

# Power, social identity and fashion consumption

A thesis on how female executives use power-coded-dressing as a tool to accentuate power as a part of their social identity

Carolina Ordonez Asenjo

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Supervisor: Nishant Kumar, PhD

Stockholm Business School



**Abstract**

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to the CCT research field on social identity, by placing a focus on power from a customer perspective and studying how power can be accentuated within social identity. Theory from CCT with a focus on social identity has been used in combination with extensive literature on power and authority from a sociological perspective and literature from Fashion-Studies focusing on power-dressing, conspicuous consumption and luxury.

The research question is: *How is power-dressing and consumption of high-end luxury fashion brands used by female executives/senior managers in an attempt to accentuate power as a part of their social identity?*

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection method interviewing five female senior managers/female executives working in Stockholm; using the fashion consumption of female senior managers as its empirical sample.

The main conclusion on this thesis is the creation of the concept of power-coded-dressing. This thesis implications are that it develops the CCT field slightly by adding a consumer-power perspective into the theoretical discourse. Its practical and social implications help women accentuate their power through, power-coded-dressing.

Keywords: *CCT, Power-dressing, Social Identity, Power, Female Senior Managers, Female Executives, Power-Coded-Dressing, Conspicuous Consumption*

## **Preface**

I want to start with thanking PhD Nishant Kumar for his help through the semester as my supervisor; his flexibility and enthusiasm guiding my work and helping me forward when the task felt the most difficult, through his abundant feed-back.

I also want to give a large heartfelt thanks to Susanna Rönn for mentoring me this past year and letting me use her personal network to find suitable respondents. She has been an inspiration for me and a role model.

Lastly I would like to thank my family and sambo for their infinite support, motivating me to continue working when a part of me just wanted to give-up.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Fashion goods consumption among female executives

Clothing and its symbolic equivalent has through history been used by the ruling classes to express their power and wealth (Kawamura, 2007; Hägg, 1991, 2003; Gilchris, 1994). The consumption of luxury fashion became a tool to express power in 17<sup>th</sup> century France, creating the contemporary consumption model. The purpose of conspicuous consumption<sup>2</sup> was not mainly for the leisure and pleasure of the king and court, but as a tool to express Louis XIV political power through the use of luxury. (Kawamura, 2007, p142; Burke, 1994)

The use of luxury fashion to accentuate power remains to this day. Today high-end fashion houses dominate the fashion industry, Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Gucci, are some of the strongest brands in the world and the three strongest luxury brands at the moment (MillwardBrown, 2013). Hermès, for example, is connected to the story of when princess Grace of Monaco<sup>3</sup> used a black crocodile Hermès handbag to hide her barely visible pregnant stomach from the male paparazzi; which became a popular story on how luxury items today become symbols of female power (Wallenberg, 2007; Fogg, 2013). The image of an exquisitely dressed woman, princess Grace with her Hermès handbag in the centre of the image, forcefully cruising through a myriad of men, the paparazzi, was one of the most spread tabloid images in 1956 (Pedersen, 2006). The images spread all over the world, the bag became the Kelly bag and fashion history was made. Over time those images became a part of the feminist discourse, loaded with the symbolic power of one woman on her way to the top through a myriad of men. (Wallenberg, 2007) The Kelly bag is an example of a popular tool for female power-dressing and a staple accessory for female executives, politicians and other powerful women (Wallenberg, 2007).

The thesis focuses on the use of power-dressing with high-end brands as a tool to accentuate the part of their social identity related to power by female senior managers and executives. Interviews with several women in senior management positions in Stockholm have been used as empirical sample.

This thesis aspires to further develop the CCT field and thereby give value to researchers. Practitioners in the fashion industry (and other industries targeting women) gain insight in new tools and ideas that they can use to develop the marketing of their products or as guidance for women that want to use fashion and image as tools to further help them rise in the career ladder.

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<sup>1</sup> A first draft of this thesis is “Power, social identity and consumption of luxury fashion brands – A study on the use of power-dressing by female executives to accentuate power as a part of their social identity” That text was a take home exam for the course Qualitative Research Methods (QRM) spring 2013 written by Carolina Ordenez Asenjo.

<sup>2</sup> Conspicuous Consumption is status-directed consumption that encourages individuals to purchase and consume products not for their intrinsic value (ie their value in use) but for their extrinsic (i.e. prestige) value. (Veblen, 1957 [1899])

<sup>3</sup> Grace Kelly

## 1.2 Research problem

The thesis is based on literature in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) with a focus on consumer identity projects (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; 2007). Arnould & Thompson (2005) state that consumers find tools in the market that they can use to create stories about their own identity through consumption. The concept of the social self is further developed by Sirgy (1982) and defined as when a consumer acquires market resources to accentuate their belonging to a specific social group, in order to display their desired identity or a part of their desired identity to others. Kawamura (2007) describes how consumption of luxury has been used to accentuate power as a part of identity through history. Likewise, Entwistle (2000) states the importance of using high-end luxury brands when power-dressing. In this context a brand is a legal instrument whose ownership can be protected, that is exemplified with a unique logo, that can be instantly recognized by consumers and that it has a strong personality that consumers can use to develop a relationship to a specific brand (Tolstikova, 2013a).

Power and status is a highly popular topic in sociology and management literature (Weber, 1947; Bourdieu, 1984). Power is defined as the ability of an individual to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to stop them from realising them and having influence on others (Weber, 1947). Relying upon this understanding, women can be described as those women in senior management positions or above with rational-legal power through their position at their organisation. These women may also have charismatic and/or traditional power.

Power-dressing can be defined as a strategy for self-presentation with specific rules as how to consume clothes, hair and beauty products in order to increase one's chances of career success (Entwistle, 2000). Literature has focused on the close linkage between power-dressing and corporate females since the 1980's (Entwistle, 2000) and it is still highly relevant among marketing scholars and practitioners alike.

While power-dressing and the use of fashion as a tool to accentuate power as a part of an individual or a group's identity; and the use of fashion to express a part of your identity to others is a common topic in fashion studies and marketing (Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2007; Tolstikova, 2013a), little attention has been given to consumption as a tool to express or accentuate power as a part of an individual's identity, within the CCT field. Previous CCT research has extensively covered social identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005 & 2007; Sirgy, 1982) and the consumption of fashion when mapping out consumer identities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p873). Holt (2002, p81) explains the post post-modern consumer culture as that consumers cultivate their self, their identity and image through consumption of brands. Power in CCT is studied as: consumption fighting the power of corporations by resistance towards brands as a consumption tool (Arnould & Thompson, 2005); or how empowered consumers reflect on how marketing works as an institution and use this critical reflexivity to defy the code in their consumption (Ozanne & Murray, 1995; referenced to by Holt, 2002) or power in opposition to power in organisations (Kasabov, 2007). The powerful, empowered CCT consumer fights against the control of the powerful market and its attempt to control the consumer through marketing (Holt, 2002). But can the consumer only express power when opposing the market? Is the consumer who actively uses consumption to shape their identity

powerless? The thesis assumes that these questions cannot be confirmed, and therefore it is important to further study social identity with a power perspective, with power contained by the consumer, not only the market.

There is however still a gap in CCT and the consumer's social identity from a power perspective. That gap consists on how powerful women use fashion consumption to express their power and power as a part of their social identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Power-dressing is used by women attempting to climb the corporate ladder or as a tool to express their belonging in an often male dominated group, but there is inadequacy in current research on how power-dressing is used by women that have reached the top of their fields. This research field needs further development and the results may aid to fill a gap within CCT research and valuable knowledge for academics in various fields such as CCT, gender studies and researchers of power structures in consumption, while also having some practical inspiration to practitioners as for example women attempting to climb the career ladder.

### **1.3 Aim of the thesis**

*The aim of the thesis is to contribute to CCT research on social identity, by a focus on power and how it can be accentuated within social identity; using the consumption of high-end luxury brands among female senior managers as its empirical sample.*

This thesis will achieve the above objective by using theoretical approach from a power perspective, focusing on fashion and social identity (Weber, 1947; Kawamura, 2008; Arnould & Thompson 2005, 2007; Entwistle, 2000; Veblen, 1957[1899]) using in-depth semi-structured interviews of senior female executives in Stockholm.

### **1.4 Expected contributions**

This thesis is expected to contribute the CCT field by developing research on how fashion is used to accentuate power as a part of identity and develop the theory of social identity. This will be done by analysing previously stated literature and other relevant literature from a CCT perspective, using the results from the interviews and observations of five Swedish female senior managers.

### **1.5. Summary of theoretical approach and method**

The literature review aspires to reveal previous knowledge in the CCT field focusing on social identity and previous knowledge of power, power-dressing, fashion from neighbouring fields; which will function as the theoretical and empirical body of research, that will be used in order to develop, understand, investigate and evaluate my own research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). The literature that has been chosen for this thesis are primarily chosen for their relevance to the research area and their noteworthiness in their fields. Therefore several of the sources go back several decades such as Bourdieu (1984), Turner (2012 [1980]), Weber (1947) and Veblen (1957[1899]). By choosing the most relevant literary sources a comprehensive theoretical framework is created. The literature will first be studied in three separate sections 1) CCT and social identity, 2) power, authority & leadership, 3) and power-dressing & luxury brand fashion consumption; and then summarised and compared to each other.



The Stockholm university library databases in combination with Google scholar are used in order to find academic articles. The following keywords were used in order to find the literature: *power, power-dressing, fashion, body adornment, female executive, female senior manager, social identity and CCT*. The empirical data was gathered using in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with 5 female senior managers/ executives. Two interviews were conducted with each woman.

