



Brand Communication and Cultural Acceptance

A Case Study Based on Denim Jacket

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Abstract. Cowboy clothing is one of the most common and popular clothing elements in the world. It is widely loved by people because of its advantages in price, design and use. This paper mainly takes denim jacket as a case study to explore the cultural communication and cultural acceptance of clothing brands. Cowboy has experienced a special development process. This paper combs the development of traditional cowboy jacket, especially focusing on the social movements related to clothing. Through questionnaires and case interviews, this paper focuses on the cultural acceptance and evaluation of denim jackets by contemporary young people. This study found that the cultural acceptance of denim jacket has become a very common phenomenon. People expect more localization and innovative design of denim jacket, and the production technology of denim jacket still needs to be improved. This paper will be beneficial to provide a new case for the cross-cultural acceptance of clothing.

Keywords: Denim Jacket · Cultural Acceptance · Case Study

1 Introduction

Denim is a durable cotton warp-faced textile in which the weft threads pass through two or more warp threads. The most popular type of denim is indigo, which has a dyed warp thread and a white weft thread. Because of the warp-faced twill weaving, the blue warp threads dominate one side of the material while the white weft threads dominate the other. It causes blue jeans to be white on the inside. Denim was first seen in a small French town named “Nimes”, known as “Serge De Nimes”. Because the British were difficult to overcome in the pronunciation of the French tongue, it was later dubbed “Denim” when it spread to Britain. One of the typical lifestyles of denim is labor because denim is often associated with work attire. People wear it to work on the farm or factory, which bring them convenient and reliable quality. Thus, in denim culture, labor spirits are constantly present.

In 1852, California was at the gold rush, railway, and coal mining height. Workers’ clothes were not enough to resist high-intensity work, and there was an urgent need for wear-resistant dirty work clothes. Levi, the founder of Levi’s Strauss, took denim to western America, finding business opportunities from gold miners. He makes denim into workwear and sells it to workers [1]. People wear it to work. Due to its sturdy and durable

features, denim has become so popular among working-class people that denim's fabric spawned all kinds of workwear [1]. Gradually, denim culture has become an integral part of American culture, which symbolizes independence, freedom, rebellion, and heroic.

Furthermore, because denim cloth was inexpensive and durable, the American army produced denim uniforms. During World War II, uniforms for this material were distributed to numerous American regiments. However, because the denim fabric's blue color was nearly identical to the Navy's blue uniforms at the time, the Navy required more denim uniforms. However, the uniform composed of this material does not qualify as a proper battle outfit. To be precise, this set of military uniforms can only be considered working attire. Denim fabric is sturdy, but it also has a thin texture. Thus, most officers and soldiers preferred to wear it when doing dirty and exhausting physical work.

In 1945, after the end of the war, American soldiers stationed in Europe wore denim clothes walking on the street. The denim clothes aroused the interest of Europeans and started the enthusiasm about denim all over the world [2]. Many Americans wore denim clothes to work in factories during World War II. At the end of the war, many wanted to take their work clothes, following fashion and trends. Even wearing denim clothes after the war means refusing to integrate into mainstream society and rejecting social norms. Yet the "Beat Generation" wear denim clothes as an anti-fashion. Many people rush to the street wearing denim clothes or leather jackets at that time. They set up some motorcycle clubs. They rode their heavy motorcycle and shuttle from block to block to show a bohemian lifestyle.

After the World War, the upsurge of production and consumption in the United States, the hippie culture in the 1950s and 1960s, punk in the 1970s and heavy metal rock in the 1980s, and other youth cultural movements all regard denim as a kind of materialized youth spirit, representing the spirit of freedom and rebellion, rugged and bold. For example, In the 1970s, youth increasingly wanted to find a free and treason life, so they wore denim clothes or strange clothes, poured into the street, and became a hippy, living a decadent life. Even celebrities and royalty in the 1970s fell in love with denim clothes, and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter even wore jeans to run for president [3].

