

An Analysis of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Seoul Fashion Week with a Focus on Organisational Issues

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Abstract : Seoul Fashion Week aims to be the world's fifth Fashion Week from the year after 2000. This has involved significant labour and investment, not all of which has been successful. This study analyses the strengths and weaknesses of SFW based on the London Fashion Week as a successful model. By identifying its obvious and less obvious characteristics, this analysis aims to diagnose SFW's current status in order to upgrade the event at an international level. Key factors are organisational body, designers, visitors, sponsors, schedule, venue, main events and supportive events. The following points have emerged from the research: the success of Seoul Fashion Week was based on the combination of separate collections, an appropriate fashion show venue, and the active role of new designers. The problems were: lack of an independent organisation, non-professional staff, lack of diverse visitors, exclusive governmental funding, late timing, excessive distance from the main European and American fashion markets, lack of sustainability of the main events, a limited variety of supportive events, the absence of online promotion and, last but not least, no distinctive features. The study concludes that Seoul Fashion Week has great potential with its fast growth and young designers. This should be complemented with an independent organisation and effective administration and strategy.

Key words : Seoul Fashion Week, organisation, buyers, governmental sponsorship, online promotion

1. Introduction

Seoul Fashion Week is a biannual fashion showcase event sponsored by the Seoul Metropolitan government. It aims to become the world's fifth leading Fashion Week, following London, Milan, New York and Paris (Seoul Design Foundation, 2015a). Although its 16-year-old history is short compared to others, its growth has been remarkable.

Several studies have been carried out on the subject of developing Seoul Fashion Week (hereafter, SFW): Analysis on the current status of Seoul Fashion Week and study on the methods of its mid- and long-term development (Kim, 2012), Research on "Korean" collection as high added value fashion industry -by comparison of status and characteristics of domestic and international collections (Joo, 2009), The development strategies of SFAA, Seoul collection (Kim, 2008a), The development strategies of the Seoul fashion industry (Kim, 2008b) and An exploratory study for the market of Seoul collection - from the collection participants' perspective (Han & Lee, 2008). A number of press articles (Ham, 2011; Kim, 2015; Lee, 2013; Lee, 2014), report the strengths and weaknesses of each collection, particularly in organisational terms. Organisational issues are crucial for assessing the present as well as planning future directions. It is also important

to look into the success and problems in order to construct a correct and realistic development plan. However, no detailed academic studies about SFW organisational issues were made available after the year 2012, when separate collections were combined into one, despite the great quantity of news and magazine articles on this topic. The aim of this paper is to define the current situation of SFW, particularly after 2012. To do this, it is helpful to look at the key factors of some successful events of this kind. London Fashion Week (LFW) can be a good model as an independent, yet powerful, organisation.

The scope of this research focuses on the changes in SFW after 2012, particularly in terms of organisational issues. The issues of designers, prices and products are as important as organisational ones in order to produce an accurate diagnosis, as these, however, would be too wide to be considered in one paper, this study only focuses on organisational points. The research method is based on a review of the relevant literature, including online resources and news articles. With its efficient organisational body, the British Fashion Council (BFC) and its successful strategy (guests, sponsors, events etc.), LFW will be used as a standard against which to assess the current situation of SFW. It seems to be best to investigate both websites (i.e., LFW's and BFC's) because buyers and press alike regard Fashion Week websites as the best way to gain information about designers, schedules and events. This is confirmed by interviews (from other research projects) with buyers (7), press (21), stylists (2), photographers (1) and makeup artists (1)

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during 2015 SS LFW, 12-16 September 2014. All of them mention the homepage as their best information source. Then, by the standards from websites, SFW is investigated through journals, news articles and related websites, SFW, CFDK (Council of Fashion Designers of Korea), designers' websites and reports by governmental organisations (Seoul Fashion Centre, Seoul Institute, Seoul Metropolitan Government and Seoul Design Foundation). This study aims to illustrate unnoticed success along with more obvious achievements, in order to devise specific strategies for SFW to become the world's fifth Fashion Week and launch Korean fashion internationally.

2. The key factors to consider with a focus on organisation

2.1. The key factors of Fashion Week in terms of funding and organisation

Fashion Week is a preview chance of the latest trend and trade-based events (Kim, 2015). The world's four biggest Fashion Weeks are held in London, Milan, New York and Paris. These are followed by similar events in Berlin, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Istanbul, and other cities. New York Fashion Week is run by IMG Fashion, the world's leading producer, marketer and partner to the international fashion community. Although New York Fashion Week was established by the Council of Fashion Designers of America, it was handed over to IMG in 2001. New York Fashion Week was funded by Mercedes-Benz from 2007 until January 2015. Following this successful sponsorship, Mercedes-Benz has funded other Fashion Weeks, such as Australia, Berlin, China, Istanbul, New York and Tokyo (*Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Homepage*, 2015). Paris is run by the French Fashion Federation and funded by private corporations such as Mercedes-Benz and Maybelline, New York. Milan Fashion Week is run by the National Chamber for Italian Fashion, a non-profit organisation, and supported by the City of Milan and other private companies although it is not clear whether this governmental support is financial or institutional help.