### **1.6 Thesis outline**

The thesis is divided into six main chapters. The introduction, the part you are currently reading, describes the problem formulation, research aim and research question, expected contribution, and short summary of methodology. In the following chapter, literature review, literature upon the topics of CCT and social identity; power, authority & leadership and power-dressing & luxury brand fashion consumption, are reviewed and reported. Thus the literature review serves as theoretical framework for the analysis of the empirical data. In the third chapter, methodology, the method used is described; including a brief account of how the interviews were conducted, justification of methodology used, and a description of how empirical data is analysed. The next part, chapter four, findings from ten interviews are presented as well as the main themes and problems that emerged out of generated empirical data. In chapter five, analysis, the results from previous chapters are compared to the literature review and followed by discussion. In the last chapter, conclusions and implications are discussed in conjunction with suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature review

In this section, the literature on social identity, power and luxury fashion consumption will be examined. It will start with describing how the CCT field has investigated the concept of social identity; then power, authority and leadership will be studied from mainly a sociological perspective, and then luxury fashion consumption from a fashion studies perspective will be studied in drawing parallels between, power, fashion and identity creation.

The topics examined are:

1. Consumer Culture Theory and Social Identity
2. Power, Authority and Leadership
3. Power-dressing and Luxury Brand Fashion Consumption

### 2.1 Consumer Culture Theory and Social Identity

*“ Man is born naked but is everywhere in clothes [...] Decorating, covering, uncovering or otherwise altering the human form in accordance with social notions of everyday propriety, [...] beauty, [...] status or changes in status, or on occasion of the violation and inversion of such notions, seems to have been a concern of every human society of which we have knowledge.”*  
 – Turner (2012 [1980]:483)

Turner (2012 [1980]) explains the social and symbolic importance of clothing and how it expresses an individual's role in their society. Age, rank, power and role in society and other parts of an individual's identity are clearly seen by the members of it's society. The surface of the adorned body is the frontier of the social self. Clothes and accessories constitute a cultural medium, specialised in shaping and communicating personal and social identity. (Turner, 2012 [1980])

Sirgy (1982) discussed the concept of social identity and consumer identity within CCT. Sirgy (1982) divides the self into three categories and expresses that consumers use their consumption of products to precise their actual self, ideal self and social self. The social self is described as when a consumer acquires products, such as power-dressing fashion, to accentuate their belonging to a specific social group, such as female executives, in order to display herself to others (Sirgy, 1982). Women trying to climb the career-ladder can use power-dressing as a way to express their ideal self and such using fashion as a tool to develop their career.

McCracken (1986) explains how cultural meaning can move from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods and from there to individual consumers; advertisement and the fashion system are examples of factors that facilitate that movement of meaning. Culture according to McCracken (1986) constitutes the meanings in the world, meanings that are characterised according to two concepts: cultural categories and cultural principles. Culture being the lens through which we see phenomena. Cultural categories emphasises distinctions about time, nature, person and space, e. g. social class or status. Cultural principles express how cultural

phenomena are organized and evaluated. Cultural principles are the founding ideas on how cultural categories such as status can be distinguished, ranked, and interrelated. (McCracken, 1986) Possession rituals allow the consumer to internalize the meaning of a good, individual consumers are able to gain cultural meaning such as status or power through consumption. (McCracken, 1986)

Arnould and Thompson (2005:868) define CCT as “a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings”. CCT is not a unified theory, as much as a perspective, which puts consumers in the centre of attention considering various cultural and other contextual influences. (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). CCT research emphasises the productive aspect of consumption and explores how consumers take an active part in transforming and reshaping the symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, retail settings, brands and or material goods to express their own personal and social circumstances and manifest their identity, with a partial focus on consumer identity projects (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Consumer identity projects are one of four different research programmes described by Arnould and Thompson (2005) whose purpose is to advance current consumer behaviour knowledge by emphasizing sociocultural structures and processes effect on customer behaviour. The concept of Consumer Identity projects is further developed by Arnould and Thompson (2007) as how identity creation is interconnected with consumption. According to Arnould and Thompson (2005:871) market consumption becomes a source for identity creation tools. Consumption creates meaning and is used to portray the consumer's desired identity to others in their surroundings; market-resources create consumers' identities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

## **2.2 Power, Authority and Leadership**

Power can be either authoritative (legitimate) or coercive (where power is taken with brute force) (Weber, 1947). Weber (1947) describes three kinds of authoritative power: Traditional power, Rational-Legal power and Charismatic power. Traditional power is often inherited such as within a family company. Rational-Legal power is given bound to an individual's title and position, a manager has power over their employees within the boundaries of work customs and ethics. Charismatic power refers to the personal qualities of an individual that give influence over others (Weber, 1947), in other words characteristics of a leader that make others want to follow his or her ideas.

Kasabov (2007) identifies four types of power - *direct power, gendered power, information inequities, and disciplining*- that are analysed through the four power dimensions - *design and execution, scope, importance of knowledge requirements, and continuity*. The power dimension design and execution is related to the degree of explicitness, clarity and definitiveness of power; that expresses differences in a distinctly straightforward and easily identified way. Direct power is defined as having authority as a power resource and typically involves conventional power technologies and visual rules. The importance of expertise knowledge requirements is of secondary importance for direct power, where the level of authority may vary between different situations. The direct power is often also connected to an individual with authority. The gendered power is equally explicit as direct power but is on the other hand more group centred and continuous through its close connection to a patriarchal society. By for example playing the

damsel in distress using sociocultural norms and expectations, it offers marginalised groups in society or individuals of those groups a form of power. Information inequities is most often implicit focusing on an individual's expertise knowledge as the main power resource. Disciplining is the most implicit and continuous type of power that is combined with extensive knowledge about a group, that uses knowledge and technology as it's primary power resource. (Kasabov, 2007)

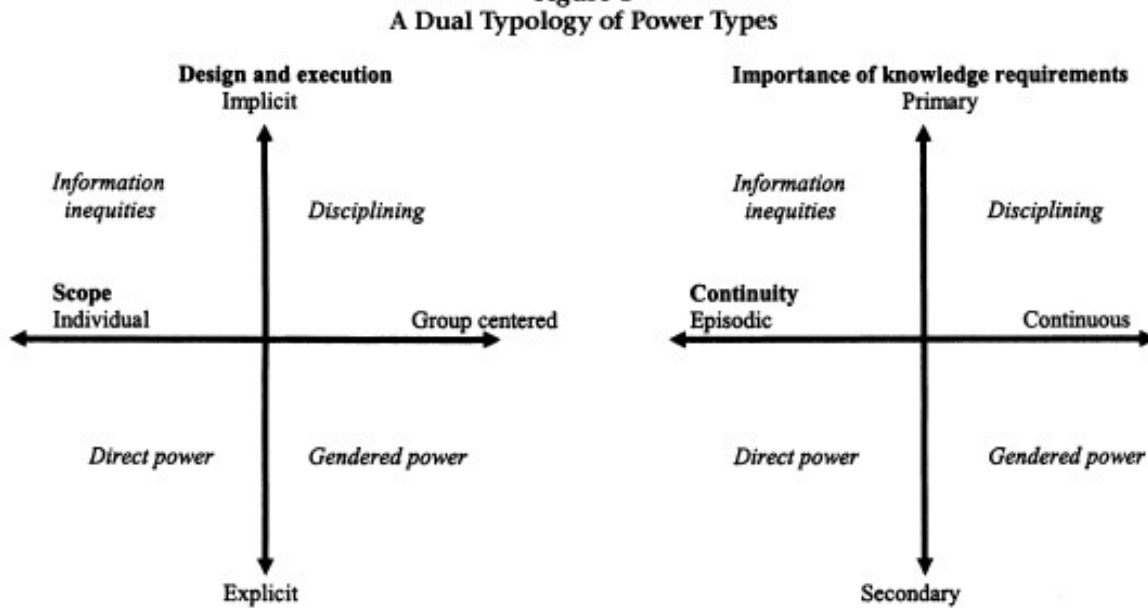


Fig 1: Explaining the relation between the four types of power and the four power dimensions (Kasabov, 2007)

Power and leadership from a social perspective may also be dependent on the role models available in society; Olsson (2002:143) describes how male leadership is closely connected to four decidedly masculine archetypes of leadership: the father, the hero, the saviour and the king. The male archetypes are used to legitimate male leaders and are treated as universal norms for executive behaviour (Olsson, 2002:143). The lack of a female leadership archetype is one of the reasons because female executives are fewer than male and may also be a cause why female executives are more frequently actively working to prove their belonging as executives (Olsson, 2002:146), here power-dressing can be seen as a tool to prove their belonging to the subculture of corporate executives.

**2.3 Power-dressing and Luxury Brand Fashion Consumption**

Fashion is not limited to clothing, but incorporates invisible symbolic elements contained in clothing. Fashion are the alluring values in the clothing that attract consumers (Kawamura, 2007:20). The outer appearance of clothing is constantly changing and high value is given novelty (ibid:22). Fashion's subtle symbols give a clear markers of individuals social class and power (Williams 1982:52, refereed to by Kawamura, 2007). Clothing and accessories are the carriers of fashion. Fashion has to be interpreted within it's social context according to Kawamura (2007:60) since fashion is a symbolic product and cultural praxis. Luxury is “a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense“ (Oxforddictionaries.com,

2014). Luxury fashion will in this thesis be defined as fashion clothing and accessories in the prêt-à-porter price category or above.

