

Identifying the Characteristics and the Advantages of 'China Chic' within Contemporary Fashion Film and Branded Content from 2019 to the Present Day

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Abstract: *China-chic is a design based on traditional Chinese culture and elements, which integrates fashion and popular features. It is a style that collides with traditional and modern fashion and combines Eastern beauty with Western beauty. The term "China Chic" refers to the growth of Chinese fashion styles. It broadens the meaning of "Made in China" and is widely considered a quality assurance symbol. Nowadays, "Made in China" or "Chinese Fashion" has come to reflect Chinese culture and aesthetics given by local Chinese firms. Chinese elements have been used more and more in fashion in recent years. With the development of economic globalization, China entered the WTO in 2001. More and more Western fashion brands have entered the Chinese market, enhancing the productivity of the Chinese fashion industry and market; Chinese consumers have placed a premium on the Chinese market brand. The purpose of this research is to show the application of Chinese culture in fashion films. By comparing the Chinese brand's 'China-Chic' in fashion films and the application of Western fashion brands, homegrown Chinese brands and e-commerce platform to Chinese culture, we can interpret the context of Chinese culture in fashion films. It determines that if Chinese cultural elements could be combined with Western brands to achieve cultural integration.*

Keywords: *China Chic, Fashion Film, Moving Image, Commercial*

1. Introduction

With the popularity of Chinese brand cultural IP in recent years, China Chic has gradually developed rapidly. As an emerging fashion trend, 2018 was recognized as the first year of China Chic. In 2019, China Chic attracted more attention from consumers. A group of brands took advantage of the trend to choose the style of 'China Chic', which triggered a hot spot of communication and public opinion. China Chic began to continue to integrate with different brands. A survey conducted by the China Youth Daily research center shows that among 2,012 participants, 96 percent are willing to pay for China's chic design products ^[1].

Nowadays, China Chic refers to the combination of Chinese tradition and fashion. It points to a generalized concept of consumption: the popularity of domestic product groups and brands with Chinese characteristics and is no longer limited to specific niche cultural circles. Layer, but permeates many aspects such as clothing, culture, daily necessities, etc.

From the meaning of the word itself, 'China' is the culture with Chinese characteristics, and 'Chic' is the trend and trend. Simply put, the two elements are superimposed and merged, showing that the traditional Chinese cultural elements and fashion elements complement each other and are indispensable. The popularity of China Chic is often regarded as a cultural return, actively returning to tradition in a diversified and trendy world, trying to resonate by stimulating the patriotic feelings of Chinese people. At the same time, it also reflects the mutual interpretation of perspectives and the cross integration of different perspectives. China Chic traverses clothing, beauty, food, and other fields to create a unique concept. In addition, China Chic has gradually evolved into a new fashion symbol. With the brand as the banner, the product as the support, and the social media environment as the channel, the China Chic brand has gradually explored a communication strategy suitable for its development, based on its own brand Cultural recognition and understanding of the audience for brand communication and marketing.

With the development of the times, people's needs for spiritual life continue to increase, and they are pursuing an emotional resonance and a sense of cultural belonging. This can be achieved through

traditional symbolism. In the past, fashion media production in Chinese culture has focused on aesthetics over meaning; this is problematic when trying to reach Chinese consumers emotionally. Therefore, especially the Chinese brand's fashion film production has to consider the work's cultural and national symbolic expression. In recent years, the rise of China Chic culture has undoubtedly brought a new field of production and development to fashion film.

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China-chic design is based on traditional Chinese culture and elements, integrating fashion and popular features. It is a style that collides with traditional and modern fashion and combines Eastern beauty with Western beauty. The term "China Chic" refers to the growth of Chinese fashion styles. It broadens the meaning of "Made in China" and is widely considered a quality assurance symbol. "China Chic" is based on the trend of China and has two factors: one is to have the genes of Chinese traditional culture; the other is to integrate current design concepts and have a sense of fashion. "China Chic" is a phenomenon that is not confined to a particular industry or field. Nowadays, "Made in China" or "Chinese Fashion" has reflected Chinese culture and aesthetics given by local Chinese firms. Chinese elements have been used more and more in fashion in recent years. With the development of economic globalization, China entered the WTO in 2001. More and more Western fashion brands have entered the Chinese market, enhancing the productivity of the Chinese fashion industry and market; Chinese consumers have placed a premium on the Chinese market brand. This research aims to show the application of Chinese culture in fashion films.



