

# Monpe Workpants and Their Memetic Derivations

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**Abstract** *Monpe, Korean women's wartime attire during the Japanese colonization period, has survived for 70 years as typical baggy workpants for rural women and emerged as retro-fashion. This paper applied a theory of "meme" to explain the monpe fashion trend in Korea. Based on literature review, empirical analyses were conducted by analyzing market and media including newspaper articles and blogs. We found that the monpe meme has evolved over time through variation, penetration, and diffusion. In terms of variation, the impression of monpe transitioned from a negative image to a positive one as a result of changes in design, functionality, and popular image. In terms of penetration, the monpe meme has spread into popular culture, again through mass media, with images of active, sexy, and attractive monpe-wearers on television and at popular occasions. Finally, the monpe meme has diffused throughout a broad range of consumers of various ages and both genders as an item of clothing for various occasions through diversified distribution channels. In this way, the development of monpe as fashionable clothing in Korea during the 2000s is itself a meme reflecting its evolution from a disgraceful colonial legacy to an item of contemporary fashion.*

**Key words** *Monpe, Meme, Variation, Penetration, Diffusion, Evolution.*

## Introduction

Since they were first mandated by the Japanese colonial government some 70 years ago, Korean work pants, known as ilbaji or monpe, have been standard clothing for middle-aged women in rural areas. More recently, though, beginning in the early 2010s, monpe began to draw attention as a popular fashion item among people from a variety of classes in Korea's so-called visual culture. Monpe fever broke out on a Korean TV show, *VJ Teukgongdae*, on June 8, 2011 (T. K. Lee, 2011). This was followed by an article in the Seoul Shinmun Daily, with a report entitled "Monpe pants, general trend for recession" (Oh, 2013). These are just a sample of the numerous articles and blog posts dealing with the evolution of monpe and its popularity, and illustrates that the term monpe and related imagery exist in contemporary

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Korean society and are expanding into the realm of fashion. This paper explores the phenomenon of monpe with the emphasis on cultural evolution. The term *ilbaji* developed as a replacement for the Japanese term, *monpe*, or “workpants,” in order to expunge the vestiges of Japanese colonization. The term as used in this paper is based on the general perception of the public, *monpe*.

If evolution is the process of changing the trait of a living organism as a result of adaptation to the environment, (H. G. Lee, 2008), then social scientists can take this concept to interpret social and cultural changes. Richard Dawkins (2010), author of *The Selfish Gene*, suggested the word *meme* as a cultural element or cultural gene transmitted by replication not by genetic inheritance, and claimed that culture is transmitted by replication of such memes, including language, clothing, ritual, convention, art, and design. By chasing the process of a meme’s penetration into one’s brain and its diffusion, one can analyze various social phenomena synchronically as well as diachronically. In the case of *monpe* in Korea, these baggy, drawstring pants with floral prints in their contemporary, fashionable version might not be derived from the original, workaday *monpe*, but Koreans conceive of them as “*monpe*” and “*monpe* in fashion” due to the meme process. This paper approaches *monpe* in fashion in the 2000s within this memetic frame.

Previous research on *monpe* has focused on its origin and history but not as a contemporary fashion trend (Ahn, 2008; H. J. Cho, 2002; Yi, 2015; Youn, 2011). Memetic research includes a philosophical approach toward cultural phenomenon or cultural changes (H. G. Lee, 2008; Nam, 2015) and media studies dealing with the Korean wave, K-pop, or dispersed cultural phenomenon (Chang & Park, 2012; J. S. Park, 2012). Especially in the field of design, art, and literature, the meaning of memes was explored within a memetic framework (Choi, 2009; G. H. Kim & Kim, 2010; G. H. Kim & Kim, 2012; D. Y. Lee, Kang, & Lee, 2010). Meanwhile, in fashion studies, “humor,” one of the so-called cultural genes of Koreans, was sought out through memetics in the context of Korean fashion (Bang, 2014). Although memetics have not been actively adopted to explain fashion so far, there is growing tendency of using memetics within the field of design, art, and literature, including work on the Korean wave.

