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DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Influence of Confucianism on Personal and Corporate Brand  
from the Perspective of Managers' Dress in China

Document Five

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## **Abstract**

This study used a qualitative approach to explore to what extent symbolic dress affects managers' personal brand and corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences personal and corporate brand from the perspective of managers' and professionals' dress in China. Semi-structured questionnaires, in-depth one-on-one and focus group interviews served as the primary source of data collection.

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# 1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It begins with the rational of the research. The second part is a brief look at the previous literature review and previous research results. The third part discusses the objectives and research questions. The fourth part outlines the structure of the thesis.

## 1.1 The Rationale of the Research

There are six reasons for studying the influence of Confucianism on personal and corporate brand from the perspective of managers' and professionals' dress in China:

1. In recent years, Chinese companies have been gradually moving from the production-oriented to the brand-oriented. In the increasing competition in the homogenization of the market, Chinese brand-oriented companies are increasingly aware that customers not only want to buy products but also look forward to the brand culture experience. Customers have higher expectations for corporate brand and managers' personal brand. And managers' dress is an important part of corporate brand identity.
2. Managers and professionals in China face more competition in the global economic environment and in the workplace. They need to establish a personal brand image which can help them to stand out from other competitors. Establishing a positive brand image is one of the important factors in achieving the goals for both companies and individuals. Dress is one of the essential elements of personal brand.
3. Managers and professionals in China have more awareness that dress is an important visual language to show personal brand. The function of dress is changing from protection to adornment and identity. People wear clothing not just to keep

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warm. They begin to pursue a more symbolic representation of cultural connotations, such as identity, status, social role, communication, and tastes in art (Keenan, 2001). However, because twenty years ago China's economy was not as strong as it is now, people wore dress mainly to keep warm, and most Chinese managers today grew up in that tough situation. Now, although the economy is developing rapidly, most people still have little knowledge and skills of dressing and have no idea how to dress to demonstrate their personal image. They are eager to have guidance in dress knowledge and the skills for success.

4. For Chinese managers living in the Confucian cultural environment, dress behaviour is affected by traditional Chinese culture. In parallel to China's economic recovery, Chinese corporate brands are also beginning to carry forward traditional Chinese culture (Fei, 2010).

5. There is very limited literature on the Confucian cultural influence on personal and corporate brand from the perspective of managers' dress in China, so this research will contribute to knowledge.

6. The author's teaching and research background provides another reason. The author has been teaching Fashion Design in Peking University of Clothing & Textile for 15 years, and training "Dress for Success" to managers in Tsinghua University, Peking University, Beijing Normal University, and the author's studio (Grace Professional Image Research Studio) for 8 years.

In this case, the study of Chinese managers' dress code for personal brand and corporate brand identity, and the study of Confucian cultural influence on Chinese managers' dress, are very meaningful to enhance Chinese managers' personal brand.

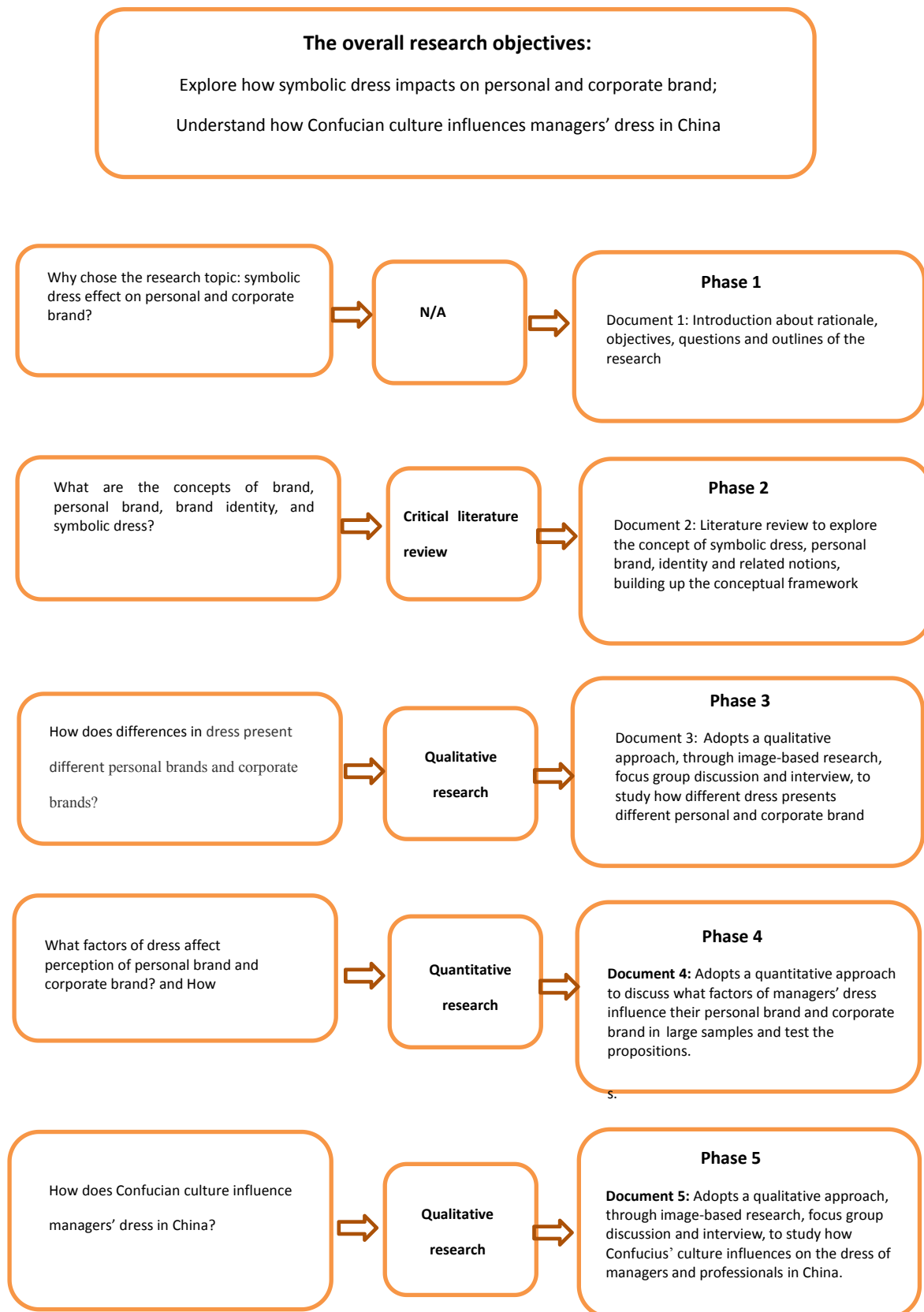


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## **1.2 The Outline of Overall Research**

The objective of overall research is to examine how managers' and professionals' dress influences their personal brand and corporate brand in China. Five phases are laid out to achieve such research goals, including previous research (Documents 1-4) and current research (Document 5) (See Figure 1.1)

**Figure 1.1** The Research Road Map



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Phase 1 involves a basic understanding of the rationale of the research; knowing Chinese enterprises have entered the stage of transformation from the production to the brand, managers' dress has become an important visual identity for personal brand and corporate brand. After that, research questions are asked and a research plan is proposed. Phase 2 is a key part of the exploration of detailed key concepts discussed in this research, including understanding about brand, personal brand, visual identity, symbolic dress and so on. Phase 3 consists of primary research on how the visual identity of product brand is perceived by consumers, and on how the visual symbolism of the dress of managers and professionals is perceived by their clients, and it explores the importance of symbolic visual elements of dress to express the personal brand of managers and professionals. Phase 4 employs a quantitative approach to discuss how the factors of managers' dress influence their personal brand and corporate brand in large samples and to test the propositions. Phases 1-4 focuses on the phenomenon of managers' dress, and from this basis, the phase 5 for this research moves from the phenomenon to the cultural impact behind it, including how Confucian culture has an influence on personal and corporate brand through the dress of managers and professionals in China.

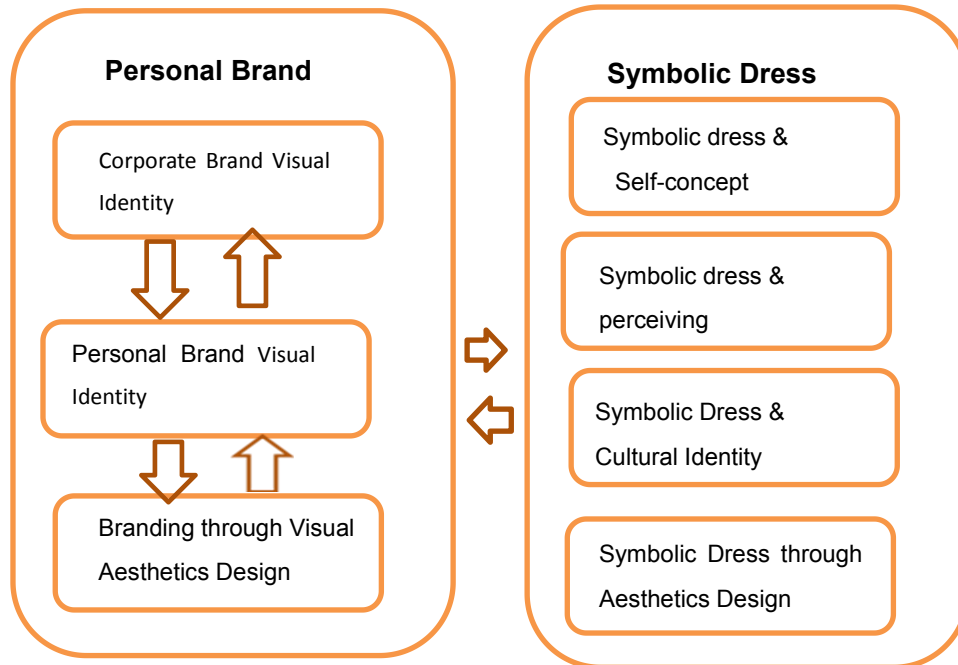
### **1.2.1 Phases 1 and 2: Understanding the Key Concepts**

Key concepts are essential in conducting research. Since there is very limited literature about symbolic dress for enhancing personal brand, the author chose to explore literature from related fields. To better understand the definition of personal brand and personal branding, the literature review traces the definitions of brand, branding, brand identity, and visual identity through aesthetics. For better understanding of symbolic dress as personal brand visual identity, the literature review outlines the definition of semiotics, dress for self-concepts, dress for perception by customers, and dress representing culture identity, and dress visual

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identity through aesthetics (See Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2** The Framework of Symbolic Dress for Personal Brand

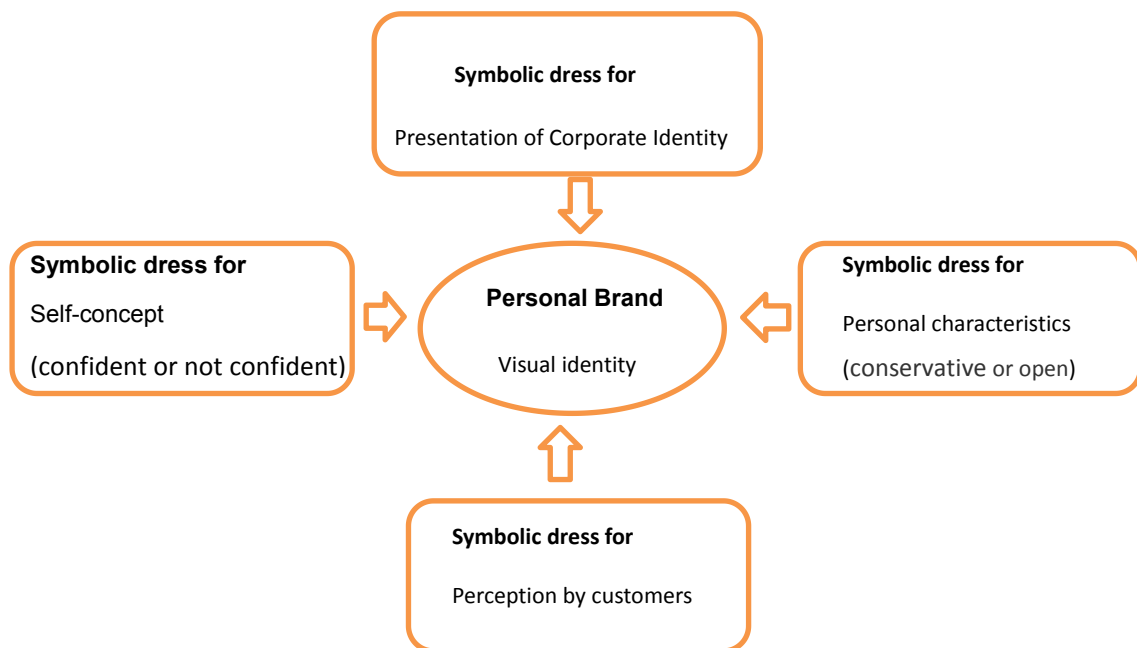


### 1.2.2 Phase 3 and 4: The Outcome of Documents 3 and 4

The aim of Document 3 was to evaluate the value of symbolic dress for presenting personal brand. The research explored how the visual identity of a product brand is perceived by consumers, how visual symbolism of dress is perceived by clients, and how important are the symbolic visual elements of dress in expressing the personal brand of business managers. To achieve the research objective, Document 3 conducted qualitative research using image-based study, focus group and semi-structured interviews to respond to the above issues. Topics such as symbolic dress, personal brand, self-concept and corporate brand were incorporated in the research (See Figure 1.3).

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**Figure 1.3** Qualitative Research of Symbolic Dress for Personal Brand

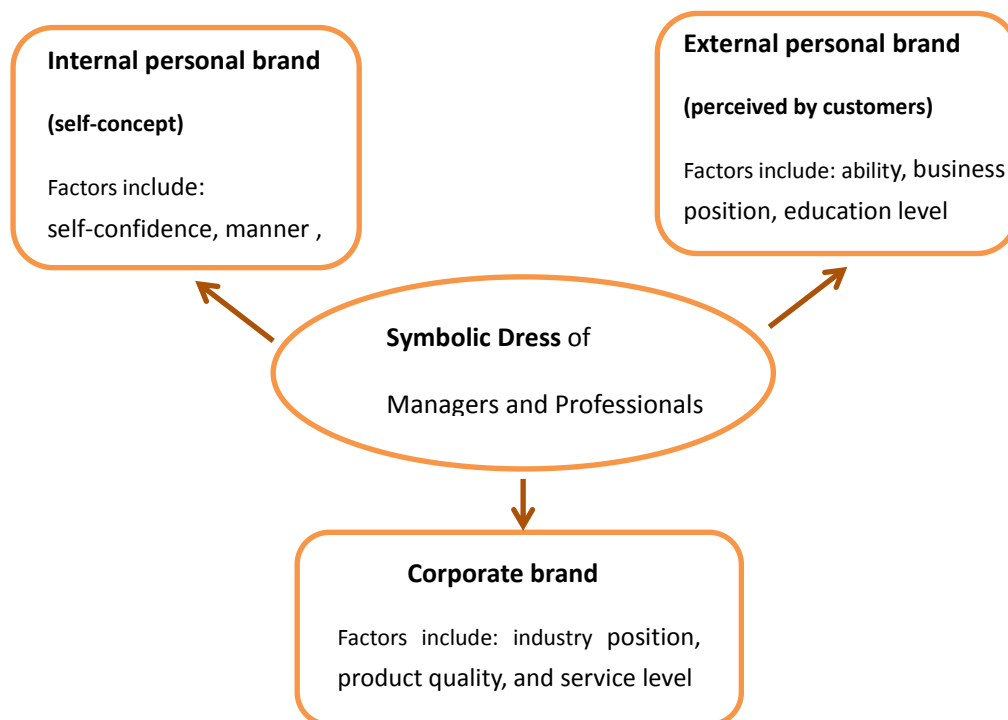


The conclusion of Document 3 shows that: 1) Managers' personal brand image can influence the impression they make on leaders, clients, and colleagues. 2) One's personal brand image can bring more opportunities to gain success. 3) Varieties of dress present different personal brands. 4) Dress is an important part of personal brand.

Document 4 aimed to find out the specific aspects of Chinese managers' and professionals' dress that can influence their personal and corporate brand. Document 4 employed a quantitative approach using large samples to discuss the factors of dress that influence personal and corporate brand and to test the propositions (See Figure 1.4).

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**Figure 1.4** Quantitative Research of Symbolic Dress for Personal and Corporate Brand



The results of Document 4 show that: 1) Internal personal brand here is about how an individual feels about himself/herself. It includes how dress influences self-confidence, behaviour, and communication. 2) Dress affects how customers interpret managers' external personal brand. External personal brand is about how a person is perceived by customers in terms of business or professional ability, business position, and education background. 3) Dress affects customers' interpretation of corporate brand. Dress can help interpret the corporate brand, which includes corporate identity, corporate position, and corporate product/service quality.

The contributions to research for Document 4 also discovered some of the main problems which Chinese managers and professionals experience with how to dress.

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For example, managers who are more confused about how to dress often run into embarrassment on occasions. Senior managers are often faced with media interviews. When they dress too casually in front of the camera, they appear to be lacking in confidence. It is very easy to let a customer lose faith in the quality of the manager's product. Another example is that someone wearing international designer brands is not showing his /her identity, because the type of dress does not meet the occasion, or because the style of clothing does not meet the characteristics of the wearer.

### **1.3 Objectives and Research Questions**

In modern society, managers are facing more and more competitive challenges in how to make themselves stand out. Creating a personal brand consistent with the goal directly affects their career (Xu, 2007; Vosloban, 2012; Chen, 2016). Symbolic dress is the way that one presents one's personal brand identity through dress identity. The importance of symbolic dress lies in the fact that it can help individuals and companies to establish their brand clearly, better prepare their brands to adapt to today's international market environment and present a correct interpretation of their personal and corporate brand to customers (Thourlby, 1978; Baldrige, 2009; Pooser and Zhang 2010; Barreca, 2011).

In the recent years, as Chinese enterprises move towards the international market, they begin to face international competition. As the representatives of their enterprises, managers are an important part of enterprise internationalization. Managers' personal management has been paid increasing attention by the researchers (Kotler, 2007; Zhang, 2007; Zhang, 2009). Personal management of managers includes personal emotional management, time management, personal brand management, etc. Personal brand management is particularly important. Good

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personal brand determines the external evaluation of professional managers (Thorp, 2009; Zhang, 2010). Managers need to dress to accurately reflect the corporate brand image.

While Chinese managers need to be aware of contemporary Western brand concepts in a globalized market environment, Confucian culture is also a very important element they need to consider. Firstly, most Chinese managers grow up in a Confucian cultural environment and receive traditional education permeated with Confucian thought (Xu, 2009). Secondly, China has gone from poverty to basic prosperity in recent years. With the development of the economy, Chinese people increasingly feel that the increase of material wealth is not the ultimate goal. UNESCO suggests that “development is ultimately defined by the concept of development culture, and cultural prosperity is the highest goal of development”. Culture is a kind of inherent spiritual and universal demand for human beings, and it is also a lifelong accompanying demand (Fei, 2010). Chinese people have begun to awaken to culture and become more confident about their traditional culture especially Confucian culture (Yang, 2018).

Therefore, this research explores how symbolic dress affects managers’ personal brand, how managers’ symbolic dress affects corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences dress of Chinese managers.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does visual identity present personal brand?
2. To what extent does managers’ symbolic dress influence personal and corporate brand?
3. How does Confucian culture influence personal and corporate brand from the perspective of managers’ dress in China?



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## 1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology and research methods, data collection, data analysis, and conclusion. Chapter 1 Introduction includes the structure of overall research, the subjective and objective, the results of Documents 1-4, and the research plan of Document 5. Chapter 2 Literature Review includes definitions of some key concepts, such as symbolic dress, personal brand, corporate brand, brand identity, branding, Confucian *Li* (etiquette) culture and Confucian “face” culture. Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods presents methodology issues and the choice of the methodology for this research. It also includes data collection methods, which are images, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, sample selections and data analysis methods. Chapter 4 Analysis and Discussion includes analyses of data on the influence of symbolic dress on personal brand and the influence of personal brand; on corporate brand, and more importantly, it analyses the influence of Confucianism on personal brand and corporate brand through symbolic dressing. Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the analysis and discussion. In this chapter the author will present limitations of this research and possible future research areas.