London Fashion Week is run by BFC and its main funder is the

City of London, followed by the London Development Agency, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the EU's European Regional Development Fund. However, these sponsorships are for the Paris Fashion Week showroom fee. Normally most contracts are made during Paris Fashion Week, at the end of the Big 4 Fashion Weeks. Buyers confirm their contracts after seeing the major Fashion Weeks. So many LFW designers are represented in Paris showrooms during Paris Fashion Week. The City of London contributes 800,000 British pounds (₩ 1,440,000,000, ₩ 1,800 = £ 1). This is just 8% of the total expenses (Seoul Institute, 2014). The rest is covered by business sponsors (products, services or money), by profits from the fashion weekend, a consignment fee, and designers' fees.

Tokyo Fashion Week is run by the Japan Fashion Week Organization and used to be funded by Tokyo's city government until 2010. Now two thirds of the expenses (₩ 4,000,000,000) are covered by sponsorship from various companies. Berlin Fashion Week is run by Berlin Partner and supported by the title sponsor, Mercedes-Benz. Singapore Fashion Week (Audi Fashion Festival) is run by Asia Fashion Exchange, and its biggest sponsor (half of their budget) is Audi. The rest is from governmental organisations such as the Small and Medium Business Administration and STB (Singapore Tourism Board). SFW is currently hosted by Seoul Metropolitan Government and run by Seoul Design Foundation. Seoul City is almost the sole funder of Fashion Week (only 5% is from other sponsorships) (*ibid.*).

Fashion Week sponsorship sources can be classified as private corporations and governmental funding. Independent sponsorships are from private corporations (New York, Berlin and Tokyo) and are divided into profit- and non-profit making. There is a mix of governmental and company funding (Singapore), and governmental funding (Seoul). Fig. 1 shows the differences in funding each Fashion Week.

Among these, LFW is a suitable model for SFW to follow. Singapore Fashion Week tends to host well-known designers' garments shown at an earlier major Fashion Week, rather than run its own fashion show (Seoul Metropolitan Government Fashion Advi-



Fig. 1. Funding and profit- or non-profit making of each Fashion Week. (modified from Seoul Institute, 2014)

Table 1. Key factors from LFW and SFW Homepage (2016 SS)

(Retrieved 28 August 2015)

	Organisational body	Participants (Designers)	Visitors (Guests)	Sponsor (funder)	Schedule	Venue	Events	Supportive events
London	British Fashion Council- have separate homepage about business, event etc.	Contact details (sales, press), stock list, showroom, company details, social media, look book	Press (including bloggers) and buyers, press, buyers registration, press portal, galleries for press	Principal sponsor, other sponsors, suppliers, funders (EU, Mayor of London, UK Trade & Investment)	18-22 Sep.	The Brewer Street Car Park (1 st time) (2010-15: Somerset House	Catwalk show, showroom, digital show, film screening	Pop-Up showroom, Unfold (Irish Designers showcase), photographic exhibition, Lovebullets ART exhibition, after Party, Louis Vuitton Series 3 exhibition opening gala, Belstaff event etc.
Seoul	Hosted by Seoul Metropolitan Government Run by Seoul Design Foundation	Contact, designer profile, brand concept, season collection photos -no link to homepage & social media	Press, buyers registration	N/A	16-21 Oct.	Dongdaemun Design Plaza (from 2014 AW)	Seoul Collection Generation Next Off show	Give Donation

sory Team, 2009). SFW has not developed enough yet to be supported by a main sponsor such as Mercedes Benz. In fact, a big multinational company as a main sponsor using its own name would seem clash with SFW’s intention to encourage the domestic industry. Further, relying on just one company for sponsorship makes it difficult to replace it when the contract ends. Thus, a better option for SFW seems to be to find a number of small, separate sponsors in order to decrease dependency on the government. Paris Fashion Week has various collections and fairs, including Prêt a Porter, Haute Couture, Who’s Next, among others. However, because of its scale and complexity, it is not the best model for SFW to follow. Although Milan Fashion Week is funded by the City of Milan and LFW is funded by London’s city government, both are run by non-profit organisations, recruit sponsorships and run businesses in order to fund their Fashion Weeks and associated events. However, LFW is famous as a gateway for new designers and its program is aimed at nurturing young designers. Of all designers participating in 2015 AW, 44.87% have run their own brands for less than 5 years 35 out of 78, including Generation Next and Seoul Collection (the details are in tables 4 and 2.2.1. Designers). Given the difficulty for new designers to sustain their labels, BFC, an organiser of LFW, can be taken as an ideal sample model to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of SFW so as to set up a future plan. In Table 1, information from the LFW website is compared with the corresponding aspects of SFW.

2.2. The key factors of SFW

Drawn from LFW and BFC homepages, these factors encom-

pass: organisational body, designers, visitors, sponsor, date, venue, events and supportive events. Table 2 shows the changes in SFW from 2012 AW.

