

On the Value Propositioning of Royal Costume Design Management:

A Case Study of the Korean Film *Sanguiwon* (*The Royal Tailor*)

Seo Young Kim[†] · Hwang Oak Soh

Lecturer, Dept. of Fashion Design, Chung-Ang University, Anseong, South Korea

Professor, Dept. of Fashion Design, Chung-Ang University, Anseong, South Korea

Abstract The aim of this study was to identify the core facets underlying the construction of a conceptual platform in value propositioning through exploration of the design culture in the fictional story of the film *Sanguiwon* (*The Royal Tailor* 尙衣院). The scope and area of focus of the literature were on *Hanbok* (韓服) via media representation as well as design issues through a case study in the film. The analysis employed a semiotic approach that was based on the key elements of the organization represented in the story. The focus of the analysis included design culture and the creation of meaning within the context of identifying areas of design management. Key findings included the following: the main ideas underlying the organizational structure based on the roles of the national costume operation; the attributes of producing royal attire as an official authority for costume production; and the contribution of sustaining heritage to defining visions and facilitating the noble fashion asset.

Keywords *Sanguiwon*, Design culture, Heritage, Value proposition

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Introduction

A global phenomenon of Korean culture, the so-called *Hanryu* (韓流), has evolved in terms of understanding and sharing what the Korean cultural context means, textually and visually, through pop culture via the media. In the Korean entertainment industry, such distinctive films and music videos of K-pop idols have played a leading role in representing some core elements of Korean creative culture, e.g. fashion. In particular, the new media has broadly introduced and used the aesthetic and unique design aspects of Hanbok to shape culture-driven Korean branding to a wider audience at an international level (Howard, 2014; Soh, 2004; Tudor, 2018).

The aim of the study is to explore re-defining the roles of the royal costume design management in terms of

fabricating value through the analysis of a Korean film called *Sanguiwon* (*The Royal Tailor*). To support the development of a methodological process to achieve the rigorous outcomes of the research focus, one of the leading design management theories, by David Hands, was applied as an analytical tool. The purpose of selecting this particular theory was to gain insight into and to identify an advanced definition of Korean costume from design management itself, as *design*. Methodologically, visual semiotics analysis was conducted from an inductive approach in order to construct a conceptual framework from the key findings in the research. The study mainly highlighted the attributes of the symbolic organization in the film in order to investigate their design culture and how they are interconnected with value creation.

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[†] Corresponding Author: velvetsyk@gmail.com

Owing to the use of a film for the case study, the major content of the narrative-based visual context following the storytelling was selected for analysis. The thesis is structured as follows: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature Review, (3) Theoretical Framework, (4) Methods, (5) Result, and (6) Discussion and Conclusion.

The type of paper is propositional research at an initial stage which attempts to suggest developing further study about 'K-Culture' in the field of design management toward international audiences. Although the story of the film for case study obviously focuses on the two fictional rivalry, there are considerable elements surrounding the theme to be re-interpreted from the design context. Also, the study is conducted based on investigating a fictional story in the film, not from sources of academic records or documentation from Korean history. The content of the research in the section 'Result' can be considered as a new approach from the author's insight and perspective of design management. The scope of defining *Sanguiwon* within the analytic topics of the research is limited to address the realm of costume. And the author does not have the intention or purpose of analysing and criticizing the costume making in the film through historical research.

Literature Review

Sanguiwon from the Design Organizational Perspective

Originally, *Sanguiwon* was the official bureau of Royal attire in the *Joseon* Dynasty and established by King *TAEJO* (太祖 1392-1398). It was located within the geographic realm of a palace and the primary role of the organization was to make and supply a range of formal costumes and associated fashion items (S. Kim, 2008; S. Kim, 2019; M. Lee, 2012). For finance management, the Ministry of Taxation (*Hojo* 戶曹) and Tribute Bureau (*Seonhyecheong* 宣惠廳) was charged with the responsibility. The given task of workers in the national institute was to provide and supply a range of royal necessities from instruments to clothing, including informal and formal dresses for the royal family, both in the palace and outside places, including all the traditional

national occasions, such New Year's Day. For a special and politically important occasion, e.g. tributes to the Chinese, an additional duty of officers in the formal organization was to address making letters, consulting, and gaining permission about the events. For design production, the costume production was operated by significant numbers of workers as factory-based fashion management. There were specialised artisans and well-trained technicians in the various sectors of design for the royal family. There were 597 artisans, sorted by 68 types that were officially assigned to *Sanguiwon*: textiles, clothing, military weapons, leather/fur, dyeing, shoes, official hats, combs, musical instruments, and jewellery (S. Kim, 2008). From a management perspective, the design process was systematically operated by a professionally segmented work process at each key stage of designs, from weaving to decoration (Chang & Lee, 2016; Kastanos & Reddy-Best, 2018; S. Kim, 2007).

