

# Narrative Analyses of Korean Master Tailors and Incoming Tailors' Ways of Thinking and Behavior Patterns

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**Abstract** To contribute to the revitalization of menswear custom-tailoring, narrative analyses were conducted to study the ways of thinking and behavior patterns of Korean tailors. Two master and two incoming tailors were interviewed. The interview results were analyzed applying Labov and Waletzky's six elements of narrative plots, yielding the following findings. First, in relation to occupational perceptions, tailors pursued good appearance, made efforts for self-development, felt both pride and shame in their works, and pursued craftsmanship. Second, in terms of training process, tailors agreed on the necessity of a systematic training. It was also observed that trust between the master and the apprentice almost disappeared nowadays. Third, in relation to work environment, few incoming found a place to experience field practice while receiving a reasonable wage. The older generation was reluctant to share know-how, while the incoming tailors exchanged information. The interviewed tailors were frustrated by consumers' ignorance of the value of bespoke tailoring. Based on these results, pursuit of high-end image and craftsmanship, improvement in social perceptions of bespoke tailoring and economic conditions of incoming tailors, vital information exchange between the tailors, and the promotion of bespoke tailoring publicity could be suggested for the revitalization of bespoke tailoring in Korea.

**Keywords** Menswear, Custom-tailoring, Tailors, Narrative analyses

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## Introduction

Menswear custom-tailoring was introduced to Korea by Japanese during the enlightenment era in the late nineteenth century and became everyday wear within sixty years, persisting through the Japanese colonial era and the Korean War (K. M. Lee & Lee, 2000). However, master tailors are disappearing in nowadays' ready-to-wear centered fashion market. Korean custom-tailoring industry, which once flourished with the conquest of the World Skills Olympics, has been declining (Choi, 1998).

However, Japanese and European artisans have long been producing luxury goods, transferring skills from generation to generation. For example, Italy's Brioni is making

limited numbers (300) of 100% hand-made suits with the touch of master tailors, employing 400 tailors and 1,500 technicians (Yoon, 2009). On the other hand, about 100 tailor shops are concentrated in Savile Row in the United Kingdom (H. S. Jeong, 2015). In addition, Japanese tailoring shops such as Ginza Yamagataya and Eikokuya, with more than 100 years of history, are still thriving, with large stores centered around Ginza Street in Tokyo. The Italian shoe

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brand Testoni, which has been known as the European premium brand, was founded 70 years ago by a descendent of a shoe artisan, and now his grandson is running the family business. Testoni shoes are made by master artisans going through 177 production processes and are sold in 66 stores around the world (Cho, 1995). Such luxury goods can be made due to the existence of master artisans and the social culture that respects the value of craftsmanship passed down in family businesses.

Global luxury brands can be developed in Korea, if custom-tailoring techniques of master tailors, which once were recognized by the world, are succeeded and developed. The possibility of custom-tailoring technique development and vocation promotion can be glimpsed from the facts that high-priced luxury custom-tailor shops in Jung-gu and Cheongdam-dong are attracting customers, and there are still young tailors in their 20s and 30s who have launched themselves into custom-tailoring careers (H. J. Kim, 2019; J. M. Kim, 2015). Therefore, conducting a study on master tailors and incoming tailors' ways of thinking and behavior patterns through their narrative stories would contribute to the enhancement of understanding the custom-tailoring business and its revitalization.

There are not many studies on Korean custom-tailoring culture. The previous studies on menswear from the 1990s mainly analyzed the transition process of the menswear market, especially the process of ready-to-wear taking over the menswear market. According to Nam (1992), in the 1990s, consumption patterns became individualized and sensitized due to changes in lifestyles with the rise of the information society, which resulted in more diversity in styles of menswear. Especially with the boom of the ready-to-wear market, menswear, which had been disregarded in the fashion industry, received attention. S.-Y. Park (1992) also studied the evolution of suits since the Korean liberation from Japanese colonization in 1945.

Research conducted in the 2000s showed that ready-to-wear led the men's fashion market. S.-H. Park (2002) sought solutions to improve the productivity of menswear factory, and S. H. Kim (2008) studied how the ready-to-wear menswear market was specialized in quantity and quality in the process of its expansion. In the 2010s, the

research on manual pattern making decreased, while the research on the technical aspects utilizing computers showed a tendency to increase. M. J. Lee (2012) verified the possibility that the virtual human body could actually correspond to the human body created by using 3D apparel CAD program avatar sizing, and compared the simulated virtual clothes and the actual clothes to present a male suit MTM (Made-to-Measure) system in virtual reality.

According to the research on menswear over the past 30 years, studies conducted during the 1990s indicated that menswear master tailors had lost their value with the popularity of ready-to-wear. Studies related to production of ready-to-wear predominated in the 2000s, while the number of studies on making computer-based work effective up to the pattern making process increased in the 2010s. Through these studies, it was confirmed that the value of master tailors gradually reduced and almost disappeared, and there has been an absence of studies focused on tailors.

Therefore, in order to achieve the research purpose of understanding the difference in the ways of thinking and behavior patterns between generations in menswear custom-tailoring business, we interviewed two master tailors each with careers of 50 years or more and two incoming tailors each with careers of less than one year. Narrative analysis was applied to review their experience stories. The results of this research will help the different generations of tailors understand each other and serve as exploratory basic sources for the revitalization of the Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry.

## Menswear Tailoring Business in Korea

The change in Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry since 1876, when Korea was occupied by Japan, to the present was divided into introduction period, developing period, prime period, and recession period, in reference to previous studies. First, the introduction period is from 1876, when the treaty of Ganghwa was signed with Japan, to the mid-1940s, when Korea was liberated from Japan. This is from the time when men's suits were introduced to Korea by

Japanese to the time when Japanese tailors left the mainstream of the Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry. The first tailor shop in Korea was the Hamada tailor shop, established in 1889 by a Japanese named Hamada, played a large role in fostering Korean tailors. Even under Japanese oppression, the Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry expanded. However, after the late 1930s, the Second World War forced the national uniform to be worn as a military uniform by Japanese in the event of an emergency (S. H. Kim, 2018; M.-J. Lee, 2010; M. Lee & Kim, 2011).

