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Deconstructing Hong Kong Fashion System: Globalisation and cultural identity of fashion in Hong Kong

submitted by

Wessie W.S. Ling

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Abstract

The thesis analyses Hong Kong fashion in the context of globalisation, in order to define the role and identity of fashion in Hong Kong. It hypothesised fashion in Hong Kong to be a dual product of globalisation and cultural phenomena; the development of local fashion design is therefore seen to be linked with the territory's progressively international, and consumer-driven society. An understanding of this dual position would, it is projected, facilitate implementation of strategies to market fashion as a consumer product.

Colonisation did not hinder Hong Kong's progress towards industrialisation and hence to modernisation. The territory has passed through various globalisation processes and become a global city. It is widely perceived to be cosmopolitan, a regional trendsetter, and an avid follower of ideas from the West. Although Hong Kong enjoyed the success of being a major fashion manufacturer from the 1970s to the 1980s and became a first-rate centre for international fashion retailing in the early nineties, fashion design in Hong Kong is associated with notions of copying and limited creativity. The study of Hong Kong fashion and its cultural development through various globalising processes is essential to define Hong Kong's dual role as a fashion producer and fashion consumer centre, and is central to the thesis.

The number of published references on the subject of fashion in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Fashion History: 1995, Turner & Ngan: 1995, Tang & Wong: 1997) is limited, whereas Chinese costume and dress (Dress in Hong Kong: 1995, Zhou: 1987), and in particular the evolution of the same (Roberts: 1997, Wilson: 1986) are more widely recorded. Numerous studies have been conducted on the subject of the Hong Kong clothing industry (Ng: 1985, Wong: 1984, Steele: 1990, Kurt Salmon Associates: 1996, Made by Hong Kong: 1997) however, the cultural aspect of Hong Kong fashion is as yet unexplored.

Interviews contributed a significant amount of research information as a result of insufficient writing on the subject of Hong Kong fashion. The thesis commences with a discussion of the theoretical framework necessitated by a multidisciplinary approach. The contextual aspects of Hong Kong fashion system are measured by cultural, social, global and various fashion theories central to the development of Hong Kong and her fashion. The following sections of the thesis address the phenomenon of fashion in Hong Kong leading to its dual hypothesised position. The last section of the thesis examines and overviews the discourse of its dual position by reconstituting an identity for fashion in Hong Kong. The study also highlights the question of how to sustain such a dual position during the process of globalisation.
Abstract

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The author would like to apologise for the visual quality of the images particular Fig. 3.1-3.7. They contain images from old movies and pictures that were lost and found after generations, and are essential to explain the text. The author has made every effort to trace all the copyright-holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, she will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.
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Introduction

I. Purpose of Study

Hong Kong, being widely perceived as a vibrant financial and trading centre, has transformed speedily from the industrialisation stage to one that epitomises a capitalistic haven. Having developed from a tiny fishing-port colony to a global city, Hong Kong has performed remarkably within the last 50 years and has successfully earned itself the title of one of the four 'little dragons' in Asia. As a consequence, an increasing amount of interest has been accorded to the territory in the nineties. From history to economy, politics to society, the study of Hong Kong has, in recent times, extended to the area of popular culture. In recent years, Hong Kong fashion has also been central to the agenda of a number of academics. It has, in addition, become a popular topic of discussion amongst students of fashion as well as other disciplines. There are, however, very limited references about fashion in Hong Kong, whereas details of Chinese costume and dress have been formally recorded, and numerous studies have been carried out to analyse the historical evolution of the city. Studies of the Hong Kong clothing industry, Hong Kong consumerism and the fashion industry in terms of the studies of economics, trading policy, technology or society have also been carried out; however, the cultural aspect of Hong Kong fashion design remains unexplored. Having experienced 150 years of colonialism, Hong Kong under British rule followed a unique course of development, characterised by East-West culture. Fashion, being the manifestation of a prevailing mode, has evolved in the context of the ever-changing culture, society, economy and policy. Hong Kong fashion diversified significantly after the arrival of migrants from China Mainland in 1949. The population of the city was increased by a figure of 4 million,
amongst whom were many experienced tailors, skilful tradesmen and entrepreneurs with substantial capital to spur the development of the clothing industry in Hong Kong, turning the territory into one of world's largest clothing exporters. The gigantic clothing industry also offered opportunities to a new profession that of fashion design, to serve the growing industry. The efficiency of the manufacturers and the ingenuity of the fashion designers assisted the industry, after the seventies, to transform Hong Kong into a major fashion producer. In the course of a decade, Hong Kong fashion evolved from a Chinese to a Western style, and since the nineties, the territory has entered into a new stage – that of a first rate fashion consumer society.

The short fashion history of Hong Kong did not detract from its position as one of the targeted fashion markets in Asia. The Hong Kong market is regarded as fashionable, trendy, and one that closely follows the West. In the nineties, the fashion business continued to flourish and bring prosperity to the city. Hong Kong is also characterised by its passive consumer culture, since fashion customers are generally trend followers, brand conscious and easily persuaded by the influential fashion media. Similarly, Hong Kong fashion design developed by local designers, trained within the industry and nurtured in a global environment has generally been regarded as unoriginal. The designs are less popular with the people of Hong Kong than those attributed to foreign fashion designers. Nevertheless, until recently, the pressure to define a 'Hong Kong identity' was a major consideration for most of the Hong Kong fashion designers. It is, therefore, necessary to understand Hong Kong's cultural and fashion environment, the development of Hong Kong fashion history and that of the West before designing fashion for (or in) Hong Kong and selling fashion to Hong Kong. Thus, this research was undertaken to provide a unique analysis of Hong Kong fashion. An attempt was made to explore and deconstruct the system of Hong Kong fashion from the 1950s until the present day with regard to its development process from production
stage to consumer society, industrialisation to modernisation, and colonialisation to globalisation. The meaning of the Hong Kong fashion system, as discussed in this thesis, differs from Barthes' (1983) semiology account of 'signs' and 'signifier'. Davis' (1992) interpretation of the fashion system, in terms of design, manufacture, distribution, sales, etc. has been borrowed for the situation of Hong Kong in the context of its diversion in the cultural and globalisation process. Further assessment of the future direction of Hong Kong fashion based on research and findings in respect of the cultural and global environment is also provided.

This research was not undertaken in order to provide an historical account of Hong Kong fashion development from the 1950s to the present day. Rather, it attempts to theorise the phenomenon of fashion in the context of Hong Kong in terms of her dual role as a clothing producer and a first rate fashion consumer society. Fashion in Hong Kong is hypothesised to be a dual product of globalisation and cultural identity. In this context, Hong Kong fashion designed by local fashion designers is assumed to have derived from globalisation, whereas society's obsession with consumerism could be interpreted as a form of cultural identity of fashion in Hong Kong. The thesis explores various Hong Kong fashion phenomenon contributing to such a dual position. Through these arguments, the cultural aspects of Hong Kong fashion relating to fashion and design identity, obsession with consumerism, as well as reasons and implications for identity crises are investigated. Empirical research is provided accordingly to facilitate an understanding of these phenomenon. Colonisation and globalisation of the development of Hong Kong are believed to contribute the development of fashion in Hong Kong and are examined alongside for the emergence of local fashion phenomena.

The thesis begins to explore fashion in Hong Kong from the 1950s when industrialisation accelerated and speedily turned the city into a vibrant
financial centre. It is now one of the fashion centres in Asia. It is difficult to explain this remarkable development by examining a single domain. Thus, the thesis centres on the hypothesis to study fashion in Hong Kong through various globalisation processes that are essential to define its role as a fashion producer and a fashion consumer. It is believed that this study will provide a perspective to document fashion in Hong Kong and that it theorises the phenomenon of fashion in the local context essential to define fashion in Hong Kong.

II. Background of the Research

Fashion has been a source of interest to academic writers since the turn of this century. It has been widely discussed in different circles in terms of costume history, social history, psychology, sociology, cultural phenomena, the economy and most recently marketing and management. However, it has always been considered a frivolous topic. Discourses about fashion have often failed to present it as an academic discipline. Various perspectives intended to confer the study of fashion with a meaningful, theoretical slant have invariably led to simplistic explanations that neither can define the subject nor satisfy professionals in the field. From the industrial period of mass-production of fashionable clothes to the capitalistic one of spectacle, mass-consumption and mass-communication, fashion has become a manifestation of the civilising process. It is essential to the world of modernity and it is a connective instrument to our social and cultural network. In recent times, when capitalism became global and imperialist, old fashion rules or theories were derided as being out-dated and inapplicable, hence contemporary fashion researchers and writers are making numerous attempts to provide new perspectives for the study of fashion. In rejecting earlier theories about the changing social structure and global environment, the study of fashion has
gradually become more complex, frequently permeated by globalisation. To theorise fashion in Hong Kong, the research demonstrates the rejection of earlier theories and adoption of new perspectives essential to define fashion in its distinct environment, mingled with colonisation and globalisation.

Hong Kong enjoyed the success of being a major fashion manufacturer between the 1970s and the late 1980s, evolving to become a first-rate fashion consumer society since the early nineties. Colonialisation did not hinder Hong Kong in the process of adapting from industrialisation to modernisation, nor from going through the various globalisation processes to become a global city. Having experienced a high degree of Western contact under the British colonial rule, Hong Kong people asserted their sense of local culture in spite of the effect of global compression and the intensity of global flows. In a city with a population of more than six million, where Eastern and Western cultures blend, Hong Kong people have generated a distinct cultural environment within the period of colonisation. The formation of the concept of local culture is not difficult to identify via the development of media communication such as Hong Kong movies, Cantonese music and local TV. Fashion and clothes in Hong Kong, on the other hand, do not appear to reflect a desired Hong Kong culture. The everyday dress code of the people of Hong Kong is distinctly Western in style. Literature (Dress in Hong Kong: 1995, Hong Kong fashion history: 1995, Robert: 1997, Garrett: 1987), old movies and pictures reflect the fact that Hong Kong did, indeed, once having her own way of dress and tailoring. Chinese tailoring and the preservation of wearing Chinese clothes gave way, however, to Western styles of clothes together with industrialisation and, eventually, accelerated modernisation. The wearing of the formerly popular cheongsam, and the traditional tailoring industry, both succumbed to modern dress forms. The initial impression of Hong Kong fashion design is, inevitably, the capability of catching the latest international fashion trend. Accordingly Hong Kong fashion, namely fashion design from
local designers, is typified by 'lack of identity' and 'lack of originality'. Fashion designs from Hong Kong designs have received far less acclaim than those of foreign fashion designers and brand suppliers. Being the largest employer and export-earner, the clothing industry, which employed 24.8 percent of the manufacturing workforce and exported goods worth 34.2 percent of domestic exports in 1997 (Manufacturing Industries 1998: 1), established an Asian garment and fashion centre for Hong Kong. Local fashion designers, however, have not benefited from the success of the industry and are constantly compared with those of their Asian counterpart, Japan.

In the course of the transformation from a production base to a consumer society, Hong Kong, in the post-industrial period, has seen what Bourdieu (1984) described as 'the rise of new middle class', and what Featherstone (1991) observed as 'the expansion of the division of labour and the growth of individualism'. With increasing exposure to the world via media and ideologies (Featherstone: 1991), the changing Hong Kong environment facilitated the growth of its consumer culture, which has encouraged the practice of consumption. For decades, average citizens have understood clearly that well fitting and acceptable clothing is an everyday necessity. This attitude towards clothes has its roots in Chinese history. The significance of certain colours, materials, signs and the appreciation of workmanship, the constant evolution of Chinese costumes through the dynasties, and the selected wardrobe and colours worn during festivals, give evidence of how aware the Chinese were of clothes in the past. For the majority of Hong Kong people, the importance of dress and interest in fashion have never diminished. Since the early nineties, Hong Kong has attracted more than 500 international fashion brands. The rise of a fashion consumer society enhanced the ability of Hong Kong people to purchase international labels. Local retail brands, such as Episode, G2000, Giordano, and Shanghai Tang, blossom resplendently
within and outside the context of Hong Kong. Today, retail brands such as Joyce and Topsy are as familiar as Chanel and Cerruti to the residents of the city, with a smaller difference in price than might have been predicted even as recently as ten years ago (Taylor 1998: 3). By observing of the attitude of people towards purchases of fashion and clothes in this consumer society, it may be stated that Hong Kong people are fascinated with fashion from all over the world and ultimately become brand followers.

Until recently, due to the questionable political status of Hong Kong, there was a compulsion to study Hong Kong culture and identity. It was held that Hong Kong could, or should, have an identity through fashion in the nineties. A number of local fashion designers therefore produced designs that incorporated Chinese elements or otherwise reflected a sense of 'Hong Kong identity' through the collection. The intention to rid itself of the Western domination of design has become characteristic of fashion design in Hong Kong in recent years. Hong Kong, in the course of the transformation from a traditional to modern society has, however, experienced consistent cultural flows both from the East and the West. Apart from the Western influence, which was strong during the period of British colonialism, the assumption that its Chinese heritage was the predominant eastern cultural influence would over simplify the impact of the multi-cultural environment of Hong Kong. With an ill-defined Hong Kong identity to express, the efforts of most local fashion designers have been directed towards creation of collections, which exhibit a sense of Hong Kong's heritage. Though the Chinese inspiration for the fashion trend has lost its impetus in recent seasons, of those local fashion designers that still prolong the trend few have been able to convince the public of their distinctiveness or their ability to define 'Hong Kong identity'. Most of their designs have little significance for the citizens of Hong Kong. On the other hand, the variety of designs produced by Hong Kong fashion designers in recent years has also suggested a wide range of backgrounds of individual
designers influenced by different cultures. Local consumers, subjected to a range of cultural influences when selecting merchandise, react differently in their turn towards fashion products in terms of their purchasing behaviour and attitudes. Japan's 'cultural invasion', specifically its economic influence arising from the popularity of imported products since the late seventies, for instance, has made a great impact on the lives of Hong Kong people, and almost every Hong Kong family has at least several Japanese electronic appliances in the home.

Globalisation has, in recent years, contributed a level of prestige to both fashion development and fashion trends. It also poses an emphatic challenge to the search for identity of Hong Kong fashion. Hence, an understanding of Hong Kong fashion, the historical development of Hong Kong, the evolution of Hong Kong culture and the social changes which have moulded the Hong Kong environment is essential in advance of attempting an analysis of the development of Hong Kong fashion. The decision was therefore made to explore the essence of fashion design as a cultural industry and retain identity in Hong Kong, to discover the underlying reasons for fashion purchases, and further identify repetitive cultural invasion within the framework of Hong Kong society. In this context, references are made to the development of culture, fashion and clothing industry, Hong Kong fashion design identity, fashion consumerism, cultural influence, colonialisation and globalisation.

III. Research Objectives

The research covers the period of transition of the fashion style of Hong Kong people from predominantly Chinese to Western, taking into account the consumer culture and global environment in shaping Hong Kong as the Asian centre of fashion and clothing. The research also tackles the issue of fashion
identity in Hong Kong and draws comparisons between the look of Hong Kong fashion and that of Japan. Further, it assesses the future approach of Hong Kong fashion within a global environment. Thus, this research outlines the following in the context of Hong Kong fashion:

i. Examination of the evolution of Hong Kong fashion development against the historical background of Hong Kong.

ii. Exploration of Hong Kong fashion as a cultural industry and analysis of the effects of cultural and social differences on the development of local fashion design.

iii. Assessment of the influence of cultural diversity on the development of Hong Kong fashion and investigation of the effects of cultural influences on the same.

iv. Proposition of future direction for fashion in Hong Kong and suggestion for design identity as a cultural strategy for Hong Kong fashion design in the post-colonial era.

The research also identifies opportunities for future exploration of the transformation process of fashion in Hong Kong, and contributes to the further understanding of the fashion phenomenon as a characteristic of Hong Kong culture.
IV. Methodology

i. Desk research

Before beginning the fashion research, it was considered necessary to examine the historical background of Hong Kong. The desk research therefore included a review of the historical and social background of Hong Kong, in addition to the origins of the formation of Hong Kong culture. Due to the limited references on the subject, a wide range of information sources was tapped to trace its evolution. Fashion reports, journals, trade fair publications, newscollections, research findings on the clothing industry, and marketing analysis of relevance to the local fashion business, were reviewed in order to understand the formation of the fashion industry in Hong Kong.

ii. Interviews

Interviews played an important role throughout the research as a result of insufficient publications on the subject of Hong Kong fashion. More than 40 prominent representatives of the fashion field were interviewed, each of the respective interviews lasting an average of 1.5-3 hours. Some of the subjects were interviewed several times on different occasions. Approximately half of the interviewees were fashion designers, both local and from overseas. The majority of the remaining interviewees were fashion professionals such as fashion editors, marketers, entrepreneurs and tailors. Some had been based in Hong Kong for several decades, experiencing the rapid changes which took place in the city during that period, while others had arrived from overseas and hence viewed Hong Kong fashion from a different perspective. 10 to 15 percent of interviewees were professionals working in related fields. For instance, cultural critics having expertise on the subject of Hong Kong; representatives of the Japanese consulate with insights into the Japanese influence in the city; and scholars of cultural studies for their analysis in relative subjects. These people offered diverse views on the subject of Hong
Kong, and contributed qualitative data in the course of the research process. Interviews form the basis of primary data and are cited in the thesis.

iii. Survey

It was assumed that Hong Kong people were particular about their choice of clothing, that they were obsessed with fashion and consumerism and that the majority had a preference for foreign brands. Their attitude has, without doubt, contributed to the cultural phenomenon of Hong Kong fashion. To assess the prime determinants of purchasing behaviour, a survey was carried out to explore the underlying and psychological reasons for fashion purchases within the framework of Hong Kong society. A survey, which facilitated the analysis of socio-psychological factors affecting the formation of the concepts of fashion and related buying behaviour, was conducted to examine customers' purchases of designer brands and diffusion lines. Four foreign fashion brands known for their popularity with the people of Hong Kong were chosen, in addition to which the respective diffusion lines were selected for the purpose of study. Data was collected and statistical analysis carried out in order to achieve a greater understanding of consumer culture and fashion purchasing patterns in Hong Kong. In addition to primary data, secondary data was extracted from relevant surveys to demonstrate the assumed cultural behaviour.

iv. Participation in fashion events

A degree of personal involvement in a subject such as fashion is inevitable, particularly when information is largely conveyed at the initial, informal stage via 'word of mouth'. By means of interaction with fashion people and their activities, a lively approach to research was engendered. As a consequence, constant participation in fashion-related events was considered to be essential for a thorough understanding of the research topic. Participation in relevant activities such as the Hong Kong Fashion Week, Interstoff Asia, and other
trade shows, fashion shows, exhibitions and seminars offered opportunities to meet professionals in the field. The discussions with fashion representatives provided a better understanding of the concepts and formation of Hong Kong fashion. Observation of the changing pattern of fashion also facilitated the exploration of the research subject.

V. Scope and limitations of the study

Research into the cultural aspects of fashion in Hong Kong was considered to be a worthwhile undertaking, despite the fact that little has been written on the subject in the past. Information was gleaned from interviews and unofficial manuscripts, which took time and patience to examine for reliability. The investigation of Hong Kong as a distinct environment in which fashion may be nurtured required frequent comparison between the domestic fashion system and others overseas. The insights into the evolution and meaning of the fashion system were considered essential in order to differentiate Hong Kong's position from that of other fashion centres. In view of the insufficient reference materials relating to Hong Kong fashion, effort was expended to compare the fashion development in Hong Kong with that of alternative fashion systems in the world. However, the different development pace, nature and goal of the cities have, very often, complicated the situation rather than defining the phenomenon. Hong Kong, being also a major financial and trade centre, was traditionally reliant on the clothing industry for its economy, and the fashion business still plays an important role in every sector of the lives of the Hong Kong people. To explore the fashion industry as a cultural industry in Hong Kong required a careful distinction between business and fashion in the research process and thesis writing.
The thesis attempts to provide a full perspective of Hong Kong fashion by demonstrating several fashion phenomena for the hypothesis. It aims to formulate the concepts of fashion in Hong Kong and theorises the phenomena of fashion in the context of Hong Kong juxtaposing the hypothesis. The research, therefore, was not undertaken as an empirical one for Hong Kong fashion development. It centres on the hypothesised position against the backdrop of Hong Kong fashion and clothing, Hong Kong culture and the social environment. Based on the demonstration for the hypothesis and the understanding of the formulation of fashion in Hong Kong, a future approach for Hong Kong fashion is presented. The last part of the thesis therefore proposes a theoretical concept of what Hong Kong fashion design could be, ultimately posing questions about the current and future fashion phenomena, and proposing options for the further investigation of the discussed subjects based on the research and findings. By examining the post-colonial fashion in the last part of the thesis, a new cultural strategy essential to market Hong Kong fashion was formulated. Cultural identity and identity crises in the local context was seen not only to demonstrate the city's cultural performance but also to facilitate the growth of a marketing strategy for 'Hong Kong fashion' world-wide. The discussion of the emergence of cultural strategy is by no means exhaustive. The potential strategy requires further investigation, which is beyond the scope of the present research, therefore further study of the topic is recommended.

The topics examined in the thesis contribute an overview of fashion in Hong Kong. Numerous different incidents and events have formulated the concepts of fashion in Hong Kong. It would be delightful to embark on further study based on the foundation of the current work.
VI. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is basically divided into three sections: (1) Literature Review, (2) Research and Findings, and (3) Discussion and Analysis. The second section comprises topics and chapters related to 'Hong Kong fashion and cultural identity in the global environment'. The third section, entitled 'Future approach of Hong Kong fashion', is a discussion of the overall ideas throughout the thesis and analysis of recent phenomena in the local fashion scene.

The thesis starts off with a framework of theory, which contributes, to the central hypothesis. Chapter 1 discusses the literature review on relevant domains in colonisation and globalisation, fashion theory, Hong Kong fashion, and Hong Kong culture. The following five chapters contribute to the section for Research and Findings, support the hypothesis and define the phenomena. Chapter 2 - 'From a Chinese way of dress to Western-style clothing: Chinese clothes, tailor industry, and the adaptation of Western-style clothing in Hong Kong' - is an empirical research on dress and fashion in Hong Kong from the post-war era to industrialisation. It addresses the transformation of Hong Kong fashion from Chinese to Western-style clothing, the decline of the tailoring industry and social changes brought about by industrialisation. It attempts to define the tendency of the people of Hong Kong to wear clothes of Chinese origin, as well as the adaptation of Western-style clothing in the city. The chapter provides the historical background for the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 3 - "Suzie Wong dress" as a Hong Kong way of dress: A comparative study of 'The World of Suzie Wong' and 'Teddy Girls' - illustrates how the sexy Suzie Wong cheongsam could represent a Hong Kong way of dress. The chapter challenges the stereotypes of Chinese women as described by Westerners and argues that the "Suzie Wong dress" is a form of
costume dress rather than a staple wardrobe item for ordinary Chinese women. Identity in the context of local fashion may be defined by the “Suzie Wong dress”, and it might be widely adopted as a norm when Hong Kong fashion identity is described. However, the author poses the question of stereotyping, in the transposition of novel to movie, and the general attitude of the Hong Kong Chinese towards the formation of local fashion identity as signified by the image of Suzie Wong. A local production Cantonese movie, ‘Teddy Girls’ is examined alongside with ‘The World of Suzie Wong’ for a comparative approach.

The “Suzie Wong dress” as a symbol of the identity of fashion in Hong Kong is perhaps better supplanted by the city’s more abstract obsession with consumerism, which represents the identity of Hong Kong fashion in several respects. Chapter 4 – ‘Fashion consumerism as a Hong Kong cultural phenomenon’ – develops the idea of the search for a fashion identity by illustrating various phenomena essential to define the identity of the city. The obsession with consumerism is widely perceived as the major reason why Hong Kong became a fashion consumer society in the nineties. The obsession is illustrated by means of reference to the purchasing behaviour of McSnoopy. Secondary data from several surveys helps to demonstrate the obsessive attitude of the Hong Kong Chinese. Reference to fashion consumerism is made thereafter, measured by means of a survey of purchasing behaviour, and conclusions are drawn about the behaviour which contributes to an identity in terms of fashion in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong fashion designed by local fashion designers may not necessarily signify a distinct form of cultural identity. Local fashion is haunted by the past with its connotations of copying, lack of identity, originality and creativity. Local fashion has been given a poor reception by the Hong Kong Chinese and consistently neglected by the local people. This may be explained by the fact that local fashion is a product of globalisation, demonstrated in respect of its
emergence, development, industrial background, and constraint in design. Chapter 5 – 'Hong Kong fashion design - a product of globalisation' – denotes the emergence of fashion design in Hong Kong, the development of the local fashion and clothing industry, the activities of local fashion designers and their respective associations. It provides an account of the development of Hong Kong fashion design alongside the process of globalisation, which facilitates the idea of it being a product of globalisation.

In order to develop the theme of Hong Kong fashion as a product of globalisation and cultural identity, (as discussed in Chapter 4), a comparable example is provided. Japan, being one of the strongest cultural influences on fashion in Hong Kong, is chosen to demonstrate the hypothesised phenomenon in Chapter 6. 'A reflection of the dual position: Emergence, popularity and cutie Japanese fashion in Hong Kong' begins with the emergence of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong. Its popularity from the initial stage until the present day is illustrated. It demonstrates the craze of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong as a cultural identity using the example of cute fashion, for which the behaviour is seen parallel to the obsession with fashion consumerism. The similarities between Japanese and local fashion labels could be seen to demonstrate Hong Kong fashion design as a product of globalisation. In this chapter, the role of fashion in Hong Kong is therefore examined in the light of the emergence and popularity of Japanese fashion.

The section Research and Findings ends with the above chapter and the last section, Discussion and Analysis, contains the final chapter of the thesis. Chapter 7 attempts to draw conclusions about the hypothesized phenomenon. The identity crisis experienced during the period of the handover to China, and subsequent emergence of a new cultural strategy, is seen to facilitate the marketing of fashion as a commercial product. The chapter illustrates this, using two examples of Hong Kong labels: Shanghai Tang and Vivienne Tam.
By clarifying the development process of Hong Kong fashion in parallel with the globalisation process, the circumstances surrounding the post-colonial fashion phenomenon of Hong Kong can be better understood. The emerging cultural strategy could be seen as one facilitating the marketing of 'Hong Kong Fashion' worldwide. The last chapter therefore serves as a forward for such a strategy. Further study is expected to proceed with the current research as a foundation.
Section I  Literature Review
Deconstructing the Hong Kong fashion system

1.1 Hong Kong as a distinct environment for fashion

1.1.1 From a colonial to a global city

Before any definition of the Hong Kong fashion system in respect of the ongoing tension is attempted, other factors must be considered. The historical background of Hong Kong suggests a distinct environment for the development of fashion design where both the manufacturer and the consumer are concerned. From production stage to consumer society, Hong Kong has undergone a speedy transition from a traditional to a modern society, experiencing industrialisation, urbanisation, commodification, rationalisation, differentiation, bureaucratisation, the expansion of the division of labour and the growth of individualism. These developments have enabled the Hong Kong economy to flourish and to change from a trading port in the nineteenth century to its present position as a premier financial centre of Southeast Asia.

Hong Kong was one of Britain’s last colonies, but her reversion to Chinese rule in 1997 did not mark the end of capitalism. The handover did not entail the double demise of capitalism and colonialism; on the contrary, Hong Kong was transformed from a colonial city to a global city, as discussed in Featherstone’s (1995) classification of these developing processes that imply a central feature of theories of modernity; and from which there is a universalising force. King (1990) further pointed out that colonialism offered a system to deal with societies with different ethnic, racial and cultural entities by incorporating precapitalist, preindustrial, and non-European societies into
the world economy. Colonial cities perform, as a consequence of a ‘historically significant phenomenon’, as forerunners of the contemporary capitalist world cities. In this respect, colonialism in a number of instances provides a stepping stone for imperialism to make the leap to globalism. It is imperialism that produces by definition the colonial city, but the colonial city can also prefigure the global city. The rise of globalism spells the end of the old empires, but not before the offspring of these empires, the previous colonial cities, have been primed to perform well as global cities (Abbas 1997: 3). The argument appropriately implies that towards the end of imperialism, colonialism can take on a global form.

It should also be noted that, in the case of Hong Kong, such globalisation as could take shape from colonialism did not happen overnight, since postcoloniality is not developed without struggle. In this regard, it is worth considering Ackbar Abbas’s (1997) account of postcoloniality of Hong Kong. Postcoloniality of Hong Kong, he points out, can only be understood in a nonliteral sense, since it:

does not take the physical departure of the colonial power (or even the subject’s own departure) as its point of origin, just as colonialism in its effects does not end with the signing of a treaty. Postcoloniality begins, it has already begun, when subjects find themselves thinking and acting in a certain way; in other words, postcoloniality is a tactic and a practice, not a legal-political contract, or a historical accident. It means finding ways of operating under a set of difficult conditions that threatens to appropriate us as subjects, an appropriation that can work just as well by way of acceptance as it can by rejection (Abbas 1997: 10).

In retrospect, the handover of Hong Kong did not entail the end of capitalism, but the transformation from colonialism to globalism increased Hong Kong’s anxiety about being controlled by China. If postcoloniality does not succeed
colonialism, it is likely that a second phase of colonialism will affect Hong Kong, this time with China acting as the colonising power. The concerns about human rights, freedom of speech, and the shadow cast by the Tiananmen Massacre have provided endless energy to drive the city to acquire a strong and stable economy. The signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 for the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 marked the foreseeable end of British imperialism, which, on the other hand, accelerated the rate of globalisation to enable Hong Kong to join the world economy. In addition, with the memory of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre in mind, fear of China control left Hong Kong with no option but to acquire the necessary characteristics to become a global city.

Globalisation and integration into the world economy, in other words, has paved a secure route to maintain the social and political status of Hong Kong. It is the highway to sustain economic prosperity and political stability for Hong Kong and also for other Asian countries. The fact that the region has placed economic development in the position of a top priority in order to maintain world power (Manubani: 1998) can easily be seen from the present situation. Japan and the ‘four little dragons’ may be taken as examples. Japan has succeeded in entering the world economy, thereby recovering from the defeat experienced in WWII. Taiwan has struggled for economic stability to facilitate a highly centralised governmental rule. South Korea embarked on an ambitious course of economic development to shake off the repressive control of Japan’s economic power. Singapore under a disciplinary government has opted for a competitive environment in favour of a global economy (Vogel: 1991). Hong Kong, with a laissez-faire government primarily interested in a strong economy, remains a vibrant trading and financial centre in respect of ‘one country, two systems’. Postcoloniality, to a great extent, is a tool to operate this general ‘set of difficult conditions’ from each of these countries with all of them voting for economic power.
Faced with the dilemma of whether to globalise for a world economy or be ‘colonised’ by China, Hong Kong is situated in a distinct environment where globalisation has taken place and there is no prospect of a return to former ways. This complex connection between imperialism and globalism, colonialism and postcolonialism must be understood in advance of formulating any hypothesis concerning Hong Kong. In the case of fashion, colonialism deserves serious consideration, yet it is equally important to relate any changes in social or economic behaviour to the globalisation of the city, since the changing form and structure, in many respects, does not resemble the old colonial model at all.

1.1.2 The study of the new global cultural economy

The study of fashion in Hong Kong suggests the study of new global cultural economy, which is seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models. As the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics, Appadurai (1996) proposes an elementary framework to explore such disjunctures, which are worthy of consideration. The relationship between five dimensions of global cultural flows are (1) ethnoscapes, (2) mediascapes, (3) technoscapes, (4) finanscapes, and (5) ideoscapes. The suffix -scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterise international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles' (Appadurai 1996: 33). The framework is particularly applicable to Hong Kong as it began to enter a new global cultural economy whilst society progressed from industrial to modern. One of the external cues was the adoption of Western-style clothing.

Ethonoscape refers to the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers,
and other moving groups and individuals who constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. Technoscape is the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speed across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. Financescape refers to the disposition of global capital which is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before, as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, with vast, absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units. Mediascapes deal with image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and those people who experience and transform a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts are formed of imagined lives, or of others living in other places. Finally, ideoscapes are the concatenations of images, that are often directly political and frequently deal with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. They are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and the master term democracy.

1.1.3 Globalisation as recent phenomenon

The globalising force of fashion in Hong Kong can be seen as a relatively recent phenomenon, which is intimately related to modernity and modernisation, as well as to postmodernity and postmodernisation. That explains the congruity between changes in Hong Kong fashion and the process of globalisation. Robertson (1990: 20) also suggests that research within the framework of the globalisation paradigm should be limited to the relatively recent past. He believes that the concept of globalisation per se
should be applied to a particular series of developments concerning 'the concrete structuration of the world as a whole' (The term 'structuration' has been calculatedly chosen). It has to be made directly relevant to the world in which we live and has to contribute to the understanding of how the global system has been and continues to be made, which is central to the idea of studying the fashion phenomenon in the thesis. Fashion in Hong Kong has been well defined by globalisation particularly in the absence of a precolonial past, which facilitates the generation of a new culture, or what King (1990: 397-411) has described as a 'third culture' within the global figuration. He realises a specific role of architecture, urban planning, and design that are understood as distinctive, professional cultural practices within the globalisation process. Such an idea could apply to fashion design with King's concept to view these professions as particular cultural industries that might be compared with other major spheres of cultural production, image-projection and consciousness-transforming industries, and all those in the conditions of contemporary capitalism along with a variety of other forms and processes, contribute to the constitution, confirmation or reconstitution of human subjectivity and cultural identity. Ultimately, these 'design professions' are potentially major influences contributing to the transformation of culture on a global scale. Such an influence is seen when fashion design and design professionals are studied in the local context.

1.1.4 The global and the local

Featherstone's (1995: 97-100) concept of immigrants and migrants who move from one place to another and opt to live out a 'third culture' concurred with that of King (1990). Featherstone argues that the notions of global and local culture are relational. He suggests six historical phases within the globalisation process to denote the possible affiliations to various forms of local and global cultures, which are useful to define the development of fashion design in Hong Kong. First, the question of immersion in a local
culture is taken into account. It is dependent upon a long-established locality and rejects the option of being drawn into wider collectivises and erecting barriers to cultural flows. However, even in the event that geographical reasons facilitate isolation, the problem of being left alone, of remaining undiscovered, or of controlling and regulating the flow of interchanges arises. Second, such communities, which are increasingly becoming drawn into the global figuration, will also have to cope periodically with the refugees from modernisation, those members of ethnic groups who are romantically attracted to the perceived authenticity of a simpler life and sense of 'home'. These groups can be seen as searching to live out their version of an 'imagined community'. The concept could be interpreted in terms of tensions between insiders and outsiders. Third, such an imagined community relies upon the rediscovery of ethnicity and regional cultures within the current phase of a number of Western nation-states which seek to allow a greater recognition of regional and local diversity in addition to multiculturalism. To maintain the imagined communities on the part of immigrant groups and indigenous local affiliations, respect for local cultures and rising concern for multiculturalism must enter the agenda. Fourth, those locals who travel, or tourists who usually take their local cultures with them (Hannerz: 1990), very often limit the opportunities for intercultural encounters to 'reservation-style' experiences (Bauman: 1990). They seek 'home plus' in effect, which facilitates transposition of cultures from one place to another. Fifth, those local affiliations that are limited in terms of geographical mobility and professional culture have to display a cosmopolitan orientation. The eagerness to work and live in 'third cultures' results in development of practical, working acquaintanceships and bridges to the third culture that facilitate communications with like persons from around the world. Sixth, these cosmopolitan and cultural intermediaries do not seek to judge local cultures in terms of progress towards modernity, but interpret them as growing audiences, especially those who have higher education within the new middle class and
the wider audience within consumer culture. They re-present and package their work, live within the third cultures and define them from the 'natives' point of view'. These practices facilitate the definition of Hong Kong fashion design, which is seen to incorporate elements of globalisation.

1.2 Consuming culture and consuming fashion

1.2.1 Re-interpreting culture for Hong Kong

If such an imagined community took form, a new culture would be formulated to represent 'a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values and symbols' (Smith 1990: 171). It would be difficult to employ the classic aesthetic form of culture to represent that of Hong Kong, which was derived after the post-war generation. Arnold's (1868) account of culture may be seen to be invalid in the case of Hong Kong as he defined it as 'essentially classical and conservative'. He referred to a standard of aesthetic excellence: 'the best that has been thought and said in the world' and derived from an appreciation of 'classic' aesthetic form such as opera, ballet, drama, literature, and art. Rather, William's (1965) view of culture is worthy of consideration in the local context. It refers to 'a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour... It is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture'. His definition, which involved the 'study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life', emphasised the study and discovery of 'certain general causes or "trends" by which social and cultural developments as a whole can be better understood'. William's account deliberately broadened the formulation of the relationships between culture and society, and facilitates incorporation of images derived from an 'everyday life'. A similar approach was employed by Hbdige (1979) when he wrote 'Subculture. The meaning of style'. Though he discussed the notions of culture proposed by Eliot (1963) and Barthes (1993),

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their connotation encompassed a classical and semiological system that is beyond the scope of the present research.

1.2.2 Consumer culture

In tracing the 'way of life' to describe the cultural aspect of fashion, the recent trend of mass consumption, changes in production, market segmentation and consumer demand are often regarded as making possible greater choice for the post-1960s generation, and they are increasingly applied to the middle-aged and the elderly. Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen's 'Channels of Desire' (1982: 249-251) states that 'Today there is no fashion: there are only fashions.' 'No rules, only choices.' 'Everyone can be anyone.' They have suggested the breakdown of uniformity and society's tendency to surpass adoption of styles of life by specific groups. Jameson (1988) describes culture as 'the very element of consumer society itself; no society has ever been saturated with signs and images like this one'. Department stores, shopping centres, and advertising campaigns all help to display goods (Benjamin: 1982, R.H. Williams: 1982), and to transgress formerly registered meanings to rename goods. Baudrillard (1970, 1993) who is particular important in this context, has essentially drawn on the movement of mass production of commodities to 'nature' the use-value of goods. The dominant exchange-value transaction in the capitalistic society is seen in the commodity of sign by means of Saussurean, which suggests that its position is determined by a self-referential system of signifiers. Accordingly, consumption is to be understood as the use-values, a material utility, but primarily as the consumption of signs.

