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I, Qingyang Xu, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Design.

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The Zeitgeist of Feminist Rebellion through Fashion Blogging Amongst Chinese Millennial Young Women

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The Zeitgeist of Feminist Rebellion through Fashion Blogging Amongst Chinese Millennial Young Women

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School

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of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Design

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates Chinese Millennial young women's notion towards feminism through fashion blogging. Fashion blogger as an emerging profession has acquired much public attention and created much social cultural influence, especially for young women. How does fashion blog as a tool to affect Chinese young women's feminist identity, confidence, and self-expression has been a fascinating concept. Through analyzing a specific Chinese fashion blogger's blazer looks and conducting related surveys, it is able to conclude that fashion is a tool for not only self-expression, but self-promotion amongst millennial women in China. Results also show that the millennial generation is more diverse and comprehensive in terms of the choice of fashion, which contributes to the zeitgeist of this era.

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CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION

This thesis started with an interest towards a specific Chinese fashion blogger – Magic Yang, who is famous for mix matching different articles of clothing and utilizing colors in a bold and creative way. Being a full-time style blogger, she has set her enterprise on China's largest blogging platforms – Weibo (www.weibo.com) – a Chinese language social networking/micro-blogging platform which often referred to as 'China's Twitter'. On this platform, she promotes her works, shares her life, her attitudes and her version of being independent. Through following her on Weibo and tracking her Weibo posts, I started to think about several questions: why am I so interested in her? What makes her unique and stand out among other bloggers? To answer these questions, I reviewed my journey with her on Weibo. Her taste for quirky styles of dress has caught my attention and found a fan in me. Those unrelated articles of clothing are matched so harmoniously and fascinatingly. She is masterful to control different styles – being casual, sexy, elegant, playful, sporty, soft yet powerful, she is versatile. She seems to have magic, just like her

name. Being exposed to these numerous styles, "where to start" has been a tough question.

Additionally, there is a value shift that lies within the Millennials and Generation Z young women in China. Magic Yang herself is a Millennial. The traditional idea of being a housewife and pleasing your husband is no longer a young women's ultimate goal. Instead, pursuing personal value and self-realization became the new mainstream ideology among young Chinese women, who have gradually acquired and been influenced by the western notion of feminism. Women started to think about women's rights power, self-expression and self-promotion, and the idea of being independent and confident. The impulses to dominate, express, and sexually exploit others are no longer taboos for discussion. There are many ways to express these impulses; however, fashion is the most direct and intuitive way to express its appeals. Throughout history, women had always used fashion as a feminist tool to make approaches for their benefits (Komar, 2016).

Weaving together these two perspectives of interests and locating the connections between them, I found that women's blazers would be the perfect vehicle to conduct my thesis. Women's blazers are considered as a typical format of "power dressing" in most circumstances. Padded shoulder, masculine silhouette, double-breasted, and pinstripes may be the impression of what female blazers look like (Schaffner 2016). Today women still choose blazers as their professional dressing or for their personal style choices.

Magic Yang herself is a big fan of blazers, and they have occupied a pivotal place in her street shoots. By analyzing her blazer matching looks, the thesis is going to explore what blazers mean to women both historically and contemporarily.

To understand this, the researcher started the paper by investigating the following questions:

1. What makes Magic Yang popular on Chinese social media Weibo?

2. By analyzing this one blogger, how can it contribute to the discussion of feminist identity, confidence and self-expression related to young women in China?

3. How does the women's blazer serve as a format of self-expression?

To answer these questions, the researcher ascends the following: a decent analysis on Magic Yang's Weibo posts, especially focus on blazer looks, literature reviews of Millennials characteristics, fashion blogs, social media, concept of post-feminism, fashion psychology, and conducted surveys to investigate people's opinions about blazers and related concepts.

The responses to these questions indicated that Fashion, more than ever, is a tool for not only self-expression, but self-promotion amongst millennial women in China. The blazer is the article of clothing that is being integrated and remixed into wardrobes of these young millennial women as a means of power dressing. Confidence is a manifestation of the notion of post-feminism, as represented by the current popularity of the blazer in women's fashion. Chinese Millennials attitude towards

fashion was not constrained by simple standards any more. It is not only a

rebellion against the last generation, but a manifestation of confidence and

the ultimate way of self-expression.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Millennials and Generation Z in China

The millennial generation is the demographic cohort of people whose birth years started in the early 1980s and to the mid-1990s as ending birth years. By 2018, the Pew Research Center (2019) was able to determine a precise year as the cutoff point between Millennials and the next generation – that is – anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23–38 years old in 2019) is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation, usually been called as Generation Z or post-Millennial generation (Dimock, 2019; Serafino, 2018). The reasons to define the Millennial generation's formative years are because of a number of reasons including political, economic and social factors. Many studies had examined the characteristics of this specific generation both in China and worldwide. Notably, Millennials have grown up accompany with the Internet and digital media. Consequently, Millennials are found to have different values and beliefs from previous generations.

In China, people are more likely to distinguish the generation by decades, naming them as 'the 80's' (80后) and 'the 90's' (90后), which is China's equivalent of America's Millennials. Undeniably, the Millennial generation and early Gen Z are the main force of China's modern society since the older ones are well into adulthood. Those who were born in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were ruled by Mao's pervasive and oppressive presence, which shaped a nation whose overriding characteristics were collectivism and obligatory self-sacrifice on the behalf of society. During the Maoist-era, the various changes and mass movements were all conducted by the Communist Party, not by fidgety and rebellious youth. While in the 1990s, with China's increasing prosperity, the popularity of the Internet and exposure to the West, changes were engendered from the bottom up from a young generation finally unfettered from the constraints of totalitarian political pressures (Moore and Chang, 2014). Compared to the last generation, the most approved characteristics of China's Millennials that have been found are concealing emotions, appearing stylish, and being independent, competent, modest and friendly (Moore, 2005). These characteristics synthesized together and generated

a new kind of individualism valued by China's Millennials. "A key indicator of young Chinese attachment to this new individualism is the pervasive use of a new slang term associated with it, ku. Ku is the Chinese version of the American slang term 'cool', and like cool, its emergence as a pervasive youth slang term is the verbal icon of a youth rebellion that promises to transform some of the older generation's most enduring cultural values" (Moore, 2005). Researches also indicated that socio-economic development has a strong positive impact on the support of self-expression values. Besides, geographic reasons also affect values that people from the industrial coastal areas tend to be more self-expressive than those from the less developed inland regions (Gu, 2011).