Figure 1: Nike 2018 (NIKEID, 2018).



Figure 2: Dolce & Gabbana 2018 (D&G, 2018).

By comparing the "China-Chic" of Chinese brands in fashion movies in Figure 1 and Figure 2, and the use of Chinese culture by Western fashion brands, Chinese local brands, and e-commerce platforms, we can interpret the Chinese cultural context in fashion movies. It determines if Chinese cultural elements could be combined with Western brands to achieve cultural integration.

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2. Aim

Develop a deep understanding of 'China Chic ' and its current meaning in fashion media.

3. Objectives

- (1) Understand the meaning and history of 'China Chic.'
- (2) Explore examples of contemporary fashion films where we see China Chic.
- (3) Through primary research, gain insight into the creative direction for global Fashion Film projects and branded content through Chinese film production companies.
- (4) Summarise the characteristics of China Chic.

4. Background and Rationale

4.1. Key References

4.1.1. Historical Context

Steele and Major discovered that "China Chic" refers to three periods of dress that have considerably affected Western design: the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China [2]. Traditional cheongsam, also known as Manchu robe, is worn by Manchu women. Han ladies wore Hanfu during the Qing Dynasty. Cheongsams, formal gowns with side seams, are worn by most Chinese women, and Wool suits are worn by most Chinese people in the Republic of China [3].

It can be seen that China-chic is more synonymous with clothing style and element design in the historical era of China. At the same time, the fashion film about China-chic is more like a documentary production form, leaving precious video materials for the clothing style of China-chic in the past. Rare Color Films produced the video at Historical Chinese Fashion Show-Shanghai 1929 Haute Couture Collection, a good past show about china-chic fashion film [4]. The model walks through an ornate gate and speaks in English about trendy Chinese clothing. The visual effects of contemporary fashion films about China Chic contrast with modern Chinese females, who blend Eastern and Western-style.

4.1.2. Contemporary Context

Nowadays, china-chic has long since gotten rid of its original definition and has become synonymous with modern fashion. The term "China-chic" has two meanings: first, it refers to parts of traditional Chinese culture; second, it refers to the ability to combine traditional Chinese culture with modern trends to make items more popular [5]. Meanwhile, more and more Chinese fashion brands and e-commerce websites choose to shoot fashion films about 'China Chic.' The Music video TMALL China-chic and Adidas Chinese New Year collection fully demonstrate China's visual style with elements of China Chic [6,7]. Through these references, we can see the expressions of "China Chic" in existing fashion films and the production methods. The final fashion film presentation analyses how he uses Chinese elements and combines them with fashion clothing to present "China Chic." Furthermore, through a series of data such as applying their social strategies, video playback analyses the meaning and effects of fashion movies about "Chinese Fashion

4.1.3. Theoretical Context

The cultural theories that make up this research will focus on Chinese fashion in fashion films, Mise en Scène, and stories in fashion movies. I will focus on every commercial fashion movie case on Youtube,

Vimeo, New Studios Media Co., Ltd, and Digital China to understand fashion movies' visual style, production format, and characteristics.

"China-Chic" is the name given to the emergence of China's new fashion trends. It not only stands for "Made in China," but it also has a solid link for product quality assurance. "Made in China" has created a cooperative relationship with Chinese culture and aesthetics represented by local Chinese enterprises as China's fashion sector has grown.

The current china-chic is more the national pride of the younger generation in China, and the recognition and self-confidence of domestic brands, have been further enhanced. The changes in their consumption tendencies have helped the country's trend. Steele and Major recognize that China chic is instead a long, tortured, eye-opening history of Chinese costume. This view no longer fits the current definition of china-chic [2].

China-chic fashion film has no accurate academic background. This study will hopefully create a theoretical conversation of identifying the characteristics and the advantages of 'China Chic' within contemporary fashion film and branded content from 2019 to the present day. There is no accurate academic background because it is based on the development and globalization of Chinese fashion media that makes China-chic have a new definition.