Bourdieu (1984) studied fashion from a sociological perspective. Fashion and taste become a marker that both produces and maintains social differences between the dominating and dominated classes. Taste becomes a key concept that gives meaning and content to the social identity. Bourdieu's (1984) interpretation of fashion is framed by cultural taste and class struggle: the upper and middle class focuses on the aesthetic values and gives high importance to the distinction of private and public fashion, the working class on the other hand focuses on wearability, and the long term usability of the clothing. Fashion has a dividing function and accentuates the relationship between the dominated and dominating classes in relation to economic power (Kawamura, 2007). Fashion reflects the development of a democratic society where class differences have become less rigid (Kawamura, 2007)

Entwistle (2000:226) explains power-dressing as a strategy for self-presentation with specific rules as how to consume clothes, hair and beauty products in order to increase one's chances of career success. She also connects power-dressing with the use of luxury brands, linking power-dressing with careerist corporate women (Entwistle, 2000). High status brands become a necessary tool to express an individual's power and influence of others within a corporation or society. (Entwistle, 2000)

Veblen (1957 [1899]) created the term Conspicuous Consumption to explain status-directed consumption. Consumption for the sake of prestige, not consumption mainly for the goods practical or functional value. Goods used for conspicuous consumption may very well have a functional value, their monetary cost is however not in relation to their functional value and their main purpose is to express the wearer's wealth. Fashion is one of the strongest carriers of conspicuous consumption, cloth and clothing covers fashion's practical value of covering and protecting the body, whereas fashion's true value is symbolic. Conspicuous Consumption has three purposes according to Veblen (1957 [1899]) 1) to express the wearer's wealth and power. 2) To display that the wearer does not need to work for their living or does not conduct any physical labour, the less practical and functional a fashion item is, the better it is as a symbol to exhibit the wearer's high status. 3) Fashion has to be of it's time and current. Kawamura (2007) uses the example of the opulent Sun King Louis XIV as an example of how conspicuous consumption was used for its symbolic extrinsic value to express opulent wealth and power through extensive use of luxury and luxury fashion in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. The second purpose is no longer relevant in contemporary conspicuous consumption, since impracticality no longer fills a function of adding symbolic power. The first and third purposes are however still relevant. Entwistle's (2000) power-dressing can be seen as a form of modern conspicuous consumption used to accentuate or create an image of power for the wearer. The importance of fashion to be in the moment is further developed by Kawamura (2007; referring to Koenig, 1973:77) using the concept of *neophilia* where fashion to be fashion has to current and regularly ever-changing. The desire for the latest is one of fashion's core constituents.

## 2.4 Summary of the theoretical framework

Clothes and accessories constitute a cultural medium, that shapes and communicates personal and social identity. (Turner, 2012 [1980]). Sirgy (1982) discusses the concept of social identity and consumer identity within CCT and divides the self into three categories where consumers use consumption to create their actual self, ideal self and social self. McCracken (1986) explains how cultural meaning can move from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods and from there to individual consumers; advertisement and the fashion system are examples of factors that facilitate that movement of meaning. Possession rituals allow the consumer to internalize the meaning of a good, individual consumers are able to gain cultural meaning such as status or power through consumption. (McCracken 1986). CCT research emphasises the productive aspect of consumption and explores how consumers take an active part in transforming and reshaping the symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, retail settings, brands and or material goods to express their own personal and social circumstances and manifest their identity, with a partial focus on consumer identity projects. (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

As explained above status can be a part of the social identity. Weber (1947) describes three kinds of authoritative power: Traditional power, Rational-Legal power and Charismatic power. Kasabov (2007) on the other hand identifies four types of power - direct power, gendered power, information inequities, and disciplining. Direct power and disciplining power has several similarities with rational-legal power. Power and leadership from a social perspective may also be dependent on the role models available in society; Olsson (2002) describes four kinds of male leadership archetypes, there is however a lack of female leadership archetypes. The lack of a female leadership archetype is one of the reasons because female executives are fewer than male, and may also be a cause why female executives are more frequently actively working to prove their belonging as executives (Olsson, 2002:146), here power-dressing can be interpreted as a tool to prove their belonging to the subculture of corporate executives.

Entwistle (2000) explains power-dressing as a strategy for self-presentation with specific rules as how to consume clothes, hair and beauty products in order to increase one's chances of career success, connecting the use of luxury fashion to power-dressing. Fashion has to be interpreted within its social context according to Kawamura (2007) since fashion is a symbolic product and cultural praxis. Bourdieu's (1984) interpretation of fashion is framed by cultural taste and class struggle: the upper and middle class focuses on the aesthetic values and gives high importance to the distinction of private and public fashion, the working class on the other hand focuses on wear-ability, and the long term usability of the clothing. Fashion is one of the strongest carriers of conspicuous consumption, fashion used to express power and wealth that is of the peak of its time (Kawamura, 2007; Veblen, 1957 [1899]). The importance of fashion to be in the moment, is further developed by Kawamura (2007) using the concept of neophilia where fashion to be fashion has to current and regularly ever-changing.

Arnould & Thompson (2005; 2007), Sirgy (1982) and McCracken (1986) belong to the CCT field and focus on social identity. Kawamura (2007), Turner (2012 [1980]) and Entwistle (2000) do not belong to the marketing field but help to connect the concept of power to social identity creation and the accentuation of power as a part of social identity, using perspectives of power

from Weber (1947), Kasabov (2007) and Olsson (2002). Therefore they are of high value when attempting to fill the gap in CCT research that connects the concept of power to social identity creation and the accentuation of power as a part of social identity using consumption of high-end brands within the global business culture.

Based on the above discourse the research question is:

*How is power-dressing and consumption of high-end luxury fashion brands used by female executives/senior managers in an attempt to accentuate power as a part of their social identity?*

### 3. Methodology

The following section describes the method which is used to answer the research question. This thesis' research consists of two main parts: the literature review and the empirical study based on 10 in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews. The in-depth literature review is necessary to introduce the reader to the concepts of power-dressing and to examine how the consumer power perspective can be integrated into CCT research, these concepts had to be understood before realizing the empirical study. After the literature review, 10 qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with female senior managers/executives to gain a first hand knowledge of powerful womens' fashion consumption and if and how they actively use power-dressing when shaping their social identity at work. Abductive research process of Bryman and Bell (2005) was applied as the primary method and will be further explained in section 3.2 research method. In-depth semi-structured interviews are a suitable methodology when attempting to gain deep knowledge of behaviour and identity creation from the participants' perspective working with a sensitive topic such as identity and power (Mack et al, 2005).

#### 3.1 Philosophical framework and research design

This thesis will use an interpretative perspective based on the subjectivist assumption that reality is created within a social context (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The thesis will have a hermeneutic application and uses constructivism as its epistemological foundation (Davis & Sumara, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1989) give a clear comparison of the conventional and constructivist belief systems, where the constructivist belief system uses a relativist ontology which asserts that there is a multitude of socially constructed realities that are not governed by any natural laws. The "truth" is described as the best informed and most refined construction that is accepted by consensus (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructivist beliefs use monistic subjectivist epistemology that asserts an inquirer and the respondent are interlocked in a way that the findings of a study is the literal creation of the inquiry process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructivist beliefs use hermeneutic methodology that involves a continuing dialectical iteration, analysis and critique, re-iteration, re-analysis and re-critique and so on with the ultimate pragmatic criterion of reaching better understanding and sense making (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Since the the purpose of this study is to improve understanding on how and if female senior managers/executives use power-dressing in the creation of their social identity; and the constructivist belief system with a realist ontology, subjectivist epistemology and hermeneutic methodology's ultimate criterion is to reach better understanding, this approach is considered appropriate to answer the research question and reach this thesis' aim.

The thesis will be based on the author's subjective interpretation of previous theory within the CCT field presented in the literature review and of the collected empirical material from the in-depth semi-structured interviews with female senior managers, and to what extent they may be using those brands to accentuate the power aspect of their social identity. (Bryman & Bell, 2005) According to Bryman and Bell (2005) the interpretive perspective is common in qualitative research and according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011) it is philosophically based in



hermeneutics. Interpretive research's outcome tends to focus not on predefined variables, but on human sense making and its complexity (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011).

By establishing this thesis on the CCT perspective it will interpret consumption of high-end luxury brand clothing used to accentuate power as a part of social identity within a consumer culture context by connecting it to the concept of power-dressing. This will be done by studying how consumption is used at the financial peak of global business culture as a tool to accentuate their belonging to the cultural sub-group consisting of female executives.

### **3.2 Research method**

The abductive research process is chosen for this thesis in combination with a qualitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Firstly it's important to find more existing research on how consumption of high-end luxury brand clothing is used today to accentuate the wearer's power. Secondly, to find more research on accentuating a specific part of an individual social identity, within a consumer culture context. Then I will collect empirical data on how female senior managers use high-end luxury brands and attempt to relate that data to expressions of power. From there I will attempt to match current theory to the empirical findings while attempting to develop new theory within the CCT field.

The thesis will therefore use abduction, I will start from a deductive research point of view that will be combined with inductive methodology to develop the extent I study the empirical material (Tolstikova, 2013b). I will attempt to find out how female executives use their consumption of high-end luxury brands when power-dressing to accentuate power as a part of their social identity. By attempting to explain that phenomenon, the aim is to expand CCT theory.

### **3.2 Data collection method**

The empirical data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observations of the clothes and accessories of the interviewees, in combination with other bodily adornment they may use such as hairstyling and make-up. Bryman and Bell (2005) define structured observations as systematic observations that are made with a predetermined schedule. The benefit of using qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews is that they are an excellent tool to help the respondent to open-up and to collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored, such as their identity and power (Mack et al, 2005). The observations will focus on the clothes and other fashion items used by the observees during the interviews and the observation will be participant since the thesis will consist of observations before and during the interviews keeping the researcher inside the environment that is being observed (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

Since these women have a tight schedule and the brief time available for this study, it was not possible to use more longitudinal methods such as narrative diary writing by the participants or a longitudinal series of interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2005). To use observation as the only data collection method would have the benefit of study powerful women across the world (Bryman & Bell, 2005), this would however create difficulties in interpreting their motivations behind their clothing choices and since it would lack any source of primary data the trustworthiness of the

thesis may lack since then only the author's subjective interpretation would be used in gathering data from images.

Qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with female senior managers in Swedish, since Swedish was the mother-tongue of all respondents and the interviewer. Semistructured interviews is that the interviewer has a simple interview guide<sup>4</sup> when asking the questions. Depending on the answers questions can be added, removed or change order during the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2005), which increases the fluidity of the interview. The psychological interview tool *laddering* was used during the interview. Laddering is a useful technique for qualitative research when studying behaviour. It consists of asking follow-up questions to the interviewee, based on their previous answers to gain deeper knowledge in the respondents opinion, approach to fashion and their values (Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda & Campomar, 2006).