The development period is from the mid-1940s to the early 1960s. This is the era in which Koreans took the lead in the menswear custom-tailoring when the Japanese left after Korea's liberation. It was a period of great change in Korean clothing culture, because there was an influence of overseas relief goods brought into Korea during the war and an increase in demand for custom-tailored menswear (S. H. Kim, 2008). In particular, the foundation of the textile industry was established in the mid-1950s with the foundation of textile companies, including Cheil Industry (S.-H. Kim, 1991).

The prime period of Korean menswear custom-tailoring was from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. The 1960s was the heyday of tailor shops, when the roots of universal and indigenous menswear custom-tailoring were established. Under the self-reliance economy, in 1961, the government forced the public to wear standardized simple clothes made from domestic textile products, which resulted in reformation of custom-tailored suits and instant market stagnation. However, a full-fledged boom began after 1963 with the lifting of the obligation to wear the standardized clothes (M.-J. Lee, 2010). Since then, in the 1970s, as Korean tailors won successive gold medals at the World Skills Olympics, the custom-tailoring market in Korea boomed, with 20,000 tailor shops opening nationwide (J. Kim, 1990). Taylor (2004) called the 1980s the maturity period of the Korean fashion industry. In the early 1980s, ready-to-wear suits produced by major companies' brands such as Cheil Industries' Galaxy and Kolon's Man Star were released and became popular. The interviewed master tailors also remembered this period as the heyday of the Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry.

The recess period is from the late 1980s until 2017, when the interviews of this study was conducted. This era includes the period where ready-to-wear of large companies entered the menswear market and became dominant. It was also a downturn era in the Korean menswear custom-tailoring industry as remembered by the interviewed master tailors. After the 1988 Seoul Olympics, demand for casual wear had increased due to shorter working hours. In this situation, the menswear custom-tailoring market suffered a great deal (S. H. Kim, 2008). However, in the 1990s, overproduction by large corporations led to the stagnation of the ready-to-wear suit industry. The half custom-tailored suits produced from system order, which was the intermediate form between the custom-tailoring and ready-to-wear, emerged as a way to reduce inventory. In the system order production method, a customer selects a size of ready-made suit among many other different sizes, corrects the existing pattern using a computer, and produce a suit that fits the customer's body shape for delivery (S. K. Kim, 1999). In addition, ready-to-wear companies sought solutions by adjusting the size of the ready-made suits to the consumers' body shape along with the promotion of newly-made custom-tailored suits at 70–80% of the price of preexisting custom-tailored suits (J. K. Kim, 1999). Imports of foreign brands during this period also exacerbated the hard situation of the menswear custom-tailoring industry (“의류업체,” 1991). Since the 2000s, various high-end suits have been produced, while mid-to-low-priced suits, which were intermediate forms of ready-to-wear and custom-tailored suits, coexisted in the menswear market (H. N. Kim, 2005; W. G. Lee, 2006). Therefore, while ready-made clothes dominated the menswear market, only 3% of bespoke tailor shops—where 100% hand-made custom-tailored suits are produced—remained in 2015, compared with the number of shops in the 1980s (M. Kim, 2015).

## Research Method

### Narrative Analysis

In this study, by applying narrative analysis, a qualitative research method, we pursued a macroscopic view to capture

the social phenomenon as it is and grasp its meaning in a large context (K. O. Kim, 1999). Qualitative research is necessary to identify variables that are not easily measurable in a particular group or to give voice to the unheard, and is also appropriate to conduct when complex and detailed understanding is required (Creswell, 2013). Especially, narrative analysis extracts the interviewee's story as it is without any researcher's intervention, discovers the speaker's life in the story, and analyzes how the events and actions flow to form and organize meaning. The researcher must find out why the story was told the way it was and how the events and actions the interviewee experienced were reflected in the story and what it meant (K. O. Kim, 1999). Narrative analysis is based on the interpretation of the naturalistic paradigm, understands human experience and provides meaning to the experience, and pays careful consideration to the fact that the story uncovered contains human opinions and thoughts (Yoo & Song, 2008).

Labov and Waletzky (1967) introduced a structural framework for narrative analysis composed of six elements of narrative plots: the abstract, which suggests what the story is about; orientation, which includes introduction of story in terms of time, place, and content; complicating action, which is about the flow of events; evaluation, which covers the importance and meaning given to the story by the interviewee; resolution, which is about how the story ended; and code, which returns to the current perspective. However, the six elements of the story were often partially omitted in some of the narratives in previous research (Yoo & Song, 2008). Overall, Labov and Waletzky emphasized the narrative's evaluative function and emphasized that narrative without the evaluation element had no point and lacked importance (Clandinin, 2011).

Qualitative research based on narrative is used in academic fields such as history, anthropology, folklore, psychology, sociolinguistics, communication science, cultural studies, and sociology, and researchers related to law, medicine, nursing, and education also accepted the concept (Clandinin, 2011). In the fashion research field, S.-S. Kim and Rhee (2005) suggested the direction for the construction of an Internet shopping mall by identifying the types of shopping behavior according to the clothing product

shopping moving line based on the Internet shopper's narratives using interviews and observations. Kwon (2015) conducted a qualitative study to conceptualize the socio-cultural meaning of retro consumption based on consumers' experience in retro fashion product consumptions. Yoo and Song (2008), who studied viewers of cable TV women's channels related to fashion, applied narrative analysis to understand viewers' consumption behaviors and attitudes through viewers' story of consumption of fashion products to determine patterns, processes, meaning, and problems of consumption. In sum, previous studies confirmed the applicability of qualitative research, especially narrative analysis of experience stories, in the fashion research field.

## Research Process

In order to analyze the ways of thinking and behavioral patterns of master tailors and incoming tailors, we used interview recordings and transcriptions, interview notes, working journals of tailors, and photographs as primary sources. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and newspaper and magazine articles.

