

A Comparative Study of Ideological Suppression of Fashion in Korean History from a Contemporary Perspective

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I, Miran Hong, certify that this is an original piece of work. I have acknowledged all sources and citations. No section of this essay has been plagiarised.

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Introduction

Suppression, defined as the act of preventing something being expressed by force (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.), was detected at several moments in the history of Korean fashion. It may be challenging to imagine that individuals' fashion was forcefully restricted by someone or organizations with power, especially in contemporary perspective of where freedom of expression is taken for granted. However, looking at the history of Korea, such freedoms were not as common, compared to recent history, rather, freedom of expression was a privilege of contemporary people, given by the ones who hard-earned it from past.

This dissertation will conduct studies on different moments when a great force in higher position, such as governors suppressed on clothing of ordinary individuals with authority, throughout various periods in Korean history. The analysis will specifically focus on three distinct eras, Joseon dynasty, Japanese colonialism, and the military regime, as these three eras features clear evidence of suppression, as well as Japanese colonialism and military regime periods being the most prominently oppressive times in Korean history. In the first part, the study will be indicated on the Prohibition of Clothing, affected by Confucianism, a national ideology that affected society, culture, politics, and policies. Secondly, Japanese colonial era will be reviewed with the use of national uniform, as a way of controlling the public. Lastly, restrictions on miniskirts and long hair during the military regime will be explored, along with the use of clothing as a medium for conveying symbolic messages and ideology. These three distinctive historical eras will be compared to contemporary Korean fashion after democracy, when individualism shifted the position of fashion, by looking closely into generation X, millennials, and generation Z, for further study on the contemporary viewpoint.

The aim of this study is to find how the freedom of fashion was not given but hard-earned and slowly established over time, by achieving comparative analysis of historical cases of fashion suppression with contemporary view where freedom of expression acts as a deserved right. By examining how individualism transformed fashion, the role of fashion goes beyond mere clothing to conveying unchangeable symbols overtime, and influence people's behaviour and ideals.

Using the concept of individualism to be discussed as a pivotal ideology for the contemporary viewpoint, 'The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture' by Karen Tranberg Hasen and 'Individuality on fashion diffusion: Differentiation

versus independence' by Kyungae Park were researched as academical resources and theories. Moreover, Confucianism, for ideology, was discussed with academic research of 'The Analects' by Confucian.

Furthermore, to support historical evidence of fashion suppression during Joseon period, a case study will be conducted on the prohibition of the use of Gachae, which was implemented twice in the Joseon dynasty. Gachae refers to a wig worn by women during this period to enhance the thicker look of their hair. This case study will provide insights into the ideological suppression of fashion during this era.

Despite the fluidity of ideologies in power, the persistence of suppression captures my attention. Investigating the ways in which ordinary individuals liberated themselves from restrictions of these periods and observing the evolution of aspects of fashion connects this topic to my personal practice.

Methodology

To achieve the main findings of this dissertation, which is a comparison of historical fashion suppression to modern days view, two methods, visual analysis and interviews were selected to develop research techniques. This will allow me to criticise the suppression of fashion, to perceive the underlying reasons behind such restrictions and to understand the journey of fashion which was shifted from a state of suppression to a form of free expression.

Visual analysis, a qualitative research method obtained from conventional ethnography used in sociology and anthropology (Glaw, Inder, Kable, and Hazelton, 2017), will firstly be used to conduct analysis on objects during Joseon period. Initially, material culture and object analysis were chosen, however, due to the objects curated at the museums in Korea, the intention of physically analysing the objects was not feasible. This led to analysis of objects through visuals taken by museums, including their VR exhibition. To discuss how frugality, one of the main values of confucianism, was deeply engraved into people's life, and to study on how the value changed overtime, comparison of two types of ceramics from Goreyo and Joseon period will be conducted. Additionally, there will be an analysis of wedding gowns from Joseon dynasty, to inspect the type of clothing that was considered as exception of frugality back in that era.

Furthermore, visual analysis will be carried out to find out the fashion symbolising youth and freedom during military regime era, by looking closely into the image of Lee Han-yeol (Fig. 9) The interpretation and ideologies that shape the image, benefit in analysing the acceptance of the image to people, along with the impact the images have on society and culture (London College of Fashion, 2023). Analysing what touched emotions in people and influenced the motivation of the population at that time will be conducted through examination of clothing that he was wearing in the picture.

‘Film’s value as a historical source is detached from its empirical content’ (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011, p.356). The distinctive characteristic of film lies in its photographic representation of external world, contributing to the arguments of film being the most realistic medium among all media (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011, p.362). For this reason, analysis on film, ‘The March of Fools’ by Ha Gil-jong, which portrays vivid life and ideals of youth in 1970s, will be conducted to benefit historical communication, by investigating the suppressive atmosphere represented in the film, as well as realistic fashion of youth in that era.

The second method employed in this study is interview, conducted to investigation on the impact of individualism on generation X and their ideals expressed through fashion. Given that individuals who belong to generation X were born in 1970s and are currently in their 50s, notably, individuals from this generation include my parents and their friends. Interviews allow deeper information on individuals’ experience, lifestyle and cultural context, with in-depth thoughts, feelings, and aspects on a specific subject being revealed (London College of Fashion, 2023). The participants of the study, who experienced the 1990s, the specific focused era of Chapter 2, enhance the understanding of the era. This will be conducted as semi-structured interview, aiming for unstructured answers. Interview will also be combined with visual analysis, through images provided by interviewees, to support their interviews and to research further on characteristic of the era. This is due to visual aid that improves the data’s richness and facilitate communication between participants and researchers (Glaw, Inder, Kable, and Hazelton, 2017, p.2). Additionally, short interview with the younger generation through surveys will also be conducted, as a form of structured interview.

To bridge the gap of knowledge left from the qualitative methods, data will be gathered from a historical book of records, ‘Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty’ to build into a table to be discussed about Prohibition on Clothing.

Chapter 1. Ideological Suppression of Fashion in History

1.1 Joseon (1392-1910), nation of Confucianism

Confucianism, the basis ideology that Joseon (1392-1910) was built on, had a mighty impact on culture, society, and politics. In 1394, Goryeo dynasty was ended by Yi Seonggye, establishing a new dynasty, Joseon. He asserted Confucianism as the national ideology of Joseon and used Neo-Confucianism to support the ideology theoretically. As Goryeo was a dynasty based on Buddhism, to radically reform the new dynasty, it was necessary to suppress Buddhism and venerate Confucianism. In the Joseon dynasty, there was a strict distinction between the upper class and lower class, especially between noble and common, child of a legal wife and child of a concubine. (Park, 2001, p.89) The reason behind this distinction can be found in Confucianism.

