

Two different tales of fashion media industry development in Mainland China and Hong Kong

Tommy Tse, The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

By revisiting relevant literature and case studies, this article first outlines Euro-American fashion media's influence on and the development of the Chinese fashion media industry. The participant field research created chances for interviews with sixteen Chinese fashion media insiders from 2011 to 2013. Apparently, Hong Kong journalists take a pessimistic view of the local fashion industry. Mainland fashion media personnel, by contrast, take an optimistic view of the industry's potential in China. The interview data suggest that such contradictory visions may arise from differing political changes and cultural biases. It is argued that the fashion media industry has never reached a cultural renaissance in either Hong Kong or China proper, despite their respective economic boom over the past decades. Fashion was taboo, a sign of bourgeois taste, and considered morally inferior in the communist ideology. Against this backdrop, colonial Hong Kong, where fashion was adopted to manifest a modern Chinese identity, did not share this ideological change. With the

arrival of 1997, the situation changed under the fast-growing Chinese economy and information flow. The shifting fashion industries and cultural politics in the two regions construct new relations between the post-socialist country and its postcolonial city.

Keywords

China

communist ideology

cultural industries

digital culture

fashion communication

fashion media

Despite the global economic recession in 2008, the luxury market today is constantly enlarging (Euromonitor International 2010). Lannes (2010) highlighted that since 2010 the greater China market has been ranked the third largest luxury spend market and has become a leading stimuli of worldwide luxury spend since the global economic downturn in 2007 (Bain & Company 2011: 5); Chinese consumers have contributed to over 30% of global luxury spending (Bain & Company 2015). Even though luxury spending in China in 2014 showed a –1% growth at constant exchange rates (–2% at current rates) due to greater controls on luxury spending and evolving consumption patterns (D’Arpizio et al. 2014; Bain & Company 2015), Chinese consumers, on a global scale, still represent the fastest-growing nationality for luxury spending, spending more than three times abroad compared to what they locally spend – meaning both international and local luxury and fashion brands are coveting and striving to share a piece of this affluent market segment; further, there is still a huge potential for them to retain such fashion and luxury consumption in China if relevant marketing and communication strategies are appropriately planned and executed (D’Arpizio et al. 2014).

All of the market data discussed suggest an overall prosperity of luxury and fashion retail, marketing, as well as media business across the greater China region since 2009. However, fashion media personnel remain doubtful about the economic revival as it

does not guarantee a favourable work environment, promising career prospects and stronger power in encoding fashionability in the global fashion stage. This article investigates how such socio-economic changes are entangled with the cultural history of and the fashion media business environment in Hong Kong and Mainland China since the post-Mao era: for example, the gradual changes and emerging needs of the masses; the social and economic (re)development; the relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong; and the technological changes based on the literature review and fashion insiders' first-hand experience. Rather than reinforcing the perceived rivalrous relationship between the development of Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese fashion media, the researcher intends to narrate a different tale, as the analysed data demonstrate discrepancies between the performance of fashion print media businesses and the experiences of fashion media workers in the two regions – which also show various forms of simulacra blurring their visions. The conceptions and misconceptions of fashion communication among fashion insiders are related and presented. Beyond the simple dichotomies such as 'West/East', 'high fashion/fast fashion' and 'Mainland China/Hong Kong', different dimensions of the 'rise' and 'fall' of media businesses in Hong Kong and Mainland China in relation to the western fashion industry are demonstrated.

The fashion media industry

Media is neither merely a mirror nor a neutral portal of communication. It generates meanings, affects the thinking and vision of the public, and enables their imagination of different things. Specifically, similar phenomena also exist in the arena of fashion media industry. To understand to what extent and in what ways fashion media influences the target public, we first need to comprehend the brief history and nature of fashion media in the West, in China and in Hong Kong.

Fashion media industry in the West

The fashion plate – a detailed fashion illustration or engraving depicting the most up-to-date garments, hairstyles, accessories and footwear of a particular time, and determining the legitimate aesthetic taste for the royalists to adopt and the mass to imitate – may be considered the very first fashion magazine-like object used to communicate fashion information in England and France in the late sixteenth century (Steele 2005). It quickly became widespread in Europe, leading some women magazine publishers to include fashion plates to their content (Holland 1955). The presentation of fashion information within the pages of magazines was first found in the late seventeenth century (DeJean 2005). Until the mid-nineteenth century, fashion drawings became a regular feature in the emerging American fashion magazines

(Nevinson 1967).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there came the official launch of *Harper's Bazaar* (in 1867) and other significant international fashion titles such as *Cosmopolitan* (in 1886) and *Vogue* (in 1892) in America; from the early until the mid-twentieth century, the expanding fashion industry in Europe also triggered the French media conglomerates to publish *Vogue Paris* (in 1920), *L'Officiel* (in 1921), *Marie Claire* (in 1937) and *Elle* (in 1945). Since then, fashion media has started playing a significant part in defining and communicating what fashion was. Among other influential publications, *Vogue* (founded in 1892) is perhaps one of the most significant and influential fashion magazines in the global fashion industry in the past 30 years, partly due to the magazine's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, who joined the prestigious American fashion media group in 1980 (Borrelli 2012: 46). Her hypercritical and ruthless editorial management style and close collaboration with key fashion creators were vibrantly demonstrated in *The September Issue* (R. J. Cutler, 2010). Anna plays the role of 'fashion-editor-as-celebrity' and emphasizes the relation of the world of fashion to the world of art (Borrelli 2012: 46–47), fusing the two in *Vogue* and generating a strong fashion rhetoric as well as aesthetic to strike the world fashion audiences.

