

Shanghai Fashion Week: A Socially Engaging Mass Entertainment Event with a Professional Infrastructure

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Abstract

This paper uses a cultural event in the global fashion ecosystem that has been largely ignored, the fashion week, as an entry point to elaborate on the explicit cultural characteristics of Shanghai Fashion Week (SHFW) alongside the significant rise and construction of the Chinese design and fashion cultural system in the past five years. Under the structural interconnectedness between art and capitalism in the global fashion industry, together with the drive of the socialist ideology of the public ownership of the means of production in China, SHFW is now showing discrete cultural characteristics, absorbing as much knowledge as it can from the legitimate fashion week system and incorporating this in the domestic industry context. This paper also argues that SHFW has built up an interactive and dynamic infrastructure or ecosystem within the domestic fashion culture, enhancing its socialist characteristics with the intertwining of a core professional fashion week and a mass carnival event. Its deep engagement with both the general public and professional insiders is a unique cultural characteristic that distinguishes it from Paris Fashion Week and London Fashion Week.

Keywords: Fashion Culture; Fashion Week; Social Fashion; Socialist Ideology; Global Fashion Ecosystem.

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Introduction

The topic of fashion weeks has long been neglected in the fashion ecosystem, as well as in fashion research and studies. The last specific study that discussed fashion weeks was on London Fashion Week's "materializations" and engagement with fashion cultural productions, conducted by Entwistle and Rocamora.¹ However, recent decades have seen significant changes in the systems and statuses of global fashion weeks, especially using the rapid growth and development of China's fashion week, Shanghai Fashion Week, as a paradigm. As the global economic power in fashion is shifting from the West to the East, more commercial and cultural collaborations between the UK and China in fashion have been seen in the past two years. This includes the British Fashion Council's acceptance of the Chinese enterprise VIP.com as its new sponsor, as well as new projects that have been established to encourage Chinese designers to participate in London Fashion Week as a 'new wave' of fashion power.² Large numbers of young Chinese designers are educated in the UK and are starting up their autonomous brands in the UK. According to the first published report on the ecosystem of independent Chinese designers, Liu³ states that approximately 48% of Chinese designers have international education backgrounds, with 17% graduating from Central Saint Martins, which is the highest proportion of the design colleges.

The legitimate "Big Four" fashion weeks, Paris Fashion Week (hereafter referred as PFW), New York Fashion Week (hereafter referred as NYFW), Milan Fashion Week (hereafter referred as MLFW), and London Fashion Week (hereafter referred as LFW), have gained global recognition as the central focus of the fashion industry. They have become highly influential in "rendering and reproducing" the structure of the fashion field.⁴ In the meantime, these fashion weeks have acquired a more mature operating system and developed cultural characteristics embedded with each fashion city due to their hierarchical status and considerable cultural heritage in fashion. As international fashion weeks have been the most renowned and central platform for brands and designers in publishing their new season's collections, its intimate links to the general fashion ecosystem should not be ignored. Not only because it is the core stage for emerging high-end or premium designer brands to build their brand identities and global images to boost their international sales, the fashion week has also become one of the most crucial tools in driving the host city in becoming a world-recognised fashion city.⁵

Since 2001,⁶ Shanghai Fashion Week (hereafter referred to as SHFW) has been developing at an unprecedented speed and has rising global recognition. One of the cultural characteristics which is being noticed by European fashion commentators is its gathering of emerging Chinese designers who, despite having studied in European fashion systems, are returning to the runways of their domestic country.⁷ Accompanied by the domestic institution Labelhood as one of the official organisers of SHFW, these international-based Chinese designers, with their innovative shows displayed through this institution, are breaking the old forms of fashion show whilst exhibiting the possibilities of high-profile fashion's wider social engagement with the mass audience. The trend of combining Western and Eastern fashion in the fashion system and culture is inevitable and will be a new topic in the fashion field that deserves more academic attention and discussion.

1. Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized: a study of London Fashion Week," *Sociology*, vol. 40, n. 4 (2006), 735–51.
2. See Tamsin Smith, *Exclusive interview: Caroline Rush on China and the future of fashion week*. <https://jingdaily.com/caroline-rush/> (2018); Enrica Miller, "The Chinese New Wave changing the perception of Made in China" (2018), <https://www.collater.al/en/chinese-new-wave-made-in-china/>.
3. Jun Liu, "《华丽志》发布首份"中国独立设计师品牌生态报告" ["Huali chi published the first Report of Chinese independent designer brands' ecosystem"] (2017), <http://luxe.co/post/57927>.
4. See Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized," 741.
5. Allen J. Scott, "Cultural economy and the creative field of the city," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 92, n. 2 (2010): 115–30.
6. Cf. Miller, "The Chinese New Wave changing the perception of Made in China;" Tim Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai: The Designers of New Economy of Style*, PhD thesis in International Business, A.R.C Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation Queensland University of Technology, 2013.
7. Cf. Miller, "The Chinese New Wave changing the perception of Made in China."

This empirical study shines a light on SHFW, China's high-profile fashion week that has received extensive global attention and has developed rapidly in recent years. As an international fashion week nurtured within a socialist country where the political and social ideologies are different from the "Big Four"⁸ fashion weeks, including LFW, that have been nurtured in Western countries, SHFW, although starting by systematically imitating the West, has gained its own cultural characteristics after 15 years of development. One of the most noticeable characteristics that is emphasised in this paper is SHFW's challenging of the long-existing elitism and exclusivity of the legitimate European "Big Four" fashion weeks as an emerging fashion week that has originated within a socialist country.

More specifically, this paper investigates SHFW in terms of its organisational ideologies, institutional structures, commercial systems and cultural characteristics to identify how Western and Eastern culture have been combined in the microcosm of Chinese fashion culture created by SHFW. It also explores how the governmental organisers and institutions have strategically eliminated its original elitism and turned this hierarchical fashion event into a socially engaging carnival event with mass appeal that could benefit the public, to the greatest extent, both commercially and culturally, by allowing the mass audience to access all events that used to be exclusive to insiders, as well as establishing creative events for the public to engage with SHFW. The way and the extent that the event is nurtured by and interacts with the global fashion ecosystem are also analysed to discover a better way to fuse Western and Eastern culture.

Literature and Context Review

With regard to the prior research on the legitimate fashion weeks, a limited number of studies can be found due to the difficulties of accessing the data. The professional fashion industry is difficult for outsiders to access, even for fashion researchers. A number of scholars' research experiences have proved that it is difficult to gain access to and be a participant in the industry; in most instances, the observation has to be overt.⁹ European cultural critics, such as Entwistle and Rocamora¹⁰ who studied London Fashion Week in 2006 by applying Bourdieu's field theory,¹¹ have provided a theoretical framework for the subsequent research on fashion weeks by investigating the research topic of cultural productions within a certain field. In fact, most of the existing research covering China's fashion weeks¹² has been undertaken on the basis of Entwistle and Rocamora's research. However, this paper discussing SHFW does not take Entwistle and Rocamora's study¹³ as a theoretical framework as other studies have done because this paper focuses on one of the cultural characteristics of SHFW, which is its increasingly strong social engagement with the public from April 2017 to September 2018.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the formation of SHFW and its having strong engagement with the public, it is necessary to investigate its unique features and establishment. Historians¹⁴ have provided sufficient insight into the emergence of the Chinese fashion culture and fashion system, demonstrating that benefiting the public is a long-existing tradition in China's large-scale fashion events that are operated by the government, with fashion weeks being an example of this. These prior studies

8. This refers to Paris Fashion Week, New York Fashion Week, Milan Fashion Week and London Fashion Week.
9. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized;" Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, "Between art and commerce: London Fashion Week as trade fair and fashion spectacle," in *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 249–69; Weiping Wu, "Cultural strategies in Shanghai: Regenerating cosmopolitanism in an era of globalization," *Progress in Planning*, vol. 61, n. 3 (2004): 159–80; Christine Tsui, *China fashion: Conversations with designers* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2009).
10. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized." Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "Between art and commerce."
11. Pierre Bourdieu and Johnson Randal, *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
12. Cf. Jianhua Zhao, *The Chinese fashion industry: An ethnographic approach* (London: A&C Black, 2013); Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai: The Designers of New Economy of Style*.
13. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized."
14. Cf. Wu, "Cultural strategies in Shanghai," 159–80; Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai: The Designers of New Economy of Style*; Zhao, *The Chinese fashion industry: an ethnographic approach*.

have all looked at China's first fashion week, China Fashion Week (hereafter referred to as CFW), as a case study, revealing that its close links to officialdom and unusual degree of politicisation are relatively unique cultural characteristics that distinguish the fashion cultural phenomenon in China from legitimate European ones.