Premising ‘Theory of Role and duty’, [in Korean: 명분론, in Chinese: 名分論] in Confucian Studies, the people [백성 민, 民] in People Centred Governance [민본주의, 民本主義], which is a political ideology of Joseon, refers not the people of constituent entity or sovereignty but the rather to the subjects of governance who must conform to the rule and the domination of by heavenly emperor and monarch, indicating that ‘People Centred Governance’ itself is rooted on a feudal class system (Park, 2001, p.95). Based on the hierarchy system in Joseon period where the class system was deeply rooted in society, the Prohibition of Clothing [복식금제, 服飾禁制] was a method to make a clear distinction between classes. In a society where class exists, it was not hard to detect someone’s class group by what they were wearing. People in comparable status in the class system experience unique and life-defining events together, which makes differences in the structure of class hierarchies evident through dressing behaviour. (Crane, 2000, p.5) As the prominent and prevalent culture in class society is that of the dominant class (Crane, 2000, p.7), the lower class has always been mimicking the lifestyle and clothing of the upper class, and the upper class would have thought about distinguishing themselves from the lower class.

As the desire to create distinctions based on social class and the aspiration to appear different from the lower class is not exclusively from Confucianism, the Prohibition of Clothing is not a law that suddenly appeared in the Joseon period. Records of the clothing system were shown in 649, by King Jindeok of Silla, and in 834, by King Heungdeok of Silla. (Jeon and

Kang, 2013) However, with Joseon's national ideology being Confucianism, the Prohibition of Clothing could be found regularly from the very early period of Joseon.

One distinctive aspect influenced by Confucianism is the value of frugality which makes the Prohibition of Clothing in the Joseon dynasty different from other cultures. Frugality held considerable importance in Confucian values and a significant culture in the history of Korea for earlier periods, particularly during the Joseon dynasty, due to Confucianism. 'Propriety' [예, 禮] was one of the main concepts in Confucianism, with 'filial piety' [효, 孝]. In chapter 3 [in Chinese: 八佾] of 'The Analects', Lin Fang asked about the essence of propriety, to which Confucius answered, that propriety is frugal rather than extravagance. [林放問禮之本, 子曰, 大哉問, 禮, 與其奢也, 寧儉.] (Confucius, The analects) Literati [in Korean: 선비], who played a crucial role in establishing and shaping the nation during the Joseon era, upheld the principle of frugality in their lifestyle.

Literati emphasized the importance of inner purity, embraced a simple lifestyle, and pursued a life of contentment in harmony with nature [안분지족, 安分知足] (Kim, 2021) Frugality not only influenced the lifestyle during Joseon dynasty but also had a significant impact on culture, aesthetic and art. A notable example is seen in ceramics. In contrast to the vibrant Celadon in the Goryeo dynasty, Joseon ceramics, the White Porcelains were prominent for their pure and restrained beauty. The trend shifted to embodying a simplicity and refined aesthetic of Frugality.



Fig. 1. *Celadon Prunus Vase with Inlaid Cloud and Crane Design* (2014)



Fig. 2. *Celadon Melon-shaped Bottle with Inlaid Peony and Chrysanthemum Design*. (2014)

The two images above feature Goryeo celadon, with the one on the left showcasing 'Celadon Prunus Vase with Inlaid Cloud and Crane Design', and the right one showcasing 'Celadon

Melon-shaped Bottle with Inlaid Peony and Chrysanthemum Design’. Both were created in the late 12th century, during the Goryeo period. Both celadons exhibit the distinctive jade-green colour of celadon. The intricate shapes of ceramics with the inlaid technique of the delicate cane, cloud, and flower decorations enhance the opulent appearance. Inlaid is a way to decorate by engraving on the surface and filling in with materials such as white engobe. The technique used in making Goryeo celadon demanding high concentration, delicate touches and long hours, shows how luxurious celadons were in the Goryeo dynasty.



Fig. 3. *White Porcelain Moon Jar* (2014)

Fig. 4. *White Porcelain Jar with Grape Design in Underglaze Iron* (2014)

The two images above are white porcelain from the Joseon dynasty, with ‘White Porcelain Moon Jar’, registered as Korean cultural heritage in 1991, on the left and ‘White Porcelain Jar with Grape Design in Underglaze Iron’, registered as cultural heritage in 1962, on the right, both created during the 18th century, exhibiting simple round shapes. The colour is pure white, creating a simplistic aesthetic, compared to Goryeo celadons, which were in vibrant green colour. The ceramic on the right is decorated with a painting of grapevine with meticulous detail but avoiding any excessiveness. In contrast to the elaborately adorned celadon ceramics, with its technique even being inlaid, the depiction of a single grapevine that is drawn, seems to convey a life of contentment, finding satisfaction in modest and small things in harmony with nature, subtle and refined. White porcelains in Joseon radiate an understated and austere beauty. This shows how the value of frugality changed over time, by being deeply ingrained not only in art but also in life, culture, and perception during the Joseon period. As people’s values of lifestyle changed, it appeared in clothing, which has an intimate relation to one’s life, expectedly. The importance of frugality shows how the Prohibition of Clothing goes beyond merely enforcing distinctions based on social class to restrain extravagance among the people.

Below are the selected records of Prohibition of Clothing in Joseon period, found in Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty [in Korean: 조선왕조실록, in Chinese:朝鮮王朝實錄]