Fashion (media) industry in China

Behind China's rapidly rising economic splendour in the contemporary world, here a less-heard story of fashion in China through its ideological transitions is narrated. At the turn of the twentieth century, the foreigner's major impression of Chinese clothing was of a simple, monotone culture; British traveller Alicia Little (d. 1926) once characterized China as 'the land of the blue gown' (Finnane 2008: 1). The anti-fashion sentiment had been common since the launch of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During the Cultural Revolution period, fashion in China was considered taboo, a sign of bourgeois taste, and as morally inferior in the communist ideology. Wang Guangmei, the sixth wife of Liu Shaoqi, the second president of the PRC, was charged with being 'a member of the reactionary bourgeoisie' on the Tsinghua University campus, because she wore a trendy, body-conscious qipao at a banquet in Indonesia in 1963. Young Chinese girls wearing pants with a narrow cut and fashionable shoes in the middle of the street were seized by the monstrous Red Guards, with their shoes and trousers forcibly removed in public (Finnane 2008: 227–28, 230). These Red Guards, typically wearing grass-green army-style uniforms, declared their contempt for the bourgeoisie, capitalism, and their commitment to the Maoist revolution (Finnane 2008: 230).

Yet, in the post-Mao era, the re-establishment of the print media had a strong

influence on the transition from a rigid uniformity in dress to the adoption of novel styles by young Chinese, which promoted Deng Xiaoping's idea to 'emancipate the mind' of people (Wu 2009: 62). Fashion print media flourished in the 1980s; advocates of fashion in the mass media also helped to transform Chinese fashion from a trivial lifestyle issue into a legitimate industry. The advent of various hybrid domestic and foreign fashion magazines in the 1990s further connected Chinese fashion industry to the international fashion world (Wu 2009: 61).

Hong Kong fashion media industry – a blank?

Against this backdrop, colonial Hong Kong did not share the ideological changes experienced in the mainland. The history of the Hong Kong press started in the mid-nineteenth century when Hong Kong was ceded to Britain (Lai 2007: 8). While the early Hong Kong press was closely tied to the colonial and business elites – to offer information about local affairs, daily entertainment and commercial news to the mass public – some served for propagandizing communist values and interest (Lai 2007: 10). Due to demographic changes and the growth of the advertising industry, the rapid growth of the commercial press was most noticeable during the decades from the early 1980s to the present. In the late 1990s, there was a diversified and vibrant news media environment in Hong Kong, covering an array of elitist,

commercial and trivial tastes (Lai 2007: 10–11). With the arrival of 1997, the situation changed under the fast-growing Chinese economy and information flow. Hong Kong media has changed dramatically from fact-oriented to market-oriented (Leung 2010: 42, 44). This perhaps can be best illustrated by the rife of the advertorial (Leung 2010: 55). The shifting fashion media industries and cultural politics in the two regions also generate new relations between the post-socialist country and its postcolonial city.

In the literature search, however, the detailed history of Hong Kong fashion media business was not found. Hence, the following oral histories narrated by the sixteen fashion media personnel interviewed will serve as original primary data in outlining a rough picture of Hong Kong fashion media development: most remain doubtful about the economic revival in Greater China as it does not guarantee a favourable work environment, promising career prospects and stronger power in encoding fashionability in the global fashion stage. Apparently, they tend to narrate a linear story about the rise of mainland fashion media versus the fall of Hong Kong fashion media.

Methodology

The researcher played the dual roles of participant and observer, including

volunteering as a fashion reporter in the editorial team of a high fashion magazine, *Stylistic* (false name), in the summer of 2011, and as a marketing assistant in the PR and marketing team of an undisclosed British luxury accessory brand in the summer of 2012, where he followed the senior fashion marketer and joined a one-week business trip to Beijing and Shanghai. Via snowball sampling the researcher interviewed sixteen undisclosed fashion media workers. He audiotaped conversations with the undisclosed fashion marketer and the mainland fashion media personnel. Collected data were transcribed and thematically coded to demonstrate the fashion media personnel's insights and experience, and to outline contrasting stories about fashion media industry in Mainland China and Hong Kong.

By analysing the collected data, the researcher came up with, and made use of, the following themes and coding scheme in constructing his postulation: 'traits of fashion media in Hong Kong and Mainland China' summarizes the original and/or changing characteristics of the media personnel's affiliated fashion media organizations; 'Fashion media business in Asia' includes 'now and then' and 'organizational structure, culture and socialization' as well as 'career aspiration', narrating the fashion media workers' personal experiences at work. The codified data were remapped in a coherent manner for the purpose of revealing the postulated paradox.

Results: The rise of mainland fashion media versus the fall of Hong Kong fashion media

Traits of fashion media

Among the sixteen interviewed fashion journalists, many suggested that they were limited by the origin of their affiliated publications, believing that they were merely a fashion messenger rather than a creator. Seasoned fashion journalist Janice argued,

The international titles in mainland China display a stronger ambition...they demand for making a strong fashion statement, unlike those fashion journalists in Hong Kong who are too used to be a follower...they can afford to produce a wide range of original, acute fashion features uttering their own voices...They aim at creating their own star journalists...like Anna Wintour.

Similarly, in the Chinese fashion industry, competition among fashion magazines for staff is extremely fierce. Inspired by the powerful role models set by Anna Wintour, Carmel Snow and Diana Vreeland, leading Chinese fashion titles were also keen to find their own glamorous fashion leaders (Wu 2009: 83).

According to the interviewees, Mainland Chinese fashion editors appear to have all the special treatment and unofficial benefits at work. While many Hong Kong fashion editors look down upon such ‘unethical’ ways of taking financial advantages, such as receiving red packets, press gifts and secret bribes, Jacky, fashion journalist of a popular weekly culture and lifestyle magazine, stated his own interpretation: ‘Don’t forget their political and cultural background...it’s rather common that they [the mainland fashion media] will charge you even for reporting the hard news or editorial featuring...as the governmental officials will do it too’.