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## **2. Literature Review**

The research aims to understand how managers' dress affects personal brand and corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences personal brand and corporate brand from the perspective of managers' dress. The literature review, therefore, centres on the following subjects: 1) brand, branding, personal brand, personal branding; 2) product/corporate brand visual identity, personal brand visual identity; 3) symbolic dress, dress identity function, dress and self-concept, dress and perception; 4) dress and corporate brand identity, dress and customer recognition; 5) Confucian system and inner quality, Confucian face culture, Confucian dress code, motivation of dress and Confucian value.

Based upon the previous research and literature review, the conceptual framework is formulated and postulated.

### **2.1 Brand, Branding, and Brand Visual Identity**

#### **2.1.1 Brand and Branding**

##### **Brand**

According to Pavitt (2000) and Lury (2004), the term "brand" has existed since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In earlier times, brand mainly referred to the customer's impression of the product. A brand is a product, service or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and usually marketed (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993; Cowking, 1993; Keller, 2014). Pearson (1996) stated that brand was a combination of features (what the product is), customer benefits (what needs and wants the product meets) and values (what the customer associates with the product). Brand is a notion that differentiates itself

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from other products (Datzira-Masip and Poluzzi, 2014).

Since the mid 1990s, corporate brand has emerged as a significant area within the corporate marketing arena (Balmer, 2009, 2011). Brand extends to the customer's impression of the company as a whole. It can be defined as a whole set of physical and socio-psychological attributes and beliefs (Simoes and Dibb, 2001). McNally and Speak (2002) argue that a brand is a perception or emotion, maintained by a buyer or a prospective buyer, describing the experience related to doing business with an organisation. One significant way of comprehending corporate brands is compare the differences and similarities between corporate brands and product brands. This type of discrimination explains why a new marketing mindset (corporate marketing) is required in comprehending and managing corporate brands (Balmer, 2012). Corporate brand is a distinct identity type and a gestalt, which has multifarious manifestations and can, therefore, be viewed as a corporate brand constellation (Brexendorf and Keller, 2017).

For the purpose of this research, brand refers to integrated presentation of self existence. For example, a brand of product or service or a corporate, considered in combination with its name, its identity, and its reputation image, is a systematic presentation of its inherent and hidden values (Anholt, 2007; Balmer and Wang, 2016).

## **Branding**

Branding is the process of creating and disseminating the brand name, which can be applied to the entire corporate identity as well as to individual product and service names (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Melewar, and Nguyen, 2014). According to Anholt (2007), branding is the process of designing, planning, and communicating name and identity, in order to build or manage reputation (Temporal, 2000;

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Keller,2013). Branding in corporate context, can be defined as a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a favourable image and consequently a favourable reputation for the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism (Einwiller and Will, 2002; McMurrian, 2008; Balmer, et al., 2016).

### **2.1.2 Personal Brand and Personal Branding**

Some literature indicated the origins of the personal brand concept either in Goffman's work in the 1960s or in the 1980s in marketing studies (Lorgnier and O'Rourke, 2011; Khedher, 2015; Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015). Despite these early attempts, the academic research on personal branding as a self-standing concept only began in early 2000s ( Gorbatov et al., 2018).

#### **Personal Brand**

Personal brand is a set of characteristics of an individual (attributes, values, beliefs, etc.) rendered into the differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017).

Although personal brand originated in the field of marketing (Lair et al., 2005), in recent years more papers are being published on the topic across a range of disciplines. Personal brand, being a multidisciplinary construct, employs a wide range of distinct theories to explain it. Gorbatov et al. (2018) identified two main categories of personal brand definitions: one based in the marketing theory and another sprouting from the studies of psychology theory (self-presentation behaviours).

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The definitions based on marketing theory tend to use words like “product”, “buyer”, “seller”, “market”, “added value”, “promise”, “differentiation”, or “meeting customer needs” (Lair et al., 2005; Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Bendisch et al., 2013). They use similar terminology and directly applying marketing principles. For example, McMurrian and Washburn (2008) discovered that brands provide a way to make their products or service distinctive for companies, and personal brands also allow them to identify themselves and make a personal statement about who they are as individuals. Horton (2011) found that much like corporate brands, a personal brand demonstrates the compelling value that the person delivers by way of his/her unique combination of experience, background, and expertise.

## **Personal Branding**

Personal branding is a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based on a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery (Suddaby, 2010). Many scholars position personal branding as a career success strategy (Parmentier et al., 2013; Brooks and Anumudu, 2016).

The definitions based on psychological theories tend to include such words as “impression”, “reputation”, “individual’s strengths”, “uniqueness”, “image”, “self-promotion”, or “identity”. These definitions position personal branding as a person-centric activity, focused on managing how others view the individual (Parmentier et al., 2013; Molyneux, 2015; Schlosser et al., 2017). Self-discovery is the most common first assignment in personal branding courses, discussed in the reviewed literature, and scholars seem to agree that self-awareness is the initial step of the personal branding process (Philbrick and Cleveland, 2015; Gandini, 2016; Cederberg, 2017). Impression management is the vehicle for positioning the

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personal brand (Vetter, 2010 ; Labrecque et al., 2011; Khedher, 2015), which can be achieved through a combination of online and offline strategies.

For the purpose of the research in the given context, personal brand refers to a person's traits, ability, and so on. The brand and its inner qualities can be inferred through visual identity in terms of colour, form, materiality, and other externally visible features (Zhang et al. 2009).

### **2.1.3 Brand Visual Identity**

In marketing research, identity has been conceptualized through “recognition” and “categorization” of brands (Ghodeswar, 2008; Warell, 2015). Visual Identity is a very important means of communication for corporate branding. It is defined by the visible elements of a brand, such as colour, shape and form, which encapsulate and convey symbolic meanings that cannot be communicated through words alone (Warell et al., 2006). For product branding, identity is the design features of product, which contribute to brand value by serving as references for recognition of product brand, allowing customers to attribute meaning to the brand related to heritage and character (Karjalainen and Snelders, 2010).

### **Corporate Brand Visual Identity**

Corporate brand identity is what the corporate brand is seen to be, corporate name, corporate logo, corporate slogan, packaging and other visual design (Anholt, 2007; Urde and Greyer, 2016). According to Balmer(2012), corporate brand identity includes several facets: actual corporate brand Identity (an organization's traits), communicated corporate brand identity (what the organization communicates

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about its a corporate identity), conceived corporate brand identity (what stakeholders understand as corporate identity), cultural corporate brand identity(what the corporate brand culture is found to be), ideal corporate brand identity(the shaping of corporate identity by corporate strategy), and desired corporate brand identity(the shaping of corporate identity by management vision). Generally, corporate identity expresses the values and ambitions of an organization, its business, and its characteristics. First, visibility and recognizability are often constructed by a corporate identity (Balmer, 1995; Adamson, 2006). Second, a corporate identity symbolizes an organization for its external shareholders, thus contributing to its image and reputation (Schultz et al., 2000). Third, the internal function of corporate visual identity relates to employees' identification with the organization as a whole or with the specific departments they work for (Clarke, 2011).

### **Personal Brand Identity**

Personal brand identity is what the personal brand is seen to be. People often rely on visual signals to make assumptions about a person's competence, personality, habits, tastes, social life, friends and dress. What can be seen related to the characteristics of an individual is personal brand identity (Wilson and Blumenthal,2008). Personal brand image is the perception of the brand that exists in the mind of consumer or audience (Li, 2012). It is virtually the same thing as reputation, and it may or may not match the brand identity (Parmentier et al., 2013; Molyneux,2015). Strategic personal branding is closing the gap between the desired identity, image, and reputation for CEO or manager's personal brands from the stakeholder and organizational perspectives (Bendisch et al.,2013; Schlosser et al., 2017).

In social media, for example, a visual identity of personal brand strategically may showcase a professional who encapsulates the brand of his employer through tactics

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such as prominently displaying his employer's logo, following his employer's organization, posting client logos, or posting wide-ranging company- or product-related resources (Rangarajan et al., 2017).

Clarke (2011) argues that dress has been repeatedly recognized as a visual symbol of personal identity as well as a non-verbal communicator of other personal traits. As important personal identity, dress serves as a kind of visual metaphor for identity (Davis, 1992), and identity is what defines a successful personal brand (Blanco, 2010).

### **Visual Identity and Aesthetics Design**

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty as mission or function . It is becoming part of a deliberate market strategy to present brand visual identity (Weggeman et al., 2007). In marketing research, visual brand identity has been conceptualized through 'recognition' and 'categorization' of brands (Warell, 2015). A brand strategy is based on two parameters: differentiation and added value (Riezebos et al., 2003). Differentiation means that a company tries to distinguish its product from other competitors. Added value means more value than just the bare product. There are many ways to make brand difference and provide extra value. Compared with attributes and benefits, aesthetics is one of the most effective marketing strategies of brand visual identity in today's market (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Karialainen and Snelders, 2010). Recent research on aesthetic versus standard packaging for frequently purchased products found that some people are willing to pay more and choose unknown brands when the logo or package has a strong aesthetic appeal (Reimann et al., 2010). Therefore, it is clear that visual identity can represent more value to customers through aesthetics.



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### **2.1.4 The Gap in the Literature on Branding and Identity**

In the looking at branding, some existing literatures mention that corporate branding has multifarious manifestations and can, therefore, be viewed as a corporate brand constellation, or gestalt (Balmer, 2012). According to Brexendorf and Keller (2017), the gestalt corporate brand includes all products brand and service brands.

But there is limited literature that discusses managers' personal brand. In order to fill this gap and identify the relationship between manager's personal brand and corporate brand, Proposition1 is set up as follows:

#### **Proposition 1**

Just like product brands as part of the corporate brand constellation, managers' personal brands are also part of corporate brand constellation.

About brand visual identity, some existing literatures mention that it is what the corporate brand is seen to be, for example, corporate name, corporate logo, corporate slogan, packaging and other visual design. Visual identity is a very important means of communication for corporate brand. (Anholt ,2007; Urde and Greyer, 2016). But there is limited literature mentioning visual identity of personal brand. In order to fill this gap, Proposition 2 is set up as follows:

#### **Proposition 2**

Just as visual identity is a very important means of communication for corporate brand, visual identity is also an important means of communication for personal brands.

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## **2.2 Symbolic Dress and Personal Brand**

The previous sections provide understanding of the concepts of brand and visual identity; this section is intended to consider symbolic dress presenting personal brand, self-confidence, and perception.

### **2.2.1 Dress-related Definitions**

Dress is part of a large context of appearance. Some basic related definitions are provided as follows.

#### **Clothing**

The term clothing refers to any tangible or material object connected to the human body. This definition encompasses shirts, tops, pants, and other related body coverings (Kaiser, 2000).

#### **Appearance**

The term is a broader and more inclusive term than clothing. Appearance refers to the total, composite image created not only by clothing, but also by the human body and any modifications to the body that are visually perceived (Kaiser, 2000).

#### **Appearance Management**

This concept includes all activities and thought processes leading to the purchase and wear of clothing items, as well as processes of body modification (Kaiser, 2000).

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## **Dress**

This is a frequently used term that encompasses acts and forms of appearance management. As a verb or a process, dress refers to the act of altering or adding to appearance. As a noun, dress refers the total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of body and all material objects added to it (Roach and Eicher, 1992).

## **Dress Perception**

This is the opposite of appearance management, the process of observing and making evaluations or drawing inferences based on how people look.

## **Symbolic Dress**

This term refers to how a person's dress has meaning. Since the external factors of dress, such as colour, style and fabric pattern, can be seen by others, it acts as a symbol to present an important visual channel to recognize and interpret personal brand. Dress as symbol is an important factor for impression management (Pooser and Zhang, 2010), enabling people to present an identity to others in terms of their symbolic or expressive meanings (Lurie, 2000; Svendsen, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Dress Function of Identity**

Dress functions as more than just physical protection (for keeping warm in cold weather), or adornment (for purpose of display, attraction, or aesthetic expression). It now has a more symbolic or identity dimension (Kaiser, 2000). Craik (1994) defines symbolic dress largely as a symbol to communicate information about the wearer and to constitute the external representation of internal properties, while Daniel (1996) considers that symbolic dress describes the wearers to observers or

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customers. Essentially, dress through symbolization passes messages about the wearers in positive or negative ways.

From the perspective of appearance management, identity can be very useful for providing direction, purpose and meaning in life (Blanco, 2010). Visual image is a reflection of personal identity and its values according to the point of view of the observer. People are constantly creating an impression where a personal brand with a unique quality is formed, but they may not even be aware of it. To some extent, what we are wearing is a silent self-introduction, telling people who we are (Sproles, 1994; Barnard, 2007). People's behaviour and image leave impressions on customers, which constitute the process of building a personal brand (Kang et al., 2011). A different personal image can project a different social influence and status (Johnson, 2007). Personal brand image is usually displayed in three areas: dress, behaviour, and communication. Dress constitutes the largest proportion of the whole image, accounting for 55% according to Pooser and Zhang (2007), and this important part of a person's overall image renders dress indispensable to personal brand development.

Dress exerts a far-reaching influence on what customers perceive and think of us, which constitutes a key part of a successful personal branding. Although you may have professional knowledge and skills, when your clothes make other people doubt your ability, they will not choose you or your service. Gardner and Avolio (1998) argue that the function of visual symbols is to manage impressions, which they propose directs attention to the development and manipulation of physical appearances, settings, props and other types of artificial displays.

For a personal branding to be successful and distinct, the person who embodies and represents the brand needs to dress according to his/her character and personality

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including particularity, interest, autonomy, roundedness, confidence, development and interior life, factors that appeal to potential customers of the personal brand (Blanco, 2010). Business elites often engage in active personal brand building. Image management thus becomes very important because they have to appear in the public domain and on social media. Their visual portraits are widely disseminated, forming significant sites for communicating messages regarding leadership and associated intellectual, symbolic and social intangibles (Davison, 2010), all closely related to the building of a successful personal brand. Business leaders send signals to employees about what matters and how to approach work. A leadership brand exists in a company when customers' expectations translate into employees' actions because of leadership practices. Firms with a strong leadership brand have translated their customer expectations into leadership competencies (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2008).

Yet while there has been considerable research into what constitutes a strong leader, a preliminary review of the literature finds that there has been little research into how dress would impact the personal brand of business managers and leaders, which constitutes the necessity for further study in the area in the present chapter.

### **2.2.3 Symbolic Dress and Self-concept**

Self-concept refers to a person's beliefs about his/her characteristics and the evaluation of these features, which influence self-confidence, behaviour and communication attitude (Stryker and Burke, 2000). How people look at themselves, and how they evaluate their own features, often affects their choice of dress (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009).

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“Self” can be divided into the “ideal self ” and the “actual self”. The ideal self, which is also called the internal identity, is the one people want to become; while the actual self is a more realistic assessment of what we have and what we do not have (Stryker and Burke, 2000). According to Slepian et al. (2015), dressing formally will enhance confidence. When dressed formally, people change how others perceive them. Their thinking will be more open. they will feel more authoritative, and they will be concerned with the overall situation rather than being troubled by immediate problems. In psychological terms, when wearing formal dress, there will be a feeling of everything being within one’s grasp, and this sense of power will inspire people’s abstract thinking rather than concrete thinking.

Researchers have studied whether what people wear influences how they think about themselves. Hannover and Kuhnen (2002) reasoned that clothing styles would influence self-description because certain clothing styles might be related to specific trait categories. They found that participants described themselves in a way that was consistent with how they were dressed. Thus, the clothing worn by these individuals influenced their thoughts about themselves. Chinese psychologist Yang (2002) argues that dress is an organic concept manifested through the harmonious coordination of the wearer’s figure, personality, charisma, skin colour, age, etc. Scholars such as Workman and Freeburg (2009) posit that people’s attire or dress is part of their appearance. Therefore, how people dress affects their whole physical and psychological status, of which self-confidence is certainly an organic part. Attire is the most lively external representation of their internal status, which is largely symbolic (Zhao, 2009).

The aesthetic aspect of dress affects people’s self-confidence. A survey conducted by Yang (1989) discovered that more than 50% of girls were not comfortable with their

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own dress, 11% were not happy about it, while 76% of them thought dressing for beauty could boost their confidence by a large margin. The instrumental aspect of dress can enhance the experience of self-confidence. People's self-confidence often comes from other people's comments on what they look like. If they dress well, they will feel comfortable and carefree. If not, they may feel they are not themselves, be too self-conscious, or worry too much (Kelley and Daigel, 1974). Dress can become a tool to make people feel good and produce positive self-appreciation (Newton, 1976). Solomon and Douglas (1985) find that young women like to dress like a successful person, seeking to use dress as a means to secure self-fulfilment. Dress, as an important part of appearance management, can be used as a therapeutic tool to help depressed individuals by injecting self-confidence (Dubler and Gurel, 1984). Proper dress can help mentally troubled persons in reducing their anxiety and deterioration by improving their self-confidence and self-respect (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992).

Dress affects one's ideas about the self (e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs) and self-directed behaviour (Rudd and Lennon, 2000). Adam and Golinsky (2012) found that when clothing is worn that has symbolic meaning for the wearer it also has behavioural consequences.

Dress influences communication with others. Dress can affect the wearer's emotions. A positive dressing or style image can bring a glorious feeling and a positive emotional experience so that the wearer becomes more comfortable, pleasant and self-confident. If dressed well, individuals will treat other in a more friendly manner and be more communicative with each other.

#### **2.2.4 Symbolic Dress and Perception of Customers**

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From the cognitive perspective, dress can provide as cues to what a person is like (Kaiser,2000). These cues make up what we might think of as “the tip of the iceberg” (Zerubavel, 1982). We can never see the entire iceberg, especially the part that is non-visible or beneath the surface. In this respect, dress is regarded as a stimulus that leads to the formulation of an impression (Davis,1984).

Dress influences the customer’s perceptions of business role, ability and education (Damhorst, et al., 2000). Dress is utilized by wearers to transmit values, identity and group membership (Ryan, 1966). As argued by Clarke (2011), dress representing appearances that are “visually salient” could potentially assist entrepreneurs in securing the resources they need. Dress serves, then, as a visual metaphor for identity management (Davis, 1985,1992).

First, dress can help individuals perform social roles, construct individual’s social identities and facilitate or withhold social contacts (Kaiser, 2000). An important function of dress is that it demonstrates a social signal of a person’s membership of a particular social group (Argyle, 1988; Kaiser, 1985). Being highly symbolic and visually projective, dress ultimately presents who we are and what we do, and is thus open to others’ reading and interpretation. The symbolic nature and the highly visual aspect of dress incorporates clothing styles, brands, uniforms, membership of particular subcultures and so on (Hines and Bruce, 2007). Some research even finds that dress can act as a political instrument impacting formal or informal relationships (Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993), for example, a formal dark business suit with a red tie will make a political leader more influential in campaigning. Therefore, power can be reflected through one’s dress.

In contemporary studies, “dress” tends to refer to the clothing and other items that



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people wear at work. The workplace is an important context within which to examine individuals' use of dress to shape and communicate work identities for a variety of reasons (Kang et al., 2011). Dress is specifically used in the workplace to manage customers' perceptions (Moren, 2005; Peluchett et al., 2006). As a result, individuals who dress with identities may differ from those without identities (Kang et al., 2011). Since people hold expectations about dress and appearance that are tied to different occupational roles, dress for work reflects one way to facilitate role enactment (Rafaeli et al., 1997).

Second, dress can interpret one's ability. Dress as a visual product can not only make the wearer feel warmth and suit their own preferences, but it can also be seen through the eyes of customers to form impressions and how others will think of the wearer. Dress can communicate an extensive and complex array of information about a person, without the observer having to meet or talk to the wearer (Entwistle, 2007). A person's attire has been shown to convey qualities such as character, social ability, competence and intelligence. The focus has been on dress as a stimulus that affects the impressions of others. Damhorst (1990) conducted an analysis of 109 studies on impression formation to determine the kind of information that was communicated by dress; she found that in the majority of the studies (81%), the content of the information communicated by dress was competence, power, or intelligence, and nearly 67% the messages were about character, sociability, and mood.

Third, dress can reflect one's education and intelligence. According to (Eicher et al. (2000), people's age, gender, and intelligence can be reflected in their dress and their social and cultural identity can be anchored by the way they dress. Behling and Williams (1991) presented research participants, who were students and teachers, with photographs of male and female students that were unknown to them. The clothing styles of the students were varied so that the students were sometimes

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shown wearing cut-off jeans and t-shirts and sometimes suits. For both student and teacher onlookers, the clothing style worn affected the impressions formed. When wearing jeans and t-shirts, students were rated lower in intelligence and scholastic ability than when they were wearing a suit.

### **2.2.5 The Gap on Managers' Dress for Personal Brand**

In the area of personal branding, while some of the literature states that clear personal brand identity can reinforce leadership (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2008), few have documented dress as one of important visual identifiers for personal branding.