2 Classic Denim Jackets and Society Movements

For most people, if they're browsing to buy a denim Jacket, two garments usually come to their mind: Levi's Type III or Lee's Storm Rider Jacket. In 1933, Lee introduced their famous Storm Rider jacket, which, with its signature corduroy collar, zigzagged stitching, and blanket lining, has kept cowboys and outfitters warm and stylish at the same time [4]. When Marilyn Monroe wore a Storm Rider Jacket in the 1961 film named "The Misfits," which labeled the denim Jacket as casual and sexy for women. The iconic image became a sensation. It became one of the most popular fits among girls. Besides, the denim element has become an essential part of American culture. Almost all the presidents of the United States are loyal fans of denim jackets. For example, Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, once wore a denim jacket on the cover of Time Magazine [5].

The denim jacket symbolizes the patriarchal style. According to records, the first denim jacket was made in the United States by Levi Strauss in 1880. Initially designed

for miners and railroad workers, the denim jacket was meant to provide workers doing physical work with a sturdy fabric and a relatively comfortable cut so they could increase their productivity without worrying about their clothing being damaged. Because the wearer is generally male, the denim jacket is endowed with manly and rugged traits, and it is also loved and sought after by most men.

After the Second World War, the denim culture was deeply rooted in American society. Some brave working women began to get rid of traditional work clothes and wear denim jackets initially designed for men. Women who wore denim clothes were more respected in society. As a result, the denim jacket became famous among women and led to a denim revolution, with more and more customized versions appearing on the market to fit women's bodies. These new styles also became the counterculture uniform of the gender equality movement in the 60s and 70s. After the baptism of hippie culture expanded the infinite possibilities of the denim style and injected the spirit of abandoning tradition and independence into the denim jacket. Until now, the denim jacket has been held up as a fashion model by fashionistas and has gradually become an indispensable new item in women's wardrobes [3].

Today, denim jackets tend to be unisex, and the gender boundaries for the wearer are becoming increasingly blurred. Both men and women can easily match different styles to show their personality and charm. In my opinion, men wearing denim jackets can show their unrestrained, bold, and wild side, while women wearing denim jackets can show their vigor, sexy and wild side. Therefore, the denim jacket is sought after and loved by people from all walks of life and becomes a symbol of leisure culture. Denim jackets are now widely accepted in the fashion industry, and many fashion designers are willing to incorporate denim elements into their creations. With models wearing denim jackets on the catwalks at Calvin Klein, Diesel, and Guess, the transition from workwear to fashion was successful and smooth.

The denim jacket has a long history of being the carrier to spread ideas from person to person. In the 1950s, the Vietnam war broke out, American people set off a frenzy of anti-war sentiment at domestic country, and the holistic society situation in the U.S. was turbulent at that time. Although young people were well-off, they were spiritually hedonistic and opposed their parents' conservative thinking. The young people at this time gradually abandoned the simple function of denim clothes and decorated denim jackets with anti-war patterns, expressing their wishes of "independence, peace and anti-war." Therefore, the meaning of denim clothing is sublimated from expressing individual rebellion to condensing the unity of a generation [6].

To sum up, the denim jacket has played a positive role in spreading the zeitgeist and has developed and evolved many denim clothes 'distinct styles in different events throughout history—for example, the colored-drawing denim jacket, which is one of my favorite styles. The denim jacket is also universally acclaimed, and almost everyone has their denim in their wardrobe. Currently, denim clothes have their unique style and have become a fashion symbol that never goes out of style.

In recent years, in addition to discussing the history and culture of jeans [7, 8], some scholars have further discussed the cross-cultural marketing of jeans and the innovative design of jeans [9–11]. It can be seen that the research results based on jeans at home and abroad are very diverse.