Research on *Sanguiwon* through the Film Study

Revisiting 'fashion mythology' from the global perspective is important to mapping visible identity and values (Bruzzi & Gibson, 2013). In that sense, the film attempted to conceptualize the aesthetical point of view about Korean traditional costume from the modern design approach. The film was highly criticized both positively and negatively when it was opened in public in Korea, because the designs of the costume in the film were assorted with the originality and the advanced styling elements. However, the creative dimensions of costume design for an imaginative-driven story surrounding the national organization opened a further discussion on potential development of Hanbok designs from the contemporary aesthetic perspective (K. Kim & S. Lee, 2015).

A brief introduction to the film is as follows. The original title in Korean is *Sanguiwon* which stands for the official name of the history organization in the *Joseon* Dynasty (the film's title in English is *The Royal Tailor*). It was released by Cinemascope nationwide in Korea in 2014 and a copy for downloading is widely available via the major channels of online media. Additional detailed information on the film's production and the cast are: The production was by *Younghwasa Bidan Gil* and the *Sanguiwon* Culture Industry;

it was directed by Won Suk Lee, the screenplay was by Byung Hak Lee and it was edited by Dong Soo Lee. The leading actors were Seok Kyu Han in the role of ‘Dolseok’, Soo Go in the role of ‘Gongjin’, Shin He Park as the ‘Queen’, Yeon Seok Yoo as the ‘King’. The genre can be categorized as drama based on fictional storytelling with imagined characters. The story’s theme is basically about imaginative figures, two excellent design professionals from different perspectives on creating a royal costume; one is “traditional elegance”, another is “enfant terrible” (M. Lee, 2015; Szeman, 2017). Dolseok represents an official chief designer at director level at the costume operation. In contrast, Gongjin reflects an unknown but emerging fashion genius outside the palace who has exceptional creative talent. To support the theme of the drama, one of the interviews with the leading actor, Seok Kyu Han in the film clearly informed audiences that the core message of the film’s story referred to a designer: “The movie is a story about designers” (‘An interview with Seok Kyu Han’, 2014). Additionally, the subtle and sensational costume design portfolio in the film was introduced by a few of internationally-acclaimed culture magazines. A couple of film critics analyzed the dramatic fashion story of the film as a “dazzling” costume presentation (Lee, 2015; Paquet, 2020).

Identifying *Sanguiwon* from the Design Perspectives

The first topic of the study concentrated on an examination of the costume design and its representation, in particular that of the Queen in the film. The main category of costume for the study specifies, *Dangui* (唐衣), *Jinyounbok* (進宴服), and *Chima* (裳), for the Queen. The key findings are as follows: (1) Identifying basic design elements and their use in the costume design, such as structure, pattern, draping, form, color, textile, silhouette, decoration and sewing technology; (2) Understanding the genre and function of the specific style of costume in terms of iterating the unconventional social status of a royal figure in authority, formality, control and preservation. The essence of the study on *Sanguiwon* clearly

shows the necessity of examining traditional costume and its value from a rigorous historical point of view. In this sense, defining and documenting a fact-based research outcome based on the observational study of a specific character in the film can be linked to the design agenda in representation (K. Kim & S. Lee, 2015; S. Kim, 2008).

The second example of the study explored the story content of the film from a current and phenomenal issue of ‘disruptive innovation’ in the design industry and in management. Specifically, the topic generously articulates an international marketing agenda in customers’ adoption of new products, and applying it to the needs and complexity of design innovation in marketing strategy (Yun & Choo, 2018). The study identified two types of characteristic features of new products for their introduction in a market followed by developing attributes: (1) Incremental New Product (INP): transformation or adding new functions to a product; (2) Really New Product (RNP): a radical revision or change in the original features of a product. In the study, there are two groups of customers based on their understanding, empathy and acceptance of the disruptive designs. The related theories are: (1) Innovation resistance: an internal and a potential factor of consumers in driving a negative formation to innovation; and (2) Conspicuous consumption: the tendency of consumers to use higher quality goods, in particular, luxury goods (Christensen, 2016). The discussion on the adaptation and conflict of a new and radically innovative design implies the relationship between the design leadership and audiences (Seo & Oh, 2018).

The key findings of the literature study formulated a considerable discussion in the context of Korean costume design and value creation. A possible topic for discussion could be converting the point of view on Korean traditional clothing from costume representation to rethinking ‘K-fashion’ to the area of value proposition. It can suggest a new barometer to revitalize and to upgrade awareness of the creative capital of *Hanbok* design culture at an international level.