Stylistic fashion reporter Kris shared her opinion as well: ‘Think about how many international fashion titles launch their magazines in mainland China rather than in Hong Kong...[I]n China every issue has a very high circulation’. In the 1990s, glossy fashion magazines predominated city news-stands, and the fierce competition forced many indigenous magazines either to reform or to relaunch as domestic–foreign partnerships – examples include *Shishang/Cosmopolitan*, *Shijie shizhuang zhi yuan/Elle*, *Ruili/Rayli* and *Shishang basha/Harper’s Bazaar* in the 1990s, and *Jiaren/Marie Claire* and *Vogue China* in the 2000s (Wu 2009: 76). In Hong Kong, the fashion-themed publication with the lowest circulation is a monthly culture and lifestyle magazine of around 30,000 copies, whereas the highest is a weekly consumer magazine of 152,094 copies. Yet, in Mainland China, the claimed circulation of

fashion publications ranges from 420,000 to 1,288,224 copies (see Appendix 1).

Janice made a satirical remark: 'It's impossible to compare with the American fashion magazines...You can also randomly pick up any fashion magazine in mainland China with at least 500,000 circulation...Do you [Hong Kong fashion publication] have 500,000 copies? If not...Forget it!'

Situated in the digital era, however, the rise of broadband connection, the ubiquity of wireless fidelity and also the popularization of mobile devices have enabled the new convenient way of receiving messages anywhere, anytime. Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has played a crucial role in communicating fashion trends in China. With over 253 million Internet users in June 2008, the Internet in China has evolved into a key platform for exchanging ideas and conducting business (Wu 2009: 84). Indeed, it also contests the dominance of the traditional fashion print media in the West and complicates the power relations among the greater China regions in encoding fashionability; the scarcity of fashion information in the early 1980s has given way to a spectrum of fashion information available to increasing numbers of Chinese online (Wu 2009: 84).



Figure 1: Digital fashion media – the rise of fashion websites (*Elle*) and fashion bloggers (Susie Bubble, Divia Harilela and Tina Leung).

A few journalists interviewed who are working for the international fashion titles mentioned that their companies had already been expanding the digital team in producing graphic and animated fashion content. Debby, previously a fashion editor in a local English newspaper and now a renowned fashion blogger in Asia, explained why she decided to give up her prestigious full-time job and launched her own fashion blog.

I think print media is still in a very traditional form. You tend to have an older or very educated audience. They like to get informed, they like the idea of picking up a piece of paper and reading it...But you know where the youths today are and what they read.

Now and then

According to Janice's (the interviewee agreed to her name being disclosed) autobiographic book sponsored by Louis Vuitton, Hong Kong occupied a significant position along the developing history of fashion media industry in Asia. From the mid-1980s to early 1990s, international fashion brands first started setting their footsteps in Hong Kong – the foremost potential market in the greater China region. Subsequently, the four renowned international fashion titles – *Cosmopolitan* (in 1984), *ELLE* (in 1987), *Harper's Bazaar* (in 1988) and *Marie Claire* (in 1990) (see Figure 2) – immediately took part in a fierce competition (Wong 2013: 22–23). Both the local high-end fashion magazine *Elegance* and another two low-end women's magazines *Sisters* and *Women and Family* could not compete with the financially strong international media conglomerates and were gradually defeated in the early 1990s. Around the same time, the overall Hong Kong fashion media industry experienced an

unprecedented upsurge and expansion, and Hong Kong media became a key information provider to bridge the information gap between China and the rest of the world. Only in the 2000s has Hong Kong's role as an icon of modern imagination and information provider gradually diminished, while exchanges and collaboration between Hong Kong and mainland media producers have been rising (Ma 2006: 348–49).

In fact, in the 1990s, a similar expansion of fashion media business did happen in Mainland China. Again, most of these growing magazines were joint ventures with established foreign titles, whereas indigenous magazines were undercapitalized and shrinking. Zhang, editor of *Art and Design*, commented, 'We must recognize that there is currently no fashion industry in our country...fashion magazines in China are no more than a clotheshorse for the international fashion industry'. Li, former senior fashion editor of *Elle*, also said,

Local fashion magazines are so weak...there is no hope for a new local fashion magazine today...Before the inception of *Ruili*, glossy titles like *Elle* were thoroughly Westernized...many Chinese readers felt that these titles promoted fashion that bore little relation to China. (Wu 2009: 76, 79–80)



Figure 2: ‘The Four Great Beauties’.

Figure 2a: *Cosmopolitan*.

Figure 2b: *Elle*.

With 25 years’ experience in the field, Janice bemoaned the decadence of Hong Kong fashion media in its lack of professionalism – not producing original editorial content and being eroded by explicit, uninteresting advertisement. She also emphasized that, instead of the high-end fashion titles, youth magazines had become the mainstream fashion publication in Hong Kong since the late 1990s.

Like *MILK [Weekly]* and *East Touch*, they are the mainstream ones nowadays (see Figure 3)...before 1997 there still existed a ‘Joyce Boutique culture’ – the high-end fashion culture; after 1997 the ‘I.T. [Apparels] culture’ had prevailed the former and deeply influenced the majority of Hong Kong youths...Become the mainstream [fashion] culture.

Janice claimed that, the post-1980s’ attitudes to clothes and the styles they admire are no longer about extravagance and glamour, and that has been particularly apparent after the new millennium. ‘Most [Hong Kong] stars today dress in a pretty “I.T. style”...and the college students like them’. Janice assumed the new generations of Hong Kong celebrities made a strong influence on the youngsters, ‘Buying those LV [Louis Vuitton] and Hermès handbags are already too “tai tai” [a Chinese colloquial term meaning “wealthy-married-woman-like”] for them...the “tai tai culture” no longer exists now’.



