

Thematic Analysis of Chinese Elements in International Fashion Industry Branding: From Appropriation to Appreciation?

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Abstract: *Branding is an aspect of business that links it with broader sociocultural dynamics since branding practices influence customers by means of appealing to their sensibilities, which are functions of contemporary social dynamics. As such, branding efforts can be based on the native culture of a country or borrow from other nations. Thus, cultural appropriation pertaining to branding practices is a significant issue in the fashion industry insofar as Chinese cultural elements are considered. Thematic analysis of secondary data revealed that appropriation of Chinese elements occurs in two major ways: firstly, organisations can adopt aspects of native Chinese culture without admitting to doing so, thereby denying the legitimate claims of the community whose culture is being represented. Secondly, appropriation can take the form of bringing cultural elements outside of their context, thereby decreasing their significance. On the contrary, instances of genuine cultural appreciation emphasised authenticity, proper disclosure of sources of inspiration behind design choices, inclusion of native communities in the process, and direct collaboration with them when possible. Thus, in lieu of ethnically Chinese artists not being present, collaboration opens up another pathway for cultural appreciation in fashion branding. While this understanding itself has policy implications going forward, future research can expand on it by varying methodology and area of focus.*

Keywords: Fashion; Dior; Cultural Appropriation; Asian Culture; Chinese Culture; Cultural Appreciation; Marni

1. Introduction

1.1 Backgrounds

Branding, being related to efforts at influencing the minds of the probable customers of a business, is an integral part of society and culture under the modern, capitalist economic system. According to Hughes (2017), a brand can be a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, or any combination thereof that uniquely points out a business, a product, or a service. As such, branding happens at multiple layers, with the brand name, logo (both design and colours) being the most visible component of it. The product design, exclusivity of a product or service, pricing strategy, quality, and even reputation can be considered part of or closely related to branding; these factors together build the image of a business or an organisation that helps it pull customers and convince them to enter into a transactional relationship. Notably, branding does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it actively interacts with elements of society, culture, and

economy in its contemporary environment in order to effectively influence the customers, with the key purpose of it being to convert potential customers to customers. This entanglement of branding and popular culture warrants an analysis of cultural elements used in branding to appeal to the consumers, assessing if such usage shows genuine appreciation for the said culture or merely appropriates it to its own end. Kleisath (2021) argues that cultural appropriation is not reliant on the reactions of the cultural insiders; instead, a systemic view of appropriation demands that all actors in a given situation be held responsible for their relative positions in the historic racial/ethnic hierarchy. Thus, appropriation of Chinese culture in branding is not dependent on how individuals may opine or feel about the same; rather, it is linked with whether a particular branding exercise exacerbates existing hierarchies or challenges them. Therefore, showing appreciation to a culture involves using proper contexts, preservation of original meaning and purpose up to a certain extent, and collaborating with cultural insiders for authenticity.

1.2 Research Aim

The study aims to investigate whether the adoption of Chinese aesthetics in modern fashion branding, internationally, constitutes genuine cultural appreciation or stays at the level of appropriation.

1.3 Research Question

- Does the modern International Fashion Branding duly acknowledge its Chinese sources of inspiration?
- To what extent, if at all, do such practices embody a positive, appreciatory approach to traditional Chinese aesthetics?

1.4 Research Significance

In my previous paper, titled “Visual Taste of Culture: The Semiotics of Traditional Chinese Elements in Modern Fusion Restaurant Branding,” I explored symbolic aspects of branding that evoke traditional Chinese culture in the restaurant sector. Moving on from that, this study aims to assess traditional Chinese aesthetics in fashion industry branding using thematic analysis to validate whether specific practices qualify as cultural appropriation or appreciation. The goal of this study is to inform how often acts of embracing foreign culture involve asymmetric power dynamics, diminishing reciprocity in cultural exchange. In the same vein, the study also analyses how proper appreciation can be shown while adopting traditional culture into modern fashion. In both cases, dominant modes of showing appreciation and categories of appropriation are to be identified with fitting examples. Consequently, the findings of the study can inform future policy decisions, mostly in the private sector, concerning cultural adoption and assimilation.

