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ABERDEEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
THE ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

The Logic of Practice –
Understanding the Chinese Newly Rich
Consumers' Status Consumption in Luxury Fashion
Clothes

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[August 2017]

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Abstract

Chinese newly rich consumers have gained substantial power in the luxury sector through their conspicuous consumption. Chinese consumers' lack of cultural capital and inexperience in the purchase and use of material commodities in the luxury consumption field has led many to associate their conspicuous consumption with pecuniary display of their newly acquired economic capital. Scholars have either used cultural globalisation theory to suggest that the Chinese consumers are embracing and emulating Western material culture, or have used Chinese face theory to explain their conspicuous consumption in terms of the social norms associated with Chinese family kinship and peer group pressure. This study attempts to look beyond both these assumptions, and for the first time seek a detailed and holistic understanding of Chinese newly rich consumers' status consumption practices, particularly the relationships between personal taste and the social structure and cultural forces shaping individual taste in the consumption field struggle. Hence, the research question is "What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption?"

Bourdieu's field analysis has been undertaken in order to enable a new understanding of Chinese newly rich consumers' luxury consumption practices. The key concepts; cultural capital, habitus, and fields (Doxa and Illusio), have been discussed with respect to Chinese social conditions. Using luxury fashion as a potent example of conspicuous consumption, a qualitative study has been conducted among ten carefully selected Chinese newly rich consumers (Generation 1) residents of Beijing. Data analysis has shown that informants used two distinctive status consumption practices, namely, the materialist status consumption practice, and the cultural idealist status consumption practice (Holt, 1998), which are aligned with their social trajectory route, volume and the composition of their cultural capital. Informants' cultural idealist status consumption practice indicated two important forms of cultural capital as social distinction: embodied cultural capital and 'deterritorialized cultural capital' (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). The embodied cultural capital has been accrued through early socialization, centered on intellectual cultivation and nonmaterialistic daily lives, whereas the 'deterritorialized cultural capital' has been accrued in a similar fashion to

their Turkish high cultural capital (HCC) counterparts (Üstüner & Holt, 2010), through engagement with the West, despite only having this contact during adulthood, unlike the Turkish HCC. These two forms of cultural capital are centered on non-materialistic aesthetic driven consumption practices, which are similar to Bourdieu's (1984) and Holt's (1998) HCC consumers' cultural idealist consumption practices. Thus, the thesis answers calls for more detailed analyses of consumption practices in Less Industrialised Countries. In doing so it both confirms the suitability of Bourdieu for the study of consumption practices in an Eastern context and provides new insights into the Chinese newly rich group's consumption practices in the field of luxury fashion.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Rise in the Luxury Consumption of Chinese Consumers

According to a recent study (Xiu et al., 2014), since Deng's open-door policy which welcomed foreign business investments in China by Highly Industrialised Countries (HIC) in 1978, China's GDP volume had increased 22.5 times by 2012 and its growth rate was about 9.8% year on year during this period; In 2010 China surpassed Japan to become the world's second largest economy. At the same time, the income of the Chinese people has doubled or even quadrupled every 10 years. This is perhaps not surprising given that in 2013 China boasted more than 1.3 million households with "assets under management" worth at least \$1 million, ranking China behind only the United States and Japan for the number of such millionaire households (Qin, 2013). This rising income has led to an increase in living standards and demographic changes including rising disposable income, urban living, better education, and postponed life stages which have been considered to be common features of rapid industrialisation and echo those witnessed in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s, and South Korea and Taiwan in the 1980s (Astmon & Magni, 2012).

These changes have had a profound effect on the retail sector in China. According to the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), China has become the world's second largest retail market after the United States and the total retail sales of consumer goods doubled to 20.7 trillion US\$ in 2012 from 10.7 trillion in 2008 (Fung Business Intelligence 2012). China is now also the world's largest luxury market, accounting for 47 per cent of luxury retailers' global revenue with some \$102 billion spent on high-end goods by Chinese consumers in 2013 (Chang 2014, Zhu 2013). The economic downturn since 2008 in the U.S. and Europe has made many large international retail companies realise that they need Chinese consumers to power their growth (Saporito & Ramzy, 2011). Many global brands such as Pepsi, Volkswagen, Motorola, Novartis (Swiss pharmaceutical company), and Prada, not only have plans

in place to expand their presence in China (Wu, 2011), but also have made long-term investments in the country, as they realise the potential importance of the consumption power the Chinese consumers hold at present and in the future.

The growth in Chinese luxury consumption has been linked by many commentators to “showing off” through status consumption. Buckley (1999, p.209) notes that mentioning “*the new rich*” in urban China is likely to ‘*evoke an image of ostentatious wealth and fast-talking entrepreneurs*’; while mentioning their “*culture*” or “*cultural constructions*” is likely to “*bring to mind the garish status symbols favoured by them*”. Ahmad (2009) points out that “*the newly wealthy everywhere love to flaunt their money, but China’s rich are even more shameless than most: cars are not a means of locomotion for the affluent Chinese, they are a symbol of success, status and the naked power of the internal combustion engine over the bicycle or pedestrian*”.

This view of money flaunting behaviour is also shared by the Chinese public, but they associate it with unrefined consumption tastes. Some new terms have evolved throughout the economic reform, which do not only highlight the feature of their wealth, but also question their taste, such as *Baofahu* (暴发户), literally “break-out household,” which pinpoints the phenomenon of the suddenly rich (This thesis will refer to them as the Suddenly Rich Group (SRG)). Most recently, derived from *fuhao* (富豪), the term *tuhao* (土豪) translated as “local tyrant” has become a hit on social media as it precisely mocks the taste of China’s newly rich. “*The tu draws on its colloquial use as a synonym for unrefined or vulgar, and hao picks up a new tone from the Chinese phrase fuhao (富豪), which means rich and powerful. Thus, in a single stroke, tuhao links the crass nouveau riche benefiting from Communist rule in modern China with the cruel feudal landlords of pre-revolutionary China whom the Communists promised to wipe out generations ago.*” (Qin, 2013).

In consumer research, luxury consumption has long been interpreted as a means to express social difference and social distinctions and consumers may consume in order to parade their social class status (Veblen 1899, Simmel 1904, Bourdieu 1984). The earliest work studying conspicuous consumption is Veblen (1899, p.73) who defines conspicuous consumption as ‘*all consumption in excess of the subsistence minimum*’. In his *Theory of Leisure Class* (1899/1994), Veblen criticizes the lifestyles of the

upper classes using ostentatious consumption and waste as symbols of wealth and social status. In Veblen's view, consuming and displaying wealth is essential for class distinction. There are three principles responsible for the emergence and the dynamic of fashion and the achievement of social distinction: *conspicuous waste*; *conspicuous leisure*, and *up to date* fashion styles (Barnard 1996, p.108). Hence, conspicuous consumption refers to the competitive and extravagant consumption practices and leisure activities that aim to indicate membership of a superior social class. Veblen theorizes that conspicuous consumption is used by the newly emerged Nouveau Riche social class as a result of accumulation of capital wealth during the second industrial revolution. For Veblen, pecuniary display confers not only "*invidious distinction*", but also honour, prestige, and esteem within the community (Page 1992, p.83) by delineating the upper-class struggles for social distinction which are then imitated by the lower classes.

Veblen's (1899/1994) theory of conspicuous consumption suggests that consumption preference is determined by economic factors in relation to the positions of an individual in the social hierarchy. In other words, the practice of distinction in conspicuous consumption is bound to the process of the construction of social identity, where the subject is perceived equivalent to his or her expressed status and tastes. Budgeon (2003) points out the importance of the embodied identity incorporating the mind and the body.

In terms of the world system theory, China is categorised as one of the semi-periphery countries, meaning that it is seen as less industrialized than the capitalised countries such as the U.S, and many European countries (Wallerstein, 2011). The economic reform which began in 1978 has gradually increased China's engagement with the HICs and gained the economic benefits of globalisation. Chinese newly rich consumers also benefit from globalisation, as they can consume the same products as their Western counterparts. Lin (2009) notes that the Chinese consumers are keen to learn consumption tastes and lifestyles from more advanced consumer societies, and Croll (2006) suggests that Chinese consumers are using luxury consumption as a means to 'catch up' with the rest of the world. For example, Fussell (1992) published a book discussing the superficiality of the middle class in America by detailing their

lifestyles and consumption habits. Ironically, this book was published in Chinese in 1998 and became so popular that it was considered to be a Bible on how to demonstrate Western taste by many Chinese. As a result, it has been reprinted many times.

It is evident that Chinese consumers are prone to consuming iconic international brands, but they also lack experience in consuming luxury goods. Magni and Poh, (2013) describe Chinese consumers as focussing more on the functional attributes of most products, but demonstrating a lack of emotional connection to the items they buy due to being new to the market. Atsmon and Dixit (2009) note that they are less knowledgeable about luxury brands, and more trusting of foreign brands. In a report (2008) on the luxury apparel market in China by the Li & Fung Research Centre, the characteristics of Chinese conspicuous consumption behaviour were linked to its Less Industrialised Country (LIC) status and the new consumers' nativities in consumption. It was stated that:

“Compared to many developed economies, China’s luxury market is not yet mature. Chinese luxury consumers tend to be less sophisticated and less brand-savvy; and many of them have a typical “show-off” attitude towards luxury purchase. Strongly influenced by “face”, Chinese luxury consumers want to be recognized. Designer labels that are highly recognizable by the public such as Louis Vuitton or Gucci are often regarded as must-haves by first-time luxury buyers. Furthermore, luxury items with highly visible features such as prominent logos, though seldom do well outside China, are often the bestsellers in the country...” (p.3)

Central to consumer research is the aim of discovering meaningful actions taken by consumers as a way to construct their social identities and exploring the subtle nuances of consumption behaviours driven by totally different mental states, ideology, and habitus (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010). In particular, this study is interested in exploring how Chinese newly rich consumers use luxury fashion clothes to express their social status and their efforts to achieve social distinction through luxury consumption with their newly found wealth.

Consumers with incomes around US\$ 17,000 (£10,600) to US\$60,000 (£37,000) have been identified as the prime Chinese consumer groups stimulating rapid growth in

luxury-goods consumption across a wide range of consumer goods from luxury cars to fashion clothes. However, despite their consumption power in the luxury sector (Cai 2005 p.778, Chen 2002 p.404, Xiao 2003 p.62), they are in fact “*lying above ordinary working people but still not the richest*” (Cartier 2013, p.23). This is the consumer group that this research is interested in studying, as they have purchasing power sufficient to participate effectively in luxury consumption, but are neither the top social elites, nor the mass market consumers.

In order to understand the status consumption practices of the Chinese newly rich, this study will need to gather detailed, first-hand accounts of their consumption experiences, their motivations and the meanings that they attach to their own purchases and those of their peers. In order to do this, a qualitative research approach will be required which privileges discussion and reflection. This is detailed in Chapter Three. In the tradition of sociological scholars studying consumption practices (notably Holt 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010) these data will be examined using Bourdieu’s theory of distinction (1984) to allow the structured and systematic examination of the logic of their “taste as practice” (Holt 1998, p.4) for the first time. Bourdieu’s work, and the application of it to analyze informants’ consumption practices is presented in Chapter Five.

1.2 Fashion Clothes as an Object of Study

For the purpose of empirical investigation, the problem emerges in terms of how to identify a legitimate product that should carry aesthetic expression with a wider appeal to consumers of all categories, contain rich symbolic individual and social meanings, and signify social boundaries and justification of their newly found social positions. Previously, ‘highbrow’ cultural objects were the major focus of consumption pattern studies (Peterson 1992, Peterson & Simkus 1992, Peterson & Kern 1996). Later, a constellation of everyday consumption objects and activities were studied among American middle class and Turkish upper middle-class consumers (Holt 1997 & 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010). The results show that a whole array of different forms of knowledge, preferences, and participation in cultural activities are associated with consumer groups’ formation and institutionalised social exclusion. This demonstrates that the consumption of popular culture objects were not

'commercial menace' (Gans 1999, p.xi), but do express aesthetics and reflect differences in consumption practices and habitus between social groups.

The implication for choosing objects of study also requires a consideration of China's specific circumstances and the characteristics of consumers: China ruled under Mao was restricted not only in material resources, but also in a lack of cultural activities in consuming cultural artefacts like literature, arts, and music. As a result, Chinese newly rich consumers are newer to the consumer market in comparison to their Western counterparts: their emotional connections towards many products are weaker, and their emphasis on functional and pragmatic attributes are stronger, their habitus of taste and knowledge towards these specific products and genres are less developed (Magni & Poh, 2013, Atsmon & Dixit 2009). Therefore, a constellation of cultural objects and activities may not be well developed and prominent. After some careful evaluation and consideration of different possibilities, this study determined to use luxury fashion clothes and accessories, not a single object, but a constellation of consumption objects under one product category, as an object of study. The reasons which underpin this decision are laid out in the paragraphs that follow:

First of all, for consumer research, it has long been believed that consumption serves as "*a consequential site of reproduction of social class boundaries*" (Holt 1998, p.1) that unites members of a social class and demarcates classes from one another (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899/1994, Bourdieu 1984). Fashion consumption in particular is a potential site of status evaluation and assessment resulting from the visual cues luxury fashion consumption could provide for social distinction and exclusion. Scholars (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899/1994) studying fashion believed that fashion consumption presents some significance of social meanings in relation to social status, prestige, and honour. Bourdieu (1984) in particular rejects the idea of individual taste (consumption preference) that is an innate and individualistic choice of the human intellect, but sees it as socially constructed and as unintentionally revealing one's social class inheritance.

Secondly, fashion requires a certain type of society with a focus on prestige (Simmel 1904, Blumer 1969), so agents have some degree of shared understanding in terms of

the ranking of the relative status products and demeanours (Dazlo, 2011). Research has well established Chinese consumers' increasing preference for and expenditure on Western luxury brands (Kaigler-Walker & Gilbert 2009, O'Cass & Choy 2008, Wu & Delong 2006). A large number of statistics have also indicated Chinese newly rich consumers' increased brand awareness and conspicuous consumption tendencies in international luxury brands. According to official figures by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS), apparel sales grew 24.2% year-on-year to reach 795.5 billion Yuan in 2011. Urban households on average spent 10.7% of their annual income on clothing. Chinese consumers aged 26-35 spend the most on clothing and women spend more than men (Li & Fu Research Centre, 2012). Wuthnow et al. (1984) argue that the more a society focuses on economic status differences, the more emphasis it will place on symbolic goods that mark those differences. Historically, Mao's China was egalitarian society promoting the classless society and people dressed in similar styles and plain colours, which did not emphasis social difference, but collective social identity. Deng's policy centred on economic growth and the emphasis on economic incentives has drawn people's attention to the social difference. The imported luxury fashion brands provide them with ample choices to express social prestige.

Thirdly, fashion clothes accommodate diverse meanings and attributes. According to an online dictionary (dictionary.reference.com) fashion is the prevailing style or custom, as in dress or behaviour. French fashion designer Coco Chanel once said, "*fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.*" (Madsen 1991, p.124). The variety of fashion styles and brands allow individuals to make choices and decisions on the creation of a meaningful self-identity. "*Dress is a fundamental element in ... the moment of interaction when the actor defines which person she wishes to be, freely opts for one of her "multiple self-identifications", or rather, decides which self-identification to favor in that particular situation*" (Bovone, 2003, p. 208). Hence, fashion clothes are the very form that represents individual self and identifies who s/he is among others (Sproles, 1981); an inevitable linkage to one's past, present and future (Barnim & Guy 2001, Woodward 2007, Gell 1998, Goffman 1971); and a communication vehicle for mood or feelings, as well as

hopes, values, and beliefs (Barnard, 2002). This aspect of fashion consumption allows informants to express localised meanings.

Finally, fashion, as a source of novelty, is all about change and the constant unravelling of the new and the display of inventive styles, as Blumer (1969) notes, “*fashion is always modern; it always seeks to keep abreast of the time.*” Fashion in this sense is applied to systems that produce new styles of clothing and attempt to make them desirable to the public (Barthes, 1990). Consumption choices enticed by constant style innovations and changes rely on individual tastes and their judgment of taste. Fashion consumption is inevitably associated with individual taste and aesthetic preference relevant to one’s immediate situation on a daily basis (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). This process of aesthetic appreciation and rejection of certain styles allows individuals to express their diverse repertoires of taste and meaningful justifications of purchases relevant to their immediate living conditions and lifestyle.

Despite constant and continuous efforts made to understand sartorial culture in the West (e.g. Barthes 1990, Veblen 1899/1994, Simmel 1904, Bourdieu 1984), little research attention has been paid to dress and fashion culture in China (Hartley & Montgomery 2009). In stark contrast to the lack of understanding of sartorial culture, are the increases in apparel sales, in particular the luxury sector consumed by newly rich consumers. In response to Chinese consumers’ increasing consumption power, European fashion brands such as Marks & Spencer, Gap, H&M, and Zara are putting expansion plans in place for this market (Li & Fu Research Centre, 2012). International luxury fashion brands like Gucci (with 58 stores in China), Louis Vuitton (42 stores), Burberry (62 stores), Prada (18 stores), Nike, and Adidas have veered towards lower tier cities after having established their presence in tier 1 cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (Fung Business Intelligence Centre, 2013).

In summary, fashion has been chosen as the object of study because fashion clothes consumption is a material culture containing both functional values and symbolic values which consumers hold relevant to social identity, class, and lifestyles (Crane and Bovone, 2006). Fashion clothes are not only associated with functional usage by the wearer, but also are almost inevitably associated with a system of symbolic

signification (Barthes, 1990); reveal a versatile expression of an individual consumer's social identity (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899/1994, Blumer 1969), taste, life conditions and social positions (Bourdieu, 1986); as well as an individual interpretation of cultural meanings (Thompson & Haytko, 1997) that requires both aesthetic appreciation (cultural capital) and economic capital to be consumed properly (Bourdieu 1984, Solomon 1983, Levy 1959, Holt 1998). The rich meanings and symbolic representations of fashion clothes may allow Chinese informants who are inexperienced in cultural consumption in material goods to express their aesthetic views in relation to their perceived social positions.

This study sees fashion representing innovation and change in styles of clothes and is associated with a wide range of sociological issues, social stratification and social status. For the purpose of this study, fashion clothes and accessories (handbags, shoes, scarves, pens, underwear, etc.) are considered as material cultural objects that reflect an up-to-date trend requiring consumers' aesthetic appreciation to keep up-to-date, to wear inventively, and to communicate with others. This allows the study to focus attention on the fashion consumers who consume fashion clothes as daily practices for both functional and social purposes.

In conclusion, this study addresses the gap in knowledge about the social phenomenon of Chinese newly rich consumers' conspicuous consumption and undertakes a detailed examination of their status consumption practices. In addition, it answers calls to extend the empirical study of status consumption to cultures with collectivist forms of identity (Holt, 1998) and the new consumer classes in other semi-periphery countries (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). The thesis is driven by the research question: **What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption?**

1.3 Terminology

Throughout this thesis, a number of terms have been adopted and are used in specific ways. What follows is a list of key terms and their meanings in the context of this study.

- ❖ Fashion brand: because of China's diversity and the availability of clothing products in the market, the concepts of fashion and brands are also difficult to define. In other words, there are so many so-called brands that have a presence in China's market, including well-known international brands, national brands, local brands, and even fake brands. As the emphasis of this research is on the construction of self-concept, particular brand choice is considered as unimportant; rather, the meaning behind the brand choice is the key factor. Hence, the researcher will not stress the consumption of any specific brands or the level of brand while recruiting interview participants. Consequently, fashion brand as a general term used in this research project is simply determined by the interview participant's own brand knowledge. Branded fashion clothes in this research is a general term regarding the international and national stylish clothes with well-known names which are sold in department stores.
- ❖ Fashion: Fashion is "...the systematic encryption, transmission, and interpretation of social meaning." (Solomon, 1985). In relation to fashion consumption, Midgley & Wills (1979) defined fashion quite broadly as '*the current mode of consumption behaviour, or in other words the style or styles being worn at the time in question by consumers of clothing.*' For the purpose of this research, fashion refers to the highly visible styles of clothing, accessories, and shoes, that can be found in most recent printed fashion magazines and other mass media or a trendy style led by celebrities. Instead of concentrating on clothing alone, this study stresses the 'total look' of that style and the impact on each individual consumer is discussed. Fashion in this study is associated with clothing and accessories with modern styles and it extends beyond the primary functions of protection or modesty.

- ❖ Style: A distinctive characteristic or way of expression; style in clothes describes the lines that distinguish one form or shape from another (Kefgen & Touchie-Specht, 1986)
- ❖ Aesthetics by definition are linked to the science of perception and involves those aspects that are both cognitive and affect-based, that might be described as knowing and liking (Minshall, 1994).

1.4 Overview

The thesis contains six chapters.

Chapter One - Introduction

Chapter one explores the issues related to Chinese conspicuous consumption and briefly outlines the main theories that have been used to explain Chinese conspicuous consumption: Chinese face consumption, materialism and the impact of globalisation are introduced. The reasons for adopting fashion clothes as an object of study are presented.

Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Conspicuous consumption has always been related to social class distinctions, but in China, it has additional meanings related to 'face', social group expectations and family connections. In global cultural theory, it is suggested that the West enjoys socio-cultural domination over less industrialised countries (LIC), leading to LIC emulation of Western tastes and adoption of Western brands. By adopting Bourdieu's cultural practice theory in a Chinese context, some key political policies that place emphasis on specific capitals at historical times are reviewed and discussed to highlight China's social transformation.

Chapter Three - Research Methodology

The qualitative research method adopted in this research is justified in Chapter three. A series of empirical issues and techniques used in data collection and analysis are also discussed. Two steps are taken in data interpretation: individual, within case examination and collective, across case data interpretation. The detailed fashion discourses found within each individual case can be found in full in Appendix II.

Chapter Four – History and Context of China’s Fashion System

Chapter four provides background context in terms of the evolvement of the Chinese fashion system which has been intertwined with China’s economic and political developments.

Chapter Five – Data Analysis and Discussion

Building on the within case analysis presented in Appendix II, this chapter analyses interviewees’ fashion discourse in a collective manner, using across case analysis. Interviewees’ shared tastes and consumption practices are highlighted and examined based on Bourdieu’s key concepts: cultural capital (taste and consumption practice), habitus, field, Doxa, and Illusio. Throughout the analysis, reference is made to how these findings compare with extant literature.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

The concluding chapter provides a summary of the issues raised in the study which are relevant to key pieces of previous research, in particular Bourdieu (1984), Holt (1989), and Üstüner & Holt (2010). Contributions, limitations and implications for future research are suggested.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Outline

Conspicuous consumption is normally associated with status consumption and materialism. Globalisation research suggests a trickle-down theory in which products from HICs conveying cultural ideals and status symbols are ‘passed down’ to LICs. Chinese face value studies suggest that Chinese family kinship and peer group pressures may exacerbate luxury consumption. This study believes that Bourdieu’s cultural practice theory can offer some insights to help understand Chinese newly rich consumers’ luxury consumption practices. Three key concepts; cultural capital, habitus, and fields (Doxa and Illusio), are discussed here with respect to Chinese social conditions.

2.2 Conspicuous Consumption

2.2.1 Definition of and Motivation for Conspicuous Consumption

Various theoretical explanations of the motives driving overt displays of wealth exist from sociological, economic, and marketing disciplines. From sociological and economic viewpoints, pecuniary behaviour associated with social factors is the unfortunate result of capitalism (Marx 1867, Veblen 1899). Marx (1867) believes that conspicuous behaviour is the result of ‘*commodity fetishism*’ whereby goods are erroneously believed to possess prestige value and hence confer respect, authority, and deference to those who acquire such objects of status (Page 1992, p.84). At a micro level, some believe that the desire to consume conspicuously is derived from within us as human and is "*the most powerful of human passions*" (Marshall 1890, p. 73). Rae (1905) suggests that it is a human-innate desire to be self-indulgent in order to express vanity.

Modern social studies suggest that showing pecuniary strength is one way of claiming status advantages (McCracken 1988, Williams 1982, McKendrick et al. 1982). Status is the stratification of social groups according to honour or prestige accorded by others (Weber, 1946). In this view, conspicuous consumption is a status game that

assists the status group to provide biased status beliefs as they are better in the evaluation of competence, and therefore write group differences such as class based lifestyle into organisational structures of power and resources (Ridgeway, 2014).

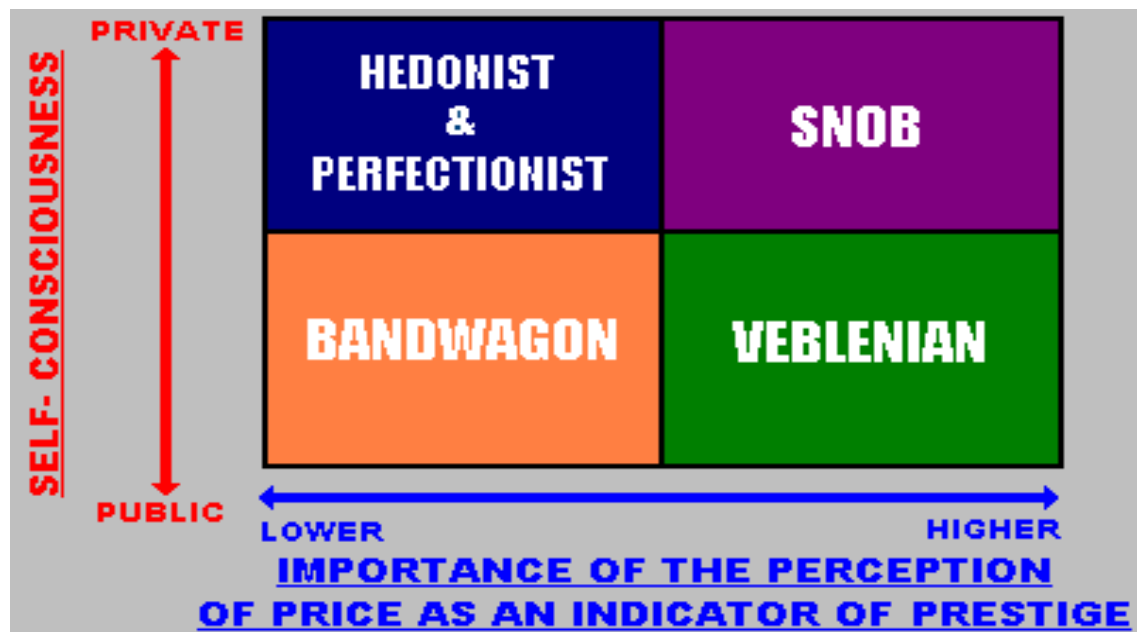
Status consumption involves a tendency to value status and to consume goods and services that provide status to the individual (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Driven by different luxury consumption benefits and effects, consumers develop prestige meanings for brands and their luxury consumption motivations and behaviours differ. More importantly, the definition and interpretation of prestige may vary depending on consumers' socioeconomic background and perceptions. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) explain luxury consumption according to the effects that it generates (see **Figure 2-1**) as follows:

1. *The Veblen effect*: perceived conspicuous value. Veblen consumers attach greater importance to price as an indicator of prestige, because their primary objective is to impress others and signal status. The invidious comparison leads to pecuniary emulation, an act of status signalling seeking to improve status or drawing approval from higher ranked individuals or groups. In this case, conspicuous consumption represents symbolic status desires or status aspirations to become a certain type of person (Bocock 1993, Collins 1992, Kellner 1992). Campbell (1987) argues that the reference group for conspicuous consumption-driven individuals is not their own but a higher stratum; most people strive to maintain their consumption in line with that of a desirable group and avoid that of others.
2. *The snob effect*: perceived unique value. Snob consumers perceive price as an indicator of exclusivity, and avoid using popular brands to experiment with inner-directed consumption. Mason (1981, p.128) develops a theory of the 'snob' effect which describes that people preoccupied with social status reject products that are perceived to be possessed by the common populace. Thus, the 'snob' consumer seeks to purchase products which have limited availability. This type of exclusive non-conformity consumption guarantees a measure of social prestige, as Solomon (1994, p.570) states that "*items that are limited supply have high value, while*

those readily available are less desirable. Rare items command respect and prestige”.

3. *The bandwagon effect*: perceived social value. The bandwagon effect, the antecedent of the snob effect, refers to when people’s demand for a commodity is increased due to particular attributes of a brand that they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable, stylish; or to be ‘one of the boys’ (Leibenstein 1950, p.189) or ‘keeping up with the Joneses’. This type of consumer normally follows the snob consumer and desires to possess prestige and intends to enhance their self-concept (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). Relative to snob consumers, bandwagon consumers place greater emphasis on the effect they make on others while consuming prestige brands, but less importance on price as an indicator of prestige.
4. *The hedonic effect*: perceived emotional value. Hedonist consumers are more interested in their own thoughts and feelings, thus place less emphasis on price as an indicator of prestige.
5. *The perfectionism effect*: perceived quality value. Perfectionist consumers rely on their own perception of the product’s quality, and may use price as further evidence of quality.

Figure 2-1 Prestige-seeking consumer behaviour



Source: Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L.W., 1999. A review and a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behaviour, *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, p. 4.

2.2.2 Materialism

Materialism in consumption is associated with obsessive and excessive consumption, and the potential effect of positive happy feelings which can be obtained through both private and public consumption (Richins et al. 1992b, Richins 1994). Belk (1984, p.291) defines materialism as “*the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person’s life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction*”. This definition is manifested by three personality traits, possessiveness, non-generosity, envy. Preservation, the fourth trait was added through further cross-cultural studies by Ger and Belk (1996). However, none of those traits have a direct link to conspicuous consumption, apart from envy. Hence, materialism and conspicuous consumption are implicitly linked through envy (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Envy involves a coveting of what another has and frequently, a resentment of the person who possesses the desired objects (Belk, 1984).

Different from Belk (1984)’s view that materialism is associated with personal traits, Richins and Dawson (1992, p.308) suggest that materialism can be conceptualised as a consumer value, “*a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life*” which can be measured in the three belief domains:

- “acquisition centrality”: possessions are at the centre of lives for some materialists.
- “acquisition as the pursuit of happiness”: possessions are viewed as essential to satisfaction and wellbeing in life.
- “possession-defined success”: The number and quality of possessions accumulated is a basis for judgement of the materialist’s own and others’ success.

Because of these material centred value beliefs, materialists are people who believe that success can be judged by the things people own. The point here is that the prerequisite for materialism to work is the possession of materials that one owns, but Ram (1994) notices that Asian consumers’ demand for luxury products are high-price goods, even before they have secured adequate food, clothing, and shelter. According to the World Bank’s data (2014), China, despite its significant improvement in economics in the past three decades, is only a lower middle income country of the

world on a par with the Maldives and Turkmenistan in terms of the measure of gross national income (GNI) per capita, but its purchasing power was US\$12,205 billion in 2012 just below the United States which was US\$16,514.5 billion. Hence, materialism alone can hardly explain Chinese consumers' luxury consumption behaviour.

Holt (1995, p.1) suggests that the study of materialism should concentrate on how people consume consumption objects, rather than focusing on the ownership alone, because consumption practice is "*social actions in which consumers make sense of consumption objects in a variety of ways*". Hence, materialism is a style of consuming which contains a typology of four consumption practices respectively: experience, play, integration, and categorization (Holt, 1995). This view of materialism regards consumers as socially connected human beings in interacting cultures, and consumption as a social practice has allowed them to use the symbolic properties of commodities to communicate not only personal qualities, but also play an important part in defining individual identity, identifying social class and signifying social position (Goffman 1952, Belk 1988, Solomon 1983, McCracken 1987, Levy 1959) suggesting group membership and identification (McCracken 1988, Dittmar 1992) with aspirant group influence (Rassuli & Holland 1986, McCracken 1986). Holt (1998) examines the different consumption strategies adopted by groups of High Cultural Capital (HCC) and of Low Cultural Capital (LCC) and suggests that LCC and HCC use two different status strategies to distinguish themselves in the consumption field. Materialism is the dominant status game for LCC and their consumption practices involve consuming goods and services that are signifying their economic status. HCC, on the other hand, strategically avoided those materialistic practices and embraced consumption idealism, avoided to consume the mass market products - the direct opposition from LCC.

2.2.3 Cultural Globalisation

The rise of commercialised mass culture around the globe has had a huge impact on the new participants in Chinese consumerism. Research studying Chinese luxury consumption has been interpreted as participation in a global consumer culture

associated with cosmopolitan values such as modernity, democracy, and even liberation which are shaped by media of many forms (Stearns, 2006). The traditional values of Confucius which stressed modesty in consumption to control the potentially negative effect of envy (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996) has been replaced by the modern value of insatiable desires and perceiving wealth as achievement and this is a result of the development of a modern capitalist universe (Zheng, 1992). Other studies of Chinese fashion consumers also provide some evidence of Western cultural impact, such as research which shows that Chinese consumers hold positive views towards Western brands (Frumkin et al. 2006, Ahmed & d'Astous 2004, Wu & DeLong 2006, O'Cass & Choy 2008). Scholars (e.g. Wong & Ahuvia 1995 & 1998, Hartley & Montgomery 2009, Anderson & He 1998) believe that China's luxury consumption trend is part of the influence of globalisation and consumers' insatiability for material goods and eagerness to parade individual economic success. Rodoshen et al. (2011) noted a continuous adoption of more materialistic values in China on the whole since Deng's economic reform.

With the advent of globalisation, marketers have opportunities to attract global audiences with their branded products and services that not only have intrinsic value, but also carry symbolic meanings, especially for brands and designer fashion which have been successfully developed by marketers into global icons. The commodity symbols have created a global cultural effect in which ideas, meanings, and values are transmitted around the world and consumption culture has been diffused by internet, mass media, and international travel. Research in this globally-oriented form of taste associated with Western lifestyles tends to show positive effects. To many consumers especially from LIC, those branded products have become symbolic artefacts that indicate social status, help them to increase social recognition and move up the social ladder (Üstüner & Holt, 2010).

There are two main effects pertaining to the cultural globalisation process which have been discussed. First of all, cultural globalisation is typically represented as Western culture being imposed upon LICs *“a globalised consumption field as an unintended consequence of its cultural, economic, and political dominance”* (Üstüner & Holt 2010, p.46). Given the economic differences between countries like the HICs and

LICs, the development of a global monoculture cannot be a process of homogenization, but a systematic ordering of cultural differences. Most global cultural research has assumed the HIC's superior position and that there will be a trickle down of emulation from HICs to LICs, sometimes referred to as the trickle-down theory (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). In this view, Western goods are seen as powerful global status symbols that consumers from LICs seek out, buying the same goods as in the West to signify that they have arrived, that they are peers to their Western brethren (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). Holt et al. (2004) suggest that those global brands were perceived by consumers from LICs as symbols of a Western cultural ideal. The Western lifestyle myth held by consumers from LICs contributes to the development of effective status claims among high cultural capital consumers (HCCs) in Less Industrialised Countries (LICs) such as Turkey (Üstüner & Holt, 2007 & 2010) and Brazil (Wilk, 2006).