Theoretical Framework

The research was developed on the basis of a theoretical reference. David Hand's *Design Management* (2018) can be applied to support the research in the context of designs and value creation to organizations. He stated that developing the essentiality of design and associated vital drivers leads to encompassing a provision through creation as follows: "The term 'design' is commonly, and sadly, used to articulate how either a product or object looks, mainly at a very superficial level of understanding. With this rather limited definition of usage, it is seen as a frivolous activity offering no real worth to the organization. However, enlightened organizations, regardless of size, really understand its (design) 'value,' not just a tactical level of engagement, but as a vital ingredient and source of both inspiration and opportunity." (*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11)

Based on the nature of the theory, the following design classification can be applied substantially to the research. Trueman (1998) classifies design activities into four distinct areas, with each area showing the differing benefits that design can provide: (1) Adding value, (2) Manipulating image, (3) Enhancing process, and (4) Improving productions. In the research, the three selected categories are addressed due to connectivity between the topic segment and the research context as follows:

- (1) Adding value: The ultimate purpose of the company is to offer its targeted customers products and services that satisfy the demand proliferation of users in buying and in value. It helps to enable the company to increase the perceived value of its product offerings and keep the competitive advantage. Therefore, the company needs to provide "added-value products and services" that are distinctive and visible. Furthermore, value can be articulated to develop a design concept progress:
 - (a) Existing or planned new products by expertise from multidisciplinary fields;
 - (b) Defining and sourcing knowledge from heterogeneous and unconventional areas of sagacity; and
 - (c) Incorporating this idea into "blue-sky" thinking and

innovative-driven design management (Hands, 2018, p. 62).

- (2) Manipulating image: Design can be a utilized tool as means for operating and coordinating, not just how the organization looks to its audiences, but also the way in which it conveys communications with them. In the sense, the organization is constantly producing 'designed material' that transmits clear and coherent messages to both internal and external receivers. Failure to manage the messages positively could gain a result in an ambiguous company image and unstable market reputation (Best, 2015). Also, design can be a strategic tool to enhance the image of the company by provisioning high-quality designs in experiencing aesthetics, technology and user-centered.
- (3) Enhancing process: The role of a structured and executed new product development (NPD) program requires a prerequisite to driving the competitive advantage when competing in active international markets. One of the most frequently used statistics is that 85 per cent of all future product costs are determined by the stage of concept development in a design project process (Design Council, 1998). Therefore, investing in design development the early stages of the new product development process is vital to accomplishing a successful outcome.

Table 1 shows a research framework based on the theoretical background of the literature study. The two areas were selected to conduct the analysis that draws upon design context development at meta level.

Methods

The data was collected from two types of secondary sources to conduct the research during 2019. Firstly, selected peer-reviewed journals and books within the specific scope of the research topic were used for the stage of the literature review. The period of data collecting based on publication date was

Table 1. Dimensions of design activity, modified.

Areas	Key context at meta level	Research applicability
Adding value	Increase the perceived image of the organization from inside to outside stakeholders by varying added-value design products.	Encompass the image creation to shape the higher value of the <i>Sanguiwon</i> both physically and intangibly (Hall, Evans, & Nixon, 2013).
Manipulating image	Produce readable messages that differentiate the characteristics of the organization and its design performance.	Categorize the main attributes of the <i>Sanguiwon</i> in enhancing the identity both internally and externally (Golinelli, 2015).

limited to the years 2004 to 2019. Next, a copy of the film of *Sanguiwon* was used through an official download on Google Play (<https://play.google.com/>) via the Internet for the stage of case study in 2019. The design management theory in the category of 'design values and the organization' (Hands, 2018, pp. 72-74) was extensively used to develop a systematic structure of the results from the analysis of the case study. The purpose of using the analytic criteria was to examine and to display a conventional relationship and gaps on the topic within the context of value construction. A segmentation of the key phases in the analysis under the main topic of 'design culture and value approach' is as following: (1) Identity, (2) Design focus, and (3) Role. For the analysis, selected visual references in the film were used. The methodological process was utilized from a semiotic approach (Rose, 2013) as follows. (1) Select scenes which show the clear story in the category of *Sanguiwon* as an official organization, design production environment, and a designer as Director; (2) Cross-analysis of visual elements such shape, color, figures and props allocation that are incorporated with the thematic creation; and (3) Construct segmented topics that shape a basis of identifying implications.