2.2.1. Organisational body

The first fashion show in Korea was by Nora Noh on 29th November 1959 at the Bando Hotel (Noh, 2007). The first regular group fashion show started from SFAA (Seoul Fashion Association) 1991 SS (November, 1990). In the 1990s there were a number of similar well-established fashion shows showcasing events such as the KDFA, SFAA and NWS Seoul Collections. SFAA, established in 1989, is led by designers from the Kookje Design Institute or the Choongang Design Contest. Since then, it has been holding two fashion shows every year. KFDA (Korea Fashion Designers Association), established in 1961, is based on boutique designers near Myoungdong and NWS (New Wave in Seoul), established in 1992 by new and young designers, when SFAA and KFDA were already established (Park, 2000). Because of the different interests and goals, collections were held separately, despite Seoul City’s combining efforts. In 1998, the Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy, together with Seoul Metropolitan Government, launched Seoul Collection as a event of ASEM which combined KFDA, NWS and other independent designers. In October 2000, Seoul Collection launched its first fashion shows. After that, there have been two fashion collections in Korea: the Seoul Collection and the SFAA Collection. Shows’ schedules, ticket sales and PR are organised separately. This is wasteful of labour, money and PR, and weakens the collections in terms of

Table 2. Changes from 2012 AW

Season	Organisation al body	Designers : catwalk show	Visitors (Guests)	Sponsor-funder : Seoul City	Date (Schedule)	Venue	Events	Supportive events
2012 AW	SDF	67 (SC: 36, FTO: 19, GN: 12)			2-7 April (6 days)	Olympic Park	SFF- 200	GIVE Donation
2013 SS	SDF	56 (SC :41, GN: 12, OS: 3)		2012 -3.875 billion (3,875,000,000)	22-28 Oct. (7 days)	War Memorial Museum, Xi Gallery	SFF- 200	GIVE Donation
2013 AW	SDF	70 (SC: 50, GN: 11, OS: 9)			25-30 Mar. (6 days)	IFC Mall, Blue Square	SFF- ?	GIVE Donation
2014 SS	SDF (27), CFDK (25) (run each shows separately)	70 (SC: 52, GN:18)	62,655 (IB-124, IP-53)	2013 -3.1 billion (3,100,000,000)	18-23 Oct. (6 days)	Hangang Park, IFC Mall	SFF- ?	Asian Fashion Forum, Art zone, Camping zone, K-style Concert, Pop-up stores, 800g fashion donation, Galleria West pop up store by Singapore designers at SFW, Fashion filming (Nora Noh)
2014 AW	SDF, CFDK	86 (SC: 60, GN: 17, OS: 9)		2014 -3 billion (3,003,034)	21-26 Mar. (6 days)	DDP	SFF-48	Fashion Collaboration-EXO+ GN, GIVE Donation (etc. Singapore Fashion Week Trade Show-Blue Print attending)
2015 SS	SDF, CFDK	86 (SC: 60, GN: 17, OS: 9)	55,558 (IB-212, IP-308, B-114, P-786)		17-22 Oct. (6 days)	DDP	SFF-33 (PT-5)	GIVE Donation
2015 AW	SDF (Sponsor- CFDK)	83 (SC: 57, GN: 21, OS: 5)		2015 (including 2016 SS) -2.7 billion (2,704,954)	20-25 Mar. (6 days)	DDP	No	GIVE Donation

* From the year 2012, all financial support has been from Seoul Metropolitan City Government.
 * SC= Seoul Collection, GN= Generation Next, FTO= Fashion Take Off, OS= Off Show, SFF= Seoul Fashion Fair
 * IB= International Buyer, IP= International Press, B= Buyer, P= Press

attracting international attention to one city. Finally, after significant efforts towards unification, the year 2003 saw the first combined SS collection. However, this did not last beyond that year because of distribution problems in scheduling shows, fee administration, funding, tickets, etc. Until 2012 there were separation and unification in succession. Finally, one collection was held in 2012. It was hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and co-run by Seoul Design Foundation and CFDK (Council of Fashion Designers of Korea). CFDK was established in 2012 by combining separate designer groups, in order to “create a truly unified fashion designer association that will bring every fashion designer organizations and individual designers together” (Council of Fashion Designers of Korea, 2015). Since then, CFDK has worked together with, or against, SDF for SFW. Table 3 shows the chronological order of fashion collections in Korea and Seoul Fashion Week’s organisational bodies.

2.2.2. Designers

There are various types of designers showing exhibiting at the

Fashion Week (Table 4). Almost half of them have run their businesses for less than five years. It is hard to survive for young brands because of financial problems, weak brand identity, inability to keep regular customers, etc. This is why a nurturing program is needed. SFW has Generation Next, which supplies venues on a smaller scale than is needed for Seoul Collection. This is a chance for new designers to operate on smaller budgets, participate in shows and contact buyers, press, and even the public.

2.2.3. Guests

Unlike other Fashion Weeks, SFW is open to any ticket holder. Therefore, the guests include press, buyers, VIPs, celebrities, students, etc. Conversely, the four major Fashion Weeks are trade-only events, only open to press, buyers and VIPs. In 2015 SS, the number of visitors to SFW was 55,558, whilst the visitors to LFW were 5,000, that is, almost ten times less. Moreover, contract amounts were significantly different (See Table 5).