Secondly, the global culture does not provide consumers with shared similar tastes and values, rather consumers from different culture backgrounds may develop conflicting viewpoints towards products usage and branding images (Holt et al. 2004, Üstüner & Holt 2010, Thompson & Tambyah 1999). A special consumer group, the cosmopolitans have been actively studied by consumer researchers (e.g. Thompson & Tambyah 1999, Hannerz 1990), for their consumption behaviour may have highlighted the sociocultural and economic complexities when consumers encounter the conflicts of cultural ideals and product differences in the global cultural context. Hannerz (1990, p240) suggests that cultural globalisation has enabled “*a cosmopolitanism [to] become a proteanism*”, for the cosmopolitans actively consume transcultural diversity in a reflective and intellectualizing manner which marks their social distinction from the locals and tourists who are highly provincial. In Holt's study (1998), this protean orientation of consumption is also presented in the HCC consumers which is in direct contrast with the local mentality and provincial identity held by the LCCs. Thompson and Tambyah (1999) found that expatriates from HICs identified themselves with the dominant cosmopolitan ideals of nomadic mobility and cultural adaptability, but also struggled with the familiar goods and places from home countries. In LIC countries, the cosmopolitanism indicates consumers' emulation of HICs lifestyles and negotiation with local domination. For example, both LCC and

HCC consumers in Turkey (Üstüner & Holt, 2010) engaged with Western culture and consumer goods to some extent, but had differentiated practices incorporating Western consumer goods, with one deflecting but the other embracing the Western influence, due to the variation of volume of cultural capital and habitus they held. Therefore, the study suggests that cultural context dependent study is crucial in understanding the indigenising process of status consumption.

Furthermore, cultural globalisation research suggests that there is a tension between globalisation, a new social force, and cultural localisation. To some extent, Chinese consumer studies have failed to explain how traditional cultural values have been changed, sometimes drastically, and how consumers have come to embrace some foreign culture values so completely that the cultural values that they grew up with have been rendered redundant. It appears that the Chinese consumers' indigenising processes and experiences in dealing with the tensions between the competing influences of their indigenous cultural values and global cultural values embodied in Western luxury goods may have been overlooked in Chinese consumer studies.

2.2.4 Chinese Face Value

According to social studies, the economic standing (economic capital), display of high status cultural signals (cultural capital) and social connections (social capital) have been depicted as status cues and bases of social exclusion that actors use for forming social and symbolic boundaries (Bourdieu 1984, Erickson 1996, Lamont 1992, Lamont and Lareau 1988). This tendency to emphasise prestige in relation to wealth is related to the notion of status widely acknowledged by sociologists. Weber (1968, p.53–54) suggests that 'classes, status groups and parties' are seen as phenomena of the distribution of power, and the notion of domination involves a combination of legitimacy and force. The effect of such status-inequality is based on differences in esteem and respect, as well as based on resources and power. Both are significant in understanding the micro motives for behaviour.

The symbolic and social values pertaining to luxury consumption are deeply embedded in culture. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) argue that luxury consumption in

China has its own distinct characteristics and consumers with interdependent self-constructs tend to place more importance on the symbolic value of public meanings when consuming luxury items (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The fact that China's economic reform resulted in social transformation may also contribute to the Chinese newly rich's luxury consumption as a way to seek social position and social approval (Li & Su, 2006). Yoon and Seok (1996) studied luxury consumption in Korea and suggest that luxury consumption is most likely to be seen in the social transitional phase of a society when greater social mobility intensifies status uncertainties and individuals struggle to seek social positions.

Social studies in advanced societies suggest that status serves as marker of economic (Veblen, 1899), social (Gould, 2002), moral (Lamont, 1992), and cultural (Bourdieu, 1984) worth that plays a crucial role in defining how individuals are evaluated, permitted to access positions of power and control over (economic, cultural, social) resources in a society (Rivera, 2010). In China, its social structure features a high level of power distance which means it tends to emphasize the importance of prestige and wealth in shaping boundaries or vertical relationships between social and economic classes such as rich and poor, and superiors and subordinates. Hofstede (1984, 2001) suggests that individuals in high-power-distance cultures like China seek to maintain and increase their power as a source of satisfaction.

Some Chinese consumer studies have characterized face as an important collectivistic value that motivates Chinese consumers' luxury consumption. Hu (1944, p.45) identified two types of face, "Lian" and "Mianzi". The former "*represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community,*" whereas the latter "*stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized, a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation*". Despite these two aspects of meaning, central to face conception is the desire for prestige that one seeks when living in society. Zhou and Belk (2004) suggest that Asian consumers buy luxury products primarily to enhance and maintain their 'face'. Li and Su (2006) compared the influence of 'face' on consumer luxury purchasing between American and Chinese consumers and found that Chinese consumers' luxury brands consumption is

more related to 'face' than their American counterparts. Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) suggest that the collectivistic nature of Chinese culture determines that luxury consumption is not so much an individual behaviour, but more about the need to maintain group relationships, with, for example such as family and work colleagues. Braxton (1999) also suggests that individual success in China is associated with family honour or family face. Hence, when an individual becomes successful and wealthy, it is not an individual matter, but gains face for the whole family. It is the sensitivity of maintaining individual face within one's close social ties associated with their efforts in enhancing individual social standing through status consumption which makes luxury consumption a salient social characteristic in Chinese societies (Li et al., 2013). This face value presents individuals with high pressure for social conformity, and people tend to aim to live up to the expectations of others (Wong & Ahuva, 1998) to preserve 'face' which means they expect others to think them rich, generous, and have good taste, no matter whether they have or not (Ho, 1976).

This stream of studies provides an important perspective for understanding Chinese consumers' status consumption behaviour, for it underlines the fact that conspicuous consumption enhances social status for the Chinese and social relationships especially family kinship and peer groups play a key role in influencing consumption choices. On the other hand, the face value studies do not provide an explanation of conspicuous consumption as essential experiences. Hirschman and Stern (1999) suggest that consumers are just as likely to purchase impulsively and to be influenced not only by family and friends, by advertisers and role models, but also by mood, situation and emotion and consumers do not always remain true to type and the same consumer may behave inconsistently depending on the mood and situation at the time (Peattie 1999, McDonald et al. 2012). Furthermore, face theory has offered no explanation in terms of how the face value is integrated or altered in the larger social cultural context when luxury or wasteful consumption in China was treated with disdain from the perspective of both Confucianism and contemporary Chinese communist ideology (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007) and when cultural globalisation especially the Western consumer culture has been reported as dominating the global cultural hierarchy (Üstüner & Holt, 2010).

Both cultural globalisation theory and Chinese face value theory attempt to explain status consumption from the perspective of the collective cultural influence. Cultural globalisation theory suggests that the West imposes upon LICs a globalized consumption field as an unintended consequence of its cultural, political, and economic dominance (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). It has provided a possible reference for understanding the ways in which Western material culture (and cultural objects in particular) may be facilitating Chinese consumers' status consumption. Chinese face value theory provides a specific context in which significant social relations particularly family kinships and peer group influences should be attended to as part of the mechanism for collective conspicuous consumption practices. However, neither theory can provide an effective tool to understand the dialectic relations between personal taste and the social structure and cultural forces shaping individual taste in the consumption field struggle, or explain the individual or group variations in adopting differing consumption practices.

2.3 Bourdieu's Cultural Practice Theory

Bourdieu (1984) also sees culture impact on human action, but his concern for the role of culture is in the processes of cultural domination and cultural reproduction. He suggests that cultural products and practices are imbued with social value and as such constitute resources in status competition and class distinction (Goldthorpe, 2007). To explain consumption practice and class struggle, Bourdieu (1984) views the social space as multidimensional and unable to be reduced to a single causal mechanism (such as the economy, Veblen's explanation of conspicuous consumption). Therefore, culture as a sense of institutionalized repertoires has as powerful effect on the structuration of everyday life as do economic forces in the process of group making which "*entailing struggles to impose class as the dominant 'principle of social vision and division' over and against competing alternatives.*" (Waquant 2013, p.3).

Bourdieu's conceptualisations of cultural capital, habitus, and field provides a framework that explains different class factions use different status consumption strategies that align with the composition and volume of their economic and cultural capital. His model allows researchers to understand consumption practices as part of

an individual life and consider that tastes are formed during childhood as part of the socializing process and unconsciously serves as social boundaries and cultural capital in adulthood. The taste that a person shows in goods is an indicator of his/her social class in a commodity-oriented culture (Featherstone, 1984), as Galbraith (1984) indicates that modern consumers' conspicuous consumption is still related to status recognition, but it is no longer '*simple forthright display*' as Veblen's leisure class did, but requires '*a certain measure of artistic and even intellectual effort*' to show '*obtrusive good taste*' (1984, p.xxii). It is this classifying taste that makes consumption culture the 'field' to create, preserve and replicate social differentiation and social disparities (Bourdieu, 1984).

China is evolving from a relatively monolithic, poor country into a vibrant marketplace with complex and rapidly developing consumer segments. However, the materialist explanations may not be sufficient to understand localised meanings established by different consumer groups. On the other hand, culture, in the form of dispositions, objects, institutions, language and so on, mediates social practices by connecting people and groups to institutionalized hierarchies. If consumption is viewed as a form of cultural practice, it can manifest the perpetuation of social differences and hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984). It is at this point that consumption tastes as a symbolic form of social distinction are worth further investigation so we can understand their status expression and evaluation of social exclusion, as well as the mechanism and logics that are underpinning those luxury fashion consumption adopting differing consumption practices.

2.3.1 Key Concepts

Bourdieu (1984, p.101) believes that the human action is intentional driven and is formed by the interplay of three main elements: field, capital and habitus which can be illustrated by the following equation:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital}) + \text{field}] = \text{practice.}$$

Therefore, practice is the outcome of the multiple relations and interactions between the diverse dimensions (field, capital, and habitus) as well as by the position of the agent in her relations to the other agents.

2.3.1.1 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu uses the concept of capital to represent the resources, goods and values available to individuals occupying various positions in various fields and there are four generic types of capital: economic capital (money, property, income); social capital (in the form of social networks); cultural capital (in the form of educational credentials); and symbolic capital (legitimizing). Economic capital, ‘accumulated labour’, is capital in the form of material wealth that is institutionalised in property rights and that then yields monetary returns, or profits, to its owners, allowing for further accumulation. Correspondingly, cultural capital is capital “embodied” in individual dispositions and competencies that give privileged access to such capital in its “objectified” form of cultural artefacts, and that is in turn institutionalised in criteria of cultural, including academic, evaluation and thus ultimately in educational qualifications that also provide returns to their holders. Bourdieu (1984) argues that class structure is reproduced through the accumulation of cultural capital, which can provide access to high-status occupations and social circles and to gain symbolic power.

In the consumption field, it is taste as cultural capital that structures the space and consumers compete to consume valuable resources (e.g. fashion goods) in a manner that implicitly indicates their social class conditions (*habitus*) and express their social status. Bourdieu (1984) disaggregates the taste that arises from economic versus cultural capital: whereas economic capital is expressed through consuming goods and activities of material scarcity, cultural capital is expressed through scarce aesthetics and interactional styles that are consecrated by cultural elites. In *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), the bourgeois tend to consume high cultural products from fine arts to haute couture as a means of asserting their difference from the petit bourgeois. The petite bourgeoisie is characterized by its pretension to be part of the high bourgeoisie: It is ‘*committed to the symbolic . . . haunted by the look of others and endlessly occupied with being seen in a good light*’ (Bourdieu 1984, p.253). As for the working classes, they ‘*do not have this concern with their being-for others*’. The bourgeois’ cultural capital belongs to high culture consumption practice and taste (Rocamora, 2002). Unlike Veblen’s (1899, 1992) leisure class that aimed to show off its wealthy background by consuming luxury fashion through ‘conspicuous waste’ and their

frequent style changes aimed at preventing imitation from other social classes, the choice made by those in the high social class in Bourdieu's research reflects the inherited cultural capital as the nature of bourgeois' lifestyle adopted from an early age accompanied with high educational levels and free from economic concerns (Holt, 1998).

Some consumer research demonstrates that there is a subtle difference in class-consumption. In particular, cultural elites distinguish themselves by developing a set of tastes in opposition to materialists whose tastes are formed by economic capital. Holt (1998) examines the different consumption meanings adopted by groups of High Cultural Capital (HCC) and of Low Cultural Capital (LCC) to address the social class differences in cultural consumption. He found that HCC presents a series of characteristics (e.g. creativity, individuality) that reflect their educational background-promoting abstract ideas, expressing individuality, emphasising individualized consumption styles. Because they have never experienced material shortage, their attitudes towards material objects are calm and relaxed. On the contrary, LCC's consumption styles are pragmatic, simple, and social conformity styles without addressing individuality and aesthetic appreciation. The tastes of HCC express this distance from necessity, a distanced, formal gaze, and a playful attitude. For LCC's, their tastes are organized by a desire for pragmatic solutions to basic requirements and the utilitarian characteristics of their living environment. For clothing choice, they prefer clothes that are durable, comfortable, reasonably priced, and well fitted. For clothes that will be seen by others, their selections are concerned with conforming to role norms (e.g. they are appropriate 'work clothes' or 'church clothes'). Üstüner & Holt (2010) conducted research with a similar theme in a less industrialised country, Turkey and found that both HCC and LCC social groups competed to mobilise both economic capital and cultural capital in order to claim higher social position. Turkey's HCC consumers relied on American lifestyles as cultural capital and argued that cultural capital is deterritorialized and consumers depicted the Western lifestyles from a localised viewpoint as a consequence of globalisation, not only in the presence of production and consumption, but also in the presence of education. Southerton (2001) studied groups of HCC's and LCC's kitchen consumption orientations in England and

suggested that consumption and identity formation are increasingly free from normative group constraints.

2.3.1.2 Habitus

Bourdieu (1990, p.53) defines habitus as: “*a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structure predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them*”. For Bourdieu, the habitus is structured by and structures individual expression and the social order (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The concept is a mediating notion that revokes the common sense duality between the individual and the society by capturing ‘*the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of internality*’ (Bourdieu 1977, p.82). In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, ‘*without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration*’ (Bourdieu 1984, p.170).

Bourdieu’s habitus emphasizes the unconscious formation: the habitus results from “*early socialization experiences in which external structures are internalized*” (Swartz 1997, p.103). Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984, p.471) shows how the ‘*social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds*’ through ‘*cultural products*’ including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life. It is not a structure, but a durable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and exert influence to mould forms of human behaviour (Navaroo, 2006). Individuals who internalize similar life chances share the same habitus (Swartz, 1997). In Bourdieu’s social distinction, social elites who carry on family traditions and intellectual heritage obtain advantaged social, cultural, and communication skills and knowledge and share them with other social elites.

Bourdieu’s habitus also stresses the *generative* nature of habitus. Societal life results from the inculcated, durable, predictable patterns of behaviour of individuals and groups that serve both to shape and to reproduce social structures. The habitus is

formed by one's social position but it also generates this position (Calhoun, 1993/2000, Jenkins 1992, Holt 1997 & 1998).

The habitus is 'social' as well as 'individual'. Habitus not only implies a "sense of one's place" but also a "sense of the place of others" relative to oneself in various contexts (Bourdieu 1995, p.328). Structured disadvantages such as those associated with class, gender and disability are incorporated into the habitus, and individuals adjust their behaviours and aspirations according to their appreciation of anticipated consequences or life-chances inscribed in their social positioning (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Although constrained by social structures and historical forces, individual and social transformations are possible. By accumulating and deploying various forms of capital, people can improve their social positioning.

2.3.1.3 Field, Doxa, Illusio

Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 97) defines field as:

"... a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions."

The social world consists of many distinctive, relatively autonomous, but similarly structured fields such as politics, the arts, religion, education and business. Specific to consumption field, through the consumption preferences, agents classify objects and in the process classify themselves in social hierarchy and identify themselves as the dominant, the dominated or new entrants. Holt (1998) notes that field is the key arena in which actors compete for placement in social hierarchy through acquisition of the status distinctive to the field. Each field will be characterized not only by special power structures, but also by differentiated composition and distribution volumes and forms of capital. It is crucial to distinguish between the different types of statuses that accrue in different fields. Consumption is a particular status game that must be

analysed in isolation rather than mixed up with work, religion, education, or politics (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998).

Bourdieu quite often uses the analogy of a ‘*game*’ to field (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.98-115). *Doxa* represents the belief they concur in the game and its stakes despite the fact that players would oppose one another during the play. In Bourdieu’s viewpoint, behaviour in fields is interest driven. Actors, regardless of their positions, are complicit in accepting the rules of the game in which they play. Both the dominant establishment and the subordinate challengers, both orthodox and heterodox views, share a tacit acceptance that the field of struggle is worth pursuing in the first place. Challengers and incumbents share common interests in preserving the field itself, even if they are sharply divided on how it is to be controlled. Moreover, he stresses that this acceptance goes unacknowledged, or ‘*misrecognized*’, for the most part (Bourdieu 1986, p.107). *Doxa* is “*a fundamental acceptance of the established order situated outside the reach of critique*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.247). It happens when we ‘*forget the limits*’ that have given rise to unequal divisions in society: it is ‘*an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident*’ (Bourdieu 1984, p.471). *Doxa* is what agents immediately know, but do not know what they know, in Bourdieu’s (1990, p.167) expression “*what goes without saying because it comes without saying*’. As Bourdieu (1977, p.169) points out, those who are the dominated classes within a field have a special interest in challenging and pushing at the *doxa*’s boundaries, in establishing together “*their right to be spoken and to be spoken publically*”. This indicates that *doxic* beliefs, although shared by all, are themselves produced and reproduced by the dominant class. *Doxic* assumptions then are a sort of unseen and unintended support for the rule of the dominant.

Illusio represents an ‘*investment in the game*’ or ‘*interest*’ by the player. Every field presupposes and produces a particular type of *illusio*, which Bourdieu defines as a belief or acceptance of the worth of the game of a field or “*specific interest implied by one’s participation in the game differentiates itself according to the position occupied in the game (dominant vs. dominated or orthodox vs. heretic) and with the trajectory that leads each participant to this position*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.117).

Golsorkhi et al. (2009) further explain *illusio* in the field in which the functioning of each field is imprinted by a specific ‘*game*’ for the appropriation and accumulation of the capitals specific to the field. Sometimes those capitals can seem meaningless for agents outside the field who do not share the same sense of the game, and lack a view of the stakes. Similarly, those struggles considered crucial for members in the field might appear meaningless for agents external to the field. The fundamental belief in the interest of the game and the related stakes are constitutive of the *illusio* specific to the field (Bourdieu, 1984). Sharing the *illusio* also means that field members will struggle to gain the forms of capital specific to the field. Through their struggles for those forms they will acknowledge and reinforce the importance of these capitals and increase the *illusio* (Golsorkhi et al., 2009). Bourdieu (1977, p.195) notes that *illusio* is “*a collective understanding,*” as “*the whole society pays itself in the false coin of its dream*”.

2.3.2 The Critiques of Bourdieu

Throughout his career, Bourdieu operated four key concepts, namely, practice, habitus, capital, and field which play a quintessential role in Bourdieu’s grand theoretical construct for explaining cultural reproduction and social inequality (Warde 2011, Robbins 2000). Robbins (2000) comments that many debates revolved around the definition of those concepts due to Bourdieu's imprecise formulation of concepts and the consequences are that they are empirically untestable. Warde (2011, p.11) notes that “*the very features that some consider as major achievements are said by others to be its weaknesses. Empirically grounded theory, versatile concepts, methodological flexibility and variety, and detailed portrayals of French cultural practice may seem to be virtues, but they are also read as theoretical vacillation, conceptual imprecision, inadequate operationalization of concepts, methodological indecision and limited applicability. Consequently, evaluations are diverse.*” In *Distinction*, there are some unequal treatments when defining the three stratification dimensions of volume of capital, composition of capital, and social trajectory which provide the general framework for Bourdieu’s analysis of class structures in contemporary societies (see Bourdieu 1984, p.114), he draws unevenly upon them in his analysis of French class structure and consumer practices. The third dimension,

social trajectory has not been given enough attention compared to the other two dimensions in his analysis. In the sections that follow, critiques of each of these key concepts will be presented.

2.3.2.1 The Field Analytical Conception of Cultural Capital

2.3.2.1.1 The Definition of Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) is of crucial importance for the understanding of cultural taste development and the reproduction of life chances (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). It is the most widely used of all Bourdieu's central concepts. One of the main problems is that the concept of cultural capital is not clearly defined and researchers have been using it in different ways (Swartz, 1997). It has received many critiques which range from total sceptics of the whole apparatus of cultural capital (Goldthorpe, 2007) to some adjustments of the concept for the purposes of researchers' own uses (Warde, 2011).

Many doubts rest on the considerations of what forms cultural capital. Kraaykamp and Eijck (2010) argue that the term 'cultural capital' is not a singular concept because it contains three aspects, the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state. In Bourdieu's global theoretical framework, Lamont and Lareau (1988) point out that cultural capital is a polysemy term alternatively used as an informal academic standard in *Inheritors* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979), a class attributer in *Reproduction* (ibid.), an indicator and a basis for class position and social selection in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), and a resource for power in *Les Strategies de Reconversion* (Bourdieu et al., 1973). Those incompatible definitions of cultural capital indicate different functions and forms of cultural capital and cause confusion to researchers who intend to carry out similar studies. Lamont and Lareau (1988, p.156) suggest defining cultural capital as "*institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion*". This definition intends to capture the essence of functionality of cultural capital derived from Bourdieu's early work.

Prieur and Savage (2011, p.569) suggest that cultural capital should be conceived as *“intrinsic to a social field within which it is contested and subject to transformations as well as reproduction.”* This definition seems in keeping with Bourdieu’s original idea for the role habitus played in the accumulation of cultural capital in the social field which stresses the inherited nature of cultural capital, but failed to convey the oppositions that Bourdieu sets out against the Kantian view of the intrinsic nature of taste and pure aesthetics (Turner & Edmunds, 2002).

Many studies have extended Bourdieu’s cultural capital as a major factor for social exclusion and provided concrete examples in terms of which symbolic boundaries have been drawn by contemporary social groups. For instance, Lamont (1992) included both manners and tastes as aspects of cultural refinement when describing how cultural, as opposed to moral and socioeconomic, boundaries were drawn in order to make judgements about the worth of others. Lawler (2011) finds that class is still at the heart of judgment of taste in the U.K. in the form of manners, not a matter of aesthetics. Ollivier (2008) argues that Bourdieusian sociology has failed to appreciate how distinction in matters of taste relates to more general conceptions of excellence and the good life. Legitimacy is not only about the valuation of specific art forms, but also about the entire configuration of life choices and orientations in which these practices are embedded. Ollivier (2011) further argues that individualisation may occur without the disappearance of the class and that, in contemporary society, social distinction takes a particular form resulting from attempting to reconcile actual material disparities with ideals of democratic material place. In a global cultural context, the social exclusion and competition may remain within its native country, but cultural capital could be borrowed or learned from HICs. Üstüner & Holt (2010, p.50) suggest that *“deterritorialized cultural capital”* is an important form which is enacted in LICs to aid consumers’ status claims and reflects the socio-economic domination of HICs in globalization. Those findings suggest that social status relating to social inequality presents multi-dimensional complexity including cultural, material, and social-economical dimensions at individual, interpersonal, group and organisational levels (Ridgeway, 2013).

In consumption studies, the concept of cultural capital is also intertwined with another concept, practice. Some researchers have used cultural capital as taste; others used it as practice; some used it as both taste and practice (Yaish & Katz-Gerro, 2010). Yaish and Telly (2012) argue that taste and participation are two distinct dimensions of cultural capital. For them, cultural participation is largely restricted by economic resources, whereas cultural tastes are shaped to a greater degree than cultural participation by the socialisation process and through habitus. What people consume might not reflect what they would consume if they were free from various types of constraints (e.g. economic capital or social restraints). A capital is always linked to a field, in which agents battle relationally for strategic advantage and position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Capitals permit the accumulation of advantages within fields, and their convertibility between them (Bourdieu 1984, Swartz 1997). Because of this, taste is socially structured and reflects individual position in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, the notion of practice reflects how consumers play the game by exercising embodied skills that are shaped by one's socio-economic standing and cultural environment and the distinctive ability to comprehend and appreciate difficult cultural goods (music, arts, literature) (Allen 2002, Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1995).

2.3.2.1.2 *The Function of Cultural Capital*

The notion of cultural capital in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) rests on valuing what is rare, marginal and exotic as opposed to what is more widely accessible to fulfil its inescapable and unconscious classificatory effects, which are the key for shaping social positions (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Functioning as the process of social exclusion, cultural capital provides the bases of Bourdieu's cultural stratification model in explaining a multifaceted dimension of class, status, and lifestyle. The idea of cultural capital as a basis for exclusion from jobs, resources, and high status groups is one of the most important and original dimensions of Bourdieu and Passeron's theory (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). However, the high status cultural signals do not necessarily refer to highbrow culture (Lareau & Weininger, 2003), but many empirical studies have taken up this interpretation and link it to the traditional forms of '*highbrow*' culture such as classical music (e.g. Peterson & Kern 1996, Peterson & Simuks 1992). In their studies, the relation between social stratification and cultural

consumption have been concerned exclusively with participation in highbrow culture, because many considered that highbrow culture is the symbol of legitimate culture that defines social boundaries. Hence, their research findings suggest that the consumption of highbrow culture (e.g. literary reading, museum visits, ballets, operas, theatre) has typically been found among the higher educated social groups (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985).

There is a vast stream of research that has dedicated their research questions to finding whether lifestyle differences are structured in accordance with the structures of social space as that depicted in *Distinction* (e.g. Peterson & Ken 1996, Peterson & Simkus 1992, Prieur et al. 2008 in Denmark, Savage & Gayo 2011 in Britain). Many have identified that cultural breadth or openness to diversity is a highly-valued resource in the upper and upper-middle classes (e.g. Coulangeon 2004, Warde et al. 2008). Cultural eclecticism (individualisation in choices, taste, lifestyle), which means the openness to appreciate a wide range of aesthetic forms and as well as to cross boundaries between genres, has become one of the key characters of high cultural signals (Peterson, 1992). According to Peterson and Ken (1996), those extensive findings of eclecticism and individualisation have suggested that the birth of modern consumer society and marked the end of the conventional logic of hierarchies and the advent of mass consumer society and individualised consumptions. In the same vein, Warde (2011) questions whether studying cultural preferences alone are sufficient enough for understanding social discrimination and exclusion and whether Bourdieu's structural architecture of class domination by means of social exclusion is crumbling in the face of the culture turn. These research findings indicate Bourdieu's model has faced the challenge of increasing pervasiveness of the cultural omnivore.

On the other hand, Jarness (2015) argues that the problem of the 'cultural omnivore' stream of studies is their narrowing understanding of how cultural capital should function. The essence of adopting Bourdieu's model should be focused on discovering the cultural consumption differences that result in social inclusion and exclusion, instead of concentrating on mapping lifestyle differences, which have driven the empirical inquiries in the past decades. The central characteristic of capitalist consumption lies in its continuous transformation, in which consumers constantly

seek new products and services to define and redefine their social identities. Holt (1998) argues that the modern capitalist society has changed the way cultural capital operates. In contemporary consumer culture, consumer goods sit in the epicentre and this leaves no room for any particular cultural capital flows, virtually any category of consumption or locale is susceptible to appropriation via cultural capital. Hence, the social difference can no longer be detected through consumption patterns, but need to be understood through consumers' ability to consume and interpret commodified products.

2.3.2.2 The Conception of Habitus and Theory of Practice

2.3.2.2.1 The Concept of Habitus in Theory of Practice

Bourdieu believes taste is shaped and structured unconsciously by his notion of habitus.

“The habitus is not just a random series of dispositions, but operates according to a relatively coherent logic, what Bourdieu calls logic of practice and this is organized by a system of classification. The habitus...is what will shape an individual's apparently personal taste through the way in which the individual applies the system of classification” (Lury 2006, p.85-86)

Habitus forms the “*intrinsic properties*” that define each class condition, and class position, which in turn give away the distinguishing features of ‘taste’ and ‘distaste’. It is at this point of social differentiation is defined and asserted. Habitus contains internalized necessity and embodied capacity that is converted into a disposition which generates meaningful perceptions and practices created by interplay between social structures, including the family, and individual will or choice which “*beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt-of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions*” (Bourdieu 1984, p.170).

Bourdieu (1984, p.170) clarifies that habitus “*is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalisation of the division into social*

class". Habitus here contains two aspects: habitus as a generative structure of practical action (a producer of a structure); and habitus as a perceptual and classifying structure (a product of a structure). It is in the relationship between the two systems of schemes which define the habitus, a "*system of schemes of generating classifiable practices and works*", and "*systems of schemes of perception and appreciation*" (judgement of 'taste').

The means by which systems of domination are reproduced without conscious intention by agents is a central issue for Bourdieu and arguably the primary reason for the development of his theoretical framework (Golsorkhi et al., 2009). The notion of habitus reflects the dialectic relations between individual agency and social structure, or between individuals who construct reality through a process of classifying cultural preferences and the social conditions that constrain them. Through the conceptualisation of habitus, Bourdieu attempts to transcend the fundamental antinomy between subjectivist and objectivist approaches to the study of social life (Allen & Anderson 1994, Swartz 1997). There is a split view regarding this aspect of habitus: some (Swartz 1997, Prieto & Wang 2010) believe that habitus is "*an open and continuously evolving system... with or without conscious reflection*" (Prieto & Wang, p.302), whereas others (e.g. Adam 2006, Throop & Murphy 2002 p.198) believe that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is "*overly deterministic rendering of human experience and behaviour*" by relying solely on nothing other than '*the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition*' (Bourdieu 1977, p.72). It is critiqued for being entirely deterministic, leaving no place for individual agency or even individual consciousness (DiMaggio 1979, King 2000). Bourdieu insists that habitus is not a closed but an '*open*' concept (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.132-137). Swartz (1997, p.98) argues that Bourdieu '*stress(es) the importance of agency within a structuralist framework*' and "*habitus represents a mediating concept between practices and structures...(Habitus) is an adaptive mechanism*' (ibid., p.212-213), since its operation occurs through time and across situations that can differ in structural conditions from those in which habitus was formed, there is a room for mediation and change. Many scholars also support Bourdieu with regards to habitus' power of 'transcendence'. Sulkenen (1982) credits him for devising a valuable '*working compromise*' between structure-function and subject-meaning. Wacquant

(1992, p.11) praises Bourdieu's '*social praxeology (which) weaves together a "structuralist" and a "constructivist" approach*'.

2.3.2.2.2 *Habitus in Empirical Studies in China*

Habitus is a complex and multi-layered concept. Many scholars agree that habitus' current formulation and usage brim with inconsistencies and ambiguities (Lau, 2004). This also coupled with Bourdieu's unwillingness to specify the objective structure and clarify the social boundaries of habitus formation (Thorpe, 2009). Swartz (1997, p.96) admits that '[e]ven among those knowledgeable about Bourdieu's work, considerable disagreement exists on just what Bourdieu's concept represents' and reckons that it is '*difficult to specify empirically*' (p.290). The concept of habitus is meant to provide a means of analysing the workings of the social world through empirical investigations (Grenfell, 2009), but because of the complex of conceptualisation of habitus, it may cause difficulties in using it as an analytical tool.

Many researchers struggle to grasp what habitus is in empirical studies. Wacquant (2014) discusses habitus constituting cognitive, conative, emotive layers that are collectively acquired through the socialisation process. Swartz (1997, p.108) interprets habitus as containing both mental and physical dispositions representing "*master patterns of behavioural styles that cut across cognitive, normative, and corporal dimensions of human action... find expression in language, nonverbal communication, tastes, values, perceptions, and modes of reasoning.*" This conception of habitus is, however, "*too encompassing*" and made it even more difficult to capture in empirical research, especially when Bourdieu resists distinguishing between cognitive, moral, and corporal dimensions of action (Ibid., p.109).

Lau (2004) proposes that habitus, as an objectivist concept, is most appropriately understood in terms of the category of the practical such as fundamental beliefs, perceptions, and a descriptive or prescriptive sense of practical or objective possibilities. Habitus, hence, is not a bodily motor skill, but a non-reflective cognitive sense. In this sense, it is the notion of embodied habits that habitus implies, but Bourdieu insists that habitus' dispositions are not habits because of their '*generative*

(if not creative) capacit[ies]’ or transportability which may produce ‘very different practices and stances’ or even ‘dramatically opposed conducts’ in different social situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.122-135). Wacquant (2005, p.316) suggests we see habitus as “a mediating notion... that is, the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu.”

Panagiotopoulos (1990) suggests that habitus functions as an ‘internal compass’ that orients and guides agents’ practices. Asimaki and Koustourakis (2014) emphasise the unconsciousness of developing a system of continuous and transferable dispositions, but raise the question of whether the past experiences and the pedagogical processes people have experienced during socialization process play the same role or carry the same weight as far as the structural composition of personalities is concerned. Gorringer and Rafanell (2007, p.111) criticised Bourdieu’s habitus as it does not allow for the empowerment of the individual and its internalised structure is “*made too strict an application of the unconsciousness of the habitus*”. In particular, people in the lower caste could be highly motivated to consciously change their habitus and improve their social position. They (Gorringer & Rafanell, 2007) may have missed the point, because it is the system of dispositions as a product of history that “*produces practices in accordance with the schemes engendered by history*” (Bourdieu 1984, p.82).

Since habitus tends to reproduce those actions consistent with the conditions under which it was produced (Bourdieu 1977 p.95), habitus is seen as most successful in explaining social reproduction, but does not sufficiently anticipate situations of social crisis and change (Berger 1986, Jenkins 1982). In the modern consumption field, Warde (2011) suggests that habitus can no longer provide a basis for social reproduction because class groupings are divided in taste by gender and generation and the meaning of cultural products are in a state of flux. Holt (1997) used a constellation of products to study differences of cultural taste and consumption behaviour between two distinct fractions of the upper-middle class in a small city. His

study demonstrates an example of how the embedded nature of habitus is played in out the formation of taste and consumption patterns of consumers from a developed society and is affected by that which is beyond what is directly learned from childhood. However, it did not provide any further assistance for using habitus as an effective analysis tool.

2.3.2.3 Field of Struggle & the Relational Concepts

Navarro (2006, p.19) states that Bourdieu's inter-related concepts (cultural capital, habitus, and field) are essentially "*a path to unearth hidden power mechanisms of social domination, illuminate hierarchies and their reasons of existence, denounce patterns of accumulation of resources, and demystify forms of ideological justification.*" McRobbie (2009, p.141) points out that Bourdieu's relational theory is "*bringing together*" micro-sociological analyses of particular fields with macro-sociological analyses of wider social, cultural and political fields (Thorpe, 2009). However, his theoretical framework has been used in a piecemeal fashion since most scholars do not build on his ideas systematically, but selectively integrate certain ideas into extant paradigmatic projects (Golsorkhi et al. 2009, Swartz 2008).