Figure 3: Street fashion magazines – *East Touch* and *MILK Weekly*.

Subjectively, Janice attributed this evolution of fashion culture to the new philosophy of work and life among local youths.

Their [mainland Chinese youth] attitude to clothing is so different from Hong Kong people...They are hungry for success, for stepping up, making a fortune and living a luxurious life...Hong Kong people were once like that too...In the 1980s, men wanting a Giorgio Armani suit and women yearning for a Chanel 2.55 bag, how could they tell you they are interested in those 'trendy brands'?...but that's an era long gone.

Culture and lifestyle magazine reporter Jacky analogically illustrated why there were different versions of 'raison d'être' for different fashion magazines: 'Our magazine is like Chanel whereas *ME Magazine* is like H&M...Obviously the two have dissimilar market positioning...but it's not a superior-versus-inferior distinction'. Interestingly, for Jacky the gradual rise of B-grade magazines as affordable fast/street fashion became more popular in the local market did not necessarily signify a shrinkage of high-end fashion media, as they simply served different clients and separate promotional objectives. Here a contrast between the two generations of fashion journalists is revealed. The former ones grieved over the rise of 'inelegant' street fashion and the fall of high-end fashion that young people in the past were commonly passionate about; the latter ones disapproved the extravagant yet unapproachable

luxury products, decrying it as far-from-the-earth fashion detached from their ordinary everyday life.

Tracy, Senior Fashion Journalist of a monthly Chinese fashion magazine, suggested that, in the 1990s, the Chinese held no position in fashion circles. ‘Now everything belongs to the mainland, like the specified VIP sitting area [in the fashion shows] assigned to the mainland fashion journalists, that was similar to what they did to the Japanese press in the past’. As *Harper’s Bazaar China*’s Editorial Director Su described,

Six years have passed [since *Harper’s Bazaar* launched in China]. Our situation has changed from having no place to get clothing samples to now having a whole series of clothing samples shipped from overseas for fashion shoots...China has changed from a fashion desert to the largest market and a paradise for luxury brands. (Wu 2009: 81–82)

Kim, a junior reporter at *Stylistic* magazine, lamented, ‘The [Hong Kong] moment is gone, now the mainland is spinning at full speed’.

Organizational structure, culture and socialization

Janice highlighted that the MingPao Group exclusively defended the authentic tradition of professional journalism, endowing the ultimate power to the editorial teams of all its affiliated publications. That was also the reason why she was loyal to the company for almost twelve years. Under the 'MingPao culture', Janice insisted, she appreciated the fact that her editorial team was never required to produce any free-of-charge media coverage to please or build rapport with the fashion marketers.

However, as Debby said, in her previous days at the local English newspaper, even though they beheld very strong editorial integrity, the advertising team did engage in rivalry with them.

We had one incident a few years ago...We wrote about something good and bad about a Milan [Fashion Week's] show...But the brand got very upset and called our ad sales...they're advertising like two to three million [HK] dollars a year...the client said they wanted us to write the retraction and an apology or else they would remove all the advertising...eventually, our ad sales backed us up and informed the advertiser 'Fine, you can do that if you want to'.

This example indicates that the power relations between the advertiser and the media are not always asymmetrical.

During an afternoon meeting, Karena, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of a hybrid domestic and foreign fashion magazine, revealed that the work life in fashion media was tremendously tough and stressful. Even though Karena was in a very senior position in the local organizational structure, she often had to work until night-time and could never get the editorial tasks finished. ‘I have already assigned to my team a lot of tasks, still there are many things which I can handle by myself only!’ She continued to expound: As the top fashion media conglomerate across China, her media company was greatly expanding and had a wide range of new development plans – launching two new magazines apart from the existing four publications. While enjoying the exciting and rapid development in China, the fashion journalist does not seem to forget the downsides of it – heavy workload and the shortage of helping hands.

Career aspiration

In Janice’s ‘those were the days’ tale, she pointed out that the mainland fashion media industry offers immense opportunities while there is limited prospect for today’s

Hong Kong fashion journalists. In reality, almost every popular Mainland Chinese fashion magazine has employed stylish young women as editors-in-chief to take up the powerful role of ‘fashion opinion leader’: for instance, Angelica Cheung at *Vogue*, Su Mang at *Harper’s Bazaar* and Xiao Xue at *Elle* (Wu 2009: 83).

Janice further elucidated her own theory of the fall of Hong Kong fashion media, ‘Why can Suzy Menkes still be a powerful fashion journalist in her seventies?...[She would] never advertise nor copy the entire press release in her editorial, she truly has the knowledge, experience and a critical eye’. She critiqued that many Hong Kong fashion media houses had ‘Four No’s’ – no vision, no insight, no professionalism and no originality. In the meantime, she lamented the limited prospect for today’s fashion journalists: ‘Can Hong Kong become a fashion trendsetter? I think so, but only for those youth street fashion labels and Japanese trendy brands’. In other words, these ‘B-Grade’ fashion labels are not the genuine fashion in Janice’s mind; their local popularity does not guarantee an optimistic career future for fashion journalists.

Fashion editor Fei Fei told the researcher she really wanted to quit the job. After working at *Stylistic* for five years she could not see a proper and attractive promotional path. While being asked why not leaving the media company right away, Fei Fei responded in a mixed tone, ‘I know...It’s ironic that, the fashion editor job title provides one all the luxurious fringe benefits, such as the business-class air ticket,

five-star hotel accommodations, fine dining, luxurious press gifts, precious connections with the stars and supermodels, etc.’ Fei Fei exclaimed that, while local fashion journalists clearly realize they have a very humble salary and an uncertain career path, it was still difficult for them to give up such benefits and ‘vanity’ right away.