Featherstone (1988) and Hepworth (1991) linked culture with lifestyle, with the stylisation of life in relation to the practices of consumption, the planning, purchase and display of consumer goods, and experiences of every day life. Their theories cannot be understood merely via conceptions of exchange value and instrumental, rational calculation. The instrumental and expressive
dimensions should not be regarded as exclusive and/or polarities, rather they can be conceived as a balance which consumer culture brings together. Rather than unreflectively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle. Hence, such a practice very often denotes a specific culture of a commodity. These cultural practices and theories are relevant when Hong Kong fashion consumerism is measured.

1.2.3 Consuming fashion

The analysis of the new petite bourgeoisie mapped by Bourdieu's Distinction (1984) is useful to comprehend the system of fashion in general. Bourdieu (1984: 359) analyses the new petite bourgeoisie, the cultural intermediaries, who provide symbolic goods and services, which may be useful to describe fashion producer and consumer. He defines the petit bourgeoisie as 'a proletarian who makes himself small to become a bourgeois.' Typically they invest in cultural and educational capital. They stand apart from the old petit bourgeoisie and the working classes as a result of their attraction for the most native aristocratic qualities (style, distinction, refinement) in the pursuit of expressive and liberated lifestyles. In contrast to groups comprising peasants and farmers, whose numbers have declined as a result of the changes taking place in the division of labour, and tend towards a pessimistic, nostalgic view of the world, the new petit bourgeoisie is numerically on the increase, and therefore has a progressive view of the world.

Bourdieu outlines the concept of habitus of the new petit bourgeoisie as the unconscious dispositions. They are uneasy with their bodies, constantly self-consciously checking, watching, and correcting themselves. They therefore adopt a learning mode of life; they are consciously educating themselves in
the field of taste, style, and lifestyle. Apparently, this group is the perfect audience and transmitter, intermediary for the new intellectual popularisation, which is not just a popularisation of bodies of knowledge, but a popularisation of the intellectual lifestyle as well. Thus, they may well be in the process of creating the perfect of consumer. To facilitate production, the new petit bourgeoisie and the cultural intermediaries have to adopt the roles as 'interpreters' of the great variety and wealth of the different cultural traditions which can be presented to new audiences as meaningful and exotic without venturing into areas of judgement or value-hierarchisation (Bauman: 1988).

In his book, Culture and Consumption, McCracken (1990) confers the idea of the radical changes resulting from human effort and the effect of anonymous social forces which are willingly accepted and highly encouraged in modern industrial society. He argues that 'hot', western, industrial societies demand changes and depend on them to drive certain economical, and cultural sectors of society as a whole. This idea could apply to the rapidly industrialised society which emerged after the post-war era in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the fashion system 'serves as one of the conduits for capture and movement of this category of highly innovative meaning' (McCracken 1990: 81). Given that economically modern industrial societies need consumerism in order to tick over in a satisfactorily productive fashion, they need to promote consumerism as a way of life in order to ensure their viability over an extended period. Hence, fashion plays a major role in this process inasmuch as it maintains a constant turnover in demand (Miles 1998: 92).

Conversely, Leopold (1992: 101) argues the problematic approach to see fashion as a product of consumer demand. He stresses that 'fashion is a hybrid subject'. It incorporates dual concepts of fashion: as a cultural phenomenon, and as an aspect of manufacturing with the accent on production technology'.

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Ultimately, it is no exaggeration to describe the craze for fashion consumption as a cultural phenomenon in Hong Kong.

Other researchers point out the value of fashion marketing, which is far from dictating what customers should wear. Mueller and Smiley (1995) suggest that fashion producers (including fashion consultants, fashion magazines, trade publications, advertising and store image, etc) actively construct a sense of what fashion should be in order to ensure that the consumer consumes it. McDowell (1994: 138) criticises the fashion industry for having intentionally moulded a culture to define a person by the labels s/he is wearing. He finds the fashion industry to be a ruthless and immoral one which can 'scam us in to believing fashion is a birthright, a proof of worth, and adjunct of character, even an indication of social desirability'. In Hong Kong, excessive consumption might be seen to raise the level of social insecurity and uncertainty owing to the lack of identity derived from colonialism. Consumption of fashion in Hong Kong concurs with McDowell's idea of the continual 'favours' offered by the fashion industry. Feelings of social uncertainty and insecurity are exploited by creating an illusion that 'fashion can answer, or at least lead us to forget, the problems of every day life.'

1.3 Writing fashion

1.3.1 Fashion, appearance, status, and self identity

Simmel (1957) is one of the earliest and most important contributors to the debate on fashion, and his is a sociological approach. He emphasises the restless, changing nature of modernity, which copes with the prevailing mode of fashion in nature. He regards fashion as helping to ensure that people adapt to the complexities of modern life. He suggests that 'The whole history of society is reflected in the striking conflicts, the compromise, slowly won and quickly lost, between socialistic adaptation to society and individual departure
from its demands' (Simmel 1957: 294). He sees fashion as a product of social demand because it identifies the individual as being a member of a desired group and highlights the one who is not. Fulfilment through fashion is seen as a social rather than individualistic form or source of satisfaction. The role of fashion is that of a social form of class demarcation, juxtaposing the feeling of individuality with the security of commonality with others. Simmel's analysis of fashion is relevant to the market of Hong Kong fashion, particularly since the city's residents tend to practice collectivism in purchasing fashion products. He argues that fashion provides the only apparent means of recovering oneself, of stabilising the assault upon the senses which is characteristic of modern life. The tendency of Hong Kong Chinese to adhere to group opinions and social norms (Hui and Triands: 1986, Kagitcibasi (1992) is one reason for the majority's obsession with consumerism (e.g. the purchase of mobile phones, stock market, stamps, fashion products, etc). The formation of consumerism was foreseen by Simmel in the construction of everyday life in the late twentieth century.

Veblen's (1899) conspicuous consumption theory may seem dated in Western modern society, but this classical contribution to a sociological understanding of consumption is still applicable in the context of Hong Kong. Accordingly, consumer goods are seen as markers of social prestige and status. Fashion and brand name serve to identify an individual's social status and wealth. Veblen identifies an elaborate system of rank and grades where an individual's place in the social hierarchies of the leisure classes is expressed via marketers of consumption. Consumption takes place to fulfil social satisfaction, to display and to acquire a desired status. The Hong Kong Chinese practise of conspicuous consumption in contemporary society, in which people associate with each other so closely, has become highly sophisticated. One of the obvious phenomenon is the purchasing behaviour of fashion products and the pursuit of foreign labels.
Flugel (1930), who wrote about the psychology of clothes in the early twentieth century indicated that fashion represented the fluidity of the social structure of the community. It is possible for fashion to bridge hierarchical differences in a society. Lurie (1981) and McDowell (1985) also observed that fashion can be used as a weapon to denote social status. The force of fashion lies in the promise of "unspoken prestige", as argued by Ewen (1988). It is a highly individual notion of personal distinction measured by the compulsory consumption of images. Craik (1994) further signals the behaviour of purchasing the desired fashion to construct social interaction. She stresses that fashion shapes social conduct at a collective level. 'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances, the true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible' (Wilde 1996: 32). The quotation from Oscar Wilde may well serve to define the force of fashion in the contemporary world.

1.3.2 Communicating fashion

Veblen is regarded as one of the earliest to write on the use of fashion as communication and reproduction of economical status. Contemporary researchers have furthered his idea to incorporate the behaviour exhibited by consumers who use labels and logos to achieve the same effect (Barnard 1996: 10). As such, 'fashion and clothing are used as weapons and defences in that they express the ideologies held by social groups which may be opposed to the ideologies of other social orders' (Barnard 1996: 39). Nonetheless, fashion, according to Barnard, contributes to the context of gender constructions. Though it is less significant to construct masculinity with the creation or maintenance of 'a look' or appearance, it is a defining feature of femininity. Fashion and clothing worn by women may said to be constructed, signalled, and reproduced to signal their gender identity in that 'a society deems appropriate for them and insofar as they continue to be "obsessed" with their appearance' (Barnard 1996: 115). Wilson (1992), on the other hand, suggests that fashion could easily confuse identities on the surface and provides a sense
of playfulness or props that can be adapted from one experience to another. In such a case, fashion communicates. It visualises and embodies culture. She criticises the fact that the convergence of the 'poor' Punk style to a dominant fashion style in the eighties was an excessive expression of the 'enterprise-culture ethos' of the times (Wilson 1992: 15). The idea is applicable when the sexy cheongsam worn by Suzie Wong in the movie in early sixties is perceived as a typical example of dress for contemporary Hong Kong. Wilson begins to analysis fashion by rejecting Veblen's conspicuous theory and Lurie's theory of dress as language. Fashion as the exclusive preserve of the rich to dress as a means of self expression for the majority and of counter-cultural solidarity for minorities, Wilson (1985) suggests rather to utilise concept of 'modernity' adding that this should apply to the study of fashion. She explores the history of dress from 1860 to the late eighties with Lou Taylor (Taylor, L. & Wilson, E.: 1989) and has moved from modernism to post-modernism, then Wilson (1994) subsequently addresses fashion in the nineties.

1.3.3 The fashion system
In Fred Davis's (1992) discussion of fashion system, he distinguishes the fashion cycle as the passing of time from the introduction of a fashion to its being supplanted by a new fashion; and the fashion process as the diverse influences and exchanges on an individual, organisational and institutional level that are transmitted to such a cycle. He argues that, in the late twentieth century, instead of the traditional three- to five-year fashion cycle, a plethora of 'microcycles' has emerged. These cycles are, very often, associated with different identity segments of the apparel markets (Davis 1992: 157). In effect, fashion has become plural and increasingly temporal.

Though temporal, fashion is not merely superficial, decorative or disfiguring, as argued by Konig (1973). He stresses that fashion features 'life', and is 'an
important regulator and means of expression in the community of men' (Konig 1973: 19). He analyses the nature, roots, and function of fashion from civilisation to modesty; from the existence within the bourgeoisie circle to capture the masses; from mass consumption to the expansion of the consumption field. Roche (1988) creates a detailed account of history, fashion, and clothing systems from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. He identifies the Parisian clothing system, and defines the roles played by the producer (tailors, dressmakers, linen-drapers, fashion merchants, etc), the consumer, and the fashion press in France. The study set the foundation to better understand the contemporary French fashion system.

Both Konig's and Roche's account of the fashion system may seem dated in the context of the contemporary society. Leopold (1993: 101-107) identifies the dual concept of fashion as a cultural phenomenon and a series of manufacturing activities supported by production technology. This dual concept has made it difficult to accommodate within a tradition in which the histories of consumption and production plough largely separate furrows'. The United States apparel industry is discussed in parallel with the process of industrial development, rise of the working class after the WWI, the power of fashion houses and the availability of mass-produced garments.

Breward (1995) also expands on the development of fashion. He confines his discussion mainly to England, in the process of formulating notions of Englishness. Yet, he presents not only a fashion history from the mid-fourteenth century to the mid-twentieth century but also provides an introductory guide to the cultural significance of fashion. In his book, 'The cultural of fashion. A new history of fashionable dress', the cultural and social significance of fashionable clothing and its representation is the central theme.
Other scholars approach the concept of the fashion system from different perspectives. Social philosopher Lipovetsky (1994) focuses on clothing, bodily deportment, political rhetoric, sex roles and practices as forms of 'fashion'. He understands the consumer-driven fashion throughout its history whilst modern streams of ephemeral sensations serve the common democratic good. He therefore analyses fashion as a role to smooth social conflict and identities inquiries into the symbolism of everyday life by abandoning class analysis. He presents the evolution of fashion across two thousand years of history from an upper-class privilege into a vehicle of people expression which closely follows the rise of democratic values. Barthes (1983), on the other hand, tackles the sign and signifier within the fashion system. He constructs a system of meaning in terms of linguistics to comprehend the system of fashion as an independent object. His semiological approach reconstitutes the semantics of actual fashion to a set of representations to define fashion in various domains.

1.4 Hong Kong fashion and Japanese fashion

1.4.1 Writing Hong Kong fashion

Garett's (1987) 'Traditional Chinese Clothing in Hong Kong and South China' is about clothing and evolution of dress in Hong Kong. The book is illustrated with pictures and definitions of various styles of traditional Chinese clothing found since the turn of the twentieth century in Hong Kong and the South China regions. It documents different styles of clothes worn by the traditional Chinese and the minority tribes. 'Hong Kong fashion history' (1995) gives a brief account on the history of Hong Kong fashion, largely after the post-war era. It covers the tailoring industry, the wearing of the cheongsam, and the development of the clothing industry in Hong Kong alongside the city's economic growth. However, the brief explanation fails to provide a comprehensive review of either the development of the clothing industry or
fashion business in Hong Kong. 'Dress in Hong Kong - A century of change and customs' (1995) supplements the lack of details of 'Hong Kong fashion history'. It examines the evolution of dress in Hong Kong in respect of traditional customs since the turn of the twentieth century. 'Hong Kong fashion allure 50 years' by Tang and Wong (1995) also failed to trace the history of Hong Kong fashion. They introduced fashion icons (designers, tailors, and movie stars), accompanying the text with portraits and relevant fashion collection examples. These references tend to simplify the history of dress in Hong Kong.

'Hong Kong style: The evolution of the cheongsam' edited by Claire Roberts (1997) comprises a comprehensive account of the evolution of cheongsam in Hong Kong. Szeto (1997), who had researched its history since the early twentieth century, provided details of the transformation from one decade to the next. Clark and Wong's (1997) chapter on 'Who still wears the cheongsam?' examines the role of traditional dress in contemporary society. The book also traced the history and evolution of Chinese dress in Mainland China and Taiwan. Apart from the literature cited, limited secondary material on the subject of fashion in Hong Kong could be found.

Matthew Turner (1995) wrote about the design identity of Hong Kong in the sixties. His research covered a variety of design activities, including fashion design, and develops a theory of design identity, thus a cultural identity for Hong Kong. The study addresses social, political, economic, and historical factors in an effort to arrive at a definition of a 'Hong Kong identity'. He wrote that migrants fled from the Mainland in 1949 in order to have a better way of life. They were subjected to change and adapted to their new circumstances, thereby contributing to the dynamics of the city. Notions of cultural and social values along with the historical background described by Turner contributed to the present research. He investigated the impact of colonialism on Hong
Kong, suggesting that the inhabitants were prevented from exercising their creativity since the city was attuned to trade, business and the flow of capital. In 'Ersatz Design. Interactions between Chinese and Western design in Hong Kong: 1950's-1960's' (Turner: 1993), he stated that 'originality' of design must be 'copied' for design in Hong Kong was considered to be an instrument of trade control.

Published materials on the subject of Hong Kong fashion were supplemented by newspaper reports, periodicals, trade reports, and interview data. The 'Hong Kong Review' published by the South China Morning Post, which featured fashion events and items about the clothing industry from the early eighties to the beginning of the nineties was reviewed. The source is relevant to the study of the development of Hong Kong fashion design. Other materials included television documentaries, which were helpful when the influence of Japanese culture and imports were studied. Relevant movies were also chosen, for example to illustrate the cheongsam worn by Suzie Wong in the movie of the same name.

1.4.2 Writing Japan

Japanese fashion in Hong Kong was studied to examine the hypothesised theory of the present research. Literature on the subject of Japanese fashion is inappropriate for the English speaking environment. Only Skov (1996: 138) writes on Japanese fashion, and the concept of Japonisme in postmodern society. She defines Japanese fashion as being 'characterised by off-black oversize garments, the use of holes in the material as a form of decoration, asymmetrical cuts, and crumpled textiles which were treated to look as if their colours had run'. She uses Japonisme as a key concept to discuss the transnational flows of trends, images, and goods. At the same time, postmodernism is employed to diagnose contemporary culture in the light of the growth of the media and increased globalisation. Her research on the
implication of the widespread popularity of Japanese fashion is essential to
define its influence in Hong Kong. Kondo (1990) writes on the transition
values and identity of the Japanese in the seventies and re-defines orientalism,
using Japan as a backdrop (Kondo: 1997). Various scholars have written on
the subject of Japanese popular culture, which provides insights into the influx
of Japanese imports in Hong Kong. Shiraishi (1997), Nye (1990), and Morean
(2000) stress that Japanese innovation and creation have been transformed
into a culture of production, which favours the emergence of a set of 'image'
alliances that has augmented the culture industry in size. Its expansion has
cause the spread of Japan's popular culture through Asia. Japan thus
expanded her influence and power by transplanting Japanese business
networks and internationalising some of the popular culture, promoting
growth through economic co-operation.

Sellers (1998: 15) sees Japan's intention to expand when she analyses
Japanese aesthetics in Architecture in Britain. She points out the inevitable
loss of face during the war suffered by Japan which resulted in an attempt, on
behalf of the Japanese, to re-present themselves. Thus, Japan's post-war re-
emergence, and re-establishment of national ascendance is coloured by
foreign trade policies, and her continuing goal of internationalisation.

The promotion of Japan through its cultural programmes is observed by local
scholars. Wong (1996), Ogawa (1999), Ng(1999), Fung (1999), and Leung
(2000), all identify a localisation of Japanese values and culture within the
local context. In different cultural domains (e.g. music, television, CVD, etc),
or the business sector (e.g. department stores, supermarkets, etc) the
assimilation of Japanese images is seen in the everyday life of the Hong Kong
Chinese. It was therefore considered to be essential to analyse the expression
of transnational values in the fashion of Hong Kong, if it existed. The example
of Japanese cutie is therefore employed to denote the phenomenon of
Japanese fashion in Hong Kong and demonstrate the hypothesis of the present research.

Kinsella (1995) has made an intensive study of the cutie phenomenon in Japan, which is central to the demonstration. She defines the meaning of cutie and presents the background for such a style to evolve. She identifies the social constraints of what the Japanese had encountered, which permitted the adoption of the cutie style in Japan. Her analysis of the adaptation of cute fashion in Japan is taken into account. If cutie in Japan was derived from social upset, cutie in Hong Kong may be seen as merely a fashion trend, which contradicts the idea of cutie in Japan.
Section II  Research and Findings

Hong Kong fashion and cultural identity in the global environment
From Chinese to Western-style clothing: Chinese clothes, the tailoring industry, and the adaptation of Western-style clothing in Hong Kong

Introduction

Hong Kong has never had a characteristic, unique costume and this has made it difficult to define a Hong Kong style of clothing. The adoption of Western-style clothing concurred with the period of industrialisation and modernisation in the sixties and seventies in Hong Kong, and remains the staple dress of Hong Kong Chinese. However, before the popularity and adaptation of Western-style clothing, Chinese clothing was the dress code for the majority of the Hong Kong Chinese. This chapter considers the effects of colonialism and globalisation on dress code, both before and under colonial rule. It then examines the decline of the tailoring industry and the adaptation of Western-style clothing in the context of both industrialisation and modernisation.

2.1.1 The lack of a precolonial past

The confrontation between colonialism and globalism affected the development of Hong Kong fashion, the degree of tension varying to different degrees according to circumstances. As a colony, in contrast to other colonial territories such as India, Vietnam and South America, Hong Kong had no precolonial past to speak of (Abbas: 1997). Given the records of human settlement on the island in the Song dynasty, Hong Kong did have a history before it was ceded to Britain in 1841; but the history of Hong Kong which is relevant to what it has become today has effectively been a history of colonialism. Where clothes are concerned, it is evident that the sari and the
sarong are still worn in India and Vietnam respectively, while the majority of Hong Kong Chinese wear Western-style clothing.

Though 98 percent of the population in Hong Kong is ethnic Chinese, for historic reasons, Hong Kong Chinese and the Mainlanders are now culturally and politically distinct. Geographically as an isolated port from China (with Mainland China to the north and oceans to the south), Hong Kong began its role as an international port after 1898 when China and Britain signed the Treaty¹ to extend the Territories of Hong Kong, thereby facilitating cultural interchange between the East and the West. Though traditional Chinese-style clothing continued to be the most popular form of dress and the dressing habits were initially similar to those in China (Hong Kong fashion history: 1995, Dress in Hong Kong: 1995), the migrants who fled after 1949 from the political hardship in China accelerated Hong Kong’s economic growth and industrialisation, setting it further apart from turbulent China which was undergoing the Cultural Revolution in the sixties and seventies.

A similar sequence of events could be seen in the example of Singapore. Western-style clothing is the every day wardrobe of the Singaporean and the indigenous designs are geared to Western norms, though very often they seek inspiration from neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia. The lack of a precolonial past affected not only to the wardrobe of the population, but also the development of the entire city and society. Similar to Hong Kong, Singapore was a destiny of abode for the Chinese in the thirties, but the diverse population arose due to the proximity of Malaysia and Indonesia. With 75 percent Chinese, 15 percent Malay, and 7 percent Indian population, each different ethnic group having its own language and tradition, the task of the Singapore government was to forge a new national identity. The new created identity shaped by the ‘charismatic national leader’, Lee Kwan-yew and the ‘meritocratic politicians’ (Vogel 1991: 82), enabled Singapore to develop as a
global city. Though both cities possess global elements, Singapore has decided to provide an entire global environment inclusive of European style café terraces, grand avenues with shopping arcades and boutiques selling international brands like those in New York, a China Town with authentic cuisine and restaurants, etc. The lack of a precolonial past thus also suggests facilitation to generate a new culture, or what King (1990a) described as a 'third culture', within the global figuration.

2.1.2 Globalisation and the adaptation of Western dress

Robertson (1987) defined globalisation as 'the process by which the world becomes a single place'. It involves the development of a global culture, not as normatively binding but in the sense of a general mode of discourse about the world as a whole. If Hong Kong fashion is taken as a question in point, then the adaptation of Western dress as a means of formulating a homogenous culture and the emergence of international fashion brands in Hong Kong may have directly contributed to the decline of the Chinese way of dress. Turner (1995) stated that, in the 60s, the British government diverted the attention of Hong Kong people from social turmoil by its grand promotion of Ready-to-Wear fashion, thereby focusing attention on the latest trends and accelerating the progress of modernisation ('a change for the better'). In the 60s, Hong Kong experienced an immediate adaptation of Western fashion and the corresponding creation of a common culture (i.e. the way of dress), which corresponded with the decline of the tendency to wear Chinese clothes.

Prior to colonialisation the Hong Kong people were, indeed, Chinese oriented in their dress. When Hong Kong became a British colony, traditional Chinese-style clothing continued to be the most popular form of dress (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 57). In the 50s, the majority Hong Kong Chinese either visited tailors or made their own clothes. They wore Chinese clothes such as the sam fu for every day use and adopted the cheongsam for more special occasions².
The cheongsam, which was fashionable in the 60s, was characteristic of the
type of the people in Hong Kong. Nowadays, images of Hong Kong people
wearing Chinese dress can only be seen in photos and references. It would,
however, be incorrect to attribute the decline of a local culture to
industrialisation and modernisation. Japan, for instance, underwent this dual
process whilst preserving the Kimono as a traditional form of dress.
Westernisation of dress was similarly insignificant in the case of the
adaptation and production of the Indian sari. In Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam,
traditional dress was worn alongside Western clothes. Hence, the question
must be asked, why did the custom of wearing Chinese clothes in Hong Kong
virtually disappear?

An historical account of dress in Hong Kong before and under the British rule,
followed by a summary of the development of tailoring in Hong Kong from
the 1950s is provided in this chapter, and a comparison with the French Haute
Couture in made. The last part of the chapter analyses the adaptation of
Western-style clothing from the perspective of the city's industrialisation and
modernisation.

2.2.1 The Hong Kong Chinese way of dress - Chinese clothes before and
under British rule

On the frontline of cultural interchange between the East and the West, Hong
Kong experienced the highest degree of Westernisation after cession to the
British in the 1850s. Although under the administration of the British from
early 1841, Chinese traditions and customs were still recognised and honoured.
Freedom was granted in the general policing and organisation of the Chinese
communities. There was minimal social contact between Chinese and Western
people, since they existed independently, which also enabled the Chinese to
preserve their traditional way of living, including their style of dress. Not until
1850s, during the period of rebellion and social disorder on the Mainland, did
a significant number of migrants of wealthy families flee from political upheavals, moving southward from the Pearl River Delta area to settle in Hong Kong. These early settlers brought a substantial amount of capital and abundant qualified personnel, becoming export and import traders, and forming the backbone of local Chinese society under British rule.

When Hong Kong became a British colony, traditional Chinese-style clothing continued to be the most popular form of dress. The outfits most commonly worn by the Chinese people in Hong Kong and south China from the early Hong Kong era to the first few decades of the 20th century were the cheongsam, makwa and sam fu. The Makwa, reaching only to the waist, was worn over the man's cheongsam. Men of the lower-middle class were accustomed to wearing the sam fu, which was mostly long and loose fitting in style. The Aqun and aoku dominated women's attire. Towards the turn of the 20th century, the aqun became the favourite outfit of the wives and daughters of the notable and wealthy families for festive and formal occasions. Aoku gained popularity among domestic servants and maids. They wore simple and plain aoku, with sleeves of the ao cut shorter and narrower to facilitate work (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 57-8).

2.2.2 Clothes in the unstable political climate

'In an age of political disorder, people were powerless to modify existing conditions closer to their ideal. They created their own atmosphere, with clothes, which constituted their immediate environment for most men and all women' (Chang 1987: 67).

In the era from the 1850s to the early 20th century, during which time Hong Kong was opened up for development, Western fashion exerted an influence on the rapidly changing styles, that were subject to the fluctuation of political
and social situations. In 1898, China and Britain signed the Treaty to Extend the Territories of Hong Kong, allotting the New Territories, including Lantau Island and more than 200 islands into Hong Kong's boundary, thus allowing Hong Kong to break away from her isolation. With Mainland China nearby in the north and oceans to south, Hong Kong began to establish its role as an international port (Hong Kong Fashion History 1995: 2-3). By playing its role as a free port, Hong Kong attracted foreign traders, overseas merchants and executives including British, American, Indian, Parsee, Pakistani, Jews and Portuguese. The ethnic clothing worn by different nationalities contributed exotic splendour to local traditional Chinese attire (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 57-8). This began to broaden local people's outlook regarding fashion. Western culture and ideas gradually influenced the Hong Kong Chinese thereafter. On the other hand, the liberal Western progressive thinking reflected the backwardness of Chinese feudalism and apparently caused drastic changes to the feudal Qing's costume regulations. Revolutionary ideas spread, leading to the creation of many new movements. Hong Kong women were encouraged to liberate themselves and stop foot binding with the foundation of Hong Kong Women of Natural Feet Club in 1900. A No Pigtail and Qing Clothes Club was set up in 1910 to abolish the tradition of men wearing pigtails (Hong Kong Fashion History 1995: 2-3). With the success of the 1911 revolution in China, there was a great impact on clothing customs, which also paved the way for later social reforms. The "Zhongshan suit," named after the great Revolutionary Dr. Sun Yatsen, evolved as a new type of men's wear. As the traditional Chinese became more liberated, women began to seek equal rights with men. They took part in various political activities and began liberating themselves from breast and foot binding - even abandoning loose fitting robes for fashionable wear. A new stage in the history of local women's wear began with the abolition of bound feet. Since then, women have been allowed more freedom in dress and have adomed themselves to reflect individual taste. At the same time, Hong Kong and China became
closer through swifter and easier travel and communication. Women from the upper class and wealthy families of Hong Kong were eager to emulate the fashion of Shanghai, the leading city in China in the early 20th century. Well-dressed women would pay special visits to Shanghai, commissioning skilful tailors to create their fashionable wardrobes (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 30). The May Fourth Movement in 1919 nurtured progressive and innovative ideas in Chinese society with the return of a considerable number of overseas students who helped to blend Chinese and Western culture. Not only did they bring Western customs and etiquette, but also an intense interest in wearing Western style clothes among the young and well-educated men and those from the upper-middle class of Hong Kong. Clothes began to be Westernised while the Western style of dressmaking also gained in popularity. Chinese merchants engaged in foreign trade, and office personnel and overseas-educated men were particularly in favour of Western outfits. Clothes-conscious women also adopted the new Western look. Conservative citizens, on the other hand, chose a blend of Chinese and Western styles.

2.2.3 Towards a new era – Chinese dress in the era of social and economic reforms

After the 1920s and 1930s, a new decade began for the fashion conscious citizens of Hong Kong. Fashion trends from then onwards were mostly shaped by socio-economic factors. Although the aoqun and sokuk continued to be the major dress code in the twenties and thirties, the silhouette was more close-fitting and narrower, with a shorter upper garment, tighter waistlines, different styles of collar stands, shorter sleeves with broad cuffs, fitted skirts and trousers. The less-cumbersome one-piece skirt replaced the Qing style pleated skirt. It was seen as 'modern dress' and reflected the greater freedom enjoyed by women. Furthermore, decorations and details of garments such as collars, lapels, cuffs and hems varied considerably both in pattern and material. In
addition, extensive use of embroidery, decorative trimmings and borders were applied for aesthetic interest.

Having been a leading prosperous city in China in the days prior to the Second World War, Shanghai² had the reputation of being the centre of women's fashion. Wives and daughters of the wealthy and well-known families, movie stars, and singers in Shanghai were the avant-garde of the country's fashion. They wore elaborate and fanciful clothes in breathtaking variety (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 55). When the women in Shanghai made modifications and improvements to the traditional Manchu gowns, the qipao⁹ was born in this dazzling and dynamic metropolis of Shanghai, and immediately became the fad of the time. With a closer fit, and collars and hemlines which rose and fell, the qipao changed drastically almost every year, and the fashion conscious citizens, tailors and dressmakers never hesitated to follow, create and design more variations on the theme. From the 1920s and 1930s onwards, fashion was emphasised and Western dress became popular, juxtaposing the Western influenced qipao, though the majority of women still wore Chinese clothes. The 1940s also saw the introduction of men's Hawaiian-style shirts and trousers suits that were widely accepted by Chinese men in society, especially those who engaged in business negotiations and social activities involving wider exposure to Western culture and etiquette. After the end of the WWII, there was a tendency for the cheongsam and makwa to be slowly replaced by Western shirts and trousers. By the late 1960s, men's wear of Chinese style had virtually disappeared.

However, the 1930s Chinese Civil War resulted in a harsh and impoverished life for every family. Housewives did the dressmaking and laundry for the household. Daily casual wear made out of sturdy fabrics was the norm in ordinary households. Only the rich could afford to go to the tailors. Thus, the garment industry almost died out in Hong Kong. In addition to the Japanese
invasion in 1941, following the Communist Liberation of China in 1949, the political upheavals brought in a massive influx of refugees to Hong Kong. (Hong Kong Fashion History 1995: 6) These immigrants included important traders, politicians, and other eminent persons who formerly lived in major cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Zhanjiang, and they brought with them substantial capital and labour. The entrepreneurs also inspired the local garment industry with their strong sense of fashion, which paved the way for the later, extraordinary economic growth in the 1970s. At the same time, experienced and skilful tradesmen, especially the renowned Shanghai tailors, also moved to Hong Kong in large numbers and set up tailoring companies or engaged in the textile industry.

2.3.1 The tailoring industry in Hong Kong

The tailoring industry in Hong Kong was once a prosperous business. At one time, the industry absorbed more than a thousand workers into the slowly recovering economy. Before the influx of tailors to Hong Kong in the 1950s, Western style tailoring already existed, tailoring shops having been established from the beginning of colonial rule. Westerners were the first to set up tailor businesses, and the Chinese joined them at a later stage. Over 600 people were engaged in the production of tailored suits in 1920. Local tailors were asked to imitate the style of European, British and French fashions as many of the foreigners settled in Hong Kong for the purpose of doing business. These custom-made clothes were seldom worn by Chinese people, since at that time, men's suits were exclusively for the upper class. Suit tailors prospered in the forties. Major department stores such as Wing On and Sincere had counters for tailor-made suits, and tailor's shops sprang up all over the city. According to statistics for the year 1948, there were 36 women's fashion shops in Kowloon and 52 on Hong Kong Island, which employed about a thousand workers (Hong Kong Fashion History 1995: 27-36). The number of tailors also reached its peak between 1955-1960, with
more than 700 Shanghainese cheongsam tailors and a further 300 Guangdong tailors; altogether more than a thousand people were engaged in the tailoring business.\textsuperscript{11}

The tailoring business reached its zenith in the 1960s with the gradual recovery of the economy. At the same time, the Vietnam War brought an abundance of American sailors to Hong Kong for replenishment of warring materials. At one stage, businesses swelled to a number of several thousand. Orders for suits were taken from US military bases all over the world, including West Germany, Okinawa, Spain and Vietnam, in addition to a large number of orders from retailers in the US, Japan and Australia. Hong Kong boasted 15,000 skilled tailors in the prime time of the tailoring business in the '60s (Hong Kong Fashion History 1995: 27-36).

2.3.2 Popularity of tailoring
Besides orders from foreigners, a large number of tailors tailor made cheongsam for the well-off prostitutes. During the 1940s, prostitutes from the nightclubs\textsuperscript{12} were the frequent customers of the Mainland tailors. The influx of immigrants in 1949 led to an abundance of Mainland prostitutes frequenting nightclubs in Hong Kong, who ultimately became one of the major client groups of the local tailors together with the senior executives and professionals\textsuperscript{13}. They wore very tight fitting cheongsam with more darts for slim body shapes, and this also contributed to the modification of the traditional cheongsam, which was characterised by a loose fitting silhouette. The cheongsam reached the height of its popularity in the 1960s, when it was the primary costume worn by the actress Nancy Kwan in the film "The World of Suzie Wong"\textsuperscript{14} (also see Chapter 3), which set the trend for wearing tight fitted and mini cheongsam with high heels. The popularity of the cheongsam extended to the West\textsuperscript{15} and to different social levels of Hong Kong women\textsuperscript{16}. With an average salary of HK$180-200 per month\textsuperscript{17}, the majority of working
women went for tailor-made clothes once or twice every month, while the rich could afford two or more tailor-made garments at one time, these being distinguished by their refined finish\textsuperscript{18}.

With the popularity of tailor-made clothes, a distinction of tailor styles had become significant as ultimate choices for the customers. The two streams of tailors, from Shanghai\textsuperscript{19} and Guangdong\textsuperscript{20} respectively, were keen competitors in the early days. Most of the Guangdong tailors even established two departments, one for Western clothes and the other for Chinese clothes within the tailor shop to attract a wider range of clients. A system of branding was introduced through the tailor circle, and the most popular ones were accorded the most prestige. The distribution of respected tailors’ shops was categorised according to their streams of styles\textsuperscript{21} and classification. Tailor-made counters established within big department stores such as Wing On and Sincere were targeted for tourists, though some of the upper class reserved their private tailors within. Other tourists’ favourite shops were located in Tsim Sha Tsui where efficient service, quality workmanship, custom-made service was provided and ready-made garments were sold.

2.3.3 Decline of Tailoring

- Industrialisation replaced tailoring

Both the Korean War in the fifties and the Vietnam War in the sixties had boosted the growth of the tailoring business in Hong Kong. These wars brought to the city several thousand US military personnel, who regarded both Hong Kong and Japan as the more attractive holiday destinations in Southeast Asia for bars and entertainment, added to which they were far less expensive than the equivalent in their native country. Hence, a wealth of orders was placed for suits and tailor-made clothes during their stay, which contributed substantially to the business of tailoring. Though the tailor
industry continued to flourish in the seventies, the scale could never compare to that of the sixties mainly due to the increasing popularity of ready-to-wear.

The decline of the popularity of the cheongsam diverted many young tailors to join textile factories so as to apply old techniques to new jobs. As manufactured clothes were mass-produced by machines in established garment factories, many of the remaining tailor shops were situated in hotels and plazas to serve film stars, businessmen and influential politicians from various countries. Traditional tailor’s shops faced the prospect of losing clients and competing with ready-made brands. In addition, foreign imported brands also joined the competition for consumers’ income. Facing severe competition and lacking government and trade community support, the tailoring enterprises died out in the 80s, together with their traditional techniques and skills. In the 1990s, there were no more than 250 cheongsam tailors, most of who had more than 30 years’ experience and were 50 years or more of age (Figure 2.1.1 & 2.1.2).

- **Insufficient support from and connection with official body**

Tailoring in Hong Kong, which declined after the onslaught of industrialisation, did not fare as well as haute couture in France, which has enjoyed sustained success for several decades up to the present day. Until the sixties, haute couture dictated fashion to the entire world and its unbeatable excellence was manifested in the constant renewal of its brands (Fashion & Textile Landmark 1996: 141). This position was challenged during the social revolution of the 1960s when prêt-à-porter designs became more influential. Fashion pundits proclaimed the death of the couture. Morris (1982) summarised this viewpoint, saying, “During the era of miniskirts, T-shirts, and blue jeans, a couture designer seemed as obsolete as a blacksmith.” However, couture did not die. Couturiers continued to show each year. On the other hand, many prêt-à-porter firms were connected with established couture
Figure 2.1.1 Master Ng, one of the few remaining tailors who emigrated to Hong Kong in 1949, still practices his tailoring skills and specialises in cheongsam.
Figure 2.1.2 A rare case. Ascort Chang runs men's tailoring establishment as a family business. The Chang family emigrated to Hong Kong in 1949 and have practiced men's tailoring until the present day.
houses where couturiers designed the lines. Franchised boutiques sold these ready-to-wear products in cities around the world. Manufacturers purchased licences to use the couture name on such diverse items as handbags, jewellery, and household linens (Tortora, Eubank 1998: 493-4). Protectionism relative to haute couture was assured by the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne which represents couturiers as firms that create models that may be sold to private customers or to other segments of the fashion industry who also acquire the right to reproduce the designs.

Through this system, the Chambre Syndicale protected the prêt-à-porter sector in the 1960s, when immediate promotion of new lines was a direct result of being on their lists.25 Thus, the designs originated by the couturiers influenced international fashions (Latour: 1956, Tortora, Eubank 1998: 341). Still earlier, couturiers and manufacturers were grouped under the banner of “Chambre Syndicale de la Confection et de la couture pour Dames et Fillettes”26 which was founded in 1868. Once couturiers had received their training from this association, they went easily from manufacturing workshop to the made-to-measure workshop. The practice guaranteed manufacturing support for the couturiers and facilitated the differentiation of their career path from that of the dressmaker.

