

# Research on Countermeasure of Blending Culture in Garment Industry

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**Abstract.** Compared with purely artistic products such as music, fine art and drama, garment possesses not only cultural connotation but also practical function, which makes it closely related to our daily life. The integration of cultural elements and garment products will elevate the branding position of the products and help to generate new consumption experience that is marked by concepts such as fitness, comfort, fashion, respect and pride. Chinese garment industry can draw on cultural innovation and design service to promote branding values and achieve the advantage shift from scale and cost to technology and branding innovation. This essay gives a clear definition of culture industry, and analyses the significance of the great influence culture industry may exert on clothing industry. In the last part, this article provides a few suggestions to the development of clothing industry facilitated by culture industry.

## Introduction

In 1944, T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer coined the term “culture industry” for the first time in their essay *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*. They clearly defined it as an industrial system which on a large scale replicated and disseminated cultural products mainly by means of modern science and technology. [1] It was characterized by industrial production and targeted at the general public. [2] However, the “industry” here didn’t mean the technical production process but the standardization of the object itself as well as the rationalization of distributing skills. Later, in the 1980s, the conference in London firstly employed this term which was then interpreted as those social commercial forms based on cultural production and service and professional organizations aimed to produce and spread kinds of information signals. Then, at the beginning of the 1990s, Clinton, the former president of America, also gave his definition of “culture industry”. [3] In 1997, the British government pioneered the term “creative industry”. One year later, the British task force of creative industry clearly defined it that: creative industry exactly means those industries with a potential for wealth creation and job creation which are derived from individual creation, skills and talents or through the development and application of property rights. [4] Besides, they extended its concept that it covered 13 industry fields including advertising, architecture, exchange of art and cultural relic, craftwork design, fashion design, movie, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television broadcast and so on. Since then, it was inherited by many countries and regions like Australia, Singapore, China, Honkong and so on. [5] But for America, apart from the terms “culture industry” and “creative industry”, it started and preferred to employ the new term “copyright industry” aimed to stress the importance of copyright. Though the new term was increasingly recognized by several countries and regions, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and South Korea as well as its organizations still adopted the term “culture industry”.

According to the UNESCO, culture industry only contains those products and their relative services which are born of industrial production and in line with the four basic features -- seriation, standardization, and refinement of production process division and massification of consuming groups. For instance, printing material including books, magazine, etc. and e-journals like audio publication and visual publication are all complied with those requirements. [6] However, the products and services coming from stage performances and plastic arts are excluded.

In September 2003, Chinese Ministry of Culture issued a document *Several Opinions on*

Supporting and Promoting the Development of Culture Industry in which culture industry was clearly defined as “those industries that producing cultural products and providing cultural services”. “It corresponds to cultural undertakings and they both are important components of the socialist cultural construction. [7] That is, culture industry is not only a historically inevitable outcome of the development of productive forces but also a newly emerging industry complying with the gradual improvement of Chinese socialist market economy and the continuous progress of modern production methods.” [8] [9] Right after the definition of Ministry of Culture, the National Bureau of statistics in 2004 gave their definition that culture industry was a collection of activities which aimed at providing the public with cultural and entertainment products and services and some other relative activities.

## **Significance of Blending Culture in Garment industry**

### **A. Bottleneck on the Development of Garment Industry**

Over the last decades, under the influence of the increasingly fierce market competition, the increasingly serious labor shortage, the increasingly high labor costs, the RMB appreciation and so on, the development pace of garment industry has largely slowed down. What’s worse, some hidden contradictions before like single product structure and low cultural added value are increasingly sharp.

#### **a. Pervasive Style Assimilation and Design Plagiarism**

On one hand, design plagiarism is a commonplace in domestic garment industry. Some enterprises even copy others design aboveboard in the good name of “integration”, namely learning and refinement of previous successful works. On the other hand, it is difficult for original designers to apply for a patent in intellectual property rights for a long wait of 6-month investigation. Then, many copycats born of minor local modification of original works can easily get rid of the restriction of copyright regulations. [10] Thus, the industries owning the original designs has no choice but to consistently bring forth the new through old to protect their benefits.

#### **b. Rising Cost, Low Profit and Transfer of Consuming Region**

Currently, the labor costs in garment industry are rising by more than 15% per year while labor shortage is increasingly serious. Skilled sewing workers are fairly hard to get, just like a needle in a haystack. [11] The contradictions of structural employment are increasingly acute. Besides, with the growing risk of production cost, delivery period and quality claim, the average profit rate of clothing export is as low as 3% to 5% which leads to the zero profit of some small and medium-sized enterprises under backward production management. What’s worse, more and more foreign traders place their orders in Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Pakistan and even North Korea because of their low production cost and competitive advantage in similar garment. [12] The export of clothing industry continues to be gloomy and thus exerts a great negative impact on the whole textile and clothing industry. According to statistical data, the sales of the retailing giant UNIQLO in 2013 amounts to 75.75 billion yuan with an increase of more than 60% respectively in revenue and profit year on year. Obviously, the large-scale import of foreign brands greatly increases the development pressure. In addition, the continuous sluggish market demand directly leads to the large stockpiles of some renowned garment brands which on earth results in their tight capital liquidity. [13] In the first half of 2014, some renowned domestic brands including Baleno and Metersbon we even plunge into the wave of bankrupt. A typical example is the the brand Bosideng. In 2011, the value of its stockpiles amounts to 12.15 billion yuan. In 2012 it rises to 13.99 billion yuan and in 2013 it is as high as 19.71 billion yuan. However, in the first half of 2014, it should break the historically highest line of 20 billion yuan, namely 20.43 billion yuan.