Kim and Kris said pessimistically, ‘If your family is poor, really don’t enter the field...Until now I have two-year experience in fashion journalism, I still only have slightly more than HK\$10,000...Needless to ask if I can afford those expensive luxury products at full price’. Kris conceived that their career prospects were not good, and can never be compared with that of other professional industries like banking, education, etc. Therefore, these media workers tended to spare time for and engage in various freelance jobs to make extra money, which indirectly reinforced their stress at work and made their work schedules tighter, to a certain extent affecting their full-time job.

Conclusion: Neither renaissance nor decay?

In the above discussions, the researcher has juxtaposed the interviewed Asian media workers’ experiences and viewpoints against fashion media development in greater China since the 1980s. While carefully scrutinizing them, however, many of their

views do not synchronize with each other, or even with their own, in supporting the argument that the fashion media business in Mainland China is experiencing an economic upsurge, whereas Hong Kong fashion media is suffering from a gradual downturn.

The interviewed fashion journalists shared their experience about the splendid launch and expansion of Hong Kong fashion media starting from the early 1980s, and of a similar rise in fashion media in Mainland China in the mid-2000s. Hong Kong fashion journalists were more autonomous and not so affected by commercial concerns in the past, but now the fashion media companies have become more advertising-oriented than content-oriented; the sacred wall between the editorial and advertising sales teams has been loosened or even disintegrated; on the other hand, mainland fashion media was perceived as being politically ambitious, financially strong, culturally influential, content-oriented and highly respected by the fashion marketers. This also indicated a gradual fall of economic power of the Hong Kong fashion media, making it more conscious of monetary returns for the sake of sustaining its operations in the long run. In 1995, *Fortune* magazine described Hong Kong's future in two words: 'It's over?' (Mathews 2003: 12). It said that Hong Kong's success emerged only over the past few decades. Hong Kong people experienced a small period of cultural autonomy, economic boom and political freedom between the overpowering cultural

influences of Great Britain and China. Nonetheless, in the postcolonial era, China will seize Hong Kong's democracy and prosperity gradually (Mathews 2003: 12–13).

The shrinkage of traditional print media negatively impacted the fashion media ecosystem in the Hong Kong context. The rising popularity of digital and social media also opened up a free-of-charge, more convenient channel for fashion lovers to acquire global fashion news. They can acquire a variety of information and knowledge on fashion in an interactive manner through the web. Hong Kong fashion media no longer has its exclusivity in assembling fashion news in Europe and reporting it in Asia; rather, it is now being neglected and less taken care of by both the global and regional fashion publicists because of the rise of mainland fashion media in the international fashion stage as well as their much-higher circulations telling their significant impact to a larger pool of target audiences.

With respect to creative autonomy, the financially capable mainland fashion media supported by the global media conglomerates showcase their professional and aesthetic fashion editorials in a highly sophisticated manner – the mainland media ambitiously aims at making a strong statement to define 'what fashion is'. Conversely, Hong Kong fashion journalists bemoaned the limited resources leading to the uninspiring production of more rigid and formulaic fashion styling and editorials.

The accumulated weakness of Hong Kong fashion media has turned the local fashion

journalists into a depressing yet recurring cycle – heavy workload deteriorating one’s passion and dedication; submission to the sales-oriented goals and low level of creative autonomy suffocating fashion aestheticism; and uncertain career path and discouraging monetary return dissuading capable fashion journalists from staying in the industry. These experienced, capable Hong Kong fashion journalists have started jumping into the mainland fashion media market in the recent decade for the golden career options and creative opportunities it affords (Ma 2006: 352).

At the same time, there are ideas, insights and even statistical data generated as an *antithesis* to the perceived dichotomous relationship between the Hong Kong and mainland fashion media. Comparing the status of Hong Kong fashion journalists in the 1980s–1990s to the current time, there are already many more opportunities and much respect granted to the Hong Kong fashion media due to the rise of local tourism and economic growth in the mainland. The fashion journalists in the two regions seem to be in a symbiotic rather than a rivalrous relationship.

Even though the mainland fashion media organizations were regarded as affluent, full-fledged and powerful by Hong Kong fashion journalists in a jealous and hostile tone, it seems that their scope of work, responsibilities and pressures are much more than what the Hong Kong journalists can imagine. The stereotypical traits of mainland fashion media workers stigmatized as unethical, unskilled and untalented were not

directly observed by the researcher. Compared with the Hong Kong fashion journalists' admiration and higher degree of acceptance to the Euro-American and Japanese fashion media, somehow it seems to be an untrue cultural imaginary manifested by the Hong Kong journalists out of their cultural biases and de-sinicized sentiments to the recent shift of importance and influences intertwined with the specific socio-historical and cultural contexts in Hong Kong and Mainland China (Ma 2001: 121–122). Many Hong Kongers identified themselves as 'Chinese plus capitalist, British colonial, democracy and the rule of law' – in short, 'Chinese plus Westernized' (Mathews 2003: 9). They negotiate between their ambivalent desire for and distance from China, and they are experiencing a split in returning to their mother country: 'going back' to China, and yet resist 'going in' (Wong 2002).

The fall of traditional fashion print media may not necessarily link with the rise of mainland fashion media. Instead, the digitization of media industry and the gradual 'democratization of information' pose a real threat to all types of traditional media regardless of their specialized subjects and geographical contexts. Interestingly, statistical data of both the overall media advertising spend and print media advertising spend in Hong Kong since 2000 show a gradual expansion of the media advertising market in Hong Kong. There was a significant 268.6 per cent increase between 2001 and 2013 (see Appendix 2), indicating that the continuous boom of local media

industry is going along with the rising consumption needs of the mainland tourists symbiotically.

The decline of high fashion and the rise of street/fast fashion are not exclusive to the Hong Kong fashion industry; rather, it is an international phenomenon. The diverse understandings of fashion also affect one's perception of the rise and fall of Asia fashion media industry, as there are signs showing the rise of popular fashion media, weekly consumer magazines and online fashion media featuring street fashion/'trendy brands'.