Apparently, the traditional apprenticeship system27 was the most popular type of industrial training when Hong Kong was under British rule with undeveloped industrial, commercial and education facilities. The low-educated apprentices set up their own tailor shops shortly after the early settlement in Hong Kong in the 1950s. With limited investment, a permanent tailor worker could earn HK$120-HK$200 a month. If the piece rate was counted, a tailor could earn up to HK$200-HK$300 a month. The profitable business did not encourage them to progress to an industrialised form of tailoring enterprise, and licensing was non-existent. Unlike couturiers in

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France, who were aesthetically inspired and worked closely with artists and intellectuals, tailors in Hong Kong worked in a non-artistic environment. They were merely dressmakers to serve the demands of their customers. The prevailing mode of Chinese clothes with consistent Western influence drove local tailors to adopt and imitate Western techniques and traditional skills, rather than create new forms of modern fashion.

On the other hand, to protect the French couture industry and to facilitate its publicity in general, the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne imposed a "press release" date for the publication of haute couture creations. Reports and collections could only appear after presentation of collections through international press coverage and magazines. Ultimately, the undisputed pinnacle of Paris haute couture set the international style trends. However, no effective trade or government community existed to represent the interests of Hong Kong tailors. Tailor-made garments and creations were not featured and praised by the media. Although The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) was established in 1967, for the purpose of promoting Hong Kong fashion and the local clothing industry, the interest aroused by “Made in Hong Kong” products was a result of the production of Western manufactured clothes beneficial to the trade and the well-being of the Hong Kong economy. Preservation of Chinese garments such as the cheongsam and promotion of such clothes were totally neglected. Tailoring in Hong Kong was severely challenged by the increasing demand for ready-made and manufactured clothes in the 1970s. Lack of innovation and technological development within the tailoring industry also contributed to its decline in later years.

With the simultaneous development of industrialisation and capitalism in the 1970s, the tailoring industry in Hong Kong gradually declined. On the other hand, the increasing demand for factory workers created lots of job opportunities for the new generation, as well as the experienced tailors and
dressmakers. The growing manufacturing industry absorbed most of the workforce, which eventually accelerated the speed of development of the clothing and textile industry.

2.4 Adaptation of Western-style clothing

Industrialisation and the increased popularity of ready-to-wear in the 1960s in Hong Kong were not the only factors contributing to the diminished popularity of wearing Chinese style clothing. Chan (1999) gave a brief account of the Westernisation of fashion and dress in Hong Kong using Appadurai’s (1990) model of five "landscapes", which is borrowed here for intensive elaboration and analysis. The cessation of wearing Chinese style clothing to adaptation of Western-style in the sixties and seventies of Hong Kong is emphasised alongside the high gear industrialisation and modernisation in the local context.

Appadurai (1990) suggests an understanding of the relation of global cultural flows in multiple aspects. He argues that the new global cultural economy should not be examined by a centre-periphery manner since it is too complex, overlapping, and disjunctive. The multi-disciplinary field of cultural globalisation is characterised by Appadurai in terms of five "landscapes," which are demonstrated below. They are ethnoscape (persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live), financescape (movement of capital), technoscapes (technology), mediascapes and ideoscapes (the constituted images).

- Ethnoscape

Hong Kong in the turbulent sixties had reinforced itself as a British colony and had set farther apart from China, especially with the long lasting Cultural Revolution in China in the mid-1960s. The British Government had introduced sets of policy to integrate the community as a whole and education
was imposed to strengthen the people’s concept of the felicity of a mobile, urban and nuclear family that they could enjoy (Turner 1995). In contrast with the corresponding economic and socio-political hardship in mainland China, the exotic notion of ‘a new life’, ‘a change for better future’ of the British rule was meant to be most effective among the people of Hong Kong. Their readiness to accept news, hastened the adaptation of Western style of fashion where as all forms of self-adornment were considered counter-revolutionary during the Cultural Revolution in mainland China.

The development of urban civilisation was accompanied by social mobility, which favoured the mass adaptation of Western style of clothes. In the realm of idea to implement a systematic social order community, it was reinforced by increasing opportunities in the context of social, economical, political, and the colony’s incorporation into the world of division of labour. The acceptance of the arbitrary association between ‘the West’ and ‘modernisation’ was, in the most direct and simplest form, exercised through clothes. Whilst fashion is a peculiarly Western and modern phenomenon which is rarely used in reference to non-Western cultures (Alison 1981, Craik 1994), the abandonment Chinese clothing for Western fashion was an ubiquity. Consequently, one trait characteristic of modern fashion phenomenon in the twentieth century is its association with urban lifestyle (Wilson: 1985, Lipovetsky: 1994), which enables the individual to express identity, status and modernity. The wearing Western fashion was, in fact, a manifestation of the will to change and progress.

The unquestionable acceptance was a compromise of Westernisation and thus, modernisation. The social tensions in the sixties between workers and employers, rival political groups, government and people, were brought to a head in the political confrontation of 1967 and subsequent riots, which spread quickly all over the city. The riot shocked the laissez-faire government

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by constituting a decisive, ideological movement within the community, generating a sense of belonging and indicating a desire for social reform. Turner (1995) noted the subsequent formulation of a policy by the British Government to regain the confidence of the Hong Kong people and hence promote an integrated community. The 1967 riot marked an abrupt coming of age of a new society. The immediate remedy was the 'Hong Kong Week', a supplement to the first Festival of Fashion, in November 1967\textsuperscript{12} which was originally intended to promote local garment exports, but was instantly adapted as a community event of fashion shows, exhibitions and a floats parade.

The event, organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries\textsuperscript{13}, was to provide the blueprint for the much larger 'Festival of Hong Kong' in 1969, a week long carnival of dancing, parades, fashion shows and pop concerts organised by the Government to demonstrate that the "community was as one", and "a shop window for democracy\textsuperscript{14}". With the dissolution of social rivalry through Ready-to-Wear fashion, Hong Kong's role as a major producer and exporter, and more generally, an export economy concentrated on following the latest trends in Western markets (Turner 1995: 15-32). As a product of the clash between official rhetoric from live experience, official representations of the city as economically independent, in trade shows, tourist promotions and Western-style export clothing or products, were now absorbed into the self-perception and daily lives of Hong Kong people (Figure 2.2.1 & 2.2.2).

- **Finanescape**

Nevertheless, Hong Kong turned instead to the material benefits of slowly rising standards of living after the violence which erupted in 1966 and 1967. There was also a marked, subjective change in Hong Kong peoples' attitude towards their own city, in part, a consequence of an increasing focus on local
Figure 2.2.1 One of the oldest family stores in Hong Kong, Sincere, displayed Western style men's suits in the shop window in 1965.
Figure 2.2.2 Top: Wing On's first merchandise premises in 1907-1909, Hong Kong. Bottom: The department store advertised their latest collection in the early 70s.

Courtesy of Wing On
issues, reflected in the incidentals of daily life, in comics, movies, local campaigns, education, and even social transformation brought by economic development, such as the pressures on families, high-density housing, and above all, the new economic independence brought about by factory work (Turner 1995: 15-32).

Migrants who fled from China in 1949 comprised entrepreneurs, investors, businessmen, and skilful workers, who brought along substantial finance to the territory, were the pioneers who invested in and boosted manufacturing in the city. With the twin development of industry and economy in the sixties, the economy prospered and the work force increased. The progressive transformation of the industrial society into a consumer society meant more dispensable income. The consumers included not only the lower middle class, but also the manual workers who had acquired the necessary self-confidence and self-respect to claim a fashionable style of life as their due. Ultimately, since the economy continued to flourish, Hong Kong was transformed into a first rate consumer society in the nineties, with more than 500 fashion brands from around the world (see also Chapter 4).

- Technoscope

Between 1960-65, the gross national product grew by 13.6% and the per capita income was HK$4,757. Hong Kong had embarked on the road to an industrial future, winning status as one of the ‘Asian dragons’. With the flow of Mainland refugees and investments from Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, the manufacturing industry became the major export earner, with the textile industry taking the lead in this sector. The number of factories in Hong Kong grew threefold between the fifties and the sixties, while the workforce grew twofold. Established garment factories manufactured mass-produced clothes that were offered at affordable prices. Along with the severe competition faced by individual tailors with ready-made clothes, brands and
imported clothes, domestic sewing faced an onslaught with the decline of the sewing machine.

On the one hand, industrialisation and the manufacturing industries attracted former tailors, machinists, domestic sewers, individual merchants, and others. On the other hand, the export oriented garment industry, which was geared for the manufacture of Western-style of clothes, decelerated the production of Chinese style clothing. While ready-to-wear fashion in the fashion shows displaced reliance on Western clothes and fashion, traditional tailoring, dressmaking, production and adaptation of Chinese style clothing had reached the end of an era.

• **Ideoscape**

The ‘trickle-down’ discussed by Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904) was limited to the Western fashion system, and can only account for a short period of Hong Kong fashion history. The theory cannot be applied in circumstances where consumer items are more widely available and cheaper to purchase in most of the Western countries. In Hong Kong, when new manufacturing processes enabled affordable mass-produced items, Western fashion was put into production instead of Chinese clothing. Nevertheless the cheongsam was at its peak during the sixties, popular among the high and middle class and more expensive than Western style dress (Osgood 1975, Roberts 1997, Hong Kong Fashion History 1995, Dress in Hong Kong 1995). In the post-war period, when Westerners were often associated with wealth, success and opportunities, the majority of people lived a life of poverty and hardship. Only the wealthy entrepreneurs, civil servants and big tycoons could earn a living without selling their physical labour. Westerners often occupied upper management and chairmen posts in established and respected organisations. The Hong Kong Chinese could at best reach a step down from the Western managers on the social ladder. Society gave many privileges to foreigners; for
instance, the peak tram was first built for the convenience of foreigners and the Chinese were not allowed to travel on it; in addition, only foreigners were allowed to live on the Peak.

Without doubt, local people fantasised about having the same degree of success and social status as their foreign counterparts. Their aspirations were reflected in their appearance, but the adaptation of Western dress was not psychologically assimilated and their ideas and opinions remained primarily Chinese. As a consequence, Western costumes seemed to demonstrate that the wearers, though not physically at ease in Western countries, had their heads full of ‘half-baked’ Western ideas. More often the wearing of a single foreign garment, like the dropping of a foreign word or phrase in conversation, was meant not to advertise foreign origin or allegiance but to indicate sophistication. It could also signify wealth. Alison (1981: 8), and Faure (1997) stated that Westernism was an avenue for a society to move ahead socially, as evidenced in Hong Kong’s important trade port status, rather than simply a colony.

* Mediascape

The sixties also saw the extensive adaptation of Western style clothing, especially amongst the first generation of locally born Chinese, who aspired to Western styles and absorbed the plethora of images projected by the new mass media. Colonial style education reinforced the value of Western culture. The contrast between colonial rule and the socio-political hardship experienced in Mainland China during the sixties and seventies in Hong Kong reinforced the idea that a Western orientation was the preferred option. Proficiency in English and overseas study were further aspirations of the local people, and this is still true today. Chinese art and culture were not especially interesting to the youth of the 1960s. In addition, the colonial-educated generation experienced a large generation gap, and sought idols who were both multi-
talented and open to change. They needed role models who could voice their
dissatisfaction, and who could give expression to their dreams and potential;
individuals who could oppose the economic powers-that-be that oppressed
them; icons who could assume an identity transcending class and enjoy the
happiness of youth and the freedom of love, without fear or hindrance (Turner:
1995). These idols expressed their identity through clothes and appearance,
aggressively asserting Westernisation and modernisation through Western
fashion. Through their Western appeal, they protested against the old
generation and tradition, thus defining a new path for the young generation.

In the sixties, going to the cinema was one way to develop critical
spectatorship. Moviegoers experienced visual pleasure in a context where
looking is also about imitation, competition, and confrontation. In the sixties,
Cantonese cinema, which reflected the changes of the times, was relied upon
to attract the youth market by making the transition to a youth-oriented
industry. The screen hero/ines acted as fantasy role models for their fans and
evoked a common sense of dignity and pride. The cinema in the sixties led
audiences to emulate and adopt the styles worn by their favourite film stars in
their latest films. Following the decline of Cantonese cinema, a new mass
media – television\(^36\) – widened audiences in the late sixties, providing
additional information and creating even more daring idols for the general
public in the young and turbulent society.

The appearance of TV and cinema personalities had a strong impact on the
general public. These stars correspondingly exerted the strongest possible
influence on fashion, for the public tried by every conceivable means to
unearth the secret of their prestige (Figure 2.3.1 & 2.3.2). The simplest means
of achieving this, and one that offered the user a kind of distinction into the
bargain, was fashion, and youth were the most affected (Konig 1971: 169).
With a relatively youthful population, the public observed the mass media
Figure 2.3.1 Left: Young, popular idol in the 60s, Siao Fong Fong dressed in the latest Western-style fashion which was similar to those advertised in department stores (on the right).
Figure 2.2.3 The image of Chan Po Chui, one of the popular idols in the 60s (below) was copied by the youth at that time (top left).
circles of relatively remote and 'high placed' persons, who offered something new – the latest Western fashion – and these idols in Western fashion succeeded immediately in gaining mass appeal.

Nonetheless, in the sixties the Hong Kong society was on the route to rapid industrial development and the economy was slowly recovering. The effect of urbanisation was, by no means, confined to the city dwellers or to the suburbs; in fact, all were exposed to the glare of publicity. Cinema and television were the primary form of mass media promoting Western dress, yet magazines, journals and comics all devoted considerable copy to fashion (Figure 2.4); even educational textbooks reinforced the trend.

The popularity of ready-made, mass-produced, Western-style clothes resulted in the corresponding decline of the tradition of Chinese tailoring. Hence, the Hong Kong Chinese manifested their desire for change and progress in extrinsic terms by the adaptation of Western fashion.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the transition from Chinese to Western style clothing in the context of Hong Kong. It analysed the evolution of dress in the context of the colonialisation and globalisation of the city; globalisation facilitated both Westernisation and modernisation, hence the acceptance of Western fashion. Clothing evolution both before and under the colonial rule was examined to illustrate the transition from wearing Chinese clothes to Western style of clothes. Industrialisation marked the demise of the traditional tailoring industry and the popularity of ready-to-wear weakened the adaptation of the cheongsam and Chinese dress. The decline of the tailoring industry in Hong Kong was compared with the case of Haute Couture in France and the conclusion was reached that insufficient support was evident in Hong Kong.
The dressing styles of Hong Kong people in early 70s demonstrated an adaptation of western-style fashion.

Figure 2.4 Local magazine publicised the wearing of Western-style fashion in the 70s.
The last part of the chapter demonstrated the adaptation of Western style clothing by Hong Kong Chinese in the sixties and the seventies within the framework of Appadurai's model of the five 'landscapes'. The Hong Kong Chinese, being migrants who were subjected to 'change' and to things that were 'new' in the form of the West, were exposed to Western fashion (ethnoscape). These migrants also brought substantial funds for industrial investment, speeding up the pace of the city's industrialisation. Given the increased workforce contributing the individual's economic independence, substantial disposable income had facilitated fashion consumption (finanscape). With industrialisation and modernisation ahead, the traditions of tailoring and domestic garment sewing were weakened. The decline of the domestic sewing machine and the popularity of mass-produced clothes quickened the pace of adaptation of Western-style clothes (technoscape). Moreover, the Hong Kong Chinese acquired social satisfaction and representation through the adaptation of Western style clothing (ideoscape). With the influence of cinema, television, magazines, and journals, the promotion of Western fashion led the people to abandon Chinese clothes (mediascape). Thus, Western style clothes became the every day dress code for the majority.
Endnotes

1 The treaty in 1898 signed by China and Britain was to extend the Territories of Hong Kong, inclusive of the New Territories, Lantau Island and more than 200 islands within Hong Kong's boundary.


3 cheongsam Literally 'long dress', fastening over to the right. Worn by men and women, but for women the term refers to a fitted dress, usually calf-length. The equivalent term for women's cheongsam in north China is qi pao, literally 'banner gown'. The term indicates the Manchu origin of this garment, 'banner' being one of the divisions of the Manchu army (Garret 1987: 80).

4 makwa Literally 'riding dress', short black jacket worn over man's cheongsam (Garret 1987: 81).

5 sam fu Sam is the upper garment fastening over to the right; fu is loose fitting trousers (Garret 1987: 81-2).

6 aoqunAo appeared in ancient China as a relatively short garment; qun means skirt. Aoqun was the combination of upper garment and skirt (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 38).

7 aku Ao being the same as above; ku means trousers. Aoku represented the set of upper garment and trousers (Dress in Hong Kong 1995: 38).

8 Shanghai was regarded as China's business centre from the 1910s onwards. Having frequent trade between Europe and US, it was one of the biggest trade ports in Asia. As business flourished, companies looked towards the Mainland, and major department stores such as Wing On Co., The Sincere Co., Sui Hing Co., and Tai Wah (also known as the Big Four department stores) were opened in the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai. During the 1930s and 1940s, Shanghai's fame and reputation had extended beyond South-east Asia, attracting lots of foreigners and traders who fostered continuous changes of clothing habits with modifications based on the style of Western clothes. Shanghai gained a reputation as a centre of Chinese women's fashion and was called the 'Paris of the East'.

9 The qipao was originally developed from the attire of Manchu women. It was commonly known as the cheongsam while the northern Chinese termed it qipao.
10 Tailor-made counters in major department stores like Wing On, Sincere, Sui Hing and Tai Wah held a wide selection of cloth and luxury embroidery, and served mostly tourists, the upper class and foreign businessmen. Locals often went to individual tailoring companies. However, skilful and experienced tailors felt inferior if they worked as in-store tailors, as their work could not easily be recognised by customers, and those with knowledge of tailored clothes chose popular and distinctive dressmakers. Superior tailors preferred to establish their own companies in order to attain a reputation in the tailoring business (Donny S.L. Mok, Senior Manager, Kwun Kee Tailor Co. Ltd., interview with author, August 1998).

11 During the 1950s, there were 8-10 tailor shops located in Stanley Street, Central, and the tailors were mostly from Guangdong and Shanghai. There was strong competition between Guangdong and Shanghai tailors. Differentiation of origin was stressed to attract customers with a particular preference. At the time when Chinese clothes and Western clothes were both worn, tailoring companies distinguished themselves according to the categories of either Chinese or Western clothes (Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998).

12 Nightclubs were the places of entertainment exclusive to men accompanied by well-dressed women for drinks and dance. During the 1940s, nightclubs were very popular among men of the middle to upper class, especially in big cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou.

13 Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998.

14 The world of Suzie Wong was a Hollywood movie directed by Ray Stark in 1960 starring William Holden and Nancy Kwan. The movie was made in Hong Kong and the story line was a love match between a Wanchai bar girl and an Englishman. Nancy Kwan, who played the prostitute in the movie, wore an exceedingly tight, mini-cheongsam with high slits to the buttocks, and high heels. The movie hit the international market, bringing the cheongsam to prominence, and making it a ‘hot’ item in the West. See also Chapter 3.

15 The success of the movie aroused international interest in wearing tight fitted-mini-cheongsam with high slits on the side and high heels for the ensemble, which made stars Martine Carol, Eva Gardner and Jean Simons fans of the cheongsam. See also Chapter 3.

16 In the 1950s and 1960s, the cheongsam was so popular that women of different ages and from all walks of life had at least one or two cheongsam in their wardrobe. Teenage students, clerks, housewives, waitresses and
professional women found their own preferred style of cheongsam appropriate to their status (Szeto 1997: 62).

17 In the late 1940s, a tailor-made cheongsam cost HK$8-9 without binding (at that time the average monthly salary was HK$110-120) In the 50s and 60s, the price rose to HK$15 without binding (average monthly salary of HK$180-200). In the late 70s and early 80s, the cost rose to HK$70-80 without binding and HK$150-160 with refined binding. The sam fu was also tailor-made, lower in price than the cheongsam and even cheaper without binding (Donny S.L. Mok, Senior Manager, Kwun Kee Tailor Co. Ltd. Interview with author, August 1998).

18 Tailor-made clothes were popular with the Hong Kong people from the 1950s onwards. The poor visited tailor shops for a single garment, mostly the sam or fu, to last for several months; while the rich would order an ensemble or cheongsam to match their wardrobe (Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998).

19 Shanghai tailors were renowned for their cutting, silhouette, body fit, fabrics and craftsmanship (Donny S.L. Mok, Senior Manager, Kwun Kee Tailor Co. Ltd, interview with author, August 1998).

20 Guangdong tailors were more practical and flexible with their patterns. Rapid absorption of Western trends and clever modification of clothing styles were their advantages (Donny S.L. Mok, Senior Manager, Kwun Kee Tailor Co. Ltd, interview with author, August 1998).

21 Shanghai tailors in the early days were mostly centred in North Point, Hong Kong, which was formerly known as 'Little Shanghai', and had the most renowned fashionable tailor shops such as "Cho Yiu", "Kwok Fong", "Hak Pak", and "Oi Wah". Other popular names included "Siu Hong Btn" in Happy Valley and "Union" in the former Lee Theatre, both located in Hong Kong Island. Guangdong tailors "Cissi", "Po Luk", "Mau Kei", "Chi Leung" were amongst the most renowned.

22 In the 1970s, established garment factories such as Goldlion and Crocodile manufactured their own brands that were favoured by the locals and were regarded as popular brands for ready-to-wear clothes. The exhibition of Hong Kong Products, which was organised by the Chinese Manufacturers' Association (CMA) from 1938-1974 (except 1941-47 and resumed in 1998), held annually, had introduced the public to Hong Kong industrial products. Ever since, Hong Kong people looking for branded products have extended their preference from general products to clothing items (George Yau, General Manager, Kwun Kee Tailor Co. Ltd., interview with author, August 1998).
The recovery of the economy in the 1970s also improved the general living standard of the Hong Kong people, and foreign brands became relatively affordable to the general public. Popular foreign brands in those days were "Arrow", "Montague", and "Bally". Brand names also extended to US fabric like "Dacron" (Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998).

Although most people criticise the symbolic relationship between haute couture and prêt-à-porter, and challenge the unprofitable extravagance and virtual existence of haute couture, preservation of tradition, aesthetic, skill and techniques are key issues to consider in this context.

1962, a crucial year, saw the appearance of Philippe Venet, André Courrèges, Oonagh Ferreras, Yves Saint-Laurent and Jean Louis Scherrer and for the first time in France, in the same year, witnessed the designers Christianne Bailly, Emmanuelle Khanh, Daniel Hechter and Jacqueline Jacobson, discreetly bring out their first collections. In 1965, Emmanuel Ungaro founded the last fashion house to experience international recognition in times of prosperity (Fashion & Textile Landmarks 1996: 141).

"Chambre Syndicale de la Confection et de la Couture pour Dames et Fillettes" was the first union of the French clothing industry, founded in 1868 to group companies to sell models for reproduction, one-off items, and mass produced items and facilitate trained workers to move from manufacturing work-shop to made-to-measure work-shop. It was not until 1910 that couturiers split from the manufacturers and formed a separate group, which began the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne.

To be trained as a tailor, one had to become an apprentice who began his term of employment by 'boiling water' for his master. The training normally last for three years, with a year of enhanced training. The apprentices were normally paid HK$5 per month as pocket money during the late 1940s. Each master could train no more than three apprentices (Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998).

In the early 20th century, the talent of Paul Poiret and his use of vivid colours was inspired by the tour of the Russian Ballet, which appeared in Paris in 1909. In the 1920s, Coco Chanel dressed film stars with the most elaborate costumes possible. She worked closely with Claude Monet and was strongly inspired by his colours. In the 1930s, Elsa Schiaparelli achieved popularity for her emphasis on colour and unusual decorative effects. She worked closely with Salvador Dali who designed fabrics for her.

The Hong Kong Tailor Association was found in 1961 with the aim to facilitate local tailors by the publication of a quarterly magazine indicating new trends and style forecast. The magazines that were sold to local tailors
also previewed new creations by popular tailoring companies for publicity purposes. The magazine became a biannual publication.

Political ideology had suppressed and restricted variety in dress and fashion. Around the time of the Cultural Revolution in China, the element of contrast could not have been starker. All forms of self-adornment were considered counter-revolutionary. Bright colours were condemned. The standard grey/blue/green Mao-suits became the uniform for the proletariat and party leaders.

Social conflicts throughout the sixties in Hong Kong invariably disrupted harmonious relations between East and West. The disparity between the wealth and the hardship of the majority resulted in a series of strikes, lockouts, demonstrations and riots. In 1966, riots were inspired by a protestor at Star Ferry over the rise in Star Ferry prices, which culminated in a demonstration. The following year, a labour dispute in a plastic flower-manufacturing factory spilled over into street riots after the intervention of a leftist group. A strike of 6th May ignited demonstrations and riots across the Colony with support from the Cultural Revolution across the border. It was not until 1968 that social discontent diminished. See also Wah Kiu Daily Testimony of History 1995: 78.

The plan was overtaken by the riots, bombs and murders of May 1967, hence the event was adapted to soothe rival emotions of the public.

Underlying Hong Kong social changes caused by the shift from regional exports to manufacture for Western markets, a commercial and ideological transformation engineered by the Government-inspired Federation of Hong Kong Manufacturers, founded in 1960.

A phrase coined by Sir Cho-yiu Kwan in an official message for the Festival brochure (Turner 1995: 166).

In 1950, there were 2,384 factories registered in the territory, employing a workforce of 109,900. In 1959, the figure had risen to 4,689 factories and 205,726 workers (Hong Kong Almanac 1981). In 1969, the manufacturing industry employed a total of 524,400 workers. The value of their exports was 10.5 billion dollars, 2.7 times the figure of 1960 (Wah Kiu Daily Testimony of History: 1995).

Television Broadcast (TVB) introduced in 1967 had at once boasted around 300,000 viewers. In the following year, consumption of television sets grew 1.7 percent. By 1973, television had turned to full colour and by the mid-
1970s, it had established itself the most popular form of mass entertainment media, serving around 3 million viewers during peak viewing hours.
"Suzie Wong dress" as a Hong Kong way of dress: A comparative study of 'The World of Suzie Wong' and 'Teddy Girls'

The previous chapter demonstrated the rapid adaptation of Western-style clothing by the Hong Kong Chinese, and corresponding rejection of traditional Chinese clothes. The widespread habit of dressing in Western-style clothing for the majority of the Hong Kong Chinese was also illustrated. The topic is well recorded and the Hong Kong Chinese have retained the same habit for more than thirty years. However, in recent years the cheongsam, typically the sexy cheongsam worn by Suzie Wong in the movie 'The World of Suzie Wong' in early sixties, has been revived in the fashion scene in Hong Kong. Its return during the period of the Handover of Hong Kong was meant to denote an identity of dress for the people of the city. However, whether such a dress could represent an identity of dress or fashion of Hong Kong, or to what extent it could be representative, require profound assessment. Thus, this chapter explores the impact of the "Suzie Wong dress" in relation to a Hong Kong style of dress. It uses for a resource the novel and subsequent movie 'The World of Suzie Wong', and comparisons are then drawn with the locally produced Cantonese movie, 'Teddy Girls'/Feimu Zhengzhuan.

Background

*The World of Suzie Wong* is Richard Mason's most spectacularly successful novel. It was translated into over 14 languages, and sold virtually a million copies worldwide. The book, which told the fictional story of a British artist who fell in love with an Oriental Wan Chai bar-girl was turned into a
Broadway, then a West End, play. It then became a hugely popular film with Nancy Kwan as the eponymous tart-with-the-golden-heart prostitute and William Holden (then a major star) as the painter (Adrian: 1997). In 1960, the movie hit American theatres. The sexy, mini-cheongsam, which Kwan wore in the movie, became so popular that it inspired American manufacturers to run imitations (Roberts: 1996). The so-called "Suzie Wong dress" became a trendy item in the sixties with numerous foreign stars and Westerners rushing to Hong Kong to order their tailor-made cheongsams (Hong Kong Fashion History: 1995). Kwan's dress code extended to local women of all walks of life and the cheongsam business also experienced a spell of popularity in the sixties in Hong Kong (Hong Kong fashion history; 1995, Dress in Hong Kong: 1995, Szeto: 1997). Worn with a curvy, figure-revealing sheath with a tall stand-up collar and asymmetric closures at the yoke, this form of oriental dress was revived as a fashion fad in the nineties.

Introduction

Perceived as a city where 'East meets West', Western styles of clothes are the everyday dress code for Hong Kong people in general. In the nineties, particularly in advance of the return of the territory, Hong Kong fashion was facing an identity crisis. Numerous Hong Kong fashion designers (e.g., Flora Cheung-Leen, Peter Lau, and William Tang) began to explore 'a Hong Kong identity' in local fashion by using the cheongsam as an inspiration for their collections. They produced cheongsams in sexy and mini styles with clear and transparent materials, addressing the image of Suzie Wong in the movie. Even the Hong Kong label, Shanghai Tang, which declare their clothes to be 'Made by Chinese' and once advertised with the slogan 'Chinese people should wear Chinese clothes', has released tight-fitting and short cheongsams in luxurious fabrics and fluorescent colours. The "Suzie Wong dress" seems to represent a Hong Kong style of dress.
Popular as it may have been, however, both the dress and the film represent a Hollywood fantasy created by Westerners. An Asian stereotype viewed from a Western perspective and a mode of dress representing seduction has been extended to fit Asian women in general. It is unlikely that the sexy, mini cheongsam worn by Nancy Kwan as Suzie Wong in the movie would influence local fashion followers to adapt the style of "a bar-girl dress" in the sixties in a conservative society such as Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the cheongsam was, indeed, worn by most Hong Kong women of different social levels. The number of cheongsam shops, and the prosperity of the tailoring industry in the past decades, reinforces the status of the cheongsam as a major fashion item in the sixties.

The impact of the "Suzie Wong dress" on the local dress code is therefore analysed and it is argued that this was a costume dress for movie. Reference is made to the clothing of ordinary people of Hong Kong in the sixties as depicted in the Cantonese movie – Teddy Girls/Feinu Zhengzhuan (1969) of Lung Kong, which gives an illustrative approach to the dress of those times, and reveals something of the attitude of the Hong Kong people towards clothes. The chapter commences to evaluate both Suzie Wong and her dress as part of the history of Hong Kong. It demonstrates 'Suzie Wong dress' as a movie costume of stereotype. Finally, the author highlights the image of Suzie Wong as a myth representing the cultural identity of Hong Kong.

3.1.1 "Suzie Wong dress" as a Hong Kong way of dress

The "Suzie Wong dress" received international acclaim. Since the film was shot on location, and since Nancy Kwan represented Hong Kong femininity in the late fifties, this form of oriental dress denotes the trend for Hong Kong fashion. However, the Hollywood produced movie and costume produced with Western fantasy, are central to the argument. American Asian communities once accused the "Suzie Wong" character of creating a negative

Whether or not the emergence of Suzie Wong in the sixties was well received by the people of Hong Kong, and whether her image of dress was widely adopted by local women, depends on one's point of view. Hong Kong fashion designer Ms Judy Mann, a renowned sixties' Hong Kong fashion model turned fashion designer, suggested that Suzie Wong, in her sexy cheongsam, could not possibly have represented the style of conservative Hong Kong in the old days. Master Ng, who began his tailoring business in Hong Kong after leaving the Mainland in 1949, and specialised in women's cheongsams, observed that the dress of prostitutes and ordinary women differed in the choice of materials, colours, cutting and silhouettes. Thus, Suzie Wong's impact on local culture, the degree to which she influences the representation of the image of Hong Kong, and her role in the creation of local fashion, require profound assessment.

3.1.2 Suzie Wong as part of Hong Kong's history

Apparently, Suzie Wong's role as a part of the history of Hong Kong cannot be denied. In the past few decades, Hong Kong has grown so fast that real estate prices have risen to a preposterously high level, with the result that many of the office buildings constructed in the seventies have been torn down and replaced by steel-and-glass towers soaring more than 60 stories into the sky. Today, most of that sexy exoticism has vanished as banks, luxury hotels and arts centres replace some of Wan Chai's historic district (Flannery: 1997). The lasting symbol of Hong Kong's biggest convention centre, which was designed to present to the world an image of a major, first-world ranking, economic centre for Hong Kong, appears in stark contrast to the bars and
night-clubs on the other side of the Wan Chai district. Even so, the Wan Chai of Suzy Wong fame looked the same, with topless bars filled with GIs on R&R from Vietnam (Fortune: 1997). No matter how fast developments in the city emerged, it seems the fictional good-time girl Suzie Wong as a symbol of Hong Kong's once notorious Wan Chai district cannot be replaced overnight.

Indeed, *The World of Suzie Wong* attracted a great deal of attention both locally and overseas. In the exhibition of 'Hong Kong Sixties', held in 1995 in the Hong Kong Arts Centre, aiming to tackle Hong Kong identity in the sixties, exhibits included local exported merchandise produced with the image of Suzie Wong, Nancy Kwan's picture on the cover of local magazines, Suzie depicted in cartoon form characterised by her sexy cheongsam in the movie poster, etc. She has become an icon representing the fantasy of Hong Kong in the sixties and a part of the city's history. Matthew Turner (1995), curator of the exhibition, noted that Suzie Wong is a symbol of Hong Kong as prostitution was occasionally used as a metaphor for the city. In a contemporary Cantonese film - *Comrade, almost a love story* - a middle-aged Hong Kong woman collects photos of William Holden, a Hollywood film star who went to Hong Kong for the filming of *The World of Suzie Wong* and played the lead role in the movie. Her passion for him increases after a memorable night meeting with the idol in the Peninsula Hotel of Hong Kong. Memorabilia of the star and the movie appear to be very popular with many of the older generation in Hong Kong. Even the Museum of Hong Kong History, which houses Suzie Wong exhibits, has demonstrated that Suzie Wong, who characterises a Wan Chai bar girl in the fifties of Hong Kong, is regarded as a part of Hong Kong history.
3.2.1 Stereotype and clothes - The World of Suzie Wong and Teddy Girls/Feiu Zhengzhuan

The fact that Suzie Wong was a part of Hong Kong's history does not change the notion that the "Suzie Wong dress" characterises a certain stereotype in movie production. Unlike the image of Suzie Wong, the representation of the "Suzie Wong dress" could not simply be regarded as a Hong Kong style of dress. Styling of costume for the cinema is frequently influenced by images and myths (Barthes: 1993). Nevertheless, cinema is often represented as producing both manipulation and resistance, as well as the homogenisation and fragmentation of contemporary culture (Morley: 1991).

It is believed that, after the fifties, most of the Hollywood movie productions employed their own staff to cater for movie costumes (Gaines: 1990). In The World of Suzie Wong, although no costume designer was listed, it is assumed that the costumes were managed by a production crew, since this was the norm for the majority of Hollywood motion picture productions after the fifties. Nevertheless, the movie was a Hollywood production, and it originated from an English novel with imagined characters and a story based on Hong Kong in the late fifties. Despite the research on the location and the characters, the images of Hong Kong and Chinese people are based on the perception of Westerners.

The Cantonese movie – Teddy Girls/Feiu Zhengzhuan (1969) of Lung Kong, is chosen to provide a comparative approach to The World of Suzie Wong. According to Law (1996), Cantonese films of the sixties were not merely for entertainment, they reflected society with realistic characters and scripts. Jarvie (1977) further divided Hong Kong film in those years into Mandarin and Cantonese. He argues that Cantonese movies were un-Westernised and designed entirely for local consumption, while Mandarin movies were cosmopolitan, technically accomplished, and in touch with the contemporary
world. He believes that Cantonese movies are reflections of the modern world. They use local culture and personalities, folk-stories, popular operas, etc. to provide a way of recording them or fixing them in time. While many Mandarin movies were effectively copies of Western movies, Cantonese movies were about everyday life, values and colonial society of the people of Hong Kong. They reflect society and the life of the people because such plots and role-playing are either closer to the world they live in, or closer to what the world they are living in is likely to become.

In the sixties, when Hong Kong society began its path to industrialisation, Cantonese films were mostly low budget productions, supplied for the domestic market (Jarvie: 1977), and costume or fashion designers were relatively scarce. Clothing used in the movies, therefore, may be seen as being dependent on the structure of narrative and character for significance. Gaines (1990) also remarked on the function of costume in realist cinema. She (1990: 180-1) pointed out the 'restriction' with 'the primary function of costuming in classical, realist cinema where every element in the mise-en-scene...serves the higher purpose of the narrative'. Costume is, therefore, a tool to 'serve the narrative by restating the emotions which the actress conveyed through gesture and movement' (Gaines 1990: 185). In Palmer's (1992) chapter on 'Visualisation', she recommended screenwriters 'to study character by observing gloves, shoes, and jewellery, because "so much of character is told in one's manner of wearing clothes"'.

The clothes and mannerisms that Palmer (1992) mentioned were significant in the Western, silent movies in the twenties and thirties, yet they were equally relevant to many of the Cantonese movies of realist drama in the fifties and sixties, in which film stars were their own costume designers. Similarly in the Hollywood motion picture industry, before the employment of couturiers and costume designers, local actresses were literally their own designers. Very
often, they picked up styles from the latest magazines, perhaps modifying them slightly, and passed the designs to their personal tailors. They had to struggle with these clothes and ordinary clothes. Either they had to appear in different roles wearing the same dress, or to make their screen clothes double as everyday dress\(^2\). Costume dress for locally produced dramas may therefore be assumed to have been no different from ordinary dress. These practices were defended based on verisimilitude, for the period, at least, before the emergence of costume or fashion designers\(^4\) in Hong Kong. Film scholars have, in spite of that, theorised classical realist cinema as a finely tuned naturalisation machine which presents to the viewer a perfectly contained world that is an apparent continuation of the one in which he or she lives (Gaines 1990: 192).

Insufficient reference material about the Hong Kong fashion history, and the confusion over such information as there is, suggests that movies are an alternative source to perceive fashion and dress identity. Dress code, attitudes towards dress and other aspects of cultural life may be viewed from the perspective of the cinema, and the film stars that arise from the movie industry. With reference to the film *Teddy Girls*, illustrations of the style of dress, society and representation of Hong Kong are reviewed.