5. Literature Review

What is the difference between china-chic and Chinese elements is quite crucial in this popular trend; what is the definition about the China-chic? Regarding the concept of china-chic, S. Major believes that china-chic is about the three periods of clothing that have a significant impact on western fashion, which is Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the Republic of China (1912-49), and the People's Republic of China (1949-present) [2]. Meanwhile, Ma and Bian believed that Chinese culture had influenced Western textile and clothing for many centuries, especially for reform and opening up in China since the 1970s [8]. Nevertheless, the above definition for China's chic does not seem suitable for today's "china chic" phenomenon. These books were all published before 2000, and they are China-chic as defined by the understanding of Chinese fashion and Chinese culture in that era. Gu updated one article which described china chic: The term "China-Chic" characterizes the rise of China's native fashion trends. It has expanded the concept of "Made in China," which is usually regarded as the Assurance of the quality of products [8]. Based on this definition, with China's rapid development in just 20 years, CHINA CHIC has created academic vacancies. Like Steele and Major [2] and Ma and Bian [3], China-chic has become a thing of the past. According to this definition, "China chic" is a phrase that depicts the trend of China-centric design and has been named as the "word of the year" for quite some time [5].

Nevertheless, their views did not clearly define the current China chic, including its nature, characteristics, form of expression, and application methods. "China Chic" is an art form that combines traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern fashion trends. The designer recreates these two elements using composition techniques such as decomposition and transformation, fragmentation and reconstruction, and essential deformation. Symbols such as colors convey the cultural connotation of China. There are fewer scholarly resources and academic research papers in the development of china-chic from 2000 to the present. The China Chic fashion films look like having a template in the production. Undoubtedly, elements such as red, fan, mahjong, and hot pot in Figure 3 represent distinct Chinese characteristics, but they are used repeatedly.

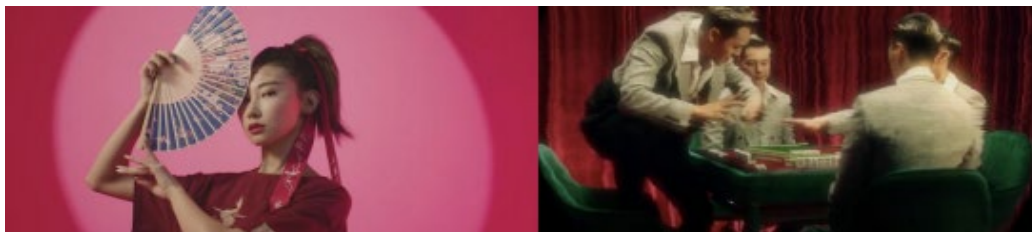


Figure 3: *Benteng T55 (Nikki, 2021), Trend Partner Promo(Rzone, 2021)*

This phenomenon will eventually create the result of aesthetic fatigue. With the continuous changes of consumer groups, Generation Z is now the leading force in fashion consumption (Wang, 2021). A recent China Youth Daily survey indicates that 96 percent of the 2,012 participants are willing to pay for China-Chic design products, a style that evokes classic Chinese designs. Furthermore, according to The

Global Times, the results also showed younger demographics, like Gen Zers, shifting more toward this style. Among these findings, 32.4 percent of respondents were born in the 1990s and 22.1 percent in the 2000s. Meanwhile, the survey shows that 92.4 percent of them expect more elements of Chinese design on the market [9]. It is urgent to define China-Chic and make consumers understand it correctly. The works lack cultural connotation: After the "China Chic" wind hit, the market demand for "China Chic" fashion films has increased, but not all so-called "China Chic" fashion films are actual "China Chic." Some creators put together fragmented traditional elements, and auspiciousness appears in production design. Clouds and cranes do not mean "China Chic" production design. This method of randomly matching elements has not been the authentic "China Chic" style.

The audience was branded as "cottage" and "plagiarism", and it also lowered the value of its brand. If this so-called "China Chic" fashion film floods the "China Chic" production market, which will lead to "China Chic" fashion film is loss of competitiveness and value.