Overall, this research challenged and complicated such perceived transformation of fashion marketing and media landscape in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The fashion media industry in Asia, whether in Hong Kong or in Mainland China, has never reached a state of renaissance in a cultural sense, even though it has experienced an economic boom over the past decades. The fashion journalists in the two regions are in a symbiotic relationship. Compared with the Hong Kong fashion journalists' admiration of and higher degree of acceptance to the Euro-American and Japanese fashion media, the negative portrayal of mainland fashion media by Hong Kong journalists indicate the specific socio-historical and cultural contexts in the two regions. The rise of digital technology challenges media industry and its overall operational modes in the global context, rather than only attacking the Hong Kong

fashion media industry. Amid the commercial consideration in the media business observed by the researcher, there is also room for negotiating fashion meanings in the production process. The editorial integrity and creative autonomy can be defended in certain cases according to the visions and determination of fashion journalists and the media organizations. Lastly, the international upsurge of street fast fashion and street fashion and the popular press actively propagandizing them may also be considered the rise of fashion media industry, if we expand our understanding of fashion beyond the cherished notion of high-end fashion.

Some may hold a pessimistic view that the rise of Mainland China will gradually dissolve Hong Kong's cultural uniqueness and economic power; Hong Kong fashion media will soon fade into history. Optimistically, Mrs. Anson Chan, former Chief Secretary of the last colonial/first postcolonial Hong Kong government, once said, 'in one hundred years, Hong Kong and China will merge into one system – the Hong Kong system' (Mathews 2003: 13). Hong Kong identity may soon be dead; but from the ashes of that identity a reviving, independent new Chinese identity resonating with people across greater China may emerge (Mathews 2003: 12–13). At the end of the day, whether the dwindling 'Hong Kong-style' can actually give birth to the 'New Chinese-style' in the global fashion stage depends on our faith and actions.

Appendix 1

Circulation of major print media in Hong Kong and Mainland China

Circulation of major print media in Mainland China

*Statistics provided by the undisclosed British accessory marketer in August 2012

Media	Circulation
21st Century Business Herald	859,500
Bazaar	856,000
Bazaar Men	510,000
Cajing	320,329
China Daily	400,000
ELLE	1,288,224
Forbes China	168,000
Fortune China	181,338
GQ	450,000
GQ Style	420,000
Grazia	1,162,000
L' OFFICIEL	650,000
L' OFFICIEL HOMMES	550,000

MEN's UNO	438,000
Modern Weekly	680,000
Noblesse	118,000
Trends Esquire	798,000
Vogue China	570,000

Circulation of major print media in Hong Kong

*Statistics provided by the undisclosed British accessory marketer in August 2012

Media	Circulation
<i>Apple Daily</i>	303,047
<i>City Magazine (號外)</i>	82,000
<i>Cosmopolitan (HK)</i>	42,186
<i>Elle (HK)</i>	42,026
<i>Esquire (HK)</i>	35,000
<i>East Touch</i>	85,000
<i>Financial Time – HK edition</i>	12,102
<i>Harper's Bazaar (HK)</i>	32,000
<i>HKEJ Lifestyle Journal</i>	62,000
<i>Hong Kong Economic Times</i>	93,052
<i>HK Tatler</i>	32,200
<i>How To Spend it</i>	34,796
<i>Jessica</i>	64,376
<i>Jmen</i>	38,000
<i>Marie Claire (HK)</i>	44,708

<i>Ming Pao Daily</i>	85,527
<i>Ming Pao Weekly</i>	56,140
<i>MILK Weekly</i>	100,000
<i>MILK X Monthly</i>	50,000
<i>More Magazine</i>	113,137
<i>Men's uno</i>	66,800
<i>MR style</i>	30,000
<i>MRRM</i>	35,000
<i>ME Magazine</i>	119,672
<i>Oriental Daily</i>	530,000
<i>Prestige</i>	31,000
<i>Post Magazine</i>	80,865
<i>SCMP</i>	100,860
<i>Sing Tao Daily</i>	85,527
<i>Timeout</i>	40,000
<i>Zip</i>	66,800

Appendix 2

Hong Kong media advertising spending reports

*Source: admanGo.com (generated in July 2013)

Hong Kong Adspend Market -- Media Mix (HK\$ in millions)																	
	TVBJ	ATVH	TVBP	ATVW	TVB DTT	CableTV	NowTV	Newspaper	Magazines	Radio	Interactive	MTR	Bus Body	Other OOH	Total	SOV	YOY
Jun-01	548.14	235.55	25.04	11.81	0	0	0	733.02	333.38	0.09	0	58.12	0	109.11	2,054.26	6.67%	-
Jul-01	621.89	235.88	23.47	16.45	0	0	0	704.27	332.39	0.29	0	58.21	0	122.11	2,114.96	6.86%	-
Aug-01	658.63	237.55	25.49	7.57	0	0	0	752.31	357.34	0.5	0	45.21	0	135.95	2,220.55	7.20%	-
Sep-01	562.14	225.24	25.47	8.42	0	0	0	725.03	404.39	0.24	0	46.8	0	88.4	2,086.13	6.77%	-
Oct-01	657.67	243.69	28.08	9.38	0	0	0	716.88	426.96	0.21	0	47.32	0	125.41	2,255.60	7.32%	-
Nov-01	693.17	242.08	37.25	10.88	0	0	0	854.64	407.26	0.14	0	48.05	0	56.48	2,349.95	7.62%	-
Dec-01	705.64	268.17	46.29	15.73	0	0	0	890.99	446.1	0.07	0	57.13	0	55.42	2,485.54	8.06%	-
Jan-02	700.86	270.12	22.42	10.56	0	53.19	0	852.56	348.02	41.72	0	43.59	0	35.27	2,378.31	7.72%	38.51%
Feb-02	663.55	278.68	22.88	8.72	0	79.07	0	654.66	289.71	45.36	0	42.05	0	53	2,137.68	6.94%	41.16%
Mar-02	691.63	271.79	28.47	9.8	0	57.69	0	860.8	384.56	54.55	0	56.12	0	73.78	2,489.19	8.08%	26.98%
Apr-02	717.87	273.43	24.57	8.79	0	63.59	0	819.21	401.9	51.24	0	55.5	0	92.17	2,508.27	8.14%	29.44%
May-02	809.09	295.39	28.44	10.77	0	78.67	0	980.15	481.13	60.05	0	75.75	0	109.76	2,929.20	9.50%	34.68%
Jun-02	749.71	276.68	40.61	11.46	0	137.53	0	900.02	454.08	56.1	0	70.13	0	114.46	2,810.78	9.12%	36.83%
Total	8,779.99	3,354.25	378.48	140.34	0	469.74	0	10,444.54	5,067.22	310.56	0	703.98	0	1,171.32	30,820.42	100%	34.29%