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Brand Culture Theory

Brand culture theory is a relatively recent understanding of how brands interact with culture and how this relationship between brands and culture is shaped. Briciu and Briciu (2020) argue that the term brand can be conceptualised in many different ways, including a name or a distinct symbol (a logo or insignia) that marks certain products or services as exclusive to a certain organisation/business. Hence, a brand must interact with culture to convey the uniqueness of what the organisation behind it has to offer. Briciu and Briciu (2020) also point out that a brand can be conceived of as an entity (such as a business that manufactures and/or sells certain products or provides some service) as well as an activity or process that sprouts from an effort

to signal exclusivity or special characteristics. As such brand is fundamentally a derivative of the more abstract philosophical constructions, such as purpose or meaning; by attaching “special-ness” or specific features with tangible (products) or intangible (services) items, brands associate value and importance with these items, thereby influencing how humans in a society interact with the said items or the organisation. Yalkin (2018) argues that brands are not necessarily separate from a nation or state to the extent that they exist as cultural, ideological, and optical objects, thereby justifying a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding brands. Particularly, the product of a country, its political and economic characteristics, as well as its history and traditions, can be construed as a brand in itself; consequently, merging the role of the state and non-state entities in creating the brand of a nation. Yalkin (2018) gives the example of Hong Kong as an entity that has integrated its Chinese aspects and Western elements, creating a hybrid brand identity. Following this model in the economic sphere, organisations can collaborate with the state to build a brand identity that is exclusively tied to a national identity, showcasing nationalist pride as well as pride in cultural traditions.

Consumer Behaviour Theory

Consumer behaviour within the modern economic system is a cross-disciplinary field of study that incorporates social sciences with a modern understanding of human behaviour and how it can be influenced. Manuere et al. (2022) provide several competing understandings of consumer behaviour, such as buyer behaviour and the theory of reasoned action. Under the buyer behaviour model, consumers are influenced by a range of external factors mediated by hypothetical constructs such as perceptual and learning constructs. Perceptual constructs include information sensitivity, bias and searching data, while learning constructs include motive, decision-making, satisfaction and so on. Thus, the buyer behaviour model seeks to recognise elements that lead to a specific purchase action, to predictably influence the consumer. Conversely, reasoned action understanding of consumer behaviour suggested that the actions of the buyers are affected by their own beliefs and emotions or feelings that are evoked by a particular product. Notably, despite its apparent simplicity, reasoned action theory indicates that buyer behaviour is subjective, making no effort at creating a formulaic understanding of consumer behaviour. Tanrikulu (2021) argues, referring to previous academic works, that consumer behaviour is determined by the perceived value of the product or by the consumption value of the same. The former refers to how consumers evaluate the necessity and importance of making a purchase, and the latter assesses consumer perception across different value judgements, including functional, emotional, social, and epistemic values. This being the case, consumer behaviour is affected by a range of factors that span cultural, socioeconomic, and political dimensions. As such, brand culture influences the discourses surrounding a product or a company, which translates into a factor in consumer behaviour, thus either boosting sales or diminishing them, depending on the effectiveness of branding. By inference, therefore, consumer behaviour being influenced by cultural elements depends on how strongly the consumers associate themselves with that particular culture. Higher propensity towards identifying with a national culture, consequently, leads to the success of branding invoking traditional elements of that culture.

1.5.2 Guochao and Cultural Identity

Guochao, or national tide, is characterised by its emphasis on national pride and embracing of traditional Chinese elements in general cultural spaces. As per Wang (2022) by the way of embracing Chinese national identity in global spaces incorporates efforts by designers and brands to not only incorporate traditional Chinese cultural symbols into modern fashion by means of innovation and redesigning in their product lineup, but also efforts at cultivating a

particular brand image that can serve as a vehicle for promoting Chinese cultural aesthetics in global spaces. As such, Guochao identity, which includes recognisable Chinese elements like dragon calligraphy, kung fu and poems and elements derived from Chinese Opera, is a source of inspiration for reinvesting fashion brand aesthetics. However, cultural appreciation demands that these motifs are not merely incorporated or adopted by also properly contextualised and situated with a broader panorama of fashion, whereby the original meaning or significance of these cultural markers is maintained and recognised. Wang (2022) mentions the example of the dragon, which in Chinese culture symbolises power, nobility, luck, or good fortune and so on; notably, the meaning of the dragon has also changed over the years. Hence, despite being immediately recognisable as a Chinese aesthetic, the critical component of its adoption in modern fashion must be how it is being used in terms of its significance. He and Wang (2017) point out that cultural compatibility is significantly associated with chances of being purchased, implying that by incorporating Chinese elements in modern fashion in a clever branding exercise, that increases the appeal of the brand to the customers in the Chinese diaspora as well as general people who prefer that aesthetic. Therefore, the possibility of brands merely using Chinese visual aesthetics in fashion to draw in more customers is rather significant. Consequently, the brands must balance between profit-seeking, which should make their policies lean towards cultural appropriation and valuing Chinese Culture and the discernible line between these two approaches can be difficult to identify.