In terms of Internet and media use, according to the 41st Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, as of December 2017, the number of Internet users in China has reached 772 million, the Internet penetration rate was 55.8 %, and the ratio of male to female is 52.6: 47.4. The majority of them are people 10-39, accounting for 73% of the total Internet users; among them, people 20-29 accounted for the highest proportion, reaching 30%, the proportion of groups aged 10-19 and 30-39

is 19.6% and 23.5%. Meanwhile, according to 2017 Weibo User Development report issued by Weibo Data Center, as of September 2017, the Weibo monthly active users has reached the number of 376 million, the proportion of mobile devices accounts for 92%. Among them, people under 30 years old excesses 80%, forms up the main crowd of Weibo users. In gender, 56.3% are male and 43.7% are female. In a report aimed at fast fashion in 2016, fashion interest users on Weibo has accounted for 58 million. Female users account for 60%, and more than 70% of them are 18-30 years old. Noticeably, from the perspective of education background, the majority of the fashion-interested crowd is highly educated, over 70% are with bachelor degree or above. This feature corresponds with a worldwide statistic that among fashion bloggers, around 75% have completed at least some college education, and nearly half have post-graduate degrees (Luvaas, 2016). In terms of regional distribution, it is mainly concentrated in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and coastal provinces. From the data above, we are able to conclude that Chinese Millennials are the primary Chinese media audience and will shape the way people receive information (Cook, 2013). Also, the huge amount of

fashion-interested audience implies that there are still development space, expansion capacity, opportunities and benefits of fashion industry. In the following section, why postfeminism is perceived as a rebellious notion and how contemporary media depicts it is discussed.

2.2 Feminism and Postfeminism

Feminism by definition is the belief that man and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.

In the 2014 HeForShe campaign, Emma Watson stated herself as a feminist and appealed to the public to make the effort to achieve gender equality. She indicated that the word 'feminism' has been seen as an unpopular and uncomfortable word, because it often perceives as strong, aggressive, isolating, unattractive, and anti-men. However, the word has been misunderstood since the idea and ambition behind it is emphasizing equal rights – in other words – human rights. Male needs gender equality too because they have been made fragile and insecure by the distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men should have the permission to be sensitive, vulnerable, and human as well. It is time that we all perceived gender on a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals (Watson, 2014).

"I think it is right that I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men."

——Emma Watson

What is postfeminism?

Many scholars have contributed to the debates about the value and utility of the notion of postfeminism. Some understood it as a backlash against feminism, to refer to an historical shift after second wave feminism (Faludi, 1992); some understood it as a gender regime (McRobbie, 2009), a response to feminism, and was closely connected with the notion of neoliberalism (McRobbie, 2004). Additionally, some has understood it as a 'sensibility', which was composed of elements including: 1. Femininity is a bodily property. 2. The shift from objectification to subjectification. 3. An

emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline. 4. A focus on individualism, choice and empowerment. 5. The dominance of a makeover paradigm. 6. A resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference (Gill, 2007). Evidence had shown that feminism has a visibility in media culture that did not exist even a few years ago, and we are currently experiencing a renaissance of a 'feminist zeitgeist' in the media. Current mainstream publications often exemplify the idea of feminism as the new cool. This trend of new feminism embraces the neoliberal fantasy that 'anything can be achieved' (Gilroy, 2013) - by championing women for making the "right" choices and celebrating their intelligence, beauty, and confidence. However, what do they mean by "making the right choices" or in other words, "correct disposition" (Gilroy, 2013)? Gill had illustrated several female magazines as examples to unpack the code or elements of this new feminism which are commonly advertised in mainstream media, seeing it through the psychologizing discourse and promotion of female confidence, self-love and self-esteem as one size fits all solutions to gender injustice. It highlights work through individual hard work and changing attitudes rather than to work with others for social and political

transformation to solve injustice (Gill, 2016). Thus, Gill interrogated it as an ostensible version of new feminism.

The celebration of feminism not only found in the media, but also found in the worlds of fashion. Fashion can be feminist too. "Feminism appears as an identity that young woman might like to have – it is stylish, defiant, funny, beautiful, confident, and it 'champions' women" (Gill, 2016). Fashion blogging on social media sometimes serves as opinion leaders and influencers. In the next section, the social and lexical aspects of fashion blogging in China will be discussed.

2.3 Fashion Blogging in China

There is an increasing trend on social media platforms of bloggers trying to market themselves as either amateurs or full-time professionals to gain public attention; as well as social, cultural and monetary value. First of all, if you have noticed that the terms of 'fashion blogger' and 'style blogger' are switched between each other. What is the nuance between the pronouns in fashion blogosphere? Is it necessary to distinguish between fashion bloggers and style bloggers? The easiest way of describing fashion bloggers are fashion savvies who are known for their personal websites and probably has own a fashion line of products; examples are like Chiara Ferragni and Leandra Medine (now known as Leandra Medine Cohen). Style bloggers probably do not own fashion lines and may not be keen on wearing luxury brands, rather, choose comfort over trend. Another related term is 'influencers' who do not typically have personal websites or their own platforms outside of social media. They are social media queens or kings and their worth is evaluated by the number of followers they have. Both fashion and style bloggers are considered as sort of influencers, but not all influencers are bloggers (Alexander, 2018;

Pashaian, 2017). In Chinese language, there is no vivid boundary between these terms. *Style* or *fashion* as they both can be translated as '时尚(Shishang)' in Chinese. 'Fashion' is a general word to describe anything related to this industry. In addition, Chinese people just don't go to independent Uniform Resource Locator (URL) blogs due to the large volume of social media platforms and less commonness of independent URLs (Luvvas, 2016). Perhaps, the cultural value of collectivism still influences Chinese people in a subtle way. If your friends, families and colleagues are all on social media, you probably cannot avoid staying away from them. Moreover, research has proved that there is a significant cultural value shift from traditionalism to more liberal thinking and more self-expression leaning from the industrial coastal areas to the less developed inland regions (Gu, 2011).

Taking Magic Yang as my example, she locates her job based in Shenzhen, a coastal city in South China. She roots her career on Weibo instead of building her own website. She owns her fashion line, which collaborates with a fashion retailer. She has a decent number of followers. And she has been invited to many notable fashion events. It is not proper

to put her into any categories addressed above. She actually fulfills the requirements of being a style blogger, a fashion blogger, and an influencer. Thus, the terms 'style blogger' and 'fashion blogger' are used synonymously in this thesis.

