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Fashion in 21st Century China

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Preface

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a highly dynamic Chinese fashion industry along with the flourishing economic development. Fashion brand upgrading, emerging of the new generation of Chinese fashion designers, improvement of fashion education, and the support of both Chinese government and giant business organizations (such as e-commerce retailers Tmall.com and JD.com, Inc.) all have helped Chinese fashion to become international and global. The fast-growing Chinese consumer segment who requests for high fashion is also an indispensable part of this scenario. Young Chinese consumers are living in the globalized and network information age. They keep abreast of the thoughts of fashion trends with an increasingly broad vision, which further cultivates and enhances their fashion knowledge and taste. As a response, foreign brands adopt various corresponding strategies to seize the opportunities and develop their market share in China. To take a close look at these important shifts, we have compiled this three-part monograph, which pays much attention to the new generation of Chinese fashion designers and consumers.

Today, Chinese fashion brands and designers are more closely connected with international fashion developments. Moreover, part of the younger designers are embracing a new esthetic milieu relatively independent of the Eurocentric fashion system. This is very different from the clichéd cultural iconography, which is more familiar to the Western viewers. By revaluing the ethnic heritage with a growing sense of confidence, they project Chinese style from within rather than blindly sticking to the Western one. In the multifaceted surroundings, the new generation endeavors to elaborate a "neo-Chineseness," crafting their authenticity in a mix of the East and West, taken as their passport of traveling the increasingly globalized world. It can be said that the emerging force is playing a growingly important role in the "created in China" branding process. By setting up their own enterprises and brands, showcasing at fashion week events locally and abroad, the new generation holds out the promise of developing "home grown brands."

The thriving of Chinese fashion is, without doubt, cogently associated with the improvement of education quality. The operation is twofold: bringing in and going out. Paralleling with the fact that modern fashion mostly originates from the West.

In the past decade, to improve knowledge on fashion and modern design, more and more Chinese students chose to go abroad to study fashion in the internationally renowned art and design institutions, such as the University of the Arts London, Parsons School of Design, Polytechnic University of Milan, etc. On the other hand, the teaching models of domestic institutes led by the Academy of Arts and Design of Tsinghua University, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and alike have become increasingly internationalized. This includes establishing extensive cooperative partnerships with international elite colleges and universities, inviting experienced experts and industry professionals around the world to hold workshops, give lectures and seminars. Besides, to promote young talents and help students better involved into the industry, domestic colleges have established close connections with the industry by developing industry–academia partnerships and organizing graduate fashion week events and fashion shows. Such international initiatives and endeavors undoubtedly contribute to expanding the young generation's creativity and vision, improving their knowledge on the fashion industry and facilitating their entrepreneurial spirit. These further exert a positive impact on the construction of their design identity in a way very different from their predecessors from the 1980s and 1990s.

In line with Chinese fashion dynamics, Chinese consumers are undergoing major shifts, which are largely related to the changes of sociocultural context, the improvement of education level, and the formulation of the "Web lifestyle." How do today's Chinese consumers relate to foreign brands? What do apparel brands, as identity symbols or cultural signs, mean to contemporary young consumers? Does the attractiveness of Western fashion designers and brands to Chinese consumers remain the same compared to the past decades? Furthermore, does the present young generation have any change in their attitude toward the local designs? How could brands adapt to the online-centered consumption behavior to maintain and strengthen their brand position in the mindsets of consumers?

With multidisciplinary investigations, the featured chapters of this edited book discuss and explore different factors, features, and motivations constituting today's Chinese fashion dynamics from different dimension perspectives. They collectively offer an insightful update on Chinese fashion landscape from a comprehensive spectrum of perspectives for all researchers and practitioners interested in these topics.

We wish to thank various reviewers, especially Dr. Jie Feng and Dr. Na Liu, for their constructive commentary and suggestions which led to improvements of this book.

Beijing, China Yuli Bai
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Dr. Yuli Bai is Associate Professor at the College of Arts at Beijing Union University. Her research interests are fashion and art collaboration, fashion theory, and authentic branding.

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Part I
New Generation Design

Chapter 1
Fashion Design in Altermodern China

Jie Feng

1.1 A New Critical Discourse

Tsui (2009), drawing on interviews with prominent contemporary fashion designers in China, provides insight into the recent history with three main phases: pre-liberation (pre-1949); the "fashion forbidden period" (1949–1978); and the post-Mao era (1978-). Ten years on, it is pertinent to offer new reflections on the state of contemporary fashion design in China. What is not accounted for in Tsui's study, for example, is the year-on-year rise and ubiquity of China's homegrown mobile and Internet technologies. WeChat, for example, reached 1 billion monthly active users after the 2018 Chinese New Year (Hollander, 2018), and as early as 2016 Alibaba became the world's largest retailer (Jing, 2016), having surpassed all US retailers combined (including Walmart, Amazon, and eBay). The specificity and scale of China's market make for a very particular context.

Yet, equally, the optimism suggested in Tsui's vision for the role of Chinese designers in the "fashion world of the future" is not necessarily in evidence as we might expect. This chapter seeks to offer an updated and more nuanced reading through the application of the term "altermodenism". It is a term that is borrowed from the field of contemporary curation, notably from the writings of the curator Nicolas Bourriaud, who is well-known within a globalized art world. Arguably, given that contemporary art moves around the world rapidly and is not contingent on the same sort of production and manufacturing cycles of fashion, curatorial thinking offers a form of "agile" theorization. It provides pertinent insights and framing that can be adapted for other areas such as fashion, which similarly represents complex forms of engagement and production within a fast-paced, global system.

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However, while the altermodern helps contextualize a contemporary reading, the chapter goes onto contribute a "neutral" account of fashion in China, which is to suggest a more expansive view of how trends and new generation of designers are positioning themselves within their home environment. As part of which, the aim is move beyond overly simplified notions of postmodern "tradition" and hybridity. The term of the "neutral" is adopted from the late work of Roland Barthes, notably his late lecture course *The Neutral* (2005). When applying it here (in the later sections of the chapter), it is elaborated through a reading of François Jullien, in particular his book *In Praise of Blandness* (2007). The term "blandness" is applied here as a synonym of Barthes' "neutral". While Jullien's account of blandness offers a more accessible, descriptive account, Barthes' term remains important in its acknowledgement of a form of "fluid" semiotics, that allows for an echo of his well-known structuralist study of fashion, yet equally presents a much more "open system". Both terms refer to a sense of plenitude and openness (Feng, 2020). In addition, the term "fashion" in itself is not easily fixed. As it is evoked here, it does refer merely to commercial "high fashion", nor to the latest styles and decoration. Instead, the underlying "reading" of fashion in this chapter seeks to allow for a more *general* semiotic basis. As is well know, Barthes' (1983) early text on fashion offers a semiotic reading, but focusing on fashion *as produced through language.* Importantly, however, while he does not expand on this himself, he acknowledges how meanings circulate at the level of image and materiality. This chapter understands fashion as a multi-modal system of significations, which opens up the possibility for greater *movement* within the structures of signification, or, as in the "operation" of the Neutral (as Barthes might suggest), to get outside of these structures, or at least to expand them radically. Pursued in this way, the aim is to "think through fashion", which as Rocamora and Smelik (2016, 2) suggest to pursue an exercise in broadening the discourse, "to critically engage with a vast array of theories and concepts, often from thinkers who…have not themselves written about fashion". In a similar way, this chapter asserts a more layered reading, with the view to contribute to a *new critical discourse* on fashion design in China.[1]

1.2 Altermodern China

Chinese fashions need to be examined in their local and global contexts, which also gives rise to ideas about hybridity and fusions. However, such concepts are frequently framed within postcolonial discourse, which often suggests of an imposition from one side to the other, and typically more from a Western point of view. Venn (2000) refers to the idea of "occidentalism" to describe a condition that goes beyond a

[1] The critical approach offered here can be understood to parallel David Wang's *A Philosophy of Chinese Architecture* (2017). Unlike a long history of 'architectural theory' based on the Greco-European tradition, Wang argues there is no comparable 'line of theorizing in Chinese ideas'. Obviously, this is not to deny the distinctive architectural styles associated with China, rather his point is that there has been no comparable philosophical *discourse.*

First/Third world imbalance. The "Third World", he writes, is no longer "contained within the older colonial space; the relationship of the global and the local [has become] deterritorialized" (3). Thus, he goes onto argue "the postcolonial world is present everywhere, but it is filtered for the 'West' through the representational devices of consumer culture and the tourist gaze" (Venn, 2000, 3). Venn's argument is that the narrative of modernization has become a standardized one; "because of the universal scope of the project of modernity and the global research of European colonization" (4). Similarly, Enwezor refers to the idea of "supermodernity", as the grand narrative of Western modernity, "generally acknowledged as fundamental to the development of the entire framework of global modernity, namely the world system of capitalism" (2009, 28). Against this, however, we can turn to the concept of "altermodernity", allowing for alternative modernisms; and a *different* kind of "orientalism", or a re-*orient*ing of our views of local–global politics.

The Shanghai Fashion Week in 2019 hosted close to 300 Chinese brands and the country's designer exports are increasing now in high demand (Suen, 2019). It is hard to underestimate the promise of a vibrant creative industry, built upon a new generation of Chinese artists and designers. Of course, whether simply as play or subversion, creativity is inherently critical of the very system in which it exists—this is its means of change, its means of producing something *new*. While China's creative sector is constantly looking to expand and extend, its up-and-coming designers—those increasingly trained in Europe—still tend to pay attention to Western styles. Local identity has begun to evolve from *both* inside and outside, with big international fashion players launching collections specifically devised for the Chinese market, as well as with new local brands starting to emerge. This all makes for a complex layering of attitudes, styles, and opportunities, and whereby the concept of "altermodernism" becomes pertinent. Local productions, for example, can incorporate elements from outside sources, such as international fashion culture, which then allows the local to enter into the context of the global, and vice versa. This is a phenomenon that Lindgren (2015, 287) refers to as the "borderless exchanges of aesthetic information", that comes of globalization, but which must also be read in terms of China's global economic ascendency.

The term "altermodern" was coined by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2009) in the context of contemporary art. Using the geographical image of the archipelago as a key metaphor, Bourriaud breaks from the unitary notion of modernism to describe the altermodern as a "scattering of islands united by no common name … a structureless constellation" (2009, 12).

> [The term has] its roots in the idea of "otherness" (Latin *alter* = "other", with the added English connotation of "different") and suggests a multitude of possibilities, of alternatives to a single route. In the geopolitical world, "altergloblisation" defines the plurality of local oppositions to the economic standardization imposed by globalization. (Bourriaud, 2009, 12)

The insistence on the "alter-" of altermodernism is to acknowledge multiple viewpoints and temporalities, which arguably were lost in what Bourriaud refers to as the "essentialist" multicultural model of postmodernism. In respect of which, one of

the critical ideas bound up in the phrase "altermodernism" is the idea of *alternative* modernisms, which is both to assert the idea that processes of modernization occur at different times and speeds around the world and that these different modernisms can appeal to quite different aims and desires. In this respect, it is not sufficient, for example, to think of China's development of its fashion industry as simply a later echo of developments in Europe. Instead, we need to get in amongst the actual histories, objects, and effects of fashion making and consumption in China to properly understand what is going on and where its (alternative) futures might lead. Bourriaud writes:

> [Altermodernism] cannot be placed *after* modernist phenomenon any more than after this aftermath: it does not "overtake" anything, any more than it "harks back" to a previous period. There is no question of a return to the principles or the style of twentieth-century modernism, nowadays the object of a revival far from our preoccupations. If today we can envisage a form of modernism, this is only possible starting from the issues of the present, and assuredly not by an obsessive return to the past, whatever its attributes. (Bourriaud, 2009, 12–13)

Bourriaud's reference here to the "present" is important. Altermodernism is more attuned to how we look out from where we currently are than to continually revisit how we might have reached such a point. In response to Bourriaud, fellow curator Okwui Enwezor makes specific reference to the large-scale and rapid modernization of Asian countries such as China and South Korea in recent decades.

> In China alone, the restless imagination and ambition shaping the landscape … is breathtaking. Along with this shift, especially among intellectuals and artists, a reverse phenomenon of migration is occurring, namely the relocation back to an Asian context from which many of them had emigrated years before. Yet it is not only the infrastructures of the state and private speculation that are being revived, but the artistic and intellectual cultures of many cities being remapped... (Enwezor, 2009, 28)

Not only does Enwezor refer to a reverse migration from outside China he also regards the cultural and intellectual capital to be dispersing *across many cities*, rather than concentrating on a limited number. In addition, the virtual realm has developed significantly in China. As noted in the introduction, the last ten years have seen rapid development and consolidation of internet and social media platforms specific to the Chinese context. Also, unlike Western equivalents (such as Amazon and Facebook), these platforms have been allowed to consolidate various datasets to offer unprecedented integration of profiles, features and e-commerce. Here again, we encounter the prospect of what Bourriaud describes as a "multitude of possibilities, of alternatives to a single route".

Despite an external view that typically portrays contemporary China as monolithic (due to its centralized political structure), the country is arguably much more diverse, at least in terms of consumption and leisure. In this respect, China has many sides, many alternative viewpoints, from which we need to situate our reading of contemporary consumer circumstances. The term "altermodern" becomes useful in explaining, or at least describing the new context of both global and local forces, or what Enwezor (2009) refers to as our habitations of modernity. In his outline

of the altermodern project, Enwezor explains, "Bourriaud lays out an intellectual and cultural itinerary, a jagged map of simultaneity and discontinuity; overlapping narratives and contiguous sites of production", as such altermodernism rejects the "rigid structures" of previous modernisms (and the notion of the autonomy of art). "If there is anything that marks the path of the altermodern," Enwezor goes onto suggest, "it would be the provincialities of contemporary art practice today—that is, the degree to which these practices, however globalized they may appear, are also informed by specific epistemological models and aesthetic conditions" (2009, 30–31). By applying such a reading to contemporary Chinese fashion design, the altermodern encourages us to look not for a singular reading as such, but rather its *overlapping narratives*.

However, it is important to note, Bourriaud and Enwezor primarily deploy the altermodern as a tactic or "project" of contemporary art. As a critical term, and in this case in looking at the context of fashion, it warrants some development. As discussed below, this is to consider a shift in perspective away from thinking about hybridity (being a typical reading of global, contemporary tends) toward a *neutral reading* of fashion. The point of which is to place both the local and global, the traditional and the modern, within a less hierarchical system of understanding, which arguably the Chinese context allows for quite readily, due to how it combines its own sense of a long, rich history and a rapid, at times seemingly insatiable, drive towards the new.

1.3 Beyond Hybridity

While fashion, by its very nature, is always changing, the contemporary, globalized context has given rise to ever greater exchange and copying. In turn, this leads to increased interest in and experimentation with hybrid forms. Wu et al. (2013) provides in-depth examples of successful Chinese brands that are reaching a global audience and explicitly reference Chinese culture and history. In many respects, this serves to illustrate Bourriaud's notion of the altermodern, which, in the context of contemporary art, he speaks of in terms of a new "global culture". As he writes: "The more that contemporary art integrates heterogeneous artistic vocabularies deriving from multiple non-Western visual traditions the more clearly there emerge the distinctive characteristics of a single global culture" (2009, 13).

Bourriaud is critical, for example, of what he calls the "blindspot of postcolonial theory" (2009, 34), whereby those articulating such a theory are all too often those who continue to preserve the power to do so. By contrast, his reference to "altermodernity" is a form of looking forward; as noted above it is a "construction of a space of negotiation going beyond postmodern multiculturalism" (40). It is less about origins and more about destinations. Yet, nonetheless, there remains in his account a somewhat simplistic notion of "translation" (and by extension hybridity). He suggests rather simplistically: "we are entering the era of universal subtitling" (44), which arguably only leads us back to supermodernity. What underlies his references to translation and hybridity is a more widespread notion of *benign* cultural exchange, and a

desire to seek harmony through diversity (Li & Chen, 2018, 122–123). Various studies have examined hybridity in terms of how elements of culture, race, language, and ethnicity fuse together to form new hybrid identities for newcomers and the dominant, host culture (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). Such accounts of cultural "fusions" (and a new global culture) frequently assert how newcomers to culture continually build upon what they are exposed to, integrating components of the dominant culture into the knowledge base, so that the dominant culture is influenced by newcomers. These relatively optimistic accounts are different from the description of de-culturation, accultural, and inter-culturation, whereby it is argued that newcomers are encouraged to abandon older, accrued cultural knowledge while learning new cultural knowledge.

Inevitably, hybridity is a realized politics of difference, which arguably, even when eliding differences still foregrounds those differences. We remain stuck with an antagonistic view of culture. A way of understanding this point can be to consider the postmodern concept of "doubling code" that Jencks (1987) refers to the domain of architecture. The postmodern, hybrid style of the late-1980s onwards led to a changing skyline. Yet, new buildings would only *ironically* re-work existing codes and styles in such a way that elements are "quoted" (outlined, foregrounded) rather than worked up into something genuinely new.

With respect to the fluidities of fashion, and also, with respect to a specific "neutral" aesthetic of Chinese fashion, this contested sense of culture, albeit hybrid, does not necessarily best define the experience of change and renewal taking place for a younger generation of designers in contemporary China. It is more pertinent to argue for an "open" system. This is still to understand the garment as a "socio-cultural sign", but to take the logic of the *arbitrary* nature of the sign to its fuller conclusion. We might be reminded of Barthes' (1983) well-known structuralist account, *The Fashion System*, which argued for how Fashion (as a discourse) signifies itself; that it alters clothing by making them seem natural, to be signified as definite elements within an overall lexicon. Barthes describes this discourse as "a veil of images, of reasons, of meanings; a mediate substance of aperitive order" (Barthes, 1983, xi). Rather than focus on these structured, "veiled" outcomes (how the systems get "weighted" or bound up, such as we might suggest with hybridity), the point is to stay with the *movement* of the system, to understand the "lightness" of fashion—its *present*, lived conjecture—so as to understand how it can change and adapt. The proposal of a "neutral" scene of Chinese fashion is to read less as a postmodern condition, and more as an altermodern phenomenon, which is to say, in looking between or across both East and West brands (and consumptive trends) it is important not to be drawn into dichotomous accounts. Crucially, in altermodern China, we can begin to discern a shift from "Made in China" to "Made for China" (Casagrande, 2018). And whereby the notion of hybridity gives away to a more nuanced form of creativity and consumption.

1.4 Brand Neutral

The term "altermodern" has been adopted in this chapter as a means to refer beyond merely a collapsing or hybridizing of styles (as we might consider with the postmodern). Instead, it is a reflexive term, suggestive of a particular local-global context, with its own "time" of modernizing forces (which we see writ large in China's state-run infrastructural developments), and its blending of place, ideas, and styles, notable with the layering of *both* the influx of western consumer goods and the emergence of new Chinese designers. In the altermodern, tradition is not to be thought of as an unchanging trope of the past, but, on the contrary, as a *dynamic* encapsulation of the fusion of global trends and successive innovations. Again, the focus is not on "origins" (and cultural traditions per se), but about destinations. Indeed, the dropping of the prefix "post-" in favor of alter-modern gives more credence to the modern, as in the "now" and of future aspirations. In addition, of course, this is to be open to different temporalities and modes of modernities. In this case, the growing confidence of Chinese fashion (Suen, 2019) provides us with tangible examples of how imaginations and beliefs are expanding, which as a very open "system" of significations leads to a more "neutral" and mutual image of Chinese people's everyday fashions. Thus, the altermodern landscape gives rises to what we might refer to as "brand neutral": a movable and scalable "fashion system" that is evident in China (although arguably observable in places, particularly those outside of the West). Or, put another way, and connecting with the concept of (self-) orientalisation, the neutrality of fashion in China can perhaps only be "read" from within. It requires a field of vision that is *situated* within the complex layering of both contemporary and historical conditions.

In accounting for traditional Chinese aesthetics (for example in Chinese ink paintings), Jullien (2007) notes of contrast between flavor and blandness. An ink painting, he suggests is bland, but not in the sense of dull, or boring. Rather the opposite. There is a plentitude (a many), and a sense of *all things being equal*, all elements are mutually together. He writes: "nothing here strives to incite or seduce; nothing aims to fix the gaze or compel the attention. […] The Chinese critics traditionally characterize this in one word: *dan*, the 'bland'" (37). By contrast, flavor "constitutes a limitation, for it excludes all other becoming. It will never be anything more than that particular flavor, the given flavor, compartmentalized in and restricted by its insuperable particularity". Thus, he writes, "when no flavor is named, the value of savoring it is all the more intense for being impossible to categorize; and so it overflows the banks of its contingency and opens itself to transformation" (42). It is this "value of savoring" (of enjoying, appreciating) that is significant here in exploring contemporary fashion design in China. Much of the prior writing on Chinese fashion has the tendency to draw out particular garments as distinct "flavors" (e.g. the cheongsam) albeit hybridized and postmodern (Ling, 2017; Tam, 2005; Wu, 2009), but which, following Jullien's logic "excludes all other becoming". What is of more interest in terms of an altermodern reading is how clothing might operate in a "flavorless" manner, in that space in which there are greater transformations and possibilities.

This is the zone of the neutral, and arguably the matter of fashion in itself, as an ever-changing set of codes and possibilities.

When viewed from outside of China it is perhaps too easy to make binary readings of outside/inside, west/east, new/traditional, fashionable/derivative (with the first of each of these terms forming a complicity of authorizing, domineering terms, West *over* East). Indeed, from a western point of view, "to value the flavorless rather than the flavorful … runs counter to our most spontaneous judgment" (27). In Chinese culture, Jullien argues, it is given a positive value:

> As the Chinese have always said, if "all men are able to discriminate among differing flavors," the blandness of the "Mean" (or the "Dao") is "what is most difficult to appreciate". But it is precisely this that lends itself to infinite appreciation. (Jullien, 2007, 24)

Thus, here, we can suggest the "bland" comes to represent "all things in-between" the otherwise fixed values we typically contend with and trade in. One argument, then, is that fashion—as a process of continual change—is always of the "bland", is always the means of continual discrimination "among differing flavors".

Typically, we might be led to consider two main ways of categorizing contemporary Chinese designers in terms of how they adopt and absorb from both a western and local context. One approach has been to pursue a decidedly "international" style, of which the most successful in market terms is Frankie Xie's fashion brand JEFEN. The brand has now more than 80 shops across China, and with collections shown at Paris, London, New York, and Milan fashion weeks. Frankie Xie has had a significant impact upon a new, emergent generation of fashion designers, including, for example, You Zou, Masha Ma, Hao Qiu, and Huishan Zhuang. Typically, these designers share a foreign education, and present modern styles and prolific activities upon an international stage, which offer sophisticated reflection of the aesthetics of *international* fashion beyond that of China. Another group of new designers emphasize more traditional aesthetics. The most obvious example is the haunt couture brand Heaven Gaia founded by Ying Xiong, whose designs reflect the Chinese "national spirit", with strong red seal, and traditional shapes and use of silk heavily influenced by a Chinese sartorial history.

Some investigators divide Chinese fashion styles into several further groups: "young and vivacious", "ethnic and classic", "modern and simple", "romantic and elegant", and "avant-garde" (Xiao & Ren, 2018). A postmodern reading of these various styles would be to suggest of a repetition of what has gone before, a sense of being stuck within perpetual re-invention of the same. An altermodern take, however, is to allow the work of these designers to be viewed more as numerous trajectories within a greater complexity. One of the problems is that the new designers are not necessarily as "exciting" as their pioneering counterparts. But, this less "interesting" status is interesting in itself. It represents a new, quiet confidence and a continually broadening spectrum, a new means of "savoring" fashion. The suggestion, then, is that the Chinese fashion scene operates as much at a level of "brand neutral", which is to suggest of being both diversified and integrated. A way of understanding this is to turn from the literal production of fashion (as the site of fashion design) and

rather consider a *proliferation of fashions*, a "production" or play of fashion through consumption.

In 2019 a meme circulated on social media in China of young women lying face down surrounded by luxury possessions. Like many "glamorous" images on social media (such as with selfies, etc.) these images involved very deliberate staging and careful coordination or manipulation of colors and tones, etc. In one example, the image was themed with the color pink. In this image, the woman appears to have fallen from her car, although it is obvious the items around her and their selections are deliberately set out for the photograph. The expensive nature of the car and all of the various luxury goods (a Hermes bag, cosmetics, sunglass, etc.) surrounding the woman signifies wealth and even decadence (i.e. that it is reasonable to let such expensive items be left strewn about the floor). One reading of these images, of which many circulated the social media platforms, is of a superficial narcissistic display of possessions. Yet this meme was defined by the female figure lying face down, as if "crashing to the ground". Indeed, the women assume a very deliberate pose, *as if* falling. As much as there is a display of opulence, it is also an explicitly ironic display.

The humor of this social media meme is worth keeping in mind when reflecting on the dramatic rise of luxury consumption in China. There is no doubt that luxury goods are greatly desired by the Chinese consumers, yet this meme can be read as a kind of *neutralizing* of brand. It pushed the "image" of brand to its limit, as a hyper-display of conspicuous consumption. Yet equally, the images portray a certain "death" of consumption (symbolized by the "incident" of the fallen woman). This neutralizing of brand, can be thought of as an altermodern up-date on Barthes' study of the fashion system, whereby we need to consider fashion *systems* (in the plural). The meme is a clear example of the role of social media in circulating ideas and images of fashion. The images that circulate are examples of how the legible "units" of fashion can be a source of infinite circulation; that their original significations are open to re-writing in various ways, and here as *both* a sign of opulence and a sign of its undoing. The neutral, in this case, as befits Barthes' oft reference to Taoism, opens up a way of seeing that is multiple and fluid. Or, similarly, to again cross-reference to Jullien's (2007, 24) thesis of "blandness", we can begin to think of things as less in opposition to one another, but, rather, able to "*abide within* plenitude". Of course, the fact that this meme appeared in the context of China is significant in itself. It represents a particular cultural response, which presents a certain kind of "play" with brands and the ownership and status of brands that is arguably quite different to other contexts.

The point, then, is to acknowledge the prevalence of brands in China, but equally to suggest a kind of flattening of meaning. Quite commonly, jackets, jumpers, and trousers will include slogans and emblems incorporating certain characters and words. As with the fad in the West for Chinese character tattoos, unreadable to the causal viewer (and often even the person sporting the tattoo), the various western phrases and logos on the clothing that "ripple" through the streets of China's urban environments are mere visual patterning that moves in amongst the tremendous variety of sartorial styles, whether old, new, retro, or hybrid; whether: young and

vivacious, ethnic and classic, modern and simple, romantic and elegant, or even avant-garde. "Designed in China" is on one level, then, a deliberate making of Chinese-styled fashions (motivated through the work of notable designers within the country, and those working elsewhere, but identifying themselves as Chinese). But equally, clothing designs (and choices) are constantly being made and re-made by individuals on a daily basis. All of which combines to make for the contemporary landscape of a Chinese fashion system (or systems plural)—a neutral system, a *lived* reality, formed through the "production" or patterning of consumption; as such, not only is the designer important to a new generation of fashion but the consumer too must be acknowledged in the "designing" of a new visual (unclassifiable) landscape.

1.5 Conclusion: Local, Global, and Multiple

No different from anywhere else, the Chinese fashion system comprises not only manufacturing and the provision of certain styles of clothing, but also marketing and cultural processes. As Barthes (2010) long ago recognized, all of these elements serve to produce fashion and in doing so structure almost all experiences of everyday wear. What is unique, however, is just how the elements and structuring devices all align, which inevitably relates to cultural-specific conditions. The structural circumstances impinging upon China's pioneering designers, for example, is such that their work is indelibly connected to specific renderings of Chinese aesthetics and traditions, but through which, equally, they are able to provide new and even contested visions of not only "what to wear", but also "how to be". Lee (2018) suggests how contemporary China might now enter into a new period of development, or an alternative modernism, in which the goal is not merely economic progress, but the advancing of quality of life, to "live differently" (Lee, 2018, 175). However, given the uniformity of "global" clothing and the commercial pressures these place upon younger designers (i.e., how richly marketed luxury brands *and* the cheap fast fashion structure the market place), the new horizon of thinking that Lee suggests of is not yet greatly in evidence with regards to the sphere of fashion, whether in China or elsewhere. Instead, the future Lee points to is a further alternative modernism *still to come*. Nonetheless, as suggested in the previous section, the actual *articulation* of fashions within the specific cultural context of China gives rise to an array of new meanings and values; a new "savoring" of blandness or the neutral.

The "neutral" landscape of fashion characterized here is an outcome of the economic renewal of China. The suggestion is that, unlike the developments in many western countries, the success associated with the consumption of luxury brands in China represents a *new* identity. Importantly, China has experienced very rapid development over the last 40 years, characterized here as its own altermodernism, that is both layered and compressed. China's globalization involves relatively more intensive interaction, which acts as a prism in which major disputes are refracted, including questions of capitalism and socialism, gender inequality, cultural hybridity, and new identities. As has been recounted here, the new socio-economic circumstance of a

globalized China gives grounds for a more fluid, hybridized fashion system, which in turn allows for new affordances of cultural communication. Against this backdrop, "brand neutral" is depicted here as a state of being for the Chinese fashion system. Rather than suggest the interactions of western and local brands as being somehow a series of "negotiations", relying upon binary oppositions, the argument is for something more diffuse and multiple. And rather than use the language of the postmodern, which in itself creates a underlying set of distinctions (with "post-" suggesting a before and after), the reference to altermodern China is intended to suggest of alternative time and space, which can both incorporate western consumerism, but also allow for difference—both in terms of how such consumer culture is actually consumed, and how it can combine with "other" Chinese fashions.

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Chapter 2
Projecting Authenticity with Cultural Heritage: Chinoiserie of Contemporary Chinese Fashion Designer Brands

Yuli Bai

2.1 Introduction

Today, the aspiration for authenticity is ubiquitous. People treasure authenticity from dressing, eating to traveling. In the fashion world, authenticity is definitely crucial. The traditional and local features of designs or craftsmanship are becoming critical for marking a difference (Teunissen, 2005). Given this background, this research attempts to explore the Chinoiserie practices of Chinese fashion design brands by focusing on the notion of "cultural authenticity".

As a decorative style taking images and materials thought to be related to China as its inspiration, chinoiserie emerged in the early seventeenth century, representing European's taste for China or imaginary China (Sloboda, 2018). In step with the emergence of modern fashion, Chinese motifs are seen frequently in Western fashion, encompassing a long list of established designers like Paul Poriet, Christine Dior, Yves Saint Lauren, John Galliano, Pierre Cardin, Gorge Armani alike. Within China, ever since the introduction of Western fashion alongside reform and opening up, Chinese-style fashion design has emerged. It is nevertheless since the late twentieth century that the passion of Chinese fashion world for Chinese repertoire is largely evoked paralleling with the big events like the Return of Hong Kong to China, the successful hosting of APEC 2001, and the 2008 Beijing Olympics, echoing the prevalence of Chinoiserie fashion in the international fashion stage. In recent years, alongside the dazzling economic performance of China and the profound changes in global situation, there is an impressive momentum behind Chinese-style designs, which earn more than one Chinese fashion designer's widespread attention in the international fashion world.

In the academic sphere, the appeal of Chinese-style fashion design mainly resides in the shifts of design ideologies and style. Little writing on this domain addresses

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the performance of Chinese-style fashion design brands. An admirable exception is the contribution made by Ferrero-Regis and Lindgren (2012), who explored the challenges that Chinese fashion designers face regarding how to embrace a global fashion market via branding through aesthetic reference to Chinese culture; and others, such as Xu et al. (2016), who analyzed the strategies of design and positioning of Chinese fashion design brands. The extraordinary performance of a new wave of young fashion designers around Chinese style in the domestic and international market also has begun to receive academic attention. For instance, Lindgren (2012, 2013) took fashion designers based in Shanghai as a case and examined how the new generation of fashion designers explore new innovative approaches related to Chinese aesthetic by building upon the European-centred fashion system. Yet, overall, this youthful design group and their branding performance are invariably overlooked in academic discourse (Peirson-Smith, 2013).

This research focuses on the new generation of mainland Chinese fashion designer brands making abundant use of Chinese repertoire. The past four decades have seen the emergence of three or even four generations of Chinese fashion designers with a distinctive profile from their predecessors (Craik, 2020; Tsui, 2010). Living in a global fashion world, the emerging designers of the new era have a distinct characteristic in terms of self-knowledge and design ideologies: either reliant on or beyond a Eurocentric fashion model, they seek to develop their distinct approaches to fashion design and brand operation, constructing independent dressing and fashion ideals. Moreover, more than one of them have established individual brands with a distinctly Chinese aesthetics.

Based on two cases, this research sets out to explore how young Chinese fashion designers build brand authenticity with Chinese culture. Of the central concern in this chapter is: (1) how do fashion designers of new generation craft brand uniqueness based on Chinese culture in an age of globalization? (2) What features does this uniqueness represent? (3) How do the designer brands make a balance between internationalism and Chineseness? By doing so, this chapter attempts to shed light on operation characteristics of the emerging fashion designer brands and unravel its contribution to the dynamics of Chinese fashion industry.

2.2 Crafting Cultural Authenticity

The notion of authenticity here refers to genuine, real, or true (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Ooi & Stober, 2008), acting as a signal of "how individuals negotiate the social world and make sense of their experiences", measuring the quality, efficiency, and integrity of some experiences (Gaytán, 2008). As a quality which is ascribed rather than inherent, authenticity perpetually renews in step with the continuous and complex process of negotiations and alignments (Delhaye & Woets, 2015).

Correspondingly, cultural authenticity communicates culturally genuine, real, or true ideas (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Ooi & Stober,

2008), which can also be transformed over time through brand vision alongside ceaseless reconstruction of culture and place (Ooi & Stober, 2008). In this sense, contemporary modification of authentic objects would not necessarily lose their allure of authenticity. One of the numerous examples is Ghanaian national costume "kaba and slit" which is a two-piece dress consisting of a long skirt with matching top. This outfit actually is a result of the incorporation of local and European dress in the late nineteenth century (Delhaye & Woets, 2015).

It is recognized that cultural authenticity can provide a unique selling point, helping to build spiritual exclusiveness of brand experience, create unique and powerful brand identity. In this vein, through cultural authenticity, Chinese brands may gain a competitive advantage by offering authentic "Chinese" experiences to the consumers of the world (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). This is especially true in the case of global brands: consumers have been found to seek the culturally authentic in order to feel connected to other cultural traditions as a part of the global community (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Southworth and Ha-Brookshire (2016) asserted that it is quite important for the Western clientele when facing fresh but unfamiliar Chinese brands which mainly compete on price for a long time.

While there is some truth to this view, it is noteworthy that to date, the target market demographic of Chinese brands building around traditional culture is unnecessarily Westerners. Indeed, Chinese people may be their main goal, including the Chinese diasporas. "The new designs are not mere trinkets being sold to the foreign visitor, for example. Rather these are confident statements of a culture that is familiar to the wearer, to those living in China and brought up with its historical understanding, yet equally 'new' or 'alternative'. This is 'China' for the Chinese: meaning a form of local design that engenders a sophisticated cultural reading of its own"(Feng, 2019, 152). Under this circumstance, we need to reconsider what positioning "chinoiserie style" means. Increasingly global connectivity strengthens self-identity as well as cultural diversity; modern people are increasingly making references to tradition. "Although consumers look to, integrate, and react to global consumer culture symbols and signs, they do so in relation to their local cultural discourses" (Strizhakova et al., 2012, 43). Alongside the development of economy and the enhancement of cultural confidence, a growing number of Chinese consciously or unconsciously search for their social position and connection with their surroundings, manifested as a growing aspiration for seeking cultural roots. That being said, the significance of branding with cultural authenticity cannot be adequately unpacked and understood simply from the perspective of catering for Western consumers, which is one-sided. This topic cannot be analyzed and explored in-depth unless it is situated in a macro picture linking with the development of Chinese economy and society.

2.2.1 Iconic Authenticity

When seeking cultural authenticity, the researchers suggest that consumers use their own socially constructed meanings to interpret what is authentic (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). In this respect, Grayson and Martinec (2004) provided theoretical support by identifying two forms of authenticity: indexical and iconic authenticity. Indexical authenticity considers the kinds of authenticity that is believed to be the "original" or the "real thing" while iconic authenticity refers to that which reflects and resembles the original form.

A brand's indexical authenticity is based on the authenticity theory of psychology (Peirce, 1998). In contrast, a brand's iconic authenticity is based on sociological theory, which holds that a brand's authenticity is the one that conforms to consumers' cognition and expectations. Such authenticity can be achieved by conforming to consumers' expectations in feeling or an emotional impression of something. Peirce (1998) explained that to view something as an icon, perceivers must have some preexisting knowledge or expectations, which create a "composite photograph" in their minds. By comparing this composite photograph with what they sense, the perceivers make an assessment of similarity. Based on this perception, it is generally accepted that cultural authenticity can be created via objects or messages. For example, Southworth and Ha-Brookshire (2016) specifically examined how an Asian-themed brand logo was used to communicate the cultural authenticity of the brand with US consumers from the dimension of iconic authenticity. In this chapter, we will examine clothing products, fashion display, propaganda which make references to Chinese cultural heritage.

2.3 Projecting Style and Coolness

As mentioned above, while fostering cultural diversification, globalization also strengthens self-identity and searching for one's own cultural roots, which in turn makes tradition increasingly attractive to modern people (Du, 2012). This provides an opportunity for brand building: developing marketing strategy of cultural authenticity based on Chinese flavor (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). It is worthwhile to notice that there exists a conflict between tradition and modern due to the distinction of lifestyle and aesthetic perception. Hence, to rejuvenate history, it is necessary to balance between the past and now. For Chinese brands, it means how to incorporate "Chineseness" and internationalism into the brand, including the design of products and brand image. At this point, it is commonly agreed that it is necessary to be modest to cover both of these aspects and to not distance consumers so to generate a sense of alienation. This is particularly true considering the identity challenge young people face in the era of globalization, i.e. how to build their glocal cultural identity which "reflects their beliefs about both global phenomena and local culture" (Strizhakova et al., 2012, 43). As a matter of fact, modern fashion is closely

related to Western fashion given the long-term dominance of eurocentric fashion discourse (Jansen, 2020). To the non-Western designers and brands, internationalization is largely equal to Westernization. In line with this thinking, in the following section, the author will first briefly review the core values of Western fashion, and then examine the performance of two Chinese designer brands.

2.3.1 Core Values of Western Fashion: Individualism, Authenticity, and Coolness

The formation and institution of the modern fashion system are inextricably connected with the flourish of individualism valuing autonomy, expression, and hedonism in the nineteenth century (Delhaye & Woets, 2015). Being conscious of self individuality, expressing one's uniqueness and appearance, and pleasing oneself become important imperatives of the western fashion logic. The practices of western consumption culture and fashion ideologically stems from self-obsession. In other words, it means that it is necessary to adapt to a neo-liberal ideology of heroizing the individual consumer in order to incorporate into the global fashion market (Delhaye & Woets, 2015). Since the mid-twentieth century, this ideology has become more prominent, in parallel with the injection of a new aesthetic sense.

The desire for authenticity is increasingly strong in consumption society with the emergence of the Counterculture movement in 1960s. Brought up in the midst of heavy-exposure marketing, youth as a quite sensitive consumer group, pursues the real thing and strongly resists the commercial machine and the claims of mass marketers (Beverland & Ewing, 2005). The search for authenticity links youth with freedom, rebellion, beauty, freshness, and promises. Accordingly, as role models, cool rebels heavily attract this cohort, which account for the commercial value of being cool (Frank, 1998).

The so-called coolness is explained as a kind of popularity, mystique, and sacredness (Marisa, 2002), closely related to expense and exclusivity (Lascity, 2020). Bergh and Behrer (2013) developed a formula about coolness based on their survey: 22% original +23% popular +55% appeal. They pointed out that "to freeze your brand, common techniques include: creating exclusivity and scarcity, regular surprises, novelties, and innovations, and advertising and selective media usage"(Bergh & Behrer, 2013, 80). It can be found that with a high frequency of usage, this concept connotes multiple dimensions and is intimately connected with authenticity. To youngsters, behavior and objects qualified as cool have to be endorsed with authenticity including genuine, uniqueness, innovation and originality, at the same time, popularity and appeal are part and parcel of coolness. So to speak, the integration of these three parts has an irresistible attraction to this group.

Just as the embrace of individualism has become a fundamental logic in the global fashion system, being cool is universally pursued by youth of the world (Lascity, 2020), including in China. In post-socialist China, young Chinese (featuring GY,

GZ) consider individuality a highly sought-after quality, fostering a "me culture" which is distinct from "collective interest" that marked the older, Mao generation (Sima & Pugsley, 2010, 287). In the next section, these points will be discussed in more depth with an examination of two emerging Chinese designer brands, MUKZIN (密扇, means secret fan) and ANGEL CHEN.

2.3.2 Cooling "Old Fashion"

The two design brands studied here, both of which were launched in 2014, demonstrate the combination between coolness and chinoiserie. Corresponding to the aspiration of young people for authenticity and self-expression, they consciously merged traditional aesthetic appeal with youth's lifestyle. This can be found in their brand ethos, design style, and communicative activities alike.

