



Adjustment Patterns in Food Consumption: From Extreme Poverty to Affluent Society: A Case of North Korean Defectors (Saeteomins) in South Korea

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ABSTRACT

There are two Koreas; North Korea and South Korea. The former has been a centrally planned communist system that has brought a dismally failed economy to 23 million people experiencing starvation while the latter has developed into an advanced, market-oriented economy that ranks among the world's largest. An increasing number of North Koreans are leaving their homeland to seek better lives in South Korea or elsewhere. The study deals with how North Korean defectors (saeteomins) change their food consumption behavior in South Korea with their newly-found freedoms to shop, to earn, and to consume in a choice-loaded world. The findings indicate that the saeteomins tend to stick with rice consumption eating more at increasing rate after their arrival in South Korea. As a necessity item, the saeteomins spent 35%, only about the half of the 70 % of their income spent for food expenses while in North Korea. The study reveals that unlike the promises made under the communist rule that all things are provided to the needs of the people in the country, the lack of provision in many necessities, not to mention any luxury items, has caused the birth of Jangmadang (a semi-authorized market system) and many blackmarkets in North Korea.

INTRODUCTION

Geography of North Korea with:

China	1,353 km	85 %	Land line
Russia	16 km	1 %	
South Korea	238 km	14 %	
3 countries	1,607 km	100%	

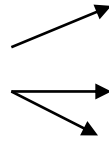
METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY



Research Setting

Countries

North Korea → China



South East Asian

South Korea

U.S.A.

20,000 plus saeteomins in South Korea

Un-willingness to participate/Paid interviews

Daegu

27 effective/28 interviews/Fruit Baskets

Saeteomin (North Korean Defector)=people settling in a new place

Parallel Translation of the Survey Questionnaire

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- Increasing number of saeteomins
- Understand the adjustment patterns
- Consumer life: Nonexistence in NK
- New life as a consumer: Choice loaded in SK
- Food consumption and shopping outlets
- Business and government policy for settlement of saeteomins

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY

Table 1

Gender

Male	4 (14.8%)
Female	23 (85.2%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 2

Home Province from North Korea

Hamgyong-Bukdo	17 (63%)
Hamgyong-Namdo	2 (7.4%)
Yanggang-Do	2 (7.4%)
Pyungan-Namdo	2 (7.4%)
Pyungan-Bukdo	1 (3.7%)
Hwanghae-Bukdo	1 (3.7%)
Kangwon-Do	1 (3.7%)
Chagang-Do	1 (3.7%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 3

Marital Status

Married	13 (48.1%)
Not sure	13 (48.1%)
Missing	1 (3.7%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 4

Years Away From North Korea

Years away from North Korea before reaching South Korea	55 months
Years lived in South Korea	36 months



Mean age of the sample group 37.8 years
 Mean family size in South Korea 2.7 person

Table 5

Levels of Education	Education in North Korea	Plus In South Korea
High School	15 (55.6%)	6 (22.2%)
2-year College	8 (29.6%)	6 (22.2%)
4-year College	3 (11.1%)	11 (40.7%)
Graduate School	1(3.7%)	4 (14.8%)
Total	27	27

Table 6
Occupation

	In North Korea	In South Korea
Laborer	12(44.4%)	7 (25.9%)
Student	1 (3.7%)	10(37.0%)
Office Worker	7 (25.9%)	4 (14.8%)
Health Worker	5 (18.5%)	2 (7.4%)
House wife	0 (0.0%)	2 (7.4%)
Missing	2 (7.4%)	2 (7.4%)
Total	27	7

Food Expenditures in North Korea and South Korea /Shopping Outlets in North Korea /Preference of Shopping Outlets in South Korea/Cultural barriers in brand recognition in SK/Major barriers in conducting shopping in SK

Table 7

Food Expenditures in North Korea vs. South Korea

Item	In North Korea	In South Korea	Difference in %	Significance
Food (grain)	73.56 %	47.08 %	-26.48 %	0.0001
Food (Non-grain)	11.22 %	15.00 %	+ 3.78 %	0.3850
Personal Groom	9.71 %	18.00 %	+ 8.29 %	
Housing				
Appliances		2.62 %	+ 2.62 %	
Furniture		3.00 %	+ 3.00 %	
Education		10.44 %	+ 10.44 %	
Medicine	5.51 %	3.86 %	- 1.65 %	
Total	100 %	100 %		

Table 8

Food Items Consumed in North Korea and South Korea

Item	In North Korea	In South Korea	Correlation	Significance
Rice	17.79 %	41.21 %	.038	.000
Potatoes	21.73 %	17.79 %	.720	.374
Corn	37.76 %	21.26 %	.579	.094
Flour (Wheat)	22.72 %	19.74 %	.226	.924
Total	100.00 %	100.00 %		

Table 9

Shopping Outlets in North Korea

Shop or Source	Jang Ma Dang	Self-Supply	Relative Help
Shop or Source	24 (89%)	14	14
Missing	3 (11%)	13	13
Total	27 (100%)	27	27



Table 10
Preference of Shopping Outlets in South Korea

Preference	Department Store	Large Discount Store	Traditional (Korean) Market	Small Neighborhood Store	Home Shopping Networks	Online Shopping
1st	1(3.7%)	7(25.9%)	4(14.8%)	16(59.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
2nd	3(11.1%)	4(14.8%)	7(25.9%)	6(22.2%)	1(3.7%)	1(3.7%)
3rd	4(14.8%)	5(18.5%)	4(14.8%)	3(11.1%)	2(7.4%)	0(0.0%)
4th	6(22.2%)	5(18.5%)	2(7.4%)	0(0.0%)	2(7.4%)	0(0.0%)
5th	2(7.4%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(11.1%)	2(7.4%)
6th	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(7.4%)	3(11.1%)
Missing	11(40.7%)	6(22.2%)	10(37.0%)	2(7.4%)	17(62.9%)	21(77.7%)
Total	27(100%)	27(100%)	27(100%)	27(100%)	27(100%)	27(100%)

Table 11
Degree of Familiarity of Brand Names

Degree of Familiarity	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not Familiar At all	4	15.4	15.4
Little Familiar	8	30.8	46.2
Half Familiar	10	38.4	84.6
Completely Familiar	4	15.4	100.0
Missing	1		
Total	27	100.0%	

Table 12
Major Barriers in Conducting Shopping

Types of Shopping Barrier	Frequency	Valid Percent
Foreign words in brand names	4	28.6
North Korean accent	3	21.4
Unfamiliar with brand names	3	21.4
Lack of market information	1	7.1
No refund or return allowed	1	7.1
No major problems	2	14.3
Missing	13	
Total	27	99.9

Findings/Implications/Conclusions

¾ of income in NK for Food expenditures
 Significant difference in NK and now in SK/Neither choice nor variety in NK for food
 Evidence of national ownership in life: housing and education
 Rice: the most consumption preference
 Potatoes, corn, and wheat: forced consumption in NK → decrease in SK
 Choice in variety and shopping outlets
 Discrimination → Government policy
 Preference of rice consumption/Education/English
 One race, one ethnicity, one culture society/Acculturation not enculturation
 Adjustment → assimilation/association

Future Study/Plan of research in South Korea

Larger sample size
 Relationships in the demographics of Saeteomins and consumption patterns
 Study the speed of acculturation and the demographics/Prepare for the future coming of the unification



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