Although SHFW was first established by a government-directed industry institution, the Shanghai Fashion Design Associate took over and transformed it to more closely resemble the legitimate "Big Four" fashion weeks than CFW. Viewed historically, SHFW was first officially established in 2003 and originated from the Shanghai International (Clothing) Festival, which emerged in 1997.¹⁵ Shanghai, as the most important fashion city since the fashion modernisation of China, exhibited similar characteristics when launching its first fashion week. As Bian¹⁶ has mentioned, "...SHFW was, at first, an action of government; it was held by the government as a comprehensive (all-round) culture festival...". The 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee marked the official end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978 and the gradual resuming of regular cultural activities. From the 1980s onwards, the event has been seen as the renaissance of Haipai culture as it has regained its vitality and become more mature.

A number of Chinese fashion industry professionals have discussed SHFW and its issues in the early stages of its development. Shao and Zhang¹⁷ discuss the core purpose of establishing SHFW and the lack of a professional buying system in China, which has inevitably led to weaknesses in the operational system of SHFW. Yang¹⁸ categorises the brands that participate in SHFW into four classes, which are the overseas brands, Chinese brands coming from external provinces, small designer brands, and traditional manufacturing brands that are seeking to upgrade their design capabilities. He questions the operational situation of SHFW, including its relationships with the domestic government and the increasing number of industry institutions that could create potential communication issues, causing operational problems for SHFW. Ling¹⁹ emphasises this issue, analysing the interrelationships between potential business opportunities and promotional exposure at fashion weeks in China, pointing out the inner immaturity in the Chinese fashion industrial chain compared to that in the European and American fashion systems. However, she also comments on both the economic and cultural values of SHFW, stating that SHFW is a cost-effective promotion vehicle for designer brands in China, comparing the production cost of a show at SHFW with that at New York Fashion Week (at over US \$1,500,000) and China Fashion Week in Beijing (at over 50,000 RMB), which are much higher than the cost at SHFW.²⁰

Few studies, however, have investigated SHFW in the most recent three to five years, which can be seen as a period in which SHFW has been rapidly growing in terms of both its commercial scale and upgrading its international recognition through the increasing fusion of the Western system with Eastern culture. As a paradigm of an emerging international fashion week that is obtaining global recognition in China, on the industry level, SHFW deserves more investigation to update the global image of Chinese fashion culture. On the academic level, it has been proven that fashion weeks are a microcosm of the domestic fashion industry in terms of cultural production,²¹ as well as a medium for examining the fashion system, from its design and production to dissemination, its cultural and political incorporation in the host fashion city and its interaction with the industry as a whole.²² For these reasons, when investigat-

15. Xiangyang Bian, "Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW," Interview by Zhe Wang (April 18, 2017)

16. Cf. Bian, "Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW."

17. Longtu Shao, Yufan Zhang, "上海时装周, 究竟缺了什么? [Is there anything lacking in the Shanghai Fashion Week?]," 国际商业技术 *International Business and Technology*, n. 1 (2009): 40.

18. Du Yang, "上海时装周往何处去 [What's the future of Shanghai Fashion Week?]," *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House*, n. 4 (2009): 10-3.

19. Ziyang Ling, "上海时装周: 与产业同行, 让发展永驻 [Shanghai fashion week: Keep pace with industry and make development permanent]," 2/2 (2012): 4-8.

20. See Ling, "上海时装周: 与产业同行, 让发展永驻 [Shanghai fashion week: Keep pace with industry and make development permanent]," 5.

21. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized."

22. Cf. Alexander Fury, *Catwalking photographs by Chris Moore* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2017); Gill Stark, *The fashion show: History, theory and practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

ing the global fashion ecosystem, fashion weeks are an indispensable topic that deserves more academic attention.

Methodologies and Methods

This research is a small part of my Ph.D. studies which discusses UK-educated, international-based Chinese designers and their survival and interaction with today's global fashion ecosystem. It is ethnographic research conducted from 2016 to 2018, with Shanghai Fashion Week being one of the case subjects, utilising participant observation and unstructured in-depth interviews as research methods. It mainly looks at two consecutive fashion seasons in 2017, the Autumn/Winter 2017 season and the Spring/Summer 2018 season.

For the ethnography, which is the core methodology applied in this research, it is considered to be the important analysis of culture and society. According to Coleman and Simpson,²³ ethnography is usually “based on participant observation and resulting in a written account of a people, place or institution.” As presented by Reeves *et al.*,²⁴ the main purpose of ethnography is to “provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews.” As Hammersley and Atkinson²⁵ also state, “the task of ethnographers is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to “get inside” the way each group of people sees the world.” Ethnographic research shares these qualitative traits but ethnographers more specifically seek an understanding of what the participants do to create the culture in which they live and how the culture develops over time. As ethnography is “a descriptive account of the life of a group of people at a particular time and in a particular place,”²⁶ a combination of methods should be used to provide a comprehensive picture of SHFW due to its complexity of system and cultural phenomena, with this paper especially focusing on its social engagement as a cultural characteristic. Therefore, this research adopts diversified methods of data collection, which mainly include observations and interviews. More specifically, the methods and tools that are utilised to design and implement this research are participant and covert observation and formal and informal interviews, which are elaborated on in the following sections.

Ethnographic Observations

Observation is a vital research method in qualitative and ethnographic research.²⁷ As stated by Patrick²⁸ deductive quantitative research tends to make the researcher an “objective observer who neither participates in nor influences what is being studied,” while in inductive qualitative research, “the researcher can learn the most by participating or being immersed in a research situation. Both contain observation as a critical research method. According to Sheroz,²⁹ observation in a field setting involves ‘prolonged engagement in a setting or social situation.’ Li³⁰ argues that ethnographic participant observation is the

23. See Simon Coleman and Bob Simpson, *Discovering anthropology: A resource guide for teachers and students* (Royal Anthropological Institute: National Network for teaching and learning anthropology: University of Durham, 1998), 2.

24. See Scott Reeves *et al.*, “Qualitative research methodologies: ethnography,” *BMJ*, n. 337 (2008): 1020.

25. See Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (London: Routledge, 2007), 120.

26. See Carol R. Ember *et al.*, “Cross-cultural research,” in *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 1998), 648.

27. Cf. Natasha Mack *et al.*, *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*, North Carolina: Family Health International, 2005; A.H. Patrick, “Methodology: Observation” (2013), <http://www.public.asu.edu/~kroel/www500/Observation.pdf> (accessed: August 15, 2016); Muhammed Sheroz, “Observation in Qualitative Research” (2013), https://www.slideshare.net/sheroz_ramzan/observation-in-qualitative-research (accessed: July, 2016).

28. Cf. Patrick, *Methodology: Observation*.

29. Cf. Sheroz, *Observation in qualitative research*.

30. See Jun Li, “Ethical challenges in participant observation: A reflection on ethnographic fieldwork,” *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 13, n. 1 (2008): 101.

only effective method that can provide the researcher with the “real life” context in investigating people’s behaviours, rather than “what they say what they do.” It gives researchers “detailed and authentic data, which is usually inaccessible through other methods.”³¹ If ethnographic observation cannot be used, the data would be much less convincing. In this project, ethnographic observation is a main implement. During the ethnographic case study on SHFW, diversified types of observation were applied and different combinations of the above types of observation shown in Table 1 were used according to the specific situation.

Observations do not always rely on people’s willingness to provide information as the researcher can sometimes directly see what people are doing without depending on the subjects’ participation, which can often be very time-consuming and longitudinal, with observer bias and subjectivity being the main disadvantages of this method. Furthermore, people usually perform differently when they know they are being observed. In this research, a precise and well-designed observational rubric was used when collecting data on SHFW’s social engagement with the public, which was revealed through investigating the MODE tradeshows, the innovative fashion shows and performances displayed by Labelhood, the fashion events catering specifically to the public, and the ticket scalpers of the fashion shows for each venue at SHFW, namely, XintianDi and 800Show operated by SFDA and the Bailian Centre operated by Labelhood. I participated in SHFW in the Autumn/Winter 2017 season in April 2017 and the Spring/Summer 2019 season in September 2018 as a temporary fashion editor working for the new media department of a UK newspaper,³² a Chinese mainstream media platform based in Europe. I adopted this editor’s identity to enable me to gain thorough access to all of the events held during SHFW while doing field research, although this proved to be unnecessary as most of these events could be accessed by the public through various methods, which are further discussed in the analysis section.