3 Methods

The methods used in this study were questionnaire survey and interview. In the survey section, 42 people responded to the questionnaire, the majority of participants were female, and most people's age was between 26–30 years old. Also, most participants' majors were fashion design, arts and crafts, image design, textile engineering, apparel materials, and engineering.

In the interview section, five relevant people to be the interviewees, including two major-related students, one garment designing programmer in the video game field, and two ordinary people who firmly have an interest and knowledge in the denim field. The gender of interviewees was two males and three females. Besides, the age group is concentrated from 20 years old to 30 years old. J. C. is a student whose major is international fashion retailing. M. H. is a student whose major is clothing designing and engineering. C. P. is a video game development programmer, and his job is to design the garment for the characters in video games. M. Z. and Q. L. are ordinary people interested in denim, so they are familiar with denim garments and have sufficient knowledge of denim culture.

4 Results and Discussion

Most people agreed that the denim jacket symbolizes garment was never outdated in the fashion field based on this study. Half of the young people who participated in the survey believed that denim embodies the values of freedom and individuality, and less than 10% of the respondent's associated denim with pragmatism. Nearly 60% of survey respondents mentioned denim jackets associated with protest social movements, such as World War II and protests. Only one in 42 respondents associated them with conformity social movements. While most survey respondents understood the social values and social activities embodied in cowboys denim was not very prevalent to wear in China. 88% of survey respondents only bought 1–4 pieces of clothing in a year, and closed to 80% of people had less than 1/3 of their closet in cowboys, and 69% wear them only once a week. But denim was still widely accepted and recognized by young people, as nearly 55% strongly agreed that denim jackets symbolize clothing would never goes out of style. And about 29% agreed with this statement.

For the interviewees, five denim brands attracted them: Samurai, RedCloud, Cheap Monday, Habitual, and CK Jeans. Firstly, Samurai is a Japanese brand; Samurai promotes Japanese traditional culture into the worldwide Samurai well-balanced Japanese culture into western culture. For example, just like the name, Samurai is full of Samurai elements. The leather patch of the garments depicts two Samurai warriors fighting each other. The reinforced rivets show traditional Japanese patterns, Japanese kana, traditional language, or symbols. Secondly, RedCloud adheres to using high-quality Xinjiang long-staple cotton to create the denim garment. Xinjiang long-staple cotton has the feature that possesses long sunshine and a longer growing period to make the cotton fiber length more than 35 mm and the fiber of cotton finer. Thirdly, Cheap Monday because compared with some other big brands of denning, it achieved the balance of price and quality. Based on high quality, there is a relatively low price. Fourthly, Habitual because Habitual

works with Japanese denim factories that are more than 100 years old and use traditional machinery to make more modern fabrics. Habitual pays more attention to the details of denim, with some specially designed details that can bring sophistication to classic jeans and essential denim jackets. Comfort and complexity can exist at the same time. Lastly, CK Jeans, because the design style of CK Jeans is simple, the patterns and colors are often updated from the old. The cutting highlights the beauty of lines and pursues exquisite effects. Give a person a confident, positive, energetic, simple, and fresh feeling.

Three denim designers were most concerned by the respondents: Shinichi Harak, Nicole and Michael Colovos, Calvin Klein. Firstly, Shinichi Harak is the designer of Iron heart. The style of Iron Heart is a heavy locomotive, and the locomotive elements are incorporated into the garment design, such as the pattern of the locomotive on the leather patch. Besides, Iron Heart considers the rider's comfort in the clothing design. For example, pants are longer to protect the wearer's knee and ankle. Secondly, Nicole and Michael Colovos, an American husband and wife team, had early involvement in denim, working as creative directors for Helmut Lang from 2001 before creating their first brand Habitual. The brand blends bold, stylish styles with traditional tailoring to create an elegant, effortless look that's cool. Lastly, Calvin Klein is arguably the most famous fashion designer in America. Calvin Klein's design philosophy believes that Today's American fashion is modern, minimalist, comfortable, gorgeous, casual, and elegant. Calvin Klein said he wanted to design clothes for modern women active in social life and family life and strike a balance between them. The design style is minimalist, sexy, American relaxed, and elegant.