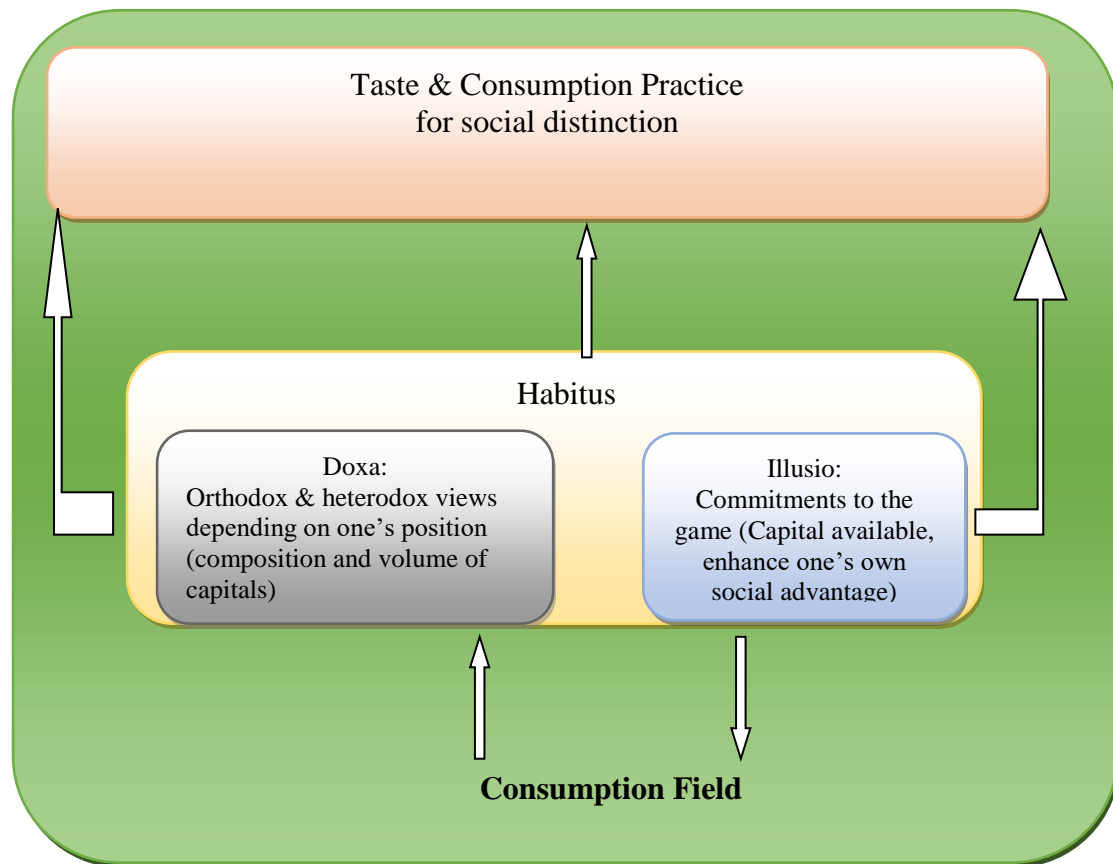
Bourdieu (1984) considers that conflict is the fundamental dynamic of social life, at the heart of all social arrangements is the struggle for power – not only over material resources but also over symbolic power. Field defines the structure of the social setting in which habitus operates. It is within this specific and structured space that both the dominant establishment and subordinate challengers struggle and compete for social status through different forms of capital (e.g. economic capital, cultural capital, social capital) and volume of the capital (Swartz, 1997). It is through the workings of habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure). This conceptual formulation treats individual and society as two integrated sorts of being and constructs them relationally as if they are two dimensions of the same social reality (Swartz, 1997). The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.127): on one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field; on the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful

world, a world endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one's energy. Habitus operates as a generative grammar, providing agents with creative capacities (Bourdieu, 1985). The class habitus that stems from our position on the social field leads to the *doxa*, i.e. the knowledge of what is taken for granted in a field that sets social boundaries and limits our social behavior. In this respect, the habitus limits practices and strategies and “*entertains with the social world*” by ensuring that we act “*intentionally without intention*” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 12) in conformity with our relative position on the field. Furthermore, the habitus ensures that agents act in accordance with the field specific rules as all agents tacitly recognize “*the value of the stakes of the game and the practical mastery of its rules*” (*illusio*; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 117). Therefore, the habitus is said to guide our *strategy*, i.e. the unconscious *practice* that aims at achieving our objectives (Rehbein, 2011) by investing the appropriate types and amounts of capitals on a specific field.

In the consumption field, Bourdieu emphasises that class struggle exists in every realm of cultural practice such as taste, lifestyle and education, and dominant groups generally succeed in legitimizing their own culture and ways as superior to those of lower classes, through oppositions of taste such as distinguished/vulgar, aesthetic/practical, and pure/impure which are central to symbolic classifications between class, as well as the key for the reproduction of class privilege. In this case, taste is the result of strategic cultural practice that can draw social boundaries from high to low, from sacred to profane, from the “legitimate” to “illegitimate” for individuals and groups who struggle to maintain or enhance their relative standing within a hierarchically structured social space.

Cultural legitimacy was highly contextualised and exists in a field that is determined by social class distinctions. The study of the field of power is, thus, crucial to unearth a clear interpretation of the origin, the meaning and the consequences of power and power relations in any specific society (Navarro, 2006). Field analysis (see **Figure 2-2**) therefore directs the researcher's attention to a level of analysis capable of revealing the integrating logic of competition between opposing viewpoints (Swartz, 1997).

Figure 2-2 The Relational Concepts of capital, practice, habitus and field



Cultural capital along with habitus, field and practice, can provide a powerful tool in understanding taste, culture, and social class in this study. Warde (2011, p.103) notes that Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory as a conceptual tool “*offered a path breaking, ultimately rather restricted, account of how cultural taste operated as a weapon of social struggle*”. Robbins (2000) comments that *Distinction* is a paragon of theoretically informed empirical analysis. Warde (2011) admits that a Bourdieusian approach perhaps still an adequate, even the best available option in sociological studies. Lamont and Lareau (1988) consent that one of the strengths of the concept of cultural capital is that it leaves room for individual biographies by taking into consideration variations in how individuals use their cultural capital.

The advantage of using Bourdieu’s relational approach to study the Chinese newly rich consumers’ judgement of taste is that it addresses the symbolic dimension of the group by uncovering their subtle mental constructs of social identity and group classification through their mundane activities of everyday consumption. Adopting

Bourdieu's cultural capital analysis could facilitate better understanding of social classification for the poorly understood Chinese newly rich consumers; fill the absence of studies of their status consumption practices in the process of luxury fashion consumption; and understand how symbolic boundaries are drawn by individuals and form the social distinction of Chinese newly rich consumers by providing an empirical qualitative study.

2.3.3 The Clarification of Bourdieu's Key Concepts Specific to this Study

For the purposes of this study the understanding of Bourdieu's key concepts will be as follows:

- Cultural Capital (Taste): In the consumption field, cultural capital takes a specific form that is taste. Bourdieu (1984, p.466) defines taste as "*an acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate' ... to establish and mark differences by a process of distinction ... ensuring recognition*". However, in consumption studies it has become increasingly difficult to ratify social classification using taste alone. This study will search for tastes that imply exclusive privileges, advantages and superiority over others in social life. In addition, deterritorialized cultural capital has been an important form of cultural capital enacted in LICs in order to assist consumers' status claims (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). This study will give attention to both borrowed and embodied cultural capital used to compete in the luxury fashion consumption field. In terms of taste, this study will focus on discovering not only the differences in consumers' consumption tastes that imply social advantages and exclusive privileges in social status (cultural capital analysis), but also how these differences are evaluated and considered to be superior to others. Hence, the taste, distaste, and invidious comparison to others will be highlighted through the data analysis. Since there is a discrepancy found between taste and consumption practice among Chinese consumers this study will also consider that taste and consumption practice are sometimes inconsistent (DeLong et al., 2005), and pay particular attention to their consumption practice (action), rather than taste (preference) in the data analysis.

- **Consumption Practice:** Consumption practice is embodied skills that are shaped by one's socio-economic standing and cultural environment. This study will look for actions and practices, rather than tastes alone which may indicate how consumers play the game and what is done to achieve the stakes. In particular, this study will examine the effect that cultural globalisation has had on Chinese newly rich consumers' practices that impacts on their social status and how this aligns with their current social trajectory position.
- **Habitus:** Habitus is an unconscious understanding of the rules of the game, its spirit and the logic that gives rise to the game. It simultaneously represents embedded history and disposition towards the future. Formed unconsciously, habitus contains both bodily and cognitive dimensions representing master patterns of behavioral styles that are social yet individual, a generative scheme that is structured structuring, durable and transposable dispositions. Hence, the data analysis will look at the underlying 'master patterns of behavioural style' that are "a product of the type of environment in which agents live" (Golsorkhi et al. 2009, p783), that is cut across cognitive, moral, and corporal dimensions of action (Swartz, 1997) and give rise to the practice, allowing actors to manoeuvre successfully in the social space (Kerr & Robinson, 2009). This study will examine their learning processes and the generative schemes that underpin both their embodied cultural capital and deterritorialized cultural capital.
- **Field:** The consumption field is characterized by its special status game that gives power to those who consume and marks group differences based on the status beliefs that certain social groups are 'better' than others because of their high competence in acquiring resources (knowledge, aesthetics, dispositions) and power (cultural legitimacy). This study will take into consideration the impact of China's societal change in political, economic, and social environments, as well as the impact of cultural globalisation, on luxury fashion consumption practices.
- **Doxa:** Doxa are the fundamental beliefs of a field held by the game players who challenge the status quo and express their frustrations in terms of how to make their distinction distinguishable.

- Illusio: Illusio is also the field specific and collective beliefs of the field members who have committed themselves in the game and are pursuing the stakes that are crucial to them in gaining a dominant position.
- Social Capital: Bourdieu's social status sees competition over different forms of capital that agents use to gain symbolic power. Social capital is one of the most important forms of capital along with cultural capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital in Bourdieu's consideration of social struggle. According to Portes (1998, p.3), the contemporary analysis of social capital began with Pierre Bourdieu who defined the concept as "*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.*" However, this study will not discuss social capital in detail despite the fact that social capital can be a vital source of capital in the social field, because its '*relational collectivism scheme...a strong emphasis on long-term reciprocity and moral obligation*' resulting in '*group sanction of deviance*' (Herrmann-Pillath 2009, p.23). These descriptions seem to reflect the core Chinese collective culture values in most social settings. On the other hand, Chinese interpersonal relationships such as Guanxi development have a powerful impact on individual behavior and conduct in the public domain (Gold et al. 1985, Lee & Dawes 1995). This social reality could overshadow the taste-related individual expression that this study intends to understand. Therefore, it is the taste (cultural capital) and the accumulation of cultural capital (habitus) in fashion consumption field that is going to be the main focus in this study.

2.4 Applying Bourdieu in Chinese Society

2.4.1 China – The Changing Society as a Field

2.4.1.1 The Confucian Field

Field analysis calls attention to the social conditions of struggle that shape cultural production. Among those Less Industrialised Countries, China has its uniqueness in terms of social structure and cultural values. To be able to understand the

consumption field, it is important to know China as a social field and what it stands for. China's 5,000 years' history has formed the enduring characteristics of Chinese culture encompassing various and sometimes opposing schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, etc., and a host of regional cultures (Fan, 2000). However, Confucianism, stressing harmony, hierarchy of the society, scholarship, thrift, and perseverance (Hofstede, 1980b), is undisputedly the most influential thought forming the basis of the Chinese cultural tradition for 2500 years (Pang, 1998), prevailing at all levels in society (Yau 1988, Pan et al. 1994), and still providing the foundation for the norms of Chinese people's behaviour in modern days (Fan, 2000). Pang (1998) argues that despite the social changes such as Cultural Revolution, this did not end Confucian influence and it remains the backbone of Chinese culture. Hence, Confucianism is thought as the most relevant to this study and will be reviewed in the subsequent sections.

2.4.1.1.1 Social Hierarchy, Family Hierarchy, and Gender Inequality

Liu (1987) points out that the centre of the Confucian system lays a linear hierarchy governing family structure, political structure, and the supernatural world and is delineated by clearly defined roles, responsibilities, rituals, and customs governing interactions among the occupants of designated positions at various levels. This hierarchy is characterised by various dominance-obedience relationships: men dominant over women, the old dominating the young, and the emperor dominating everyone else.

Within family structure, Confucianism emphasises the superiority of men over women, and the lifelong submission of a woman to her husband and her husband's family. Women are considered as the subsidiary of men in family and society and the property of first their fathers, then their husbands (Honig & Hershatter, 1988). These values toward male-female relationships are manifested through clear definitions of female roles and the duties and obligations associated with those roles. The emphasis on the unimportance and the passiveness attributes of woman as well as their second-class status to men both intellectually and physically resulted in the perception that it was unnecessary to educate women apart from the womanly virtue. Xinran (2003, p.111) notes that,

“Women obeyed the ‘Three Submissions and Four Virtues’: Submission to your father, then your husband and, after his death, your son; the virtues of fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech and action, diligence in housework. For thousands of years, women had been taught to respect the aged, be dutiful to their husbands, tend the stove and do the needlework, all without setting foot outside the house. For a woman to study, read and write, discuss affairs of state like a man, and even advise men, was heresy to most Chinese at that time.”

As the result of this teaching, Hall (1997, p.1) reports that Chinese women’s lives in pre-twentieth century China is *‘among the most restricted and oppressed on earth’*. The extreme case of such is the practice of footbinding (Laidler, 2003). However, a woman who bore a male descendant will have definitive power in the family once she is aged and her son has a family of his own. Mu (2002, p.44) describes her family without a dominated male;

“In terms of domestic affairs, my great grandmother was the decision-maker. After her eldest son married, her family position improved: not she could allocate chores to her daughter-in-law, instead of doing them herself. At dinner, she could sit respectably at table with her husband and the family’s bread-winners, instead of eating in the kitchen with the young children as she did before. Her experience realized the ultimate female dream expressed as “Eventually become a mother-in-law after long years of suffering as a daughter-in-law”.

Simone de Beauvoir (1949, 1989) said: *“One is not born a woman, one becomes one”*. Stone and Desmond (2007) also argue that the perception of what is ‘masculine’ and what is ‘feminine’ are not given biologically but are mediated through culture. Gender identity involves socially proscribed and prescribed behaviours, which may take the form of social rules or cultural values. This view proposes that in gender studies, the term *“gender”* should be used to refer to *“the social and cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities”* and not to the state of being male or female in its entirety (Garrett 1992, p.vii). Because children learn about what it means to be male and female from the society in which they live, they adjust behaviour to fit in with the

gender norms and expectations of others (Sandra 1981). In Confucianism, gender role expectations and performance was a key to maintain social harmony in which the husband's power was granted over wives. A well-known Confucian saying, "*Man is honoured for strength; a woman is beautiful on account of her gentleness*" indicates that female beauty lies in her conformity and passivity. Confucius believed that the husband should go out to work to support his family financially, whereas the wife should stay at home to look after the house and other family members. This tradition teaching was challenged by Mao who advocated gender equality by saying "*women are capable of holding up half of the sky*". Mao's idea has contributed to liberate the females from their bond with the home and they have begun to get educated and go out to work like men. However, the female's household responsibilities remain and they are expected to perform these well alongside their professional work (Jun & Sun, 2014). These female role expectations have remained in place throughout Deng's economic reforms (Yang, 2011).

Bourdieu has relatively neglected the discussion of gender issues in his work in *Distinction*, and Holt (1987), although he did not tackle gender directly in his American studies, calls for more detailed study of this factor. In their study, Üstüner and Holt (2010, p.41) chose to study female consumers only, because "*they provide the cleanest interpretation on how consumption and social class interact*" and the Turkish men "*remain somewhat committed to production-oriented notions of class*". However, the long tradition of male superiority in Chinese society must have set gender differences in dealing with consumption issues. It would be interesting to know how this gender habitus might play out differently through their status consumption practices and this will be given consideration in the data analysis.

2.4.1.1.2 The Interdependent Self-Concept and the Sense of Shame

China has been regarded as a Confucian collectivist society emphasizing conformity, obedience, and reliability and Individuals' sense of self is inevitably related to the relationship with others or groups (Hofstede 1980b, Triandis 1995). Bond (1986) believes that Chinese society is family-based ethnic groups based on relations. In describing themselves the Chinese employ more terms that relate to family roles (grandson, daughter, elder, brother, and so on). This indicates that the identity of self

lies in one's familial, cultural, professional, and social relationships. Cousins (1989) argues that social roles in Asian culture are important in the construction of self-identities. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) note that the Chinese include in-group members within the self, the distinction between the group and individual identities is somewhat obscured. In this logic, each individual self develops group affiliations that merge individual interests with group interests and cross individual and group identification boundaries.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) distinguished two self-construal's: 'independent self' which views the self (typical in individualist Western culture) as separate from others, including parents, siblings, co-workers, and friends; based on the selfhood in collective culture (mainly in Asia), the 'interdependent self' normally views the self as being comprised of values, beliefs, and other such internal attributes. The 'interdependent self' sees the self as connected with others and part of a social context. In addition, the legitimacy of the judgment of individual self in interdependent cultures tends to be on the basis of group identities such as family and nationality. In Western cultures, strength and integrity are demonstrated by being true to one's own opinions and tastes and not being swayed by social pressure to conform (Kashima et al., 1995). The problem for the Chinese interdependent self is that "*there is often no consistency between the internal private self and the public self*" when one conforms to social norms and pressures. In the West, the true self generally refers to one's private self, individual freedom is valued as a good in itself because it allows individuals to live an authentic life by expressing their inner values and tastes, but "*conformity is usually seen as a negative trait indicating a lack of personal integrity, a willingness to betray one's personal convictions and tastes to gain social advantage, or a cowardly fear of others' opinions*" (Wong & Ahuva 1998, p.433). As opposed to seeing individual freedom as a prerequisite to an authentic life, interdependent cultures evaluate freedom in terms of its costs and benefits to the group (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). For example, in their studies on social interaction patterns, Wheeler et al. (1989) found that the Chinese stressed harmonious interactions among in-group members which could involve restraining one's private internal preferences, whereas Americans focused on expressing the private self by meeting personal needs.

Based on cross cultural studies, cultural differences resulted in the differences in interdependent and independent self-concepts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The Asian view of self is alternatively viewed as the “*centre of relationships*” (Tu 1985, p.232) “*a configuration of roles expressed in self-other expectations*” (Chu 1985, p.252), and an “*individual’s transactions with his fellow human beings*” (Hsu 1983, p.4). For instance, the independent Americans would see one’s social class as primarily a reflection of one’s income level, which in turn is believed to reflect (at least in part) one’s professional merit, whereas the interdependent Chinese see class as reflecting not only one’s achievement, but also the positions of one’s group, usually one’s family, relatives, and kinship clan (Hsu 1981, p.159). In comparison to the Western cultures, the interdependent cultures have a conformity tendency in that they are unable to maintain individual opinions, tastes, and can be swayed by social pressure to conform (Kashima et al., 1995).

Bond (1992) underlines the Chinese emphasis on moderation and social orientation. The social orientation of the Chinese is reflected in the higher endorsement they give to group-related traits and roles. They also may sacrifice their own benefit or interest if necessary for the benefit of the group. Lopez (1996) notes that a Chinese individual seldom has extreme opinions or reveals their true feelings, tends to seek consensus, and stick to group norms. The roots of Chinese mentality can be found in Confucian ethics where, in order to be a man or a sage, it is necessary to “*perform one’s duties first, not to claim one’s rights*” (Lau & Kuan 1988, p.50–51). However, this group oriented culture would create social pressure on the individual (Kashima et al., 1995). Chinese people has interdependent self-construe and holds collective cultural values. The luxury fashion consumption game means that there is a direct conflict between stylist strategies based on individuation and the collective culture value and social identity promoted by Confucian in China (Holt, 1998).

Confucianism also adopts self-regulation of misconduct by introducing the sense of shame which acts as an emotion of a human capacity that directs the person inward for self-examination and motivates the person toward socially and morally desirable change. People feel shamed when they perceive that someone is making a negative

judgment about some activity or characteristic of theirs (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). Cooley's 'looking-glass self' (1902) illustrates the reflective knowledge about oneself in terms of how individuals are conscious about their appearance and how the imagination of seeing through another's eyes affects the feelings and perceptions of the concept of the self. This 'looking-glass self' functioned power of shame that Confucianism values regulate Chinese people's public conduct. Shame functions as a social control mechanism that makes use of the emotion's aversive properties. "*Shame often occurs when a person becomes aware of him/herself as having violated a moral standard, goal or social convention, it leads typically to expressive behaviors of hiding the face, turning away, and escaping.*" (Li et al, 2004). Shame to the Chinese is not a mere emotion, but also a moral and virtuous sensibility to be pursued (Hu 1944, Hwang 1987). It is closely related to moral concerns and encourages people to face their wrongdoings and to amend themselves, a process by which they can be reintegrated back into the community (Mascolo et al., 2003). For a Chinese person, when one has done something wrong or socially inappropriate, admitting one's misconduct and desiring to change oneself is also believed to be an act of expiation requiring personal courage (Wu & Lai, 1992).

2.4.1.1.3 Discussion

Chinese social development and Confucius' profound influence in the construction of individuals' social identities have imposed many restrictions on an individual to develop a united private self and public self. Individuals (male and female) have specific social positions, responsibilities and social roles to perform in the social hierarchy and he/she relies on those allocated social roles to define himself/herself. The male is expected to take the dominant role in society and family and the female holding the dominated position is taught differently in terms of their expected behaviour. In the fashion consumption field, habitus of such long cultural inheritance may be presented.

2.4.1.2 Cultural Capital, Political Capital, and Economic Capital in Chinese Society

2.4.1.2.1 Cultural Capital: Confucian intellectualism

Central in governing the hierarchy in ancient Chinese society is Confucian intellectualism which emphasised the importance of study including classics, music, poetry, and calligraphy, but rejected other utilitarian and specialised studies such as agriculture, astronomy, and architecture, because they believed that literature studies produced a well-rounded being with a noble character who was eligible to govern others and the society (Lu, 1919). Literacy was served as a filter role in the selection of social elites (Laidler 2003, p.39).

Confucius believed that educated people were much more superior to those uneducated. The social hierarchy in ancient China was based on occupations, *shi* (scholars) were ranked on the top of the social hierarchy above *nong* (peasants), *gong* (artisans and craftsmen), and the *shang* (merchants and traders) (Wikipedia: Four Occupations 2012). Lu Xun, a leading figure of modern Chinese literature and renowned for his ironic writing styles, portrayed a life-long student Kong Yi Ji who constantly failed in national examinations and lived in a miserable disrespectful life due to his pride in his 'intellect' which has no practical use, but vanity (Lu, 1919). Mencius (Meng-tse) (1932) arguably the ablest of Confucius' disciples, commented on the hierarchy of people in terms of their choice of work which represents the dominance obedience relationships in the nature of work people do (e.g. the governing and the governed, or the labourer and the intellectual).

'Great men have their proper business and little men have their proper business...Some labour with their minds and some labour with their strength. Those who labour with their minds govern others; those who labour with their strength are governed by others. Those who are governed by others support them; those who govern others are supported by them.' (Laidler 2003, p.39)

To this day, the notion of Confucius "*Of all kinds of careers, (literary) scholars are the best*" still exists in Chinese society. The university entrance examination is still the most important national exam and is perceived to be the way up the social ladder and educated people are highly regarded (Bond, 1992). On the other hand, Hesler

(2001) noticed how the agricultural people were despised by urban people who usually use language to express such emotions. The term 'tu', the antonym of 'yang' (means fashionable), was to describe those who had no taste and understanding of aesthetics as a result of non-education. On the other hand, it shows that the prejudice of social advantage in geography (countryside vs. urban) and educational credentials in living in the city among Chinese people.

“Nongmin, literally ‘agricultural people’, and in English it is usually translated as ‘peasant’. In some ways that is an inaccurate translation, calling to mind feudal Europe, but also a term like ‘farmer’ fails to convey the negative connotations that are associated with working the land in China. Roughly 75 per cent of the population is involved in agriculture, and the divide between these people and the urban Chinese is one of the most striking gaps in the country. City dwellers can recognize a peasant at a single glance, and they are victims of prejudice and condescension. Even the word for soil-tu-can be applied to people as a derogatory adjective, meaning unrefined and uncouth.” (Hessler 2001, p.228)

Another important doctrine from Confucius is ‘Zhong-Yong’ - The Doctrine of the Mean. It is an ontological and moral concept (Tian, 2004). Confucius called for an individual to cultivate a means of ‘Zhong-Yong’ in one’s life which means moderation in terms of the attitude each individual has towards the world including the way one socializes with others. For Confucius, going to the extreme was a sign of lack of individual cultivation and the best of human life is attained through practical cultivation of the social self (Yu, 2007). The goal of life for Confucius was to become a *junzi* (君子 a superior, virtuous person) through cultivating virtues such as *li* (禮 ritual propriety), *yi* (義 righteousness), and *ren* (仁 benevolence) (Yao, 2000). The fully cultivated self in fact was a moral intellectualism as the Confucius’ utmost goal was to advocate people’s commitment to moral life to achieve not only individual contemplative wisdom, but more importantly dedication to society and social harmony. Those virtues and cultivation would be best to start from at childhood (Ni, 2009).

There are some significant differences between Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital accumulation process and Confucian intellectualism. Confucian encouraged men to become a well-rounded being which required the need for life-long learning (xue 學) and reflecting (si 思) which was to fully cultivate the self (xiu ji 脩己). Cheng (1949, p.2), a Chinese ambassador to Britain in his letter to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization states that "*a person is not esteemed or honored on account of his origin or birth or riches, but solely on account of his knowledge and learning*". This message indicates that individuals who are able to climb the social ladders should demonstrate one's learning and knowledge, but not necessarily with the support of strong social or family backgrounds.

Confucian intellectualism emphasised the lengthy, conscious, and committed learning process. A cultural comparison study (Li, 2005) suggests that Western learning beliefs are mind-oriented and Chinese learning beliefs are personal virtue-oriented. Americans value mentally oriented understanding and their understanding is achieved by articulation, analysis, and reasoning rather than by experience, practice, or meditation and understanding alone is not central to their learning beliefs. For the Chinese, the purposes of learning are mainly to perfect themselves morally and socially, to achieve mastery of the material, and to contribute to society. To accomplish these aims, the learner needs to develop the virtues of resolve, diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance, and concentration. These virtues are not task-specific but are viewed as enduring personal dispositions that are more essential than actual learning activities (e.g., reading), and they are believed applicable to all learning activities and processes. Hence, learning may include any subject matter and requires some profound thinking process and reflectivity (Li, 2005). The main basis to be a learner was to seek knowledge, study, and become a better person, so Confucius said that "*to be fond of learning is near to wisdom...*"

This basic orientation — to become a better (more virtuous) person — is still believed to this day, in Chinese culture, to be the most essential quality for any learner (Chan, 1963). Cheng (1996) found that parents in China, whether well off or destitute, expected their children through schooling to become knowledgeable of the world, able to function well in social relations, and, most important of all, become morally

cultivated. Because learning beliefs are not innate but develop through the process of socialization together with individuals' own active construction, the beliefs are profoundly influenced by cultural value systems (Li, 2005). Huss and Azuma (1991) suggest that those beliefs developed in childhood become stronger, not weaker, as we grow older. This implies that the Chinese people respect to knowledge and regard learning as a lifelong commitment.

2.4.1.2.2 Political Capital: Mao's Ideology

Mao's China was a bureaucratic and state centred socialist country with a bureaucratic command economy (Bian et al., 2005). Wu (2008) studied educational stratification in socialist China from the onset of communist rule in 1949 to 1996 and found that the process of social stratification in socialist China has been shaped by massive state intervention. This is inevitably associated with its cadre-dominated social structure in which state cadres occupied prestigious administrative, managerial, and professional jobs and represented 5% of the workforce and 20% of the urban labour force (Bian et al., 2005). The cadres, in strategically advanced positions for acquiring the most valuable resources, were socially distinctive from industrial workers and superior to professionals and managers (Li 1995, Davis 2000). There has always been a profound social division between peasants and urban-dwellers (Hessler, 2001). However, despite the social division, China was a relatively egalitarian society (Buckley, 1999). The PRC Gini Coefficient was 0.22 in 1978 (one of the most equal ever recorded) (Adelmen & Sunding, 1987) and 0.496 in 2007 (one of the most unequal along with Brazil, Zambia and Uganda) respectively¹ (Xinhua, 2007).

Mao, the revolutionist, attempted to change China's well established social structure, social hierarchy, and ideology through a series of political movements. Maoist class struggle did not refer to active social divisions but to roughly applied concepts of blood lineage, and expediency (Donald & Zhang, 2009). The whole of Mao's generation (interviewees' parents' generation) had experienced too much political baptism with a minimum of product stimulation and aesthetic education. The basic mechanisms of cultural capital simply did not exist: there was a lack of both economic

¹ A standard index of inequality is the Gini Coefficient that ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to 1.

and cultural resources (Chang, 1993); interrupted social order as result of a series of political movements (e.g. Cultural Revolution) (Liu, 1990); and restricted individual aesthetic view (Kunz, 1996). Generations in Mao's era did not have any experiences in consuming material culture, neither in terms of aesthetic appreciation nor cultivation. The economic capital and cultural capital hierarchy and the importance in determining consumers' social class conditions in China before Deng's economic reform were completely nonexistent.

Since late imperial times (1368-1912) *jieji* (social class) was not a fixed system of distinction in China. Personal political effort to achieve bureaucratic distinction, rather than through birth right became the determining factor in social classification (Donald & Zheng, 2009). In Mao's era, his notion of *jieji* highlights distinction based on political performance and people were classified based on who was 'redder' in terms of political pursuit (Chang, 1993).

2.4.1.2.3 Economic Capital: Deng's Policy

Deng's market oriented economic reform has brought social transformation and has shifted China to a socially differentiated society, but how much has it changed China's social structure? Bian et al (2005) found three clusters of social classes that have distinctive patterns of social ties. Manual workers are almost socially isolated, as they have no social connections with other social classes, whereas the bureaucratic elites experience advantageous social and networking power and their success is inevitably associated with their relationships with government officials. Buckley (1999) argues that since the social transformation is extended and uneven, access to bureaucratic power and influence remains an important social advantage. Some studies of Chinese society (e.g. So 2003, Walder 1994, Oi 1992) show that Mao's cadres take advantage of their previous ruling class positions to acquire social and economic resources for personal or family benefits in business opportunities. Buckley (1999, p.212) points out that the most privileged and most visible section of the newly rich are the wealthiest of entrepreneurs and the offspring of senior government officials or "*party of princelings*" who dominate many new companies and enterprises. The opening up policy for economic reform has given status to people

who are equipped with more economic capital and human capital, because getting rich in contemporary urban China requires not only entrepreneurial skills, but also the ability to access bureaucratic power. This can be demonstrated by examining the most successful entrepreneurs in contemporary China as they do possess important entrepreneurial skills but are also able to access bureaucratic power, and the latter as '*organisational capital*' which defines the status hierarchy in China (Wright 1985, p.80). Those who have achieved and succeed in the business world are people who have the largest quantity of those resources (Buckley, 1999), and know how to take advantage of their political and social capital (Goodman, 1996).

The economic reforms and opening-up have expanded opportunities for people to make money by exploiting their skills and resources in the new market environment. It was believed that many of those benefiterers are entrepreneurs and professionals working in the business world. Lu (2002) argues that the percentage of owners of private enterprises, office workers, and business and service workers have surged dramatically over the past two decades. Nationally, the registered number of private entrepreneurs reached more than two million in 1997 and they hired 12 million workers (Bian, 2002). This is even more dramatic given that privately owned enterprises were all eliminated by 1958 and were considered illegal until after the economic reform in 1988.

2.4.1.2.4 Discussion: State Policy and Life Chances

Sociologists studying China's social development have long recognized that the life chances of social groups are decisively affected by state policies that shape both opportunity structures and social status structures (Whyte & Parish 1984, Zhou & Hou 1999). The shifting state policies meant that individuals' life courses could be dramatically disrupted and altered. Whyte (1985) examined the politics of life chances in this light and found that shifting state policies in different historical periods had created distinctive opportunity structures and also significantly affected the life chances of different cohorts. The parents' generation of interviewees experienced many major social movements from Japanese invasion (1937-1945) which was intertwined with Chinese civil war (1931- 1949) between Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist party, to Mao's era and Deng's economic reform. Many governments had

been in power throughout those years with various policies severing their own political agenda. The life chances of the interviewees' parent's generation could be affected and altered severely due to those social changes. For example, the economic conditions and Mao's political agenda may have deeply limited their experience with material culture and left them prone to choose less individualized clothing styles (Kunz, 1996).

2.4.1.3 Habitus – the Accumulation of Cultural Capital

This study views cultural capital as particular tastes and aesthetic views is cultivated by the Chinese luxury fashion consumers under China's specific socio-cultural environment that the informants use to define individual identity and mark social distinctions. Taking the structuring role of the habitus, this study will examine the informants' generative scheme: thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions that structure their tastes, give rise to their conspicuous consumption practices, and set limits on their assumptions and investments of the luxury consumption field.

The newly rich Chinese's upward social trajectory has been gained through economic success linked to taking up occupations that have been the main workforce contributing to Deng's grand economic development through alliances with foreign enterprises. In the fashion consumption field, the taste of luxury and aesthetic experiences are supposed to be embodied and cultivated from an early age through interactions with a wealth of material cultural objects (Bourdieu, 1984). Unfortunately, the newly rich consumers did not have such habitus to underpin their luxury fashion consumption, due their lack of inherited cultural capital from previous generations in terms of these specific product types.

2.4.1.4 Bourdieu's Symbolic Group Formation in a Chinese Context

Bourdieu's central focus for developing a '*genetic theory of groups*' can be seen through his emphasis on the classification dimension of class relations. He believes that groups emerge in reality only if there is symbolic work to form group identity (Swartz 1997, p.186). The possibility of group existence depends on both shared life chances and their symbolic representations. According to Bourdieu (1984, p.6), the

constructed social classes are defined in terms of '*similar positions in social space*' that provide '*similar conditions of existence and conditioning*' and therefore create '*similar dispositions*' which in turn generate '*similar practices*'. Bourdieu (1984) discussed extensively about the dispositions that constitute a class habitus are learned in the family, school, and neighbourhood and unavoidably reflect the material conditions and social conditionings that one experiences as the result of one's location. This means that members of these classes will "*have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances*" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 231). This is Bourdieu's notion of classes-on-paper which are made up of individuals who happen to occupy similar positions in multidimensional "*capital space*" (i.e., they possess similar amounts and types of capital), but not necessarily share same social group identity (Allen & Anderson 1994, p.71). It can become '*classes-in-reality*' only if there is symbolic and political work to give them actual identity and mobilization (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu's notion of classes-on-paper allows this study to go beyond those traditional ways of social classification and examination, instead through the understanding of the logic of consumption practice and the generative scheme that shapes their tastes and practices. The study will discover the social distinction of taste through the informants' own apprehensions of how one classifies and is classified by others.

2.4.2 Literature Review of Studies in Bourdieu and Chinese Culture

There are some sporadic studies applying Bourdieu's cultural capital theory in Chinese cultural context. The following reviewed some studies relevant to this study. However, no study has been conducted in fashion consumption field.