2.2.4. Sponsorship

Table 3. Collections and organising bodies in chronological order

	Number of collections	Organising bodies	Funder of collection
1990s	Three (KFDA, SFAA, NWS)	KFDA, SFAA, NWS	different funders
2001 SS (Oct, 2000)	Two: Seoul Collection (KFDA, NWS) SFAA Collection	Korea Fashion Association, SFAA	Seoul Metropolitan Government, Ministry of Trade & Industry
2003 SS	One: Seoul Collection		
2003 AW	Two: Seoul Collection, SFAA Collection		
2004 SS	One in two locations		
2007 AW	Separate: Seoul Collection, SFAA Collection		
2009 SS	Two: Seoul Collection, SFAA Collection		
2012 SS	Two: Seoul Collection, SFAA Collection	Seoul Fashion Centre (in Seoul Business Agency), SFAA	Seoul Metropolitan Government, Ministry of Knowledge Economy
2012 AW	One- Seoul Collection	Seoul Design Foundation	
2014 SS-2015 SS	Seoul Collection	Seoul Design Foundation, CFDK : MOU between two (Run by Seoul (27), CFDK (25) in 2014 SS)	All financial support is from Seoul Metropolitan Government
2015 AW	Seoul Collection	Seoul Design Foundation (CFDK: Sponsor)	

* SFC was closed in December 2011 and all responsibilities were handed over to SDF. (Seoul Institute, 2014)

Seoul Metropolitan Government has been the sole funder from 2012 AW, contributing 3.1 billions in 2013, that is, 29.9% of the government’s fashion budget made available in 2013 (Seoul Institute, 2014). This figure keeps decreasing: 4.9 billion in 2008, 3.1 billion in 2013 and 2.7 billion in 2015. As mentioned earlier, sponsorship from companies has only covered 5% of the total expenses in SFW. However, LFW distinguishes between main sponsor, other sponsors, suppliers, and funders contracted seasonally by BFC.

2.2.5. Time

SFW is held in March and October. Table 6 is a 15 AW schedule of the world’s Fashion Weeks. Buyers and press travel from New York to London, Milan and Paris without break. Buyers interested in new Asian brands keep their leftover budget for Asia, mostly Tokyo. However, most of the buying is done by the end of the Big 4.

2.2.6. Place

Collection venues have changed much through time. Some were more proper for fairs or exhibitions than fashion shows and have been criticised for not representing Korean tradition, the good features of Seoul, the current development of the Korean fashion industry, as well as for their inadequate accessibility by transport (Han & Lee, 2008; Kim, 2012). From 2000 to 2004 AW, SFW was held at Coex, then it was moved to SETEC (near Hagnyeoul Station) from 2005 SS to 2012 SS. In 2012 AW, it took place at the Olympic Park at Jamsil, and then moved to the War Memorial Museum and Riverside Park, IFC Mall. Finally, in 2014 AW,

DDP (Dongdaemoon Design Plaza) was open and SFW was held there.

2.2.7. Event

SFW included Seoul Collection and Generation Next in 2015 AW, and will do so again in 2016 SS. Seoul Collection is the biggest business showcase for established designers. Generation Next represents 1-5-year-old designer brands and is a gateway for the new generation. There is Off Show as well, taking place outside DDM.

Until 2015 SS there had been Seoul Fashion Fair for trade shows including menswear, womenswear and accessories (50 or more companies), with the chance of a presentation show. It also featured GIVE Donation, a donation market open to public (no entrance fee) showcasing donated designer products.

3. Strengths

Despite its relatively short history, the growth of SFW has been remarkable. Its size is huge (around 55,000 visitors) and the number of shows is as large as that of 31-year-old LFW.

3.1. One organisation

SFW had suffered from the fragmentation of its organisational bodies, the main drawback to its development (Joo, 2009; Kim, 2012; Seoul Institute, 2014). Finally, in 2012 AW, one combined SFW was held and solely run by Seoul Design Foundation, funded by Seoul Metropolitan Government since 2008, 13 years after the

Table 4. The running years of participating brands in 2015 AW SFW Seoul Collection (excluding Generation Next's 21 designers)