Result

The key findings of the analysis are summarized, followed by detailed descriptions: Re-positioning the roles of the costume design creation in the context of inheriting traditional ideas of creating costumes and its associated elements at the design culture level; (2) Defining the potential meaning of a national design organization from a design management perspective can be cross-positioned at two types of complementary axial

in a creativity platform, either traditional-focused or system-based; and (3) Constructing an architecture of dimensional value with regard to costume sustainability can visibly function to frame a compatible portfolio in the fashion archive at an international level. From the results of the analysis, a number of major topics and subsequent content within the subject of design-culture-led value proposition for Korean heritage were developed, as shown below.

The main features in constituting the management theme contain tangible and intangible facets which reflect the dimensional complexity of a legible value creation. On the communication side, to some extent, the text-based simple logo design helps to enable audiences to understand what the national organization symbolizes. On the invisible side, the theme acts to strongly represent a particular story of *Sanguiwon* in the context of a specialized and controlled institution brand at the standard of the governance. In this sense, the thematic connection between the institute and audiences shows complementary aspects on the subject of approachability. On the circumstance of being one of the nationally operated authorities in a sector of royal costume design management, the official positioning tends to be proactive in delivering a message: (1) The presence of the particular members of the class as symbolic figures for the nation; (2) The official roles of the royal family through showing the physique of fashion, individually and collectively, at the national level; (3) The use of the fashion code for the particular community in distinguishing themselves from others in the status system; and (4) Representational image creation, by managing the authentic design which quality, style and technology connects to build a solid originality in tradition-based communicative interaction.




Initially, the institution was established with the

purpose of making and providing specified products for certain customers in the restricted upper class. The production environment of the organization extensively interacts with the social meaning and the political status of the target segmentation at the level of the royal class. Identifying a clearly described design competitive environment surrounding the aristocratic culture was limited because of: (1) Introducing a type of organization in the conception of being exclusively connected to and supporting the royal family, functionally as well as visually, in the sense of managing apparel tradition; and (2) Positioning the bureaucratic official without showing other competitive suppliers or collaborative partnerships implies the exclusivity of the national inheritance. The essential background in identifying dimensions of the relationship between the design

system and the limited customer society underlies: (1) Limited design development which reflects trend translation from concept to design development; (2) The unconventional circumstance between the design professionals and customer that extensively correlates to the socially-established environment, individually and collectively.

The intangible features defining the value of the professional level interact with the realm of the designers' role: (1) The job specifications include position, duty and responsibility in directing and leading the design area within the systematically engineered structure of the organization; (2) The well-organized work environment shapes a divided design process by professionals in specialized areas; and (3) The outcome(s) of the cultural features of the *Sanguiwon* influence on creating complementary sides to design

Table 2. An analysis of the design culture of the *Sanguiwon* (Image source: Younghwasa Bidan Gil, 2014)

Analysis 1	Analysis 2	Analysis 3
		
<p>Figure 1. Artisans, designers and staff at the <i>Sanguiwon</i> (https://play.google.com/)</p>	<p>Figure 2. Sewing by Director of the <i>Sanguiwon</i> at his work place (https://play.google.com/)</p>	<p>Figure 3. Director of the <i>Sanguiwon</i> dresses King (https://play.google.com/)</p>
<p>Analysis criteria: Organized structure; unified work clothes, furniture, tools, and position</p>	<p>Analysis criteria: Display method of fiber collection in order; stillness; shape, color, and line up</p>	<p>Analysis criteria: Rigid posture of the designer and King in terms of communication; social norms</p>
<p>Implication: Consistency of costume production; manual-based process and undertaking</p>	<p>Implication: Focused and tension; express authority as a master's role, control, and professionalism</p>	<p>Implication: Hierarchical system and formality; strict social relationship; less-interactive</p>
<p>Value dimension 1</p>	<p>Value dimension 2</p>	<p>Value dimension 3</p>
<p>Type: In-house within a particular geographical realm of palace</p>	<p>Design philosophy: 'Good design' based on history materials</p>	<p>System-driven: Costume product management at high level</p>
<p>Function: Design, preserve, and supply various attire products exclusively to the royal family</p>	<p>Client relationship: Hierarchical community, long-term reliance, non-business, and loyalty</p>	<p>Reference: Reliable source of knowledge, skill, and method in costume design study</p>
<p>Management culture and level: Bureaucratic and national</p>	<p>Leadership: A highest master, authority, restricted but visionary</p>	<p>Representation: Authenticity, culture code, style distinctiveness</p>
<p>Work environment: A managing regulation, less interactive team, and solid infrastructure</p>	<p>Design role: Represent the meaning of traditional royal lifestyle; visual interpretation</p>	<p>Sustainability: Awareness of continuing history from the clothing legacy perspective</p>
<p>Vision: Undefined as an individual designer but personal ambition to reach the higher social-status</p>	<p>Design focus: Presentation of traditional designs based on history documentation</p>	<p>Impact: Unique and supreme design text to develop innovative themes for 'K-fashion'; content-driven innovation</p>