To be specific, the observational rubric can be explained as follows:

- Except for applying for tickets as a fashion editor from the organiser of each show, are there any methods for me as a member of the public to enter a runway which is normally exclusive to insiders?
- What are the differences in the shows exhibited at each venue at SHFW? Could they reveal the cliché hierarchical status that has long existed at European fashion weeks, such as the seat arrangements discussed by Entwistle and Rocamora?³³
- Are there any connections or ideological influences between SHFW’s social engagement and the organisers’ ideologies when building up this fashion week? If there are any, do these connections reveal the same politicism as CFW?
- What are the structural or institutional systems of SHFW? How do they assist and relate to its social engagement?
- In which way, officially or unofficially, does SHFW achieve the goal of benefiting the public?

The observations at SHFW were undertaken using the aforementioned observational rubric. In addition to assisting my field research at SHFW, this logically designed rubric also helped me in staying objective. However, as a stand-alone method without complementary interviews, the understanding of the observed actions was inevitably weakened, to an extent, as the subjects’ rationales for undertaking certain actions were not fully shared.³⁴ Therefore, in this research, in order to thoroughly understand the research data, there was a need to combine observations with interviews as the main research methods.

31. Cf. Li, “Ethical challenges in participant observation,” 103.

32. Agreed to keep the name confidential.

33. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, “The field of fashion materialized.”

34. Cf. Mack *et al.*, *Qualitative research methods*; Sheroz, *Observation in qualitative research*.

Interviews

As one of the most frequently used research methods in qualitative studies,³⁵ interview data is important but does not make up the main body of the data in this study. Due to the complexity of the PhD project, which is based on a multi-cultural context, various types of applicable research methods need to be designed under different cultural backgrounds. SHFW, as a main case study of a multi-sited project, has been investigated in comparison with LFW and PFW in terms of production culture and system, commercial and institutional system, and cultural characteristics. In this paper, the discussion of SHFW is elaborated on through a systematic comparison with PFW with regard to commercial structure and merchandising mode. To investigate the drivers of organisational ideology and its connections with public accessibility and strong social engagement, both semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, as well as unstructured and structured phenomenological short interviews, were applied in both formal and informal ways during the case study and ethnographic research of SHFW.

The aim of incorporating interviews when studying SHFW was to reveal information from behind the scenes, such as the reason for SHFW's strong engagement with the public and its social benefits as one of its main cultural characteristics compared to LFW and PFW. To obtain this information, both unofficial and formal interviews were conducted during the research. The unofficial interviews, including those that were conducted during the field research, covered any participants that I came across during the study, ranging from designers, professional audiences at shows and exhibitors at tradeshow to ticket scalpers. The formal interviews, not merely conducted for this paper but also for the whole PhD project, revealed useful information for analysing SHFW and its social culture and ideologies. Some of the data used in this paper was collected from the following in-depth and formal interviews conducted for the PhD project, which are shown in Table 1 alongside the lengths and types of interviews. (Table 1)

Table 1: List of interviewees for the in-depth qualitative interviews

Name of Interviewee	Profession	Length of Interview	Type
Martyn Roberts	Founder of Fashion Scout	1 hour	Semi-structured; phone call
XiangYang Bian	Sitting Secretary-General of the Chinese Fashion Association; participant in building up Shanghai Fashion Week	2.1 hours	Semi-structured; face to face

Data forming an empirical narrative for this paper was collected from authorities of London and Shanghai Fashion Week, as shown in the above table, Fashion Scout's Founder Mr. Roberts for LFW and Professor Bian for SHFW. The interrelationships between SHFW and LFW and the way that SHFW has consumed and localised Western fashion culture are emphasised in the following analysis.

Analysis

An international fashion week, in essence, is a commercial and a cultural event facilitating industry communication that has become highly influential in "rendering and reproducing" the structure of the fashion field.³⁶ The legitimate European fashion weeks have established a relatively mature operating system and cultural characteristics that are embedded within each fashion city due to their hierarchical status

35. Cf. Philip Burnard, "A method of analysing interview transcripts in qualitative research," *Nurse Education Today*, vol. 11, n. 6 (1991): 461–66; Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson, *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000); Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2014).

36. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized," 745.

and considerable cultural heritage in fashion after tens of years of development.³⁷ The predecessor of SHFW was the Shanghai International Fashion Festival organised by the General Office of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government (SMPGGGO). SHFW was initially regarded as part of "Shanghai's strategic goal of building up an international trade center."³⁸ The event was defined as "a large-scale national economic, trade and cultural activity supported by the Ministry of Commerce and hosted by the Shanghai Municipal People's Government."³⁹ It was a project to improve the government image funded by the SMPGGGO.

Entwistle and Rocamora⁴⁰ demonstrate that LFW is a microcosm of the local fashion industry that creates a temporal spatial social structure within the field of show production. Zhao⁴¹ has applied the study on CFW and emphasises that CFW in Beijing is the materialisation of the Chinese field of fashion and it is also a microcosm of the Chinese fashion industry. However, these views and analytical frameworks are not all applicable to SHFW as it has gained both systematic complexity and a high degree of cultural diversification within the one fashion week. Based on the historical "Haipai" culture in Shanghai and following the guidance of the operational systems of the modern Western legitimate fashion weeks, SHFW has gradually formed a multicultural identity that fuses hierarchical demonstration and democratised interpretation in the show production and presentation field, as well as the commercial aspects of the week, such as the showroom system at the same time in less than five years (from 2016 to 2019).

In this paper, SHFW's strong socially engagement is emphasised from the following perspectives: Mass audiences could gain access to all shows through activities held on social media platform or directly purchase from the tickets' scalpers. Commercial Structure is nurtured from Paris Fashion Week with a multi-commercialised system. B2B and B2C, the two merchandising modes are simultaneously existing at SHFW's showrooms. Increasing numbers of public events are held as one main body of the SHFW. A correspondent event, Shanghai Fashion Weekend is held after the SHFW containing a wider variety of activities, incorporating fashion exhibitions, performances, interactive activities and on-the-spot purchase opportunities.

Accessibility to Mass Audiences

The recent season of LFW held in September 2019 announced its official openness to the public partially through selling package tickets which included access to "catwalk shows, creative installations, industry-led panel talks."⁴² It was the first fashion week among the "Big Four" that was partially open to the public. The public was given access to SHFW at least since 2017⁴³ through multiple methods, varying from the official method of activities held on social media, such as the WeChat platform, to the unofficial method of buying tickets from scalpers. In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the mass accessibility of SHFW, it is necessary to understand the organisational structure and the venues

37. Cf. Diane Crane, "Globalization, organizational size, and innovation in the French luxury fashion industry: Production of culture theory revisited." *Poetics*, vol. 24, n. 6 (1997): 393–414; Christopher Breward, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the modern metropolis* (London: Berg, 2004); Nigel Cawthorne et al., *Key moments in fashion: The evolution of style: From haute couture to streetwear; key collections, major figures and crucial moments that changed the course of fashion history from 1890 to the 1990s* (London: Hamlyn, 1998); Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2013); Bonnie English, *A cultural history of fashion in the 20th and 21st centuries: from catwalk to sidewalk* (London: A&C Black, 2013); John Potvin, *The places and spaces of fashion, 1800-2007* (London: Routledge, 2009).

38. See Xinyu Wen, "谁在替上海张罗那个时装周? [Who is preparing and organising Shanghai Fashion Week for the Shanghai City?]" (2017), <http://www.qdaily.com/articles/39954.html> (accessed: September 15, 2018).

39. Wen, 1.

40. Cf. Entwistle and Rocamora, "The field of fashion materialized," 739.

41. Cf. Zhao, *The Chinese fashion industry*.

42. See Jessica Davis, "Members of the public will be able to attend London Fashion Week shows this September" (August 15, 2019), <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/a28707668/london-fashion-week-public-shows/> (accessed: October 2, 2019).

