

# **Eat my pizza with a pair of chopsticks - will fashion brands ever learn about cross-cultural communications when going global: a personal perspective**

**Kent Le**

School of Arts and Creative Industries, University of East London, United Kingdom

Email address: [k.le@uel.ac.uk](mailto:k.le@uel.ac.uk)

## **1. Background/ Objectives and Goals**

Twenty years ago, the standard for fashion identity and consumption has largely emanated from Europe and the USA. The balance has shifted towards Asian business economy, and in particular China, which has become the second biggest economy in the world. The admission of China into the WTO in 2001 and expiration of Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) opened up endless opportunities for trade to and from China. The “*new money*” economy created a new middle class, which use luxury fashion as the statement for their new status.

For a while, western luxury brands had no domestic competitions and were welcome with open arms from China. Brands such as Burberry and Gucci were able to establish a strong position in Chinese economy. Some even have their own head offices to cater to specific consumer community. However, things started to change when Chinese consumers gradually realised they were being seen as “cash cows”: a lot of fashion campaigns were targeted at them with no considerations towards their cultures and traditions. The breaking point, which received extensive media coverage, was the D&G Shanghai campaign 2019. The entire campaign was accused of trivialising Chinese culture and promoting unflattering racial stereotypes. This is paradigm of western Fashion’s attitude towards Chinese consumers, or anyone who is typically considered an outsider in the bigger context. This raises a question of whether or not cross-cultural communications have ever been considered or integrated in global marketing strategies when fashion brands enter any Asian markets.

As a British fashion professional with Asian heritage and having worked in various “East meets West” contexts, these issues have been underlying concerns to the researcher for some time. The aim of this study is to understand why there is a lack of cross-cultural communications of western Fashion when investing in an Asian market using the campaign as the case study. It is expected to shed a light on the colonial mentality, or the expectation of it, among global fashion brands within this specific Asian market.

## **2. Methods**

As it is a work-in-progress, the presentation will provide literature being collected so far and various methods being considered. The authour has been collecting a wide range of relevant literature within fashion studies and neocolosim to provide a conceptual framework. It is considered that quantitative method be selected to gain in-depth understanding of the problem. It is planned that the mentioned case study be used to analyse in conjunction with in-depth interviews with fashion managers within luxury and designerswear markets to have insights and gain valuable data.

## **3. Expected Results/ Conclusion/ Contribution**

The aim of this study is to understand why there is a lack of cross-cultural communications of western Fashion when investing in an Asian market using the campaign as the case study. It is expected to shed a light on the colonial mentality, or the expectation of it, among global fashion brands within this specific Asian market.

Key words: Asian Fashion, Colonial Mentality, Cross-cultural Management.

### **References:**

Dunning, J.H. (1988). 'The Eclectic Paradigm of International Production: A Restatement and Some Possible Extensions', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 19(1), pp. 1-31.

Dupuis, M. and Prime, N. (1996). 'Business distance and global retailing: a model for analysis of key success/failure factors', *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 24(11), pp. 30-38.

Forbes (2019). 'How Dolce & Gabbana is Recovering from Its PR Crisis in China'. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamelaambler/2019/07/18/how-dolce-gabbana-is-recovering-from-its-pr-crisis-in-china/?sh=4b7a0a447fbc>

Li, F. and Hu, K. (2011). 'The causes and countermeasures of Chinese consumers' overseas luxury consumption', *International Trade*, 40(4), pp. 30-36.