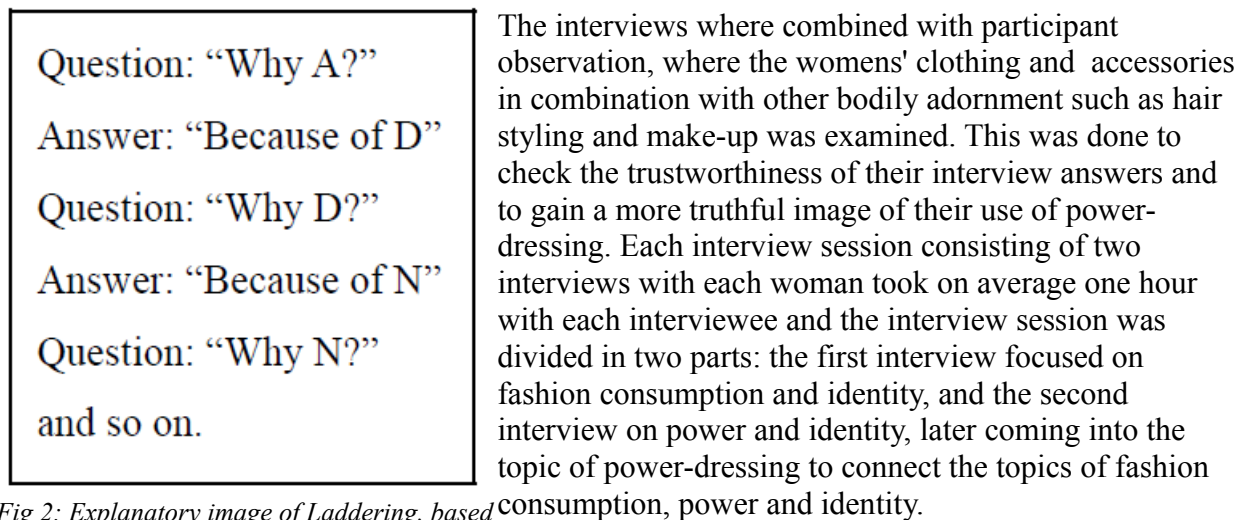


Fig 2: Explanatory image of Laddering, based on Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda & Campomar, 2006.

30 women, all senior managers in a range of industries working in Stockholm where contacted through e-mail<sup>5</sup>. The three requirements to participate in the study were that the participant had to have a senior level position at their organisation, they had to be women and they had to be available for an interview session during March 24<sup>th</sup> until April 9<sup>th</sup>. Of those six agreed to participate in the study, although one of those six then became ill during the time the interviews were conducted, leaving the five women that participated in the study. Each woman was given an alias (A)nna, (B)eatrice, (C)aroline, (D)aniella and (E)rica; and each woman participated in two consecutive interviews as a interview session of on average 60 min. All women had Caucasian origin, average height or above and average body shape (SCB, 2014), all women had upper secondary education and all have children.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for the original interview guide in Swedish with an English translation.

<sup>5</sup> The email was sent out to female senior managers/executives through the author's personal network and the network of the author's mentor Susanna Rönn. See Appendix B for the e-mail that was sent to all potential respondents.

Anna is in her 40's and works as an HR manager with three departments reporting to her, at a well known alcoholic beverage company with. She was interviewed in a conference room at her office on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Beatrice is in her late 30's and works as an Sales Operations Manager at a financial services subsidiary of a Swedish multinational telecommunication company. The subsidiary has roughly 80 employees in Stockholm. She was interviewed in a conference room at her office in Stockholm on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Caroline is in her early 50's and works as a Brand inside director for a Swedish multinational telecommunication company with over 25 000 employees around the world. She was interviewed in a conference room at her office in Stockholm on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Daniella is in her late 40's and works as a CEO and executive board member of several companies in the fashion and apparel industry. Many of those companies are on the Stockholm stock-exchange and have on average 50 employees. She was interviewed in her home in Stockholm on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Erica is in her early 40's and works as Head of Marketing & communication at a financial services subsidiary of a Swedish multinational telecommunication company. The subsidiary has roughly 80 employees in Stockholm. She was interviewed in the cafeteria at her office in Stockholm on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Ten interviews were conducted, two with each woman. Eisenhardt (1989) states the importance of gathering data until theoretical saturation is reached. In practice many factors such as time and resources available tend to affect the amount of cases that can be conducted. While there is no ideal number of cases, Eisenhardt (1989) recommends 4-10 cases. Fewer than four creates difficulties to generate theory with complexity and above ten it becomes difficult to work with the complexity and great amount of data (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore this empirical study consists of ten interviews divided into five interviewing sessions.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

All the data from the in-depth semi-structured interviews was recorded (after given the permission of the interviewees) and transcribed shortly after the interview was conducted. Transcription has the benefit of helping the researcher to become more familiar with the data and by contextualising it facilitating the first step for codification and analysis (Creswell, 2002). Field notes were taken before, during and after the interviews on the interviewee's body language, topics she repeated or accentuated during the interview and also the interviewer's observations of the interviewee's clothes and accessories. The findings from the 10 interviews were compared to the themes in the literature review. For that reason each interview session was analysed and compared to theories from the literature review. Then the five interview sessions are summarised to present similarities, differences and accentuate common themes.

Discourse Analysis has been chosen as the data analysis method of this thesis. Discourse Analysis focuses on the cultural meaning attached to people, artefacts (such as clothing), events

and experiences (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). Cultural meanings are expressed through language practices and their consequences that can be studied through Discourse Analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). Discourse Analysis main idea is that reality is not only represented by language, it is constructed by language; discourse shapes the cultural meaning of what things, such as a form of dressing, have for people and how they relate to their things (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). Since this thesis purpose is to gain understanding on how female senior managers and executives use high-end luxury fashion brands to accentuate a part of their social identity, Discourse Analysis offers an adequate set of tools to understand the meaning behind their use of power-dressing. There are three kinds of Discourse Analysis that are commonly used in business research and those are: Foucauldian, Social psychological and critical. Social psychological discourse analysis is mostly concerned with how identities are constructed and how people position themselves in relation to others, groups, ideas and objects (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). Social psychological discourse analysis proposes that social interaction is persuasive and performative, our understanding of ourselves and the world is in constant negotiation. Social interaction goal is to create consensus and to justify power-relations (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2011). Since this thesis purpose is to answer *How is power-dressing and consumption of high-end luxury fashion brands used by female executives/senior managers in an attempt to accentuate power as a part of their social identity?* and to gain in-depth knowledge social psychological discourse analysis is found to be an adequate analysis method.

### 3.4 Limitations

The thesis will focus on first hand data from the interviewees. The empirical study will also be based on the author's subjective interpretations and may therefore be difficult to generalize to other empirical material. The weaknesses of interviews as research method is that they risk bias due to poorly articulated questions, response bias and reflexivity where the respondent may answer what it thinks the interviewer wants to hear instead of what they truly believe. And inaccuracies due to poor recalling from the interviewer. Laddering helps to diminish the risk bias of poorly articulated questions, response bias and reflexivity due to the in-depth nature of the interview method and by using several similar question in the semi-structured questionnaire and in that way double checking their answers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed shortly after the interview and notes were taken during the interviews and directly after to reduce the risk of inaccuracies.

### 3.5 Source Criticism

References for this thesis that will be collected from business press, peer-reviewed articles and relevant published books within the fields of CCT and studies of power in fashion studies will be critically examined to make a just assessment of the gathered data. This will be done by following Patel and Davidsson's (2003) suggestions and offer the reader detailed knowledge of the author<sup>6</sup> and the origin of all sources. The thesis's trustworthiness will be high since each research step will be clearly explained in detail, giving reliable supporting references in each step of the research process. By using the voice of the interviewees, the female executives in Stockholm the objectivity of the thesis increases and the result becomes more balanced. As with

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<sup>6</sup> Please see appendix C for the author's biography

most qualitative research the author's subjective beliefs and values will affect the possible outcome of the thesis to a certain extent. Since the thesis is on the interpretivist perspective such factors affecting the results are expected.

### **3.6 Ensuring research quality and ethics**

Interviews will be conducted using the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Market and Social Research when interviewing and observations during the interviews will be based on the interviewees work wardrobe and their public persona. All respondents will be anonymous and are given aliases in this thesis and remain anonymous except to the author through the entire research process.

## 4. Findings

The following section describes the main findings from the interview sessions. First is a short summary with the main themes and sub-themes that were extracted from the data and after is a more detailed examination of the main data from each interview-session<sup>7</sup>.

### 4.1 Main themes and sub-themes extracted from the data

Five interview sessions consisting of ten interviews, two for each interview session and woman, were conducted with female senior managers in Stockholm from the following industries: telecommunication, financial services, alcoholic beverages and fashion/apparel. Each woman has been given an alias as explained in the previous methodology chapter. While codifying the empirical data the following themes and sub-themes were found in a majority of the interviews:

1. Fashion consumption
  - price/value ratio
  - style and design
  - uniqueness, standing out or looking like most at work
  - formality level of clothing
  - importance of cosy “home clothes”
  - Corporate dress code, formalized or spread culturally
  - Brand importance
  - Luxury consumption
2. Power, Authority and Leadership
  - Power as competence and knowledge
  - Power as inspiration/influence to others
  - Power as change-creator
  - Respect and equality
3. Social identity
  - Power-dressing
  - Physical vs. psychological comfort
  - Femininity accentuation vs. blending in with the boys

During the interviews the themes were entwined into each-other several times and some of them correlated such as *uniqueness, standing out or looking like most at work* and *Femininity accentuation vs blending in with the boys*.

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<sup>7</sup> If the reader requires more information on how the data was codified and a sample of the original transcription in Swedish please see appendix D.

## **4.2 Interview session with Anna**

### **4.2.1 Background and observation**

Anna is in her 40's and works as an senior HR manager, with three departments reporting to her, at a well known alcoholic beverage company. Previously she has mainly worked as a controller and with HR in the logistics industry. She was wearing dark blue bootcut jeans with a blue white stripped  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeve top with brown boots, her blazer and purse are left at her desk. She has no visible make-up and her blonde hair is up with with a large hair-clip, the only jewellery she's wearing is a traditional wedding ring. She greets the interviewer with a smile and leads the way to the conference room speaking a bit of her child. During the interview her body language is relaxed and her posture slightly bent forward.