Donald and Zheng (2009) suggest that the absence of clearly defined class categories in China makes the status seeking behaviour of Chinese elites and middle-income workers. To name the newly emerged middle class, the Chinese government use the word *xiaokang* (translation as '*relatively affluent society*') to lump together the well-off, the rich, and the super-rich as one class or no class is a way to deny class division. Consequently, Chinese people have a varying sense of social classifications. The Chinese government advocate the middle class should not only be economically well-

off, but also high in spiritual-cultural quality. Taste is thus “*allied to social value and in tune to the harmonisation of cultural and political behaviours*” (ibid., p.5). They suggest that post-socialist Chinese social stratification, as one direct consequence of the Party State’s reform policy, demonstrates dramatic time compression - a condition neither understood nor elaborated in Bourdieu’s model.

There are an increasing number of Chinese students studying overseas since 1990. Stafford (2004) investigated this social phenomenon as to why the Chinese sent their children to study abroad instead of choosing the national educational system. This study suggested that this is a strategy of accumulating cultural capital and a good wish for future investment. This social trend has historical roots in the 1880’s represented by the Chinese Education Mission whereby hundreds of teenagers were selected to study in America. The overseas education endowed them with the embodied cultural capital and the returnees contributed to the modernisation of Chinese society and gained individual success. The overseas educational qualifications became institutionalised cultural capital and the government made relentless efforts to entice overseas graduates back to China. Unlike the traditional way of achieving social mobility through national exams, an overseas education is expensive and remains an exclusive opportunity for social groups that have both social and economic resources. Hence, overseas study has become a sign of social status, rather than containing a particular goal or mission like the first educational mission in the 1880’s. Stafford (2004) argues that overseas education plays an important role in class reproduction and legitimising social status for the middle class of Chinese. Walter (2006) investigated Hong Kong’s middle-class families’ strategies of sending their children to study in Canada as a way to maintain the scarcity of educational qualifications which later serve to support migration to achieve social class reproduction.

Studying in the same areas, Huang (2002) suggested that the Chinese’s overseas study is a way to raise foreign cultural capital. Its historical roots were initiated in 1880’s and the educational mission experienced a process from negative meaning to positive capital. All of the students in the first Chinese group sent to America were from peasant backgrounds. Their family background and social status would not help them to advance their social positions and career development without their foreign education. With the active role it played both in modernising China and promoting

foreign studies, Western education began to be accepted by the Chinese. Foreign education (mainly Western education) gradually replaced traditional Chinese education as the dominating cultural capital and the most important means of social mobility in modern China.

Wang et al (2006) studied the reading habits across social classes and found that the volume and composition of cultural capital varies across social class independent of education. Thus, book reading habits are closely related to profession, education, gender, and cities of residence. Cultural capital in the form of diversified knowledge and an appreciation for certain genres or specific authors is unevenly distributed across social classes and regions. Managers and professionals tend to have wider ranging reading lists than the working class or self-employed. However, they classified social class only based on professions (job descriptions by interviewees), whereas Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital contributing to social class classification and cultural reproduction contains a great deal of inherited habitus, such as book reading. What one is likely read is not only associated with one's current social positions, but also reveals one's family's unconscious influence during childhood. Unfortunately, this study has not considered this important element in book reading.

2.5 Research Question

Different researchers have featured Chinese consumers' conspicuous consumption, emphasising their excessive expenditure on luxury consumer goods and associating this behaviour with overt displays of their newly found wealth. There are two streams of studies linked to the explanation of modern Chinese consumers' conspicuous consumption. Some studies suggest that cultural globalisation has had the most significant impact on Chinese luxury consumption. This explanation is aligned with global cultural research assumptions, which adopt Veblen's trickledown theory and depicts an uninterrupted cultural power force flowing from HICs to LICs. Another research stream in the study of Chinese luxury consumption attempts to explain status consumption from a Chinese face value perspective. In this stream of research, the concept of face, mainly gaining face for individuals and their families, has been considered to be the driving force in Chinese conspicuous consumption.

However, neither of these theories can provide an effective tool to understand the dialectic relations between personal taste and the social structure and cultural forces shaping individual taste in consumption field struggle. Neither can they explain the individual or group variations in adopting differing consumption practices. However, Bourdieu's field analysis may provide a more effective research tool to understand this social phenomenon. Adopting Bourdieu's field analysis approach, this dissertation is also inspired by Holt's (1998) study of status consumption in the US context. He suggests further research into collectivist cultures like Japan and the necessity to develop analysis into the interaction of class and gender when studying status consumption. Hence, their studies (Üstüner & Holt 2010, Holt 1998) have set up a template and guideline for this study in terms of how Chinese conspicuous consumption behaviour could be studied.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the Chinese newly rich consumers' status consumption practice as an indication of social distinction in the process of luxury fashion consumption. The key research question is: **What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption??**

Bourdieu's relational concepts addressing taste, practice, habitus, and field (doxa and illusio) will be adopted to assist the investigation, for they provide a multidimensional perspective in understanding cultural practice of status consumption:

- Cultural capital & consumption practice: What taste and consumption practice are important in social distinction?
- Habitus: How their classifying tastes are shaped and developed (How do you learn the rules of the game)? What are the logics underpinning those practices (the generative scheme: thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions that structure their tastes and give rise to their conspicuous consumption)?
- Field: What field environment they think that they are in and their commitments to play the game?

- Doxa: what are the fundamental beliefs and underlying assumptions (unspoken and unspeakable) when playing the luxury consumption game?
- Illusio: how do they challenge or reject shared beliefs in the status quo in the process of luxury fashion consumption?

A specific social group is of particular interest to this study. 80 per cent of the Chinese luxury consumption is undertaken by generation 1 (G1) (Barton et al, 2013). Born in the 70's, this generation, with the whole experience of trajectory of upward social mobility, have lived through years of food and material shortage in the Mao era, but they later benefited from Deng's economic reforms by gaining access to higher education and later achieved substantial economic success. They encountered Western consumer culture and consumed Western luxury brands during adulthood. Hence, the conflicting attributes that exist in the social field among consumers from G1 are: frugal vs. luxury, West vs. East, tradition vs. modern, collectivity vs. individuality. This study will also examine how the G1 consumers' consumption practices differ due to the variance of social categories, such as gender and occupation, which Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010) have not given any attention to in their study of status consumption practices.

2.6 Summary

This review of the study of conspicuous consumption in the Chinese context argues that both streams of studies, from the global cultural power context and from the Chinese face value perspective, lack an integrated perspective in understanding how Chinese consumer's status consumption practices operate. Bourdieu's view of status consumption as social classification and his relational theory in explaining the multidimensional social space and domination strategies provides a framework for data analysis. The key research question is: What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption? In order to examine this issue, the research will concentrate on those born in the 70's, known as generation 1 (G1).

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Outline

This chapter provides three sections: the first is a consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of this research; second there is a section devoted to exploring critiques of Bourdieu and Holt's work; and finally, a series of empirical, research design issues will be discussed in terms of the chosen research techniques and data analysis steps.

3.2 Research Methodology - The Qualitative Method

The research question that has been identified (What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption?) is best addressed through an interpretive approach to both data collection and data analysis. Although Bourdieu's work has in the past been operationalised through a quantitative, survey based approach (e.g. Peterson 1992, Peterson & Simkus 1992, DiMaggio & Useem 1978), Holt (1998) points out that for research seeking to characterise consumption practices it is not enough to know whether a specific object is owned or admired by a consumer, but in order to know whether their consumption is driven by pecuniary display or cultural sophistication it is necessary to know what meanings the item holds for its owner and whether they, *"use the connoisseur's vocabulary of expertise and passion to talk about their preferences"* (p.17).

This study therefore takes the subjective-order perspective in consumer research aiming to understand individual perceptions and fashion consumption experiences in daily life. Tadjewski (2006, p.430) notes that *"A methodological strategy to 'understand' the lived experience of consumer interpretive researchers generally – although not exclusively – uses qualitative methods"*. Qualitative research is characterised as descriptive and interpretive and emphasizes the analysis of the subjective accounts involving the researcher getting inside situations of the informants' daily lives. The ideographic method stresses the importance of letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation

(Burrell & Morgan, 1992). Crites (1986) points out that individual experience can be told through the form of narrative or story telling by which one retrieves their own self in the past and establishes differentiations from others. The story narrated by the individual self profoundly expresses one's personal meanings and exclusively elaborates the narrator's viewpoint. It is through narrative that one creates and establishes a strong sense of self distinguishing oneself from others. Therefore, narrative is one of the primary means by which people construct a continuous life of experience and self-identity, as well as a way that allows researchers to understand the deeper meanings of their social lives.

3.2.1 Data Collecting Techniques

For qualitative inquiries, observation and individual interview are widely used. McCracken's long interview (1988b) is considered as most appropriate to use in the second phase of fieldwork, as it can last for four hours or more and will often involve more than one interview. This study will focus on informants' established impression formation and their own construction and interpretation of different forms of representation within situational dynamics and larger cultural contexts. Therefore, 'thick description' specific to this study is required to understand individual consumer's fashion consumption experience located in their lived world.

Appropriate prompts during the interview are important in helping the story teller reconstruct their lived experience and explicitly express their viewpoint in a certain context. Thompson et al (1989a & 1989b) and McCracken (1988b) discuss in a great detail in terms of the interviewer's interview techniques. They suggest that the interviewer carry out a non-directive inquiry, creating a friendly atmosphere, revolving around key terms to encourage informants' thick descriptions (Thompson et al., 1989a & 1989b). McCracken (1988b) suggested that the researcher should concentrate on listening to issues like 'what is most striking about the incidents?', 'was it a surprise?', 'did it contradict?' The key terms include the assumptions of the story; the companion terms; the interrelationship of the terms; if it is not forthcoming, sub-questions (prompts) will be used (McCracken, 1988b).

3.2.2 Qualitative Research Limitations

Qualitative research has limitations. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) point out that many critics of one approach are judged based on the evaluative criteria of the other. Sarantokos (1993) also notes that many of the perceived weaknesses of qualitative research reflect the positivistic prejudice of assessment. However, because of their different beliefs towards philosophical assumptions, both approaches have faced some general criticisms regarding research process and outcome. The general criticisms for the positivist approach are the problem of induction (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988); the validity of objective observations (Anderson, 1983); the subjective and objective truth (Rubinstein, 1981). Hudson and Ozanne (1988) discussed a number of criticisms of the interpretive approach ranging from philosophical beliefs to research method and boundaries, such as ‘empathetic identification’ and ‘research bias’.

3.2.3 Qualitative Data Interpretation: Social Reality and Multiple Meanings

The interpretive approach requires a veridical interpretation which can be done through the investigator’s ‘intuition’ and ‘empathy’ (Hirschman, 1986). ‘Intuition’ enables the researcher to have the ability to translate comprehension of the phenomenon into knowledge and communicate with other audiences. ‘Empathy’ requires researcher to be able to relive other’s mental experience which means to understand how they think, feel, and believe. However, there are criticisms of such requirements, first of all, it is impossible to experience another’s thoughts; secondly, it is difficult to validate empathetic identification; thirdly, having a mental experience does not mean that one understands it; e.g. it is the psychiatrist who understands depression, but the patient experiencing it.

In consumer research, the main concern lies on the multiple realities that exist in the consumers’ lived world and how to reflect the multiple realities in a consumer’s world is the key issue to justify the credibility of an interpretive inquiry (Spiggle 1994, Szmigin & Foxall 2000). Hirschman and Holbrook (1986) point out that the ‘reality’ that matters most during consumption is that which is subjectively experienced in the consumer’s mind. This experience is real to the consumer and the social reality in a

consumer's own terms can be overlapped and intertwined with other issues in their lives (Hirschman, 1986). Szmigin and Foxall (2000) argue that the interpretive research approach helps researchers represent the fluidity, complexity and dynamism of the consumer world. Hirschman and Holbrook (1986, p263) acknowledge the complexity of the consumption experience and argue that trying to understand the consumption experience other than as a complex system of mutually overlapping interdependencies is probably an elusive goal. They conclude:

“Thus, in the end, the long sought-after consumption experience must be viewed as an emergent property that results from the interrelationships and overlaps among person, environment, thought, emotion, activity, and value.”

This raises a question: how do researchers produce a story which is complex enough to contain the multiplicities and inconsistencies that exist in the data obtained in this kind of research? The arising methodological issues are discussed specifically by McCarthy et al. (2003, p.20) who asked: *‘Are we obliged to construct one overall story, or should we take a more postmodern position, leaving loose threads and contradictions?’*. They conclude that the researcher's account needs to reflect multiplicity rather than attempting to produce one overall story but they recognize that this conclusion is problematic: *‘How this multiplicity and contradiction is then conveyed by the researcher opens up a whole new set of questions’* (ibid., p.20). Warin et al. (2007) argue that it is the role of research to synthesize competing interpretations of events, presenting the ‘least false’ interpretation rather than attempting to present a relativist set of competing interpretations and leaving it up to the research audience to choose between these. Therefore, the researcher should aim to construct an overall story, a story that reflects the researcher's own position and contains the complexity and inconsistencies of the respondents' accounts, as well as the researcher's own influences within the making of the story.

Since consumer research has an aim to understand the collective behavior and consumption pattern, generalization is the goal to achieve even for qualitative research. However, this study does not aim for generalizing a population, but rather means that it is an analytical generalization.

Clothing consumption is highly context dependent (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). The meaning and consumer choice are in constant flux depending on each situation (Murray, 2002). Without the proper sociocultural context, it becomes difficult to make sense of consumers expressing opposing values and beliefs as part of social identity negotiation process (Thompson & Haytko 1997, Murray 2002). Hence, it is crucial to look at social context in each individual circumstance.

3.3 Critique of Bourdieu and Holt's Approach

3.3.1 Bourdieu's Conceptual Framework and Phenomenology

One of the central tenets of Bourdieu's (1977, 1985 & 1987) conceptual framework is to reject traditional theoretical and methodological divisions between the subjectivism/objectivism dichotomy in philosophy and social sciences. In particular, his key concept habitus aimed to transcend the traditional dichotomies of subjectivism and objectivism by emphasising the mutually penetrating reality of individual subjectivity and societal objectivity. In merging these two traditions, Bourdieu "*purportedly allows habitus to explain individual experience while still retaining a view of the world as a set of relatively obdurate objective structures.*" (Throop & Murphy 2002, p.189). In Bourdieu's (1985, p.13) own words, habitus allows researchers '*to break away from the structuralist paradigm without falling back into the old philosophy of the subject or of consciousness*'. For Bourdieu, 'subjectivism' means "*all the forms of knowledge that focus on individual or inter-subjective consciousness and interaction*", whereas 'objectivism' means "*all the forms of knowledge that focus on statistical regularities of human conduct*" (Swartz 1997, p35).

Phenomenology is a discipline interested in "*how culture serves to shape worlds of experience*" and phenomenologists explore the structure of consciousness in human experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). Following Bourdieu's categorization, phenomenology is under the 'subjectivism' division collectively along with symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and existentialism. His view of subjectivism accommodates approaches including those emphasizing micro interaction, voluntarism, and methodological individualism. Creswell (1998, p.38) argues that,

“the phenomenological study focuses not on the life of an individual, but rather on a concept or phenomenon, and this form of study seeks to understand the meaning of experiences of individuals about this phenomenon”. More precisely, the aim of phenomenological study is to describe human experience as it is lived and the focus is on the lived world of the individual (Thompson et al., 1989b).

Although Bourdieu himself was initially sceptical about the ability of phenomenology to deliver the insights required to research habitus and field, Bourdieu (2000), through rereading Schutz’s (1962) social phenomenology which seeks to explain the nature of what are observed both as actors in the world and as professional researchers (Goodwin, 1994), grants phenomenology *“more leeway than in the past... and claim that phenomenological analysis is at least sufficient if one takes into account habitus”* (Throop & Murphy 2002, p.197). Swartz (1997, p.30) notes that the influence of phenomenology and existentialism in Bourdieu’s work is evident both *“substantively and conceptually”*. For example, Bourdieu’s habitus and field practice are a direct reference to human experience in the lived world. Bourdieu (1967) takes the idea from phenomenology that even the most mundane activities of human life are subjected to philosophical inquiry. Phenomenology takes the *doxic* life-world as a significant field of exploration in its own right, while also comprehending the necessity for providing a genetic account for the emergence of that same field (Throop & Murphy, 2002). Conceptually, he reintroduced the notion of agency into structural analysis which reflected the influence of existentialism.

In summary, the benefit of adopting phenomenology as ontological assumption is that it allows the researcher to adopt the qualitative approach by investigating the cultural patterning of subjective experience, and in particular for this study, the taste and fashion consumption practice of the Chinese newly rich consumers. A further important advantage of phenomenology is its ability to give *both* descriptive and generic accounts of experience that allow researchers to extract and develop a coherent understanding of interviewees’ social construction of identity and boundaries through everyday practice. Systematic phenomenological investigations of those structures of consciousness contribute to *“the patterning of experience, the attribution of meaning, and the cultural constitution of the life-world”* (Throop & Murphy 2002, p.201), as well as uncovering the internalised external structure that consumer’s

habitus' development in influencing field perception and practice. The implication for consumer research is that the researcher is not primarily interested in the subjective experiences of the so-called subjects or informants, for the sake of being able to report on how something is seen from their particular viewpoint or perspective. Rather, the aim is to collect examples of possible experiences in order to examine the meanings that may be inherent in them through the informants' voice and then be able to develop universal structures (Moustakas, 1994).

3.3.2 Research Method –The Critiques of Bourdieu's and Holt's Approach

3.3.2.1 Survey

Bourdieu's study of cultural capital presents an operational problem. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) uses survey data to identify the lifestyles and preferences of stratified occupational groups, for his concerns with status signals in relation to cultural consumption on a daily basis. However, surveys are far from a perfect instrument for capturing dispositions (Holt, 1997), albeit they serve the purpose of comparing the different modes of appropriation of culture and aspects of disinterestedness (Warde, 2011). Tastes as cultural capital vary depending on the volume of cultural and economic capital one holds with his/her occupational differences as well as level of education and income. Cultural capital has two dimensions here with credentials as dependent variables and preferences and behaviours as independent variables. He presents legitimate culture preferences and behaviours which are structured as "*binary oppositions such as high/low, pure/impure, distinguished/vulgar and aesthetic/useful*" (Bourdieu 1984, p.245), but without providing information on the statistical significance of the relationship. Lamont and Lareau (1988, p.158) suggest it is '*empirically insufficient-although analytically appealing*'.

Holt (1997) argues for an interpretive, post-structuralist approach to researching consumption which is based on the idea that all lifestyles are articulated by (implicit or explicit) references to relational differences to the lifestyles or practices of others. In addition, Lamont (2001, p.171), whose empirical work also focuses on inductively examining individuals' "boundary work" (how they define 'us' and 'them') suggests

that “*identity is constructed but bounded by the cultural repertoires to which people have access and the structural context in which they live*”. In other words, the meanings developed in the construction of identity are different from group to group and country to country, because of their differentiated social environments. They can also change over time. This means that the same action might have very different cultural meanings within and across different social groups and even for the same groups over time. What is important for researchers to understand then is not what consumers do, but what those actions mean to them and to others (Holt, 1997). Hence, consumer studies focusing on the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption agree that methods such as experiments, surveys, or database modelling can be less useful for researching sociocultural meanings than an interpretive approach (Sherry 1991, Geertz 1983).

3.3.2.2 The Limitations of Comparative Study

Comparative studies have been traditionally adopted to investigate high status cultural signals in consumption. A large stream of studies in cultural stratification would choose a series of cultural activities and preferences which are considered to be highbrow cultural in a given social setting and map their social distributions and then link the social differences to social positions. However, the results have proven to be increasingly difficult to confirm Bourdieu’s findings. Some scholars in recent studies even suggest that culture capital is no longer the sole social division (Warde, 2011).

Some consumption studies seek the pattern of consumption tastes (lifestyle) in relation to their social positions by ways of studying capitals and habitus (DiMaggio & Useem 1978, Peterson 1992, Peterson & Simkus 1992), but ignored the role that the objective structures of the social field have played on practice. Bourdieu’s (1998) practice is not determined by the habitus but is the outcome of the multiple relations and interactions between the diverse dimensions (field, capital, and habitus) as well as by the position of the agent in her relations to the other agents the history of the field, the personal history of the agent (and the way this history shaped her habitus) and the specific context at any given moment.

The comparative study presumes the social positions of two comparable groups and discovers the differences between them (Peterson, 2005). Bourdieu's cultural capital theory has been readapted by Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010) to allow researchers to differentiate between two distinctive groups. Holt (1998) used orientations shared within social groups to establish two differentiated social groups who have inherited status attainment. Üstüner and Holt (2010) took a similar approach to study Turkish upper middle-class consumers. Both studies only focused on the top and bottom quartile of cultural capital, two extreme social groups, with opposite characteristics.

Researchers raise two necessary conditions for successful comparative study: Firstly, Daloz (2011) argues that the comparative study of social boundaries proves to be limited in application only to those societies which are highly structured in terms of the capitals under study. Given the upheavals in terms of sociocultural structures experienced by Generation 1, coupled with their relative inexperience of luxury fashion consumption, it might be more complex to establish the existence of clearly differentiated social positions in the field of luxury fashion consumption in a Chinese context than Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010) found in their studies. Secondly, Holt's comparative approach requires the researcher to be knowledgeable in the social structure and signals of cultural capitals developed by the social groups they are studying before they enter the field (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Therefore, the inexperience of the researcher and her lack of current immersion in this field presented a further obstacle to taking a comparative approach for this study. However, Üstüner and Holt (2010) explicitly suggest further study of social trajectory groups, and the Generation 1 of Chinese consumers provide a good fit for this suggestion. On the basis of these considerations the purposeful sampling of the G1 social trajectory group therefore formed the basis of the sampling strategy for the data collection (Please see section 6.4 on how this decision not to undertake a comparative sampling approach has been a significant limitation for this study).

3.4 Confirming the Choice of Research Approach

An interpretive approach provides a deep insight into “*the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it*” (Schwandt 1994, p.118). The interpretive approach (Geertz, 1973) can apply to divergent cases such as allowing individual repertoire to take place or exploring in-depth dispositions associated with taste justification which enables the analyst to offer plausible explanations of singularity and commonality of elite distinction judgements of taste in relation to social positions.

The focus of this study is not to discover how lifestyle differences are structured in a similar fashion to that depicted in *Distinction*, that is, in accordance with the structures of social space. Instead, this study attempts to explore the social closure in tastes and the logics supporting their stated superiority from a particularly interesting social group – the social trajectory group which has emerged from China’s economic reform. By emphasising the subjective element of status judgement, this study will give voice to these key game players in the luxury fashion consumption field and shed light on how consumers themselves evaluate and classify others based on taste and lifestyle difference.

Through the detailed examination of individual cases, this study will examine both private and public fashion choices to lay out each individual’s repertoire of taste whether they are at home or at work and provide an overview in terms of how individuals deploy their judgement of taste in their personal strategies in order to mark social distinction. This study will also cross examine their differentiated and collective tastes, habitus, and field struggles to gain insight into the process of defining symbolic boundaries as a newly emergent social group.

The reason for not choosing a constellation of objects to study in this research is because, first of all, the study of fashion itself in the past has been fruitful in discovering diverse meanings in individual vs. society, material vs. cultural, as well as symbolic vs. pragmatic aspect of consumption. Secondly, the empirical research in cultural classification through highbrow culture did not provide sufficient evidence as how to consider certain attributes of lifestyles function as capital (see Holt, 1998 for a

review of literature on this point). Cultural legitimation can vary widely within nations, and links to changing social structures and cultural practices throughout history. Therefore, the single choice of fashion consumption provides a relatively unified standard of references in terms of taste differences. Discussions of luxury fashion consumption will allow the differences in subjective evaluations of prestige and esteem as status groups to emerge.

Taking the view that China has presented its unique socio-cultural development route, the important merit of in-depth investigation in the field study is an effort to decode any significant distinctions from a contextually relevant setting. Hence, to unravel what makes sense to consumers, the interpretive approach allows the study to incorporate the cultural dimensions, to tackle the deep rooted cultural heritage and issues of social classification in the field of luxury fashion consumption.

3.5 Data Collection

Two phases of fieldwork were planned with a year interval in order to gain a better knowledge of the subject under investigation. The research strategy in the primary phase of the research involves ten individual interviews and two focus groups centred on stimulating discussions of participants' their consumption experiences and the interesting issues and terms such as taste and brand, as well as their feelings towards brands in the process of fashion consumption. From a methodological perspective, the primary research phase is also designed to explore and test different research techniques to encourage research informants to give detailed accounts of their consumption experiences.

The second phase of fieldwork was planned for the researcher to stay on site for three months and used the appropriate techniques and methods that could encourage 'thick description' of Chinese newly rich consumers' consumption experience. A further ten individual interviews were planned.

3.5.1 Data Collection Location: Beijing

There are many significant disparities among different regions of China and sharp differences exist between urban and rural dwellers. Based on the level of economic development and consumer purchasing power, Guangzhou (capital of Guangdong), Shanghai, and Beijing are the top three cities that have been the first few cities heavily involved in economic reform and have established some consumer culture characteristics. Many studies were conducted from first tier cities like Beijing (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2004), Shanghai (Wu & DeLong, 2006), Guangdong, H.K. and Taiwan as the main data collecting sites. Some data collection has also been undertaken in the second-tier cities: Liu & Wong (2004) collected their data from Jiangsu province (South China); Chen et al (2004) conducted their research in Zhengzhou (North China); Zhang et al (2008) compared consumption difference between inland cities (Harbin & Chengdu) and coastal areas (Shanghai and Guangzhou). **Figure 3-1** Shows map of China.

Figure 3-1 Map of China's Provinces & Cities



Sources: from http://www.travelchinaguide.com/map/china_map.htm

The affluent consumers that mostly dwell in the three big cities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) (McEwen et al 2006, Cui & Liu 2000), with relatively high-income levels, have always been chosen as the bases or prime target by foreign apparel retailers (Kwan et al., 2003). However, each city presents different cultural characters and consumer tastes because of their geographic locations and the historical influence of their surrounding areas (see Figure 3-1). Previous studies suggest that Beijing is located in the North of China and represents the Jing-Pai culture attaching great value to the Confucian doctrines of hierarchy, stability and control. Consumers are relatively conservative and emphasize intrinsic satisfaction, yet are still open to new product ideas (Ariga et al., 1997). Located in the South of China, Shanghai and Guangzhou represent Min-Yue Culture. Particularly, with plenty of contact with the outside world and great emphasis on mercantile entrepreneurship, consumers in Guangzhou in Guangdong province, about 7 per cent of the country's population, are among the most prosperous in China. Close to Hong Kong and Taiwan, they have long been exposed to foreign products and tend to emphasize conspicuous consumption (Ariga et al. 1997, Zhang et al. 2008, Cui & Liu 2000). As result, although consumers in Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing, all prefer imported foreign apparel brands in comparison to local ones (Zhang et al., 2008), the Northern Chinese consumers prefer simple and vogue styles, whereas the Southern Chinese prefer mature styles. Beijing consumers in particular are more emotional and receptive to advertising messages. Guangzhou customers are more selective and open to new products; Shanghai consumers are more cautious and price is an important consideration in their purchases (Kwan et al., 2003).

Data used in this study were collected in Beijing, the capital and the second largest city in China for both its relative high volume of cultural capital and economic capital. Beijing has a population of 12,780,000. Compared with other Chinese cities, Beijing has the largest proportion of university graduates and the lowest illiteracy rate (Hurun Report, 2010). In addition, there are more rich people in Beijing than other cities in China mainland. HSBC published '*the Richest People in China 2010*' report states that there are 55,000 individuals with thousand million Chinese Yuan (10million British Pounds) and 875,000 individuals with hundred thousand Chinese Yuan (1 million British Pounds) in 2010 which has risen 7.8% and 6.1% on the previous year,

respectively. Furthermore, the levels of income and spending are the second highest in China, after Shanghai (Kaigler-Walker & Gilbert, 2009).

3.5.2 Data Collection Method and Process

There were two stages of data collection. The first stage of data collection was intended as a pilot and the second data collection strategy was developed based on the outcome of the first stage data collection. The data analysis presented in Chapter Five (and Appendix II) was based on the data collected from the second phase.

The initial data collection began with personal referrals, a pre-screening questionnaire (see Appendix I), followed by in-depth individual interviews, and focus group discussions. Before the researcher went to Beijing, a pre-screening questionnaire was sent via email to her social contacts who were mainly working for foreign companies and joint ventures in Beijing, with an explanation of what the study aimed for, asking the recipient to feel free to forward the questionnaire to anyone they thought was appropriate. As a result, a total of 36 returned questionnaires were received. Based on the returned questionnaires, six individual interviews and one focus group discussion were arranged, as some of the informants preferred to be involved in group discussions while others had chosen individual interviews. Participants were selected based on the positions they held at their companies and their basic consumption preferences. Later, following a preliminary analysis of the first data set, I selected a further four individual interviewees from the pre-screening questionnaire and a second focus group was also organised. The researcher spent one month in Beijing actively engaging with informants and also to gain better ideas of the phenomenon under investigation.

The focus group discussions lasted for on average two hours, while the interviews ran from one to one and a half hours. The individual interviews and group discussions used a combined method of informal inquiry and projective techniques. During the interviews and group discussion, informants were asked a series of questions in relation to fashion consumption, from their recent purchases to what brands mean to

them using projective techniques such as collage board, projective questions, and sentence completion (Nonoghue, 2000).

The recruitment of informants used in the second phase of fieldwork was purposive sampling (Mark, 2000). The reason for changing tactics for the recruitment of informants was that the informants on the preliminary inquiry did not demonstrate a large contrast in status, education and occupation, despite the additional recruitment. Therefore, during the recruitment for the second phase of data collection, the researcher took every opportunity to search for fashion users through a larger social network aimed at establishing the contrast of the informants in status, education, and occupation. With regard to gender, six females and four males were selected. However, given the focus on Generation 1 consumers there was not much contrast in terms of age difference, as they all belong to the middle-aged group between 32 to 42 years of age.

For the second phase of fieldwork, the in-depth interview was selected as the primary data collection tool because it permits a focus on a participant's own expression of experience, and at the same time, provides an opportunity for the researcher to ask additional questions and clarify meanings of the responses (McCracken, 1988). In conducting the interviews, Thompson et al.'s (1989a) phenomenological interviewing and McCracken's long interview (1988b) provided clear direction. The focus of the second phase of the fieldwork was on exploring the informant's lived experience in fashion consumption by using a 'long interview' (McCracken, 1988b). The individual interviews adopted McCracken's long interview strategy in choosing fewer informants, but working with them longer to encourage story telling. Thompson et al. (1989a) suggest the researcher to have no prior questions concerning the topic. Subsequently, the interviews were highly unstructured and interviews aim to yield two complementary types of information: 1) a first-person description of fashion consumption experiences and history 2) contextual details concerning the informant's life world in relation to their consumption issues. Most interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours each time. All informants were interviewed at least twice, with two informants interviewed three times. Multiple interviews allowed

the development of rich, 'thick' narrative accounts. For a summary of interviewees and the number of contacts with each interviewee, see **Table 3-1**.

3.5.3 Researcher- as-Instrument

Denzin (1989, p.10) suggests that research is a two-way process in which the researcher operates between '*multiple worlds when engaging in research - the everyday worlds of the subjects and the world of his own sociological perspective*'. Sherry (1991) argues that future interpretive inquiry, he refers to postmodern inquiry, rests upon developing researcher-as-instrument. The researcher, responding as a whole person, serves as an instrument in the whole research process in observation, selection, co-ordination, and interpretation of data (Sandy, 1979). May (1993) emphasises that the researcher's biography becomes a fundamental part of the research process.

Bourdieu also advocates a reflexive sociology (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) by emphasising that "*it is only through a reflexive practice of social inquiry that one can hope to achieve a desirable degree of objectivity on the social world*" (Swartz 1997, p.11). That is to adopt a systematic and rigorous self-critical practice of social inquiry by using a reflexive monitoring of the cognitive and social condition. In other words, the researcher is required to be aware of his/her own perspective, and being clear about how this perspective, and the perspectives of others, may influence, and be sustained throughout the research process (Van de Ven, 2007). Golsorkhi et al. (2009, p.789) clarified further that "*analysing one's relation to the object of inquiry does not mean relating the subjective experience of research and producing a self-referential and narcissistic account of this experience. It means insisting on the social conditions which act as boundaries within which the act of knowledge becomes possible.*"

The researcher's role in this social exchange is shaped by the social, historical and philosophical positioning (Harding, 1987). This positioning cannot be denied, neutralised or transcended; rather, the researcher's positioning has to be clearly perceived in order to be free from personal bias. For this reason, the researcher's story is told here as follows. I had personal experience in fashion consumption and enjoyed

a privileged lifestyle in Beijing. I had worked for a H.K. based company for some years before coming to study in the U.K. I made a good living that allowed me to afford fashion brands which I used to create different styles on a daily basis. When I came to Scotland to study marketing, consumer behaviour as part of the marketing module was extremely appealing to me, because it provided a wide sociological linkage and explanations with theoretical underpinning for human behaviour. In particular, I was intrigued by how consumption choice could reflect an individual consumer's persona and the association with a wide range of personal constructs of social issues.

I entered the field with some pre-understanding (Gummesson, 1991) as I grew up in Beijing and experienced post Mao and Deng's social environment as others of same generation. I used to work for a foreign enterprise and socialised with the so called white collar or golden collar groups and developed a general understanding about the professional groups, the social environments, the beliefs and values this generation hold. I saw the effect of the open-door policy and experienced fashion trends and people's reactions to them.

I shared many similar cultural values with the researched group, such as Chinese cultural values, educational levels, lifestyles, as well as the experience of economic development in China from Mao to Deng. Bourdieu (1999, p.612) considers this social equivalence between the researcher and the researched as "*perfect match...which lets respondents say everything...except what goes without saying.*" Having similar social cultural background, I found that it was easy to understand their dilemmas, struggles, and aspirations. However, Bourdieu (1993) considered that there is no science but of the hidden. What is hidden to agents in society is the reproduction mechanisms that they enact daily through their practices and, of which, they are largely unaware. I found that it was difficult to uncover the habitus and doxic assumptions that were hidden, unaware, because I had shared experiences with the informants at some stage in history.

Both advantage and drawback showed at the data interpretation stage. The data underlying cultural values and beliefs can be easily understood, but the social norms

or those taken-for-granted aspects were hard to find initially. However, much effort had to be made to uncover the hidden mechanisms, for instance, discussion with my supervisor who is from a non-Chinese background. In time, and through analytical discussions those overlooked aspects gradually became clearer. In addition, part of the research findings were presented in Transnational Clothing: Production and Consumption conference in Bath (Wei, 2011) and raised a wide discussion about Chinese consumption habitus and taste among international scholars.

3.5.4 Data Recording

Data analysis was based on the data collected from the second phase of fieldwork, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. The interviews were then translated by two Chinese university students majoring in English. Later when some more telephone interviews were conducted in the second phase of fieldwork, the same translators were used to achieve consistency in the use of vocabularies.

3.5.5 The Selection of Interview Informants

Stake (1995) refers to individual accounts as “cases” which are of interest to researchers both for their uniqueness and their commonality. This notion of case differs from Yin’s (1983) case study as a systematic research tool which is designed for different research aims. Consequently, the collection of data requires some rigorous selection of cases to serve a specific research purpose. For this research, individual in-depth interview is the sole data collection method and foundation for data analysis.