The research process proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Creswell (2002) is composed of six stages, while Riessman (1993) introduced a five-step process. Referring to these two frameworks, K. S. Jeong (2006) proposed the six-step process outlined above, which was applied in the present study (see Figure 1).

In the first stage, identifying the phenomenon, the current situation of the menswear custom-tailoring industry was identified through literature review and analysis of media articles, and the experiences of master tailors and incoming tailors were selected as subjects of narrative exploration. The downturn of the custom-tailoring industry was also the cause of the change in the industrial environment, but it can also be seen as a cause of the shortage of young manpower in that field. Therefore, by understanding the differences in the ways of thinking and behavior between generations of tailors, it would be possible to improve the understanding of the menswear custom-tailoring and contribute to the revitalization of the industry. To this end, we wanted to

find out tailors' perceptions of their occupation, training process, and working environment. Therefore, questions on the motivation to choose tailoring as career, thoughts and prospects about tailoring, tailor training process and environment, apprentice training, working conditions, and suggestions for the development of menswear custom-tailoring industry were asked.

In the second stage, four tailors who wanted to voluntarily participate in the interview were selected with the help of the Korean Custom-Tailoring Association and the Department of Menswear Custom-Tailoring at K University Institution for Continuing Education. Two master tailors, each with more than 50 years of experience in the field, and two incoming tailors, each with less than one year of experience, were interviewed. Master tailor A was born in 1942 and was 75 years old at the time of interview (in 2017). He began learning tailoring at the age of 17 in 1959. He was selected as the "Korea Master" in custom-tailoring in 1992 and served as the president of the Korean Custom-Tailoring Association from 2014 to 2017. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor, the "Korea Master" is the artisan with the highest

level of skills in the industry who is selected for the contribution of skill development and status advancement of such skills (PMG Knowledge Engine Research Center, n.d.). Master tailor A worked as a professor in the Department of Menswear Custom-Tailoring at K University Institution for Continuing Education. Master tailor B was born in 1947 and was 70 years old at the time of the interview. He received the Stone Tower Order of Industrial Service Merit and also served as Chairman of the Korean Custom-Tailoring Association and President of the Korean Men's Fashion Culture Association. He had run his own tailor shop in Seoul from 1977 to 2017. Incoming tailor C was born in 1988 and was 29 years old. After graduating from the Department of Media and Information at the university, he worked as a broadcasting station producer and a fashion company merchandiser. He had started to learn tailoring in April 2016 and had had 12 months of experience at the time of the interview. At the time of the interview, he was running his own tailoring shop. Incoming tailor D was born in 1993 and was 24 years old, majoring in business administration at a university. However, he had taken a leave of absence at the time of the interview. He began

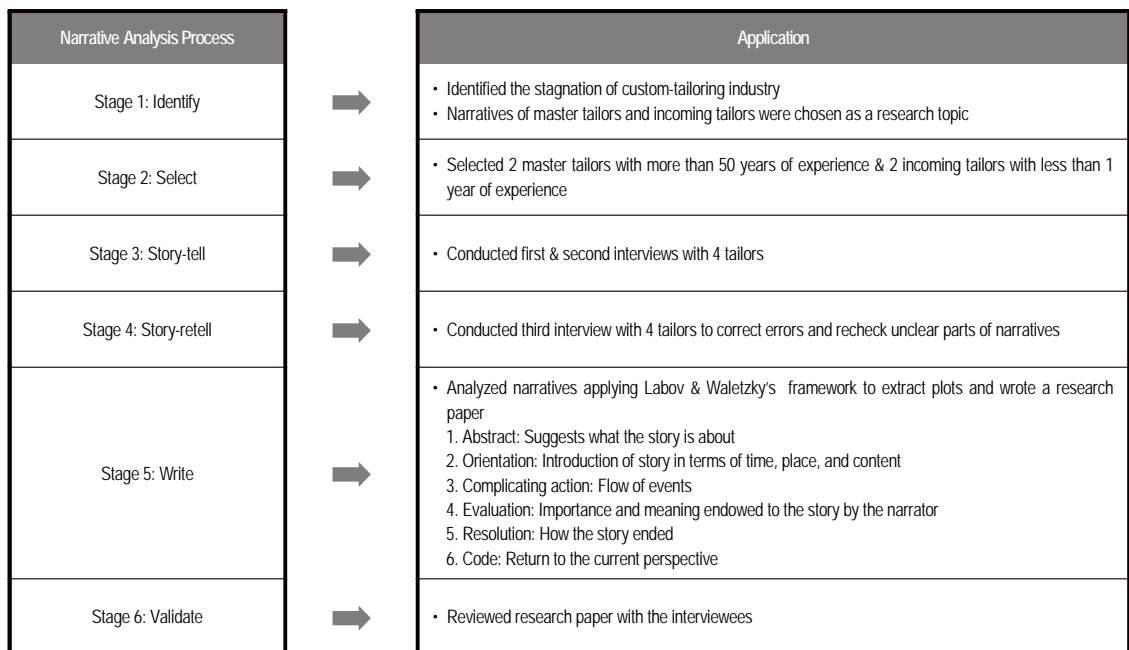


Figure 1. Narrative research process

learning tailoring in May 2016 and had had 11 months of experience at the time of interview. He was working at a custom-tailoring shop run by his father.

In the third stage, story-tell, two interviews each were conducted with master tailors A and B and incoming tailors C and D. Each interview time was different depending on the concentration of interviewees. After the first interview, the recorded interviews were transcribed and prepared for the second interview to check inaccurate pronunciation and incomprehensible contents identified in the first interview. After the second interview, recordings were also transcribed and reviewed using the same process as the first interview. The interviews were conducted in the interviewees' workrooms to provide a comfortable atmosphere.

In the fourth stage, story-retell, the field texts of the first interview and the second interview were read together in the interviewees' workrooms. The contents of the interviews were confirmed, and the contradictory parts were rechecked. Table 1 shows the specific date and time of interviews conducted in stages 3 and 4.