2.3.1 'Micro-Celebrity'

Critics and scholars have commented on the rise of fashion bloggers. Several senior Vogue editors reflected on 2016 Milan Fashion Week criticizing fashion bloggers as "heralding the death of style" (Croker, 2016; VOGUE, 2016). While bloggers said the criticism was "hypocritical, schoolyard bullying, plain and simple" (Croker, 2016; VOGUE, 2016). Luvvas argued in his book *Street Style* that style blogs have significant social, cultural and historic value. It documents the look and feel of specific cities at specific moments, expands the scope of representation of fashion-related imagery, and forms the largest archive of personal sartorial expression in the world. In addition, "bloggers were democratizing fashion" because it broke into the insularity of the fashion world, forced to open an arrantly closed-door of fashion industry. Anyone could go outside, take

pictures, and make a name for themselves as a 'self-appointed arbiter of style'. You did not have to be beautiful with flawless skin and the perfect body dimensions of a fashion model. It is "the kind of populist rhetoric circulation through the global fashion blogosphere" (Luvvas, 2016). Indeed, fashion bloggers as an emerging occupation over the past decade had become competitive with major fashion magazines, become a potential career path in the fashion world, and had obtained the front row position among major fashion shows. They served as opinion leaders and trend drivers. Some of them are doing it for monetary gains, fame and the dream of overnight famous. However, in this thesis, the positive aspect, which encourages women's self-expression and confidence, using Magic Yang as a case study are explored.

2.3.2 'Having It All' on Social Media

Bloggers on social media usually depict an ideal life of "having it all," it seems like a myth that this supposedly unstable career would earn them bread, with freedom and flexibility. Scholars have done empirical research unfolding this "myth", finding that predestined passionate work, staging the

glam life, and carefully curated social sharing are the three tropes that bloggers used to depict the ideal of "having it all" (Duffy & Hund, 2015).

Moreover, I understand this as an escape from traditional employment. Gender stereotypes and social inequalities still exist in the digital industries. Women experience gender discrimination in judgments of competence, the competence can be influenced by even with minor manipulations of their clothing, such as skirt length and the number of buttons unfastened on a blouse. Social media is a place without those boundaries; it allowed them the maximum autonomy to promote themselves (Howlett et al, 2015). Women who become online entrepreneurs are relatively freer of choosing clothes to wear. Their ability will not be limited by the length of the skirts, and their value will not be judged by the number of unfastened buttons. In addition, creativity and entrepreneurship help younger Chinese women to climb the social ladder and lead them out of blue-collar labor sectors (Minh-Ha, 2015). Thus, this is a feminist rebellion again the restrictive traditional regulations.

2.3.3   Fashion Psychology and Self-Expression

From the psychology aspect, research has proved that there is link between clothing choices and emotional states. What we wear can change the way our brain functions; what we wear has cognitive, social and emotional consequences; what we wear represents who we are, what we become, and what we wear affects our confidence (Pine, 2014).

Evidence shows that the clothing choice implies that women who are feeling down put less effort into what they are wearing, and vice versa. Women who are with a depressed mood state are more likely to wear baggy tops, jeans, and sweatshirt or jumper (Pine, 2014).

"What we wear affects how we feel so much that it can distort and determine our thoughts and judgments"

——Karen Pine

Clothes mirrors the complexity and chaos of women's lives today. Minh-Ha described personal style blogs as representations of individual

taste. "The clothes in style blogs are personal. They are worn on a real person's body, and they reflect a practice and convey an idea of self-composure. Clothes on personal style blogs communicate a personal style of dress as well as a style of identity and of life" (Minh-Ha, 2015).

Fashion blogging along with social media have social, cultural, and psychological influence on people perceiving the notion of feminism. What is the most representative style that shows the notion? The first piece of clothing that came to my mind is power dressing.

2.4   Power Dressing – Women's Blazers

The term "Power Dressing" was first coined in 1970s; it is a fashion style that enables women to establish their authority in a professional and political environment, which was traditionally dominated by men. Thus, the article expresses the notion of feminism. It consists of tailored jackets, shoulder pads, and a knee-length skirts. Today women do not necessarily wear skirts, but the tailored jackets – blazers, are still linked with the impress of feminism.

A blazer is a structured and tailored article of clothing that is elegant yet, comfortable. It is a hybrid of kinds because it is more formal than a sports jacket but not as formal as the suit jacket. It was first designed to free women from long robes and gowns. It originates from masculine sense of style, but was customized to have more feminine charm.

2.4.1   The History of Women's Blazers

Today we often link blazers to work wear or consider it as a format of Power Dressing. Historically, they offered freedom and power—and controversy (Sullivan, 2016).

It all went back to the 1920's, when there was a radical change in women's clothing – due to the World War I. Women started to enter the workforce and filled the vacancy in a male-dominated workplace as men fought in the battlefield. They started working outside in farms or factories and did the physically demanding work which earlier was perceived as "men's work". This kind of work was not achievable in long gowns and dresses. They had to come up with more practical outfits that demanded less restrictive, more casual apparel. This was a turning point that women's clothing became more masculine, loser and sporty. There was a saying that women altered their husband's clothes and went to work wearing suits. One of the most influential fashion icons of 20's was Coco Chanel who freed women from the corset with her menswear-inspired cardigan style jackets. She acted as a force that accelerated female empowerment and paved the way for men-inspiring clothing, developing elegant suits, tweed blazers and simple everyday-wear for women (Anderson, 2005). This concept of casual chic was adopted just as women were gaining the right to vote in the 19th.

"Wanting to feel lighter myself, I made fashion lighter. Women, in my youth, did not look human. Their clothes went against nature. I gave them back their freedom; I gave them real arms, real legs, movements that were authentic and the possibility to laugh and eat without, necessarily, having to faint."

——Coco Chanel

In the 1930s, popular actresses such as Marlene Dietrich, Audrey Hepburn and Katharine Hepburn had brought men-inspired fashion into the forefront. They started wearing bow ties and sporting suits in movies. Although they played roles of pioneers promoting pants or trousers, this type of wear was only socially acceptable in some specific situations. At the end of the 1930s, Vogue published an issue with a cover showcasing a woman wearing a pair of pants. This issue of magazine inspired more women to wear pantsuits and blazers.

After the World War II ended, women were being urged to leave the workforce and re-embrace their role as housewife and mother, and their clothing shifted back to skirts and dresses subsequently. The 50's was ultra-feminine with clothing, designed by Dior, to accentuate a woman's hips and bust with tight waisted dresses, and curved jackets. It was also a reaction to the budget limitations form the war since flared skirts cost more for fabric than pants.

In reaction to being pushed back home, and being preached that a women's most important job was to raise children and wait upon husbands, it begun to generate displeasure among women who desired a more fulfilling life. This dissatisfaction led to the Second-wave Feminism movements in the 1960's. Advanced with the passing of the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, women gained more rights in hiring and employment. Suits became more casual.

The 1970s continued 1960s influences; men-inspired fashion was no longer considered as rebellious, pants for women became so mainstream. Yves Saint Laurent as the representative designer at that period took

menswear-inspired styling to new heights with his "Smoking" Tuxedo Jacket, hailed as the alternative to the Little Black Dress.

"For women, the tuxedo is an indispensable outfit, which they feel comfortable with, so they can be who they are. This is style, not fashion. Fads come and go, style is forever."