Year	Content
June 26, 1394, in the 3rd year of King Taejo's reign	Officials outside Highest Administrative Institution (의정부) and Central Council (중추원) are not permitted to wear fabrics of silk and satin, jade ornaments, and jade rings. Commoners, artisans, merchants, and servants are not allowed to use silver, silk, or fur, even if they hold official positions, even in their weddings.
June 29, 1398, in the 7th year of King Taejo's reign	Prohibition on wearing colour of gold, white, and grey.
March 19, 1409, in the 9th year of King Taejong's reign	Prohibition of wearing outer skirt (오군, 襖裙) of women and maids. Their headwear should only be made of ramie fabric, and the length of hat should be different from that of lady of the house. This is to reduce price of the market and make distinction between social classes.
May 3, 1418, in the 18th year of King Taejong's reign	Prohibition of wearing silver belt on marriage of those who are not allowed to wear silver belt, instead, they should use according to their positions(시직·산직, 時職·散職).
January 9, 1419, in the 1st year of King Sejong's reign	Prohibition of wearing gold colour, and prohibition of commoners wearing round-collared uniform (단령의, 團領衣)
January 26, 1426, in the 8th year of King Sejong's reign	Monks, artisans, commoners, merchants...etc are not allowed to wear leather shoes. Those below rank 7 are prohibited from wearing leather shoes except when playing music.
November 1, 1428, in the 10th year of King Sejong's reign	During ancestral rites, those with rank 2 and above is allowed to wear gold belts and silk hats, while those with rank 3 and lower should wear black belt (오각대, 烏角帶)
February 5, 1429, in the 11th year of King Sejong's reign	The attire of maids serving ladies of various ranks should not wear underpants(말근, 襪裙), and when it comes to headwear, only ramie and hemp cloth-made ones are allowed. Silk should not be permitted, if lady's edge of the hat is one unit, then the maid's one should be half a unit. From 1 st rank to noble class, the garments should be 12 units or less. For artisans, merchants, people from lowest class and servants, the garments should be 8 units or less. Fur garments are not allowed for anyone who is not noble. Wearing yellow/gold colour garments is prohibited for individuals in all classes. Decorating gold or silver belts with red leather is prohibited.
December 25, 1471, in the 2nd year of King Seongjong's reign	As clothing regulations is for distinguishing man and woman, and discriminating high and low in class, prohibit woman wearing man's clothing.
January 22, 1472, in the 3rd year of King Seongjong's reign	Attire of commoners should be differentiated, clothing of literati and his family should not be over 10 units, outer wear should not exceed 13 units, inner skirt should be under 12 units, outer skirt should be less than 13 units, and hats should not exceed 30 units. For commoner's clothing, it should not be over 8,9 units, it should be 12 units or less for outer wear, 10 units for inner skirt, 12 units for outer skirts, and hats should be less than 20 units. Flat shoe is strictly prohibited for children and women unless riding horse.
June 15, 1498, in the 4th year of Yeonsan's reign	For dyeing clothes, officials are not allowed to use dark red, and scholars are prohibited from using purple. Commoners are banned from wearing silver knives.
August 12, 1522, in the 17th year of King Jungjong's reign	Use of purple hats is strictly prohibited for everyone except for officials(당상관, 堂上官). Furthermore, hat ribbons of amber, coral, and lapis lazuli are only allowed to officials. Additionally, commoners and women of the common class are not allowed to use white cotton fabric to make long garments and use dark blue dye for skirts. In case of violations, the items should be confiscated.
December 21, 1757, in the 33rd year of King Yeongjo's reign	Prohibit patterns on fabrics to avoid extravagance
January 26, 1886, in the 23rd year of Emperor Gojong's reign	Clothing regulations should be strictly followed according to their ranks, for the officials of the central government.

Table 1. Selected records of Prohibition on Clothing (Source: Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty, 2024)

As seen in tables, Veritable records of Joseon dynasty document various regulations on attire spanning approximately five hundred years. While some regulations were emphasized, and some disappeared over time, the enduring values that could be seen in Prohibition of Clothing are social hierarchy and frugality. As King Seongjong mentioned himself and recorded in Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty, ‘The clothing regulations are designed to differentiate men and women and to establish distinctions between high and low in social hierarchy’, the restrictions on colour, accessories, and even on the length of attire based on social class indicate the value of high and low in status as the core ideology of Joseon Dynasty. Furthermore, when Emperor Gojong regulated attire in his 23rd year of reign, he stated ‘Originally, attire has rules to differentiate class, and to financially save. However, these days, the habit of indulging luxury knows no ends, commoners and servants are wearing patterned silk fabrics. A piece of garment costs beyond entire property of an ordinary household, it is destitution of finance.’ This indicates that clothing regulation in Joseon dynasty goes beyond differentiating class but to implement the core value in Confucianism, frugality, in governing wide. For further study on how frugality impacted on Prohibition of Clothing, case study on a luxury item, called Gachae [가채] was indicated.



Fig. 5. A scenery on Dano day (18th century)

‘The extravagance of the aristocracy grew to the point where the wife spent hundreds of gold pieces for Gachae.’

(Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty, 1756)

On 16th January 1756, King Yeongjo prohibited the use of Gachae. Used in Joseon Dynasty to decorate women's hair, Gachae is a wig that was made with actual hair of people. In Joseon, where Neo Confucianism was adhered, 'the body, hair, and skin were received by parents [신체발모수지부모, 身體髮膚受之父母]' was the main idea of filial piety, therefore, the larger and plentiful Gachae was the higher price. According to the record at 7th July 1783 in Diary of Joseon Kings [일성록, 日省錄, Ilseongnok], Gachae has gotten expensive day by day, that its price has reached 1000 nyang [냥, currency unit used during Joseon period]. It was worth about 1 to 2 houses in Joseon period. (Jo, 2019)

Despite of King Yeongjo's prohibition on Gachae, the desire of beauty knew no boundary, and extravagance of the nation got worse. Therefore, on 3rd October 1788, King Jeongjo forbid Gachae once again, mentioning 'At first, it was an accessory used to tie the hair, but suddenly, it became an extravagant item to show off one's status. Since the extravagance has reached such extremes, prohibit women wearing Gachae, and those who disobey, will have their head of house punished.' (Veritable Records of Joseon Dynasty, 1788) Driven by the ideology respecting frugality, law to prohibit the use of Gachae was enacted.

However, desire for beauty and displaying themselves through fashion does not easily diminish. Gachae prohibition is a case that shows how challenging it is to suppress fashion, as the trend of Gachae continued even after issuing prohibitive laws twice. This case study initiates a notable example of difficulty in restraining fashion or trend.



Fig. 6. *Hongjangsam (Bridal Robe) of Princess Bogon, front (1830)*

Fig.7. *Hwarot (Bridal Robe), back (19th century)*

‘Despite the prohibitions continued for various reigns, wedding attire was allowed to pursue decorative beauty, and it was even permitted in ordinary households.’

(National Palace Museum of Korea, 2023)

Even in Joseon, a nation with extreme prohibition on extravagance, there was attire allowed to be luxurious, it was wedding attire. The images above refer to wedding gowns, Hwarot [활옷] used in palace during Joseon Dynasty. Hwarot was made by silk fabrics, with the colour of red, blue, and yellow, the colour that was mentioned to be forbidden on Prohibition on Clothing. The delicate embroidery and gold leaf decoration on fabrics of vibrant colour exaggerates the luxuriousness of Hwarot. The patterns used for embroidery on Hwarot were peony, lotus, plum blossom, chrysanthemum, butterfly, phoenix, white heron, and waves, these patterns had each meaning of harmonious, prosperity for descendants, happiness, long living, high status, love until the hair turns grey, and prosperity in property. With the heartfelt wishes for the bride’s happiness embroidered delicately onto fabrics as a shape of pattern, a piece of Hwarot is created by collective efforts and time of many skilled hands. One notable value that could be found in Hwarot is nature. All these patterns are from nature. From flora and fauna, to undulating waves, each element from nature has its own meaning given, and diverse patterns are engraved on garments according to their symbols. This aspect relates to the value mentioned earlier, which is satisfying in a life that is already given, respecting and living harmoniously with nature.