In the fifth writing stage, six elements of the narrative plots of Labov and Waletzky (1967) were applied to prepare the research report. The results of the interviews were analyzed to extract the total of 78 narrative plots: 30 plots related to occupation perceptions (16 from master tailors and 14 from incoming tailors), 17 plots related to training (6 from master tailors and 11 from incoming tailors), and 31 plots related to the work environment (10 from master tailors and 21 from incoming tailors). In sum, 15 plots from master tailor A, 16 plots from B, 30 plots from incoming tailor C, and 17

plots from D were extracted.

In stage 6, the study report was finally reviewed with interviewees (see Table 1). We reviewed the interviewees' experiences and checked whether the importance and meaning attached to the experiences were true, to confirm the analyzed results reflecting the parts requiring correction.

## Results

### Perceptions of Tailoring as an Occupation

**Pursuit of good appearance.** At the time when master tailor A chose tailoring as an occupation, there was a social atmosphere in which learning any skills was promoted because Korea was in a difficult economic situation. He said, "It was only tailor shop in the technical field where I could work with a nice white shirt and tie." The motivation for choosing tailoring as an occupation was that it was possible to manage one's appearance neatly and differently compared with other technical jobs.

Master tailor B was in a social atmosphere preferring technical positions to office workers when he chose his job. When he was looking for a job, he saw tailors wearing white shirts with ties. He thought, "Oh! I think it's a gentleman's job." He said that suits were made to look elegant because the clothes, as means of expressing oneself, determine the first impression made by his customers. Based on these narratives, we could understand that he was pursuing not only his own appearance management, but also that of his customers.

Table 1. Interview information

Interviewees	Step 3: Story-tell		Step 4: Story-retell	Step 6: Validate
	1st interview	2nd interview	3rd interview	4th meeting
Master tailor A	March 20, 2017 (1 hr. 51 min.)	March 31, 2017 (1 hr. 24 min.)	Sept. 11, 2017 (1 hr. 27 min.)	March 5, 2018 (42 min.)
Master tailor B	March 21, 2017 (1 hr. 39 min.)	March 29, 2017 (1 hr. 36 min.)	Sept. 15, 2017 (1 hr. 30 min.)	March 7, 2018 (45 min.)
Incoming tailor C	April 4, 2017 (1 hr. 20 min.)	April 11, 2017 (1 hr. 33 min.)	Sept. 18, 2017 (1 hr. 15 min.)	March 9, 2018 (50 min.)
Incoming tailor D	April 6, 2017 (1 hr. 22 min.)	April 13, 2017 (1 hr. 5 min.)	Sept. 21, 2017 (1 hr. 10 min.)	March 12, 2018 (47 min.)

Incoming tailor C chose tailoring due to “the notion of a very stylish high-end fashion” rather than managing his own appearance.

At that time, there were many young people doing custom-tailoring business, and they did a lot of marketing online. Looking at those, many people promoted the image of “tailorable,” a very fashionable high-end fashion, in custom-tailoring. I think that influenced me. (Incoming tailor C)

Incoming tailor D criticized that custom-tailored garments made by master tailors had no style change or development and did not reflect trends. He said “I thought ‘I don’t want to wear clothes made by these people.’...There are no changes or developments.” He thought that the road shop<sup>1)</sup> was better even in terms of style. Based on these narratives, we can infer that he was pursuing high-end fashion. He wanted to inform the customers of the stylishness of custom-tailored garments through design and high-quality production techniques.

***Pursuit of self-development.*** When A was employed as a tailor, there was a shortage of tailors. Therefore, people who had only learned the basics in academies were put into the field. Nevertheless, he had a strong enough passion for self-development through learning to arrive in the morning outside the class hours and study hard until evening. He won first place when he took the graduation exam. In addition, he created a textbook for tailoring based on his experience and know-how to let students of his K University learn the basics of pants, vests, and jackets in 7 months. Based on these evidences, we can understand the passion of A, who wants to generously disseminate custom tailoring techniques.

When B started his own tailor shop, he thought that becoming a business owner would help him become economically stable and give him a step forward. Nevertheless, opening his business was not only for

economic stability, but also for self-development. B said that he still gains his own know-how as he discovers and feels new things about tailoring. He said know-how could be gained only by tailors who serve customers directly, which is quite different from the know-how of technicians who only participate in the sewing process. He said that he had confidence that he would be able to make clothes for any body shape after learning tailoring for about five years. However, he said gaining know-how of tailoring was an endless process. From these narratives, we can infer the difficulties of technical skills and careers of tailors. The following remarks show that he had the steadfast self-development: “Fitting is taught throughout the tailor training process. But we should continue studying it. As we keep discover and feel new things, we gain our own know-how.”

The reason why C chose the Department of Menswear Custom-Tailoring of K University was because he thought he could learn properly since they taught full-time, from 10 am to 5 pm five days a week. He was so passionate about learning that he felt even the lunch break was a hindrance, since tailoring was difficult and he had to concentrate. After graduating, he worked in a tailor shop. However, he could not learn the foundation and production techniques from the older generation of tailors. In particular, there was no opportunity to make suits for the customers. He resigned from the tailor shop and set up his own studio to make suits for customers based on what he had learned. He built up his skills and confidence in terms of self-development.

I couldn't learn as dramatically as I learned at K University. I preferred to quit and organize what I've known so far, and think about building more confidence. I didn't have time to try making other people's clothes there. I quit because I wanted to set up a small studio to make other people's clothes and to build my skills and confidence. (Incoming tailor C)

D is learning tailoring techniques at his father's tailor shop through an apprenticeship. He said he had learned to make pants for about 7 months and could make good quality

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1) A road shop is a store located in an area with a lot of floating population. However, according to interviewees, it usually means a tailor shop that manufactures low-cost garments and sells them as custom-tailored garments.

pants which would satisfy customers. He was learning a jacket at the time of interview. He thought learning jackets would take longer time because jackets are more difficult to make than pants. However, he was making efforts to finish learning jackets within 15 months. He thought he would be able to finish learning pants and jackets in two years. It was clear that a lot of effort was made by setting goals fairly high, since it generally took six to seven years to learn them in an apprenticeship. He said that he would need 50 years to complete his techniques, since his father, who had 47 years of experience, still said he was making efforts to develop new patterns: “Won’t I need 50 years to make clothes that I am satisfied with? My father says it’s still too difficult.” This confirms his willingness to make continuous efforts at self-development.