43. Cf. Wen, "谁在替上海张罗那个时装周? [Who is preparing and organising Shanghai Fashion Week for the Shanghai City?]."

of SHFW as the methods for obtaining tickets are slightly different for each venue. In general, the official organiser of SHFW, the SFDA, runs two fixed venues, XintianDi and 800Show, which are both relatively stable, while the venue for the other organiser, Labelhood, changes according to its business partners, with the venue being the Bailian Centre from 2017 to 2018 (Fig 1).

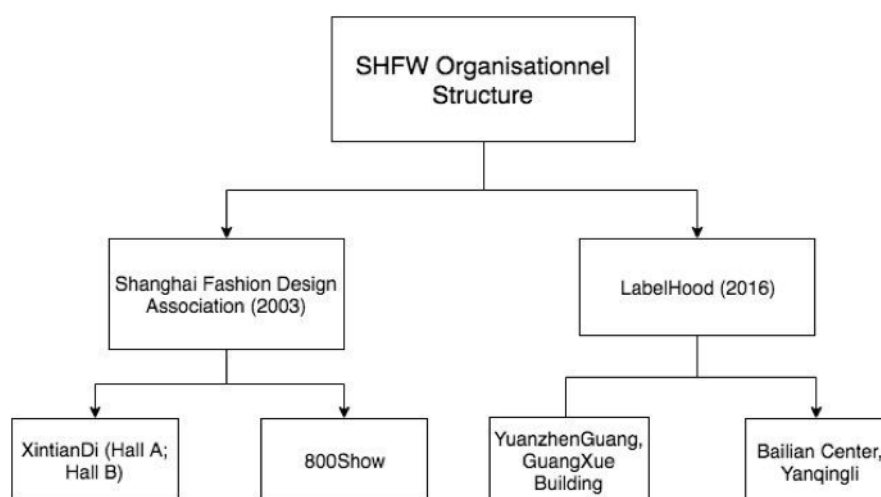


Figure 1: Organisational structure and ready-made venues of SHFW, 2017 ©Wang, 2018

In essence, SHFW shares a similar institutional structure and functional system as LFW (Fig 2), with the function of the SFDA being analogous to that of the British Fashion Council (hereafter referred as BFC), while Labelhood plays the role of Fashion Scout, one of the main off-schedule organiser of LFW aiming at incubating and promoting the new talents for the international fashion industry. As its founder, Roberts⁴⁴ notes:

You (the London as a fashion capital) need a diversity of platforms for showcasing, and you need a diversity of voice (in design), of what people are doing in a Labelhood, it's a model very similar to fashion scout. I know Tasha (the founder of Labelhood) who set about (Labelhood) and she had come (to London) and we've had a number of conversations about Fashion Scout and Labelhood and they (Fashion Scout and Labelhood) have a similar sort of (organising) model and same aim where it's about supporting young talents and independent designer brands rather than (supporting) kind of commercial brands... For us that independence is very important because it means that we are the ones who have our own destiny, we are the ones who choose (new talents for the global fashion industry).

In addition to the fashion weekend that is specifically aimed at mass audiences, SHFW itself is also open to many groups among the broader public. Officially, two groups among the public are permitted entry to the fashion week: one is students majoring in fashion design or attending arts colleges, such as Donghua University, while the other is those who have been awarded tickets after applying to activities held by the organisers on the official WeChat platform. Labelhood, as one of the organisers of SHFW that is devoted to importing new and small independent designer brands to the domestic market via SHFW, often holds activities to give away tickets to shows. As a platform for SHFW, it aims to deliver pioneering fashion art and to explore and promote young Chinese designers, fostering pioneering talent for the international fashion culture. It was founded in 2016 and it provides a platform for international-based Chinese emerging designers. Those who successfully gain tickets from the activities can attend the shows and performances exhibited by Labelhood at its own venue located at the Bailian Centre.

Only the show tickets from Labelhood can be gained from the activities held on the WeChat platform. To guarantee professionalism while benefiting the public who are curious and passionate about fashion

44. See Martyn Roberts, "Organisational ideologies on show productions at LFW," Interview by Zhe Wang (May 15, 2017).

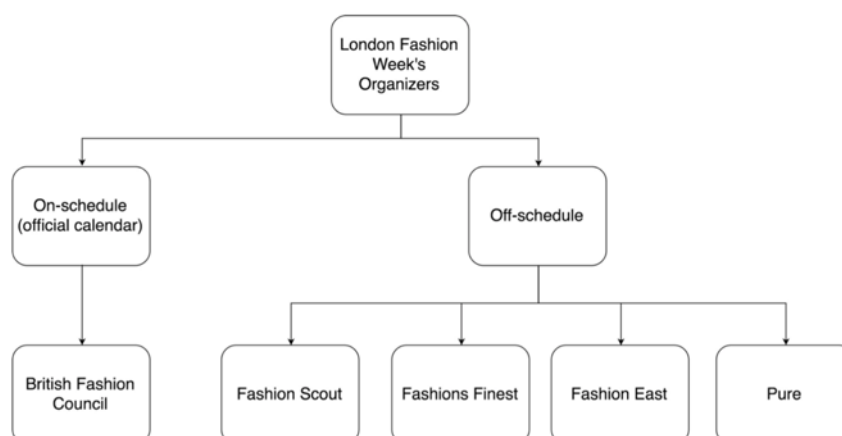


Figure 2: Organisational and institutional structure of LFW, 2017, ©Wang, 2018

shows, the shows held in the Bailian Centre are usually divided into two sessions: one is exclusive and only open to insiders and industry professionals, while the other is for the public.

Unofficially, and unique to SHFW, are unofficial groups of individuals who scalp tickets for all of the catwalk shows, purchasing tickets from ticket holders who do not plan to attend the shows and selling these at a higher price to the members of the public who are eager to gain access to SHFW. Ticket scalping for SHFW can be seen as a Chinese characteristic. Ticket scalpers can be categorised as the relatives of the authorities, large apparel companies and people in charge of the big fashion brands in China. As explained by one of these scalpers,⁴⁵ “whoever wants to establish an activity in China needs to ensure good relations with the relevant authorities” (2017).

Although established as a cultural and communicational event to build up the cultural image of Shanghai and to promote Shanghai on the international cultural stage,⁴⁶ SHFW has now become a mass entertainment event that draws the attention of many fashion enthusiasts and amateurs alike, who can access the fashion week through the unofficial method of purchasing tickets from scalpers. One of the scalpers interviewed outside one of the catwalk show venues, XinTianDi, revealed that some scalpers obtain tickets from “fashion editors and the relatives of government employees who receive the show tickets but are too busy to attend themselves” (anonym, Fig 3). According to a scalper covering the region outside the XintianDi venue, ticket prices are greatly affected by the daily demand, ranging from approximately 50 RMB to 300 RMB (£5 to £30), which is an acceptable price for most members of the public in China, equivalent to the cost of a meal in a restaurant.

From a positive perspective, the ticket scalpers for SHFW unconsciously function as a medium facilitating mass audience familiarity with a professional industry event, thus deciphering the mysteries of the fashion industry. In the European fashion systems, the democratising of fashion has originated from the emergence of fashion bloggers, restructuring fashion systems and changing the hierarchies of fashion from a general perspective. It was the bloggers attending and live-streaming catwalk shows from around the year 2000 that marked the beginning of the de-mystification of the fashion industry. For SHFW, these ticket scalpers, although disrupting the order of fashion shows, help the public to enter otherwise exclusive professional fashion shows, unconsciously reconfiguring the social structure within the temporal field of fashion created in the show venues like XinTianDi. If the tickets being sold by ticket scalpers come from those who were invited to the shows, including those who were asked to sit in the front row but do not want to attend the events, then the conventional social hierarchy and status cre-

45. Names agreed to be kept confidential.

46. Cf. Wen, “谁在替上海张罗那个时装周? [Who is preparing and organising Shanghai Fashion Week for the Shanghai City?].”

47. Identities of people appearing in this image are agreed to be kept confidential



Figure 3: A member of the public asking two scalpers (middle and right) about the fashion shows' tickets outside the XinTianDi, ©Wang, 2017⁴⁷

ated by fashion shows seem to be entirely subverted at SHFW. From a positive perspective, the existence of scalpers, to some extent, broadens the number of mass consumers at fashion events, thus enhancing the interactions between brands and consumers and narrowing the distance between them both physically and emotionally. As one ordinary attendee who had bought a ticket from a scalper argued: “It is too difficult to get hold of tickets officially. Scalpers are great helpers for people like us. They make my wish of watching a fashion show come true.”