In the field of social psychology, some literature shows that dress can affect the wearer's emotions and self-confidence (Kelley and Daigel, 1974; Yang, 1989). However, in the existing literature, there is limited concern about how manager's dress affects manners in the business world and how manager's dress influences communication with the client.

Symbolic dress is in clothing social psychology field, personal brand is in marketing field, combination symbolic dress to personal brand as visual identity, is interdisciplinary gap need to fill. This offers room for further research in dress and managers' personal brand. In order to fill this gap and identify the visual identity for managers' personal brand, Propositions 3-4 are set up as follows:

#### **Proposition 3**

Managers' symbolic dress as an important part of visual identity reflects internal personal brand (self-concept).

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**Proposition 4**

Managers' symbolic dress as an important part of visual identity reflects external personal brand (perception by clients).

**2.3 Dress and Corporate Brand**

Dress can have positive and negative impacts on the visual representation of a corporate brand. This section includes dress and corporate brand identity, dress and corporate brand recognition, and dress and corporate position.

**2.3.1 Dress and Corporate Brand Identity**

Dress relates to the construction of a corporate identity. Top-level decision-makers can utilize this to construct a coherent corporate identity (Simões, et al., 2005). Since identity creates a corporate and brand image (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997), it is advisable to design a unified dress which can give a good impression to the customers. Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) believe that dress is ubiquitous in organizations, which can reflect and create a variety of organizational dynamics. Through their ice-breaking study, three dimensions of dress, including attributes of dress, homogeneity of dress and conspicuousness of dress are identified. Dress can affect individual and organizational outcomes, that is why organization spend billions each year defining, acquiring, maintaining, and monitoring employees' dress (Solomon, 1987).

**2.3.2 Dress and Customers' Recognition**

Dress affects customers' recognition of enterprises through corporate image. The corporate image is based on what people associate with the company or all the

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information (perceptions, inferences, and beliefs) about it that people hold. A company's reputation can act as a signal that summarizes its past behaviour and which can be used to forecast future actions. A general assumption in the branding literature is that a favourable brand image will have a positive impact on consumers' behaviour towards the brand, such as the opportunity to command premium prices, buyers who are more loyal, and more positive word-of-mouth (Martenson, 2007).

Clothing can communicate strong and powerful messages (Forsythe, 1990), which has a direct relationship to the recognition of the corporate brand image by the customers. Construction of a positive and well-known brand is a consuming process where the leader's appearance and the charisma reflected through his/her dressing plays a vital role. Leadership brand implies that leaders' knowledge, skills, and values are shaped by customer expectations (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2008) while their dressed image is largely responsible for a positive corporate brand building.

### **2.3.3 The Gap on Managers' Dress for Corporate Brand**

Although some literature discusses dress and corporate brand, it tends to focus more on corporate employees' uniform as part of corporate visual identity (Solomon, 1987). Research about managers' dress as a corporate brand visual identity research is very limited.

There are references in the existing literature that positive corporate image helps to make a positive impression on the minds of consumers (Martenson, 2007), but they seldom address how managers promote corporate brand image through their appropriate dress, and how this will mean that corporate products will be more trusted by clients.

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There is limited literature in managers' dress for corporate brand. In order to fill this gap and identify managers' dress visual identity for corporate brand, Proposition 5 is set up as follows:

**Proposition 5**

Managers' dress as part of visual identity, reflects corporate brand.

## **2.4 Confucian Cultural Influence**

Confucian culture has been influencing Chinese people's beliefs and values for thousands of years (King and Zhang, 2018; Wei and Li, 2013). The Confucian culture system includes inner quality and outer etiquette. The largest contribution of Confucius is that he established an ideological system with inner quality as its core, etiquette as its formality and dialectics as its methodology, based on a thorough survey of the historical cultural classics (Zhu, 2010).

### **2.4.1 Confucian Inner Qualities and Values**

#### **Confucian Inner Quality1: Pursuing a Gentlemanly Character that Features Sincerity and Compassion**

The first doctrine of Confucianism is attention to cultivating an ideal and complete personality, *Jun Zi* (Gentleman) (Chen, 2010). Confucian culture advocates inner virtue with outward majesty. If the personality is cultivated delicately, inner quality can be achieved. If such personality can be expressive, then outward contribution is possible. Inner quality conveys an abstract idea that Confucius wants to express and constitutes an exact description of an ideal gentleman (Liang, 1999).

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The cultivation of morality aims to develop a strong spiritual power which can compensate for character weaknesses and overcome the negativity caused externally. In Confucian culture, strict self-control and forbearance towards others constitutes one of the moral principles for self-cultivation and dealing with social contacts. Confucianism focuses on the fulfilment of life that comes with the full development of man (Wah, 2010; Shao, 2010).

The purpose of having an inner spiritual life is to explore the meaning of life, pursuing the highest value standard, aiming for permanence, developing an ideal personality and becoming a sincere person. Therefore, the inner spirit constitutes a major strength of a person (Shi, 2014; Chen, 2010).

For more than 2,000 years, Confucianism influenced philosophy, social ethics, education, political ideology, leadership, culture and the way of life in East Asia (Lynn-Sze and Ahmad, 2017). The value that is highly emphasized by Chinese and associated with leadership is “*Ren*”, the inner quality (King and Zhang, 2014).

### **Confucius Inner Quality2: Establishing One’s Cause while Pursing Everlasting Values**

Another aspect of inner quality delineated by Confucius implies pursuing eternal and everlasting values. Human life is limited. However, when carnal life can spread into the realm of the spiritual, when individual life is expanded to the collective life, then life can achieve eternity. Confucius emphasizes the development of moral principles, thus leaving good examples to the offspring and contributing to the state. (Xia, 2010).

Confucianism thinks that everyone should establish lifelong faith to transcend from individual improvement to concern for the people and the country. A true gentleman should be concerned to achieve sacrificing service for the nation first, and then

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himself. (Zhu, 2010).

### **Confucian Value of Harmony**

According to Chen (2010), harmony (*he xie*) is the essence of Confucian theories of social interaction. Harmony refers to “one’s inner peace of mind, contentment, as well as interpersonal harmony” (Cheung et al., 1996). As the foundation of Chinese culture, harmony leads to several other values, such as reciprocation of social favours (*ren qing*), group orientation, personal connections (*guanxi*), solidarity with others, and non-competitiveness (Wei and Li, 2013). Confucianism put an emphasis on the notion of harmony with nature and with people, which urges them to avoid confusion, competition and conflict, in order to achieve inner and interpersonal harmony (Kirkbride et al., 1991).

### **Confucian Value of Moderation**

In Confucian culture, closely related to harmony is the concept of moderation (the doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong yong*)). Confucianism believes that all things have a dynamic equilibrium state achieved among various potentially opposing forces (Earley, 1997; Duan 2014), hence it asks people not to incline to either extreme side (Legge, 1960), which is also called as “the middle way approach”. For Confucius, man should always adheres to the Mean and treats the Mean as the perfect virtue. The value of moderation leads to a high degree of self-abasement and self-control (Yau, 1988; Wah, 2010).

### **Confucian Value of Hierarchical Relationship**

Respect for *hierarchy* can be traced back to the Confucian notion of *lun* hierarchical relationships (Zhu,2010). The prime meaning of *lun* pertains to

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the paramount importance of human relationships and social order (Shao, 2014). Of the great variety of relationships, the most important ones were known as the *Wu lun* (the five cardinal relationships (Li, 1986). According to Confucius, everyone has a fixed position in society and each person should behave according to his or her rank. In most East Asian societies, affluence is a relatively new phenomenon, and as a result, it is understandable why economic achievement has started to become a determinant of social hierarchy in East Asia (Monkhoudé et al., 2013).

This value is defined as the extent to which an individual endorses the hierarchical role of relationships prescribed by social norms. China is a hierarchical society (Hofstede, 1980) with strictly ordered relationships (Bond and Hwang, 1986). Chinese people are very sensitive to their positions in these social structures (Leung and Chan, 2003).

## **2.4.2 Confucian Face Culture (Outer Etiquette)**

### **Etiquette: The Practice of Confucian Inner Quality**

Confucianism promotes cultivation of oneself through reading classics and restraining oneself through practising of etiquette. The highlight of Confucianism does not lie in teaching knowledge only, but it is reflected more in actions and practice. Confucius believes in the role of etiquette, thinking that it enables people to develop the habit of self-control, thus constituting the only way to improve society (Liang, 1999).

The outer manifestation of inner quality becomes the etiquette that constitutes the codes of social norms. Etiquette is also very important in preserving social harmony.



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The outer etiquette is the spiritual carrier of inner quality in Confucian culture (Gao, 2010; Yang, 2010). Etiquette takes the form of rhetoric, speech, posture and dress in line with the patriarchal clan system, which is based on certain formalities and procedures that can convey such moral values as humility, respect and civility (Zhu, 2014). Confucius pays much attention to the spirit of etiquette, thinking that the form in which etiquette manifests itself is the carrier or the accessory of the spirit of etiquette.

### **Face Culture: A Special Expression of Confucian Etiquette**

Face (*mian zi*) refers to a sense of favourable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of him or her in a relational and network context (Goffman, 1967). It reflects one's social self-esteem and the desire to be respected during interpersonal interactions (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998). Chinese face culture has deep roots in Confucianism. Confucian etiquette refers to a correct attitude and way of treating people, which lays the foundation for a hierarchical class system and familial relations (Shao, 2010). Face can be divided into moral face and social face (Jin, 2002). The moral face is to follow the etiquette and earn self-respect and respect from others.

Face presents an image that is socially recognized, closely related to the goal of self-cultivation, social prestige and impact, and constitutes the extension of individual morality in the social realm. There is a traditional connection between invisible wealth and social status or position in Chinese Confucian face culture (Jap, 2010).

Because etiquette dictates people's behaviour and conduct, it requires a person with a certain position to have a proper reputation that determines his value and status

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(King and Zhang, 2018). Confucius says that a man cannot establish himself without knowing etiquette. Every man has a certain fixed social identity, which requires him to conduct himself according to etiquette. If he behaves out of the realm of his identity, then he will lose his face and become humiliated (Song, 2019). Therefore, face taken in this perspective can be said to be a special expression of etiquette. Confucian etiquette presents systems of ritualistic codes resulting in giving face to other people (Zhai, 2011).

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### **The Social Function of Face Culture**

From the perspective of social psychology, face refers to the individual achievements of social status or reputation in the community (Hu, 1988). Caring about face is an important trait of Chinese culture. It is found in expressions such as “get face”, “earn face”, “save face”, “give face” in China. A survey on “face in the Chinese people's social interaction” showed that (1) 83.33% thought it very important; (2) 11.98% were neutral; and (3) only 2.61% thought it was not important (Zhang and Si, 2010).

As a social phenomenon of interpersonal communication, there are positive and negative aspects of the social function of face. From a positive point of view, first of all, caring about face itself is a kind of maintenance of one's own image. Appropriate caring about face can promote people to forge ahead, giving a positive attitude towards life, because face represents the dignity of personality (Huang and Hu, 2010). Secondly, face is a moral feeling, to maintain morality and moral values, and shame. The right sense of shame is the embodiment of moral sentiments. The person who pays attention to face generally has a stronger sense of shame; the person who ignores face generally has a greater lack of a moral heart (Jiang, 2009). Thirdly, face is the regulator of interpersonal relationships. The degree of giving sufficient face to each other is often an important condition of interpersonal harmony, or otherwise, and directly affects the direction and extent of the development of interpersonal

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relationships. If one party does not give the other face, it will seriously affect the relationship and may even cause its breakdown of the relationship (Huang, 2006). Therefore, in social interaction, Chinese people often judge the degree of acceptance from the other side according to how they give face. The positive effect of face culture is conducive to social harmony and stability (Wei and Li, 2013).

### **The Negative Impact of Face Culture**

From the negative point of view, face reflects the vanity of people. It might lead to fraud. Excessive attention to face is, in fact, a vanity of performance. The so-called vanity is the psychological need to obtain glory and honour beyond one's actual abilities or achievements. If this psychological need is too strong, or if one tries to win compliments from others by fabricating facts, then face will become the catalyst of fraud, and the corrosive agent of the honesty system will inevitably endanger the social foundation (Zhang and Si, 2010). In dealing with people, it is easy to reject other people's reasonable criticism and suggestions, and make unrealistic decisions and actions (Chen and Ma, 2013). In terms of dress behaviour, some Chinese people have low incomes, but are keen on buying luxury goods (Ding, 2010; Han and Wu 2013).

The other kind of negative effect of face is to be too shy of face in hierarchical relations, to abandon self-judgement, to be too submissive or to overvalue the evaluation of others (Chen and Ma, 2013). Over-scrupulous face in hierarchical relations will hinder social innovation and development (Jiang, 2009). In the aspect of dress behaviour, it shows that it is conformist and lacks personality, artistry and sense of the times (Zhang and Yang, 2005).

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### **2.4.3 Confucian Dress Code**

Dress is the carrier of etiquette. Since ancient times, China has been called “the kingdom of dress, the state of etiquette”. Dress in forms of social life is the most exposed and the most easy mark of a person’s status; therefore, the rulers of each ancient dynasty in China all paid attention to it.

#### **Confucian Dress Etiquette for Clarifying Social Role Identity**

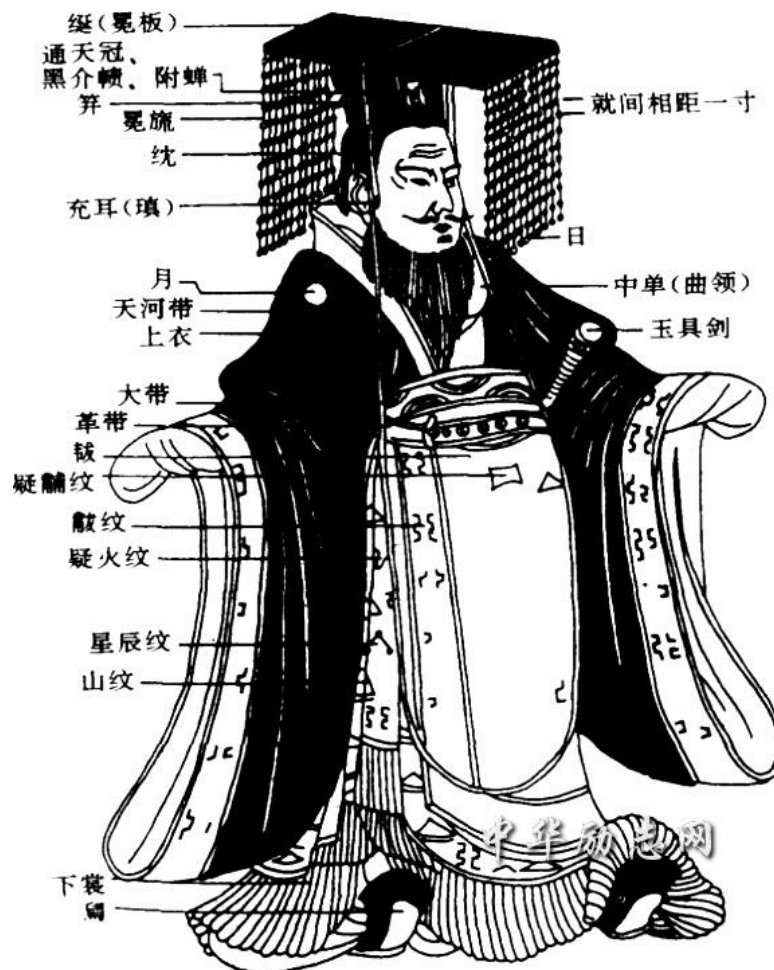
Confucian dress etiquette has important social and political functions. The dress system in each dynasty had a strong hierarchical imprint (Zhou, 2009). Since the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC - 256BC), a complete royal court system of status was gradually formed. There were strict rules and regulations of dress etiquette for different levels of officials in a variety of different occasions (Shen, 2011). The dress of monarchs was carefully planned and arranged by the “Dress Officials”. The style, colour, ornaments and decoration, and how dress was made, all embodied the supreme and elegant, from head to toe, and completely explained the material symbol of the imperial power (Zhang, 2001).

In ancient China, the crown referred to the hat worn by a nobleman. The number of strings of jade depended on the identity of the wearer. According to the literature, only the emperor could wear twelve strings (See Figure 2.1) back and front, princess nine strings, next level seven strings, and so on (Zhou, 2009).

All levels of officials dressed with differences in style, colour, and pattern. For example, dragon robes (with a dragon pattern) could only be worn by the royal family. And the colour yellow could be used only by the royal family. Red could only be worn by the first four levels of officials. Blue could only be worn officials at levels five to

seven. Green could only be worn by officials at levels eight to nine. The civilian population was prohibited from wearing red, blue, and green, so as not to be confused with the officials' dress (Wang and Guo, 2018).

**Figure 2.1** Only the Emperor can Wear the Crown with Twelve Strings



The dress of ancient emperors and senior officials were embroidered with 12 kinds of decoration, which included sun, moon, stars, mountains, dragons, pheasant, fire, tiger and ape, seaweed, rice, axe and double bow, commonly known as twelve ornament patterns (See Figure 2.2). These ornaments have symbolic meanings.

Only the emperor's robes could use all of the twelve patterns; the first-level officials could use any of the last nine; the second-level officials could use any of the last seven; the third-level officials could use any the last five (Shen, 2019).

**Figure 2.2** The 12 different decorations on dress showed different level of officials.



While dress embodies the etiquette of dignity and inferiority, it also follows the etiquette of dress code on occasions. For example, the emperor arranged his own

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dress according to the difference of five etiquettes: auspicious, vicious, military, guest and honourable (Wang and Guo, 2018).

### **Confucian Dress Etiquette Reflects the Inner Cultivation of “*jun zi*” (Gentleman)**

Confucius was the philosopher who made dress an ethical proposition. He put the dress of gentleman personality into a concept. He believed that dress could express respect for others or an attitude of awe. From this point, Confucius lays out the psychological structure of the Chinese national dress etiquette culture, and demonstrates the rich ethical connotation for dress (Chen, 2010).

Confucius defines the ideal personality of social elites as “*jun zi*” (gentlemen). In Confucius’s view, a gentleman constrained and permeated by etiquette can best manifest his inner character when such innerness features stringent observance of both norms and self-constraint (Wang and Guo, 2018). It is Confucius’s belief that a gentleman should study classics extensively so that he knows how to control himself with etiquette and does not go stray from the right. He emphasises that a gentleman should know how to conduct himself with etiquette and observe its codes (Wang and Guo, 2018). Man is born with natural instincts that must be socialized and cultured if he is to become a socially recognized gentleman, while an important link of socialization is to observe social norms. Therefore, it can be said that the establishment of personal character is the basis of a person’s recognition of social norms (Li, 1986).

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Confucian etiquette has complex requirements for external appearance and behaviour. To avoid violation, Confucius lays down very specific and delicate rules on speech, posture, gesture, facial expressions, and dress so that they do not appear rude and savage. Confucius also makes specific dress rules: gentlemen should dress according to the seasons, the quality and colour of the dress should match those of the hat, and the accessories should also be worn properly (Zhang, 2000).

### **Confucian Face Culture Influences Chinese Dress Behaviour**

Confucian face has a great influence on the Chinese people's dress consumer behaviour today. The first is the impact of collectivist face culture. In the Chinese collectivism culture, in order to win social recognition and to avoid losing face, and to protect and enhance face, individuals are turning to consumer luxury brands and paying more attention to the brand image and evaluation (Han and Wu, 2015); Second, the group impact. Everyone in a certain social group plays a role or expects to be one of the social groups. Therefore, all are concerned that their social behavior is consistent with this group of norms and others' evaluation. Solomon and Rabolt (2009) show that consumers are more likely to be affected by the reference group when buying products for public use. Consistent with community norms, it is easier to obtain approval of the group and avoid losing face (Lu, 2008). Third, social impact. There are two kinds of social impact: normative and informational effects. Normative influence refers to an individual wanting to meet the expectations of others and gain acceptance. Informational influence means that the person conforms by accepting the evidence provided by others. When there are no objective criteria in the decision-making process, the consumer is very vulnerable to interpersonal impact. In the collectivist culture scenario, normative influence has a greater effect than informational influence (Han and Wu, 2013).



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## 2.4.4 Motivations of Dress and Confucian Value

### Confucian Values and Dress Motivation

Maslow formulated a hierarchy of biogenic and psychogenic needs, in which levels of needs are specified. A hierarchical approach implies that the order of development is fixed. That is, a certain level must be attained before the next, higher one is activated. The implication of Maslow's hierarchy is that one must first satisfy basic needs before progressing up the ladder (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009).