***Pride and sense of shame.*** Master tailor A could be hired at a famous tailor shop with only six years of experience after he started to learn tailoring. He thought he could learn and build his career much faster than others with his hard work. He said he was proud of his job because tailoring was the best occupation at the time. He was also proud that that he received high remuneration while working at tailor shops in Gwanggyo, the custom-tailoring district. He was also proud of himself for having opened his own shop at Lotte Hotel, which was the center of the custom-tailoring industry at the time, because he had high skills which attracted many customers. He also expressed pride by mentioning that he was treated and recognized well as a master tailor in the United States. Older master tailors were more respected in the States. However, he felt a sense of frustration when he heard people saying “Why don’t you just stop working instead of making such things?” in Korea.

It was a tailor shop where I worked as a chief tailor with an assistant, and my assistant had a sub-assistant. I successfully entered the tailor shop with my skills after 6 years of training. (Master tailor A)

B was proud of his contribution to the 12th successive victory at the World Skills Olympics and apparel exports in

the past. In addition, he said that traditional custom-tailoring has a limitation in lowering prices due to labor costs. Even if the customer wants, he said, it is unacceptable for him to make and sell low-priced tailored garments with cheap labor cost. This remark confirms his pride as a master tailor.

However, according to C, it was found that employed tailoring technicians, unlike master tailors, were not proud of their jobs.

I said it would be great if [the tailoring technician] could teach his son. And, he said he would never do that. He said he would never let him come near this job. He said, “I hate doing this job. I hate myself doing this. I hate to see myself doing this.” ... It seemed that he had been treated as a ‘factory hick’ and never had received any respect. (Incoming tailor C)

According to C, those who started to learn tailoring like him never thought tailoring is a good job. Unlike when he started to learn tailoring, he was disappointed with his job.

People who are very similar to me never think of this as a good job. I just think the work [of a tailor] is just that of a sewing technician. When I first started, I never thought so. (Incoming tailor C)

D wanted to take over the family business and become a master tailor. His father also encouraged him to do so. He thought tailor was a socially recognized job different from a road shop’s technician, because his father ran a high-quality tailor shop where the customers had somewhat high social status. Based on his narratives, D had pride in succeeding his father in the family business as a tailor.

I majored in business administration, since [father] instilled the dream of running a big company through fashion management. ... He told me recently that he was very happy and proud of me. (Incoming tailor D)

It’s a job recognized by others. It’s a classy job compared to other jobs. ... On the other hand,



looking at the road shop, I also thought that tailors were not all the same. (Incoming tailor D)

**Pursuit of craftsmanship.** According to A, custom-tailored garments are made only for each customer. He said that any defects in the person's physique can be adjusted accordingly. Through this remark, we can recognize his craftsmanship in that he could produce tailored garments under any conditions, not to mention his respect for his customers.

B thought that after learning the process of tailoring in apprenticeship for six to seven years, tailors should continue to practice under a master instead of going independent, because tailors should even learn to fit customers with unusual body shapes. He thought that more hand sewing meant higher value, and adhered to hand sewing even the parts which could be done with a sewing machine. This provides a glimpse of his craftsmanship.

C did not use an inexpensive subcontracting factory for business, instead was aiming for a one-person bespoke tailoring even though it takes longer time to make garments. This is the evidence that he pursued craftsmanship. He was disappointed by the fact that customers were not aware of custom-tailored garments' high labor costs and long production time due to hand sewing.

We could understand that D also appreciated craftsmanship through his remarks on the fact that Italians favored custom-tailored suits made by master tailors, recognizing the value of skills. He envied Italian tailors who had customers willing to pay for the high-priced custom-tailored suits. He pointed out the lack of awareness of high-quality menswear custom-tailored garments made with craftsmanship among many Korean consumers.

Italy's view of the suit itself is very different from Korea's. ...Because they know how to recognize the value of the custom-tailored suits, and because they recognize the value of them, the price of the suits are also high. (Incoming tailor D)

[Customers] should know what a real custom-tailored suit is like, how it is made, and how it is

different when worn. ... I want to make consumers more mature. When consumers mature, the tailors will also make more mature clothes. (Incoming tailor D)

## Training Process

**Apprenticeship vs. systematic training.** According to A, it took six to seven years to learn tailoring through apprenticeship in the past, because a person "needed to learn over the shoulder while doing chores... It took a very long time to learn because you had to learn by yourself." Master tailor A thought there would be nobody nowadays who would want to learn through apprenticeship like in the past. Therefore, a training method suitable for the present time was needed. B was even taught to be beaten if he could not do well. He learned furiously because of the severe training process.

D was receiving apprenticeship training at his father's tailor shop in a different way from the apprenticeship training that was usually done in the past. He was experiencing the field by systematically learning patterns from his father and production techniques from the technicians. He thought that the apprenticeship training he was receiving might be slower than learning in academies. However, he experienced learning in practice and gained know-how from the field, which would eventually make him learn the practice faster. He was aware that he was learning in a better environment than his father's generation.

[They] teach me a lot of know-how which can't be learned at academies. It may be slower than the guys who just make [garments] continuously, but I may be faster because I learn the know-how while practicing 1:1. (Incoming tailor D)

In the old days, teachers ... learned being beaten and only delivered [garments] for 1~2 years, and were taught if they caught masters' fancy. They could secretly learn tailoring by looking at the garments when the master left work ... secretly learn from the side. But, my [learning] condition is really good. (Incoming tailor D)

C was very satisfied with the training environment and teaching methods when learned tailoring at K University. Each student had enough space to work, and professors taught beginners with no idea of tailoring one-on-one.