With the popularity of china-chic in the fashion industry, more and more brands choose to spread through social media in fashion films, such as Weibo and Wechat, to establish a china chic frenzy [10]. The commercial fashion film- TMALL China-chic was praised and forwarded by audiences and consumers [7]. Used in the main fashion film: Chinese calligraphy, hanging sky pavilion, light boat, hat, Chinese clothes, Chinese drum, table tennis, wooden door, lion dance, and other symbolic Chinese elements combined with modern features such as street dance. China-chic carried out a multi-faceted interpretation. In terms of color, many collisions between black and Chinese red are used to help Tmall define a new "china chic aesthetic" [7]. This fashion film uses the symbolic props of China; the huge Chinese man runs through the whole film, setting off the atmosphere of Chinese style. In contrast, Adidas 2020 CNY uses a different way to show china chic [6]. Ancient characters and new-age celebrities: To react to each fame that attended this feast, we have set up an antique sign. The five stars corresponded to Li Bai's rising and singing, as well as Pei Min's fan waving.

Yang Yuhuan, the ancient football player Huo Qubing, and Li Shimin produced a thriving age with the beauty of shame flowers [11]. Even if a large budget is used to build a feast for the Tang Dynasty in China, the whole film shows that production design is restoring the exquisiteness and dedication of the Tang Dynasty in China. However, the combination of modern sportswear and the historical environment will inevitably produce disharmony in storytelling.

With the rapid development of China, new forms and meanings have emerged in 'China chic.' In just 20 years of development, China chic has seen academic vacancies, easily confusing consumers and audiences. At the same time, the fashion film production of China Chic also indirectly reflects the true connotation of China Chic.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research Methods

Since 2018, the concept style of "China Chic" has become popular in China. For commercial fashion film, it was Li Ning who released the fashion film and design of Li Ning's "Enlightenment" concept in New York Fashion Week China Day in 2018 (fantastic! China Li Ning landed in New York Fashion Week to spread the spirit of "Enlightenment," 2021). The distinctive Chinese elements and the Zen-inspired "Enlightenment" theme triggered large-scale social media screens and hot searches, stunning the world. It can be seen from the case of Li Ning that the style of 'China Chic' is formed except Party A's client Li Ning is a local Chinese brand. The final formation of these fashion films is inseparable from the efforts and creations of creative agencies and filmmakers. Therefore, creative agencies and filmmakers, they are the ones who understand the reasons for the formation of 'China Chic' and the current production status of 'China Chic' fashion film.

In order to gain a better insight into the possibilities for characteristics and advantages of the 'China Chic,' semi-structured interviews were conducted with two filmmakers from the primary target job role. The leading target role in filmmaking was defined as someone who has the experience of producing the 'China Chic' fashion film and commercial project from 2019 to the present day. The surveys were used to select participants who belonged to the target group (Art director, Production Designer, Creative Agency). Interviews were conducted in Tencent's online meeting room and lasted approximately 20 minutes each. Answers were recorded by screen recording, and four interviews were also recorded with consent.

In these online interviews, two interviewee's were asked four generalized questions:

(1) What do you think are the key characteristics of China Chic in commercial projects?

(2) Have you noticed a pattern in Chinese culture's visual representation or narratives through commercial projects?

(3) Do you think they are effective in communicating Chinese culture? What other characteristics do you think could improve how we visually communicate Chinese culture through China Chic?

The interviews were transcribed, and thematic analysis was conducted. The appendix involved translating all the points of view from Mandarin to English before identifying and reviewing four key questions. Each question was examined to understand participants' perceptions and motivations. The reason for choosing these participants for the interview on this question is that they have experience producing the commercial fashion film 'China Chic.' When they get the brief of each client, they have a deep understanding of what the client wants to do.' The reason and original intention of 'China Chic.' As the creators of the fashion film, it is their role in the industrialization process of the film industry that has achieved the visual type of the current 'China Chic' fashion film.

Unstructured interviews usually produce results that cannot be generalized beyond the sample group, but they provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions, motivations, and emotions.

6.2. Interview Findings

Through Tencent's online meeting, interviewees answered my questions one by one, combined with their project experience to explore China Chic fashion film's current status and characteristics in the industry and the reasons and influences of its formation.

Beginning in 2018, with the development of the Internet social strategy, local Chinese brands have created the popularity of the China Chic style while also making Chinese consumers pay attention to China's brands, thus forming a wave of patriotism. According to interviewee Peng Cheng, two reasons for forming China Chic commercial fashion film. The first reason is the rapid development of China and its influence in the world. With the development of many local Chinese brands, the application of Chinese elements in local Chinese brands has gradually been recognized internationally. The second reason is the problem of consumer propensity. For Chinese consumers, the tonality and style of local Chinese brands are sufficiently confident. With the change of consumer propensity, the brand will follow this consumer propensity change and change.



