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# A Study of the Perfect Suit for Young Men in Hong Kong in Terms of Aesthetics, Comfort and Functionality

**Travis W. Li, Joe S. Au and Raymond W. Au**  
*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China*

**ABSTRACT** The suit is standard formal menswear traditionally; almost all businessmen wear suits to work every day. In Hong Kong, some retail shops only offer a list of similar suit styles to customers. However, the suit designs currently available might not be able to cope with the needs of young male customers. Young men in Hong Kong seek out styles that look good and they have their own preferences on suit design, which might be different from other age groups; hence, there is a strong market niche for this age group. The aim of this research was to understand the needs of young men aged from eighteen

**to thirty-two with regard to a perfect menswear suit and recommend a desirable suit design for them. Forty-seven young men and twenty-seven young women were invited to complete the questionnaire relating to the issues of creating a perfect suit for young men in Hong Kong in terms of aesthetics, comfort and functionality, and ten male respondents from the questionnaire survey were invited to the wearing trials. Finally, a menswear suit was designed according to the findings of the questionnaire survey and wearing trials.**

KEYWORDS: menswear, suit, aesthetics, fitting, functionality, Hong Kong

### **Introduction**



The suit is a traditional item of menswear all over the world. Many men wear a suit to work or to attend formal occasions, and about 90% or more of adult men wear a suit as business wear. Among these, ready-made suit users account for about 81% (Momota and Makabe, 1998). It is essential that well-designed ready-made suits are available; however, existing suit designs sold in Hong Kong's menswear shops may not be able to cope with the needs of customers of all ages. It is also unreasonable to have a series of suit designs for customers in all categories. Some young men may find there are few options to choose from; therefore, it is necessary to investigate what the most appropriate suit for this category of customer is.

In order to judge the overall quality of a suit, it is possible to conclude that there are three key aspects: aesthetics, comfort and functionality. However, there is always a trade-off between these three aspects. If comfort and mobility need to be maximized, the fashion designer has to sacrifice the design and styling of the suit. Therefore, there is a need to create a careful balance between these three aspects and produce a desirable design with maximum comfort and functionality. This research was aimed at creating a newly designed suit for young men aged between eighteen and thirty-two in Hong Kong. The specific objectives were to: (1) study the aesthetics, comfort and functionality of a menswear suit, (2) investigate the buying habits and preferences for menswear suits, (3) recognize the attributes respondents look for in selecting their ideal suit and (4) understand their preferences on design details of a menswear suit jacket and trousers.

By understanding their characteristics, needs and preferences through questionnaire surveys and wearing trials, the recommended suit design for young men in Hong Kong was developed. The result of this project is valuable in adding new knowledge with regard to

designing a suit in terms of aesthetics, comfort and functionality for the young male in Hong Kong, and illustrates the Hong Kong customers' preferences and needs in suit design.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Fashion Product Attributes***

To generate a good design that is acceptable to the majority of the targeted group, it was crucial to know what they wanted and what they needed from the product. Skgkao (1994) reported that apparel attributes could be grouped into six basic clusters for Japanese consumers: (1) workmanship in sewing, (2) physiological comfort, (3) usefulness, (4) physical and chemical properties, (5) suitability to individual preference and (6) fashionability or brand. Abraham-Murali and Littrell (1995) pointed out that the important attributes of apparel included fabric and garment construction; care, value and style; and product and service. Zhang *et al* (2002) investigated the relative importance of casual wear attributes to Chinese people; fit was the most important attribute and the customer sought the best fit when buying a new garment – if fit was significant for casual wear, it should probably be an influence in formalwear. It was interesting to see that comfort and style were almost equally important to consumers, as in a sense they represented the physical and psychological comfort derived from apparel as supported by Branson and Sweeney's (1991) model of clothing. 'This model defines the phenomenon of clothing comfort as a state of satisfaction indicating physiological, social psychological, and physical balance among a person, his/her clothing and his/her environment' (Chattaraman and Rudd, 2006).

Appearance and function were the two most important criteria in the purchasing decision of casual wear. In other words, people wanted to look good and feel good. Symbolism and price were of less concern (Zhang *et al*, 2002); 'Men's clothing practices are an important and pervasive form of appearance management that reflects the continued monitoring of their visual selves' (Frith and Gleeson, 2004). Indeed, Taylor (2002) conducted a study about the fashion buying criteria of X generation consumers in Hong Kong and found that fit, personal preference and design were the three most important factors considered when buying fashionable clothing.