Showcasing distinctive characteristics and aesthetic value featuring the ideal of "being real me", these emerging designer brands decidedly direct their own destinies. For example, when talking about their brand ethos, Angel Chen, the founder, and chief-designer of namesake brand ANGEL CHEN, claimed that: "I think my clients might be young and confident, who have a clear picture about their direction of life, knowing what they will do in future. They have strong personality, even showing some rebellious traits. Our brand targets young world. Our clients desire to be themselves, hating to be associated with ordinary" (GUECHI, 2014). "I have been quite rebellious since I was very young. As for the expression of our brand image, I keep seeking for an accurate position. Lately, I realized those who wear our clothes mostly possess a child's heart, showing a high level of curiosity in novelties. They have the courage to challenge the unknown" (EFU, 2017b). Likewise, MUKZIN also waves the flag of 'being yourself'. As its chief-designer and co-founder Kate Han said," 'be yourself' is a thing repressed by Chinese for many years. MUKZIN believes that in this era, we need to visually express our inner energy and taste via dressing" (Young, 2016). "Designing with contemporary mode of thinking and aiming at young people who have their own aesthetic values and love Chinese culture, we dedicate to create a swag and cool style." "We are striving to present Chinese elements and culture which usually are viewed as insipid by many young consumers in a way of more reflecting their aesthetic preference. For this, we specifically developed a sub-brand *Baixiju* (百戏局), hoping to attract the youngsters with a wilder and more flamboyant street style" (EF360, 2017).

It is interesting to see that such young brands draw upon traditional Chinese culture in their work. While traditional culture indisputably should be inherited, there is no seeming convergence between traditions and coolness. Compared with music and movies, it is difficult to foster a connection between cool and "unmodern" and even "insipid" traditions. However, in recent years, a tendency is increasingly becoming prominent among young Chinese, which is the youngster's enthusiastic response to traditional culture, manifested as national brand fever (*guochao*) and popularity of traditional Han clothes. Perhaps, as Tricarico (2019) puts it, ethnicity and youth

style is not airtight, mutually exclusive compartments; as boundary marker, ethnicity occupies a unique position in youth "style markets". In the ever-expanding and globalizing consumer culture, neo-liberal markets generate new identity claims. Under this background, ethnicity is treated as a primordial identity and the object of self-construction and styling, facilitating the experience of an authentic self (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009, 9).

At any rate, traditional Chinese culture is being frozen by more and more youth brands; old-fashioned cultural heritage is increasingly intersected with individualism and coolness. The intriguing point is: How does this intersection occur in practice?

2.4 Beyond Confucian Virtues of Mean and Harmony: Alternative Cultural Authenticity

2.4.1 Tapping into the Rebellious and Hilarious Arenas of Chinese Cultural Heritage

Mainstream traditional Chinese aesthetics highly value the elegant and prudent, highlighting harmony between nature and human (天人合一), gentleness and sincerity (温柔敦厚) (Li, 1999; Lin, 2010). This is distinct from western artistic spirit which is rooted in physical sense, with ebullient personality and simultaneously more self-involved. Facing this distinction, Chinese novelist and philosopher Yutang Lin (Lin, 2010) viewed Chinese art as the art of Apollo whilst treating Western art as Dionysus. Similarly, Zehou Li (Li, 1999, 240), one of the great Chinese aesthetes, described characteristics of Chinese national culture as "non-Dionysian type advocating calmness and retrospection, emphasizing self-restrain, and resisting revel of sensibility." Accordingly, traditional Chinese costume culture is all for the crafting of spirituality with a loose silhouette. Meanwhile, under the influence of patriarchal ideology, traditional Chinese clothes pay more attention to the commonalities of hierarchy, while diluting individuality including personalities, age, habit alike (Qi, 2015). In this vein, traditional aesthetics which depress individuality apparently is conflicted with the ideologies advocating individualism, being yourself, and being cool. How and in what sense can young enterprise resolve the conflict?

Based on an online data collection including browsing official websites, online stores, and materials of fashion shows, we find that the designers of new generations exhibit an apparent different pattern of appreciation and exploration in terms of how to present the convergence between oriental culture and modern civilization: Compared to dominant traditional aesthetics highlighting modest, implicity and gentleness (温润如玉), they prefer to probe into the exhilarating sides of Chinese culture. Regardless of visual signifiers or textual messages, both MUKZIN and Angel Chen appear to consciously avoid the expression of aesthetics of neutralization (中和之美, implicity and modest) by taping into the wild and exciting DNA of Chinese cultural heritage, or reconstructing traditional Chinese patterns in provocative ways,

showcasing an enthusiastic, lavish, and visually intriguing aesthetic appeal. In short, both brands strive to develop a vibrant and extroverted Chinese style.

Talking about their SS 2019 collection, Han said, "One of the attributes of MUKZIN is the rich color. And China has a long-established history and diverse culture, which not only means a wide range of colors, but also refers to harmonious color matching. These are inherent national 'DNA'. And MUKZIN apparently inherits this tradition. We extract saturated colors from traditional official uniforms and reconstruct them with our brand's unique color concept" (Chinasspp, 2016). As the core media of Chinese official culture, the official dress typically represents the Confucian political philosophy, regardless of its silhouettes or color. Nevertheless, through de-contextualization and reconstruction, Han transforms the sartorial culture which initially was used to express social order and Confucianism Culture into individual expression, weaving it into their colorful brand image.

Similarly, Angel Chen is characterized by an aesthetic of bold impassion and is full of tension. Chen is skilled in abundant color and interesting details, inclining to create fun, freedom, and personalized images, linking with invigorating contemporary youth culture (Eleventen, 2017). In the exploration of Chinese heritage, the designer tends to find inspiration from powerful and mysterious stories and culture. This is exemplified in her 2017 collection "Shan Hai Ching": On the catwalk staged with the traditional Chinese signs, which literally is a mixture of wooden frame and metal grills, a wild and rebellious show was performed under the leading of foreign models. Here, harmony and elegance featuring traditional Chinese culture are disavowed. By means of clothes, various types of "time travel" and encounters jumping out of a historical line create an international atmosphere. Qipao, jacket, gown, wind coat, dragon, cherry, Tai Chi, and Kung Fu alike are juxtaposed on the stage. It is in this sense that the self-concisous and individualized Chinese style emitting from the brand dilutes, even subverts the dominant Chinese aesthetics of the harmony between nature and human. Under the dramatic and dynamic exploration of these young designers, the robust, irreverent, and personified aspect of Chinese culture is shown to the public. Contrast with the stereotype of elegance and the ethereal, the young Chinese style is more dynamic and more lively. Same cases can be found in the brand's "Madame Ching"(SS2019) and Kung Fu teaming up with H&M (Yoka, 2019).

Briefly, with new fashion brand start-ups like MUKZIN and ANGEL CHEN, we are seeing the emergence of a youthful Chinese style built around cool and fashion, which combines new values such as youth and individualism integrated with traditional cultural and ethical values. While reflecting youth aesthetics this balance of tradition and coolness in some sense subverts the stereotypical conventions in the application of Chinese culture. This finding supports Lindgren's (2012) opinion that some Chinese fashion designers have adopted an as-yet unexplored strategy of business and brand development with a new Chinese aesthetic distinct from the clichéd cultural iconography familiar to Western viewers.

2.4.2 Designers' Influence on Brands

To designer labels like MUKZIN and ANGEL CHEN, it is the designer who sets the direction of the brand's design style (Jackson & Shaw 2009). Designers' personal experience, self-identity, and creativity play crucial roles in the building of brand image and charisma (Malem, 2008; Millspaugh & Kent, 2016; Rahman & Petroff, 2014; Dion & Arnould, 2011). In this vein, there is intricate connection between the creative rework of Chinese heritage of the two studied brands and the designers' personalities and experiences.

According to Kate Han, the designer behind MUKZIN, their brand inherits the spirit of "rebellion and innovation" of VIVIENNE WESTWOOD. It is a consequence of her working experience in the fashion house: This experience inspired her to rebuild traditional Chinese culture with Western design language. In other words, it is under the influence of Vivienne Westwood known as the mother of punk that Han positioned MUKZIN as "swag Chinese style". Angel Chen, who moved from her native Shenzhen to study in London at age 17 and graduated from Central Saint Martins, is a fan of renowned fashion designer John Galliano. Other fashion gurus Chen admires include established Japanese designers Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake, and Yohji Yamamoto. As a result, some spiritual connection can be identified between the young designer and the design gurus: Besides her distinct personality, Chen's design is highly recognizable featuring boldness, fervency, and emotional elasticity. This is clearly reflected in her brand ethos, as she said, "I proposed three rules to disseminate our brand DNA: vibrant colors and richly textured visual language, contemporary fashion without gender and age boundaries, and a fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetics." "As a personal brand, lots of my preferences are incorporated into brand image, such as eliminating black and white, conveying punk spirit, showing Japanese Bōsōzoku subculture. All of these are connected with my own experience. But I will elaborate them in a more modern way" (EFU, 2017a).

2.5 Internationalizing the Brand Through Hybrid Inauthenticity

2.5.1 Chinoiserie Design Based on the Perspective of World Citizens

Targeting Cosmopolitan Young Chinese Clients

In recent years, it is nearly impossible to overlook the Chinese style waved in China and abroad. As a scenery of spontaneous return of contemporary designers back to tradition, this behavior could be understood as self-orientalizing or a re-contextualizing of a Chinese traditional aesthetic within contemporary China (Feng, 2019).

As alluded to earlier, this research argues that such a self-orientalizing strategy cannot be reduced to a result of catering for Westerners simply because they are interested in Chinese culture. Both brands are based in China, MUZKIN in Hangzhou and Angel Chen in Shanghai. The consumers of these emerging brands largely are composed of Chinese youngsters living and working around the world. Chris Lee, Jackson Yee, Lay Zhang, all these renowned Chinese entertainers, for instance, are the high-profile clients or supporters of Angel Chen. Nonetheless, for young consumers, the priority of purchasing decisions depends on the fashion taste and the cosmopolitan image, which is no exception in the case of Chinese style design. Accordingly, in order to win the heart of young consumers and capitalize on global flows, the brands take every effort to improve their brand image serving cosmopolitan consumers, which means rebuilding national signifiers and highlighting a connotation of international fashionability. To construct glocal cultural identity which "takes shape and transforms over time as an individual negotiates between global and local cultures" (Strizhakova et al., 2012, 51), the references to heritage or traditional dress styles and materials often exceed national or ethnic boundaries, gearing towards the creation of a Pan-Asian style. These are clearly shown in the two brands. In terms of concrete approaches, perhaps it can be defined as deterritorialization which, viewed as a basic character of globalization, refers to the detachment of social and cultural practices from special places (Craig & Douglas, 2006, Tomlison, 1999; Ustuner & Holt, 2007).

Inserting Chinese Style in Multicultural Collage

Although the two labels draw inspirations and concrete ideas from traditional culture and crafts, which is parallel with the state's strategic goal of the great renewal of the Chinese nation, they are not interested in emphasizing genuine customs and traditions of specific groups of people (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), which are linked to "ethnic" authenticity based on cultural heritage. Rather, they purport to convey the message of the modern, international and innovative, which is exemplified in their multicultural collages. Angel Chen's Kung Fu collection is a perfect example. While drawing on Chinese heritage, the designer adopted an international vision to seek ideas. For example, a Tai Chi robe in a vintage shop in Japan, and looking for inspiration from classic movies like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and *The Grandmaster* (Yong, 2019). Further, the designer appears to be obsessed with telling Chinese stories in a transnational language. On their official website, her SS17 collection is said to be inspired by "Shan Hai Jing", a Chinese ancient legend book depicting various stories of monsters from land and sea. According to an interview, this collection also has a close connection to Japanese folklore "Night Parade of One Hundred Demons" (ひゃっきやぎょう) (Liu, 2016) although in effect, a proliferation of the stories and stereotypes of monsters in the latter was adopted from the former Chinese folklore.

Drawing on Cayla and Eckhardt (2008), blending with multiple cultural traditions and shaping a mosaic of cultures help brands fit the need of increasingly cosmopolitan young consumers. Similar operation can be found in the case of Vlisco. To attract the local Africans and African diaspora, Vlisco strock a balance between global tastes and aesthetics and African allure by referring to African culture in a more contemporary way, uniting an understanding of identity as both African and cosmopolitan,

as both an individual and collective expression (Delhaye & Woets, 2015). Such a creative operation reframing traditional signifies via infusing with modern take can be described as "hybrid inauthenticity" which does not reflect traditional or authentic Chinese culture but underlines the vitality stemming from the mixture of different culture (Gaytán, 2008).

2.5.2 *Reviving Traditions in a Light-Hearted Way: Images, Metaphors, and Fun*

Due to cultural and language barriers, it is not uncommon that Western fashion designers mostly draw on iconic signifers from Qing dynasty onwards, such as dragon patterns, traditional architecture, Qipao, mandarin jacket, Mao suit, releasing as chinoiserie. Compared to Western counterparts, Chinese designers with primordial identity can get easy access to a large historic repertoire encompassing traditional colors, patterns, silhouettes, aesthetic ideas, and countless literary and historic sources. This is vividly shown in the performance of the two design teams which leaped through the longstanding history of China, from the Spring and Autumn Period, to Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties, covering rangers, monsters, and ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In Mukzin's first overseas show in Paris, AW2018 collection "Woman Xia" (女侠, the English title is "Jade in the Shadow"), for example, the brand offered a dramatic narrative about legendary Chinese female with both chivalrous spirits and Kung Fu, with a series of bold and eye-catching designs, aiming to "dispel the fallacy and misunderstanding over the Xia culture in the past century" (www.Mukzin.com).

According to Delhaye and Woets (2015), young designers have less knowledge of the meanings of traditional clothes or fabric, but are more obsessed with aesthetic appeal of traditional heritage by mediating with cosmopolitan style. Yet, looking at the two studied cases, we argue that these young Chinese designers are not simply attracted by the visual signs, but also look deeply into the cultural or symbolic layers embedded in history. As a Chaoshaner (Chaoshan, a region in Guangdong Province in China), Chen's SS2019 collection draws on the female pirate Madame Ching who dominated the Pacific Ocean in Qing dynasty, complemented with factors of Ming and Qing dynasties and maritime culture. "This collection is imbued with many dragon-boat-related elements, including sculptures decorated on the boat, fishes, and Chinese elements referring to maritime culture. The lanterns adopted in our designs are very common in Matsu Temple. Merchants in Chaoshan always go to pray at the Matsu Temple before they sail. Hence, on the lantern it reads the phrases like *'be plain sailing' (一帆风顺), 'the sea raises no waves' (海不扬波)"* (Yong, 2019). To the designer's mind, such marine cultural signifies might carry the memory of the hometown because of its historic connection with the past.

It is more true in the case of MUZKIN. Its saturated and bright colors, deconstructive design, and ad material always abound with metaphors. For example, SS2017

collection "GO CATCHY CHAW-CHAW" (满汉大食代) in Shanghai fashion week reflects the modern society featuring the mixture of East–West by borrowing the history of Manchu and Han Chinese and food with intention to illustrate a fresh and real China (Huihui, 2016). Similar can be found in its SS2019 collection "丹DAN" released at London Fashion Week. She believes that the packaging of Chinese patent medicine in Hong Kong contains a sense of humanity and a profound hint of traditional Chinese culture. To manifest the nostalgic feeling of the fusion of East and West hundred years ago, these symbols were transformed into details inside and outside of this series of clothing designs. Han made the colors of their clothes echo explicitly or implicitly the colors of the packaging of Chinese patent medicine, namely "five colors" in Chinese culture including red, yellow, blue, black, and white. At the same time, visual patterns of Chinese patent medicine are abundantly printed on the clothes including sportswear, baseball sweater, jacket, and Qipao (Christopher, 2018).

Whilst making rich references to iconic patterns and cultural metaphors, both producers are not interested in bringing the accurate history back into life. It turns out that 5000-years of Chinese culture does not become an obstacle for young brands. While paying conceptual tribute to traditions, they appear to favor de-contextualizing, deconstructing, and appropriating the historic repertoire, ironically incorporating the symbolic into designs. We can see the two fashion houses exercise their unrestrained creativity by incorporating traditional elements into their brands featuring fragment, pluralism, and cut-and-mix. It is quite like the "tiger's leap" described by Walter Benjamin, "fashion has a flair to the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past" (Evans, 2003, 34). Further, there is a tendency away from prudence and restraint. The young designers apparently prefer to create clothing pieces in a playful and light-hearted manner. Instead of historical accuracy, they are more interested in how to fulfill the need of their target clients by providing innovative, fashionable and cosmopolitan style. There is no exception in the adoption of national heritage discourse. This is quite similar to the situation of the young Ghanaian fashion designers observed by Dealhaye and Woets (2015).

2.5.3 Crafting International Brand Image with Cross-Field Alliances

Whilst based in China, both the design teams have sartorial ambitious of pursuing global business. To realize this dream, one important strategy they adopt is to join the aligned transglobal flow.

Building Alliance across the Globe

Established in Shanghai, ANGEL CHEN develops an international network, covering design, production, sale, and communications. Since the year of 2017, the brand has showcased their collections on the catwalks of global fashion week events encompassing Paris, New York, and Milan and made collaboration with brands like SONY,

Lipton, Swarovski, and Lane Crawford, and popular entertainers like Petite Meller, Hins Cheung, Ivana Wong (EFU, 2017a). Remarkably, in 2019, Angel Chen became the first Chinese designer to collaborate with H&M. In addition, the youthful label actively expanded their international market, including Japan, North America. The same is true in their fabric sourcing and research. MUKZIN also holds an open mind. "We do not think we can change the world simply by ourselves. So, with an open mind, we hope to develop a crowdfunding model by teaming up with multiple fields and integrate the aesthetics and lifestyle MUKZIN advocates into a creative community which further can fit the infinite needs" (EF360, 2017). In practice, the brand is enthusiastic about enhancing their international exposure by attending global fashion fairs such as Paris fashion week and London fashion week. Moreover, they frequently carry out cooperation with all walks of life at home and abroad. Take their "Dan" collection as an example. The heels were co-designed with the brand I Suddenly Sneezed established by the Chinese graphic designer Mo Ho, whilst their sunglasses came from the cooperation with The Owner. More than that, in collaboration with DREAMPLAY, an independent creative studio, the label launched an artistic accessories collection based on prototypes of classic Dan medicine bottle and ancient acupuncture, aiming at evoking an avant-garde and mysterious aesthetic sensibility with a East-West twist (Christopher, 2018).

Teaming up with Art World

Intersecting with the art world is a typical approach to craft an authentic brand image (Gilmore & Pine II, 2009; Bai, 2020) as well as a way of de-localizing (Delhaye & Woets, 2015). Both producers are keen to adopt this strategy. ANGEL CHEN included artistic collaborations in their collections of SS2018, AW2018, and SS2019. On the stage of the SS2018 "*Noah's Ark"* collection, for example, they came up with a multiple crossovers with a mixture of fashion, contemporary performance, music, and dance: An immersive art performance was presented by AT Xperience which is a long-term collaborative project of AT x AT, teaming up with Black Cat Theatre belonging to Meng Jinghui Theatre Studio, music & art planning agency Mega Sens and celebrated dancer Zheng Liu (Christopher, 2017). It is the same for MUKZIN, if not more so. Contemporary art has occupied an important position in the brand since its establishment. Of the collaborative artistic projects, their first collaboration was with young Chinese cartoonist Mr Satan (撒旦君), and they released various patterns and silhouettes, making plenty of references to Chinese art and culture, including the 16th-century Chinese novel "Journey to the West (西游记)", the celebrated Chinese Kunqu opera classic "The Peach Blossom Fan (桃花扇)" and historical event "Zheng He's voyages down the western seas". To date, launching a collaborative series of designs every quarter has become one of the brand's key features (Chinasspp, 2016).

Display Fitting in Global Imaginary

Not surprisingly, fashion displays of both brands are quite international. Models they invited for runway show or poster campaign cover white, black, and yellow. There is something behind such an arrangement. Employing foreign models can not only make

an aesthetic distance, providing a new angle to appreciate traditional culture, but also link Chinese culture with international aesthetic schema. More precisely, regardless of race or gender, these models embody Western fashion aesthetics and individualistic ideology, namely taking sexy, tall, and slim as ideal aesthetics, and displaying themselves as self-confident, aloof, powerful, and independent. (Delhaye & Woets, 2015) Such an operation helps to show the brand's universality and international taste.

2.6 The Power and Integrity of Constructive Authenticity

Apparently, as a constructive form of authenticity, these wilful allusions to the national past are not exactly the representation of history, but a conceptual tribute to traditions by innovating and renewing the original objects, combined with their pursuit for being self. In this situation, authentic "Chineseness" is communicated in a type of iconic authenticity which paves the way for consumers to perceive cultural authenticity. As Southworth and Ha-Brookshire (2016, 727) pointed out, iconic authenticity has an advantage in the mediation of "trying global brands and staying socially relevant". Besides, their brisk and playful design attitude is easier to arouse emotion and sympathy among the youngsters, which helps to evolve into popularity. As discussed earlier, the combination of all these perceptions are fundamentally important for young people to evaluate coolness.

Departure from tradition does not mean the designers disrespect Chinese inheritance. Conversely, employing a hybrid inauthentic approach is a valuable method of honoring tradition (Gaytán, 2008). The fact that they are passionate about drawing on Chinese culture and huge amounts of elements applied in their brands exhibits their pride and confidence as Chinese designers, as well as the integrity and a sense of mission. As Angel Chen said in an interview, "many journalists asked me, 'who would you like to be in others' eyes, Chinese designer or international designer ?' I told them that I am proud of being an Chinese designer. It is our obligation to promote Chinese across the world" (EFU, 2017b). In practice, it is from 2017 *Shan Hai Ching* collection onwards that Angel Chen debuted rediscover of her roots, which is visible in growing amounts of Chinese elements incorporated in their creative outputs (Yong, 2019).

As with Angel Chen, Kate Han also shows a strong sense of responsibility. "Living in this peaceful era, we have more obligation to seek the scattered pieces of the jigsaw of Chinese costume. Only by doing this can we have a much clearer picture about how to continue traditional Chinese culture in an age of a global village, at least from the side of clothes" (EF360, 2017). It might be due to this view that rich Chinese elements are incorporated into the brand. One of the examples is SS2019 "DAN" collection, which was unfolded almost entirely around traditional Chinese medicine, including clothing style, color, pattern, the way of dressing, settings of catwalk, and even background music in the show (Christopher, 2018).

2.7 Conclusion

The West once believed that nowhere else in the world was enough to rival the West in the fashion arena. Their multiculture desire for Otherness (seeking inspirations across the world) is nothing more than the icing on the cake, with aims to stress the sweeping influence of the Western fashion empire. Today, the fashion structure in the international scope has changed dramatically. International designers of new generations no longer expect to be French, on the contrary, they are striving to promote and honor their native land (Polhemus, 2006). Revealing instances in this aspect are evinced in the performance of two fashion brands studied here. Alongside the boost of confidence for traditional culture, youthful Chinese fashion designers are becoming increasingly aware of the exquisiteness and charisma of national aesthetics, paralleling with passionately seeking inspirations in local repertoire whilst operating a cosmopolitan brand image.

As summarized in Table 2.1, these young brands exude vigor of youth either by carrying forward Dionysian sensibility of Chinese culture or by endowing traditional signs with Dionysian aesthetics featuring rebellious, bold, and aggressive attributes; besides, they continually take de-localizing strategies to imbue the designs with a connotation of international fashionability. Quite possibly, such a diverting, provocative, and Magpie aesthetic is viewed as more related to Western postmodern narratives, not to mention that the designers' overseas experiences play a crucial role in the formation of their bold, optimistic, extroverted design philosophy and brand culture. In this case, the other side of Chinese culture would be ignored. Looking back to the ancient Chinese history, since long before, *unneutralization* (非中和, opposite to modest) aesthetics has been an inseparable branch of traditional culture in the name of *Kuangjuan* (狂狷, unrestrained and defiant, related to chivalrous spirit), which

Table 2.1 The "Chinoiserie" branding of the new generation of Chinese fashion designers

Overall orientation	Concrete manifestation		
Crafting authenticity with cultural heritage • Communicating cultural authenticity from the dimension of iconic authenticity (via objects and messages)	**Projecting style and coolness** • Combining coolness and chinoiserie	**Beyond confucian virtues of mean and harmony** • Tapping into the rebellious and hilarious arenas of Chinese cultural heritage • Transferring designers' personal charisma into the brands	**Internationalizing the brand through hybrid inauthenticity** • Creating Chinoiserie design based on the perspective of world citizens • Reviving traditions in a light-hearted way: Images, metaphors, and fun • Crafting international brand image with cross-field alliances

bears some resemblance to Dionysian spirit valuing rebellion, individualism, and freedom. In other words, it is not sufficient to think of young Chinese designers' performance as simply a later echo of developments in the West. Cultural borrowings practise in all times and places. The difference is that they are intensified in the current times of globalization (Dealhaye & Woets, 2015).

As a generation embracing a broad international perspective, these young aspiring designers who are still in their early career stage, albeit operating in small-scale enterprises, hold a strong sense of self-consciousness, which largely helps to cultivate their own hybrid aesthetics of East meeting West in tune with the cultural globalization, rather than a mere replication of the Western-centric view of chinoiserie. Either MUKZIN or ANGEL CHEN, they both espouse an ironic, whimsical and challenging attitude, exemplified by their daring integration and reinterpretation of national signifiers. It is encouraging to see that their distinguishing performances have engendered certain global media attention and they have gained a foothold in the tough competitive global market. Notwithstanding that Western culture still exercises a dramatic influence on brand building, the situation is beginning to change. In the process of glocalization, ethnic discourse, as a source of the renewal of identity, embodies irresistible appeal to cosmopolitan consumers. That is to say, an era of branding based on multicentre culture is coming.

When culturally building brand authenticity with Chinese heritage, the rising design brands featured in this chapter operate mainly around iconic cues including colors, pattern, clothing styles, and text message related to the past. Put another way, hybrid inauthenticity stressing icons is selected to mediate between Chineseness and internationalism. Even so, the practitioners maintain their respect for ethnicity either by their strong sense of responsibility or by incorporating a large proportion of traditional elements into the creations. Meanwhile, to craft an international brand image rooted in Chinese culture (or a Pan-Asian style), they conduct de-localizing strategies including artification and transnational cooperation. In addition, their individuality and international vision make their brand more dynamic, cosmopolitan and multifaceted, easier to resonate with young Chinese local and Chinese diaspora. In this sense, it might suggest that this wave of youthful designer brands' cultural authenticity connotes the glocalization of cultural heritage.

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Chapter 3
Multisemiotic Discourse on Fashion and Clothing in Contemporary China

Wenwen Xu

3.1 Introduction

The past decades have witnessed a dramatic expansion in the development of contemporary Chinese fashion. With the reform of Chinese economy since 1978, China has gradually grown to be one of the most influential and promising fashion countries. Given the increasingly crucial position of China in the fashion world, it is perhaps not surprising that Chinese fashion has become a pivot subject for considerable research and industries to explore in recent years, an inevitable consequence of unprecedented economic and cultural changes. A notable feature of this burgeoning field is that a significant proportion of studies have been conducted in contexts such as aesthetics, business, education, history and practice with regard to China. Scholars who have contributed to the literature cover Bao (2008), Clark (2012), Finnane (2008), Steele and Major (1999), Tsui (2009, 2015, 2019), Wu (2009) and Zhao (2013). These achievements provide valuable academic orientation and practical information for the understanding of Chinese fashion and its design within a contemporary environment.

Another key characteristic of this roaring exploration unveils a pressing need for theoretical and methodological justifications to thoroughly delve into fashion phenomena in China. In considering its inextricably cultural hybridity, interpreting contemporary Chinese fashion faces serious challenges. The complexities and ambivalences are reflected in a variety of transitional phases that Chinese fashion has experienced. Since its inception, contemporary Chinese fashion has suffered from the huge impact of various cultures, whilst it has incorporated many traits of indigenous thoughts and practices (Tsui, 2013; Welters & Mead, 2012; Wu, 2012). The integration of these differing cultures brings out the uniqueness of contemporary Chinese fashion. Such evolutionary transformations directly result in the emergence of abundant meanings in society and therefore feed rich resources to examine their

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relationships with the social environment in which they are produced. The progress of research into Chinese fashion and clothing, however, suggests—as far as communication is concerned—the dearth of studies in contemporary Chinese settings at present. In the absence of detailed research in this area, the only sources of information available to scholars and practitioners are generally confined to a superficial analysis or still deal with semantic or pragmatic features of clothing with their foci primarily on a single resource, ignoring, for the most part, multimodal components and implications. Furthermore, the significance of practical industry in the process of communication is often disregarded by most scholars, which accordingly highlights the possibilities for this study in seeking to narrow the gap among theory, practice and methodology.

Based on these inspiring situations, the present study is designed to bridge some of the gaps in our knowledge of meaning making in contemporary Chinese fashion and thereby endeavors to formulate a systemic picture towards fashion communication within an extended range of social contexts. Distinct from traditional approaches, the theoretical principles for this study originate from social semiotic theories, that is, systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and multimodality. Working with their pioneering studies, the chapter addresses typical semiotic phenomena that occur within contemporary Chinese fashion, relating them to sociocultural contexts and indicating how these patterns may be generalized to decipher fashion and clothing as social semiotics throughout a broad reach. As a part of doctoral research project (Xu, 2019), the purpose is to present the preliminary findings about fashion communication in contemporary China and to raise a meaningful approach regarding how practitioners manipulate semiotic resources, deliver information and interact with audience in terms of product design. The study of fashion and clothing is interdisciplinary and traces its knowledge base from different fields. To fully elucidate the complicated phenomena in question, the chapter adopts an interdisciplinary standpoint by incorporating widespread knowledge of sociology, psychology, anthropology, aesthetics, linguistics and other subjects. Such vibrant exchange across disciplinary boundaries offers a comprehensive description of fashion and clothing and contributes to a new perspective in accessing meaning from the fashion phenomena.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Contemporary Chinese Fashion Designers

The remarkable booming of Chinese fashion exerts a profound influence on those who participate in the industry. As a group of creative people, Chinese designers are riding the waves on international fashion scenes right now. To construe their development, Ferrero-Regis and Lindgren (2012) classifies Chinese designers into three collections: immigrant, mainland Chinese, Hong Kong and other place-based designers. In Tsui's (2009) depiction, designers from mainland China can be further

divided into three generations: "the pioneers", "the practitioners" and "the prospects". Among them, "the prospects" represent the third generation who was born after the 1980s. For the moment, they have begun thriving in the field and are growing to become a fledgling force for fashion in China.

Tsui (ibid.) discusses the characteristics from the first to the third generations and explores the formation and outgrowth of these designers within a political and economic setting. The differences among three generations are reflected in various areas, including educational background, design style, marketing orientation and career development. As Tsui (2009, 2013) observes, designers of the new generation have distinctive characteristics. One notable characteristic is Chinese identity (Finnane, 2008; Segre Reinach, 2012; Steele & Major, 1999; Tsui, 2013). Unlike most designs of the previous time, their creativity and originality spring from both China and the West. They prefer indirect, abstract or conceptual forms to deliver cultural identity (Tsui, 2013). In their creations, you rarely see certain traditional Chinese components. They employ alternative elements to feature their designs—color, cutting, fabrics or silhouette for instance. Therefore, design for this generation is no longer restricted to such old concepts as geography or background. What they search is not only new forms of clothing but also a way of self-expression that can differentiate China from the West and their generation from predecessors. Actually, they are reluctant to embrace the aesthetics expressed in Western Chinese designs, which is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese symbols. They are also reluctant to accept the current standards of beauty and fashion established in the West. Instead, they advocate a fundamental change in Chinese views of what beauty and fashion are—views that are now influenced by Western views. These conflicting yet interweaving views are completely manifested in their designs, which cross through a multitude of areas. By means of this way, they attempt to deliver a strong statement about their individual creativity, identity and philosophy towards fashion. Wu (2009) mentions a new Chinese aesthetics initiated by the young generation, which melds the civilizations of China and the West. She (ibid.) affirms that this aesthetics will ultimately define Chinese fashion and characterize Chinese identity.

3.2.2 Social Semiotic Theories

The theoretical foundations underpinning the analysis are inspired by systemic functional theories (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Matthiessen, 2007) and its application to multimodal research (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; O'Toole, 2011). SFL, derived from Halliday, is a theory for viewing language as a sociosemiotic system and therefore is generalized as "social semiotics" (Nöth, 1990). This theory emerges from the study of language and its social context, where language is regarded not as a set of rules but as resources for making meaning. One of its solid cornerstone is that all semiotic activities are socially motivated and meaning is generated in terms of its relationship to context.

Multimodality draws on the principles of systemic functional theories and examines how diverse semiotic resources combine to yield meaning within a culture. As a newly emerging field in discourse studies, multimodality has grown from a linguistic branch towards an interdisciplinary field that encompasses knowledge across different disciplines. Therefore, multimodality is considered "a field of application" (Jewitt, 2014) and has great significance in theoretical, methodological and interdisciplinary domains. The recognition that all types of communication are multimodal can have influential implications for applied linguistics and contribute to the interpretation of semiotic products or events. The development relating linguistic theories to other semiotics resources begins with visual images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; O'Toole, 2011) then is extended to a variety of meaning-making resources. Such fruitful contributions to multimodal research can be found in the works of music and sound (van Leeuwen, 1999), color (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2011), gesture and movement (Martinec, 2000; Norris, 2004), tactile communication (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2011), fashion and clothing (Owyong, 2009; Podlasov & O'Halloran, 2014; Tan & Owyong, 2009; Xu, 2019), among many others.

3.3 Research Design

This chapter aims at developing theory and thus synthesizes case study research and grounded theory methodology to gather empirical data. Research follows the procedures of grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (1990), which starts from literature review and data selection then moves to data collection. Data are analyzed through grounded theory coding—open, axial and selective—for constant comparison until theoretical saturation. The final stage is literature comparison. To triangulate evidence and strengthen the validity of theory, the study considers multiple sources of data: document examination in relation to the phenomena under investigation; in-depth and semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of fashion designers in contemporary China; observations during interviews to view the examined subjects from a non-participant's perspective and case studies involving the selection of interviewed designers and their works. The interviews and observations are executed respectively on the basis of a prearranged interview guide and observation checklists, covering the main topics related to the phenomena. Various methods are included to foster divergent perspectives and further ground the research in reality.

Data from contemporary Chinese fashion are chosen for case study research, which contains designers and their works from Hong Kong and mainland China. Apart from geographical location (Ferrero-Regis & Lindgren, 2012), the study notices the classification of generation (Tsui, 2009) in the selecting process. Designers born in the 1980s are preferred, considering an active role they are playing on domestic and international stages for the moment, and whereby they may provide

Table 3.1 Selected fashion designers

Designer	Gender	Brand	Year	Location	Orientation
Derek Chan	M	DEMO	2013	Hong Kong	Gender and Tradition (Balance)
Kay Kwok	M	KAY KWOK	2013	London	Individualism (Imagination)
Kenax Leung	M	KENAX LEUNG	2012	Hong Kong	Society (Innovation)
Kurt Ho	M	KURT HO	2014	Hong Kong	Individualism (Perception)
Lilian Kan	F	KanaLili KanaLili Fleur	2013	Hong Kong	Feminism (Idealization)
Masha Ma	F	MASHA MA MA by MA MATTITUDE	2011 2013 2016	Paris Shanghai	Feminism (Juxtaposition)
Moti Bai	F	BLACK SPOON BLACK BRIDGE	2012	Beijing	Classicism (Contradiction)
Mountain Yam	M	112 mountainyam MOUNTAIN YAM	2011	Hong Kong	Feminism (Mixture)
Nelson Leung	M	NelsonBlackle	2013	Hong Kong	Society (Playfulness)

pertinent insights into current occurrences. In addition, designers of this new generation own distinctive characteristics in the local and global fashion industries. These multiple voices are assumed to cultivate multifaceted information, promote complete understanding towards the studied phenomena and eventually enhance theoretical constructions.

Given a large number of designers involved, additional criteria are required to narrow down the scope. They are specified as follows: professional qualification (currently employed in agencies), industry experience (more than three years), brand recognition, signature style, international reputation and other criteria (age, gender, geographical and educational backgrounds). Based on the guideline, we select nine emerging designers and their works as subjects to explore (Table 3.1). Areas for investigation cover the background of designers, their creations, design practice and other relevant issues. The information deriving from these designers serves as a reference point, from which research is conducted and grounded theory is generated.

3.4 Fashion and Clothing as Multisemiotic Discourse

This study develops a social semiotic approach to meaning making in fashion and clothing, with its particular focus on the role of different semiotic resources or multisemiotic. The fundamental principles of SFL and multimodality provide analytical

models for a comprehensive semiotic study of fashion and clothing. The guiding ideas from case study research and grounded theory methodology navigate a methodological roadmap for empirical data gathering and grounded theory building of the phenomena. Based on these significant insights, the resultant viewpoints and discussions about fashion and clothing as multisemiotic discourse are outlined.

3.4.1 Nature of Semiotic Resources

One underlying concept of fashion and clothing in relation to semiotic phenomena is multimodal or multisemiotic. In our proposal, fashion and clothing includes not a single semiotic resource rather an array of more than ones. A close examination of the data collected exhibits that designers employ multiple semiotic resources, which incorporate the sensory modalities of visual, tactile, verbal, kinetic, aural and olfactory. All the participants are not isolated from one another but work in close collaboration to create viewing effects and make meaning to the audience. By using this approach, we can understand that fashion and clothing is a complex interaction of multisemiotic elements, instantiated in the form of ensemble, garment, component, element and accessory (Table 3.2). According to our analysis, meaning is ascribed to designers' selection of semiotic resources and the particular context in which they are situated and realized. To describe the multisemiotic nature of fashion and clothing, Fig. 3.1 displays semiotic resources of fashion and clothing in terms of meaning making within a multimodal environment.

For a clear presentation of semiotic relations, a specific example from the designer Masha Ma is listed, from which a multisemiotic system is combined for illustration. Recognized as one of the most representative rising designer in contemporary China, Masha Ma garners instant attention for her minimalist, deconstructivist aesthetics and an exploration of youth subculture. Her design aims to challenge existing social conventions and construct new femininity characterized as the juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance. The sample collection "Collection P" (Punk) comes from her namesake label MASHA MA, which was presented in Paris Fashion Week Autumn Winter 2017 (Fig. 3.2). Within the collection, the designer was inspired by the streets of London and its punk heritage, through which she delivered an interpretation towards modern femininity featuring female empowerment and self-awareness. By means of such way, she strived to reconstruct a lifestyle for new generations and encouraged the audience to daringly make their voices heard. For this reason, all semiotic resources involved, either visual or texture (also others), were selected and orchestrated by the designer to make meaning in particular situations and to reflect the properties of this underground culture in terms of qualities, variations and arrangements.

