Relationships of sensibility image of mannequin and apparel shop

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Abstract

This study is to explore the relationships between sensibility images of mannequins and apparel shops. A total of 113 consumers participated in experiments with photo stimuli of 2 mannequin types (realistic and semi-abstract mannequins) and 4 brand shops of women's casual wear. In results, luxurious, chic, strong, sexy, and young images were more strongly perceived from realistic mannequins than semi-abstract mannequins whereas simple and soft images were more strongly perceived from semi-abstract mannequins than realistic mannequins. Shops using realistic mannequins indicated strong images whereas shops using semi-abstract mannequins presented soft, comfortable, and feminine images. In the correlation analysis, luxurious, chic, strong, and young images of realistic mannequins were consistent with shop images using realistic mannequins. Also, luxurious, chic, soft, comfortable, and feminine images of semi-abstract mannequins were consistent with shop images using semi-abstract mannequins. In order to clearly communicate brand concepts with consumers, mannequin that is a key element of visual merchandising in the apparel shop, should be carefully selected, considering the accordance with shop image.

Keywords: mannequin, sensibility image, shop image, apparel

I. Introduction

Recently, consumers have laid more stress on the functional value of products as well as on the sentimental value of those when they shop for apparel. As the fashion market is filled with diverse brands, efforts to contain and express attractive shop images have become more important for survival in the competitive market. Fashion brands are trying to express their images through various factors within shops to meet the needs for sentimental desires of consumers. There has been a focus on the marketing strategy to create its own specific image for apparel shops in the middle of widespread similarity of products. An effort to convey and promote the identity of a fashion brand through visuality of shops has more strengthened, as it becomes more difficult to achieve a differentiation of products due to the increase of low-cost overseas production and low-price seeking shopping trends (Cheong, 2013).

Among various factors composed of visual merchandising of shops, coordination of mannequins, display status/methods, props and furnishings of shops were most importantly considered as key elements affecting consumers' evaluations on brand sensibility (Na, Lee, Hwang, & Koh, 2007). A discussion for proper use of mannequins has not been sufficient although

it is possible to express diverse feelings according to the use of different sizes, ages, races, body types, make-ups, hair styles, poses, and materials of mannequins. A realistic mannequin with an extreme pose, make-up and hair style can give a stimulation and novelty whereas a semi-abstract mannequin with limited details on face and body may be easily matched with various types of costumes and be usable for a longer period of time (Lee & Lee, 2011). Though advantages are different by types of mannequins, types of mannequins adopted by fashion brands have been little changed and many brands tend to keep using the same kind of mannequins over and over. In addition, there has been little guideline for the choice of mannequin types that are appropriate for the specific brand.

It is general to place mannequins at the front of the shops, and it plays a significant role to induce consumers into the shop. There is a tendency for consumers to understand the brand concept through costumes dressed in mannequins, therefore, it is very significant to create a mannequin image consistent to the shop image. Mannequins are core tools conveying brand images and stimulating purchasing desires, however, studies conducted for suitability of mannequins have been very deficient. In this study, types of mannequins used at apparel shops are investigated and the consistency of sensibility images of mannequin and shop is explored.

Exploring the consistency of sensibility images between a mannequin type and a shop using the same kind of mannequin will provide a basic knowledge base and guidelines for choosing appropriate mannequins for apparel shops. Since identifying appropriate mannequins as shop properties is very crucial for balancing a total image of shops, this study may provide valuable implications for visual merchandisers and shop managers.

II. Background

1. Sensibility image of shop elements

1) Mannequin

Among shop elements, mannequin is the first object to contact consumers and a practical device for product display, so that it takes an important role of stimulating consumers' purchase intention and inducing consumers into shops. Mannequin was in charge of supplying the newest fashion trend among kingdoms while dolls dressed in the latest costumes were exchanged across kingdoms in the early of 14th century. Afterward in the 19th century, mannequins presented the ideal physical type and fashion at that times as fashion dolls that were appeared in various styles. In the 20th century, it was generalized to display costumes using mannequins on window display as it became prevalent to use mannequins which had an ideal body as a medium to convey aesthetic values. In the initial stages, mannequins to show the corsets and lingeries were mainly used, however, the entire body form of mannequins became used later in the 1920's (Kim & Yang, 2001).