According to the interview, two groups of people had different attitudes towards denim in China. The first kind of people was the majority people. They regarded denim as regular work clothes for daily commuting, and they had no particular feelings or interest in denim. This group tended to be young people and middle-aged people, and although denim was not comfortable to wear, it looked cool, so they were willing to wear it. On the contrary, older people paid more attention to clothing comfort, so the proportion of the older people in this group was small. The second kind of people was relatively minor. They were particularly interested in the history and culture of denim clothing, and they liked retro and original denim garments. They were willing to buy some original denim garments through reprocessing or long-time wearing to express the vintage style of these denim garments. This group was generally dominated by young people keen to get in touch with retro culture and wanted to get in touch with niche culture to show their uniqueness. There were also some middle-aged people in this group. Because the first batch of Chinese who encountered the denim culture in China around 2000 were now middle-aged, until now, they still paid attention to and participate in the construction of Chinese denim culture. Besides, there are almost no older people in this group.

Most interviewees believed that Chinese denim's advantage was the uniquely Chinese elements that could integrate the Chinese culture into the denim garment design. Recently, the fashion trend in China has emphasized cultural confidence, so the Chinese elements garment usually can catch people's eyes. Han Chinese costume represents the Chinese style that people are familiar with it. The low-key and dignified traditional Chinese design is invisible in modern women's clothing, and it has also become a prevalent

new fashion tendency. In the denim fabric aspect, the Chinese fashion designer uses a font plate buckle, fancy plate buckle, bevel design, stand collar design, fork plate buckle under the swing, and the details of the lapel belt to highlight the feeling of Chinese elements. They echoed the low-key introverted Chinese traditional culture and expressed the charm of orientalism. However, most interviewees believe Chinese denim's disadvantages are that Chinese People's mindsets toward denim garments are relatively solidified, lacking innovation and creation.

According to the interview, most interviewees believed that American, Japanese, and European denim garments represented different styles. American denim garment's flagship is young, casual, and comfortable, suitable for young people who like to walk relaxed and straightforward style. Has the street trend element, advocates the individuality makes public magnifies. Japanese denim garments' details and quality is meticulous. The craft and fabric are better than ordinary ones. Also, the comfort and feel are better than others, so that the price will be relatively higher. European denim garments with a preference for slim-fitting cuts satisfy your desire for affordable tannins and quality compared to jeans that cost more than \$140. Various elements include rebellious elements suitable for young people with American features, and more classic and even retro designs with European characteristics, paying attention to small details.

For the denim process, most interviewees believe the traditional indigo dyeing technology is deficient in dyeing quality, cost, and environmental protection. Therefore, they suggested that China's denim industry consider the future environment and use pollution-free and environmentally friendly materials. Besides, most interviewees believe the denim industry is developing too fast. It is causing consumers will no longer buy pre-owned clothes, which is the opposite of denim's attributes of being durable and repairable.

5 Conclusion

Clothing is often a symbol and representation of social culture. Through the preliminary combing of the history and brand development of denim clothing, this paper mainly uses the interviews of questionnaire survey and case interview. After the sample analysis of special groups specializing in art design, this paper makes a more detailed analysis on the modern communication and acceptance of denim clothing from many aspects. This paper found that denim clothing has gone deep into most daily life, and the vast majority of respondents can accept denim clothing, and look forward to their more innovation in the future. The cross-cultural marketing strategy of jeans produces different styles and cultures in different countries. In addition, the dyeing technology of denim also has a certain impact on the popularity of jeans. Of course, this paper is only a supplementary discussion on this issue, and there are still some limitations. For example, the interview samples used in this paper are relatively small, and the research conclusions are not universal. These problems will be further solved and improved in the future. This paper hopes to provide new cases for cross-cultural clothing research.

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