This paper aims to approach *monpe* as an evolving meme, as a cultural element distributed by imitation and not by inheritance, which should provide a framework for understanding the evolution and distribution of fashion culture.

The research methods used in this paper include literature review and empirical studies. Literature review provides a theoretical approach for memetics and the historical context of *monpe*. Empirical studies on the current use of *monpe* and an analysis of *monpe* design have been executed by an analysis of blog posts and photos on the Internet since 2000, as well as market research both on- and offline focused on mid-priced SPA products and Internet shopping malls specializing in *monpe*. This also includes media research of newspaper articles from January 2000 to May 2015, referencing *monpe* and *ilbaji*. For newspaper articles and blog posts, the searches result from the Internet portal site Naver, used from April 27, 2015 to June 7, 2015.

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### ***Theoretical Background***

After Dawkins developed the concept of meme, it has been widely adopted and applied to a variety of cultural phenomenon, most notably by Susan Blackmore and Richard Brodie, which has emerged as the foundation of memetics. In this paper, their concept of meme is adopted to analyze monpe as a phenomenon of fashion culture.

#### **Definition and attributes of memes**

The concept of meme as a unit of cultural transmission or imitation was first introduced by Dawkins (2010) in his book, *The Selfish Gene*. The term meme is a combination of word “mimeme,” meaning “imitate” in Greek, and “gene,” meaning memory and being phonetically similar to the French word “même.” Dawkins explained how memes work by using the examples of the development of tunes, ideas, catchphrases, fashion, pottery, and arches, which can be expanded to all cultural phenomenon. Genes spread out generation by generation by using a sperm or an egg as a carrier to replicate and disperse. Likewise, a meme disperses from one brain to another, using the brain as the carrier in a broad sense (Dawkins, 2010). Monpe, having survived some 70 years as a part of Korea’s clothing culture, also constitutes a meme.

The term meme is also listed in the Oxford dictionary as a noun meaning: 1. an element of a culture or system of behavior passed from one individual to another by imitation or other non-genetic means. 2. An image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations (Meme, n.d.). Memes have been adopted since to explain the evolution of the brain, the origin of language, religion, and sex, and has been featured in various publications, which led to the birth of memetics to enable new approaches to culture by using biology, sociology, and cognitive science (Brodie, 2010).

According to Dawkins (2010), the attributes of genes, such as prolificacy, longevity, and the precision of replication, can be applied to memes. Prolificacy here is to be transmitted by multiple replications, while longevity is to increase the opportunity of replication by living for a longer period. Memes can survive in various forms in culture, such as in documents or on the Internet, and have a high chance to survive longer. Memes also can change when transmitted and be mixed with others by consecutive mutation. However, one cannot predict when the essential qualities of the meme have changed. Thus, for the successful transmission of a meme, prolificacy is the most important attribute among the three outlined above. In contemporary society, mass media, including the Internet, is the instrument by which the life span of a meme is lengthened and its transmission is promoted.

According to Blackmore (2010), a meme, as a self replicator, should be able to execute its evolutionary algorithm based on variation, selection, and heredity. First, variation here means the transmitted meaning or form is not always identical to the original message (Jo, 2016). A story is never told in the exact same way twice. A meme is the same. The copying process of a meme is not always perfect (Blackmore, 2010). Second, some memes draw attention from people and succeed to be selected

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and dispersed eventually, but some fail to do and become unable to replicate. Finally, a meme inherits part of its original idea and behavior in the diffusion process (Blackmore, 2010). In short, a meme brings out multiple variations and the fittest is selected even as the original remains inherited.