——Yves Saint Laurent

The 1980s was considered as the decade of power suits. The style featured shoulder pads, decorative buttons, and bright, feminine colors. The trend soon has spread among corporate women and went beyond the office (Greenberg, 2017; Finch, 2017; Veni, 2018).

2.4.2 Power Dressing in China

According to an article published on Jing Daily, the power dressing code for Chinese Millennial women may seem different than those of Western women. The author took several popular TV series as examples to illustrate a "pretty is justice" mindset. In the TV series, the leading female role favors silk blouses, tight, curve-revealing pencil skirts, and cute accessories over blazers and pants as her formal workwear. A considerable part of Chinese Millennial women see her makeup and outfits as textbook-worthy examples of the ideal worfwear for women (Luo, 2018). It seems like China's zeitgeist of 'Pretty is Justice' appear as a feminist backlash. But the issue is more multifaceted than that. Under the popular belief of pretty being power, Chinese millennial working women aim to look more conventionally attractive so that they can make progress in careers and achieve greater independence. However, by doing so, they also catered into the system of traditional beauty codes that are often dictated by men (Luo, 2018). If a woman uses her natural sexual appeal, is she still a feminist? If a woman likes to wear makeup and curve-revealed clothes – be it for herself or to please her boss or partner – is she still a feminist (Abarca, 2014)?

On the other side, according to the 2019 China fashion Trend Report (2019中国时尚趋势报告）released by Taobao (the largest Chinese online shopping website, owned by Alibaba), the hottest style trend was quite different than what Luo has addressed in her article. The report was released during the week of 'Taobao New Power Week (淘宝新势力周）', which is considered as China's Internet Fashion Week. According to the trend of transactions made on Taobao, blazers will become the hottest style of female consumers this year. Data shows the ratio of women buying blazers has significantly exceeded that of men. Among them, the oversized wide-shoulder blazers are expected to become the most popular article. This specific style of blazers are called 'Da Ge Kuo Xi (大哥廓西）' in Chinese, meaning 'the big brother's blazer' that conveys an air of confidence, power, and masculinity. While the male consumers are more and more in favor of the brands designed in China, and many of them are paying attention to the more neutral style that contains embroidered and lace elements. The report predicts fashion trends for the

next 10 years: women are getting tougher and men are getting more sophisticated.

It reflects that Chinese Millennials may perceive feminism or power dressing differently. Thus, a series of surveys is conducted to reveal what they thought to be a feminist, what they thought about being confidence, and how they express themselves through fashion.

CHAPTER 3.   METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

3.1   Case Study

Magic Yang (@杨梦晶 MagicYANG), who was a full-time fashion blogger based in Shenzhen, South China. She runs her business on Weibo, tweeting and promoting her styles, looks and attitudes. The very first post of her Weibo was in 2011. In seven years, she has completed the transformation of her career and has gained popularity in being a fashion blogger. To date, she has posted 8,585 microblogs, 3.3 microblogs per day on average. Her keen taste of styles, sense of colors, passion towards fashion, and her hard-working attitude has gained her 1.63 million of fans and numerous brand endorsements.

Figure 1 – Photo from Magic Yang's Weibo.

According to an incomplete statistics, she has published 160 different looks in 240 days (see Figure 1). Among Magic Yang's numerous collocation schemes, blazers have occupied a pivotal place. She herself favors blazers and has admitted that blazers have a great meaning for her.

"西装对于我的意义不再固化于职场，而是一件满足外在时髦有型，内在傲骨坚强的利器。"

The meaning of blazers for me is no longer solidified in workplace, but a weapon that satisfies both external and internal needs, which is fashionable outside and strong inside.

——杨梦晶 Magic Yang

Magic Yang's location, passion about fashion, hard-working attitude, the keen taste of colors and styles, and the skill of photography are the reasons that make her successful as a fashion blogger and make her stand out among others in the blogosphere.

3.2   Content Analysis Surveys

The researcher traced her posts from October 2017 to January 2019, and has concluded that she has published at least thirty blazer-themed looks. Among these looks, twenty were sorted out and had been put in order to conduct the first round survey. The reason to select 20 instead of 30 was because some of the blazers were matched more than once with different items.

3.2.1   The Selected Seven

The researcher designed a series of surveys. First of all, 20 looks of blazers from Magic Yang's Weibo posts were collected and numbered. These pictures were used to randomly interview people. People were asked to pick up 7 out of 20 based on their aesthetics or tastes, and write down the reasons or key words why they liked them. 25 answers were collected and analyzed. Among the 25 people, there were 19 females and 6 males; their major/expertise ranged from: fashion design, graphic design, industry design, architecture, anthropology, geography, and nursing. The

researcher used dot stickers to represent and calculate the votes. The results are showed as below.
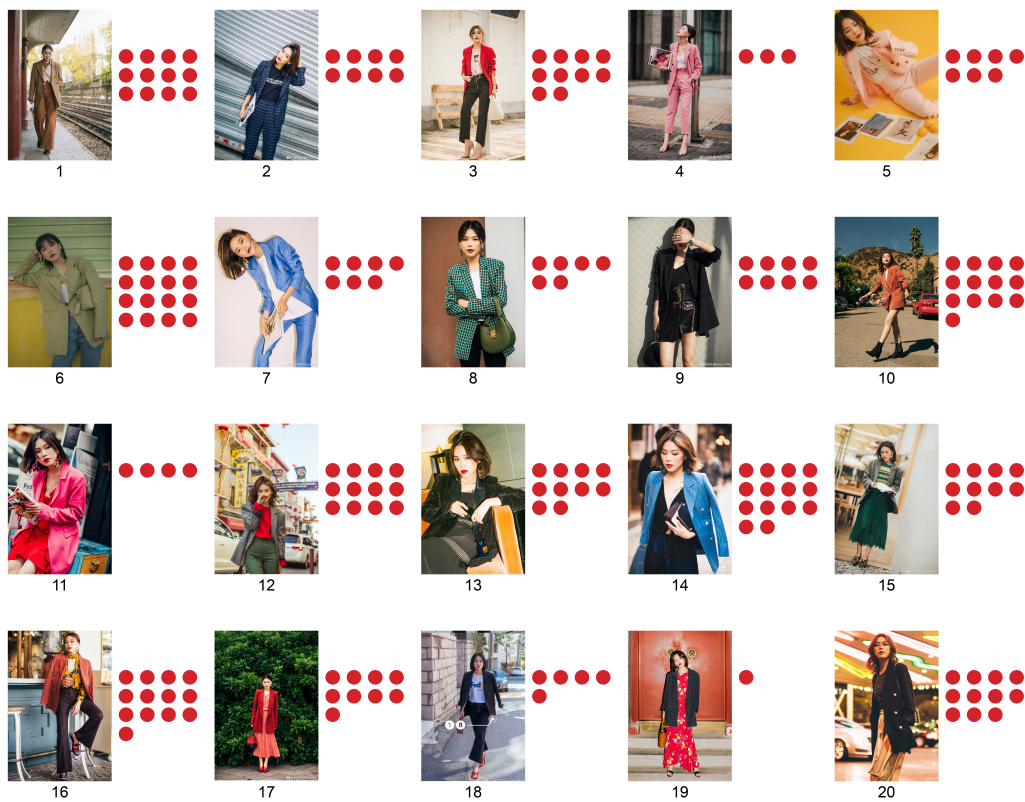
Figure 2

From the above picture, we can tell that 1, 6, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 20 are the top seven voted. The seven pictures according to how many votes

they got are recorded, with first being the most votes and vice versa. Next, the seven pieces will be discussed in detail.