### **4.2.2 Fashion consumption**

From the first interview focusing on her fashion consumption it becomes clear that Anna has a low interest in fashion and clothing. Clothes are something that she wears, but does not put a high focus on. Marketing is at the heart of the company's core competence and she describes several of her colleagues as hipsters “wearing cool hats and custom-torn jeans, trying to be a bit cool”, “snappy fashionistas that accentuate their femininity and dress-up in high heels, dresses, skirts and wear more make-up”, “ those who look like they don't care at all how they look” and a who few wear suits, “but never a tie, then you might get bullied; no finance-guys here”. The company does not have a dress-code. Anna often wears a blazer with jeans, sometimes with a matching skirt, but prefers to wear her blazers with jeans, as do most people at her office, since “it becomes to formal in a full-suit”

Anna describes her personal style as classic and comfortable, it rarely changes and remains the same over several years “I have probably used my purse the past 10 years and wear identical flat boots until they get worn-out and I need a new pair”. She usually wears basic colours such as black, grey, brown, white and blue. She describes herself as the opposite of a brand-nerd and prefers middle priced brands such as Turnover, Esprit, InWear, New House and Jackpot for tops and less important clothing pieces. Luxury brands are out of question since “she's too cheap to spend that much money on clothes, bags and shoes”

### **4.2.3 Power, authority and leadership**

Anna defines power as the ability to influence others and decisions. She sees herself as a powerful woman and her power is connected to her position in the company, “I get authority through my title” and her personality “as a person you have to be dare to take decisions, dare to delegate, to correct others and most importantly to to take responsibility for the power that you have”.

Anna stands out among the interviewees' by highly accentuating the importance of taking responsibility for actions and decisions she is able to take thanks to her power. Anna gives high importance to the responsibility/power aspect and “it is very important (to her) that others see her as powerful, competent and knowledgeable”, she wants to gain others' respect through her competence and knowledge, but still wants to keep her approachability for everyone in the company, high or low, her power and the respect towards her should never be based on fear.

#### 4.2.4 Social identity

“The alcoholic beverage industry is very male-dominated in general, but we (her company) stand out with many women at the head-quarter”, still most managers are men and if you want to blend in with them you can't look all snappy and girlish”. Anna's female boss is part of the operational board and she “always dresses down to earth, never accentuating her femininity”.

To Anna it is important to look like most at her office in her blazer with jeans, she feels no need to stand out at work clothing wise.

Anna uses power-dressing for more important meeting, such as when she's meeting the operative board and puts on a blazer to look more professional. Clothes have become less important with increased seniority, “in the past clothes were more important to give a good first impression, the more senior you are and the more established, the less important your clothes become”

### 4.3. Interview session with Beatrice

#### 4.3.1 Background and observation

Beatrice is in her late 30's and works as an Sales Operations Manager at a financial services subsidiary of a Swedish multinational telecommunication company. The subsidiary has roughly 80 employees in Stockholm, of which 18 report directly to Beatrice. She started her current job in august last year and has previously worked in the service industry and soft-drinks industry. During the interview session she wore a black pencil-skirt, a loose blue & black striped short sleeved top, a black blazer and black high-heeled boots. Her brown hair was up with a scrunchy, her nails pink and she wore natural make-up (foundation, rouge, nude lips, mascara and eye-liner). Her purse was left at her desk and she was wearing several silver rings, a small necklace and no earrings.

#### 4.3.2 Fashion consumption

Beatrice has from an early age liked to wear formal office clothes such as full-suits, pencil-skirts, blouses and blazers. In junior-high she had a fiend that liked to predict our futures as a game and once she did me she could see me “at a big office, dressed in a full-suit with high-heeled pumps, being the boss; guess it turned out she was right (said with a big smile)”

At work she wears neutral block colours and a lot of black, her style is formal/suit and she most often wears full-suits either trouser or skirt-suits. Suits dominate the industry dress-code, the direct sales staff have formalised and to others it spreads through the company culture. and Beatrice feels the most comfortable when she can wear her full-suits and heels. If she knows that she will meet a laid-back customer, she will adapt her clothing and dress down and skip the blazer.

“I have separate wardrobes for work and home clothes and I never use my office clothes at home and the other way around” Beatrice said she uses many fast-fashion brands: H&M, Ellos, Lindex, Kappahl and some Rodebjer and a ridiculously expensive Hugo Boss coat. “I don't see the point in spending too much money on clothes, I never have. Work clothes are an exception 1000kr is OK for a good blazer, but then I consider it a *big* purchase and don't buy that many during that year”. “I love to wear feminine formal clothes such as skirts, dresses and heels, to



have make-up and a lot of jewellery, that is what I feel the most comfortable in” “But I always try to not dress too provocatively, I avoid having a deep cleavage, tight clothes and short skirts”. She feels objectified when in provocative clothes, the more provocative, the less professional she would be considered. She recalled a meeting with three men where she felt like one of them was not talking to her face, but her chest.

Beatrice does use luxury brands on rare occasions, such as her Hugo Boss coat. However it is against her personality to spend too high amounts of clothes or accessories. Luxuries for her is to spend more on her vacation with her children or to take a cab home after a night out with her friends, which she prioritises higher “than a designer purse”.

#### **4.3.3 Power, authority and leadership**

Power for Beatrice is the ability to influence others. It can also be a tool to force people to act a specific way, such as your position within a company, wealth or charisma. “As a manager I automatically have some formal power over my employees such as their salaries and work-conditions to a certain extent” “but I also want to have informal power, when people believe in me and choose to follow my ideas and the changes I want to make”. Respect and equality are a significant part of that for Beatrice, “I want others to respect my role in the company and my competence, we all have a role to play and we should respect each-other's positions and as individuals”. Beatrice's power and work identity is closely connected to the suits she loves to wear, “I think a person in a suit exudes power more clearly than a person in ragged jeans and a sweater”.

#### **4.3.4 Social identity**

Beatrice uses power-dressing as her everyday tool to feel comfortable at work. Feminine formal clothing is a very important part of her work identity. That became extra clear to her when she injured her foot last year and had to walk around in flats and even barefoot for some days at work “The worst was when I had a presentation for the CEO wearing socks! It felt so wrong and unprofessional, but I didn't have a choice!” As soon as her feet could handle it, Beatrice put on her lowest heels and that felt better, but she still cannot wear her higher heels and misses them. Her high-heeled pumps and boots are a part of her work identity and a part of the full-suit she relates to professionalism, competence power and psychological comfort. She stands out among the women at her office since most of them dress less formally than her, often wearing jeans with a blazer instead of a suit.

### **4.4. Interview session with Caroline**

#### **4.4.1 Background and observation**

Caroline is in her early 50's and works as a Brand inside director for a Swedish multinational telecommunication company with over 25 000 employees around the world. She was just arriving back at her office after a meeting at another department. She has previously worked in the oil, beer and television industries. She has worked at her current company since year 2000. During the interview session, Caroline was dressed with a black blazer with satin decorations, black cigarette trousers, a white lace top and black boots with a medium heel. Her hair was up in

a high ponytail, she had neutral make-up, small circular earrings and French manicured nails. Caroline used a black canvas purse.

#### 4.4.2 Fashion consumption

Caroline's style can be described as business rock. Blazers are often worn with edgier jeans, sometimes with a pencil-skirt, and accessorised with tough rocky necklaces. She hates to feel mainstream and will only wear a full-suit if she's either having a presentation for someone very high-up at corporate or Eurasian colleagues. The company only has a dress-code for employees that meet the end customers, they do not have a dress-code at the head-quarter where Caroline works. Caroline is often searching for new edgy fashion and often looks for inspiration from some of her younger colleagues. Some time ago it was a woman, a executive manager at her current workplace, that was Caroline's fashion role-model."She was cool, different and dared to stand-out among the suits, a bike-chick with cow-hide boots" Caroline says with admiration in her voice, "but when she switched to the head-quarter here she started to dress like an old lady, I got so disappointed" and she stopped being her role-model.

Caroline often wears the same clothes to work and privately, "I often wear blazers outside of work, a nice blazer always looks good and gives you better posture" Caroline is not very brand-loyal "I don't like to pay for just a label. I have some Filippa K since they have good basics and a few Odd Molly pieces, but I think they have become a bit to expensive". Large luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Hermès are to expensive in relation to uniqueness and design value, "Sure I can afford them, but it feels like a waste of money" Another problem with well-known brands for Caroline, is that have become too popular and common, she prefers to buy clothes from new up-and-coming designers as a way to find the uniqueness she desires, for a better price-tag. "Many of the established brands at Jackie<sup>8</sup> get me bored if everyone else is wearing it". Caroline has a few vintage clothes inherited from her mother-in-law over 15 years ago that she loves, "high quality, one of a kind and it looks good on me and receives compliments year after year"

Luxury for Caroline is to be able to spend more on matching shoes and handbags frequently. "I recently bought a pair of golden Michael Kors sneakers, for only 1100kr and they are so comfortable!" Mulberry is Caroline's favourite handbag brand, she has a big white one for summer, an orange and a red one. "I like Mulberry since they (the handbags) are made of high-quality leather, and have classic plain designs. Dior and Louis Vuitton are to common, specially the Louis Vuitton canvas pattern, and when it becomes to common I loose interest. Mulberry is also common, but the plain pattern doesn't stand out as much and makes it more wearable"

#### 4.4.3 Power, authority and leadership

Power according to Caroline is to decide and to rule. Power has negative connotations to her, it's brutal, roaring orders with an iron-fist. She does not want to be seen as a power person, instead she wants to be seen as inspiration and influencer of others. She is dedicated to inspiring others to follow her by choice "I'm good at making people choose to follow my ideas, using my competence and experience. I'm extremely competent" "I don't shut-up and I create change for the better of the company in my responsibility areas" "I don't want to be seen as powerful, I

<sup>8</sup> Designer boutique chain with brands like Acne, Dagmar, Odd Molly, Burberry, Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, Ralph Lauren

want to be seen as competent and respected from all levels, superiors, employees and co-workers, and treat them equally as well”

#### 4.4.4 Social identity

Caroline often accentuates her femininity at work. “I'm petite and it seems wrong to hide a good figure, besides I'm short and my legs look nice, if I look like an old lady if my skirt is below the knee”. As described before, Caroline likes to stand-out clothing wise at work, “I like to combine classic business clothes with rock details and accessories”. It gives her comfort and helps her to express her personality and identity “When I feel well, when I'm wearing something I like, then everything is well. Then I radiate self-confidence and feel happier”.