Meanwhile, Brodie (2010) explains the condition of a meme as penetration, replication, and diffusion, in his work, *Virus of the Mind*. Penetration is the process when the brain is contaminated by a meme by way of conditioning, cognitive dissonance, or by Trojan horse. Conditioning means contamination due to the repetitive exposure, such as repetitive viewing or listening (Brodie, 2010), for example, similar messages from the news or advertisements, or the repeated doctrine of a group or affiliation. Cognitive dissonance is a kind of stress relief mechanism. A new meme brings out tension in the mind when conflicted with an existing meme. To relieve this tension, the mind accepts the new meme (Brodie, 2010). The Trojan horse draws attention to an irrelevant meme and secretly drags in the bundle of a different meme. The unrelated ideas are then connected to the irrelevant behavior or material associated with the new meme (Brodie, 2010). The meme, once penetrated, begins to replicate, which reproduces the identical meme itself (Brodie, 2010).

There are several studies using memetics to explain cultural phenomenon in Korea. Jo (2016) defined an “Internet meme” as text, images, videos, hashtags, or emoticons combined and diffused through social networks and messaging services. Choi (2009) has taken “planarity” as a meme and described how it is diffused by repeated imitation and replication in social culture and visual arts. Memes can thus be found in various forms of culture.

Fashion can also be analyzed as a meme, and in fact was suggested as a good example of a meme by Dawkins himself. Fashion products need to be conceived in people’s imagination as trendy, and need to be varied to appeal to a wide variety of customers. Monpe can also be explained within this concept of memetics. This paper will explore monpe, i.e., baggy work pants with drawstrings at the waist and ankles, as a meme in which the same genetic characters are revived with variations reflecting current trends and exposed to the public through media, which then penetrates to a diffuse base of wearers throughout different generations. As we will see, monpe has a long history in Korea, and seeing monpe through the lens of a meme will help us understand this unique clothing culture and its attributes.

#### **Attributes of memes in fashion culture**

According to memetic discourse, the attributes of memes in fashion culture is suggested as follows.

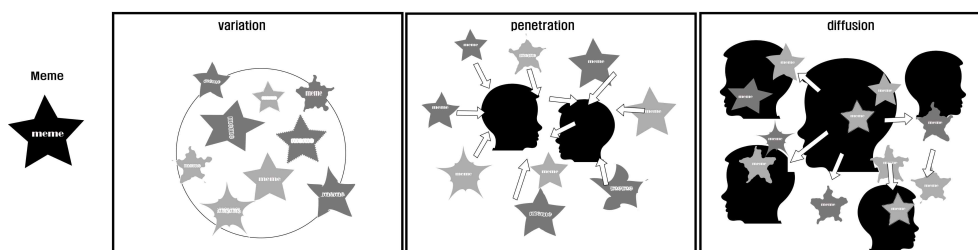
The first is variation. A meme, during the replicating process, gives birth to variations based on opportunity. Clothing, as a physical form with intrinsic meaning by nature, can develop variations in both ways.

The second is penetration. When a meme penetrates into one’s brain, it can contaminate it by conditioning, cognitive dissonance, or as a Trojan horse, as mentioned above. Especially with clothing, penetration is essential to make fashion trendy. Once an item of fashion is promoted and conceived by

customers, it will lead to a purchase. If this process is successful, the item will settle into one's brain as a meme for a long time. In terms of fashion, then, the process of penetration consists of repeated exposure to fashion information, conception of it as a fashion meme, and its eventual purchase and actual wearing.

The third is diffusion. Diffusion can be performed by any kind of mutual communication among individuals. In fashion, the beginning of a meme is the producer or designer, but the ultimate destination of diffusion is the customer. This is the point where the trendiness of a fashion item is very close to the diffusion of its meme. Fashion items are often classified by the wearers' age, gender, or TPO (time, place, and location), and sometimes by lifestyle, as well as price and level of customer participation in their purchase. The classification of a fashion item decides the market in kind and scale, and the target market will in turn decide the level of diffusion.