For Masha Ma, *fabrics and materials* were a main outlet to construct information and demonstrate femininity, where suiting fabrics and velvet represented tradition,

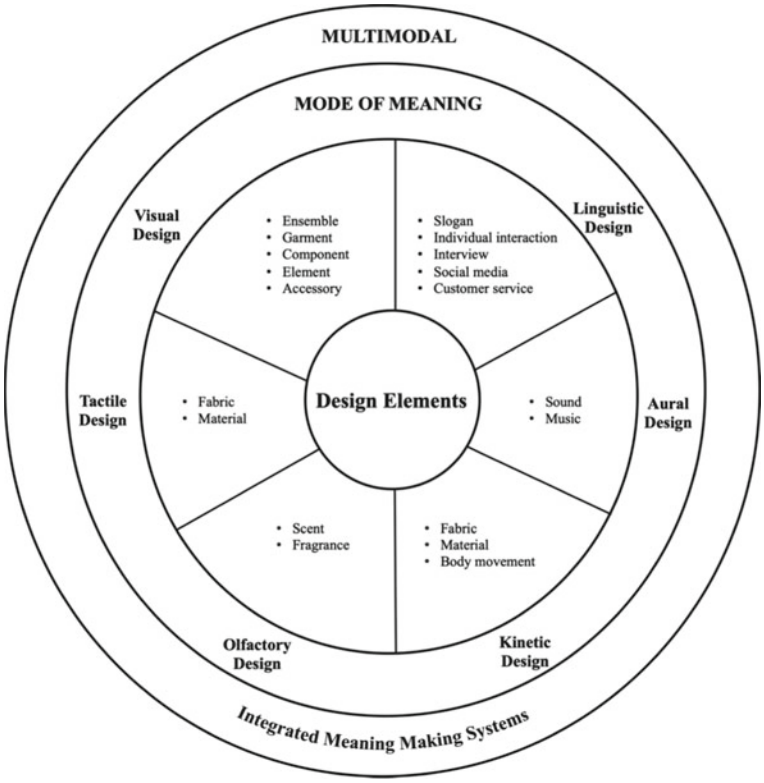

Fig. 3.1 Multimodal construction of fashion and clothing (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 3.2 Design works from MASHA MA AW 2017 "Collection P"(Courtesy of MASHA MA Studio)

leather and denim reflected modernity and silk symbolized femininity. The combination of these fabrics and materials accordingly created two prominent oppositions between conformity and defiance (suiting fabrics, velvet in contrast to leather, denim), between seductiveness and strength (silk, velvet in contrast to leather). In addition, *visual* design played a pivotal role in the articulation of message. All display elements at different ranks were selected and arranged in relation to theme and style. With multimodal paradigm as basis, nuclear elements were therefore distinguished including sharp tailoring, deconstructed element, simple cutting and architectural shape, which represented her signature style and formulated brand identity. One of her significant characteristics was to integrate masculine garment items and construction (sharp tailoring, exaggerated shoulders, boxy silhouette, etc.) into womenswear (delicate details, collapsing volumes, soft shades, exposed skin, etc.). From this aspect, the types of opposing relations were identified: strength and empowerment versus seductiveness and femininity; defiance versus conformity. Through manipulating such contrasts, the duality of femininity emerged. The importance of *linguistic* design was also corroborated by evidence analyzed from interview and observation. It was not an often process in the analysis of fashion and clothing semiotics, as the focus of attention in design was generally on the information presented through visual, tactile, kinetic and aural coordination. Apart from interview, other possible ways were available for the designer to set up a dialogue and deliver information. Taking Masha Ma as an instance, each of her collections had narrative passages to introduce the collection (Fig. 3.3). These supplemental sayings were important resources that functioned to clarify design issues and created interaction with the audience. In addition, she utilized theme to establish a potential dialogue which might find in "NEVER BE SILENCED". Another type of verbal design was slogan as a component of garment to presumably represent the process of saying emanating from the designer. Examples were traced in collections: "ADOLESCENTS", "TRANSGRESSION" and "SOCIAL DISTORTION". These linguistic descriptions in large and bold capital letters made direct reference to punk heritage and indicated the spirits and attitudes towards youth culture, which echoed to other semiotic resources in terms of message. Fashion and clothing in context often involved *aural* and *kinetic* design. In this situation, underground techno music and movement of texture during the presentation portrayed the characteristics of punk and deconstruction. Therefore, they accurately mattered in producing and disseminating meaning for the audience. As could be seen from the depiction outlined above, her creations were full of oppositions and contrasts which exactly reflected her design style and philosophy—"enjoy the struggle and embrace the chaos" in her own words. Hence, design philosophy, theme and style formed powerful strategies to guide the choices of multiple display elements made by the designer.

Olfactory semiotics is another component in multisensory design. However, it is not a key element of clothing and thus not frequently used by designers during the process. In our investigation, the designer Lilian Kan made full use of olfactory organs to create works and deliver message. Her design brand KanaLili, together with KanaLili Fleur (fragrance), was inspired by the beauties of nature. Therefore, nature and beauty became the DNA of her brand identity. To signify female characteristics,

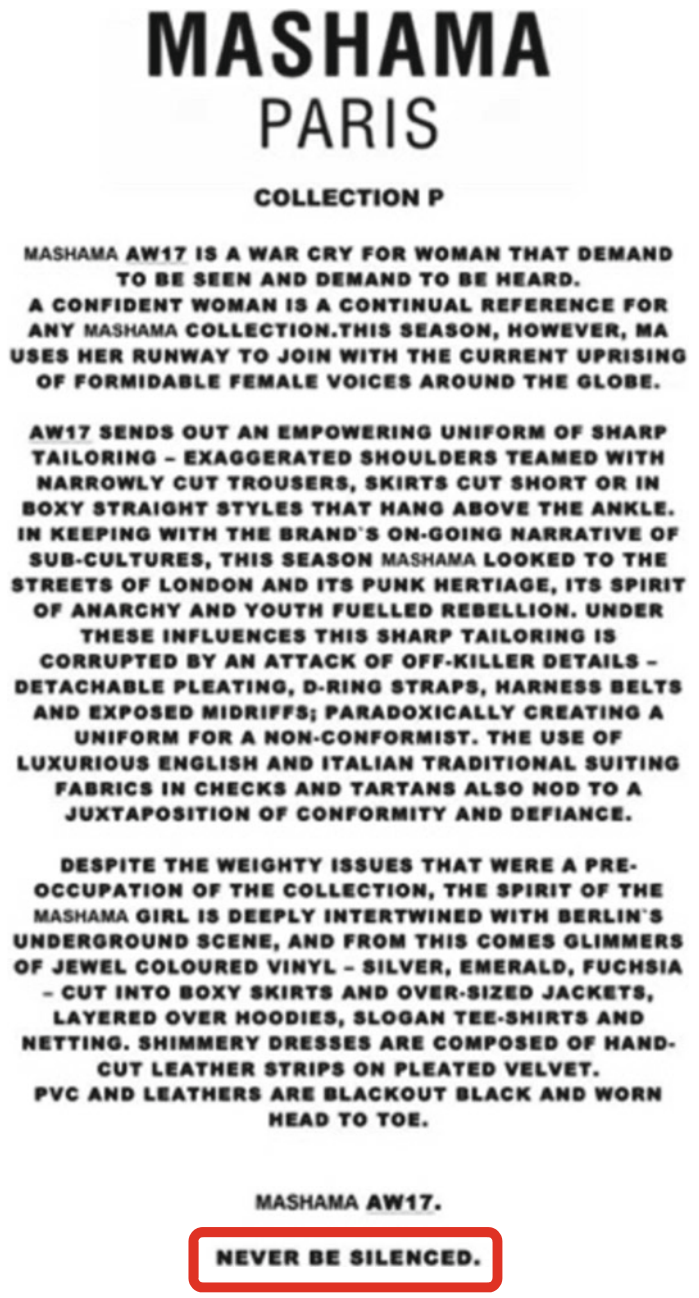

Fig. 3.3 Promotion poster of MASHA MA AW 2017 "Collection P" (Courtesy of MASHA MA Studio)

Fig. 3.4 Design works of KanaLili Fleur and KanaLili (Courtesy of KanaLili Studio)

Lilian Kan showed plenty of nature-inspired elements in her design, including airy space, curvy line, watercolor, flower pattern, feminine silhouette, exquisite details (smocking, ruffles, layers) and soft fabrics (silk chiffon, silk satin, silk organza, lace). Her fragrance products were designed around similar properties in terms of fragrance families (floral), composition of ingredients (natural) and intensity (light). In addition, names, promotional texts and presentation of fragrance products were naturally arranged in a corresponding way. All these elements she utilized related to the beauty of nature and the soft, delicate quality of women. Gradation was her signature look to symbolize the dynamic, flowing atmosphere of nature which was like the notes in fragrance. As she shared, her dresses were actually inspired by flowers. To visualize perfume was an approach when she made different products. In her opinion, there was a very close association between perfume and clothing design. From this sense, we interpret that multisensory design elements are organized into a unified whole to show the cohesive relations of nature and women, as exemplified in Fig. 3.4.

3.4.2 Selection of Semiotic Resources

Fashion and clothing is considered to be primarily a multisemiotic discourse, which creates meaning through a variety of semiotic modes or resources. During our analysis, systemic functional theories and their implications to other communicative modes or resources offer robust theoretical bases for the development of multimodality in fashion and clothing. To specify, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and

O'Toole (2011) pave a way for the exploration of visual semiotic construction in fashion and clothing. Bezemer and Kress (2014) as well as Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) lay solid foundations for the investigation of fashion and clothing as meaning-making systems in texture. Drawing on their seminal frameworks, a multisemiotic examination of fashion and clothing as systems is set out in terms of semiotic resources selected by designers in the process of communication. Since visual and texture resources form the core features of fashion and clothing, these two systems are elucidated in detail throughout the analysis.

Adopting the rank scale, the present study at first models fashion and clothing as *visual* semiotic system, where participants of clothing across different ranks are comprehensively examined to achieve a holistic framework. Details about visual semiotic description in clothing design are summarized in Table 3.2. This visual

Table 3.2 Visual semiotic system in fashion design

Category	Subcategory	Property and Dimension
Style	Stylistic features	
	• Subculture • Aesthetics	Qualities of style in subculture/aesthetics
Collection	Typical themes	
	• Narrative theme • Conceptual theme	Degree of abstraction
Ensemble	Stylistic organization of garments	
	• Layout structure • Surface structure • Light structure	• Three-dimension manipulation • Two-dimension surface • Light and shadow effects
Garment	Garment pieces	
	• Upper body • Lower body • One piece	• Function • Structure • Decoration
Component	Garment parts and details	
	• Parts • Details	• Function • Structure • Decoration
Element	Design elements	
	• Space • Line • Shape and form • Color • Texture • Pattern	Qualities and variations in space/line/shape and form/color/texture/pattern
Accessory	• Carried • Worn • Detachable • Body adornment	• Function • Structure • Decoration

framework is devised according to a variety of literature from different theoretical distances (e.g. Angus et al., 2015; Eicher & Evenson, 2015; Fashionary International Ltd., 2016; Kennedy et al., 2013; Tortora & Eubank, 2010). Under the umbrella of each rank, there exist several subcategories attached to properties and dimensions. As observed, a considerable amount of subcategories with different styles are available for designers to utilize and communicate. Besides, the variations of these categories within or across rank(s) are considered a means for designers to construct information. All the basic elements depicted therefore supply rich sources with respect to meaning making in design landscape. The study then suggests a framework for exploring meaning delivery in *texture* semiotics (Table 3.3). Within this system, clothing texture is divided into four segments: visual, tactile, aural and kinetic. Each texture has distinctive characteristics and consequently can be described through respective properties. In proposing such a statement, the systemic networks are similarly drawn from the existing literature across an expansive domain, which encloses Bezemer and Kress (2014), Davis (1996), Delong (1998), Djonov and van Leeuwen (2011) and Fiore (2010). By distinguishing various qualities of texture, the interaction among visual, tactile, aural and kinetic textures in design can be clearly identified.

Table 3.3 Texture semiotic system in fashion design

Category	Subcategory	Property
Texture	Visual texture	• Surface contour (smooth/rough) • Surface friction (slippery/harsh) • Temperature (warm/cool) • Luster (dull/shiny) • Opacity (transparent/opaque) • Density (sparse/dense) • Consistency (homogeneous/heterogeneous) • Regularity (regular/irregular)
	Tactile texture	• Flexibility (supple/rigid) • Compressibility (soft/hard) • Extensibility (stretchy/non-stretchy) • Resilience (resilient/limp) • Density: Fabric (fine/coarse), Structure (open/compact), Thickness (thin/thick) • Liquidity (wet/dry) • Temperature (warm/cool) • Relief (flat/relief) • Durability (low/high) • Consistency (homogeneous/heterogeneous) • Regularity (regular/irregular)
	Aural texture	• Loudness (quiet/loud) • Pitch range (low/high) • Roughness (smooth/rough)
	Kinetic texture	• Flow (static/dynamic) • Direction (left/right; forward/backward; up/down) • Force (weak/strong)

Hence, we assume that the perception and interpretation of texture do not lies in a single quality, but in a complex orchestration of varied qualities. For this reason, the integration of different communicative modes needs to be drawn on to fully construe the texture of clothing.

The study initiates two analytical frameworks for visual and textual interpretations of fashion and clothing. Working on this guidance, the resources of choices made by designers can be generalized in a systemic and elaborate way. From the analysis, diverse kinds of participants are involved in fashion discourse, taking verbal, visual, tactile, kinetic, aural and olfactory modes as instance. All the components are considered participants for designers to disseminate information. Among them, visual and texture semiotic systems constitute dominant elements in the construction of meaning. To further clarify the social nature of fashion and clothing semiotics, we characterize the results of resources in designers' works (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Semiotic resources in designers' works

Designer	Texture design resource	Visual design resource
DC	Wool, tweed, cotton, pattern and natural fabrics as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials	**GARMENT** (*various styles*) (Upper body) Jacket, coat, waistcoat, shirt, top, knitwear (Lower body) Pants, skirt (One piece) Dress, suit, jumpsuit
KK	Neoprene, leather, cotton, mesh, plastics as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials	
KL	Traditional fabrics and materials in combination with innovative fabrics and materials (cotton, wool, silk, knitwear, denim, mesh, neoprene, jacquard, fur, etc.)	
KH	Common fabrics and materials as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials (cotton, suiting fabrics, linen, wool, silk, leather)	**COMPONENT** (*various styles*) (Parts) Shoulder, neckline, collar, lapel, bodice, sleeve, cuff, pocket, waist (Details) Cutting, layering, dart, seam, pleat, decorative stitching, edge finish, hem, neckline, waistline, fastener, opening, stitches, panel, accessory, surface treatment, trimming, embellishment, patchwork
LK	Silk satin, silk chiffon, silk organza, lace, etc.	
MM	Leather, suiting fabrics, silk, denim, net as the core plus other thematic and stylistic fabrics and materials	
MB	Traditional fabrics and materials (silk, velvet, linen, cotton, wool, fur, etc.)	
MY	Natural fabrics and materials (cotton, silk, wool, calf) in combination with functional, sporty fabrics and materials	**ELEMENT** (*various styles*) Space, line, shape and form, light, color, texture, pattern
NL	Combinations of high-end fabrics and materials (wool, cashmere, silk, leather, etc.)	**ACCESSORY** (*various styles*) Worn or carried accessories

The finding shows a variety of choices displayed by designers, which are strikingly different from one another. These participants represent distinct qualities in relation to theme and style (Table 3.5). There are some statements arising from the analysis across designers. In terms of *theme*, (1) themes reflect the issues of society, culture, politics, history, aesthetics, environment, technology and innovation; (2) themes are developed through the sequences of ensembles, garments, components, elements and accessories; (3) themes are connected to design concept, design inspiration, brand identity, design style and target market. In terms of *style*, (1) various styles are found in subculture and aesthetics; (2) design styles are endowed with personalized characteristics; (3) design styles are related to design philosophy, aesthetics and target market; (4) design styles are associated with interest, experience, values, family, education, practice, nature, society, culture, history, trends, technology, innovation, target market and lifestyle. To summarize, differences of selection are mainly derived from several contextual factors within and around the designers. Therefore, semiotic

Table 3.5 Attributes of semiotic resources

Designer	Theme	Style		
		Subculture	Aesthetics	Signature
DC	Contemporary classic and soft masculinity within a cultural domain	Dandy Androgyny	Classic Minimal Sporty	Balance between contradictions
KK	Mysteries (space)	Futurist Hip hop	Minimalist Sporty	Contemporarily futuristic Modern Daring
KL	Construction of lifestyle (youth culture) through contemporary art and subculture	Hip hop Grunge Androgyny Futurist	Sporty Deconstructivist	Experimentation Combination
KH	Garments through personal thinking or experience	Retro Androgyny	Minimalist Deconstructivist Antifashion	Mixture Fashion independence
LK	Nature	Feminine	Romantic	Aesthetic beauties
MM	Narration of (sub)cultures	Punk Grunge	Minimalist Deconstructivist	Juxtaposition of seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance
MB	Classicism through a contemporary approach	Surrealist Gothic Feminine	Neoclassic Romantic	Contradiction Comfort
MY	The self in modern femininity	Feminine	Sporty	Mixture Contradiction Design for purpose
NL	Stories oriented to Hong Kong society and life	Hip hop	Sporty	Playful combinations

resources should be situated within the social context in which they are produced to discuss and interpret.

3.4.3 Manipulation of Semiotic Resources

Such multimodal phenomenon in clothing has accordingly given rise to a range of possible ways in the manipulation of semiotic resources. One common way is achieved through design principles and Gestalt theories (Davis, 1996; Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). The principles of design include repetition, parallelism, sequence, alternation, gradation, transition, radiation, rhythm, concentricity, contrast, emphasis, proportion, scale, balance, harmony and unity (Davis, 1996). The Gestalt theories arising from psychology refer to the perception organization of visual information for the creation of a unified whole. Gestalt's notion follows the basic laws of such as proximity, similarity, closure, continuation, past experience, figure and ground, based on its application to fashion and clothing (Delong, 1998; Fiore, 2010). These manipulative techniques provide a basic method for designers to create visual effects of clothing. Therefore, they are widely recognized as essential means to make sense of resources, to generalize the patterns of their relationships and to construct the meaning that designers attempt to deliver.

The visual effects designers create are greatly different, which are exhibited in many aspects including the elements they use, the degree of complexity, the types of principle and the perceptual organization. These aspects are considered dependent on design philosophy, personal style and the target market they wish to cater for. However, designers share similar ways in terms of design principles and Gestalt theories during constructing semiotic resources. A striking feature when reading their collections is contrast and balance (Fig. 3.5). These manipulative techniques can be found in two aspects: (1) *semiotic resources*, for example, classic clothing items with contemporary parts, details and elements; conversion of dress code from conventions

Fig. 3.5 Examples of contrast and balance in designers' Works (Designers: Kay Kwok, Masha Ma, Moti Bai, Derek Chan; Courtesy of Designers' Studios)

to new personalized interpretations; conversion of dress code from masculine items and garment construction into womenswear and vice versa; adoption of contrasting combinations in upper-lower, in-out ways and (2) *signature style*, for example, playful combinations (Nelson Leung); seductiveness and female strength, conformity and defiance (Masha Ma); contemporary classic and soft masculinity (Derek Chan); femininity and masculinity, sportswear and partywear, nature and function (Mountain Yam); experimentation and combination (Kenax Leung); contemporary and classicism (Moti Bai); modernism and futurism (Kay Kwok); natural beauties (Lilian Kan).

We argue that the frequent use of contrast and balance among these emergent Chinese designers is related to two contextual factors: the development of contemporary Chinese fashion and personal attributes encompassing gender, generation, education, activity place as well as design orientation. These designers, who were born around 1985s, are all from the "new generation" (Tsui, 2009). Because of this classification, they partake similar characteristics with regard to educational background, design style, marketing orientation, career development and sociocultural environment, among others. The 85s period is crucial for the research on the development of contemporary Chinese history when it happened to meet social movements: Deng Xiaoping's modernizing policies of the late 1970s, the burst of the "85 New Wave" and the culmination of the "1989 China Avant-Garde". During this period, a profusion of different styles and experimental tendencies subsequently emerged, thereby shaping social changes for creators who work in the fashion industry. In the meanwhile, the transformations of society provided contemporary Chinese with more opportunities to gain knowledge from the world, as well as the ability to work independently from the state commission and sanctioned socialist realist style. Under the myriad of social influences, contemporary Chinese fashion exhibits distinctive characteristics, featured by the negotiation of multiple cultures between Chinese and Western, between tradition and modernity. Such complexity within and outside the designers ultimately promotes the emergence of seemingly integrated but actually contradictory presentation in their collections. In this sense, designers from this generation might clarify the spirits of contemporary Chinese fashion, from either the attitude and interpretation towards design or the definition and reconstruction of identity. Such multiple voices from the designers offer sufficient materials for us to delve into meaning potential in fashion and clothing on the one hand, and form useful contextual motivations to demonstrate the essence of this study regarding investigating fashion and clothing through society on the other hand.

3.4.4 Semiotic Resources Within Social Context

To date, we have summarized the semiotic resources and manipulative patterns that derive from the analysis of contemporary Chinese fashion designers. As discussed, these are the choices made by designers in relation to the social contexts that surround them. For this reason, the role of context for structuring fashion discourse is well

recognized within the study. Based on previous findings, several contextual patterns have been developed in designers' making-meaning processes: design philosophy, design style and target market. These patterns are considered the fundamental principles that guide the development of creations across designers. In this way, all display elements in terms of qualities, variations and arrangements are selected and orchestrated by designers to make meaning in particular situations and to reflect the properties of the three contextual parameters. Designers always hold differing views towards the three principles; hence, we can also regard the principles as distinctive characteristics that help designers to distinguish one from another.

Such *diversification* into the patterns of design philosophy, design style and target market can be seen as the result of multiple situational contexts. In the present study, situational contexts are interpreted as interest, experience, values, family, education, practice, nature, society, culture, history, trends, technology, innovation, target market and lifestyle. Therefore, the selection of design philosophy, design style and target market is motivated by two broad contextual factors, namely, inside and outside. The environment inside designers determines which choices they prefer to make; the environment outside designers provides the explanations as to why they have made such decisions. On this account, fashion and clothing as social semiotics is an outcome from the intricate contextual interaction of designers' social, cultural, psychological, aesthetic and emotional origins, a point corresponding to Jewitt's (2014) view. It may be assumed here that a designer's origins determine the presentation of fashion and clothing and influence the generation of meaning within.

Despite different ways designers attempt to construct in creations, *common features* have emerged from the analysis. In a similar vein, findings reflect such contemporary phenomena in China as individualization, contradiction, conceptualization and globalization, which are realized through the selections and arrangements of semiotic resources. These general points exactly correspond with Tsui's (2013) study on the evolution of national identity in Chinese fashion. To be explicit, designers are mainly concerned with personal expression during the design process, which can be displayed through theme use, signature style, design inspiration, target market, core message, the choice and manipulation of semiotic components—that is *individualization*; their works are full of remarkable contrast and balance, which elucidates individual characteristics and social environments originally elicited by the development of contemporary China—that is *contradiction*; they choose to construct experience based on conceptual structures, which marks a cultural transformation of design products from concreteness to abstractness—that is *conceptualization*; at the same time, they focus on the worldwide issues and their creations are enormously influenced by Western culture in comparison with Chinese tradition—that is *globalization.* These similar characteristics arising from the process of modernization in contemporary China demonstrate fully the nature and development of Chinese fashion at the moment. Most importantly, designers reiterate a clear yet powerful statement that what they have been doing is to seek a feasible way of reconstructing Chinese identity instead of repeating the past. This thus signals a conspicuous change in the emerging generation (cf. Tsui, 2009, 2013; Wu, 2009), from which the transition of Chinese fashion is gradually marked and a new type of Chinese identity is

accordingly established. As we initiate, the transformations can be retrieved from multisemiotic involvement in terms of nature, selection and manipulation (see Sects. 3.4.1, 3.4.2 and 3.4.3). In addition, a dialectic relation emerges from the findings regarding the interaction between fashion and social system. That is, fashion and clothing illuminates the social system, in turn is illuminated by the social system, an interpretation similar to that of language defined by SFL (Halliday, 1978). Therefore, fashion and clothing is elaborated as social semiotics in the study that works particularly via resources for meaning making. Such multisemiotic approach not only unravels the mystery of meanings behind fashion and clothing through which a close connection between meaning and its social context is established, but also enables us to gain a deep understanding of practical process where designers engage with semiotic resources to create meaning for the audience.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examines the nature and feature of multisemiotic presentations in contemporary Chinese fashion, together with discussions on similarities and differences that designers produce when presenting clothing in social contexts. Distinct from other approaches, the ideas are built on the basis of SFL and its accompanying multimodality which emphasize the intermingling of text analysis and contextual involvement. In addition, theories from multiple disciplines are incorporated to conceptualize the semiotic resources of fashion and clothing. The findings indicate that fashion and clothing is not only just semiotic but also accurately multisemiotic. A fundamental premise in the study of meaning making within fashion and clothing is to investigate a range of semiotic resources and to explore the interplay among semiotic resources in the orchestration of meanings made. This proposition is established on the fact that meaning emerges from a composite of information from various semiotic sources instead of mere addition of one to another. Most importantly, we realize that communication should be situated within the social context in which a text is generated. On this account, the necessity for theoretical modeling of semiotic resources and their interactions is recognized in order to effectively design, communicate and holistically interpret the complicated fashion phenomena. This in-depth analysis has the potential to enhance literacy skills, facilitate communication strategies and develop contextual awareness. The multisemiotic perspective and frameworks proposed in the chapter initiate a substantial exploration for practitioners and audience in the designing and appreciating of texts, which is particularly vital in fashion communication. Hence, the study may inspire future studies in the field and contribute to the literature in terms of theory, methodology and practice.

Appendices

See Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

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Part II
Industry, Creativity, Education

Chapter 4
"Live Your Best IP" 20 years in Chinese Fashion

Simon Collins

When Dr. YingChung Zang asked me to contribute to this book about the evolution of Chinese fashion design, I thought how lucky I am to have witnessed so much of this process first hand, and yet how small my glimpse must be given the vast scale of creativity in China. What could I hope to understand, an Englishman living in New York, a fashion designer, then Creative Director, then dean who had lived a very short but wonderful 2 years in Hong Kong along the way, and then a decade with Parsons School of Design in New York.

Over the past twenty years it has been my privilege to witness the exacting skills, immense talent and fiercely creative minds of Chinese designers. As an outsider, I observed the Chinese approach towards the creative process in an array of settings, whether it was at a manufacturing site in Ningbo when I was with Nike, or through my more recent work with Parsons speaking at Tsinghua University, and on the CCTV shows "Creative Sky" and "Fashion Masters". Writing this chapter has allowed me to recount the evolution of my own connection to the world of contemporary Chinese design. What I have learned from immersing myself in Chengdu, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Chongqing, Tsingtao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Beijing and beyond has been invaluable. Throughout my frequent trips to China I've connected with the brilliant creatives who are responsible for showcasing the best of what China has to offer, and what is often overlooked, amidst a rapidly changing global landscape. I've become friends with people like the Shanghai PR XiaoBao, Vogue China Editor Angelica Cheung, Bazaar Editor Mang Su, Influencer AnXiao and designers like Grace Chen, Masha Ma, Taoray Wang and Pei Guo. Having seen all this I am bound to wonder, how long do we have to wait for a Chinese brand to become as ubiquitous as Louis Vuitton or Ralph Lauren? The world knows China can make anything, but does it realize that China can design anything?

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4.1 1997–2005: A Landscape Where Anything is Possible

My first visit to China was 1997 as the newly appointed Creative Director of FILA Sport. I stayed in Hong Kong and visited the Mainland by road, making frequent visits to Shenzhen and the surrounding region. As I continued to visit China for manufacturing it was clear that we could make anything in China, but only if we were extremely precise about what we wanted. It was difficult to find creative input from my Chinese collaborators. When I put in a request the results were *exactly* what I asked for, nothing more and nothing less. The communication was a literal interpretation of everything, for example if I sketched a jacket and accidentally drew one shoulder slightly higher than the other, then it would be made exactly like that, with one shoulder higher than the other. They wouldn't assume that you wanted shoulders that were the same, because you didn't draw it like that.

In the year 2000, I became Merchandising Director *of Greg Norman Collection*, and continued my frequent visits to Hong Kong and on to China for our manufacturing. That was a phase of experimentation and innovation, because the company needed certain technical developments and China was doing a great job of creating them; fabrics with technical properties like moisture wicking to keep the wearer dry in intense heat, sun protection factor for spending time in the sun, machine stretch for woven fabrics that needed a little stretch, and wrinkle resist to avoid the need for pressing. The collaborations were still directed by our team, and the local partners didn't attempt to influence us with their designs; instead they were always asking how could they serve us better. However when I wandered around the factories and asked the staff on the floor, I started to observe that the engineers and local designers were experimenting on their own. It felt like the language barrier was the only thing stopping us from collaborating.

In 2005, I moved to Hong Kong as the Creative Director for Nike's Asia Pacific Apparel. That is when I really started to appreciate what was happening with Chinese creativity. I spent time shopping, observing the culture, and connecting with people in Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen.

One of our biggest manufacturers was in Ningbo; the local business executives were forward-thinking enough to know that if they really wanted to engage with a brand like Nike and understand what it wanted, they needed to create a space for experimentation and creativity; so they gave us a floor of their factory and free reign to build whatever we wanted. To a designer it was a wonderful project; we could actually design our own creative environment. The team put in video games, a pool table, a coffee bar, and all those things that creative people do when they're looking for inspiration or a break. The Ningbo Studio became a place where our design team would interact with local employees from various departments every day to get all the input they needed. It was an immensely collaborative way of working and of course, it helped us because we got to be closer to the source of the ideas and learning. A

crucial point as that the local staff learned about the design process and were able to be much more creative and collaborative as a result.

That is when I started to appreciate the grassroots creativity that was coming out of China, which I had not been exposed to before. People had ideas, but few had the training or the opportunity to know what to do with them. This was the time when fashion trends in Tier 2 cities were defined by local shopping malls which carried off-season stock from international brands, alongside local brands that often mimicked international ones.

> When I was a kid (in the 1990’s) we only had three or four malls and no international magazines. My mom would buy me magazines but we didn’t have access to buy those clothes. At that time I thought I was trendy, but now I realize I was wearing past trends that didn’t sell at the first-tier cities. There were no TV shows about fashion. Now the young girls have phones and social media and can see what real people are wearing around the country so they are much better informed. - Qianru Fang (Campaign Planner/blogger)

During my time with Nike, Japan was the biggest Asian market; though it was clear that with China’s massive appetite for fashion, apparel, and designer brands, it would soon take over. My brief as Creative Director for the region meant I saw firsthand the differences in what the various national markets wanted. Japan was influenced by the trends coming out of New York, LA and London, but wanted everything to feel Japanese. Korea was influenced by whatever was happening in Japan. China remained strongly independent. They didn’t want to be like Japan or Korea or anywhere else. It became clear that China wanted western brands like Nike, but they wanted them to be “of China”. For example, the “Dunk” was classic Nike sneaker style, so to make it relevant to the Chinese consumer they gave it some local Chinese styling and came up with “Dumpling Dunk” since the stitch detailing looked a little bit like a dumpling. It was really successful. People loved it. There was no talk of cultural appropriation since it was designed in China, for China.

To create energy for the brand we created the Nike Co-Lab Project, where we would collaborate with local designers to create T-shirts or other small items in very limited numbers so they would be highly sought after. These Co-Lab items sold out immediately and quickly became collectors items. We would host pop-up events (before they were called “pop up”), including a “Tee Bar” where we hand screen-printed tee shirts at a party in an empty art gallery. Working with local designers was a unique window into what was happening at street level in China.

> If you look at Chinese brands from ten years ago, it looked like they were just manufacturers with none of their own DNA at all. You could see the same styles everywhere. Right now most of the big successful designers that sell in China, like 80%, are from overseas. So what the new generation is doing is absorbing all the good information, bringing it back to China, and mixing it with Chinese characters, logos, shapes for their own original looks. AnXiao Zuo - Influencer and KOL

4.2 2007–2014: Questioning the Chinese Approach to Creativity and Individuality

In 2007 I moved back to NYC and became Dean of the School of Fashion at Parsons School of Design. At that time the School of Fashion had about 1500 students, of whom more than thirty-five percent were international. In 2008 the biggest international population was South Korean. Jason Wu and Alexander Wang had graduated two years earlier and there was a lot of attention on Asian students in Parsons. The New York Times interviewed me at length for an article about them though I was very clear that at Parsons we saw all students as equal and recognized no specific national characteristics.

As part of my role at Parsons I travelled often to China to speak at universities and create relationships. This was a very different experience to that of a Creative Director; I was not looking at retail and production, I was meeting students and professors and soaking up culture. I vividly recall my first visit to Tsinghua University where I met Dr. Yingchun Zang. In the morning of my visit Dr Zang asked me to speak about Parsons and my career to a group of forty eager students, I didn't get much of a response from them, but that wasn't unusual in China, I suppose. Then in the afternoon I gave a more formal speech to an audience of 400 people including press and faculty. It was a profound experience because while I was the one doing the speaking, I felt I was learning so much about the Chinese approach to design and to learning. I remember one student in particular who had attended both of my speeches that day. During the Q&A, she raised her hand to share a comment that has always stuck with me since that day. She had watched both speeches, and I thanked her modestly. Then she said:

I feel like I have wasted my day.

That took the wind out of my sails as you can imagine. She was very polite and certainly meant no offence, she was just disappointed because I had focused so much on describing the details of Parsons, and not enough on my own life as a designer.

It was a tough lesson to learn in front of 400 people, but she was right. I was so impressed by her courage to say that. I think her open direct honesty was a reflection of Chinese culture; she was just giving a genuine straightforward response because I had asked a question. She certainly had no intention to offend. She taught me a valuable lesson.

Her confidence was very unlike the traditional mindset of many Chinese students. More typically, I would be in a room of students and spend an hour or two talking to them, and at the end, I would say "Ok, now what are we going to do? What are your comments or thoughts? Any questions?" And invariably they would all look down at their desk and be entirely silent. I realize the culture has taught them to not question the professor. You are supposed to accept everything your professor says; you write it down, you learn it and that is what education is. This was a stark contrast from what I observed from the students at Parsons who would question their professors, engage with them, and challenge them.

In spite of the challenge of getting a response from Chinese students, their work was often very refreshing. In my role as Dean I reviewed a lot of work from fashion students and began to see tendencies in fairly obvious “experiments” in fashion. Certain details and approaches to design would crop up with regularity each successive year. Part of the learning process. But what was refreshing about working with Chinese students was that their work wasn’t slavishly influenced by the obvious Western designers that all so many international design students understandably admire. Certain designers like Rick Owens, Rei Kawakubo, Phoebe Philo and Raf Simons are the go-to inspiration for young designers. Which is understandable. But when creative students are exposed to the same influences, they begin to produce the same results. The difference in China was that while they might have been aware of these designers, they did not read the reviews and get constantly told who the critics thought was best. So they weren’t pushed into the same inspiration. It is like their lack of exposure freed them to be more creative, not necessarily better, but often different. Furthermore I noticed that many Chinese students looked to their own traditions and culture, which brought out a perspective that was very different from what Westerners draw from the same source of inspiration.

> We have a strong tendency of feeling superior and inferior at the same time. Like many ancient cultures, the Greeks and the Italians, we are all the same. You feel superior but sometimes you feel antiquated and inferior. You’re seeing confidence start to grow, and taking pride in discovering new designers and bringing them up. That’s confidence to believe in your own taste. Xiaoqing Zhang (Designer)

> The styles didn’t look great on Chinese women, the fabrics and the shapes were suited for skinny French women. My clients were about wanting something for themselves, getting aware of their own identity instead of just chasing a luxury brand. Not costumes for stage, celebrity, red carpet. But I wanted to make something for the Chinese woman. No one is really doing that. Grace Chen (Designer)

> The more I lived outside of China the more I looked back to Chinese culture, but I never felt the urge to announce that I’m a Chinese designer. Chinese clothes can look international and modern and wearable. Not just heavily embroidered outfits for tourists. Xiaoqing Zhang (designer)

A question the Chinese students would ask time and time again was whether their work looked Chinese enough. When I asked why they felt it important that their work looked Chinese they would talk about their pride in their culture and how they wanted to show that they respected it. I would tell them that is all fine but I don’t think you have to wear your culture like a badge. If you are a Chinese designer who designed a men’s suit, then it is a Chinese suit because you are Chinese and you designed it. The suit itself doesn’t have to actually look Chinese to prove that you’re a Chinese designer. No more than a Prada suit has to look Italian, or a Louis Vuitton suit has to look French, or a Calvin Klein suit has to look American. In my opinion your work should be a reflection of your talent, not a badge of where you come from.

> I don't want to be limited to just fashion. Fashion is connected to culture, literature, stories, characters. If you are narrow-minded how do you sustain yourself. I want to make sure my brand reflects certain concepts and values, of course I want the brand to be profitable, but making money is not the only goal, Xiaoqing Zhang (designer)

In 2008 I became Head Judge for a Chinese CCTV show called *Creative Sky*, a weekly fashion design competition where designers had to create something in response to a challenge; and each in episode someone was voted off the show. Unlike its Western counterparts which emphasized cash prizes, this competition awarded a grand prize of free tuition at Parsons in New York City. There were talented kids all over China who had ambitions to make it on the international scene. And if they won this competition they'd get to live in NYC for two years, attend Parsons, and start to build their professional lives. It's important to stress here that Creative Sky winners received no favorable treatment for admission to Parsons. The school waived their fees but the winners had to apply like everyone else. What was so exciting was that not only did they all get accepted, but several qualified for the highly prestigious MFA in Fashion Design and Society, Parsons' most exclusive fashion program. And some went on the be finalists in the international LVMH prize in Paris, beating out competition from all leading global schools. These designers were world class indeed.

Jumping forward to 2018 I was judge on another another CCTV show called *Fashion Masters*. Each week, the contestants were challenged to design a collection around a theme that was inspired by traditional Chinese culture. One week was opera, the next Chinese dance, and then painting etc. It was clear that the network wanted to show respect to Chinese culture; and that is fine if they want cultural tributes, but I felt it limited the designers' ability to express what they really could do to influence culture on a global scale. With that said, the theme didn't stand in the way of genuine talent. For example during the filming of one show I was sitting next to my good friend Angelica Cheung, editor-in-chief of Chinese Vogue, and hugely influential in bringing attention to Chinese creativity. We watched as a collection came onto the runway and Angelica commented that whether this designer won the competition she would still definitely be in CHINA Vogue. The design was Kate Han and her collection had a strong Chinese influence but done it the way that a brand like Gucci would handle a Chinese influence; respectfully, originally, creatively, brilliantly. It was both of China and at the same time International, and to me that's what we need more of; authentic identity and original vision. I should add that Kate Hahn went on to be the grand prize winner of the series.

Kate Han, Angelica Cheung and the author. Courtesy of the author

4.3 2015–2016: Inside the Chinese Fashion Industry, Bring Your Best IP

Towards the end of my tenure at Parsons in 2015, I became a consultant for Chinese brands and businesses, including China Fashion Association and China Fashion Week. At first, I think they just thought that I was there to connect them to big names in fashion, but what I really tried to get them to think about was the image they were presenting to the world. Often the critical front row of many shows would be filled with local dignitaries which created a very formal image. It would be difficult to imagine international fashion media and buyers being part of that. But there was also the up-and-coming cultural tastemakers, the KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) who were making the shows more appealing and accessible to the local culture. I began to understand how the social scene was organized. I met big fashion players like Ellessay who did their anniversary show in the Temple of Ancestors inside the Forbidden City. It was a beautiful collection in the iconic setting of an ancient temple, which is such an ornate building, while also empty and bare. The event was an example of Chinese

creativity transforming a classic structure into a unique modern experience. It felt like something I would only see in China, elsewhere there would be creative rules and expectations and accepted ways of doing things. In China it is all new.

With limitless ingenuity, energy and creativity of course there are the ways where Chinese culture and design have surpassed the West dramatically. When it comes to modern experimentation with architecture it is hard to point to a country that has done more to allow architects creative freedom than China. Of course, all the architects building in China aren't necessarily Chinese, but the fact that China is the place where architects can do their most important work is highly significant. The CCTV building in Beijing is a great example, it was designed by Europeans Ole Scheeren and Rem Koolhaas, but they said it could never have been built by Europeans. It works both ways too, the Pyramid in the Musee du Louvre in Paris was designed by Chinese American architect I M Pei and is arguably one of the most notable buildings of the late twentieth century. The point for me is that in China there is some of the most exciting architecture in the world. If you go to a tier-two or tier-three city it probably has a world-class airport which is light years ahead of New York's JFK or London's Heathrow.

When I was working with Chinese brands, I noticed a pattern in their structures. The founder who created the company hired the best talent they could find in the design-room, but when it came to the business side, the management was much more traditional. They didn't seem to embrace the concept of design, and instead focused only on moving product through their stores regardless of what it was or its brand value. There was very little understanding of brand equity. It reminded me of my days as a designer working for the high street brands in London in the nineties—designers were tolerated but rarely listened to or respected, and they never reached the board. The Chinese brands I was working with weren't thinking about selling products to an international market and they weren't preparing for the competition from international brands in China.

During 2015–2016 I began to hear a lot of buzz around the term IP meaning "Intellectual Property" which is another term for brand equity. There were instances where businesses attempted to buy a design or copy a popular international brand because they thought that would elevate the IP of their product; but you can't just buy or copy IP especially when it comes to fashion and design. Throwing money at hiring celebrities and KOLs doesn't give you credibility, you actually have to embody the original IP and live it. In my opinion you don't win respect with money, you win respect with quality. If you want a successful brand you have to make people want your intellectual property.

> In China people are more eager to work, and there's a much bigger pool of people you can choose from. The whole product chain from fabrics to factories, is here. Shanghai has a history of tailoring and fine products, Grace Chen (Designer)

The next generation of creative thinkers in China is faced with the task of debunking the cliched myth around what it means to be successful. Just because a business has a couple of hundred functioning retail locations, it doesn't mean that it will last forever. Many such businesses are blind to the opportunity to collaborate

with innovative designers, who can bring fresh experiences and products, both online and offline, to the existing market. The lack of partnership between the designers with potential waiting to be unleashed, and the merchants who have access to huge markets, leads to both sides missing a process to distinguish between a good idea and a bad one. Something that allowed some pretty terrible ideas to grow very large before failing.

In my experience I've found that businesses, meaning people, need to really understand what design is, and what it can do for the brand. Then this should be reflected in the internal organizational structure and company culture. For example, if you go to the accounts department at Ralph Lauren, the employees look like that work for the Polo brand. If you go to Italy, and look inside the factories that make Prada or Gucci, the workers look like they work with luxury product, it's not just a job to them. Every part of the company needs to be designed into an integrated ecosystem. It's not just about luxury and employee perks, it's about efficiency and values, which is reflected in the IP of the company. In my opinion there is a huge opportunity to create Chinese brands that really speak to the Chinese people. I think there is a gap between the talent of the designers and engineers, and the vision of the mid level executives. If they don't bridge this gap, the global brands are going to take over the shopping malls and high streets. Chinese brands have to understand that they're not the only game in town, and the competition is only going to get hotter.