Guochao culture, by incorporating traditional Chinese aesthetics into modern fashion products, not only maintains a certain degree of appeal of such traditional elements by making them relevant for the modern age, but also amplifies the nationalist sentiment and influences consumer behaviour. Zhang and Li (2025) argue that the evidence of guochao can be found in the usage of traditional elements, including motifs, symbols and craftsmanship that are reinterpreted and reoriented to suit the needs of this era. Notably, this phenomenon is applicable as far as Chinese-origin businesses or organisations are concerned, both at national and international levels. By modernising traditional elements, guochao not only seeks to maintain the relevance of tradition but also boosts the likelihood of appealing to a younger consumer base, to whom the modernisation may appeal. Wang et al. (2025) point out that the fashion industry was the first to adopt China Chic visual design and develop unique, Chinese-inspired products for their collections; this resulted in the production of colourful and attractive products that led to higher sales numbers, driving up the profit margin. Consequently, this wave of Chinese-inspired designs can challenge the dominance of Western aesthetics by propagating an alternative aesthetic founded on a different culture. Since brand culture associates fashion brands with specific cultural identities, organisations are encouraged to adopt elements of certain cultural aspects to their products and branding. While flaunting Chinese identity can be a critical component of branding in international Chinese fashion companies, for non-Chinese global enterprises, it can signify the embrace of diversity and inclusivity, which is also beneficial in branding and influential in consumer decision-making. Consequently, incorporating Chinese aesthetics in branding is not only a matter of identity but also of market value since it can be conducive to appealing to a niche consumer base.

1.5.3 Appropriation of Foreign Cultures

Appropriation of a foreign culture bears a negative connotation, making it different from simply adopting a different culture (or its aspects). While intermingling of cultures does happen fairly often, accusations of cultural appropriation generally meet two types of responses, namely, dismissal of the accusation and often the category itself, and a sympathetic approach (Lenard & Balint, 2020). This dual response belies a difficulty in properly classifying which acts of adoption of specific aspects of a foreign culture constitute appropriation and which do

not. Lenard and Balint (2020) point out that there are wrong ways of engaging with a foreign culture that is not cultural appropriation but are often mistaken as such, namely offending, by hurting the sensibilities of people from another community or culture and misrepresentation, which includes acts that either dilute or distort aspects of another culture, deviating significantly from their original purpose or value. Appropriation of another culture is commonly associated with an inauthentic representation of another culture, implying a lack of permission or proper acknowledgement as deemed necessary. Thus, it includes adopting certain aesthetics, culturally important or revered symbols and signages outside their cultural context, accompanied by a lack of admission as to the true sources of these elements. Matthes (2019) points out that accusations of cultural appropriation are often underscored by a power differential between a dominant cultural entity and smaller, less powerful cultural units; thus, coinciding with conditions of oppression. Hence, in this view, appropriation of culture may only happen when a dominant culture adopts elements of a minority culture without acknowledging it as such. This implies that elements of a minority culture get gradually assimilated into the mainstream of the dominant culture, slowly degrading the uniqueness or exclusivity of a less powerful community. Hence, this concept is tied to notions of lack of reciprocity across cultural boundaries, exploitation, and lack of compensation.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study conducts a descriptive thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered from secondary sources, which is a departure from the semiotic approach of the previous work. Tenny et al. (2017) highlight that qualitative research is fundamentally based on asking open-ended questions that cannot be answered using numbers or mathematical formulations, often involving personal experience and testimonies. The merit of adopting this method lies in the fact that it accounts for subjectivity while investigating complex topics, especially in social sciences, where subjective experience is often central to the study itself. Peterson (2019) argued that qualitative studies are often “sensitive to language” with a tolerance of ambiguity. However, by taking this approach, it becomes possible to enter the depths of personal motivations and individual as well as community perspectives. Kim et al. (2017) outline, in the context of medical research, that a qualitative descriptive study is based on research questions that aim to discover who, what, and where events and phenomena thereby gaining a better understanding of a poorly explored area. The reason for selecting this mode of study is not only to improve understanding of cultural appropriation of Chinese elements in global fashion, but also that it matches a qualitative study, as qualitative data itself is often descriptive in nature. Lochmiller (2021) argues that despite diverse approaches to thematic analysis among scholars, the three common elements of it are codes, categories and themes, developed during the research. The process begins with coding salient features of the data through key phrases or terms and categorising them based on the common or shared aspects of the themes themselves and followed by a detailed discussion of the themes. By putting different data points in conversation, thematic analysis attempts to critically assess a phenomenon or a situation and generate a proper academic understanding. This study thematically analyses the recurring elements of Chinese tea culture in modern, global fashion. While software tools like SPSS (Software Package for Social Sciences) and NVivo are often used for qualitative studies, this paper utilises manual selection of data, coding, and thematic analysis for the sake of brevity and ease of understanding the reasoning process.