20, Mar	Brand	SONGZIO	Ordinary People	MUNSOO KWON	VanHart di Albarzar	HEICH ES HEICH	beyond closet	Jehee Sheen	SLING STONE			
	Director	Zio Song	Hyuncheol Chang	Munsoo Kwon	Dooyoung Chung	Sanghyuk Han	Taeyong Ko	Jehee Sheen	Jongcheol Park			
	Year	1992	2013	2011	2011	2014	2008	2009	2006			
21, Mar	Brand	THE CENTAUR	kimseoryong	ANS AN YOONJUNG	CARUSO	La doii	RESURRECTION	the studio K	J KOO	SONO DRS	SUPERCOMM A B	
	Director	Ranji Ye	Seoryong Kim	Yoonjung An	Kwanhyo Chang	Doii, Lee	Jooyoung Lee	Hyejin Hong	Jinwoo Choi, Yeonjoo Koo	Deresha Choi	Bonnie Lee	
	Year	2008	1998	1975	1987	2008	2004	2006	2011	2012	2015	
22, Mar	Brand	POST DECEMBER	Kwakhyunjoo collection	PAUL & ALICE	LE QUEEN couture	sumisumi	PartspARTs	NOHKE	CHOIBOKO	SOULPOT STUDIO	how and what	
	Director	Sohyun Park	Hyunjoo Kwak	Hyosoon Joo	Youseok Moyung	Sumi Jeong	Seonok Im	Misun Chung	Bokho Choi	Soojin Kim	Byoungkyu Park	
	Year	2009	2003	2010	2007/8	2012	2011	2011	1973	2009	2003	
23, Mar	Brand	FASHION STORY JUNG HUN JONG	LIE SANGBONG	KAAL E. SUKTAE	Push-BUTTON	KUMANN YOO HYE JIN	MISS GEE COLLECTION	BIG PARK	Steve J & Yoni P	ARCHE	METROCITY	KIM CHULUNG MODE
	Director	Hunjong Jung	Sangbong Lie	Suktae Lee	Seongkeon Park	Hyejin Yoo	Choonhee Gee	Yonsoo Park	Hykseo Jung, Seunyeon Pae	Choonho Yoon		Chulwoong Kim
	Year	2008?	1985	1997	2003	2012(1979)	1979	2011(1980)	2006	2013	1992	1979/80
24, Mar	Brand	ENZUVAN	DEMOO PARKCHOON MOO	CRES E DIM	Jain Song	S=YZ	JARRET	KYE	BAKANGCHI			
	Director	Eunzu Hong	Choomoo Park	Hongbum Kim	Jain Song	Yoojin Song	Jiyeon Lee	Hanhee Kye	Hangchi Park			
	Year	2000	1988	2009	2004	2013	2009	2012	1973			
25, Mar	Brand	Monte Milano	SUUWU	yang's by HEE DEUK	CANEZOU	kiok	JO MYUNG RYE	MAG & LOGAN	LOW CLASSIC	ANDY & DEBB	ultimo	
	Director	Seohee Oh	Suuwu Park	Heedeuk Yang	Bomin Kim	Kiok Kang	Myungrye Jo	Logan, Sunhye Chung	Mungsin Lee	Seokwon Kim, Wonjung Yoon	Dongsoon Kim	
	Year	2003?	2012?	2007(2000)	2006	1989	1977	2006	2009/10	1999	1985	

* As Generation Next (21 designers) consists of designers who have been in business for under 5 years, this table does not include their launching year. Because of their small size, it is hard to find information of some designers.

* Renamed brands, such as KUMANN YOO HYE JIN or BIG PARK are included in the original brands' launching year rather than their rebranding year. Despite reforming and rebranding, these companies have kept the same organisation and funding power.

Table 5. Number of visitors and amount of contracts at 2015 SS SFW and LFW

	2015 SS SFW	2015 SS LFW
Date	17 (Fri)-22 (Wed). Oct. 2014 (6days)	12(Fri)-16 (Tue). Sep. 2014 (5 days)
Participating Designers	Catwalk show 86 Fair 33	Catwalk show 82 Showroom 170
Number of Visitors	55,558 (including designer’s guests, students, etc.) International Buyers: 212, Domestic Buyers: 114, International Press: 308, Domestic Press: 786	5,000 (buyers, journalists, bloggers, broadcast crews, photographers)*
Total value of Contracts	\$2,000,000	\$155,000,000 (£ 100 million)

* The numbers of buyers, press and others are not shown separately.

Table 6. Fashion Week Schedule

February						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
				New York		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
New York				London		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
London		Milan				

March						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Milan			Paris			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Paris						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		Tokyo			Seoul	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Tokyo		Seoul			China	
29	30	31				
China						

launch of Seoul Collection. This consolidation can help upgrade SFW to a world-class Fashion Week.

3.2. Venue

Another issue has been the venue. Previous options, such as SETEC, on the outskirts of Seoul, were more suitable for trade fairs. Visiting individual brand showrooms was inconvenient especially for buyers, who usually prefer this way of gleaning information about companies. SETEC had been built to host trade shows, not fashion events (Han & Lee, 2008), and cannot represent the cultural heritage of Korea (Kim, 2012). After some experi-

menting (Olympic Park, War Memorial Museum, IFC, Yeouido Park), SFW was finally held at DDP. DDP represents the cultural advancement of Korea, particularly in fashion and design (Dongdaemoon Design Plaza, 2015). It is situated near Dongdaemoon, a fashion market and industry hub in Seoul, centrally located and well served by public transport, with easy access to designers’ showrooms and historic sites such as Gyeongbokgung Palace and Deoksugung Palace, among others.

3.3. The active role of young designers

It is crucial for young designers to play an active role in trading. Almost half of SFW’s brands are under 5 years old and cannot afford to open their own stores. On a domestic scale, the increase of multi-shops in department stores, shopping malls etc., helps keep young designers in business. Whereas well-established brands have their own regular clientele, young designers expect to find new buyers and customers in the international market. Apart from supporting Fashion Week, Seoul’s Metropolitan Government and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, through the Korean Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), encourage this expansion by funding, for instance, Seoul’s 10 Soul (2010 to present) and Concept Korea.

The exporting amount of Korea’s fashion manufacturing industry (Market Share data) was the world’s third in the 1980s (after Hong Kong’s and Italy’s), sliding to fifth in the early1990s; then in 1995 it plunged to ninth and its downturn still continues (Hong et al., 2010). In the 1980s Korea was exporting garments made by a low-cost workforce but as labour cost increased, many manufacturers moved to countries cheaper in labour, such as Indonesia or Vietnam. This is why Korea’s market share figures have dropped. However, the Seoul Metropolitan Government Fashion Advisory Team (2009) points out that Korea is the place where the entire process of the fashion industry is connected, from planning, design and manufacturing to distribution. This distinguishing feature of

the Korean fashion industry could be applied to promising young designers willing to enter the international market. This would enable Korea to go back to its prime.