4.4 2016–2019: Global Design Thinking in China

In 2016 I created a project to bring together all the brilliant people around the world who I had met through Parsons. The Fashion Culture Design conference series brought to together 50 speakers on stage and an audience of 500 in the room. Ten conversations throughout one day with brilliant minds addressing burning questions. One of the first conversations that inspired that conference was, "Is WeChat Taking over the World?". To find out I brought together my friends—Liyah Wu who founded the Chinese shopping app Shopshops, Julie Larsen-Green from Microsoft, Abigail Posner from Google, and Tony King from acclaimed NYC ecommerce agency King and Partners. The conclusion was, one, that brick and mortar retail is getting the beating that it deserves, and two, yes Wechat is taking over the world indeed.

Through Liyah Wu's Shopshops platform I began to understand the power of livestreaming in China, which is very different from what I see in NYC. It's another example of how China is steaming ahead of the West with its own take on future tech and e-commerce. Livestreaming is entertainment and commerce combined with the occasional sprinkle of education, viewers can comment and send small or big gifts to each other and the speaker, everyone is involved. This is old news in China but a brand new idea in the West.

Of course we can't talk about the growth Chinese fashion without talking about what's available to people through social media. I don't just means access to Key Opinion Leaders or keeping track of trends, the technology itself is light-years ahead

of Facebook and YouTube and anything else in the West. WeChat functions like twenty different Western apps rolled into one convenient interface that everyone uses. No one carries money or credit cards anymore, because everything gets paid for on WeChat pay or Alipay. Even street beggars accept charitable donations from Smartphones.

If you're a designer, an entrepreneur or a tastemaker, you can create a whole empire on WeChat. You can shoot, create and edit your own content, share your credentials and expertise, connect with fellow designers, establish your base, generate sales, and create your own story and brand. You can start a business, promote it, take payments, tell your friends about it, start a discussion, post videos, look for investors and take investments; Then you can find friends, arrange dates, announce your wedding, look for baby names, and then your children can start it all over again—All of that on one platform.

> In Western cities like LA or Paris, being an influencer is a part-time job, and you've also got to be a banker or a singer or something. But in China being an influencer is totally a full-time job because the quality and quantity is huge in China. And over the past ten years, Chinese people have gained so much more money and so now we're rich but we also want to be tastemakers. AnXiao Zuo (KOL influencer)

4.5 WeDesign Onwards, Building a Brave New World of Chinese Design

Throughout the past 20 years of my Euro-Sino-American life, I've been a Designer, Creative Director, a Dean, a consultant, a TV show judge, a speaker, a writer, and a cultural curator. All of these experiences made me more keen than ever to bring together smart people from the around the world to learn from each other and bring value to all.

After spending so much time in China I feel it's the New World for design and the place that has inspired my newest venture—WeDesign. An online and offline design education platform that brings together the best professors in the world and connects them with students across China and around the world. Using technology, K-12, undergraduate students or executives can work with professors from Parsons, Central Saint Martins, NYU or anywhere that inspires them. If they want to learn about design to get into a top design school WeDesign can do that, or if they don't want to be a designer but they realize that being able to think like a designer will make them a better engineer, or lawyer, or banker or anything else—then WeDesign can teach them the skills they need. It's the future of education and we are creating a global community of creative minds.

I feel that with the passion and creativity in China we can bring together the more create people around the world and together we can design the future.

New York City.

17th January 2019.

2021 post pandemic update–having birthed and nurtured WeDesign I have now moved on. As of 2021 I am working on creating the future of design education in Shanghai.

Chapter 5
That Which is not Taught: A Conversation Recalling the Delivery of Creative Workshops at Tsinghua University Academy of Arts and Design Between 2006 and 2019, and the Emergence of China as a Country of Designers

Lucy Jones and Paul Rider

5.1 Introduction

The call for contributions to this publication came just before Paul Rider (PR) left for Beijing on one of the annual teaching trips to TUAAD. The planning and research therefore was carried out over a considerable distance, between London and Beijing. During this time, we used FaceTime audio, recording reflections, memories and current practices. This inevitably resulted in hours of voice mail recordings, with background noise coming from the busy café which PR frequented, offering the flavour of Beijing which sadly cannot be incorporated into the finished article. Hours of listening followed, which inevitably led to additional questions and requests for conformation. Consequently, editing has been important, however, some of the spontaneity of dialogue has been lost in this process.

We wanted the article to mirror the exchange of information between us, so the conversational format chosen for the article albeit unconventional, has allowed an equal and natural flow, as we draw on our tacit and mutual understandings and experiences of delivering fashion as a creative practice.

After general reflections of the first visit to TUAAD (Tsinghua University Academy of Arts and Design), our conversation takes two main themes, teaching and learning and internationalisation. Firstly, the conversation unpicks the project

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content and talks about delivery and student outcomes. It touches on student progression, education and industry. Secondly, we look at aspects of interntaionalisation which occur through the workshops and through students' mobilization and progression. Lastly, we consider the legacy of our creative footprint and the impact that our approach to teaching creative fashion practice has had on the various cohorts of students.

5.2 Then and Now: Context and Content/Teaching and Learning

Lucy Jones—LJ Paul Rider—PR.

LJ: The collaboration stemmed from a relationship that was shaped by serendipitous circumstances which involved myself, then a newly appointed Director of Fashion and Textiles at University of East London, and a visiting fashion academic -a member of staff from Tsinghua University Academy of Arts and Design (TUAAD). It had been agreed by our respective heads of school and began with a year-long research sabbatical for the TUAAD member of staff attached to Fashion and Textiles at UEL. During the year, she and I worked together on a shared ambition to strengthen the collaboration between the two Universities through a programme of practical workshops which would focus on creativity and new approaches to teaching. Both institutions were keen on the joint project and of making the connection official. TUAAD were requesting an injection of the approach to creativity, and the new pedagogic practices which were coming out of the UK at the time.

The balance of the collaboration changed because it was not possible, owing to my full-time academic position, to commit to regular trips to Beijing, so, as you had been invited in your own capacity, it was you who continued delivery of the workshops on an annual basis. Although, we co-taught again in April 2009—another creative project focusing on identity, that was the last time we pooled our expertise at TUAAD.

My thoughts (besides the excitement of experiencing the culmination of an early collaborative teaching project at a prestigious Chinese University), was mixed with thoughts about experiences on my first trip to China in the early 1990's when working as a Product Development Manager for an Australian fashion company, sourcing factories in Guangzhou. I remember being amazed at the stark contrast between the state-of-the-art giant factories in which I was negotiating space—offering everything from dyeing, wash and fade facilities, to garment manufacturing. On the one hand, high-end technological facilities of the time, situated in purpose built monolithic hangers with on-site worker's accommodation blocks, to small scale ramshackle dark sheds where our patterns had been cut out of cardboard cereal packets. So, when I was preparing for the 2005 visit, I wondered how different it could be.

PR: My idea of Chinese higher education in Fashion was based on a visit to Sichuan in 2002 not primitive as much as poor and under-resourced—lacking in

awareness of anything global. Exposure to international brand design was non-existent. However, I was sure that in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou (Canton), things were totally different, and this was so when we came to TUAAD in 2006. International fashion labels were confined to the International shopping center and various hotels, to which Chinese nationals were prohibited, ……the only accepted currency was US Dollars, although this changed during the preparation for the Olympics. Students were challenged in terms of accessing fashion, designers, and brands—and therefore had difficulty defining their fashion aesthetic. But now, things have leapt forward to the point where most undergraduates seem able to identify numerous international brands -and have great awareness of Japanese designers together with overseas Chinese designers—Chinese Americans mostly, for example Vivienne Tam, Vera Wang, Phillip Lim, Alexander Wang, Anna Sui and so on.

LJ: Yes, students are generally familiar with French and Italian designer "brands" such as Chanel, Versace and Prada—brands which tended to advertise heavily gained exposure through magazines such as Vogue and L'Officiel …but—I am not sure if any of the students knew of the heritage or DNA of the French and Italian fashion houses.

PR: In 2005 and in subsequent years Vivienne Westwood's popularity was right up there—which coincides with her popularity and brand success as she had won British Fashion Designer of the year for a third time, in 2006. Interestingly in the last couple of years it's the British heritage brands that have entered their lists of favorites—Burberry, and Churches Shoes (currently owned by Prada), are synonymous with an older generation. Alexander McQueen is still influential and very much on the list …. even though I informed them of his death in 2010—some of them didn't know! They are familiar with McQueen's collections and shows which he created—when he was alive. But their likes and favourites change each year.

LJ: Yes—it's interesting to find out which design brands students are aspiring to… it's like tapping in to a specific demographic—revealing characteristics and nuances in life-style and aspiration, these designers often change due to marketing and media interest but can reveal some important attitudes about tastes and lifestyle. We are seeing evidence of Chinese fashion brands entering the media, as they have become more prominent internationally…and I am sure many people are waiting… for a Chinese name to become a big brand along with the Japanese European and British designers—the success of Peng Chen's SS 2018 collection has been evident and encouraging—but we will return to this a little later in our conversation, so for now, let's return to your overall perceptions of China—you had begun to talk about your general impressions, and the cultural events that had informed your view.

PR: It was the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 which changed everything—it affected the country as a whole—from academia to hospitality, retail to services- it affected the rest of the world too. All eyes were on China which became outward looking and inviting. There was a pre and post-period of openness and buoyancy, which reflected the subsequent groups of students—in their confidence, language and mannerisms. The Winter Olympics will be hosted here (Beijing) in 2022, but we will have to wait to see if it will be as open an affair as it was during the build up to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games.

LJ: Perhaps you could talk a little about your first trip to China, and how that prepared you for later teaching projects?

PR: I had visited Sichuan in 2002—I had been invited to work with a menswear company as a design consultant, and whilst there, made a visit to the Sichuan University, Fashion School. The facilities were really basic, and there was no real sense of a 'fashion department' as such (although I know I am totally influenced by my own understanding of this) -it focused on dress making rather than design—which was what I had expected—it was similar to many other Eastern European and Asian Colleges that I had visited previously—fashion design was treated very much as a vocational subject -(as it was in the UK prior to the mid 1970's before Diploma in Art and Design became Degree status[1]—and it took a lot of time, effort and persuasion for attitudes to change. … So, three years later in 2005, TUAAD appeared highly developed by contrast.

LJ: Yes, I remember being totally in awe of the sheer scale of the University, not to mention the brand-new building that the Academy of Arts and Deign now occupied at Tsinghua. The gargantuan amount of space, the height of the ceilings, the size of the studios—some of them sponsored by huge international companies such as Saga Mink Copenhagen, and Giorgio Armani Milan—These prestigious links with industry were certainly to be envied, together with the long corridors, and cavernous staff offices!

LJ: So—do you think that the early 00's was when Chinese Universities revealed/realised the importance of branding themselves?

PR: Yes, I am sure it was—but beyond building imposing buildings I am not sure what real understanding there was of *brands and branding* in the sense we understand it to be. China had spent the last decade hauling itself out of a situation where it had been perceived as the manufacturing base for the world—"Made in China"—fashion and clothing, products, goods, everything—fast and cheap—and that of course had to change….the goal was to brand themselves as a country that could not only produce high quality garment manufacturing (which it did, particularly in knitwear in the early part of the 1990's), but to be the creative energy behind it—they wanted to be an innovation-oriented country "Designed in China"—rather than workshop to the world (Wu, 2009, 127).

LJ: This is a really interesting aspect of development and one that I wish we had the space to discuss more fully, but I am sure we may return to it later.

During the run up to the Olympics (2008) we all had China fever in the UK, Europe and beyond. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London put on *China Now,* the exhibition which show-cased many independent Chinese designers in the creative industries, fashion designers Ke Ma, with her label Exception, and Yiyang Wang and his label Zuczug. I was especially happy as we had bought a Zuczug shirt during our visit in 2006. I remember the surge of interest which followed the exhibition—Juanjuan Wu (2009) *Chinese Fashion from Mao to Now* was published by Berg, and Wu was guest editor of a special China edition of Berg's *Fashion Theory the journal of Dress and Culture,* so there was a flurry of activity amongst fashion writers

[1] As it was in the UK in the 1970's, before Diploma in Art and Design became Degree status.

and researchers in academia. Information and analysis on the developments of the Chinese Fashion Industry and issues surrounding Chinese dress and identity were examined and published with much excitement.

So, to be invited back to TUAAD in 2009 whilst the spotlight was very much on China was an exciting prospect.

I would like to steer our conversation now, towards remembering the launch of the first workshop—the reception, the feeling, the delivery. We need to talk about the context and environment, our approach and the student participants and how they responded—being that it was very different to their normal daily classes.

PR: Yes, I think it was—very different. We got them working in teams, and encouraged group discussion and the sharing of ideas and thoughts. We had quite a mix of students I remember, TUAAD had brought together students from across the academy and some had even been brought in from Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT), as we were amongst the first international fashion professors from the UK to teach at the Academy. Students were inquisitive, they asked questions, but I remember BIFT students had a propensity to ask more than TUAAD students—they seemed more curious—a desire to know—for information—to hear us speak… about anything—art, design, frocks, culture, music…I suppose the internet was still very much in its infancy then. Is it possible, perhaps, that with access to the internet, social media, and international brands now easily accessible and available, that their curiosity has been quelled?

LJ: I suppose it is very possible, there is so much information it's sad to think that its presence would halt or slow down students' curiosity—it's good to accept guidance and assistance as this often aids the individual's creative journey.

PR: Yes, but educational Institutions delivering art and design programmes were having to learn how to engender the same freedom and creative outcomes happening in the UK and other international institutions—it was about educating and developing both students and staff, as the prediction was that many of the student graduates would become the teachers and professors of the future,[2] so would become the ambassadors, spreading the word of the new pedagogical approach to teaching innovation and creativity in fashion design.

LJ: That's both interesting and rewarding, and did it happen?

PR: Yes, I believe so. Indeed it is very rewarding—but, just to add to the issue of student's curiosity, I can tell, behind that slightly passive facade, there is still a keen hunger for knowledge about global aspects of fashion and particularly culture—even though their questions are very often about Asian, Japanese and Korean subcultures, highlighting their obsession with Anime and Manga.

LJ: Yes, this fascination has been well documented, how does their obsession with anime manifest itself?

PR: Mainly and quite literally in their fashion illustrations—quite beautiful lines and characters—which are also to be found in their sketch books and notebooks. I

[2] Graduates from TUAAD and participants in workshops delivered by Rider and Jones have, since graduating, progressed to become lecturers and Heads of Department in Colleges and Universities across China.

try to dissuade the use of it as I know it carries a stigma[3]—at crit, I suggest that their own (personal) style should be more forthcoming. On a more general level, Anime can be interpreted as being cartoon-like and therefore possibly not taken seriously, so I suggest that they keep it as part of their personal development and exclude it from finished work.

LJ: I would like to clarify the context and content of that first workshop and document how the workshops have been developed since 2006- I think we should talk about the pedagogic approach together with the successes and stresses of delivery—because the execution—the delivery for me, was key (perhaps not as much in 2006, but certainly as the depth of my interest in teaching and learning developed and strengthened over time.)

In my mind the workshop was the gateway to creativity—the whole purpose behind the collaboration between us and TUAAD. It seemed that the subtext of our workshops was how to teach creativity.[4]

PR: Currently the Creative project is with year Zero, (pre first year BA) it has been running in various forms for 10 years…At the start we used to have mixed levels of participants which was a new idea at the time, and included masters students, so a truly mixed class—often students progressed quicker in these groups due to individual feedback remarks being overheard, and because group feedback was given at regular points during each day, but it reverted back to year groups some years ago. Feedback is very important, so sometimes students are gathered round an example of work which was either in need of assistance and input—or it was an example of a student's results being successful for various reasons—form, structure, and use of media, or it was maybe a good example of drawing, mark making and visual communication.

LJ: So to clarify the approach,—as the professor and facilitator you were in amongst the students—giving guidance and feedback as you walk around, very much in the middle of the action. (Hunt, 2014).[5]

PR: Yes, that's right. Photography as a method of recording work was not so prevalent in 2005, but I remember that we had asked that a camera was essential equipment for each student—but now it is second nature of course—but despite this, even now, I have to keep encouraging the recording of developments and also, the act of stepping back and really looking from a distance. This develops their eye for proportion. It's a very old method of teaching I think the origin being in the innovative methods of the Bauhaus- and has been adopted by many other subject disciplines besides art and design, due to the excellent way it highlights different levels of achievement, good examples where the exploration is particularly exciting—and can elicit further developments, or, not so successful attempts can be quickly supported

[3] Staff colleagues at TUAAD discourage the use of anime in students' work because its origins come from Japanese culture. The study of Chinese culture and characteristics is preferred.

[4] In 2004 Jones delivered workshops on Creativity, at Vantan Design Institute, Tokyo, expressly for the development of staff—including office staff. Subsequent workshops were delivered to students.

[5] All lecturers teaching practice-based art and design subjects in a studio environment use this method of delivery.

with both practical demonstration and verbal assistance from the facilitator, not to mention recording the actual development process (Hunt, 2014).

PR: The Masters students who have studied with me recently (on the Creative Project) are under a specific TUAAD Prof's tutelage… and the classes with my input are like an injection of ideas both research and practice, which fits in to their weekly programme.

Often the MA students ask for a one-to-one session where I discuss their individual design projects—and in some cases, I attend crit sessions with the assigned Professor. This gives them the experience of listening to the feedback of two professionals—something which they will experience in the real world of work. These critiques are usually very busy in that there are student assistants present who either scribe (for the student whose work is receiving the critique) or attend to the professors—finding relevant teaching aids—such as books or journals—pencils paper etc.

LJ: This reminds me of atelier delivery -which was very far from the methods used in Higher Education institutions in the UK, simply because of dealing with large numbers which demands a very different approach…some atelier teaching is still practiced although it usually takes the form of, or is defined as a "tutorial". But let's return to the Creative Practice project—I want to discuss the content of this tested process.

5.2.1 The Creative Practice Project

PR: There are three stages to the creative practice project which relate to materials with very different qualities—paper, calico and jersey—we use them in that order, then mix the materials in the latter part of the project.

We always start with free sculpting using paper on the dress stand—this presents several challenges—students are encouraged to cut in to the paper to make it bend in a concave or convex way which might envelop the body form—I have found that students get too content with the usual design process which starts with 2D drawing and ends in a 3D model. The creative practice process which is used in this project turns that on its head—and allows them to see shapes and possibilities that they would not be able to draw—one's imagination cannot foresee how the materials will behave when they are used in this way—these shapes cannot be predicted—therefore totally new shapes and silhouettes are being formed—from nothing.

LJ: Yes—creation which comes from nothing. When I have facilitated similar workshops, participants are often surprised by the use of materials not usually associated with the body—for instance, how paper and other types of ephemera behave on the mannequin, they often struggle to make it "look right", and when they can't, to them it can mean failure, or can even be interpreted as "going wrong" or making a "mistake". At this point I introduce the notion of serendipity—which again may be a totally new concept for them—and one that I return to again and again as I am sure you do. The idea that "mistakes" can not only be good, but can also produce surprisingly great results, is a concept which can be quite challenging for students

new to this type of "drawing" in three-dimensional space. William Kentridge talks about drawing as something that is executed because it is known—"here is an image that I know" (Kentridge & Morris, 2014, 11), but when the knowing is not known, the empty space/void can be challenging and problematic (Land, 2014).

Instances like this happen in workshops and are numerous—students get stuck or just don't get it, usually demonstrating their immobility, through belligerent body language, frustration which results in a state of liminality. I wonder how you re-motivate them? So often students are waiting for feedback and guidance -especially in a large studio with a large cohort, they can either hide, or they get bored waiting, or just become inactive. Getting formative feedback from the professor can open the door—allowing them to progress from a liminal state, to acceptance or understanding (Land, 2014).

PR: Once identified, I will talk to the student or group—often other students will overhear and come to join in by standing around—I also physically engage with their work—re-ordering, or re-arranging, and of course, through visual means such as sketching the idea, cutting in to cloth or paper. It's really like a mini workshop/demonstration within the studio. By encouraging them to revisit and reassess their work—perhaps by reminding them of things that they have done last week or the previous day, may achieve a stronger result….

LJ: ….with a healthy amount of praise and encouragement, also!

This stop start—passing from liminality to understanding—from not knowing, to knowing (the way), gets them exploring again. It often takes them to who knows where…..it is the fact that they do not know (imagine) what the outcome will be that is troublesome and unsettling—if they knew that they were going to produce a dress—they would be okay. (Kentridge & Morris, 2014, 11).

LJ: The calico and jersey exercise must be highly anticipated by the students—as this is where they experiment with fabric on a dress stand/body form. They really begin to feel like fashion designers. I have seen this transformation happen in a group of students that I have observed as participants of a similar workshop. I think it is very important for them to feel this early in their education as it allows them to indulge in the notion that they could be a designer—a dress maker—I think it is something inherent in the cloth and the body shape, and the open space of the studio—that is evocative of great design houses and couturier's. It's very relevant—I think it brings a real sense of time travel—what it would be/might be like to be a designer, (even if it is a dream)—and that is very important and motivational to a student as they are learning the discipline.

PR: Yes…. I see this too—and I agree it is to do with the feel of cloth and its characteristics—the structure—or the folds—the architectural shapes, and the fabulously rich drape of the jersey—suddenly everyone is an evening wear designer! Some really quite sophisticated shapes can and have been achieved even by students who are totally new to draping and shape making.

Within these two workshops, shorter exercises for example limiting students to one pin to hold the cloth around the mannequin, can not only present challenges in terms of how much they can ask of one pin, but it also forces them to think about the body as a three-dimensional form. Along-side the practice session I ask them to

look at a range of cultural dress forms such as the sari and dhoti from India, togas and draped Grecian goddesses—also ecclesiastical dress including habits—monks and nuns of all denominations. Their research is recorded by drawing examples of these visual starting points in their sketchbooks, along with researching international artists, sculptors and architects.

This is followed by a session which involves a large white shirt which they are asked to bring in—it can be bought from a vintage store or their own or one belonging to a family member. The students use the shirt on the stand to generate ideas based on twisting and turning the shirt in to different forms—they're also encouraged to do the experiment using each other as models -so discussion can take place on how the twisted or tilted garment feels relating to restrictions caused by the grain of the cloth or the seams, or sleeves and openings being in unexpected places on the body. I call the workshop "tip and turn" and it's been a highly successful method of enabling students to see and get a feel for the garment and the body in equal measure. I have seen evidence of this approach in mainstream fashion—from brands such as Exception by Ke Ma who produced twisted and exaggerated shirts and garments, in fact it is now to be seen everywhere in many global collections.

LJ: So, the delivery and the outcomes of the workshops were very much at the forefront of the innovation curve—ahead if not feeding into the trend for twisted and engineered garments.

PR: Yes it was—absolutely. And the trend was around for quite some time! The next phase of the process takes two of the methods we have experimented with and merges them to make a new form—calico with jersey for instance and then, the shirt is brought into the mix with both fabrics.

The final critique takes place to decide on the final piece, and the restrictions set at the beginning of the project are re-emphasized in that pins, staples and clips may be used to join edges, no machine stitchery is allowed….so the piece is not permanent—it only has to last for the duration of the student organised fashion show. It is about concept, ideas, starting points and visual communication.

The show is the culmination of their four weeks of research and experimentation. Again, working as one large team, they produce the entire event, from music, running order to styling and visual effects (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

5.2.2 Academy Wide Option Project

PR: The workshop we delivered in 2005 evolved over the years to become the Option Project, offered across the Academy, open to students from other disciplines. It now has an emphasis on specific social and/or environmental issues. Fashion and clothing are used as a vehicle to create a narrative or vignette, the outcome of which might be a short promotional film/video, a piece of music, art/installation or performance. It does not have to be a worn garment.

Fig. 5.1 Left: Studio creative pratice session Right: Students' 2D and 3D ideation and development work. Courtesy of the authors

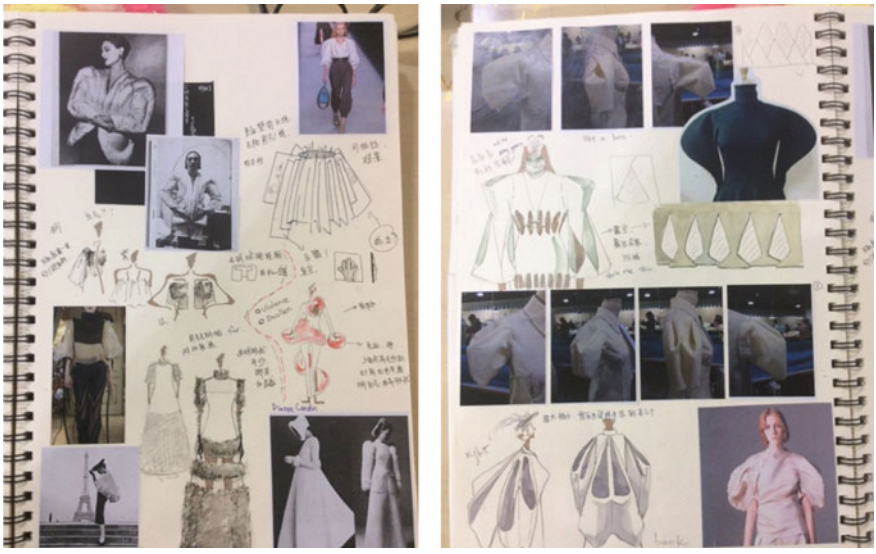

Fig. 5.2 Student Work-books: Left and Right visual reference and research, with 2 and 3D develpoment. Courtesy of the authors

LJ: That's really interesting as one could say that the project we co-taught in 2009 was a trial run—I can see the synergies—creativity—narratives using identity—ephemera—I remember after initial inactivity whilst students got their heads around what I had asked them to do, there was fevered activity—and some really exciting results, although our desired outcomes were then, more sartorial in nature, they were highly motivated and produced some very interesting creations.

PR: Yes, they did. That group of students were second year, Fashion degree. Now, students are third year, who come from the range of BA programmes in Art and Design. I feel that this type of creative interdisciplinary project at this stage in the programme, is late to be truly beneficial to their individual approach to design. However, it will be useful in terms of the preparation of their final degree show presentation. But because students can opt for this project—they used to arrive with the assumption that they would be making a garment—and this caused problems at the beginning—but now we have clarified the brief, there are not these expectations as students know that they will be partaking in a creative project in the context of fashion. Recently the social aspect have been tapped into, recycling and sustainability.

LJ: …. interesting…there's a huge recycling culture in China, isn't there? I remember being very struck in the early 90's with seeing people on bicycles with towering collections of cardboard boxes, or barrows full of cans—long before we (UK) got switched on to recycling—how did you weave it in to the project?

PR: I asked the students to source "found garments" with which to create a narrative, for example—the story of the garments' life. This gave them the opportunity to be wildly imaginative and creative with their story telling. I put them in to pairs each from different disciplines. They discuss where the garment might have come from, who might have worn it, what they might have done in it, and so forth. They respond in a range of different ways—some very successful, linking their narrative to poetry or haiku. This is very interesting as I begin to really see and hear the influences of their individual cultures. Some pairs work well together pooling and sharing ideas, and sometimes there are mismatches in the pairings—for instance the work ethic is imbalanced. This can be problematic—re-organising to accommodate an isolated student or separating incompatible pairs is the tried and tested process which works.

LJ: Its interesting, isn't it? It's the same no matter what part of the world one teaches—all students want is your time and attention—they want and need feedback—formative feedback which helps development and progress.

PR: In 2018, there were students from film, IT, ceramics, photography, fashion, textiles, art history, jewellery, and product design, so a mixed group of about twenty-four students. The social issue we looked at was the current emancipation of gender and how it manifests itself through fashion and dress. An introductory interactive presentation which illustrates the decades of change from the 50's housewife through 60's and hippy love /chic/sexual freedom, followed by the 70's and YSL's le smoking and the idea of women in suits—wearing trousers and 80's glamour—Versace and Helmut Newton…and the 90's sexism,—the female and male gaze—Calvin Klein and the masculinity in crisis, etc., up to now with celebrity culture, Hollywood glamour and the recent hash tag me too debates and accusations. So, it has quite a chunk of visual fashion culture at the start to set the scene. When I asked the

question, identify the underlying theme running through the decades', there was just one response, an Art History student who was just back from a semester at Warwick University, UK who correctly stated the development and emancipation of women. It's not necessarily that the other students didn't know the answer—just that they are reticent to speak out.

LJ: That's interesting. It really endorses the international study abroad experience, doesn't it—exposure to new cultures and to cultural histories, artists, thinkers and academics and gaining in self-confidence too—brings about their awareness of self which then feeds in to their identity—it is inherent in the very being of many students who have studied/worked overseas as part of their programme. Tell me about the outcomes—were they successful—and how did students respond to the experience?

PR: Yes, they were—there was generally very high student satisfaction amongst the group. Many stated that they had never worked on anything like this project in their subject areas. It is interesting that the multidisciplinary nature of the project always creates an initial feeling amongst the group of discomfort—they are unsettled—in unfamiliar territory—but by the end of the project that discomfort is replaced by camaraderie, and they have a much better understanding of the collaborative process which is so important in today's creative industries.

Generally undergraduate and post graduate students at TUAAD tend to be from Provinces outside of Beijing. As part of their programme they enter international and national competitions[6]—and have had a very high success rate, certainly recently a masters graduate was short listed and brought to London as part of the H&M international design awards. Whilst he did not win a prize, but to be chosen as one of the finalists was very prestigious for him. He is now a Lecturer in Fashion—it's also interesting that students who have partaken in our projects over the years, are now heads of fashion departments in numerous Universities across China, where they have set up courses and programmes using our methods of creative delivery.

5.3 Internationalisation

LJ: Lets move this on a little and start to talk about internationalisation. It's a subject of special personal interest most of my life in fashion education, and I had started to research cultural intelligence and international awareness of fashion graduates from different areas of the world (Jones, 2003).

In 2000 Higher Education institutions in the UK were busy with Reviews which were in full flow. One of the topics under scrutiny was the notion of internationalisation, what was it, and how and what made the University international, and how were our programmes international. I remember being the only member of staff who could speak to the question posed by a visiting QA auditor—all my colleagues turned

[6] Competitions have featured in the content of fashion programmes in China for many years. For further reading on this subject, see Wu (2009) Chap. 7, in *Chinese Fashion. From Mao to Now.* Berg Publications, London.

around to look at me in a mixture of amazement and relief. It was quite something! *(laughs).*

Currently, reading articles about China's internationalisation strategy in the online *Business of Fashion* newsfeed (JingDaily.com), I was momentarily surprised by thinking—how unusual it was to see the word internationalisation being used in a headline in the fashion press! But there it is—so, just like universities, brands and designers—here is a *Country* laying out its internationalisation strategy and executing it *through fashion.*.The strategy is not a dream or a wish list. It is a government strategy.

PR: Yes—it's quite radical really. President Xi Jinping's internationalisation strategy lays out six ways in which it will directly impact the global fashion business/industry, one of them being "*More competition from home grown Brands*"**—** calling for "*domestic innovation and design to meet the growing needs of consumers*".

LJ: Which is why we have seen many international professors and teachers in Chinese Universities, and many collaborative agreements and memorandums of understanding being signed in the eighteen years since 2000, and Chinese students studying fashion in their thousands at UK, and western universities, because approaches to innovation and creativity had to be learned, and therefore taught. A strategic aim on the TUAAD website in 2009 stated that they attached great importance to academic exchanges, and they "*keep abreast of the latest foreign thoughts and methodology of fine arts and artistic design"* (Jones, 2009).

So, through bringing in international professors to deliver tailor made teaching blocks, workshops and presentations, and supporting research sabbaticals, their aim was being achieved. Collaborative partnerships with international HEI's followed.

PR: Another direct result has been in programmes being validated with "built-in" semesters which are delivered in participating institutions, therefore providing all students with an international experience—in the case of the MA course at TUAAD, the three participating institutions were based in UK (London), USA (NYC) and China (Beijing). It is an ambitious programme but diverse and rich in the breadth of experiences it offers. However, many students find it difficult to sustain the high cost of accommodation whilst they study in multiple major cities overseas.

5.3.1 Home Grown

PR: It's my experience over many years of teaching at Tsinghua that some students continue to post graduate level at Beijing institutions, while many prefer to make applications overseas—taking up residency and setting up their businesses, showing at International Fashion Weeks. The flow of graduates returning home to China seems to be increasing, they tend to settle in more tier one cities, Beijing, Guangzhou and particularly Shanghai—where, in the last five years a number of own label businesses have been established due to the success of tapping in to Chinese and International funding and sponsorship. It seems very few set up in Beijing, which is much more conservative in its approach to Fashion Design.

One such enterprise—Staffonly (www.staffonly.com) was set up in 2015 by a Tsinghua graduate who had graduated from the Royal College of Art, London, UK with a Master of Design in Fashion who joined forces with a friend who had completed a Masters degree at the London College of Fashion. Having set up their studio in Shanghai, they have subsequently shown at Shanghai fashion week, and been invited to show in London and Milan. They are working with international companies on specific fashion projects namely Woolmark, BMW, Mini Cooper and Laine Crawford.

LJ: Fantastic. Was the TUAAD graduate a participant of the workshops you/we had delivered?

PR: Yes, she was. I contacted her when doing research for this paper, and she told me that she still has all her research work from our workshops, and sometimes re-visits it to refresh her thoughts on the creative processes, and ideas that she had at the time.

LJ: What better endorsement can there be?

PR: Yes, it's really good to receive that sort of feedback!

LJ: I remember (in 2006) that there was a huge interest in us being from the UK and particularly from London—lots of questions about London institutions—Central St. Martins (CSM), London College of Fashion (LCF), and of course, the Royal college of Art (RCA).

PR: I suppose it was about then (2006), that was the beginning of the wave of applications (to UK institutions) from China and the East. There has since been a continual flow of applicants, CSM and LCF having the highest applications—currently, applications are being made to most of the UK institutions which provide courses in fashion—certainly attracting Chinese students is the aim of HEI's, creating revenue. According to HESA, there has been a rise of 158% in Chinese applications since 2013 (hesa.co.uk) and the applications keep on coming.

LJ: I wonder how long the steady stream will continue? Perhaps for another few years at least—especially for applications to Masters programmes—that is until such a time when fashion design and fashion business and management education in China becomes strong and robust providing an equivalent and attractive alternative to studying overseas—then, maybe, the axis of applications will change? And this will be when Chinese institutions can say that their student graduates are truly home grown. But one would hope that they will also continue to be internationalised continuing all the different aspects they currently have in place.

PR: Sure, it will be very interesting to see the developments. Since 2006 when our relationship with Chinese design education began, we have witnessed many if not all UK HEI's relying heavily, not only on Chinese but international applications in general—both at undergraduate and post graduate level. Apparently, there are approximately 4000 students studying fashion and design related subjects in UK Universities and Colleges. (hesa.co.uk).

LJ: In the UK and elsewhere, fees for international students are really very expensive.

PR: Some Chinese students get funded by the Chinese Government, and many more have funding provided form their families' personal wealth or from selling land

or property. Others, not lucky enough to have family fortunes turn to more ingenious methods such as crowd funding—I know of a student who embraced this method who had very successful results—they raised enough money to get to New York and pay fees for a Masters course and has since not only graduated but repaid his investors and is now working as an artist/designer in NYC.

LJ: So in identifying "home grown" fashion designer brands, do students who study Masters programmes overseas then return to China to start up their businesses qualify as *Home Grown* in the eyes of the government's internationalisation strategy?

PR: At the moment they are but, in the future—who knows? I would hope that the international flavour, with input from international professors will continue—but I would think literally it means 'studied in China from start to finish'. That is the ultimate objective.

5.4 Conclusion: A Summary of Our Conversation

LJ/PR: It appears that we could say then that over the years we have sown the seeds of change in terms of the methods of delivering creative fashion practice. This change of approach has been taken forward by graduate students of TUAAD to new positions in education, each with their own interpretation, developing the new approach -which in some cases may even include elements of Chinese characteristics, which is great. This new and more creative approach to the practice of fashion design has played a small part in paving the way for graduate students to be design leaders and founders illustrated by a plethora of successful Chinese fashion brands gaining global recognition. It is very rewarding to think that we have played a small part in assisting with the orchestrated leap from workshop to the world to designed in China.

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Chapter 6
The Identity of the Emerging Young Chinese Fashion Designers and the Role of Fashion Design Education

Christine Tsui

6.1 The Rise of Chinese Fashion Designers

The dramatic upsurge in the international presence of Chinese designers from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the last decade is compelling. Frankie Xie's debut at the 2006 Paris Fashion Week, and Ke Ma's stunning display at the 2008 Paris Couture Week, began what has proven to be steady growth in international impact. In 2012, five young Chinese designers, all graduates from the elite fashion school Central Saint Martin College of Art and Design (CSM), appeared at the London Fashion Week. In Sept 2014 Chinese designer Tao Wang started her debut at New York Fashion Week and eventually attracted Tiffany Trump to become her fan. In 2016, Pei Guo followed Ke Ma and became the second mainland Chinese designer invited to present at Paris Couture Week. Now spectators can find Chinese designers' shows at all of the big four international fashion weeks: New York, London, Milan, and Paris (Tsui, 2019).

This stage success has been accompanied by growing media interest in Chinese fashion publications. In 2005, the fashion conglomerate Vogue introduced four young Chinese design talents in its first Chinese edition, and since then the magazine has reserved regular space for Chinese fashion designers in its print version of the magazine. In 2012, the international fashion journal Women's Wear Daily (WWD) initiated a column titled "China File," endorsed by the Chinese fashion journalist Huang Hung, to discuss Chinese fashion designers and their market. Today, fashion journals like BoF, WWD, Vogue Business all launched Chinese editions and offered the news of Chinese designers to international audience. There is no doubt that in the twenty-first century, contemporary Chinese fashion design is hot (Tsui, 2019)!

In the book that I published in 2009 (Tsui, 2009), I categorized Chinese designers into 3 groups based on the timing when they were born. Those who were born in

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1950s and 1960s and received their design education in 1980s and 1990s, they are counted as the first generation; those who were born in 1970s and early 1980s, they got their design education in 1990s and early twenty-first century, they represent the second generation of Chinese fashion designers; and those who were born in late 1980s and 1990s, their education were mainly accomplished after 2010, they are the third generation of Chinese fashion designers.

In 2013 and 2019, I published two articles that discuss the work of Chinese designers (Tsui, 2013, 2019). In the former article, I argue that Chinese designers' national identity is evolving from concrete Chinese symbols to spiritual Chinese symbols. In the second article, I researched the identity of "Chinese fashion". Both of the articles researched the older generations of designers—those of the first and second generations. It is worthy of a note, that most of the first and second generations of Chinese designers received their education in domestic, while in this chapter, I like to focus on the third generation—those who were born in the late 1980s and 1990s. The reason why I would like to explore the fashion identity of this generation is because that compared to their predecessors, this generation made a rapid growth rate in numbers of those who studied in overseas, particularly in elite fashion schools like CSM and Parson the New School for Design (PARSONS).

Hence, in this chapter, I would like to explore the following questions:

- What is the identity of the third generation of Chinese fashion design? Whether there is still a unified national identity can be concluded from this generation?
- What are the major differences between the identity of this generation and that of their predecessors?
- From the design education perspective, what caused such differences?

6.2 Methodology

For the part of designers, this research investigated 8 designers who fall into the following criteria:

- They were all born in 1990s;
- They obtained their degrees from the top international fashion schools;
- They have launched their collections in the fashion industry for at least 3 years, so we can see a continuous collection of their works;
- They have made certain achievements in the fashion field (Table 6.1).

The data were collected from their brand portfolio statements, captions of their collection images and collection images listed on their official websites.

For the part of education, the research outcome comes from my Ph.D. thesis (Tsui, 2015) which was accomplished by 2015. In this research, I investigated and compared 3 top international fashion schools (CSM, PARSONS, FIT) and 3 top Chinese fashion schools (Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology BIFT, Donghua University DHU, China Academy of Arts CAA) through archive studies and interviews.