To be a successful, a meme should satisfy the three attributes above, visualized as follows (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.**  
Attributes of memes in fashion culture: Variation, penetration, and diffusion

### Monpe in Korean fashion history

To help define the monpe meme in Korea, it is important to understand that monpe originated from work clothes in the agricultural areas of Japan. Work pants from the northeastern part of Japan, known as *karusan* (カルサン[輕袴]) or *momohiki* (モモヒキ), are the forerunners of Korean monpe (モンペ or もんぺ) (H. J. Cho, 2002; Koizumi, 2004). This used to be a type of regional costume before the Meiji Restoration facilitated its use to promote mobility of labor and protection from the elements. The design may have slightly varied by region, but the original design of these functional pants incorporated wide legs with an attached waist strap, and tapered toward the ankle. In the early 20th century, Japan promoted the idea of modernization and tried to adapt standardization and science in many aspects of life. The Japanese authorities thus adopted and reformed these pants and distributed them as standardized work pants (Ahn, 2008). Monpe did not earn favor in the beginning, but it started to be distributed in full-scale when it was assigned as “women’s standard clothing” in preparation for war in 1937 (Gordon, 2011).

During this period, Korea under Japanese colonization also had to adopt monpe for anti-air-raid practice. For women in Korea, wearing monpe was not easily accepted as it ran against clothing

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conventions of wearing pants or Japanese clothes as ordinary clothing. Eventually, however, Japan's colonial authorities mandated the use of these pants (Yu, 1990), and a policy of austerity and the need for mobility during wartime led many Korean women to adopt their use, a trend that continued well into the 1950s and the end of the Korean War (1950-1953) (W. H. Cho & Kim, 2015). In this way, monpe, usually made from recycled clothing material, eventually settled as ordinary work clothes in rural areas and for the urban working class, and was re-introduced during the 1960s as "simple clothing for agricultural villages" and "agricultural workwear" as a part of the government's life improvement movement (Pyojungansobok, 1961). In the 1970s and 1980s, they began to be made as ready-made clothing with flashy patterns but at a low price, and in this way became settled as the monpe Koreans are familiar with now. In the 1990s, the Korean government recommend the use of the alternative terms *ilbaji*, which literally means "work pants," or *waebaji*, which means "Japanese pants," in order to purify the Korean language and clean up the vestiges of Japanese colonization (Y. Park, 1997), but this effort failed and the term *monpe* is still the most commonly used by the general public.

According to a review of the literature, in the 2000s *monpe* was regarded alternatively as a remnant of Japanese colonization, as work clothes in agricultural area, as a symbol of maternal sacrifice, or as simply a form of unfashionable dress in Korean society (Ahn, 2008; H. J. Cho, 2002; Kong, 2006; S. S. Lee, 2011; Youn, 2011). In popular culture, *monpe* are known as typical "ajumma (middle-aged women) style" clothing worn by middle-aged or elderly women in rural areas as work clothes, often with garish floral designs and a rubber band around the waist. This rather unappealing image has endured over several decades, but in the late 2000s there developed a sea change in its popular image as trendy pants with a baggy look. The next section focuses on this phenomenon as an attribute of a meme.

### **Monpe as a meme**

Before the 2000s, *monpe* were associated with images of Japanese colonization, work clothes in agricultural areas, maternal sacrifice, and unfashionable dress. In terms of design, they invariably featured baggy legs in a floral print with a rubber band at the waist. This is the *monpe* meme and its features are shown in Figure 2.

In the late 2000s, the *monpe* meme penetrated into Korean fashion culture as a variation under the influence of contemporary fashion trends. In the next section, the emergence of the *monpe* meme as a trendy item in contemporary fashion is analyzed.



**Figure 2.**  
Monpe meme (Tojitoni, 2011)

### *The Monpe Meme as a Fashion Phenomenon*

This section analyzes the monpe meme as a fashion phenomenon in contemporary Korea, based on a review of the literature, Internet material, and market research both on- and off-line, to analyze the use and design features of monpe after 2000, including Internet blog posts, photos, mid- to low-priced SPA brands, and Internet shopping sites dealing with monpe. The attributes of the monpe meme were analyzed by variation, penetration, and diffusion.