Classes were held full-time, 5 times a week, 5 days a week, from 10 am to 5 pm, from morning to evening. ... Taught everything from stitching to stitching. ... It was very satisfying. (Incoming tailor C)

However, both C and D had difficulties in learning from master tailors at the shop. They pointed out the problem of using old terms and the old-fashioned teaching method without explaining principles as barrier to incoming tailors' understanding.

It's really difficult to learn from older people now. Because of old terms and they teach in a way using expressions like "This, this, this, like this, you do it like this." (Incoming tailor D)

If there is anything to learn, I will go. Do you know the teaching method that teachers have? From a learner's point of view, I don't understand, so I can't study. (Incoming tailor C)

C mentioned the problem that tailors face after completing a systematic training course at an academy, commenting that incoming tailors should experience the field at tailor shops. However, he said it was not easy to find a position in shops. C insisted that there should be an increase in numbers of incoming tailors and field training opportunities for them offered by master tailors to revitalize the menswear custom-tailoring industry.

For young people, if there is a workroom in the tailoring shop and if the teachers are skilled, they would go even if they are not treated well and even if they don't get paid. ... There aren't many positions, so they can't go in. There is a lot of disappointment that comes from that [situation].

(Incoming tailor C)

To revitalize the custom-tailoring industry, masters should aim to dedicate themselves to transferring skills. ... Then, there will be more people trying to learn and no one will leave due to the disappointment, unlike now. Basically, it can be vitalized when there are a lot of young tailors. (Incoming tailor C)

***Trust between the master and the apprentice.*** Master tailor A emphasized the importance of trust between the master and the apprentice by giving an example of an apprentice's move to another tailor shop after winning a medal at the World Skills Olympics with all the expense and efforts paid by the master. This precedent seemed to have provided a reason for the master tailors to observe personality first when they received an apprentice. He emphasized the importance of the apprentices' personality by expressing, "Skills are skills, but the personality must be good."

A expressed his gratitude and appreciation for his master, Sang-Guk Seo, who was the first generation of master tailor in Korea, by saying, "He did a great job in the tailoring industry." Thanks to what he learned while following his master, he could go on lecturing throughout the country, endowing values to standardizing tailoring skills. He was able to learn from his master's lectures. Later, he could lecture himself, without the master. This was possible based on respect and trust between the master and the apprentice.

B was teaching an incoming tailor through an apprenticeship. His apprentice came to learn skills while doing chores. B said that he has sincerity regarding his apprentice and wanted to treat him well, even though he said he did not need anything. He showed infinite trust in the apprentice through the expressions such as "Like my son, like an offspring, I think of him as my successor" and "I think of him as a successor and will hand over the tailor shop to him."

C said that the difference in ways of thinking between generations led young tailors to the disappointment. Therefore, few young people worked for a long time in custom-tailoring shops. This could be seen as a problem

coming from different values of young and old generations of tailors. However, the ultimate reason could be lack of trust between the generations. The lack of trust between the master and the apprentice also could be found in C's friend's situation. C's friend was handling a lot of work at the shop, and the master endured unfavorable behavior of his apprentice due to the economic profits earned by hiring C's friend. For this reason, some masters have observed the incoming tailors without teaching anything for six months to determine whether his apprentice has a good personality that can be relied on.

On the contrary, masters say that young guys can do nothing these days. They say that young people don't appreciate master's treatments. There are many problems because they have completely different ideas. (Incoming tailor C)

Even though my friend gets sassy and quibbles over his master's words, his master can't do anything. No, he doesn't do anything. But he didn't raise his salary. (Incoming tailor C)

## Work Environment

***Demand for a reasonable work environment.*** According to the interviewed master tailors, the reason young tailors avoid learning tailoring is because it was not possible to learn tailoring receiving a minimum wage. Old master tailors wanted to hire people without salary. Master tailor A said that old master tailors say, "Teach skills. Pay wages. How could that be possible?" From this situation, we can infer that a reasonable working environment is required in custom-tailoring industry. This problem also could be seen from C's comments. He said incoming tailors worked at tailor shops unpaid or were paid under 500,000 won per month: "Because they have old mindset, they think it's a big deal if they hire people with proper wages. They have never lived like that, so they never do it."

The need to improve the working environment for incoming tailors also could be seen in the example of a friend mentioned by C. C's friend worked at a tailoring shop from 9 am to 10 pm, 6 days a week, being paid less than the

minimum hourly wage on condition that he could learn skills. However, he could not learn skills properly. According to C, there were many incoming tailors who quit their jobs due to low wages and excessive work. Through these narratives, it became apparent that a reasonable working environment was needed. C thought that improving the work environment would increase the number of young tailors.

That guy worked for two years, and the only thing he could do was fit pants. ... He told [the master] that he would quit job. And then, he was told [by his master] to go to his factory. ... But, [the master] paid no salary. [The master] told him that he gave him a position, so he has to help him when he asks him for assistance. That guy said that he thought, "What am I doing here, sitting alone?" He didn't receive the minimum wage, but he was there to learn things. (Incoming tailor C)

In order for this to work out well, if the working environment changes a bit first, I think there will naturally be a big increase in new manpower. I think if there are more people who want to learn [tailoring], there can be an increase of many academies and more people who want to learn by apprenticeship. (Incoming tailor C)

C was accepted to a large franchise custom-tailoring shop, but did not start working. His boss hired him because older master tailors did not produce the patterns that the designers wanted. He is concerned that if he implemented the pattern requested by the designers, there will be a conflict with older master tailors, who refused to make patterns. This is another problem to be solved in order to improve working conditions.

The moment I do that, I become an enemy to the masters. ... I think our generation of tailors will go through [this situation] a lot. If masters don't do it, how can I do it? If masters could not make patterns for the designs, it would be hard for me to implement them. It's a problem anyway, whether I could do it or not. (Incoming tailor C)

*Perspective difference in information exchange.* Master tailor A said, “If you look at our industry right now, there are some people who are ahead of time. But they don't share and hide [know-hows] from others.” However, he regarded introducing what one knows to enlighten others as an act of leading the custom-tailoring industry to the right path. He said he shared his know-how with others, and he emphasized the importance of information exchange to revitalize the custom-tailoring industry. He, as a senior in the Custom-Tailoring Association, made suggestions to the current executives of the association for the revitalization of the industry. However, he said it is a huge problem that they agree and take no action, or would not listen to advice. His narratives indicate the necessity of communication among master tailors.