Most informants are over thirty years of age, well-travelled and living comfortably with sufficient financial resources. They were born during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, have experienced China’s economic reform and were reported to be sensitive to fashion trends. The following table (**Table 3-1**) presents the profile of interview participants

Table 3-1 Interview Participants' Personal Details

Name	Age	Gender	Education	Origin	Father's Profession	Occupation	Number of Interviews
Doris	34	F	BSc	Sichuan	Worker	Senior Manager	2
Grace	34	F	MA	Fujian	Factory worker	Senior Manager	2
Lily	38	F	High School	Beijing	Factory worker	Housewife	2
Lucy	42	F	BA	Beijing	Worker retired from Army	Senior Manager	2
Saline	35	F	BA	Beijing	Military officials	Restaurant owner	2
Zoë	33	F	BA	Nantong	Business Manager (China Petroleum)	Business owner	3
Clive	38	M	MBA (U.S.A)	Beijing	Social service official	Business owner	2
Wayne	38	M	MSc	Hunan	Farmer	Business owner	2
Leo	32	M	MBA	Hubei	Farmer	Student, former business manager	2
Quentin	34	M	MSc	Beijing	Military officials	Property developer	3

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Software Used

All of the documents for the interview transcripts were translated from Mandarin Chinese to English and typed into Microsoft Word and saved in the rich text format (RTF) and then imported into the Nvivo package. Qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 8, a software program designed for processing unstructured text, was used at

the initial stage of handling interview transcripts. For the purposes of this project, this software is used to store and retrieve coded data, rather than used to code and categorize data.

3.6.2 Data Analysis Process

The data analysis is based on the data collected during the second phase of fieldwork. There are two steps to achieve the interpretation of data, namely within case analysis and across case analysis (see **Table 3-2**), in an effort to both achieve the generalization of the whole cases and maintain the contextual richness (Ayres et al., 2003).

Different strategies and analytic focus are developed based on the goal of each step of analysis. My first analytic activity was to immerse myself in the data, reviewing each interview transcripts. Each interview was then analysed individually in constant relation to the whole data set. Then, each significant statement and consumption experience was identified, which were those phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that related directly to the individual's overall fashion consumption experience. The purpose of this phase of the analysis was to describe aspects of the phenomenon as experienced by each individual respondent. At this stage of analysis, the uniqueness of the individual and individual experience was highlighted aiming to show some exclusive characteristics that are only relevant to particular informants. I understand the importance of understanding each individual account in its own context, and also of developing a synthesis that captured the essence or variation of experience across individuals; answering questions, 'what would this interviewee want others to know about her/his experience?' "What is the uniqueness of his/her case?" The data analysis looked at each individual case holistically through the lens of Bourdieu's conceptual tools and paid extra attention to the structuring role of habitus.

The use of coding and sorting and the identification of themes are "*an important, even an indispensable, part of the (qualitative) research process*" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), but coding seems to work well to capture the commonalities of experience across cases but less well to capture the individual uniqueness within cases. Instead, I paid particular attention to patterns of individual significant statements and

experience. Themes were developed in a way that took into account particular factors that shaped individual interviewee's fashion taste and consumption practice. When all the themes in within cases emerged, I moved on to explore their relevance to Bourdieu's key concepts. The holistic view of each individual case study through the lens of Bourdieusian conceptualisation allowed me to uncover hidden mechanisms and logics underpinning their practices. To provide a consistent reading, the format was developed and presented based on Bourdieu's three key concepts.

The goal of across-case study was not to identify individual variations but rather to elicit and describe those aspects of the phenomenon that are common to all. To accomplish this goal, it is essential to make sense of each individual account and then compare across those accounts to identify themes that are common to all respondents' accounts. In fact, the within case analysis paves the way for the researcher to understand those aspects of experience that occur not as individual "units of meaning" but as part of the pattern formed by the confluence of meanings within individual accounts. As Sandelowski (1996, p.525) pointed out, "*looking at and through each case in a qualitative project is the basis*" of analytic interpretations and generalizations.

Across-case analysis contributed to the identification of collective understanding and consumption practices and the relationships between concepts across all interviewees. The across-case analysis in this study aimed to develop the generalisations that represent the multiple-accounts and were also meaningful at a theoretical level. To achieve this, the information relevant to all participants was identified and the commonality explored through back and forth comparison among individual accounts. Three topical areas emerged from this interpretation process: taste and consumption practice, habitus, and field (doxa and illusio). These three categories were interrelated and supported each other (see **Figure 5-2**). Once the categories were identified, I reconnected each significant statement to its original context and validated the categories.

Table 3-2 Within Case and Across Case Analytic Steps

Strategy	Analytic Focus	Outcomes
Immersion in each interview	Within case	Identification patterns and potential connections among each individual's significant statements and experience
Free writing	Within case	Answer questions, 'what would this interviewee want others to know about her/his experience?' "What is the uniqueness of his/her case?"
Reconnection of significant statements to interviewees	Within case	Ascertain each interviewee's significant statements and experience to individual background
Theoretical relevance	Within case	Identification of significance of interviewee's experience relevant to Bourdieu's cultural capital theory
Comparisons of significant statements	Across case	Identify categories of statements common to all participants
Organize categories of significant statements by themes	Across case	Identification of themes and relationships among themes
Reconnection of significant statements to interviews	Across case	Ascertain interviewee's patterns of taste and consumption practice to each interview transcript
Theoretical relevance	Across case	Exploring the relations between themes and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory
Comparing themes to Bourdieu's theoretical account	Summaries of themes	Identification of similarities and differences between themes and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory

Tesch (1990) described the mechanics of interpretive analysis as “*decontextualization and recontextualization*” because the process of analysis involves the breakdown of units that are separated from individual cases and then reorganised and reintegrated

into themes. These recontextualized data create a reduced data set drawn from across all cases and are used to explore theoretical or process relationships among these clusters of meanings.

3.6.3 The Reflexive Interpretation

Qualitative interpretation may provide a rich and multi-level understanding of social phenomena depending on not only the skill and professional ability of the qualitative researcher, but also the particular position and perspective that the research adopts. Therefore, it is important to increase self-awareness of the social forces shaping the researcher’s intellectual work and adopt reflective practice to achieve objectivity (Bourdieu 1990, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Alvesson and Skoldberg (2012, p.271) suggest using the term of “*reflexive interpretation*” as a way of indicating the open play of reflection across various levels of interpretation, including four levels: interaction with empirical material, interpretation, critical interpretation and reflection on text production and language use (see Table 3-3).

Table 3-3 Levels of Interpretation

Aspect/Level	Focus
Interaction with empirical material	Accounts in interviews, observation of situations and other empirical materials
Interpretation	Underlying meanings
Critical interpretation	Ideology, power, social reproduction
Reflection on text production and language use	Own text, claims to authority, selectivity of the voices represented in the text

Level one: the interaction with empirical material is at the very beginning of data constructing level where researchers conduct interviews, make observations and make preliminary interpretations. This level has been documented in Appendix II which presents the individual fashion discourses set in the context of each individual interviewee’s background and observations. The degree of interpretation is relatively low and more descriptive than interpretive.

Level two and three: This level involves data interpretation which is more systematic and guided by Bourdieu's relational theoretical framework. At this stage, the researcher has given certain themes priorities and importance, but allows other themes to recede. Partially, this reflects the researcher's own interests and also the limitations of awareness of the taken-for-granted aspect discussed above.

Level Four: The researcher believes that there could be many other ways to interpret the interview data. The data interpretation is obviously based on and limited by my own socio-cultural background, theoretical understanding, self-interests, problem solving skills, and perceptions and level of understanding of desired degree of objectivity.

Bourdieu rejects scientific positivism, but this does not mean that Bourdieu rejects all possibility of scientific objectivity in favour of a thoroughly interpretative and relativist approach to understanding the social world. Rather, *“he argues that it is only through a reflexive practice of social inquiry that one can hope to achieve a desirable degree of objectivity on the social world”* (Swartz 1997, p.11). That is to adopt a systematic and rigorous self-critical practice of social inquiry by using a reflexive monitoring of the cognitive and social condition. In other words, the researcher is required to be aware of his/her own perspective, and being clear about how this perspective, and the perspectives of others, may influence, and be sustained throughout the research process (Van de Ven, 2007). Golsorkhi et al. (2009, p.789) clarified further that *“analysing one's relation to the object of inquiry does not mean relating the subjective experience of research and producing a self-referential and narcissistic account of this experience. It means insisting on the social conditions which act as boundaries within which the act of knowledge becomes possible.”*

However, Bourdieu does not provide *“a single methodological recipe for achieving a properly reflexive posture”* (Swartz 1997, p.271). Rather, he discussed that there are three types of biases that may blur the sociological gaze, namely, the social origins and coordinates (e.g. class, gender, and ethnicity); analyst's position occupied in the academic field; and the intellectualist bias. Those bias needs to be controlled to achieve a reflexive practice of sociology (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Swartz 1997).

In this study, the first bias-social origins and coordinates is considered as the most relevant and will be discussed in detail as follow.

Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) suggests the researcher needs to control for the values, dispositions, attitudes and perceptions (habitus) that the researcher brings from his or her social background to the object of inquiry by identifying those personal dispositions and interests that infiltrate his or her own concepts, choice or research topics and methods. I am a native Beijing-born Chinese who has grown up in a family which holds a high volume of cultural capital, as both parents are highly educated professionals. I had a decent level of living conditions in childhood and was told and shown that material enjoyment in life is not as important as gaining educational credentials and that self-cultivation should be a lifelong commitment. I later received my undergraduate education in China and then pursued a Masters degree in the U.K. After I graduated from university in Beijing, I worked for a number of years in a foreign enterprise that closely cooperated with Europeans and American manufactures to serve Chinese B2B clients. My frequent involvement with my Western counterparts allowed me to identify differences of taste and dress sense between the Westerners and the Chinese I worked with. My Masters degree studies in marketing had raised my interest in understanding how Chinese consumers responded to the increasing living standards and abundant material life they were experiencing. The question became more urgent to answer when I came to study in the U.K. and noticed the increasing reports that the Chinese consumer buying power in the luxury and fashion sectors were a demonstration of a materialistic-driven motive. I questioned this unanimous explanation for this social phenomenon, because of my own personal experience and observations of my social contacts. Once I had an opportunity to conduct PhD research, I decided to explore the reasons for this social phenomenon by giving a voice to the consumers themselves.

I shared many similar cultural values with the researched group, such as Chinese cultural values, educational levels, lifestyles, as well as the experience of economic development in China from Mao to Deng. Bourdieu (1999, p.612) considers this social equivalence between the researcher and the researched as “*perfect match...which lets respondents say everything...except what goes without saying.*”

Having a similar social cultural background, I found that it was easy to understand their dilemmas, struggles, and aspirations. However, Bourdieu (1993) considered that there is no science but of the hidden. What is hidden to agents in society is the reproduction mechanisms that they enact daily through their practices and, of which, they are largely unaware. I initially found difficulties in uncovering the habitus and doxic assumptions that were hidden, as I was unaware of them as I had shared these tacit beliefs and practices with the informants in my past.

Both these advantages and drawbacks showed at the data interpretation stage. The data underlying cultural values and beliefs can be easily understood, but the social norms or those taken-for-granted aspects were hard to find initially. However, many efforts had made to uncover the hidden mechanism, for instance, discussion with my supervisor who is from non-Chinese background, those overlooked aspects became clearer with time passed by. In addition, part of the research findings presented in Transnational Clothing: Production and Consumption conference in Bath (Zhang, 2011) and raised a wide discussion about Chinese consumption habitus and taste among international scholars.

3.7 Summary

The qualitative research method, in particular the interpretive approach, was chosen for this study, in order to deliver the necessary data to address the identified research question. Two phases of fieldwork were conducted; the first one used snowball sampling in order to access more informants, while the second one adopted purposive sampling. The data analysis in Chapter Five is based on the data collected from the second phase of fieldwork. Ten interviewees were finalised for repeated, in-depth, individual interviews. Two steps of data analysis allowed within case and across case analysis to achieve analytical generalisation. Detailed data collection and interpretation process were discussed.

Chapter 4 History and Context of China's Fashion System

4.1 Outline

This chapter will review some key literatures from a fashion perspective and also provide background information on the social development of China's fashion system which has been influenced by some major political agendas.

4.2 Chinese Fashion

China's political, economic, and social change has exerted significant influences on fashion development and consumers' choice of clothing. Finnane's (2007) review of Chinese fashion stretches back to the Ming Dynasty (1368 C.E. – 1644 C.E.) to Post Mao era. It reveals China's political, economic, and cultural development with the changing dress of Chinese people. From the close-fitting jacket and high collar dress of the revolutionary time in 1911 to military style in the Cultural Revolution of the Mao era, Finnane (2007) delineates the volatility of Chinese clothing changes that reflect the political vicissitudes. However, the lack of sufficient investigation into fashion in the post-Mao or Deng era seems to omit one of the important phases of China fashion. Considering that it has only caught the world's attention since the open-door policy was introduced in the 1980's, China has become the home of fast fashion which constitutes a fundamental shift from the prêt-à-porter tradition initiated in Europe (Reinach, 2005). Fashion clothes normally have a very short product life cycle, fast fashion in particular lying at the other end of the spectrum to high fashion (ibid.).

Another book, *Chinese Fashion: from Mao to now* (Wu, 2011) also situates Chinese fashion in the evolving political, economic and cultural context and provides detailed accounts of fashion designers' struggle and contributions to Chinese fashion in the post-Mao period. Both Finnane (2007) and Wu (2011) believe that Chinese modern consumers' fashion consumption is related to status expression without primary investigation and failed to explain some contradictory social phenomena. For example, despite recent Chinese consumers' embracing global culture and fashion

trends, at the same time they still appreciate some traditional styles and enjoy wearing the Chinese long gown (Wu, 2011).

4.2.1 Tradition: Styles reflect China's multi-ethnic cultural influences

Fashion has long been considered to be a particular feature of Western society by historians. Asian clothes were customary rather than fashionable (Braudel, 1967). Braudel (1967, p.227) wrote that they '*scarcely changed in the course of centuries, but then Chinese society itself scarcely moved at all*'. Craik (1994, p.18) discussed the different consumption nature of modern Western society and a traditional society like China:

'Symptomatically, the term fashion is rarely used in reference to non-western cultures. The two are defined in opposition to each other: western dress is fashion because it changes regularly, is superficial and mundane, and projects individual identity, non-western dress is costume because it is unchanging, encodes deep meanings, and project group identity and membership.'

China is a nation with multiple ethnic groups. The majority of China's population is Han, but China was ruled by different ethnic groups throughout its history. Each dynasty had its own distinctive style of clothing. Finnane (2007) suggests that the meaning of fashion as a cultural-economic phenomenon in China is better understood, as part of Chinese life in the later imperial era. For her, the historian's view of the Chinese unchanging clothing style was based on 19th and 20th century representations of Chinese dress, because she reads the traditional and unchanging style as signs of political and economic struggle, not the fundamental characteristics of Chinese clothing.

Finnane (2007) argues that fashion initially gained three "emergent functions" in the West due to economic development: adornment, social stratification, and imitation. These emergent functions also existed in Chinese sartorial practices since the Ming Dynasty for similar reasons, so fashion has existed in Mainland China for centuries. Hartley and Montgomery (2009, p.63) also acknowledge China's rich sartorial

history, but argue that the process of fashion development was stunted because “*the turbulent period between the 1930s and 1980s left little room for the evolutionary process in industry or apparel to develop as a market. The radical policies and mass social movements of the Cultural Revolution further reduced opportunities for experimentation, invidious distinction or expressions of individuality or personal values through dress.*”

4.2.2 Mao – Revolution/material culture as Bourgeois

Relying on the powers of peasants and workers during China’s revolution, Mao led the Communist Party and succeeded in winning the 18-year revolutionary struggle against the National Party and the Japanese armies. However, his political emphasis after China’s liberation in 1949 was still on class conflict and continual revolution (Breslin, 1998). Almost thirty years in power (1949-1976), Mao launched a series of political movements to target various social problems, but the consequences were devastating: the social order was severely disrupted; historical relics and artefacts were destroyed; cultural and religious sites were ransacked; millions of people were persecuted (Chang 1993, Wu 2011).

From 1958 to 1961, he launched the “Great Leap Forward” movement aiming to use China’s vast population rapidly to transform China from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society through a process of rapid industrialization which ended with a catastrophe resulting in an estimated death toll ranging from 16.5 to 46 million (Dikotter, 2010).

Mao attacked traditional ideas and practices as being feudal in origin in the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which further damaged the country on a great scale from its economic development to social order: economic development was significantly stunted and some economists believe that it took China backwards more than ten years (Liu, 1990). In practice, this meant eradicating old social norms and criticizing Confucianism at every level within Chinese society. For thousands of years, China had been emphasising the significance of being an intellectual and the contempt for the foolishness of peasants. The Cultural Revolution was launched

directly against intellectualism, the idea that intellectuals were of a higher moral worth than the ordinary people - the Confucian ideal social order (Breslin, 1998). Intellectuals were called “*Chou Laojiu*” – ‘the old stinking Ninth’, the lowest of the low, the ones who could be saved only by the basest and most tedious labour (Hessler, 2001). He called intellectuals the most ignorant of people and described China's common folk as the fount of wisdom and the hope of the future. Mao believed that the Confucian intellectualism concept would generate social class. One way to push China towards a classless society was to promote equality among the proletariats and intellectuals which contradicted Confucian philosophy. As result of this, many intellectuals were sent to work as peasants and suffered extreme measures (Chang & Halliday, 2005). Davis (1992) demonstrated that the bureaucratic practice of the socialist state, and in particular the radical state policies in the Cultural Revolution, led to the ‘down-ward mobility’ of the children of the middle class, and produced noticeable intergenerational status disparities.

To raise a women’s revolutionary army and fight capitalist raiders, Mao also called for a revolution in female clothes (e.g. skirt) and accessories (e.g. bracelets, rings, and earrings) which he viewed as ‘prisons of women’. Chasing fashion and beautiful clothes was a way of admiring bourgeois ideology (Finnane, 2007). Many young females chose to wear uniforms rather than dress up like a woman. Military uniform was very much a young person’s fashion like jeans and T-shirts in the West at that time (ibid.). The army uniform was difficult to source and whoever acquired it would be really proud of their social connections either with family and friends in the army or with army connections (Wu, 2011). For those who chose not to wear army uniforms, it could bring misfortune to the wearer from the highest echelon of Chinese society to the lowest. Wang Guanmei, the wife of President Shaoqi Liu, was humiliated by the Red Guard who forced her to put on *qipao* too small for her, a necklace of ping-pong balls, and high heeled shoes during her public interrogation in Beijing, mocking the stand-out clothing styles she wore when her husband was in power (Wu, 2011). Cheng (1987), in her memoir *Life and Death in Shanghai*, witnessed a young girl wearing trousers with a narrow cut and fashionable shoes walking on the street who was seized by Red Guards to forcibly remove her trousers before the eyes of the jeering crowd.

In 1954, the government introduced rationing in an effort to tackle the unequal distribution of scarce consumer goods among China's vast population. Fabric is one of the consumer goods within the ration. Most people had to wear patched clothes. In this environment of scarcity, people, especially in rural areas, would often make or purchase new clothes only when their existing clothes were beyond repair. The Chinese government adopted a combination of education and industrial measures to promote a sense of thriftiness. Premier Zhou Enlai set a good example as an important party member and national leader was always seen wearing patched clothes in his public visits. The elementary Chinese literature textbook has stories aiming to teach frugality to a new generation (Wu, 2011). There was a widely known saying: "*three years new, three years old, stitch and patch if for three years more*" (Finnane 2007, p.245).

During the 1970's, people began to experience some normality and "*routinized revolutionary life involving political study, demonstrations of revolutionary faith, vigilance against counter-revolutionary elements, and work*" (Finnane 2007, p.244). The army uniform fashion gave way to the Mao suit – a short stand-up collar, padded shoulders, and four open pockets. Those suits are normally worn in subdued colours such as navy blue, khaki green, or grey. As for women's clothing, they were not much different from men's and were "*variously simple, practical, unworldly, androgynous, unfeminine or downright ugly*" (ibid., p.257).

4.2.3 Deng - Fashion/ material culture is heavily promoted

4.2.3.1 Getting Rich is Glorious

After Mao's death, Deng took over power and successfully overturned China's political emphasis from constant revolutionary movements to economic development. Many young people remained in the country whereas others returned to home and enrolled in university after passing national exams (Chang, 1993). In one of his speeches, Deng argued that the political consequences of a policy are irrelevant as long as it bears economic fruit in the short run. At the local level, material incentives, rather than political appeals, were to be used to motivate the labour force. He declared

that getting rich was glorious. Or in his own words, “I don't care about it is a black cat or a white cat; as long as it is able to catch the mouse, it is a good cat”. The core approach of Deng's notions of politics, economics and society were economic development and the encouragement of entrepreneurship (Loyalka, 2006), which was unthinkable in Mao's era (Liu, 1990).

Fashion magazines began to emerge after 1979, albeit most of them focused on textual material rather than fashion styles. By the 1990's, most of those magazines had disappeared and the market was dominated by three fashion magazines which all have foreign connections: *Ruili* which offers insights into Japanese fashion and styles; *Fashion*, which is produced in partnership with *Elle*; and *Vogue*. Designers and models also emerged as new professionals. Some universities also set up fashion design degrees. Pierre Cardin was the first foreign label to enter China in the late 70's when the fear of Western 'spiritual pollution' still concerned the Chinese authorities and became the most dominant luxury brand during the 80's and 90's (Wu, 2011). Professional models were recruited for the first time in China in 1980 and Pierre Cardin took them to his Paris show in 1985. As for women's wear, with many encouragements, such as in party leader's speech, films e.g. “The red dress is popular on the street” (produced in 1984), “Girl in red” (produced in 1984), articles in magazines began to discuss what women should wear and what was beautiful. Women began to pay more attention to their clothes and dared to wear something different from others. However, the general rule of Chinese aesthetics supports simple style and natural beauty. The advice given by an old-school clothing designer was that “young people should dress in neat, appropriate, preferably Chinese-style clothes...to coordinate their clothing, avoiding garish mixes of colour and outlandish combinations...” (Finnane 2007, p.275).

By the early 21st century, Deng's economic promotion had accelerated China's economic development, raised people's living standards, and created Chinese wealth and luxury consumer groups in a short period. According to Merrill Lynch & Co. (MER), more than 300,000 Chinese have a net worth of over \$1 million, excluding property. China has become one of the fastest-growing markets in the world for luxury labels, and by 2008 nearly every global label had a presence in China. With

sales exceeding \$6 billion, China was the third largest luxury goods consumer in the world in 2004, accounting for 12 per cent of the world's total. It is expected to reach 29 per cent by 2015, supplanting Japan as the largest luxury brand consumer (Wu, 2011). A number of market research reports have been conducted to develop a more general view of luxury product consumption groups, for example CMMS (2003) studied consumption trends of Chinese females from the three first tier cities Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou; Gallup Group (2006), a retail consulting firm, studied the changing attitudes of the Chinese generation Y, X, and urban consumers including their consumption preferences, perceptions, and even work ethics over past ten years; Mastercard and HSBC (2006) also conducted research among the affluent Chinese consumers in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou and studied their demographic characters, lifestyles, and perceptions in consumption and value. The flourishing Chinese fashion market enticed Chinese consumers to spend their cash without limitations. Much research has found that Chinese consumers are highly sensitive to price within most product categories. However, one notable exception is the luxury goods market, where an entirely different mentality prevails. It is almost a case of the more expensive, the better (Charles, 2008).

On the other end of the spectrum, Chinese consumers also consume large amounts of counterfeit products for various reasons (Chang, 1998). Counterfeit goods are illegal, low-priced and often lower quality replicas of products that typically possess high brand value. Counterfeiting prevails throughout the world, accounting for about ten per cent of the world trade or worth of about 500 billion dollars, and the U.S. loses a quarter of a trillion dollars due to global piracy and counterfeiting (Heffes, 2008). Consumers can either intentionally or unintentionally make purchasing decisions on counterfeit goods (e.g. watches and wallets). Wee et al. (1995) suggest that consumers with higher education qualifications are not inclined towards the purchase of counterfeit goods.

4.2.3.2 Fashion Design and Production

According to Kim (1989), there is a significant distinction between Western and Far Eastern dress in term of design. Western dress exhibits curved lines that are used to shape the body as a three-dimensional form, while Far Eastern dress traditionally

displays straight lines. Despite the fact that some parts of Far Eastern dress do exhibit curved lines, such as the round neckline of Manchurian robes and the curved line of sleeve seams in Chinese costume, they are not for the purpose of shaping the body. Qipao which emerged in the 1930s and later, with its curved lines that emphasised the silhouette, were believed to be a result of Western dress influence.

From the point of view of the manufacturers, the shortage of fabric at the beginning of the 80's was still a widespread problem and became one of the obstacles for developing the fashion industry for both fashion design and fashion consumers alike. Deng's government has begun to tackle the weak textile industry in which ninety per cent of the raw materials came from agricultural products such as cotton, flax, silk, and wool. They urge the industry to increase the production of agricultural materials and to vigorously develop chemical fibres (Wu, 2011).

Mao's generation of fashion designers worked for state owned apparel factories and most of them were apprentices from a young age, so they were skilful at cutting, sewing, and working with fabrics, but lacked the skills of drawing on paper and innovative design. Hence, domestic clothing brands, mostly state owned, lacked innovative styles and relied on good quality and large economies of scale to gain market share. Later, this situation changed as foreign brands entered the Chinese market (ibid.).

Since the 1980's, universities along the coast such as Beijing and Shanghai began to offer fashion design as a degree major. However, the new generation of fashion designers were well schooled in drawing skills without much first-hand knowledge of working with fabric and the human body. As they had no connection or hands-on training within the apparel industry, most well-known fashion designers in the 90's were design contest winners. On the runway, they focused more on design features and innovation such as odd shapes and showy materials, which contradicted the traditional notion of clothing design in China that emphasised more cut-and-sew techniques and wearability. Fashion designers also experienced a dilemma in terms of either adopting traditional or Western elements in their designs. Under these circumstances, some designers were inspired by the rich Chinese culture and indulged

themselves in the glories of China's past by highlighting Chinese characteristics in their designs which created sensational success on the stage. For example, Hu Xiaodan, a Beijing designer, arranged a grand runway show called 'Moving Forbidden City' in 1995 (Wu 2011, p.145):

“He dressed models to look like different architectural elements of the Forbidden City: hats, shoulders, chests, and entire dresses were shaped like the pavilion, tiled roof, clock and door knockers of the Forbidden City. These shapes were also meticulously decorated with zoomorphic ornaments, door studs, tassels, dragons, lotuses, and other plant and animal patterns.”

Chinese 80's fashion designers' own struggle for identity left consumers with unfulfilled desires and aspirations by producing domestic products with a lack of design features. Consumers began to experience some Western products and lifestyles through their limited contact with the West. They tried to display this understanding by leaving brand labels intentionally on the lenses of sunglasses or on the sleeves of suit as a sign of prestige. In the 90's, global brands had entered China. Chinese consumers began to develop an appetite for those global brands that were authentically foreign and not connected to China's traditional past (Wu, 2011).

Their extreme fashion designs created a separate fashion world from what the market required. Many questioned whether the fashion in essence was for show or for the market and whether the Chinese runway had already alienated itself from the cosmopolitanism of contemporary fashion. However, although these trends may close the door for consumers, they opened a gate for some of designers to the international fashion world. Hu toured the world, visiting Paris, New York, London, Tokyo, Brazil, Argentina, and Egypt the following year. It seems that this generation of fashion designers can only be accepted by the international high fashion world through highlighting Chinese characteristics and adding traditional Chinese elements to their designs. For the 90's designer, being accepted and recognised by the international high fashion world was achieved by taking the opposite path: through deemphasized stereotypical Chinese elements and expressing individual creativity (Wu, 2011).

4.2.3.3 Fashion Distribution in Beijing and Counterfeit Goods

For about two decades, China has been a low-cost producer of goods for Western fashion firms. Chinese companies are producing duplicates of Western brands that are manufactured in China and are selling these products internationally. “Fast fashion” brands are also selling their cheap products in vast new shopping malls across China (Reinach, 2005). Following the Italian model of prêt-à-porter, China is now becoming a luxury fashion producer on its own. The proliferation of fashion related activities during economic reform in nearly all major cities aimed to promote local fashion industries. Both Shanghai and Guangzhou established their role as southern fashion hubs promoting locally designed and produced fashion products. Hong Kong (HK.) has maintained its historical reputation in the apparel industry by providing good quality fashion products (Tam et al., 2005).

Beijing as the capital city of China, has many large and middle-sized shopping complexes scattered around. Shopping outlets can be distinguished based on the products they sell and the location can also indicate the status of the products in store.

Department stores such as CITIC, Yansha, Friendship Store, or the International Trade Centre are all located in premium locations selling imported luxury international brands from fashion and cosmetics, to jewellery. The Beijing Friendship Store is the oldest department store selling legally imported luxury products. It used to cater to the needs of foreign visitors to China, and was not accessible to the general public before the mid 80’s. Gradually, in the early 1990’s, foreign brands moved from restricted friendship stores to privately owned venues and the Friendship Store lost its exclusive status as the one and only selling conspicuous status foreign brands. Since Pierre Cardin’s first entrance into China in the late 70’s, there are an increasing number of flagship stores opening every year in both coastal and inland cities, such as Louis Vuitton, Cartier, and Armani. This is in response to Chinese consumers’ obsession with brands.

Business zones such as Wangfujing Road and Xidian Commercial Street accommodate many modern plazas, shopping centres, and flagship stores. This diverse array of clothing businesses is closely connected to a similarly diffuse and

fragmented system of distribution that includes thousands of small shops and boutiques in the city. This system produces an enormous variety of products ranging from haute couture to fast fashion targeting different consumer groups.

Qianmen is another business zone, but offers more traditional products and services. They sell well-known domestically produced products and also offer traditional tailoring services in traditional shoe shops and Chinese silk stores. There are many boutiques scattered around the city too. Each has its own supply channel and offers less well-known genuine brands with unique styles from Europe or America.

China is the largest producer in the world of copies, fake brands, and imitation goods in the textile sector (Reinach, 2005). These are featured on business streets such as Xiushui Street or Hongqiao Pearl Market, which are formed by many individual booths, are the main distributors of fake brands. They sell varieties of products from shoes and bags, to clothes. Most products have brand names, but it is unlikely that they are genuine. Grossman and Shapiro (1988) separated the transaction of counterfeits into two categories namely deceptive purchase and non-deceptive purchase. Deceptive counterfeit transactions take place when consumers cannot readily observe the quality of the goods or distinguish copies from the genuine during the purchasing process; they are victims. Meanwhile, when consumers are aware that they are purchasing counterfeits and participate in the fraud as non-deceptive counterfeit transactions, they are willing collaborators. Although it has generally been agreed that most buyers fall into the non-deceptive purchase behaviours category (Safa & Jessica, 2005), many consumers are motivated to consume counterfeit goods for symbolic status or cheap prices (Cordell et al., 1996).

4.3 Summary

China has rich sartorial history. In Mao and Deng's era, Chinese fashion was heavily influenced by the salient political agendas. In Mao's era, the emphasis was on revolution and material culture was considered to be bourgeois. Deng's economic reform promoted economic wealth and introduced Western material culture and fashion ideas to Chinese consumers.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Outline

This chapter discusses informants' social features. Two distinctive consumption strategies have been identified, the materialist status consumption and the cultural idealist status consumption. Further analysis is followed to provide an insight in these two differing strategies. Integrated throughout this analysis is discussion of how the findings relate to the extant literature. Please refer to Appendix II for the detailed, case by case analysis on which this analysis is based.

5.2 The Informants & Fashion Discourses

5.2.1 The Composition and Volume of Capitals Held by Informants

This study will adopt a multi-dimensional social classification approach by combining features such as income (economic capital), education (cultural capital), occupation, and urban residences, and luxury fashion consumption experience. Their status consumption practices will be explored. Each interviewee will be positioned within the social space based on their scores of CC and EC in the diagram displayed as **Figure 5-1** which is based on **Table 5-1**.

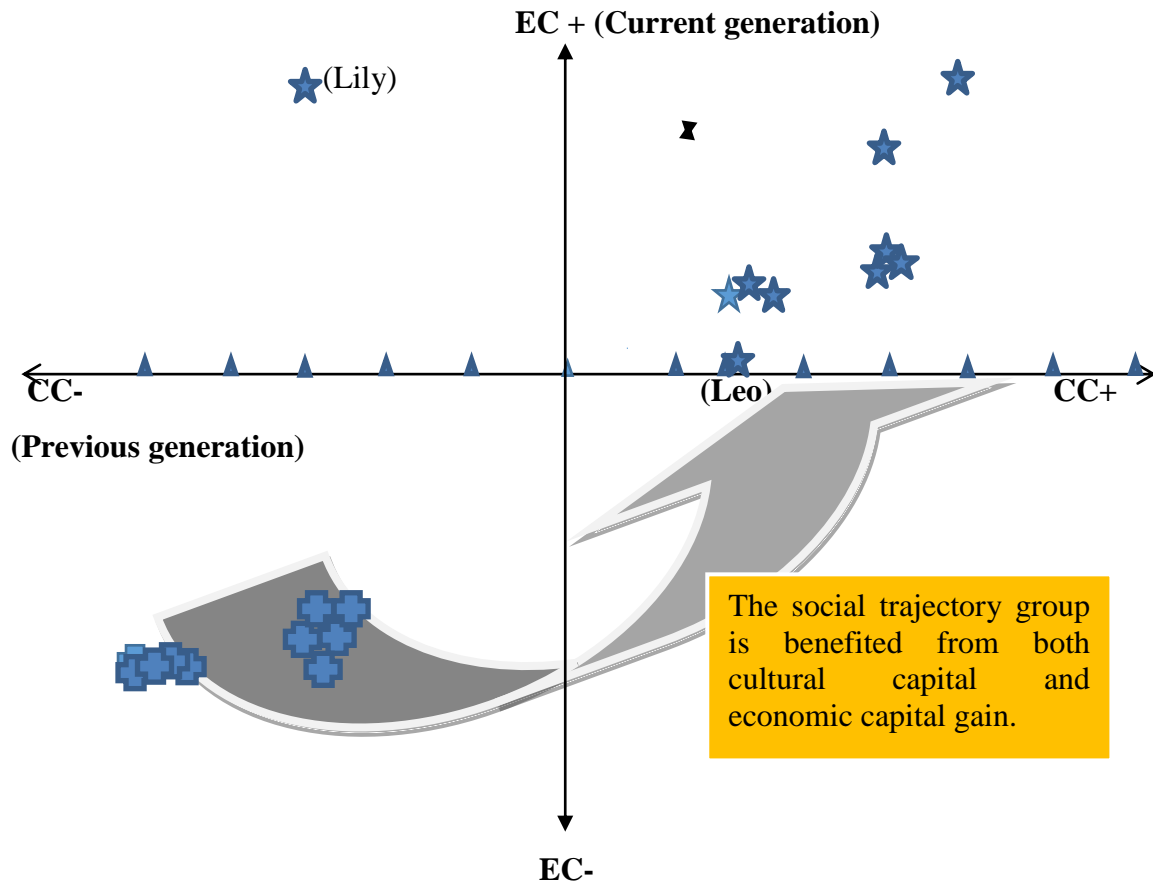
In the fashion field, EC and CC along with the informants' occupation are considered to be the main capitals that demonstrate their social position. These factors have been converted to certain scores based on Holt (1998). In the diagram (see **Figure 5-1**), the position of the Chinese newly rich consumers highlighted their trajectory route rises from low to higher social status. These locations in social space are defined by two axes: the volume of capital, from high to low, held by different class fragments; and, the nature of that capital, whether cultural or economic capital. It (see **Table 5-1**) shows that the selected informants are formed and derived from lower social class background, their current positions are the result of their social trajectory. Using their way of calculating cultural capital (Holt 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010) as benchmark, the demographic characters show that the informants belong to LCC.