In recent days, there are various types of mannequins such as ones with an entire body, with a head or not, and torsos. Alternatives of mannequins such as panels, pillars, pipes and wires are also often being used (Sim, 1997). In the case of the entire body mannequin, researchers classified the segmented types of mannequins in a diverse way. Sim (1997) classified it as the realistic mannequin, semi-abstract mannequin and abstract mannequin while Lee and Lee (2011) classified it into the realistic mannequin, semi-realistic mannequin, semi-abstract mannequin, abstract mannequin and mannequin without a head. The realistic mannequin is the one which has the similar shape to human body in terms of make-up, body color, and hair style. It often reflects a character of the target person with sophisticated and trendy make-ups, hair styles, and facial expressions (Lee & Lee, 2011). The semi-abstract mannequin is not only less refined in detailed features but also more omitted in body figure (Lee & Lee, 2011). The abstract mannequin is used to create the entire effect rather than to make a natural

line or pose as it expresses a slim body with extremely long limbs (Sim, 1997).

Mannequin delivers information about products with dressed styles. A number of brands are expected to use mannequins and other props that are well matched with their brand images in order to maintain a consistent image of the brand in shops (Jeon & Park, 2005). It is important to choose the most appropriate mannequin that coincides with the image of the brand shop by considering diverse aspects including the body type, pose, structure, facial expression, hair style, body color and make-up (Sim, 1997).

2) Sensibility image of the props

Components of visual merchandising include signs, logos, windows, awnings, and flags used in the facade as well as walls, floors, ceilings, displaying props, furnishings, lights, and POP (Point-of-purchase) inside the shop (Jeon & Park, 2005). Specific props can be used to emphasize an exclusive image of the shop, indicating creativity (Lee, Park, & Park, 1993). The most frequently used props in window display are mannequins, which play a significant role affecting the perception of the product value and brand image (Kim, 2001).

Consumers feel emotions such as the pleasure, happiness, and discomfort through the visuality of shops, and those emotions felt by consumers affect to build up attitude toward the brand and purchasing intentions (Lee & Lim, 2008). Besides, Lee (2009) stated that visual merchandising appeals sentimentally as well as aesthetically for young-casual apparels targeting young consumers who are sensitive to diverse stimulations.

Na et al. (2007) mentioned that the state of arrangement of the products is the main visual merchandising element to build sensibility images of the shop and brand. Many consumers perceive brand images through visual factors such as expressions using mannequins. Kim (2010) pointed out that the place, movement, color, shape, and costumes of a mannequin are primary visual merchandising elements that are easily perceived by consumers. According to the result, mannequin is a key component of shops, so that it is important to use appropriate mannequins that are consistent in sensibility images of the shop.

2. Shop image

Shop image is perceived when consumers experience various marketing stimuli of the shop, and influences trust about and attitude toward the shop (Chung & Kim, 2003). Kim (2002) defined a shop image as reasoned recognition and emotion that are generated by prominent shop attributes. She indicated that emotional images such as 'pleasant, attractive, classy, and modern' could be superior to functional images of the shop. Shop image is formed by recognizing and evaluating various factors of shop atmosphere, and it is the most significant inducement attracting consumers into the shop (Kim, 2002). Also, shop image is emphasized by an image subjectively determined (Martineau, 1958). Attitudes toward shops generated based on shop images more strongly influence on selecting shops than do attitude toward products (Jeon & Park, 2005). Developing and maintaining positive shop images are important since it directly relates to generating the revenue of the shop (Kim & Chung, 2006). Lee et al. (1993) suggested props, a balance of color, an effect of light, product arrangement, and space structure as significant elements influencing shop images. Kim (2002) also stated that consumers holistically conceptualize specific and distinctive impressions and feelings obtained from the shop, and that consumers' purchasing behaviors become changed as the concept is further reinforced. In addition, establishing an exclusive shop image positively influences purchase intention, shop loyalty, brand images and attitude toward the brand (Jeon & Park, 2005; Park & Lee, 2008).