As frugality and coexistence with nature were arguably the most prominent culture in Joseon, it is undeniable that these aspects were part of the Prohibition of Clothing during the Joseon period. There are lessons to learn from the nature-friendly lifestyle and clothing of people in the Joseon period, especially when there are threats to nature like these days. Nevertheless, Prohibition on Clothing suppressed fashion to put its value on differentiating high and low classes. The idea of being allowed to wear and restricted to wear due to the class that one was born with, is an unacceptable ideology from the past. Moreover, as seen in a case study of prohibition on Gachae, the fundamental desire for self-expression is almost impossible to control.

1.2 Japanese Colonial era (1905-1945) and National Uniform

In 1905, a significant event that changed the history of Korea happened, the forced Protectorate Treaty between Korea and Japan in 1905 [을사늑약]. This treaty which contained a provision stating that Korea could not make a treaty with a third country without Japan's mediation. This was compelled by the involvement of Japanese force and the agreement of 5 ministers [을사오적] despite the refusal of Emperor Gojong of Korea Empire (forced Protectorate Treaty between Korea and Japan, 1905). On 22nd August 1910, Korea Empire became entirely colonized by Japan, as mentioned, 'Korean Emperor transfer all governing authority to Japan Emperor completely, and permanently' (Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910 Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty, 1910) To govern Korea as a colony, Japan chose to govern with force. [무단통치, 武斷統治] Japanese soldiers, armed with guns and swords, having the power of summary judgment and the right to punish, patrolled the streets as police, while Japanese teachers carried swords in schools. The atmosphere of fear was cultivated through laws such as Joseon caning, which was only enforced against Koreans. This governing system ended with a protest that occurred on 1st March 1919.

The March 1st Movement [삼일운동], began as a non-violent protest has spread to the entire Korean Peninsula until the end of April. However, this protest left at most millions of civilian casualties. After the March 1st Movement, Japan realised the limitations of governing Korea with force. Moreover, the revelation of the massacre of Korea garnered unfavourable international attention for Japan. Therefore, from 1920, Japan changed its governing to cultural governing [문화통치]. Japan implemented a policy aimed at making Koreans abandon their identity as Koreans and assimilate into the Japanese national identity. Ethnic Assimilation Policy (민족말살정책) included suppression of Korean language and Hangeul (조선어 말살 정책), forced conversion to Japanese name (창씨개명), and Clothing control system, with the iconic example of National uniform (in Korean: 국민복, in Japanese: kokumin-fuku], which reflects the characteristic of the wartime situation during the era.

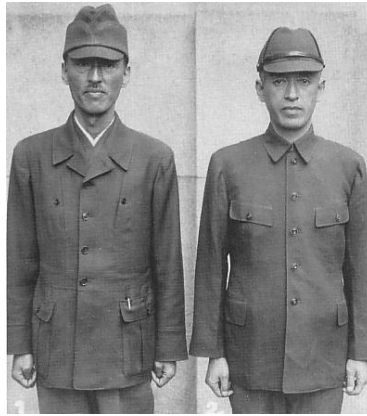


Fig 8. *Kokumin-Fuku (National Uniform for Japanese male) (1995)*

The national uniform was a device to create a royal nation, used under the ideology of imperialism. Japan likely intended to have a national uniform worn by the entire colonial population, fitting its name to become the official attire of the nation. (Kong, 2005, 80p) This strategy effectively utilized communality and solidarity, the characteristics of uniform. Uniform, reflecting the control and authority of the organisation, brands whoever wears it as public property and regulates people's behaviour (Godson and Tynan, 2019, p.12) The elite class, already westernized, were forced to wear national uniform as the era transitioned into wartime regime. It was a more direct means of conforming State General Mobilization system by Japan. (Kong, 2005, 75p) This policy aimed to instil the concept of loyal people of Japan through clothing, leading to the voluntary participation of Koreans as Japanese soldiers in the war.

1.3 Military regime (1961-1987), and wind of freedom

Started with the military coup d'état led by Park Chung-hee in 1961, his dictatorship extended into the military coup by Chun Doo-hwan in 1979 and another dictatorship under him, lasting until 1987 when the June Democratic Struggle (in Korean: 6 월 민주항쟁) ended 26 years of military regime era. The June Democratic Struggle was caused by the death of Park Jong-chul, a student at Seoul National University while being interrogated by polices. Revealed that the death was due to torture, along with the announcement of measures safeguarding the current constitution on April 13 by Chun Doo-hwan, the public started the demonstration to condemn the death of Park Jong-chul, call a direct presidential election, and end the military regime. The movement gained momentum after the tragic event of Lee Han-yeol, a student at Yeonsei University, who was stricken by a teargas bomb on the 9th of June. With the participation of the Necktie unit, referring to white collared workers, and other

citizens, the student activism was changed into the civil movement, June Democratic Struggle.

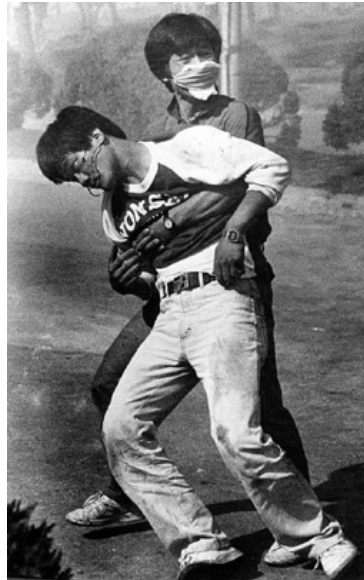


Fig. 9. *Falling Lee Han-yeol* (1987)

As seen in the March 1st Movement in the Japanese colonial era, and in countless number of movements for democracy that led to the June Struggle, it was students who were at the centre of challenging the political regime. The youth who were against oppression and pursuit of freedom, the attire worn by them was a symbolic expression of their resistance. The image above captures the 9th of June, when Lee Han-yeol got stricken by a bomb. This iconic image features a young man bleeding, which is a tragic moment. Through this picture, the June Struggle gained momentum drawing in more citizens who were moved by seeing this picture or heard of what happened. The citizen's anger and the fervour for the struggle are not hard to imagine, as the picture itself touches viewers emotions. In this picture, he is wearing a Yonsei university t-shirts, the university where he attended and studied at that time, and jeans. These two items, work as symbol of youth and freedom indicating a young boy who dreamt of freedom but fell.