production. On the positive side, the culture of exclusivity toward limited customers and hierarchical relation to governance can offer the stability to produce high-quality designs consistently. In contrast, on the negative side, the feature of rigorous demand in producing, supplying and representing designs of perfectionism can restrict or overly narrow down the authentic dimensions of designers. The portfolio in assortment products is constituted of a heritage-driven platform with various types of clothes and associated accessories for each main customer within the individual characteristic of the royal boundary. In lieu of the restricted environment to develop clothing lines, with its incorporated product lines and trendy contents, a common range of products in everyday life was introduced. Specifically, the key compositional type of products involves the needs of basic, fashionable and formal, from a hunting event to a funeral. Furthermore, the design functions to re-iterate the identity enhancement of the royal personality, socially, culturally and politically.

The key contents of the platform dimensions are: (1) Artifactually, the products – such as the visuals of lavish textile designs for each specific character within the design system – shape the aesthetically highlighted presence of the figure; (2) Functionally, the designer at the royal costume administration showed a notable lack of awareness about his customers' needs, such as customized tailoring. It extensively indicated a reliable communication issue between the organization, the designer and the customer; (3) Culturally, the outcome of each design implies an intentional idea of delivering a message of the traditional inheritance of national events; and (4) Politically, the creative designs, made with delicacy, works as a medium in intervening the possibility of situations in relation to complicated issues in regard to international diplomacy. From the results of the analysis, a summary of the contextual framework in propositioning value drivers of the *Sanguiwon* from the design management perspective was structured as follows: (1) Develop a recognisable division of fashion genres in the field of the costume study by directing the engineered system, process and disciplines in fashion design management; (2) Specify the descriptive identity in part of the elements of representative fashion codes for the individual and the nation

through the design analysis; (3) Conjoin the role statement of the designers and the conventional needs of customers of a particular fashion culture at a social level; and (4) Formulate a definition of legible cultural role by sustaining the aesthetic performance of history-originated designs from applying multi-layered aspects at a creative level.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the research was to re-define the key facets of the value proposition for *Sanguiwon* within the fictional storyline of the film, through exploring visual language. The results of the analysis showed a range of major topics which play a role in constructing the unconventional aspects of the representation in order to know the drivers of the value creation. From the primary findings of the cross-analysis, a considerable discussion theme within the categorical subject of the royal costume design management was developed. A topic for the discussion is closely related to understanding the main ideas in structuring a substantial framework of a history-based design management bureaucracy. In spite of presenting a lack of information about detailed illustration for the operation in the limited expressions throughout the film, attempting to project the national design organization can offer a conceivable argument to project the agenda: (1) Building a research direction toward the scheme of design attributes can expand perspectives to identify and add stronger asset of the institution; (2) Delving into the relationship between cultural backbone and the design output from the design administration at a meta level can help develop better ideas to project the meaning of the critical roles of costume designers. The original contribution to knowledge can be defined as creating a model of value proposition in terms of re-identifying the Korean costume within the conceptual framework of key stages in design management. The outcomes of the research suggest a number of potential beneficiaries: (1) Interdisciplinary-based researchers in the field of Hanbok fashion and design management; (2) Designers, artisans, and related professionals, like marketers, in the specified area of the creative industry. A limitation of the study can be related to

gaining in-depth knowledge and a reliable source of documentation on the designers who actually existed and worked there in the representation in the film. A future study is likely to develop the research topic, from a more advanced theoretical perspective in design management on the segmented roles of the costume design management.

In conclusion, the research has led me to rethink the history and the current status of the Korean fashion industry at an identity level in two ways: (1) The need to examine the research possibilities of Korean traditional costume from a design value perspective, which raises the question of the relationship between the visual culture and a designer's interpretation; and (2) The indispensability of developing further topics in design segmentation, which will be able to act as a meditation between the fashion and national identity development. Moreover, the deeper implications of the findings from the research underlined further issues of the Hanbok industry scheme, such as the strategic positioning through developing design differentiation. The consequence, ultimately, will be a workable acting vehicle to help add a method in accelerating the engine of Korean fashion and costume design industry at an international level. Lastly, it is hoped that the research can be a useful guideline for supporting the process of defining a new introduction to 'K-fashion' as a future-forward cultural asset.

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