Table 5-1 Informants' Demographic File

Informants	Father's Education	Score	Father's Occupation	Score	Education	Score	Occupation	Score	Economic Capital	Cultural Capital
Doris	Secondary school	1	Factory worker	0.5	BSc	3	Lawyer/ Senior Manager	4	Medium	8
Grace	Secondary school	1	Factory worker	0.5	MA	4	Senior Manager	3	Medium	8
Lily	Secondary school	1	Factory worker	0.5	High School	1	Housewife	1	High	3
Lucy	Secondary school	1	Military officer	1	BA	3	Senior Manager	3	Medium	8
Saline	High school	1	Military official	2	BA	3	Restaurant owner	4	Medium	10
Zoë	High school	1	Offshore manager	2	BA	3	Business owner	4	Medium	10
Clive	High school	1	Social Service official	2	MBA (U.S.A)	4	Senior Manager	3	Medium	10
Wayne	Primary school	1	Farmer	0.5	Elite MArch	5	Business owner	4	Medium-high	10
Leo	Primary school	1	Farmer	0.5	MBA	4	Student, former business manager	3	Medium - low	8
Quentin	High school	1	Military official	2	MArch	4	Property developer	4	High	11

Social trajectory is one of the three elements that constituted Bourdieu's social classification. Bourdieu's perspective of social mobility as capital investment and conversion strategies distinguished 'vertical' from 'transverse' movement. The 'vertical' movement designates upward or downward movement within the same field whereas the 'transverse' movement indicate movement across fields (Bourdieu 1984, p.131). In the case of the majority of Chinese informants, their social mobility belongs to a 'transverse' movement as a result of their total volume of economic capital and cultural capital gained through advanced education and occupation. In Lily's case, her social trajectory is relatively 'vertical' due to her husband's significant economic capital gain.

Figure 5-1 Informants' Social Positions



5.2.2 The Social Trajectory of the Informants

Theoretically, heritage and achievement are two distinctive causes in status attainment models. Blane et al (2005) note that attained status in capitalist societies is operationalized by occupation and income, whereas status inheritance refers to parental education and occupation, and personal achievement is usually measured by education. Table 5-1 follows this suggestion and adopts Holt's measurement (1998). However, given the uniqueness of Chinese society, Redding (1990) suggests that any attempts to explain social behaviour from a Western model would be incomplete without due consideration of cultural factors and equally the Western rationality inherent in most consumer theories needs to be reinterpreted through the eyes of Eastern reality. Hence, Bian (2002, p.105) discussed the necessity for making three significant modifications when applying these models to China which traditionally

had a Communist political economy and which, in the researcher's view, might have still been impacting the social status of the Generation 1 of Chinese newly rich consumers.

- 1). Following the Communist revolution in 1949 status inheritance was defined from a political perspective, making family class origin an important dimension of inheritance in addition to parental education and occupation.
- 2). Personal achievement was politically evaluated by party authority; membership in and loyalty to the Party are qualitatively different credentials to education.
- 3). In a centrally planned economy, state redistributive resources are differentially allocated through a hierarchy of state and collective organisations, thus workplace identification becomes a more primary criterion of social status than the occupation of wage work.

Although all of the three modifications made no differences in the overall score to any individual informant, the implication is that there are some extra social advantages obtained by certain informants that make them to stand out from others. Quentin is the obvious case.

1). First modification: the political status gained through family will bring some social advantages and benefits to the descendants. For instance, Quentin's parents have been serving the army throughout their lives. With his parents' military background, Quentin has enjoyed many benefits since his childhood such as better economic conditions and education in comparison with other informants like Lily. Coming from similar family background, Saline also never mentioned any financial struggles she experienced during childhood.

2). Second modification: If acquired with political capital, anyone could advance personal gains, even family gains to some degree. For instance, officials and managers in government offices, the so-called 'cadre' class are the two most prominent social classes in Mao's China. The parents of Quentin, Saline, Clive, and Zoë belong to this 'cadre class', but their professions in American society are not as highly regarded as in China, neither is their

generous amount of political capital. Therefore, their scores do not represent the significance in a broader social reality. In a similar vein, there has always been an important social division in China between rural and urban-dwellers. Leo's and Wayne's parents are farmers which are positioned at the lowest social hierarchy in China and should be ranked differently from the city-dwelling labour worker parents of Doris, Grace, and Lily.

3). Third modification: Work identification as the primary criterion of social status rather than occupation of wage work may imply some unclaimed superiorities of some professions over others. In Quentin's case, his chosen profession of property developer has gained substantial social advantages (reputation, achievement, and capital gain) far more than other professions in the face of societal development. This profession inevitably allows him to be in contact with bureaucratic power and gain status through this '*organisational capital*' (Wright 1985, p.80). This is evident in his interview where he claimed that he was responsible for the exchange of billions of Yuan on each project and can be seen as a 'God'. This type of social advantage cannot be displayed with the standard score grid used by Bourdieu (1984) and Holt (1998), but would contribute to the overall capital that Quentin has gained and also make his status in the social hierarchy much higher than his overall score in the score sheet would suggest.

5.2.3 Summary of Verbatim

All the fashion discourse discussed by the informants has been summarised as shown in the table that follows (see **Table 5-2**). More detailed individual fashion discourse is shown on the appendix II.

Table 5-2 Summary of Verbatim

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
<p>Taste and Consumption Practice</p>	<p>Fashionability and Individuality</p>	<p>Grace: “My wardrobe is full of clothes-for-spare-time, and I don’t even have any spare time. And I find that many people around me have the same problem. The only reason for our consumption is that we like the things we are buying. Not of much practical use.”</p>
		<p>Doris: “The way I dress is single-patterned...I will not even try other styles that might display another side of my charm.”</p>
		<p>Lucy: “I don’t like clothes that are too fashionable. Perhaps no one could ever remember it a year later. I wouldn’t wear the clothes that can easily attract others’ attention...People look at you simply because you are wearing improperly.”</p>
		<p>Saline: “When I put on a piece of clothes, I want it to be outstanding, not necessarily outlandish, but it has to be special, like, asymmetrical patterns, unique detailing and such...I do not want to wear clothes that look identical with others.”</p>
		<p>Zoë: “Artists, some of them would put on extremely ‘loud’ colours, which normally are too strong for us, like, green and red, etc. We might think that type of match is too much; but they manage to wear it to an effect that we would take as another kind of beauty.”</p>
		<p>Lily: “When I go for party or with my husband, I definitely wear name brands’ clothes... he likes me wearing those and people he dealing with are of different social position. People around me are normal working class or white collar, but people he socializing with are at higher social position, like CEO, so I have to wear name brand clothes. If I go out with my friends, I just wear whatever... If I go to her house, the less outstanding, the better. I don’t like her being picky on me... when I went to my parent’s home, we would choose to wear a normal long coat, which has been approved by them already. If you go to my parents’ house, you’d better not to wear watch, rings, and ear-rings.”</p>
		<p>Clive: “It is not because of the brands that I chose them, but rather I find both the watch and the bag are simple and exquisite. The watch won’t attract any attention from others when it is on a person, but when you take notice of it, you’ll find it is exquisite.”</p>
		<p>Wayne: “Personally, I don’t think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani. But for some people, none of their clothes is name brand and they bought from clothing booths, but they look perfect with those clothes. Maybe these people have better taste...I rarely buy goods at the original price,</p>

		usually buy at a discount.”
		Leo: “If he was wearing famous brands all over, I might think he was of high qualification ... external thing won’t take the place of his internal, but indeed, one has some influence over the other, because there will be comparison. If a person is dressed up well, people will think he might be good at every other respect. That’s the feeling.”
		Quentin: “I like exquisite stuff. something you may use for many years after purchase...like leather belt, including fine shirt, which you may wear for quite a long time, because they are fine stuff...Not particular brands, but I’m searching for something suitable to me.”
Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
	Professionability	Grace: “I think the clothes you are wearing contain the information whether you want to communicate or you prefer to keep a distance...”
		Doris: “I make sure my office wear is formal enough for office work, but I pay attention to details, a little bit feminine, not completely looking rigid...Affinity is important; I believe adding something feminine helps to make the affinity stronger, since my work is mainly dealing with customers.”
		Lucy: “At my office, since our work is sales and marketing, we need to go around a lot; sometimes, we might...if you have a meeting with a customer, probably you will dress up for it; while if you are going to the factory, possibly you won’t wear fancy clothes; probably, if this person is going a long way down to a factory, she will wear flat-heeled shoes, not stiletto heels.”
		Saline: “I feel confined and stiff. The main reason is, those clothes don’t match my character. You see, I behave like this one minute, and like that the next minute. It looks ridiculous for me to wear those clothes. Those clothes look formal and serious.”
		Zoë: “I wanted to impress well as I want to have long term cooperation... At the time I wouldn’t have redone it (hairstyle) if not for business’s sake. I had to sign a contract with them. There was no other choice.”
		Clive: “They know you are the boss from day one. If it’s like, you are dressed up in neat suit, avoiding dust, or careful not to let mud dirty your shoes; they would feel ill at ease even talking to you. Obviously it is not a good thing if you are starting your own business. Your employees are keeping a distance away from you, right?”

		<p>Wayne: “We design a building for a client, but not necessarily mean that we have to beg for somebody. What I mean is that we certainly make profit from our design, but we try to make our clients happy. We don’t beg for 200,000 to 30,000 RMB on each project.”</p> <p>Leo: “I feel this one...I think...it shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It’s a good feeling. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.”</p> <p>Quentin: “Things are special in businesses... When you are making profits, you’ll care, because other people are your customers. When others are making profits while you are giving, certainly you don’t need to care, because you are God in this matter.”</p>
Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	<p>Grace: “I think dress sense is something we need to learn about. From zero to one hundred, it is a process of continuous learning.”</p> <p>Doris: “My father... told me to study hard, as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up. At that time, if you pay too much attention to clothes, trying to be different from others, your dress would be regarded as outlandish. And that was bad. Without doubt education was like that at that age.”</p> <p>Lucy: “To know the outside world...without anyone around you...you went in and out...unless someone told you, you wouldn’t have known. You had no access to either written materials or the media, you absolutely wouldn’t have known, simply wouldn’t.”</p> <p>Saline: “My parents are very open-minded. They gave me freedom when I was young.”</p> <p>Zoë: “I was the first one to wear flared trousers in my hometown, which is a small city and nobody else wore flared trousers at that time... Like feather jackets, trainers and such. I was always of the first ones.”</p> <p>Lily: “I have little contact with the society; I don’t know that many people. So, all I rely on to know the world is television and newspaper... I also read World Fashion. How can you know the world-famous name brands if you don’t read those magazines? ... I just learn too much from it!”..</p> <p>Clive: “When I was living in the United States, I found, when on formal occasions...They pay attention to every detail indeed. But Americans try their best to show their individuality at free time...You will get used to people around you dressing this way. Once people around you don’t wear the way you’re used to,</p>

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you will feel strange.”
Wayne: “As I knew nothing about fashion wear...before going to Hong Kong, nor were there opportunity, due to the financial circumstances; and no one cared about it at university. Your life style has changed, as well as your income and the nature of your work, which, therefore, causes the change of your requirement for clothes and stuff.”
Leo: “When I was at university, not working yet, I dressed casually. I didn’t care. But after working, I saw people around me...especially I was one of the managers. People cared about my dressing. So, there is a change of conception. I’ve changed from non-caring to caring. I become to...about my image.”
Quentin: “Probably now I know all the labels, while back then, I was only blindly happy and blindly confident because everyone else were dressed plainly while you alone were wearing a big name. Now, with a good knowledge of so many designer labels, having tried many, you know which ones suit better and the different features of each brand. And the cultural elements behind certain label will win or lose your favour.”
Grace, “I think the person of me at office is much different from when I am at home. Sometimes, there is consistency.”
Doris: “I am a conservative person, which restricts me to...probably other people think I would look good dressed in another style, but due to my own conservativeness, the way I dress is single-patterned... I now have fixed ideas on how I should dress.”
Lucy: “As I had travelled abroad, I had seen a lot and knew much more. Probably it had an influence on me. It was not only because of what I had seen or what I was wearing; it must have been something about my whole self. I was influenced imperceptibly. It was not like I had been trained or something. All happened imperceptibly: look and listen. It was simply like that.”
Saline: “I don’t think it matters. If you want to look, come and look. If you dare to wear, then wear it. If you dare not, then nothing can help. I have no way to change it. And I don’t think it is not beautiful. If you wear it, you must think it is beautiful. And you don’t feel uncomfortable.”
Zoë: “I think I can wear many different styles of clothes. I believe that there is a connection between clothing styles and one’s disposition. If you contain many sensations, you could wear any styles...I look good in them.”
Lily: “If I dress up beautifully every day, people will gossip about me, like ‘look your wife is doing so and

		<p>so, since you left home.’ A friend of mine has a similar situation as me, but she is just the opposite... In other friends’ eyes, she is not a good woman.</p> <p>Clive: “Honestly, I’m not overly concerned about the brand. I belong to the middle-low class in the aspect of clothes consumption, compared to ordinary men. I know some of my friends who buy brands only, but the best jeans I have are Levis. I’m not afraid of being joked about; I’m telling you the truth; I only buy suits from Pierre Cardin, not elsewhere...”</p> <p>Wayne: “Clothes can more or less reflect one’s cultivation. But we can’t judge one’s taste from how much money he earns. It’s how he spends his money that we see his taste, not how he earns the money... He bought the most expensive range in Armani, but he still looked strange when he is in Armani...he had never been well educated. So, that is the difference.”</p> <p>Leo: “It shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It’s a good feel. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.”</p> <p>Quentin: “Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big city, the capital of China... People who have favourable living conditions when they are young don’t really care about material things. When they grow up, they are more placid.”</p>
Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Field	Doxa	<p>Grace: “I simply know nothing about clothes... the fashion, I feel, is rather distant from our real life.”</p> <p>Doris: "I’ve been to Europe, and as I saw, the Europeans are not like Chinese... Although Chinese spend a lot on clothes, we have too many restrictions."</p> <p>Lucy: “I think today’s young people are living in a good age. There aren’t many restrictions, nobody telling them what they must do and stuff like that. They can do something that no one else dares to do in the past...That is to say, they are not so silly as my generation used to be, I really envy today’s young people.”</p> <p>Saline: “Yeah, there are rules, and I won’t go too much beyond them... I rather think no-rules is a good thing, for it gives free rein to one’s imagination and ability.”</p> <p>Zoë: “...You can’t compare that with the rich... Most people are dressed the way, not because they want to be dressed that way, nor do they like to, but the environment needs them to dress like that. They have to. Such is the society. I hope, I won’t behave too improperly, and the society won’t control too much.”</p>

	<p>Lily: "It will be perfect if without having so much concerns. It will be very simple to choose what to wear every day."</p> <p>Clive: "...after various experiencing with people, you actually calm down, because it is not sensible to compare your salary with your boss's income. ...when you got to know many rich people, it is not like what you used to think it would be, to be a wealthy man, which deeply affects you."</p> <p>Wayne: " We are influenced by the environment...It is not right to wear the overly fashionable type (e.g. a pink Armani shirt) in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, it's like, hm; no matter how weirdly you are dressed, people will take it for granted; while in Beijing, people will say, 'who is that? Why is he wearing that thing?' Men are born free but restriction is everywhere."</p> <p>Leo: "You get to know many brands, but you can't afford to buy them. All you can do is to envy the rich...I will get those things through my hard-working."</p> <p>Quentin: "I think things are different nowadays. People live to seek the pleasure in life. So people's values have changed. They don't judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances. People will notice what clothes and watch you wear...This is what is like these days, however, nothing like this before."</p>
Illusio	<p>Grace: "I'd like to be comfortable. I want to be free and a little lazy; I don't want to care too much, but you can't when at office. One needs to have some principles. You can't go beyond what is proper. But I don't want to as long as I arrive home."</p> <p>Doris: "I simply don't understand what those famous models want to lead people to. I think it is ridiculous. I'm not fashionable. Usually, I stick to my own style. I think that's suitable for me. I am not after the fashion."</p> <p>Lucy: "Many people wear name brands, but they behave differently. For someone, brands have become part of their life. Whenever a new product arrives, they will go for it. This lot would only buy products that have good quality and good reputation. They just believe that this kind of lifestyle is common...If you see this kind of person on the street, you would only feel naturally instead of thinking that he/she is an upstart or pretending something."</p> <p>Saline: "Everyone wants to show individuality through dressing. I am the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please. I chose body exposing type of clothes, not because I want to be standing out that way, but I personally like wearing them and feel comfortable"</p>

	Zoë: “I think clothes reveal one's innate character, one's frankness. Some people try to hide it, um...very few people dress the way they want to.”
	Lily: “I would rather work. I’m not willing to stay at home. You know what? He doesn’t let me work because he doesn’t want to see I achieve more than him in work.”
	Clive: “I think, honestly, up to now, I think although everyone is pursuing wealth, for me, I’m not, not at all. I think I have been pursuing my ‘spare-time-activities’, doing various stuff out of the office. But, in my opinion, everyone has his way of spending money, not necessarily to show off your wealth. At least I don’t have that eagerness.”
	Wayne: “Clothes are just clothes. It plays no important part in my life. The most important thing is your career. What do clothes bring you anyway? What’s the good of dressing up like a butterfly? It’s not like I’m selling clothes.”
	Leo: “As a student, you can dress yourself casually, or formally... If you are dressed casually, people will think you have a casual manner and easy-going; if you are dressed formally, maybe you are waiting for an opportunity coming to you.”
	Quentin: “I just think that I have been like this since I was a kid, and I stay the same now. As long as I dress up suitably, I won’t care other people or fashion stuff, just following my own understanding.”

5.3 The Status Consumption Practices

This study has found that there were two consumption practices adopted by informants and their key differences in practices have been highlighted (see **Table 5-3**).

Table 5-3 The Comparison of Two Status Consumption Practices

Features	The Materialist Status Consumption Practice	The Cultural Idealist Status Consumption Practice
Believes	Materialist, believe that success can be judged by the things people own and wear	Non-materialist, individual wisdom to resist social influences
Products Requirements	Luxury display, brand names, brand fame	Authentic products, aesthetic appreciation, limited availability
Possible Products Consumption	From designers to mass products	Very selective, products only meet their criteria
Education	Lower education	Higher education

Knowledge required for successful display	Brand names and fame, colour, age	Brands characteristics, countries of origin, personal dispositions
Capitals required for successful competition	Economic capital	Economic capital and cultural capital
Field Struggle theme	Want to be recognised/unrecognised by what to consume	Want to be recognised by how to consume
Selfhood	Inconsistent, role-performer	Strive to achieve consistency
Look-up to	Popular branded products	HICs consumers' consumption habits
In-group members	Peer groups (e.g. CEOs), family members	People who display good tastes
Out-group	Strangers	SRG, mass, young fashion elites

5.3.1 The Materialist Status Consumption Practice

Among the ten informants, Lily was identified as the one who had economic capital based status consumption practices. Lily's conspicuous consumption behaviour confirmed the economic capital centred materialist consumption practice and demonstrated the typical characteristics of materialist status consumption. She follows fashion closely and preferred the fashion brands that were well-known, easily recognisable and had logos that were clearly visible. Luxury brands to her are all about brand visibility, therefore, luxury consumption is to show off wealth and success. She completely accepted messages delivered through mass media marketing promotions and emphasised the importance of conspicuous consumption within and out group activities to showcase her husband's economic status. Her family consumed internationally famous labels on a daily basis, for instance, wearing Armani clothes, carrying LV handbags, and only considering driving luxury models of Lexus or BMW. They lived in a highly regarded, expensive gated community in one of the most prestigious areas in Beijing. She was a regular goer to a prestigious French beauty salon. They went on overseas holidays every year and were planning to emigrate to a HIC at the time of interview.

Lily's idea of fashionability was achieved through following fashion trends closely, reading fashion magazines, and watching TV programs that gave guidance on fashion

trends. Lily truly believed that wearing designers' labels could give people status, especially the top designers' clothes, like Armani. Her idea of wearing designers' clothes was to show everyone that it is Armani.

Lily: Actually, he (her husband) is not particular about food. He simply is particular about clothes... As a leader of the company, he may lose his prestige if he doesn't dress up well... My husband has this piece of clothes (pointing at a picture on the fashion magazine I gave to her). There are Armani marks all over the jacket... I read lots of magazines. At first, he doubted that it would make him look too young. I said, 'there is no better time than present. When you are 50's? We can hardly walk by then, to whom you are going to show off?'

In part, Lily's status consumption showed some significant resemblances to *the Veblen effect* of status consumption (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Lily emphasized pecuniary display as a necessary step to show social status and as a sign of the achievements made by her husband. She attached greater importance to their abilities to consume designers' labels. This is an important indicator for social prestige, because her primary objective is to claim her husband's economic success. Lily's consumption practice also confirmed China's face value theory. They strived to consume a similar level of luxury brands to the group that they socialised with, so that she would not lose his face, but gain family honour (Hu 1944, Zhou & Belk 2004, Cheng & Schweitzer 1996, Braxton 1999). To them, it appeared that the ability of consuming certain designers' clothes was essential to claim their membership of the CEO's social group.

Lily: When I go for party or with my husband, I definitely wear name brands' clothes. ...He likes me wearing those and people he dealing with are of different social position. People around me are normal working class or white collar, but people he socializing with are at higher social position, like CEO, so I have to wear name brand clothes.

Lily experienced material culture in adulthood mostly through media and advertisements. Fashion media in particular was her main institution of learning (Hartley & Montgomery, 2009). This made sense in terms of her consumption

practice and taste, as she did not see luxury consumption as pecuniary display like others, but an announcement of her husband's social achievement; she did not resist following fashion trends like others, but was only deterred in case she was criticized because she was a mother of two children. Lily's doxic assumptions revealed her taken for granted acceptance of the legitimate rule of others in a manner that showed the impossibility of exercising individual freedom. This doxic assumption organized a context specific 'dress-to-please' consumption practice. Lily showed her commitment to the field, but by attempting to obtain the economic capital herself in order to achieve individual freedom. To her, economic capital is the sole capital for her to compete in the field.

Lily: *"I would rather work. I'm not willing to stay at home. You know what? He doesn't let me work because he doesn't want to see I achieve more than him in work...He believes I should stay and keep the home. I take care of the home and he earns the money to support the family. He doesn't allow me to work. I've applied for it many times. The last time I wanted to open a travel agency, but he refused my request."*

Lily was an extreme case in gender inequality, and her submissive status in the family hierarchy existed as an unseen burden that prevented her from achieving an independent individual self through dress (Honig & Hershatter 1988, Xinran 2003). So, whereas other female interviewees expressed their ideas of the consistency between the inner self and the external self, Lily expressed her willingness to correct her conduct through the 'looking-glass self' (Cooley, 1902). In the fashion consumption field, her appearance management still served her social role as a wife, mother, or daughter-in-law and fashion consumption practice for her is only situated on the surface of her body, so she could achieve social conformity with each social role she played.

Another key difference was Lily's lack of the 'scholastic' cultural experience which other informants experienced in childhood that replaced the absence of material cultural experience. This later showed the difference in not only the way she consumed, but also the way she interpreted her consumption practice. Lily lacked expressive language, with which to discuss her fashion choices. Despite her close

connection with the West (e.g. family members living abroad, they had travelled the whole five continents, currently evaluating which continent or country to emigrate to), Lily made no reference to or evaluation of Western lifestyles throughout the interview. Perhaps, this was because she did not speak any foreign languages. Her educational credentials were the lowest among the informants, which might have hindered her from developing a proper understanding of the West. The other explanation may be associated with the characters of the social group (SRG) to which she belonged. With no or little education, she adopted the luxury consumption practice to demarcate herself from others based on socio-economic boundaries which showed SRG's social group's social advantages and symbolic power gained through accumulated economic capital. However, the moral judgment of indecent body exposing styles that she shared with other informants was related to her gender habitus. Hence, the key difference between other informants and Lily lay in education, not only their educational level, but in terms of mentalities, values, and attitudes towards material culture.

Furthermore, a large part of Lily's consumption practice was not about standing out from other social groups, but the problem of integrating with them, such as her mother's side of the family, including her brother, who were high school graduates, working in a factory, and had not gained much economic freedom. At first, Lily could not resist announcing her husband's economic wealth to her relatives. But she experienced and felt deeply troubled by the distance and alienation when she consumed those branded goods in front of them. The visual effects that designers' label present would be quite significant, in contrast to her relatives' plain styles and colourless clothes. Her relatives could not appreciate aesthetically, the bright colours, design features, and styles. They also could not comprehend the cost of the clothes she was wearing, each of which would cost more than they earned in a month. Her relatives showed a great degree of remoteness towards her lifestyle (e.g. they refused to pay a visit to her house) and completely dismissed her consumption choices (e.g. "it's not worth the money" they said). The contrast between them did not only lie in the clothes, or the cost of clothes, but in the capability to afford them. What she consumed announced her husband's success, but it also highlighted others' incapacities. To stop the alienation from and humiliation to others, Lily was forced

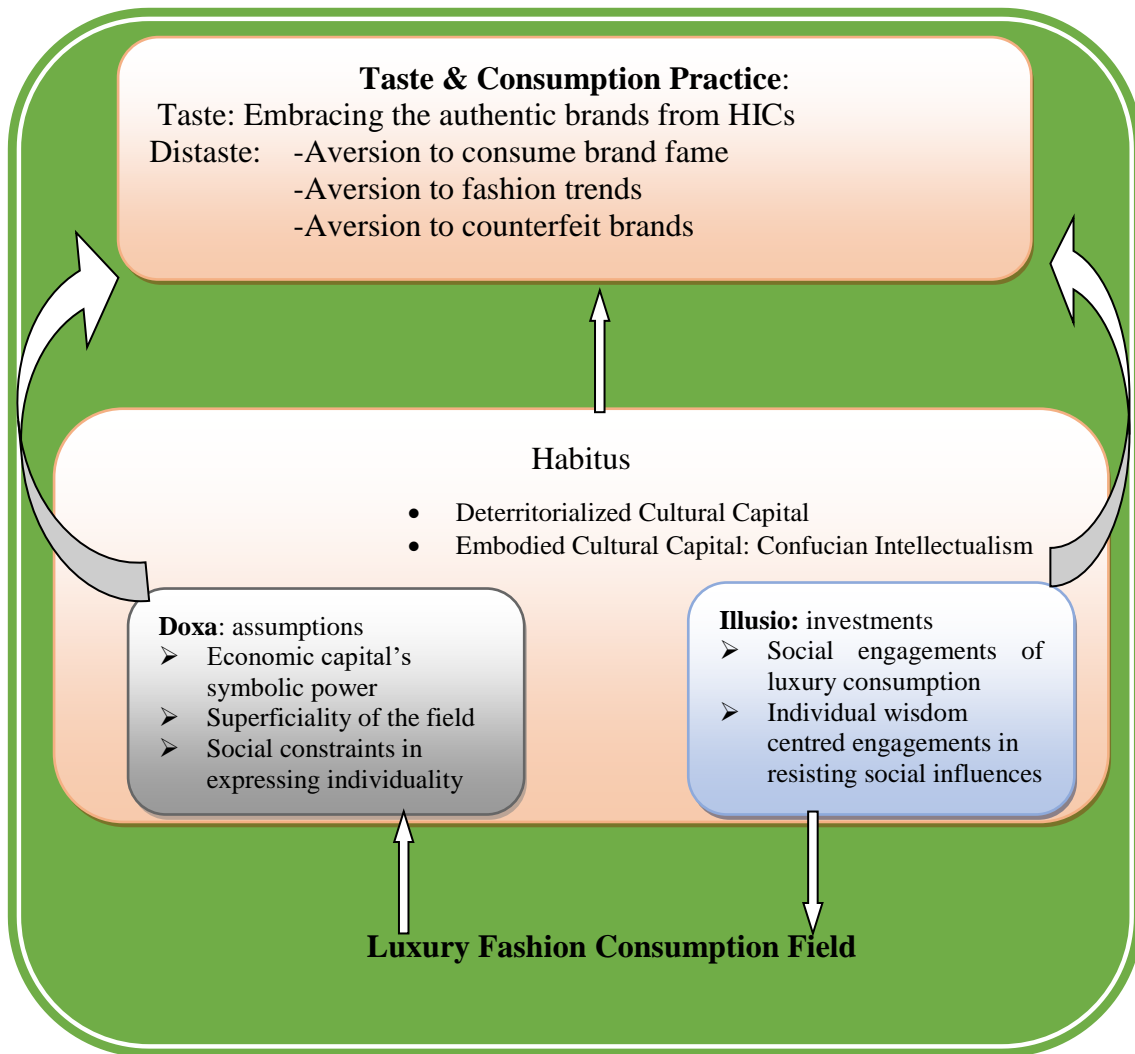
to dress down just like them when they were around, so she could blend in, in order to be accepted by her own family group.

Lily used clothes as stage costumes to dress in a variety of stereotyped social identities (e.g. old generation with conventional styles, CEO with designers' clothes, and plain clothes for commoners). Hence, her consumption practices showed a strong tendency for front stage performance and her selection of clothes was not a reflection of her true social identity, but intended to match people's expectations across social categories to achieve social harmony and integration.

5.3.2 The Cultural Idealist Status Consumption Practice

Also consuming luxury branded clothes, the rest of the informants tried very hard to avoid being recognised as being involved in materialistic status consumption. Their consumption practice is cultural idealist status consumption practice (see **Figure 5-2**). By offering three dimensions of distaste (see **Table 5-4**), They embraced the authentic products imported from HICs and stressed the guaranteed quality and workmanship that brands could offer (Dickson et al. 2004, Kwan et al 2008, Wu & Delong 2006, Chen et al 2004), but also showed a strong preference for not-so-well-known branded products from HICs. To informants, country of origin and branded products seemed an indication both of one's economic standing and aesthetic standards. Their taste which was centred on the expression of resistance to surrender to materialistic influence, emphasized aesthetics, simplicity, authenticity, and the mundane cultural appreciation of fashion clothes. They evaluated other groups' taste, critiqued their judgement of taste, morals and the manner of their luxury consumption (see **section 5.3.2.1**). In the global fashion consumption field, they gave the absolute superiority to HICs' middle class consumers. They used the HICs lifestyle myth as the source of cultural capital to guide their consumption directions – the deterritorialized cultural capital. However, their status consumption practice also seemed to be underpinned by the embodied cultural capital of their childhood upbringing: Confucian Intellectualism.

Figure 5-2 The Logic of Cultural Idealist Status Consumption Practice



Informants expressed strong views against materialistic acts and overzealous fashion sense. The status consumption in this context showed that informants were not directly competing for their social status through luxury fashion consumption itself. Rather informants competed for a dominant position through their cultured view of fashionability. They rejected the visual surface of the body – the outer appearance – as the most important matter. Despite people living consciously on the surface of their bodies and these surfaces should be felt to be the origin of identity (Budgeon, 2003), informants opposed such a simple solution and strove to address the beauty of the cultivated and educated body. Through their choice of fashion clothes, it was their internal dispositions and not the external appearance that they believed conveyed social meanings of self-worth (Entwistle, 2000). It was through this emphasis that informants trivialised fashion consciousness and sensibility motivated by public

display. They were strong believers in the embodied state of cultural capital. For them, the important presentation of individuality could only be underpinned by education and cultivation through time, which the uneducated and inexperienced were bound to fail to identify and therefore compete. This practice allowed them to secure a competitive edge with the SRG and the young fashionistas and differentiated them from the commoners.

5.3.2.1 Taste and Distaste

Table 5-4 Cultural Capital: Taste and Distaste

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
<p>Taste and Consumption Practice</p>	<p>Taste: embracing the authentic brands from HICs</p>	<p>Zoe: "The suits I like are of the Japanese style. You must have seen it in the magazines. Those suits are quite formal, and don't lack the elegance of women. I really dislike clothes made in China. I think they are very ugly... But the Japanese suits, even the ones made many years ago, you bring one out, change it a little, and it will look very beautiful. The design, the workmanship, you have to admit, is really much better than those of home market."</p>
		<p>Lucy: "I have bought some, spending several thousand on one single piece of clothing. I stopped by China World Shopping Mall and found this one, very beautiful, so I bought it immediately. It was a German label, as I remember, a knitting top. I think it was worth the money. High quality, good design, and no one would have the same as yours. It was worth the money... So I don't buy the type that is likely to wear by many. Most of my clothes, therefore, are not worn by a lot of people. For one thing, the prices are high."</p>
		<p>Clive: "I also believe that the name-brand clothes deserve their fame because of the good quality. It's impossible that you buy a Pierre Cardin and find many flaws unless it is a fake one and that will ruin the wearer's image too."</p>
		<p>Quentin: "You get the impression that they (Japanese) are amazing people about details. And their suits are quite good, too; the lining, cuffs or something are made slightly different, which is interesting. Not large difference, but interesting enough. They have a subtle way, which makes them special but not loud enough to be noticed at first sight; they put good thinking in it. I think it is fantastic."</p>
	<p>Three Dimension of Distastes: Aversion to consuming brand fame</p>	<p>Doris: "I'm not particularly up for the real big brands... Probably I want my daily wear to give the effect which designer clothes have, but the essential thing is that it has to be suitable for my position, my practical need and my taste."</p>

	<p>Clive: "It is not because of the brands that I chose them, but rather I find both the watch and the bag are simple and exquisite. The watch won't attract any attention from others when it is on a person, but when you take notice of it, you'll find it is exquisite."</p> <p>Wayne: "Personally, I don't think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani. But for some people, none of their clothes is name brand and they bought from clothing booths, but they look perfect with those clothes. Maybe these people have better taste...I rarely buy goods at the original price, usually buy at a discount."</p> <p>Quentin: "I like exquisite stuff. something you may use for many years after purchase...like leather belt, including fine shirt, which you may wear for quite a long time, because they are fine stuff...Not particular brands, but I'm searching for something suitable to me."</p>
Aversion to following fashion trends	<p>Lucy: "I don't like clothes that are too fashionable. Perhaps no one could ever remember it a year later. I wouldn't wear the clothes that can easily attract others' attention...People look at you simply because you are wearing improperly."</p> <p>Saline: "When I put on a piece of clothes, I want it to be outstanding, not necessarily outlandish, but it has to be special...I do not want to wear clothes that look identical with others."</p> <p>Zoë: "Three years ago, I bought a shirt with a fringe. One of my friends, her sister and her mother all found it weird. But now, it's popular... Also this skirt...it's bought two or three years ago, too. At that time, people would think the colour and the design gave a weird feeling. But now, no one will say it is beyond what is proper..."</p> <p>Grace: "Perhaps your difference doesn't need to be exposing your back, you can demonstrate it in other ways... We are not completely westernized."</p> <p>Doris: "I don't think there is any need to display 'sexy' ... I still can't accept it. I simply feel that it is not my style; I would feel awkward if I dress that way."</p> <p>Leo: "These days, those people want to be weird. Some people appreciate that, but I don't. Terrifying heads, a whole bunch of small accessories...that's gaudy. I don't like those things. What does that stand for? Disobedience? And those huge earrings! There are places in Beijing selling those bizarre things. I don't appreciate them and I don't like seeing them."</p>
Aversion to consuming counterfeit brands	<p>Lucy: "I never do. They make use of the name brand's reputation in quality... if you have a real famous name brand clothes, but your temperament, your personal income etc are not consistent with it, other people would. It's like if you are really wearing a diamond ring, people would mistake it for a glass ball because of your temperament."</p>

	Clive: “I never buy the fake, because I don't think I get dressed to let others see, but for myself, for my own satisfaction. The fake brand may only cost you one third or a quarter of the original price with bad quality, can you cheat yourself that it is a real brand. The feeling won't be nice unless for the purpose of showing to others. For me, I don't want to show off. Nobody will pay attention to it or they may wear a better brand than you.”
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5.3.2.1.1 Taste: Embracing the Authentic Brands from HICs

Informants pursued fashionability and individuality through consuming authentic brands from HICs. They had a unanimous opinion on Chinese local brands and regarded them as cheap and low quality, which were not good enough to demonstrate their standards of aesthetics. On the contrary, authentic brands from HICs were seen to meet all their needs. Partially, this consumption choice demonstrated their economic success. Quentin claimed that “no one will buy clothes of home brand if rich enough.” They adored those imported luxury fashion brands from HICs and the country of origin was one of the important product attributes to consider and evaluate before buying. Unlike the Veblen effect status consumption, they changed from paying attention to brand fame to country of origin and product quality. Informants expressed the significant features such as fashionability and individuality to them. They were looking at products that could provide high quality craftsmanship, unique design features, and some degree of limited availability. They genuinely believed that products from HICs can provide them with those features they were after, but not the Chinese local brands.