2.2 Data Collection: Sources and Coding

Being secondary research, the sources of data for the study include published works relevant to the topic, including the key theories and background information for the basis of the research. The key information used in the study comes from published scholarly literature, journals, academic or discipline-based magazines, as well as relevant newspaper or online media reports (journalistic sources) that complement scholarly publications. Specifically, scholarly literature is used mostly for the theoretical understanding of the subject, while reports are used for finding real-world examples that can support the arguments being made.

This study divides the qualitative data into two broad categories, controversial and non-controversial, in accordance with the reception of different instances of adopting Chinese tradition into modern fashion. In doing so, the study clearly delineates between instances of adopting Chinese elements that face backlash or a negative reaction and, on the other hand, instances where such efforts were praised or appreciated. This approach allows for two approaches to cultural adoption to be compared, making a logical conclusion as to the differences and uniqueness of these two approaches.

Table 1: Coding Key Chinese Traditional Elements in Fashion
 Source: Self-created

Examples of Chinese Elements	Category	Significance in Traditional Chinese culture
Dragon, Imagery inspired by Buddhism, phoenix and so on.	Socio-religious motifs	Social status, prosperity, long life, and knowledge
Chinese skirt (<i>mamianqun</i>), with specific garment designs and colour combinations.	Cultural motifs	Chinese identity, pride in traditions.
Trees, landscapes, gardens, flowers and so on	Symbolic or philosophical implications	Contemplation, wisdom, meaning and purpose, interconnectedness of beings
Specific sewing techniques, embroidery, design, and calligraphy	Cultural art forms	Cultural and social cohesion, respect for tradition and so on.

While the above table identifies key traditional Chinese elements often used in fashion, to form the basis of interpreting the data, the following table codes branding behaviour following cultural appropriation theory.

Table 2: Coding Branding Attitudes
 Source: Self-created

Branding Act	Category (Appreciation/Appropriation)	Connotation (positive/negative)
Lack of engagement with the community or the diaspora, lack of acknowledgement, misrepresentation (including misleading presentation)	Appropriation	Negative
Adopting elements by modernising them, by incorporating recent knowledge or understanding, with minimal but explicit acknowledgement of original sources	Reinterpretation (neutral)	Ambiguous/none
Clear and prominent acknowledgement of original inspiration, collaborating with the community, uplifting marginal voices, and so on	Appreciation	Positive

2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in a secondary study involve properly acknowledging the sources utilised in research to gather information and draw conclusions. This study has carefully selected its sources to avoid bias in published studies and excluded sources showing bias. To

the extent that utilising proper methods produces sound research work, the study followed a transparent design so that the results can be reviewed, verified, and conclusions can be replicated.