According to Maslow (2018), from lower level to higher level needs, dress can play different roles. Level 1: Physiological: Dress covers the body and protects us from the cold. Level 2: Safety: Dress must be passed the flammability standard so that it won't burst into flame when close an ignition source. Level 3: Social: Dress shows we belong to the group. Level 4: Esteem: Dress gives us a sense of status among peers. Level 5: Self-actualization: Dress is the expression of the total "me".

Confucian core values encourage people to focus on higher level (spiritual level) pursuits like *jun zi* (gentlemen), such as self-cultivation, self-improvement, collective contribution and contribution to the country (Shi, 2014).

Some pursuits of higher level needs relate to the professionals building their personal brand. 1) Needs for achievement (personal accomplishment is strongly valued). Those with this need place a premium on products and services that signify success or evidence of their achievement, such as business-like styles. 2) Needs for affiliation (to be in the company of other people). This need is relative to products and services that are consumed in groups and alleviate loneliness, such as team sports. 3) Need for uniqueness (to assert one's individual identity). This need is satisfied by products that offer to accentuate one's distinctive qualities.

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## **Motivation and Personal Values**

Values are fundamental beliefs that direct or motivate our behaviour and decision making. A person's set of values plays an important role in consumption activities, since many products and services are purchased because people believe they will help to attain a value-related goal.

Different cultures have different core values. For example, values, such as freedom, youthfulness, achievement have been claimed to characterize American culture. Values, such as harmonious, collective, hierarchical relationships may be said to characterizes Chinese culture.

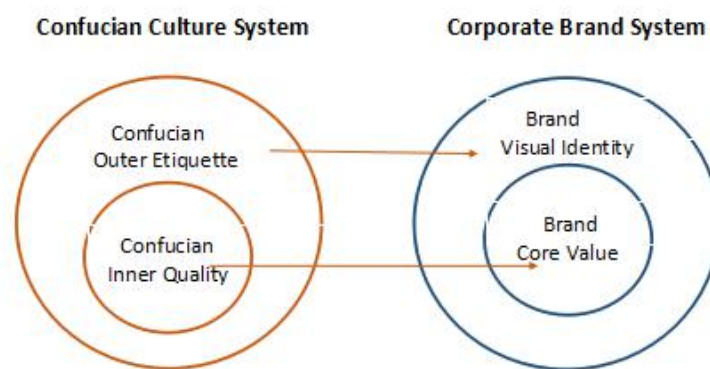
Individuals have different personal values. These include theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious values. For example, a theoretical value person stresses objective properties of fabric. An economic value person emphasises elimination of waste. An aesthetic value person emphasises good looks. A social value person emphasises conscientious. A political value person emphasises evoking of admiration. A religious value person follows simplicity as an ideal.

### **2.4.5 The Gap in Confucian Cultural Influence on Chinese Manager's Dress**

The literature on Confucian outer etiquette (face culture) presenting inner quality is very rich (Zhu, 2014). However, literature on the relationship between the Confucian system and today's brand visual identity for presenting brand value is very limited. This offers room for further research into how Confucian system influence on brand system (See Figure 2.3).

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**Figure 2.3** How Confucian inner quality and outer etiquette system influence on brand inner core value and outer visual identity system.



There is considerable literature on Confucian dress code. Confucian dress etiquette has important social and political functions (Zhang, 2005; Zhou, 2009). There were strict rules and regulations of dress etiquette for different levels of officials in a variety of different occasions (Shen, 2011). The literature surveyed above is mostly about Confucius's dress code while the literature on the relationship between Confucian dress etiquette and manager's dress code is very limited. This offers room for further research into how Confucian dress etiquette influence on Chinese managers' dress code (See Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4** How Confucian dress etiquette influence on Chinese managers’ dress code

The literature surveyed is more about Confucian dress etiquette in Chinese history (Wang and Guo, 2018). Literature on the difference between dress etiquette for Chinese managers and western managers is very limited. This offers room for further research into what is the difference of dress code between Chinese managers and Western managers (See Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5** The difference of dress code between Chinese managers and western managers.



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surveyed is also more about Confucian face culture through Chinese history (Hu, 1988; Zhai, 2011). Literature considering face culture when Chinese managers are building up their personal brand in Confucian culture environment is very limited. The literature on Confucian face culture is mostly about its positive function (Zhang and Si, 2010; Wei and Li, 2013). Literature on Confucian face culture negative effects is limited.

These offer room for further research into how Chinese managers' dress is influenced by Confucian culture. In order to identify and explain how Chinese managers' dress is influenced by Confucian culture, Propositions 6-9 are set up as follows:

**Proposition 6**

Confucian core value system influences brand system in China

**Proposition 7**

Confucian inner quality influences Chinese managers' dress motivation

**Proposition 8**

Confucian face culture influences Chinese managers' dress behaviour.

**Proposition 9**

Chinese managers' dress code is different from Western dress code on some occasions.

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## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

The objective of this research is to explore how symbolic dress affects managers' personal brand, how managers' symbolic dress affects corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences the dress of Chinese managers. The research questions are:

1. To what extent does visual identity present managers' personal brand?
2. To what extent does managers' symbolic dress influence personal brand and corporate brand?
3. How does Confucian culture influence personal and corporate brand from the perspective of managers' dress in China?

The previous literature review has identified some research gaps. Proposition1 (managers' personal brands are part of corporate brand) is to fill the gap on the relationship between personal brand and corporate brand. Proposition2 (Visual identity is an important communication means for personal branding) is to fill the gap on relationship between dress and visual identity. Proposition3 (Managers' symbolic dress as part of visual identity, reflects internal personal brand) is to fill the gap on the relationship between managers' dress and internal personal brand. Proposition4 (Managers' symbolic dress as part of visual identity, reflects external personal brand) is to fill the gap on the relationship between managers' dress and external personal brand. Proposition5 (Managers' symbolic dress as part of visual identity, reflects corporate brand) is to fill the gap on the relationship between managers' dress and corporate brand. Proposition6 (Confucian inner quality and outer etiquette system influences inner core value and outer visual identity brand system in China) is to fill the gap on the relationship between Confucian system and brand system. Proposition7 (Confucian inner quality influences Chinese managers'

dress motivation) is to fill the gap on the relationship between Confucian core value and Chinese managers' dress motivation. Proposition8(Confucian face culture influences Chinese managers' dress behaviour) is to fill the gap on the relationship between Confucian face culture and Chinese managers' dress behaviour. Proposition9 (Chinese managers' dress code is different from Western dress code on some occasions) is to fill the gap on the difference between Chinses managers' dress code and Western managers' dress code.

The objective of this research is to explore how visual identity affects personal brand, how symbolic dress affects managers' personal brand and corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influents on dress of Chinese managers. Based on the literature review, in order to answer the research questions, the conceptual framework is developed as follows (See Figure 2.6).

**Figure 2.6** Influence of Confucianism on Personal and Corporate Brand from the Perspective of Manager's Dress in China



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From the perspective of marketing, visual identity is an important tool for presenting corporate brand. At the same time, personal visual identity is what clients can interpret as managers' personal brand. Dress is one of the most visible visual identities.

From the perspective of social psychology, symbolic dress is the expression of self-concept. It directly affects the degree of self-confidence. At the same time, it is the basis for interpretation by others, including interpretation of managers' personal characteristics, qualifications, professionalism, position, industry, and so on. It is therefore an important part of personal brand.

From the perspective of culture, Confucianism influences on Chinese managers both in inner quality and outer dress etiquette (face culture). At the spiritual level, Chinese managers are in pursuit of the image of “*jun zi*” (gentleman): an internal pursuit to make a contribution to corporation and country; and an external pursuit through dress and behaviour image like a “*jun zi*”. The expression of symbolic dress is also in the doctrine of moderation, paying attention to the feelings of others, and harmony with others and the environment.



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## **3. Research Methodology and Methods**

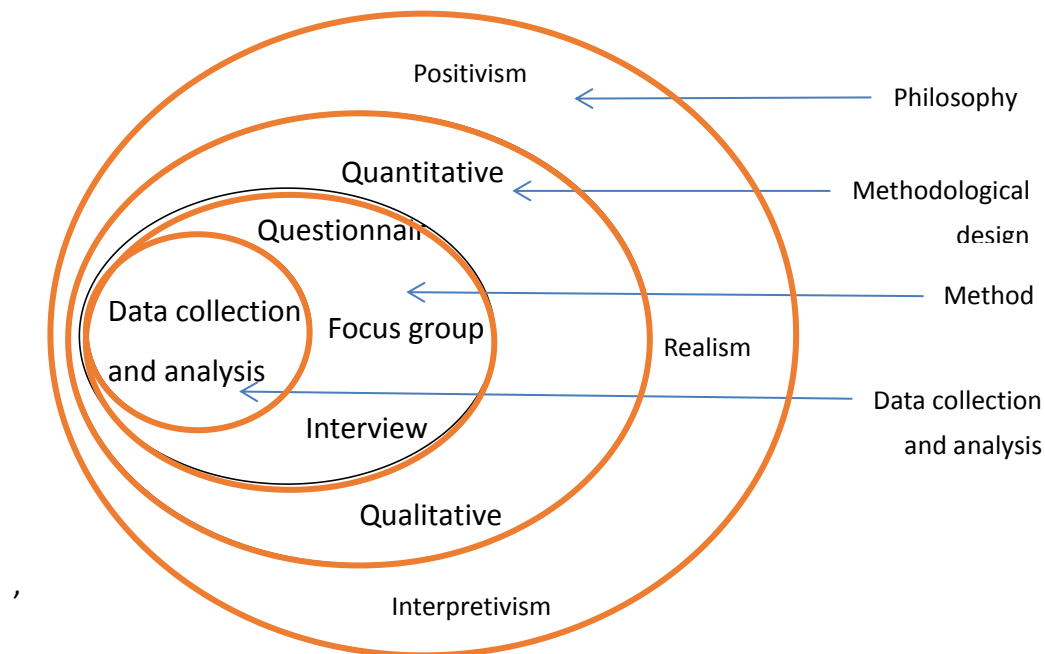
### **3.1 Research Methodology Research**

According to Fisher (2010), methodology is generally a guiding system for solving a problem, with specific components such as phases, tasks, methods, techniques and tools. Methodology produces all kinds of philosophical questions about what it is possible for researchers to know and how valid their claims to knowledge might be. Saunders et al. (2016) defines a methodology as a strategy which implies a subdivision of the development process. It can be defined also as the analysis of the principles of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline or the systematic study of methods that are, can be or have been applied within a discipline. Methodologies allow knowledge to be stored, systematised, disseminated and exchanged.

#### **3.1.1 Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge. Saunders et al. (2016) described the methodological approach as “the onion”, which draws a clear thinking frame for the author to understand methodology and determine the appropriate methods of data collection and analysis (See Figure 3.1). It is very important for the author to learn to use philosophical thinking and choose suitable methodologies to work on this study.

**Figure 3.1** Methodological Approach



The matrix developed by Fisher (2010) can help the author to understand and make choice on methodologies in a matrix with two dimensions (See Figure 3.2): 1) Whether human subjectivity is recognised or ignored; 2) Whether what is being researched is thought to have an objective existence (realism) or focuses on the subjective meaning that individuals and societies use to make sense of their world (nominalism).

**Figure 3.2** Fisher's matrix

	Non-recognition of the relevance of human subjectivity	Recognition of the relevance of human subjectivity
Ontological realism	Positivism	Methodological pluralism Realist research Critical realism Standpoint research Action research
Ontological nominalism	Not a possible combination	Interpretivism

Source: Fisher (2010)

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### **Epistemological Assumption for this Study**

Three types of research assumptions include epistemology (assumption about human knowledge), ontology (about the realities you encounter in the research), and axiology (the extent and ways you own values in the research) (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Epistemology concerns assumptions about knowledge, what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge, and how we can communicate knowledge to others (Saunders et al., 2016).

The objective of the study is to explore how a manager's dress impacts on his or her personal brand, and how Confucian culture influences managers' dress in China, and the context of brand, personal brand, symbolic dress, and Confucian culture means different types of knowledge. Therefore, the philosophical thinking of epistemological assumptions are adopted in this research.

### **Interpretivism for this Study**

Five major philosophies in business and management include: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism.

Interpretivism developed as a critique of positivism but from a subjectivist perspective. It emphasizes that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings. Interpretivists study these meanings. The purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understandings, and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders et al., 2016).

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The objective of the interpretive approach is both to understand the subjective experience of individuals and to explain the point of view of the subjective directly involved in a social process (Bryman and Bell, 2007). An interpretive position believes that reality is socially constructed. It means that people's "understanding of 'reality' is not a simple account of what is; rather, it is something that people in societies and groups form their interpretation of reality, which is influenced by their values and their way of seeing the world" (Fisher, 2010). It could be seen that interpretivist researchers take existing principles and relevant information for business as an approach to generating more knowledge and to doing business.

The purpose of this study about dress for personal brand is to create new meanings about symbolic dress and personal visual identity. The research about Confucian cultural influence is to create new meanings about Chinese managers' dress identity. Therefore, interpretivism philosophy is adopted in this study.

### **3.1.2 Research Methods for this Study**

There are three methodological choices: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. One way of differentiating quantitative research from qualitative research is to distinguish between numeric data (numbers) and non-numeric data (words, images, video clips and other similar material) (Fisher, 2010).

In this way, quantitative is often used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as a questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates or use numerical data. In contrast, qualitative is often used a synonym for any data collection technique (such as an interview) or data analysis procedure (such

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as categorizing data) that generates or uses non-numerical data (Silverman 1993; Saunders et al., 2016).

Qualitative research is often associated with an interpretive philosophy. It is interpretive because researchers need to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Since the aim of this research is to find the meanings of managers' dress for personal brand and the meanings of Confucian culture influence on the dress of Chinese managers, it is necessary to collect non-numeric data (such as words or images). Therefore, qualitative research design is adopted in this study.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

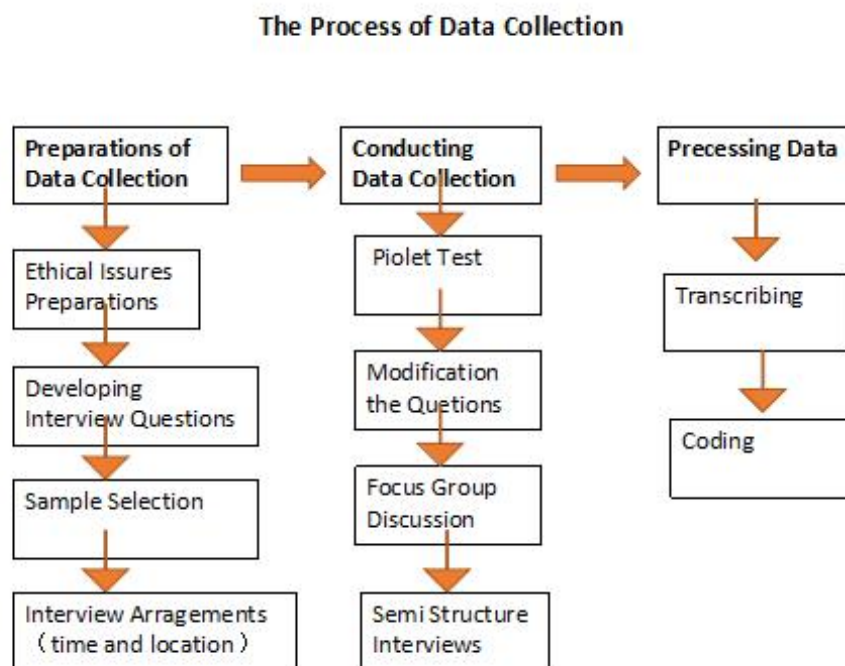
This study needs to explain the impression gained through interpreting people's appearance, rather than some external reality; it will therefore mainly use epistemology as assumptions, the interpretive approach as methodology and the qualitative approach as research method, which includes image-based research, focus group research, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

### **3.2.1 Data Collection Process for this Study**

The process of data collection for this study includes preliminary preparations of data collection, conducting data collection and processing data. The preliminary preparation step includes question design for semi-structured focus group discussion and interview, sample selection for focus groups and in-depth interviews, arranging

the schedule for focus groups and interviews, and deciding the place for focus groups and interviews. The data collection step includes pilot tests and modification, semi-structured questions, conducting three focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. The processing data step includes data transcribing and coding (See Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3** The process of data collection



The participants for focus groups and interviews are drawn from the author's exclusive dress etiquette seminars or workshops. The author often gives a half-day speech about business etiquette and professional image for the CEO course in Tsinghua University, Peking University, and also for companies and government organizations. To get further personal guidance for improving their professional dress image, some students attended the 3-to-5-day VIP professional image course in the author's training studio (Grace Image and Etiquette Studio) to enhance their image. They are CEOs and senior managers of companies, senior leaders of the government, and other professionals, such as university teachers, lawyers, and doctors.

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For better modifying interview questions and time arrangement details, two pilot tests were taken before formal focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

### **3.2.2 Image-based Question Design**

#### **Image-based Research Method**

Over the last three decades, qualitative research has given serious thought to using images with words to enhance the understanding of human conditions, signs, and symbols. The issues of representation, trustworthiness, interpretation, and reflexivity are highly contested in visual and non-visual research. Image-based research appears more relevant to the wider research community if there are shared problems to be resolved cumulatively. “Images provide researchers with an alternative to the way we have perceived data in the past” (Banks, 1998).

Visual images “provide researchers with a different order of data and more importantly an alternative to the way we have perceived data in the past”, “Images allow us to make statements which cannot be made by words” and these “images enlarge our consciousness” (Harper, 1998). Visual culture incorporates everything we do “because everything we do includes navigating the things we see” (Shirato and Webb, 2004). Image-based research provides a more intuitive approach.

#### **Image-based Question Design for this Study**

Since corporate brand identity, personal brand identity, and manager’s dress in this research can all be interpreted by showing visual image elements, therefore, to get a

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general idea of whether different dress presents different personal and corporate brands, the author adopted the image-based research method for designing the semi-structured focus group discussion and in- depth interviews.

The purpose of data collection question design through image-based research is to understand the dress status of contemporary Chinese managers, the trends of Chinese managers' dress since the 1990s, how managers dress presents personal brand and corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences Chinese manager dress behaviour. Four image-based figures (Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7) were designed for semi-structured focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

**Figure 3.4** The unique symbol design presents product brand visual identity



Figure 3.4 Presents visual symbol designs of some representative products in different fields. For example, Starbucks' unique visual symbols make the brand stand out in coffee products. Rolex' unique visual symbols make the brand stand out in watch products. Chanel's unique visual symbols make the brand stand out in fashion products.



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Figure 3.5 presents four Chinese senior managers from the author's CEO image training courses. Mr 1 and Mr 2 are typical male senior managers and Ms 1 and Ms 2 are typical female managers in China. Mr 1 and Ms 1 represent the first category of managers who lacked sensitivity in aesthetic and identifying function; and Mr 2 and Ms 2 represent the category who have a certain sense of the aesthetic and identify the function when dressing. Most of the first category were born in the 1960s to mid-1970s. They grew up in a period of poverty, and usually had less awareness of dress aesthetic and identity. But some of the second category, who had education in the West, multinational work experience, or engaged in culture and art or related job, or had undertaken the executives image training had got some sense of dressing for the occasion.

The third set of images (Figure 3.6) shows two contrasting uniforms (before design, and after design) of sales managers, which present different visual identity for corporate brand. Figure 3.6 presents perception photos of two sales manager teams. Team 1 wears low-quality dress with no indication of the brand culture. Team2 wears high quality and well designed dress, which clearly shows the brand culture.

The fourth part of image-based research takes a famous Chinese entrepreneur, Jack Ma (Figure 3.7) as an example. Jack Ma is the chairperson and CEO of Alibaba Group. He started his career in the 1990s and founded Alibaba in 1999. In 2016, Alibaba become the largest online retail company in the world. With the growth of his career and corporate brand, his dress style has undergone major changes. From conservative simplicity, to fashion personality, and then to the standard business dress code, he now follows a high-quality standard business dress code with Chinese elements. In the 1990s Jack Ma wore a loose short-sleeved shirt as his "formal dress" for business meetings, when China was just opening the door and still in poverty (Figure 3.7 Ma1). In the early 2000s managers dress began to include more elements of fashion trends to show personality. Jack May chose a brightly coloured sweater as

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his “formal dress” at a business conference (Figure 3.7 Ma2). In the early 2010s, with the Alibaba brand growing, Jack Ma began to wear a sports jacket as his “formal dress” in international meetings (Figure 3.7 Ma3). After 2015, Alibaba was becoming more international, and Jack Ma dressed in standard Western business suits (Figure 3.7 Ma4). In 2016, Alibaba became the number one online retailer, and Jack Ma wore high-quality fitted suits with Chinese elements at an international meeting and international social event (Figure 3.7 Ma5).