This aspect is explored through an analysis of a movie, 'March of Fools' (1975). The government knew very well about the impact of culture on the public. The government, aware of the impact of culture on the public, censored cultural expressions, including films. 'March of Fools', which portrayed the stories of youth in the 70s, were not an exceptional case here. In particular, the scene where students went to practice cheering, was originally intended for them heading to a protest. Scenes and scripts were deleted, the storyline became

awkward, and the character's questionable actions left a feeling of disparity, leading to fading of the director's intention, however, 'March of Fools' yet effectively conveys the ideals of youth through the metaphor of 'whale' and reflects the suppressive atmosphere of the time, such as curfew, school closures, and restriction on long hair, ironically, through comedy. This movie also reflects the pursuit of youth at that time, featuring the fashion and items in 1970s realistically.



Fig.10. *The March of Fools* (1975)

The most prominently featured item in 'March of Fools' that captured the vivid life of youth in the 1970s is jeans. Mentioned and appearing countless times in the film, beer, acoustic guitar, and jeans, were the symbols of youth in the 1970s. In that era, young people struggled against an oppressive government in jeans, by attending to demonstrations. This act of students willingly participating and starting protest, made jeans symbolize youth, as well as freedom. In one of the scenes, main characters are styled in jeans, lying on a grass field freely and comfortably. Especially, the styling of female main character, where she wears blue jeans and a white shirt with a logo reminiscent American flag, evoking the United States, which works as a symbol of freedom, indicates the yearning for freedom among the youth.



Fig. 11. *The March of Fools* (1975)

In the first parts of the film, the main characters, two university students, are caught for the restrictions of long hair on the streets and run away from police officers. This scene is portrayed in a light and comical way with a cheerful background song ‘Why Calling’ by Song Chang-sik, rather than a solemn one. The sarcasm with mockery of the government controlling an individual’s length of hair operates as an irony. The main characters are chased by the police, continuing to run away, leading to the laughter of viewers. In an era where a reasonable seriousness that could be respected has disappeared, the comical and debasing act carried out by individual’s functions as a form of humour that criticizes the situation of the era sarcastically, causing laughter. (Yi, 2017, p.22) ‘Why Calling’ later becomes banned. Perhaps due to the scene ridiculing the restrictions. This shows how strict the government was on prohibitions, meaning that a minor rebellion and small mockery towards a simple prohibition could lead to rebellion and ridicule against the entire government system.



Fig. 12. *The leading figure of the miniskirt trend! Before you change your mind by Yoon Bok-hee (2017)*

Fig. 13. *Regulation on miniskirts (2009)*

With the rise of hippie culture, a long hair trend started among men, and since singer Yoon Bok-hee first wore miniskirts in 1967, a miniskirt trend began for women. Two images above are visual research on miniskirts. The image on the left features Yoon Bok-hee in miniskirts, performing on stage in 1967. Yoon Bok-hee, almost considered as the first women who wore miniskirts in Korea, led miniskirt trend in Korea. Miniskirts were adored by women in Korea, however, soon after, the trend was controlled under the government. This was due to the reason of long hair and miniskirts were considered decadent trend of Western society. (KTV, 2023) In the figure on the right-hand side features police measuring the length of skirts in 1970s. Police on streets, with scissors, razors and rulers caught men with long hair cut their hair, and measured women's skirts of length. 'It was era of control and crackdown' (KTV, 2023). With the regulations and restrictions not only in film and music but also towards on fashion, shows the suppression that government put on people, limiting the freedom of expression, which is considered as fundamental rights in democratic nation, and was given to people in Korea only after they earned it by themselves through June Democratic Struggle.

Chapter 2. Individualism and Contemporary perspective

2.1 Generation X in 1990s, Individualism

Generation X, who were born in 1970s, were the first generation who had significant freedom. They could enjoy their 20s in 1990s, in democratized nation. They had freedom to travel overseas, the spread of PC communication opened internet culture, economic boom and above all, they enjoyed their youth where government suppression disappeared, and liberalization began, allowing them the freedom of expression. They grew up during a politically democratized era and benefited from development of Korean industry, valuing self-realization and lives of individuals. They have grown materially affluent, leading to the great interest in consumer culture, which is characterized with the understanding of fashion, pursuing values for self-realization and prioritizing personality and sensibility of each one (Hong, Kim, and Kim, 2015). Generation X prioritized individuality over community. They embodied the rationality of capitalism, the prominent characteristic of western society, which is individualistic lifestyle and values, resistance on traditional values, such as authority and hierarchy, and strong self-assertion. (Kim, 2011) The most important keyword to generation X was ‘myself’, while groupism fades away, appearing individuality and personality. (Lee and Kim, 2019) The era that was allowed to express their own personality, distinctive from others and free from oppression, generation X fully embraced what was given to them. Fashion was the most prominent way to express their personality. Their fashion was out of typical norms, free from all the rules and regulations, uninhibited in expressing oneself, and most importantly, different to one and other. For further deep studies on generation X and how they treated fashion, interview has conducted.

When interviewing generation X, it was obvious to tell that the value that they shared was individuality, personality, and most importantly, ‘being different to others.’ Interview was conducted against two people who both were born in 1970s, and now in their 50s. Participant A, Hong Lim-pyo, who had great interest in fashion in 1990s, mentioned that he did not want to follow trends as it seemed like a strange idea to go after what others were doing, and he continuously sought for items that were different to others, such as unique sunglasses (Hong, 2024). Participant B, Nam Hyun-jung, who majored in fashion design in 1990s, judged the fashion at that time as being rebellious, with her experience on how she pursued going oppose way when there were too many people going for the trend (Hong, 2024). Expressing oneself, and showing one’s own identity, one’s own taste, and something that would

differentiate and up stood one from the rest of the crowd was a shared value among people in 1990s. Especially during interview, when Nam Hyun-jung mentioned that her look finished with perfume which was not considered important before (Hong, 2024), showed that generation X considered not only the look but also the scent to engrave oneself, mark oneself and make trace of oneself, for self-expression.