Figure 4: From June 2001 to June 2002.

Hong Kong Adspend Market -- Media Mix (HK\$ in millions)																	
	TVBJ	ATVH	TVBP	ATVW	TVB DTT	CableTV	NowTV	Newspaper	Magazines	Radio	Interactive	MTR	Bus Body	Other OOH	Total	SOV	YOY
Jun-05	772.32	220.34	60.14	9.87	0	292.15	0	1,375.96	777.24	116.83	0	72.64	0	185.79	3,883.28	7.23%	9.51%
Jul-05	885.22	264.99	60.74	14.43	0	309.06	0	1,417.41	775.55	136.96	0	78.05	0	189.26	4,131.67	7.69%	11.82%
Aug-05	797.35	247.96	63.96	12.06	0	316.63	0	1,446.63	767.82	139.59	0	79.06	0	186.95	4,058.01	7.55%	11.25%
Sep-05	820.1	221.64	59.76	13.08	0	317.26	0	1,477.58	821.34	129.05	0	80.42	0	175.81	4,116.04	7.66%	8.12%
Oct-05	849.23	201.67	63.54	17.69	0	331.7	0	1,511.56	896.49	131.05	0	83.44	0	175.66	4,262.03	7.93%	12.15%
Nov-05	869.65	202.49	65.93	12.12	0	324.9	0	1,513.32	850.05	137.25	0	79.54	0	172.37	4,227.62	7.87%	9.70%
Dec-05	938.37	239.56	75.77	13.85	0	356.83	0	1,606.27	982.76	142.03	0	115.49	0	183.47	4,654.40	8.66%	9.88%
Jan-06	962.56	261.89	55.94	10.36	0	350.86	0	1,355.96	641.34	115.01	0	79.22	0	162.81	3,995.95	7.44%	5.57%
Feb-06	800.38	164.74	43.57	6.35	0	315.74	0	1,132.98	606.12	91.6	0	51.31	0	146.56	3,359.35	6.25%	6.89%
Mar-06	946.03	180.12	78.59	9.13	0	351.38	0	1,534.29	809.34	125.94	0	76.92	0	163.18	4,274.92	7.96%	14.17%
Apr-06	912.28	177.4	78.14	9.47	0	394.78	0	1,374.93	839.91	123.08	0	77.18	0	165.18	4,152.35	7.73%	7.27%
May-06	970.56	195.99	79.26	8.58	0	376.09	0	1,484.92	852.71	117.18	0	81.8	0	166.23	4,333.32	8.06%	7.40%
Jun-06	825.66	223.71	66.06	8.51	0	435.24	0	1,549.87	831.03	118.03	0	78.61	0	148.73	4,285.45	7.98%	10.36%
Total	11,349.71	2,802.50	851.4	145.5	0	4,472.62	0	18,781.68	10,451.70	1,623.60	0	1,033.68	0	2,222.00	53,734.39	100%	9.56%

Figure 5: From June 2005 to June 2006.

Hong Kong Adspend Market -- Media Mix (HK\$ in millions)																	
	TVBJ	ATVH	TVBP	ATVW	TVB DTT	CableTV	NowTV	Newspaper	Magazines	Radio	Interactive	MTR	Bus Body	Other OOH	Total	SOV	YOY
Jun-10	1,063.66	331.97	41.94	16.11	28.58	548.42	138.26	2,234.98	987.31	284.02	255.92	166.89	15.94	439.36	6,553.36	7.33%	26.58%
Jul-10	1,095.24	364.38	36.29	16.66	27.58	518.9	165.11	2,266.02	1,014.23	305.56	266.47	169.57	17.21	446.27	6,709.49	7.50%	18.10%
Aug-10	1,072.28	330.21	36.24	15.04	27.65	484.84	154.69	2,082.63	954.8	304.54	275.89	166.18	16.2	484.07	6,405.26	7.16%	14.20%
Sep-10	1,090.07	344.38	37.52	17.89	28.39	505.9	160.07	2,228.17	1,104.20	282.39	250.03	176.47	16.81	484.03	6,726.32	7.52%	10.76%
Oct-10	1,124.35	323.93	46.12	20.72	30.12	536.78	188.99	2,185.48	1,147.20	280.73	287.31	180.16	16.05	517.19	6,885.13	7.70%	11.01%
Nov-10	1,112.55	315.28	47.1	24.32	28.59	532.12	212.41	2,523.16	1,212.03	295.21	313.2	164.66	14.4	482.59	7,277.62	8.14%	16.90%
Dec-10	1,121.37	359.67	73.7	26.7	30.62	544.03	275.8	2,544.38	1,317.76	339.57	360.5	211.47	19.29	524.81	7,749.67	8.67%	14.71%
Jan-11	1,159.72	152.5	51.54	10.68	154.02	597.71	193.93	2,199.25	965.45	269.7	299.15	174.02	26.26	498.23	6,752.16	7.55%	20.07%
Feb-11	991.95	108.74	35.03	8.74	148.77	494.56	176.56	1,536.50	745.78	236.44	249.88	133.6	29.33	456.74	5,352.62	5.99%	6.46%
Mar-11	1,180.50	71.3	60.71	8.82	163.77	548.5	209.34	2,409.21	1,036.81	271.8	298.98	159.81	39.74	537.7	6,996.99	7.83%	13.57%
Apr-11	1,152.57	69.66	53.3	9.23	178.12	591.86	179.36	2,308.26	1,133.73	243.81	284.73	189.39	42.88	516.04	6,952.94	7.78%	17%
May-11	1,183.46	65.76	63	7.75	204.72	580.95	185.54	2,450.45	1,132.56	287.29	334.03	402.3	43.18	519.46	7,460.45	8.34%	16.78%
Jun-11	1,132.46	60.88	66.88	10.56	226.81	584.98	223.14	2,632.27	1,099.17	294.29	355.93	366.29	41.77	483.18	7,578.61	8.48%	15.64%
Total	14,480.18	2,898.66	649.37	193.22	1,277.74	7,069.55	2,463.20	29,600.76	13,851.03	3,695.35	3,832.02	2,660.81	339.06	6,389.67	89,400.62	100%	15.47%