“A full-suit helps you to be perceived as serious and professional, and I understand why consultants that immediately need to make a great impression use them”. However, Caroline sees that as taking the easy way out “I want to be taken seriously for my competence, not my outfit! That's why I rebel a bit against the suits!”. It was not always this way that she always felt comfortable in her own style. She recalls an incident 10 years ago when she had a presentation for a large group of people. When arriving at the location she realized that she would present next to two consultants that had suited-up to their teeth, making her feel completely under-dressed. She made a u-turn, ran out to buy a blazer and a pair of pinstriped trousers. The clothing change made her feel more confident and the presentation went well.

### 4.5. Interview session with Daniella

#### 4.5.1 Background and observation

Daniella is in her late 40's and works as a CEO and executive board member of 14 companies in the fashion and apparel industry. Many of those companies are on the Stockholm stock-exchange and have on average 50 employees. She was interviewed in her home, during the interview Daniella wore a pair of dark diamond-patterned jeans, a pastel-pink top and white socks (people rarely wear shoes indoor in Sweden). Her hair was up in a ponytail, she wore stud-earrings, natural make-up and a large black wrist watch. During a previous meeting Daniella wore a black long-sleeve merino-wool t-shirt, black suit trousers with purple running sneakers, the same make-up and hair style, similar earrings and the same watch. Then she also carried two purses a Celine beige & black 2 tone tote and a black MiuMiu tote.

#### 4.5.2 Fashion consumption

Daniella usually wears blouses, jeans, skirts, blazers and a lot of knits at the office. She most often wears pastels, many patterns (recently many ethnic patterns), strong colours, but often black as a base. On her feet she prefers handmade Italian leather shoes with a low heel or flats. Working in the fashion industry it is common to wear your company's clothes, it is not a formalised dress-code, however it spreads through the culture. It is also standard to offer employees around 30% discount on company clothes. “I use a lot from Odd Molly and Dagmar, not only because I have to show the company's products but also because I like the clothes”. Daniella does not consider herself the full-suit type. “Could be because of the industry that I work in, it gives me more liberties compared to the CEO of a stock-listed company in another industry. If you work in fashion you should wear your company's clothes”. It is important to Daniella that the clothes are comfortable, practical, look well and that they are wearable and easy

to take care of. The brands that Daniella uses the most are Odd Molly, Dagmar, Prada & MiuMiu “I love the shoes, bags and clothes”, Celine, a bit of Hope, Acne and Filippa K, some Gucci purse and Hunkydory. “2000-3000kr for a blazer is an OK price and 10 000+ for a handbag, 40000-50000 or above becomes too much, to exemplify MiuMiu is OK, and Hermès is not”. Only my blazers and suits are for work only, most of my other clothes can be used at work or privately. I always switch to sweatpants when I get home after work “it's so comfortable and helps me to relax and turn of work”. Jeans and a nice top can be worn for regular work-days, for representation I have to wear a blazer “I like to stand-out when everyone else is wearing formal full-suits, and there I come in a soft feminine Odd Molly silhouette with a blazer”

Luxury for Daniella is all about giving every-day life a silver-lining by taking care of yourself. “Spa a bit now end then, a massage, some champagne and a ski-trip”, when it comes to clothes Daniella's favourite luxuries are expensive well crafted hand-maid handbags and shoes in a classic design that can be used year after year.

#### 4.5.3 Power, authority and leadership

Daniella defines power as having the opportunity to influence a situation and others and she fits in that definition “ I want to influence change to improve the company and it's profitability”. Daniella considers herself a powerful person at work “at home it feels like my kids have the power, he-he” she adds jokingly. “At work I definitely have power!, I have power through my position in the executive board, as CEO and as shareholder I have a great amount of formal power and responsibility since it's my job to steer the ship in the right direction”. She continues adding “I also have power through the authority that I have, people trust my skills and I have past good results to prove it”. On the other hand she continues with a large smile “I'm also good at making others inspired to follow my ideas and selling-in my plans of changes; and convincing people until they think that the plans are as great as I believe them to be!” Daniella would rather be seen as competent and effective than powerful by others “to be seen as someone with good judgement that does a good job” however she then continues “it affects my choice of clothes. It is hard to specify how, although I do want the clothes to reflect who I am”. Daniella is unsure if she does that decision consciously or unconsciously, clothes vary depending on her day's agenda, whom she will meet or if she will have a presentation; “it's an assessment based on previous personal meetings, I use the clothes not only express myself yet also a way to show respect to the people I meet”

#### 4.5.4 Social identity

The change from work-clothes to sweats directly after coming home helps to separate Daniella's work-identity from her private-identity, her tone of voice expresses that it is more importance in that clothing change than only removing a stiff blazer. “Within fashion, shoes and cosmetics, most people in the industry are women; this is however not true for the boards. The board work is very male-dominated, there is rarely more than 2 women in a board with 5-7 members” Daniella further adds, “yet I still dress the way I usually do even when I am working with only men. I don't try to dress more feminine to even out the balance, nor do I dress more masculine to fit in. on the other hand I always dress in a quite feminine way”. Daniella prefers to wear soft shapes, fabrics and silhouettes “ I don't want to look like a man” she continues “I want to look

like myself and I am a woman, my appearance should reflect that, it should reflect me!'. Nevertheless she continues "I often meet women in higher positions and they frequently dress too masculine. I think you should be able to be powerful and still feminine, but I guess that doesn't work that way in many industries"

## 4.6. Interview session with Erica

### 4.6.1 Background and observation

Erica is in her early 40's and works as Head of Marketing & communication at a financial services subsidiary of a Swedish multinational telecommunication company. The subsidiary has roughly 80 employees in Stockholm. Erica has previously worked as a marketer for a well-known energy-drink company and at an advertising and event agency. The author has met Erica several times during and before this thesis and has therefore gained a deeper knowledge of her clothing style. Erica often wears black (7cm or higher) heeled boots, blazers, skinny jeans, animal prints (preferably leopard) and fur. During her interview session Erica wore a black blazer, a black top, leopard-print loose trousers, black high-heeled wedge-boots, a gold bracelet, an apple shaped gold necklace, her wedding-ring, and 70's glasses. Her curly hair is loose, she has neutral make-up and transparent nail-polish.

### 4.6.2 Fashion consumption

Erica describes her clothing style as business with a twist, for example a simple black blazer with leopard-print trousers. There is only a formalised dress-code for the sales-staff at Erica's company that are required to wear full-suits, chinos and a blazer also work during summer when the clothing becomes more informal. Since Erica works with marketing and rarely meets any customers she is not bound by any dress-code and is able to dress more creatively. "I prefer to stand-out clothing wise at work. To stand-out isn't the aim, it's just that my personal style stands-out among suits".

Most of her clothes are bought at a boutique called Pour Toi<sup>9</sup> "I think 90% of my clothes come from there, the rest is some H&M, NK or Lindex. Acne, Hope and Marlene Birger are Erica's favourite brands for clothes. "I like to match a cheap H&M top with a more expensive blazer, or an H&M blazer with some nicer trousers, constantly mixing designer and budget". Erica has no interest in expensive designer purses, "when it comes to handbags I usually choose something black and practical, I think most of my bags are Decadent" a mid priced designer brand. When it comes to shoes Erica mainly wears Acne shoes with heel "I need heels (at work) because I'm short, the heels give me authority, posture and most importantly length. They (the heels) pull me up to the men's (eye) level". Blazers and formal heels are clothes that Erica buys specifically to use at work and often uses sweatpants at home.

Time with her children is Erica's greatest luxury. "I never have enough time, so I have to create it by starting early in the morning each day and leaving the office early to be with them and working from home during the evening" and then she adds "I have no need for luxury-designer handbags".

<sup>9</sup> The store has a mix of brands from Vila to Hope and Acne.

#### 4.6.3 Power, authority and leadership

Power according to Erica is mainly about authority, comfort in taking decisions and clear communication. “You can be very intelligent and take excellent decisions, nevertheless unless you have authority you don't have any power!” “Some clothes can help you increase your authority. Authority also exists naturally in some personalities, that mostly men have” she continues. Erica sees herself as powerful person, specially within her work-field “If I didn't have any power at work, I would be in the wrong position”. Her clear communication skills are her main power-tools to influence others to follow ideas to implement the changes she wants to make “its important that others see me as powerful and competent, if not they won't follow you, also I want all (superiors, employees and colleagues) to see me in the same way”, to Erica this is about respect and equality or as she says it “people are people, I'm not that hierarchical”

#### 4.6.4 Social identity

To Erica the ritual of changing to sweats from blazers when she gets home helps her distinguish her corporate and private self. “I remove the blazer (the work-me) and adapt to a new situation (relaxing at home). She feels psychologically comfortable wearing sweats at home and out if she would go to her local grocery store, never the less “If I would go somewhere else I would have to change into other clothes again. I feel naked in sweats outside my home, clothes, glasses and shoes are my identity, in sweats I have nothing to hide behind”

The formal mixed with boldness at work “I think it's part of my personality, it feels strange to wear a navy coloured full-suit; specially if I'm holding a presentation and need to get my message through. In the suit it's not me standing there, not the real me, and it becomes harder to get my message through.” Then Erica continues “If I don't feel save on stage when I have to be serious and put on the full-suit, then it doesn't get right, it feels wrong and tight. When I look in the mirror I don't see myself any-more”. Erica tends to always dress in a feminine way at work “Maybe that is the reason why I feel uncomfortable in full-suits. The suits are all about fitting in with the men, but I'm a woman and I shouldn't have to dress-up like a man”. As mentioned above heels help Erica feel more comfortable at work. To her clothes create authority, having the right expertise gives you power and respect. Erica recalls an event some weeks ago that made it very clear that there is no piece of clothing in the world that can give you power and authority unless you have the knowledge and control to back it up; “it was a young woman holding a presentation in front of 600 people, dressed in a very authority giving suit. Unfortunately she was clueless about her topic. It was embarrassing and I felt sorry for her”.