### **B. To Improve People’s Living Standard**

The growth of clothing consumption is mainly reflected in two aspects. One is its quantitative growth driven by the improvement of people’s living standard, and the other is its pursuit of higher level of aesthetic value motivated by the change of lifestyles.

Nowadays, a garment enterprise can only stand out in this industry when it is armed with

creation and culture. More and more domestic consumers shift their pursuit from apparel to the intangible cultural value behind brands and products. [14] Thus, people's demand for garment brand and creation increasingly rises, fairly higher than before. According to the sample analysis of urban residents from National Bureau of Statistics, the improvement of quality and higher level of aesthetic value greatly contribute to the growth of consumption value, as high as 80% of it. Compared with purely artistic products like music, fine art and drama, garment possesses both cultural connotation and practical function, which make it closely related to people's life. The combination of cultural elements and garment is conducive to elevate the branding position of the products and help to generate new consumption experience that is marked by concepts such as fitness, comfort, fashion, respect and pride.

#### C. To Maintain Our International Competitive Edge

China is the first textile producer and the biggest trading power, whose exports of textile and garment account for more than 35% of that in the whole world. [15] However, the export proportion of our own brands is extremely low. With American vigorous promotion of Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and Trans-Atlantic Partnership Agreement on Trade and Investment, many medium- and low-end garment products tend to be processed by Southeast Asian countries while those products in Europe and America, with their strong brands, continuously control the terminal consumption, which both result in the increasing grimness of the situation in front of our garment industry. [16] To alleviate it, domestic garment enterprises can cooperate with culture media companies, aimed to increase the exports of garment by virtue of the export of cultural products and enhance their brand value by means of cultural creation and design services which both shift their international competitive edge in scale and cost to scientific creation and brand innovation.

### **Countermeasure and Suggestion**

#### A. Blending Culture in Garment Brand

Humanistic care is the core of brand. The emotional communication, humanistic understanding and corresponding to one's life of brand decide some new requirements. Garment is the very carrier of one's mind and quality. Nowadays, more and more domestic consumers shift their pursuit from apparel to the intangible cultural value behind brands and products. Thus, people's demand for garment brand and creation increasingly rises, fairly higher than before. Before blending cultural elements in garment brand, they should firstly fully understand the cultural content and aesthetic elements behind them and then analyze and interpret them. By blending these innovative understandings and interpretation in brand, they can then successfully design distinguished garment products. However, by far, many enterprises blindly integrate all traditional cultural elements into their brands which leave modern pursuit and demands out. To completely express the intangible cultural value of brand, designers should fully understand the culture, design history, garment history, aesthetics, and literature and so on at home and abroad. Besides, garment enterprises can integrate some fine works of artists into their garment by actively participating in some national public welfare on arts which reversely strengthen the publicity of their brands.

#### B. To Propel an Integrated Development of Animation Industry and Clothing Industry

The American futurist John Naisbitt and other scholars have predicted in Megatrends Asia that culturalisation of industry and industrialisation of culture are two major trends of future economic restructuring. Our neighboring country, Korea, has drawn on the global dissemination of its cinematic and TV culture to boost its clothing exports. The garments imported from Korean are marked by their cultural identity. On the one hand, Korea's cinematic and TV culture has instilled distinct cultural traits to Korean clothing. On the other hand, Korean clothing has helped the public to reinforce their cultural identity. Korea's pattern has taught us a valuable lesson. It is highly applicable that Chinese clothing companies disseminate their brand culture by cultural-based and artistic-based communication, such as producing original film works, television works and animation.

## Conclusion

CCM (Costume Culture Museum) is a symbol of costume culture, representing the historical and cultural accumulation of a country or a nation. Constructing the CCM can be instructive, which means exerting enormous functions on learning, and also push forward an immense influence on protecting cultural diversity and presenting the distinctive cultural relics from different countries, areas, and nations. We can digitalize the costume culture museum through the Internet so as to break the limitation of time and region and make more people get familiar with Chinese costume culture. Chinese garment industry can draw on cultural innovation and design service to promote branding values and achieve the advantage shift from scale and cost to technology and branding innovation. This essay gives a clear definition of culture industry, and analyses the significance of the great influence culture industry may exert on clothing industry. In the last part, this article provides a few suggestions to the development of clothing industry facilitated by culture industry.

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