This phenomenon was not prohibited because no official regulations exist that forbid it and no one attempts to prevent such a trading of catwalk show tickets. Not even the official organisers have introduced any effective and appropriate measures to deal with this issue. In fact, some organisers even see this as a positive chance to strengthen the interactions between the industry and the public. From a positive perspective, the organiser, Lv⁴⁸ has described being inspired by these ticket scalpers; due to the significant participation of the public, the organisers found that the public were enthusiastic about SHFW and established Shanghai Fashion Weekend one week after SHFW to cater to the public's needs, thereby promoting SHFW as a form of immersive carnival entertainment.⁴⁹

In addition to the official and unofficial methods available for the public to gain show tickets to events on the official calendar, the public can gain access to SHFW by purchasing items from the tradeshow, such as MODEShanghai. The following section investigates the commercial structure of SHFW, which is similar to PFW, and its unique merchandising system that has both B2B and B2C functions.

A Developing Multi-commercialised Merchandising System

For SHFW, as mentioned above, the macrostructure, including the institutional and the commercial structure, is deeply influenced by the imperialism of European fashion week systems. As afore men-

48. Cf. Wen, “谁在替上海张罗那个时装周? [Who is preparing and organising Shanghai Fashion Week for the Shanghai City?].”

49. Cf. Wen, “谁在替上海张罗那个时装周? [Who is preparing and organising Shanghai Fashion Week for the Shanghai City?].”

tioned, its organisational structure and operating mode are similar to those for LFW as they were both established to support emerging designers. Showing mass incorporation in terms of its flexible merchandising mode, this section also emphasises the commercial structure of SHFW, which is similar to PFW (Fig 4 and Fig 5). The showroom structure of SHFW consists of trade shows, multi-label showrooms and designer showrooms. As Bian⁵⁰ has stated:

...the fashion weeks that have emerged in China, whether in Beijing or Shanghai, all follow an existing and mature international operational system. Learning from the Western organizational system of fashion weeks is important for us in obtaining a globally recognised standard. A fashion week should be internationally accepted and recognised otherwise it is meaningless. That's why SHFW has so many similarities in terms of operational structure to Paris and London, and this is quite normal.

Today's SHFW has broadened its commercial scale with the rapid rise of multiple market-oriented showroom systems. The official trade show during SHFW is organised by the SFDA and is called MODE-Shanghai, which functions as a medium between suppliers, including independent designers, small fashion brands and distributors, and consumers, namely, commercial buyers and individual mass consumers. The multi-label showrooms are ShiTang, Ontime Show, Project Crossover, DFO, VDS, FDC, Pure exhibition and PV exhibition (Fig 6, 7 and 8), which are all run by independent companies catering for the various market segments in China's fashion industry.

These independent showrooms have become an indispensable part at SHFW, nurturing China's fashion industry by introducing new participants and emerging designer brands to the market. At least five designer showrooms are in operation in China and they all feature participants from different market segments with businesses of different sizes and origins. For instance, the DFO and VDS showrooms mentioned above are predominantly for the European designer brands. Project Crossover hosts 24-hour online showrooms coming from London and ShiTang mainly integrates international showrooms with emerging international and domestic designer brands. OntimeShow integrates more with manufacturing segments with an industry and uniform style (Fig 8).

The general commercial structure of SHFW as a whole is presented in the following figure.