4. Weaknesses

An expert survey by Seoul Institute (2014) about the problems of SFW shows that the constitution of an independent professional operational body (32%), a budget increase (27%), legislation on related business and system maintenance (27%), etc. Kim (2012) points out the lack of an independent, sustainable operation system and organisation (the problems of hiring the agency), venues, differences in the brands' price ranges, the ineffectiveness of invitations to international buyers, the failure to present SFW as a business event, an identity problem and an equally confused concept of Fashion Week and its designers. Joo (2009) also points out the absence of international guests and buyers, lack of business results (little international trade, too much focus on celebrities attending), a chaotic operational system (SFAA, Seoul Collection, Seoul Fashion Centre and Seoul Fashion Association), lack of continuity in the support program for new and young designers, inadequate venue (SETEC, see 3.2. Venue), mismatch between business and publicity, absence of subsidiary events. Through background research focused on organisational issues, some of these problems can be reduced on the basis of some key factors.

4.1. Organisational body

After years of adjustment, Seoul Design Foundation finally became one organisational body in 2012. Far from being independent, however, SDF is part of the government. Further, it does not have enough staff members. In Seoul Metropolitan Government there are only four or five people in charge of fashion events. Their duties include not only Fashion Week but also, for instance, planning a fashion museum. So, it is hard to consistently focus on Fashion Week throughout the year ("Fashion industry team organisation chart", 2015). As to its running body, the BFC has 37 people working for Fashion Week and related events. In SDF, on the contrary, there are only 8 in charge of Seoul Fashion Week: these are the

fashion team at the Fashion Culture head office run by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Their duties include not only SFW but also the administrative role of the Export Support Centre, Fashion Creative Studio, the promotion of global fashion brands, the management of the Modelist contest (Seoul Design Foundation, 2015b). In this situation, hiring an agency is unavoidable. Table 7 shows the succession of SFW running bodies.

An agency normally consists of area specialists. Because SDF selects its agency after a fair and open bid, it can conduct a project efficiently and transparently. However, a new contract is made every season. This hinders long-term administration because the people in charge of one project change with every new contract. For the possibility of extending contracts, the agency focuses on short-term goals and immediately profitable events. Fashion Week, however, is a business tending not to produce instant results. Buying takes time and cannot be judged in the short term: if buyers want to make a contract with a young new brand, they normally look at one or two years of their activity for sustainability of brand identity, survival, etc. This kind of job is unsuitable for agencies, as they are mostly assessed by their immediate results. This prevents SFW from planning long-term, focused development strategies. After combining separate collections into one, there still remains to form one professional, independent organising body on the model of BFC. Further, including Caroline Rush, CEO of BFC, most of members are PR experts. This enables them to run strategic short- and long-term events. From March, the Seoul Design Foundation appointed a general manager, Kuho Chung (Vice-President of Fila Korea) in May 2015, in charge of the planning and management of Fashion Week from 2016 SS for two years (Lee, 2015). His is not a full-time position, though. In order to draw a whole, unified picture, planning should be accompanied by strong apolitical, non-profit, organisation and staff.

4.2. Guests

Not only Joo's (2009) but also Han and Lee's research (2008) highlight the absence of buyers from Fashion Week through a survey of participants. The collection is open to the public. Fashion design students can access the show, which can be instructive; but it is a trade show, so the presence of visitors outside the industry

Table 7. SFW running bodies from 2005 to 2014

Year	Funder	Runner		Running show/ event
2005-2011	Seoul Metropolitan Government	Seoul Fashion Centre	Nongovernmental operational agency	running professional agency for fashion show and convention
2012-2013	Seoul Metropolitan Government	Nongovernmental operational agency		
2014	Seoul Metropolitan Government	Seoul Design Foundation agency	Non-governmental operation agency	

can hinder the concentration on trade. The reason why the event should be open to public started from Korea's unusual distribution structure. Whilst in most Western countries buyers purchase items at fashion shows to be sold in department stores and independent boutiques, in Korea fashion brands operate quite independently and there is no notion of a 'buyer'. Without buyers, (and aside from the press) the seats are typically given or sold to students, which would be virtually unthinkable in other Fashion Weeks. In fact, fashion collections in Seoul have been regarded as a way of presenting designers' work rather than selling it. For this reason the credibility of SFW in the mind of the international fashion community has been rather shaky (Lee, 2013). Nowadays multi-brand fashion concept stores are increasing. The first multi store was 'G. Street 494' at Galleria department store in 1997, and started to increase from 2000. In 2007, there were 80 stores and 70% of them sold imported goods (Park, 2007). During 2015, the department store, shopping mall, road shop, online shopping mall, and even retail brands have been increasing its multi stores; department stores have changed their display into a zoning system, which was not specified by brands (Samsung Design Net, 2015). Inroads are being made into changing the system, but this is likely to take time.