## 5. Analysis and discussion

The following section analyses the main findings from the empirical study using the theoretical framework from the literature review as its lens. The main themes Fashion Consumption and Power, authority and leadership and social identity have been analysed separately with their respective sub-themes.

### 5.1 Fashion consumption

#### 5.1.1 Style and design vs brand importance

The personal styles of the interviewees varied highly, from informal jeans and a sweater (Anna) to full-suits every day (Beatrice), the common clothing item all give high value is the blazer that all respondents relate to professionalism and the clearest way to accentuate their role in the company. The literature suggested that high-end brands would play a vital role in power identity creation. Entwistle (2000) connected power-dressing with luxury-brands and since all interviewed women had senior positions with salaries to match, the author believed that brands and specifically luxury-brands would have higher importance to the interviewees. Traditional luxury-brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hermès or Gucci were not a priority to the respondents; leading to the new knowledge that style, design and to a certain level uniqueness; had a higher importance to the interviewees, than having a specific brand.

#### 5.1.2 Price/value ratio and Luxury consumption

Entwistle (2000) connected power-dressing to high-end luxury brands, making high-end luxury brands a necessary tool to attempt power-dressing. Therefore it was quite surprising for the author to find that the opposite was exhibited by the data. All interviewees mainly used fast-fashion or mid-priced designer clothes. None of the women used prêt-à-porter priced clothes and only two used prêt-à-porter priced accessories. Therefore the data also disproves the previous assumption that power-dressing would be a modern form of Conspicuous Consumption (Veblen, 1957[1899]) since luxury consumption is a requirement for status-directed consumption to be conspicuous.

This point of view is however fully dependant on the definition of luxury. If only the definition of luxury would be used in its original form “a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense”, without adding the definition on what luxury fashion must reach a prêt-à-porter price level or above<sup>10</sup>. With that new definition power-dressing could be interpreted as a modern form of Conspicuous Consumption since the two characteristics of Conspicuous consumption that are still relevant today are 1) that it is used to express the wearer's wealth and power and 2) that the fashion has to be current. If mid-priced designer brands would be considered luxury brands, then the interviewees would consciously use power-coded clothing to accentuate power as a part of their work-identity and their consumption would also qualify as conspicuous for Caroline, Daniella and Erica whom all accentuated a desire of frequently finding new fads and unique-designs. As Caroline said in her own words “its a luxury for me to frequently buy new shoes and bags”, Kawamura (2007) explains that behaviour as neophilia, the constant desire for change which also explains the second characteristic of conspicuous consumption.

<sup>10</sup> To give an example a prêt-à-porter priced blazer should range from 5000kr or above. The highest acceptable price for a blazer mentioned by any interviewee was 3000kr.

### 5.1.3 Corporate dress code, formalized or spread culturally

None of the women was affected by a formalised dress-code that decided how they had to be dressed at work. Four of them did on the other hand have dress-code that where either spread culturally, that can be seen in their following examples “You are expected to wear you company's clothes if you work in the apparel industry” - Daniella; where suits dominate the industry such in the case of Beatrice; or when other departments in the organisation have formalised dress-codes, as in the case of Caroline and Erica where all direct sales-staff has to wear full-suits and adapt to the customers they meet. The non-formalized dress-code and the choice to follow it can be seen as an example of accentuating the social self and their belonging to their company and department (Sirgy, 1982).

### 5.1.4 Importance of cosy “home clothes”

One of the findings that surprised the author was the importance of sweats<sup>11</sup> as a transition from the work-identity to the home or private-identity. Both Daniella and Erica emphasised that clothing change as an important ritual to detach themselves from values bound to the blazer. Their ritual is a reverse version of McCracken's (1986) possession ritual that allow consumers to internalize the meaning of a good, such as a blazer, to gain power and status through consumption. Here they peel of their power-dressed layer and out comes their private (home) identity. The private-identity can be understood as Sirgy's (1982) actual self, the core and private part of identity. Erica compares wearing sweats in a more public situation as being naked, uncovered “my clothes, glasses and shoes create my identity”. This is a clear example of Turner's (2012[1980]) social skin. The sweats being so closely connected to private-identity lack the social and symbolic importance of other clothes that create Erica's social identity.

## 5.2 Power, Authority and Leadership

### 5.2.1 Power as inspiration/influence to others to create change

From the empirical findings it is clear that all the interviewed women have rational-legal power (Weber, 1947) through their position at their resp. company. To the majority of them their rational legal is positive except for Caroline that truly dislikes to need her rational-legal power and would ideally only need to use her Charismatic power. They also either consider themselves to have or want to have charismatic power “I also want to have informal power, when people believe in me and choose to follow my ideas and the changes I want to make” - Beatrice or “I'm also good at making others inspired to follow my ideas and selling-in my plans of changes; and convincing people until they think that the plans are as great as I believe them to be!” -Daniella. Kasabov's (2007) direct power and disciplining power have many similarities with which can be seen in Beatrice's statement “As a manager I automatically have some formal power over my employees such as their salaries and work-conditions to a certain extent”

<sup>11</sup> Myskläder in Swedish. Often clothes such as sweatpants or hoodies.



### **5.2.2 Power as competence and knowledge combined with respect and equality at the office**

All respondents accentuate in detail how their power is connected to their competence and how important it is for them that their competence and experience is acknowledged by their colleagues, superiors and subordinates. Which can be exemplified by a quote from Beatrice “I want others to respect my role in the company and my competence, we all have a role to play and we should respect each-other's positions and as individuals”. Beatrice's power and work identity is closely connected to the suits she loves to wear, “I think a person in a suit exudes power more clearly than a person in ragged jeans and a sweater”. Power through expert knowledge can be described as Kasabov's (2007) third power type, information inequities where the power isn't obvious at first sight, never the less it creates power through knowledge. “I'm extremely competent” “I don't shut-up and I create change for the better of the company in my responsibility areas” “ I don't want to be seen as powerful, I want to be seen as competent and respected from all levels, superiors, subordinates and co-workers, and treat them equally as well”-Caroline.

## **5.3 Social identity**

### **5.3.1 Power-dressing and Formality level of clothing**

Power-dressing has been explained above in 5.2.1 and the empirical study does not support Entwistle's (2000) definition on power-dressing. Although it is clear from data that the respondents actively use power-coded formal clothing to accentuate their power as a part of their identity. Beatrice is the clearest example; her power and work identity is closely connected to the suits she loves to wear, “I think a person in a suit exudes power more clearly than a person in ragged jeans and a sweater”. The power-dressed, competent and experienced woman might be the closest to a feminine leadership archetype, as an equivalent to the masculine leadership archetypes described by Olsson (2002). The regular use of suits is a clear example on how female senior managers/female executives use the symbolic meaning of formal clothes such as a suit or blazer, to express their own personal and social circumstances to exhibit their social identity (Arnould & Thompson; 2005, 2007).

### **5.3.2 Physical vs. psychological comfort**

There are two good examples in the data that show how the importance of power-coded dressing in relation to work-identity and professionalism, one from Beatrice and the other from Caroline. Beatrice uses power-coded-dressing on a daily basis as her tool to feel comfortable at work. Feminine formal clothing is a very important part of her work identity. Last year she injured her foot and had to walk around in flats and even without shoes for some days at work “The worst was when I had a presentation for the CEO wearing socks! It felt so wrong and unprofessional, but I didn't have a choice!” As soon as her feet could handle it, she put on her lowest heels and that felt better, nevertheless she still cannot wear her higher heels and misses them. Her high-heeled pumps and boots are a part of her work identity and a part of the full-suit she relates to professionalism, competence, power and psychological comfort. Her relation to her full-suits is an example on how important clothing is when creating a social identity (Sirgy, 1982; Arnould &

Thompson, 2005; 2007). The physical pain from wearing the heels was a fair price to pay to feel more confident and to be able to wear her complete full-suit.

Caroline's example is from ten years ago. Today she rebels against the full-suits, seeing them as an easy way out to express authority. During the incident 10 years ago she had a presentation for a large group of people. When arriving at the location she realized that she would present next to two consultants that had suited-up to their teeth, making her feel completely under-dressed. Next to them. That made her go and buy a blazer and a pair of pinstriped trousers for the presentation. The clothing change made her feel more confident and the presentation went well. Erica used the word baby blanket to describe her blazer when she started her career, a comforting tool to fit in at work.

### **5.3.3 Femininity accentuation vs. blending in with the boys**

Both the blazer and the full-suit are traditionally male-coded clothes, and they are also the clothes that have the strongest power-code according to the empirical data. Using male-coded, power-coded clothes the female senior managers/executives showed two different reactions. The most frequent one was to accentuate femininity by adding female-coded clothes and accessories such as heels, skirt-suits, softer fabrics shapes and silhouettes. The other reaction was to dress-down her femininity to blend in with the boys by avoiding heavily feminine-coded goods such as heels, make-up or skirts. The creation of femininity or the lack of it in relation to power-coded dressing is used to create their social identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007).

## 6. Conclusion

The findings did not fit with Entwistle's (2000) definition of power-dressing since the female senior managers/executives that participated in this study did not consume high-end luxury fashion brands in the expected way. Traditional luxury-brands are generally considered to expensive for their value and the women show a clear preference of style and design above preference of any specific brand. They do on the other hand use a kind of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1957[18999]) to express their power through their consumption and many of them have strong tendencies of neophilia (Kawamura, 2007) where they constantly are looking for new fads and trends. They also actively use power-coded goods to accentuate power as a part of their work-identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2007), such as blazers and suits. The majority of them are bound by non-formalized dress-codes at work and the choice to follow it can be seen as an example of accentuating the social self and their belonging to their company and department (Sirgy, 1982).