3. Results

3.1 Theme 1: Novelty and Casual Adoption

Patterns of adopting Asian cultural elements (including traditional Chinese aesthetics) include a prevalence of low-risk modification to existing designs so as to embrace the appearance of originality. Wilkinson (2019) points out that a recurring appropriating pattern involved Western (European/Caucasian) women models clad in Asian attire, surrounded by stereotypical “Chinatown settings” or amidst “Asian typographic decoration/lettering” that is hardly ever meaningful. Notably, Wilkinson (2019) argues that while Asian stylistic elements and motifs are generally adopted to enhance attractiveness, it is not a positive sign since Asian cultural elements are considered inherently different (“the other”) and exotic. Zhou (2025) argues that exoticism, insofar as it refers to Western consumer attitudes towards foreign (Eastern) artistic productions, was linked to how individuals respond to being in the same place as foreign cultural objects. Thus, although Europeans historically showed appreciation for Chinese art and culture, branding exercises such as the one taken by Dior in 2022, when they modelled a new pleated skirt after a traditional Chinese garment, mamianqun, typically worn by women during the Ming Dynasty era (as shown in Figure 1 below), attracted accusations of cultural appropriation (Cheung, 2022). This showed a complete lack of acknowledgement of the true origins of their product design on the part of Dior. Notably, such adoptions take the Chinese cultural elements outside their original sociocultural, political, and economic contexts, thereby diluting their meaning and generalising it as mere aesthetics, which amounts to appropriation.

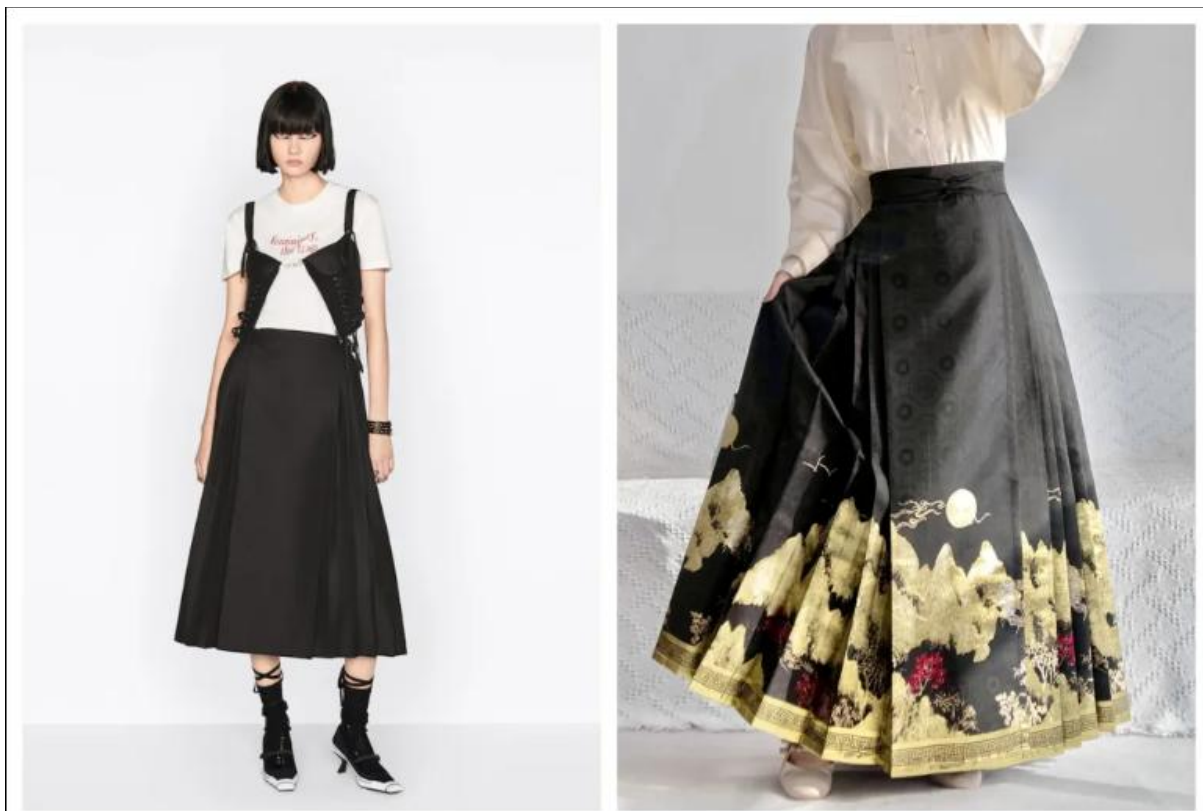


Figure 1: Dior Skirt Accused of Appropriating Traditional Chinese Horse Face Skirt (Cheung, 2022)