3.2.2 Background of Teddy Girls

Ultimately, the importance of clothes worn on the screen is what links all the films examined in the process of discussion. Lung Kong’s *Teddy Girls/Feimu Zhengzhuan* was chosen for analysis as it is a Cantonese movie produced in the sixties which was shot on-location and evidently characterised by sufficient research and plausible details. The film presented characters of different social levels and traditions in respect to the clothes they wore. In the scene of a delirious dance in the disco, a fashion show presented in the reformatory, and rebellious youth making a stand against tradition and society,
each character was dressed in a manner whereby the wardrobe signified meanings and functions in his/her play role. All these factors set it apart from other, run of the mill Cantonese film productions which were linear in terms of the narrative and the variety of characters in the film.

Another factor which distinguished *Teddy Girls* is that a fashion show was presented in the movie. The fashion show (with catwalk and models on stage) within the film was completely integrated into the narrative and lasted no more than 5 minutes within a 112-minute feature. It was not intended to show clo-hrs for commercial reasons. The fashion show in the movie was performed by the actresses who played the roles of reformatory girls, and the audience in the film comprised mostly the parents of the girls and people associated with the reformatory. In the film, the audience made negative comments about the models (the reformatory girls) as well as the clothes; while audiences outside the screen were expected to view it as the sequence of the narrative. The fashion show within the film demonstrated the attitude towards Western fashion in the sixties in Hong Kong. The film was released after a riot, when society proceeded to re-structure itself, the clothing manufacturing industry was beginning to take shape, the demand for pret-a-porter was increasing, and the people of Hong Kong were gradually evolving a way of dress and attitude towards fashion.

### 3.2.3 Teddy Girls - Narrative and clothes

*Teddy Girls* deals with female ‘A Fei’ – the Cantonese term to denote rebellious, errant youths. The main strength of the movie lies in its characterisations, particularly of the lead protagonists. Josephine Siao, who played teddy girl Josephine Tsui, a disaffected, alienated youth who opted to go to a reform school for girl delinquents after a fight with boys in a discotheque, rather than become the ward of her mother’s shady lover played by Lung Kong, the film’s director. During the film, she resorts to violence.
acting out of a strong belief of personal justice. In the end, she escapes from the reform school to seek revenge on Lung Kong whom she blames for her mother’s suicide.

Within this framework, the film develops a polemic around the tension and dichotomy between clothes and the character, structured around the evocation of the characters’ identification with their dress appearance. Siao’s youth and Western-ess in *Teddy Girls* is identified through the characterisation – a peculiarly intrusive, Western and trendy indicator being her sexy 60s’ mini-dress, her face half-covered by her long hair, and her eyes full of poison. Conversely, the elegant Chinese beauty of Ha Ping, who played her mother in the movie, is characterised by her embroidered, luxurious and sophisticated well-fitted cheongsam with matching accessories, a style that ostensibly echoes the 1960s dressy, tight-fitted cheongsam with high heels. The supervisor and the wife of the rector of the reform school, on the other hand, wore the traditional cheongsam in cotton and plain colours, which effectively presented the conservative side of society.

By means of reference to the costumes of the movies, apart from the costumes worn in the films *The World of Suzie Wong* and *Teddy Girls* are evaluated, there being three points that deserve consideration. Firstly, the interpretation of the novel into a film and the stereotyping of Chinese women from a Western perspective. Secondly, the treatment of the costume/character in both the novel and the film. Thirdly, the attitude towards fashion in the sixties in Hong Kong.
3.3.1 Interpretation of the novel into the film and stereotyping of Chinese women

Gaines (1990) stated that the transformation of the novel into the film is worthy of consideration. She referred to the work of Dudley Andrew, who stated:

"... adaptation as common aesthetics practice which often goes unnoticed. Essentially, adaptation is nothing more than a kind of borrowing in which one aesthetic domain is raided to enrich another, he says. The search for equivalence, more specifically, has to do with lining up two domains and "matching" the terms in each. Citing the work of art historians E.H. Gombrich and Nelson Goodman, whose analyses of adaptation as systemic exchange predate semiotic theory, Andrew describes adaptation as "searching two systems capable of eliciting a signifier at a given level of pertinence... By pairing signifiers, colours are translated into musical tones, vegetables are understood as animals, and fabrics are transposed into character traits. In the fabric system, for instance, wool tweed corresponds with "serious," black satin with "wicked" or "decadent," and tulle is "light-hearted."" (Gaines 1990: 191)

It would be unreasonable to expect a transposition of a completed, 300-page story to a two-hour movie. The essence of characters and the plot should be carefully transferred from one to the other. What is evident in the film The World of Suzie Wong is that the plot was dramatically re-structured and intensified. The transposition of novel into movie in such a case, arbitrarily, adapts in a rather peculiar way. The methods of 'borrowing', 'equivalence', and 'matching' did not necessarily appear as norms when the novel was transposed into a movie. In the novel, Richard Mason merges the character of Suzie Wong with her ferry travel. He wrote:
'Her hair was tied behind her head in a ponytail and she wore jeans – green length denim jeans.

That's odd, I thought. A Chinese girl in jeans. How do you explain that?'
(Mason 1957: 5)

What was odd was not a Chinese girl who wore jeans, but the fact that Suzie Wong travelled by ferry in the opening scene of the movie wearing a knee-length overcoat with straight pants (Figure 3.1). It may be explained that jeans did not appear to be "Chinese" enough, or that the director was attempting to create a dramatic encounter of the male and female protagonists where jeans were singled out for attention, or other such assumptions. Suzie Wong wearing jeans in the novel, in fact, was rather remarkable to the male protagonist. For example, Mason wrote:

'...I did not see her again until the next morning, when she came into the bar about lunchtime. She was dressed exactly as she had been dressed on the ferry, in the green denim jeans and her hair in a ponytail.' (Mason: 1957: 52)

When he met her again, he observed that:

'[s]he was wearing a silk cheongsam with high, tight-fitting collar, which although very smart was too sophisticated for her: I thought the ponytail and jeans better suited to her style.' (Mason 1957: 56)

Throughout the entire film, however, Suzie never appeared in jeans. Ultimately, adaptation through 'borrowing', 'matching' and 'exchange' between these two systems in such a case does not possess the capability of 'eliciting a signifier at a given level of pertinence' (Gaines 1990: 195).
Figure 3.1 Suzie Wong in knee-length overcoat with yellow straight pants in the opening scene of 'The World of Suzie Wong'

Courtesy of Paramount British Pictures Ltd.
In addition, besides the jeans and ponytail, Mason did not intend to engrave the wardrobe and appearance of Suzie Wong in the novel, only in fragments like '[s]he looks pretty', '...her hair loose on the shoulders instead of in a ponytail...in a cheongsam instead of jeans' (Mason 1957: 46), '...her kicking legs and her thigh through the split skirt' (Mason 1957: 50), etc. Rather, the film borrowed a Suzie Wong fellow bargirl's 'look' as a reference for her astonishing appearance in the movie. Mason writes of Jeannie, a bar-girl who worked in the same bar as Suzie, who wore:

'a black split skirt stretched tautly over undulating hips, black stockings, and enormously high heels – the only girl who dressed the part, for none of the others, if met out in the street, would have given a hint of their profession' (Mason 1957: 39).

Thus, with the 'pairing' of 'signifiers', her wardrobe was translated into a tight-fitted, curvy sheath, mini-cheongsam with high split slit just reaching the bottom, in bright, eye-catching colours, worn with thin and super high heels, offset by a delicate Oriental face decorated with loose and long, shiny black hair (Figure 3.2).

If Suzie Wong's appearance is made of fragments of the image of the Chinese bar girl throughout the novel, then the fragments of many Chinese people have also contributed to her character. Mason went to Hong Kong in the fifties to do research for the book and became friends with many of the bargirls during that time. He (1957) stated that 'Suzie Wong was a mixture of the different girls in the bar' that he observed. 'She was certainly not based on just one girl'. Instead, the character of Suzie Wong is, most likely, a mixture of many Chinese people who 'consulted a fortune-teller about a favourable day for changing jobs', 'show off possessions with emphasis on their imagined value', were very much concerned with 'loss of face', etc. Suzie Wong,
Figure 3.2 The image of Suzie Wong in the movie

Courtesy of Paramount British Pictures Ltd
comprising all these perceptions of Westerners of the Chinese in a single character, became a stereotype of Chinese women from a Western perspective. In spite of that, in the film, the abundant use of Hong Kong as a dramatic backdrop guaranteed a 'sight-seeing' approach for the late fifties. There were, for instance, the conducted tours of all possible Chinese Hong Kong neighbourhoods, such as a wet Chinese market, a trip to the floating restaurant in Aberdeen, a Hong Kong-Kowloon ferry trip, Hong Kong scenery, etc. All have become a fundamental guide for tourists. The World of Suzie Wong, is, eventually, a result of the elaboration of a cross-cultural love story based on Hong Kong in the fifties from the viewpoint of a Western novelist and cinema producers. Consequently, the "Suzie Wong dress" was, presumably, a costume dress in the movie.

3.3.2 The treatment of costume and character

"Appropriate" costuming for a given character is the value of fidelity in literary-film adaptation. Costume drawn by striving for exact connotative equivalence from relative unlike systems, very often, creates the "right" impression. To establish the rule or code, apparently, by the frequent use of such combinations or coupling of items, this coding would, eventually become "naturalised". By and large, 'the degree of habituation produced when there is fundamental alignment and reciprocity', 'between the encoding and decoding sides of an exchange of meanings', as Hall (1980: 132) further described, results in 'the degree of habituation', which facilitates the existence of this "naturalised" code. An easy agreement for an existential connection between two terms would, therefore, be emphatically achieved with the perfect connotative match between the systems. With costume, this naturalisation reasserts the personality, which finds its direct manifestation in the manner of dress. Such naturalisation of the relationship between costume and character decelerates the notion of costume for a movie. That is to say, audiences see the character as merely wearing clothes.
In this discourse, costumes in *Teddy Girls* could best illustrate the naturalised costume/character relationship with the society of Hong Kong in the sixties. Siao's teddy girl play role is identified through an excess of negative behaviour and rebellion with her mini-hot-dress dancing A-Go-Go and varied styles of Western and trendy dress worn throughout the movie (Figure 3.3). Her style of dress was, according to the references about Hong Kong's fashion evolution (Hong Kong fashion history: 1995, Dress in Hong Kong: 1995), an ubiquitous sartorial sign of the young, middle-class, new generation filled with Western ideas, in the sixties in Hong Kong. Her mother, as portrayed in the movie, signified the conventionalised notions of sartorial femininity identified by Ha Ping. The film portrayed her luxurious cheongsams and played on their exclusivity, blending them into the narrative about a rich married woman, who was having an affair with her 'openly' secret lover, while her husband lay in hospital. Her frequent meetings with the secret lover were an obstacle to the mother and daughter relationship, which allowed her frequent display of refined, embroidered, luxurious, well-fitted cheongsams, worn with carefully selected accessories for perfect co-ordination. Her beauty was conveyed through a wardrobe of sensuous silks and heavily embroidery cheongsams and her attractiveness is marked by a sensuality, ornamentation and flamboyance in her wardrobe - all in sharp lines and perfectly matching (Figure 3.4). It is also, as fashion history suggests, (Hong Kong fashion history: 1995, Dress in Hong Kong: 1995, Szeto: 1997), the way in which beauty, elegance, luxury and wealth were signified, as she had a rich husband who would soon die, leaving her tremendous wealth and property.

The costumes of the supervisor of the reformatory were subtle and down-to-earth cheongsams with mid-length sleeves (Figure 3.5). Her brown cotton cheongsam signified the middle-class, conservative and disciplined attitude of the society of the sixties. Her character in the film is contrasted with that of the rector of the reformatory, who believed suppression and penalty to be no
Figure 3.3 Various images of Siao Fong Fong in trendy Western-style dress in 'Teddy Girls/Feinu Zhengzhuan'

Courtesy of Wing Wah Production.
Figure 3.4 Sensuous, luxurious cheongsams worn by Ha Ping in 'Teddy Girls/Feinu Zhengzhuan'

Courtesy of Wing Wah Production
remedy for youths' problems. Her costumes harmonised with those of the rector's wife who also dressed in a cheongsam and ensemble for special occasions. The rector's wife was a more mobile and open-minded woman when compared to the conservative supervisor. Her cheongsam was well fitted, sleeveless and brighter in colour (Figure 3.6). Lung, the film director, identified the two women, who worked in the same reformatory, by slightly differentiating the costumes in terms of different materials, colours and styles. Such variations demonstrate the variety of cheongsam in the sixties, with the categorisation in terms of colour, material, cutting, silhouette and accessories for different levels and status of women in the society of Hong Kong. Moreover, their wardrobes in the movie serve the function to masquerade the reality underlying society. Their characters are unrelated to relative social value, environment and society's perception of youth. Their costumes represent the fundamental components of their characters.

From what was worn in *Teddy Girls*, different features of a cheongsam worn in the sixties may be identified: luxurious silk, embroidery, bright colours and delicate materials, a fitted silhouette, and high-heeled shoes for the wealthy, society women; plain, simple, mostly cotton material, a relatively loose but well-fitted silhouette worn with lower heels for the middle-class professionals (such as teachers, office ladies, nurses, etc.). The classification of the cheongsam is echoed in Hong Kong Fashion History (1995: 22), which points out the adaptation of cheongsams made of materials of high quality that were worn by wives of celebrities and young ladies from rich families. Cheongsams of teachers and students were simple and plain, mainly made of Prussian blue or dark blue satin. Consequently, the closest form of cheongsam following the trendy "Suzie Wong dress" after *The World of Suzie Wong* would be what Ha Ping wore in *Teddy Girls*. However, a huge gap, measured in terms of dignity and decency, exists between the two different types of cheongsam. Most of all, the characters of "Suzie Wong" and Ha Ping in *Teddy Girls* represent women
Figure 3.5  The reformatory's supervisor in a subtle and
down-to-earth cheongsam in 'Teddy Girls/Feinu Zhengzhuan'
Courtesy of Wing Wah Production.

Figure 3.6  Brightly coloured, snugly fitted cheongsam worn
by the rector's wife in 'Teddy Girls/Feinu Zhengzhuan'
Courtesy of Wing Wah Production
of different social level in Hong Kong. Master Ng, an old Hong Kong tailor, commented on the difference in making cheongsam for prostitutes and ordinary women. Technically, when making cheongsam for prostitutes, the waist was relatively shorter, colours were brighter and more showy, the materials were seductive and sensuous, the silhouette was comparatively slimmer and tightly-fitting, the breasts were exaggerated, the waist was more pronounced, and the side slit was much higher than 'usual'.

3.3.3 Attitude towards fashion in the sixties of Hong Kong

The World of Suzie Wong and Teddy Girls were released at different times, the former in 1961, and the latter in 1969. In the course of almost a decade, the once 'hip' "Suzie Wong dress" was transformed in a modified, classy version, widely accepted by elite society, assuming immediate adaptation via the elite group which allowed a style to trickle down to other groups of society. Though the original "Suzie Wong dress" was trendy, the adaptation of 'a prostitute dress' was unlikely to happen in a conservative society like Hong Kong in the early sixties. Consider the attitude towards clothes of the people of Hong Kong. By the late sixties, as demonstrated in the fashion show featured in Teddy Girls, Western dresses, corresponding to the trend in the West, were presented in the gala event for the chairmen of the reformatory and relatives of the reformatory girls, and the reaction of the audience was recorded. Models from the catwalk, who were also the reformatory girls, presented their clothes one after another and a presenter read out a predefined description for each outfit. The adaptation of Western fashions, and the admiration accorded to those who had competently interpreted the latest fashion trends, also elicited comments such as 'over-sexy', or 'over-exposed' from some of the middle-aged women during the show. They were refuted by an old lady in a sam fu who was, apparently, related to one of the reformatory models. She defended the adaptation of Western clothes for ordinary people, despite the non-rebellious act on the part of the teddy girls. Although it was
probably the director's intention to use the comments to resolve the issue of 'problem youth' through Western fashion, the conservative side of society in the sixties of Hong Kong is clearly identified. The resistance to Western fashion, as observed in the movie, prevalent amongst a considerable number of Hong Kong people in late sixties, and the acceptance of "a bar-girl dress" as a fashionable item in early sixties of society, were figments of imagination.

3.4 Suzie Wong as a myth of Hong Kong culture

After the popularity of The World of Suzie Wong, Kwan was featured on the covers of movie and other magazines. She aroused interest in the sexy, mini cheongsam and the interest extended to the West. Her "Suzie Wong" image was transformed into merchandise such as fashion products and print materials. She has, in fact, successfully constructed a vague figure, "Suzie Wong," who was courted with attention and popularity worldwide, and transported the imagined character to reality. Apart from Suzie Wong, however, she was unable to achieve the same popularity with other character roles. "Suzie Wong" was possibly more famous for its portrayal of Hong Kong than for its connotations with Oriental dress. In view of the popularity of Western fashion and increased demand for pret-à-porter, Chinese clothes and the cheongsam had, on the contrary, given way to Western fashion. The dated "Suzie Wong dress" is, therefore, recorded in the history of Hong Kong fashion. Whilst "Suzie Wong," on the other hand, vitalises the image and history of the city.

Throughout the past decades, Suzie Wong's sexy image has been revived in show business, serving industry, and as an inspiration for contemporary fashion designers (Figure 3.7). She has become a myth embodied in the cultural identity of Hong Kong. Though the "Suzie Wong dress" may be viewed as a costume dress in the sixties, its influence transcends and extends
Figure 3.7 Top: Hong Kong singers in the 60s; Bottom left: Bar waitresses of Hilton Hotel Hong Kong, in uniform in the 60s; Bottom right: Spring/Summer 98 collection of contemporary Hong Kong fashion designer, Peter Lau.


Courtesy of Hong Kong Arts Centre & Peter Lau
through decades. Such a myth has become a timeless symbol for both Hong Kong and her fashion.

Conclusion

Movie costume in the sixties and, specifically the "Suzie Wong dress" was not wholly typical of women in Hong Kong in the sixties. The "Suzie Wong dress" has often been regarded as a metaphor for the Hong Kong style of dress in that period. However, it is suggested that the popularity of this dress could only evolve slowly among the elite society women. The actual dress worn by the women of Hong Kong was a modified version which, in a manner of speaking, had more style. This type of garment was widely adopted as a local form of dress in the sixties and considered to denote prestige. On the other hand, there is always the notion of a cinematic stereotype of costumes and their overriding effect in the movies. It has been demonstrated that the "Suzie Wong dress" was a movie costume with a strong signifier. The costume worn in Teddy Girls, on the contrary, served the purpose to blend costume/character/reality 'naturally' with the necessary established ground rules for making movie costumes. It also denotes the attitude of Hong Kong people towards fashion in the sixties. The "Suzie Wong dress" achieved an immediate stir in the local context; however, it had a negative image - a bar-girl dress. "Suzie Wong" presented a Western perception of Chinese women, and the attitude towards dress and fashion in Hong Kong society was moving in a different direction in the sixties. Rather, through the decades, the influence of "Suzie Wong dress" transcended reality to generate a mythical emblem and cultural identity for Hong Kong fashion.
Endnotes

1 Judy Mann, interview with author, Hong Kong, July 1998.

2 Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, Hong Kong, September 1998.

3 The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai is a temple-like, five-storey building of glass and aluminium, rising on land reclaimed from the sea. 'It is intended to represent Hong Kong as precisely as the Eiffel Tower does in Paris or the Opera House in Sydney,' according to Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, a Chicago firm responsible for the construction of the Centre. It is intended to show the world an exact image of Hong Kong, once a motley sweatshop for Chinese refugees, now a major first-world-ranked economic centre. See also Flannery: 1997.

4 Unlike Mandarin movies, Cantonese films in the fifties and sixties were about shopkeepers and their assistants, factory work and farming, about colonial life and tourism, split families and immigration, about refugees, hard times, the strains on the individual, about the clash between old and new values and mores, about settling down in a new life in a strange place, about disease, gambling, drugs, politics, corruption. Mandarin movies were, on the other hand, leaving aside costume pictures, about nightclubs and pop singers, about airhostesses and travel agents, about cops and robbers, all subjects remotely if at all connected with the real lives of the mass of Chinese people living in Hong Kong. See also Jarvie 1977: 86.

5 Unlike the east, costume design for movies in the West has a long history. Edith Head, renowned costume designer, for example, has dressed the cinema and countless enchanting film stars from the period of silent film to contemporary movies. Couturiers such as Givenchy had dressed the bewitching Audrey Hepburn and became legendary; contemporary fashion designer, Jean Paul Gaultier, was invited to exhibit his spectacular costumes through various big productions in recent years. Costume designers in Hong Kong, on the other hand, are not as respected as those in the West. Few movies can manage to employ professionals and specialists in the design and making of movie costumes. Besides, fashion design in Hong Kong was an emerging profession in the late sixties and seventies; fashion designers worked primarily in the clothing industry and export business and were seldom employed as costume designers for movies, especially in the sixties (Edith Cheung, costume designer, interview with author, July 1999).

6 Teddy Girls by Lung Kong was released in 1969, two years after the '67 riot of Hong Kong. In the sixties, Hong Kong experienced many social conflicts.
The disparity between the wealth and the hardship of the majority resulted in a series of strikes, lockouts, demonstrations and riots. In 1966, riots were inspired by a protestor at Star Ferry over the rise in Star Ferry prices, which culminated in a demonstration. The following year, a labour dispute in a plastic flower-manufacturing factory spilled over into street riots after the intervention of a leftist group. A strike of 6th May ignited demonstrations and riots across the Colony with support from the Cultural Revolution across the border. It was not until 1968 that social discontent diminished. See also Wah Kiu Daily Testimony of History 1995: 78.

7 According to Dress in Hong Kong (1995: 53), 'wives and daughters of the wealthy and well-known families, movie stars and singers were in the avant-garde of the country's fashions. They wore elaborate and fanciful clothes of breathtaking variety and spectacular design'. In Hong Kong Fashion History (1995: 38), it is noted that in the sixties, 'A-shaped skirts of simple cut, stopping above or at the knee, were in vogue. Dressy girls preferred "miniskirts," notorious for their shortness — fifteen to sixteen inches in length! People tend to look askance at the wearers'.

8 Referring to Dress in Hong Kong (1995: 56), 'ladies of the upper-middle class,... were clothes-conscious and fastidious about how they wore qipao'. In Hong Kong Fashion History (1995: 18), it states that upper-class women and ladies from wealthy families worn mainly Chinese dresses and cheongsam in silk and brocade with brighter colours.

9 Besides The World of Suzie Wong, Nancy Kwan featured in only one more movie, Flower of Drum Song, which was a musical film made in the sixties and aroused less interest amongst the public. She was occasionally featured in magazines after her movie life in the sixties. Her latest appearance was to publicise cosmetics in the early nineties in the States. See also Moy: 1991.
Fashion consumerism as a Hong Kong cultural phenomenon

The previous chapter defined the “Suzie Wong dress” as a costume dress. It could not possibly represent the dressing style of Hong Kong women in general in the sense that it could not be seen as an identity of dress for the city. It would be difficult to distinguish an identity in fashion for Hong Kong if fashion consumerism was not taken into account, as the city is recognised as a fashion consumer society. Thus, this chapter tackles fashion consumerism in Hong Kong. It demonstrates Hong Kong people’s obsession with fashion and consumerism, with several phenomena in order to define a cultural identity of Hong Kong and her fashion.

Introduction

Discourses on the subject of Hong Kong fashion often refer to the speedy formation of the territory’s consumer society. Hong Kong since the early nineties has, indeed, become a first rate fashion consumer society. There are uncountable fashion brands and retail outlets; flagship stores of international retailers; fashion news and shopping guides in consumer journals and magazines; ‘live models’ demonstrating the latest fashion with trendy colours and silhouettes on the streets. Apparently, clothes rank in the first position before three other essential requirements (food, housing, and transportation) for the Chinese, according to a popular Chinese phrase. People in Hong Kong, immersed in the world of fashion, conform to an old Chinese saying – elite attire is respected before men. Fashion consumerism, it seems, is an essential practice for the people of Hong Kong. Amid the increasing emergence of international fashion brands and flagship stores, Hong Kong is regarded as an important fashion market in Asia. Hong Kong people’s passion for following
the fashion trend, and their obsession with fashion labels and brands are served by a proliferation of fashion malls and imports of international fashion brands. As a targeted fashion market in Asia, Hong Kong people practice fashion consumerism as a necessity of life.

Thus, this chapter considers the formation of the first rate fashion consumer society in Hong Kong. It first considers consumerism as a way of life. The historical background of Hong Kong and the emergence of its consumer culture are studied. Hong Kong people's obsession with consumerism in general is explored with reference to behaviour demonstrated in purchasing Snoopy. The chapter examines the consciousness of and obsession with fashion and brands as a cultural phenomenon of Hong Kong, illustrated with the example of bridge fashion. Lastly, the author remarks on the dressing attitude and consumer behaviour of the Hong Kong Chinese, which has ultimately demonstrated a local fashion phenomenon.

4.1.1 Consumerism as a way of life

Fashion may be seen as the wares of consumerism which are 'most visibly expressed and fervently endorsed' in the constitution of 'a legitimate way of life' (Miles 1998: 90). According to Simmel (1957), fashion is a product of social demand, and the product of class distinction. It identifies the relationship between an individual and a particular class. It ensures people's adaptation to the complexities of modern life. Given fashion as a means of reflection of the tensions of modern life, money plays a pivotal role in ensuring the omnipresence of fashion. In this context, it is arguable that 'fashion is a commercial, industrial art, concerned less with beauty than with making money' (McDowell 1994: 57). The consumption of fashion could, therefore, be seen as evidence of wealth with the practice of conspicuous consumption. Conversely, the failure to consume in due quality and quantity becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit (Veblen: 1899).
If modern societies are characterised by constant change and the instability of meaning, as McCracken (1990) points out, encouragement of constant innovation becomes a means to drive society as a whole. 'Societies demand this change and depend on it to drive certain economic, social, and cultural sectors of the Western world. The fashion system serves as one of the conduits for capture and movement of this category of highly innovative meaning' (McCracken 1990: 81). In this respect, consumerism is a necessity in economically modern industrial societies. These societies 'need to promote consumerism as a way of life in order to ensure their viability over an extended period of time' (Miles 1998: 92).

If clothing is regarded as an indicator of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner, adaptation of a lifestyle through traditional habits is reflected in the emergence of consumer culture. Contemporary consumer culture weaves into a lifestyle with the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance, and bodily dispositions (Featherstone 1991: 86). Besides fashion as a prevailing mode, (Davis 1992, Finkelstein 1991), 'adornment', 'style' and 'dress' (Frisby and Featherstone: 1997, Polhemus and Procter: 1978), or other definitions about fashion as a cultural phenomenon (Wilson: 1985), modern individuals within the consumer culture are publicly convinced that fashion allows self-improvement and self-expression whatever our age, class or origins. On the other hand, trends in Western fashion in recent decades suggest that fashion is a pervasive feature of everyday living, and certainly not confined to, or determined by, haute couture or elite societies. Clothing the body is the means through which the physical form is actualised in its habitat. In this sense, clothes create the parameters of a person's living environment. If fashion is an international language for self-expression and Hong Kong a city which provides immersed varieties of fashion products for the individual to interpret, then Hong Kong
could be seen as one of the global fashion consumer markets where the individual practices fashion consumerism as a legitimate way of life.

4.1.2 The emergence of consumer culture for fashion in Hong Kong

One significant role of fashion is seen in turning over the economy of many societies particularly after the Second World War, when classes and individuals attempted to collide with one another with the social currency of money (Simmel: 1957). Ultimately, fashion is a means of stimulating the world's economic growth, and has traditionally been used for this purpose. The most notable example was Louis-Napoleon, who utilised two Great Exhibitions in 1851 and 1855 to display the advancement of technology with the economy, with the intention to boost the French economy (Rubinstein: 1995). A similar practice was seen in 1967 and 1969 in Hong Kong when Western fashion was displayed through fashion shows in the 'Hong Kong Week' and the 'Festival of Hong Kong' respectively, organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, to divert people's attention to trade and industry, and hence encourage a prosperous economy (Turner: 1995).

The factors affecting the spread of fashion in post-Second World War Britain identified by Minchinton (1982) are worthy of consideration. He points out that the general increase in incomes, the facilitation of the nuclear family due to the greater disposable income, and the effects of advertising and the spread of marketing, quickened the pace of fashion as fashionable ready-to-wear and mass produced clothing. The sixties also saw the process of industrialisation and the growth of the labour force in the local population. Even housewives were encouraged to join the labour force, which effectively benefited family income in general. Transformed from regional exports to manufacture for Western markets, the economy of Hong Kong was marked by slowly rising standards of living. By the end of the sixties, the notions of modern and
nuclear families were widely accepted as a model for the Hong Kong way of life. Subject to the relocation of smaller family units, larger disposable incomes were ensured particularly with the increasing employment of women in factories, which meant economic independence was achieved by the various family members. With such a distribution of income and independence, together with the success of the Chinese Manufacturers' Exhibition which aimed to increase local consumption of manufactured goods, Hong Kong experienced the birth of an Asian consumer culture (Turner: 1995). In view of the new economy and disposable income, professional advertising and advanced marketing began to develop as emerging industries, notably due to the consumption of a wider range of goods.

Towards the end of the sixties, the young local generation aspired to Western styles, images of which were widely diffused by the new mass media. This impact stimulated the popularity of Western fashion, in particular ready-to-wear, amongst the middle class and affluent working class in Hong Kong, and mass-produced clothing of Western styles soon took over the traditional Chinese cheongsam and sam fu. Thus, consumer culture appeared 'which allowed the working classes to become involved in the temporal world of fashion consumption, leading in turn to significant changes in the way in which the fashion industry was structured' (Miles 1998: 94). Despite the awareness of stereotyping and falsity characterised by the fashion industry and its advertising, local women - and increasingly men - were prepared to become involved in the glamour and the wares that surrounded the industry as a whole.

As a bridge to modernisation and diversified economic development, the 1970s featured Hong Kong as an important financial centre and international metropolis. People's income increased considerably (Wu 1992: 8). Their
eagerness to enter the fashionable world was a statement to acquire international success. Tailors’ shops were slowly replaced by clothing companies, boutiques, and department stores. Foreigners came to open retail stores in the market. With the foundation of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, in 1966, a Ready-to-Wear Festival, later renamed the Hong Kong Fashion Week was held every year. The local clothing and garment industry was heavily promoted, resulting in further involvement in export business with the first wave of Hong Kong fashion designers. As with the dissolution of Chinese clothes through ready-to-wear, Hong Kong, as a producer and exporter of clothes, constituted an export economy that assimilated the latest trends to produce for the Western markets. Such a boom industry was therefore characterised by the imitation of foreign products and the pursuit of Western fashion. The exported Western styles of clothes also became the major fashion for the people of Hong Kong who tried to adopt a Western look. Hence, the majority of Hong Kong people began to follow fashion and the trend coincided with the growth of the industry, the emergence of fashion retail outlets and the increasing import of fashion products. When the wealthy, style conscious, young and urban generation of the mid-eighties ‘went after famous brands and high class fashions’, Hong Kong abruptly turned into ‘one of the world’s top fashion centres’ (Wu 1992: 10).

In the eighties, the young generation of Hong Kong was mobile, independent, and determined to enjoy itself. When the locals ‘started sporting fashion jeans, designer-label running shoes, expensive track suits, jewellery and chains, ear-phoned stereo cassette players and bikinis, the change was startling in the 1980s. The young generation had found its own uniform. Peer pressure compelled every schoolboy to follow suit. Hong Kong citizens' symbol of not being left behind was seen when the South China Morning Post reported that:
'Copies of Gucci, Cardin, Dior, St Laurent and others - names from past Designers' Decades - had been available accessories to all and sundry for years in the street markets. True tai-tais seeking true status symbols had to fly to Rome, Paris, or Los Angeles to get them. Ladies' fashions were not safe either with Bang Bang or with other local garment manufacturers bringing haute couture concepts to the lower classes (Hong Kong Review, January 1981, p.90).

It is no surprise to find that '"status" accessories' such as 'bags, wallets, belts with an all-important designer logo' became an absolute must for the Hong Kong Chinese from the eighties onwards: 'whether they were the real Italian leather article or an imitation from a side street hawker stall' (Hong Kong Review, January 1983, p.27).

Hong Kong's sophisticated shopping population is becoming less and less content with sheer price, poor quality, and a shoddy environment. They like to shop around for the best overall value, in terms of price, quality, range of goods and surroundings. The eighties also saw the increase of own-label products in evidence in Hong Kong, acquired directly from overseas suppliers. More retail business was in the hands of the major chains, which compared favourably with European and US retail trading operations. Even the MTR Island Line transported 'shoppers in the thousands from around the territory to the new booming areas of Causeway Bay, North Point and Taikoo Shing' (Hong Kong Review, January 1986, p.59). Strong demand for retail space in prime locations continued to grow. The trend towards the development of large integrated out-of-town retail complexes was proven popular with retailers and consumers alike' (Hong Kong Review, January 1986, p.15). Importation of quality brands, and the constant growth of retail complexes, thus stimulated the people's desire to consume.
In spite of the fact that Hong Kong's fashion-conscious people will always patronise home-grown designers, there is no disputing the fact that the chic international labels of major fashion capitals will continue to find favour among high-flying executives and well-off women. In the face of soaring rents and astronomically high overheads, the likes of Joyce Boutique, for example, can rest assured that HK$20,000 ensembles will continue to be snapped up by brand-name hungry women. That partly explains why:

'ultra-expensive French and Italian designers insist on opening even more boutiques in the territory: Salvatore Ferragamo's luxurious new outlet in the Mandarin Hotel is registering healthy sales, as is the revolutionary new Moschino boutique. More than three-quarters of the clothes designed by the infamous bad boy of fashion sold out within a month' (Hong Kong Review, 14 January 1990, p.40).

Nonetheless, since the eighties and particularly in the nineties, the advancement of marketing and advertisement was recorded. Large-scale, expensive advertising campaigns and marketing promotions were considered the key to brand building and increased point-of-sale profits. The fashion media drew the attention of consumers to the variety of fashion products in the market. The effectiveness of marketing and promotion was assisted by a media-dependent Hong Kong, where customers were easily persuaded by the prestige of wearing high fashion brands. The speed with which things happened increased generally in Hong Kong, particularly in the case of 'trend-conscious' products which were brought to market within a much shorter timescale. 'Young people with a high amount of disposable income are anxious to spend cash on glossy magazines. Cosmetics in mousse form and patterned tights and stockings became best sellers in Hong Kong within weeks of being launched in Europe' (Hong Kong Review, January 1986, p.59). Consequently,
fashion conscious Hong Kong has become one of the major fashion markets in Asia. The pursuit of fashion also drove the city to become a first rate consumer society after the nineties.

4.2.1 The Hong Kong Chinese turn consumption into an obsession

However, the emergence of consumer culture and fashion consumption cannot explain the obsession with consumerism in general and fashion in particular in the local context. The distinctive feature of the historical background of Hong Kong is worthy of investigation. The colonial nature of Hong Kong ended only recently, where a city of transients was perceived (Abbas: 1997). Much of the population was made up of refugees or expatriates who thought of Hong Kong as a temporary stop (Abbas: 1997, Faure: 1984). From a place of temporary abode to permanent settlement, from an undeveloped port to a global city, a community such as that found in Hong Kong, which has been drawn into the global figuration, has had to cope periodically with the refugees from modernisation. Members of the various ethnic groups who were previously uncertain about how long they were going to stay have a romantic attachment to what they now consider to be ‘home’. Consequently, Hong Kong can be seen as a city where migrants aspire to live out their version of what Featherstone (1995) terms an ‘imagined community’. Hong Kong has also experienced a high degree of cultural flow influenced by economic growth and industrialisation since the sixties, hence these migrants were most amenable to ‘change’ and to accept ‘things new’ (Turner: 1995). Together with the emergence of consumer products in the rapidly rising capitalist society of Hong Kong, such behaviour may explain the city's preference for consumerism.

Nevertheless, under the colonial influence, the distinctiveness culturally, politically and socially from the motherland, and in fear of their political future, the people of Hong Kong suffered from a lack of identity, social
uncertainty, and insecurity. Through consumption, their identity could be constructed, signalled and reproduced. Social uncertainty and insecurity may be resolved by the power of consumption and the ability to possess. Given the freedom to fulfil desire through consumption, whilst society was subjected to produce excessive consuming opportunities, the Hong Kong Chinese had their attention diverted to daily consumption and the overwhelming desire for material goods.

The phenomenon of an ‘imagined community’ is reflected in the citizens’ belief in shaping their own history. In Hong Kong, the colonial administration provided insufficient outlet for political idealism. In addition to the effects of the city of migrants’ uncertainty about the future and anxiety about the reversion of Hong Kong’s sovereignty to China, most of the peoples’ energy and attention was diverted toward the economic sphere. Hong Kong people became obsessed with speculation on the property and stock markets, and the parallel phenomenon was an obsession with fashion or consumerism. ‘The rationale seemed to be: If you cannot choose your political leaders, you can at least choose your own clothes’ (Abbas 1997: 5). The fashion industry continues to exploit feelings of social uncertainty and insecurity by offering the illusion that fashion can answer, or at least lead us to forget, the problems of everyday life’ (McDowell 1994: 138). Restriction on political participation and social interaction may thus have been compensated with the so-called ‘democratisation of fashion’ (to borrow the term from Miles). The diversions of fashion in particular and consumerism in general have driven Hong Kong to swirl in a first rate fashion consumer society with brands from all over the world. This general obsession with fashion and consumerism may be seen as a cultural phenomenon of Hong Kong.
4.2.2 The case of McSnoopy

Hong Kong's obsession with consumerism is well known and has increased steadily, being particularly evident in the latter half of the nineties. It has been evident at property sales, stamp sales, coin sales, memorabilia auctions, and even mobile phones sales. The hysteria became extreme at any store with a redemption-voucher history that might be approaching bankruptcy, irrespective of whether the vouchers were for video rentals, children's amusement arcades, or cakes. One of the most remarkable might possibly be the purchasing behaviour shown in the case of McSnoopy. In October 1998, burger fast-food giant McDonald introduced a campaign called "Snoopy World Tour." A seven-centimetre plastic Snoopy was dressed in 28 costumes from around the world (Figure 4.1.1-4.1.2). The promotion was launched in various parts of Asia, such as Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, with the condition that the plastic dogs were bought with a standard meal for children - Happy Meal - in a McDonald's outlet. On ordering the promoted meal, the whole set of twenty-eight McSnoopy dogs dressed in different costumes could be purchased. The promotion period lasted for one month. When it came to Hong Kong, the beagle was offered with adult combo-meals and McSnoopy was released on specific days. Promotions announced the 'theme' of the Snoopy daily. The result was massive queues outside the doors of every McDonald outlet in the city for a period of nearly a month.