Fig. 14. Nam Hyun-jung and her friends (1990s)

In this picture that Nam Hyun-jung (second from right) took with her friends at the seaside in 1990s, shows 4 people in different style of clothing. With their hairs flying freely by the wind blowing, the smiles on their face show how truly they were enjoying the moment. The noticeable item in this image is sunglasses worn by her friends. Two sunglasses appeared in this image show very different shapes. The one worn by a guy in orange jacket, is rectangular shape, fully tinted with brown colour, making semi-transparent texture, while the other one has circular shape with fully coated black and decorated with gold details. These two different shapes of sunglasses in one picture shows the uniqueness of one's style and taste at that time. Moreover, noticing the orange vibrant jacket that is worn by one of her friends, matching with red coloured socks that he is wearing, catches viewer's attention with its neon orange colour popping up, creating huge contrast with black trousers that is matched with the jacket. This indicates the tendency of standing out from crowd, expressing and defining oneself, a discussed feature of generation X. Furthermore, inspecting the collection of pictures provided by her, almost 1/3 of the pictures showcases bold belts. This supports her words in interview, where she mentioned 'In 1990s, there were trends of excessive

accessories' (Hong, 2024). Though she went opposite to trend, the item she chose that looked 'cool' to her as well, was bold accessories. However, this is considered as an extension of leaving traces and engraving oneself into other's mind, since it must have been noticed easily to be big rather than small.



Fig. 15. Nam Hyun-jung and her friends (1997)

Fig. 16. Nam Hyun-jung in shorts (1990s)

In addition, the fashion from 1970s remained in the fashion in 1990s. In the picture on the left, showcasing Nam Hyun-jung and her friends, shows three different people in jeans. The jeans, worn by people who desired for democracy in 1970s were worn by people who lived in significant freedom that people in 1970s dreamt of in 1990s. Although the time they lived were different, their desires were different, lifestyles were different, 20s in 1970s and 20s in 1990s are united under the name of youth in jeans, symbolizing freedom, of the ones who dreamt and the ones who had. Also, in the figure on the right, Nam Hyun jung in shorts creates contrast to regulations of miniskirts in 1970s. In shorts that is probably shorter than skirts in 1970s, she proudly expresses her freedom on what to wear, not worrying about

someone suppressing and controlling on her outfits. This is what was left by 20s in 1970s, and what 20s in 80s earned.



Fig. 17. Drawing on Jeans (2023)

The image above features one of the pages of Figaro Korea, that was published in 1990s, and discussed in one of the videos by ‘Old Magazines’ in 2023. In this page, model Kim Gwang-su explains about how he re-creates jeans. In the red coloured fonts, it says ‘buy cheap jeans, think of design, rip the jeans, sew them with other fabrics, paint drawing on it, it looks pretty’. This shows even the jeans, the most basic and well-worn item during 1990s were styled differently by people’s personality, indicating individuality of generation X. This idea is supported by Hong Lim-pyo and in his interview, where he mentioned ‘Everyone wore jeans, but there were different colour, different bleaches, and different fit to it’. (Hong, 2024)



Fig. 18. Figaro Korea (2023)

This aspect is further supported in a same magazine, as shown in figure above. In one of the pages, the main heading, in blue bold character, is written in Korean, direct translating to ‘I really hate those clothes that everyone wears’ as their main heading. This caption is the definition of generation X and their fashion, as defined by Hong Lim-pyo, ‘Individuality is the definition of generation X’ (Hong, 2023). This is a sentence that compresses all the research that were carried out in this chapter.



Fig. 19. Nam Hyun-jung’s current husband and friend (1990s)

Moreover, 1990s was era of unisex. There were no limitations between what girls can wear and what boys can wear. People could wear whatever they wanted to, there were no rules and regulations oppressing them from wearing. Boys wore accessories and girls wore military boots. The increased amount of interest on fashion for men changed not only the attitude of men dressing up, but also the view of people on men dressing up. They pierced ears, put rings and necklaces on, which were belonged to women only. It was fashionable to do that. Also, women dressed up in military boots. In one of interview by MBC news, one has mentioned ‘I do not care what other people think. I wear military boots because they, make me feel sexy and equivalent to men’ (MBC, 1994). Not caring about other people though, but only pursuing what I want clearly led to the trend of unisex. Looking at the image above, the image of green polo shirts with popped up collar, matched with brown belt and white trousers, finished with round shape sunglasses initiates the start of the era where men dress up.



Fig. 20. Figaro Korea (2023)

Fig. 21. Nam Hyun-jung in her favourite look (1990s)

The image on the left is a page from a magazine Figaro at that time, and the image on the right is Hyun-jung Nam's favourite look in 1990s. The look on the left has grey waistcoat with stripes details on as sleeveless top, matched with darker shade of grey trousers, with a final touch of black flat shoes. The look on the right, she matched black waistcoat with grey stripe details with jeans and placing brown colour of belts and shoes as a point colour. The use of waistcoat, which traditionally only wore by men, on each look creates same silhouette and style, despite of left one styled particularly for male and right one styled on female. This shows how fashion in 1990s did not care about differentiating between men and women, or traditional thoughts on fashion, but rather adopting any good fashion items on both sides to create more fashionable look. Nothing limited the passion on fashion of generation X. They pursued the attitude of 'my way'.

Individuality, known as opposed to conformist, is desire for the distinctiveness, the refusal of using same things with others, and to avoid adopting fashion thoughtlessly. (Park, 1998, p.353) When individuality meets fashion, personality and identity shows through style. Garments are shaped to create individual's image, with its characteristic being incredibly malleable. (Hansen, 2004, p.373) Wearing according to your style to represent your

personality through fashion is a very simple concept and well-known concept in these days. By Simon Doonan, ‘conformity is the real fashion crime. To not dress like yourself and to sublimate your spirit to some kind of group identity is succumbing to Fashion Fascism’. However, there were times that this basic knowledge was not on mainstream, and rather, it was ignored and criticised to be individualistic to fashion. If seeking for the era where the concept changed from conformity to individualism, the origin of this thought was probably started in 1990s fashion by generation X. Rise of individualism has led people to dress according to their personality, leading to the freedom of fashion and chance for fashion to be variety.

2.2 Contemporary Korea’s Fashion

As individualism has become more accepting in society and conformity has diminished in fashion industry, people no longer try to conform to society norms. Instead, there is now a focus on personal thought and values through which individuals are discovering and creating their own unique identities. Indeed, distinctive identity that stands out from others and differentiate one from others became the main importance of current society. Moreover, class hierarchy is less prevalent, along with the reasons to differentiate classes. In a nation where monarchy, colonialism, and dictatorship has passed, the democratized government no longer controls people’s clothing, as they used to do in past. With the beginning of individualism in 1990s, people’s personality flourished over time, nowadays, fashion is no longer standardized. Nowadays, the number of people expressing their individuality in fashion to find their own style has increased. The government and the society do not restrict freedom of individuals, rather, non-conformity is accepted naturally. Individualism has not only permeated in styles of each individual, but also transformed habit of consumers in clothing. People now purchase according to their personal values, as discussed in the survey.