If an internal problem is distribution, an external one is the combination of time and location: Seoul Fashion Week's schedule is late compared to other Fashion Weeks, and Korea is geographically distant from the main trade locations, that is, Europe and America (this will be discussed in 4.4. Time and Location). Due to the distance from the main trade locations, as much as 30% of the SFW budget is spent on guests' travel expenses, accommodation and stay. BFC too spends a significant amount of money on guests. However, it is always pointed out that there is an issue about the quality of both buyers and the press (Kim, 2012). This naturally means insufficient returns compared to monetary investment. Lee Kio points out some of SFW's problems in this area. One of them is that the number of contracts is low compared to other Fashion Weeks'. Myung You Seouk, a Hempel CEO, also stresses SFW's lower achievement compared to European, American and even Chinese fashion fairs (Lee, 2013).

For PR purposes, huge numbers of celebrities are invited to the show. However, because their attendance causes competition in media coverage and monopolises public focus, buyers and press can hardly concentrate on the show itself (Joo, 2009).

4.3. Sponsorship

SFW is wholly funded by Seoul's Metropolitan Government. Sole sponsorship can be a problem if it cuts down its investment. If an alternative cannot be found (it takes time to find sponsors), the

event must be downsized. This obviously affects the credibility of Fashion Week. The ratio of dependency on government should be gradually decreased through funding from more diverse places and ways.

The sponsoring company supports products and services or spends money for its own promotion as suppliers and funders. So, the company logo and information should be visible. Although the sponsored party's homepage is the best permanent tool for exposure, there is no mention of sponsors on the SFW homepage.

4.4. Time and location

There is a fixed time for ordering next season's stocks for a department store or shop. Buyers set their budgets and items and draw up contracts during and just after the Fashion Week event, after watching the fashion shows. This is what normally happens in the four major Fashion Weeks. As table 6 shows, SFW takes place later than the Big 4, so most of the contracting between buyers and brands is over by then. It is always a problem to set the date, because of the impossibility to squeeze the Seoul event between the main Fashion Weeks, and this is due to the buyers' movements. If SFW is moved earlier than the Big 4, buyers can see it first, make their notes and postpone the contract to after they have watched the four Fashion Weeks. However, because of domestic sales and the manufacturing calendar, January or the beginning of February and August, or the beginning of September, are too early for designers to prepare their collections. The physical distance from the main markets is not the sole organisational problem; however, it can be considered in terms of SFW's targets. Its advantages include closeness to the Asian and Middle Eastern markets. If it is developed separately in the Asian market, schedule and venue matter much less. Because the mainstream market is Europe and the USA, trends start from there. Thus, it is helpful to have a stock list there to promote and sell to the Asian market. This issue should be developed further.

4.5. Main event

Over all, as can be seen in table 2, there is no consistency among the events scheduled. There used to be Fashion Take Off (2011 AW to 2012 AW), inspired by BFC's Fashion Forward program (Ham, 2011), as a bridge between Generation Next and Seoul Collection, to help young designers establish their brands. In 2012 AW the scale of Seoul Fashion Fair was a lot larger (200 brands in 2012 AW) than in 2015 SS (33), when it stopped. In 2014 SS there were many events scheduled, but in 2015 AW hardly any. Although it is a period of transition, it is better to keep up consistency. If one event is set, however, it is better to alter its contents through trial and error than cancel the whole thing. Continual change in the

main event affects the credibility of SFW. Once the event is set, it is necessary to wait for a while to know its results. If SFW set up a long-term goal for the next 10-20 years, it can set a direction towards it. Seoul's current goal to be the world's 5th Fashion Week or fashion capital should be accompanied by more detailed and realistic directions.

If the first weakness is the problem of the persistency of the main event, the second one is the lack of different collections according to brand size. SFW only has Seoul Collection and Generation Next which both of which are under 5 years old. The differences between these two are show size and funding. There is no difference in their method. In the case of LFW, there are fashion show and presentation show. A presentation show features a small number of garments (normally more or less 20) on digital film, at a closer distance from the audience, with three or four shows in two hours. Guests can have a closer look at the clothes and talk business in-between shows, thus getting to know items and brands. Digital showcasing displays brand identity and images more widely. The showroom is actively run as a vibrant place for trade, not only for fashion show brands but also for accessories or small-sized brands.

4.6. Supporting event

Supporting events are for attracting guests or the public. They can be related with business, education, entertainment, etc. However, an official supporting event of SFW is Give Donation, which sells donated clothes from participating designers. In 2015 SS of LFW, there were numerous such events: Vodafone London Fashion Weekend, Live streaming of fashion show, BBC broadcasting of three documentary series, the highlights of fashion show broadcast in 19 major underground stations during the Fashion Week period, fashion film screenings, photobooth service (taking photos of guests, to print and share through Facebook), pop up store, eBay BFC contemporary shop, Oxford street, LFW special window display and style seminar at a main shopping street in London, Decoded Westfield (online opinion making competition), an exhibition of fashion photographer, David LaChapelle at the bus stop near Somerset House, the location of LFW and parties in collaboration with magazines or big clothing companies. In addition, there were LFW digital Talks about important issues in fashion, live-streamed worldwide. One of themes in 2015 SS was: "can you bring real luxury online?". This issue covers industry and academia: beside being commercial, it also takes into account the future of fashion. If SFW organised more supporting events for education and promotion, for professionals and non-professionals, for the domestic and international markets, it would be helpful for both the present and the future of SFW.