Table 6.1 Designers' list and their major achievement[1]

Designer's name	Brand's name	Category	Education	Start year of the brand	Major achievements
Kate Han	Mukzin	Women's line	Leeds University Art School	2014	✓ Won the Pioneer Designer Award from the Asian Fashion Federation in 2017 ✓ Spring/Summer 2019 collection at London Fashion Week
Angel Chen	Angel Chen	Men and Women	CSM	2014	✓ Won the 'Ones to Watch' Awards from Fashion Scouts in 2014 ✓ "30 under 30" by Forbes in 2016 ✓ BoF 500 in 2017 and 2018 ✓ Milan Fashion Week ✓ Awards winner of 2018/19 International Woolmark Prize (Asian region) ✓ Partnership with H&M in 2019
Yutong Jiang and Liushu Lei	Shushu/Tong	Girl's line	London College of Fashion (LCF)	2015	Stock list covers Lane Crawford, Dover Street Market, Opening Ceremony, 10 Corso Como
Hai Lin	Particle Fever	Sports	PARSONS	2015	Obtained A-round investment in 2016. Achieved profit break-even in 2017

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Designer's name	Brand's name	Category	Education	Start year of the brand	Major achievements
Yiran Guo	Yiran Tian	Women's line	LCF	2014	✓ Partner with Lane Crawford for its 165th anniversary celebration ✓ "30 under 30" by Forbes in 2018. ✓ 1436xLabelhood awards winner in 2018
Xuzhi Chen	Xuzhi Chen	Women's line	CSM	2014	✓ LVMH Prize 2016 (nominee) ✓ International Woolmark Prize 2016(nominee) ✓ H&M Design Award 2015 (nominee) ✓ "30 under 30" (Asia) by Forbes in 2017 ✓ BoF 500 2018
Leaf Xia	Leaf Xia	Girl's line	PARSONS	2016	Multiple Presentations at Shanghai Fashion Week
Fengchen Wang	Fengchen Wang	Unisex	Royal College of Arts		Nominated for the 2016 LVMH Prize, Wang has designed six collections to date, showing two at London Fashion Week Men's as part of Lulu Kennedy's support scheme for emerging designers, MAN. Cross-over with Levi's and Converse

Resource The official websites of designers. Accessed on July 11th, 2019

6.3 The Identity of the Third Generation of Chinese Fashion Designers: Heterogeneous

Compared to their predecessors, the third generation of designers have much more diversified identities (with no surprise). In my previous researches (Tsui, 2009, 2013, 2019), I argue that both of the first generation and the second generation of Chinese designers carry an obvious "national identity" called "Chinese" identity, though such identity evolved from the concrete Chinese symbols like Qi Pao, dragon, phoenix, and so on to the "spiritual" Chinese symbols.

It is difficult to generalize such a unified "identity" from this third generation of those born in 1990s. Or if there is such one, we probably can call it "heterogenous", which means it includes multi-cultural elements and identities.

I find three key features for their design identity: a "cultural dimension", compared to their predecessors, the third generation of designers embrace a multi-cultural inspiration more than just China and or West; a "technical dimension", they tend to use lots of "deconstruction" and "reorganization" techniques to construct their clothing physically; a "spiritual" dimension, which makes their work "fun" or "interesting". To conclude, their identity carries a strong heterogenous sense.

6.3.1 Embracing the Multi-culture

Compared to their predecessors who mainly source their inspirations from Chinese traditions, this generation of designers embrace multi-culture from multi nations.

For instance, Angel Chen in her FW2017 collection, she writes on her website:

> Every nation/tribe has his own unique language, religious and belief, but all human being desire freedom……(in her new collection), the costumes of Yoruba, Bamileke the Maori, it mixtures the handmade embroidery, fringe, jacquard and man-made fur…… (www.angelchen.com)

In her collection showed on Sept 10th 2018, "China Day" hosted by Tmall on New York Fashion Week, she presented her collection themed with "Mrs. Pirates'. For this collection, she wrote:

> Fabric inspired from Iran-American artist Sarh Rahbar… the pattern adopts Chinese painting tactic to symbolize the tattoo of pirates, embed fancy carp, Chinese dragon, pirates ship in the form of treasure map. In silhouette, the designer researched the costume features of both Ming-Qing Dynasty and Pirates, re-innovate their basic forms……

Yoruba, Bamilek, and Maori are ethnical tribes from Africa and New Zealand. The Iran-American identity of Sara Rahbar entails that her hybrid cultural background is the stimuli for her work, and according to the artist's website, she is a "mixed media artist" who covers "photography, sculpture, and installation". Key words like "Chinese painting tactic", tattoo of "fancy carp", "Chinese dragon" represented her

inclusion of Chinese culture; "pirates", according to its etymology, it is a Western-born phenomena rather than traditional Chinese. Thus, this collection, at least covered culture of China, west and middle east.

In the Introduction part to Mukzin, the designer states that:

> The elements were reformed into a kaleidoscope of patterns and profiles, in a trail-blazing way, and then stay in the soul of every piece of costumes, leaving their imprints as totems…-Such mixture with an innovative emphasis has not only brought with it numerous fans, but the crossover way of thinking has pushed the brand to join in experiments that blend East and West tastes in various industries and fields (shop.mukzin.com/pages/brand).

In the older generation of Chinese designers' work, we rarely see work inspired by other nations rather than China and the West (even though the "west" maybe different with the real west). Apparently, the younger generation shows their passion for not only Western culture, but also the non-Western culture. This proves that the younger generation designers are much more inclusive with multi-cultures compared to their predecessors.

6.3.2 Deconstruction as a Main Technique

"Deconstruction" is another key word found from their texts and collection. "Since the surfacing of the term "deconstruction" in design journalism in the mid-1980s, the word has served to label architecture, graphic design, products, and fashion featuring chopped up, layered, and fragmented forms imbued with ambiguous futuristic overtones" (Lupton, 1994).

The following examples manifest how young designers "deconstruct" the original idea then re-organize/shape to form a new form.

For instance, Particle Fever claims that the following collection is inspired by British artist David Hawkney "who is good at breaking the artistic media" (www.pafev.com). The artist most famous work is the 'swimming pools' collection he created in LA, maybe for this reason, the designer also shoot their work in "swimming pool" (although it does not look like a real swimming pool). The silhouette does not look any special—they are just normal swimming suits, but the paintings or prints on the fabric show somewhat deconstruction and reorganization of the elements (Fig. 6.1).

In the following work, Particle Fever "deformed, deconstructed and re-organized different material, details" (www.pafev.com) in order to build an impression of "heterotopia"—a concept inspired by the French philosopher Foucault (Fig. 6.2).

In Angel Chen's same collection we can also see the deconstruction tactic. As the designer describe it:

> The pattern adopts Chinese painting tactic to symbolize the tattoo of pirates, embed fancy carp, Chinese dragon, pirates ship in the form of treasure map. In silhouette, the designer researched the costume features of both Ming-Qing Dynasty and Pirates, re-innovate their basic forms…… (www.angelchen.com)

Fig. 6.1 SS2017 collection of particle fever, photographer: Muka

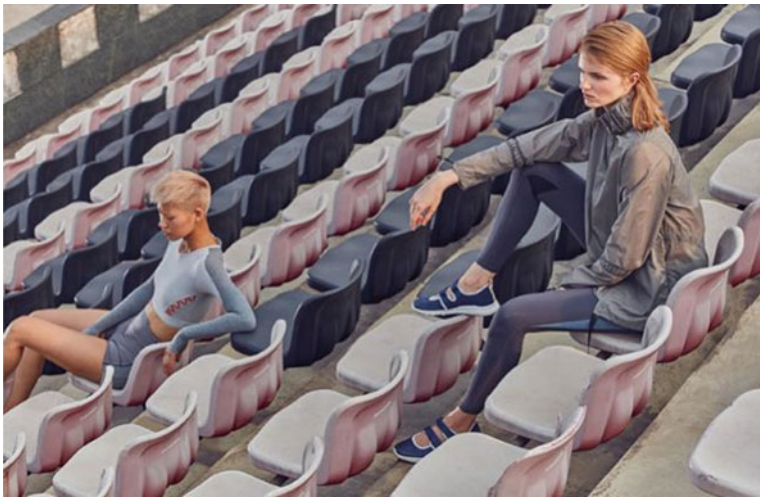

Fig. 6.2 FW2017 collection of particle fever, photographer: Wei De

From her design, we don't really see a concrete dragon image, or not even a fish, but we can feel the sea (the blue and white brush), fish (the red fish scale), boat (the yellow flag with fish like pattern on it)… The motifs are also "broken" into pieces but the whole dress looks quite harmonious.

Designer Kate Han once worked for Vivienne Westwood for apprenticeship, shows a strong talent in the "deconstruction" technique. On her website, the designer states "(the brand) standing on a pan-Asia perspective and following the consumption trend "oriental fever", they deconstruct the majestic and myriad Chinese traditional culture,

via original modern costume design, and bring about a *neo-orientalist* aesthetic language in a brand-new dimension".

Other examples include:

> Kate Han has deconstructed the symbols of Women Xia and their spirits throughout history and mixed those elements in a new way to create a splendid image of modern woman as reflected in the hall of the World of Mirror (shop.mukzin.com/pages/brand).

The following image, themed with "women xia (martial artist)" is an example to explain how the designer deconstructs the original form and re-organize them. The overall silhouette seems like a big coat, but mixed with at least two separated pieces—the green checks part and the prints part. From the picture we can see "blades, swords, spears and halberds" (mukzin.com) but meantime they were given "feminine color". But as we can see from the image, we don't really feel all these weapon instantly, mainly because these weapons are not presented in a direct form, rather they are toned down by colors and deconstructed into different patterns (Fig. 6.3).

Fig. 6.3 AW2018 collection of Mukzin, photographer: Peter Xu Studio

Shushutong in their portfolio also states that they "aim to deconstruct and reorganize the elements of girls" (www.shushutongstudio.com). From the following image, we can see the clothing is "deconstructed" into two different parts in two different materials: the see-thru oversleeve and a camisole-like top.

Deconstruction shows more conflicts by deconstructing the prints/motif, structure of the dress, or silhouettes, and tends to be more postmodern look, compared to the older generation, their design tends to show more harmonious sense (Tsui, 2013, 2019).

6.3.3 The Fun Emotion

Another obvious difference compared with their predecessors is the emotional dimension. In the older generation, they tend to show a serious, solemn emotion (under the influence of nationalism) (Tsui, 2009, 2013, 2019), the younger generation tries to demonstrate a more relaxed emotion in their work.

For instance, Shushu/Tong and Leaf Xia tends to create a "fun" character for their clients. In their work, they use sweet and colorful colors to show how "fun" a dress can be. For instance, Shushutong uses exaggerated butterfly in their work. Butterfly usually refers to girls and the designers enlarged the proportion of butterfly and make it look more fun (Fig. 6.4).

Fig. 6.4 SS2016 collection of leaf Xia, photographer: Toryrust

6.4 A Brief History of "Fashion", "Design" and Fashion Design Education in China[1]

To understand the role of education in affecting the fashion designers, it is important to get a brief understanding of the key words of "fashion" and "design" in the Chinese context and the history of design education in China The following parts come from the research I made in 2016 about the definitions of "fashion" and "design".

To properly understand the meaning of fashion in the Chinese academic discourse and its major differences with the English word "fashion" ("*shizhuang*" and "*fuzhuang*" in Chinese), I analyzed the definitions that appeared in dictionaries, academic journals, and fashion textbooks (Tsui, 2016a, 2016b). My research shows that the origin of Chinese word "*shizhuang*"(fashion's translation) was associated with the migration of women's dress in the Western form in the late nineteenth-century. *Shizhuang* today is a type of *fuzhuang* in the Chinese discourse. It mainly refers to *fuzhuang* that is modern, vogue, international or Western. *Fuzhuang* is an umbrella name for all kinds of clothing in the Chinese discourse, including dress, costumes, garment, apparel, fashion (Tsui, 2016a, 2016b).

Fashion in China, enjoys a less prestigious position compared to its role in the English discourse. In China, scholars engaged in fashion research are solely from fashion field, while in the West scholars came from a much wider disciplines: fashion researchers, sociologists, arts historians and critics, cultural studies scholars, literature scholars, psychologists, consumer studies researchers, and behavioral scientists. Research of fashion in China still mainly focuses on its "how to" aspects– how to cut clothing; how to be more creative; how to teach design… In the West research of fashion extends from techniques to its spiritual, social, and cultural meanings. As a result, both teaching and learning of fashion in China place more importance on its material aspects such as the clothing that people wear; and in the West scholars also use fashion to study social phenomenon (Tsui, 2016a, 2016b).

My research on the final graduation shows of six fashion institutions reveals the same tendencies: The analysis of the visual look and techniques adopted for creating the clothing collections reveals that fashion design in the top Chinese fashion institutions has achieved nearly the same level as the international fashion institutions with regard to "what" to design and "how" to design. However, there is still a disparity in terms of "what is design for? (why)" (Tsui, 2015).

According to my research done for "design" (Tsui, 2016a, 2016b), "design" in the Chinese language has evolved through three stages in Chinese academic discourse. The concept of design was firstly introduced to China through Japanese translation at the beginning of twentieth-century and was called "*tu an*". When *tu an* was imported to China, it did not only mean creating visual decorations that would beautify objects, but also meant creating useful functions for the designed objects; its scope did not only cover two-dimensional design such as advertisement, book covers, and textiles, but also three-dimensional work such as ceramic, architecture, landscape, and wood

[1] The part of "fashion" and "design" comes from my publications in 2015 and 2016. The part of education part 6.5 and 6.6 is an episode from my PhD thesis (Tsui, 2015).

carving for furniture; its curricula for students to learn included both the drawing and making technology required to produce the objects. However, the backwardness of industry development in China in the beginning of twentieth-century restricted the development Tu An program. It eventually shrank to graphic pattern design for visual decorations on two-dimensional work. As a result, drawing became the most important learning component for the curricula. While in the meantime, "design" in English started to engage more dimensions besides aesthetic decorations and useful functions—business values, alongside the rapid development of industrial mechanical products.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the government adopted the term *Gongyi Meishu* to refer to designs. Its initial motivation was to stimulate the growth of traditional handicrafts since they could earn crucial foreign exchange for the country. However, scholars at the time believed *gongyi meishu* should not only cover traditional handicrafts, but also modern industrial products made by machines. The cleavage in understanding the meaning of *gongyi meishu* between the administrators of the universities, who represented the government, and scholars working in the field eventually resulted in many debates and fights in the curricula settings for *Gongyi Meishu* programs. Eventually handicrafts were taken as the core of curricula for the Design programs. However, today, *gongyi meishu* in the Chinese academic discourse only refers to handicrafts design and production.

By the late 1970s, *sheji* was eventually used as the official translation of the word "design". Although the term has changed, design is still primarily seen as an artistic activity in China today. The legacy of the previous 70 years where design was seen as a fine art activity continues to impact people's perception of the design field today; and its drawing-oriented curricula has misled people into thinking that design was only about drawing. In its latest National Catalogue (2012), Design is placed under the broad field of Arts, in parallel with Music, Fine Art, Dancing, and Theatrical Performance. It also appears under the field of Engineering as Industrial Design and Apparel Design and Engineering. The split of Design across these two fields reflected Chinese scholars' conflicting views about whether Design is an art or a science. In English, scope of Design education has extended from tangible objects to intangible organizations and systems; from material to immaterial; from serving industry to serving society including non-profit organizations, environment protection ideals, and marginal people. In the West, design is not only within the ambit of trained designers, but also of non-designers (for instance, managers' design thinking). Compared to the role of design and designers in the West, function of design and designers in China is still underestimated. Until today, "design" is often understood as "drawing" in China by most of non-professionals.

With regard to the inception of clothing design programs, in order to improve the daily life quality of people, the Chinese government promoted the textile and clothing sector to a strategic important level and founded textile institutions/programs and later fashion institutions/programs. The founders established the first curriculum mainly based on their intuitive understanding of clothing design. These early fashion design programs were imbued with a focus on fine art because they emerged from within Textile Design areas that in turn came under Fine Art. The Apparel Design and

Engineering program was started mainly because they provided Doctorate degrees and could simultaneously take advantage of the established Textile Engineering resources. The program's shape and nature was also a consequence of competition with Fashion Artistic Design. The universities that launched the first programs carefully selected their first group of teaching faculty, making assessments based on criteria ranging from the candidates' professional expertise, morality, presentation skills, and future potential. Political reliability was also critical, and in general, membership of the Communist Party was an advantage. Therefore it is common in China that design students from arts are strong in drawing, but those from engineering backgrounds are stronger in making clothing.

6.5 The Centralized Chinese Education System and How It Affects the Designers (see footnote 1)

The Chinese education system started in a centralized and unified form because of the government's unified one-party political system. When the first Fashion Design program was started in 1980, there were three possible ministries that could establish and administrate it—the Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Light Industry, and Ministry of Culture. These ministries managed the sectors of education, production, and trading; and the human and financial resources in each of these sectors. The vertical administration system initially promoted the rapid boom in the industry because such a system allowed educational institutions to design curriculum precisely for the needs of industrial development. However, this system also created wastage in terms of duplication of programs and resources. Its job allocation system also prevented students from choosing employment according to their personal interest or strength; rather the needs of the country or the whims of the personnel departments were paramount. Alongside the economic reforms initiated at the beginning of 1990s, and later the booming of the industry sector, the ministries-administration system underwent major reforms too. As a result, the majority of the ministries were removed from the realm of fashion design. The Ministry of Culture is still active today but no longer engages in fashion design education; both the Ministry of Textiles and the Ministry of Light Industry were removed from the governmental organizational structure. Most universities were switched to local provincial or municipal government control; only a few remained with the Ministry of Education. The new system offers much more autonomous authority to universities. The role of the government has changed from being a micro executor engaged in daily operational issues to a macro strategic planner. In Fashion Design, my research on the National Catalogues shows that the previous split of arts and science is moving toward providing a broader general education including both the arts and science. It has also moved from being drawing-oriented to exploring the production and business components of design. Moreover, courses have shifted from focusing on China only towards a more global vision. Nevertheless, the entrance exam into Fashion Design still remains focused on

achievements in drawing. However, the exam's content has become less predictable during the recent ten years.

My research of the six schools' websites indicates while the international schools place information of admission and program details as the first priority, Chinese institutions gave priority to research and projects that are more associated with government grants. The heavy dependence on government resources created uniformity in curricula. Compared to the uniformity of the Chinese universities, the international schools, while having many common features, still exhibit their own individuality. FIT teaches more practically; Parsons is creative but also considers the balance of business and social engagement; CSM's creativity aims at subverting tradition.

My research of the archives of historical curricula of the six schools, textbooks of Fashion Design, and the secondary resources demonstrates that fashion design education in China has been driven primarily by the government; while in the West it was mainly driven by industry. Although the developments of the two groups of fashion institutions were driven by different factors, they still show a similar trajectory in curricula development. Both groups of schools started fashion design in a fine art module that focuses on "drawing" courses; later the courses were extended to include production techniques that I called the "making" phase. The inclusion of fashion business, branding, and marketing have also begun to play more important roles in the teaching programs, as designers are required to learn certain business skills in order to ensure their clothing is saleable in the increasingly competitive market. Similarly, "creative thinking" is taking the leading role in the fashion design curricula in the most recent years, which I will elaborate more on the following part.

As stated before, the two different education systems lead their designers toward two different design objectives—what is design for? In China, universities call students to design for earning respect/honor for homeland from the world, to a certain degree explains why the first two generations of designers carry such a strong "national identity". While in the international schools, young talents obviously do not necessarily carry such a mission and show a more relaxed attitude toward their designs.

6.6 The Role of Creativity: Whether the Younger Generation is More Creative Than Their Predecessors (see footnote 1)

"Creativity", is the core capability for designers. Chinese people have been widely regarded as not being strong in creativity (e.g. Black, 2007; Chien & Hui, 2010; Niu & Sternberg, 2003; Wu, 2004). But many scholars have demonstrated that creativity is influenced by many factors. At an individual level, it can be connected to a person's "traits", "behavior" (e.g. Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Runco, 2004; Williams, 1972). Creativity is also related to "task motivation", "domain-relevant knowledge and abilities", "creativity-relevant skills" (Amabile, 1983). At the external

level, creativity is impacted by the organizational, cultural, social, and environmental context (Chuang, 2007; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Nickerson, 1999; Runco, 2004; Simonton, 2000; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995; Williams, 1972). Therefore, until convincing and profound research is conducted, one cannot argue whether Chinese people are inherently uncreative, or whether it is the social environment in China that suppresses their creativity. John Howkins wrote for the *Financial Times* that "the complaint that the Chinese are a nation of copiers is half-true…British, Germans, French and Americans when they industrialized [also copied from other nations]…copying is often the best way to learn…creativity and innovation are as highly valued in China as elsewhere" (2013: 9). In this statement, Howkins provides the most adequate assessment of creativity in China. Research conducted by Niu and Sternberg concludes that Chinese students' creativity can be improved if teachers knew how to train them in creativity, and it seems like "[the Chinese] high-stakes standardized tests could impair the development of students' creativity" (2003: 103). Two years before they published this research, the same authors once argued that Chinese students' creativity was weaker than that of American students (Niu & Sternberg, 2001). Yi et al. also found a similar phenomenon that "creativity scores of children in elementary school [in China] were significantly higher than those of children in middle school" (2013: 22), the statement implies that the degeneration of creativity is the fault of the education system in China. Though both findings criticized the negative role that education plays in creativity training in China, they at least certify that Chinese students can be creative if provided with the right conditions. In addition, these studies show that education can play a significant role in fostering Chinese students' creativity. As a matter of fact, creativity has been identified as one of the core competencies in education that the Chinese government has sought to develop since the mid-1990s. Wang and Plucker (2012), in their Recent Transformations in China's Economic, Social, and Education Policies for Promoting Innovation and Creativity, investigated systematically the acceleration of "innovation and creativity" in the Chinese national development strategy and how such policies affected education policies and laws by exploring Presidential Reports from 1992 to 2007 and the National Five-year Plans from 1991 to 2011.

Wang and Plucker (2012) divide the development of formal creativity education into three phases. The "nascent creativity education" phase from 1998 to 2001 when the educational creativity policy was more "abstract", saw creativity as an aspiration that lacked a specific plan, and was limited to a small group of "high-end talent". In the second phase, "the developing" stage, from 2002 to 2009, creativity was legitimized in The Education Law, and expanded to all higher educational institutions; academic research in creativity was simultaneously fortified. The latest phase, "the innovative talents and collaborative innovation" phase, from 2010 to the present, is marked by policies that encourage collaboration between organizations, "link secondary education with higher education", "highlight creativity in curriculum frameworks," and include "assessment" that is more encouraging of "creativity/innovation-oriented" (Wang & Plucker, 2012: 260). The series of policies, while indicating the increasingly strategic position of creativity, can also be seen positive responses to the controversies of copying that have been surrounding China. My findings from the following

Chinese fashion curriculum point to the same tendency—that creativity has been ascendant since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, the authors also reveal that the "execution" of the policies was not entirely satisfactory for a range of different reasons. For instance, education policies are inclined to attach more importance to Science and Technology rather than other disciplines such as Arts and Design; and primary and secondary schools still do not offer enough training in creativity (ibid: 268). Policy improvements in higher education will have less impact if students arrive with a weak foundation in creativity before their entry to universities (ibid). Finally, in practice, creativity "is often marginalized in the classroom" (ibid: 269). Wang and Plucker's argument echoes my statement at the beginning of this chapter that my findings and arguments are based on "theory" rather than "practice".

By studying the history of international schools, we know that creativity has been playing a critical role in their curriculum in past over 50 years. Take Parsons as an example, at Parsons creativity developed importance in its curriculum from 1950–51. This curriculum states that "the primary aim of the school is to stimulate and encourage creative design" (Parsons Curriculum 1950–51: 10). Once again, however, before the 1990s Parsons' curricula still focused on training skills such as drawing, making, and selling. Only in the 1990s did its curriculum become more conceptual. In its 1997–98 curriculum, it states "the school has long been a place for creative thinkers preparing for careers in the visual arts" (Parsons Curriculum 1997–98: 4). The term "thinker" can be seen as a synonym of conceptual. In 2002–03, Parsons' curriculum states "…[W]e nurture in students, sophisticated critical thinking skills, creative vision, a capacity to work collaboratively, and the ability to envision how design relates to the broader forces of our society, culture, and economy" (Parsons Curriculum 2002–03: 1). Again, words like "thinking", "vision", and "envision" signify a tendency toward concept rather than tangible skills like drawing and making. Words that connect to "society, culture, and economy" place design in a much broader social context beyond any specific academic discipline. The value placed on design's relationship with "society, culture and economy" gives a hint that, design now is playing a more significant role in engaging society. At the same time, this relationship leads design to adopt a more conceptual thinking style. Starting from 2002–03, the course Concept Development appeared in the curriculum. The course is:

> …an ongoing, required course for sophomores, juniors and seniors. Sophomores are introduced to methods of two-dimensional representation, textile and fabric development. Research, critical thinking and presentation methods are key components. Juniors develop individual design sensibilities while using real-world design problems for content. The senior year synthesizes the myriad of freshman through junior year experiences. Students engage in individual and collaborative design work, which is fabricated in the thesis studio.
>
> (Parsons Curriculum, 2002-03: 101)

There is a similar trajectory for the development of "creativity" for CSM. Starting from 1981–82, CSM's curriculum also became more conceptual and abstract. It says, besides teaching "basic drawing and making techniques" the courses of the first year aimed to be diagnostic in processing and "to determine the student's main

interests and abilities" (CSM Curriculum, 1981–82: 13–4). In their second year, students can choose their courses and form timetables of their own, "depending on the particular student's interests and abilities" (ibid). By the third year, students can take a one-year work placement. CSM's curriculum seems more like in-principle guidelines rather than specific course titles—this can be seen as a form of fostering each individual student's creativity according to their individuality. In 1994–95, the first year changed to "encourage students to experiment with different expressive forms and technologies central to art and design practice" (CSM Curriculum 1994–95: 14) further indicating an investment in creativity cultivation. The second year included "practical training" and the third year included the "development of relevant personal style which relates to the graduate career aspiration" (ibid: 20). Again, the curriculum is individually oriented. By 2013, the three years were split into "general experiments through practical workshops" in the first year, then to "pathway-related experiments" in the second year through to the "personal research, independent study and team projects" in the last year. Though showing nothing specific and lacking tangible course names, CSM's curriculum's objective remains consistent and explicit—that is to cultivate students' individuality through any daring "experiments" possible. Just as the school states in its 2013 curriculum, when asked how CSM distinguishes itself from other schools that offer similar courses, CSM's curriculum states that "the philosophy of the CSM BA Fashion Design course is to nurture creative innovation and originality throughout all the pathways" (CSM Curriculum, 2013: 8). At its 2013 BFA Graduation Show, which will be presented in the next chapter, CSM students dare to experiment with all types of design in any possible material. Again, creativity that aims at subverting tradition is a symbol of CSM.

The trajectory of "creativity" developed in international schools and Chinese schools were also reflected in the work of first, second, and the third generation of designers. Majority of first and second generation of designers received education in domestic, therefore their design bears a strong "Chinese" nationalism, which is hard to argue that leading to less creativity, but certainly restrict the views of designers. This "responsibility" makes the older generation designers' work more serious, bear strong solemn responsibility, but from the younger generation, we see a more relaxed and fun emotion—to express the "national" identity is not the only goal they have any more.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines the identity of the third generation of Chinese designers—those who were born in 1990s and received education in the top international schools. I argue that compared to the older generation, the work of the third generation of Chinese designers bear a much more diversified identity. Such identity has three dimensions, namely (i) the cultural dimension: The younger designers are much more inclusive with multi-culture rather than just struggling between the Chinese and Western culture (like what the older generation of designers did); (ii) the technical

dimension: The younger generation tends to use "deconstruction" to construct their design work, while their predecessors tend to emit a sense of "harmonious"; and (iii) the emotional aspect: The younger generation reveals a more relaxed and fun attitude with their work, while the older generation of designers seem more "serious" with their work because of their mission of earning honor for the country.

The two different education systems in China and the international schools partly lead to the differences between the two generations. In China, even today no matter if it is creativity education or design education, there are not much differences in "what to design" and "how to design" compared to the international schools, but with regard to "what is design for" still remains disparity. This is mainly because first "fashion" is still considered to be a material object in Chinese education system, while in the Western institution "fashion" is seen as a "social phenomenon", which engages more part of society. In this sense, "fashion" is not placed as an equally important position as it is in the West. Secondly, "design" is mainly seen as "drawing" and for "visual decoration" in China. This makes design programs still fail to earn its strategic importance as it supposed to be. Last but not the least, the central and unified administration of universities made government plays a more critical role than the industry. Hence, design for the nation has been a key objective for the older generations of designers who received design education in China.

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Chapter 7
Fashion Events in China Today: New Models for Fashion Education, Industry-Academia Partnerships, and Fashion Promotion

Jingxi Qian and Ping Xie

7.1 Introduction

Originated in the 1980s, China's fashion industry has been developing for almost 40 years. With the expansion and globalization of the fashion industry, local fashion events have been playing an important role for promoting the fashion industry, and trying to position Chinese fashion in the global fashion map.

Besides, the fashion week format has been adopted by fashion schools and industry associations for the purposes of education and industry-academia partnership. As the graduation show of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, BIFT Fashion Week (BFW) has been organized for almost ten years. The school takes the show as a platform to present their teaching achievements and as an opportunity for their graduates to position themselves in the job market at home and aboard. BFW is integrated with creative curriculums in order to give students an opportunity to experience industrial collaboration. Student working groups in different majors are in charge of fashion collection, modeling, choreography, press releases, filming, and photography. This project-based learning process could help them to see exactly how they would work in their specialist role and how they would collaborate with other departments within a fashion framework.

China Graduate Fashion Week (CGFW) co-hosted by China Fashion Association (CFA), China National Garment Association (CNGA), and China Textile and Apparel Education Society (CTAES) is also a well-known fashion event in Beijing. Held in mid-May every year, the event positions itself as a school-enterprise cooperation platform and a stage for creative young designers. The Global Director for Education at Polycom and Chair Emerita, Marci Powell, said that "it takes some drastic things to change education" (2012). Things would be doubly true in the area

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of fashion education. The challenge for fashion educators is to enhance specialization while maintaining academic integrity and benchmarking (Varley & Phiri, 2011). The curriculum designed for creative graduates must maximize the opportunities for industrial experience. The teaching approach, which gives students time to experiment and to reflect, would foster their creativity (Rouse, 2011). Project-based learning (PBL), which integrates knowing and doing, could help students to apply their knowledge to solve authentic problems. It focuses on the students rather than the curriculums, and rewards intangible assets such as passion, drive, creativity, and empathy (Markham, 2011). This teaching strategy has been adopted by fashion institutions and integrated with creative curriculums in terms of industrial collaborations and live events.

The purpose of this study was to discover the backgrounds, formats, and objectives and achievements of the fashion events in China, and to explore how these spectacles influence the fashion industry in terms of fashion education, industry-academia partnership, and fashion promotion.

7.2 Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives, the researchers decided to design case studies for selected events since they would provide an overview and in-depth understanding of the whole process. This study took a qualitative approach; multiple methods were adopted to collect data, namely focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, and obtaining information from secondary research.

The case study of BIFT Fashion Week used open-ended questions in focus group interviews and in-depth interviews which encouraged the participants to respond based on their specific situations. Each of the questions had a distinct purpose. The qualitative data was examined by using tape-based analysis and content analysis. The administrator of this study divided the participants into three groups according to their majors, namely Fashion Design, Fashion Modeling, and Fashion Communication. Small focus groups with four to six students were adopted since the researchers wanted more in-depth insights about their experience with the project. The researchers personally directed the four groups which lasted 90 min on average. In-depth interviews were also arranged for 6 group leaders.

As a practitioner of China Graduate Fashion Week and China Fashion Week, the researchers of this study obtained information of these projects based on their own work experiences. Other information of these events was collected from secondary research.

7.3 BIFT Fashion Week: A New Model for Project-Based Learning

7.3.1 Background of BFW

As the only stated-owned higher-education institution named after "fashion" in China, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology (BIFT) has always given top priority to cultivate creative minds, contributing greatly to the country's economic growth, especially to the development of the textile and fashion industry. It also implements the strategy of international cooperation in school management and academic programs.

Founded in 1987, the School of Fashion (SOF), BIFT recruits undergraduate students, graduate students and doctoral students from the whole country. While developing the concept of "Creativity Merges with Technology, Design Inherits Culture," the SOF is perfecting methodology for training elites and promoting quality education for BIFT. The school enjoys an excellent reputation and maintains close contact with the fashion industry in China and abroad.

BIFT Fashion Week (BFW) is the graduation show of SOF. Taking the China International Fashion Week as its blueprint, BFW presents itself as a fashion event, attracting significant press attention and benefits for its founder (Xiao, 2013). The school takes the show as a platform to present their teaching achievements and as an opportunity for their graduates to position themselves in the job market at home and aboard. Held in March every year, BFW consists of a series of activities, including the opening ceremony, fashion shows, fashion exhibition, and academic forum; it is organized and executed by students majoring in Fashion Design, Fashion Modeling, and Fashion Communication.

The event is also supported by fashion experts, entrepreneurs, and media specialists from the industry; and the teachers are responsible for guiding students' employment by organizing interviews with potential employers. BFW is considered as a great chance for the students to face the society. As they enter the job market, the ability of self-management and adaptation are crucially important (Liu, 2015).

Known as the prelude of the graduation season, BFW is the time for the teachers and the graduates to harvest. Their creativeness and professional skills have shown the beauty of native culture, reflecting the best performance of BIFT (Liu, 2013). The educators wish that their students would become the explorers and promoters for the Chinese fashion industry and cultural creational industry (Zheng, 2014).

7.3.2 Project Management

As a fashion project within a school setting, BFW was initially organized by teachers in the central office, who reported to the Dean of the school directly. The central office would then arrange meetings for relevant staff members concerned with the

Table 7.1 BIFT fashion week schedule 2015

Date	Time	Event	Place
3.17	15:00–6:30	Opening ceremony & Graduation show of women's wear design class 1&2	Stage one
3.18	10:30–11:00 15:00–15:30	Graduation show of knitwear design Graduation show of men's wear design	Stage one
3.19	10:30–11:00 15:00–15:30	Graduation show of sportswear design Graduation show of women's wear design class 3&4	Stage one
3.20	10:30–11:00 15:00–16:30	Graduation show of fashion modeling Closing ceremony & Graduation collection of experimental class	Stage one
3.17–3.23	8:00–18:00	Graduation Exhibition of Fashion Communication	Exhibition hall

project, such as the dean, assistant dean, course directors, assistant course directors and teachers, discussing and confirming the major issues on theme, schedule, event organization, and the work flow. According to the work flow of BFW, the course directors and teachers would divide the students into different working groups in class, for instance, modeling groups and PR groups. Since the event was based on the cross-course collaboration between different majors, the lectures would teach basic knowledge to the students and guide them on project planning, organization, execution, and promotion from their respective aspects.

BFW 2015 had a hectic five-day schedule, including seven graduation shows from four directions of the Fashion Design major, the Fashion Modeling major and the Experimental class (Table 7.1). All the designers were required to sign the original commitment in order to ensure the originality of their collections. This was also a good chance to strengthen their awareness of intellectual property rights. The establishment of selection mechanism was adopted; only 80 percent of the designer works were selected and performed on the stage of BFW (Wang, 2015).

BIFT Fashion Week, which is usually held in mid-March, could be regarded as a presentation to the industry. It is followed by the BIFT Special Session in the China Fashion Week held in late March and the China Graduate Fashion Week in late April. The president and teachers of BIFT carefully selected elite students and excellent works from the stage of BFW for these two events which would generate publicity and benefit the school in return.

BIFT Fashion Week 2015 was held on March 17th–23rd in BIFTPARK Stage One and exhibition hall. It brings together graduation collections of fashion design major (including subdivision directions of experimental class, women's wear design, men's wear design, knitwear design, and sportswear design), fashion communication major, and fashion modeling major. The event includes one exhibition and seven fashion shows, presenting a full range of learning outcomes of art majors in School of Fashion, BIFT.

7.3.3 Cross-Course Collaboration

This project was based on a cross-course collaboration that involved over 260 students and four separate courses (Table 7.2). The idea of student working groups was adopted, which involved collaborative negotiation, discussion, brainstorming, working and execution. The learning process was highly interactive; the students were encouraged to broaden their minds and to reflect on what they had learned in class. The teaching strategy of affective learning was conducted through multiple techniques such as lectures, tutorials, and self-directed study.

The students from Fashion Design, Fashion Modeling, and Fashion Communication majors were divided into different working groups in class, all of which had their own responsibilities in BFW (Table 7.2). These working groups were organized by the group leaders, who reported to the teachers directly. The teachers and group leaders constituted the core team in each major, which supervised the work flow and checked what the students had achieved to date.

The Fashion Design major consisted of four directions (women's wear design, men's wear design, knitwear design, and sportswear design) and one experimental class. The key responsibility for Fashion Design students was to showcase their graduation collections on the stage of BFW. The design process usually began in November—four months before the graduation show—which gave the students

Table 7.2 Cross-course collaboration in BFW

Major	Grade	Curriculum	Missions in BFW
Fashion design	4	Graduation design	Designing fashion collection Garment management Show planning: negotiating with the choreography team Detail confirmation
Fashion modeling	3	Choreography & Practice	Show planning: negotiating with the designer team Model management & casting Fitting & rehearsal execution Performance execution
	1&2	Performance & Practice	Modeling & performance Fitting and rehearsal
Fashion communication	3	Fashion media operation & Practice	Fashion PR & Press release Media planning Event promotion Photography Filming Interviewing and recording Editing BFW Daily Digital media management

plenty of time to improve and adjust their collections, since pursing perfection was the ultimate goal for these prospective designers.

Within the BFW organization, students from the Fashion Design major were also in charge of show planning. As designers, they would need to negotiate with the choreography team on the issues of visual image, music, lighting, make up, etc. The student leaders would confirm the details on each key link and transmit the information to the teachers and the cooperative team.

Students from the Fashion Modeling major were responsible for choreography and performance in BFW. As the show directors, they would need to negotiate with the designer team on the performance-related issues and try to bring the ideas into reality. They were also in charge of model management, casting, fitting, and rehearsal, which needed an investment of a lot of energy. Within this process, communication and interaction between designers and choreographers were established, and they would work together for the same objectives and show their passion for fashion on the stage of BFW.

The Fashion Communication major served as a powerful medium in BFW, which played an important part in event promotion. Students from Fashion Communication major would not only collaborate with students majoring Fashion Design and Modeling, but also work together with the seniors of Photography and Visual Communication majors from the School of Art and Design on the issues of photography and filming. These junior students were divided into three working groups, namely fashion PR, fashion editors and digital media specialists. The fashion PR students would invite media professionals to attend the activities and send them a press release after the show. The fashion editors and journalists were responsible for guest interviewing, recording and editing the BFW Daily, which was a six-day magazine published in the period of BFW by BIFT. The digital media specialists were in charge of managing the digital media platform, including the official microblog and WeChat.

The researchers of this study identified that the students from all majors evaluated the project-based learning process positively on the whole. The Fashion Design students argued that the BIFT Fashion Week was absolutely a feast which gave them a complete design experience and made their four year's study satisfactory. The event broadened their horizon and provided a great opportunity for them to apply the theoretical knowledge comprehensively. It also helped them to complete the self-conversion process from graduates to professional designers and to focus more on the details. The Fashion Modeling students from the choreography team stated that they had gained a lot as show directors, although their jobs were more complex and trivial than that of models. They also emphasized the importance of teamwork and the abilities of project management, coordination, and communication skills, since they had to consider the feelings of the designers as well as the models. As for the models, the BFW was a rare opportunity to enhance their confidence, fashion aesthetic, and charming personality, which were crucially important for promoting their performance. The Fashion Communication students suggested that they had learned a lot technical skills from their Visual Communication partners, for instance, photography

and typesetting, which improved their visual literacy. The fashion collections from design students also inspired them on creative thinking and event promotion.

The participants of this study deemed that the cross-course collaboration between different majors was the key mechanism of the project, which made the activities more interactive and efficient. The collaborative courses triggered the thinking initiative of the students and enhanced their interests of learning. It was also a good chance to cultivate their cooperation, networking, and problem-solving skills. The Fashion Design students suggested that they got inspired from different angles and recognized the limitations of this major through communication and cooperation with their choreography counterparts. The participation in BFW helped the students build confidence and gain experience on professional development successfully. The event provided an ideal platform for them to keep contact with the enterprises and professionals from the industry, and to obtain potential employment opportunities through industry networking. The participants also recognized that whether they would find a job or start their own business in the future, they must pay long-term efforts on their beloved fashion career.

However, critical factors about BFW were also found in the focus group interviews. The students encountered problems when facing the issues on budget and sponsorship, since the events were highly controlled by the school. The stage design of each show was unified, so that the choreography team may feel restricted in stage modification. Some of the new technologies, such as 3D mapping, could not be adopted due to the limited funds. Furthermore, the work efficiency of student groups needs to be improved, and the cooperative division needs to be further detailed in order to avoid any disagreement and conflict.

7.4 China Graduate Fashion Week: A New Model for Industry-Academia Partnership

7.4.1 Background of China Graduate Fashion Week

Founded in 2013, China Graduate Fashion Week (CGFW) is co-hosted by China Fashion Association (CFA), China National Garment Association (CNGA), and China Textile and Apparel Education Society (CTAES). Held in mid-May in Beijing every year, the event is composed of work release, design competition, special exhibition and industrial forum, and professional evaluation. The essential information of its superior organizers is listed as below:

China Fashion Association (CFA) is a national organization registered at Ministry of Civil Affairs of China. CFA was founded in 1993, and the HQ of CFA is located in Beijing. CFA has both individual members and group members, including fashion designers, professionals, fashion brands, fashion media, and model agencies. The main activities include China Fashion Week, Fashion Design and Model Contest, Part-time training, and international exchange activities.