Zoe: The suits I like are of the Japanese style. You must have seen it in the magazines. Those suits are quite formal, and don't lack the elegance of women. I really dislike clothes made in China. I think they are very ugly... But the Japanese suits, even the ones made many years ago, you bring one out, change it a little, and it will look very beautiful. The design, the workmanship, you have to admit, is really much better than those of home market.

To pursue fashion products' high-quality design and exclusivity, they considered that premium prices for those products was justifiable and reasonable. In comparison, the Chinese local brands were considered not to be good value for money.

Lucy: I have bought some, spending several thousand on one single piece of clothing. I stopped by China World Shopping Mall and found this one, very beautiful, so I took it. It was a German label, as I remember, a knitting top. I think it was worth the money. High quality, good design, and no one would have the same as yours. It was worth the money... So I don't buy the type that is likely to wear by many. Most of my clothes, therefore, are not worn by a lot of people. For one thing, the prices are high.

However, unlike the SRG who tend to announce the high prices that they paid for luxury products, they indeed appreciated those authentic products aesthetically. Quentin commented on Japanese brands which provided the subtleness of style he preferred in, marked contrast with those brands that offer loud fashion features.

Quentin: You get the impression that they are amazing people about details. And their suits are quite good, too; the lining, cuffs or something are made slightly different, which is interesting. Not large difference, but interesting enough. They have a subtle way, which makes them special but not loud enough to be noticed at first sight; they put good thinking in it. I think it is fantastic.

Their strategic moves therefore involved pursuing less well-known authentic brands to achieve exclusivity. This is an effective strategy for it kills two birds with one stone. On the one hand, they had smoothly manoeuvred away from direct competition with those people who are more able economically, such as the social elites, famous movie stars, extremely successful and well-known business men, and even members of the SRGs. On the other hand, the authentic brands from the HICs offer better value for money, brands exclusivity, aesthetic satisfaction, which mark social difference from people who consumed counterfeit products aimed at emulating consumers from higher social hierarchy (Reinach, 2005, Safa & Jessica 2005, Cordell et al. 1996).

5.3.2.1.2 Three Dimensions of Distastes

Informants conveyed traditional aesthetic views and Chinese values and required clothes containing both functional and aesthetic aspects. They seek to present a balanced and modest look to enhance individuality through; pursuing fashionable

elements, without chasing the whole fashion trend; pursuing the effect of designer label, without showing-off the high price tags; and pursuing aesthetics, without creating negative attention.

Bourdieu (1984) identified the importance of distastes in signalling membership of social groups and recognised that distastes were probably more important than tastes in allowing for the indication of social distinction, and thus association or disassociation with important social groups. There was significant interplay in the fashion discourse between taste and distaste, rejection and acceptance, to indicate interviewees' association or disassociation with other social groups. However, it seemed more powerful for interviewees when they rejected certain tastes, as they set up their idea of dress sense in contrast to the inappropriateness of others and justified the suitability of their own choices. Disposition, situation, age and gender were all taken into consideration. Their fashion discourses were built on their critical, yet referential, fashion knowledge learned from the mass media and acquaintances from highly industrialised countries (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2004). For this reason, the dimensions of their taste and consumption practices were arranged based on interviewees' distastes or refusal to acknowledge the tastes of other social groups (see Table 5-4).

Aversion to Consuming Brand Fame

Informants associated designer brands with high price, good quality, style and a reputation that everyone knows. They were against superficial consumption practices for the purpose of consuming a brand for its fame. Instead, they liked the effects that could enhance individual dispositions. They insisted that conspicuous consumption was a sign of superficiality and vanity. It was not their intention to show-off with their consumption of luxury brands; rather their choice was determined by product quality and individual aesthetic dispositions.

They were against the Veblen effect of luxury consumption practice (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Contrary to the Leisure Class which holds ostentatious consumption and waste as symbols of wealth and social status (Veblen, 1899), informants rejected such waste and ostentatious display. The negative connotations of designers' labels

were not about the brands themselves, but rather the way that some people used brands to convey their status and wealth. Particularly, the SRG who consumed the brands improperly by taking no consideration of individual dispositions, but placing greater importance on the premium prices that designer labels charged to impress others and signal wealth.

Contrary to some social groups' display of lavish lifestyle and conspicuous consumption, informants addressed 'value for money' through their consumption practices along with the importance of having a relaxed manner and down-to-earth attitudes towards designer labels. Interviewees shared the idea that they would not squander earnings on something too luxurious in order to gain benefit from its superficial elements. The consistency between one's needs and income level was stressed. Compared to the SRG, they emphasised their functional and experiential needs, as opposed to social needs for pecuniary display (Kim et al, 2002). Interviewees intended to send a strong message about their personal taste in fashion as individual aesthetic appreciation and display.

Informants admitted their consumption choices included some popular brands, but only because they were the perfect match to their figures and dispositions. Their expression of those brands was from an aesthetically centred viewpoint, which seemed different from Lily who consumed the brand fame and viewed the designer's label as a highlight.

Aversion to Following Fashion Trends

The world of high fashion has created an idealized consumer dream world which has been constantly reinforced through fashion and lifestyle promotions (Barthes, 1990) and depicts an image of the good life (Ollivier, 2008). In the fashion field, high fashion has been conveyed through its global operation such as the worldwide exposure of celebrities and top fashion models (Thompson & Haykto, 1997). Like celebrities in the West, celebrities in China also have huge power and social influence in terms of dressing styles (Hartley & Montgomery, 2009). Many people follow and imitate what they wear. Fashion retailers rush to copy celebrities' styles and sell copies of their clothes in the high street with high speed and low quality (Reinach,

2005). Younger consumers are more likely to explore the most recent styles and consume luxury brands (O’Cass & Choy 2008, Law et al 2004).

Informants enjoyed consuming fashion clothes in general, but were against the concept of fashion associated with high fashion and fast fashion. Interviewees interpreted celebrities’ fashion styles as socially distant: completely different from their own lifestyles, social circles, and educational backgrounds. At the other end of spectrum from high fashion was fast fashion. Fast fashion normally has a very short product life cycle (Reinach, 2005) which promotes fast paced fashion trends that features cheap materials and shortened product life cycles.

Instead, informants’ pursuit of fashion was situated between high fashion and fast fashion, containing individual elements with functional usage and aesthetic values. The informants’ ideas of fashionability were sustainable, mundane fashion that was a true representation of the wearer rather than what the current fashion environment promoted: over-emphasis on trendy styles; shortened product lifecycles; heavily influenced by celebrities through fashion media, the ‘institution of learning’ for fashion (Hartley & Montgomery, 2009). They placed importance on sensitivity to fashion trends and appraised the diversified fashion styles incorporating individuality, but disapproved of the overly emphasized fashion styles that resulted in a lack of harmony with their social environment, or failed to convey personal values and qualities. Those unacceptable fashion styles were thought to be unrealistic for the social world that they lived in. Fashionability for interviewees was not about trendy clothes, but styles that were suitable for their individual dispositions. Equally, fashion styles for them did not serve the purpose of catching others’ attention, but to retain a standard that was a natural reflection of one’s characters, personality and achieved social positions.

Aversion to Consuming Counterfeit Brands

Counterfeit fashion products are seen as the sub-culture of the fashion industry. Luxury fashion brands have been fighting for the genuineness of their names in the global market to prevent counterfeit products (Heffes, 2008). Chinese consumers, tired of the low quality of their own goods, have a high regard for Western imports

(Ahmed & d'Astous 2004, Wang et al 2004, O'Cass & Choy 2008, Wu & DeLong 2006, Lam et al 2011, Frumkin et al 2006, Wang et al 2004). This research supports such findings as interviewees hold positive perceptions of, and attitudes towards, fashion brands produced by Highly Industrialized Countries (HIC) (Europe, America, Japan), because of the high quality and unique designs they could offer, as opposed to the high social status that motivates some consumers to consume. The interviewees' perception of fashion products manufactured and designed by Chinese apparel companies tend to be unfavourable due to their poor quality, undesirable design features and styles (Yan, 1994).

Despite the general understanding of consumers being misled in many situations leading to purchasing counterfeit products (Safa & Jessica, 2005), it was the deliberate purchase of counterfeit luxury items aimed at symbolic status counterfeiting at minimum price which were the main target of disdain for the informants, for their deliberately dishonest acts (Chang 1998, Grossman & Shapiro 1988). Informants' resistance to consuming fake luxury products that carry designers' labels set up social differentiations at both the economic level and moral level. For one thing, they proved that their economic conditions were insufficient for them to buy designer labels. Secondly, the counterfeit practice was attacked on moral ground for being 'dishonest' and 'cheating'. The Confucian ideal social order suggests that people need to be educated to achieve a higher moral worth than the ordinary people (Breslin, 1998). Interestingly, research suggests there is a relation between anti-counterfeit conduct and educational credentials (Wee et al., 1995). Informants' education credentials enabled them to believe what they purchased was morally sound and that they could make moral judgements about others.

5.3.2.1.3 *The Invidious Comparison: Tastes vs. Distastes*

Informants' emphasis on 'natural' or 'normal' did not in fact indicate having no standards, but quite the opposite, to demonstrate that they were 'better' in an aesthetic capacity. However, this sets of tastes were not so distinctive, but rather somewhat ambiguous without looking at other aspects such as attitudes, manners, and morals that they did not support and had made invidious comparison with. Then it became clearer that they intended to show the dichotomy of tastes and consumption practices:

natural vs. superficial, subdued vs. showing-off, real vs. fake, Chinese vs. Westernised, normal vs. weird (strange). Their social distinction reflected that ‘*social identity lies in difference, and difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat*’ (Bourdieu 1984, p.479). Their invidious comparison with three dynamics indicated their struggle and intention to break out from the three social groups. What they emphasized was their intention to demarcate themselves from SRG, Y generation, and the mass by simultaneously drawing cultural boundaries, moral boundaries, and social-economic boundaries, as discussed in the following three sections (see **Table 5-5**).

Table 5-5 The Invidious Comparison

Informants	Wayne, Clive, Quentin	Clive, Lucy, Leo	Doris, Grace, Lucy, Saline, Zoë, Quentin, Leo
Referenced Social groups	The Pretentious	The Commoners	The Fashion Trends’ Followers
Refer to as	The super-rich (e.g. SRG) without education, or the not-so-rich, but spent too much on one piece of clothing	People lack of sufficient economic capital	Celebrities, younger generation fashionistas
Lifestyle of distaste	Only consuming the fame and expensiveness of designer labels, without understanding social environment, individual disposition.	Buying fake designers' labels, cheap clothes from local booths	Wearing weird, strange styles (e.g. body exposing styles), to distanced from reality, without considering individual dispositions
Ascribed characteristics	Pecuniary consumption and display, pretentious, shallow, vain, ostentatious	Having no taste, cheap, being dishonest, bad quality, faking	Inappropriately standing out from the crowd, sexy, attention seeker, indecent, westernized, disobedient, superficial, unnatural, unconventional
Lifestyle of taste	Not consuming designers’ labels, but appreciating brands’ quality, styles, tailoring and effects, cultural elements	Lifestyle differences, expensive tastes, having high standards in quality, pay attention to detail	Beautiful presentations in accord with dispositions, social roles, and environments, convention, individuality, feminine
Exhibited characteristics	Subtle, suitable, down-to-earth, placid, subdued, with higher volume of cultural capital	Authentic, original, aesthetic capacity, and being honest with higher volume of economic capital	Natural, comfortable, attractive, knowledgeable, experienced, frank, and bravery, conventional values

Fashion Leadership: Celebrities and the Y Generation

Blumer (1969) points out that “*what is central to fashion, namely, to be in fashion*”. In China, fashion media is an important source of information and education for consumers (Hartley and Montgomery, 2009) and celebrities are used to lead fashion trends and to promote innovative styles (Zhang et al, 2003). The Y generation are also at the forefront of fashion consumption and are highly engaged in fashion trends with enthusiasm, energy, free spirits, and playful modern ideas of dressing (Liu & Wong, 2004). With the effect of global cultural influence to LICs, the younger generation consumers have been exposed to more globalised consumer cultures through various forms of media and consumption experiences which provide possibilities for the individual to construct multiple social identities (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

In comparison, informants valued a more natural and comfortable way of dressing and dismissed the tastes displayed by celebrities and the Y generations. They considered some of their choices of modern styles to be ‘weird’, ‘strange’, ‘Westernised’, and criticized their indecency, unconventional and inappropriate dressing styles on moral grounds. Even though informants were the first generation encounter Western ideology and the global material culture has opened their eyes to the possibilities of what products can offer to individuals, with their restricted generation habitus, they cannot comprehend everything happening in the market. Hedonistic consumption, for example, has been absorbed by the Y generation, but the G1 generation found it hard to comprehend (Kaigler-Walker & Gilbert 2009, Liu & Wong 2004) and to decipher meanings beyond their group’s, time and space of living (Davis 1992, Crane 2000).

Conspicuous Consumption: The Sudden Rich Group (SRG)

Deng’s economic policy in promoting individual affluence has signalled that economic capital has become an important resource for people to compete in society. In the luxury fashion consumption field, informants agreed upon the irreversible truth of the conspicuous consumption of the super-rich and that the symbolic power they hold over other players in the field. In particular, holding a large volume of economic capital and with the mentality of ‘*the more expensive, the better*’ (Ram, 1994), the SRG use material possessions and brand names to reinforce their social identity, wealth, and social status (Charles 2008, Richins et al 1992b, Richins 199, Richins &

Dawson 1992, Qin 2013, Ahmad 2009, Buckley 1999). However, informants rejected status defined by material possessions and brand fame and questioned the SRG's tastes as a result of lack of education, aesthetic disposition, and fashion knowledge and criticized the manner of their pecuniary display on the moral grounds of being vain, pretentious, and shallow.

Individuality: The Commoners

Contrary to the competing situation with the previous two social groups, the third dimension of distaste involved differentiating and avoiding being identified with commoners. Through their emphasis on addressing high standards of quality clothes, better taste and the expression of individuality, informants pointed out that the commoners had low standards for their clothing choices due to holding much lower volumes of both economic and cultural capital. In contrast, informants were equipped with better education, higher income levels, relatively expensive tastes in fashion and the intention to express individuality. The informants highlighted their social advantages and inequality in resources (knowledge, taste, economic capital, and experiences) and better social standing in terms of moral, esteem and respect (career achievement and success).

5.3.2.1.4 Tastes and Consumption Practice in Professional Field

Table 5-6 Taste and Consumption Practice at Work

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Cultural Capital	Female: professionability & social affiliation	Grace: "I think the clothes you are wearing contain the information whether you want to communicate or you prefer to keep a distance..."
		Doris: "I make sure my office wear is formal enough for office work, but I pay attention to details, a little bit feminine, not completely looking rigid...Affinity is important; I believe adding something feminine helps to make the affinity stronger, since my work is mainly dealing with customers."

		<p>Lucy: “At my office, since our work is sales and marketing, we need to go around a lot; sometimes, we might...if you have a meeting with a customer, probably you will dress up for it; while if you are going to the factory, possibly you won’t wear fancy clothes; probably, if this person is going a long way down to a factory, she will wear flat-heeled shoes, not stiletto heels.”</p>
		<p>Saline: “I feel confined and stiff. The main reason is, those clothes don’t match my character. You see, I behave like this one minute, and like that the next minute. It looks ridiculous for me to wear those clothes. Those clothes look formal and serious.”</p>
		<p>Zoë: “I wanted to impress well as I want to have long term cooperation... At the time, I wouldn’t have redone it (hairstyle) if not for business’s sake. I had to sign a contract with them. There was no other choice.”</p>
<p>Male: symbolic power</p>		<p>Clive: “They know you are the boss from day one. If it’s like, you are dressed up in neat suit, avoiding dust, or careful not to let mud dirty your shoes; they would feel ill at ease even talking to you. Obviously, it is not a good thing if you are starting your own business. Your employees are keeping a distance away from you, right?”</p>
		<p>Wayne: “We design a building for a client, but not necessarily mean that we have to beg for somebody. What I mean is that we certainly make profit from our architect design, but we try to make our clients happy. We don’t beg for 200,000 to 30,000 RMB on each project.”</p>
		<p>Leo: “I feel this one...I think...it shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It’s a good feeling. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.”</p>
		<p>Quentin: “Things are special in businesses... When you are making profits, you’ll care, because other people are your customers. When others are making profits while you are giving, certainly you don’t need to care, because you are God in this matter.”</p>

Informants’ taste and consumption practice are also analyzed (see **Table 5-6**). Data showed that their choice of clothes played an important role in facilitating the development of strategies to combat the stiffness and seriousness of the professional wear and the consequences of social distance that might have been created. They intended to indicate not only their group membership (Turner, 1982), but also their desire and capability for developing close interrelationships with others (Gold et al 1985, Lee & Dawes 1995). Wong and Ahuvia (1998) suggest that Chinese individual

and group identification boundaries could be crossed and the group affiliations merged with individual interests. This tendency showed clearly in female's clothing choices in the professional field. They made efforts to obscure their individual identities, emphasising group affiliation. Hence, females surrendered their personal preferences to achieve a look that signalled approachableness.

On the other hand, male informants seemed to be more sensitive to social achievement than female informants and showed a great sensitivity to the symbolic meanings of clothing that were associated with status, power and achievement in the business world. Their choice of clothes was intended either to facilitate or enhance the power distances depending on the positions they held. As a result, men chose to address their achievements and power with a look that suggested they were able.

5.3.2.2 Habitus

Habitus is a theoretical dimension characterized by processing meanings and actions into a wide range of trajectories and individual differences. The notion of habitus as the dominant mechanism played a central role in Bourdieu's analysis of the social world. This study aimed to look at the underlying '*master patterns of behavioural style*' that is "*a product of the type of environment in which agents live*" (Golsorkhi et al. 2009, p783), that cuts across cognitive, moral, and corporal dimensions of action (Swartz, 1997) and gives rise to practice, allowing individuals to manoeuvre successfully in the social space (Kerr & Robinson, 2009). However, habitus are individual yet socially cultivated dispositions that give rise to their consumption practices, limit the doxic assumptions, and restrict their investments in the field. The habitus has been examined through two aspects based on the habitus' structuring and structured roles, namely how to learn to play the game and the generative grammar exhibited through consumption practice.

5.3.2.2.1 The Accumulation of Deterritorialized Cultural Capital: Learning to Play the Game:

The role habitus plays in social structure, classification, and domination is that it provides the first environment and input that agency encounters when various forms

of capital interplay, legitimate and transform as symbolic capital without conscious understanding of its profound influences, but is processed internally in creating categorizations of perception that become the incorporated structures of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1998). This study examined how informants learned to play the game and their accumulation of the deterritorialized cultural capital (see Table 5-7).

Table 5-7 The Accumulation of Deterritorialized Cultural Capital: Learning to Play the Game

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
The accumulation of 'deterritorialized cultural capital'	The indigenised socialisation	Saline: "My parents are very open-minded. They gave me freedom when I was young."
		Zoë: "I was the first one to wear flared trousers in my hometown, which is a small city and nobody else wore flared trousers at that time... Like feather jackets, trainers and such. I was always of the first ones."
		Doris: "My father... told me to study hard, as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up. At that time, if you pay too much attention to clothes, trying to be different from others, your dress would be regarded as outlandish. And that was bad. Without doubt education was like that at that age."
	Autodidact way of learning material culture in adulthood	Grace: "I think dress sense is something we need to learn about. From zero to one hundred, it is a process of continuous learning."
		Lucy: "To know the outside world...without anyone around you...you went in and out...unless someone told you, you wouldn't have known. You had no access to either written materials or the media, you absolutely wouldn't have known, simply wouldn't."
		Clive: "When I was living in the United States, I found, when on formal occasions...They pay attention to every detail indeed. But Americans try their best to show their individuality at free time...You will get used to people around you dressing this way. Once people around you don't wear the way you're used to, you will feel strange."

	<p>Wayne: “As I knew nothing about fashion wear...before going to Hong Kong, nor were there opportunity, due to the financial circumstances; and no one cared about it at university. Your life style has changed, as well as your income and the nature of your work, which, therefore, causes the change of your requirement for clothes and stuff.”</p>
	<p>Leo: “When I was at university, not working yet, I dressed casually. I didn’t care. But after working, I saw people around me...especially I was one of the managers. People cared about my dressing. So, there is a change of conception. I’ve changed from non-caring to caring. I become to...about my image.”</p>
	<p>Quentin: “Probably now I know all the labels, while back then, I was only blindly happy and blindly confident because everyone else were dressed plainly while you alone were wearing a big name. Now, with a good knowledge of so many designer labels, having tried many, you know which ones suit better and the different features of each brand. And the cultural elements behind certain label will win or lose your favour.”</p>
<p>Self-interpretation of the HICs lifestyle myth</p>	<p>Clive: I don't wear cardigans and the reason I don't wear cardigans has something to do with my experience in the States. I saw not a single person who wore a cardigan there. It looks ridiculous to wear your tie under the cardigan... Nor do I wear waistcoat. I feel waistcoat is typical Japanese thing. I haven't seen many people wear that in the States or Europe. All I choose to wear are suits with white shirt.</p>
	<p>Doris: “I’ve been to Europe twice, and I find, in fact, the fashion is in China. And economic developments are happening in China. The Europe...I have never been to the United States; the Europe, I think, the fantastic scenery there, the culture and the good living conditions, people just enjoy the pleasure in life, not for the purpose of extravagant consumption itself. It’s not the time now. But things are different in China. People consume a lot, especially the newly rich; they try to display their value through continuous consumption. This phenomenon is very striking in China, especially in big cities. For instance, mobile phones, people simply keep changing their mobile phones for more exquisite ones. But when I was in Europe, I noticed many people’s mobile phones have been used for years. They won’t change their mobile phones unless they go out of order. And TV sets, only sixteen inches...They don’t want to spend money on these things. They don’t think it is necessary.”</p>

	<p>Quentin: "Because...everyone dresses this way in Japan and there is nothing strange about it; they want to, in short, look younger. For example, in China, once over thirty, like, I'm thirty-five years old now, normally you are not supposed to wear sneakers at my age; but in Japan, there are people wearing sneakers everywhere. So having returned to Beijing, when I put on my sneakers and go to meet up with people, they will...to quote them, 'why are you dressed like a university student?' They found it strange. And T-shirts, our T-shirts are rather simple, with a simple design in the front; while in Japan, first of all, the materials they use are different; and they print stuff like Chinese characters or Japanese fruits on the front; it looks fresh and cool."</p>
	<p>Saline: "I thought it was beautiful. I felt quite good about it. And, to be honest, I love to wear very few pieces of clothing. I'm not saying I must expose much of my body, but I feel comfortable that way. I feel comfortable, just like when I went to Europe last year. I went to the beach and swam naked. It felt so comfortable. I didn't have other special feelings..."</p>
	<p>Grace: "Perhaps your difference doesn't need to be exposing your back, you can demonstrate it in other ways. Like...some people like wearing traditional Chinese costume and that's different from most people. Or, some use scarves or other small accessories to change decoration. You don't have to wear exposing clothes. Maybe the westerners, ladies should dress up that way, but for Chinese, not all of us accept it. We are not completely westernized. "</p>
	<p>Wayne: "I think you would feel it in the subways, the difference in Beijing's subway and in Hong Kong's subway. It doesn't matter whether your clothes are good or not, in the subways in Beijing; while in Hong Kong, if you are dressed badly, you would feel the pressure. But it is not right to wear the overly fashionable type in Mainland China. For instance, a pink Armani, Armani sweater, you can't wear it, can you?"</p>

Indigenized Socialisation: Childhood Experience and Family Education

Most informants reported their limited material experience in childhood and their learning was education-centred and guided by their parents. In Bourdieu's view (1984), home influence contributes a significant part of the conditioning to form individual action, as it paves the way for one's critical abstract thinking, communication, patterns of feeling, thinking, acting, or dispositions as 'habitus'. Habitus therefore is the concept that can be traced back to where the fundamental social differences (practice and taste) are located. Data analysis underlined the

importance of parental education and social experience at that time in determining the tendency towards more individuality or social conformity in adulthood. For instance, Doris' childhood was prioritized with education and social conformity. Clothing issues were considered as secondary and superficial linked to materialistic and individual expression, typical to this generation and previous generation in the 1970's when national frugality and wearing patched clothes were heavily promoted by the government (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007). Doris' single patterned dressing style in adulthood perhaps was relevant to this emphasis on social conformity in her childhood education.

Doris: My father... told me to study hard, as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up. At that time, if you pay too much attention to clothes, trying to be different from others, your dress would be regarded as outlandish. And that was bad. Without doubt education was like that at that age.

However, lying on the other side of the spectrum, Saline and Zoë emphasized individuality in taste and consumption practice at adulthood. Their upbringing environments indicated that they had been nurtured and reinforced by their individuality centered environments and the fashion leadership modeled to them since they were young.

Zoë: I was the first one to wear flared trousers in my hometown, which is a small city and nobody else wore flared trousers at that time... Like feather jackets, trainers and such. I was always of the first ones.

The Accumulation of “Deterritorialized Cultural Capital”

It was evident that Chinese consumers did not experience flourishing material resources until the 90's when the interviewees' generation was in their early twenties (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007, Zhang et al. 2001). Because informant's taste in fashion clothes was not inherited from indigenised socialisation, they relied heavily on an autodidact way of learning about fashion in adulthood through various forms of social communication. This form of cultural capital is “deterritorialized cultural capital” (Üstüner & Holt, 2010).

A: Autodidact Way of Learning Material Culture in Adulthood

They consciously accumulated and extracted from vast resources and channels, as they revealed their shared and common perceptions of an enlightened adulthood understanding of fashion sense through varied opportunities when in “*contact with the outside world*” once they had graduated from university. Wayne described his experience of the material cultural shock he experienced when he arrived in Hong Kong to work. For years, he believed educational credentials to be the most superior form of capital and was completely innocent of any knowledge of material culture in his childhood. He first encountered fashion when he began to work in H.K.. After buying many things which he later realised were unsuitable, he began to stick to Armani, as this brand suited him the best.

Wayne: As I knew nothing about fashion wear...before going to Hong Kong, nor were there opportunity, due to the financial circumstances; and no one cared about it at university...After graduated from Qinghua university, I went to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, people seem to care much about their dress. I'm from mainland China and I came to the realization that I could not pay no attention to my dress style...So I began to take notice of my dress. As a matter of fact, I did buy some clothes that didn't suit me. The other day, my mum counted and told me that I had nearly 100 shirts, but half of these shirts haven't been opened yet.

Informants' fashion knowledge was learned with eagerness, but was not a simple case of copying what others do, rather it involved lots of thinking. They had gone through some learning curves from consuming the 'brand fame' to arriving at a stage where they did not just know how to pick a brand, but more importantly, what to appreciate.

Quentin: “Probably now I know all the labels, while back then, I was only blindly happy and blindly confident because everyone else were dressed plainly while you alone were wearing a big name. Now, with a good knowledge of so many designer labels, having tried many, you know which ones suit better and the different features of each brand. And the cultural elements behind certain label will win or lose your favour.”

Informants' autodidact way of learning material culture in adulthood was not a simple emulation process, copying others to consume similar products. They comprehended

what the important elements were that contributed the difference between individual presentations, such as why one presented better than the other when both were wearing the same clothes; how a certain style of clothes would be worn by a certain type of person; how to match accessories etc. Hence, their social contacts and interactions with material culture were more like a mentor, generating much mental engagement in thinking and developing understanding in aesthetic appreciation, rather than a prompting of purchasing actions. However, the autodidact way of learning was associated with a trial and error process. They reported that they had made many mistakes, the outcome did not always show good results.

B: The Interpretation of the HICs Lifestyle Myth

The Western lifestyle myth was one of the important elements contributing to the development of effective status claims among high cultural capital consumers (HCCs) in Less Industrialised Countries (LICs) such as Turkey (Üstüner & Holt, 2007 & 2010) and Brazil (Wilk, 2006). This Western lifestyle myth has also been found in the Chinese newly rich consumers' consumption practice. Data showed that informants frequently looked up to consumers from Highly Industrialised Countries as references not only during their consumption processes, but also help them to make judgements about others during the interpretation processes.

Since the lifestyle myth pursued by the informants of this study also includes Japan in their verbatim, the western lifestyle myth here is referred to instead as the HIC lifestyle myth. It should also be noted that the HIC lifestyle referenced varied across respondents (for example, Clive referenced America, Doris referenced Europe and Wayne referenced Hong Kong whilst Zoë referenced Japan), unlike Üstüner and Holt's Turkish HCC who all referenced America.

Informants' interpretations of HICs lifestyle myth were closely associated with fashion taste and expression. They tended to adopt the Western fashion taste and to agree with their individual expression of taste, but they often used HICs' lifestyle myth as reference to disagree with those who had misinterpreted fashion and luxury consumption meanings. They paid special attention to those aspects where general modern Chinese consumers' practice of fashion and taste were different from

consumers from HICs. They self-interpreted those lifestyle myths and turned them into a form of strong confirmatory evidence to justify their taste and lifestyle choices. Their interpretation hence was their efforts to ‘correctly’ interpret luxury fashion consumption by making the judgement of what were the ‘right’ choices, based on their understanding of the consumers from HICs.

Sartorial culture is developed and underpinned by its nation’s social, economic, and cultural development (e.g. Barthes 1990, Veblen 1899/1994, Simmel 1904, Bourdieu 1984). Suits are typical Western professional wear, and most Chinese learned to wear it the right way (Wu, 2011). Clive, who graduated from an American MBA university, considered that suits should be meticulously presented and adopted the American way, as with other accessories.

Clive: “what is professional wear? The suit should be of only one color; the upper and lower garments should be of the same color, strictly speaking, especially outer garment. You can’t have one color for the upper garment, and another for the lower part. Even if you think it fits well, it can’t be worn at the office. It is not forbidden; but if you ask me, it should be forbidden. However, there wasn’t a rule against it in my company... one stuff from one department did everything well in our weekly mock meetings with customers and we were planning to make him model for others. Then his watch came out from under his sleeve. It was only for a second, but we saw clearly that was a cartoon watch. Everything in him disappeared but that ridiculous watch...”

Most informants showed a sense of frustration when they adopted the fashion expression which might be naturally accepted in other societies, but were unappreciated and confusing for Chinese audiences. Fashion in particular can have different interpretations with multi-layered meanings. Informants found it illuminating when they saw different ways of expressing and interpreting fashion during their overseas’ trips. In Quentin’s view, fashion is about fresh and relaxed dressing which in a way is contradictory to the Chinese view of ‘age’ appropriate dress sense. His trip to Japan had helped him to confirm his view of fashion.

Quentin: Because...everyone dresses this way in Japan and there is nothing strange about it; they want to, in short, look younger. For example, in China,

once over thirty, like, I'm thirty-five years old now, normally you are not supposed to wear sneakers at my age; but in Japan, there are people wearing sneakers everywhere. So having returned to Beijing, when I put on my sneakers and go to meet up with people, they will...to quote them, 'why are you dressed like a university student?' They found it strange...

However, informants held the view that they knew more about fashion objects and were more experienced in consuming luxury fashion goods which enabled them to make wiser choices and be more selective and sensible (Kaigler-Wakjer & Gilbert, 2009). Through their material cultural encounters in adulthood, consumers in Western advanced societies were resilient to materialistic impulses and impetuous and their luxury fashion consumption was driven by occasional events.

Doris: "I've been to Europe, and as I saw, the Europeans are not like Chinese, who spend a lot of money and energy on clothes, instead, they dress very simply. However, they are bold to wear...they are very careful about occasions, and they are bold to wear whatever suitable for the occasion, while Chinese not... people in our circle, like us, don't think they are fit to wear like that. We don't have the chance, and our backgrounds, education backgrounds and family backgrounds don't allow us to dress that way. That fashion I am talking about is related to exposing. For us, we can't accept exposing because of our education and... we are nearly thirty-three."

The information they gathered was mostly piecemeal and individual case based, hence it could not reflect the typical Western society material culture (Holt et al, 1984). This is perhaps because of their autodidact way of learning and lack of material experience in the indigenising socialisation phase. In comparison with their Turkish HCC consumers, according to Üstüner and Holt (2010), whose cultural capital was cultivated through closely following the American middle class' upbringing and regularly traveling to America to update their information. The social trajectory group in this study did not have such luxuries as going abroad to study or travel when they were young. Even information about the West was hard to find, whilst developing a general understanding of Western lifestyles would have been impossible. The fashion brands, material culture, and Western dress sense were all completely new subjects to

them when they were adults. This did not allow them to develop a full understanding of HICs lifestyle which is centred on material culture.

5.3.2.2.2 The Embodied Cultural Capital: Confucian Intellectualism

Data suggest that the embodied cultural capital of Confucian Intellectualism also structured informants' status consumption practice. Central to their idea of embodied capital was the cultured self, who hold moral superiority over material cultural influence. This group believed in education and this belief was deeply embedded in their social classification and intertwined with their understanding of aesthetic appreciation and presentation.