In result of the study about visual merchandising elements influencing shop images, window displays affected shop images like 'luxurious, pleasant, neat,

and charming images' (Lee, 2012). There has been little research on the effect of diverse elements of visual merchandising on shop images. In this study, the effect of a mannequin, a key element of visual merchandising, on shop image is explored. As environmental stimuli developing shop images are getting important, there is a need to study the appropriate use of diverse visual merchandising elements including mannequins.

III. Methods

1. Research problems

In this study, it is explored the relationships between sensibility images of mannequins and shops. The specific research problems are as follows.

Research problem 1. To explore the sensibility images of several types of mannequins.

Research problem 2. To explore the sensibility images of apparel shops using several types of mannequins.

Research problem 3. To explore the correlation of the sensibility images of a mannequin and a shop using the same kind of mannequin.

2. Experimental design

1) Stimuli

Experiments are designed to examine the sensibility images of apparel shops and mannequins. In order to select apparel brands to study, ten brands were primarily selected from the ranking of the 'Top 10' of the young casual and young character zone in women's apparel ("2012/2013 best", 2012) by the 'fashion biz' trade magazine. Selected brands are Dewl, Egoist, Benetton, System, Lab, Plastic Island, O'2nd, C.C Collect, Zooc, and Sisley. Since the department stores provide similar atmospheres and a limited range of other VMD elements for young casual wear, it is considered as a good condition to

examine the effect of mannequins of the apparel shops. In the L department shop, photos of 10 brand shops were taken including mannequins.

In the analysis of the photos, realistic mannequins and semi-abstract mannequins are being most often used in the 10 shops. Therefore, the two best selling brands using realistic mannequins (i.e., Egoist, Benetton) and the two best selling brands using semi-abstract mannequins (i.e., System, C,C, Collect) were selected for the study. Photo stimuli of the mannequins were developed by selecting a photo of the most similar type of a realistic mannequin and a semi-abstract mannequin from the online retail site selling mannequins. Those mannequins were not dressed to reduce the bias generated by clothing. Photo stimuli of the shops were taken in the L department store. The photos of the whole shop of four brands were taken with brand name logo but without mannequins between May 17th and 26th in 2013. In results, two pieces of mannequin photo stimuli and four pieces of shop photo stimuli were prepared ⟨Table 1⟩.

2) Experimental questionnaire

Questionnaires consisted of three parts including 1) the sensibility image scale checks of a mannequin photo, 2) the sensibility image scale checks of two shop photos, and 3) demographic characteristics. A total of 10 items were used to assess the sensibility of the mannequin and shops, including 'strong', 'luxurious', 'chic', 'simple', 'soft', 'sexy', 'comfortable', 'cool', 'feminine', and 'young' that were extracted in previous studies (Lee, 2012; Yu, 2010). These sensibility adjectives were provided with 7-point Likert scales. The items asking about gender, average monthly income, and average monthly expenditure for clothing to assess demographic characteristics of the subjects.

3) Data collection and analysis

In this study, a convenience sample of university students at a University participated in the experiments between May 29th and June 3th in 2013. This

〈Table 1〉 Stimuli by mannequin and shop image

Stimuli type	Realistic mannequins	Semi-abstract mannequins
Mannequin type		
Shop image		

study was conducted in a way that informants observed one photo of a mannequin type and two apparel shops that were randomly allocated and completed the sensibility image scales for each. A total of 113 questionnaires were submitted to the final data analysis, except for insincere ones out of 117 distributed questionnaires. The SPSS 20.0 statistical program was used for data analysis such as descriptive analysis, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlations. In the demographic characteristics of the sample, 16.8% (N=19) of the sample are males whereas 83.2% (N=94) of the sample are 94 females. The age ranged from 20's to 40's, but concentrated in the 20's (N=96, 84.8%). About 60% (N=67) of the total indicated that they spent 100,000 to 200,000 won for clothing per month.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Sensibility images of apparels and types of mannequin