China National Garment Association (CNGA), founded in 1991, is a national industry association of the Chinese fashion industry. CNGA is committed to the adjustment of industrial structure and growth mode innovation, and to improve the development of domestic fashion brands. The organization also contributes in the communication and coordination of fashion enterprises and government; and accelerates the pace of international cooperation in order to create a good atmosphere of the development of local clothing enterprises. The main work includes industry research, information services, industry services, exhibitions and contests, and collaboration and promotion.

Founded in 1992, China Textile Education Society (CTAES) is a national academic, non-profit, and public organization with the qualification of a legal person, approved by the Ministry of Education and registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. It is composed of the enterprises and institutions and the social organizations in the textile industry across China on a voluntarily basis. Currently, it has 215 group members. Taking service and self-discipline as its tenet, this society endeavors to serve for the grass roots and functions as the bridge between enterprises, textile schools at all levels, and the government.

CGFW aims to publicize and popularize the achievements of clothing education, and to show the students' talent in fashion design and creativity. The objectives also include promoting the college students' entrepreneurship and employment, so as to further improve the quality of fashion and clothing education in China, and to better meet the demands of transformation and upgrading of China's textile and clothing industry. The organizers hope that the event would play an active role in promoting the development of fashion and clothing education, and supporting the growth of young designers and the exchange of fashion design talents.

7.4.2 Project Management

Every March, the responsible person of the China National Garment Association will send an invitation letter to the fashion schools and universities to confirm whether they would participate in this year's China Graduate Fashion Week. Upon receipt of the invitation letter, the administrators of the colleges will meet to discuss and reply in time. After confirmation of the participation, the association and the university will sign an agreement, determining the affairs about time, venue, media & PR, and other related details, and ultimately pay the fee.

After preliminary communication with the association, each college will open its internal screening and mechanism process. Due to the limited number of participants, the universities will select around 20 graduates who will best represent the level of the school's design education and teaching outcomes. After the selection of the participants, professional teachers will select about 100 sets of outfits from the graduates' collections to be presented on the final stage.

One to two weeks before the fashion week starts, the organizer of the fashion week will communicate with the colleges about the issues of show planning. The

organizers of the event will introduce the choreographer team to the school. If the schools have good resources, they may also use their own choreographers and models. For budgetary considerations, most of the schools outside Beijing will choose to find local collaborative teams. These professional teams will provide individualized services to the schools to ensure the success of the performance.

The association will also provide a unified media promotional package for the participating institutions. A large number of news media and professional media journalists will come to the scene to report on the fashion show. During the event, the organizer has a press office to provide news reporters with check-in services and issuance of interview certificates. The main content of the campaign will be pushed synchronously on the official website of the CGFW and the official WeChat platform.

CGFW 2018 had an eight-day schedule, including 46 creative fashion shows and launches from 54 colleges and universities at home and abroad (see Table 7.3). Besides, over 80 industrial activities were held during the fashion week, including academic forums, salons, and job fairs for college students, and open classes of experts on fashion-related topics such as design and technology. CGFW is integrating into the global fashion industry context and providing opportunities for young talents.

7.4.3 Industry-Academia Partnership

The Chairman of the China Fashion Association, Mr. Dangqi Li, pointed out that the fundamental purpose of the CGFW is to build a platform for all the fashion design colleges and universities in China to communicate with and learn from each other (Wang, 2015). This platform includes three levels: between school and school, between school and industry/society, and between graduates and employers. The orientation and main objectives of CGFW is to "improving the Chinese fashion education level and the quality of personnel training, creating the healthy space for the growth of Chinese new generation fashion designers, and promoting the employment and entrepreneurship of college students" (Wang, 2015). The opportunity of public display is a good incentive for colleges, graduates, and instructors. Among the guests present, a considerable part came from enterprises. The organizers of event hope to build bridges between graduates and employers through this platform. Since 2014, job affairs have been held during the CGFW to provide employment opportunities for graduates participated in the event.

In order to recommend excellent designers to the industry, a large number of potential new designers have been excavated in the selection of the Chinese Fashion Design Newcomer Award held during the China Graduate Fashion Week. The Newcomer Award has also been putting forward new thinking for the development direction of Chinese design. The main contents of the investigation include the prediction and analysis of the popular trend theme, the analysis of color tendency, fabric characteristics, ready-made clothing style design, jewelry combination scheme, and other comprehensive and market-oriented research directions under the theme trend. All the representatives of the 2018 undergraduate and graduate students of fashion design

Table 7.3 CGFW fashion week schedule 2018

Date	Time	Event	Venue
5.13	10:30	China Academy of Art School of Design	Workshop
	11:30	Northeast Electric Power University	79 Tank
	13:00	Wuhan institute of Design and Sciences	Workshop
	14:00	School of Fashion, Dalian Polytechnic University	79 Tank
	16:00	Fashion College of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University	Workshop
	17:00	Hubei Institute of Fine Arts	79 Tank
	19:00	Zhejiang University of Science and Technology School of Apparel Design	Workshop
	20:00	School of Textile and Clothing, Jiangnan University	79 Tank
5.14	10:30	The Fine Arts College of Chongqing Normal University	Workshop
	11:30	Taiyuan University of Technology	79 Tank
	13:00	Chongqing University of Education	Workshop
	14:00	College of Textile & Clothing, Qingdao University	79 Tank
	16:00	Southwest University	Workshop
	17:00	Sichuan Fine Arts Institute	79 Tank
	19:00	Henan University of Engineering	Workshop
	20:00	Guangdong Polytechnic	79 Tank
5.15	10:30	Tianjin Polytechnic University, Institute of Art & Fashion	Workshop
	11:30	College of Art and Design, Beijing Polytechnic	79 Tank
	13:00	Hunan Arts and Crafts Vocational College	Workshop
	14:00	School of Art & Design, China Women's University	79 Tank
	16:00	Faculty of Applied Science and Textiles, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Workshop
	17:00	College of Arts of Beijing Union University	79 Tank
	19:00	Changzhou Vocational Institute of Textile and Garment	Workshop
	20:00	Apparel & Art Design College, Xi'an Polytechnic University	79 Tank
5.16	10:30	SINO-UK Fashion & Design College, Zhejiang Fashion Institute of Technology	Workshop
	11:30	College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University	79 Tank
	13:00	School of Arts, Soochow University	Workshop
	14:00	Costume College of Hebei Academy of Fine Arts	79 Tank
	16:00	The School of Fashion, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	Workshop
	17:00	Minzu University of China Academy of Fine Arts	79 Tank
	19:00	LuXun Academy of Fine Arts	Workshop
	20:00	New Silk Road School of Fashion, Xiamen University of Technology	79 Tank

(continued)

Table 7.3 (continued)

Date	Time	Event	Venue
5.17	10:30	College of Engineering and Design, Human Normal University	Workshop
	11:30	School of Design, Jianghan University	79 Tank
	13:00	Lumei Bunka International Fashion College	Workshop
	14:00	Dalian Polytechnic University & University of Southampton	79 Tank
	16:00	College of Fine Arts and Design of Tianjin Normal University	Workshop
	17:00	Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology	79 Tank
	19:00	Zhengzhou University of Light University Eastern Art College	Workshop
	20:00	College of Fashion and Art of Sichuan Normal University	79 Tank
5.18	11:30	University of Jinan College of Fine Arts	79 Tank
	13:00	School of Fashion Engineering, SUES	Workshop
	14:00	Shanxi Fashion Engineering University	79 Tank
	16:00	School of Fashion, Wuhan Textile University	Workshop
	17:00	School of Fashion Accessory Art and Engineering, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	79 Tank
	19:00	Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University & Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti Milano	Workshop
	20:00	The 23rd China Fashion Young Talent Award	79 Tank
		China Graduate Fashion Week 2018 Annual Award	

specialty recommended by colleges and universities nationwide are invited to participate in the contest. The evaluation committee determines the winners list based on the comprehensive consideration of the "Proposal on Fashion Trends in 2018/2019" submitted by the contestants, the ready-to-wear collections, and the draping and cutting of on-site propositions. At present, China's fashion design colleges are closely focusing on the economic development and human geographical characteristics of their regions, striving to combine traditional culture and technology with modern science and technology, actively carrying out in-depth exploration of production, teaching and research, and making considerable progress in textile fabrics, fashion design, dress culture, information exchange, technology, internationalization, etc.

Although students from each college present different fashion style, they are more and more integrated with the current fashion trends and culture. Fashion elements, as well as important events, cultural symbols and so on could be found in students' works. Mr. Qinghui Zhang argues that this phenomenon fully shows that China's fashion education has been growing rapidly, and has reached a very good stage, especially reflected in the synchronization with international fashion (Chen, 2015). The design theme of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University 2018 is "Garbage Laboratory," which derives from ideas about sustainable fashion and green design for the environment. Young designers consider green design concepts such as "design and waste", "design

and recycling" in the way of design experiment; graduation design explores from "garbage is misplaced material," "garbage reduction principle," and other aspects. Designers use various design languages to find the optimal design scheme as much as possible, and to present the works in a refreshing effect by reducing the loss of materials or design links. Graduates of Minzu University of China are inspired by the costumes of China's ethnic minorities. The design works involve 20 minority cultural elements of ethnic costumes, including the rainbow sleeves of Tu nationality, Hezhe fish leather clothing, Tajik tapestry, Tujia tapestry, Yi tapestry, Uygur traditional folk dye, Miao Ethnic batik patterns, etc. The designers reconstruct the elements of ethnic minorities, and combine modern fashion concepts and popular colors, utilize the traditional crafts of ethnic minorities, and apply emerging materials for innovative design. These design works fully display the national characteristics of the school; meanwhile, the innovations promote the common development of fashion culture and national culture, and show the sharp edge and passion of designers.

Collaborative innovation of industry, university, and research is a hot topic discussed by academia and industry in recent years. On this issue, the former dean of School of Fashion BIFT, Professor Rong Zheng, stated that ideally, the theoretical research problems of colleges and universities can be docked with practice and indeed solve problems for the industry. These problems are not to complete a "work," but to solve the problems that cannot be dealt with R&D and design centers and theoretical research centers of enterprises at the present stage, even in the next two or three years or longer, so as to make scientific research and innovation forward-looking (Wang, 2015). BIFT adheres to the educational and teaching concept of "creative integration technology, design and inheritance culture" and constantly improves the talent training program and improves the teaching quality. As the Second-level College of Fashion Art and Engineering in the new round of teaching reform, it puts forward the train of thought of combining "international design vision" with "cultural inheritance" and constantly directs the curriculum system and teaching. The method is adjusted and perfected, and the idea of "advanced" women's wear design curriculum system construction is put forward. At the same time, diversified teaching methods such as international work camp courses and school-enterprise joint courses are added to strengthen students' ability of "industrial product design" and "cultural deepening design," and report to society and industry through centralized display of curriculum results every semester. The school-enterprise joint course is one of the diversified teaching methods of fashion design major. It aims to cultivate the practical application ability of students majoring in clothing, to familiarize them with the industrial environment as early as possible, to understand the operation process of enterprises, the research and development process, and the evaluation mechanism of brand products.

During the 2019 college fashion week, a precision design talent docking meeting was held; as for the release of graduation works, the trend of school enterprise cooperation has become the mainstream. More and more colleges and universities are cooperating with textile and garment enterprises to implant new and cutting-edge design ideas into theme fabrics, industrial chain platform services, innovative research and development, etc. Facing the industrial situation of consumption

upgrading, brand iteration, and the rise of original design, CGFW has always played a role in connecting the education chain, talent chain, industrial chain, and innovation chain, and it also undertakes to promote the docking of talent cultivation and market demand in colleges and universities and guide the new generation of talents that has both commercial value and the ability of artistic creation. As the intersection of colleges and the industry, CGFW is constantly absorbing the information of fashion industry development at home and abroad, striving to adapt to the actual demand of industrial development for talent training and scientific research in universities, and providing experimental space and integrating high-quality resources for the renewal of China's fashion industry.

7.5 China Fashion Week: A New Model for Fashion Promotion

7.5.1 Background of China Fashion Week

China Fashion Week (CFW) was founded in 1997. It is held twice a year in Beijing, which are A/W Collection (25th–31st Mar.) and S/S Collection (25th–31st Oct.). The activities are composed of fashion shows, design contests, exhibitions, forums, professional evaluation, and other major business units. After 20 years of development and perfection, CFW has become an international comprehensive service platform for famous fashion, garment, and accessories brands at home and abroad to display new designs, new products, and new technologies, and a mainstream channel and national window for fashion brand and designer image promotion, market development, commodity trading, and professional evaluation. Mr. Qinghui Zhang argues that CFW is an industry promotion platform for mature and successful designers. Its most important function is to enable designers to be more influential in the industry (Liang, 2018). More and more young and cutting-edge designers are appearing on the stage of CFW. Up to now, more than 760 designers, approximately 730 brands and institutions from nearly 20 countries, including China (including Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan), Japan, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, France, Italy, the United States, Russia, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Australia, have held 1459 launches, and more than 3400 new designers and models have participated in 134 special events (China Fashion Week, 2019). In the finals of the competition, hundreds of Chinese and foreign media are invited to participate in the interview and coverage of each CFW.

7.5.2 Project Management

Participation in CFW includes three specific processes: project declaration, service guidance, and project organization.

In the process of project declaration, the first step is to declare and register. Participants are required to submit relevant documents to the organization committee at least 60 days before the opening ceremony. After assessment by the committee, releasing organizations are allowed to submit registration form, photocopies of organization registration certificate and trade mark certificate to the committee. Qualified organizations will receive invitation from the organizing committee. The releasing organization has to pay the registration fee as soon as the confirmation receives.

After the confirmation of the registration, the organizing committee will send service guide part one, part two, and part three to the releasing organization 80, 50, and 10 days before the opening ceremony. The releasing organizations are required to read the service guide carefully so that to submit relevant documents on time and to get ready for the relevant activities (China Fashion Week, 2019).

In the organizing process of the fashion week, the releasing organization will confirm the date and schedule of the event and select the models and choreography team for the performance. China Fashion Week committee will produce a journal with brand and promotional information. It will also produce the tickets for each show and working pass for the staff. The releasing organizations are required to confirm their stage design and styling proposals with relevant organizations at least ten working days before the shows (China Fashion Week, 2019).

7.5.3 Promoting Role in China's Fashion Industry

The China Fashion Award is an annual professional selection event organized by the organizing committee of CFW. It aims to recognize the professional elites, well-known brands, and fashion organizations that have made outstanding contribution to the development of the fashion industry in China. The results of the selection are announced at the annual award ceremony of the China Fashion Award; and the winners, brands, and institutions are awarded certificates and trophies. China Fashion Award includes Top Award, Best Fashion Designer, Top Ten Fashion Designer, Best Fashion Model, Top Ten Fashion Models, Best Fashion Photographer, Best Fashion Commentator, Best Stylist etc. The award ceremony of China Fashion Award has become the annual event of year-end inventory of the fashion industry in China. It also attracts wide attention both inside and outside the industry (China Fashion Week, 2019).

The Organizing Committee of CFW has been committed to cooperating with Chinese and foreign institutions with high reputation and leading position in the international industry and to participating in CFW or cosponsor-related projects. CFW business cooperation is divided into three categories: strategic cooperation,

project cooperation, and service cooperation; sponsors are divided into four levels: named sponsors, official sponsors, project sponsors, and designated suppliers (China Fashion Week, 2019). Among them, Fashion Week Strategic Cooperation refers to Fashion Week's total name sponsor, which has been run by Mercedes-Benz in recent years.

With the emergence of popular words and new concepts such as "social media," "consumption upgrading," "new retail," "industrial internet," "small and beautiful," "craftsman spirit," "innovation chain," etc., the new era and business model that have quietly changed are becoming more and more diversified. CFW also put forward the slogan of "linking" everything: linking fashion to business, linking fashion to cross-border art, linking fashion to the whole textile and garment industry chain. On this basis, the China Fashion Association has organized two supporting projects, namely 10+3 SHOWROM and DHUB DESIGN SINK. "10 + 3" refers to ten fashion designers and three accessories designers. Special exhibitions are organized by the association every year during the CFW in order to create an interactive platform that integrates multiple functions, including styling, static display, collection release, buying order, and fashion salon. DHUB DESIGN SINK is a business platform based on 10 + 3 SHOWROOM. The event, with its three themes of "Media Day," "Brand Day," and "Buyer Day," focuses on designer brand building and brand landing, industrial cluster development, Chinese fashion buyer salon, and other themes, as well as the participation of many international excellent brands and operation platforms, to build a diversified and multi-dimensional display and exchange platform. In addition to its original 751D PARK site, the DHUB DESIGN SINK 2018 links to Beijing's most fashionable landmark—"*Sanlitun Tai Koo Li*". The event gathers more than 20 original clothing and accessories designer brands with vitality and personality from home and abroad, and competes with various stars, bloggers, and opinion leaders.

The chairman of China Fashion Designers Association, Mr. Qinghui Zhang said that the high-quality development of fashion industry is to design better clothes, to respond to consumers' personalized needs with better products, and to better beautify people's lives, which is the proper meaning of the fashion industry. China's fashion industry is entering a new period of development. The emergence of new and cutting-edge designers and independent fashion brands is becoming a decisive new force, which promotes the updating of the whole industry. Every designer is unique, but every original designer brand needs to experience the test of the commercial market. As an official cooperation platform, CFW provides designers with the numerous opportunities to understand the market, find their own niche segmentation, get industry recognition, and strive to survive and grow (Fig. 7.1). In addition, in the whole fashion marketing network, the commercial transformation of design is also constantly improving, especially the development of e-commerce. This process also provides many independent and young designers with more opportunities for survival and development.

Meanwhile, CFW is committed to communicating and promoting traditional handcrafts and local culture. In October 2019, CFW cooperated with WWD to hold 'HEAVENLY EBROIDERY ART EXHIBITION' to pay homage to the beauty of fashion culture and craftsmanship. With stylist Wei Huang as curator and silk thread

Fig. 7.1 Fei Gallery and Boutique by designer Xuefei Sun, A/W CFW 2016

as the creative clue, the exhibition shows 36 exquisite embroidery outfits designed by eight designers. Fashion photographer Chao Yin was invited to direct a fashion film entitled "TRIBUTE TO HERITAGE & CRAFTSMANSHIP GALA" for this exhibition. Within this film, embroidery technology, advanced customized clothing, fashion visual arts, and the young generation of celebrities are organically integrated, which together radiate a beautiful and shocking charm. Yin argued that "the significance of this creation is to let more young people understand our traditional Chinese culture and crafts, and even bring them changes of ideas and attitudes." He demonstrated that traditional culture and technology will never be out of date. With the continuous update and change of people's way of overcoming, tradition is also evolving new situations and values. This exhibition represents the firm belief and original intention of CFW to carry forward excellent Chinese design and promote it to the world with Chinese traditional culture as the cornerstone.

With the continuous improvement of China's economy, fashion is significantly promoting the economic development of the city. Major cities such as Shenzhen, Shanghai, Wuhan, Chongqing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, and so on have launched fashion weeks named by the city, striving to create a new business card of the city's fashion image. The highlight of CFW 2019 is the innovative "City Light" fashion city star making plan, which links five fashion cities of Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Beijing, Xiamen, and Dalian, selects 15 representative young designers, and makes every effort to create fashion city spokesmen through dynamic show, static exhibition,

buyer docking meeting, and other forms. Zhang demonstrated that "from the perspective of urban development, urban functions are changing from production oriented to consumption oriented to provide more public services and cultural products. In the process of superposition of urban functions, fashion plays an important leading role. In recent years, China has also emerged many cities that want to make a difference in the field of fashion". From this point of view, China Fashion Association and CFW actively help cities to empower and launch the "City Light" plan, on the one hand, to cultivate better design forces for the industry; on the other hand, to cultivate more influential fashion seeds for urban development.

In the context of the new era, China's fashion industry will become a new "pole" to lead and promote the development of global fashion industry. In Qinghui Zhang's view, the development of China's fashion industry needs the promotion of CFW and the help of many fashion platforms in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Xiamen, Qingdao, Wuhan and other cities so as to play an important "one pole" role in the development of the global fashion industry and show their voice and influence.

7.6 Conclusions

The results of this study identified that the students from all majors evaluate the project-based learning process in BFW positively. The creative activity provides a rare opportunity for them to apply theoretical knowledge as well as technical skills comprehensively. The study also argued that cross-course collaboration and project-based learning maximize the opportunity for the students to enhance their abilities of self-management, problem-solving skills, collaborating with others, flexibility and adaptability, project management, as well as critical thinking. Within the project implementation process, the interaction and communication among different working groups could generate creative ideas and make the innovative practices more efficient. The expansion of information, eruption of imagination, inspiration, and extended thinking were also highly valued in the teaching process. The participation in live events, which features on team work and professional development, seems to be most valuable to students in developing their future careers. Project-based curriculum experienced by creative students could help them to build stronger connections with the professional world. BFW provides an ideal platform for the students to keep contact with the enterprises and professionals from the industry, and to obtain potential employment opportunities through industry resources.

China's fashion industry is in the best period of development in decades. With the development of information technology, the maturity of fashion industry, and the perfection of fashion education system, college students have numerous resources and opportunities. As an official platform, CGFW has been committed to improve the Chinese fashion education level and the quality of personnel training, create the healthy space for the growth of Chinese new-generation fashion designers, and promote the employment and entrepreneurship of college students. As a new model of school-enterprise cooperation, CGFW helps fashion graduates learn how to grasp

the market and fashion trends, plan their future career, and improve their comprehensive quality. Meanwhile, fashion schools and industry are not separated; they become a unified whole, leading the fashion industry from all aspects. From the perspective of innovation and development of industrial system and employment of talents, CGFW has played a bridge role in recruiting graduates for enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship and employment of college students. Therefore, the times put forward new requirements for the innovation of integrated development mode and the cultivation of compound talents, and also for the innovation and reform of education elements such as the training program, teacher structure, and teaching mechanism of professional colleges.

The operators of CFW and CGFW are the same team; although they serve different clients, one is the communication platform between Chinese fashion education institutions and the other is the business platform they have some similarities in organizational ideas. The Chinese Association of Fashion Designers is committed to promoting the works of famous designers; meanwhile, it also gives great support to young and cutting-edge designers. Over the years, CFW has played an increasingly important role in promoting the structural adjustment, transformation and upgrading, supply side reform of China's textile and garment industry, as well as the transformation of China's garment industry from a big processing country to a strong brand country; promoting the professional level of the group of fashion designers and their position in the society and industry to continue to strengthen, increasing the influence and authority of the whole country. According to incomplete statistics, under the guidance of CFW demonstration, nearly 30 cities across the country have held fashion weeks one after another. CFW plays an active guiding role in promoting the transformation of fashion lifestyle and satisfying people's yearning for a better life. However, there is still a big gap from the four major international fashion weeks; there are still many deficiencies. For instance, the market influence and business value promotion of fashion week on the brand are still insufficient. Moreover, it does not play a full role in promoting cultural integration, exchanges, and mutual learning between China and foreign countries. The promotion of green, healthy, and fashionable lifestyle needs to be further improved. Lastly, we need to continue to change our concepts, accelerate, and upgrade the service upgrade of fashion week.

In the future, fashion shows will no longer be the only promotional spectacular in China. Various exhibitions and presentations, interactive experience activities, virtual reality and online activities will play an increasingly important role in fashion promotion. However, as the activities those touch all five senses, fashion events are still irreplaceable in the fields of fashion education, industrial-academia partnership, and fashion promotion. With the continuous development of China's fashion industry, fashion events will have a broader development prospect in twenty-first century.

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Part III
Marketing, Consumption

Chapter 8
Are Mass-Market Digital Strategies an Oxymoron in the Luxury Fashion Industry? An Insight from China

Sindy Liu and Claudia E. Henninger

8.1 Introduction

In 1987 the band R.E.M. highlighted "it is the end of the world as we know it…", which holds truer than ever in the twenty-first century. We have seen a digital (r)evolution that has changed the way businesses operate (McCormick et al., 2014). We have seen a shift from solely focusing on *bricks and mortar* stores to developing an omni-channel (cross-channel) strategy designed to enhance the user experience (Blazquez, 2014; Kent et al., 2016). To explain, consumers are increasingly getting used to the 24/7 access of information, as well as being able to make purchase decisions, quite literally, wherever they want—on the beach, at work, or in their own home. In order to accommodate this increased flexibility companies need to invest in their mobile apps, websites, *bricks and mortar* stores, and their other outlets/platforms in order to ensure that the transitions between them, as well as the overall user experience (interaction) is seamless and similar in nature (Blazquez, 2014; Kent et al., 2016). Past research has emphasised that a positive user experience, especially in the online/digital context, is vital in order to enhance customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, both of which are vital for any fashion company, seeing as the industry is extremely volatile (Deloitte, 2019; Lee et al., 2015; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2015). As such, it may not come as a surprise that especially luxury fashion organisations have more recently increased their investments into their social media platforms and, more generally, their digital marketing strategies and channels, thereby building a stronger presence on electronic (e-), mobile (m-) and social-commerce

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(s-commerce) platforms (Bürklin et al., 2019; Deloitte, 2019; Lin et al., 2017). The ultimate goal is to create long-lasting consumer relationships and enhance brand loyalty, which can be challenging at times as there is an increased choice available in the luxury fashion market (Bu et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019). Although past research focusing on social media marketing and more specifically on social media, is manifold, there are only limited studies available that provide an insight into luxury fashion organisations' strategies within the Chinese market segment (Liu et al., 2016, 2019). This chapter addresses this gap, by investigating the Chinese luxury market and the way Chinese consumers utilise, interact, and perceive mass-market digital strategies. As such, we draw on findings from Liu et al. (2019), who explored the implications of digital marketing on WeChat within the Chinese luxury fashion market. This chapter seeks to provide thought-provoking questions and future pathways for research into one of the most lucrative markets: the Chinese luxury industry.

8.2 The Chinese Luxury Fashion Industry, Its Consumers, and Digital Marketing

8.2.1 The Chinese Luxury Fashion Industry—Emerging Digital Trends

As alluded to, the luxury fashion industry has changed in that it increasingly adapts to a consumer world that seeks 24/7 access to information and fosters a "see-now-buy-now" phenomenon (Newbery & Haschka, 2018; Reuters, 2018). The latter emerged in 2016, when luxury fashion companies retaliated in order to avoid copies of their garments being sold on the high street prior to them being released in their own stores, which previously was within a 6-months timeframe. "See-now-buy-now" implies that collections are sold simultaneously with being shown on the catwalks through s-commerce platforms (e.g. Instagram or Facebook in Western countries and WeChat and Weibo in China) (Abnett, 2016; Bürklin et al., 2019; Fraser & Dutta, 2008; Lin et al., 2017). Key luxury fashion brands that have adopted the "see-now-buy-now" approach fully are Rebecca Minkoff, Massimo Dutti, and Mulberry, whilst Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Jil Sander have seen a partial adoption through capsule collections or limited items (Newbery & Haschka, 2018). Whether or not "see-now-buy-now" is a short term trend or here to stay is out of the scope of this chapter, yet what can be said is that it has changed the way consumers engage with (luxury) fashion organisations and the way they gain information and make purchases. This highlights how important digital strategies are for luxury fashion organisations, as these (digital platforms) allow luxury fashion organisations to have a real-time interaction with their consumer base and react to ever-increasing consumer demands. Digital platforms, which here include social media, are global in nature and as such have made it possible to reach a global audience instantaneously and in real-time (Blazquez et al., 2019; Henninger et al., 2019).

8.2.2 The Chinese Luxury Fashion Consumers—Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z

Generation Y (Millennial Generation)

A further change that can be observed is the way luxury fashion organisations are communicating with their customers, who currently predominantly fall within Generation Y or the Millennial Generation and as such are aged between 23 and 38 (Lannes, 2019). Millennials have been strongly affected by China's "one-child policy", which was introduced in 1979, as a measure to control how many children are born in China, as the government had ambiguous economic growth plans, which would have been impacted by a domestic population number, which in the late 1970s approached 1billion (BBC, 2015). A consequence of this policy was that a vast majority of individuals born between 1979 and 1996 do not have any siblings and thus, they have their parent's full attention and spending power, which can be diverted towards luxury products (BBC, 2015; Lannes, 2019). It is a generation that has first-hand experience with the technological (r)evolution through the introduction of the internet, smart phones, and real-time information. They are described as self-confident with a strong tendency to show high individuality, they are computer savvy, and quite openly admitting to increasingly purchase luxury products to not only show off their success, but also treat themselves (Deloitte, 2017; Liu et al., 2016, 2019; McKinsey, 2019; Rogers, 2013; Valentine & Powers, 2013). The former might seem contradicting, as the Chinese market has predominantly been associated with collectivism and, in a way, uniformity, yet the introduction of the "one-child policy" has "resulted in a dramatic cultural and societal shift in Chinese society" (Chen, 2015: 167), which can be challenging for companies, including luxury fashion providers (Cai et al., 2018; Kang, 2017). Generation Y (Millennial Generation) is different from any previous ones in that they are more educated, with 25% holding a bachelor's degree or higher, and approximately 66% are passport holders, and thus have had exposure to different countries, lifestyles, cultures (Kidway, 2019; McKinsey, 2019). Generation Y (Millennial Generation) furthermore had more opportunities, with being able to not only travel outside the country but also study aboard (McKinsey, 2019), thereby gaining more exposure to pop culture and different luxury brands.

Generation Z

Yet Millennials are not the only luxury spending power, their successors, Generation Z, born between 1997–2015, are increasingly becoming the centre of attention of luxury fashion brands, as they make up 20% of the Chinese population (Reuters, 2019; Twigg, 2019). Contrary to the Millennials, Generation Z is often described as digital natives, as such they have grown up with technological innovations that they see as a normality rather than "life-changing" (Twigg, 2019). The Chinese Generation Z also differs from their counterparts in other countries in that they account for 13% of the household spending in their own country, which is significantly larger and remarkable (McKinsey, 2019). Moreover, unlike the Western Generation Z, which

has experienced the economic crisis in 2008, the Chinese Generation Z has benefitted from a prospering economy, which has resulted in different attitudes towards "luxury". Whilst the Western Generation Z often looks for experiences over materialistic items, the Chinese Generation Z enjoys spending money on luxury goods (Athwal et al., 2019; Bloomberg, 2019; Yao et al., 2019). Interestingly, the Chinese Generation Z has developed a lot more patriotism when it comes to fashion, comparatively to previous generations. Various luxury fashion brands including Dolce & Gabbana, Dior, and Balenciaga have suffered in the Chinese market after committing cultural faux pas, which resulted in a negative social media storm (Galvan, 2019; Handley, 2019). In line with this, there is also a growing trend of Chinese Generation Z consumers to "now bypassing brands that focus much of their marketing on their illustrious European or American heritage and are looking for Made in China products instead" (Twigg, 2019).

As such it may not be surprising that past research found a shift in Chinese consumer (Generation Z) attitudes to become increasingly similar to traits mainly associated with individualistic cultures, and may include, but are not limited to materialism, self-reliance, hard working, and open and frankness in working relationships (e.g. Peppas & Yu, 2005). These attitude shifts may be responsible for an emerging change in consumer patterns from previously making involvement purchases, which implies careful research and a well-informed decision-making process, to increasingly making impulsive decisions, which means that consumers see, for example, a luxury bag, and buy it without looking at any other sources for information about the brand or product itself (White & Denis, 2019; Zhang, 2017). To reiterate this further, whilst in 2010 only one in four luxury purchasing decisions were made in one day (impulsive), this has shifted to one in two by 2017 (Bu et al., 2017). In the Western hemisphere individuality is nothing new, yet it takes some getting used to in the Chinese context. Within Western countries it is not uncommon for consumers to seek active dialogues with companies, whereby they can not only read information about new product launches, but also write reviews, post blogs, and hold a dialogic communication. Yet, within China, these aspects are new and noteworthy and have only more recently emerged (Kim et al., 2019). A question that could be raised here is whether this shift in Chinese consumer behaviour (Generation Z) is related to becoming more individualistic or whether it is simply a result of the increased use of technology and more specifically social media, as well as opportunities of travel and education Generation Z enjoys. As will be highlighted in the following social media has developed differently in China compared to the Western world, combined with different economic prerequisites (boom versus crisis) and attitudes towards luxury spending, it may not be surprising that their purchase behaviour may change. Having said that key motivators for Chinese luxury consumers to purchase luxury fashion remain: (1) the ability to show off wealth, which links to seeking prestige and recognition; (2) showing social belonging (bandwagon effect), and (3) hedonic values (emotional value/attachment) (Deloitte, 2017; Henninger et al., 2017; McKinsey, 2019; Vingeron & Johnson, 1999).

8.2.3 Digital Marketing and Chinese Luxury Fashion Consumers

For luxury fashion companies it is vital to react to these changes, seeing as Chinese consumers are ever-increasingly dominating the luxury market: in 2008 they accounted for only 12% of the global luxury spending, which has increased to 75% in 2016 (Bu et al., 2017), as such they provide an interesting context for further investigations. A key question that emerges here however is whether the thirst for individuality is reflected in the way Chinese luxury consumers want to receive information from these luxury fashion brands. Does this societal shift in attitude imply messages need to be delivered in an even more personalised manner, and thus moving away from mass-media platforms? To be even more drastic, would this mean that using social media platforms could be damaging to luxury fashion brands in their attempt to growing a lucrative market? These questions are further explored in the following.

Developments of Social Media—Western Countries versus China

Western Social Media in China

In today's (Western) world companies can no longer hide as information is broadcasted in real-time to a global audience (e.g. Doherty & Delener, 2001; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, our world becomes increasingly transparent and consumers more and more knowledgeable, which can have both negative and positive consequences. An example of the former is an incident that highlighted "destroying unsold clothes is fashion's dirty secret. And we're complicit" (Siegel, 2018), which has had negative consequences on the fashion retailers involved with consumers voicing their opinions and demanding changes in the companies' behaviour. On the other hand, the news that "Prada announces it is to go fur-free" (Bramley, 2019) has had a positive impact and received popularity especially amongst consumers that have animal rights at heart. One aspect that the reader needs to keep in mind here is that Western and Chinese media have developed very differently. Whilst in the Western world media has enjoyed freedom of speech and access to quite literally any digital channel available on the market, the Chinese media has had stronger government regulations. The enforcement of tight government regulations, especially on social media, is one of the reasons, why for example Western social networking platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, either cannot at all be used and/or visited when in Mainland China (Xu, 2014) or with extreme difficulty. The only ways to make use of Western platforms are either through virtual private networks (VPNs), proxy servers, or micro-blogging platforms, such as Weibo (Shambaugh, 2016). As such, Chinese netizens have found ways to "voice opinions or discuss taboo subjects" and engage with Western platforms (Shambaugh, 2016: 293). Yet, having to go through these hurdles implies that Chinese consumers may not be able to catch up on all the news and happenings, seeing as VPNs and proxy serves can fail and may potentially not allow netizens to access these platforms for days. Thus, there was a need to provide

platforms that overcome these challenges in order to engage with Chinese consumers in a more convenient manner, which is discussed in the following.

Sina Weibo and WeChat

Although media censorship may not necessarily be seen as something positive, in this case, it has led to enhanced creativity and innovation, with the creation of one of the most influential Chinese micro-blogs—(Sina) Weibo (新浪微博)—which has an average daily user rate of 374.1 million in 2019 and is expected to grow by approximately 12% and thus reach 418.4 daily users in 2021 (Statista, 2019). Yeo and Li (2012) describe the Chinese internet as "one of the most vibrant economic and social cyberspaces in the world. (…) Entrepreneurial companies have created tens of billions of dollars in economic value" (p. 7). This further highlights that "digital" has not only developed differently in China, but it plays a vital role. A further innovative creation that is commonly used within the Chinese market is WeChat. WeChat is not only used by billions of people in China but has also emerged as "the" app, which implies that it is used on an everyday basis in China (Deng & Chen, 2018; Kharpal, 2019). A key question that emerges here is what makes WeChat so special? The answer is that WeChat is a multi-purpose platform that combines features from a variety of popular Western apps, such as Whatsapps messaging services that allow individuals to stay connected, Twitter's newsfeed to keep up-to-date with what is going on in people's lives, but also with product launches and sales, Facebook's memory sharing, and Instagram's picture posting. What makes WeChat the most popular daily app however is the fact (1) you can scan QR codes to be added into different groups and find out more about brands and their offerings, and (2) it has mobile payments incorporated, as such individuals can transfer money to one another by either sanding it to existing contacts, or scanning unique QR codes (Atkinson, 2018). As such, it is a one-stop-shop that allows for easy access to information and an opportunity to purchase products on the go, securely through the incorporated payment function. Seeing how media has been created and the functions of these platforms, it could be suggested that Chinese consumers are inclined to receive content that is intended for the mass-market. Scanning QR codes to receive information implies that the content is predetermined and not necessarily customised to the individual.

Little Red Book (RED) and TikTok

The newest social media trends utilised especially by Generation Z are Little Red Book (小红书) and TikTok (抖音). Little Red Book or RED can be described as a mixture of Instagram and Amazon. The luxury e-commerce platform is content-driven, which implies that it relies on customer reviews as well as Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), who share their experiences of luxury products with a global audience. The app has managed to attract the most "it" influencers to their platform, who regularly share their shopping experiences, hobbies, and lifestyle tips, thereby reaching approximately 200 million users daily (Achim, 2019; Fannin, 2019). The importance of engaging with KOLs is further addressed in a later section of this chapter. The New York Times states that TikTok "will change the way your social

media works—even if you're avoiding it" (Herrman, 2019), it is a video app that encourages responding to previously posted content and connect with other users, whilst at the same time utilises #hashtags and creates challenges that users can get involved with. As such, the app is highly interactive and reaches a younger generation, with luxury brands, such as Burberry and Calvin Klein testing its potential (Lieber, 2019).

Digital Marketing Strategies for Luxury Fashion Retailers in China

Lannes (2019) indicates that the Chinese luxury consumer market sales are growing at an average rate of 20%, with one of the key contributing factors being digitalization, linked to the previously mentioned innovations that allow Chinese consumers to gain information at their fingertips. Generally speaking, there are four main channels that are used by (fashion) luxury retailers within China to broadcast their newest product launches, sales events, or sponsored content that features key opinion leaders:

(1) Brand owned

As implied by the name, these are owned by the individual luxury fashion brands, for example, LouisVuitton.cn or cn.Burberry.com. A key advantage here is the fact that the content covered on the platforms, whether this be the company website or official social media channel, is controlled by the organisations, and thus, they can ensure that the content "fits" their image and intended consumer experience. The design and feel of the brand is directly reflected in these outlets, as the brand has ultimate control. A further benefit is the fact that brands are able to charge full prices on their products (Baetzgen & Tropp, 2015; Blazquez, 2014; Lannes, 2019). The only drawback that can be mentioned here is potential "footfall" or traffic of these accounts, as consumers have to actively choose to go to the brand's information channels and explore them. As such, it is unlikely that they would "accidentally" attract individuals to look at their newest posts, but rather centre on their core customer base.

(2) Co-operators

This implies that luxury fashion products are advertised through channels that receive high traffic through daily users. In China for example, Tmall, a business-to-consumer platform, is a key online retailer that allows, in this case, luxury fashion retailers to sell their goods to consumers in China, via a local, trusted, online Tmall flagship store. A key feature on the Tmall site is the AliWangWang (阿里旺旺) chat, which allows consumers to engage with the sellers and/or their respective customer service teams, thereby creating strong customer relationships. Although fashion luxury brands do not have full control over these channels (Tmall flagship stores), the overall control remains high, with the added benefit of profiting from the daily user traffic to Tmall (AIO, 2019; Lannes, 2019; Tmall, 2015). Similar to Tmall, WeChat commerce is often used as a co-operator channel to broadcast and boost luxury fashion sales. Seeing as Chinese consumers use WeChat on a daily basis, it is highly likely that they may browse different notifications, scan QR codes, and gain friend recommendations for blogs, posts, and related brand content. As such luxury fashion brands may experience an increased interest in their products/content as consumers almost

"stumble" across content and information by browsing on these two different platforms. Yet, luxury retailers need to keep in mind that giving more power to third-party platforms can also create challenges, in that there may be inconsistencies in terms of how merchandise is presented. This in turns can lead to confusion and potential mistrust of authenticity of products (Liu et al., 2019). As indicated in the introduction, whilst it is important to develop an omni-channel strategy (Blazquez, 2014; Kent et al., 2016), this needs to be carefully done in order to ensure that the brand experience remains the same.