### ***Suit Aesthetics***

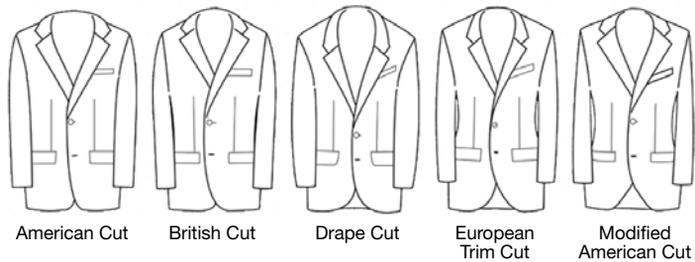
The menswear suit jacket is always matched with trousers, and is styled conservatively. In a traditional menswear suit design, Boswell (1993) stated that the buttons of suits were usually subtle and matching in colour, the conservative pockets were usually in the jetted pocket style and fabric chosen was weight-appropriate for both jacket and trousers. The cut determined the proportion and silhouette of the garment. Classic business suits were normally navy blue, grey, charcoal or black in colour; however, some modern

colour palettes such as brown and dark green had been introduced, but were not widely accepted by business professionals. Besides these solid colours, patterned elements such as stripes and checks have also been commonly adapted.

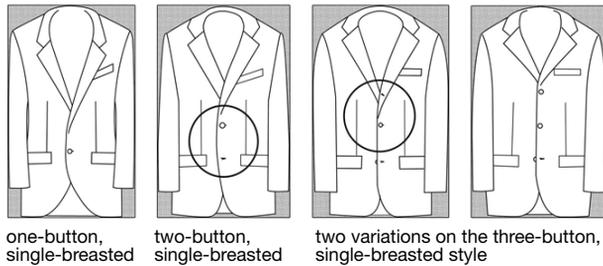
### Design of Jacket as Adopted from Boswell (1993)

There were five types of cut, as shown in Figure 1, which were known as the American cut, British cut, drape cut, European trim cut and modified American cut. Buttons could be arranged with one, two or three buttons on the front (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1**  
Various styles of cutting.



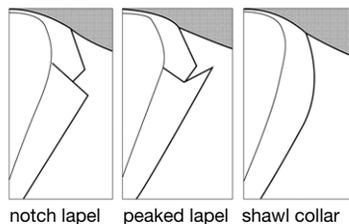
**Figure 2**  
Various designs of button arrangement.



The lapel was a distinctive design detail of the suit; various designs of lapels gave variations in styles. Figure 3 shows the three types of lapels, which include notch lapel, peaked lapel and shawl collar.

In order to create a silhouette and fit for the body, there were commonly two vertical darts in the classic suit design. Additionally, two main types of pocket design were commonly adopted on suits, which were the jetted and patch pocket. More variations of pocket

**Figure 3**  
Various lapel designs.



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## **Appendix I Questionnaire for Male Respondents.**

### **Part 1**

#### **General Concept of Suit**

1. How often do you wear a suit?  
( ) every day                      ( ) few days a week    ( ) few days a month  
( ) on formal occasions    ( ) rarely                      ( ) never
2. Do you think every man should own at least one set of suit?  
(Yes/No, why?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever found that it was difficult to buy your best suit?  
(Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4a. How many suits do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4b. Any tailor-made suits? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which one do you prefer between tailor-made suit and ready-to-wear suit? And why?

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6. Do you think the same design of suit in a shop can fit most male customers of different age ranges? (Yes/No)\_\_\_\_\_

7. Which famous brands of suit you will always think of?

- ( ) Giorgio Armani      ( ) Hugo Boss      ( ) Ermenigildo Zegna  
 ( ) Dior Homme      ( ) others\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your favourite colour for a suit?

- A**  **BLACK**  
**B**  **DARK BLUE**  
**C**  **CHARCOAL**  
**D**  **GREY**  
**E** **OTHERS**

9a. What are your criteria for selecting a suit? Please rank 1 to 5.

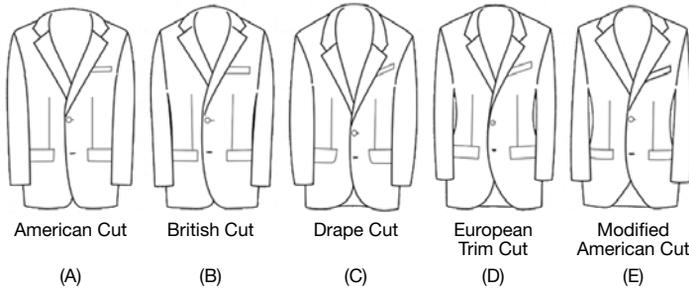
- ( ) aesthetic      ( ) fit      ( ) comfort      ( ) brand  
 ( ) price      ( ) quality      ( ) workmanship      ( ) trends

9b. According to the previous question, please select the most important attribute among the three selected criteria?