According to Jack Ma’s changing style, the author divides Chinese managers dress into five styles: 1) simple and uniform quality and style (Figure 3.7 Ma1); 2) blindly following fashion (Figure 3.7 Ma2); 3) partially following the dress code (Figure 3.7 Ma3); 4) following the dress code (Figure 3.7 Ma4); 5) following the dress code with Chinese elements (Figure 3.7 Ma5).

In Style 1 he wears a short-sleeved casual shirt. The style is conservative but looks low quality in fabric and construction. In Style 2, he wears a candy-coloured sweater with a contrasting coloured scarf. It looks fashionable and has personality, but it does not look professional. In Style 3, he wears a luxury brand jacket with a loose red sweater. It looks uncoordinated, and does not meet the business dress code. In Style 4 he has moved on to fitted, high-quality suits. Style, colour, fabric, and fit all follow the business dress code. Style 5 shows a high-quality business suit but now incorporating Chinese elements.

In this research, participants were first asked to describe the characteristics of the dress seen in each picture (including: how much it follows the dress code, the level of quality, the level of contemporary sense, the level of overall coordination, the level of appropriate application of Chinese elements). Participants were then asked: “If you do not know the background of the person on the photo, according to the way he dresses, please interpret his personal brand characteristics and corporate brand

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characteristics”. For example, picture 1: the level of professionalism, the level of management ability, the level of position, the stage of the corporate brand, the size of the company, the degree of trust by clients in the product he represents. The author designed the survey forms and the participants could give a detailed interpretation of the managers’ personal brand and corporate brand through the way he dressed.

### **3.2.3 Data Collection through Focus Group Discussion**

#### **Focus Group Discussion Method**

The focus group uses a semi-structured interview designed for small groups of unrelated individuals, formed by an investigator and led in a group discussion on some particular topic (Schutt, 2003). Interviewees may use words or ideas to ascribe to various phenomena to probe these meanings, which will add significance and depth to the data. A group of people are brought together to have a free-flowing, but focused, discussion on a particular topic. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), focus group discussion can have a number of appropriate uses: obtaining general background information about a topic of interest; stimulating new ideas and creative concepts; or interpreting previously obtained qualitative results. The focus group discussion is needed where it is necessary to understand the reasons for the decisions that the research participants have taken, or to understand what lies behind their attitudes and opinions. It also provides an opportunity to “probe” answers, where the researcher wants the interviewees to explain, or build on their responses (Saunders, et al., 2016).

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Interpretivist researchers use focus groups as a means to construct meanings through social interaction and sense making about a topic. A typical focus group session consists of a small number of participants under the guidance of a facilitator, usually called the moderator. Krueger (1994) suggests that for complex problems focus group size should be kept to no more than about seven participants. Thus, larger groups may be divided into a series of smaller focus groups. The informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group is intended to encourage participants to speak freely and fully about behaviours, attitudes, and opinions they possess.

Participants are generally allowed to say anything they like in focus group sessions. The focus group, therefore, is considered to be naturalistic (Gordon and Langmaid, 1988). This enables the researcher to learn or confirm not just the facts but the meaning behind the facts. This conveys a major advantage of the focus group method: the production of insight.

### **Focus Group Discussion in this Research**

This study not only needs to know how different dress presents different impressions of personal and corporate brand, but also to further explore the causes and impact of this impression. Compared with the previous quantitative research (Document 4) questionnaires, semi-structured group discussion is very helpful for further exploration into why different people dress differently and why the same person dresses differently at different times. Therefore, the author uses the focus group research method.

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Following Krueger's (1994) advice about the maximum size of focus groups dealing with complex issues, the author divided the 12 participants into two small groups of six for pilot tests. The focus group discussions were held at Grace International Image Institute from 1.30 to 4.30 p.m. on 15, and 22 January 2017. (See Table 3.1)

**Table 3.1** Participants of pilot test for focus group discussion (January 2017)

No.	Name	Position/age/Gender
1-1	Ms. An	Manager of medical company/ 49 /F
1-2	Ms. Bai	Manager of an international motor corporation/42/F
1-3	Mr. Chen	Manager of a Sino-foreign joint venture/52/M
1-4	Mr. Deng	Manager of a culture creative company/42 /M
1-5	Ms Feng	National first-class actress/43/F
1-6	Mr. Hu	Manager of a large private enterprise/47 /M
1-7	Ms Lu	Lawyer for 8 years /36 /F
1-8	Ms. Su	Doctor-in-charge /55//F
1-9	Mr. Wang	CEO of real estate company/55 /M
1-10	Ms. Xu	Manager of Insurance company/49 /F
1-11	Ms.Yu	General manager of a beauty product company/43 /F
1-12	Mr. Zhang	National banker/50 /M

After pilot tests, the author invited 10 new participants into two small groups for formal study. The number of participants of formal focus groups was similar to the pre-study groups. The formal focus groups were held from 1.30 to 4.30 p.m. on 1 and 5 March 2017(See Table 3.2).

Since all the participants were Chinese, and the training took place in Beijing, the language of the discussion was Chinese. Questions were asked in an interactive

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group setting where participants were free to talk with other group members.

**Table 3.2** Participants of formal focus group discussion (March 2017)

No	Name	Position/Age /Gender
2-1	Ms Li	Manager of real estate company/ 39 /F
2-2	Mr Jian	Manager of electrical company/52/M
2-3	Mr Gu	Manager of chemical company/58/M
2-4	Ms Wang	Manager of packaging materials company /38/M
2-5	Mr Zhao	Manager of national bank/52 /M
2-6	Ms Yang	Manager of media company/46 /F
2-7	Ms Chen	CEO of Automotive Group/53 /F
2-8	Dr Zhang	CEO of energy company/54 /M
2-9.	Dr Jiang	Manager of railway construction company/49/M
2-10	Ms Yu	CEO of cosmetics company/50 /F

Since previous studies (Document 3 and Document 4) focused on “different dress reflects different brand visual identity”, it was planned to put more focus on Confucian cultural influence in this research in the pilot test, but some new participants were very interested in reviewing previous research about “Dress presenting personal brand” and “Dress presenting corporate brand” before discussing Confucian cultural influence. Therefore, in formal focus group research, to warm up the focus group discussion, the author showed the four group images (Figure 3.4, Figure 3.5, Figure 3.6, and Figure 3.7).

After warm-up time, the discussion mainly focused on how the Confucian system influences brand system in China, how Confucian values influence the motivation of Chinese managers’ dress, how Confucian face culture influence Chinese managers’

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dress behaviour, and the difference between Chinese managers' dress code and western business dress codes on certain occasions.

### **3.2.4 Data Collection through In-depth Interview**

#### **Interview Research Method**

Interviews can be classified into three categories: open-ended, pre-coded and semi-structured (Fisher, 2010). An open interview is usually an informal conversation whose idea is straightforward. A pre-coded interview, in contrast, is controlled by the researcher and is where the interviewer generally reads from a prepared script and the respondents are asked to choose a number of the options for the given questions. Semi-structured interviews fall between these two extremes. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a guideline of questions.

#### **Interview for this Study**

In the focus group, the participants discussed the reasons for how one interprets others. At the same time, some participants wanted to share their own experience with a lot of emotion. Since time was limited for the focus group, for those participants who wanted to share more of their own experience, the author conducted in-depth interviews at another time. The purpose of the interview is to further explore the impact of the dress on personal and corporate brand, and the impact of Confucian culture on Chinese managers' dress by listening to the story of their experience. To make the participants feel at ease the author adopted the open-ended method.

The purpose of the interview in this research was to gain deeper understanding of how Confucian culture influences dress through one-to-one deep interview. Every interview participant was asked open questions, such as: Tell me about your story or experience with dress; What are the important occasions for you? What will you

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wear on these important occasions and why? Do you think that Confucian face culture has any effect on managers dress in your experience? Do you think that Confucian moderation culture has any effect on managers dress in your experience?

The interviews did not have fixed questions and participants could give their answers freely, so they could also be called open-ended interviews. Because the questions were open-ended and the participants were asked if they wanted to add anything, it was possible for them to make comments about a topic at a time other than when a specific question was asked.

Part of the interviews were recorded by recorder, with participants' permission. Participants who did not want to be recorded electronically were recorded in writing.

The author invited eleven participants from the focus group (January -March 2017) as interviewees, according to industry distribution and participant enthusiasm. Table 3.3 gives basic information about them.

**Table 3.3** Interview participants (January -March,2017)

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No.	Name	Position/age/Gender
3-1	Ms. An	Manager of medical company/ 49 /F
3-2	Ms. Bai	Manager of an international motor corporation/42/F
3-3	Mr. Chen	CEO of a Sino-foreign joint venture/52/M
3-4	Mr. Deng	Manager of a culture creative company/42 /M
3-5	Mr. Wang	CEO of real estate company/55 /M
3-6	Ms. Xu	Manager of Insurance company, /49 /F
3-7	Mr. Zhang	National banker/50 /M
3-8	Ms Lu	Lawyer for 8 years /36 /F
3-9	Dr Zhang	CEO of energy company/54 /M



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3-10	Dr Jiang	Manager of railway construction company/49/M
3-11	Ms Yu	CEO of cosmetics company/50 /F

Interviews took place during lunch and dinner times on 18, 19, 21, 29, and 30 January, and 4, 5, and 11 February, with more interviews on 1, 2, and 3 March 2017. Each interview lasted 1.5–2 hours. The interview location was Grace international Image Institute. The interview language was Chinese.

### 3.2.5 Data Collection Summary

In the process of exploring how managers’ dress impacts on personal brand and corporate brand, and how Confucian culture influences managers dress in China, the author combined three methods for accessing research data.

As a first step, the author used image-based method and designed the focus group discussion and interview questions. Secondly, a pilot test was conducted for modifying questions. Thirdly, the focus group research method was applied for deeper research into the reasons why manager care about dress code, how dress impacts on personal brand and corporate brand, and the influence of Confucian culture. Fourthly, the interview method was used for even deeper research. The author invited participants one-to-one to share their own stories about dress on occasions and how Confucian culture influences dress.

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## **4. Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter consists of six parts: 1) Data analysis, 2) How visual identity presents the brand; 3) How manager's dress presents personal brand; 4) How manager's dress presents corporate brand; 5) How Confucian culture influences Chinese manager's dress; and 6) Contributions to the research.

### **4.1 Data Analysis for this study**

Data analysis includes preparation for data analysis, and the selection of appropriate analytical technique for this study.

#### **Preparation for Data Analysis**

The focus group discussion and interview were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Transcribing not only included what participants said, but also the way they said (non-verbal communication). Each participant's points were saved as separate word-processed files. Coding all the collected data according to the research questions included identifying themes, dividing the research materials into units and allocating the units to the themes.

#### **Thematic Analysis for this Study**

Thematic Analysis offers a systematic yet flexible and accessible approach to analyse qualitative data (Braun and Clark, 2006). Thematic Analysis can be used to help in the following: 1) comprehending qualitative data; 2) integrating related data drawn from different transcripts and notes; 3) identifying key themes from data set for further exploration; 4) producing a thematic description of data; 5) developing a test explanation and theories based on apparent thematic relationships; 6) drawing and verify conclusions (Saunders et, al., 2016). Therefore, this study adopted Thematic Analysis.

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## **Searching and Refining Themes**

Searching for themes is part of the overall process of condensing raw data, which involves making judgements about data and looking to see how the code might fit together to allow further analysis. This stage of analysing data involves searching for relationships in long lists of codes to create a short list of themes that related to the research questions. In the refining theme stage, the author re-read and reorganized the data under each relevant theme, combining or separating some initial data.

## **4.2 Personal Brand in China**

### **4.2.1 Brand-orientation in China**

According to Pavitt (2000) and Lury (2004), the term “brand” has existed since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In China, recently, there are three stages in the development of brand awareness. The first stage is that people begin to choose goods according to brand; the second stage is that enterprises begin to upgrade from OEM (original entrusted manufacture for international brand) to having own brand; and the third stage is that managers’ personal brand becomes an important part of corporate brand.

### **Choosing Products According to the Brand**

Thirty years ago, during the period of planned economy in China, a period of product shortage, demand for products exceeded supply. Now, since entering the market economy, shortages have already become the past, replaced by excess production capacity (Xu, 2007). The surplus of products means that consumers have more choices, and the globalization of the economy means that consumers not only have more domestic products to choose from, they can also choose many international brands. Faced with the oversupply of the market, Chinese consumers have begun to choose products according to the brand.

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In group discussion, participants gave the following views:

*“In the store when facing a variety of options for a certain product, for example, shampoo, I usually choose well-known brands, such as Pantene or Sassoon.”*

(Participant 2-1)

*“Among the fast food restaurants with many choices, I still prefer to go to McDonald's. Besides enjoying McDonald's 'fast', the salesman's playful hats and lively costumes make me feel relaxed and energetic.”* (Participant 2-4)

As global branded products gradually enter our lives, the concept of the brand has gradually become part of our lives in China. As Participant 2-1 shared, when facing a variety of shampoos in the store, she is usually attracted by well-known brand products, such as Pantene or Sassoon. And as Participant 2-4 shared, she would prefer McDonald's among the fast food restaurants because of the attraction of the waking up of the big “M”. The power of the brand is not only reflected in the product function, but also in the brand visual image and brand culture.

### **Company Gradually Brand-oriented in China**

In group discussion, participants gave the following views:

*“In the early days of reform and opening up, many Chinese enterprise were OEM. In the recent years, many enterprises have begun to cultivate their own brands. Nowadays, there more and more domestic brands in stores.”* (Participant 2-7)

*“In deed, a few years ago, if I went to the store to buy shampoo, the first thing I thought of was some international brands, such as Hafez or L'Oreal. However, in recent year, many Chinese brands have begun to appear. Because of the use of natural materials and medicinal functions, they are very popular, such as Bawang black hair shampoo, and Yu Nan Bai Yao” hair generating shampoo.”* (Participant 2-9)

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*“In the early years of reform and opening up, when it comes to fast food, I only think of McDonald and KFC. Now there are more domestic fast food brands which suitable for Chinese taste. For example, ‘Steam kung Fu’. I also like the logo design of Taiji Kung Fu, which reminds me of thousands of year health care wisdom in China.”*  
(Participant 2-3)

A brand is a product, service or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services, or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and usually marketed (Keeley,1992; Hankinson and Cowking, 1993; Keller, 2014). When supply exceeds demand, customers will give preference to products that have unique brand characteristics or are more attractive. As Participant 2-9 shared when facing a variety of shampoos in the store, he is usually attracted by well-known Chinese brand products, such as “Bawang” or “Yunanbaiyao” because of the Chinese medicinal functions. And as Participant 2-3 shared, he would prefer Steam Kung Fu's among the fast food restaurants because of the Chinese health preservation concept and the attractive of the Taiji Kung Fu logo design. Brand is a combination of features (what the product is), customer benefits (what needs and wants the product meets) and values (what the customer associates with the product)( Pearson et al., 2014).

“Corporate brand” has been growing fast in the past 30 years in China. Chinese enterprises have gone through three stages. In the first stage, "Made in China" meant low-cost, low-quality. In the second stage, "Made in China" became the foundry of many international brands, having the world's largest production and processing plants. In the third stage, in recent years, for better survival and development, some Chinese companies have been gradually moving from a manufacturing orientation to a brand orientation.

About company brand-orientation in China, in the group discussions, participants gave the following views:

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*“In the IT product and service field, I will say Huawei Technology Company. Its unique customized technology services brand culture, attracting customers in many countries.” (Participant 2-2)*

*“In the online retail field, I will say Alibaba. Jack Ma’s brand creativity of ‘not difficult to do business online’ helped hundreds of thousands of people to start their online business.” (Participant 2-7)*

A strong brand plays a very important role in the survival and development of businesses. Strong brands enjoy customer loyalty, the potential to charge premium prices, and considerable brand power to support new product and service launches (Ghodeswar, 2008). Some Chinese companies with strong brands are growing fast, Participant 2-2 shared Huawei in IT, and Participant 2-7 shared retail areas of Alibaba in online retail.

#### **4.2.2 Personal Brand is an Important Part of Corporate Brand**

About the relationship of managers’ personal brand and corporate brand, in group discussion participants gave the following views:

*“I think the company leader is the best spokesperson for the company.” (Participant 2-3)*

*“The leaders of the leading global brands all have unique personal brands. For example, in the field of IT, Apple's Steve Jobs and Microsoft's Bill Gates.” (Participant 2-2)*

*“For some successful Chinese companies, the leader’s personal brand is also plays an important role , for example, Jack Ma is the best spokesperson of Alibaba Group.*

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*Dong Mingzhu is the best spokesperson of Gree air-conditioning Group.” (Participant 2-10)*

Much like successful global product brands, a personal brand demonstrates the compelling value that an individual delivers by way of his or her unique combination of experience, background, and expertise (Horton, 2011; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017). For companies, brands provide a way to make their products or service distinctive. For individuals, personal brands also allow them to identify themselves and make a personal statement about who they are (McMurrian and Washburn, 2008).

Some existing literatures discussed the relationship between product brand and corporate brand. Corporate brand can be viewed as a corporate brand constellation, or gestalt (Balmer, 2012). The gestalt corporate brand includes all products brands and service brands (Brexendorf and Keller 2017).

From the research, as Participant 2-2 shared that the company leader could best play the role of spokesperson for the company. In recent years, there have been a number of corporate leaders starting to build up personal brand as part of corporate branding.

In the global market, as Participant 2-2 shared, Steve Jobs’s personal brand was an important part of the Apple corporate brand, and Bill Gates’s personal brand was an important part of the Microsoft corporate brand.

As Participant 2-10 shared, that in recent years, some successful Chinese companies, leaders also played an important role for their corporate brand. Through Jack Ma’s presentations around the world, he has not only enhanced his personal brand, but also expanded the influence of Alibaba's brand in the world. Dong Ming-zhu's “Let

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the World Fall in Love with ‘Made in China’” advertisement not only enhances the personal brand, but also expands the brand image of Gree Electric Products.

Shaping manager’s personal brand has gradually attracted attention in China. Managers’ personal brands are becoming an important part of their corporate brand. The gestalt corporate brand not only includes all products brands and service brands, but also includes managers’ personal brands.

### **4.2.3 Contribution to the Research on Brand and Branding**

The literature shows that corporate brand, as constellation, or gestalt, includes all of a company’s product brands and service brands (Balmer, 2012; Brexendorf and Keller 2017). But there is very limited literature that mentions whether the constellation includes personal brand.

### **Answer for the Proposition 1**

This study filled the gap in branding. Managers’ personal brands are an important part of the corporate brand constellation. And managers’ personal branding is an important part of corporate branding.

## **4.3 Visual Identity Makes Brands Stand Out**

### **4.3.1 Visual Identity for Product Branding**

In the focus group discussion research, the logos in Figure 3.4 were first chosen by participants among their competitors because of their unique aesthetic design.

*“The Rolex logo appears to have a crown on the top. Therefore, these brands make a deep impression on customers’ minds all over the world. If I want to buy a watch, I will first think of this brand. Because it looks regal and important.”* (Participant



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2-9).

*“From the trademark of Nike we can image the dynamics of the sport products.”*  
(Participant 2-4)

*“From the double ‘C’ of Chanel you can imagine the elegant of the fashion products.”* (Participant 2-7)

*“From the symbol of Starbucks, such as logo, cups, and interior design, we can sense the fragrance of coffee and the value of the corporate.”* (Participant 2-5)

*“Appropriate aesthetic design can make these brands more impressive.”* (Participant 2-10)

Visual Identity is the design features of a product, such as colour, shape and form, which contribute to brand value, allowing customers to attribute meaning to the brand (Karjalainen and Snelders, 2010). It has been conceptualized through ‘recognition’ and ‘categorization’ of brands (Warell, 2015). Visual Identity is a very important means of communication for corporate branding. Customers are attracted by a brand’s visual identity and these visual features can separate the brand from others (Temporal, 2000). Participant 2-9 shared that the crown of Rolex made a deep impression on him which separated the brand from other watches. Participant 2-4 shared that from the trademark of Nike he can image the dynamics of Nike products, which separated the brand from other sport products. Participant 2-7 shared that from the double ‘C’ of Chanel she can imagine the elegance of Chanel products, which separated the brand from other fashion brand products.

Visual Identity is a very important means of communication for corporate branding.