1) Sensibility image by mannequin type

In the result of t-test, there is a difference between the two mannequin types in sentimental images perceived from the mannequin, except for the cool

〈Table 2〉 Differences of sensibility image of mannequin types   (n=113)

Sensibility image		Mannequin type		t-value
Mannequin type		Realistic mannequin (n=59)	Semi-abstract mannequin (n=54)	
		M(SD)	M(SD)	
Mannequin image	Strong	4.95(1.28)	3.43(1.60)	5.618***
	Luxurious	4.00(1.07)	3.17(1.34)	3.668***
	Chic	3.92(1.13)	3.30(1.18)	2.848**
	Simple	3.58(1.40)	4.80(1.23)	−4.886***
	Soft	3.51(1.54)	4.37(1.32)	−3.184**
	Sexy	5.07(1.31)	3.24(1.45)	7.027***
	Comfortable	5.31(1.21)	4.80(1.35)	2.114*
	Cool	3.90(1.21)	3.80(1.28)	0.435
	Feminine	5.49(1.14)	4.98(1.38)	2.152*
	Young	5.31(1.21)	4.80(1.35)	2.114*

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

image (Table 2). Realistic mannequin type was more strongly perceived as strong, luxurious, chic, sexy, comfortable, feminine, and young images than semi-abstract mannequin. On the other hand, semi-abstract mannequin type was more considered as simple and soft images than realistic mannequin. It was found that customers feel different images in accordance with the mannequin type.

2) Sensibility image by apparel shop

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Scheffe test were performed to determine differences in the sentimental image according to apparel shops (Table 3). The results showed there was a difference in strong, luxurious, chic, simple, soft, comfortable, and feminine images among four apparel shops. In Egoist shop, no prominent shop image was observed, com-

〈Table 3〉 Differences of sensibility image of apparel shops

Sensibility image		Shop using realistic mannequins		Shop using semi-abstract mannequins		F-value
Brand		Egoist (n=59)	Benetton (n=54)	System (n=59)	CC Collect (n=54)	
Shop image	Strong	3.10 a	3.37 b	3.49 b	2.39 a	7.815***
	Luxurious	2.76 a	3.13 a	4.17 b	4.04 b	18.195***
	Chic	3.08 a	3.35 a	4.31 b	3.39 a	11.605***
	Simple	3.41 a	3.43 a	4.63 b	4.65 b	19.398***
	Soft	3.17 a	3.11 a	3.49 a	5.15 b	37.879***
	Sexy	2.85	2.61	2.88	2.57	0.788
	Comfortable	3.78 a	4.11 ab	4.08 ab	4.67 b	4.747**
	Cool	3.92	3.74	4.20	4.30	1.774
	Feminine	4.58 a	3.93 a	4.03 a	5.57 b	16.369***
	Young	4.63	4.28	4.59	4.63	0.816

**p<.01, ***p<.001; a and b are results of Scheffe tests

pared to other shops. In Benetton shop, strong image was more perceived than others. In System shop, strong, luxurious, chic, and simple images were more observed whereas luxurious, simple, soft, comfortable, and feminine images were more perceived in C.C Collect shop compared to other shops. More diverse sensibility images were significantly perceived in CC collect and systems using semi-abstract mannequins than Egoist and Benetton using realistic mannequins overall.

T-test was conducted to find out whether there is a difference in shop image according to shops using a different type of mannequin. Depending on the type and use of mannequins in the shop, there was a difference in shop image, specifically in strong, soft, comfortable, and feminine images. As summarized in 〈Table 4〉, shops using a realistic mannequin were perceived as stronger than others whereas shops using semi-abstract mannequins were perceived as softer, more comfortable and more feminine than shops using a realistic mannequin.

2. Correlation between sensibility image of shop and mannequins

Correlation analysis was performed to figure out

the relationships between sensibility images of the mannequin and the apparel shop using a certain kind of mannequin. The result was summarized in 〈Table 5〉.