#### **Variation**

A Korean blog post in 2011 (Tojitoni, 2011) featured a photo from Harper's Bazaar (American Edition) with the caption, "Well, these pants seem quite familiar. What is this unsophisticated familiarity? Monpe... It sells grandma's pants?" (Figure 3). Baggy pants have been a steady fashion trend since the late 1970s. More recently, after the trend in skinny jeans in around 2007, the athleisure look, at the border of sportswear and daily wear, became a fashion trend, and by 2014, jogger pants became popular and various baggy pants with expressive patterns became fashionable. For Koreans, such baggy pants were received as monpe, regardless of brand or place of origin. This suggests that the monpe meme of floral baggy pants is recognized as monpe by Koreans despite their variations, be it silhouette, pattern, design details, or use of functional material. Furthermore, the negative image that monpe used to have has now changed into a positive one.

The following is a sample of the variation of the monpe meme in terms of design, fabric, and image. First, one notices the variation in design. The monpe meme of floral material has changed under the influence of contemporary fashion trends. Traditional patterns were mainly optical art patterns or festive prints, including floral patterns of peonies, the rose of Sharon, and roses, as well as animal patterns such as the leopard, or a combination of both. More recently, dots and stars have been used for

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women's monpe, while camouflage patterns and the Jolly Roger have been used for men. Among geometric patterns, snowflakes and stroke patterns, the so called Northern European style, have been used. In some cases, the variation of traditional roof patterns or mother of pearl patterns have been used, as have pyramids, tropical foliage, paisley, and other ethnic motifs.

In terms of color, monpe featured both colorful color combinations as well as minimal monochrome color combinations. In particular, two-tone combinations of white or light grey on a black or navy blue background were favored for their simplicity and practicality.

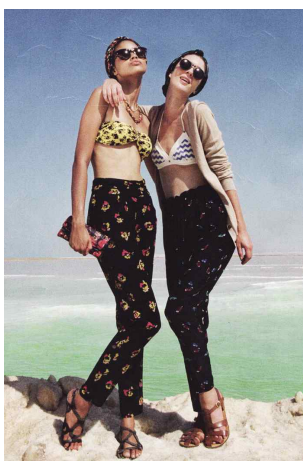
Pockets, one of the most important details for functionality on monpe, could be attached at unconventional locations or feature a drapery style design to give it a twist. A monpe with drapery style pockets is called "Namju-baji," after the actress Kim Namju (Figure 8).

Most monpe design features a rubber band around the waist, but sometimes a drawstring was adopted as a variation. As for the silhouette, while the conventional monpe meme featured a baggy hip with tapered ankle, more contemporary monpe were tapered at the knee. This rather slim version of monpe was the result of the use of spandex, the influence of fashion trends, and the growth of young consumers. For seasonal variation, there were numerous differences in length.

The second variation is in fabrics, which allowed greater emphasis as well on maneuverability. While conventional monpe were mostly made with woven material, contemporary variations were made with knit or elastic material to promote comfort. Some variations also included the use of functional material for summer, for a cool touch. One style of monpe, called "naengjanggo-baji" (refrigerator pants), was very popular among younger consumers (Figure 4). For winter, linings with a nap or bonded material were used to increase insulation. Others made use of Punggi ingyeon (rayon or artificial silk from Punggi), traditional material such as cotton colored with natural dye, and trendy material like denim.

The third variation is the overall image of monpe. The conventional image of monpe was negative, as unfashionable, tough, and old-style clothing. The new variation added a sense of being trendy, sporty, active, kitsch, young, and sexy. This turn of image was due to popular media, which made conditions ripe for penetration. This effect was particularly remarkable when monpe were worn by celebrities. A good example is TV presenter Cha Seungwon, who is both a fashion model and actor. In the popular program *Samsiseggi-eochonpyeon* (three meals at a fishing village) on tvN in 2015 (Na, 2015), he was presented wearing monpe. Another presenter, Yu Haejin, gave him compliments on his good looks, saying, "They look like a luxury item...stylish and practical at the same time," which helped generate a fashionable image for monpe (Figure 5). Overall, the conventional image of monpe has moved from an old, negative, unfashionable image to a new, positive one with a sense of being healthy, young, and sporty.