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Brand identity can give customers a good first impression and help them know more about the company's products, services, processes and corporate culture (Horton, 2011). Corporate brand identity is what the corporate brand is seen to be, corporate name, corporate logo, corporate slogan, packaging and other visual design (Anholt , 2007; Urde and Greyer, 2016). As Participant2-5 shared that from the symbol design of Starbucks, such as logo, cups, and interior, he can sense the fragrance of coffee and the value of the corporate.

Visual identity can make the product brand stand out. Therefore, it is a very important means for product branding.

#### **4.3.2 Visual Identity for Personal Branding**

Visual Identity is a very important tool for product branding. The unique design of logo, product appearance, packaging, and product advertising, all help to enhance consumer recognition of the product brand. Similar findings have been obtained in group discussions and interviews.

Some participants believe that personal brands, just like product brands, face being interpreted by customers from the outside to the inside. Customers will infer the intrinsic characteristics of the managers' personal brand from the appearance elements they see.

Participants 2-4 said : “ *Similar to the appearance elements of product brand seen by consumers, for example, logo, product shape and colour, packing, personal brand also has some appearance elements that are interpreted by customers. For example, when dealing with customers, managers' facial expression, posture, behaviour.*”

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Participants 2-1 said *“Appearance elements of personal brand that people can see also include dress, hairstyle, and even makeup for ladies etc.”*

People often rely on visual signals to make assumptions about a person's competence, personality, habits, tastes, social life, friends and dress. What can be seen related to the characteristics of an individual is personal brand identity (Wilson and Blumenthal, 2008). Participants 2-4 shared that what can be seen related to the characteristics of an individual includes all *appearance elements*. For example, when dealing with customers, managers' facial expression, posture, behaviour". Participants 2-1 added that appearance elements of personal brand that people can see also include dress, hairstyle, and even makeup for women, etc.

Regarding facial expressions and eye contact, participants believed that it affected the customer's trust in personal brand.

Participants 2-5 shared his point *“I work in a bank, and when I receive a company manager who comes to handles the loan business, if I see the person with a focused eye contact, it is easier for me to build trust in him. If I see an inattentive eye, I will arouse vigilance and check more details.”*

Participants 3-10 shared her experience *“Once I was invited to a cross-border executive reception. Since I understand that the activity is a good opportunity to gain business, despite the heavy workload in that day, without changing clothing, I rushed to the reception. When arrived, I realized that my casual dress did not fit with the reception. An elegant lady beside me greeted to me and introduced herself. When she knew that I was a senior executive of a construction company she was very excited and said that their company was planning to find suppliers to undertake the*

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*expansion of plant. Since I felt no confident with my terrible dress, I did not look at her directly. Soon the lady seemed to lose interest in me and talk to the guests on the other side. Now in retrospect, it must be my inattentive eye that made me lose the business opportunity.”*

Personal brand image is the perception of the brand that exists in the mind of consumer or audience. It is virtually the same thing as reputation, and it may or may not match the brand identity (Parmentier et al., 2013; Molyneux, 2015).

When Participants 2-5 shared his experience in bank, if he saw the customer (a company manager come to apply for a loan) had focused eye contact, he would be find it easier to trust in the manager. If he saw an inattentive eye, it aroused his vigilance and he checked more details for handling loan business. Similarly, if Participants 3-10 communicates to the potential costumer with eye contact, she does not miss a business opportunity.

Regarding the visual impression of body posture, participants believed that the correct standing posture would leave a serious and responsible impression on the customers, and energetic walking would remind the customer of the intrinsic characteristics of positive and efficiency.

Participants 2-2 said: *“When I go to a store as a consumer, I prefer to find a salesperson who is upright and energetic. Seeing a good standing posture will make me believe that he/she is more conscientious in his/her work, and a vigorous walking will make me believe that he/she is more efficient in his/her work.”*

Participant 2-7 said: *“As a high-end automobile brand, our corporate culture is to*

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*provide customers with high quality automotive products and first-class service. We are very concerned about customer feedback to the sales managers. It is found that sales managers who are very popular with customers have some common characteristics: full of spirit, always let customers see a positive and efficient state.”*

Strategic personal branding is closing the gap between the desired identity, image, and reputation for manager’s personal brands from the stakeholder and organizational perspectives (Bendisch et al.,2013; Schlosser et al., 2017). When attending the reception, Participants 3-10’s desired identity was confident and trustworthy. But the potential customer’s perspective was unconfident, absent minded, and untrustworthy by seeing her inattentive eye. Participants 2-2 and Participants 2-7 shared that in the store sale managers should be full of spirit, always letting customers see a positive and efficient state.

Therefore, the strategy of personal branding is closing the gap between what customers see and desired visual identity.

### **4.3.3 Contribution to the Research on Visual Identity**

Some literature shows that visual identity is a very important tool for product branding (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997; Adamson, 2006; Horton, 2011). But there is limited literature about visual identity for personal brand.

### **Answer for the Proposition 2**

This study filled the gap in brand visual Identity. Visual identity is also an important means of personal branding.

## **4.4 Symbolic Dress Presents Personal Brand**

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#### 4.4.1 Dress Presents Internal Personal Brand (self-concept)

Internal personal brand in this study refers to self-concept, and how an individual feels about himself/herself. It includes how dress influences self-confidence, behaviour, and communication.

##### **Manager's Dress Effects his/her Self-confidence**

In the research, when the author showed Mr 1 and Mr 2 in Figure 3.5, and asked which one looked more confident, participants shared their points and experiences.

*"When people wear formal suits, like Mr 2 they will feel more confident."* (Participant 2-1)

Participant 3-9 shared his experience of being at a conference:

*"I did not pay much attention to dress for press conferences in the past. After taking the business dress etiquette course recently, I bought a high-quality suit for this year's roadshow press conference. When I saw myself in the mirror, looking much more professional than before, I felt more powerful. During my presentation I was more confident; during the interview, I felt more open, with everything under control."*

Newton (1976) found that dress can become a tool to make people feel good and produce positive self-appreciation. Mr 2 in a suit looks more confident than Mr 1 in casual wear. This is consistent with the research of Slepian, et al. (2015): "dress formally will enhance confidence", and the research by Rudd and Lennon (2000). When dressed formally, Participant 3-9 felt more confident during a presentation. Dress can become a tool to make people feel good and produce positive self-appreciation (Newton, 1976; Yang, 1989).

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This study about dress the effect of dress on self-confidence focuses more on the business perception. In the process of business negotiation or participating in business bidding, when confronted with powerful opponents, the formality of dress directly affects the confidence of whether they can win or not.

Participant 3-10 shared his experience in negotiations:

*"I often represent my company to participate in business negotiations. Indeed, when meeting a strong competitor, the dress is not only to meet the basic business norms, but also more formal than the other side. If I dress in higher-quality suits than the counterparts, I will feel calm and more confident."*

*"Last month on the first day of a product exhibition, I dressed in a sport jacket which was less formal than some of the visitors, and standing behind the station, I did not feel confident enough when introducing our products. The next day I dressed more formally than most of visitors, and I could introduce our products more confidently."*  
(Participant 3-1)

**Table 4.1** Summary of the results of how manager's dress effects his/her Internal personal brand (self-concept)

Proposition-1	Results of the research	Findings
Manager's dress influence his/her Internal personal brand (self-concept)	1. Manager's dress influence his/her self-confidence. 2. Manager's dress affects a person's behaviour. 3. Manager's dress affects his/her way of communication.	1. The statistic finding score mean is 4.439 2. The statistic finding score mean is 4.891 3. The statistic finding score mean is 4.798

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The finding of Document 4 (Table 4.1) shows the same result about this point. The statistic finding score mean is 4.439. Manager's dress influences his/her self-confidence. Figure 3.5 shows Mr 2 (the man dressed in a darker suit) looks more confident than Mr 1 (the man dressed in a light-coloured casual jacket). The results are similar to the research done by Peluchette and Karl (2006). They examined how different styles of clothing influence self-perceptions of male and female MBA students.

According to Stryker and Burke (2000), "Self" can be divided into the "ideal self" and the "actual self". The ideal self, which is also called the internal identity, is the one people want to become; while the actual self is a more realistic assessment of what we have and what we do not have (ibid).

When Participant3-1 dresses casually, he sees more of his "actual self"; when he dresses formally, he feels closer to his "ideal self", and even thinks that he is the "ideal self". Especially when he in the exhibition public business occasions, the formality of dress directly affects his degree of self-confidence.

According to Kaiser (2000), there are two situations of "ideal self". The first situation is compliant with the standard dress code. A formal suit is the standard dress code on formal occasions, for example Participant 3-1 in exhibitions, Participant 3-10 in business negotiations, Participant 3-9 in conferences and public speaking. Meeting the dress code which belongs to the standard ideal image will be close to most people's "ideal self" and therefore Participant 3-1 and Participant 3-9 can feel confident when their dress is compliant with the standard dress code.

The second situation is based on the other side as a reference. "Better than the other" is the "ideal self". From this point of view, Participant 3-10 could feel confident when



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dressed better than the counterparts. Participant 3-1 could feel confident when dressed better than clients. Wearing formal business dress enhanced participants' feelings of competence and trustworthiness, as well as perceptions of being an authority. Wearing casual style participants feel friendly, but not as productive.

Therefore, for keeping or enhancing confidence in business, manager's dress should follow the dress code, more formal than counterparts, and more formal than clients.

### **Manager's Dress Affects her/his Behaviour**

The finding of Document 4 (Table 4.1) shows manager's dress affects their behaviour. Mr 2 (Figure 3.5) dressed in a high-quality and well-structured jacket shows more authority than Mr 1 dressed in an unstructured low-quality sports jacket. Ms 2 dressed in an elegant jacket poses more confidently than Ms 1 dressed in a casual sweater.

"Dress affects one's ideas about the self (e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs) and self-directed behaviour." The symbolic meaning of certain dress has a psychological suggestion. Adam and Golinsky (2012) found that when dress is worn that has symbolic meaning for the wearer it also has behavioural consequences.

Since dress has symbolic meaning for the wearer, when a person wears a certain style, she/he will take on this meaning and goes into this role. When Ms 2 wears an elegant style, she immediately take on the symbol of elegance and takes on the role of an elegant lady. She would therefore pay more attention to make her manners match the elegant dress. This also applies to Mr 2. When putting on a dark suit, he immediately takes on the symbol of rigour, efficiency, and professionalism. That is

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why he naturally entered a more energetic, responsive and active state.

During interview, Participant 3-4 shared her experiences about how dress affects on behaviour.

*“Before attending the managers etiquette training course, I used to wear sportswear. When wearing casual wear, I usually sit in a chair and casually lean against the back of the chair. Two months ago I took the CEO image training course, and I changed to wearing a well-cut jacket or suits. Recently some of my friends say that when I am dressed in suit, I not only look slender, but also my sitting posture is with more energy than before. Indeed, when wearing a tailored suit, I will pay more attention to make my manners to match my suit.”* (Participant 3-4)

Participant 3-4 will pay more attention to his behaviour and sitting with more energy when he wears a tailored suit. The experience of Participant 3-4 is similar to the literature. For example, there is a significant association between the perception of one’s role and identity when one is dress in a Halloween costume (Miller and Hunt, 1997). Adam and Golinsky (2012) did a test in which they found that a laboratory coat was a cue often used to infer that an individual was attentive and careful. Consequently, they reasoned that if individuals wore lab coats they would perform better on attention-related tasks than individuals not wearing lab coats.

Unlike the literature, this study aims to explore the impact of business attire on the business behaviour of managers on business occasions.

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During interview, Participant 3-9 shared his experiences about dress and action.

*“Whenever I wear a dark blue suit, I seem to naturally enter a more rigorous state. My action will be more agile, the response to the needs of customers will be faster, the service will be better organized.”* (Participant 3-9)

“Dress for success” means when Participant 3-9 dresses like a successful person (Barnard, 2007), he will tend to behave like a successful person. Understanding how dress can impact on behaviour, managers will enhance their behaviour through learning the dress code for important business occasions.

### **Manager’s Dress Affects his/her Way of Communication**

The finding of Document 4 (Table 4.1) shows that when a person dresses well, he/she may receive more praise, become more confident, and be more active in communication.

In the research, participants shared some experiences in business social activities.

*“In business social activities, such as attending a reception, sometimes when I realize that my dress is not coordinated, the whole body seems uncomfortable, and I don’t even know how to stand or sit well, and don’t want to take the initiative to talk with others. ”* (Participant 2-7)

*“When aware that my dress is not formal enough in a conference or social event, I often hide in the corner and will not talk with others. When dressed more elegantly*

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*and appropriately, I like to talk with more people.” (Participant 2-6)*

*“When I am wearing a high-quality fitted suit and a decent tie at a roadshow, I am often praised, and as a speaker and reporter I will be more confident, and in the reception party I am more willing to talk to others.” (Participant 3-9)*

Appropriate dress can bring a glorious feeling and a positive emotional experience so that the wearer becomes more comfortable, pleasant and self-confident (Newton, 1976; Barnard, 2007).

Dress can adjust people’s emotions. When Participant 2-7’s dress is not coordinated, she feels uncomfortable, and far from her “ideal self” and less confident to take the initiative to talk with others. The same applies to Participant 2-6, when she realizes her dress is not formal enough, that means it is far from the “ideal self”. That is why she hides in the corner. Participant 3-9’s appropriate dress helps him to meet the “ideal self”. That is why he has more confidence as a speaker and reporter. And in the reception, he is more willing to talk to other guests. With a positive emotional experience, one is more willing to actively listen and has enthusiasm to actively talk with other people.

In summary, dress is a symbol of a manager’s Internal personal brand (self-concept). Appropriate dress can increase one’s self-confidence, attention to manners, and willingness to communicate with others.

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#### 4.4.2 Dress Affects Manager's External Personal Brand

External personal brand is about how a person is perceived by customers in terms of business position, management ability, and education or professional background level.

##### **Customers Perceive a Manager's Position through his/her Dress**

In the focus group discussion, when the author showed the photos of two women, Ms 1 and Ms 2 (Figure 3.5), to the participants and asked: "According to the images of the two ladies, which one's position level is higher?" almost all participants said "Ms 2".

The author then asked: "If you are the HR manager and the two ladies come to apply for a job, what job do you think Ms 1 can do? Why?"

The participants were very active. *"Cleaner. Because she does not seem to have received higher education."* (Participant 2-7)

*"Babysitter. She looks nice, but she seems to have no professional work background and cannot do complicated work."* (Participant 2-10)

When the author showed the picture of Ms 2 to the group, and asked "What about Ms 2? What job do you think she can do?"

*"Senior Manager of a company. She looks as if she could easily work with the team or could lead the team."* (Participant 2-4)

*"Expert in culture and art. She seems to have a higher artistic accomplishment."*

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(Participant 2-5).

*“Diplomat. She looks very good at communicating.”* (Participant 2-2)

In the interview Participant 3-8 shared her experiences:

*“I am the typical Ms 1. I particularly love to work, in all the work I will do as much as possible to the best. But I do not know why my promotion is always relatively slow. Recently, one of my colleagues, who is eight years younger than me, was appointed as my immediate leader. I thought that the top leadership of the company was unfair to me about this matter.*

*But now, I realized that this was my own problem. If I were the company top leader, I would give priority to Ms 2 as well. As discussed with my classmates, Ms 2 looks more professional, better at communication. These intrinsic qualities I actually have, but my casual unstructured sweater cannot show my professional qualification.”*

The findings of Document 4 (Table 4.2) shows the same result: when a person dresses well, others perceive her/his position to be higher.

**Table 4.2** Summary of how manager’s dress influences external personal brand (interpreted by customers)

Proposition2	Results of the research	Findings
A manager’s dress influences person’s external personal brand	1. Others perceive a manager’s position level through his/her dress	1.The statistic finding score mean is 4.303.
	2. Others perceive a manager’s	2.The statistic finding score mean

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(interpreted by others)	management ability through his/her dress  3. Others perceive a manager's education through his/her dress	is 4.184  3. The statistic finding score mean is 4.3
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In fact, Ms 1 and Ms 2 are both senior managers from the author's CEO image management class. Ms 1 represents the look of before training, and Ms 2 represents the look of after training.

Dress, as a visual product, can not only make people feel warm and meet their own preferences, but it can also be seen in the eyes of people around to form impressions and form how will others think of us. In a sense what we are wearing is a silent self-introduction, telling people who we are (Sproles, 1994).

Ms 1 has the same CEO position as Ms 2. Why do people think of them has holding different positions? Because from cognitive perspective, dress is the easily seen visual cue of a person (Kaiser,2000). The internal qualities of a person are like an iceberg where people can never see the entire one. The dress cues of Ms 1 and Ms 2, made up what observers might think of as "the tip of iceberg" (Zerubavel, 1982; Davis, 1984).

Ms. 2 has no better internal qualities than Ms. 1. Why do people think she is in higher position? Because dress can help individuals demonstrates a social signal of a person's membership of a particular social group (Argyle, 1988; Kaiser, 1985; Kaiser, 2000). Being highly symbolic and visually projective, dress ultimately presents who we are and what we do, and is thus open to others' reading and interpretation (Hines and Bruce, 2007).

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Peluchette et al. (2006) identified that business suit elements are regarded as the symbol for management identity. As more women enter the business arena, they have to deal with a female gender identity and a business identity. Dress that symbolizes power and authority may help women to achieve better positions in business (Entwistle, 2007). The soft casual wear of Ms 1 is symbolic of female home style identity. The business style jacket of Ms 2 shows a senior manager's identity and adds more competitiveness. In the interview, Participant 3-8 has longer working experiences. But her sweater and jeans, similar to Ms 1's dress, does not meet the professional qualification identity of the senior manager position.

Therefore, dress can reflect the position from the perception of costumers.

### **Customers Perceive a Manager's Management Ability through his/her Dress**

In the focus group research, the author showed the photos of two men Mr 1 and Mr 2 (Figure 3.5) to the participants and asked: "Imagine you are the company leader, ready to recruit a vice president with strong market development ability. There are two candidates Mr 1 and Mr 2; which one do you prefer to choose? Why?"

*"Mr 2. He looks as if he has stronger ability in market development."* (Participant 2-1).

*"Mr 2 looks more clear thinking."* (Participant 2-9)

*"Mr 2 looks more efficient and decisive."* (Participant 2-6)

*"Mr 2 looks more like an influential team leader."* (Participant 2-10)

*"Mr 2 looksable to win the respect of the customer more easily."* (Participant 2-7)

*"Mr 2 can better present corporate brand."* (Participant 2-4)



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In the interview, Participant 3-3 shared his experience when competing for a post:

*“I have worked in an electrical engineering company and have nearly 20 years of working experience. I have two degrees, one is in electrical engineering and the other is an MBA. Last year, when vice president retired, I was very confident to fill that position, because of the existing candidates, I have highest academic qualifications. In work ability, I feel no worse than others. At that time I heard that there was a competitor, but I knew he did not have a high degree of education, five years less than my working experience. Almost every day he wears a suit, and I often jokingly call him ‘Mr Suit’. However, the result of competition was that ‘Mr Suit’ won the position. Afterwards, HR told me the top leader's feedback: facing international market competition, the new corporate culture in the spirit of innovation and international concept. The new company leaders need to meet today's international market characteristics, and the image can also represent the company's new brand culture.... I checked myself, my old sport jacket, jeans, travel shoes, very similar to Mr 1, does not meet the updated corporate culture.”*

The finding of the survey research of Document 4 (Table 4.2) shows the same result: when a person dresses well, her/his leadership or management ability perceived by others will be higher. Mr 1 and Mr 2 (Figure 3.5) have the same good internal qualities in terms of ability. But due to the casual and low-quality wear of Mr. 1, his good internal qualities cannot be reflected by his external appearance.

Symbolic dress can communicate an extensive and complex array of information about a person, without having to talk to the wearer. Why Mr 2 can stand out? One of the reasons is Mr 2's structured suit has served as a significant symbol for management and administrative roles in business (Entwistle, 2007). The suit reflects a symbol of higher social ability, competence and intelligence. It shows more professionalism, clear thinking, and efficiency.

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Dress helps individuals perform business roles (Davis, 1984, 1985; Rafaeli and Pratt, 1993). The workplace is an important context to examine individuals' identities for a variety of reasons (Kang et al., 2011). Why did Participant 3-3 not win the position? Because he was been interpreted as incompetent. Since dress influences the perceptions of customers (Damhorst, 1990), it is specifically used in the workplace to manage the impression (Rafaeli et al., 1997; Peluchett, et al., 2006). Participant 3-3, as casual as Mr 1, presents a symbol of not having the ability to be in line with the standard. When the company entered international market, Participant 3-3 needed to present up-to-date abilities by presenting international standard dress images.