First, the sensibility images of the shop using a realistic mannequin and the mannequin itself were compared. Strong, luxurious, chic, and young images were commonly perceived from the shop and the mannequin. In other words, strong, luxurious, chic and young images of the realistic mannequin are also felt from the apparel shop using the realistic manne-quin. However, there was no consistency in other images such as simple, soft, sexy, comfortable, cool, and feminine images between the shop and manne-quin used in the shop.

On the other hand, images of shops using semi-abstract mannequins and the mannequin itself were compared. The correlation of the sensibility image was high in luxurious, chic, soft, comfortable, and feminine images, reflecting the good accordance in sensibility images between the semi-abstract mannequin and the shop using the mannequin. However, there was no consistency in strong, simple, sexy, cool, and young images between the two.

In the comparison result, about a half of the sensibility images were consistent between the shop

〈Table 4〉 Differences of sensibility image by apparel shop groups

Sensibility image		Shop using realistic mannequins (n=118)	Shop using semi-abstract mannequins (n=108)	*t*-value
		M(SD)	M(SD)	
Shop image	Strong	3.30(1.45)	2.88(1.25)	2.309*
	Luxurious	3.47(1.50)	3.58(1.18)	−0.656
	Chic	3.69(1.38)	3.37(1.14)	1.917
	Simple	4.02(1.40)	4.04(1.28)	−0.112
	Soft	3.33(1.13)	4.13(1.56)	−4.373***
	Sexy	2.86(1.40)	2.59(1.26)	1.531
	Comfortable	3.93(1.43)	4.39(1.10)	−2.709**
	Cool	4.06(1.50)	4.02(1.37)	0.213
	Feminine	4.31(1.45)	4.75(1.55)	−2.229*
	Young	4.61(1.28)	4.45(1.51)	0.843

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

〈Table 5〉 Correlation of mannequin image and shop image

Mannequin Image		Shop image									
		Strong	Luxurious	Chic	Simple	Soft	Sexy	Comfor-table	Cool	Feminine	Young
Realistic mannequin	Strong	**.260***	−.040	−.107	.049	−.035	.142	.066	−.117	.038	.063
	Luxurious	−.007	**.265***	**.270***	.119	.218	.215	.241	**.292***	.157	.077
	Chic	−.073	.220	**.346****	.060	.112	.238	.240	.119	.031	.074
	Simple	−.193	.211	**.397****	.055	.031	.080	.201	.211	.256	.142
	Soft	−.072	.799	.222	.093	−.019	.079	.032	**.268***	.200	.234
	Sexy	.162	**.258***	**.301***	.001	−.155	.183	−.043	−.078	−.089	.208
	Comfortable	**−.273***	.021	.028	.098	−.060	−.219	−.021	.006	−.054	.009
	Cool	−.125	**.295***	**.282***	.216	−.080	.003	−.087	.190	.108	.159
	Feminine	.066	.105	−.089	**.271***	.014	**.273***	−.028	.159	.102	.182
	Young	−.022	.012	.082	−.096	−.168	−.005	.100	−.024	−.059	**.342****
Semi abstract mannequin	Strong	.173	.108	.268	.037	.210	−.029	.154	.164	.231	.100
	Luxurious	.164	**.271***	.266	−.107	.164	.196	.220	.156	.141	−.007
	Chic	.223	**.414****	**.441****	.099	.223	.197	.182	.144	**.274***	.125
	Simple	−.167	−.057	−.200	−.043	.209	.147	.262	−.066	−.098	−.133
	Soft	.014	.105	.096	−.162	**.305***	.135	**−.332***	.088	.171	−.206
	Sexy	.200	.147	.139	−.003	−.058	−.030	−.012	.122	.049	.094
	Comfortable	.061	.216	.236	−.047	**.343***	.142	**.336***	.217	**.409****	.135
	Cool	.095	**.406****	**.308***	−.111	**.379****	.118	.263	.121	**.449****	.135
	Feminine	.124	**.310***	**.307***	−.048	.253	.043	**.236***	.221	**.293***	.037
	Young	.102	−.019	.084	.228	.255	.096	.047	.228	**.318***	.254

*p<.05, **p<.01

and the mannequin whereas the rest of a half of images were not consistent. Regardless of the kind of mannequin, luxurious and chic images were commonly high in the correlation. It means that these two images were commonly pursued by apparel shops and by diverse kinds of mannequin, in order to express apparel products more attractively.