Note, the following seven pictures (Figure 3-Figure 9) are from Magic Yang's Weibo.

Figure 3

1. Oversized Blazer (16 votes)

Brand: N/A

This blazer was lightly tinted in matcha green, featured with masculine tailoring, suitable size of collar, and an oversized fit. A lot of compliments that I have received regarding this piece were commending its color. The light matcha green color pleased the eye and made people feel fresh and relaxed. The oversized cut made you feel comfortable and indolent. It pairs well with the jeans and T-shirts. It fulfilled the need of being a blazer while being a short trench coat.

2. Blue Pinstripe Blazer (14 votes)

Brand: Tie For Her

This blazer comes in a stunning royal blue with pinstripes printed. It is elegant, close-fit tailored, and dignified.

The way she is wearing is to put it on shoulders, feels like being protected.

Figure 4

3. Coral Blazer (13 votes)

Brand: Mango

The color itself is very visually appealing. It features double-breasted and just sits below the hips. It is an all-matching piece, goes along well with everything.

Figure 5

Figure 6

4. Coral Blazer II (13 votes)

Brand: Mango

This is the same jacket as Look 3, but a different way of wearing. To my surprise, this blazer was selected twice among twenty options. It proves from the side that how versatile the blazer is.

Figure 7

5. The Classic Camel (12 votes)

Brand: N/A

Camel is a shade of brown and said to be a neutral hue. Its color alone can give any garment a luxe appeal. It is softer to the eye and more versatile, especially when paired with other shades of brown. It is a color proper to wear in the autumn.

This blazer features an oversized fit, with lapels and one button; it provides a harmony feeling matches the tone of autumn.

WAKE UP
IN THE MORNING
RISE AND SHINE

It's a brand new day
The sun is rising
It melts the pain away

Figure 8

6. Grey Plaid Blazer (12 votes)

Brand: ZARA

"It feels like everywhere we look these days, we spot the '80s-style plaid blazer. A scroll through street style or your Insta feed or a walk by a store window is sure to reveal some iteration of the retro revival. While it's unclear what exactly prompted the reemergence of the power blazer — current political climate? nostalgia? — the undeniable fact is this piece is fall's official wardrobe MVP."

The way she pulls up the sleeves gives a feeling of comfort and ease.

Figure 9

* *Figure 3-Figure 9 are from Magic Yang's Weibo.*

7. All Black (11 votes)

Brand: N/A

The color black has always been a controversial color both visually and emotional. On one side, it is a color symbolizing death, emptiness, mourning, oppression, ignorance and bad luck; on the other hand, it has positive connotations such as sophistication, power, luxury, sexuality and high fashion (Feisner, 2004).

"You can wear black at any time. You can wear it at any age. You can wear it on almost any occasion." Insisted Dior.

3.2.2 Online Survey I

After that, the researcher conducted an online survey via SurveyHero using the seven selected pictures, named the survey 'She is wearing a blazer I'. The survey aimed to find out how people look at the seven pieces in terms of feminism, confidence, and self-expression, and ranked them from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest). Please refer to the Appendix for the detailed questionnaires. There were a total of 56 responses collected, 41 of them have completed answers. There were 27 participants from the United States, 13 participants were Chinese, and 3 were from other countries. There were 7 males and 36 females. The results are showed as below (see Figure 10-13).
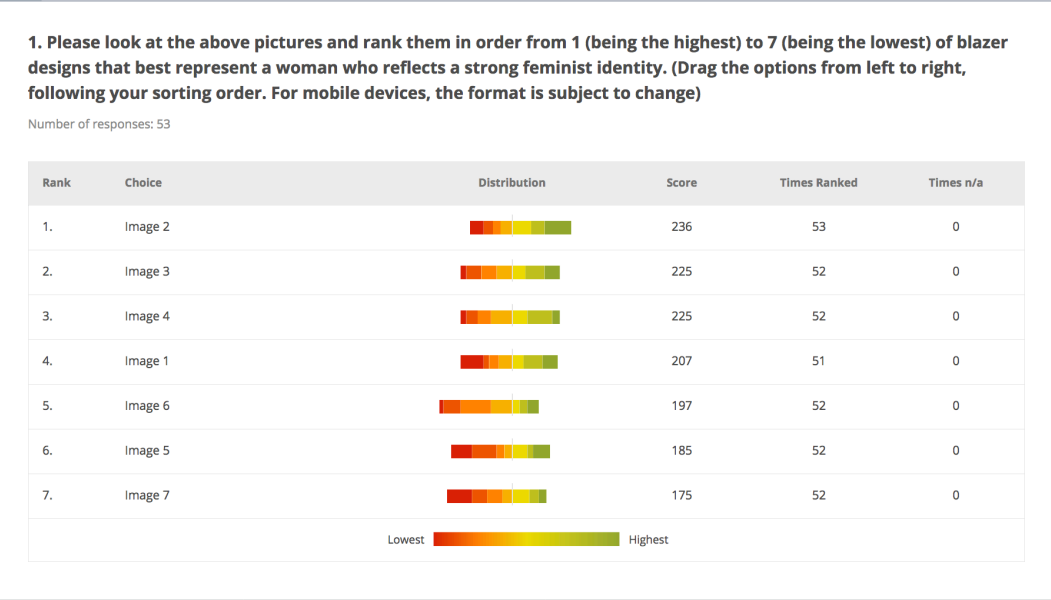
1. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent a woman who reflects a strong feminist identity. (Drag the options from left to right, following your sorting order. For mobile devices, the format is subject to change)

Number of responses: 53

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 2		236	53	0
2.	Image 3		225	52	0
3.	Image 4		225	52	0
4.	Image 1		207	51	0
5.	Image 6		197	52	0
6.	Image 5		185	52	0
7.	Image 7		175	52	0
		Lowest Highest			

Figure 10

2. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent confidence.