- ( ) aesthetic      ( ) fit      ( ) comfort      ( ) brand  
 ( ) price      ( ) quality      ( ) workmanship      ( ) trends

**Silhouettes**

10a. Which type of cutting do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



10b. Which brand's cutting do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) Dior Homme  
 (Trendy slim fashion style)



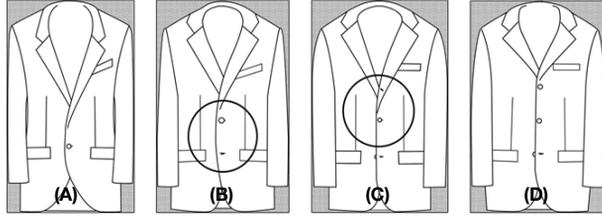
(B) Giorgio Armani  
 (Traditional Italian cut)



(C) Hugo boss  
 (American style)

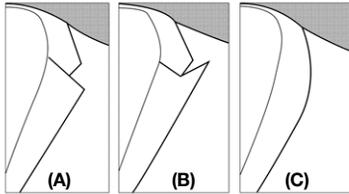
**Details of Jacket**

11. Which arrangement of buttons do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



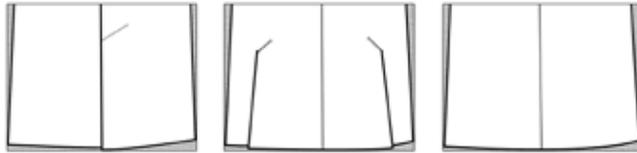
(A) one-button, single-breasted      (B) two-button, single-breasted      (C) and (D) two variations on the three-button, single-breasted style

12. Which type of lapel do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



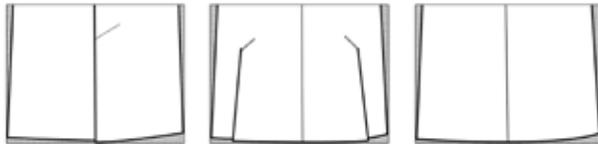
(A) notch lapel      (B) peaked lapel      (C) shawl collar

13. Which type of vent do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) centre vent      (B) side vent      (C) without vent

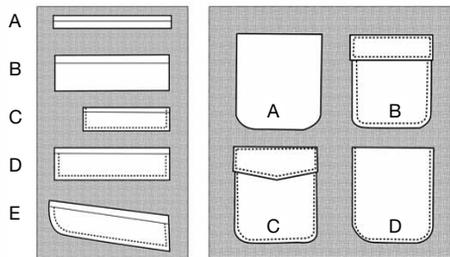
14. Which type of shoulder treatment do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) rope shoulder      (B) padded shoulder      (C) natural shoulder      (D) square shoulder

15. Do you prefer jacket between with lining or without lining? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Which design of pockets do you prefer?



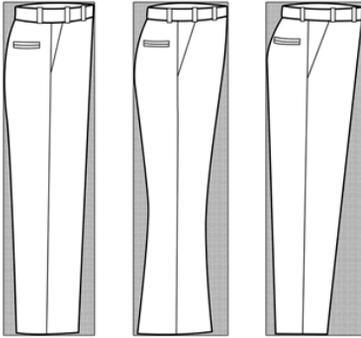
besom pockets      patch pockets

Besom or patch pocket? \_\_\_\_\_, which style do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Any discomfort or problem while wearing your jacket?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

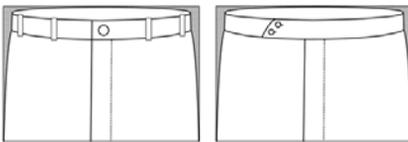
**Details of Trousers**

18. Which silhouette or cut do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) straight leg      (B) flared leg      (C) pegged leg

19. Which waistband design do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



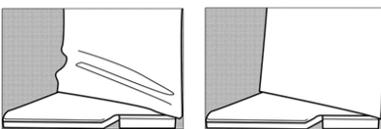
(A) with belt-loops      (B) without belt-loops

20. Which front design do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) plain front      (B) with one pleat      (C) with two pleats

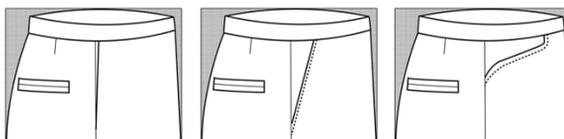
21. Which hem treatment do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) with crease      (B) without crease

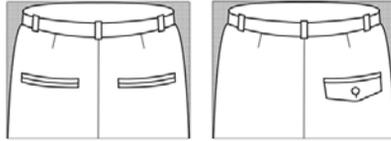
22. Which pocket design do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_

Side pocket



(A) on-seam pocket      (B) quarter-top pocket      (C) western pocket

23. Back pocket  
Which pocket design do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_



(A) notch lapel

(B) peaked lapel

24. Any discomfort or problem while wearing your trousers?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2**  
**Personal Information**

25. How old are you?  
 18-22                       23-27                       28-32
26. What is your weight (kg)?  
 below 50                       50 to 55                       55 to 60  
 60 to 65                       65 to 70                       70 or above
27. What is your height (cm)?  
 below 165                       166 to 170                       171 to 175  
 176 to 180                       181 to 185                       above 185
28. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_