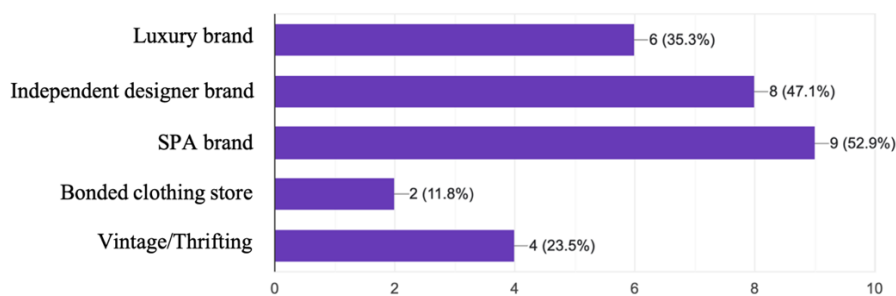


Table 2. *survey on the type of purchasing method (2024)*

When surveying on the type of brands that millennials and generation Z shop, the result showed various answers and reasons to it. However, very little amount of people selected bonded clothing store, which are non-branded clothing that are produced in factory, and has characteristic of being cheap and standardized, without any uniqueness. People have selected vintage and thrifting wear due to the reasons of vintage fashion being unique and coming with the pride of having items that no one else owns, as well as thrifting being eco-friendly which is good for sustainable consumerism. 35.3 percent of people chose luxury brands due to the quality of clothing, the brands' trusted after care service, and the respected value. A lot of people answered that they prefer shopping at independent designer brand, as it's unique, matches their own style, and to support independent designers. Most people chose SPA brands such as Zara or H&M due to its reasonable and affordable pricing.

The participants' purchasing behaviours reflects upon their identities as it aligns with their personal values allowing individuals to express their own identity. People who chose vintage wear had styles of American casual look, SPA brand for minimalistic, modern, simple and neat style, independent for uniqueness. However, even though they chose same answer, the style that they explained themselves were different. Some seek for monotoned designs, and some pursued streetwear, and some wanted to look for simple clothing even though they are shopping in the same category of brands. One participant mentioned that 'one's personality and taste is visible in the way of they dress', people nowadays still seek for individualism, rather than conformity.

Conclusion

The suppressions of fashion appeared in three significant periods was executed with different intentions and reasons, however, a commonality found amongst discussed timelines was that the restrictions were enforced on a national scale by the government. This finding indicates that in the definition of suppression, which is the act of preventing something being expressed by force, the authority of government is the force. The significance of this study lies in unveiling and critiquing the historical instances when the nation controlled individual's freedom of expression through fashion.

The frugality, propriety, filial piety, and harmony with nature that emerged, serves as positive factors on Prohibition of Clothing by Confucianism during Joseon dynasty are the aspects that could be respected and admirable even in the perspective of contemporary. However, the

foundational class system, the manipulation of people's ideals through uniforms during the Japanese colonial era, and the regulations restricting overall culture and fashion caused by dictatorship during the military regime are historical realities. From the contemporary perspective, where the prominence of class has diminished, social mobility is more easily achievable, and citizens are the sovereign power of the democratic nation, these ideologies present challenges in acceptance. Though this study is primarily based upon of the Joseon dynasty, Japanese colonial era, and military regime, the misuse of ideology is not limited within these regional premises. These cases of ideological suppression have been observed in different regions and times. This research could be developed by further investigating on restrictions happened outside these eras.

Above all, the wind of freedom, which appeared during military regime era caused people to be motivated, eventually securing the hard-earned freedoms of individuals' expression and cultural representation, coming along with democracy. This freedom of expression has been passed down to generation X, giving rise to social phenomenon of individualism. Generation X, being the first generation to be afforded modern freedoms in Korea, they introduced and defined the concept of individuality in fashion. This perception continued and persisted to the present day, where individuals not only express individuality in how they dress, but also through their consumerism preference, showing the continuity and development of individualism.

This illustrates that when individualism encounters fashion, it gives rise to unique personal expression and preference which appears in individuals' fashion, showing how ideals can manifest in clothing. The infusion of idealism into fashion creates not only the oppression and restrictions but also individuality to flourish, diverse intentions of ideologies lead to various cases of suppression and expression of fashion. When the ideology is conducted by those with authority, those whose main aim is to suppress, individuality cannot exist. On the contrary, when formed with the shared and agreed concept of the public, it allows fashion to bloom with individuality.

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Fig 14. Nam, H-J (1990s) *Nam Hyun-jung and her friends* [Photography]

Fig 15. Nam, H-J (1997) *Nam Hyun-jung and her friends* [Photography]

Fig 16. Nam, H-J (1990s) *Nam Hyun-jung in shorts* [Photography]

Fig 17. Old Magazines (2023) *Drawing on Jeans* [Screenshots] Available at:

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Fig 19. Nam, H-J (1990s) *Nam Hyun-jung's current husband and friends* [Photography]

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Fig 21. Nam, H-J (1990s) *Nam Hyun-jung's in her favourite look* [Photography]

Table 1. Hong, M. (2024) *Selected records of Prohibition on Clothing*

Table 2. Hong, M. (2024) *Survey on the type of purchasing method*

Appendix

Interview on Generation X

Participant A, Hong Lim-pyo, an architecture student in 1990s

Interviewer: What is the year that you were born?

Interviewee: It was 1971.

Interviewer: Do you refer yourself as generation X?

Interviewee: Yes, I didn't like and still dislike when others interfere me. In a joking way, I might have been kumquat (want to be orange) who loved to be playful and fashionable. I liked going to Apgujeong.

Interviewer: In 1990s, did you tend to follow trends, dress according to your own personality, or have little interest in fashion?

Interviewee: At that time, I derided trends. Doing something just because everyone is doing it seemed like a weird and strange concept. I remember that perfume 'Poison' was on trend at that time. The entire streets were full of the strong floral scent. I personally, did not like that perfume as everyone was wearing it. Instead, I looked for things that others wouldn't wear, such as purely off-white shirts or unique sunglasses. The long coat I often wore was nowhere near typical neat coat. It had lots of decorations that made it look a bit messy and tattered from far distance, but it was pretty in my eyes. I liked the vintage (grunge) look.

Interviewer: In your perspective, if you must choose one fashion item that was the most 'cool' in 1990s, what would it be?

Interviewee: Chains. There was a trend that people hanged chains in the pockets of jeans. I thought that was cool. I also personally liked jeans. Everyone wore it, but there were different colour, different bleaches, and different fit.

Interviewer: What was the look that you adored the most, or considered as the most Fashionable in 1990s?