Number of responses: 44

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 2		219	44	0
2.	Image 4		204	44	0
3.	Image 3		194	44	0
4.	Image 6		163	44	0
5.	Image 7		160	44	0
6.	Image 5		155	44	0
7.	Image 1		137	44	0
		Lowest Highest			

Figure 11

3. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent creativity/self-expression.

Number of responses: 42

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 3		200	42	0
2.	Image 4		199	42	0
3.	Image 6		169	42	0
4.	Image 2		168	42	0
5.	Image 5		154	42	0
6.	Image 7		148	42	0
7.	Image 1		138	42	0

Lowest ▬▬▬▬▬ Highest

Figure 12

The darker the color, the less votes the image get; and the lighter the color, the more votes. From the results we can tell, Image 2 – The Blue Pinstripe Blazer ranks the highest in the first two questions. The researcher interviewed people about what they thought about this outfit. The answers revealed that the participants like the bright color and the pattern, they thought it was professional, they like the fit and straight structure, etc. For the third question, Image 3 ranked the highest. Interviewees liked the rich coral color, and the way the blogger worn it with

a leather skirt was creative. Her legs were showed and it was a way of self-expression.

3.2.3   Online Survey II

An iteration of the online survey was needed since the thesis was focused on young Chinese Millennial women. Thus, 'She is wearing a blazer II' survey was conducted and sent to a group of young Chinese Millennial women. The researcher also created a WeChat (a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and mobile payment app developed by Tencent) group chat to collect and synthesize the feedback. WeChat is the most commonly used messaging app among Chinese people. All of the participants were invited into the group and they were welcomed to share and post their thoughts, ideas and considerations directly in the group chat dialog box. Emojis were also welcomed to use to keep the conversation active and vibrant. The results are shown as below (see Figure 13-16).

Figure 13 – WeChat Screenshots

The researcher collected the survey feedback via WeChat, and created a group chat and invited 15 Chinese millennial young women to join. All of them have been exposed to Western culture, either studied or lived in United States. Survey link in this group chat was shared so that everybody could access to the questionnaire. The participants were asked to share their thoughts, ideas, considerations especially aiming to Q2 - Q5, and post them directly in group chat so that they can chat with each other. They participated actively and positively; emojis were being used

often and freely. The whole process was surrounded by good vibes. It was

a very typical Chinese messaging routine. The translation was done by

WeChat built-in translation function. Color-coding was used to reveal the

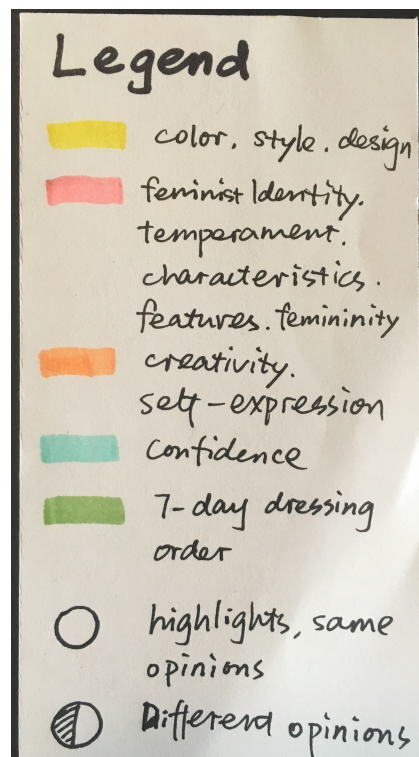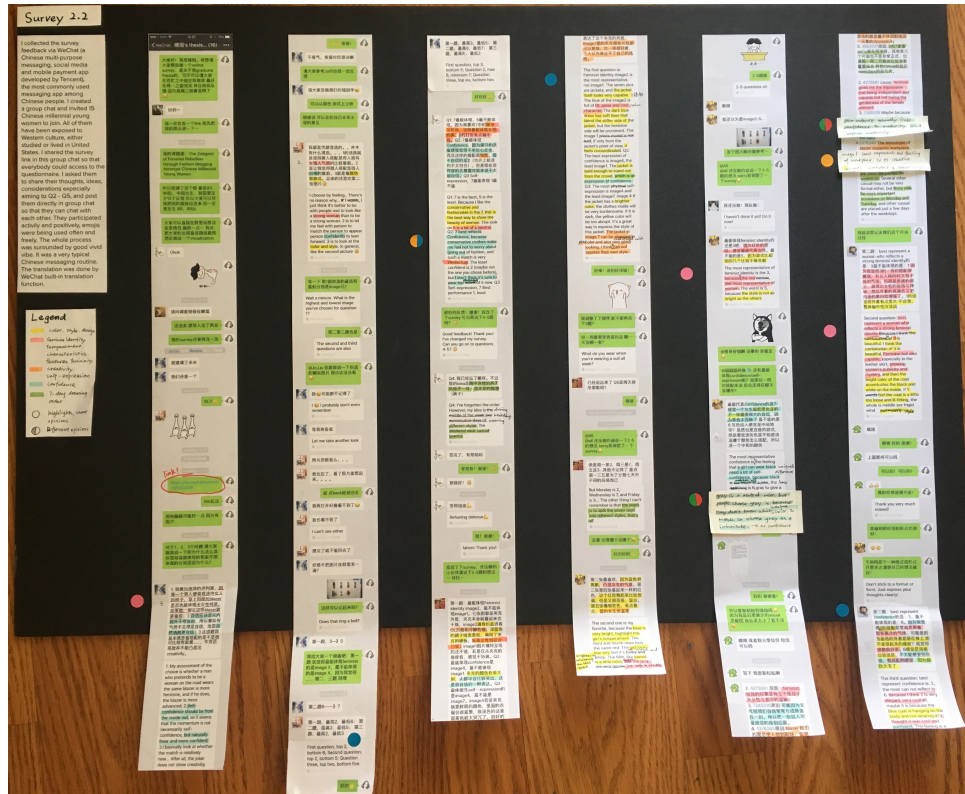insights (refer to the legend below for details).
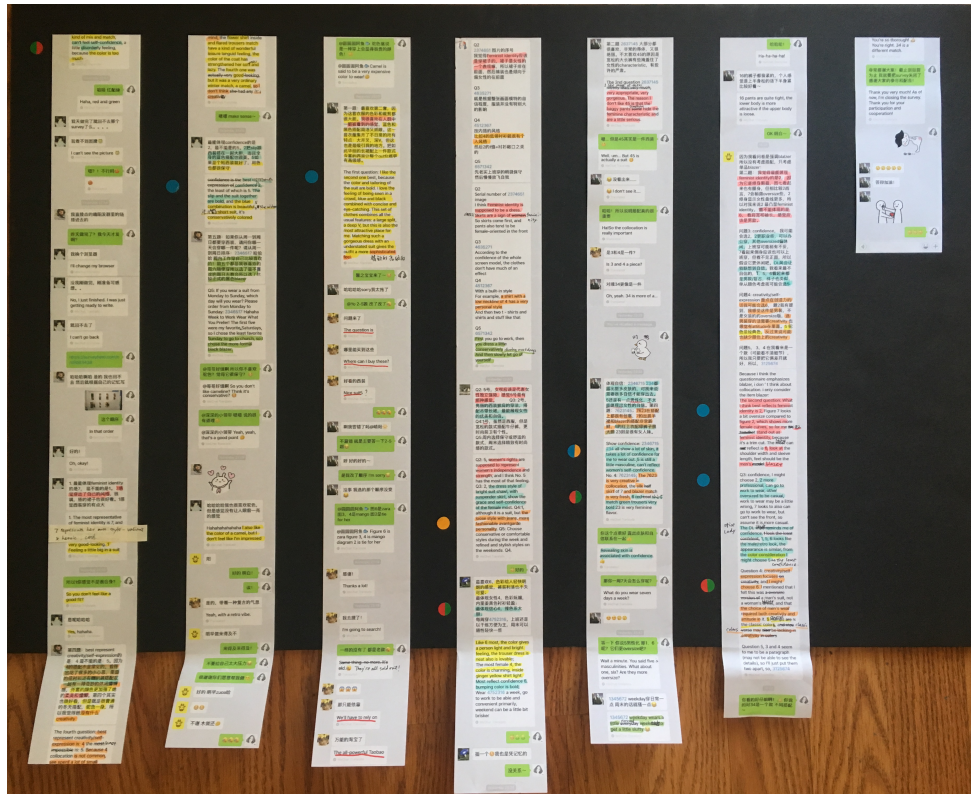