C observed no know-how sharing among the older generation of master tailors. While the older generations thought young tailors who worked at several different tailor shops as undesirable, they also disliked young tailors who learned skills by themselves. C found the reason for the lack of know-how exchanges among master tailors was that tailors were afraid of being deemed as low-level technicians when exposing the limit of their skills. From this situation, we can understand that the problem of no exchange between older generations resulted in less opportunity for learning for incoming tailors.

There are know-hows, but no exchange at all. When a young guy goes around to learn know-hows, he becomes a smasher. ... Even in that [situation], smart guys learn by themselves. Then [master tailors] hate them. (Incoming tailor C)

In the custom-tailoring industry, there can be recognition from the customers and within the industry. C said the latter is more important. To receive recognition within the industry, you need to have skills, but your network was much more important. C knew that there was an exchange of information about incoming tailors at the association's gathering of master tailors. In order to experience the process of mastery smoothly, reputation was important. C said, “If you get on the wrong side [of some

master tailors], there will be limits to learning, and problems will occur. No matter where you go, you shouldn't look bad.”

D said that the best way to learn custom-tailoring is to work at a tailoring shop factory. However, you cannot enter the factory without a network. D thought technicians would be busy with their works and that they would be reluctant to teach skills because they gained their skills under difficult conditions. According to D, there were some incoming tailors who opened a tailor shop and hired technicians to learn skills from them. However, they felt that the hired technicians did not teach properly, and even intentionally left out the important skills. Based on these narratives, trust must be established through the communication between the generations of tailors.

It is best to learn custom-tailoring at a factory, but you cannot enter without a network. ... [An incoming tailor] set up a workroom and hired a tailor, but he was very reluctant to teach things. They have nothing to lose in terms of teaching. (Incoming tailor D)

D regarded the association's executives as being old and sticking to the old ways. He emphasized the necessity of communication among master tailors and incoming tailors to revitalize the industry. He thought it would be a solution for young people to actively demand information exchange.

C and D commented on the avoidance of communication among master tailors and remarked on incoming tailors sharing skills and information about custom-tailoring industry by setting up meetings. Incoming tailors encouraged each other to have a positive mind about the business through the meetings. C and D thought that these exchanges would help them grow.

We do a lot of skill sharing. ... In some ways, we may be growing faster [than the older generation]. But the seniors don't share their knowledge with others because the technique is their own bread and butter. You never share it with others. (Incoming tailor C)

Whether there are good fabrics, new brands, or new custom-tailoring shops, etc., we share the news with each other and tell each other about the stores where subsidiary materials are sold at a reasonable price. We are trying to form a network between us so that we can have more positive interests in custom-tailored suits. (Incoming tailor D)

***Frustration with the current situation of the menswear tailoring business.*** B said that the government preferred ready-to-wear suits to custom-tailored garments due to production efficiency. He also expressed regrets about the disappearance of Korea's custom-tailoring techniques, which had once received recognition from the world. The interviewed master tailors showed disappointment about the stagnation of custom-tailoring industry with the popularity of ready-to-wear suits and the lower number of people who wanted to learn tailoring with passion. They said that ordinary custom-tailored suits, no matter how low the price, could not match the sale prices of suits made in road shops. Moreover, consumers believed that the road shop suits were custom-tailored. In this situation, if the quality of the road shop suits is low, the overall reputation of the custom-tailored suits will fall. B thought that the status of custom-tailored garments was much lower than before, because of the low-cost, low-quality garments produced from the road shops. He also felt frustration by the fact that there was no support from Korean government, because even in a neighboring county, Taiwan, the government actively supported the custom-tailoring industry to improve its status, not to mention Europe. B also mentioned that, in the homes of menswear like England or Italy, the more hand-sewn the suits, the higher the price, because consumers recognized the excellence of custom-tailoring. On the other hand, he was frustrated by the lowered reputation of custom-tailored garments and customers' perception that the price was too high due to the flourishing ready-to-wear and low-priced sales of road shops.

C believed that if the industry itself provided a high salary, incoming tailors would survive even though the skills are hard to learn. Incoming tailors struggled with the lack of living expenses because they had a small salary while

learning skills for a long time. D also pointed out these difficulties faced by incoming tailors.

It takes a long time to learn this skill. So, if a condition that can secure basic living while training, we can do it long term. But, that's not available. [So] we have to put everything aside to come in [to this field]. (Incoming tailor C)

But the reality is that it takes at least three or four years to learn all the skills. They [apprentice tailors] will feel constraint at home because they have no income. ... Many people go to road shops to earn money. (Incoming tailor D)

According to the interview results, the working environment should be improved, while design and technical developments should be maintained for the revitalization of menswear custom-tailoring in Korea.

In fact, if people just obey the law, there will be a great change. But basically people don't follow the law. And, what would be the worth of working environment [improvement], if customers wouldn't buy [custom-tailored garments] because of design and technical degradation? Technical skills should be developed. But, in my opinion, they don't want to do it. (Incoming tailor C)

D thought that the road shop's suits were inadequate as tailored suits. Consumers who used to purchase ready-to-wear suits showed satisfaction with the poorly made road shop suits. He felt skeptical about consumers' ignorance of value difference between the road shop suit and the bespoke suit.