4.7. Online promotion

Homepage and social media are effective PR tools, as there news can be updated, responses can be seen almost in real time and communication can take place bilaterally. However, the SFW homepage and social media do not function well. The homepage is not fully transferring information about Fashion Week and its designers. They check the details of SFW and its designer information through its homepage and, nowadays, the social media. Many people use social media (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram) which can be updated on a daily bases. Further, it would be efficient to have links from designer profiles to their social media to learn the latest about their brands. Finally, updating news and fashion shows in real time and disseminating the information through the social media are effective promotional tools that can save money on PR. So, it is natural for Fashion Week to invite power bloggers such as buyers and press as guests.

Apart from updating images and news, LFW uses live streaming of fashion shows. This can overcome the time and location problem because the internet can be accessed anywhere, in real-time, and at any time. In 2015 SS, 196 countries watched live streams of LFW ("London Fashion Week", 2015). This would otherwise be impossible in the actual fashion show.

As to technical problems, it is important to collaborate with IT companies; in 2015 SS, Topshop collaborated with Facebook and Instagram, and Burberry with Twitter, with cloud-based real-time TV and video clips shared through Twitter for world-wide communication.

4.8. The characteristics of Fashion Week

LFW is renowned for showcasing creative young new designers; New York Fashion Week is for a practical and saleable collection. Then, what is the distinguishing feature of SFW? It needs to be specific in order to attract buyers and press to the event. It needs to reflect what is and what will be strong in Korean fashion and SFW. The vibrant presence of young designers can be one solution, so SFW can be settled as a showcase of young designers in Asia, similarly to LFW.

Advanced Korean IT technology can be used as an innovation hub in Fashion Week. LFW combines fashion showcase with digital tech by showing Fashion films, digital presentation shows, live streaming and real-time communication. For example, House of Holland collaborates with Metal, an online fitting room, by creating a customised model called MeModel according to the wearer's size and tastes. Customers can try the garments on in real time when watching the live-streamed catwalk show. If this technique is matched with young designers' collections, it will be enough to attract young audiences, with their buyers and press.

Table 8. The strengths and weaknesses of SFW

Strengths	One organisation	Union finally achieved after a long struggle to combine since the launch
	Venue	Settled as a fashion market and industry hub in Seoul, centrally located and well-served by public transport, with easy access to designers
	The active role of young designers	Almost half of designers in SFW have been in business for under five years
Weaknesses	Organisational body	Independent organisational body with PR professional staff (strong apolitical, non-profit organisation and staff) in charge of Eashion Week all year round is needed
	Guests	Lack of buyers and press from the unusual distribution structure Insufficient returns compared to monetary investment Huge numbers of celebrities: hard to focus on trade
	Sponsorship	sole governmental sponsorship
	Time and location	late Fashion Week calendar compared to major Fashion Weeks, distance from main market
	Main events	inconsistency, unclear distinction between Seoul Collection and Generation Next
	Supporting events	not enough events to attract guests and to supplement main events
	Online promotion	lack of information, no online promotion
	The characteristics	no distinguishing feature to attract buyers and press

5. Conclusion

Seoul Fashion Week, a biannual fashion showcase, has put significant time, effort and money into becoming one of the world’s leading Fashion Weeks. The strengths and weaknesses of SFW have been analysed on the basis of a number of headings (organisational body, designers, visitors, schedule, venue, events) drawn from the homepage of London Fashion Week, its most successful counterpart. Throughout its 16-year old history, SFW has grown to the size of a world-renowned Fashion Week. Its greatest achievement is that it finally has combined a number of different collections into one. Secondly, the venue seems now settled as DDP, in the design and fashion culture centre of Seoul. Finally, a number of young designers are actively participating and making new contracts. However, there have been a number of problems ahead of becoming the world fifth Fashion Week. 1), despite having one organisational body, SFW is not independent and there are not enough specialised staff: the event is actually run by private operation agencies; 2), it should be focused on trade rather than on the general public; 3), it depends exclusively on government funding; 4), the SFW schedule is incompatible with those of the major Fashion Weeks and its location is far from the American and European fashion markets; 5), the main events are not sustainable; 6), there are not enough supporting events to attract guests and to supplement main events; 7), the SFW homepage and social media are not actively used for promotion; finally, there is no distinguishing feature to SFW yet. Therefore, if fast growth and the active role of young designers mean that its future is positive, SFW should have one independent, active, powerful, specialised organisation in order to conduct sustainable, long-term planning,

reduce governmental dependency and recruit private funding.

An awareness of SFW’s current situation and problems means that more down-to-earth solutions can be found. Fashion is a high added-value, yet very sensitive, industry. If SFW overcomes its weaknesses and learns from successful Fashion Weeks, it will become the world’s fifth event of this kind, which is the aim of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. If the following research is accompanied by a development plan, it would be possible to achieve this goal; it can be useful to conduct studies of successful Asian cases, such as China Fashion Week, as well as planning the future direction of SFW through other, smaller, Fashion Weeks. An in- depth interview with designers would also help towards a fuller diagnosis of the situation. Invitations of international buyers and press from Europe and America should be considered with more attention. This study only deals with organisation. However, there are many other issues, such as designers and their prices or products range for trade. If this research is followed up, it could help towards setting up a realistic plan for an appropriate governmental policy.

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