Figure 6: From June 2010 to June 2011.

Hong Kong Adspend Market -- Media Mix (HK\$ in millions)																	
	TVBJ	ATVH	TVBP	ATVW	TVB DTT	CableTV	NowTV	Newspaper	Magazines	Radio	Interactive	MTR	Bus Body	Other OOH	Total	SOV	YOY
Jun-12	1,221.52	70.34	71.13	6.77	338.13	671.13	349.77	2,904.60	1,249.89	309.97	538.49	431.58	54.91	451.95	8,670.18	7.63%	14.40%
Jul-12	1,251.96	75.93	63.67	8.94	330.11	764.83	270.34	2,728.30	1,198.76	348.6	539.5	438.11	60.41	519.42	8,598.88	7.57%	11.23%
Aug-12	1,213.60	103.66	79.06	19.26	316.79	810.76	224.74	2,647.69	1,189.47	338.35	512.15	399.66	53.08	564.31	8,472.58	7.46%	12.25%
Sep-12	1,227.16	106.65	69.5	10.18	324.73	705.97	210.17	2,890.84	1,307.89	300.28	518.7	446.94	53.81	543.55	8,716.37	7.67%	11.58%
Oct-12	1,316.42	107.37	82.5	8.93	332.51	774.45	243.79	2,865.97	1,427.17	325.65	518.94	507.38	56.14	639.96	9,207.18	8.10%	12.41%
Nov-12	1,287.84	127.66	90.14	9.11	321.55	837.72	286.73	3,184.07	1,412.25	323.23	566.97	570.82	68.72	623.46	9,710.27	8.55%	17.48%
Dec-12	1,230.65	116.11	82.59	7.78	334.57	842.78	346.59	2,963.31	1,484.40	327.23	595.69	707.25	66.65	653.1	9,758.70	8.59%	9.14%
Jan-13	1,314.08	126.02	89.42	6.98	356.11	790.21	236.14	2,732.63	1,046.04	255.08	477.21	466.01	60.3	540.18	8,496.41	7.48%	15.04%
Feb-13	1,102.71	111.39	85.31	6.01	284.86	777.07	221.27	2,030.21	844.17	231.71	450.17	389.61	49.71	533.98	7,118.18	6.27%	11.86%
Mar-13	1,290.28	54.84	87.85	6.01	343.21	739.52	125.18	2,789.47	1,164.95	275.5	598.68	496.86	63.33	550.37	8,586.05	7.56%	5.36%
Apr-13	1,271.61	44.69	77.72	5.78	355.93	721.29	119.78	2,664.05	1,239.49	274.26	563.7	529.67	64.17	597.82	8,529.96	7.51%	11.38%
May-13	1,335.33	55.33	85.02	6.55	345.22	738.36	172.37	3,093.14	1,283.21	320.55	622.81	503.69	59.17	627.71	9,248.46	8.14%	6.29%
Jun-13	1,254.06	45.32	85.81	6.63	350.37	565.96	167.8	2,816.31	1,166.48	295.42	610.02	479.19	63.94	587.29	8,494.60	7.48%	-2.03%
Total	16,317.22	1,145.31	1,049.72	108.93	4,334.09	9,740.05	2,974.67	36,310.59	16,014.17	3,925.83	7,113.03	6,366.77	774.34	7,433.10	113,607.82	100%	10.30%

Figure 7: From June 2012 to June 2013.

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Contributor details

Tommy Tse is Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong (HKU). He completed his Bachelor's and M.Phil. degrees at the Department of Comparative Literature, HKU, with his expertise in gender studies and literary and cultural theories, and his Ph.D. at the Department of Sociology, HKU, specializing in the interdisciplinary study of fashion communication, media and cultural industries in the Asian context. His works have appeared in *Asian Journal of Business Research* (MAGScholar), *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education* (Taylor & Francis), *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect) and *Luxury Brands in Emerging Markets* (Macmillan). Tse has acquired experience and knowledge in marketing and advertising in various media companies and creative service agencies, including ADO and TBWA. Before joining HKU, Tse worked at the School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University, the Department of Fashion and Image Design, Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), and the Culture and Media Domain, HKU SPACE CC.

Contact:

Room 9.09, The Jockey Club Tower, Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong.

E-mail: tommyt@hku.hk