"In this status-obsessed city," wrote The New York Times on October 9, 1998, "where Rolls-Royces and Rolexes seem to outnumber Toyotas and Timexes, the most prized of all possessions these days is a 75-cent plastic beagle." The Washington Post carried the same story on the same day: "They began lining up at dawn outside every branch in the city. Soon the lines grew to hundreds of people, stretching around city blocks. On a few occasions, police were called to keep order" (quoted in Sunday Morning Post, December 20, 1998).
Figure 4.1.1 A set of 28 plastic Snoopy dogs promoted by McDonald during the "Snoopy World Tour" campaign in Oct 1998. Source: Next Magazine, September 18, 1998, p. 43-44.

Courtesy of Next Magazine
Figure 4.1.2  The vote for the most popular McSnoopy among the set of 28 promoted by McDonald

Courtesy of Next Magazine
The news spread as far as Europe. It became a phenomenon in the city when The Guardian reported that:

"Hong Kong's latest collecting mania has turned into a matter of serious debate. Hungry old people have been spotted hanging around in McDonald's outlets hoping to get a free Extra Value Meal from customers who buy the food only in order to collect the Snoopy which goes with it" (quoted in Sunday Morning Morning Post, December 20, 1998).

The marketing scheme was a success in planning, execution, and ultimately, financial reward. Apparently, the McSnoopy campaign was not the first attempt by McDonald's to market their products using popular cartoon characters. Another cute toy - Winnie The Pooh - was introduced with a limited edition of 60,000 stuffed toys by the giant burger company in July 1995. People were queuing outside branches of the fast food chain at the opening time as the range of Pooh bear toys was re-launched. One million were snapped up in less than a week when McDonald's ran a similar promotion a month later. People bought up to 40 each when the stuffed toy was first launched. With the re-launch, each customer was strictly limited to purchase one bear at one time (South China Morning Post, July 25 1995, p.5). Thus, millions stood in queues to take advantage of the promotion, and branches of the fast food chain were filled with customers in a craze.

Consequently, the giant burger company seems very capable and certain of the essence of success, after the experiences of Winnie The Pooh and McSnoopy, when they market their products. Following on from these promotions, the cute cartoon character - Hello Kitty - was introduced in McDonald's in June 1999 as a stuffed toy purchase, and could be purchased with a minimum outlay of HK$15 (Ming Pao Newspaper, June 17, 1999, p.A6). Similar queues were observed and a similar phenomenon was noted when the same
promotion extended to another part of Asia, Taipei, two months thereafter. There were long lines of customers around chain stores and scuffles broke out as a result of haggling for a place in line (South China Morning Post, August, 15 1999, p.6).

The promotions of McDonald's demonstrate that the fast food company has evidently captured a formula of success when marketing their products to the people of Hong Kong. Marketers of the company succeeded in capturing the people's passion for collectibles, drive for a materialistic way of life, and obsession with speculation that has resulted in a general obsession with consumerism among them. Such an obsession could be ascribed to the nature of Hong Kong people, since material things are regarded as extremely important. It could be seen in a survey conducted by a Hong Kong research company, the Roper Starch World, which aimed to study the global consumer in 2000 and gather information on consumer intelligence. It found that more than one third of the Hong Kong people are materialistic and workaholic. The study interviewed 30,000 people aged between 13 to 65 in 30 countries in 1999\(^3\). The findings showed that about 34 per cent of the 1,000 Hong Kong respondents were classified as "Strivers", a group that holds "material things extremely important". They value wealth, status, power, and ambition and are usually workaholics who have no time for fun.\(^4\) The findings echoed with the self-criticism of the Hong Kong people themselves, as found by a survey in 1998, conducted by the Chinese University. They considered making fast money, to be a trend follower, and to shop rather than to appreciate nature, were important elements for the people of the community\(^4\). Leung (1996) also remarked on the behaviour of the Hong Kong Chinese in a highly competitive and capitalist environment. He stated that individual achievement was not measured by moral worth but by the ability to out-compete others to gain material wealth (Leung 1996: 65). Such materialism drives the Hong Kong
Chinese to excessive consumption and to make overt statements about their wealth.

By means of consumption, reflections of one's taste, self-identity, and social status can all be achieved. It is a social tool to distinguish social groups and to identify with peers of similar social status (Simmel: 1957, Barnard: 1996, Craik: 1994), which is particularly obvious amongst the Hong Kong Chinese as observed by Tse (1996). Hong Kong Chinese measure people by the visible objects they carry, and 'have often used material possessions as a primary base for normative judgements' (Tse 1996: 360). They assess the possessions of a person in order to draw conclusions about his/her social identity. Yau (1994) also noted the conformity characteristic of the Hong Kong Chinese and their adherence to group norms. As a referent group establishes a normative standard, it at once becomes a norm for other groups of society to follow. Such behaviour is considered unlikely to deviate from the accepted norm (or product), and contributes to a high degree of trend consciousness, thus, to excessive consumption. To display one's material wealth, to achieve social recognition and to sustain conformity in society through consumption, the Hong Kong Chinese must acquire the symbols of status with obsession. Hence, their obsession with consumption may be described as a local cultural phenomenon.

4.3.1 Obsession with fashion consumerism

A parallel phenomenon is seen in consuming fashion in the local context. The fashion industry is considered to set fashion as an adjunct of character, an indication of social desirability. In the context of Hong Kong, by means of fashion consumerism, the identity of people may be constructed, signalled, and reproduced. Given that they wear the appropriate and appreciable attire, which society deems to accept with praise, they continue to be "obsessed" with their appearance. In effect, fashion and clothing to the Hong Kong
Chinese 'represent something like a border or a margin between a public, exterior person and a private interior identity' (Barnard 1996: 173). Consumers arguably use mass produced garments to construct who they are (Miles 1998: 99). Thus, 'identity shades into difference, and difference into identity' despite thousands of copies of a garment being made (Barnard 1996: 174). Ultimately, the social uncertainty and insecurity of the Hong Kong Chinese are resolved through social recognition whilst such recognition is constituted through the incorporation of a common cultural meaning in fashion and consumerism.

In this context, fashion consumerism for the display of wealth and social status, to raise 'status symbol' in Hong Kong could be seen as a clear referent of Veblen's (1899) conspicuous consumption theory. Hong Kong people are considered to be obsessed with expensive fashion labels and brand names, using them to demonstrate their wealth and purchasing power (Lam: 1998). Hong Kong Chinese consumers demand a higher level of brand name products than those in Western countries (Yau: 1994, Tse: 1996, Clark: 1995, Lam: 1998). Their self-identity is preferably constructed by means of famous foreign designer label fashion. Foreign fashion designs are, thus, favoured in the local fashion context, and wearing them may serve to identify the individual with peers of similar social groups. The person who cannot afford to purchase fashion labels would feel a sense of shame, and perhaps even a feeling of being ostracised by society (Lam 1998: 31).

4.3.2 The brand conscious and bridge fashion
Veblen's (1957) conspicuous consumption theory is applicable in this context. The brand consciousness of Hong Kong Chinese is demonstrated by the purchasing behaviour of bridge fashion. Bridge fashion / a bridge line is the secondary line of a designer label with a lower and more competitive price, which is usually aimed at the younger market. It represents a means by which
designers may expand their business, because typically designer merchandise is supplied to a limited number of stores. With bridge lines, the prices are lower and the fashion can be supplied to more stores. The bridge line market has been rapidly evolving in recent years. Retailers are paying close attention to this sector, particularly in the light of the stagnant demand for more expensive designer ready-to-wear collections. Despite the general economic recession, the culture of wearing fashion in the 1990s has paved the way to the growth of bridge fashion.

Bridge fashion attracts customers who may want to wear designer brands but find them just a little out of reach. In this respect, bridge fashion may attract more than young customers since the styles are more appealing to the people in general. They have become a resource for well-made and wearable fashions of current trends from the runways into reality-based clothes (Ling, Taylor, & Lo 1998: 362). Hence, an increasing number of designers are introducing bridge lines, aiming to sell internationally. However, there is always a tension created when bridge fashion is first introduced to Asian markets, rather than the hometown. Vivienne Westwood's bridge line, Red Label, for instance, was first introduced in Japan before it was launched in England. D&G, a bridge line of the Italian fashion brand, Dolce & Gabbana, was not intended for the European markets but it was well received in the Asian markets. A marketer of the brand noted the significance of Asian markets to the company and commented on the difference between bridge fashion and designer fashion:

‘Our designers are the spirits of Dolce & Gabbana. The best designs and creations are implemented into the label, such as the entire concept of the brand, theme, interior, colour, clothes, atmosphere, and image. We do not have D&G here and we will not put it to Europe. It is a branch business of the (designer) line. There is an absence of the spirit of D&G. It is different....it is designed for the Asian markets’ (Carline Charmoulaud,

Ultimately, the designer lines are always more personal to the designers themselves. In interviews, many of them claimed to put more effort, concept, and creativity into designing the designer line. While bridge fashion may be targeted for the market of Asia, a high degree of consuming power and the will to purchase brand names in Asia are noted. Dries Van Noten, a Belgium fashion designer, is one of those who resists introducing a bridge line to supplement his collection, but he has acknowledged the strong purchasing power and brand consciousness of the Asians.

'I do not think any designer would be happy to introduce bridge fashion, as its design does not represent the idea of a designer. Every designer is eager to nurture his/her signature (designer) line. They will put the best of all to the line. Bridge fashion is a consideration of business and could be a support of the (designer) company....it is more appealing to the Asians as everything imported from the West will sell at once. They follow the trend closely and they like foreign brands. Before any promotion of my brand in Japan and Hong Kong, the first shipment of clothes sold out immediately because the brand is from Europe' (Dries Van Noten, Belgium fashion designer, interviewed by the author in Feb 1997).

Though bridge fashion may not be well regarded by the designers themselves, it has attracted a wide range of clients throughout Asia. With affordable price ranges, wearable clothes in fashionable styles, and most of all, an 'interpreted' title of a renowned fashion designer, there is a general culture in Hong Kong of buying more bridge fashion than designer labels. A survey conducted by the author in 1997, which aimed to study customers' purchasing behaviour in the categories of both bridge fashion and designer fashion, resulted in collected data from 460 respondents in Hong Kong. In the survey, it was
found that 44% out of 460 interviewees claimed that they only possessed / bought bridge lines, and 42% claimed that they owned more bridge lines than designer brand items. Only 3% claimed that they only possessed / bought designer brands (Ling, Taylor & Lo 1998: 366). Apparently, the out-rated number of shops for bridge fashion, which used more promotion than the respective designer label, contributed to the popularity of bridge fashion in Hong Kong.

Whilst the popularity of bridge fashion is noted in the local context, the brand consciousness of the Hong Kong Chinese was reviewed through their consumption of bridge fashion. Several findings from the survey are worthy of consideration. While more than 80% respondents claimed that they purchased bridge line fashion, less than half of them (49%) knew what bridge fashions were. 62% of the total respondents claimed that they would buy counterfeit brand items from street hawkers, there being an even distribution of ages from 18 to 56 with a monthly income of HK$6,000 - HK$23,999, which is considered the target group of the bridge line market. Their principal reason for buying counterfeit products was that they were the lowest in price, and the second reason was convenience (Figure 4.1). The majority of those who claimed that they did not buy counterfeit products from the street hawkers gave the reason that they did not feel comfortable shopping on the streets (Figure 4.2). Having a similar age range and monthly income to the above, they refused to purchase these products because of the low quality. Instead, they purchased other, less popular brands in department stores. It is suggested that Hong Kong customers have a certain preference for purchasing branded products, and at the same time, pay a lot of attention to price, quality and convenience. Bridge lines in Hong Kong have opened up the market to attract the general public who want to pay less, are satisfied with 'acceptable' quality, can shop in trendy shopping areas, and most of all, are brand and fashion followers.
Fig. 4.2 Reasons for buying imitation branded items from street hawkers

- Price
- Convenience
- Can shop and eat at night
- Popular items already sold out in shops

Fig. 4.3 Reasons for not buying imitation branded items from street hawkers

- Do Not feel good
- Low quality
- No fitting
- Illegal act
- No packaging
In view of the tendency to purchase counterfeit fashion brands in Hong Kong, it may be deduced that the practice of owning brand products could be regarded as a cultural 'sign' to display the individual's social status and identity. Possessing brand names, especially in the case of such visual products as fashion, gives the suggestion of wealth whilst the wearer's feeling of insecurity and inferiority are overcome. In place of a dichotomous image of social class, the Hong Kong Chinese perceive a fashion brand as an indication of their social status or the social status to which they aspire. Thus, they feel more socially confident when they wear foreign designers' clothes. Given that the consumption of the Hong Kong Chinese has been legitimised as a "daily goal" (to borrow the term of Tse: 1996), they demonstrate a high degree of brand consciousness through the consumption of fashion.

Nonetheless, the respondents understood that there was a huge difference between the quality and comfort of bridge fashion and the designer brand. However, the factor of affordable price remained a major reason to purchase bridge fashion. By prioritising low cost at the expense of quality, design and creativity are increasingly being ignored. McDowell (1994) once commented on the example of Giorgio Armani's range of A/X Exchange merchandise which, he claimed was little more than a slight variation on classic items of American sportswear embossed, as a token gesture, with a designer label (McDowell 1994: 138). Adversely, from the survey it was found that the Hong Kong respondents perceived a similar social status offered by both the bridge and designer fashion which, as a result, drives bridge line fashion to become an ultimate consumers' choice. If the fashion industry is determined to scam the consumers into believing that fashion is a birthright, a proof of right, an adjunct of character, an indication of social desirability and status symbol, then the Hong Kong consumers would be the whole-hearted devotees eager to acquire these elements by means of fashion brands and labels. Such purchasing behaviour runs parallel to their obsession with general
consumption, and the obsession with fashion consumerism amongst the Hong Kong Chinese, which could be considered a fashion phenomenon in the local context. Thus, this Hong Kong fashion phenomenon has evidently generated a first rate society of fashion consumers since the nineties.

4.4 Fashion consumerism as a Hong Kong cultural phenomenon

On the other hand, the complexity of the task of constructing a theory about the nature of fashion consumerism in Hong Kong also implies an analysis of the relationship between Hong Kong people and their own culture. The city has been referred to as 'a cultural desert' and despite its movies, music, literature, and architecture, the implication is that there is no recognisable culture as such. Hong Kong culture may not conform to the 'classic' aesthetic frame as described by Arnold (1868) but its culture is more readily classified in terms of 'the mode of change' encompassing certain general causes or 'trends' which mark the changes in social and cultural developments (Williams: 1965).

One of the effects of colonialism has led Hong Kong culture to be absorbed from external sources: Chinese tradition, more legitimately located in Mainland China and Taiwan, or from the West (Abbas 1997: 6). The concept of external culture also extends to fashion, for instance, a well-dressed Hong Kong person by observation would project the most international flavour from head to toe with his/her favourite import brands from all over the world. People with, for example, an Agnès b béret, DKNY T-shirt, Versace pants, Adidas trainers, and a G-shock watch could be seen on every street.

In this respect, William's (1965) account of culture is worthy of consideration. Culture, according to William (1965, quoted in Hebdige 1979: 6), has been defined as a 'particular way of life' which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary
behaviour.' The analysis of culture, accordingly, involves 'the clarification of meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture.' (Williams: 1965, quoted in Hebdige 1979: 6). Thus, the way of dress as a 'particular way of life' demonstrated by the people of Hong Kong is, in fact, a 'particular culture' which has coincided with the process of development of the city. The composition of such a culture has, in fact, composed a fashion phenomenon for Hong Kong.

Apparently, if culture is the 'study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life' (Williams: 1965, quoted in Hebdige 1979: 7), it would, therefore, be important to manifest the dressing attitude and the purchasing behaviour of the Hong Kong Chinese as part of local culture for fashion and to accept their adaptation of foreign brands or/with local brands as their 'particular culture'. The dressing attitude, and particularly the purchasing behaviour of the Hong Kong Chinese, thus demonstrates their obsession with fashion and consumerism, constituting a cultural phenomenon of fashion in Hong Kong.

Conclusion
This chapter has demonstrated the formation of consumer culture and the spread of fashion in Hong Kong after the post-war until the present time. Speedy industrialisation and modernisation of the city since the sixties contributed a stable standard of living, which favoured the emergence of a consumer culture. The replacement of traditional, tailor-made and Chinese apparel with ready-to-wear has seen the pace of fashion change and quicken. The effectiveness of advertisement and marketing since the eighties has also had a significant impact. In the nineties, Hong Kong became one of the targeted fashion markets in Asia and a first rate society of consumerism. The historical background of Hong Kong had a significant influence on the overall obsession with consumerism of the Hong Kong Chinese. Colonialism affected
the identity and the social crises of the people, diverting them to consumerism to acquire social values. The phenomenon was explored with reference to the example of McSnoopy and the Hong Kong Chinese' purchasing behaviour. Excessive consumption compensated for their cultural and social unease, which was described as a phenomenon of Hong Kong culture. The parallel phenomenon would be fashion consumerism in the local context as illustrated by the example of bridge fashion. Veblen's conspicuous consumption theory, in which the display of material wealth, achievement in social recognition and the conformity to society are the driving forces of fashion consumption, is applicable for the Hong Kong Chinese. Such a particular way of life could be regarded as a cultural phenomenon of the city. The author finally concluded that the purchasing behaviour for fashion by the Hong Kong Chinese constituted a cultural phenomenon of fashion in Hong Kong. Thus, such fashion consumerism could be seen as a Hong Kong cultural phenomenon.
Endnotes

1 Turner (1995: 15-19) notes that the Chinese Manufacturers' Exhibitions, organised by the Chinese Manufacturers' Association (CMA), which was held yearly since 1934, set a pattern for Hong Kong future identity as a consumer culture. 'By the sixties, the Exhibition had grown in scale and variety to become the Colony's largest festival outside Chinese New Year'. The event was designed to bring together the whole community in several weeks of entertainment including dancing, fashion shows and opera, beauty pageants and competitions whilst most people came to consume the manufactured goods. Turner stresses that such an identity of consumer culture was 'suspended between the fantasy of export promotion and the grim experience of factory life, neither colonial nor nationalistic, yet predominantly Cantonese'.

2 Joyce Boutique is a local established and leading Asian lifestyle empire featuring the crème de al crème of international fashion designers such as Giorgio Armani, Prada, Yohji Yamamoto...and one of a kind, electric homeware. There is also Joyce where you can eat and drink - elegant cafes serving health and fashion conscious food; the Joyce you can smell - fabulous flower shops as well as vogue fashion photography, Joyce magazine you can read' (Lam 1998: 43).

3 The survey classified the respondents into six distinct "value groups" as follows:

- Strivers - They hold "material things extremely important." They value wealth, status, power and ambition and are usually workaholics who have no time for fun.
- Altruists - More females than males are Altruists. These are "very outer focused", generally well educated and older (average age of 43), with higher-ranking values like equality, justice, social responsibility, environmentalism and duty.
- Fun Seekers - this is the youngest group. They look to have adventure and excitement and prefer to go out rather than be home-based.
- Intimates - They value highly stable personal relationship and family. They are more home-centred in social pursuits.
- Devouts - More females than males belong to this group. They place great importance on faith, respecting ancestors, modesty, duty, and tradition.
- Creatives - This group is split equally between the genders. Creatives are dedicated to learning, knowledge, and technology.

The findings showed that 34 per cent of the 1,000 Hong Kong respondents could be classified as "Strivers", 20 per cent of them were "Altruists," followed by "Fun
Seekers" (15 per cent), "Intimates" (14 per cent), "Devouts" (11 per cent) and "Creatives" (6 per cent) (see Focus, South China Morning Post, 27 June 1999, p.2).

A survey on the impression of Hong Kong people on the people of 13 countries conducted by the Department of Journalism and Media, the Chinese University, Hong Kong in 1998, aimed to facilitate trade and development by the understanding of Hong Kong people to the people of other countries that included China, Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada and America. The survey covered four groups with 32 Hong Kong persons of different social background for discussion and intensive interview. The survey also measured Hong Kong peoples' impressions of themselves. The interviewees believed that besides being hard working with a high level of adaptability, Hong Kong people are generally inconsiderate, impolite, political unconscious but impatient in every day matters. Other impressions included the desire to make fast money, to be a trend follower, to shop rather than appreciating nature, to be insensitive to civil and social matters and to have limited social circles (also see Ming Pao, 02 June 1998, p.A4).

Jonathan Chan, Hong Kong fashion designer, interviewed by author in Nov 1996.

A survey conducted by the author in 1997 studied Hong Kong customers' buying behaviour for designer brands and bridge lines. Four local shopping spots in Hong Kong were chosen for face-to-face street interviews. Four well-known brand names, having both designer brands and bridge lines were chosen as the basis for the interviews. Hong Kong citizens were the targeted groups that were randomly selected with an even distribution of sex and ages ranging from 16 to 56. 460 responses were collected. The analysis of Hong Kong people's brand consciousness in this chapter is constructed on the partial findings from the survey, which was published in the Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management, issue 4 / Vol.2, 1998, p.361-8 (Ling, W. Taylor, G. & Lo. M.T.: 1998). These findings are believed to be relevant to review the attitude of brand consciousness of the Hong Kong Chinese, and thus, are employed for further analysis in this Chapter. Completed paper and questionnaire are listed in the appendix. Results and completed findings from the survey are not displayed in this chapter as the purpose of study here is to stress fashion consumerism as a Hong Kong cultural phenomenon whilst the aim of the survey deals mainly with Hong Kong consumer behaviour towards designer fashion and bridge fashion.
There is a general 1:3 ratio of designer brand shops to bridge line shops in Hong Kong. For instance, there are 1 Donna Karan shop to 3 DKNY shops; 1 Dolce & Gabbana shop to 3 D&G shops (dated Jan 2000).

Giorgio Armani has several bridge lines besides the designer brand, Giorgio Armani. A/X Exchange is one of them. Others include Emporio Armani and Junior Armani.
Hong Kong fashion design - a product of globalisation

The previous chapter illustrated a cultural phenomenon of fashion in Hong Kong, i.e., the obsession of the population with consumerism, which could be defined as an identity when Hong Kong fashion is described. In chapters 2 and 3, different styles of dress in Hong Kong were presented, yet none could effectively define a characteristic style which could represent Hong Kong. Chapter 5 therefore attempts to define Hong Kong fashion design in the context of the local fashion designers. It investigates the common attributes of Hong Kong fashion and explains them in parallel with the globalisation process. It presents the concept of Hong Kong fashion design as a product of globalisation, which may explain its lack of identity, originality and creativity.

Introduction

Reference is made to Hong Kong fashion design primarily in terms of the design and production of fashion and apparel by local designers and design houses of local fashion brands. The prevailing image of Hong Kong fashion design is one of interpretation, specifically, the ability to translate and disseminate the latest fashion trend. Hong Kong formerly enjoyed success as a first rate clothing producer, and more recently has achieved fame as a global fashion consumer society (see Chapter 4). The combination of industrial success and retail supplier of international brands have earned Hong Kong a reputation as an Asian centre of fashion, separate and distinct from Japan. Hong Kong fashion designers are, on the other hand, ill-situated to step into the international fashion scene, since they receive negligible acclaim. Adverse statements about their lack of creativity, identity, and popularity with the local
consumers continue to thwart their efforts. Though most of them are heavily involved in the export business, those having retail outlets in the city cannot compete with the imported fashion brands. Despite the increased international exposure during the period when Hong Kong's sovereignty reverted to China, and increasing opportunities to participate in overseas fashion shows, Hong Kong fashion design is still unable to gain international recognition through fashion innovation. Nevertheless, the question of what represents Hong Kong fashion design remains controversial.

It is hard to define or otherwise describe Hong Kong fashion design without due consideration of Hong Kong as a discreet environment. Hong Kong's historical background suggested a different environment for the development of fashion design in the case of both producer and consumer. Ultimately, it would be incorrect to conclude that the first rate fashion consumer society, the brand conscious Hong Kong Chinese (as discussed in Chapter 4), and Hong Kong fashion designers' lack of creativity are simply a local, cultural phenomena. There are a number of underlying issues that contribute to the present situation and the important relationship between the city and its fashion. Moreover, the relationship between Hong Kong fashion design development and the globalisation process has not yet been explored. An essential point to be considered when examining Hong Kong fashion is the influence of both the colonial and global environment, which distinguishes the territory from other, fast growing countries and old colonial cities. In the ensuing discussion, the historical background of Hong Kong fashion design and designers is explored. The chapter proposes the idea that Hong Kong fashion design is a product of globalisation. The author considers Hong Kong fashion design to be a product of globalisation in view of Featherstone's (1995) discussion of historical phases within the globalisation process.
5.1 Hong Kong fashion design in the global context

With the favourable conditions provided as a result of the introduction of international fashion, in addition to the first rate consumer society, both Hong Kong's economy and its fashion design have been nurtured within a global environment. From production stage to consumer society, Hong Kong has undergone a rapid transition from a traditional to a modern society in parallel with the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, commodification, rationalisation, differentiation, bureaucratisation, the expansion of the division of labour and the growth of individualism (Featherstone 1991: 87). This assumed process of Western modernisation was accompanied by Western images for the Hong Kong clothing industry, manifested through the joint processes of clothing manufacture and fashion design.

If Hong Kong peoples' obsession with fashion and consumerism is a cultural phenomenon of Hong Kong (as discussed in Chapter 4), then fashion and apparel designed by local fashion designers may be considered to be contributing to the globalisation process. In this context, fashion design may be defined as a cultural industry, as proposed by King (1990), who sees architecture and urban design as having a similar role. The cultural industry of fashion design refers to the conditions of contemporary capitalism and, along with a variety of other forms and processes, contributes to the constitution, confirmation, or reconstitution of human subjectivity and cultural identity. This might be compared, for example, with other major spheres of cultural production such as film, video, or music industries, the realms of television or advertising: the image-projecting and consciousness-transformation industries (King 1990: 398). The new category of 'design professionals', according to King (1990), is a potentially major influence in contributing to the transformation of culture on a global scale.
Hong Kong fashion designers, spawned by the gigantic clothing industry since the sixties, were trained to produce designs according to the export buyers’ specifications, which were mainly Western in origin. Their creativity and uniqueness in design are less appreciated, but the ability to follow the fashion trends and effectively meet the demands of the clients is most emphasised. The Hong Kong fashion designers' tendency to follow the trend is, in fact, a survival kit to sustain the industry and their professionalism. Even the famous Hong Kong fashion brands, such as Giordano, Esprit, and Episode, all contribute to the homogenisation of a global fashion culture by projecting Western-sounding names and culturally undistinguished images.

5.1.2 The distinctiveness of Hong Kong fashion design

The different transformation process of cultural phenomena characterising fashion in Hong Kong as distinct from the established fashion capitals is worthy of investigation. Given that the fashion capitals (namely Paris, London, Milan, New York and Tokyo) have generated a design-oriented culture within their respective local fashion context, it is the case that, under certain circumstances, identity is modified according to the various transcultural media forms of interchange in the world. Even though the latest and future trend suggests that fashion has international flavours and that fashion designers from the capital cities of note project an image which is culturally neutral, the historical ‘image’ (Paris chic, Milan cut, London avant-garde, New York urbanity and Japanese Zen), which each of them has projected for decades, cannot be replaced. Their fashion resembles the characteristics that are derived from the entire environment of fashion evolution corresponding to their native countries. Besides, it is their characteristics that sustain the distinctiveness and differentiate the style for each of these fashion capitals. Nonetheless, when global fashion is considered as a trend, global style and image are merely another fashion trend close to the millennium. Whether the fashion capitals will eventually dissolve or finally reinvent themselves so that
the fashion designer will continue to produce 'global fashion' is a question that remains to be answered in the future. At the present time, the distinct characteristics of each fashion capital are patently evident.

If Robertson's (1992) idea of a global culture is as meaningful as the idea of national-societal, or local culture, then the distinct characteristics of each fashion capital demonstrate a long-established locality, more permeable and difficult to maintain as a global culture of fashion takes form. This concept is evident in the statement that 'all fashion is the same in every place'. It is, in fact, the locality that takes identity from each fashion capital and the distinctive characteristics remain culturally significant for their fashion.

Conversely, the cultural phenomenon of fashion, which Hong Kong possesses, is quite different from that of the notable fashion capitals. Hong Kong is affected outwardly by the environmentally determined cultural phenomena; local fashion designers are, adversely, being nurtured to facilitate the integration of a homogenous culture on a global scale. The idea of Hong Kong fashion design being a product of globalisation can only be understood through reference to the changing environment and the global form. Such a globalised product, in the sense of generating a homogenised culture contributing to the globalisation process, has made it difficult for Hong Kong fashion design to find an identity. Thus, to compare Hong Kong fashion design with other fashion capitals at the level of design would only result in a bias definition of the same.

5.2.1 The emergence of Hong Kong fashion design

Fashion design was a new profession for the post-war generation of the Hong Kong Chinese. In the fifties and the sixties, tailoring and domestic sewing contributed the major production of clothes for the Hong Kong citizens. With the twin development of industrialisation and economy, Chinese-style
clothing eventually gave way to Western style clothes, which were particular favored by the new generation of locally born Chinese. They manifested progress and change with the association of fashion, which was perceived in relation to the West (see Chapter 2). Though Western fashion and apparel received wide publicity through imported magazines, established department stores, foreign movies, and advertisements in the sixties, imported brands and apparel catered for the middle to upper class consumer. At the peak of its popularity, young women were keen to adapt Western style apparel by producing their own garments. The emergence of tailoring training schools in the late sixties provided intensive training for pattern making and sewing techniques for the Hong Kong Chinese who were desperate to produce their adopted fashions. These schools began in 1968, and the number rose to 120 during the peak period of popularity, between 1972-1974 (Hong Kong Story - Clothing and Fashion TVB: 1996, quoted in Lam 1998: 100). The schools provided training, and produced custom-made patterns for the latest Western fashion. At one time, abundant ready-to-consume patterns for Western apparel were available in the markets, allowing these young female consumers to custom-make their own clothes¹ (Figure 5.1).

Imitations of Western garments produced from the visual images gleaned from secondary sources were also made by local tailors whose customers included film stars, prostitutes, women of respected social level, and the young generation². These customers were virtually their own 'fashion designers' with access to both reputable tailors and seamstresses who could specify their desired 'fashion'. With the decline of tailoring, old tailoring shops were replaced by ready-to-wear boutiques. Towards the end of the sixties, the adaptation and production of Chinese-style clothes diminished with the corresponding increase in demand for mass-produced, affordable Western apparel (Chapter 2).
Figure 5.1 Ready-made patterns for Western-style dresses by various Hong Kong clothing and pattern schools in the late 60s
The production of Western apparel and the promotion of Western fashion were highlighted in the fashion shows organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC). Hong Kong's Ready-to-Wear Festival began in October 1967, organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries in conjunction with the HKTDC. The HKTDC staged the second festival in March 1969. The organisation, a quasi-Government body founded in 1966, and charged with the responsibility of promoting Hong Kong trade and industries throughout the world, was then appointed to take over the festival and make it an annual event. However, the emergence of fashion 'was an orientation towards the Western mass markets, and so "local" garments on the catwalk were designed in Paris' (Turner: 1995: 102). In spite of the lack of tradition and expertise, the promotion of "Hong Kong fashion" benefited from a mixture of international design.

Each year, the event provided a forum for international talents and professionals to work and exchange ideas. The events were showcases for these people to express their desire for "Hong Kong fashion." Foreigners were appointed as consultants, co-ordinators, or choreographers to organise the events. Models were imported from the West. Overseas designers were invited to design the so-called "Hong Kong fashion" and catwalk presentations were staged. The absence of native design talent resulted in the importation of fashion ideas. It might seem strange that foreign designers were invited to create designs for local manufacturers to display as "Hong Kong fashion," however these clothes were produced mainly for Western mass markets where 'originality had to be imported' (Turner 1995: 105). Julius Schofield, a British fashion consultant, who was invited to produce the Hong Kong RTW Festival from 1974 to 1978, emphasised the fact that:

"...England makes for England...French fashion is French...but Hong Kong makes for the world" (HKTDC 1975: 26);
and further claimed that:

'Hong Kong is the only true international fashion centre in the pure sense''
(HKTDC 1975: 26).

5.2.2 The emergence of Hong Kong fashion designers
In the seventies, the HKTDC supported a mission with the statement that
'Hong Kong's got it all' for the development of trade and industry. 'If it's in
fashion, Hong Kong's got it and Hong Kong makes it' (HKTDC 1975: 30).
With consistent effort, support from the organisation, and the growing record
numbers of international buyers3, Hong Kong surpassed Italy in 1973 by
becoming the world's largest clothing exporter, exporting clothing to around
250 countries of the globe4. In 1972, the 'Made in Hong Kong' label was
introduced for the purpose of establishing a reputation for well made, well
designed, quality garments, thereby reinforcing the territory's position in the
world's ready-to-wear markets. Ultimately, the label was seen as a means
whereby the emergence of true Hong Kong fashion design could be publicised.
The HKTDC introduced the label with pride and stated that it would make its
appearance on the international fashion scene in every single garment - from
tiny, cloche hat to elegant, ankle-strap shoe. It promoted the label, asserting:

'the RTW Festival wa[i]s not a designers' festival; there are no big "names"
competing for the limelight. The only name that matters is Hong Kong'
(HKTDC 1975: 6).

The results were positive, as demonstrated by the fact that many foreign
buyers declared Hong Kong to be the fashion centre of Asia in the mid-
seventies. Some clothes sold under internationally-known names were made
locally during that period, examples being Pierre Balmain, Lanvin, Hardy
Amies, and Ossie Clark, among many others (Hong Kong Review, 1976). The
tenth season of the Hong Kong RTW Festival thus marked the industry's success. The enthusiasm with which clothes that carried the 'Made in Hong Kong' label were received by international markets has translated into healthy trade figures (Hong Kong Review, 14 January 1990, p.40). Quality improvement and an increase in the value-added element supplied by the Hong Kong clothing manufacturers also contributed to the success of the new label campaign. In view of the tariffs and quota restrictions encountered in many of the export markets, a conscious move towards medium-to-high markets was necessitated. Local manufacturers began to be aware of design as an entity. They followed trends, rather than just copying them. 'Hong Kong began to make fashion, rather than simply making clothes' (Hong Kong Review 1977: 15). Consequently, the Hong Kong RTW Festival in 1977 established beyond all doubt that Hong Kong was a centre of creativity and original design as well as a place for unchallenged manufacturing capacity. The 'Made in Hong Kong' label was a sufficiently well-known guarantee of quality to allow the Festival to move on to promoting the "Designed in Hong Kong" label. Hence, for the first time, young local designers were invited to participate in a special show of their own, organised as the finale to the whole RTW Festival. The Young Designers' Show (YDS) has, subsequently, been presented annually as part of the fashion festival since 1977.

The Young Designers' Show was a contest introduced to encourage local young designers to demonstrate their creativity. The YDS group encompassed a wide range of experience, educational background and fashion specialisation, participants including both local and overseas fashion graduates. This was a time when a significant number of young fashion designers returned to Hong Kong from abroad, and their contribution stimulated the apparel industry. Local manufacturers were increasingly gaining confidence to produce fashion clothes under their own labels, instead of simply making brands for other companies. In the eighties, some local designers also gained international
recognition and praise, and their collections were sold in major department stores (Hong Kong Review 1983: 27).

The Hong Kong RTW Festival continued to be the fashion designers' showcase in which to display their latest collections. However, the increasing local design talents and fashion designers from local and overseas fashion institutions resulted in a legitimate need for greater exposure. Besides the designers' consistent co-operation with major manufacturers for shows and exhibitions, a Hong Kong Fashion Designer Association was established to better organise and promote native fashion design talents. The association, founded in 1983, showed clothes designed and made solely in Hong Kong. Members of the group were the most active and well-established fashion designers, most of whom manufactured their own labels and developed new collections seasonally. With the increasing emphasis on the local fashion-design environment, Hong Kong fashion design enjoyed a greater degree of overseas exposure and was given wide coverage by the overseas press. In 1991, the South China Morning Post reported for the Hong Kong Fashion Week (formally known as the Hong Kong RTW Festival) that:

"it was the first time that Hong Kong-made garments could be found alongside major European labels in this fashion establishment where royalties for sales can reach almost HK$1.5 million a day (Hong Kong Review 1991: 27)."

5.3.1 Hong Kong fashion design within the globalisation process

Despite the success of the local clothing industry and the remarkable export figure for local fashion design, Hong Kong fashion designers are still unable to extend their popularity within the local context. The 'Hong Kong Chinese would not recognise locally designed products' and 'the territory did not have the vision to develop a strong identity due to the failure of long term industry'
(remark made by New York based Hong Kong fashion designer, Vivienne Tam, quoted in Lam 1998: 102). Besides, 'creativity is limited by market and production...because Hong Kong fashion depends greatly on export' (Tang & Wong 1997: 103). Mimi Yeung, former Fashion Director of the HKTDC also observed that the problem facing Hong Kong fashion designers was the lack of design character. Most renowned Hong Kong fashion designers who began their businesses in the mid-seventies were concerned about getting a foothold in a competitive market. Their major areas of interest were design and production, not character (South China Morning Post, October 26, 1994).