One surprising finding was the importance of cosy home clothes as a tool to not only relax after a long day at work but also to separate their private actual home self, from their social work-identity (Sirgy, 1982) and how they played a key part in a daily ritual of removing the work-identity to reveal the actual home self (McCracken, 1986). Both their cosy clothes and their work clothes are closely bound to their actual self and their social identity respectively in such a way that an interviewee compared wearing cosy clothes in public almost equivalent to being naked, since she did not have her high-heeled shoes, blazer nor glasses to hide behind (Turner, 2012[1980]).

All the women were fully aware of their rational-legal power through their positions at their respective companies (Weber, 1947), yet they valued their charismatic power higher since it was closer connected to their personalities (Weber, 1947). Another form of power that was very important for the women was Kasabov's (2007) information inequality since it was the form of power that was the most connected to their experience and competence. Power-coded-dressing without the adequate expertise and experience did on the other hand lead to embarrassing failure and a sensation of false marketing. Power-coded-dressing gives the opportunity to increase and accentuate one's authority. However without the necessary experience and knowledge you only risked becoming an empty suit.

This thesis implications are that it develops the CCT field slightly by adding a consumer-power perspective into the theoretical discourse. Its practical and social implications help women accentuate their power through, power-coded-dressing.

### 6.1 Limitations and future research

This study focuses on how women relate their professional identity to power and their use of power-dressing from the perspective of female senior managers and executives. It would be interesting to see how power-dressing affects how women in senior positions are viewed by their peers in relation to power and professionalism. Since this study's empirical data gave unclear results if the use of power-coded clothes matched Entwistle's (2000) definition on power-

dressings it would be interesting to see which results a study focusing on purely female executives would have. Considering that the female executive and the higher senior manager were the only of the five respondents who's power-coded dressing matched Entwistle's definition the author believes that a study focusing on female executives would better give support to the similarities of Power-dressing and conspicuous consumption.

Other limitations of this study is that all the interviews where conducted in Swedish and later translated by the author to English, the author even though a confident English speaker is neither a native speaker nor a professional translator and therefore all the nuances from the original text may not reach the reader of this thesis.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Interview guides

#### Swedish interview guide for interview 1.

Namn

Jobtitel/roll

Företag

Moderbolag

ålder

tidigare arbete, företag och/eller sektor

Personal observations:

What is she wearing, accessories. Was bag clear or hidden. Body language, posture.

#### Modekonsumtion frågor

snälla beskriv din personliga still för mig.

Har du några klädförebilder? Isf vem, vilka?

Vilka magasin/tidningar eller bloggar följer du?

Har din klädstil förändrats sedan du började arbeta? Hur då? Varför tror du att den har förändrats?

Köper du kläder endast för kontoret/att ha på jobbet?

Vilka märken använder du?

eg. Hermès, Celine, LV, MiuMiu, Prada, Longchamp, Gucci, Botkier, etc.

Odd Molly, Acne, Filippa K, Dagmar.

Har ni en klädkod på ditt företag? Hur detaljerad är den? Snälla beskriv den.

Brukar du accentuera din feminitet på jobbet?

Föredrar du att sticka ut?...

eller vill du hellre klä dig liknande övriga på kontoret.

#### Interview guide in Swedish for interview 2.

Personal observations:

What is she wearing, accessories. Was bag clear or hidden. Body language, posture.

#### Makt

Hur definierar du makt?

Passar du in på den beskrivningen?

Anser du dig ha makt/ Vara en mäktig person?

Är det viktigt för dig att andra ser dig som mäktig eller att du har kontroll?

Är det någon skillnad om de är dina överordnade, underordnade eller kollegor på samma nivå som du?

Vilket stöd har du från chefer?

Vilket stöd har du från underordnade?



KVINNA/man ratio på jobbet.

Relaterar du makt till en del av din personliga stil? Isf hur?

Vad är din åsikt om power-dressing? Hur känner du dig när du är klädd i kostym (motsv kontorskläder) ?

Feels good, comfortable

Hur använder du lyx? Påverkar det hur du ser på dig själv?

Vad driver dig att välja dina kläder?

### **Interview guide for interview 1, English translation**

name

title / role

business/industry

Parent company

age

previous work, company and / or sector

Personal observations:

What is she wearing, accessories. Was the clear bag or hidden. Body language, posture.

### **Fashion consumption questions**

Please describe your personal style for me.

Do you have any clothing role models ? In that case who, what?

Which magazines / newspapers or blogs do you follow?

Has your fashion style changed since you started working ? How? Why do you think it has changed?

Do you buy clothes for the office / to wear at work?

What brands do you use?

eg. Hermès, Celine, LV, Miu Miu, Prada, Longchamp, Gucci, Botkier, etc.

Odd Molly , Acne, Filippa K, Dagmar.

Do you have a dress code in your company? How detailed is it? Please describe it.

Do you accentuate your femininity at work?

Do you prefer to stand out? ...

or would you rather dress like the rest of the office.

### **Interview guide for interview 2, English translation**

Personal observations:

What is she wearing, accessories. Was the clear bag or hidden. Body language, posture.

### **Power questions**

How do you define power?

Does that definition fit you?

Do you think you have power / Are a powerful person?

Is it important to you that others see you as powerful or in control?

Is there any difference to you if they are your superiors, subordinates or colleagues at the same level as you?

What support have you from managers?

What support have you from subordinates?

FEMALE / male ratio at work.

Do you relate power to part of your personal style? If so how/in which way?

What are your thoughts on power- dressing? How do you feel when you are dressed in a suit (or equivalent office clothes )? Ask follow up question depending on their answers.

eg. Feels good , comfortable, etc. Follow up with in which way?

How do you consume luxury? Does it affect how you feel about yourself ?

What drives you in choosing your clothes?

### **Interviewer reminder**

what way of dressing is demanded by work culture or dress code? Formalized or expressed through corp. culture?

do clothes help you to differentiate yourself from subordinates?

does she chose the clothes as a was to express her identity?

Brands!

### **Appendix B: E-mail request to potential interviewees**

Looking for interviewees for research study in fashion consumption

Hello,

My name is Carolina Ordenez Asenjo and I am a marketing graduate-student at Stockholm University. My research field is fashion consumption and identity creation among female senior managers/female executives.

The study's purpose is to increase knowledge on how female senior managers/female executives use fashion to accentuate their position within their organization. Previous research has only focused on men and their use of fashion to express their pondus and professionalism. I think it's wrong to ignore perspective of female senior managers/female executives and I would love to have your help to show how women use fashion to accentuate your professionalism, competence and pondus.

I will need roughly 60 min of your time for an interview. The interview will be conducted during or after office-hours, depending on when suits you best, the same goes for the interview location. All participants will be anonymous. All personal data will be deleted once the research has ended. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me by e-mail at [caroeoa@gmail.com](mailto:caroeoa@gmail.com) or on 072-1648543.

Every answer is highly valuable and your participation is truly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely Carolina Ordenez Asenjo

### Appendix C: Author's biography

Carolina Ordenez Asenjo was born in Stockholm in 1988. Fashion, beauty, identity and image have been a topic that interested me for many years since high-school. In 2007 she started her studies at Stockholm university where she started her education in Fashion Studies and French to later join Stockholm Business School for her bachelor. She received her bachelor's degree in Business Administration with focus on marketing and management in 2012. Later the same year she joined the Consumer and Business masters-programme, choosing to broaden her studies by taking one semester at Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship. During her studies at Stockholm Business School Carolina has two exchanges at Kedge Business School in Marseille, France, where she studied luxury fashion marketing, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Hong Kong, China.

During her studies Carolina joined several student organisations, such as working for the operative board of Föreningen Ekonomerna in-charge of international relations and chairwoman of the board at Campusbutiken AB. It was during this time that she became more interested in power-dressing and decided to further gain knowledge in that topic through her Qualitative Research Methods Home-exam, that became a pre-study for this thesis.

### Appendix D: Sample of codification method and a sample of a part of a transcription in Swedish

#### Codification pattern

Social Identity.

*Psychological comfort*

*fitting in with others*

Power, Authority and Leadership.

*Power as inspiration to others, changemaker*

*competence, experience*

**RESPECT!**

*responsability/power*

*Power-dressing*

Luxury Brand

Fashion Consumption

dress code

price/cost

femeninity

equality

style/design related to uniqueness

formal clothes

*informal*

*home clothes, public clothes/work clothes*

### Sample part of transcription

snälla beskriv din personliga stil för mig.

**Inte huvudkontorsstilen, isf så skulle jag ha haft mer kostym och sånt, däremot lite classiskt, lite rockigt. Gillar att ha kavaj med jeans.** Kortare kjolar, inte så korta men penkjolar. Och till det så vill jag ha tuffare halsband, rockiga smycken. Jag tycker det är tråkigt att vara mainstream!

ej blå kostym, sånt har jag bara om jag ska träffa någon väldigt högt upp på corporate, lite mer från eruasien, då tänker jag på att klä mig mer strikt och formellt.

Har du några klädförebilder? Isf vem, vilka?

Nja, påverkas av omgivning, **lite kollegor som är yngre och har cool stil. Hade en kvinna på Företaget, hög chef på sin tid, cool udda, hon vågade ta ut svängarna och kunde ha stövlar med kofärgs skinn, mc brud och hon satt högt upp på Företaget. Men det var så roligt för hon började här på huvudkontoret ett tag och då blev hon så tantig i sin klädsen, så jag blev aldelles besviken på henne. Man behöver ju inte förändra hela sig själv trots att man gör karriär och kommer upp i företaget! Hon slutade vara min förebild då.**

Kommentar till ovan paragraph: Cool, rock, rolemodel, trendsetter

**Stockholm Business School**

Stockholm University  
SE-106 91 Stockholm  
Tel: 08 – 16 20 00  
[www.sbs.su.se](http://www.sbs.su.se)