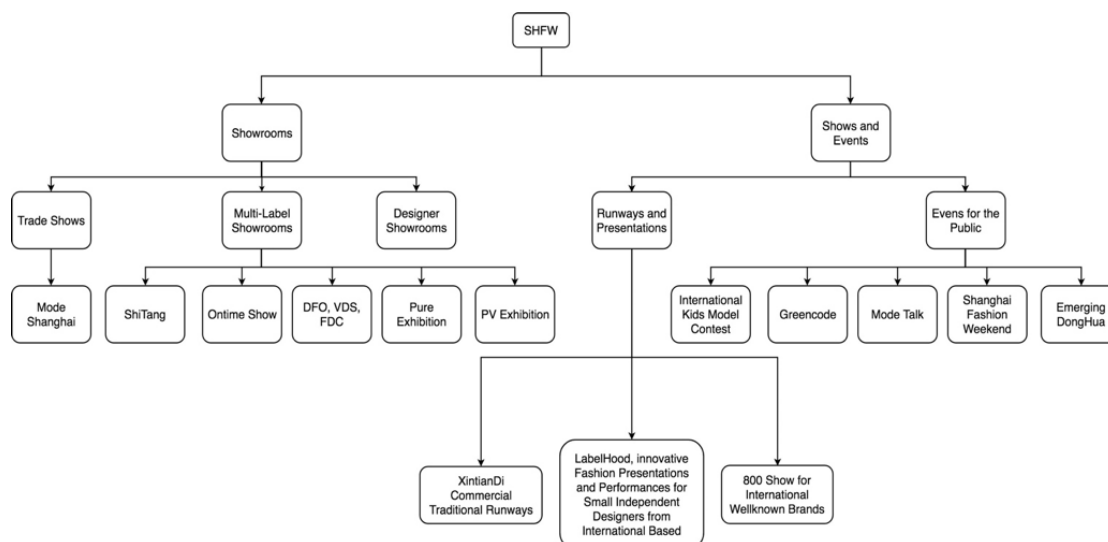


Figure 4: Macro-commercial and institutional structure of SHFW, ©Wang, 2018

50. Cf. Bian, "Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW."

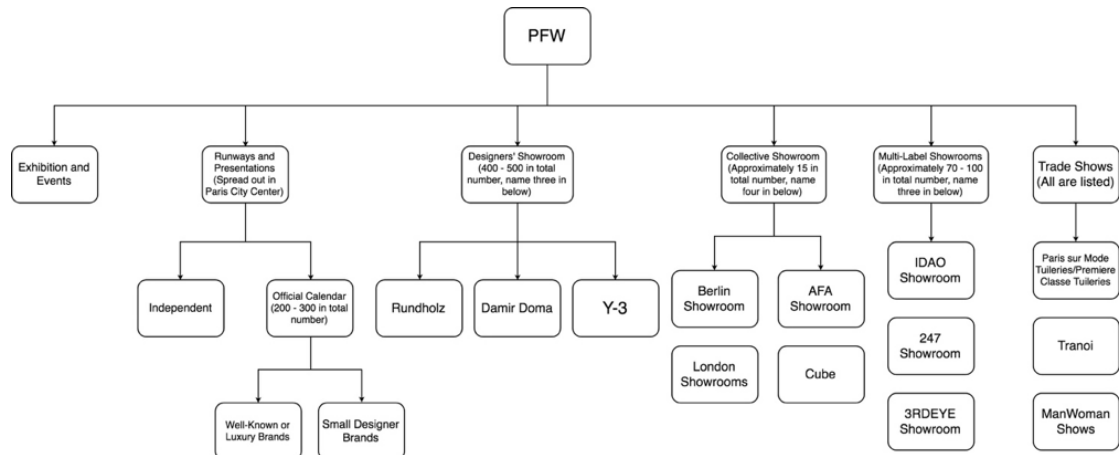


Figure 5: Macro-commercial and institutional structure of PFW, ©Wang, 2018

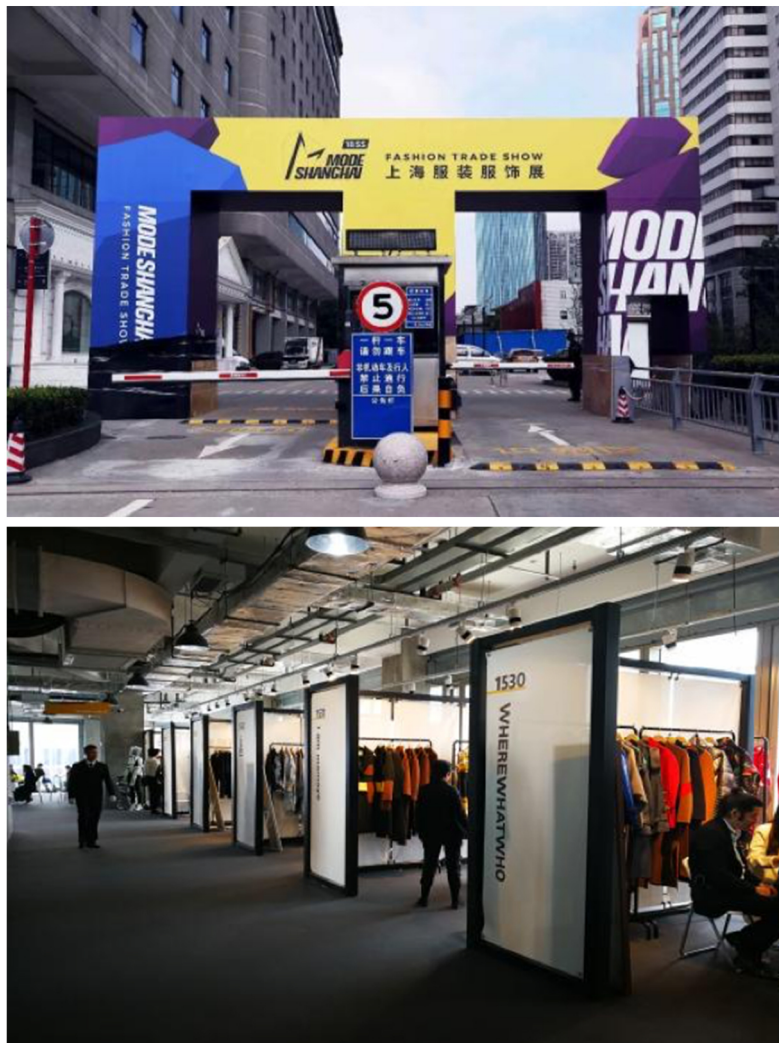


Figure 6: The trade show MODEShanghai for SHFW, ©Wang, 2017



Figure 7: The multi-label designer showroom ShiTang, ©Wang, 2017



Figure 8: The apparel manufacturing showroom OntimeShow, ©SHFW's official website, 2017

Under this commercial system, its engagement with the public is mainly revealed through its multiple merchandising modes in which the public can gain access to the tradeshow and purchase items individually. More commercial flexibility in terms of merchandising modes with both wholesale and retail modes available for distributors, designers, buyers and members of the public is found at SHFW compared to PFW and LFW, which only cater to wholesale distribution. For PFW, it is not only the fashion shows but also the showrooms that are exclusively for buyers and the press, which are typically professional B2B merchandising platforms, instead of B2C platforms. Trade shows at SHFW have B2B and B2C functions simultaneously. Many products are in stock for individual consumers; the general public can apply to enter the show and can browse and purchase from the majority of brands and get their products immediately. This is not possible during European fashion weeks. The showrooms at SHFW function as commercial shopping malls where customers can even bargain with the merchant (Fig 9).



Figure 9: Three members of the public as customers bargaining with a seller in the MODEShanghai trade show while viewing the retail products in front of them ©Wang, 2017

The flexible merchandising modes of SHFW deepen its engagement with the public, enabling the tradeshow to have the appearance of an ordinary shopping centre whilst facilitating wholesale trading. The public can purchase the most up-to-date products and gain an understanding of the rapidly growing brands in the fashion industry. From a positive perspective, the designers and participating merchants can reach consumers in the target market directly through tradeshows, instead of merely reaching professionals, obtaining data on both the industry and the public and directly researching the domestic market. This system has apparent benefits for both the public and brands and the reason for such characteristics is partially due to the unique historical processes of this system being formed and the lack of professional buying and merchandising systems in the Chinese fashion industry.⁵¹ For instance, the operation mode of the main showroom, MODEShanghai, has changed from a manufacturing trade fair to the showroom of today, aligning itself with the international showroom system. As Bian⁵² has noted:

After around 2003 to 2004, when the International Costume Culture Festival stopped, the Shanghai Textile Holding Group set up MODEShanghai. It wasn't a buyer's shop at the beginning as it was more like a traditional commercial trade fair for apparel manufacturing. It has been only four or five years since it changed to having a buying mode catering for international buyers to place orders. This definitely happened after 2015.

MODEShanghai established itself by absorbing the international fashion merchandising system to enable SHFW to fit into the globally recognised fashion week system. One vital reason that today's MODE-

51. Cf. Bian

52. Cf. Bian.

Shanghai still has its retail system that exists parallel to the international buying system is that there are few professional fashion buyers in China. The conventional commercial function of an international showroom system, which facilitates global buyers to place orders, is not fully formed in SHFW's showroom system. It has been imported to the manufacturing and retailing system at SHFW. As Bian⁵³ has explained:

MODEShanghai's appearance was actually linked with the emergence of the buying system, which was quite weird and had Chinese characteristics. The earliest Chinese buyer's shop didn't have actual "buyers," only some people who were interested in fashion. The owner of the shop even included clothes from retail stores. But it is not a buyer's shop if the clothes inside are from the retail industry. From this aspect, this concept matches the idea of adding new elements to this industry. However, it still does not entirely follow the international system.

This situation, however, gives SHFW an opportunity to form its own cultural characteristics. Lindgren⁵⁴ argues that Shanghai is building a "self-legitimization that has become central to the practice of experienced Chinese fashion designers." More importantly, Shanghai is forming its own cultural atmosphere that reconstructs the legitimate Western fashion weeks' mature organisational and commercial systems through the Chinese domestic market and cultural ideologies, with the essence of SHFW being a cultural event held by the government to build up international recognition of the city and benefit the people. This is aligned with the core value of socialist countries like China, which is collectivism.

Collectivism is a cultural value "that is characterised by emphasis on cohesiveness among individuals and prioritisation of the group over self."⁵⁵ With public ownership playing a dominant role in China, emphasising the elimination of stratification and the sharing of products with the public⁵⁶ (Barnett, 1967), the openness of SHFW is reasonable as the organisers have the responsibilities of upgrading the global status of Shanghai as a world fashion city, increasing the public's interest in fashion and cultivating aesthetical capabilities of domestic designers. As SHFW was established as a government initiative rather than driven by industry needs, it is embedded with more social functions for the benefit of the public because the ideology of collectivism directs all government activities; all events should benefit the people instead of catering for certain groups of insiders or elitists. As Bian⁵⁷ has stated:

Shanghai Fashion Week, from the aspect of its organisational structure, is different from the European fashion weeks. For example, the European fashion weeks are held by associations, while SHFW was started by the government. Actually, all fashion weeks seem to be held by the government while in the back, they may rely on some industry organisations at the same time. Shanghai is even more special than those in western countries. Its organiser, Shanghai Textile Holding Group, sounds like a company but it is owned by the Chinese government. On the one hand, they'll consider their own development; on the other hand, as a state-owned company, they have social responsibilities...it aims to increase the whole industry's sensibility towards and quality of fashion, to cultivate our own designers, to benefit Shanghai citizens and to promote the public's awareness of fashion.

Thorough engagement with the public, which fundamentally breaks the social stratification of traditional Western fashion weeks, can be seen as a unique characteristic of SHFW. This does not mean that its openness to the public is a sign of immaturity in the system. As Bian⁵⁸ has stated from the point of view of fashion authorities:

53. Cf. Bian.

54. Cf. Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai*, 234.

55. See Henry C. Triandis, "The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts," *Psychological Review*, vol. 96, n. 3 (1989): 506–20.

56. See A. Dock Barnett, *Cadres bureaucracy and political power in Communist China* (New York: New York Columbia University Press, 1967).

57. Cf. Bian, "Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW."

58. Cf. Bian.

It is not fair to say that the engagement with the public means SHFW is immature. It has its own style. It is difficult to judge which stage they're in according to an international standard. It mainly depends on their audience. It was true in the past and is still true now. What we expected at that time was to encourage more people to accept the concept of the foreign fashion system and the way that foreign designers, especially the mature ones, express their cognition. Domestic Chinese designers were learning from others and understanding how they could do better from an economic perspective; the cross-over of designers and enterprises in particular was an overall trend at that time in China. We want to discover how we can fully utilise the value of the art of design, change it into a product and fulfil the goal.

In essence, this is aligned with the Chinese philosophy and political ideology. As Bian⁵⁹ has also noted:

Eastern philosophy is totally different from Western philosophy. Western philosophy is based on personal property. Here, all our property belongs to the country, the empire, the world. We have a special concept of the 'world,' which means that Chinese philosophy serves the public. This is totally different to the Western philosophy that serves the individual. That's why we talk about the social significance in everything. Sometimes, not all things have social significance, and this needs to be stressed in all events held in China because the core value of our government is to serve the public.