The first wave of Hong Kong fashion designers struggled with the joint issues of supply and demand since export markets were their major concern. They were obliged to, and apparently, trained to, produce designs according to the buyers' specifications and these were Western in style. Hong Kong fashion designers, having grown up in the post-industrial society were familiar with Western modernisation, and observed that the territory was increasingly being thrown into a global figuration. It is possible that the process of globalism may explain the lack of creativity and character of fashion design produced by Hong Kong fashion designers. Featherstone (1995) points out six historical phases within the globalisation process, namely (1) the attitude of immersion in a local culture, (2) the compromise to modernisation, (3) the recognition of local diversity and multiculturalism, (4) the input of travellers and expatriates, (5) the display of cosmopolitan orientation, and (6) the 'reproduction' of traditions from the cosmopolitan and cultural intermediaries, being heightened or diminished upon the historical phases, are possible affiliations within the globalisation process.

5.3.2 The attitude of immersion in a local culture

The men and women of Hong Kong, both past and present, understood clearly that well fitting and acceptable clothing is a necessity. The popularity of
tailoring in the fifties and sixties of Hong Kong (Chapter 2), and the substantial number of clothing and pattern institutions in the late sixties (as discussed earlier in the Chapter) ingrained an attitude within the local community and this has persisted to the present day.

Even by 1920, over 600 Hong Kong people were engaged in the production of tailored suits. The Korean War also precipitated the arrival of a large number of marines in the city, prompting the increase of business. Individual orders for suits, and large orders for uniforms for US military personnel based all around the world, including West Germany, Okinawa, Spain, and Vietnam, became a major business interest. As American involvement in Asia increased, the market continued to grow, reaching its height during the Vietnam War, when over two thousand tailoring shops and 15,000 skilled tailors were separating in areas such as Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong.

In addition to generating a culture of clothing production in Hong Kong, the city had aligned herself with a new world power having vast mass markets. As a consequence, the territory was able to survive the sudden closure of the China trade in 1951. As a result of its increasing industrialisation, Hong Kong was able to produce large quantities of merchandise at bargain prices for the tourists, military, and ultimately the American market. The negotiation between and the compliance with foreign and commercial policy highlighted the products to be produced. Thus, the production or the design of a Hong Kong product was, most often, determined by foreign policies and trading companies, and managed by foreign investors. In the fifties, Hong Kong had a pool of tailors skilled in making both Western style and Chinese style clothing, all of whom produced for the foreign markets.

The flexibility of the garment manufacturers in design and production gave rise to a cliché to describe the industriousness and success of the Hong Kong
Chinese in delivering the 'one-day' suit. From the time of the Korean War, US marines came to Hong Kong for rest and relaxation, then circulated stories of suits made to order and delivered in a single day. Americans were fascinated by the story, in part because it suggested astonishing bargains, but also became it contributed to the Oriental or Modern mystique of Hong Kong, already established by novels and films such as 'The World of Suzie Wong' (see also Chapter 3) and 'Love is a Many Splendoured Thing'. Such stories advertised an adroitness by which the Chinese could imitate styles, the speed at which goods were made up, and the astonishing cheapness by which Western quality could be simulated in tandem with flexibility (Turner 1993: 55). The degree of compromise in design, and the flexibility to meet demand had, in other words, become immersed as a local attitude for Hong Kong Chinese.

5.3.3 Compromise to modernisation

In 1954, the Chinese Manufacturers' Union stated that importation was no longer as interesting as in the past; rather, any increased export from Hong Kong necessitated development in the US market, hence the assistance of U.S. buyers was sought in developing Hong Kong product design (Report & Trade Reactions: Hong Kong exhibit, quoted in Turner 1993: 70-71). After 1955, Hong Kong government policy became focussed on manufacturing. The government took a decisive role in shaping the course of local industry, orienting exports towards the United States, and focusing on design. Shortly after the decision was made, designers and investors from established organisations realised the need to change and find new clients. Given the attitude of flexibility and compromise which had already become established, local designers realised the importance of commercial considerations to develop design in Hong Kong. A designer's adaptability, flexibility and general response to market needs were seen essential, accompanied by the
capability of the Hong Kong manufacturers to cater for almost any design specifications.

The mission to export had demonstrated great success with the co-operation of local entrepreneurs, investors, and designers. Between 1953 and 1956, Hong Kong domestic manufactured exports to the United States increased sharply, according to the Washington State Trade Fairs. By volume, and by the percentage of total domestic exports, domestic exports of clothing from Hong Kong to U.S.A. in 1955 increased more than four fold when compared with the previous two years, and those with Great Britain increased in the same year by more than 100,000 Sterling$^8$.

The concentration on export business highlighted the importance of the Ready-to-Wear festival organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council since 1969, where exports of garment and clothing industry were encouraged. The event helped the Government to accomplish its export policy, facilitated by foreign buyers and investors. The garments promoted at the event were intended to demonstrate manufacturers' ability to design and produce according to specifications (discussed later in the chapter). In the light of industrialisation and the corresponding popularity of ready-to-wear goods, the compromise to produce and adapt Western style fashion was a way to modernisation. The degree to which Western style fashion was deliberately adapted (see also Chapter 2) may be seen as a modifier to drive the new economy towards globalisation.

5.3.4 Recognition of local diversity and multiculturalism

The process of globalisation permits the recognition of local culture and the respect of multiculturalism. Hong Kong Chinese worked in a multicultural environment when the clothing industry began to take form. Fashion professionals, manufacturers, investors, and traders from different parts of the
world came to Hong Kong with their latest collections, skills, organisation knowhow, and techniques to the city when the Hong Kong Trade Development Council began the annual fashion event. Substantial foreign investment had brought about real industrial development. However, foreign investors had no interest in diversification, research, and development, or design in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, the colonial government made no attempt to eliminate the image of 'low-level skill', 'counterfeit', and 'cheap and nasty products' generated in the territory. With increasing business exchange, foreign flow, and perceived lack of trained and experienced industrial designers in the territory, the latest trends in Western ideas continued to be presented to the local industrialists from overseas.

Behind the government promotion of trade and industry, however, the importance of following fashion trends was obvious. The Federation of Hong Kong Industries (1962: 3) believed that it was necessary for a successful designer to be in close touch with the trends of fashion and taste in the company where a manufacturer hoped to sell his products. Thus, Chinese entrepreneurs and designers deliberately followed the styles which had demonstrated some success already. Their reticence to create new design and even their understanding of what was meant by design left a shadow for the city with substitute products, imitations and counterfeits, a surfeit of locally-produced foreign products and designs.

The transfer of foreign professionals, skills and management failed to stimulate a design environment in the territory as it constituted the 'transfer of control' over designs rather than an exchange of ideas. In any event, this was not the right time for Hong Kong designers to evolve a style of their own. Commercial considerations dictated all developments where design was involved, and industrial designers / technical designers were required to follow specifications and efficiently interpret an ordered style. Clients from
the overseas markets typically opted for Hong Kong since they believed that local manufacturers were capable of carrying out almost any design to specification or sample. Paradoxically, as Turner (1993) identified, 'originality' had to be 'copied', since in the context of the industrialisation process design is considered as an instrument of trade control.

5.3.5 The input of travellers and expatriates
Insufficient knowledge of overseas demand, marketing, management, quality control, and design skills of local manufacturers were recognised by American officials who wanted to expand Hong Kong's domestic exports. They considered that local manufacturers 'who can make anything but do not know what to make' demonstrated the need for design and marketing, the combination of American design with refined labour, the alluring opportunities offered by businessmen and the need for trade representatives in the United States (Turner 1993: 73-74). Thus, an increasing number of United States firms located their assembly plants and factories in Hong Kong, and American designers and merchandise experts were sent to advise local manufacturers on producing goods for the United States. Many of these factories included assembly plants for American components or textiles, and many new plastic and clothing firms were established solely to sell to the American market. They provided guidelines and training in production techniques and the implementation of design, styling, quality, and marketing skills. 'Design control' was extended to encourage Hong Kong manufacturers to act as subcontractors, with design being interpreted as a specification rather than something original.

Similar control has been transferred to fashion design since the Ready-to-Wear Festival began. Fashion co-ordinators and choreographers were invited from London and models were imported from the West (Figure 5.2).
THE 12 girls and three men who will model in the 1969 Hongkong Ready-to-Wear Festival were introduced to the Press at a tea-party yesterday.

They are Bob Anderson, Moses Fong and Christopher Hunt the three male models, and Wendy K, Samantha Cheng, Karin Hewitt, Helen Ho, Grace Ko, Marion Kwan, Susansee Sartain, Tina Viola, Anna Maria Wong and Danby Zoe.

The festival, to be held in March, will show the fashions of 100 Hongkong manufacturers.

It is sponsored by the Federation of Hongkong Industries and the Trade Development Council.

Figure 5.2 Models selected for the Ready-to-wear Festival 1969
'The TDC employs two fashion co-ordinators who visit factories to give advice on current designs, fashion colours and fabrics. London fashion consultant Mr. Julius Schofield came to Hong Kong to take charge of the festival organisation. An expert from overseas helps ensure that the Festival is in the mainstream of fashion for the international markets'. (Hong Kong review 1975: 67-8)

'Fashion co-ordinators Gary Scales and Gwenda Crone, came from London to choose the models...The Hong Kong Trade Development Council is still awaiting confirmation of some of the five overseas models who have been invited for the festival. The busiest girls in town during March 5 to March 10 will be Christina Hui, Anna Maria Wong, Deborah Wright-Nooth, Jackie Orepen, Judy Mann, Judy Washington, Linda Chang, Marion Kwan (now holiday in Beirut), Terry Wong, Toni Wade and Vivien Poole (now with her family in England). The boys chosen are Christopher Hunt, Bambi Lim, John Culkin and Raymond So'. (The Star 1972: 16)

Foreign fashion designers from London and Paris were invited to design fashion on the catwalk despite the fact that the event was meant to display Hong Kong fashion. These fashion consultants organised the event, co-ordinated catwalk shows, and decided the theme for the event each year to ensure that the festival was 'international'. Thus, Chinese styles of clothes were not included, and the events closely followed the Western fashion trend, despite the fact that a Chinese theme and Chinese clothes could have been seen as a trend if used. In 1969, the Ready-to-Wear festival displayed lavish embroidery and luxuriant beadwork on gowns. An embroidered trouser suit of French organza, trimmed with yellow crepe and accompanying hat - modelled on the "Coolie" style - which was trimmed with yellow feathers, represented one departure from the norm. Chinese style clothing was rarely used as an element for fashion design during the Festival. The launch of 'the Chinese Look' in 1973 was one of the few that exploited Chinese as a theme for the
event. However, it comprised show-pieces which were displayed by models on a stage, rather than fashion on the catwalk. Cawthorne (1972) wrote favourably about the initiative, describing the scene as a 'brilliantly inspired segment, including not only avant-garde versions but lavish Sung Dynasty costumes'. In the following year, the Chinese theme was gone, and emphasis on Western fashion resumed with the headline, 'Back to the 50s look' (Figure 5.3).

'The 50s look is very much a part of this year's Ready-to-Wear Festival organised by the Trade Development Council. Bare shoulders, low necklines and the platform shoes of the 50s are all the rage....a number of local designers are displaying garments with a 50-ish feel at this year's festival'.
(The Star 1973: 8)

5.3.6 Display of cosmopolitan orientation and 'reproduction' from the cosmopolitan and cultural intermediaries

Foreign manipulation of a local event appeared to drive the local designers to develop a practical and working acquaintance-ship with overseas buyers, which enabled them to bridge traditional culture for communication around the world. Likewise, these cultural intermediaries, having a cosmopolitan orientation, displayed a new category of 'professional' to 'reproduce' local culture from and within. In the seventies, when fashion design in Hong Kong had not yet taken shape, the eagerness for local designers to communicate was observed, which in turn led to the 'natural' abandonment of wearing and designing Chinese style fashion.

'Bobbie To is back from his travels and among the things he brought back with him is a genuine California tan! This recent trip took him to Tokyo, on to Los Angeles and San Francisco and New York. He is simply bursting with fashion news! "Jackets are definitely in, ...lengths vary from Chanel to boot-lengths... for me, shoulderbags are very in. They're going back to straight
Figure 5.3  Top left: Models in the Ready-to-Wear Festival 1969
Bottom right: 'The Chinese Look' as a theme for the Ready-to-Wear Festival 1972
Right: 'Back to the 50s look' in the Ready-to-Wear Festival 1973
elegance, with jackets and shorter hair." (Del Rosario, T. 1971, 'Jackets are now in, says Bobbie', Womenscope, Aug, 19711.)

'Philip also thinks that the change in pop music is another vital factor in this revival of the 50s look..."Nostalgia has played a great part in reviving the 50s fashion but it has been helped by the rock and roll revival",...glamour rock went with heavy makeup and rhinestones.' (The Star: 1973).

Besides, the territory has all time highlighted by fashion events, visits, and shops opening, demonstrating its cosmopolitan orientation.

'The Vidal Sassoon Organisation opened its first Asian Salon in Hong Kong last November. The salon was officially opened by Mr. Christopher Brooker, the international artistic director for Vidal Sassoon, who is based at the company's headquarters in the United States. Mr. Brooker is responsible for the standard of work and creative direction in all Sassoon salons world-wide. He explained the decision to open a salon in Hong Kong indicated the importance of Hong Kong as a fashion centre in Asia' (The 1978 Hong Kong Ready-to-Wear Festival 1987: 20).

'Internationally-famous Japanese designer, Kenzo Takada, is making his first visit to the 1979 Hong Kong Ready-to-Wear Festival this year' (The 1979 Ready-to-wear Festival 1979: 14).

'While the past year was marked more by the glamour and glitter of overseas happenings or by foreign firms showing their best in Hong Kong - great occasions such as the Chanel show and perfume launch - there was one milestone set in Hong Kong's fashion history... Locally, the year's highlight was undoubtedly the marvellous Chanel fashion show at which the famous Paris house launched its new scent, Coco. Held at the Regent Hotel, it showed for the first time in Hong Kong the full range of Chanel's new collection by Karl Lagerfield, haute couture as well as pret-a-
porter...Hongkong had a unique chance to see the best in French haute couture - wonderful clothes superbly designed and made' (Hong Kong Review: 1986).

' Last year saw the injection of some quality British fashion into the local retail market with the arrival of Marks and Spencers, and British Home Stores with their Richards label. Most of these have still to gain recognition, but with the other upmarket British names like Jacques Vert, John Charles, and Susan Small gaining such a firm foothold here in the past 12 months, the fashion scene is rounding out satisfactorily' (Hong Kong review 1989: 41).

The Trade Development Council continued to act as a mediator to ensure that the city would be 'international'.

'Our experience of taking the 1975 Ready-to-Wear Festival Gala to Paris showed that garments bearing the "Made in Hong Kong" label have the quality, design and the workmanship that international buyers want' (Welcome message from the Chairman of the Ready-to-Wear Festival Organising Committee, The 1976 Hong Kong Ready-to-Wear Festival, South China Morning Post, p. 5).

'Then there's the "export" of the Hong Kong Ready-to-Wear Gala: to London and Paris in '75, Los Angeles and New York in '76 and Tokyo in '77. And the Young Designers' Show, established for the first time this year's festival. This show was introduced to create a platform whereby Hong Kong's emerging fashion talents could be simultaneously exposed in a unique show of their own to the international press and buyers' ('The 1978 Hong Kong Ready-to-Wear Festival 1978: 10).

'To help promote Hongkong's image as a producer of quality garments at competitive prices, the TDC mounted a series of overseas promotion campaigns on top of attending regular fashion fairs last year...The TDC has
also decided to take part, for the first time this year, in the Men's Apparel
Guild in California. It will also mount a prestigious fashion promotion in
Japan and one at the Salon International du Pret-a-Porter Feminine in Paris'
('TDC continues to find new markets', Hong Kong Review, South China
Morning Post, January 1983).

Schofield (1975) remarked that 'In Hong Kong you can see the clothes and
designs of almost every leading designer in the world', which is the case. Even
the first Hong Kong fashion Designer Competition organised by the Trade
Development Council had international figures on the panel of judges.

'Among the panel of international judges will be American designer
Charlotte Ford and Rudi Gernreich fashion writer Dale Kern of Women's
Wear Daily and business executive and personalities representing the major
markets for Hong Kong's billion dollar garment industry, such as Mr. Robert
Midgley, Chairman and Managing Director of Harrods Ltd., of London' (The

The member list of the Hong Kong Fashion Designer Association
demonstrated that 17 out of 43 of their members (Member list 1999-2000)
were overseas educated. The rest had either experienced living/working
abroad, received foreign prize awards, or were working in the export sector.
All were therefore characterised by their 'international' profiles. They were
skilled, trained, packaged, and nurtured in an environment where they were
constantly exposed to elements from the Occidental world. These cultural
intermediaries/design professionals, when re-interpreting Hong Kong fashion
design, would thus identify themselves as 'international' in appeal, trendy in
keeping with the homogenised fashion world, and marketable.
Conclusion
This chapter has demonstrated Hong Kong fashion design to be a product of globalisation using Featherstone's six historical phases as a framework to define its nature within the globalisation process. Through these phases, notions of copying, lack of creativity and originality associated with Hong Kong fashion design and the designers were identified. The chapter first tackled Hong Kong fashion design in the global context with its external influence. Its distinctiveness was analysed and contrasted with the five fashion capitals, with the observation that design and creativity were not seen as a priority in the local context. The emergence of Hong Kong fashion was illustrated, in addition to that of the local fashion designers. It questioned the common associations with local fashion design and its producers, and suggested that the root of the problem may lie in the dual influence of trade and industrialisation. Colonialism played a significant role in exposing the city to export markets. The constraints for foreign investors, organisation in the city, local manufacturers, industrialists and designers have led 'design' to be trend following and dictated by commercial considerations. Ultimately, the city's eagerness to acquire international recognition has driven designers and professionals to follow the trends, the taste, and the examples of success. Such a possible development of design has been nurtured in a global environment where fashion design in Hong Kong could be seen as a product of the process.
Endnotes

1 Learning to sew was a pleasure and was seen as an essential skill for women to attain. Sewing and pattern making skills for the production of Western apparel were taught in various clothing and pattern institutions. The emergence of numerous clothing and pattern institutions and the delivery of production skills for Western-style clothing in the late sixties demonstrated the society's demand for Western apparel. The pursuit of Western fashion prompted this development, to improve the availability of ready-to-make clothing patterns in Western styles (Lee Wai Chun, comic writer, founder of thirteen dots, interview with author, July 1998).

2 Customers selected the latest fashion and apparel ideas from magazines, catalogues, promotion leaflets and advertisements. Tailors were often asked to imitate the production of the selected attire. The practice was popular as Western fashion available in the market was relatively expensive and choices were few. Among the customers, film stars and prostitutes particular favoured such a practice, as clothes played an important role in their professions (Master Ng Cheung Hei, interview with author, August 1998).

3 The third and fourth Hong Kong RTW were held in 1970 and 1971, attracting record numbers of 798 and 848 buyers respectively. In 1972, more than 1,000 buyers attended from all over the world, and a record number of more than HK$28 million worth of orders was received - a tremendous improvement compared to the figure of HK$7.5 million in 1967 when the first festival was held (HKTDC 1975: 24).

4 Hong Kong overtook Italy in clothing exports in 1973 and maintained the first in position until 1977. Clothing exports were valued at HK$7, 425 million; bringing 44% of export earnings to the city solely from the garment industry. In 1980 Hong Kong regained the top position by a margin of HK$6,000 (Hong Kong Review, January 1982, p.54).

5 The South China Morning Post reported that 'designer' labels like Jenny Lewis, Eddie Lau, Diane Freis and Hannah Pang are gaining world recognition and praise, with their collections selling in major department stores (Hong Kong Review, January 1983, p.27).

6 The major markets for Hong Kong garments in 1975 were the United States, which took 27.6%, the Federal Republic of Germany, 20.3% and the United Kingdom, 16% (Hong Kong Review, January 1975, p.67).

7 Kevin Yeung, Chairman of the Hong Kong Designer Association. Interview with author, Jan 1998.
1 Source: Cost and value of Hong Kong to the United Kingdom, draft minute of P.M. from President of the Board of Trade, 01/03/57, UK, P.R.O, Co 1030 859.

4 Source: Publication for Ready-to-Wear Festival 1969, personal collection of Judy Mann (source unknown).

10 Cawthorne, Zelda (1972), 'Hong Kong launches the Chinese Look', publication for the Ready-to-Wear Festival, personal collection of July Mann, source unknown.

11 Source: Personal collection of publication of Judy Mann, source, and page unknown.
A reflection of the dual position: Emergence, popularity, and cutie Japanese fashion in Hong Kong

In the previous chapter, the theory that Hong Kong fashion developed concurrently with globalisation was expoused. Chapters 2 and 3 presented a summary of the evolution of dress in Hong Kong and questioned the representativeness of Suzie Wong’s sexy cheongsam in signifying dress identity in the territory. It is difficult to construct an identity for fashion in Hong Kong if fashion consumerism is excluded, hence Chapter 4 examined the city’s obsessive commitment to consumerism as a cultural phenomenon of consequence where Hong Kong fashion is concerned. If fashion in Hong Kong is defined as a cultural phenomenon (in particular with reference to the city’s obsession with fashion consumerism) and a product of globalisation (chapter 5), then Japanese fashion in Hong Kong may be seen as facilitating the dual position. Chapter 6 therefore expands upon the emergence and popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong. Cutie of Japan is employed as an example to measure the hypothesised position.

Introduction
This chapter aims to theorise the role of Japan in the formation of fashion in Hong Kong through the examination of the corresponding production of Hong Kong fashion and consumption of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong. An analysis is made of the popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong, against the historical backdrop of its emergence in the market of international fashion and of Hong Kong. Since Japan is widely perceived to be the Asian fashion
leader, the impact of Japanese fashion on Hong Kong fashion producers and consumers is also examined.

Given its colonial history, the international exposure and Western global influence, Hong Kong culture is dominated by Western values. However, design elements of Japanese fashion are often displayed in the creations of contemporary Hong Kong fashion designers. The recent popularity of Japanese street fashion has also contributed to its widespread assimilation into the youth culture of Hong Kong. Using the example of Japan, the development of Hong Kong fashion as a dual product of globalisation and cultural phenomenon can be seen. Despite the strong presence of global values, the indigenous Japan culture has been influential to the cultural development of Hong Kong. While the adoption of Asian values from Japan is acknowledged, it may be observed that, given the example of 'cute' fashion, Japanese fashion is unlikely to become localised despite its widespread popularity in Hong Kong. The author further admits that only indigenous Japan homologous values, norms and ideologies prominent in the formation of Hong Kong culture may inspire the new generation to integrate Japanese design into local fashion.

6.1.1 Juxtaposing Japan with the global environment of Hong Kong

The globalisation process is seen as producing a unified and integrated common culture (Featherstone: 1996). The simplest connotation of globalisation is that it homogenises local cultures and dissolves national boundaries interspersed with global values. These global values, irrespective in any domain such as politics, economy, or cultures, however, refer primarily to western values and culture (Cvetkovich and Kellner: 1997).

Though local culture may seem to retreat under the universalising process of globalisation, it is unwise to assume that non-Western cultures are giving way
to the logic of modernity and adopting Western forms. Rather, the 
globalisation process should be regarded as opening up a greater dialogue 
between various nation-states, blocs, and civilisations. Recent studies have 
elaborated on the formation of a local culture which does not adopt 
homogeneous character from a dominant, single global origin (Dirlik: 1996, 
Featherstone: 1996). Though the 'West' is always seen as constituting a major 
force of globalisation, the outcome is always multi-origin and multitudinous.

Hong Kong, having changed from a place of temporary abode to a permanent 
settlement, from an undeveloped port to an international metropolis, from 
residual colony to one of the world's most important financial centres, is now 
a special administrative region of China. Such a community, which has a 
hybrid character, is believed to have crystallised beyond its global elements.

In the process of globalisation, Hong Kong has not solely absorbed Western, 
homogenised culture. Until recently, Japan was accorded credibility for 
having thrust its hegemonic cultures into different parts of the world, 
growing importance of its cultures have been accelerated by "soft power" (to 
borrow the term from Joseph Nye: 1990) in world politics. The "one-
dimensional" economic power of Japan marked by cultural insularity has 
relevance for other societies (Nye: 1990). The relentless modernising force of 
Japan set the model into motion, with the assumption that every locality 
would display the cultural ideas, images, and material artefacts of the 
Japanese way of life (Shiraishi: 1997). The fact that people in a wide range of 
countries around the world, particularly in Asia, are watching Pokémon, 
playing Nintendo, dressing in Japanese styles and reading Japanese manga is 
taken as evidence of this process.
6.1.2 Japan as a force for cultural transformation in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is usually described in terms of 'East and West', either as a fusion or as two polar extremes of the same. Western influence resulted from British colonialism hence, together with the expatriate population, Hong Kong is appraised as a melting pot of cultures in the East and in the West. The symbolic link between Hong Kong and the West is perennial, irrespective of the end of colonialism. This might empirically dilute its link with the culture of the East such as is found in Japan and Taiwan.

It is evident that Japanese products are to be found everywhere in Hong Kong: in shopping malls, magazine stalls, skywalk or fashion show, promoted through popular media, and at the centre of the plots of pirated video compact diskettes (Fung: 1999). Hong Kong youngsters out in the street wear Japanese 'cutie' styles, local designers seek inspiration from Japan, customers queue for fresh Japanese clothing imports, hence the influence of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong is considerable. Ultimately, the visibility of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong is historical, but increasing quantities of Japanese fashion have been imported since the nineties, and few studies have examined the popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong.

In recent years, young people have dressed from head to toe in similar fashion to those of Japanese youths, as may be evidenced on every street corner in Hong Kong. Moreover, with the return of Hello Kitty\(^1\) in the nineties, cutie fashion and products have become favourite items for many of the Hong Kong youngsters and adults. Popular as it may be, cute fashion is devoid of social meaning when transported from Japan to Hong Kong, denoting the difference between product transportation and identity transplantation (Hebdige: 1979). Though the influence of Japanese culture in Hong Kong and in local fashion scene could not overlooked, it is not yet a legitimate force for cultural transformation in the territory. However, young and contemporary Hong
Kong fashion designers in the nineties derived fashion collections containing design elements of Japanese fashion (Ling: 1999b). Frequent adaptation of Japanese philosophy and inspiration from Japan are seen in their collections. The incorporation of Japan ideologies into local culture and fashion and the omnipotence of Japan in Hong Kong fashion are topics waiting to be explored.

Localisation of Japanese culture in Hong Kong fashion cannot be understood by merely examining extrinsic cues; the incorporation of Japanese ideology may rather be seen as one of the many global influences, Japan being an originator of global fashion trends. Nevertheless, the popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong serves to demonstrate, as a local cultural phenomenon, the obsession of Hong Kong people with fashion. Using the example of Japan, the theory that fashion in Hong Kong is both a product of globalisation and cultural phenomena will be tested. Thus, the chapter examines the popularity of Japanese fashion with Hong Kong as the historical backdrop, on which Japanese culture and values might exist, yet it is hypothesised that Japanese fashion has not been fully indigenised in Hong Kong, as the example of cute fashion illustrates. The designs of contemporary local fashion designers also demonstrate that the international global feature of Hong Kong fashion does not permit full-scale absorption of Japan culture into local fashion. Such a flow could be regarded temporal, which serves to demonstrate Hong Kong fashion design (designed by local fashion designers) to be a product of globalisation.

6.2.1 The emergence of Japan fashion
Ever since the eighties, Japanese fashion has caught the attention of the international fashion press. In the nineties, international trendsetters looked to Japan for new styles to adopt for consumers in every part of the world, increasing the popularity of Japanese fashion. In recent years, young people
have dressed in the same fashions as Japanese youths, both in Hong Kong and other, capitalist cities.

The success of Japanese fashion appears to be more historic than instinctive. In the early eighties, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, and Issey Miyake took over the Paris fashion runway and the three Japanese designers quickly achieved international success. Their styles 'characterised by off-black oversize garments, the use of holes in the material as a form of decoration, asymmetrical cuts, and crumpled textiles which were treated to look as if their colours had run' came to represent Japanese fashion. These designers caught attention of the international fashion press and, ever since, Japan has been linked with Paris, Milan, London and New York. Tokyo as one of the five "fashion capitals" (Skov 1996: 138). Within the same decade, Japanese fashion designers became part of the general movement of artistic innovation, which became transformed into a cultural production process. The net result was a set of 'image' alliances that has augmented the culture industry in size and extent has provided the vehicle for Japan's popular culture to spread through Asia (Shiraishi: 1997).

The assumption that Japan practised a new form of imperialism through the cultural, and globalisation process is widely held. When Japanese popular culture spread through Asia, it became Asian popular culture. It would appear that some Japanese products have cultural relevance and have 'resonance' in societies in Asia and beyond. Some researchers have gone as far as to suggest that contemporary Asian popular culture is solely Western and Japan encounters values that resonate with Asian societies (Long: 1985, Woronoff: 1990, Vogel: 1991, Shiraishi: 1997). The definition and the distinctiveness of Orientalism, as seen in the case of Japanese fashion (Kondo: 1997, Skov: 1996) may create a sense of 'Asian-ness', but this is often superficial. Designs reflecting the sense of Zen or minimalism, use of mono-colours (black, white
and grey), complexity in pattern, asymmetric cut, emphasis on the silhouettes of the garment instead of the body, crinkled or torn materials and colour fading effects, are all classified as Japanese fashion. It might be true that 'resonance' is found in other Japanese popular cultures for Asia. Design elements of Japanese fashion are less likely to resonate with the wardrobe of other Asian countries. Rather, Japan's position as the Asian fashion leader has become a myth to inspire millions of fashion followers, particularly in Asia.

Japanese fashion exists as a model for other Asian societies, and it appears impossible for other nations to surpass its leadership. Sizing apart, (since garment fit is more suitable for the Asia figure) and colour (more in harmony with the skin tone and taste of Asians) and silhouette (for smaller figures), Japan's fashion capital Tokyo represents the only Fashion Empire in Asia, and the trademark of Japanese fashion. In addition, the admiration of the western fashion press for Japan, throughout the past two decades, and general interest in oriental exoticism has increased the general level of popularity. In the context of its reputation and appeal to Asian people, the popularity of Japanese fashion is tremendous.

6.2.2 The popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong

The 'East meets West' or Western appeal of collections is noted whenever Hong Kong fashion is reviewed, but there is scant regard for Hong Kong's design abilities in Asia. Japan, on the other hand, represents a legitimate force, and irrespective of the success of the Hong Kong clothing industry, Hong Kong fashion design is unlikely to repeat the pattern of success seen in Japan. Though the tension of 'who's next?' after Tokyo as the leader of fashion in Asia is severe, none of the Asian cities has yet shown signs of becoming the successor. Instead, frequent comparisons with Japan have been used to challenge Hong Kong fashion.
When Japanese fashion was first introduced to Hong Kong, the majority of Hong Kong Chinese were Western trend followers. Japanese fashion succeeded in arousing attention locally due to its remarkable success in the international fashion market from the early eighties onwards. This was also the time when other Japanese cultural industries set in force the motion of an image alliance¹, and every Hong Kong family displayed the material artefacts of the Japanese way of life. With the popularity of Japanese manga, TV series, and animation in Hong Kong, the consumption of Japanese products is proliferating.

Nevertheless, the context of trade and business with Japan and Hong Kong contributes to Japan's visibility locally. Within four years, Japanese re-exports through Hong Kong to China increased 40 times in value terms when compared with those of 1978. Trade between the two places increased by 15% from 1983-4. Until 1982, Japan remained the largest trading partner with Hong Kong and was in second place behind China thereafter (RTHK: 1983). Products within the programme of her industrial investment had long since penetrated the Hong Kong market. From the seventies onwards, Hong Kong families enjoyed a wide range of these consumer products, ranging from small electronic appliances to vehicles for transportation². These products have become part of the everyday life of Hong Kong families³. Nonetheless, the eighties saw the widespread distribution of Japanese clothes in 75% of all Hong Kong boutiques, though more than half of them sold counterfeit Japanese products (RTHK: 1983).

Since the eighties, Japanese fashions have been favoured by the people of Hong Kong, with Japanese public idols as motivators. Japanese pop music was introduced to Hong Kong in the early eighties, and the Japanese singers immediately became super idols. Hong Kong was the largest market for Japanese albums in 1982 (RTHK: 1983). The popularity of the images of
Japanese singers was demonstrated by the fact that Hong Kong singers resembled those in Japan (Figure. 6.1). The imagery transferred from the pop stars to the public, and hence Japanese style was widely adopted during the eighties in Hong Kong.

The eighties' Japanese music idols were important trendsetters in Hong Kong, and their fashions were in turn influenced by Western music artists and groups. The transformed styles of Japanese version from Western artists were, very often, more widely appraised than the originals. Ogawa (1999) remarks that though Japanese artists might adopt the same styles as specific western artists, their images as musicians and performers were significantly distinct. With their young and healthy appearance, these Japanese idols had wittily modified and adopted the styles of their favourite Western music artists for a wider audience, particularly in Asia. Chan3 (1999) also noted that several renowned Western music artists, for example Boy George and David Sylvian, were far too extreme for local audiences. Popular as they were, they were not directly imitated by the Hong Kong artists or the public in general. That may also imply that a 'resonance of look' is extended from the Japanese to the Hong Kong Chinese, and probably to other Asians. One remarkable example was seen in the case of the hairstyle of a British male vocal artist, David Sylvian, of an English music group named 'Japan'. The group began to be popular in music in early eighties and, despite its unpopularity in England4, it was a hit in the music chart of Japan, the male singer, David Sylvian becoming a favourite idol for the Japanese. His hairstyle became so popular that almost all Japanese idols had a similar cut at one stage. The young Japanese idol, Matchy, was amongst the most outstanding. This hairstyle was then adopted by numerous Hong Kong artists and became known as the 'Matchy cut' thereafter. The 'Matchy cut' also trickled down to the general public (Figure. 6.2).
Figure 6.1  Hong Kong young idol groups (on the right) resembled those in Japan (on the left) in the eighties. 1st row left & right: Shibukakitai (Japan) & Grass Hopper (Hong Kong); 2nd row left & right: Shonentai (Japan) & Little Tiger (Hong Kong); 3rd row left: Shohjotai (Japan) & Happy Girls' Group (Hong Kong)
Figure 6.2  From top left to right: 1st row – David Sylvian (UK) & Matchy (Japan); 2nd row – two members from Shonentai (Japan); 3rd row – Hong Kong singers and idols in the 80s; Jacky Cheung, K.H. Choy, Andy Lau; 4th row – Hong Kong youngsters in the 80s.
Various modifications of western styles facilitated the popularity of Japanese artists in the local context. The Japanese version was stressed when styles were delivered and, correspondingly the source of origin was, as often as not, neglected. The eighties also saw the introduction of heavy make-up, inspired by British pop singer, Boy George, whose exaggerated appearance introduced a distinct make-up style for men. Similar make-up was promoted through local magazines using a renowned Japanese male vocalist, K. Tamaki, from the music group, Anzenchitai, as a model for the distinctive look. The process of subtle adaptation is evident when a comparison is made between the two. Again, the modified version was widely adopted by local artists (Figure. 6.3).

Japanese style overshadowed other fashion trends in the eighties in Hong Kong. The popularity of Japanese fashion not only stimulated consumer demand for Japanese products, and Japan ideology was seen to be incorporated in various local fashion media (Figure. 6.4 & 6.5). The fashion trend served as a force whereby Japanese culture and images could be assimilated in the local context. The generation influenced by Japan in the eighties imbibed its ideologies, imagination, culture, and fashion. Thus, the infinite preference for Japanese fashion in Hong Kong in the nineties explains why 'local culture embraces Japan culture' (Ng: 1999)7.

6.3.1 Cutie in Japan/in Hong Kong

Japanese fashion is well received in Asian and beyond. Today, young people dressed in Japanese styles may be seen in Harajuku, Japan, Causeway Bay, in Hong Kong, and other Asian cities such as Shimending, Taipei and Siam Square, Bangkok. Of the numerous Japanese styles, 'cutie' is one of the most popular amongst Asians and the Hong Kong Chinese. Young fans of Japanese 'cute' style dress in the most exaggerated bell-bottom pants, and smocked tops, heavily accessorised with plastic and string. With the revival of the cute
Figure 6.3 From top to bottom: 1st row - Boy George; 2nd row - K. Tamaki from Anzenchitai; 3rd row left & right - Hong Kong singer Anita Mui & actress L.C. Lee

Figure 6.4 From right to left: Advertisement of Hong Kong label, Reno resembles Japan label Pink House in the mid 80s.

Courtesy of Reno and Pink House

Figure 6.5 From right to left: Fashion and style of Hong Kong label, Reno resembles that of a Japanese youth walking down the street in the mid 80s.

Courtesy of Reno

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character - Hello Kitty - cute fashion has been particularly fashionable since the mid-nineties in Hong Kong.

In the chapter on 'Cuties in Japan', Kinsella (1995: 220) explains that 'cute' or 'Kawaii' in Japanese, 'essentially means childlike; it celebrates sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine gentle, vulnerable, weak, and inexperienced social behaviour and physical appearances'. In Japan, cute clothes are 'designed to make the wearer appear childlike and demure... The clothes were often fluffy and frilly with puffed sleeves and lots of ribbons - a style known as "fancy" - or alternatively were cut slightly small or tight and came decorated with cartoon characters and slogans'. Cute fashion has also undergone its evolution with the promotion of Japanese fashion magazines. By the late eighties, it 'had matured into a cheeky, androgynous, tomboy sweetness. Apart from the perennially popular tight, white baby vest-like T-shirts, nursery colours, cartoon characters and baby doll frills mellowed out into woolly Noddy hats, dungarees and tight little sweaters'. In addition to the childlikeness, 'cutie style is also chic, eccentric, androgynous and humorous'. (Kinsella 1995: 229).