(3) Aggregators

Working with aggregators implies that, in this case, luxury fashion brands are outsourcing the responsibility of developing and continuously growing high-traffic channels to a third party (the aggregators). Examples of successful aggregators in China are JD.com's Toplife and TMall's Luxury Pavilion. In an interview with Style Tmall's Fashion and Luxury president Jessica Liu highlights that the Luxury Pavilion "was aimed at helping luxury brands gain insight into their clients and provide them with the exact products they desire" (Chen, 2018a). Aggregator sites such as JD.com Toplife and Tmall Luxury Pavilion collect data on their users through cookies and as such, are aware of what these consumers look at, what they purchase, how often they visit the site, and what lifestyle they prefer. This information can provide vital insights into Chinese luxury consumers, who are increasingly exposed to Western culture and enjoy more freedom to travel and access to education both at home and abroad. In order to align with the luxury brand feel and to comply with the information gathered whilst these Chinese consumers browse these e-commerce platforms (Tmall Luxury Pavilion and Toplife), both JD.com Toplife and Tmall Luxury Pavilion have invested in new technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to further promote omni-channel sales (Blazquez, 2014). Interestingly, Tmall Luxury Pavilion has recently created a new feature in its app entitled "Maison", which allows luxury fashion brands to "customise their digital editorial content and storefront design to speak to their brand image and tone of voice, as well as offer early access to Alibaba's latest technology, such as 3D pop-up shops" (Chou, 2018). This feature is especially attractive to the Chinese luxury fashion consumer market, which is dominated by tech-savvy Millennials and the digital native generation (Generation Z) that rely on social media for information and want to have a unique customer experience (Chen, 2015; Lannes, 2019).

(4) Luxury vertical sites

These third-party sites offer selected lines and product ranges at a heavily discounted price, in the Western world one of the most prominent sites is YOOX, whilst in China Mei.com or Secoo might be more popular. Although these websites currently remain popular, it is questionable whether this will be the case in the future, as there seems to be a shift in consumer behaviour that has been observed since 2015 in that luxury fashion brands and reseller platforms move away from simply recruiting customers to retaining them. With Chinese customers striving for individuality and wanting to

showcase their ability to purchase luxury items, we might see a move away from 'bargain sites' in the future (Arcibal, 2019; Daily, 2014; Lannes, 2019).

Although these four different channel types are vital in terms of broadcasting messages and providing consumers with the opportunity to purchase these goods they are not the only ones consumers utilise to gain information. As alluded to, Chinese luxury fashion consumers actively look for information, both online and offline, whilst the four channels previous discussed may play a key role, they further consult none brand official accounts and sites on Weibo, WeChat, RED and TikTok, for information.

Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and Luxury Fashion Consumers in China

KOLs

Chinese consumers spend on average from 3 to 5 h on social media and other platforms to gain the newest information about their favourite luxury fashion brands (McKinsey, 2019). This indicates that collaborating with key opinion leaders may no longer be an option, but rather an essential for luxury fashion brands. The brand-related content may be written by famous luxury fashion bloggers, such as Mr Bags, Becky Li, Chrison, Dipsy, Fil Xiaobai and/or other influencers (Yang, 2018). Previous studies (Blazquez, 2014; Blazquez et al., 2019; Siddiqui et al., 2019; Vazquez et al., 2019) indicate that these opinion leaders play a vital role within purchase decision-making, as well as creating trust between the consumer and the luxury fashion brands. On average, posts by key opinion leaders (KOLs) receive four times more views than content posted by official brand accounts, a reason for this could be that these KOLs are seen as "friends", everyday people, who have managed to gain a high following, yet remain the person from next door (Chen, 2018b; Flora, 2017; Liu et al., 2019). They (KOLs) are able to create high engagement with their followers and influence on their buying decisions (Ding et al., 2019), which can be evidenced seeing as Mr Bag's collection designed for Tod's sold out within one hour of it being released (Yang, 2018), whilst Becky Li's collection in collaboration with Rebecca Minkoff sold out completely in two days (Chen, 2018b). An explanation that can be given is highlighted in an interview with Style, whereby Becky Li insisted "the new generation of consumers are savvier and more rational. Instead of chasing blindly after the latest trends, they are more focused on their own needs" (Chen, 2018b) and expressing themselves as individuals. This links back to what has previously been described as the "bandwagon effect" in that consumers seek to be part of an "in" group and be associated with the KOLs they follow and idolise (Deloitte, 2017; Henninger et al., 2017; McKinsey, 2019; Vingeron & Johnson, 1999). From the interview with Becky Li (cited in Chen, 2018b) it becomes apparent that the "new" luxury consumers seek more of an experience rather than product quality. They further want information from multiple sources, whether or not this information is necessarily customised is only a secondary aspect, as long as the overarching message is coherent and consistent across the platforms, engagement is high (B1azquez, 2014; Chen, 2018b). This follows in line with Liu et al. (2019) findings in that social media content can not

only create a buzz around certain topics but also is effective electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Liu et al. (2019) insist that in China Generation Y and more so Generation Z follow their peers' advice and guidance. Peers in this case also incorporate KOLs, who regularly post their opinions on a variety of platforms. A question that has been raised previously concerns luxury fashion brands and social media and whether a "mass market" strategy is the right way forward for these luxury fashion brands. Drawing on Kapferer's (2000) brand identity prism consisting of physique (product), relationship (brand—consumer), reflection, personality, culture, and self-image, it becomes apparent that social media enhances each of the aspects, especially the "new generation" platforms, such as RED and TikTok, as they are honing in on culture, personality, and the relationship aspect. As such, it could be suggested that successfully integrating new technologies can enhance a luxury brand's identity and image, especially in China, thus, would be a positive move forward.

Online Sales and Chinese Luxury Consumers

Although the Chinese market and more specifically Chinese luxury fashion consumers are tech-savvy and enjoy searching for information online, luxury fashion companies are fazed by an idiosyncrasy. To explain, to date only 8% of luxury fashion purchases are made online, with the remaining 92% being made in traditional *bricks and mortar* stores (McKinsey, 2019). This may come as a big surprise, seeing as China is not only highly connected in terms of internet usage, but also, as previously mentioned, has developed some of the most innovative Apps, such as WeChat (McKinsey, 2019). Moreover, as previously stated, Lannes (2019) points out that the luxury market sales figures are growing by an average of 20%, with digitalisation being one of the key contributing factors. So what does this mean? It could be suggested that although a majority of luxury fashion sales happen in *bricks and mortar* stores, digital strategies are vital in order to provide consumers with up-to-date information on product launches, collaborations with KOLs, and special offers. Thus, answering the question as to whether all the digitalization and investments made in digital strategies are a waste of time—is a simple, but explicit no. According to Liu et al. (2019) digital strategies in the Chinese market are more important than ever before. They denote that their findings contrast what has previously been stated in the literature, in that it is vital to have a digital footprint, spread across multiple platforms, yet the overall brand message needs to be coherent and consistent. This however, may at times be challenging, as was pointed out in the section on "co-operator channel", where luxury fashion brands may lose some of their control and ability to portray their brand image and actual feel of the brand in a manner that matches their brand-owned channels. One way to overcome these challenges is to invest more in aggregator channel collaborations, such as Tmall Luxury Pavilion's Maison store, which allows for high customisation and provides a feel of "exclusivity and luxury". Yet, simply posting content is no longer enough for a demanding, tech-savvy customer base, creativity and innovation are key (Liu et al., 2016, 2019), which is why a majority of luxury brands decide to collaborate with key opinion leaders. KOLs or "fashion leaders possess a high level of fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership, demonstrating a combination of interest in fashion, experience,

knowledge, and interpersonal influence" (Zhou et al., 2019: 194). They are able to convey messages to consumers in a way that captures their audience and makes them want to engage more with luxury brands. By enabling KOLs to get involved in collaboratively creating fashion collections, luxury brands are further able to capitalise on creative designs and a refresh outlook, whilst at the same time stay true to their own brand values (e.g. Casalo et al., 2018; Qian & Park, 2018; Siddiqui et al., 2019). As such, the focus is shifting from "simply" purchasing a luxury fashion item, to purchasing a luxury fashion item that links to an experience, in this case, a connection with a KOL and ultimately the opportunity to identify oneself with an in-group. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that the product or the brand in itself may become less and less important. Whether someone buys a Louis Vuitton bag, a Prada purse, or a Coco Channel clutch is no longer the key focus, but rather it is the brand experience that ideally is created through the omni-channel (cross-channel) integration (Bu et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019). As such, brand pre-eminence moves up high on the priority list, which here implies these are well-known luxury fashion brands that manage to satisfy a high level of customer experience and manage to coherently broadcast their message across all channels, whether they are brand-owned or part of a collaboration, or discussed as part of brand-related content by key opinion leaders.

Liu et al. (2019) further highlighted in their paper that various of the luxury brands that participated in their study has managed to strike a balance between their online and offline (omni-channel) strategy of consumer retention and acquisition, in that they have utilised WeChat as a medium. As previously indicated WeChat is not simply an app, but rather *the* app that is used on a daily basis as a method of payment and source of information that has the power to guide consumers/users towards new products. Various luxury fashion companies have already incorporated training sessions on this communication channel, as such it is further proposed that more investment is made into new technologies, such as RED and TikTok, in order to ensure that brands are not missing out on opportunities to target an emerging market segment—Generation Z.

In linking back to an earlier statement made about it being an idiosyncrasy of investing in digitalization when only 8% of luxury fashion purchases are made online (McKinsey, 2019), the question remains—why is this the case, seeing as Liu et al. (2019) have made a convincing argument that digital strategies are vital when entering the Chinese market. Although slightly outside of the scope of this book chapter, an explanation that can be given is the fear of purchasing counterfeit products (Hancock, 2018; Pham & Nasir, 2016; Rapp, 2019). This could explain why tech-savvy consumers are using digital platforms as key sources for information, as it is easily accessible, whilst remaining true to *bricks and mortar* stores for making the actual purchase.

8.3 Conclusion

Whilst R.E.M where right in denoting 'it is the end of the world as we know it' they conclude "I feel fine". Technology and digital innovations are increasing and the creation of new platforms will continue to grow and with it the need to explore their potential. Although it may be quite obvious from industry reports that digital communication channels have developed differently within Western countries and China due to tight government regulations this is not always reflected in academic literature. Liu et al. (2019) were among the first authors to explicitly state that there is a need for luxury fashion companies to provide their staff with training opportunities on Chinese social media, as well as decentralising digital marketing strategies from European headquarters. They recognised that the societal shift that was partially influenced by the "one-child policy" has not only created different attitudes towards luxury, but also differs dramatically from their Western counterparts.

To the question of whether mass-market digital strategies work in the Chinese market the question remains partially unanswered. From company reports and news articles it is apparent that Chinese luxury consumers, who fall within the Millennial Generation and Generation Z, actively seek information from a variety of sources. They enjoy creative content and are longing to gain information. WeChat allows easy access to brand news, by simply scanning QR codes, Sina Weibo enables consumers access to Western social media sites and thus, discussions and blogs concerning their favourite brands. RED showcases images and offers s-commerce purchase opportunities, whilst TikTok encourages visual content sharing and #hashtag challenges and engages consumers not only in regards to information sharing, but also from an entertainment level, which links o brand experience. As such it could be insinuated that yes, these mass-market strategies work in the Chinese market. Yet, this cannot be confirmed until more research focuses on this area.

In the beginning of the chapter, we raised the question of whether the thirst for individuality is reflected in the way Chinese luxury consumers want to receive information from these luxury fashion brands. After having read this chapter, the reader will be aware that this is not a straight forward yes or no question, but rather is complex in nature. What could be suggested is that yes, consumers want to receive personalised information, yet this is to be understood in the sense of having opportunities to seek information through various channels (omni-channel), thereby gaining a unique brand experience. As such, providing mass-market strategies is important, as it allows consumers to pick and choose what they want to research and find out about. Investigating this further could be a potential area of future research.

A suggestion for future research is to investigate the consumer decision-making model, specifically comparing and contrasting Generations Y and Z, within the context of luxury fashion and China. Our chapter alludes to the fact that there is a difference not only within these generations, but also in the way they source and act upon information.

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Chapter 9
American Products in China: How Much is "Made in USA" Worth?

Dong Shen

9.1 Introduction

In China, the rapidly growing economy has translated into high consumer spending and expanding size of market. The China market is flooded with imported foreign goods and foreign brands as a result of a series of tariff reductions since China's WTO accession. With increased disposable income, Chinese consumers are moving upmarket and the demand for luxury goods has dramatically increased. China's fashion industry is set to overtake the U.S. and become the world's largest fashion market in the world for the first time in 2019 (Smith, 2018a, 2018b). According to Statista (2018), in the global market, most revenue will be generated in China with US$281 billion in 2019 in comparison to the U.S., ranking as the 2nd largest with a revenue of US$111 billion. The revenue in the fashion market in China is expected to show an annual growth rate of 11.5%, resulting in a market volume of US$433 billion by 2023 (Statista, 2018). Meanwhile, high price seems not to be an issue for more and more Chinese consumers. China now is the number one luxury spender worldwide and Chinese luxury spending accounted for 32% of global luxury purchases in 2017 (Smith, 2018a, 2018b). China's personal luxury goods market is projected to expand by 6% annually through 2024, by then Chinese shoppers will contribute 40% of global luxury sales and drive 70% of global luxury growth (Smith, 2018a, 2018b). Chinese consumers have put more emphases on the aesthetic, image, and status aspects of fashion than just on the functional and protective aspect (Bu et al., 2017; Fung Business Intelligence, 2018; Zhang & Kim, 2013). As a result, an inexpensive piece of clothing made by cheap labor is no longer the only key stimulus for consumer purchase. Rather, brand value, quality, style, color, fiber content, and other product attributes can be the main determinants for final purchase (Kansra,

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2014). Today, foreign fashion brands are everywhere in China, and more and more Chinese consumers have become experts in international fashion brands. However, due to foreign companies' sourcing and pricing concerns, most of those fashion pieces carrying foreign brands sold in China are "made in China". This seems to be a reasonable strategy not only because China provides ample cheaper labor than Western countries do, but due to the geographic proximity between the production location and target market for the foreign companies in Western countries. As a result, even though foreign fashion brands are everywhere in China, those fashion pieces "made in USA", "made in France", "made in Italy", or made in other Western countries are very rare finders in China. For Chinese consumers, checking country of origin on a clothing tag is not a common shopping behavior. Compared to consumers in other countries, foreign-made fashion is still relatively new in China's market. Are Chinese consumers interested in country of origin of fashion products? Especially for a foreign brand, does it matter to them if the fashion piece is made in the original country where the brand is originated from? For example, if a brand is an American brand, such as Levi's, do Chinese consumers perceive a pair of Levi's jeans "made in USA" differently from the same Levi's jeans but "made in China"? Is "made in USA" appealing to Chinese consumers? Are Chinese consumers willing to pay more for "made in USA" fashion caused by the higher labor cost in the US? If they are, how much more are they willing to pay?

Country of origin (COO) has been well studied since 1960's; however, most studies have focused on how consumers *in developed countries* evaluate and perceive products made in developing countries versus made in developed countries. Limited studies have investigated how consumers *in developing countries* perceive products made in developed countries versus made in developing countries. Furthermore, there is still a lack of research on how COO and brand jointly affect perceived price and purchase intention, which is the gap this study will fill. This chapter examines Chinese consumers' perceived price and purchase intention of fashion carrying American brands and "made in USA" vs. "made in China" with purpose of better understanding this largest fashion market by identifying potential new consuming trends and new market segments. The objectives of this study include the following aspects: (1) to investigate how COO and brand jointly affect Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" clothing compared to "made in China" clothing; (2) to examine how COO and brand jointly affect Chinese consumers' purchase intention to "made in USA" clothing with their perceived price values; and (3) to identify the monetary value of "made in USA" compared to "made in China".

This study is not designed just to test the relative significance of COO in consumer product evaluation. Rather, it is conducted to not only better understand the China market by identifying Chinese consumers' perception and evaluation of fashion made in other countries, but investigate how the impacts of COO and brand may be used to a firm's advantage in planning global production strategies. From the academic perspective, this study can bring empirical findings to the existing literature on COO by providing better understandings of how brand and COO jointly affect consumers' perceive price and purchase intention by taking the viewpoint of a developing country, which in turn further deepens the academic research on COO.

9.2 Literature Review

9.2.1 Effect of COO and Brand on Perceived Price

Perceived price is what a consumer is willing to give up in order to obtain a product, which is different from the actual price of a product because it is what a consumer believes the product is worth, while the actual price is often set up by retailers (Zeithaml, 1988). Even though perceived price is different from the actual price, it has a significant influence on consumer final purchase decision. When the perceived price is lower than the actual price, it is less likely for a consumer to make a final purchase because s/he might not think it's worth it. When the perceived price is higher than or close to the actual price, the likelihood of purchase tends to be higher.

What have influences on perceived price of product? The most common factors include quality, brand, service, and availability (exclusivity). If two products are identical in these factors, can COO make a difference? Even though COO has been studied in literature for over five decades, it is still a topic of many current studies (Krupka et al., 2014). In general, COO literature has focused on the impact of COO on perceived product quality (Biswas et al., 2011; Tigli et al., 2010), and purchase intention (Prendergast et al., 2010; Tigli et al., 2010). A limited number of research studied the relationship between COO and price, among which they often examined the influence of COO and price, both as independent variables, on purchase intention. However, this study focuses on the effect of COO on price. When price is unknown, certain product attributes, such as COO or brand name, are useful for consumers to form their own opinion on what the product price would be, in turn, impact purchase intention (Bettman et al., 1998; Zeithaml, 1988). Evidence have suggested that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a reputable COO and expect greater price discounts for less reputable COO (Han, 2010; Hu & Wang, 2010). Products produced in less developed countries tend to have a less positive image than products from more developed countries (Cai et al., 2004; Delener, 1995). For example, Siu and Chan (1997) found that Chinese consumers in Hong Kong perceived American products to be prestigious, Japanese products to be innovative, and Chinese products to be cheap. Similarly, a product with a developed country origin is seen as insurance regarding the product's quality and performance (Kaynak, 2000). Therefore, the COO effect on perceived price of product and purchase intention may hold true when fashion "made in the USA" and "made in China" are compared.

Do different brands affect the impact of COO on perceived price of product differently? An addition of brand into the relationship of COO and perceived price of product, and intention might further generate more insightful and interesting findings. Consumers often favor brands originated from developed countries (Batra et al., 2000). Similarly, many Chinese consumers love American fashion brands. Hu and Dickerson (1997) studied COO effect on Chinese consumers' perceived price and purchase willingness toward foreign-brand apparel compared with Chinese-brand apparel, and they found that Chinese consumers' perceived price and purchase willingness toward foreign-brand apparel were all significantly higher for foreign-brand

shirts than Chinese-brand shirts. It is clear that Chinese consumers prefer American brands to Chinese brands. The key question, which has not been examined in previous studies, is how American brands with different price points and various degrees of popularity in China affect the impact of COO on perceived price and purchase intention.

When different brands are studied, luxury brands and non-luxury brands are very different in many aspects. Luxury brands are associated with excellent quality, high transaction value, and distinctiveness (Fionda & Moore, 2009), and they are often bought more for their symbolic values arising from exclusivity, premium prices, image, status (Jackson, 2004), premium quality, heritage of craftsmanship, recognizable style and design (Beverland, 2006). In comparison, a non-luxury brand (an average brand) stands opposite to luxury brands from all perspectives. Therefore, consumer perceived price of an average brand would be lower than that of a luxury brand. But when COO comes into the picture, how COO impacts perceived price in a luxury brand scenario vs. in an average brand scenario can be very interesting. Will consumers' perceived price be significantly different for the same luxury brand products but one is "made in China" and the other is "made in USA"? Will consumers' perceived price be significantly different for the same average brand products but one is "made in China" and the other is "made in USA"?

Brands can also be very different from each other due to its popularity regardless of whether it's a luxury brand or not. If a brand is popular, consumers are more aware of it and think about it when they shop, which is defined as brand awareness and brand association by Aaker (1991). A very popular brand may lead to a high level of brand awareness among consumers, while a new brand which has not been promoted well enough by business will not arouse consumer awareness. For an unknown/new brand, are consumers' perceive prices significantly different between "made in the USA" and "made in China"? For a popular brand, do they perceive price differently between "made in USA" and "made in China"?

The following research question is formed based on the above discussion:

Research Question 1: Do Chinese consumers have significantly different perceived price of fashion products between "made in USA" and "made in China" for different categories of American brands?

9.2.2 Effect of COO and Brand on Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a plan in which a consumer intends to buy particular goods or service sometime in the near future. Purchase intention is different from the actual purchase. However, according to Brown et al. (2003), consumers with intentions to buy certain products often exhibit higher actual buying rates than those who demonstrate a low or no intention. Extensive research has been done on consumer purchase intention, and multiple factors have been identified to have significant impacts on purchase intention. One of them is product attributes, such as brand, quality, price,

and COO. When consumers are presented with same products with the only difference in COO, they tend to show different purchase intention (Ghalandari & Norouzi 2012; Lee & Lee, 2009). More interestingly, in different brand categories, will their purchase intention present differently again?

Examining purchase intention is critical in this study. If Chinese consumers form higher perceived price for "made in USA" fashion than "made in China" fashion carrying the same brand, it does not necessarily mean that they intend to make the final purchase of the piece "made in USA". Maybe the price is out of their reach or maybe whether it's "made in USA" or "made in China" does not matter to them. If Chinese consumers do show higher purchase intention to the piece "made in USA", does it hold true to all American brands? Do Chinese consumers have higher purchase intention to American luxury brands "made in USA" than "made in China"? What about American average brands? What about American new/unknown brands?

Therefore, the following research question is developed:

Research Question 2: Do Chinese consumers have significantly different purchase intention to "made in USA" fashion products and "made in China" fashion products for different categories of American brands?

9.2.3 Quantifying the COO Effects on Perceived Price

Most COO studies do not look at price as a measuring tool by which to quantify the extent of COO effects. Rather, among many variables, price is usually discussed as an independent variable in relation to consumers' evaluations of product alternatives and their purchase decisions (Veale & Quester, 2009). This study moves beyond the effect of COO on perceived product quality and purchase intention. Instead, it puts a price tag on a COO label by treating COO as an independent variable and perceived price as a dependent variable.

A very limited number of studies have been identified which empirically researched the relationship between COO and perceived price. Wall and Heslop (1986) found Canadians were willing to pay more to purchase Canadian products over imported products as long as the quality was equal. Drozdenko and Jensen (2009) found that statistically significant price premiums the US consumers were willing to pay for "made in USA" goods over Chinese goods across all eleven product categories. Those premiums ranged from 37% (for athletic shoes) up to 105% (toothpaste). The closest product to fashion Drozdenko and Jensen (2009) chose in their study was shirt and they found that US consumers would pay 42% more (from $10 to $14.22) than the same products but made off-shore. Ha-Brookshire and Norum (2011) found that US consumers were willing to pay over a 17% premium for a shirt made of US-grown cotton, compared to cotton without the COO display. Sirkin, Zinser, and Manfred (2013) found that U.S. consumers quoted for U.S.-made athletic shoes were 8% higher than for the same products "made in China" and they were willing to

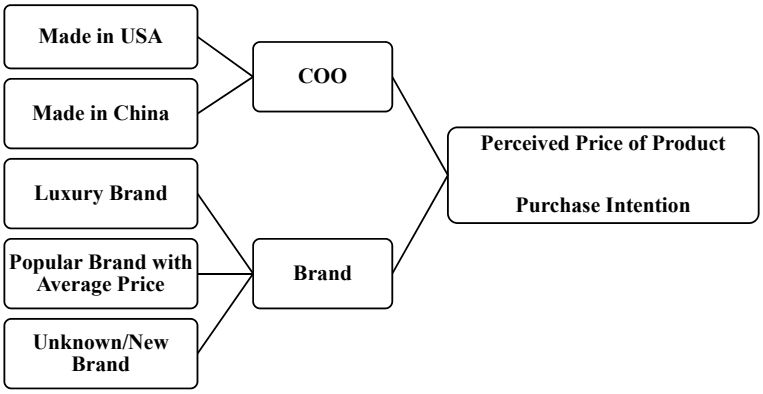


Fig. 9.1 Research conceptual model

pay premiums of 19% more for the U.S.-made gas range, 30% more for the mobile phone, and 63% more for the wooden baby toy.

All of these studies intended to examine the value of COO by asking consumers about their willingness to pay. However, consumers' willingness to pay is different from how much consumers believe the products should be priced, which is perceived price. More importantly, few of the above studies examined the final purchase intention. Consumers may be willing to pay a high price for a product. However, they may not be interested in buying the product or simply they just can't afford it. Then the high price consumers are willing to pay will never be able to bring monetary profit to businesses. As a result, the following research question is developed:

Research Question 3: What is Chinese consumers' perceive price of "made in USA" compared to "made in China" when purchase intention exists?

Figure 9.1 shows the conceptual model of this study.

9.3 Methodology

Survey is conducted in this study for data collection. College students are the participants for two reasons. First, this particular group of Chinese is extremely influential due to their size and buying power (Vahie & Paswan, 2006). Even though college students do not tend to have a full-time job and a stable income in China, the financial income from their family and their seasonal jobs are still sizable. More importantly, they spend a substantial amount of their income on clothing, accessory, and other fashion products. Second, this segment can provide valuable information to the future of China's market because they will soon become professionals and become the main core part of Chinese consumer market.

A 2 × 3 within-subjects design with two countries (USA vs. China) and three types of brands (popular US luxury brand versus popular US average brand vs. US unknown/new brand) is conducted in this study. Researchers have been cautioned against the use of within-subjects design because of a potential source of demand artifact (Adair et al., 1983). However, in reality when consumers go shopping and evaluate alternative products, they are often confronted with a within-subjects evaluation decision environment (Han & Terpstra, 1988).

Three different kinds of American brands—luxury brands, average brands, and unknown brand—are needed in this study. First, Marc Jacobs is chosen for the popular American luxury brand category. Research shows that among the most searched-for American luxury fashion brands in the world, Marc Jacobs ranks No.2 (Doran, 2012). In 2013, Marc Jacobs started to aim China in order to make China its biggest foreign market (Chen, 2013). The second brand needed for this study is an American popular brand with an affordable price range. Among the most popular American fashion brands which market with average price in China, Levi's is the best choice. In 2014, Levi's ranked No. 22 on China brand index following the most well-known European luxury brands, such as Chanel and Gucci (Into China: 2014 Bomoda brand index 2014). Last, for the unknown brand category, a made-up brand, Fire, was created in order to guarantee it does not have any popularity with minimum amount of brand awareness, which can create a clear contrast between the popular luxury brand and the popular average brand.

The questionnaire designed for this study starts with a question about whether the participant has heard of each of the three brands. Then demographics questions are included. The last section is composed of the following six scenarios: (1) Marc Jacobs "made in the USA"; (2) Marc Jacobs "made in China"; (3) Levi's "made in USA"; (4) Levi's "made in China"; (5) Fire "made in USA"; and (6) Fire "made in China". A particular fashion item, jeans, is chosen in this study in order to make the purchase scenario as specific to the subjects as possible. Jeans are selected instead of any other fashion articles is because it is a unisex and everyday common article for most Chinese consumers, especially among college students. After showing a picture of a pair of jeans, participants are asked to answer questions on their perceived price of product and purchase intention for each of the six scenarios. Perceived price of product is measured by asking the subjects to choose from one of the following answers: (1) <199 Yuan; (2) 199–399 Yuan; (3) 399–599 Yuan; (4) 599–899 Yuan; (5) 899–1299 Yuan; (6) 1299–1999 Yuan; (7) 1999–2999 Yuan; and (8) >2999 Yuan. Purchase intention is measured by two items: (1) I would like to buy this pair of jeans; and (2) I intend to purchase this pair of jeans. A 5-point Likert scale anchored between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5) was used for these two items.

The initial questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into Chinese by two bilingual (Chinese-English) speakers separately. The translation/language differences were resolved and the consensus was reached by the researchers and the translators. In addition, a focus group including four Chinese graduate students was conducted before the final survey to (1) assess the three brands, (2) examine all the scales, and (3) confirm the translation. When focus group was conducted, a clear differences among the three brands were identified

by all participants. Therefore, Marc Jacobs, Levi's, and Fire were chosen for the final survey.

College students were recruited from three colleges in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Dalian, located north, south, and central part of China, respectively. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to the students to earn extra credit points in summer 2016.

9.4 Data Analyses and Results

9.4.1 Validity

Construct validity is used to ensure that a scale can actually measure what it is intended to measure instead of other variables. Using a panel of experts who are familiar with the construct is a way in which this type of validity can be assessed (Cronbach, 1971). In this study, two experts examined all the scales in the questionnaire. Then a focus group composed of four graduate students was conducted to further examine all the scales.

9.4.2 Preliminary Results

Even though Marc Jacobs is one of the most popular American luxury brands in China, perhaps for some Chinese, luxury brands are still novelty in their life. Therefore, the responses who have not heard of Marc Jacobs were removed. In addition, since Fire is a made-up brand, the responses who claim that they have heard of Fire were also removed from the sample. Only the subjects who have not heard of Fire AND heard of Marc Jacobs and Levi's were kept. After eliminating unuseful and incomplete responses ($n = 55$), the final sample was reduced to 445. The sample was comprised of approximately 13% males and 87% females. Their average age was 20.2 years old. The participants' educational backgrounds consisted of students with 69% college degree, 30% associate degree, and 1% graduate degree.

9.4.3 Two-Way Repeated MANOVA

In order to study Research Question 1 and 2, a two-way repeated MANOVA test was conducted with two countries and three brands, and two DVs (perceived price of product and purchase intention) to test the effects of COO and brand on Chinese consumers' perceived price of product and purchase intention. The results showed that there was significant overall effect of COO and brand on perceived price of

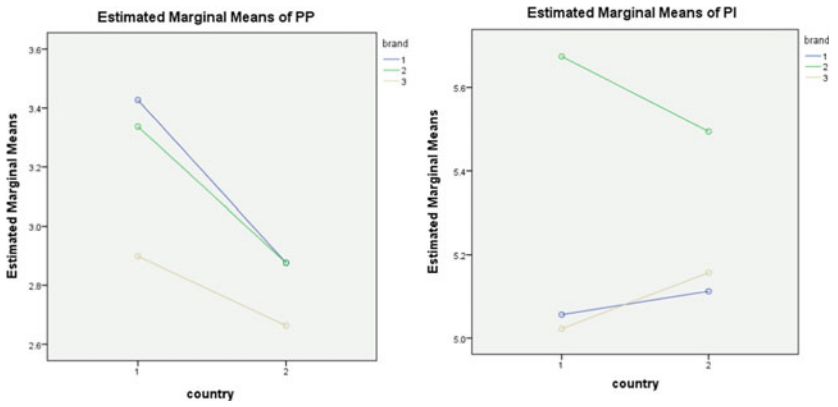
product and purchase intention, Wilks' Lambda = 0.952, F(4, 440) = 5.575, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.048, Power to detect the effect = 0.978. Giving the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. As shown in Table 9.1, univariate tests indicated that there was COO effect on perceived price of product, F(1, 443) = 63.122, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.125, Power to detect the effect = 1.000. However, there was no COO effect on purchase intention, F(1, 443) = 0.808, $p = 0.369$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.002, Power to detect the effect = 0.146. Regarding brand, there was significant brand effect on both perceived price of product, F(2, 886) = 12.198, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.027, Power to detect the effect = 0.995, and purchase intention, F(2, 886) = 14.615, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.32, Power to detect the effect = 0.999. Furthermore, the interaction between COO and brand does not significantly affect perceived price of product, F(2, 886) = 1.617, $p = 0.200$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.004, Power to detect the effect = 0.341. However, the interaction between COO and brand does affect purchase intention significantly, F(2, 886) = 9.312, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.021, Power to detect the effect = 0.977.

When individual brands were examined, as shown in Fig. 9.2, across all three brands, Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" jeans is higher than perceived price of "made in China". This is very consistent regardless of the brand type. Then when purchase intention is examined, even though COO does not affect purchase intention directly, the correlation between COO and brand does have an impact on purchase intention as shown in Table 9.1, because the interaction between COO and brand affect purchase intention significantly, F(2, 886) = 9.312, $p < 0.001$, Partial Eta Squared = 0.021, Power to detect the effect = 0.977. Therefore, as shown in Fig. 9.2, for brand 2—Levi's, an American popular brand with average price, Chinese consumers' purchase intention for "made in USA" is much higher than "made in China". However, for both Marc Jacobs and Fire, Chinese consumers hold higher purchase intention to "made in China" than to "made in USA". This indicates that even though Chinese consumers have higher perceived price of "made in USA" Marc Jacobs than "made in China" Marc Jacobs, and higher perceived price of "made

Table 9.1 Effects of COO and brand on perceived price of product (PP) and purchase intention (PI)

Source	Measure		df	Mean Square	F	Sig. [a]	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power[b]
COO	PP	G-G	1	66.848	63.122	0.000	0.125	1.000
	PI	G-G	1	1.635	0.808	0.369	0.002	0.146
Brand	PP	G-G	2	11.633	12.198	0.000	0.027	0.995
	PI	G-G	2	26.642	14.615	0.000	0.032	0.999
COO x Brand	PP	G-G	2	0.771	1.617	0.200	0.004	0.341
	PI	G-G	2	10.965	9.312	0.000	0.021	0.977

[a]The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level
[b]Computed using alpha = 0.05



Brand (1-Marc Jacobs, 2-Levi's, 3-Fire); Country (1-USA, 2-China)

Fig. 9.2 Effect of COO and brand on perceived price of product (PP) and purchase intention (PI)

in USA" Fire than "made in China" Fire, they do not have higher purchase intention to "made in USA" Marc Jacobs and Fire.

9.4.4 Regression

The results from MANOVA showed that across all three brands, Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" jeans was higher than the perceived price of "made in China" jeans. In order to study Research Question 3, a linear regression was conducted with COO as IV and perceived price of product as DV (Model 1). As shown in Table 9.2, Perceived Price of Product = 3.071–0.315 × COO, F (1, 2668) = 27.684, $p < 0.001$. Using this regression model, the perceived price of "made in USA" including all the brands is 2.756, and the perceived price of "made in China" including all the brands is 2.441 on the pricing scale. Then the regression result showed that (2.756 "made in USA"—2.441 "made in China")/2.441 "made in China" = 12.9%. A label of "made in USA" means a 12.9% higher price for Chinese consumers compared to "made in China". However, this 12.9% higher price cannot be realized and achieved because Chinese consumers don't have higher purchase intention to "made in USA" fashion than "made in China" fashion across all three brands. The MANOVA results showed that only for American popular brands with average price such as Levi's, was Chinese consumers' purchase intention for "made in USA" higher than "made in China". For luxury brands or unknown American brands, Chinese consumers held higher purchase intention to "made in China" than to "made in USA". Therefore, across all brands, a perceived price increase for "made in USA" Levi's is more likely to be realized. As a result, another regression was run to solely focus on Levi's (Model 2). Table 9.2 presented that Perceived Price of Product

Table 9.2 Regression results of COO effect on perceived price of product

	Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardized coefficients		*t*-value	Adjusted R-square	*F*-value
			B	Std. Error			
Model 1	Perceive price of product	Constant	3.071	0.095	32.485	0.010	F (1, 2668) = 27.684***
		COO (all three brands)	−0.315	0.060	−5.262***		
Model 2	Perceive price of product	Constant	3.285	0.164	20.050	0.014	F (1,888) = 13.270***
		COO (only Levi's)	−0.378	0.104	−3.643***		

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$
p-value (the probability of obtaining the effect observed in the sample if the null hypotheses is true for the population)

$= 3.285 - 0.378 \times \text{COO}$, $F\,(1,888) = 13.270$, $p < 0.001$. Using this regression model, the perceived price of "made in USA" Levi's is 2.907, and the perceived price of "made in China" Levi's is 2.529 on the pricing scale. Then the regression result further showed that for the brand of Levi's, (2.907 "made in USA"—2.529 "made in China")/2.529 "made in China" = 15.3%. Chinese consumers' perceived price of Levi's jeans "made in USA" is 15.3% higher than that of Levi's jeans "made in China". For popular American brands with affordable price, a label of "made in USA" not only means a 15.3% higher price for Chinese consumers compared to "made in China"; more importantly, Chinese consumers have higher purchase intention to "made in USA" Levi's than "made in China" Levi's.

9.5 Conclusions, Implications, Limitations, and Future Studies

The purpose of this chapter is to better understand Chinese consumers and the fashion market in China by identifying potential new consuming trends and new market segments. The objectives are (1) to investigate how COO and brand jointly affect Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" fashion compared to "made in China" fashion; (2) to examine how COO and brand jointly affect their purchase intention to "made in USA" fashion with their perceived price values; and (3) to identify the monetary value of "made in USA" compared to "made in China". A survey was conducted in the summer of 2016 in three cities in China and 445 returned questionnaires were useful. After checking validity, MANOVA was conducted and the findings showed that across all three brands, Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" fashion was higher than the perceived price of "made in China". When brand was brought in, for American popular brands with average prices such

as Levi's, Chinese consumers' purchase intention to "made in USA" was higher than "made in China". However, for luxury brands or unknown American brands, Chinese consumers held higher purchase intention to "made in China" than to "made in USA" even though their perceived price of "made in USA" fashion was higher than "made in China" products. Next, a linear regression revealed that a 15.3% higher price was perceived by Chinese consumers for "made in USA" label than "made in China" label for American popular brands with average price. Can this 15.3% increase be more than enough to cover the cost of moving production from China to the US and further generate more profit? According to Sirkin et al. (2011), wage and benefit increases of 15 to 20% per year at the average Chinese factory will slash China's labor-cost advantage over low-cost states in the U.S., when adjusted for the higher productivity of U.S. workers. If companies can get a 10% price premium, then moving production from China to the U.S. will be not only manageable but profitable for American manufacturers (Sirkin et al., 2013).

This chapter concludes that today Chinese consumers are not just interested in foreign fashion brands, they also have purchase intention for fashion carrying foreign brands AND made in the original countries. While they are willing to pay more to foreign brands, they are also willing to pay extra if the foreign brands are made in the brand-originated country rather than "made in China". Chinese consumers are eager to buy foreign goods because they believe that foreign products are of a higher quality and are less likely to be counterfeit (Kaplan, 2018). For many Chinese consumers, especially the ones in the middle and upper class, the Westernized lifestyle including popular Western fashion brands and Hollywood movies and entertainment have a significant impact on them (Williams, 2016). When they pursue and purchase foreign brands, the counterfeit market with knockoff products have generated tremendous amount of consumer complaints and even legal cases in China (Ge, 2015). A product carrying a foreign brand AND made in the original country leads to a more trustworthy quality and authenticity than the same product "made in China" to Chinese consumers.

More specially, this new emerging market in China works for foreign brands which are popular in China with affordable price instead of luxury brands and unpopular foreign brands in China. Popularity of a fashion brand is critical to Chinese consumers, especially for foreign fashion brands, because the images attached to fashion brands are closely connected with Chinese consumers' shopping motivations and behavior (Wei & Jung, 2017). Luxury brands have their prestigious images established for a long-time, and for Chinese consumers, the premium price they have paid for luxury brands is often enough to show their social status, and they may not want to pay more for the same luxury product if it is made in the original country (Jovanovic, 2015). For unpopular foreign brands which don't have the popularity established in China yet, Chinese consumers of course won't show much interest. However, for the popular and affordable foreign brands, the price range is much lower than luxury brands, which makes it easier to afford for many Chinese consumers today. Then finding and purchasing the more authentic version becomes more critical for the potential consumers. A pair of Levi's jean "made in USA" is definitely more convincing than a pair of Levi's "made in China". The popularity of

the brands along with the affordable price range, as a result, can create a potential attractive market in China for American businesses.

This chapter provides empirical findings to the possibilities of opening new market in China, maybe in other developing countries as well, a new marketing direction which may bring more options to Chinese consumers and make Chinese consumers more mature in the global market, and a new business direction which may open more opportunities to foreign fashion businesses. On the theoretical level, the findings on the COO and brand's joint effect on the perceived price of product and purchase intention further enrich and update the literature in the field, especially with a focus on a developing country.

Despite the important implications and contributions, the study has limitations and, therefore, offers future research opportunities. First, the study employed college samples. Even though they are considered as appropriate samples due to their high interest in fashion and foreign brands, they are still not the representation of the entire population. Further research could sample different groups which are more representative of the whole population. In addition, with a more representative sample, identifying the most ideal groups of Chinese consumers who have the highest purchase intention for "made in USA" fashion will be important and beneficial as well.

Second, this study examined three kinds of brands and for each type of brand only one particular brand was chosen, which lowers the possibility of putting a more accurate price tag on a "made in USA" label. Future studies will need to examine more brands in each category.

This study concludes that as long as it's an American brand, Chinese consumers' perceived price of "made in USA" is higher than "made in China". However, the popularity of a brand determines whether Chinese consumers develop higher purchase intention to "made in USA" clothing than "made in China". In this study, a made-up brand "Fire" was used in order to create a zero degree of popularity in comparison with Levi's popularity. However, how popular an American brand needs to be when Chinese consumers start to develop higher purchase intention to "made in USA" than "made in China"? This study did not examine this tipping point, which is the third limitation of this study. For future studies, it is important to find out the relationship between the popularity level of American brands (brand awareness and brand association) and purchase intention of Chinese consumers. Then foreign companies can have a much clearer strategic plan in terms of how much they need to budget first to promote their brands in China in order for their brands to reach a certain level of popularity, and ultimately to lead to a higher purchase intention of Chinese consumers.