The public is served in SHFW through events ranging from tradeshows to catwalks, with the significant rise of official public events held by the organisers from 2017 to 2018 demonstrating this ideology and deepening the social interconnections of SHFW as a whole through the comprehensive participation of the public.

Rise of Public Events and Deepening of Social Interactions

In SHFW, numerous public fashion events are organised and are open to the public with the express purpose of cultivating the public's taste in fashion and enhancing the interactions between insiders and outsiders. For instance, for the 2017 Autumn/Winter SHFW, the public events were the "International Kids Model Contest," the "Green Code" event promoting sustainable fashion by providing events ranging from forums and catwalks to pop-up stores; the "Mode Talks" fashion forum during the MODE-Shanghai trade show, offering discussions with professional insiders on the current trending topics in fashion; Shanghai Fashion Weekend, as mentioned above; the "Parent-Offspring Fashion & Sports Performance," which included fashion activities for families; "Emerging Donghua" for exhibiting new talents who had graduated from Donghua University via a series of fashion shows; and "Fashion Lives," containing four themes of activities featuring the public, varying from shopping carnival activities to afternoon tea activities (Fig 10).

In 2018, the number of professional events open to the public, such as "Kering's Innovative Luxury Lab" and "BOF China Summit," increased from seven to 13 (Fig 11).

Under the traditional fashion week system, public fashion events are rarely seen as the fashion week is a professional event that caters only for professional insiders. SHFW has broken this rule by offering a variety of public events, triggering a transformation of the elitist fashion culture from advocating exclusivity and featuring both clear hierarchies within and barriers towards the external public into a form of mass entertainment. This is in accordance with the mainstream socialist values in China that emphasise the sharing of all resources among the public with the ultimate goal of eliminating social polarisation and stratification.

Considering the fact that legitimate fashion institutions in Europe were founded on social stratification and originated from Parisian aristocratic culture,⁶⁰ the participation of all classes of the public in SHFW has given rise to a set of unique cultural characteristics that are redefining the concepts of fashion and the fashion week in China.

59. Cf. Bian.

60. Cf. Bian.

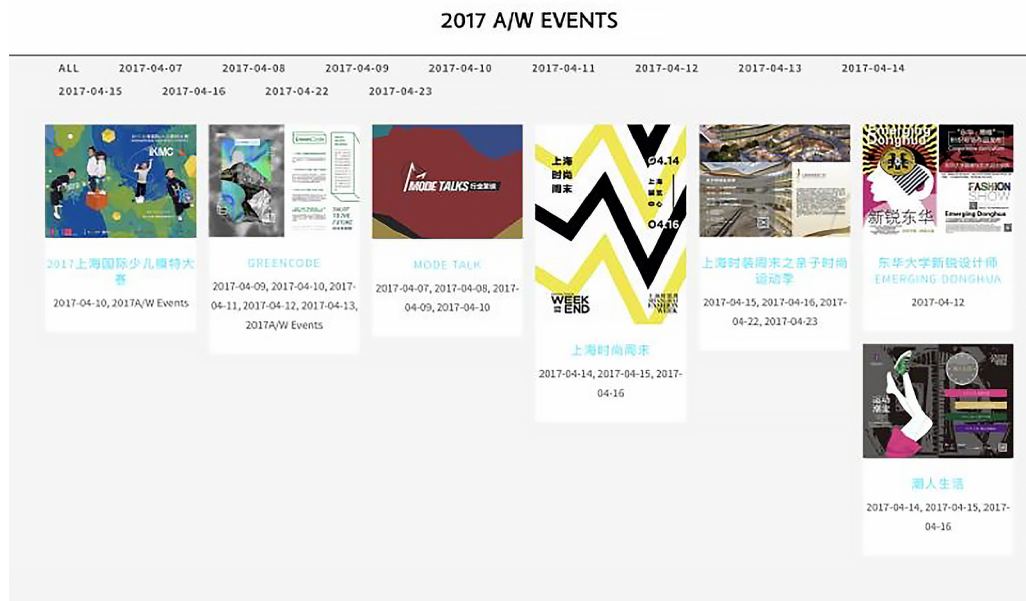


Figure 10: 2017 Autumn/Winter events that were open to the Public during SHFW, ©official website of SHFW, 2017

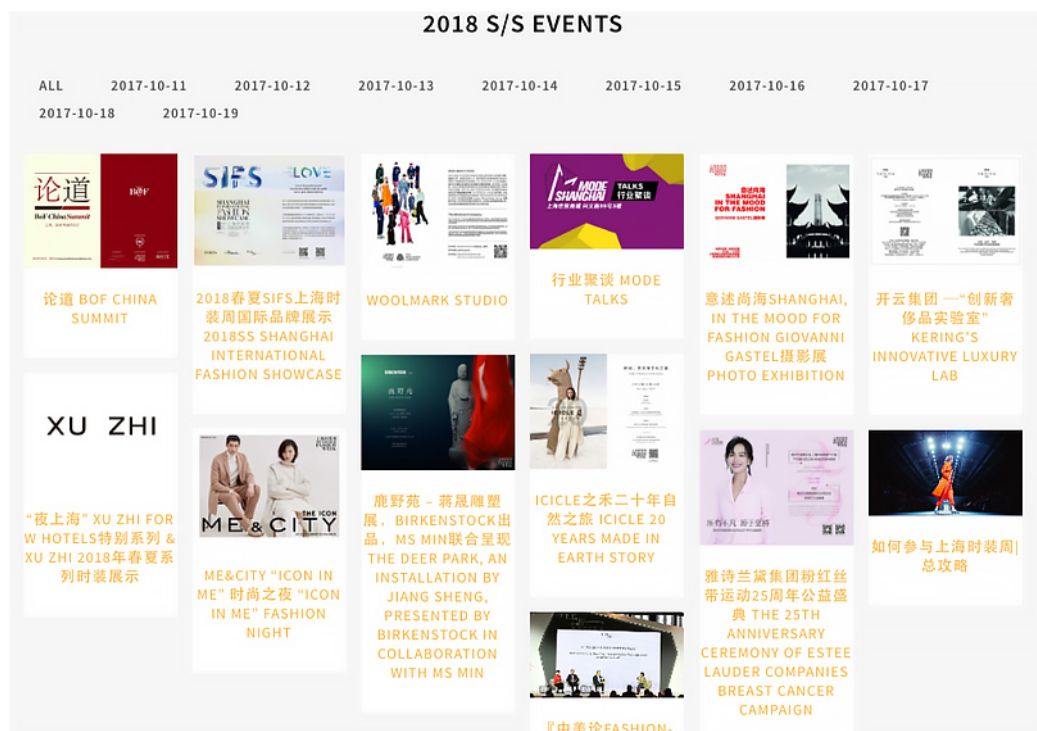


Figure 11: 2018 Spring/Summer events that were open to the Public during SHFW, ©official website of SHFW, 2018

We are now entering an era of postmodernism and the biggest feature of a postmodern society is entertainment. The so-called “artistry” in fashion is reduced, or the “commodity” is increased, becoming vulgar. Well, it doesn’t matter. Elegant art will merge with street culture in modern society anyway. This is understandable. This is the inevitable result of social stratification. The key is which consumer group we are focusing on and what idea we are observing. This is rather important.⁶¹

Unlike for PFW, in which most events are prepared solely for professional insiders, in which the public events are relatively small scale, SHFW offers a new system in which insiders and the public can interact with one other. This has given rise to a massive fashion cultural atmosphere that is open and that people of all professions and social classes can join. The public can be involved and interact with this industry event and no aspects are invisible or mysterious, or entirely closed off to the general public. For instance, during SHFW, one can easily find signs on each main street in the city centre, informing the public of where the main sites for SHFW are located (Fig 12 and 13). This is rarely seen during PFW as most events exclude the public.