The Cutie style evolved in the eighties Japan as a consequence of the perceived harshness of adult society, of restrictions and of hard work. Negative connotations of excessive social responsibilities, lack of free time and tight social regulations dictated that cute culture would provide an escape route from adulthood into alternative universes. Cute idolises childhood as a place of individual freedom unattainable in society. The overwhelming cute culture, which began in the mid-seventies in Japan, was expanding rapidly between 1970 and 1990, and reached a peak of saccharine intensity in the early eighties. According to Kinsella (1995) cute signifies the desires of young Japanese people to escape entirely from real life. Consumption of cute fashion was obviously demanding as it facilitates the transformation of a person to
look and feel like a child. The adaptation of cute fashion in Japan is therefore a means of social expression. It re-personalises the wearer. In Japan, cute fashion is

'...a kind of rebellion or refusal to co-operate with established social values and realities. It was a demure, indolent little rebellion rather than a conscious, aggressive and sexually provocative rebellion of the sort that has been typical of western youth culture' (Kinsella 1995: 243).

If cute style in Japan is anti-social and it idolises the rebel, then its practice in Hong Kong is a contradiction. Vast adaptation of Japanese styles in the eighties in Hong Kong included not only cute fashion but also Japanese fashion and brands in general. Cute fashion did not dominate the wardrobe of Hong Kong youth in the eighties. Instead, it provided an alternative apart from western fashion as well as other Japanese clothes. Cute fashion hence constituted a phenomenon in Hong Kong. Though cute styles were further promoted with the popularity of Japanese 'idol singers' (e.g. Matsuda Seiko, Naoko Kawai, Hiroko, Akina and Kyoko) among many others. They were 'cute stars' dominating television, magazines, and pop music in the eighties in Japan, and frequently graced the pages of young people's Chinese language magazines. The adaptation of fashion and styles through imitation of pop idols was a form of collective behaviour to acquire social recognition, particularly within a desired group. This form of social practice could be seen as a form of neutral cultural activity, and fashion was as a means of producing and reproducing certain cultural groupings. Social position and belonging were indicated through fashion and clothing (Veblen: 1992). In this discourse, communication was enhanced where fashion and clothing were artefacts, practices and institutions as ways of signifying society's beliefs, values, ideas and experiences (Barnard: 1996). Communication through cute fashion in both Japan and Hong Kong was understood as a signifying system; however,
the values, hopes, and beliefs of the wearers did not reflect coherent identities. Barnard (1996) believed members of a social group to be negotiated and established through communication but not vice versa. However, the discourse in which people are first members of groups before communicating their membership is activated particularly in the case of blind imitation of super idols. Moreover, such imitation is temporal since the popularity of idols decline, the idols shift images, or members withdraw from the social group. Evidently, Hong Kong followers blindly imitated their cute Japanese idols, neglecting the social meanings behind the wardrobe. Such behaviour is by no means unique, and may be seen elsewhere other than fan clubs.

Nonetheless, self-gratification and social acceptance of the individuals are often projected through fashion. However, the latest desired appearance within a social group is not so much an individual decision as the fulfilment of societal expectations within the group (Simmel: 1957). Such collective activity tends to be particularistic and different standards are applied to members of and outside the group (Gudykunst: 1988). In this discourse, a collectivistic culture could most possibly formulate cultural pressure for collective conformity in a society. The embraced collectivistic cultures have emphasised values also on in-group integrity, interdependency and harmonious relationships (Triandis: 1990). Some of these values could be seen alternatively as reinforcing paternalism, hierarchy, and conformity. (Schwaritz: 1990). Southeast Asia countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, etc., are considered highly collectivist (Hui & Triandis: 1986, Hofstede: 1980). An important connection between collectivism and Hong Kong is observable: in the process of wearing cute clothes and purchasing cute products, individuals of Hong Kong become social objects, whilst social expectations and acceptability are interpreted through conspicuous consumption. Such collectivism is also evident in the way in which Hong
Kong people queue to consume mobile phones, collectable stamps, properties, stock market shares, or discounted products (see also Chapter 4).

6.3.2 Cute as a fashion trend in Hong Kong

Cute fashion could, therefore, be termed as a fashion trend in Hong Kong. As a result of the increasing demand for Japanese fashion in the eighties, local fashion brand suppliers launched Japanese-style collections (Refer to Figures 6.5, 6.6 & 6.7.1). The prevailing mode of fashion does not constitute images and direction from a single trend. Cute fashion and Japanese styles were, with hindsight, yet another fashion fad, which waned after a season or two. The latest fashion trend was adopted in the manner of a temporary transition without cultivating an affinity for Japanese image or an understanding of the brand philosophy. The accent of 'Japanese-ness' for the local fashion brand G-2000 in 1986, for example, has long been subsumed by the culturally indistinct and global style of brand image (Figure 6.7.2).

Cute fashion styles did not become 'hot' items for the Hong Kong youth until the mid-nineties. In the past decade, artefacts of Japan were widely distributed internationally. Its fast emerging capitalist structure reinforced by the image of a leading economic power enabled Japan to become a focal point globally. As a spotlight for the media, Japanese life style was repeatedly in the news worldwide. In the nineties there was a chain effect, and the remarkable performance of Japan was reflected in its fashion with the result that international trend-setters looked to it for new styles to adopt for consumers in every part of the world. Youths have adopted cute fashion as a new trend of street fashion, in Hong Kong as well as elsewhere in Asia. The popularity is vast and widespread in Hong Kong, where cute figures gather on every street corner. The styles worn are similar to those promoted in Japan, and new trends are adopted from various Japanese magazines such as No-non, Cutie, Olive, or Can Cam. In addition, cute fashion is heavily promoted in local
Figure 6.6 Collection of Hong Kong label, Base in 1986

Courtesy of Base
Figure 6.7.1  Collection of Hong Kong label, G-2000 in 1986

Figure 6.7.2  From top to bottom: Autumn/Winter 96/97 collection & Spring/Summer 97 collection of Hong Kong label, G-2000

Source: Catalogues of G-2000 fashion collection  
Courtesy of G-2000

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magazines. Promotion of new Japanese cute fashion products and items, features on Japanese cute brands, a directory to purchase Japanese cute clothes, detailed reports on shopping sites in Japan, editorials on emerging Japanese fashion trend and street fashion, how to DIY fashion items similar to those featured in Japanese magazines, all are favourite themes and receive local media coverage. As a consequence Japan and Japanese fashion are seen as trends for local fashion followers.

Cute fashion is often featured in fashion pages of local magazines but the clothes are not necessarily from Japan. The total look for a cute style could be a mixture of international fashion brands, provided that the muse projects a cute image. (Figure. 6.8.1, 6.8.2) A superficial transposition, which does not constitute an underlying statement, is implied. It consciously neglects the values associated with cute culture, to deliberately cancel out the possibility of assumptions, and hence deny the expectation of consumers. Very often, the transfer of a style from one place to another does not correspond to the transplantation of the constituted identity (Hebdige: 1979). Whether or not the 're-ordering and re-contextualisation of objects' would eventually 'communicate fresh meanings' (Clarke 1976: 177), in the later stage, cute fashion in the late 20th century in Hong Kong was simply a fashion trend.

Consequently, adaptation of cute fashion in Hong Kong does not correspond with social behaviour as seen in Japan. Young Hong Kong Chinese do not share the same views as their Japanese counterparts and hence cute fashion is worn as a fashion trend without social connotations. Table 6.1 below summaries the differences between cutie style as seen in Japan and that seen in Hong Kong.
Figure 6.8.1 Fashion styling from Hong Kong magazine - Mag Paper - features cute fashion in the mixture of international fashion brands

Courtesy of Mag Paper, Hong Kong Daily News Ltd.
Figure 6.8.2 Fashion styling from Hong Kong magazine, The Young Generation. Model dresses in Hong Kong and Japanese fashion, posing in a cute manner.


Courtesy of The Young Generation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cutie in Japan</th>
<th>Cutie in Hong Kong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Cute fashion is about 'becoming' the cute object itself by acting infantile. In cute culture, young people became popular according to their weakness, dependence, and inability, rather than because of their strength and capabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Cute fashion is widely adopted by the youths who are conscious about their physical appearance. The cute and childish appearance of their clothes does not correspond to their strength, capabilities, and social dependency. They could be, at the same time, brilliant students at school or respected workers in the office. Young people do not want to be left out of their peer group and be alienated. By adorning their bodies in cute fashion, social needs are satisfied via adherence to group identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* The idea of cute ignores or contradicts values central to the organisation of Japanese society and the maintenance of the work ethic. By acting in a childish manner, Japanese youths try to avoid all social responsibilities. Rather than working hard, cuties seem to want to play and ignore the rest of society completely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Cute is an example of Hong Kong society's obsession with consumption - as seen by its popularity. It reflects the behaviour of collectivism. By consuming cute products, consumers become trapped by cultural manifestations whilst such behaviour is interpreted in terms social acceptability, expectations and conformity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Young people who are fond of cute things and acting childishly do not consider themselves to be engaging in a current fashion at all. The ideals of the cute fashion are to be uncontrived, genuine and natural. It is not intended to be viewed as a historically defined style.

(Kinsella: 1995)

• Cute is associated with the current fashion trend. To project trendy and fashionable images, and to denote a preference of Japanese styles, cute remains a popular trend whilst young people are eager to dress according to the latest and most desired cute image.

Table 6.1 Cutie in Japan vs. Cutie in Hong Kong

6.4.1 Japan ideologmes in Hong Kong fashion

Young Hong Kong Chinese are dressing themselves in cute styles, which evidently represent a variation on the theme of the current fashion. Recent studies (Fung: 1999, Wong: 1996, Moeran: 1998, Shirashi: 1997) have implied that Japan has colonised some Asian capitals by expanding her power through transplantation of business network and internationalisation of some of her popular cultures. Such influence is evident from the translocation of Japan ideologies in these commodities. Cutie in Hong Kong is an example; however, the indigenous Japan homologous values do not transplant. Correspondingly, Japanese influence is evident in the creations of contemporary young Hong Kong fashion designers.

The Japanese ideologies in the creations of Hong Kong fashion designers incorporate a design philosophy similar to that of Japan (e.g., the concept of Zen in design, minimalism, asymmetric cut, use of mono colours, etc.). The styles are often inspired by Japan, or alternatively they resemble Japanese designs (Figure. 6.9). These clothes are young, urban, and targeted to the local market in particular, as well as overseas. The group of designers generally
Figure 6.9 Various Hong Kong designed fashions resemble Japanese fashion. From left to right: Top - Single-sleeved draped top with asymmetric wrap-skirt, and light weight wool top with pants (FM Concept by Lee Sui Mei), fleece hat with white cotton fleece T-shirt (Spy by Henry Lau); Bottom - wool/Lycra tube top and draped skirt embellished with corsage (Madame Benjie by Benjamin Lau), jersey top in draped form teamed with long skirt (Simon Ng). All designed by Hong Kong fashion designers.

Courtesy of Lee Sui Mei, Henry Lau, Benjamin Lau, Simon Ng & Hong Kong Fashion Flash, HKTDC
comprises recent fashion school graduates (some of them pursued fashion studies overseas); ultimately, they aspire to be independent\textsuperscript{10}, hence they are eager to release seasonal collections, retail their creations, and reach greater exposure. Their designs are frequently shown in magazines with "theme-to-theme" fashion styling\textsuperscript{11} done by fashion professionals. The design concept is thus the main concern for this group of designers. It is worthwhile to note that these designers are mostly in their twenties or early thirties. They are of the generation which grew up in the eighties in Hong Kong. It might imply that some of the Japanese values, ideas, beliefs and ideologies have been assimilated, as may be evidenced in their creations. However, such an assumption requires further analysis.

The popularity of Japan and Japanese fashion in Hong Kong began in the eighties and grew in the nineties, (as discussed earlier in the chapter), during which decades the young, urban middle-class favoured everything with a Japanese label. Japanese fashion was obviously popular among the youths, and the new clientele resulted in numerous sources of Japanese fashion labels appearing in the city. In view of the demand, several local brands (e.g. 21LU82, b+ab, 5cm), with designs, interior concepts, and printed materials which resembled those of Japan, were created for local clients. An increasing number of Japanese fashion labels were imported and became popular in the fashion boutiques in Hong Kong (e.g. I.T., Coupe). Consequently, there was a clear marketing decision in response to consumer demand. The subsequent decision to launch fashion labels for popular styles was a marketing tactic to fulfil the need of Hong Kong. It is a cultural phenomenon that Hong Kong people tend to purchase consumer goods enthusiastically when a product type is considered to be in demand, as evidenced in the excess of mobile phone service providers, which has resulted in one mobile phone for every two Hong Kong persons. The craze for Japan and Japanese fashion is likely to wane, with a corresponding rise in the popularity of alternative fashion trends.
afterwards (as seen with the example of G-2000 earlier in the chapter)\textsuperscript{12}, or cutie in Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, insufficient market demand remains the major obstacle for local fashion designers. In the brand conscious environment, being trendy, fashionable and able to catch the latest fashion are important design elements for local fashion designers. To compete and survive, they have to offer similar products with foreign fashion brands at a relatively low price. Design philosophy is perhaps unimportant to Hong Kong customers. Conversely, the fashion designers that aim to satisfy their needs would appear to be trend followers, even though they claim a design philosophy for their creation. For instance, Chinese elements and themes were in fashion in 1997 when Hong Kong's sovereignty reverted to China, and 70\% of local fashion designers who participated in the Design New Force\textsuperscript{11}, a fashion show organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, showed collections with outrageous inspirations from China. Chinese embroidery, transparent cheongsam, stylish sam fu, transformed aprons, Chinese wooden sandals, etc., were seen on the catwalk. However, Chinese inspiration was largely absent in the following year, when designers turned to various different styles and dropped their Chinese imagery. Fashion designers commonly seek new inspirations and themes on a seasonal basis, experimenting with as many ideas as possible so that distinctive style is achieved and the design philosophy is consistent. In this context Japan might be regarded as a one-time trend inspiration for designers, enabling them to deliver a unique style and sustain a design philosophy which would inevitably change in the course of their careers.

\textbf{6.4.2 Indigenous Japan in a global fashion environment}

Adoption of Japanese values in the Hong Kong society requires closer consideration of the historical background of the city. From a tiny fish port to the premiere financial centre of Southeast Asia, from a colonial city to a
global city and now a special administration region, Hong Kong suggests a
distinct environment for the development of fashion design in which both
manufacturer and consumer are effectively involved. Hong Kong experienced
a speedy transition from industrialisation to a cosmopolitan and global city,
enjoying progressively greater economic prosperity. A capitalistic economic
structure was seen as the means to maintain social and political status. Social
and political security has therefore facilitated the transformation of culture on
a global scale. As a cultural indicator, fashion design, arising in the context of
contemporary capitalism, is a potentially major influence in such a
transformation (King: 1990). Hong Kong fashion designers, spawned by the
gigantic clothing industry since the sixties, are engaged in a culture to 'serve
the clients'¹. Their role is to follow the fashion trend and fulfil the demands of
the clients. Not only manufacturers are majors trend followers; local
consumers are endlessly searching for the latest fashions, leading to the
emergence of a homogenous, global environment for fashion. Consequently,
Hong Kong fashion could be perceived as a product of globalisation (see also
Chapter 6). Even today, local fashion brands - Esprit, Episode, and Giordano
among many others - are examples of essential contributors to the
homogenisation of a global fashion culture, projecting Western-sounding
names, and culturally undistinguished images.

The homogenised culture provided by local manufacturers (whose business is
to supply products to meet the needs of the clients), design professionals (who
are requested to fulfil customers' demands) and consumers (who seek the
current trend) has various effects on the global fashion environment of Hong
Kong. First, prevailing cultural invasion is perceived (Featherstone: 1995,
King: 1990, Smith: 1990), as a result of the consistent cultural flows from one
direction to another. These cultural flows are particularly applicable to the
prevailing mode of fashion where the global fashion trend is concerned.
Second, resistance to cultural invasion is minimal as local enthusiasm for
indigenous Hong Kong fashion design is negligible. Consumers are quick to adopt the current trend despite the presence of a cultural difference. Third, local fashion makers are reluctant to project individualism, as local fashion consumers seek collective identity by means of current fashion.

Since the Japanese look is considered to be a fashion trend, localisation from the prevailing cultural flow is unlikely to happen. Though cultural invasion has its historical roots in Hong Kong, and though Japan has been successful in offering a 'resonance' to Asian societies via its cultural industries, the incorporation of Japanese values and ideologies in the fashion of Hong Kong is less convincing. Rather, Japan's role in internationalising the cultural industries, the spread of Japanese media, and mass culture have provided the stimulus for a new consumer lifestyle in Asian societies. It may be seen that middle class youths across the world, but particularly in Asia, are consumers of fashion, entertainment, and other consumer products.

Japan's ideologies and artefacts do not dominate the creations of Hong Kong fashion designers. They are mostly favoured by a minority group of young and contemporary local fashion designers that may or may not be regular fans of Japan and Japanese fashion. Among others, western images and styles influence both the new and the established local designers. Indigenous, Japanese values are nevertheless perceived in Hong Kong society, hence it is worthwhile investigating how these values, norms, and ideologies contributed to the formation of Hong Kong culture. It is possible that the infusion of Japanese culture into local culture may eventually lead to the localisation of Japanese fashion in time.

Conclusion
This chapter has analysed how a regional force, Japan, is influencing fashion in Hong Kong. It has demonstrated that western elements are not the sole
determinant for fashion in Hong Kong. It is evident that, since the emergence of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong in the early eighties and its subsequent popularity, Japan is seen a model for Hong Kong fashion designers due to its status as the Asian fashion leader. Japanese products and ideologies are everywhere and, with the expansion of Japanese influence into most Asian economies, the style of Japan has become highly recognisable. However, localisation of indigenous Japan homogenous values is not directly recognisable via fashion, as discussed by reference to the examples of cutie in Hong Kong and the creations of young Hong Kong fashion designers. Cutie is seen rather as a manifestation of the society's obsession with consumerism, while the creations of young Hong Kong fashion designers have demonstrated the global features of the Hong Kong fashion environment. The two examples have illustrated the dual position of Hong Kong fashion, one being a product of globalisation, and the other a local cultural phenomenon which demonstrates the preoccupation with consumerism. Though indigenous Japan values and ideologies in Hong Kong are perceived apart from fashion, they may influence the new design generation to absorb Japanese culture into the local fashion design only when they are fundamental to the formation of local culture.
Endnotes

1 Hello Kitty is a cute white kitten which was invented by a Japanese toy company, Sanrio in 1974. She has been popular ever since she was created. In the late 20th century, Hello Kitty became a feline phenomenon. A staggering 13,000 products have been stamped with her image, and at least 300 new ones appear every month. The popularity of Hello Kitty started in Japan, spread to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and the United States like a contagious consumerist virus. She has become the money-spinning, late 20th century consumerist icon (Postmagazine 1998).

2 The dominance of Japan has been guaranteed by sets of images and ideals that were found in the content of media blockbusters such as movies, TV series, and cartoons.

3 Japan electronic appliances were particularly in demand in the eighties. In 1982, Japan exported television sets, air-conditioners, rice cookers, hi-fi sets and refrigerators, all of which represented more than 75% of the respective import product categories in Hong Kong (RTHK: 1983).

4 Japanese department stores are the focus of Japanese influence in Hong Kong. In 1969, the first Japanese department store, Daimaru opened in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, followed by Mitsukoshi, Matsuzakaya, and Sogo. Even since, Causeway Bay has been synonymous with Japanese department stores, together with Seibu in Admiralty, and formerly Isetan and Tokyu in Tsim Sha Tsui. These attracted the wealthy, urban middle-class shoppers who sought everything from electronic products to instant noodles, and formed the nucleus of the territory’s shopping centres with their satellite boutiques that are open, ready to serve every day (Ling: 1999a).

5 Henry Chan is a music critic in Hong Kong who began listening to and collecting music in the late seventies. He is an expert in Western pop and Japanese pop in the eighties. He is also a fan of Japanese music and fashion.

6 The unpopularity of ‘Japan’ in England is evidenced by the fact that Japanese artists were excluded from its list of ‘100 most popular music group and artists’ in the early eighties (Chan: 1999).

7 A phrase coined by sociologist, Dr. C. H. Ng, in a conference when the omnipotence of Japanese artefacts in Hong Kong was discussed. He was a discussant for the conference: ‘Japan in Hong Kong/Hong Kong in Japan: System of production, circulation and consumption workshop’, organised by the Department of Japanese Studies, The University of Hong Kong and Foundation of Japanese Studies, Dec 1999.
Numerous Japanese fashion and brands have been imported to Hong Kong since the eighties. They include a variety of clothes, from designer labels to ready-to-wear. Some examples are Matsuda, Suzuya, Big John, Kenzo, Issey Miyake, Bigi, Monsieur Nicole, Kiro, etc.

DIY means 'Do It Yourself'. A favourite term coined since the mid-nineties to describe a product, which could be produced by the user his/herself. The term frequently appears in magazines and newspapers.

Hong Kong fashion designers of the '70s and '80s mainly catered to the export markets, and the majority worked for export companies. They may not have had an equivalent education background to that of designers of the young generation. They do not necessarily have their own retail outlets or a local spot to purchase their clothes and they gain less local media exposure. By way of contrast, the young fashion designers in the nineties preferred to be self-employed. They established their own brands and, if possible, retailed their designs within their own shops (see also Chapter 5).

Very often, fashion styling is done by a team of fashion professionals, which include a photographer, make-up artists, stylists, and sometimes an art director. It is the stylist's responsibility to search for clothes for the shooting. The concept of the photos being shot does not necessarily correspond to the designer's idea of his clothes.

G-2000 have long returned to their cultural non-distinctive image since the heyday of the Japanese trend in the late eighties. Local fashion brands offering clothes inspired by Japanese fashion were widespread in the eighties. With the accent of 'Japanese-ness', Reno and Base, for example, (also used as examples earlier in the chapter) became the one time local fashion brands in the eighties. When the Japanese trend was over, these brands declined.

Design New Force is a seasonal fashion show organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council every year in January and July, aimed to promote young and new local fashion talents. Every year, around 8-10 young Hong Kong fashion designers are invited to display their latest collections on the runway.

Hong Kong fashion designers, spawned by the clothing industry since the sixties, were trained to produce designs according to the export buyers' specifications. They were export designers and were appreciated for their ability to interpret fashion trends and supply according to customers' demands. Their creativity and distinctiveness in design are less emphasised (see also Chapter 5).
Section III  Discussion and Analysis

Future Approach of Hong Kong Fashion
Marketing cultural identity: Identity search and re-interpretation in fashion industry - Case studies of Shanghai
Tang and Vivienne Tam

The previous chapter examined the emergence and popularity of Japanese fashion in Hong Kong. With the example of Japanese cutie, the chapter further demonstrated the hypothesised position of Hong Kong fashion. Though indigenous Japanese values might imply a certain degree of localisation, in the case of fashion, cutie is simply regarded as a fashion trend. The earlier part of the thesis provided a perspective on fashion in Hong Kong. In this section, a recent phenomenon is examined, which could be seen as the future approach of fashion in Hong Kong. The recent identity crisis in Hong Kong gave rise to a trend for 'post-colonial fashion', which incorporated cultural elements. This chapter therefore explores the topic of cultural distinction in fashion and demonstrates the possibility of using cultural identity as a strategy to market fashion.

Introduction
During the handover period, Hong Kong was filled with colourful fashion imbued with Chinese elements. Numerous local fashion labels and designers used cultural elements in their collections. Few have succeeded in maintaining them and incorporating the elements into the brands' philosophy. Their success in attracting both local and overseas attention has involved a considerable 're-interpretation or 're-location' of cultural identity. The introduction of cultural elements into the products is considered essential for greater exposure. These fashion labels and designers have not only created a trend for post-colonial fashion, they have also evolved a new form of strategy
to market fashion products. This strategy might be significant to introduce 'Hong Kong fashion' worldwide.

Hence, this chapter begins by providing the background about when Hong Kong experienced an identity crisis. It then presents a review of how Chinese elements have been introduced into the collections of fashion designers in Hong Kong. The possibility of marketing fashion by re-location of cultural identity is examined with the illustrations of two case studies, firstly the Hong Kong label, Shanghai Tang, and secondly the Chinese, New York based fashion designer, Vivienne Tam. Reference is made to phenomena identified in the last section of the research and supplemented by detailed observation.

7.1.1 Searching for identity in Hong Kong fashion

Hong Kong is usually described in terms of ‘East and West’, either as a fusion or as two polar extremes of the same. When the local and the global concepts of fashion embrace each other, the classic terms 'East and West', which are used to describe Hong Kong, tend to confuse rather than clarify the status of Hong Kong's identity. In the case of Japan, ‘Western’ images abound but the essence of Japanese culture remains distinct, and affects Hong Kong as a result of the influx of Japanese imports (Chapter 6). Consistent cultural flows from outside (East or West) have become a part of the city’s nature. As a result, its identity is coloured by the flow of foreign cultures and struggles within the tension of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism plus an affective political and social context. It is assumed, for example, that the identity of Singapore is represented by much more than a global culture: colonialism, nationalism and capitalism also form the core of its identity, together with a diverse fusion of cultures from colonial influences, the ethnic Chinese, the neighbouring countries, the Singaporean people and their government. A ‘mix of cultures’ would therefore fail to describe the state's identity, but an account of the fabrication of these cultures would present a better picture. Similarly,
Hong Kong alone could not be a subject of focus for the discourse of identity, since it is one part of the complex construction of cultural flows accompanied by the developing political and social characteristics.

7.1.2 Hong Kong fashion in the handover period

Until recently, Hong Kong was engrossed in a collective search for identity (Figure 7.1). The discovery, recognition and theorisation about local identities in order to project a particular image has placed Hong Kong in a most embarrassing situation, both locally and overseas. Consequently, from colonialism to the reversion of sovereignty to China, Hong Kong people experienced a series of historical shocks and radical changes\(^1\). To protect themselves against further traumas, they dispensed with unsavoury memories and retained no sentiment for the past. In the tiny isolated port populated by refugees encumbered by uncertainties, the labour force ultimately transformed Hong Kong from a place of temporary abode to one in which it was possible to settle. The city of migrants was eventually attracted to the perceived authenticity of a simple life and sense of ‘home’. Having succeeded in pursuing a continuous cycle of hard work, and with the notion to fabricate a distinct Hong Kong history, the population then faced the uncomfortable possibility of an alien identity with the return of sovereignty to China. However, Hong Kong’s colonial history, one that cannot be forgotten overnight, distanced the territory culturally and politically from China, thereby complicating the relationship beyond one of simple reunification (Abbas 1997: 5). Having once been a city of transients, Hong Kong, with its ‘floating identity’ (Abbas 1997: 4), needed to establish something more definite in response to current political exigencies. During the period of the handover, Hong Kong indulged in a late-stage, collective search for a definite identity. That involved not only the domains such as art, culture, movies and literature, but also fashion: a number of Hong Kong fashion designers, whose
Figure 7.1 The identity crisis in Hong Kong became the headline on the front page.

Source: Hong Kong Standard
Courtesy of Hong Kong Standard
previous collections were clearly Western in their direction, experimented with designs which exhibited a sense of 'Hong Kong identity' (Taylor: 1998). Such a last-ditch attempt to portray collective identity had a bizarre effect on fashion when the familiar names of local designers, formerly known for their unswerving Western-style, released collections with Chinese inspiration in favour of a 'Hong Kong identity'. Smith (1990) states that identity should possess a sense of continuity with shared memories and a sense of common destiny. Whether the collections of these designers succeeded or failed remains controversial, and the notions of 'Hong Kong identity' seen through their interpretation made minimal impact on the citizens of Hong Kong. On the other hand, the intensified flow of people from the ex-colonial countries to the Western metropolitan centres in the post-war era, as recounted by Featherstone (1995), brought about an increasing consciousness of the colonial aspect of the development of modernity and the question of culture identity. Apparently, the handover in 1997 provided Hong Kong a window of exposure and a focal point internationally. The interest of the Western press in Hong Kong fashion resulted in an oversimplified stereotype of Hong Kong. For example, Hong Kong fashion with a Chinese heritage or East meets West. The search for Hong Kong fashion with a Hong Kong identity was the preoccupation not only of local designers but of also the Westerners.

7.1.3 Chinese inspiration for Hong Kong Chinese fashion designers
Various Hong Kong Chinese fashion designers succeeded in arousing international interest by projecting their designs with Chinese inspiration during the period of the handover. Designers such as Peter Lau (whose collection is renowned for the Sexy China doll look), Pacino Wan (who tried to constitute a Hong Kong identity for his collection during the period of handover), and William Tang (whose collection was inspired by local graffiti) were all recorded by international press. Their selected pieces were collected by the Powerhouse Museum in Australia for an exhibition with the theme of
the evolution of Chinese dress. The latter two designers habitually used Western trends in their collections. When Hong Kong’s sovereignty reverted to China, the period provided inspiration as Chinese themes and the rediscovery of identity were in fashion. The phenomenon could possibly have been seen as temporary, and the search for identity a fashion trend, for Hong Kong Chinese fashion designers.

Foreign elements also played an important role since they increased the scope for interpretation of the local fashion designers. In order to arouse international interest and to gain sufficient exposure, the designers quickly identified a desirable trend. A similar approach was taken by other fashion designers; for instance, Chinese elements and themes were in fashion in 1997 in the year of handover, and 70% of local fashion designers who participated in the Design New Force, a fashion show organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, showed collections which were inspired by China. Chinese embroidery, transparent cheongsam, stylish sam fu, transformed aprons, Chinese wooden sandals, etc. were seen on the catwalk. Together, they demonstrated an extraordinary performance with Chinese drum and music on the catwalk juxtaposing the theme of the organiser, which ensured greater exposure, press coverage and general publicity. However, Chinese inspiration was largely absent in the following year, when designers turned to various different styles and dropped their Chinese imagery. Fashion designers commonly seek new inspirations and themes on a seasonal basis, experimenting with as many ideas as possible so that distinctive style is achieved and the design philosophy is consistent. In this context, fashion designs with Chinese styles by Hong Kong Chinese fashion designers might be regarded as a one-time trend inspiration, enabling them to deliver a unique style and sustain a design philosophy which would inevitably change in the course of their careers. Nevertheless, the suggested theme and inspiration
could also guarantee market positions and mediate the entries of both the new
design and the designers themselves.

Though Chinese themes and elements might not be used as a design
philosophy by local fashion designers, several local fashion brands have
succeeded in employing them and been proud to launch their collections
distinguished by the respected heritage. Shanghai Tang, for example, is one of
the outstanding Hong Kong labels offering distinctly Chinese clothes and
accessories. The brand is seen as a unique creation, since it is 'Made by
Chinese' and is confident to announce its Chinese heritage. However, the
brand and its associated merchandise failed to interest the Hong Kong citizens,
and it was most appealing to tourists (Figure 7.2). Unpopular locally as they
may be, Chinese clothes and themes have earned the brand a reputable interest
internationally. They are frequently reported in the international press, hence
Shanghai Tang is regarded as a respected fashion brand in Hong Kong. The
boutique has also become a sightseeing spot for tourists visiting Hong Kong.

Such apportion for market position is also practised by overseas Chinese
fashion designers. A New York based Chinese fashion designer, Vivienne
Tam, is one of those who mediated the entries of fashion design with Chinese
inspiration and her identity in effect. Born in China and educated in Hong
Kong, Tam began as a fashion designer after having graduated from the Hong
Kong Polytechnic University in the early eighties. She proceeded to New
York for her career and successfully entered the Western fashion world by
incorporating Chinese themes and elements in her collection. Her Mao
collection created a stir when it was modelled on the catwalk, brought her
instant fame, and is now in the permanent collection of the Victor & Albert
Museum in London. Her identity is associated with her status as a 'New York
Designer', yet the impression of a 'cultural identity' in her collection is
strongly evident and internationally appreciated.
The only place for overpriced, illuminous clothes to buy as gifts for someone you don't care much about!

Figure 7.2 Ironic advertisement features Hong Kong label, Shanghai Tang

Courtesy of Specific Rim
It is believed that cultural identity formed the basis of the marketing strategy for the creation of both the brand Shanghai Tang and the designer label Vivienne Tam. The background of the brands, design profile, and significance are illustrated with photographic materials. Research and analysis focus on cultural identity as a strategy to market fashion commercially.

7.2.1 Case Study 1 - Shanghai Tang

7.2.2 Background
Created by David Tang in 1995, Shanghai Tang is a department store selling deluxe Chinese clothes and accessories. Shanghai Tang is one of the popular stores in Hong Kong selling Shanghai-inspired merchandise. Variations of Chinese costumes, in particular the figure-hugging cheongsam dress, are supplied in riotous colours, including hot pink, acid lime green, and neon orange. From tasselled shawls and black cotton slippers to silk jackets, Shanghai Tang has a full collection of ready-to-wear, retro, Chinese inspired attire. Shanghaiese or 'Imperial' tailors fill the store, devoted to creating custom-made clothes inspired by traditional Chinese apparel.

Dark wood, antique fixtures, ceiling fans and gorgeous chaise longues are scattered about, acting more as props than mere furniture. The store is perfumed with a ginger flower aroma, evoking the sense of another place and time, in particular, to create an atmosphere of Shanghai in the '30s. Browsing through the store is a relaxing, luxurious experience (Figure 7.3).

The store also sells house wares, and accessories. Silk-lined photo albums, silver ashtrays and even sequinned T-shirts subverting Maoist pop culture can be found all over the aisles.
Figure 7.3 Shanghai Tang boutique interior in Pedder Building, Central, Hong Kong
7.2.2 Research & Profile

The creation of Shanghai Tang is a clever combination of nostalgia and marketing. It has become the hottest post-handover fashion trend in Hong Kong. Its reputation extends internationally with the perceptive marketing of David Tang and the store. The experience of shopping in Shanghai Tang is luxurious. Sophisticated and bold, yet mysterious and enigmatic images greet the customers whenever they browse through the store.

The use of gimmick is the essence of image for Shanghai Tang (Figure 7.4). The clothes carry a label namely 'Made by Chinese' and the statement frequently stressed by the owner, David Tang, is 'Chinese people should wear Chinese clothes'. Since 75 per cent of the clients are tourists, Shanghai Tang has become one of the favourite spots in Hong Kong for sightseeing. The concept store has become a trendy place and Shanghai Tang now represents a Hong Kong fashion brand.

The re-defined Chinese clothes and accessories offered in Shanghai Tang are effectively a post-handover fashion. They were frequently worn in parties especially during the handover holiday in Hong Kong (when many events were scheduled to coincide with the handover). Among the best-selling items is what might be called the Chinese leader watches, which was a "waving" Deng Xiaoping or Mao Tse Tung watch, complete with a leather strap and "Made by Chinese" inscribed on the back. Gifts inspired by Shanghai or with a twist of "Chinese-ness" are favoured by tourists. Even household items are popular and generally purchased as wedding and festival gifts.

7.2.3 Results & Analysis

The success of Shanghai Tang lies in effective marketing where the indigenous culture of wearing and using Chinese products is exploited. The re-interpretation of colours used for the attire has given a new look to
Figure 7.4 One of the Shanghai Tang advertisements entitled ‘Re-orient Yourself’

Courtesy of Shanghai Tang
traditional Chinese apparel. To reinforce the image of the store, David Tang, the owner of the brand, presented himself as an extraordinary person in Hong Kong. In his early 50s, he made public appearances dressed in Chinese apparel and smoking a cigar. This style and attitude seemed to crystalise the image of 'East meets West' and steadily enhanced the appeal of the brand. His special personal contact with personalities such as the late Princess Diana, Kevin Costner, or Leng Nan, the daughter of Deng Xiao-ping promoted the brand by merit of association (Figure 7.5).

Shanghai Tang is unique in Hong Kong. The store is located in a colonial building in the central area of the city. The spacious store generates the charm of Shanghai in the 30s. The wood furniture, art deco structure, and antique fixtures create an enormous impact and distinguish the brand from others locally. Besides the appreciation of interior and architectural standing, the green and violet label bearing the words "Shanghai Tang, Made by Chinese" is a clever gimmick, suggesting an attitude associated with the wearing of Chinese attire to both foreigners and the local people. Though Chinese apparel is offered in the store, the re-interpretation of colours injects freshness to the style of déjà vu. Lime green, yellow, and shocking pink, have become the trademark of the brand. Such dynamic marketing has transformed the wearing of Chinese clothes into a fashion statement. It has attracted customers from different parts of the world, in addition to native people who want to look trendy.

The successful image of Shanghai Tang has earned itself distinguished praise such as:

'Shanghai Tang mele culture chinoise et luxe occidental' (Bagot, L. Journal du Textile, 20/01/1997, No. 1482, p.150)
Figure 7.5 Top left & bottom: One of the promotion events of Shanghai Tang. Celebrities were invited to play Chinese Tai Chi. Top right: Celebrities dress in Shanghai Tang at a party.
'Retro Shanghai in style' (Shen, J. Where Hong Kong, July 1998, p. 26)

It could be stated that cultural identity was employed as a strategy to promote the brand. Though not a designer label, the owner - David Tang - remains the spokesperson of the label, adding lustre to the brand. The products in Shanghai Tang are frequently featured in the media, and the brand image is widely recognised. The best-selling 'waving' Deng Xiaoping or Mao Tse Tung watch suggests that Shanghai Tang is perceived to be a concept store where souvenir gifts may be purchased to take home after a trip to Asia, rather than a serious fashion label.

7.3.1 Case Study 2 - Vivienne Tam

7.3.2 Background

Vivienne Tam brings to her apparel a rare global and cultural perspective. Born in Canton, China, she was brought up in the British colony of Hong Kong making it possible for her to understand and better appreciate the beauty and subtlety of her own culture. Her bi-cultural upbringing is seen as being influential in the development of her signature East-meets-West style.

After graduating from the Hong Kong Polytechnic, Tam moved to New York where she thrived on the excitement and energy of the fashion world. New York became her home and a continuing source of stimulation for her designs. Her first collection, sold under the East Wind Code label (meaning good fortune and prosperity), was met with great success. In 1994, she shifted gears with a collection under her own name that has evolved into one of the most exciting designer lines in the North American and Asian markets.

In 1982, Tam designed her first collection. She developed fresh interpretations of crochet and pleated fabrics long before these trends prevailed on European
and American runways. While her designs are clearly contemporary, there is an enduring quality that captures the attention of women around the world. She expresses her distinctive style through combining traditional Chinese elements with a modern edge.