**Figure 3.**  
Variation – Design  
(Tojtoni, 2011)



**Figure 4.**  
Variation – Fabric  
(Hey0728, 2015)



**Figure 5.**  
Variation – Image  
("Monpe by model Cha," 2015)

### Penetration

For penetration of the monpe meme, conditioning, cognitive dissonance, and the Trojan horse were all used, with the use of conditioning and the Trojan horse as the most considerable.

Conditioning, which involves repeated exposure and contamination, for the monpe meme was repetitive exposure through the media and market. Variety TV shows such as *Family-ga-ddeotta* and *Cheongchoonbulpae* (Figure 6), based on rural village life, featured multiple characters, including younger characters, all wearing monpe. Later, in shows such as *Abba oediga?* *Moohandojeon* *Ilbakyiil Running man* and *Superman-i-dolawatta*, an increasing number of presenters all presented in monpe, when the show was filmed in rural areas or the presenters are involved in physically active games. In the beginning, monpe had a conventional image of unfashionable work clothes. When more and more presenters of all generations began to be clad in monpe -- from teen idols to famous actresses in their 40s -- younger viewers took it as a familiar item, which let them to purchase monpe for their own use. Furthermore, as the wearing of monpe on TV was reproduced as newspaper articles or blogs, the monpe meme gained more exposure, with emphasis on the good looks of celebrities clad in monpe and the positive image of being sexy, active, and healthy associated with the positive image of these celebrities.

The monpe meme was also repeated through various channels of distribution, including affordable traditional markets, mid- to low-priced SPA brands, and the targeting of younger shoppers through merchandising monpe in various designs. On-line stores further offered the chance to purchase monpe conveniently, which led to a wide range of purchase and wearing of monpe.

With the Trojan horse, the monpe meme penetrated with the new naming and new imagery. Mid-

and low-priced fashion brands provided the same item without using the word *monpe*, using instead such descriptions as “baggy pants,” “Harlem pants” (Figure 7), “jogger pants,” or “cool pants” to appeal as trendy fashion items. As a result, the general public in Korea began to conceive *monpe* as more sophisticated and purchased them as a fashion item. They were also named with an emphasis on functionality, such as *hanibaram-monpe-baji* (west wind pants), *naengjanggo-baji* (refrigerator pants), and *mink-baji* (mink pants), or with a focus on material, such as *bodeure-monpe* (soft *monpe*) and *punggi-monpe* (rayon *monpe*). This naming strategy of specifying variations helped satisfy the demand for practicality and functionality in contemporary society and further promote the products.

The media helped alternate the image of wearers of *monpe* and made it easier to make a positive variation out of the conventional image. This made it easy to penetrate into a wide range of consumers. The example of TV presenter Cha Seungwon mentioned earlier is a good example of reflecting the good image of the wearer, even to expand the range of wearers to men. In terms of fashion product, the item worn by influential celebrities can positively shift the image of a product. In the case of *monpe*, alternative naming of the product was useful. As mentioned earlier, the nickname *namju-baji* itself was derived from the actress but it survived in traditional markets even after several years. Even now, tapered pants with drapery style pockets are still called *namju-baji* in Namdaemun market, in central Seoul.



**Figure 6.**  
Penetration – Conditioning  
(Jeong, 2009)



**Figure 7.**  
Penetration - Trojan horse  
(Forever21, n.d.)



**Figure 8.**  
Penetration - Trojan horse  
(Goyangjini, 2014)

### Diffusion

In the case of the *monpe* meme, conventional wearers were mostly limited to middle-aged and older women, while the pants themselves were worn as work clothes in rural area and sold through traditional markets. However, the range of consumers has diversified and so have the distribution channels. The age of *monpe* consumers has also expanded to all age groups, including young children, teens, and those in their 30s. The result of the survey on blogs also found a number of cases where mothers began making

monpe for their children 10 and younger, and were sharing information on how to make monpe (Goldenneedle, 2012; Quxsnlsh, 2012). A number of other blogs featured photos of young people in monpe with positive feedback.