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

Take Image 6 – the Grey Plaid Blazer – as an example. This blazer received many controversial comments. Some people thought it was messy and dull because it mixed color green, red, and grey. However, some people were holding an exact opposite opinion, and seeing it as the reason for being creative, bold and confident. Interestingly, one comment thought she was wearing men's blazer, rather women's blazer. The

comment corresponded to the hottest style were mentioned in Chapter 2.

Image 6 was a perfect example of 'the big brother's blazer', with wide

shoulders, loose-fit tailored, and straight structured. It was a manifestation

that Millennial generation's perception towards color and style was very

different, and their attitude towards fashion was not constrained by simple

standards any more.

For the online survey, the researcher asked the same questions that

to rank the photos in terms of feminist identity, confidence, and self-

expression, the results are shown as below (see Figure 17-19).

2. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent a woman who reflects a strong feminist identity. 以上图片哪张最能体现feminist identity, 请从 1（最能）到7（最不能）排序。 (Drag the options from left to right, following your sorting order. For mobile devices, the format is subject to change)

Number of responses: 21

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 3		107	20	0
2.	Image 2		103	20	0
3.	Image 7		82	21	0
4.	Image 6		73	20	0
5.	Image 1		69	20	0
6.	Image 4		67	20	0
7.	Image 5		60	20	0
		Lowest ▬▬▬▬▬ Highest			

Figure 17

3. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent confidence. 以上图片哪张最能体现confidence, 请从1（最能）到7（最不能）排序。

Number of responses: 19

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 6		91	19	0
2.	Image 2		89	19	0
3.	Image 4		76	19	0
4.	Image 1		72	19	0
5.	Image 5		72	19	0
6.	Image 3		67	19	0
7.	Image 7		65	19	0
		Lowest ▬▬▬▬▬ Highest			

Figure 18

Figure 19

Notably, the results were different than that in Survey I. Image 3 was ranked as the most feminist and Image 6 as the most confident, whereas Image 2 was the answer for both questions in Survey I. For the third question, asking about creativity and self-expression, Image 2 got the highest votes, whereas Image 3 was the original answer. Interestingly, they thought Image 2 was the most creative because this blazer to me was very formal and normal, except the attractive color. Then I realized that it was because of she wears it with a deep-V, side-slit, long dress.

It drew me back to Mao's era when the dressing style was very conservative and simple. Both men and women wore uniforms – the typical Chinese tunic suits. People who wore different or dared to reveal skin were seen as indecent, immoral, or even sinful. Coming to the Millennial generation, though they were much more opened than that time, they were still requested to were school uniforms – the long sleeves, loose-fit, and ungendered uniforms, when they were adolescents. Their bodies were covered fully. Thus, revealing skin was seen as bold, rebellious, and maybe keen-set, so that when there were opportunities to change, it was a direct way to express and show oneself.

5. If ask you to wear the seven blazers from Monday to Sunday, what would be your choice of order and why? Rank them from 1 (being Monday) to 7 (being Sunday). 如果你从周一到周日都要穿西装，请问你哪一天会穿哪一件呢？请从周一到周日排序。

Number of responses: 13

Rank	Choice	Distribution	Score	Times Ranked	Times n/a
1.	Image 6		67	13	0
2.	Image 7		54	13	0
3.	Image 4		53	13	0
4.	Image 3		52	13	0
5.	Image 5		52	13	0
6.	Image 2		45	13	0
7.	Image 1		41	13	0
		Lowest ▬▬▬▬ Highest			

Figure 20

It was also asked whether they would wear blazers form Monday to Sunday, what would be the rank order? 6, 7, 4, 3, 5, 2, 1 was the order corresponded to from Monday to Sunday. The considerations includes being professional for weekdays and casual for weekends; or being conservative for weekdays and playful for weekends.

6. Please select how strongly your personal beliefs/values support the concept of feminism (as defined below).
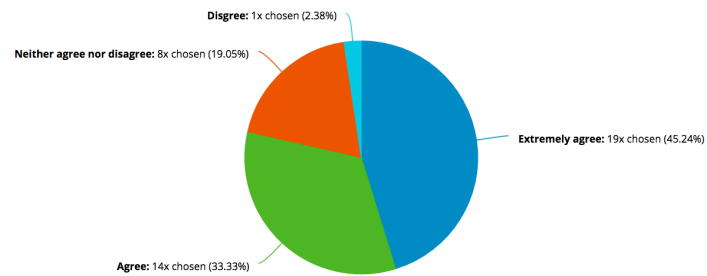
Number of responses: 42

Disgree: 1x chosen (2.38%)

Neither agree nor disagree: 8x chosen (19.05%)

Extremely agree: 19x chosen (45.24%)

Agree: 14x chosen (33.33%)

Figure 21 – result from Survey I

7. Please select how strongly your personal beliefs/values support the concept of feminism (as defined below).

Number of responses: 14

Extremely disagree: 1x chosen (7.14%)

Extremely agree: 2x chosen (14.29%)