3.2 Theme 2: Borrowing without Acknowledgement

Casual adoption for novelty value or Chinese artistry aside, a major issue in the contemporary fashion industry branding is borrowing elements of diverse cultures without acknowledging their source. Case in point, Dior originally marketed the aforementioned controversial skirt as “Dior creation” and demanded a substantial premium of 3,800 USD for the piece, exemplifying cultural appropriation (Cheung, 2022). Notably, this shows a proclivity for completely copying a cultural piece and passing it off as “original,” which not only shows negligence towards showing due respect to foreign cultures, but also a disregard for the consumers, trusting them to not “look too deeply” into the matter, to make them complicit in the cultural appropriation. Rackham (2020) provides the example of Dolce and Gabbana (D&G), which in 2018 faced backlash for showing in its marketing a Chinese model struggling to eat pasta and pizza with chopsticks, shown in Figure 2 below. The blatant borrowing of a cultural symbol, chopsticks, outside of the original cultural context of East Asian cuisine, and juxtaposing it with traditional Italian food, shows a lack of respect for both cultures, if not outright mockery. Thus, borrowing Chinese cultural elements outside of Chinese culture requires understanding and appreciation for those elements. Notably, in both instances, the organisation with branding intentions failed to acknowledge the sources, and especially in the second case, which also highlighted a lack of sensitivity and awareness regarding cultural appropriation in the industry.



Figure 2: D&G Advertisement Showing Chinese Model Zuo Ye Struggling to Eat Pasta with Chopsticks (Holland & Wang, 2019)

3.3 Theme 3: Cultural Appreciation and Ethical Adoption of Cultural Markers

Drawing from the previous arguments, a genuine appreciation of a culture, which is the diametric opposite of cultural appropriation, should involve the proper contextualisation of cultural markers and preferably also the inclusion of people who belong to the said culture. Yuan et al. (2021, p. 7) provide the example of the fashion designer Qiu Hao, whose Retiring from the World collection showcased “the traditional costume of the Yi ethnic group in China.” Not being a part of that community himself, he interpreted the design using his imaginative prowess, utilising subtle colours with a simple design approach overall, without any extravagant visual ornamentation. Unlike previous examples, where true cultural inspiration was denied or omitted, Qui Hao acknowledged it proudly, saying, “Made in China...would

become an important creative focus in the near future” (Lindgren, 2013, p. 194). This emphasis on his own cultural heritage, with the combination of acknowledgement of the source of inspiration, makes this representation significantly more authentic. As evident in Figure 3 below, Marni, an Italian fashion brand, announced in 2019 that they are collaborating with the Miao community, a recognised minority in China, known for their “elaborated use of embroidery, lace, pleating, weaving and silverware, which are largely unknown to the rest of the world” (Zhang, 2019). Thus, collaboration with native people is a significant pathway to showcase proper appreciation by privileging native voices to inspire modern, innovative fashion designs. Liu (2022) pointed out that the representation of Chinese culture by Europeans need not be negative, as Jesuit missionaries and the French philosopher Voltaire held positive notions regarding China and its culture, which led to the rise in popularity of Chinese clothing designs. Consequently, unlike other colonised nations, which were depicted as inferior to their European colonisers, Chinese fashion was represented rather flatteringly. However, later anti-Christian philosophers pointed out the mismatch between ground reality and Jesuit portrayal (Liu, 2022). Hence, in terms of showing cultural appreciation, accuracy, aside from authenticity, becomes highly important, since inaccuracies create room for dismissal of positive cultural representations.



Figure 3: A Teaser Image from Marni Miao Project (Zhang, 2019)

4. Analysis/Discussion

The findings of the study reveal a clear lack of regard for properly acknowledging sources of influence or inspiration while adopting Chinese traditional cultural elements in the modern fashion industry. While this behaviour does not portray an exclusive hatred, bigotry, or lack of respect towards the Chinese culture, it makes evident the proclivity among noteworthy fashion organisations to pass off Chinese cultural influences as their innovation or original thought. Consequently, cultural appropriation, as it refers to a lack of acknowledgement for original sources of inspiration and putting elements of a culture outside that particular context, is