Therefore, dress can reflect ability from the perception of costumers.

### **Customers Perceive a Manager's Education and Professional Level through his/her Dress**

In the focus group, the author showed the photos of two women Ms 1 and Ms 2 (Figure 3.5) to the participants and asked: "Companies will participate in a high-tech project bidding, and you need to choose a project manager with higher educational background and professional experience background. Ms 1 and Ms 2, which one would you prefer to choose? Why?"

*"I prefer Ms 2 because she appears to have a higher academic educational background."* (Participant 2-9)

*"Ms 2 looks more professional."* (Participant 2-10)

*"Ms 2 looks more rigorous."* (Participant 2-2)

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In the interview, Participant 3-8 shared her experience:

*“After interpretation of Ms 1, I am shocked by my similar mistake. I am a lawyer with a PhD and 15 years working experience, it should be easier for me than for others to win the trust of client. But several times my clients turned to other colleagues. Recently I received an important case and was very excited. But after the first meeting, the client complained and asked to change a more professional lawyer, like Ms Tang. Why? Tang only has undergraduate education and her work experience is not better than me. I don’t understand as I have the higher degree, how can the client say that I am not professional enough?”*

*Today, from the client's perspective, Tang really looks higher educated and more professional than me. She wears an elegant suit every day. From the client’s perspective, elegant dress presents her higher educational and professional position. My unstructured sweater is similar to Ms 1. Clients sometimes judge our academic and professional qualifications by the way we dress.”*

The finding of survey research of Document 4 (Table 4.2) shows the same results: when a person dresses well, customers perceive her/his educational and professional level higher.

According to Eicher, Evenson and Lutz (2000), people’s age, gender, and intelligence can be reflected in their dress and their social and cultural identity can be anchored by the way they dress. In the research, Ms 1 and Ms 2 have the same internal qualities in terms of educational background. But due to the casual wear of Ms 1, her good internal qualities cannot be reflected by her external appearance. Even though Ms 2 has no better qualities than Ms 1, but her formal business attire attributes a higher education level to her.

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Dress can help individuals present their experience, values, identity and group membership (Ryan, 1966; Barnard, 2007; Entwistle, 2007). As argued by Clarke (2011) representing appearances that are “visually salient” could potentially assist entrepreneurs in securing the resources they need. An importance function of clothing is that it demonstrates to a social perceiver about our membership of a particular social group (Argyle, 1988; Kaiser, 2000). Participant 3-8 has a higher education degree and longer working experience. But clients perceive that Ms Tang is more professional because Ms Tang’s structured suit looks formal than Participant 3-8’s unstructured sweater. Sometimes people judge our education and professional level by the way we dress.

Therefore, dress is an important visual identity to present manager’s education and professional level.

#### **4.4.3 Contribution to the Research on Managers’ Dress for Personal Brand**

Some literature has discussed symbolic dress from the aspect of the social psychology field and the fashion field. There is very limited literature on managers’ symbolic dress for internal personal brand and external personal brand in the marketing field. This study fills these gaps and bridges the fields of social psychology, fashion, and marketing. The main contribution is reflected in two aspects.

In application, this study has important practical significance for managers to improve their personal brand from the perspective of dress as brand visual identity.

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### **Answer to Proposition 3**

First, this research fills the gap in dress and inner personal brand. Dress impacts managers' internal personal brand. For example, dress impacts on a manager's thinking; dress impacts on manager's self-confidence and behaviour; dress impacts on a manager's initiative communication in social occasions.

### **Answer to Proposition 4**

Second, this research fills the gap on the relationship between dress and external personal brand. Dress impacts managers' external personal brand. For example, how managers' different dress styles can be interpreted to reflect different professional abilities; and how managers' different dress styles can be interpreted to indicate different education levels.

## **4.5 Manager's Dress Helps to Shape Corporate Identity**

Dress can communicate strong and powerful messages (Forsythe, 1990) that have a direct relationship to the recognition of the product or corporate brand image by the customers.

In the focus group discussion, the author showed the photos of two groups of sales managers and asked the participants: "These two groups of sales managers are from two brands of car company (Figure 3.6). If two cars are same price and same quality, which team's car would you prefer to buy? Why?"

*"I will choose Team 2's. There are so many car brands on the market, and among so many brands, Team 2 is more attractive to my attention."* (Participant 2-8)

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*“Team 2 makes me feel bright, in almost all the car world, the brand will let me never forget, and very much feel curiosity.” (Participant 2-1)*

*“Team 1 is without any features, and even if the test drive feels good, you do not necessarily remember the brand. If I buy a car, it is likely that after the first test drive, it will be ignored.” (Participant 2-3)*

In interview, Participant 3-1 shared her experience:

*“I am a sales manager. At the product exhibition, I am sometimes not respected by customers. Although the product quality is at an industry-leading level, it is difficult to attract customer recognition. I was very depressed. Today, finally I understand that this may be related to my dress. These two groups of different sales manager photos gave me a good lesson. If a sale manager does not have a positive dress image, the inherent outstanding quality of the product may be ignored.”*

Dress has positive and negative impacts on the visual representation of a corporate brand. Since Team 2's dress is more attractive, it is easily preferred by the customers. People accept you before accepting the product. Dress can affect individual and organizational outcomes, which is why organizations spend billions of dollars each year defining, acquiring, maintaining, and monitoring employees' dress (Solomon, 1987; Simões et al., 2005). Dress relates to the construction of corporate identity. Team1 presents a corporate identity of conservatism and low quality. Team2 presents an identity of fashion innovation and high quality. Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) believe that dress is ubiquitous in organization, which can reflect and create a variety of organizational dynamics.

The finding of the survey research of Document 4 (Table 4.3) shows the same result:

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when managers or teams dress well, the company will have a stronger visual identity.

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**Table 4-3** Summary of the results from existing framework

Proposition 3	Results of the research	Findings
A manager's dress reflects the corporate brand (perceived by clients)	1. Manager's dress identity help to shape the corporate identity.  1. Manager's dress influence customers how to judge corporate positioning  3. Manager's dress affect customer's view of product quality	1. The statistic finding score mean is 4.330  2. The statistic finding score mean is 4.510  3. The statistic finding score mean is 4.290

Dress can directly denote a positive or negative impression to the customers.

Team 2 with an up-to-date and high-quality look has a positive impact on the brand and gives a positive impression to the customers.

#### **4.5.1 Manager's Dress Influences Customers Perceive Corporate Positioning**

In the group discussion, the author showed the first group of images (Figure 3.5) and asked: "If Mr 1 and Mr 2 represent two different companies, please speculate and describe the positioning of the two companies."

*"I feel Mr 1's company is smaller, Mr 2's company is larger." (Participant 2-5)*

*"Mr1's company culture is more conservative, Mr 2's company culture will be more*



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*innovative. ” (Participant 2-1)*

*“Mr 1 ’ s company in the industry may be the public brand, Mr 2’s company in the industry may be the leading brand.” (Participant2-9)*

After that, the author showed the fourth group of images (Figure 3.7), and asked: “According to the dress style of each photo, speculate on the corresponding stage the company's brand development. For example, what stage do you think style 1 represents for Alibaba's brand development?”

*“The dress is more conservative, the quality does not look high; the company should be in a relatively difficult initial stage.” (Participant 2-2)*

*“This reminds me of 20 years ago, when China was still in poverty, and was already the ‘business formal dress’. Not only is the quality not high, in the whole country we all wear the same colour and same style, there are no characteristics.” (Participant 2-3)*

*“The dress of Style 2 shows a certain fashion sense, but it is not professional enough. This should be the early development stage of Alibaba as an innovation model. Alibaba was keeping up with the trend, but not being standardized.” (Participant 2-7)*

*“The dress of Style 3 looks stylish, compared with Style 2. The professional degree has been enhanced, but the red sweater plus suit does not meet the dress code. This should be the middle development stage of Alibaba.” (Participant 2-10)*

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*"I like Style 4, it is dress with quality and looks very professional; this is like a mature entrepreneur. This is like Alibaba's initial listing stage so that investors trust the mature brand image."* (Participant 2-5)

*"I like Style 5, high quality, very professional, while the collar gives a Chinese element. This is the world-leading stage, reflecting the national self-confidence of the mature corporate brand."* (Participant2-9)

Corporate brand image is largely formed by how customers perceive and recognize the person embodying the brand. Mr 2's tailored jacket presents a larger and more well established corporate than Mr 1's. Appropriate dress reveals the wearer's world view, personal values and attitudes, especially corporate values and missions, which can appeal to loyal customers of the same belief and value systems. Under-positioning, over-positioning, confused positioning and dubious positioning are not advised, while styles of dress and degrees of formality create a first impression which determines the positioning choice of the personal brand (Blanco, 2010). Clarke (2011) argues that entrepreneurs' personal appearance is not incidental but serves as an important symbol that facilitates the creation of their identities as founders of legitimate ventures. Jack Ma's dress style is changing with the growing of company growing. In each stage, he presents a different visual identity of Alibaba through his dress. Presenting appearances that are "visually salient" could potentially assist entrepreneurs in securing the resources they need. As senior managers of the company, personal dress represents corporate brand. It is recognized by clients through the dress taste of the business leaders (Eicher et al., 2000; Moren, 2005).

The finding of survey research of Document 4 (Table 4.3) shows the same result: when managers are well dressed, the corporate brand positioning looks higher.

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According to Clarke (2011), leader's personal appearance serves as an important symbol of corporate brand. If the manager's dress style does not exactly present corporate brand positioning, the manager plays a negative role, as shown by Mr 1, Ms 1 and Team 1. Only when the manager's dress style exactly presents the corporate positioning does the symbolic dress play a positive role, as shown by Mr 2, Ms 2, Team 2, and Mr Ma.

#### **4.5.2 Manager's Dress Affects Customer's Perceive Product Quality**

In the group discussion, the author showed the third group of images (Figure 3.6) and asked: "If you are ready to buy a car and face the following two brands of sales manager, which product quality you will you trust more?"

*"For Team 1's dress both quality and taste are not high enough. I can imagine that the company's products are likely to be at the same level. So I don't trust them."*  
(Participant 2-5)

*"I would be more likely to rely on the quality of Team 2's products. Team 2's high-quality dress will make me think the quality of the product will be at the same high level."* (Participant 2-6)

The Audi case is selected from the author's 2008 uniform design for Audi brand sales managers and teams. The Team 1 photos show the uniform worn by the sales manager and teams before 2007. At that time, China had very few choices of imported car brands, and Audi was the first brand to enter the government

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procurement system. So it was easy for it to account for a 60% share in China's national car market. But in 2007, before the opening of Beijing Olympics, Audi realized that it was facing two major challenges. First, BMW, Mercedes and other international brands would soon enter the Chinese market, and the competition would become very intense. Second, the private car market would surge. Private car buyers are less concerned with formality and they focus on the car brand and sales experience. The author was invited by Audi as the brand image consultant and presented the improved image of the sales personnel as shown in the Team 2 photo. Nine years later, with a strong corporate identity, Audi is still the top seller in the field.

In the interview, Participant 3-11 shared her experience:

*"I am a cosmetic sales manager. The product I sell is a high-end Swiss import. It is very good for middle-aged female skin. The anti-aging effect is very significant. I am also a beneficiary. Whenever I see a woman with a skin problem, I will try to help. However, often I encounter distrust. Last year I remember the first day of this 'CEO Image Course', I saw Ms Wu (classmate, a female entrepreneur) had a skin problem, and suggested using my Swiss product. Ms Wu immediately refused, 'No, thank you, don't ruin my face.' But, when my dress style was changed during the class under the guidance of the teacher, the whole class were surprised. 'So elegant! This is the image someone who sells high-end products should have!'. Ms Wu said: 'If you had been so elegant this morning, maybe I would have been willing to try your product.' This is a great inspiration for me. Customer really judge the quality of our products based on our dress."*

A general assumption in the branding literature is that a favourable brand image will have a positive impact on consumers' behaviour towards the brand, such as the opportunity to command premium prices, buyers who are more loyal, and more

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positive word-of-mouth (Martenson, 2007). The construction of a positive and well-known brand is a consuming process where the leader's appearance and the charisma reflected through his/her dressing plays a vital role. Team 2 presents a positive visual identity with a high-quality, fashion innovation look. People think about or even imagine a company's product through the visual identity that they can see (Temporal, 2000). When Participant 3-11 presents a negative visual identity (less coordinated, low quality casual wear), people will associate it with her product quality. Customers prefer Team 2's product, due to the up-to-date positive image.

The finding of the survey research of Document 4 (Table 4.3) shows the same result: when the sales team dress well, customers have more trust in the product quality. Sales manager's dress is a very important visual identity to present product quality. Some specific results have been found on dress and corporate brand. An individual's dress can symbolize the corporate brand. Individual dress can help shape the corporate identity. When a team dresses more formally, customers will have an expectation of higher corporate positioning. When a team dresses more formally, customers will expect the quality of its product to be higher. When a team dresses more formally, customers will have a higher trust in its services.

### **4.5.3 Contribution to the Research on Managers' Symbolic Dress Impact on Corporate Brand**

Some literature has discussed how visual identity can construct a positive impact on consumers' behaviour towards the brand (Martenson, 2007). But there is very limited literature on managers' dress for corporate brand positioning and product quality perceived by customers. This study fills these gaps.

In application, from the aspect of managers as the dynamic logo of corporate brand,

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it can enhance corporate competitiveness through the improvement of managers' dress image.

### **Answer to Proposition 5**

This study explored the role of dress as the visual identity of corporate brand. The author pointed out the concept that managers are the dynamic logo of the corporate brand. The main contribution is reflected in three aspects in which this study fills the gap in research in, first, how managers' dress represents corporate brand; second, how managers' dress impacts on customer interpretation of corporate positioning; and, third, how managers' dress affects customers interpretation of product quality and style.

## **4.6 Confucian Cultural Influence on Chinese Managers' Dress**

Since Chinese managers grow up in the Chinese cultural environment, while accepting the contemporary brand concept, they are also be influenced by the traditional Chinese culture (Confucian culture). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the Confucian culture system when studying the personal brand of Chinese managers and the corporate brand in China.

### **4.6.1 Confucian System influence Chinese Managers Personal Brand**

#### **Matching Personal Brand System with Confucian System**

In the focus group discussion, participants shared their view about the Confucian system and personal brand system.

*"Personal brand system has the same structure with Confucian system."* (Participant

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2-9)

*“Confucian system has inner quality and outer etiquette. Corresponding to Confucian system, personal brand system has inner brand value and outer brand visual identity.”*

(Participant 2-5)

The Confucian system includes inner quality and outer etiquette. The largest contribution of Confucius is that he established an ideological system with inner quality as its core, etiquette as its formality and dialectics as its methodology, based on a thorough survey of the historical cultural classics (Zhu, 2010). Confucian culture advocates inner virtue with outward majesty. If the personality is cultivated delicately, inner quality can be achieved. If such personality can be expressive, then outward contribution is possible. Inner quality conveys an abstract idea that Confucius wants to express and constitutes an exact description of an ideal gentleman (Liang, 1999).

Just like the point of Participant 2-9, personal brand has the same structure with Confucian system. Participant 2-5 added “Confucian system has inner quality and outer etiquette. Corresponding to Confucian system, personal brand system has inner brand value and outer brand visual identity.”

If a personal brand wants to win customer recognition, it must have positive value connotation, such as thrust, responsibility, contribution, innovation, and so on. At the same time, customers need see the corresponding visual identity, such as positive attitude, rigorous service, decent dress.

Therefore, personal brand system can match Confucian system.

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## **Inner quality of Personal Brand can Match the Inner Quality of jun zi (Gentleman)**

In the focus group discussion, participants shared their view about inner quality of personal brand matching with the inner quality of *jun zi* (Gentleman).

*“Jun zi (gentleman) is the ideal set up by Confucius, and I believe he is also the goal most Chinese people have been striving for. As I understand that as long as you constantly improve yourself every day, you will grow into a jun zi.”* (Participant 2-4)

*“Jun zi knows how to continue to learn to grow, know how to constantly improve their own deficiencies, know how to resist the negative impact from outside, know how to live with people, so the jun zi has a continuous improvement of personality, no matter what industry we engage in, no matter what social role, first of all to meet the standards is to be like a ‘jun zi’ (gentleman).”* (Participant 2-3)

*“The self-improvement advocated by Confucian culture plays an important role in Chinese managers’ personal brand.”* (Participant 2-7)

*“The connotation of personal brand can correspond to the inner quality of Confucian system, and the visual identity of personal brand can correspond to the ‘outer etiquette’ of Confucian system.”* (Participant 2-2)

The first doctrine of Confucianism is attentive to cultivating an ideal and complete personality *jun zi* (Gentleman) (Liang, 1999; Chen, 2014). Inner quality conveys an abstract idea that Confucius wants to express and constitutes an exact description of an ideal *jun zi* (gentleman). The *jun zi*’s purpose of having an inner spiritual life is to explore the meaning of life, pursuing the highest value standard, aiming for permanence, developing an ideal personality and becoming a sincere person.



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Therefore, the inner spirit constitutes a major strength of a person (Shi, 2010).

From the research, Participant 2-5 thinks there is a corresponding relationship between brand connotation and the Confucian *jun zi* inner quality. *Jun zi* is the ideal set up by Confucius, and Participant 2-4 believes he is also the goal most Chinese people have been striving for. Participant 2-7 shared that the self-improvement advocated by Confucian culture plays an important role in Chinese managers' personal brand. Participant 2-5 thinks that the value of personal brand can correspond to the Confucian internal quality. If a personal brand wants to win customer recognition, it must have positive value connotation, such as thrust, responsibility, contribution, innovation, and so on. At the same time, customers need see the corresponding visual identity, such as positive attitude, rigorous service, decent dress and so on.

For thousands of years, the standard of both spirit and behaviour of a “*jun zi*” is the Confucian standard that every Chinese person should follow. Confucianism advocates continuous practice and complete personality. The purpose of establishing a personal brand is also to be the best you can be. For the gentleman the outside etiquette is to constantly improve the inherent quality. Therefore, when establishing personal brand visual identity, Chinese managers should have the constant improvement of their inherent quality.

#### **4.6.2 Confucian Values Influence the Motivation of Managers' Dress**

##### **Confucian Inner Quality and Dress Motivation**

Another aspect of inner quality delineated by Confucius implies pursuing eternal and everlasting values.

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In the focus group discussion and interview, participants shared their view about Confucian value and dress motivation.

*“Contributing to the collective and being recognized by the community, are a very powerful part to me.” (Participant 2-5)*

*” My company although the scale is not large, I can live very well with the current development of the situation. But I still work overtime, because I hope the company in product development and brand reputation can be in the front of the industry. Now it has become the benchmark enterprises in my city. I really feel my value has been doubled, when I can get glory for the city.” (Participant 2-3)*

*“About choosing better quality and higher taste in dress, if someone says that this helps to improve personal charm, for me it may not make me move immediately, but if someone says it can help improve the corporate brand, I will act immediately. For me, work is more important than life, and the collective is more important than myself.” (Participant 2-8).*

*“When Alibaba, as a Chinese brand, was very successful globally, Jack Ma worn a high quality social suits with Chinese elements. This shows the national pride of Chinese entrepreneurs.” (Participant 2-1)*

Man’s life is limited. However, when carnal life can spread into the realm of the spiritual, when individual life is expanded to the collective life, then life can achieve eternity (Shi, 2014). Influenced by Confucian, Participant 2-3 feel his value has been doubled, when he can get glory for the city. Confucianism emphasizes the development of moral principles, thus leaving good examples to the offspring and contributing to the state (Xia, 2010).

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Confucianism promoted that everyone should establish lifelong faith to transcend from individual improvement to concern for the people and the country. A true gentleman should be concerned to achieve sacrificing service for the nation first, and then himself (Zhu, 2010). Participant 2-5 believes that contributing collectively and being recognized by collectively, are a very powerful and valuable part to him. Participant 2-1 shared the example of Jack Ma. When Alibaba, as a Chinese brand, was very successful globally, Jack Ma wore a formal suit with Chinese elements. This shows the national pride of Chinese entrepreneurs.

### **Confucian Value and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

There are different levels of motivation for dress (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). According to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, the higher the level of needs, the stronger the motivation. The core value of Confucian culture leads Chinese people to pursue the respectable spirit life, and pursue eternal and everlasting by contributing to company and country (Shao, 2014). The motivation of dress is upgraded to the upper levels of need (Maslow, 2018). Dress for corporate brand and dress for country brand became the powerful motivation of Chinese managers' dress. Participant 2-8 shared that if someone points out dress can improve personal charm, it may not make him move immediately, but if someone say it can help improve the corporate brand, he will act immediately. For him, the collective is a more powerful motivation than personal charm. 'Contribute to the company, contribute to the country' are the core values of *Jun Zi* and these are also the core values of Chinese managers today. When many Chinese companies have been gradually moving from a manufacturing orientation to brand orientation, Chinese managers have more opportunities than ever before to contribute to the company.