7.3.3 Profile & Research
Tam is recognised in the fashion world for her controversial and cutting-edge creations of the "Mao" collection for the Spring/Summer '95 (Figure 7.6). Items from the collection have been incorporated into the permanent archives of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, and the Museum of FIT, New York. Since October 1999, it has also been permanently archived in the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Tam's notable designs of Eastern inspired clothing are frequently featured in Museums. Her black and white "Peony" print on a stretch net dress and the "Kuan Yin" (Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) print on netting were collected for the permanent archives of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 7.7). Her notable designs were displayed in an exhibition entitled "China Chic" at the Museum of FIT, New York in February 1999, which demonstrated the evolution of Chinese style and its influence on modern international fashion. Designed originally for Barneys New York 1997 holiday windows, the full length red/black positive/negative Mao coat was featured in an exhibition entitled "The Shape of the Colour: RED" at the Lighthouse in Glasgow in September 1999. Tam's "Mao" collection was also featured in a temporary exhibition titled "Mao Craze" in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

In addition to her popularity among museums and curators, Tam's collection of Eastern inspired clothing with a modern edge created an international trend for Chinese inspired clothing and received favourable reviews from the media.
Her Fall 1998 collection inspired by the country and people of Bhutan won Tam the title of "individualist" from the global media. International Herald Tribune fashion critic Suzy Menkes deemed the collection a breath of fresh air and quoted guest Julia Roberts, who apparently found the show "Fabulous".

'...Vivienne Tam made a good job of tapping into her own Asian culture, applying Chinese warrior inspirations like pagoda shoulders or plates of mesh armor to simple modern clothes. The signature color was used by the Chinese to ward off evil, according to Tam. It beats blankets as protection for hip, subway-friendly, urban clothes.' (Suzy Menkes, 'New York: It's a Warp', International Herald Tribune, 23/02/1999).

The New York Times also agreed on the philosophy of Tam:

'Of the many contemporary designers now plundering Asian culture for inspiration, Ms. Tam was there first and has been instrumental in ushering along paradigms for combining Western and Eastern identities in clothing. She has developed her own successful formula...' (White C. C. R., 'Invoking Tribal Spirits as 90's Muses', The New York Times, 07/11/1997).

Tam’s distinguished designs have earned her multiple invitations to design other forms of fashionable products. She is seen maximising the impact of Eastern inspiration in every one of her creations. For instance, her license with Candie's enabled her to create a line of spring shoes in January 1996, and her Chinese inspired beaded mule with a lacquer carved heel became a best seller world-wide. General Motors unveiled Tam's first-ever car design for "Concept Cure" in January 1999 - a programme that benefits the Nina Hyde Breast Cancer Research Fund - with a Chinese dragon featured on the red cover of the car seat (Figure 7.8). Once again, Tam's fashion signature was promoted when the advertisement read:
Figure 7.8  Vivienne Tam designed the seat for Oldsmobile Alero
'Inspired by ancient Eastern philosophy, Vivienne Tam says this Oldsmobile Alero is "the ultimate healing car." She's dressed it in rich, red tones and "good energy dragons." Interior features also include dragon head shifter, embroidered seats, and an acoustically tailored Bose music system.'

Her popularity demonstrates successful adoption of "Chineseness" in her creations. She initially attempted to employ only Chinese staff in her New York office, and her first free-standing store in Soho, New York, which opened in May 1997, was a spacious showcase incorporating classic Chinese elements such as a pair of Fu Dogs, the symbol of Double Happiness, a decorative antique wooden screen, and hanging lanterns. The use of the colour red was intended to create an atmosphere filled with old world Eastern warmth and charm. The shop caught the attention of the magazine, Interior Design, which featured Tam's Soho store on the cover in April 1998 (Figure 7.9). While the interior of the store was described as 'an environment enriched with tantalising elements and symbols of her Chinese roots', 'a feng shui master for placement advice' put the final seal of approval on the design (Interior Design, April 1998, p. 236).

As an "international" fashion designer, Tam's collection is available in different parts of the globe. In the United States, Tam is stocked by prominent stores such as Barneys, Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman-Marcus, Dayton Hudson, Nordstrom, Macy's and Marshall Fields; a flagship store in New York City. In Hong Kong, there is a network of seven boutiques (date June 2000). There is a free-standing store in Tokyo, a flagship store in Kobe, plus thirteen shop-in-shops in department stores in Japan. In addition, Tam is distributed in Brazil, Indonesia, Taiwan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.
Figure 7.9  Vivienne Tam's flagship store in Soho, New York
7.3.4 Results & Analysis

Tam's success has earned her a reputation in the fashion world, particularly in Hong Kong. Though a native Chinese and once a Hong Kong resident, Tam believes that the prospects for a Hong Kong based local fashion designer are limited. In interview, she stated that the 'Hong Kong Chinese would not recognise locally designed products' and 'the territory did not have a vision to develop a strong identity due to the failure of long term industry' (Lam 1998: 102). Despite the success of the local clothing industry and the remarkable export value of locally designed clothes, the territory has long emphasised industrial development and hence neglected the role of creativity, innovation, and design in adding value to a product, typically clothing and apparel. Nonetheless, the people of Hong Kong prefer Western labels. 'Nobody accepted Chinese things' (remarked Tam, quoted in People, 11/23/98, p. 149).

Tam's overseas experience and popularity were invaluable when she emerged in the local market. The territory treasures her identity and success as much as the foreigners do. In February 1997, she was honoured as "Outstanding Alumnus" of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In June 1997, she was one of the 100 special guests invited by the Hong Kong Government to witness the historical return of Hong Kong to China.

Tam's success is closely associated with her being a "New York Designer" rather than "Hong Kong Designer", and she frequently uses her bi-cultural identity as a strategy of engagement in a foreign country, such as the United States.

"I remember growing up in Hong Kong, where you don't know who you are. At Catholic school, you study using hymns, you join the choir, and then you go home," said Tam. She was raised in a Buddhist household but now
believes in "a universal spirituality". (Women's Wear Daily, 10/0401997, Vol. 173, No. 67)

'How to interpret the millennium?... Tam seems to have found her own unique way of doing it... she made a statement with silver because in Chinese culture, the color is believed to have the power to ward off evil, dispel demons and insure safety'. ('Finishing Touches', WWD, Monday, 22/02/1999)

The incorporation of her identity into the creations which she sells sustains Tam in her chosen, Occidental environment. The fascination of foreigners with Oriental history suggests that Tam is in a privileged position to help them to uncover the mystery (Figure 7.10).

7.4 Tang and Tam
Both Vivienne Tam and Shanghai Tang project a Chinese inspired image as their native identity and this is invariably considered at the point-of-sale. Similar to Tam, the indigenous cultural identity of David Tang is emphasised. It has become a formula to market the label. Shanghai Tang as a fashion label, may not be as popular in the local context as the international one; however, the label itself has captured foreigners' imagination and enables them to consume some elements of Chinese culture.

The strategy of engagement for both Tam and Tang demonstrates the fact that the indigenous identity of a creator/designer can be employed to market products. The mystery of Orientalism is also fascinating for foreign consumers. The experience of exploring 'East meets West' through consumption remains a crucial factor for Asian designers to consider when designing and marketing their products.
Conclusion

'Cultural identity' has been used as a strategy of engagement for fashion designers and brands. The chapter has demonstrated two case studies, both using cultural identity as strategy for fashion marketing. It is important to notice that the emergence of such a strategy is nurtured in an environment where the city lacks a definition of identity. The re-discovery of, and preoccupation with identity are seen as strategies for Hong Kong Chinese fashion designers. The extension of 'cultural identity' to fashion design colours their professional lives. Nevertheless, transformation of cultural identity into a successful marketing strategy for Hong Kong fashion or designers is not a simple task. Further discussion on the subject of how Chinese culture may be defined in terms of commercial brands is necessary. Thus, this initial analysis opens a dialogue for such a discourse and will hopefully lead to further examination.
Endnotes

1 Hong Kong has experienced radical changes in the course of its history. In the 19th century, it was a British colony, and it was occupied by the Japanese in WWII. There was an influx of refugees from communist China after 1949, followed by the speedy economic development and modernisation in the shadow of the socio-political hardship of the Cultural Revolution in China during the 60s and 70s. Then, there was the Sino-British Joint Declaration to end Hong Kong colonialism in 1984. The Tienanmen Square Massacre of students of China in 1989 presented a further dilemma for democracy amongst the local Chinese. Finally, sovereignty reverted to China in 1997.

2 Design New Force is a seasonal fashion show organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council every year in January and July, aimed to promote young and new local fashion talents. Every year, around 8-10 young Hong Kong fashion designers are invited to display their latest collections on the runway.
Conclusion and Recommendations
Conclusion and Recommendations

- Conclusion

The present research has demonstrated the hypothesis - the dual position of fashion in Hong Kong - as a product of globalisation (Hong Kong fashion design) and as a cultural phenomenon (Hong Kong people’s obsession with fashion and consumerism). It has defined Hong Kong’s dual role as a fashion producer and a fashion consumer, with the effects of the city’s cultural and social differences on the development of Hong Kong fashion. With the central hypothesis, the evolution of fashion in Hong Kong was mapped in context from industrialisation to modernisation, colonialisation to globalisation, and with its changes with the return to Chinese administration. The decision to explore fashion as a cultural industry was made to differentiate fashion and the clothing industry in Hong Kong in order to define Hong Kong fashion and to formulate the concept of fashion in Hong Kong.

Several phenomena essential to define the hypothesised position were discussed in the thesis. The adaptation of Western-style clothing, the Suzie Wong dress, the population's obsession with fashion and consumerism, and the emergence of Hong Kong fashion design have well demonstrated fashion in Hong Kong under the British rule. These phenomena put forward the concepts of fashion in Hong Kong. They form the bases for any further development of fashion in the territory. On the other hand, Japan as a cultural invader is visible in the city, in the case of fashion, with the popularity of Japanese fashion and as an inspiration for Hong Kong fashion designers. Cultural invasion allied with economic power has sustained Japan's visibility in the fashion of Hong Kong. Its continual acquaintance and resonance with
the population suggest an alternative colonialism in the city. Though Japanese fashion may be seen as a fashion trend in Hong Kong, the incorporation of indigenous Japanese values and ideologies through the consumer lifestyle of the population may eventually extend to consuming and producing fashion in Hong Kong.

Japanese fashion is evidently widespread from chain stores to individual boutiques. Numerous small-scale boutiques supplying a mixture of Japanese fashion and Hong Kong fashion, are widely distributed in the territory, and popularised by the young Hong Kong generation. Contemporary Hong Kong fashion designers remain the followers of Japanese fashion. Their frequent inspiration from Japan has become the guideline to designing fashion. The colonial influence of Hong Kong fashion is therefore highlighted by Japanese ideologies. Fashion in Hong Kong is manifested by cultural diversity. It is necessary to define this diversity when fashion in Hong Kong is described.

Colonialism may hinder the promotion of Hong Kong fashion world-wide. Most Hong Kong fashion designers became the international focus when the city returned to Chinese administration. Employment of Chinese elements in their creations became a favourite practice, which was also seen as a trend for this special period. Given the superficiality of Chinese inspired creations, most Hong Kong fashion designers resumed their culturally undistinguished styles after the 'Chinese fever'. Those who managed to sustain introduced this post-colonial fashion in term of distinctive and original creations. Vivienne Tam and Shanghai Tang are international names producing Chinese inspired fashion. They use local elements to achieve global appeal with their widely acclaimed creations.

Cultural identity is seen as a cultural strategy to market Hong Kong fashion world-wide. While such practice is not unique within the framework of Hong
Kong, cultural exportation may be found in fashion labels such as Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, and Giorgio Armani. It is also employed in other cultural industries such as cinema, architecture, graphic design, etc. In recent years, creations incorporating cultural elements have been favourite models for designers / creators across the cultural industries in the local context. The movie of Wong Kar Wei, and the images and products of Alan Chan, which contain cultural elements, manage to promote Hong Kong creations internationally. By embracing indigenous culture, cultural producers can increase their exposure, thus reaching a wider audience.

Section 1 of the thesis contains a literature review, which provides the framework for the present study. Hong Kong fashion in this context is presented as a cultural industry. The study of Hong Kong fashion encompasses the distinctive environment mingled with globalisation and colonisation. To define Hong Kong fashion in terms of design, or to draw comparisons between Hong Kong and other fashion capitals on the basis of creativity, could result in bias. It is necessary to consider its development along with the process of globalisation with respect to colonial influence. It is obvious that the evolution of dress in Hong Kong was marked by the immediate adaptation of western-style of clothes and the cessation of wearing Chinese clothes. The city's efforts to sustain the tailoring industry gave way in the face of industrialisation and modernisation (Chapter 2).

Though 'the good old days' of Suzie Wong and her sexy cheongsam may appear to offer one form of identity for dress in Hong Kong, fashion images are limited by stereotypes transferred from the Occident (Chapter 3). To define an identity for fashion in Hong Kong, the activities favoured by the Hong Kong Chinese are more worthy of consideration. An obsession with consumerism has long been a local attitude. Excess consumption has coloured the city since the emergence of capitalist consumerism. Such behaviour is
considered as a form of compensation for the lack of identity and insecurity of people's lives, effectively influenced by colonialism. Consumption has provided the answer to everyday problems, and this applies also to fashion consumerism, with the net result that the city has become a first rate consumer society. This obsession is seen as a cultural phenomenon in Hong Kong. The city could, thus, be seen as a fashion centre, which is essential to define fashion in Hong Kong (Chapter 4).

On the other hand, Hong Kong fashion design created by local fashion designers is unpopular in both the local and overseas context. It has never been successful in promoting Hong Kong fashion design which is internationally recognised. To describe Hong Kong as a fashion centre is, therefore, unconvincing. It is rather difficult to consider an identity for Hong Kong fashion especially since local design is haunted with notions of copying, lack of originality and lack of creativity. Substantial investment in promoting the clothing industry of the territory does not seem to have provided an outlet for local fashion design. Nor has the continual transfer of design, marketing, organisational skills, quality, and other techniques improved the 'image' of Hong Kong fashion design. By locating its development alongside different phases of the globalisation process, the described notions were explained. The city's and people's cosmopolitan orientation could perhaps flavour creative design; yet, the reputation for counterfeit, low-level production, and imitation could not be shaken off overnight. Hong Kong fashion design could be seen as a product which has emerged out of the globalisation process (Chapter 5).

One of the analogies to locate the dual position of fashion in Hong Kong could possibly be Japanese fashion. Japanese images, products, and other imports are found everywhere in Hong Kong, and this has been particularly the case since the eighties. Japanese fashion is popular amongst the Hong Kong Chinese, partly because it has acquired international status, but more
significantly, as a result of Japan's 'cultural invasion' in Asia. A recent phenomenon to demonstrate the dual position of Hong Kong fashion is Japanese cutie. The popularity of Japanese cutie is widespread in Hong Kong. Consumption of Japanese cute products and the imitation of Japanese fashion amongst the Hong Kong Chinese is a manifestation of capitalist society, in which consumer power is strong, and the attitude to follow the trend is obvious. Such practices have facilitated fashion in Hong Kong to be 'fashionable', and at the same time, denote a cultural phenomenon (Chapter 6).

The last section presented a future vision of fashion in Hong Kong. It is noted that during the period of the handover, Hong Kong undertook a late-stage identity search. Fashion designers, in other words, chose a popular topic as the inspiration for their collection. Numerous Hong Kong labels and fashion designers began to employ Chinese elements in their creations. They may be seen to have created either handover fashion or post-colonial fashion. Nonetheless, the utilisation of Chinese characteristics is not limited to surface design. Some of them have seen success in adopting these Chinese elements as a cultural strategy whereby to market fashion commercially. Such a form of cultural strategy derived from the post-colonial society could possibly represent a new marketing approach to introduce 'Hong Kong fashion' worldwide. Shanghai Tang and Vivienne Tam are two outstanding examples. They incorporate cultural elements in their creations and promote their cultural identity as a strategy for greater exposure (Chapter 7). It is suggested that further study to be carried out to analyse this post-colonial strategy, which may be helpful to promote Hong Kong fashion world-wide and as distinctively original design.

• Recommendation

The present research is not an attempt to present a historic fashion history for Hong Kong; nor is it a chronologically organised account of historic events
related to clothes and fashion. Rather, it demonstrates the course of exploration undertaken in order to test the hypothesis of the thesis. By understanding the past and contemporary fashion phenomena in Hong Kong, it facilitates the formation of strategies to market fashion as a commercial product. While the notions of copying and lack of creativity, are not uniquely found in the fashion industry in Hong Kong, the hypothesis may well define other design industries (as such photography, image design, etc) in the local context. The hypothesis is expected to facilitate inter-cross disciplinary studies with the current assumption.

With the theoretical framework provided in the thesis, it is expected that certain fashion phenomena in Hong Kong could be theorised, casting a new perspective on past and contemporary events. The current thesis provides an open dialogue for further investigation of relevant subject material. It opens debate on fashion in Hong Kong, and provides options for analysis of the commonality between fashion and other cultural industries, as a way of beginning to put fashion into further research and academic agenda.

- **Significance of the study**

  The present research provides an analysis of Hong Kong fashion within the context of local culture. It therefore offers a basis for the future study of Hong Kong fashion and related subjects, which are of growing interest to academics, researchers, and students of fashion and cultural studies. Throughout the research, an attempt was made to project a new perception of the evolution of Hong Kong fashion from colonialism to globalisation. It raises questions about the essence of Hong Kong fashion and offers opportunities for further investigation and exploration of the discussed topics.

  The research examined the structure, pattern, and history of fashion in Hong Kong, which began with industrialisation and proceeded towards
modernisation, concurrent with the industry's development from a fashion manufacturing to a fashion consuming society. It projected a new focal point for fashion to merge with culture within the context of the Hong Kong society.

With the examination of the Hong Kong fashion system in respect of its cultural and global environment, both intrinsic and extrinsic cues having an influence on the Hong Kong fashion system in relation to other foreign fashion systems, design identity and fashion globalisation will be better understood. The research and analysis may therefore benefit academic researchers, historians, educators, students, and design / fashion professionals or others who are interested in the subject of Hong Kong fashion.

Further, the findings arising from the research, such as identity, fashion globalisation and localisation, fashion consumerism, Hong Kong fashion evolution and competitiveness will provide a guide for the formulation of fashion theories and may stimulate related studies of the popular culture of Hong Kong. Discussion arising from these subjects will benefit cross-disciplinary (and inter-disciplinary) studies academically and commercially.

Increased opportunities for research such as the future examination of the transformation process leading to cultural and social changes within the fashion environment may arise, which will lead to further understanding of the assessment of fashion development. Lastly, the research opens opportunities for future exploration of the transformation process of market and strategy, and leads to further analysis of fashion both as a cultural industry and as a commercial product.
Appendices

Survey of customers' buying behaviour towards designer brands and bridge lines in Hong Kong retailing market

Objectives
1) To find out the reasons why Hong Kong consumers purchase designer brands and bridge lines
2) To find out Hong Kong consumers' opinions about designer brands and bridge lines
3) To find out if Hong Kong consumers intentionally purchase branded fashion, and the reasons why
Survey of customers' buying behaviour towards designer brands and bridge lines in Hong Kong retailing market

(Please circle the answer)

Part I

1. Do you know the following brands?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column I</th>
<th>Tick if yes</th>
<th>Column II</th>
<th>Tick if yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna Karan</td>
<td></td>
<td>DKNY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolce &amp; Gabanna</td>
<td></td>
<td>D &amp; G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Paul Gaultier</td>
<td></td>
<td>JPG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Mara</td>
<td></td>
<td>Max &amp; Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giorgio Armani</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emporio Armani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Armani Junior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Armani Exchange (A/X)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Do you know the relationship between the two columns?
   (a) Col. I & Col. II are separate brands
   (b) Col. I & Col. II are designers' names
   (c) Col. I includes designers of corresponding brands in Col. II
   (d) Col. I includes designers' brands; Col. II includes their second lines

3a. Did you buy items from Col. I in the past year?
   a. Yes - go to 3b
   b. No - go to 4a

3b. How often did you buy items from Col. I in the past year?
   a. Every month
   b. Every 3 months
   c. Every season
   d. During the sales period
   e. Occasionally

4a. Did you buy items from Col. II in the past year?
   a. Yes - go to 4b
   b. No - go to 5
4b. How often did you buy Col. II in the past year?
   a. Every month
   b. Every 3 months
   c. Every season
   d. During sales period
   e. Occasionally

- Answer Q. 3a & 4a, goes to Q. 5; neglect Q. 6, 7a & 7b, then Q.8 onwards -

5. Regard brands under Col. I & Col. II as two groups
   How do you feel about the two corresponding groups?
   (Please indicate preference with >, = or <)  
   Price
   Creativity
   Fashionable
   Status symbol
   Quality
   Comfort
   Advertising Activities

6. For any items you bought in one of the columns, did you buy or have a corresponding item in the other column?
   a. Only from Col. I - go to 7a
   b. More from Col. I - go to 7a
   c. Only from Col. II - go to 7b
   d. More from Col. II - go to 7b
   e. More or less the same from Col. I & Col. II - answer 7a & 7b

7a. If you buy or have more in Col. I, what is / are the reason(s)?  
   Tick if yes
   Affordable price
   Creative
   Fashionable
   Status symbol
   Better quality
   Comfortable
   Easy to accept
   More shops around
   More advertisement
   No particular reason
7b. If you buy or have more in Col. II, what is /are the reason(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Tick if yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status symbol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to accept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More shops around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More advertisement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No particular reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Do you buy from department stores other brands that you are not familiar with?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. Do you buy from street hawkers those brands from Q.1?
   a. Yes - go to 10a
   b. No - go to 10b

10a. For what reason(s) do you buy imitated branded items from street hawkers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Tick if yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular items already sold out in shops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can shop late at night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10b. For what reason(s) don't you buy imitated branded items from street hawkers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Tick if yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not feel good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No packaging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part II  Personal Particulars

1. **Sex**
   - Male
   - Female

2. **Age**
   - a. Below 18
   - b. 18 - 25
   - c. 26 - 35
   - d. 36 - 45
   - e. 46 - 55
   - f. 56 or above

3. **Education**
   - a. Primary or below
   - b. Secondary
   - c. Post Secondary
   - d. University or above

4. **Occupation**
   - a. Top / Middle Management
   - b. Executive
   - c. Professional
   - d. Non Professional
   - e. Clerical Staff
   - f. Factory Worker
   - g. Student
   - h. Housewife
   - i. Retired / Jobless
   - j. Others

5. **Personal Income**
   - a. Under HK$6,000
   - b. HK$6,000 - HK$14,999
   - c. HK$15,000 - HK$23,999
   - d. HK$24,000 - HK$34,999
   - e. HK$35,000 & above
From Designer Brand to Bridge Line: Brand Differentiation, Brand Strategies, and Customer Purchasing Behaviour in Hong Kong Fashion Retail Operations.

Wennie Ling*, Gail Taylor*, M. T. Lo*


Abstract

KEYWORDS: bridge line, designer label, buying behaviour, street hawker

Bridge lines (1) represent a way for designers to expand their business, because typically designer merchandise is supplied to a limited number of stores. With bridge lines, the prices are lower and the line can be supplied to more stores (2). The bridge market has been rapidly evolving in recent years. Retailers are paying close attention to this sector, particularly in the light of the stagnant demand for more expensive designer ready-to-wear collections. Despite the general economic recession, the culture of wearing fashion in the 1990s has paved the way to the growth of bridge lines.

* Wennie Ling is currently a Ph.D. candidate researching on the fashion culture of Hong Kong retail operations with the Institute of Textiles and Clothing of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU). She graduated with a degree in Fashion and Textile Design from the Institut Superieur des Arts Appliques in Paris. She is also a fashion consultant of the Iseem Co. Ltd., and a visiting lecturer in the School of Design at HKPU.

Gail Taylor is Associate Professor and Associate Head of the Institute of Textiles and Clothing at the HKPU, with special duties in research, staff development and external liaison. Her teaching and research specialisms are design management and product development. She has published prolifically in trade journals and is currently fashion editor, fashion writer, editor and writer for journals and newslettets in Hong Kong.

M. T. Lo is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Textiles and Clothing (ITC) of the HKPU. He has worked as an advisor to a number of adult education agencies in Hong Kong and China, and has been active in course developments for textile technology in the ITC. His publications include articles on low-cost testing laboratories and modification of rotor-spun yarn. His
Background

The reason why fashion has been decade surfing so much is that past decades have been about one key point. Fashion was dictated by fashion designers (3). They introduced new styles, often extreme, exclusive, and original, for fashion followers, manufacturers, and the general public. For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, Dior’s skirt length was measured by all fashion leaders and clothing manufacturers; Chanel’s suits were widely copied and modified by manufacturer; and haute couture was regarded as the trendiest level of clothing among the fashion conscious. Certainly, the social climate has inspired the evolution of fashion style. The 1960s was about youth. Miniskirts, one piece dolly dresses, polka dots and stripes were all found on the street. The 1970s, together with the hippie movement, were about peace and love. Hippie blouses, bell-bottom pants, platform shoes and tattoos were most trendy. In the 1980s, industry and technology helped to substitute much of the time-consuming work associated with the trade. People were moving in another direction for power and authority. Styles were varied to suit different social levels and functions. People were more aware of wearing the right clothes on the right occasion. In the 1990s, individualism is emphasised. The fashion system is finished. People want all of the above - plus comfort (4). The real power, and real fashion are no longer in the hands of either the designers or the insiders of the fashion ‘pack’, but with the public, the people who rightly insist on expressing their own style in the way they dress, and who could not care less about Fashion with a capital ‘F’. Fashion today is based on freedom, democracy, and individualism (5). It is about real life.

The bridge line

To be successful, retailers or manufacturers should understand the needs of their customers. Customers are concerned about their wardrobes: they want...
comfort, quality, value, versatility, and functionally, splashes of colour, trendy
touches and a hint of sexiness. They are being won over by whoever has the
ability to give them the best look, fit and price. At the same time, bridge is
undergoing a makeover to no longer supply regulation business suits, rather it
has become a resource for well-made and wearable interpretations of current
trends from the runaways into reality-based clothes (6). With distinctive
styling and sure-handed tailoring, bridge lines are attracting a diverse
customer base.

Bridge lines represent an important business because it opens price point.
They attract customers who may want to wear designer brands but find them
just a little out of reach. Accordingly, they draw the crowd of young
customers since the labels are a little more ‘hip’ (7). With the growth of
business, department stores are getting crowded with secondary lines and
other offshoots of big designer names (8). Despite tight floor space, retailers
will still manage to make room for designers who can put a new twist on the
bridge collection (9).

Hence, more and more designers are introducing secondary lines, aiming to
sell internationally. However, designers and bridge line makers are very
optimistic about competition. They are confident that bridge lines are
attracting a totally new and affluent customer to the stores and that their
business are growing (10). They believe that the new secondary lines would
probably take business from other secondary lines - not from the more
expensive designer labels. And the designer customers remain loyal to the
designer because of cut and quality; hence they are not likely to buy bridge
lines to save money (11).

Hong Kong fashion

Hong Kong has a short fashion history. There was no distinctive Hong Kong
fashion in the 1960s and 1970s. The fashion conscious adopted styles from the
west (12). In the 1980s, the clothing industry flourished with the rapid growth of factories and manufacturing. The living standard improved. People began to be aware of trends and styles. Fashion, at this stage started to be relevant to the general public (13). In the 1990s, with an efficient network of information, computers, mass media, and high technology have together created a global communication system. Hong Kong has become one of the most up-to-date and trendy cities in the world (14). Nevertheless, Hong Kong people pay a lot of attention to their appearance in order to be fashionable. They read many international magazines and follow western trends seasonally (15).

The purpose of this study

With insufficient fashion knowledge and background, Hong Kong people are seen to be 'copy cats' without their own, original styles. Their buying habits are greatly influenced by the mass media (16). It is sometimes very difficult for retailers to predict their buying behaviour. Thus, this paper attempts to explore the buying pattern of Hong Kong customers for the designers' brands and bridge lines market.

Methodology

A survey was conducted for the study of Hong Kong customers' buying behaviour for designer brands and secondary or bridge lines. Four local shopping spots were chosen for face-to-face street interviews. They were The Landmark in Central, Pacific Place in Admiralty, Times Square in Causeway Bay and Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. All interviews were carried out on Saturdays and Sundays. A balanced number of males and females were interviewed. Four well-known brand names, having both designer brands and bridge lines were chosen for the basis of the interviews. They were Donna Karan with her secondary line DKNY, Dolce & Gabbana with D&G, Jean Paul Gaultier with JPG, Giorgio Armani with Emporio Armani and Armani Exchange (A/X). Hong Kong citizens were the targeting sample groups that
were randomly selected with an even distribution of ages ranging from 16 to above 56.

Results and findings

Five hundred questionnaires were distributed with an 8 per cent refusal rate, which resulted in a total of 460 completed questionnaires being collected in the survey. Table 1 shows the response in the relationship between designer brand and bridge line. The chosen labels were printed on a separate card for reference of the interviewees. Less than half (49 per cent) of the interviewees knew the difference between a designer brand and bridge line. Table 2 shows that 44.7 per cent found the bridge lines more creative than designer brands; 27.8 per cent found that they were equally creative, while 25.7 per cent found the designer brand less creative than the bridge lines, 48.2 per cent found bridge lines more fashionable, while 33.2 per cent found that they were both fashionable. Only 26.2 per cent found the designer brand more of a status symbol than the bridge line. 49.7 per cent found that bridge lines provided more comfort than the designer brand. 27.8 per cent found that they were similarly comfortable, 87.6 per cent found that bridge lines had more advertising activities than the designer brand and only 4% found the opposite. Figure 1 shows the reasons for buying designer brands and bridge lines: 26.7 per cent claimed that the designer brand was of better quality compared with only 8.7 per cent response for the bridge line. Almost the same percentage found that both designer brands and bridge lines represented high status. Bridge lines were found more creative by 10.1 per while 9 per cent opted for the designer brand, 5.4 per cent claimed that bridge lines had more shops, and only 1.7 per cent found this to be untrue. Again, 5 per cent found that bridge lines had more advertising and 1.7 per cent stated otherwise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Col. I and Col. II are separate brands</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. I and Col. II are designers' names</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. I includes designers of corresponding brands in Col. II</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. I includes designers' brands; Col. II includes their Bridge line</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1. Response to relationship between designer brands and bridge lines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impression</th>
<th>Frequency BL</th>
<th>Frequency DB</th>
<th>Frequency BL</th>
<th>Frequency DB</th>
<th>Frequency BL</th>
<th>Frequency DB</th>
<th>No idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>209 92.5</td>
<td>12 5.3</td>
<td>3 1.3</td>
<td>12 5.3</td>
<td>2 0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>58 25.7</td>
<td>101 44.7</td>
<td>6 2.6</td>
<td>101 44.7</td>
<td>4 1.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionable</td>
<td>41 18.1</td>
<td>109 48.2</td>
<td>3 1.3</td>
<td>109 48.2</td>
<td>1 0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Symbol</td>
<td>60 26.6</td>
<td>90 39.8</td>
<td>2 0.9</td>
<td>90 39.8</td>
<td>2 0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>54 23.9</td>
<td>112 49.7</td>
<td>3 1.3</td>
<td>112 49.7</td>
<td>3 1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>9 4</td>
<td>108 87.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>108 87.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>19 8.4</td>
<td>101 44.7</td>
<td>4 21.2</td>
<td>101 44.7</td>
<td>4 21.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Impression on designer brands and bridge lines**

DB = Designer Brands  
BL = Bridge Lines
Figure 2 and 3 show the reasons for buying, and not buying, imitation branded items from street hawkers. Nearly half (45.7 per cent) of the interviewees who bought imitation brands from street hawkers did so because of the price. The second reason was convenience (27.5 per cent). 17.5 per cent did so because they shopped at night-time, and 9.3 per cent claimed that their behaviour was a result of popular items having sold out in the shops. The majority of respondents stated that they would not buy imitation brand items from street hawkers as they considered this to be wrong (36 per cent). 33.2 per cent believed that the counterfeit items were of low quality. 14.2 per cent claimed that the fit was inferior, 10.8 per cent claimed that it was illegal and 4.2 per cent would not buy from street hawkers due to the lack of packaging.
From the survey, it was found that 44 per cent of the interviewees claimed that they only possessed/bought bridge lines. Forty two per cent claimed that they owned more bridge lines than designer brand items. Three per cent alone claimed that they only possessed/bought designer brands. Out of 460 interviewees, 42 per cent who only purchased bridge were aged 18-35 with an average monthly income of HK$ 6000-HK$2,3999. Thirty three per cent were aged below 18 with a monthly income of less than HK$ 6000. In case of the designer brands, 77 per cent were aged 26-55 with a monthly income HK$1,5000-HK$3,4999. Nineteen per cent who stated that they bought designer brands were students with monthly incomes below HK$ 6000.

Discussion
From Table 1, it can be seen that 49 per cent of the Hong Kong public felt they could distinguish the difference between a designer label and a bridge line. Some designers are quite eager to communicate the direction of their design to their clients. They often view bridge lines as a means of expanding
the collection to the public but maintain a signature line for the desired clientele. The signature lines are always more personal to the designers themselves. Many of them claimed to have put more effort, concept, and creativity into designing the signature line (16). However, in Table 2, it can be seen from the survey results that bridge lines are considered more creative than designer labels, this 44.7 percentage being larger than the one for those who found the designer label, this percentage being larger the one for those who found the designer label superior to the bridge. The same case applies to fashionability. Designers and retailers alike maintain that the designer label is more of a status symbol than the bridge line, from design to fabrics, pattern, fitting, quality, image, and price. Nevertheless 39.8 per cent of those surveyed claimed that bridge lines had higher status than the designer label, and 32.7 per cent found both to be of equal merit, while only 26.6% claimed that the designer label had higher status.

The general Hong Kong fashion culture of buying more bridge lines than designer label merchandise is closely related to number of shops and advertisements (Figure 1). There are more shops for bridge lines than designer labels. For example, a small selection of Donna Karan merchandise is sold in Joyce Boutique, while there are three DKNY shops with full collections in town. Another example is Giorgio Armani, having only one Giorgio Armani boutique in town, but three Emporio Armani boutiques, one AX boutique and one Junior Armani boutique. With more bridge line shops, more advertising has been done for publicity. Campaigns, sponsorship, fashion shows, posters, trade and magazines coverage all contribute to the promotion of the bridge lines. Together with affordable price ranges and styles which are easily to accept (Figure 1), it is not difficult to attract a wide range of clients.

From Figure 2 and 3, it can be seen that, out of 460 interviewees, 62 per cent claimed that they would buy imitation branded items from street hawkers. For this percentage there is an even distribution of ages from below 18 to above
56, with a monthly income of HK$ 6000 - HK$23999, which is also the target group of the bridge line market. Their principle reason for buying imitation products was the lower price, followed by convenience. The majority of the sample who would not buy counterfeit products from street hawkers gave the reason that they did not feel comfortable shopping in the streets. Having a similar age range and monthly income to the above, they refused to buy imitation items because of the low quality. These customers, not necessarily bridge customers, typically purchased in department stores, accepting other brands which are not especially popular. From the above, it is suggested that Hong Kong customers have a certain pride in purchasing branded products, and at the same time, pay a lot of attention to price, quality and convenience. Bridge lines in Hong Kong has opened up the market to capture the general public who want to pay less, accept low to medium quality, can shop in trendy shopping areas, and at the same time, are brand followers.

The 44 per cent of the interviewees who buy or possess only bridge lines and the 42 per cent who possess more items from bridge lines represent a strong tendency for Hong Kong customers to purchase bridge lines rather than the designer brand; only 3 per cent claimed that they only possessed or bought designer brands. The reason for these customers to buy and possess items from bridge lines was the affordable price range, which is seen to be the main consideration of Hong Kong customers, and just 3 per cent, who bought only designer brands, noted that they would continue to buy designer brands for quality reasons.

Conclusion

Bridge lines have proved to be successful in the expansion of business and clientele in the Hong Kong fashion retail market. They attract customers who want to wear a brand but are unwilling to pay for an expensive designer label. Their acceptable quality and easy styles have drawn a younger range of customers as well as the mature crowd. Together with the general fashion
culture of Hong Kong, many fashion conscious people have become bridge line customers. They regard wearing bridge lines as a trend, neglecting the innovative concept behind a designer brand.

As business grows, so increasingly more designers are beginning to sell bridge lines. Retailers are ready to make room for any new bridge collection, hoping to gain a quick turnover. The market is, at this stage, saturated with bridge lines. Customers have begun to complain about the steady influx of styles for bridge line collections for each season. Bridge lines have become an everyday commodity with no surprises in fashion value terms. Designer brand customers have shifted to buying bridge lines because of the affordable prices. While retailers and manufacturers are busy making bridge lines in business, designers are still having fantasies about expanding their signature lines in terms of concept, image, creativity, and personal values. Though there are designers who are comfortable with their signature lines and refuse to make bridge for the expansion of business, many, who have gone the other way, find their bridge lines overwhelming the designer collection. Moreover, with sales growth in bridge lines, the possibility of expanding designer brands becomes less.

Whether there is a stagnation of style differences in bridge but great opportunity for business expansion or original styles of concept, creativity with a touch of designer's personality in designer collection but less demand for its expansiveness in the market; designers, retailers and manufacturers should determine a new business direction for the long-term success of the fashion retailing business.
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(1) Bridge is the secondary line of a designer label with lower and competitive price and which aims usually for young markets.

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(3) WWD, 'New York bridge: Of Kors', Tuesday, February 20, 1996, p.17.

(4) Ibid.


(7) WWD, "Secondary lines stake their ground." Wednesday, August 14, 1996, p.16.


(11) Interview with Hong Kong designer, William Tang; October 24, 1996.

(12) WWD, ref. 1.

(13) Interview with Hong Kong designer, Walter Ma, for Esquire, No.96, November 1996.

(14) Interview with Hong Kong designer, Pacino Wan, for Esquire, No.96, November 1996.

(15) Interview with Hong Kong designer, Leo Fan, for Esquire, No.96, November 1996.

(16) Interview with Hong Kong designer, Benjamin Lau, for Esquire, No.96, November 1996.

(17) Interview with Hong Kong designer, Jonathan Chan, for Esquire, No.96, November 1996.

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