Neither agree nor disagree: 4x chosen (28.57%)
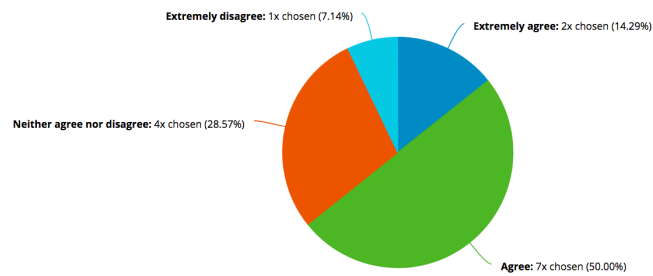
Agree: 7x chosen (50.00%)

Figure 22 – result from Survey II

Another notable difference between the two surveys is the last question asking them whether or not to support the idea of the concept of feminism. Pie charts show that the result from Survey I (which has more American interviewees) has more polarized supports ratio than that from Survey II (which were only Chinese Millennial women). The two blues on the pie chart means "extremely agree" or "disagree", while green and orange represents "agree" and "neither agree nor disagree". The area of green and orange were larger in Survey II than that in Survey I. This drew me back to the characteristics of Chinese Millennial generation as reveals in Chapter 1, which values the culture of moderation. Although there is a cultural shift from collectivism to individualism, cultural factors of traditional Confucian philosophy remain powerful in shaping the minds of the Chinese people (Gu, 2011).

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Fashion in China is in its period of prosperity, more and more people are either dedicated into this industry as influencers or affected by the industry as amateurs. Social media along with fashion blogs have created an awareness of feminism among Chinese Millennial women. Traditionally, although Mao's pervasive and oppressive rule remains a dispute, the rise of Chinese women's status has to more or less give credit to him (Mengke, 2013). Mao's saying "Women can hold up half of the sky" was considered as a form of feminism, which emphasis power, strength, and same activeness as men. In the meantime, the Western feminism movements influence the world including China, given debates about women's rights, gender equality, femininity and neoliberalism (Liu and Suh, 2017; Gill, 2008). Together, the two tropes articulate a form of feminism that beside power, masculine, strength, we remain softness, gentleness, and femininity as parts of feminist identity through the expression of fashion. Blazer, as a representative piece, articulates the identity of independent, yet lovable, strong, yet gentle, masculine, yet

feminine. Fashion, more than ever, is a tool for not only self-expression, but self-promotion amongst millennial women in China. Chinese Millennial's attitude towards fashion was not constrained by simple standards any more. It is not only a rebellion against the last generation, but a manifestation of confidence and the ultimate way of self-expression.

This paper examines the cultural value shift amongst Chinese Millennial generations, presents a vivid fashion blogging example, and illustrates a zeitgeist of feminist rebellion through a specific article of clothing – women's blazers. The thesis serves as a pioneering paper that linked feminism with fashion blogging in the context of China and reveals that the blazer is the article of clothing that is being integrated and remixed into wardrobes of these young millennial women as a means of power dressing.

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APPENDIX A

**A Graduate Thesis
about Fashion Blogs**

In this survey, you will be asking to look at 20 images of blazer looks and then choose SEVEN looks that you like. Please mark on the numbers, and state the reason why you like it in a couple of words. It could be functional, aesthetic, and expressive, etc; just go with your first or "gut" responses.

Please try to focus on the blazers and the whole look, ignore the other matching itesms or accessories such as earings, shoes, bags.

All of your responses are anonymous, it is for a graduate thesis research. Thanks for your cooperation!

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Do you follow fashion/style bloggers on any sort of social media?
Yes ◯   No ◯

Are you a person who pays attention to personal styling?
Yes ◯   No ◯

What's your major/expertise?

Where are you from? *(The reason for this is to see how different cultural background influences the perception of aesthetics)*

Gender *(The reason for this is to compare how different gender perceives aesthetics)*
Male ◯   Female ◯   Prefer not to tell ◯

4.1.1 Questionnaire 1

She Is Wearing a Blazer I

This survey is aiming to find out how people from different gender and different cultural background look at women's blazers in terms of feminism, confidence, and self-expression. You will be asking to look at 7 blogpost photos and answer related questions. Please focus on the blazer and the overall look, do not assess based on the background and her facial expression.

All of your responses are anonymous. The survey is for a graduate thesis research. Thanks for your cooperation!

Link: https://surveyhero.com/c/0d8c86fa

1. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent a woman who reflects a strong feminist identity.

2. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent confidence.

3. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent creativity/self-expression.

4. What is your nationality?

5. What is your gender?

   o Male

   o Female

   o Prefer not to tell

6. Please select how strongly your personal beliefs/values support the concept of feminism (as defined below).

   "Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational

and professional opportunities for women that are equal to

those for men.”

- o Extremely Agree

- o Agree

- o Neither Agree nor Disagree

- o Disagree

- o Extremely Disagree

4.1.2 Questionnaire 2

She is wearing a blazer II

This survey is aiming to find out how people from different gender and different cultural background look at women's blazers in terms of feminism, confidence, and self-expression. You will be asking to look at 7 blogpost photos and answer related questions. Please focus on the blazer and the overall look, do not assess based on the background and her facial expression.

All of your responses are anonymous. The survey is for a graduate thesis research. Thanks for your cooperation!

1. Among the following pictures, which one is your favorite?

   下列图片中你最喜欢哪套穿搭?

2. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent a woman who reflects a strong feminist identity.

   以上图片哪张最能体现 feminist identity,

   请从1（最能）到7（最不能）排序。 *(Drag the options from left to right, following your sorting order. For mobile devices, the format is subject to change)*

3. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent confidence.

   以上图片哪张最能体现confidence，请从1（最能）到7（最不能）排序。

4. Please look at the above pictures and rank them in order from 1 (being the highest) to 7 (being the lowest) of blazer designs that best represent creativity/self-expression.

   以上图片哪张最能体现creativity/self-expression,

   请从1（最能）到7（最不能）排序。

5. If ask you to wear the seven blazers from Monday to Sunday, what would be your choice of order and why? Rank them from 1 (being Monday) to 7 (being Sunday).

   如果你从周一到周日都要穿西装，请问你哪一天会穿哪一件呢？

   请从周一到周日排序。

6. Are you a person who is interested in fashion and pays attention to personal styling?

   你是一个对时尚感兴趣并且注重穿搭的人吗？

7. Do you follow any fashion/style bloggers on any sort of social media platforms? 你有在任何平台上关注任何时尚博主吗？

8. Please select how strongly your personal beliefs/values support the concept of feminism (as defined below).

"Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men."

o   Extremely Agree

o   Agree

o   Neither Agree nor Disagree

o   Disagree

o   Extremely Disagree