In summary, Confucian inner quality value is very powerful motivation for Chinses

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managers' dress.

### **4.6.3 Confucian Face Culture Influences Managers' Dress Behaviour**

#### **The Positive Impact of Face Culture**

Face (*mian zi*) plays an important role in Chinese social life. It is a special expression of the outer etiquette of Confucian system.

In the focus group discussion and interview and interview, participants shared their views about the positive function of face culture.

*"Once I accepted a public welfare award on behalf of the company. The honored guests presented the award to the 10 representations of the enterprise who came on the stage at the same time. Then we took a group photo together. When I saw the group photos in the news report, I felt particularly humiliated, because everyone else was dressed in jacket or suits, only I was wearing T-shirt and jeans, which looked a lower than others. Since then, in order to save face, I pay special attention to formal occasions must wear formal jacket or suits."* (Participant 3-3)

*"In order attend an important trade fairs, I asked an image expert to guide my dress. When I dressed more elegant and appropriately than some other people on the day of the trade fair, I felt that I win the face."* (Participant 3-10)

*"As business managers, our product brand or corporate brand can win customer recognition – this is my greatest sense of accomplishment, but also the biggest face. If sometimes, our product or company is ignored by customers because my dress is*

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*not appropriate, I will feel strongly that I lost face.” (Participant 2-3)*

*“I think a person can follow the ethical standards, which is maintaining the base level of his face. But building up personal brand can win greater social recognition. This is the higher level of face.” (Participant 2-6)*

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Face (*mian zi*) refers to a sense of favourable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of him or her in a relational and network context (Goffman, 1967; Chen and Ma, 2013). It reflects one’s social self-esteem and the desire to be respected during interpersonal interactions (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998). Chinese face culture has deep roots in Confucianism (Jiang, 2009). Face can be divided into moral face and social face (Jin, 2002). The moral face is to follow etiquette and earn self-respect and respect from others. Participant 3-10 felt that she won her face when she dressed better than some other people around her. From the perspective of social psychology, face refers to the individual achievements in the social status or reputation in the community (Zhang and Si, 2010). Participant 2-3 cares more about how to dress properly for success and social recognition. Participant 2-6 believes that dress for personal brand and corporate brand is more about saving face at the social function level.

Appropriate care about face can encourage people to have a positive attitude towards life. Confucius says that a man cannot establish himself without knowing etiquette. Confucian etiquette, on the one hand, presents a system of ritualistic codes resulting in giving face to the others, and, on the other hand, it constitutes an inner self-evaluation with the result of losing one’s face. Participant 3-3 with a strong sense of face will pay attention to their dress in social occasions, in order to avoid being criticized for not following the proper dress code.

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## The Negative Impact of Face Culture

In the focus group discussion and interview, participants shared their views about the negative side of face culture.

*“China is not the richest country in the world, but China is the biggest luxury consumer country. Some people buy clothing, beyond their income level. I think it is not advisable to care too much about face. This is actually the pursuit of vanity.”*

(Participant 2-7)

*“Some upstarts wear luxury brand clothing enthusiastically, in order to accelerate social recognition and respect.”* (Participant 2-9)

*“On the contrary, in the hierarchical relationship, some people deliberately lower themselves in order to take in to account the face of the upper lever person.”*

(Participant 2-5)

From the negative point of view, face reflects the vanity of people. It might lead to fraud. Excessive attention to face is, in fact, a vanity of performance. The so-called vanity is the psychological need to obtaining glory and honour beyond one's actual abilities or achievements. If this psychological need is too strong, or if one tries to win compliments from others by fabricating facts, then face will become the catalyst of fraud, and the corrosive agent of the honesty system will inevitably endanger the social foundation (Zhang and Si, 2010). In terms of dress behaviour, some people have low income, but are keen on buying luxury goods (Ding, 2010). In order to accelerate social recognition and respect, upstarts will wear luxury brand clothes enthusiastically (Han and Wu 2013). Participant 2-7 shared that in order to save face, some people buy clothing beyond their income level. Participant 2-9 shared that

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some upstarts show off their wealth by wearing luxury brand clothing.

The other kind of negative effect of face is to be too shy of face in hierarchical relations, to abandon self-judgement, to be too submissive or overvalue the evaluation of others (Chen and Ma, 2013). Over-scrupulous face in hierarchical relations will hinder social innovation and development (Jiang, 2009). In the aspect of dress behaviour, it shows that it is conformist and lacks personality, artistry and sense of the times (Zhang, and Yang, 2005). Participant 2-5 shared that in the hierarchical relationship, some people deliberately lower themselves in order to take into account the face of the upper-lever person. Apparently, it can maintain a harmonious order, but it will lose his/her creativity and innovation ability if it takes too much account of hierarchical order.

#### **4.6.4 Chinese Managers' Dress Code Different from Western on Some Occasions.**

##### **Western Dress Code for International Business Occasions**

In the global market environment, Chinese managers' dress in international business occasions needs to be in line with international standards, which is in line with Western managers' business dress codes.

In the focus group discussion and interview, participants shared their views about Chinese managers' dress needing to be in line with international standards.

*"Several years ago, I was invited to attend an international Academic Annual Conference (occasions include academic seminars, buffet, formal dinners, award ceremonies). The dress code part indicated three outfits: business formal, business casual, and social formal. I didn't pay any attention about these. To be more precise, I*

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*didn't know the difference among them at that time. Therefore, I only bought a dark blue suit and a sports zipper shirt. After I arrived, I find that the dark blue suits only suitable for academic seminars. I was embarrassed to wear the suit for breakfast and formal dinner. Through this experience, I deeply realized that: in order to enter international market, the first step is need to understand the international standard dress code.” (Participant 3-9)*

*“Before attending the image training course, I thought a dark blue suit is enough for manager for most of occasions. Now I learned that there are some details of business suit that need to conform to international standards. For example, the sleeve length of suit should be 1.5 cm shorter than the shirt sleeve.” (Participant 2-2)*

*“Previously, there were many misunderstandings in accessories. After training, I learned what specific pattern of tie and what kind of belt can match with business formal suit.” (Participant 2-9)*

*“Like other classmates, I thought a dark blue suit could deal with various business occasions. Now I learn that managers need to prepare grey suit or jacket for business casual, and black for dinner.” (Participant 2-3)*

Chinese managers need to know the international dress code for some important occasions when they enter the international market. And they need to know the standard of suit and accessories detail as well.

### **Dress Code Different from Western Dress Code on Some Occasions**

Due to the influence of traditional Confucian culture in China, the dress codes of Chinese managers are different from those of the West on some occasions.



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In the focus group discussion and interview, participants shared their views the difference between Chinese managers' dress code with the Western code on some occasions.

*"After emphasizing internationalized in recent years, I am used to wearing suits on various occasions. But for some occasions it doesn't seem right. For example, when government leaders who are wearing casual come to inspection, if I wear a suit it seems not appropriate."* (Participant 2-5)

*"Between state-owned enterprises, or between state-owned enterprises and government, Chinese managers need to wear a kind of Chinese government casual wear: dark blue zipper untailored casual jacket."* (Participant 2-8)

*"In traditional Chinese festivals, such as Spring Festival and the Moon Festival, it is not suitable for Chinese managers to wear western suits when they participate in related activities. It is more suitable for these occasions to dress with Chinese elements. For example, men can wear stand-up collar suits, women can wear improved qipao or tang style dress."* (Participant 2-6)

Western style suits are not suitable for all occasions in China. Some dress codes for Chinese managers are different from the Western codes. Beside Western-style suits, Chinese managers also need to prepare Chinese-style business wear and social wear. In business, for example, Chinese manager needs to wear a dark blue untailored zipper jacket for meetings with government, or between state-owned enterprises. In social formal for traditional festivals, Chinese managers need to dress with Chinese elements, for example, stand-up collar suits, *qipao*, or tang style dress.

#### **4.6.5 Contribution to the Research on Confucian Cultural influence on Chinese Managers' Dress**

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There is very limited literature on the influence of Confucian culture on Chinese managers' dress. This research fills the gaps.

### **Answer to Proposition 6**

Confucian culture from the inside and outside impact on Chinese managers' dress, and then affects managers' personal brand and corporate brand. Confucian "inner quality" culture is the spiritual source of Chinese managers' pursuit of self-improvement and contribution to collectivism. Confucian "outer etiquette" culture is the basis of Chinese managers' brand visual identity.

### **Answer to Proposition 7**

Confucian inner quality values influence on the motivations of Chinese managers' dress. The inner quality of self-cultivation to the community are leading Chinese managers to higher levels than Maslow's need for clothes.

### **Answer to Proposition 8**

Confucian face culture influences Chinese managers' dress behaviour.

Face culture mainly plays a positive role in managers' dress for enhancing personal brand. When a manager's pursuit of face goes much beyond the ability of the person, face becomes a vanity performance. This is the negative side of face culture.

### **Answer to Proposition 9**

Chinese managers' dress codes are different from Western codes on some occasions.

In the global market, Chinese managers need to meet the international standard dress code. At the same time, Chinese managers also need to understand and apply

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the different dress codes from Western ones on some occasions in China.

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## **5. Conclusions, Reflections, and Limitations**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

#### **5.1.1 Summary of the Research**

Under the circumstances of Chinese enterprises entering the international market and the rapid development of Chinese economy, the personal brand image of Chinese managers has attracted more and more attention from enterprises, managers themselves and the academic field. This research mainly includes from three aspects:

Firstly, it discusses the concept of enterprise brand and individual brand from the perspective of market, and the influence of brand vision on brand recognition, as well as the relationship between personal brand and corporate brand. Secondly, from the perspective of social psychology of clothing, the function of symbolic dress, it discusses the relationship between symbolic dress and personal brand visual identification, and how dress affects manager's personal brand and the corporate brand. Finally, from the perspective of culture, this thesis explores the influence of Confucian culture on Chinese managers' dress motivation and dress behaviour, and analyses the differences in the codes between Chinese managers' dress and Western managers' dress on some occasions.

Based on the above research results, the conclusions of the whole study can be described as follows: 1) Manager's personal brand is an important part of corporate brand; 2) Just like visual identity is an important means of product branding, it is also an important means of personal branding. The symbolic identification function of dress determines that manager's dress is an important part of personal brand identification; 3) Dress affects manager's self-confidence, behaviour, and

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communication; 4) Dress affects customers' interpretation of managers' professional position, ability and educational background; 5) Managers' dress affects customers' interpretation of enterprise positioning and product positioning; 6) Confucian cultural system influences Chinese brand system; 7) Confucian face culture influences Chinese managers' dress behaviour; 8) Confucian core values affect Chinese managers' dress motivation; 9) Chinese managers' dress norms need to be different from Western ones on some occasions.

### **5.1.2 Contributions to the Literature**

The contributions of this study are in three fields: brand and visual identity, symbolic dress and personal brand recognition, and culture impact on personal brand through analysis of Confucian culture influence on Chinese managers' dress.

#### **Contributions to Branding and Visual Identity**

In the field of brand, some existing literatures mention that corporate branding has multifarious manifestations and can, therefore, be viewed as a corporate brand constellation, or gestalt (Balmer, 2012). According to Brexendorf and Keller (2017), the gestalt corporate brand includes all products brand and service brands.

But there is limited literature on managers' personal brand. This study fills this gap and identify that just like product brands are part of the corporate brand constellation, managers' personal brands are also part of corporate brand constellation.

About brand visual identity, some existing literatures mention that it is what the corporate brand is seen to be, for example, corporate name, corporate logo,

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corporate slogan, packaging and other visual design. Visual identity is a very important means of communication for corporate brand (Anholt , 2007; Urde and Greyer, 2016). But there is limited literature mentioning visual identity of personal brand through personal dress as visual identity. This study fills this gap and identifies that just as visual identity is a very important means of communication for corporate brand, visual identity is also an important means of communication for personal brands.

### **Contributions to Symbolic Dress for Personal Brand and Corporate Recognition**

#### **1. Dress for personal brand**

In the area of personal branding, while some of the literature states that clear personal brand identity can reinforce leadership (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2008), few have documented dress as one of important visual identifiers for personal branding.

In the field of social psychology, some literature shows that dress can affect the wearer's emotions and self-confidence (Kelley and Daigel, 1974; Yang, 1989). However, in the existing literature, there is limited concern about how manager's dress affects manners in the business world and how manager's dress influences communication with the client.

This study fills the gap and identify that managers' symbolic dress as an important part of visual identity reflects personal brand. Since symbolic dress is in the social psychology field, and personal brand is in the marketing field, the combination of symbolic dress and personal brand as visual identity fills the interdisciplinary gap.

#### **2.Dress for corporate brand**

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Although some literature discusses dress and corporate brand, it tends to focus more on corporate employees' uniform as part of corporate visual identity (Solomon, 1987). Research about managers' dress as a corporate brand visual identity is very limited.

There are references in the existing literature that positive corporate image helps to make a positive impression on the minds of consumers (Martenson, 2007), but they seldom address how managers promote corporate brand image through their appropriate dress, and how this will mean that corporate products will be more trusted by clients. This study fills this gap and identifies that managers' dress as part of visual identity reflects corporate brand.

### **Contributions to the literature of Confucian Culture Influence on Personal Brand from Perspective of Managers' Dress**

Confucian culture has influenced Chinese people's thinking and beliefs for more than two thousand years (King and Zhang, 2018; Wei and Li, 2013). There is abundant literature on Confucian system, Confucian inner quality, Confucian values, Confucian face culture, Confucian dress code, and so on.

#### **1. Correspondence between brand system and Confucian system**

There are some literatures on Confucian culture system. According to Shi (2014), Confucian culture system includes inner quality and outer etiquette. The largest contribution of Confucius is that he established an ideological system with inner quality as its core, etiquette and dress code as its formality and dialectics as its methodology, based on a thorough survey of the historical cultural classics (Zhu, 2010). However, literature on the relationship between the Confucian system and today's brand system is very limited. This study fills the gap and finds that brand

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system is similar to the Confucian system. Brand system has its internal brand connotation and external visual identity (Zhou, 2013).

The connotation of brand includes brand concept, brand value, brand vision, brand positioning, brand promise, and so on (Zhou, 2013). This internal brand connotation can correspond to Confucian inner qualities. The external brand image includes brand name, brand logo, brand advertising, dress of manager and teams, product packing, and so on (Jin, 2016). The external brand image can correspond to Confucian outer etiquette and dress code.

## 2. Confucian face culture influences Chinese managers' dress behaviour

There is some literature about the positive influence of Confucian face culture and Confucian dress etiquette. Chinese face culture has deep roots in Confucianism. Face can be divided into moral face and social face (Jin, 2002). The moral face is to follow the etiquette and earn self-respect and respect from others. Confucian etiquette refers to a correct attitude and way of treating people, which lays the foundation for a hierarchical class system and familial relations (Shao, 2010). Confucian dress etiquette has important social and political functions. Confucius was the philosopher who made dress an ethical proposition. He put the dress of gentleman personality into a concept. He believed that dress could express respect for others or an attitude of awe. From this point, Confucius lays out the psychological structure of the Chinese national dress etiquette culture, and demonstrates the rich ethical connotation for dress (Chen, 2010). Appropriate care about face can encourage people to have a positive attitude towards life. Confucius says that a man cannot establish himself without knowing etiquette.

However, there is limited literature on how Confucian face culture influences



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managers' dress behaviour. And limited literature on Confucian face culture's negative influence. This study fills the gaps and identifies that Confucian face culture can affect Chinese managers' dress behaviour in both positive and negative aspects.

### 3. Confucian inner quality affects manager's dress motivation

There are some literatures on Confucianism leading people to explore the meaning of life. Confucius believes that the purpose of having an inner spiritual life is to explore the meaning of life, pursuing the highest value standard, aiming for permanence, developing ideal personality and becoming a sincere person (Shi, 2014; Chen, 2014). Another aspect of inner quality delineated by Confucius implies pursuing eternal and everlasting values. Human life is limited. However, when carnal life can spread into the realm of the spiritual, when individual life is expanded to the collective life, then life can achieve eternity. Confucius emphasizes the development of moral principles, thus leaving good examples to offspring and contributing to the state (Xia, 2010).

However, there is limited literature about the relationship of Confucian inner quality to managers' dress motivation. This study fills the gap and identifies that Confucian inner quality influences Chinese managers' dress motivation.

### 5.1.3 Contribution to Practice

This study not only contributes to literature, but also to the practice.

Firstly, incorporating managers' personal brand into the corporate brand will help enterprises to improve the strategic management of corporate brand. Secondly, it helps managers to enhance their personal brand image. When managers realize that

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dress not only affects self-confidence and behaviour, but also affects customers' interpretation of their internal qualities, they will try to manage their dress image. Thirdly, it helps managers to strengthen the motivation of dress management. When managers combine dress with their inner spiritual pursuit, it will produce stronger motivation. Fourth, Chinese managers' dress codes need to be different from Western managers' on some occasions. The results can be used as a reference for Chinese managers' dress codes.

## 5.2 Reflections

China economy has fast changed fast during the past 30 years, from poverty to a well-off society. In recent years, both for individuals and corporates, how to move from simple manufacturing to a successful brand has become a key question. For an individual, how to establish a personal brand to become more distinctive in an increasingly competitive society is important. I am very lucky in this era, with the opportunity to design appropriate dress for both individuals and companies. For example, based on the research of corporate brand culture, I can be better equipped to design uniforms to reflect the corporate band image.

One of my design experiences for service-oriented sectors is with Audi. To keep in line with the trends in the Chinese car market and facing increasing challenges, the corporate brand needs to move beyond the “quality” image. Based on the quality, further dimensions, such as “dynamism, fashion and innovation” are needed to expand its business scope and for it to become a successful brand in China. Our design for Audi has won high praise for presenting its new brand culture, which contributes to its consistently growing sales record for eight years.

In terms of providing service for personal dress image, our clients include:

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entrepreneurs from listed corporations, managers from all industries, government leaders, female professionals, trainers and so on. Most of them are positive and full of energy. For them, the design of dress image is a good learning process.

As time passes, corporate and individual demand is rising. For me, the DBA study has been a very good experience of self-improvement, for example, in terms of logical thinking, and clear and precise expression, as well as providing experiences of international cross cultural communication with supervisors.

### **5.3 Limitations and Further Research**

There are some limitations in the research.

First, this study has focused upon only some aspects of Confucian culture, such as face and hierarchy culture, due to the space and time limitations. There are other aspects of Confucian culture, which are also worth to exploring, such as harmony and modesty and their impact on the field of this study.

Second, the author considered Confucian culture's impact but did not include other cultures. Every culture has its unique value and may have different degrees of impact. Thus, the study that claims cultural impact on personal brand and corporate brand has limitations. However, it does demonstrate a valuable point that culture has influenced personal brand through symbolic dressing.

Third, in data collection, participants were all students from corporate training on business etiquette and leadership image training courses. Because of the subject of their training, when they were involved in the research, they may have tended to choose what they thought was the "right" answer, and may not have entirely

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revealed their real thoughts. Image-based research may have dominated the thinking of participants. Photos only capture the image of a person at a particular moment and they do not reflect the dynamic behaviour and personality of the person in every day life.

Fourth, “symbolic dress of Chinese manager for personal brand and corporate brand influence by Confucian culture” is just the beginning stage of the journey. There are still many issues that need to be studied, such as: What are customers’ expectations of managers’ dress for personal and corporate brand in today’s market? What are the problems for current managers with symbolic dress? How can managers’ symbolic dress be improved to upgrade personal brand and corporate brand?

Chinese managers have started to recognize the problems with dress and the reasons behind them. But there they are facing some confusion. For example, on some important occasions because of their inappropriate dress they cannot win the trust of customers. They have a lot of confusion about how to dress appropriately. The main reasons for their dress confusion are: first, China’s education system does not cover aesthetic and etiquette attainments; second, managers lack understanding of the dress code for various occasions; and third, managers do not have the aesthetics of sense and skills in colour and style coordination. But Chinese managers are ready to improve their dress image. More and more Chinese managers are taking dress etiquette and dress aesthetics training courses. Chinese managers are starting to build up their new wardrobes to match business occasions and their personal characters.

Therefore, the next step of the study needs to be extended to solve the problems of the Chinese managers’ dress. For example, how should Chinese managers dress for

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important business occasions? How should Chinese managers dress for different business roles? How can Confucianism be combined with internationalization?

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