germane to the international fashion industry. Branding efforts by passing traditional Chinese garments as “original” show not merely cultural appropriation but also consider the consumers as gullible (as they may fall for the branding ploy of “originality”). In this connection, there are two major forms that cultural appropriation of traditional Chinese aesthetics takes. Firstly, it can be an act of borrowing ideas or an entire design structure without any reference to the source of the said ideas. Importantly, modern intellectual property laws cover recent cultural developments in the fashion space, but such protections do not exist for traditional fashion, making it vulnerable to appropriation. The second form it can take is bringing a traditional cultural element outside of its original context, for sensationalisation in branding. Lacking in historical, social, political, and cultural contexts, such borrowing can make traditional Chinese culture seem ridiculous (as discussed above), signalling a lack of reverence for tradition and diverse cultures. Conversely, two forms of showing cultural appreciation were identified; the first is transparency regarding the sources of inspiration, and the second is authenticity (including accuracy) in reinterpretation. Apart from artists who hail from China or the broader Chinese diaspora, modern fashion brands can showcase proper cultural appreciation by collaborating with native people. Nonetheless, the lack of genuine appreciation for Chinese cultural influence in modern fashion remains, with dominant Western influence overshadowing aspects borrowed from Chinese traditional fashion.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Implications

The study aimed to assess the adoption of traditional Chinese aesthetics in modern fashion, internationally, and to that end utilised a qualitative thematic mode of analysis to answer the predetermined research questions regarding the association of such cultural adoption and appropriation of culture. The latter is defined as an act of borrowing from a culture, adopting its elements without properly disclosing such borrowing, by claiming (falsely) originality or completely ignoring the topic of origin. At the same time, cultural appropriation can take diverse forms in itself, as there is no fixed way to engage in the said practice. Branding, being one of the most culturally sensitive aspects of business, is vulnerable to Cultural appropriation since it interfaces with popular culture, politics, and socio-economic dynamics. Being a tool of influencing the consumers into purchasing the products or services of the organisation, branding is a critical vehicle that carries the banner of a business. The thematic analysis revealed that appropriation of Chinese cultural elements happens in two major ways in the modern fashion industry. The first type involves directly copying an aspect or element of Traditional Chinese culture, such as a specific government design or colour, and adopting it in in-house products of the organisation without sharing the profits. The second most significant way of appropriating cultural elements involves passing off inspired product ideas as original or exclusive, thereby denying any credit to the source. Combined, these two forms of cultural appropriation constitute a major injustice against traditional Chinese elements in modern fashion that can serve as a sufficient complement or counter to predominant Western ideals. Conversely, fashion designers who are ethnically Chinese themselves are more likely to disclose their Chinese traditional influences and even take pride in their own artistic heritage. Fashion brands, however, can make up for this personal connection by collaborating with diverse communities, thereby championing the people who can authentically represent traditional China. Regardless, instances of proper cultural appreciation remain small-scale and less frequent in modern fashion.

5.2 Research Gap and Future Scope

While this research explored the theme of Appropriation of Culture with regard to Traditional Chinese aesthetics and the modern fashion industry, future research on cultural appropriation and influence on traditional Chinese aesthetics can take different routes. Being a secondary qualitative research study, this study is limited by its method itself, in that it does not involve fresh data collection and analysis. Moreover, by ways of discussing Chinese traditional influence in modern fashion, this study simplifies the diversity within Chinese culture itself, with different ethnic groups being compressed into the international category of being Chinese. Further studies can investigate the prevalence, if any, of the majority ethnic influence, compared to the minority communities. Future studies can also adopt a quantitative method of conducting statistical analysis of the broader phenomenon of adopting Chinese aesthetics in modern fashion. Instead of manual coding, the next qualitative studies can utilise NVivo or SPSS to benefit from faster and more accurate information.

5.3 Contribution

The study has made a meaningful contribution to the academic endeavour to understand the phenomenon of the influence of Chinese aesthetics in modern fashion, as well as the question of cultural appropriation compared to cultural appreciation and mutual respect. Specifically, moving on from the semiotic focus on the previously published work, this study approaches the topic thematically and narrowly focuses on the fashion industry to highlight specific aspects of this sector. By identifying prevalent modes of cultural appropriation, this analysis enables critical discourse on this topic, while the identification of modes of appreciative adoption can guide future diversity and inclusivity policies in the fashion industry. Consequently, the study opens up the future scope for further exploration of the influence of traditional elements of Chinese culture in other industries, as well as the phenomenon of cultural appropriation in different facets of society and culture.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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Disclosure of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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