Figure 4: Adidas 2020CNY [6].

China Chic fashion film is a production style that began with local Chinese brands because they all have Chinese genes. They use Chinese elements to tell Chinese stories and brand stories through a familiar form to Chinese consumers. At the same time, for foreign brands, Chinese consumers also need to adjust their own brand's strategy on the fashion film to cater to Chinese consumers after they have changed their consumption tendencies. It became clear from an interview with Peng Cheng that she combined with the project analysis she had done for Adidas on the form of China Chic, the change of western brands. As one of the international brands, Adidas will face more fierce competition in the Chinese market. It needs to make some changes to cater to the Chinese audience. As for why it has to be China Chic, you can compare it with the local Chinese brand Li Ning. As a local Chinese brand with the same product type as Adidas, Li Ning began to change the brandtone in 2018 and showed a rising trend.

The rise of Li Ning has ignited a wave of love for Chinese elements for Chinese consumers. As a competing brand, what changes should Adidas make to compete with? They are thinking about referring to Li Ning's strategy to do China Chic, tell the story of China with Chinese elements, and sell the Adidas brand to Chinese consumers. Therefore, at the end of 2019, Adidas produced a commercial fashion film of 2020 Adidas New Year made Vientiane, a very Chinese-style year-end fashion film [see *Figure 4*], to express Adidas' communication strategy for Chinese consumers.

Concerning the characteristics and status of the current China Chic fashion film, the use of the essential elements of the China Chic fashion film, which I think, presents a similar phenomenon, which has led to the phenomenon of aesthetic fatigue in today's China Chic fashion film. The two interviewees also expressed relevant views on this issue. According to interviewee Peng Cheng, China Chic has many production forms, so we are just now making some lanterns, screens, and large red applications to define China Chic. Can their existence define China Chic? I think that the current production has some generalities. It became clear from an interview with Zhipeng Dong that the first reason was the budget problem. The production of China Chic fashion film is different from modern fashion film production. Many locations need to be produced in the studio through production design or film and television bases. Shooting, these work plans require much budget to rent venues or scene production. In the face of low-budget productions, the visual effects can only be presented by changing the wall color and props layout in the existing real-life studio, and the phenomenon of similarity is unavoidable [see *Figure 5*]. The second reason is that with more and more similar China Chic commercial fashion films, many brand clients will not give production designers more creative space, but require us to make some small changes based on existing references. They are more afraid to try new forms.



Figure 5: TMALL 2020China Chic film (Zhipeng Dong, 2019)

The current China Chic fashion film is an excellent opportunity to express Chinese elements, tell Chinese stories, and move Chinese items to the international stage. Breaking the current production assimilation and aesthetic fatigue are the breakthrough directions needed for the current development of China Chic fashion film. Peng Cheng proposed this direction that requires the joint efforts of future brands, production company and creative agencies (Appendix 1). At the same time, interviewee Zhipeng Dong hopes that China chic fashion film's production can give film crew more production space to enrich the form of China Chic fashion film's production.

7. Conclusion

China Chic fashion film has the characteristics of artistic creation and meets commercial needs. It involves a wide range of industries. China Chic fashion film has the characteristics of duration, fresh colors, and rich imagery. The development of other industries has driven the development of fashion film to a certain extent. With the advancement of technology and the continuous innovation of China Chic's form and content, the application of China Chic fashion film will also become more diversified.

Carrying forward Chinese traditional culture in China Chic fashion film is the future trend and the goal of all filmmakers' joint efforts. In addition, under economic globalization, all walks of life pursue brand uniqueness to improve brand competitiveness, which also drives the globalization of the China Chic fashion film industry.

Chinese culture is extensive and profound and has a long history. Under the background of "China Chic," fashion film has become a bridge between Chinese traditional culture and modern life, allowing the public to see a different traditional Chinese culture and enhancing the cultural confidence of Chinese people. China Chic fashion film has a perfect development trend in the current initial stage of cultural

and creative industries development. Its diversified characteristics determine the needs of the era for moving images. To maintain the long-term development of China Chic fashion film, filmmakers, brands, and creative agencies also need to continue to maintain an innovative attitude. With the development of the Internet, Chinese culture can be better exported abroad, allowing the world to recognize and recognize the culture and power of the Chinese nation.

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