Figure 12: SHFW’s main venue, XintianDi, with large signs giving directions around the venue, ©Wang, 2017

This is because social significance is vital for a cultural event in China like SHFW. It is attempting to create its own fashion system alongside the Chinese government’s systematic efforts to build up a global fashion centre with socialist cultural characteristics that to underlined its social significances, as well as to produce world-famous fashion designers and popular domestic fashion brands. The city has invested heavily in reviving its reputation as a site of “fashionability” and has formed a “Haipai” culture, which has been mentioned and discussed by scholars in recent years.⁶² With its “Haipai” culture being discussed in recent years, Shanghai is also seen as favouring innovative and creative designs that imitate

61. Cf. Bian.

62. Cf. Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai*, 73–89; Juanjuan Wu, *Chinese fashion from Mao to Now* (Thousand Oaks: Berg Publishers, 2009); Jieqiong Wang *et al.*, “Preservation and Regeneration via Hai Pai Culture Renaissance — A Case Study of TianZiFang Creative Quarter in Shanghai,” in *Proceedings of the 4th international conference of the international forum on urbanism* (Amsterdam: Delft, 2009), 289–300; Geng Cui and Liu Qiming, “Regional market segments of China: opportunities and barriers in a big emerging market,” *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 17, n. 1 (2000): 55–72.



Figure 13: Within the city centre, marketing materials can be seen (the left picture) everywhere and near to the main venues for SHFW, like XinTianDi, the public is able to see eye-catching instruction boards telling them how to get to the main venues, ©Wang, 2017

Western fashions⁶³ (Tsui, 2009; Lindgren, 2013). In general, it is too simplistic to identify “Haipai” as representing the culture of either SHFW or the city of Shanghai as a fashion capital. Although Shanghai has endeavoured to become the world’s sixth fashion centre, alongside London, Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo, it has yet to form its own fashion and cultural identity.

... From an ideological point of view, from the authorities’ perspectives, the culture of a city is simple to understand. We have always said that Shanghai has its own culture — Haipai culture. Shanghai’s culture is actually contradictory and complex. In the process of constructing Shanghai’s own culture, what role does the fashion week play? Is it demonstrating a mature system of constructing an iconic event in the city? Or disseminating an elegant fashion sense? Or stressing the unique lifestyle in Shanghai? Or presenting the sustainable development of Shanghai in the future? Can you accurately clarify the function and purpose of SHFW? If you cannot, it means that there are still improvements that can be made ... From a cultural point of view, Shanghai is a cultural integration after the opening based on Jiangnan District,⁶⁴ including Suzhou, and uses Suzhou cultural circle⁶⁵ as a cultural

63. Cf. Tsui, *China fashion*; Lindgren, *Fashion in Shanghai*.

64. Jiangnan or Jiang Nan (Chinese: 江南; pinyin: Jiāngnán) is a geographic area in China referring to lands immediately to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of its delta. The region encompasses the city of Shanghai, the southern part of Jiangsu Province, the southeastern part of Anhui Province, the northern part of Jiangxi Province and the northern part of Zhejiang Province. The most important cities in the area are Shanghai, Anqing, Changzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Ningbo, Shaoxing, Suzhou, Wuxi, Wenzhou and Zhenjiang.

65. Suzhou “is the birthplace of the flourishing Wu Culture which has had immense influence in the regions embracing Taihu Lake, west of Shanghai, southeast of Nanjing, northwest of Zhejiang and south of Yangzhou and Huaiyin. As one vital part of the Chinese traditional civilization, the Wu Culture has a long history which may be traced back to 10,000 years ago. However, just about 2,000 years ago, this culture had a surge of development. At first, the Wu Culture mainly adopted the essence of the central Chinese civilization. Until the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), more and more overseas civilizations were absorbed by the Wu Culture, and then introduced into central China. Coming after the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), Suzhou City was one of the most prosperous Chinese cities, both in agricultural production and domestic

background. Even if the SHFW looks Western in form, basically, the feature of the pursuit of Chinese culture still exist.⁶⁶

This is also seen in the formation of SHFW's cultural identity for two reasons. One is that forming a design or cultural identity typically requires a long-term development of at least ten to twenty years,⁶⁷ which the SHFW is too young to achieve. The other reason is that the Chinese fashion industry system is immature, resulting in a shortage of industry professionals who are able to underpin any form of stable cultural identity.

Conclusions

From a general perspective, in the field of fashion weeks, the “materialisation” of the cultural product, seen through fashion shows, is critical in revealing the industry's production processes and interconnections with the fashion field of the host city on both the cultural and industrial levels. Connecting with the local creative clusters is important for SHFW in building up an interactive and dynamic infrastructure or ecosystem within the domestic fashion culture. Distinguishing itself from the conventional and legitimate “Big Four” fashion weeks, Shanghai Fashion Week is seen as an intertwining of a core professional fashion week and a mass carnival event. Shanghai Fashion Week is also systematically and culturally nurtured by London Fashion Week and Paris Fashion Week. The organisers of Shanghai Fashion Week have successfully made this cultural event benefit the public via a series of actions, such as adding to the number of activities that are open to the public and collaborating with local universities and industry institutions to broaden its influence. This has created a research collaboration between the industry and universities to trigger significant developments in the global fashion ecosystem, which benefit SHFW in enhancing its interconnections with other parts of the local industry, rather than merely being an independent fashion and cultural event that only seeks global recognition.

Under increasingly fierce competition in the global fashion week system in which there has been a surge in the number of international fashion weeks that have spread out into the global fashion system, it is not easy for an emerging fashion week to identify a precise cultural or commercial target or establish a proper position within the world's fashion system. Becoming noticeable as a fashion week in the global fashion system is more difficult than ever, not only requiring the event's emphasis on a variety of exemplary design capabilities but also strong economic and political power to support the industry. SHFW is a paradigm of this as it has obtained merits as an emerging fashion week and has made Shanghai one of the most noticeable fashion cities as an emerging city or the sixth world fashion city after Paris, New York, Milan, London and Tokyo.⁶⁸ Under the structural imbrication of art with capitalism in the global industry, together with the drive of the socialist ideology of “the public ownership of the means of production” in China, SHFW is now showing discrete cultural characteristics, managing to absorb as much knowledge as it can from the legitimate fashion week system while combining this with the domestic industry context.

As SHFW has been established in a socialist country, it has become a major cultural event that is directed by the ideology of collectivism. This ideology means that SHFW's engagement with both the general public and professional insiders is a unique cultural characteristic that distinguishes SHFW from PFW and LFW. A carnivalesque atmosphere has gradually formed with the expansion of SHFW in terms

and foreign trade. Therefore, it is no wonder that Suzhou is one of the cities where the earliest bud of capitalism in China appeared. The historic Wu Culture has left Suzhou City with a series of attractive heritages, including the classical gardens and water townships, the melodic rhythm of Kun Opera and Ping Tan (Suzhou ballad), the Wumen Fine Arts School, the Suzhou handicrafts and the Jiangsu Cuisine. Each of them can reflect the locals' essential character-exquisite, mild and smart.” (Travel China Guide, 2018)

66. Cf. Bian, “Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW.”

67. Cf. Crane, “Globalization, organizational size, and innovation in the French luxury fashion industry,” 393–414; Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark, *The fabric of cultures: Fashion, identity, and globalization* (London: Routledge, 2009).

68. See Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (eds.), *Fashion's world cities* (London: Berg, 2006).

of both its scale and the number of participants. The traditional temporal and spatial hierarchies created in fashion weeks have been reconfigured, transforming from highly disordered at the beginning of SHFW's existence to gradually becoming clarified. Compared to PFW and LFW, maturing in its operational system and having significantly different organisational and cultural characteristics to PFW and LFW, the multi-culturalism of SHFW enriches and adds more cultural layers to the fashion week. However, it also weakens its uniqueness and recognisable features in the global fashion ecosystem as it does not have a central focus, whether this is culture or commerce. Adding this to the fact that it is not exclusive to industry professionals, SHFW is becoming a cosmopolitan entertainment event, rather than a professional fashion week, which may add more difficulty in it gaining a high-profile status among the professionals within the industry.

The connection between the industry infrastructure and the inner operating of the ecosystem is “key in the Western cultural industries understanding the way innovations take place.”⁶⁹ As an industry with a global infrastructure, as well as the fact that the construction of China's fashion weeks has followed internationally recognised structures and patterns, the connection between industry infrastructure and inner laws of the ecosystem is also critical to understand China's cultural and fashion industries within which innovations take place. Only by conveying Chinese cultural characteristics, enabling the fashion week as a cultural mechanism to gather the strength of Chinese fashion and creating a mechanism for leading the aesthetic standards of Chinese fashion culture can China obtain and upgrade its global recognition.

69. See Xin Gu, “‘Creative Economy’ in China, a case study in Shanghai's fashion industries,” in *Fashion in multiple chinas: Chinese styles in the transglobal landscape*, eds. Wessie Ling and Simona Segre Reinach (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2018), 94–119.

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