Interesting results were clear contrast of images with a high correlation by the kind of mannequin. Specifically, realistic mannequin and the shop using the mannequin were consistent in strong and young images whereas semi-abstract mannequin and the shop using the mannequin were consistent in soft, comfortable, and feminine images.

V. Conclusion

This study was conducted to confirm whether sensibility images of the apparel shop and the type of mannequin (i.e., realistic mannequin, semi-abstract mannequin) used in the shop were consistent. For the experimental test, the photos of two types of mannequins and four photos of women's casual brand shops using the kinds of mannequins were used as stimuli. Main results are summarized as follows.

First, the difference was found in the sensibility images of two types of mannequins. Realistic mannequin was more perceived as strong, chic, and sexy whereas semi-abstract mannequin was more perceived

as simple and soft. It may imply that the realistic mannequin is found to convey a more characteristic image and semi-abstract mannequin was found to convey a more ordinary image.

Second, each apparel brand shop showed a significant difference in strong, luxurious, chic, simple, soft, comfortable and feminine images. A shop using realistic mannequin is generally perceived as stronger whereas a shop with semi-abstract mannequins is perceived as more luxurious, chic, simple, comfortable, and feminine than a shop with realistic mannequins. Therefore it was found that each shop may vary in sensibility images according to types of mannequins that were carried out.

Third, shops were grouped by the mannequin type used in the shop. There were significant differences in images of the shops using realistic mannequins and the shops using semi-abstract mannequins. Strong image for the shop with a realistic mannequin was more significantly perceived whereas soft, comfortable, and feminine images were more significantly perceived in the shop with the semi-abstract mannequin.

Fourth, correlation analysis was conducted to find out a consistency between the images of the shop and the mannequin. In the shops using the realistic mannequins, strong, luxurious, chic and young images were perceived, consistently with the realistic mannequin, indicating the strong and young images that were well managed by the brand shop. Otherwise, luxurious, chic, soft, comfortable and feminine images of the semi-abstract mannequins were commonly perceived in the shops using the kind of mannequin. It implies these images are being well managed by the apparel shops.

As a result, strong and young images were prominent and consistent in the apparel shop using the realistic mannequin as well as the realistic mannequin itself, therefore, the realistic mannequin is appropriate for the brand that has a unique, powerful, and prevailing sense. In contrast, if the brand orients stable, comfortable and ordinary concept, it is suitable

to use semi-abstract mannequins than realistic mannequins. In the case of shops within the department store that is regulated and occupies small space, it is hard to reveal characteristics of the brand. Then, it is useful to adopt various props and mannequins that account for brand personality in a consistent manner.

So far, the research and verification was deficient to figure out whether the image of the props including mannequin is matched well with that of the shop. It has been common for shops to use general and standardized mannequins to meet the tight budget, making little effort to develop the most appropriate mannequin for the brand. It is necessary not only to study the consistency of the image of the mannequin and the shop but also to verify if the shop image is well maintained when selecting the mannequin type by brand in this situation.

It is meaningful to explore about the issue that is rarely studied in the past. The issue can be expanded to diverse items, brands, props, and type of shops in order to figure out the consistency in images of props and shops. The verification efforts will provide an important knowledge base to build a guideline to select appropriate props for the brand. In the situation with no specific guideline for props including mannequin, these studies will provide important implications for visual merchandisers. This study has limitations of generalizing the results based on the convenience sampling of the university students. In addition, it is not possible to apply the result since only a few sample shops and mannequin photos were used for the experiment. In the future research, a wide range of samples can be assessed to figure out the difference of views by age groups on the images of the shops and the mannequins. Also, diverse colored and motioned mannequins can be tested to explore further implications.

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