Interviewee: In my graduation picture that I used to have, I wore maroon-coloured trousers matched with black jacket and black shoes. I think I was the most fashionable in that picture. I liked vintage look but also clean look.

Interviewer: Do you agree with the opinion that generation X valued personality?

Interviewee: Yes, individuality is the definition of generation X. When I was a young boy, I wore whatever my mother had bought for me. To the generation before me, that

was normal. It was normal to wear what was given from mother, and wear exactly what others wore. But our generation thought that it was old fashioned. It was the generation who wore what they wanted to wear.

Participant B, Nam Hyun-jung, a fashion student in 1990s

Interviewer: What is the year that you were born?

Interviewee: It was 1973

Interviewer: Do you refer yourself as generation X?

Interviewee: When comparing my age group to the definition of generation X, it matches, however, I never thought or considered myself as part of it.

Interviewer: In 1990s, did you tend to follow trends, dress according to your own personality, or have little interest in fashion?

Interviewee: I have to say that I was sensitive to the trends, since my major was fashion design, yet I prioritized my personality and taste reflected clothing.

Interviewer: In your perspective, if you must choose one fashion item that was the most 'cool' in 1990s, what would it be?

Interviewee: I think the fashion in 1990s was mixture of personality and rebel, there was a psychological tendency which is pursuing individuality and uniqueness, however, when majority followed the same trend, or had the item, I wanted to go to the oppose way. If I must specifically choose fashion items, I would say excessive accessories such as large earrings, bold bracelets, hairband. Moreover, boots that were out of season, and especially perfumes that were not important before were also cool.

Interviewer: What was the look that you adored the most, or considered as the most Fashionable in 1990s?

Interviewee: Wearing waistcoat (suit vest) as sleeveless top, wide fit jeans, ankle boots, and must finish with perfume which was not considered important before us.

Interviewer: Do you agree with the opinion that generation X valued personality?

Interviewee: Yes, the overall atmosphere of the society was affluent and free.

Picture of Nam Hyun-jung's favourite look (question 5)



Pictures of her and her friends in 1990s, provided by Nam Hyun-jung

















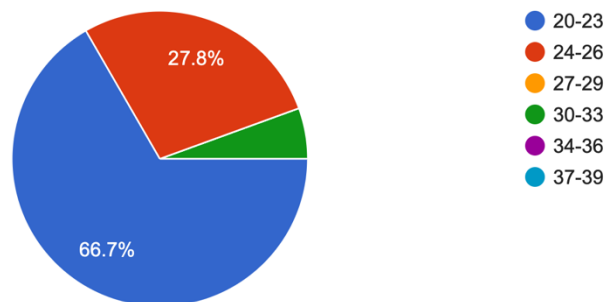




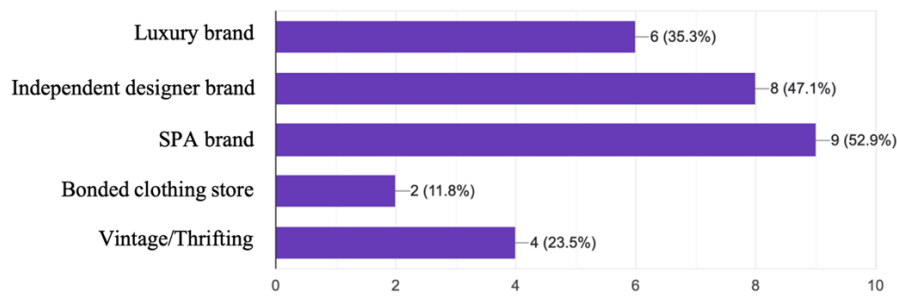
Survey on millennials and generation Z in Korea

1. Please select your age

18 responses



2. Where do you usually purchase clothing?



3. What is the reason of answer in question number 2?

1. Differs by taste and feeling: Luxury, Independent, SPA, Vintage
2. I like the distinctiveness of Vintage. I have pride of owning something that other people don't have: Vintage
3. For reasonable purchase: SPA
4. It's reasonable pricing comparing to the design and quality: Independent
5. For individuality: Independent, Vintage
6. It's affordable pricing: Independent, SPA, Bonded
7. It's approachable, and there is trust in the brand: Luxury, SPA
8. Quality of material, guaranteed after care service, I value the brand's idea: Luxury
9. Wear clothing that I like, for a long time: Luxury
10. For sustainable consumer habit: Vintage
11. To help independent designers, and to find unique outfit: Independent
12. It's easy to approach: SPA, Bonded
13. It matches my style: Luxury, Independent
14. For its affordable prices: Independent, SPA
15. To find unique design: Luxury, Independent, SPA
16. It's not too expensive, also there is a lot of choices on clothing, it's easy to find the one matches my style among tons of designs: SPA
17. The quality is good compared to price, as its price is like other bonded brands, but it is trustable: SPA
18. I purchase simple clothing from brands that I can wear it for a long period of time, and I purchase trendy items from bonded brands or independent designer's brand: Luxury, Independent, Bonded

4. Do you think you are expressing your personal identity (personality) through the clothes you wear?

1. I try to dress up coordinating colours nicely.
2. American Casual
3. Minimal look
4. Yes
5. Minimal look with oversized items
6. Modern, neat, clean, formal, and monotone
7. Simple and minimalism. I prefer neat and stylish image.
8. Oversized item, Everyday wear, just anything comfortable
9. Simple
10. American Casual
11. I prefer neat and minimal, yet unique
12. I select items that could make me look better.
13. I believe that one can understand a person's personality and preferences by observing how they dress. Just as dress codes are important for events, I think everyday clothing choices, when there is freedom to choose, reveal a lot. Personally, I like street style because it feels comfortable and relaxed to wear, without feeling too formal.
14. I enjoy wearing muted tones with a touch of gray, and I believe this reflects a bit of my identity. I also think I avoid overly short or tight-fitting clothes, which is a part of my style.
15. I pursue a clean yet distinctive style. It's about expressing the image I desire through clothing, a style I've discovered over the past 30 years that suits my body and face.
16. I aim for a natural look rather than something overly polished. I prefer a style that is grounded in the basics but still has its own charm.
17. I believe I express my personality through clothing. I focus on a modern style, emphasizing a calm yet comfortable feel in my styling. I use clothing as a method to express my identity and attitude.
18. I don't stick to a specific style, and my style change frequently. So, I think there's limited information about me that others can gather from the clothes I wear. It varies a lot depending on place or situation. However, I see clothing as a means of

self-discovery. By trying out various styles, you can clearly understand what you like and dislike. Distinguishing between these preferences helps you learn more about yourself. I believe these elements play a significant role in establishing one's identity.