They were poorly made. But customers say they are good and visit [road shops] again. [Road shop suits'] fitting is perfect, if customers used to wear ready-to-wear suits. They say "customizing is good for sure," and revisit [road shops]. Those shops are doing well. I feel a lot of skepticism about it. (Incoming tailor D)

Customers do not know the difference between clothes made in road shops and clothes made in high-end tailor shops. Road shops make less profit and sell cheaper. ... Consumers only look at the price. Road shops are ruining the market. (Incoming tailor D)

## Conclusions

Master tailors making traditional menswear custom-tailored garments are currently disappearing from the fashion market in Korea, with the dominance of ready-to-wear. In order to contribute to seeking ways to revitalize the menswear custom-tailoring industry, we used narrative analysis to examine the ways of thinking and behavioral patterns of tailors. Two master tailors and two incoming tailors were interviewed. The results of analysis could be categorized into three topics: occupation perception, training process, and working environment.

First, as a result of examining the perception of occupation, master tailors and incoming tailors commonly pursued stylishness. Master tailors pursued stylishness in terms of their appearance management and when they made garments for their customers. Incoming tailors sought high-end stylishness of luxury goods in their custom-tailored garments instead of pursuing their own appearance management. In addition, all interviewed tailors were constantly striving for self-development. All of them were very proud of authentic bespoke practices. However, they felt frustration when they received comments regarding older tailors working as too much, and when they were overlooked or treated as a sewing machine. Their pride in custom-tailoring was also related to the pursuit of craftsmanship that could fit any body types.

Second, there was a difference in the training processes experienced by master tailors and incoming tailors. Master tailors experienced apprenticeship training in which they had to learn over the shoulder for a long time in a harsh environment, while incoming tailors learned basic courses at a systematic institution or experienced more systematic apprenticeship training than in the past. However, they

agreed that more systematic and practical training was needed in place of master tailors' old-fashioned training methods. In addition, with regard to the relationship between the master and the apprentice, the interviewed master tailors showed respect and trust in their masters when they were apprentices. However, C saw no faith between the masters and the apprentices, because mistrust arose from value difference and masters who tried to apply old apprenticeship styles to their trainees. The interviewed master tailors also expressed the need for improvement on these issues.

Third, with regard to the working environment, the interviewed master tailors pointed out that the mistrust between the masters and the apprentices resulted from the problem of the unpaid working condition. This point is in line with the economic difficulties among the incoming tailors who left the custom-tailoring industry. In addition, all interviewed tailors considered technical skills exchange among master tailors and between master tailors and incoming tailors as one of the keys for the revitalization of menswear custom-tailoring industry. Incoming tailors formed a small group to share information and technical skills. Interviewees expressed concern, disappointment, and frustration for different reasons. In order to overcome this, it was necessary to improve consumer perceptions of menswear custom-tailored garments and incoming tailors' working conditions, along with master tailors' design and technical skill development efforts.

Based on the above results, the following suggestions can be considered in the process of seeking ways to revitalize the menswear custom-tailoring industry. First, the custom-tailoring industry must keep the high-end reputation. All interviewees commonly pursued stylishness. In particular, incoming tailors were pursuing high-end fashion. The aforementioned Italian custom-tailoring brand, Brioni (Yoon, 2009), and the shoe brand Testoni are recognized as masterpieces by aiming for a high-end with the best quality that comes from manual work by skilled master craftsmen (Cho, 1995). High-end fashion is characterized by luxuriousness, differentiation, and personalization (Oh & Kim, 2014). These elements are consistent with what the interviewees mentioned as the advantage of custom-tailored suits. Strong commitment to the best quality of products is

the most important principle for high-end fashion (Oh & Kim, 2014). In this regard, it was possible to examine the passion and commitment to custom-tailored garments from all interviewees. However, Korean apparel products are still rarely evaluated as high value-added in the world market (Hwang, Chun, & Na, 2015). Nevertheless, Korean menswear custom-tailored suits will also be competitive in the global market if they adhere to the high-end image pursued by luxury brands. To this end, tailors should aim to achieve craftsmanship and self-development. Even in the case of Japan, the manufacturing industry is gaining global competitiveness with excellent quality and high productivity based on the traditional craftsmanship of Monozukuri (Ryu & Sun, 2014). In Japan, master tailors are both socially and nationally protected and recognized (Y.-Y. Lee & Yoo, 2020; J.-S. Park, 2013).

Second, it is necessary to improve social perceptions and economic conditions of the manufacturing industry, including the menswear custom-tailoring business. According to the interview results, Korean master tailors were proud of their occupation, while technicians were ashamed of their jobs. This is a problem that is caused by poor treatments of professional artisans and their unstable social status. On the other hand, Japanese artisans can make a living with their own skills. Therefore, it is possible to run family businesses over the generations (Shin, 2008). Moreover, while skilled artisans, for instance in Italy, which has many luxury brands, earn high wages, Korean tailors, especially incoming tailors, are economically unstable (Cho, 1995).

Third, training institutions that can systematically teach custom-tailoring and positions in the field where incoming tailors can receive practical training should be established. All interviewees thought that the past apprenticeship education, which was generally conducted at tailor shops, did not fit the current era. Incoming tailors said that the tailoring methods explained by master tailors were difficult to understand. Moreover, it was hard to find a tailor shop where they could receive training. K University Institute of Continuing Education, which taught basic courses systematically, was a successful training academy except for the problem that there was no mastery course. Interviewed master tailors thought that incoming tailors could experience proficiency through

apprenticeship while providing enough help to master tailors during the mastery process. Master tailors' know-how can be transferred to incoming tailors, if an official educational institution where incoming tailors can experience the process of attaining proficiency is established

Fourth, communication and technical skill exchanges among tailors should be promoted. Faith and trust will arise if the mutual understanding is broadened through the association activities under the common goal of revitalizing custom-tailoring industry. If faith and trust are built, master tailors' transference of knowledge and skills will increase in the future.

Fifth, efforts should be made to improve consumers' perception of bespoke tailoring. In order to make this happen, the development of technical skills and designs which reflect the trend must be done and highlighted. In addition, consumers who understand bespoke suits have emerged with the soap opera, *Wolgaesoo Tailor Shop (Laurel Tailor Shop)*, had been aired from 2016 to 2017 in Korea. Old and young generations of tailors make efforts together to promote the merits of bespoke tailored garments to change consumers' perceptions.

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