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Chapter 10
Disclosure of Mainland Chinese Youngsters in Hong Kong—The Acculturation and Consumption

Han Han

10.1 Introduction

Since the year 2005, Hong Kong has become one of the most preferred destinations among all international cities for the Mainland Chinese high school graduates to pursue their undergraduate education, and universities in Hong Kong are always competing with the top universities in mainland China (e.g. Tsinghua and Peking University) and worldwide (e.g. Cambridge, Harvard, etc.) to recruit the best students considering both the NCEE (National College Entrance Examination) results and performance in integrated competence-driven interviews. Meanwhile, due to the much-higher tuition fee and life expenses in Hong Kong, students decided to go there for higher education always enjoys better financial background compared with the average levels respectively in mainland, which enables them with stronger consumption power living in the city which is one of the fashion capitals in Asia. Hence this study drives its attention to this group of people who had their higher education in Hong Kong meanwhile chose to stay living in the city after graduation to continuously contribute to the local economy. The importance of this study is also shown with its social-cultural value as after almost 20 years since Hong Kong firstly started to recruit students from Mainland China, the focus group of this research has formed a very essential role of mainland immigrants in the society as the "new generation of the middle class" that brings significant sociocultural and economic impact to the consumer market in not only Hong Kong but also mainland China due to their social connections with family and friends.

Being different from studying and living either in mainland China or foreign countries, staying in Hong Kong forms unique experience to the extent of sociocultural environment due to the colonial history of the city, which highlights the key issue that

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influences the consumption culture that is explored in this study. The focus group, people who were born in the late 80s and early 90s, is the witness of Hong Kong's biggest social transition in the century which is its return to the mother country (P.R.C) from the colonial governance of the UK and becoming a Special Administrative Region of China since the year 1997. On one hand, people in the focus group were even labeled as 'non-local students' in the same category with 'international students' having to obtain student visa managed by the immigration office for their legal stay in the city and study in the education system in which most of the official communications are conducted in English, while on the other hand, they are living in a society which is deeply immersed with traditional Chinese culture. In this case, the focus group is facing a unique situation of acculturation process during which they are continuously seeking for identity construction, which then makes mutual impact with their consumption practice. Therefore, this research pays attention also to the intercultural issues when study this essential social group of people who have strong consumption power.

Recent reports indicate that consumers in the age between 25 and 35 donate the strongest consumption power to luxury fashion industry, as same importance as the role of Chinese consumers in the global market (Bain & Co., 2018). Meanwhile, this group of people are in the "emerging adulthood" stage of their life-span development, which is as what is clearly defined by Tanner and Arnett (2009), a stage of always "feeling in-between", the "age of possibilities", "time of self-focus", and seek for "identity explorations". Therefore, the *acculturation* situation is also a key issue to be studied here in this research, which brings more impact of sociocultural adaptation for the focus group who are experiencing their *emerging adulthood* life stage. Standing with this point, the significance of this study will be highlighted in terms of exploring how the process of acculturation, the construction of identity and the development of self are conveyed with the consumption practice and lifestyle formation by the chosen group of respondents. Such insights of these consumers disclosed by this chapter then provide deep understanding for luxury fashion marketers and brand managers to consider their strategies and approaches when nurture their brand-consumer relationship especially in Chinese emerging consumer market.

10.2 Literature Review

Acculturation is the process, as what is defined by Sam and Berry (1997), by which migrants to a new culture develop relationships with the new culture meanwhile, maintain their original culture. Therefore, in this acculturation process immigrated people who hold their home culture make continuous contact with the host culture (new culture), which results in cultural change and social impact on those individuals. Plentiful researches studying on ethnic immigrants have provided adequate theoretical evidence on how acculturation process is associated with consumption practice in cross-cultural contexts. Examples such as investigations of Hispanic women living in the United States (Inglessis, 2008; Ogden, 2002), students with Mexican heritage

in Southeast America (Hussaini, 2008), and even Chinese immigrants in Canada (University of Guelph. Dept. of Consumer Studies & Chen, 2002; Wang, 2004), explore the symbolic meaning of consumption practice the ethnic people perform. In these studies, how the immigrated people imply their socio-cultural values and beliefs and how they construct their self-identity through consumption practice are deeply investigated. On the other hand, most of the researches discussing acculturative issues put their interests on the immigrants across countries, whereas less attention is paid to how such issue can take place within one country, and even within one culture in general—as the case in this research that is about "Chinese Culture". It is then worth discovering how does acculturation process performs in a collective culture with internal diversities, and how does it make influence on the people who moved to a place where is as same as their origin in terms of nationality. To this extent, this research makes an experimental step to fill in the blank as it studies a particular group of Chinese mainlanders in Hong Kong. And this discussion is based on a collective and complicated concept—Chineseness. The special point of this study is then aroused by the condition generated from the complexity of Chinese culture and the intricacy of Chineseness.

The most salient factor that causes the intricacy of Chineseness is the diversity of ethnic groups in China (1 majority group and 54 minority groups). Amount of discussions on Chinese ethnic groups disclosed the diversities of Chinese culture regarding the identification of ethnicities since the years of Shen (1981) and Fei (1989, 1991) until current era (Gladney, 1994; Iredale et al., 2003; Ma, 2007), whereas there is also no lack of exploration on how the ethnic groups convey their identity projects with consumptions especially in clothes and appearance (Chung & Fischer, 1999; Finnane, 2008; Lan, 2007). Yet, the matter of diverse ethnic groups is not the only factor causes the complexity of the concept of Chineseness. Since the identification of Chineseness is tangled in historical, territorial, and political scales, the Chineseness cannot be simply discussed within the discipline of monolithic nationalism (Guo, 2003). The existence of acculturation process then is not limited in occasions where Chinese diaspora immigrate to other nations, but also within the Greater China region including mainland China, Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR, and even Taiwan and Singapore. The intricacy of Chineseness is most frequently exhibited in linguistic studies when even one type of Chinese language—Mandarin—is distinguished differently in names of Huayu, Guoyu, and Putonghua (He, 2006; Wang, 2011), quite apart from the varieties of Chinese used as official language in different administrative districts (e.g. Putonghua in mainland China while Cantonese and Putonghua in HKSAR). Language is one of the classic but not the only point of view to examine the identity formation regarding diversities of Chineseness. This research faces the issue of Chineseness in the case that Chinese Mainlanders withholding traditional Chinese beliefs and values perform to build-up their self-identification in awaken of unique Chinese identity in Hong Kong—a city with alternative Chineseness (Lee, 2003) developed by its colonial history with capitalism in *a logic of wound* (Chow, 1998, 5). Thereby, studying the focus group's consumption as a socio-cultural practice is a comprehensive approach to explore the insight in the acculturation situation where these people are searching for their individual's Chineseness. This also reveals a

postmodern context for this study as its intrinsic hybridity, ambiguity, intermingling, and liminality (Baudrillard, 1998; Brown, 1993; Chun, 1996; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993; Lee, 2003).

Regarding theoretical arguments of postmodernism (Elliott, 1999; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 1997; Sarup, 1993), platitudes of discussions have been made to exhibit the idea that self-images and identities are fragmented with full of juxtapositions of contradictions and ambiguities. These discussions were followed by arguments of some post-structuralists like Baudrillard (1998), suggesting that consuming goods are decentralized from the role of commodity in economic chain that is started with production to a semiotic signifier embodied with symbolic meanings recontextualized by consumers as individuals to construct multiple identities in a range of social-cultural settings. Based upon the arguments put above as precedents, the uniqueness of Chineseness should engage a new symbolic project of self through internal–external dialectic of identification (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Thompson, 1995), which is constructed to portrait a coherent and comprehensive image of the focus group from mainland China to Hong Kong on the way seeking for identity in both fragmented settings and "Chinese" as a whole.

Moreover, unlike studies of acculturation process executed by other constitutes of "new immigrants" from mainland China to Hong Kong, the focus group of this study has been, as introduced previously, enjoying better conditions both educationally and financially. As Xu discovered in her study, this group of people constructing their identities as "free" self and "elite" self by both re-act in social movement as well as consumption and lifestyle (Xu, 2015). This initiates a tending of the focus discussion towards Bourdieu's theory about social distinction that is differentiated by the assets with relative volume and proportion of cultural capital and economic capital the individual processes. In this way, the consumption is signified as a social language that shapes lifestyles in classification, which orients social encounters (Bourdieu, 1984). Though the focus group of this research came from mainland China where the Communist governing targets to minimize the inequity originated by "social-class", as they are acculturating to Hong Kong where had been under colonial capitalism for long, Bourdieu and following western socialists' works (Calhoun, 1993; Featherstone, 2007; Holt, 1997, 1998; Warde et al., 1999) about the social distinction formed by capital could provide and be extended reasonably as the theoretical rationale for the analysis of the consumption culture and lifestyle of the focus group.

10.3 Research Methodology

As a cross-cultural study focusing on the lived experience of which consumption is regarded as a symbolic practice for a project of identity construction among Chinese mainlanders living in Hong Kong, a qualitative phenomenological approach is implemented to gain thorough understanding of a small number of participants to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2008). In further considerations of all the issues discussed in the previous paragraphs, 7 participants, who are in age

25–30 and graduated from different universities in Hong Kong with holding qualifications of Bachelor degree or above, were randomly chosen from the corresponding pool for observations and in-depth interviews individually.

These participants have significant characteristics responding to the research focus that is about acculturation situation and consumption power: they were born and lived in mainland China with their parents until the age around 18, which built up the base of their traditional Chinese values; they enjoyed above-average financial background and academic achievement, which is able to offer them higher level of both economic and culture capital especially regarding the influence on their consumption; they gained higher education in Hong Kong and spent most of their time from age 18 to 30 of their life in Hong Kong other than their home cities, which arouses the complexity for identity seeking in such a unique environment with Chineseness especially in stage of emerging adulthood of their lives; they are now working in Hong Kong with well-paid salary, which made them as the "new middle class" in the society playing a leading role in the consumption market.

Observation and long interview (McCracken, 1988) are mainly employed for data collection and phenomenological interpretation is applied for data analysis process. All observations were taken on casual occasions (e.g. shopping together, social gatherings, dinner, etc.), while all individual interviews last around three hours for each participant based on unstructured interactive approach (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The places that the interviews conducted on were chosen based on agreement of both the researcher and the interviewees, mostly in café, lounge, or bar suggested by the interviewees where they feel relaxed and comfortable to talk. This is found to be an effective way to provide not only a natural setting stimulating more productive interaction, but also a disclosure of the participants' lifestyle in a perspective of leisure consumption. Due to this advantage, observations are also taken during the whole process of the interviews including pre-stage and post-stage so as to figure out more coherent understandings of the participants' lived experience linking what they said with what they did/had done.

Given with natural environment for talk, the interviews were initiated with casual questions referring to their most recent consumption experience/desire, which made the respondents feel easier to step into the conversations by giving straightforward response at the beginning stage. Then grander questions are extended based upon their previous response to guide the interviewees for memory recall of their life-history stories. At the same time, the researcher plays a role as an active listener with sharing own associated experience but in a non-directive way, which engages "self-as-instrument" process as McCracken (1988) suggested, to gain better understanding in matching the respondents' experience for ideas with actions they described. During the interview process, the respondents naturally looked for ways to explain and elaborate their statements with referring back to their history of experience linking with life in mainland China and Hong Kong reflectively. This then generates a dialogical-self process (Hermans & Gieser, 2012) that effectively supports acculturative studies, which as what Bhatia and Ram (2006) puts, "involves a constant moving back and forth between various cultural voices that are connected to various sociocultural contexts and are shaped by issues of power and constructions of otherness". Though

Table 10.1 Basic information of the participants

Name	Gender	Age	Marital status	City of origin	Education	Disposable income HK$	Living condition (apartment) sq ft
Qian	F	28	Married	Shenzhen	BEd	35,000	Husban-Owned (700)
Xun	F	27	Single	Shanghai	MSc	33,000	Self-owned (650)
Yuan	M	27	Single	Beijing	MA	38,000	Self-rent (500)
Shengn	F	28	Single	Changchun	MEd	36,000	Self-rent (400)
Zhong	F	28	Single	Shanghai	Double MA	30,000	Shared-rent (700)
Ruolin	F	28	Engaged	Shanghai	MA	32,000	Self-owned (650)
Wanzi	F	28	Single	Beijing	MA	30,000	Self-rent (500)

the interviews are principally conducted in a loose-structured and non-directive way, the scope of response could be specified (Briggs, 1986) in address to explore the intertextuality (Holt, 1997; Liu & Elliott, 2002).

For records of the data collection, all interviews were audiotaped under permission of all participants; meanwhile, the names of participants are guaranteed anonymous for data analysis. The basic information of the participants is given in Table 10.1 with pseudonyms. Pictures were also taken during the interviews for further illustration.

10.4 Research Findings

10.4.1 Food, Book, and Unique Design Products Are the Top Three Categories of Consumption Goods Taken from Hometown

Hong Kong is recognized as "shopping paradise" in the world especially for China mainlanders, as it enjoys both advantages of abundant merchandise assortments of international brands and, more importantly for current situation–the benefit of tax-free policy that offers competitive pricing advantage, compared to the market in mainland China. Therefore, for the studied participants who spent most of their time living in such a city, their conspicuous consumption performed in their hometown (mainland China), especially for those consumption goods taken from homecity to Hong Kong, can tell some stories with exploration of the motivation behind.

Being asked about what do they shop when they go back to mainland and take back to Hong Kong, all of the interviewees gave immediate response with the answer of "food" with no hesitation, more than half of them mentioned about book, while

some of them also mentioned some "little things" designed with traditional Chinese elements or by local Chinese designers.

Ruolin: Homemade lotus roots! Everytime before I come back to Hong Kong from Shanghai, my mom prepares a lot of local Shanghai food for me, no matter homemade or bought from supermarket.

Interviewer: There's no such product in Hong Kong market?

Ruolin: Well, for some of them, maybe there is, but very difficult to find. But for food like the lotus roots, especially the taste made by my mom, I believe no! then licked her lips quickly.

Interviewer: What else?

Ruolin: Well…books! Simple reason: it's much cheaper and in Simplified Chinese.

Yuan: Peking Duck! Haha! Sometimes I invite my friends to my home for dinner, or take it to my office to share it with my Hong Kong colleagues.

Interviewer: But there're restaurants in Hong Kong serving Peking Duck.

Yuan: Yes, but different. At least the feeling is different. I'm a Beijinger, I feel obligated to take something representative from my hometown to share with my friends in Hong Kong.

Interviewer: What else do you buy particularly in Beijing?

Yuan: Nothing particular actually. But as I would like to visit some art exhibitions or design studios like 798, I might buy something there, if I see something really special and attractive. For example, the wallet I'm using, is what I bought from 798 Art Zone last year, it's year of Dragon, I was born in the year of Dragon. It's with good quality and nice design with traditional Chinese elements. I didn't find similar ones in Hong Kong, not like the products from big brands. I like it very much. " Yuan shows me the wallet with sense of pride.

Shengn: Food. And…books. You know I love reading and I'd love to go to bookshops during spare time, wherever. And the books in mainland are much cheaper, and there are more choices written by popular mainland writers.

Wanzi: Homemade food. It seems I have the habit to go to a supermarket right before I return Hong Kong to see what I might need or want to eat especially. And in terms of fashion good, I would love to go for some Chinese local designer brands such as JNBY or B.N.C shop in Sanlitun, or go to 798 for designer/art products. It's stylish and unique! I think we need to support Chinese local designers. Especially when others show their praise and ask me where did I get such products, I always introduce the brands/designers to them with sense of pride, no matter in mainland, Hong Kong or other countries.

The quotes above clearly show that the respondents in the focus group treat food as the most significant carrier as the "taste of hometown"; they would like to take books from mainland China to Hong Kong mainly due to the difference in price issues and reading habits/interests; they pay attention to the unique design products in mainland China which cannot be found in Hong Kong, which can express their keen taste in fashion that carries strong cultural asset.

10.4.2 Feeling of Freedom and Independence

During the research conversations, "freedom" and "independent" are frequently mentioned by many of the participants when being asked about questions relating to their feeling of their life in Hong Kong. Several clues can provide further elaborations and explorations toward this issue:

"Feel Like a Bird"—The Oversea Experiences Change Life

Interesting results are retrieved that all of the participants have at least one time (longer than 4 months/time) of overseas living experience (in the UK, US, Australia, etc.) for exchange or/and internship programs during their studies in Hong Kong. They all expressed their appreciation for the opportunities Hong Kong universities provided, being regarded as a huge advantage comparing to the counterparts in mainland. The overseas experience not only elevated their independent living skills in different countries with diverse cultures but also strengthened their ethnic identity of being Chinese with or without the condition of collectivism.

> Ruolin: The most memorable experience for the years I was studying in HK, I would say, is the time in England. Here in HK students have more opportunities to successfully apply for the exchange programs. I went to England for an exchange program for half a year and was immersed in totally another culture far away from home. Unlike the time here in HK, that's really something, made me feel my life free and independent, and I had more time and space being alone looking into myself and enjoying precious friendship. This feeling is much more vivid when I'm in a totally foreign culture.

> Interviewer: When you were in Australia for exchange, how did you introduce yourself when you were asked by questions like "where are you from"?

> Shengn: China, definitely. Coz I went there with a group of Hong Kong fellows and I was the only mainland student among them, so I would sometimes emphasize that I'm from mainland China.

> Yuan: I joined exchange programs to Delaware (US) and Dublin (Ireland), half a year for each, and internship in Belfast (UK) for 2 months during the whole period of my university study. All of those gave me fantastic memories and I could hardly tell which one was the best. I found myself enjoy experiencing different cultures a lot. This might be why I took a master degree majored in Intercultural Studies afterwards. When being asked about the origin city, my answer depends on whether I went there alone or with a group of Hong Kong fellows. If it were the former case, I would simply say Beijing; if it were in the latter case where I need to let others distinguish that I'm from that group of people representing my university maybe, I would say I came from Hong Kong, but in most of such cases I would further explain that I'm actually from Beijing but studying in Hong Kong.

The above expressions indicate that the respondents in the focus group enjoy the international environment that Hong Kong provided to them as they value the oversea experience a lot, which can bring them strong sense of freedom and independent, meanwhile it was also a significant chance to enhance their identity construction as a "Chinese" whose homecity is their home town in mainland China and Hong Kong is a place where they currently live in.

The Start of Independent Shopping for Clothes

It is interesting to notice that when being asked about whether their first independent consumption on clothes was made since the time they came to Hong Kong for study, almost all of the participants said "Yes".

> Xun: Before I went to university in Hong Kong, I was studying in a boarding school in Shanghai. I did go shopping with my mom every weekend, and I could make my own decision but under my parents' supervision. My mom loved to buy clothes for me especially for the brand named <E-land> which is quite popular at that time for school girls, and I found myself love it too. After I came to Hong Kong for study, I started to buy more things on my own, especially for clothes. Of course I had a sense of freedom and independence for making my own decision at once, but just at very beginning stage. I then had less consciousness of this feeling since buying clothes became a common action as part of our daily life. Especially in Hong Kong where shopping malls are everywhere, it seems to be a normal activity for us girls going around the shops, for example after dinner gatherings.

Other respondents in the focus group also expressed the same feeling as what Xun elaborated. Their first time of independent shopping for clothes were taken place in Hong Kong, which led themselves get more sense of independence and freedom by making own decisions. Like what Xun has recalled, < E-Land > , as a popular brand that is with classic "American Campus Casual" style and originally from South Korea, was one of their top preferences before they went to Hong Kong; since their move to Hong Kong, preferences are changing to more varieties as more choices are offered in the market meanwhile they are free to make any decision without the interfere of their parents; moreover, going shopping is one of the dominant activities of their daily social life.

10.4.3 Finding "Myself" in Fashion Consumption—The Choice of Clothes

Further to the questions on the independent shopping experience of clothes, the decision-making process when the respondents conduct their consumption and the changes towards this matter in the period they have been staying in Hong Kong was also discussed. Since the time they came to live and shopped in Hong Kong, most of the respondents had the awareness to observe the trends of fashion in Hong Kong especially among their peers, many of them had attempted to conform with the trends they noticed, while none of them accepted to follow after a very few times of attempts. Though the respondents are still aware of what is trendy among Hong Kong people, it makes no significant impact on their decision for consumption. In response to the question of "what features do you think you changed a lot for the choice of your clothes comparing your current status to the one before you came to Hong Kong?", "less-colourful" is the most popular answer. Moreover, many of the respondents still wear some of the clothes they purchased years ago. They expressed the feeling that they have found their own ways to dress up themselves, and they feel comfortable and confident in such situation. Such behavior and expression (the

choice of color and old clothes) show their intention to keep themselves in a comfort zone that is able to compromise both the local trends and uniqueness with a sense of security.

10.4.4 Lifestyle Exhibited by Consumption—Luxury Life is not Necessarily Related to Luxury Goods but Experience

No Strong Desire in Consuming Luxury Goods

Though more than half of the respondents acquired adequate brand literacy, most of them showed surprisingly low passion and interests when being asked by questions about the attitude towards luxury fashion consumption. Luxury good takes no position when talking about their current wish list for shopping, while it is consumed randomly in a natural way, and less-recognized items are preferred.

In the case of Xun, though she expressed her carelessness of purchasing luxury fashion brands, it is observed that she was carrying a handbag from Lanvin—a lambskin one in black colour with no logo—when came to the interview.

> Xun: I don't think it is necessary to spend so much money and time focusing on luxury fashion. For girls, there are so many things that are more important to make us beautiful from inner side rather than these stuffs.
>
> Interviewer: But that is a Lanvin handbag, right?
>
> Xun: Oh…yes… You have such keen eyes… [still no orientation to "show off"]
>
> Interviewer: When did you buy it? Why?
>
> Xun: Well…I just bought it probably two months ago…Just walked around with my friends after dinner and stepped into Lane Crawford, then I saw this one. The size, the colour, the hand-feel of leather, and the low-profiled design, is exactly my cup of tea, so I just purchased.
>
> Interviewer: Is that in discount?
>
> Xun: probably no… can't remember. I do buy some so-called luxury fashion items, but very randomly. I won't make them in my wish list and won't pursue for a life labeled with famous brands. Unlike many of the young people in our age, especially there's such trend in mainland China, which I cannot accept. I could see many of my friends from mainland write on-line posts expressing their strong desire to own one…for example, the Boston bag from Celine was on so many wish lists last year. I never, I just buy whenever I want, and I don't have such strong and many "wants".

An exceptional case happens to one who explained her seek for luxury fashion as a way to complement her lack of confidence. This is indicated in a way that the respondent spent most of her spare time and money in shopping fashion items with preference of the signature designs of big/designer brands in stores with multiple high-end merchandise, e.g. Lane Crawford and Harvey Nicoles. When being asked

about the reasons behind such consumption, she gave straightforward response with no hesitation:

> Qian: Because I don't think I'm a person who have the glamour to project high-wattage aura. So being equipped with big brands makes me more confident. And I can feel that my colleagues appreciate my taste in fashion, which made me feel happy……another reason is that my husband (a big lawyer) is much older than me, I need to build a more mature and elegant image.

Travel Costs the Most, and Shapes the Future

In terms of the distribution of expenditure, except the basic costs for living, the first seat is reserved for "travel" in most of the respondents' lists. Besides, random consumptions are made for friend gatherings (e.g. dinner), theatre goings (for drama, film, live shows, etc.), lifestyle products, books, and multimedia entertainment devices and materials, and fashion items. Some of the respondents who were more used to shop high-end brands are gradually shifting their interests from fashion items to lifestyle products (e.g. home accessories). Many of the respondents expressed their ideas that it is the valuable experiences that build high-quality life, so they would rather spend more time and money on explorations of the world instead of shopping luxury fashion with big names. Therefore, they never intend to save money for the purchase of luxury products but fruitful voyage and found their greatest passion in trip planning for each holiday. At the same time, they also enjoy the experiences of taking a tour without pre-planning. The destinations are diverse from the leisure places like Hawaii and Koh Samui to culture exploration places in Europe (e.g. France, Italy, Switzerland, etc.) or Asia (e.g. Japan, Korea, Cambodia, India, etc.), and even road-trip routes in Australia and America. Instead of joining group tours arranged by travel agencies, they would prefer to make DIY tours with friends or family or even alone.

> Shengn: I don't know how do I usually spend the money I earned… Maybe go dining with friends; I buy a lot of books and DVDs, which really costs in Hong Kong! And watch movies and shows… and little stuffs like notebooks or playful cameras or some little things to decorate my home…and the money is just going fast. Oh, yes, the most costly expense is for travel! Especially when I just make decisions within one week before departure sometime… Just like the last two times I went to Thailand and Korea for weekend…
>
> Interviewer: Do you have any plan for the coming Easter Break?
>
> Shengn: Yes, I've planned! Japan! And I already booked the flight ticket this time! Hah!
>
> Interviewer: With whom?
>
> Shengn: Alone! Would you like to join? Hah!
>
> Wanzi: Travel really costs a lot! It'll be much cheaper if I join the group tour from agency, but that's not traveling! It's task accomplishment! So I'll prefer to plan my own trip with more flexibility. And as the living condition makes crucial impact for my experience of journey, I prefer to live in better hotels, which also increases the expense……Be honest, I liked shopping fashion items such as luxury handbags or designer brand clothes before, ever since high school time, but now I found myself being more interested in lifestyle products

> like furniture and home decorations. You can see many Hong Kong girls walking on the street with shining jewelry, big brand handbags, trendy clothes, and delicate make-up, but large part of them are actually living in tiny room with quite poor condition, they try hard to save money for dressing up themselves. But the quality of life, of living, should be more important. So after I realized this, I shift more attention and interests to lifestyle consumption instead of those on surface.

When I joined a gathering with several of my respondents, I also found they were easily driving their chatting topics to travel. They shared their exciting experience for the past Christmas vacation and asked about each other's plan for the coming Easter break, and also tried to arrange a Europe tour together for the summer time this year.

10.5 Discussion

10.5.1 Symbolic Consuming Goods to Construct the Persistence of Culture

According to what the research findings described that although the respondents have been living in Hong Kong—a city of shoppers' paradise—for around ten years, they still conduct evident consumption in their hometown in preference of food, books, and unique products with traditional Chinese design elements or by local Chinese designers, for taking back to Hong Kong. All of such consumption practices are performed not simply as daily-life practice but embodied with symbolic meanings for the persistence of culture—the participants' culture of origin. Food, especially those are home-made, as being the top preference in the respondents' lists, has been noted for long among anthropologists to stress the ethnic meaning of cuisines in acculturation process ever since Levi-Strauss's () argument on the importance of cooking which is regarded as a 'transformation of a natural object into a cultural one' (Van den Berghe, 1984, 387). Book, regardless of the motivation caused by price differences, is purchased also in the case seeking for popular literature (Shengn elaborates). It then shows an intention of the participants to keep themselves well-updated with the popular culture in their community of origin, which symbolizes the consumption practice as a representation of the willing to maintain up-to-date culture contact associated by domestic literature. Therefore, by consuming food and books, the participants' attempts to live in a way persisting their culture of origin are well implemented with physical, literary, and emotional satisfaction, respectively.

If these attempts are regarded as the respondents' internal pursue of cultural identity construction for private self, the fragmentation discussed in postmodernism is absent to such extent in this particular study, as the respondents at the same time consistently seek for the same cultural identity to construct their image of public self externally (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993). Illustrations can be taken from Yuan's case in food sharing and wallet purchase: in the behavior that Yuan intentionally (refer to

the word "obligated" quoted from respondent's talk) shared the Peking duck with his Hong Kong peers, the process of sharing for the ethnic cuisine then symbolized as a social practice to differentiate himself from the mass culture in Hong Kong to the unique culture in Beijing, which is made as an emphasis of the identification of Beijinger as a social self; wallet, a personal belonging which needs to be frequently taken out to the public occasionally, as well as a fashion device to build self-image, is purchased in preference of Chinese traditional design elements (a pattern of dragon) in Beijing rather than choice from international fashion brands, which conveys a semiotic meaning for the seek of Chineseness. This seek is explicitly strengthened by the respondents especially when they are living in the social context of post-colonized society in Hong Kong, where the local people are struggling in identity confusion between Chineseness and Hong Kong-ness regarding themselves "a part of China" as well as "apart from China".

Thereby, in order to distinguish themselves from the local Hong Kong people who are holding chaotic identity of Chineseness, the focus group of respondents keep making effort to persist their culture of origin as maintenance of 'pureness' of Chineseness in terms of both "private" and "public" identity (Sarup & Raja, 1996). In this way, the cultural distinctiveness is then "increasingly manifest through self-conscious consumption of goods and, at the same time, these commodities assist in negotiating the enforcing identity differences" (Halter, 2002, 7). Such phenomenon disclose obviously the cultural confidence of such group of Chinese young people who are world travelers with high-level education, which gives more hints and potential opportunities for Chinese brands to develop solid brands with strong Chinese DNA and high-quality design. The design should put efforts on the elements that are able to provide evident touchpoints for the consumers to construct their identity awareness as a Chinese no matter from the traditional point of view or from the perspective that linking closely to the current social community. Such touchpoints could consider both the internal identity construction such as food/taste/flavor-related factors that are able to recall the deep memories and the external ones such as fashion items that are able to present the iconic cultural images.

10.5.2 Balance of Belongingness to Form the Uniqueness in Acculturation Process

In terms of being unique, it is not only restricted to the self-expression in constructing the cultural identity of Chineseness as discussed above, but also implied in the whole acculturation process accompanied by simultaneously seeking for belongingness. This uniqueness is then composed by the feeling of being an outsider as well as the feeling of being unique during the whole process disregarding the degrees of acculturation.

The role as being an "outsider" is justified in the cases when the respondents tried to explain the place they "come from" to others and also when they attempted to

"observe the local fashion trends" then decided "not to follow". Like in the description stated in the previous part, the respondents preferred less-colorful outfit, which shows their attempts to make themselves easier and more safety in the environment; meanwhile are willing to still dress some of their old clothes purchased in mainland China, which makes their tastes distinct from the mainstream.

Similar to the situation of the choice they make for outfit, the respondents also declared clearly about their non-participation of any "sensitive" social acts/events in the society, such attitude and behavior of "not following' arouses no anxiety to the respondents as being "outsiders", as they are hardly criticized by the mainstream value of the society. Such "non-participation" shows their attitude of being an "outsider" in the society, at the same time, the feeling of "no-anxiety" indicates the comfortable room provided by the society to the respondents to make their own choice of "being different" with respect. This then brings out the conceptualization of a society with "freedom" and "independence"—the words used by the participants. To be simply put, freedom to some extent is about the independent right to choose from alternatives that may be embodied with different social values (Barro, 1997; Klemisch-Ahlert, 1993). Such concept of being free and independent is further elaborated by the cases when the respondents conducted their first-ever independent shopping for clothes, which justifies that it is the "right to choose" forms the respondents' sense of freedom and independence. In this way, the freedom is discussed in a notion where it is regarded as a "property of choice" (Pettit, 2007).

Such environment of freedom allows the respondents to make the choice to become "who they are". The practice of freedom is also performed in a way of consumption, as what Elliott (1997, 290) extracted from the post-structuralist perspectives, which "if available at all, comes in the form of consumer freedom, through which the individual must take responsibility to invent and consciously create a self-identity" (Bauman, 1988). As expressed by the respondents, a self-identity exploration is directed when they experienced a journey from trying to be dressed like a Hong Kong people to the stage that being as who they really are. In this process, fashion—a symbolic device to portrait our self-image in a way we would like to be—was regarded as a direct tool to enhance the on-surface belongingness by reaching similarities of body image towards the host community by the observation of the local trends followed with conformity, so as to get the participants themselves visually acculturated into the indigenized society at the very beginning stage (De La Hay & Wilson, 1999; Hansen, 2004; Mansvelt, 2005; Penaloza, 1994).

In the way pursuing for self-concept from the stage of "lost" in authenticity, the uniqueness is gradually developed with the awaken of the respondents' traditional value and beliefs established in the life-long process (example can be extracted from Wanzi's definition of her style as "simple, comfortable, and appropriate"), in result of that the role of the fashion trends observation is changed from "looking for a rule to follow" to a feature for differentiation. At meanwhile, according to the respondents' reflective description, assimilation also occurs in the acculturative process both unconsciously in the presence of color preference, and consciously in occasion-driven decision-making of clothes. In this way, the choice of "old clothes" mentioned by many of the respondents, could then be interpreted as a metaphorical

symbol for the persistence of self-identity rather than a simple anti-fashion action, and the new mix-and-match of old clothes is performed as a representation of assimilated fashion awareness. The new interpretation of old clothes can be representatively considered as an establishment of uniqueness, the uniqueness based on confidence—a word strongly suggested by the respondents—which is built upon both the affirmative identity construction developed by the journey of self-exploration as well as the acceptance and appreciation from others in the host community.

Therefore, the discussion elaborated above for the balance between "assimilation" and "uniqueness" provides applicable hints for global brands especially fashion brands to better arrange their merchandise assortment in their destination markets: It is better to fit the color trend in the local market meanwhile provide more varieties of styles both basic and avant-garde, such "mix" is hence more able to fulfill the consumers' unconscious assimilation as well as the space for choice of freedom.

10.5.3 Distinction and the Consumption of Lifestyle

The distinctiveness the participants incessantly established is not only restricted to the uniqueness discussed above but also in a process, they differentiate themselves from their counterparts from both Hong Kong and mainland China in terms of lifestyle consumption. One of the clues can be explored in perspectives from their attitudes toward luxury fashion consumption. The respondents described their carelessness of luxury fashion with comparison of both "girls in Hong Kong who save money only to equip themselves for the building of better public image (Wanzi's account)", and their peer in mainland who "pursue for a life labeled with famous brand" (quoted from Xun's speech), then their distinction of taste, as Bourdieu (1984) suggested, is explicitly displayed by those are disliked. At the same time, such "dislike" is not caused by the unsatisfactory fulfillment of material but the disagreement of the desperate pursuit oriented by materialism and consumerism. Xun demonstrated such point in her speech: "I just buy whenever I want, but I don't have such strong and many 'wants'", which reveals that she has conducted luxury fashion consumption as a part of mundane practice, while the desire (which is described by the word "wants") of consumption is reduced to a low degree. The work of Belk and his colleagues gives a good explanation of such reduction of desire with a link of accessibility by interpreting desire as an embodied passion that can be enhanced by distance, restraints, and inaccessibility (Belk et al., 2003). The accessibility in this case, is attained not only by the adequate merchandise assortment provided by "the city of shoppers paradise" the respondents are living in but also the economic capital secured both from the income they earned on their own and historically from their family.

The exceptional case shown by Qian who regards luxury fashion as an equipment to leverage her lack of confidence so as to build up a hyper-real self-image, also gives a portrait of her lifestyle differentiated from the majority of the respondents. Such distinction can be analyzed with reference to Bourdieu's discussion by mapping the social space on scales of economic capital and cultural capital as variables (1984, 262,

264). Due to the respondent's description, it can be retrieved that the luxury fashion consumption is performed as a social practice intentionally in high-end department stores as an institutionalized authority providing luxury lifestyle experience, Qian' case tends to fall into the agenda of *new pepit bourgeois* Bourdieu categorized—those are the *perfect consumers* as well as pretenders who consciously educating themselves in the field of lifestyle with aspiring of more than she is (Featherstone, 2007). In contrary, the others in this case, who enjoy higher volume of cultural capital, at least regarding the educational level, are naturally conducting lifestyle practices especially in terms of leisure pursuits as habitus, which forms the distinction of taste with a satisfaction of their position in the social space. It was found in the interviews that unlike other respondents most of whom are putting their top habits as reading and music/movies/art exhibitions and planning to pursue for higher education or work worldwide in the future, Qian regards those with less importance compared to staying in Hong Kong for stable income and going shopping in leisure time. Regardless the social class issue, there is hereby significant distinction of tastes and lifestyles between Qian and the others, which echos with Holt's study (1998) on comparison between people with higher level of cultural capital (HCCs) and those with lower (LCCs), which indicates that opposed to material abundance, experiential abundance is highly valued by HCCs.

Though the respondents of this study do not actually hold clear distinction of classes in terms of capitals as how Bourdieu's work performed in French society under capitalism, their behaviours to some extent can be generated as a picture captured with Bourdieu's impact in the particular socio-cultural context. The respondents' leisure pursuits for experience-driven travels also form a vivid scene in this picture. In a retrospective sum of the lived-experience according to the respondents' descriptions, their interests in traveling were highly developed when they gained cross-cultural enjoyment during the time living in a foreign country for education. Being part of their education background, such experience is also a component that enriches the respondents' cultural capital. At the same time, with holding corresponding level of economic capital, this group of people, being as a romantic role of "untourist"—a word suggested by Huie (1994, 2) with comparison of the word 'tourist' referring to those who look for deliberately-staged sight seeing, afford the traveling as a lifestyle consumption to experience and track down the authenticity of the world (Corrigan, 1997; MacCanell, 1973, 1999). To further support this intention, the dominant consideration for the decision-making of their future life plan can fully demonstrate the respondents' self-position as being a traveler, instead of simply being a tourist. On the other hand, the respondents have strong sense of home, no matter the first one where is their hometown or the second home where is Hong Kong. With determination of returning home, they clearly distinguish the on-road destinations of their travels and the final destination for living. To this extent, apart from the physical experience, *travel* can be perceived with metaphorical meaning referring to a fascinating journey of identity exploration, where there is "enjoyment by the rich of the exotic difference of the *other"* (Sarup & Raja, 1996, 127).

The above discussion hereby asserts the importance for the brands to provide holistic experience-driven touchpoints, especially those which are more able to

engage consumers in full-degree lifestyle immersion, such as the product-line extension to homeware and travel-related categories. Such branding strategy of extension and collaboration could efficiently be applied to not only the luxury brands but also the brands for mass market, examples can be found in cases like Salvatore Ferragamo Parfums exclusively for Waldorf Astroria Hotels & Resorts, Supreme with Rimowa, Bulgari Resorts, etc., and also the hotels and cafes of Muji.

10.6 Conclusion

> Very much contented am I to lie low, to cling to the soil, to be of kin to the sod. My soul squirms comfortably in the soil and sand and is happy. Sometimes when one is drunk with this earth, one's spirit seems so light that he thinks he is in heaven. But actually he seldom rises six feet above the ground.'
>
> —from <The Importance of Living>
>
> by Yutang (1937)
>
> originally written in English

Yutang Lin—a famous Chinese novelist and philosopher in the modern Chinese literature, originally wrote this passage in English with putting the Chinese philosophy of living as a being. The message implied in this philosophy can also speak to the current era, especially to be interpreted by the status of the people studied in this case, after their years of moving and living in Hong Kong. No matter how the acculturation process takes place, how the self distinguishes the other, how the imagination and fantasy flies, how the time and places travel by, this group of people is living happily in the authenticity and with pleasant communication toward the "soil" and "sand" around them, while the inner "soul" is being held by the "ground" where the identity of Chineseness is firmly persisted. People especially the practitioners for global brands are putting close eyes to the Chinese consumers as the leading power contributing to their world economy, while they should never underestimate the soul behind the consumption on the surface. This study just lifts a corner of the portrait of the soul behind the driving force of such leading power–by trying to understand deeper on a group of advanced Chinese young generation as nowadays global players.

When regarding this study as an identity construction project, the respondents of this study clearly represents a group of Chinese young people who are global travelers and fully experienced an acculturative process of self-exploration in the social-cultural context with postmodernity where people having chaotic cultural identities but with high degree of freedom, after which their self-identity is stably constructed. As such process is conducted in the years when the respondents are in a stage defined as "age of possibilities", "time of self-focus", and seek for "identity explorations", the impact of the exploration of self-identity was then strengthened vividly, with the seek of uniqueness by balancing the distinctiveness with belongingness toward the

host community. Being as not only the result but also the channel of this identity construction project, the consuming goods are symbolized in association with the respondents' cultural beliefs and traditional values of the Chineseness that is represented by the culture of their origin, and the lifestyle consumption is formed with distinction built upon the economic and social capital they have long been enjoyed. This craft of identity begins their life of travel—a travel to explore the authenticity of the world by happily experiencing the cultures of others.

On the other hand, when viewing this research to a practical extent, it discloses directions for the brands to dig out and develop their aura of authenticity. As a response to Holt's cultural branding strategies, fashion brands, no matter foreign or local ones in this context, should take the acculturation process of Chinese mainlanders as a significant step of cultural transformation. In this case, it is vital to make good use of social media as an essential tool for advertising and marketing to promote the cultural and social attitude the brand is trying to seek consensus with the consumers in every memory or turning point of social movement by associating with relative KOLs (Dieter, 2018). Meanwhile, strategies should focus more on providing high-quality designs for full-scaled touchpoints with serious consideration of merchandise assortments that are able to engage consumers to multidimensional experience from food, fashion, travel, and more lifestyle-oriented varieties. Such brand extension strategies also allow further exploration in the marketing potentials regarding the lifestyle consumption patterns of the respondents as well as their counterparts and the development of signified consuming goods that enhance the emotional attachment along with the journey of not only acculturation but also the travel on their way forward. In this way, brands are no longer simply a commercial concept, they are the companion for people in the journey for the construction of self, exploration of identity, and safari of life.

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