The gender of the wearer has also changed. Monpe used to be exclusively women's clothing but is now popularly worn by men (Figure 9). A number of men's monpe on the market are offered as men's refrigerator pants. This is not only limited to rural areas. Men from urban areas wear them as well. The range of age is also dispersed widely across generations.

Usage has also changed. Monpe is now used for various TPO related to functionality, such as workout clothes, clothing for outings, uniforms, and group wear. In April, 2014, the cheerleading squad for the Samsung Lions baseball team selected monpe for their cheerleading uniform (Figure 10). Likewise, members of a water sports company chose monpe as their group wear (St8514, 2012). The volunteer agricultural society of college students adopted monpe almost like a ritual (Penismight, 2009), while some volunteers for overseas aid have adopted monpe as work clothes (Sung, 2013). Some other examples include foreigners wearing monpe (Figure 11) as part of their agriculture experience ("Foreigners wearing monpe," 2013), as a fun outfit for a sporting events (Goglass, 2012), as a party costume, and as a wedding singer's outfit.

Distribution channels have also expanded. Monpe once was only available at traditional markets but they are now widely available by mid- and lower-level fashion brands, SPA brands, and on-line shopping malls.



**Figure 9.**  
Diffusion - Wearer  
(Shoppinghaja, 2012)



**Figure 10.**  
Diffusion - Time, place,  
occasion  
(S. J. Kim, 2014)



**Figure 11.**  
Diffusion - Wearer  
("Foreigners wearing monpe," 2013)

**Table 1.**

Evolution of the monpe meme as fashion phenomenon: Variation, penetration, and diffusion.

Evolution of Monpe Meme	Fashion Phenomenon	
Variation	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· contemporary patterns</li> <li>· trendy color coordination</li> <li>· added design details including pockets and drawstrings</li> <li>· refined silhouettes</li> </ul>
	Fabric	· functional fabrics improving performance: coolness, insulation, elasticity
	Image	· positive image
Penetration	Conditioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· repeated exposure through media</li> <li>· repeated exposure through various distribution channels</li> </ul>
	Trojan horse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· naming strategy, i.e., baggy pants, jogger pants, harem pants, refrigerator pants</li> <li>· adding new image</li> </ul>
Diffusion	Wearer	expanded to broader groups: age and gender
	TPO	variety of occasion: workwear, sportswear, casual wear, uniform
	distribution channel	expanded marketing channels, i.e., traditional market, low and mid-priced market, SPA brand, and online mall

### *Conclusions and Discussion*

Once mandated by the Japanese colonial regime as women's work clothes, monpe has recently been featured in the media as a fashion item for the younger generation. This paper explored monpe under the theoretical theme of the meme phenomenon, a cultural gene transmitted by imitation as meme in fashion culture with the attributes of variation, penetration, and diffusion (Table 1).

First, monpe increased the chance of diffusion by diverse diffusion. The diversification of design, the use of functional fabrics, and the positive change of image helped monpe settle down as a successful meme.

Second, monpe have gradually penetrated into fashion culture by repetitive exposure through the media and markets. Through variations in monpe with new names and images, monpe assumed a new, important place in Korean fashion culture.

Third, the variations of monpe were diffused through various distribution channels to a range of wearers and for various TPOs.

Memes exist in our brains. This research focused on the conceptions of the general public regarding monpe to explore the general phenomenon around the monpe meme through market research, newspaper articles, and popular blogs. For further study on the diversity of conception and level of diffusion, the collection of primary data through questionnaires and interviews will be needed.

Monpe have a long history as an important piece of clothing culture in Korea, with strong symbolism and historical and social context. There are a number of other interesting phenomena

surrounding the use and development of monpe, and further study is needed to better understand this ever-changing fashion and cultural phenomenon.

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