Wayne: Clothes can more or less reflect one's cultivation. But we can't judge one's taste from how much money he earns. It's how he spends his money that we see his taste, not how he earns the money... He bought the most expensive range in Armani, but he still looked strange when he is in Armani...he had never been well educated. So, that is the difference.

Informants had shared requirements for clothing attributes such as the functionality of clothing, durability, comfortability, and 'value for money'. Their frugal living conditions in childhood resulted in their relentless demand for products' tangible attributes like quality, wearability, durability. They were also very price sensitive and requested value for money products. These requirements were also found in other consumer studies of this 70's generation (Li et al., 2011, Barton et al. 2013, Wu 2011, Finnane 2007, Zhang et al. 2008). For Bourdieu, habitus is not a direct reflection of the conditions of existence of a class, but a sensibility acquired through an upbringing in those conditions (Swartz, 1997). It must be borne in mind that G1 was educated by the traditional cultural values at home and school in the 70's. This generation was inspired by Confucian intellectualism (Ni, 2009) alongside the promotion of a frugal way of living (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007). The Confucian Intellectualism had become instilled in their value system.

Central to their social distinction was education. This was understandable because the informants achieved their career success through the social trajectory route of

accumulating institutionalised cultural capital. This group was university graduates and some of them had Masters' degrees, which were either obtained from China or abroad. Given the fierce competition to gain university access, this achievement had made them different from those who did not do well at school. Their life chances were transformed by education and the doors opened for them because of higher education. Without the higher level of education, they would not be able to get hired as the first generation of the work force to work alongside the foreigners that Deng's open-door policy brought to China. Without the higher level of education, they would not have been able to comprehend the essences of taste and distaste; without the higher level of education, they would not be able to understand or display the important dispositions instilled in style choice and brand selections.

The Confucian Intellectualism is also centered on cultivating individual virtues. These virtues promote moral excellence and action correctness (Yu, 2007, Ni 2009). Informants developed a strong sense of superiority over other social groups in expressing their embodied taste, cultivation and life goal orientation. Informants' judgments of taste and distastes were quite often associated with dispositions along with a series of moral judgements such as considering the SRG to be shallow, the commoners to be dishonest, and the dress sense created by celebrities and the Y generation to be indecent and unnatural (see **section 5.3.2.1.3**). It is not only the taste and distaste that sets them apart, but more importantly, their dispositions, moral excellence, and life goal orientations. They advocated modesty in manners and placidity in attitudes towards luxury fashion consumption, which to some extent highlighted their professionalism and drive to achieve. In their logic, dressing is only part of individual life, whereas the other groups had paid too much attention, and placed too much weight on this matter so that they had changed life courses and violated moral principles. This superior position as paragons of virtue might be related to Confucius's view of the individual life goal which was to become a moral intellectual (a superior and virtuous person) by cultivating a series of virtues from an early age (Yao 2000, Chan 1963). They uphold the notion of Confucian Intellectualism which centered on individual development in learning and being cultured to achieve moral excellence outweighed other factors in one's life progress.

This inevitably created a potential social classification and a sense of superiority of being cultured (Hessler 2001, Laidler 2003, Bond 1992).

5.3.2.2.3 *The Generative Scheme: The Differing Aspect*

Despite the informants having shared generative schemes as discussed above, their nuanced practices may be a result of gender and occupation differences (see **Table 5-8** and **Table 5-9**).

A: Gender Habitus

Table 5-8 Gender Habitus: Female and Male Differences

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Habitus: the generative grammar	Female: the inner self and the external expression of consumption tastes	Grace, “I think the person of me at office is much different from when I am at home. Sometimes, there is consistency.”
		Doris: “I am a conservative person, which restricts me to...probably other people think I would look good dressed in another style, but due to my own conservativeness, the way I dress is single-patterned... I now have fixed ideas on how I should dress.”
		Lucy: “As I had travelled abroad, I had seen a lot and knew much more. Probably it had an influence on me. It was not only because of what I had seen or what I was wearing; it must have been something about my whole self. I was influenced imperceptibly. It was not like I had been trained or something. All happened imperceptibly: look and listen. It was simply like that.”
		Saline: “I don’t think it matters. If you want to look, come and look. If you dare to wear, then wear it. If you dare not, then nothing can help. I have no way to change it. And I don’t think it is not beautiful. If you wear it, you must think it is beautiful. And you don’t feel uncomfortable.”
		Zoë: “I think I can wear many different styles of clothes. I believe that there is a connection between clothing styles and one’s disposition. If you contain many sensations, you could wear any styles...I look good in them.”

Male: social position and competitive advantage	Clive: “Honestly, I’m not overly concerned about the brand. I belong to the middle-low class in the aspect of clothes consumption, compared to ordinary men. I know some of my friends who buy brands only, but the best jeans I have are Levis. I’m not afraid of being joked about; I’m telling you the truth; I only buy suits from Pierre Cardin, not elsewhere...”
	Wayne: “Clothes can more or less reflect one’s cultivation. But we can’t judge one’s taste from how much money he earns. It’s how he spends his money that we see his taste, not how he earns the money... He bought the most expensive range in Armani, but he still looked strange when he is in Armani...he had never been well educated. So, that is the difference.”
	Leo: “It shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It’s a good feel. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.”
	Quentin: “Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big city, the capital of China... People who have favorable living conditions when they are young don’t really care about material things. When they grow up, they are more placid.”

The study of habitus has uncovered a significant difference between female and male informants. Female informants showed more sensitivity towards the social aspect of self in fashion trends, while male informants showed more sensitivity towards the symbolic violence imposed by luxury consumption (see Table 5-5). Their different intentions with respect to luxury fashion consumption were aligned with their gender habitus (see Table 5-8). Female informants placed more importance on styles, as they emphasised that clothing should be in accord with one’s dispositions, social roles, and environments in the process of consumption. Clothing styles were the representative of themselves living in the society. On the other hand, male informants paid more attention to the luxury aspect of consumption which showed in their emphases on the social aspects of self in relation to symbolic property, particularly in association with wealth, social achievements, and status. Consequently, luxury consumption was the representation of the achievements and privileges they earned in society. This character showed even more prominently in the professional field (see section 5.2.2).

It is evident that females and males were traditionally taught differently in terms of their social roles and responsibilities at home and school (Hofstede & Bond 1988, Markus & Kitayama 1991, Triandis 1989) and held different expectations (Stone and Desmond, 2007), which were deeply rooted in Confucius' philosophy impacting on their education, conduct and morality (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007, Yau 1988, Pan et al. 1994, Liu 1987, Hall 1997, Laidler, 2003, Mu 2002). In terms of social roles, females were expected to have a supporting role in the family and society while the male was expected to be the breadwinner for the family (Liu 1987, Honig & Hershatter 1988, Xinran 2003). Data in this study suggest that females were more conscious of their appearances as individuals living in the society and showed more sensitivity towards the inner self and the differences from others through appearances. Relatively, males were more driven to achieve, more conscious of their social positions and status in society, and consequently emphasised their competitive advantage and addressed their strength to win.

B: Occupational Habitus

Table 5-9 Occupational Habitus: Taste of Constraints vs. Taste of Individuality

Concept	Theme	Living Condition	Parental Social Location	Taste and Consumption Practice
Class habitus: social condition	Taste of constraints	Grace: “not to compare with the rich...looking back...the beauty in poverty!”	Factory worker, South China	Grace: “My wardrobe is full of clothes-for-spare-time, and I don’t even have any spare time. (Laughing) And I find that many people around me have the same problem. The only reason for our consumption is that we like the things we are buying. Not of much practical use.”
		Doris: ““My family is like any in the past...as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up.....	Factory worker, South China	Doris: “I’m not particularly up for the real big brands... Probably I want my daily wear to give the effect which designer clothes have, but the essential thing is that it has to be suitable for my position, my practical need and my taste.”
		Lucy: “We were extremely poor	Factory worker,	Lucy: “I don’t like clothes that are too fashionable. Perhaps no

	<p>when I was young. All the clothes at that time are left by my parents who had worn them in the army.”</p>	Beijing	<p>one could remember it a year later...I tend to be conservative. I don't try to be deliberately unconventional. I wouldn't wear the clothes that can easily attract others' attention. Of course, this kind of attention is not a result of appreciation. People look at you simply because you are wearing improperly.”</p>
	<p>Leo: “My hometown locates in the west of Hunan, which is a poor area. My family lived in the country. Experiences of dressing...we didn't have the financial ability to pay particular attention to clothes; I even rarely have chance to wear new clothes.”</p>	Farmer, South China	<p>Leo: "These days, those people want to be weird. Some people appreciate that, but I don't. Terrifying heads, a whole bunch of small accessories...that's gaudy. I don't like those things. What does that stand for? Disobedience? And those huge earrings! There are places in Beijing selling those bizarre things. I don't appreciate them and I don't like seeing them."</p>
	<p>Wayne: “When I was a child, my family is poor, so my mother made me clothes in every Chinese New Year.”</p>	Farmer, South China	<p>Wayne: “Personally, I don't think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani. But for some people, none of their clothes is name brand and they bought from clothing booths, but they look perfect with those clothes. Maybe these people have better taste...I rarely buy goods at the original price, usually buy at a discount.”</p>
Taste of individuality and aesthetic driven	<p>Clive: “When I was living in the United States...”</p>	Social Service Official, Beijing	<p>Clive: “It is not because of the brands that I chose them, but rather I find both the watch and the bag are simple and exquisite. The watch won't attract any attention from others when it is on a person, but when you take notice of it, you'll find it is exquisite.”</p>
	<p>Saline: “When I was a kid, I was kind of alternative and I didn't like skirts. My mother always said, “Look at yourself, girl. Why</p>	Military Official, Beijing	<p>Saline: “When I put on a piece of clothes, I want it to be outstanding, not necessarily outlandish, but it has to be special...I do not want to wear clothes that look identical with others.”</p>

	don't you wear dress in the summer? Why do you wear trousers? .”		
	Zoë: "When I was young in the eighties, my father bought me a jacket. A rather formal jacket, and it's very expensive, eight hundred. It goes well with my dress. The size is just suitable for me...what my father was thinking was, "as long as it's suitable for her, it doesn't matter how much it costs." It's simply likes this."	Business Manager in China Petroleum, South China/ Beijing	Zoë: “Artists, some of them would put on extremely ‘loud’ colours, which normally are too strong for us, like, green and red, etc.. We might think that type of match is too much; but they manage to wear it to an effect that we would take as another kind of beauty.”
	Quentin: “Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big city, the capital of China...”	Military Official, Beijing	Quentin: “I like exquisite stuff. something you may use for many years after purchase...like leather belt, including fine shirt, which you may wear for quite a long time, because they are fine stuff...Not particular brands, but I’m searching for something suitable to me.”

Bourdieu (1984) suggests that consumption differences can also be found through the examination of occupation. The intention of this study was to select informants to reflect the characteristics of the modern Chinese, for Deng’s economic reform promoted business related occupations. As a result, informants held occupations that were all business related. The data suggested that there were some links between occupation and different tendencies for taste consumption, but it is difficult to pinpoint whether the characteristics were associated with the geographic privileges or occupations alone (see **Table 5-9**).

In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu demonstrates a fundamental embodied phenomenon and the unconscious formation of habitus that forms the key social divisions. It was the perpetuation of economic conditions in early socialisation which generates two extreme conditions ‘taste of necessity’ and ‘taste of luxury’ which in turn underpin

agents' unconscious intentions towards consumption practices and lifestyle choices. Data showed this trend of dichotomic practice among informants: the "taste of constraint" and "taste of aesthetic driven individuality", which could be derived from occupational or geographic differences. Informants came from different geographic locations originally. One group is originally from Beijing which normally indicated relatively better living conditions and more available material resources to Beijing citizens than to people living in other parts of the country. Informants from this group also reported relatively 'loose' parental controls in clothing styles and enjoying more individual freedom in childhood. Another group, who migrated to Beijing after their university studies, recalled struggles with basic material resources like food and clothes during childhood. This group reported relatively 'stricter' parental control over material consumption with emphasis on social conformity.

This parental influence might have contributed to some differences in their consumption tendency at a later stage: the taste formed of constraints vs the taste driven by individuality and aesthetics. Those who had more parental controls and struggled with living conditions in childhood showed signs of social constraints in their taste in luxury fashion consumption. They were less likely to choose more modern or individual styles than the informants reporting that they had more freedom in childhood. On the other hand, the relatively socially privileged informants tended to be more driven by individuality and aesthetics and were able to express their aesthetic views more elaborately. These characteristics were similar to the reported Y generation who experienced much richer material resources and Western ideology when growing up in Deng's era (Rocha et al., 2005). Interestingly, the second group of informants were entrepreneurs or business owners, whereas the first group of informants were working for enterprises.

However, the individuality and aesthetic driven tendency may also lie in the geographical locations (e.g. capital vs. 2nd tier cities, peasants vs. urban-dwellers) (Hessler, 2001). The cultural diversity of China resulting from the natural circumstances (e.g. geography, climate) and social circumstances (the composition of the population) may already serve as a prelude to social divisions. The informants who grew up in the capital of China held more cultural resources and were more

diverse in their taste when interacting with material goods than informants coming from 2nd tier cities, who in turn showed more diverse taste than informants from the countryside.

Quentin: *Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big city, the capital of China... People who have favourable living conditions when they are young don't really care about material things. When they grow up, they are more placid.*

On the other hand, Leo and Wayne, coming from rural south China, expressed their initially lacking aesthetic appreciation and noted that branded clothes had helped them with presentation when they began to work in big cities.

Wayne: *“Personally, I don't think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani.”*

Furthermore, the geographic differences also resulted in differences in experience, mentality, and language in use, such as the effectiveness of using expressive language and exercising abstract thinking in understanding situations. It is obvious to see the differences of the usages of expressive language between Quentin, Leo, and Wayne. Educated at the same level, Leo and Wayne were much less expressive than Quentin. Another effect of growing up in poor living conditions was that they were very hungry to succeed in their lives. Informants like Leo and Wayne expressed the intensity of being successful and their symbolic associations made direct reference to successful career as opposed to Quentin's more dynamic aspects of life or Wayne's after work leisure pursuits.

5.3.2.3 The Chinese Luxury Fashion Consumption Field

Studies (e.g. Hartley & Montgomery 2009, Finnane 2007) suggest that the emergence of a modern fashion industry was an indication of the onset of China's social transformation, linked to much larger processes of change in politics, economy, technology and ideology. Deng's economic reform in the 1970's gradually attracted substantial foreign investments in China and created a large work force serving foreign or joint venture enterprises and some of them even became entrepreneurs, which was unprecedented (Loyalka, 2006, Liu 1990). A big proportion of the

workforce was serving foreign enterprises (Li 2006, Lu 2002). Many of them, born in the 70's with university degrees and had experienced varying degrees of hardship in terms of material resources and at the same time, being educated with Confucius' intellectualism in their early years (Chang & Halliday 2005, Barton et al. 2013), began to get familiar with Deng's policy of material incentives for encouraging individual wealth accumulation (Loyalka, 2006).

In the consumer market, since Pierre Cardin, the first foreign fashion designer, entered China and recruited professional Chinese models in 1980's (Wu, 2011), China's textile industry and the Chinese consumer market have undergone tremendous change and Chinese consumers have been inspired by fashion products produced by Western designers (Zhang et al. 2003, Kilduff et al. 2004). The accession to the WTO in 2001 for China has also accelerated the speed at which the Chinese market opened up to foreign apparel enterprises. However, China's domestic textile manufacturers have experienced many difficulties in competing with foreign enterprises, ranging from technology in manufacturing, to product innovation, design and styles, as well as merchandising and business management in understanding and promoting consumers' needs (Reinach 2005, Li & Yao 2000).

5.3.2.3.1 *Doxa: Exposing the Domination Structure*

A field is a specific arena defined by its relation to its participants and their relations to each other as well as the distribution of the relevant capital or resources that allow consumers to compete for status and symbolic power. The luxury consumption field is the battle field within which consumers compete for the distribution of the relevant resources, status, and social distinction through their acquired capitals relevant to the field. These heterodox views (see **Table 5-10**) revealed their perceptions of the important resources to acquire in the field, the valuable and important stakes to preserve in the field, the dominant social structure and their intentions to push the boundaries in relation to their relative social positions.

Table 5-10 Field: Doxa

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Field: Doxa	Economic capital as symbolic power	Zoë: “They (the rich people) have the money, the foundation...the service provided by the society, for people who are of a certain economic level, is different from that for you and I ... whatever else is not perfect, it can be done.”
		Clive: “I used to work in a company and had a fairly high salary, but after various experiencing with people, you actually calm down, because it is not sensible to compare your salary with your boss’s income. It is a far cry from their income. This is the first reason. Secondly, when you got to know many rich people, it is not like what you used to think it would be, to be a wealthy man, which deeply affects you.”
		Leo: “You get to know many brands, but you can’t afford to buy them. All you can do is to envy the rich...I will get those things through my hard-working.”
	Superficiality of the field	Grace: “I simply know nothing about clothes... the fashion, I feel, is rather distant from our real life.”
		Doris: “I’ve been to Europe twice, and I find, in fact, the fashion is in China. And economic developments are happening in China. The Europe...I have never been to the United States; the Europe, I think, the fantastic scenery there, the culture and the good living conditions, people just enjoy the pleasure in life, not for the purpose of extravagant consumption itself. But things are different in China. People consume a lot, especially the newly rich; they try to display their value through continuous consumption. This phenomenon is very striking in China, especially in big cities. For instance, mobile phones, people simply keep changing their mobile phones for more exquisite ones. But when I was in Europe, I noticed many people’s mobile phones have been used for years. They won’t change their mobile phones unless they go out of order. And TV sets, only sixteen inches...They don’t want to spend money on these things. They don’t think it is necessary.”
		Quentin: “I think things are different nowadays. People live to seek the pleasure in life. So people’s values have changed. They don’t judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances. People will notice what clothes and watch you wear...This is what is like these days, however, nothing like this before.”
	Social constraints in expressing individuality	Saline: “... Yeah, there are rules, and I won’t go too much beyond them... I rather think no-rules is a good thing, for it gives free rein to one’s imagination and ability.”
		Doris: “I’ve been to Europe, and as I saw, the Europeans are not like Chinese... Although Chinese spend a lot on clothes, we have too many restrictions.”

	Zoë: “Most people are dressed the way, not because they want to be dressed that way, nor do they like to, but the environment needs them to dress like that. They have to. Such is the society. I hope, I won't behave too improperly, and the society won't control too much.”
	Lucy: “I think today’s young people are living in a good age. There aren’t many restrictions, nobody telling them what they must do and stuff like that. They can do something that no one else dares to do in the past...That is to say, they are not so silly as my generation used to be, I really envy today’s young people.”
	Wayne: “We are influenced by the environment...It is not right to wear the overly fashionable type (e.g. a pink Armani shirt) in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, it’s like, hm; no matter how weirdly you are dressed, people will take it for granted; while in Beijing, people will say, ‘who is that? Why is he wearing that thing?’ Men are born free but restriction is everywhere.”

A. The Symbolic Power of Economic Capital

Informants hold the orthodox view that the social hierarchy and social division were marked clearly through social position and economic capital. Their social position, income level, and achievements would not be able to match those at the top. Hence, their consumption level and service received would only match the volume of the economic capital they held. Informants accepted the social hierarchy that aligned with economic capital, and subsequently the superior service they received: the higher social position one has, the higher volume of economic capital one holds, and the better service or more premium products they consume. This orthodox assumption was held without challenging the hierarchy of the society, nor the hierarchy of the market.

China is a society with a high level of power distance (Hofstede, 1984 & 2001) and people tend to emphasize their social importance or their social achievement in order to mark social divisions. China’s economic reform has highlighted those social divisions through material differences. Services and products in the market are also adopted to match up with the level of personal wealth in the society.

Sociologists studying China’s social development have suggested that state policies shape the life chances of social groups and social status’ structures (Whyte & Parish

1984, Zhou & Hou 1999). Whyte (1985) examined the politics of life chances in this light and found that shifting state policies in different historical periods had created distinctive opportunity structures and also significantly affected the life chances of different cohorts. The shifting state policies of Deng's economic reform aiming to modernise China and to encourage individual wealth accumulation effectively redistributed social resources. This 70's generation experienced social trajectory and early experience of material culture from the West. Deng's economic reform has created a distinctive opportunity for them to accumulate economic capital themselves through doing business in the market.

In the consumer market, fashion media may have also played a key role in encouraging consumers to adopt materialistic strategies (Holt, 1995) to consume luxury fashion products by signifying social status (Goffman 1952, Belk 1988, Solomon 1983, McCracken 1987, Levy 1959), group membership and identification (McCracken 1988, Dittmar 1992), which also inspired other group members to follow (Rassuli & Holland 1986, McCracken 1986). This created a social phenomenon which indicted the importance of economic capital as social distinction (Buckley 1999, Ahmad 2009). In part, they had been actively participating in luxury consumption and closely engaging with fashion related issues. Conspicuous consumption provided biased status beliefs that if people were able to consume luxury fashion products, they would be better and more able in terms of their personal competence and social achievements (Ridgeway, 2014). The social division in modern China illustrated through social position and economic capital indicates that not only are those people in the higher position regarded as more able and competent, but their own capability to achieve, and therefore to consume the level of luxury which matched their positions was affected. This marked a social distinction from those who cannot afford luxury goods and made them stand out in terms of their social achievements and status. Informants distinguished themselves from the mass who consumed counterfeit designers because in fact they were unable to afford real luxuries.

On the other hand, informants did not challenge the symbolic violence that people from higher social position imposed on other members of the society (including them) by leading very extravagant lifestyles. Instead, they in fact had taken it as an

aspiration for them to work harder and to climb the social ladder higher. This implies that they had accepted their lower social position in the existing social hierarchy, but refused to be confused with the lower social position held by the commoners.

B. The Superficiality of the Field

The data show that informants did not like the way that the current field operated, particularly in terms of how to display one's aesthetics and reveal one's identity. Informants considered that the ways in which other groups were participating in global consumerism was a sign of the superficiality of the field, because this field used to be a place which treated luxury or wasteful consumption with disdain from the perspective of both Confucianism and contemporary Chinese communist ideology (Wu 2011, Finnane 2007), which was the field that they grow up with.

China's modernisation was accompanied by improved cultural, social, and economic conditions that promoted consumers' aspirations for fashion consciousness and created social identity through consumption (Wang 2010, Goodman & Zang 2008, Rahman et al. 2008, Wong & Ahuvia 1998). This social phenomenon encouraged excessive consumption, the worship of material goods, and judging people based on their appearances and the products they consumed. Many would consume internationally recognisable designer labels to show off their wealth and status (Qin, 2013) or to share with family members (Braxton, 1999). They attempted to make sense of the social phenomenon of the Chinese people's overwhelmed response to material culture and globalisation. SRG was on the front line of consuming excessively and therefore being criticized by the informants. Although SRG also hold substantially higher volumes of economic capital and lead extravagant lifestyles like those people from high social positions, informants characterized SRG's consumption practices as superficial and illegitimate claims of their higher social position. China's economic reform has allowed many to accumulate economic capital in a very short period of time through doing business. The SRG's social trajectory route through increased economic capital alone was fundamentally against informants' sense of achievement.

This heterodox view might have been shaped by their habitus developed in the specific historical moments (Barton et al. 2013, Rocha et al. 2005, Tai 1998, Tai 2005, Gao et al. 2004). They grew up in an environment which emphasised education and considered any kind of appearance management to be vain and superficial. Informants acknowledged the social transition period, but refuted those economic capital centred consumption practices, because their cultural legitimation rested on the traditionally legitimate social trajectory routes gained through the accumulation of cultural capital, rather than economic capital display.

Informants competed for a dominant position through their cultured view of fashionability. They rejected the visual surface of the body – the outer appearance – as the most important matter. Despite people living consciously on the surface of their bodies and these surfaces could be felt to be the origin of identity (Budgeon, 2003), informants opposed such a simple solution and strove to address the beauty of the cultivated and educated body. Through their choice of fashion clothes, it was their internal dispositions and not the external appearance that conveyed social meanings of self-worth (Entwistle, 2000). It was through this emphasis that informants trivialised fashion consciousness and sensibility motivated by public display.

Their doxic assumption challenged whether the field should be preserved or maintained with traditional Confucian Intellectualism or materialism driven ideology. Although data showed that most of informants felt offended by current materialistic social phenomenon which was against their established ideas of fashion, consumption, and taste, informants had given cultural legitimation to Western fashion products sold in China. Most imported fashion products carrying Western cultural values that are sold to China, carry quite different cultural traditions to those indigenous to China (Markus & Kitayama 1991, Triandis 1995, Hofstede 1980b, Tu 1985, Chu 1985, Hsu 1983, Kashima et al. 1995). Some fashion ideas such as body exposing clothes were challenged by the informants as inappropriate to the Chinese cultural values and against Chinese traditional aesthetics. These aesthetically challenging styles may be a form of cultural invasion from HICs to the LICs, or Western modern society to a traditional society. This notion of cultural invasion was a central idea in international marketing studies and cultural globalisation research (e.g. Holt et al. 1984, Üstüner &

Holt 2010). However, informants had not recognised this cultural invasion through their consumption of those Western commodities. Instead, they were rather enthusiastic and completely smitten by those luxury fashion products coming from HICs. In their verbatim, there were no criticisms towards designers/manufacturers/importers of the fashion products, only towards other consumer groups who bought those products ‘incorrectly’ or ‘superficially’. They challenged the mass’ immoral consumption behaviour for counterfeit products, challenged the young fashionistas’ complete acceptance of the unconventional fashion ideas, and challenged the SRGs’ materialistic and extravagant consumption practices. They believed that it was the individual choice, personal responsibility and decision to make purchasing actions happen, and whether to accept the Westernised fashion ideals. These critiques of other social groups made them feel superior to others who could not see through the essences of what they have perceived. However, they perhaps had also failed to acknowledge the power of cultural globalisation imposed on individual consumers and the difficulty of tasks that individual consumer faces, especially the uneducated ones when consuming luxury fashion goods. Given the collective nature of the Chinese people, the informants’ education credentials had given them a key critical evaluation skill that allowed them to consume selectively and to go beyond objective forms of consumption, towards a cultural practice of consumption.

C. Social Constraints in Expressing Individuality

Consumers’ needs and desires are shaped by their values and influenced by the society they belong to (Tse et al., 1989). Consumption provides a concrete social context in which the existential paradox between social restriction and individual freedom is routinely played out (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Holding Confucian values, China as a collective society presents individuals with high pressure for social conformity, and people tend to aim to live up to the expectations of others (Wong & Ahuva, 1998). Under such circumstances, social restrictions referred to the negative effects generated by wearing something different from others. It was reported in the interviews in a variety of ways including tone of voice, comments, judgments, a staring, an expression, and an attitude expressed by family members, friends, and even strangers in social environments. This phenomenon might be widely diffused

throughout every corner of their social lives which represented that the symbolic power was generated by the public and imposed on any individual who was visually standing out from the crowd.

The informants were financially well-off, but they struggled to convey their career success and social achievements through legitimate choices of clothing. Studies (Wong & Ahuvia 1998, Belk 1984) suggest that envy would be generated by expressing the coveting of wealth, showing resentment towards the person who possesses the desired objects. On the one hand, this indicates the resentment that the public have developed for those who have achieved financially. On the other hand, it also indicates the informants' misrecognition of their own internal drive for being obliged to remain 'one's people' due to the 'interdependent self-construal' and the strong tendency to make a connection between the individual self and others as part of a social context (Markus & Kitayama 1991, Triandis 1995, Hofstede 1980b, Tu 1985, Chu 1985, Hsu 1983, Kashima et al. 1995), the social role as an important construction of self-identities (Cousins, 1989) and the ambiguous self-identity and group-identity as individual (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

Bourdieu believes that *doxa* is more than common belief, but it also has the potential to give rise to common action. Therefore, practice is largely organized through the world of *doxa*, the taken-for-granted, naturalized world of everyday life (Friedland, 2009). The doxic assumptions made by informants organised their consumption practices by giving a significant consideration to individual dispositions, down-to-earth consumption attitudes, valuing the cultivation of the tastes, and appreciating the contents (e.g. design, quality, matching to individual dispositions) of brands (Bond 1992, Li et al. 2011).

5.3.2.3.2 *Illusio: Commitments to the Game*

Golsorkhi et al (2009) denote that the *illusio* of the field allows relationships between agents in a field to be regulated in such a way that the stakes and rules of a field favour those who have already achieved the best-established positions, benefited from the higher amount of capital and had the best dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Informants revealed two important aspects of being caught up with the game

and the reasons that might be able to explain their highly engagement in the game (see **Table 5-11**), because this was the very field not only in terms of struggling for social distinction, but also a field that could highlight personal quality and encouragement.

Table 5-11 Field: Illusio

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Field: Illusio	The social engagement with luxury fashion consumption	Grace: "I'd like to be comfortable. I want to be free and a little lazy; I don't want to care too much, but you can't when at office. One needs to have some principles. You can't go beyond what is proper. But I don't want to as long as I arrive home."
		Lucy: "Many people wear name brands, but they behave differently. For someone, brands have become part of their life. Whenever a new product arrives, they will go for it. This lot would only buy products that have good quality and good reputation. They just believe that this kind of lifestyle is common...If you see this kind of person on the street, you would only feel naturally instead of thinking that he/she is an upstart or pretending something."
		Leo: "As a student, you can dress yourself casually, or formally... If you are dressed casually, people will think you have a casual manner and easy-going; if you are dressed formally, maybe you are waiting for an opportunity coming to you."
	Individual wisdom centered encouragement in resisting social influences	Saline: "Everyone wants to show individuality through dressing. I am the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please. I chose body exposing type of clothes, not because I want to be standing out that way, but I personally like wearing them and feel comfortable"
		Doris: "I simply don't understand what those famous models want to lead people to. I think it is ridiculous. I'm not fashionable. Usually, I stick to my own style. I think that's suitable for me. I am not after the fashion."
		Zoë: "I think clothes reveal one's innate character, one's frankness. Some people try to hide it, um...very few people dress the way they want to."
		Quentin: "I just think that I have been like this since I was a kid, and I stay the same now. As long as I dress up suitably, I won't care other people or fashion stuff, just following my own understanding. There is an English word...self-fondness, Greek...a narcissist."

	<p>Clive: "...although everyone is pursuing wealth, for me, I'm not, not at all. I think I have been pursuing my 'spare-time-activities', doing various stuff out of the office. But, in my opinion, everyone has his way of spending money, not necessarily to show off your wealth. At least I don't have that eagerness."</p>
	<p>Wayne: "Clothes are just clothes. It plays no important part in my life. The most important thing is your career. What do clothes bring you anyway? What's the good of dressing up like a butterfly? It's not like I'm selling clothes."</p>

Informants showed a shared passion for consuming luxury fashion and equally a shared understanding of the social roles that clothing must play in this modern society. They contend that luxury fashion consumption was not a pretentious game, but a serious matter in defining who they were. They invested heavily in high standards of luxury and branded items to show their social position, personal achievements, and aesthetic capacity. They considered clothing consumption to be part of their lives and an important part in constructing who they were and what they do as professionals. This shared existential experience in luxury fashion consumption gave away their consideration of the worth of playing the game. What they emphasized was not the face value of dressing, but a sincere commitment with an attitude that put dressing for life in a relatively formal situation. This might be related to their business-related professions in which dressing is an important part of self-presentation. In addition, it showed that there was some pressure for them to engage in certain consumption standards. It seemed that it was their social responsibility to dress properly and decently. This commitment may indicate their construction of self-concepts as professionals. It is possible they feel they must maintain their professional stature in the community.

The second aspect showed that they insisted on individual wisdom centered encouragement in resisting negative social influences (e.g. chasing the superficiality of brand fame, following fashion trends without justification) through encouragement for not being swayed by others (e.g. fashion media, celebrities, and super-rich groups), but being able to pursue one's own identified importance in life. This illusion was aligned with their taste which was centred on the expression of resistance to

surrender to materialistic influence, emphasizing aesthetics, simplicity, authenticity, and the mundane cultural appreciation of fashion clothes.

Interviewees' *illusio* revealed their specific disinterests in fashion collectiveness and indifferences to the face value of consumption practices. Informants showed less interest in playing within the existing rules of the game and tended to dismiss the collective social phenomenon towards luxury and fashion and instead emphasised the individual conscious selection. Males tried to redirect the game rules by expressing the unimportance of fashion in their lives, compared with career and individual interests. Female informants emphasised their brave spirits in rejecting the status quo. They questioned the fundamental issues in terms of how one should be dressed to best represent who one was in society. Subsequently, the pursuing of individual subjectivities by successful social elites were true inspirations to informants. This aspect might have revealed their professional background and the habitus of driving to achieve through career success. Their perceived importance for investing in the game reflected their social trajectory route, and the social conditioning that led them to their current positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

5.4 Summary

The informants belong to social trajectory groups, but their status consumption strategies differ, because informants not only hold different volumes and compositions of cultural capital and economic capitals, but have also gained their upward social mobility through different routes. Lily gained her social position through an economic route and holds much less cultural capital than the rest of the informants. She exercised the materialist status consumption practice. Other informants, who hold relatively more cultural capital, exercised cultural consumption practices.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Outline

This chapter will summarise the research findings and review key similarities and differences from previous research findings. The original contribution and future research will then be discussed.

6.2 Data Comparison with Status Consumption Research

This study set out to explore the status consumption strategies that Chinese newly rich consumers, the social trajectory group, used to gain social distinction through luxury fashion consumption. The research question underpinning this inquiry is: **What status consumption practices do Chinese newly rich consumers engage in to compete for social distinction through luxury fashion consumption?**

Two distinctive status consumption strategies were adopted by the informants: the materialist status consumption; and the cultural idealist status consumption. Although all informants belong to the social trajectory group, the volume and composition of cultural capital and economic capital determined their differentiated consumption practices. The materialist status consumption practice was adopted by Lily who held a higher volume of economic capital, whereas the cultural idealist status consumption practice was adopted by other informants who held more volume of cultural capital. This alignment between capital composition and tendency of consumption supports Bourdieu's theory (1984) and confirms its relevance to the modern Chinese context.

6.2.1 The Materialist Status Consumption Practice

Lily's conspicuous consumption also confirmed findings in studies of Chinese face value in which gaining family face and expressing wealth and success were the main driving forces in conspicuous consumption. It confirmed the important role of family kinship played in Chinese people's everyday life. If one of the family members became rich, their family members would be expected to benefit financially and enjoy the shared social status and prestige.

In the Chinese cultural context, researchers (Zhou and Belk 2004, Cheng & Schweitzer 1996, Braxton 1999, Li et al. 2013, Wong & Ahuva, 1998, Ho 1976) have had extensive discussions about Chinese face consumption related conspicuous consumption, especially the close family ties which can contribute to the conspicuous consumption for status claims for the purpose of gaining face. However, the extant literature did not mention that family ties can also discourage conspicuous consumption for the purpose of status claims.

Literature suggests the linkage between family honour and conspicuous consumption, but only for the reason of encouraging luxury consumption as materialistic consumers view conspicuous consumption as enhancing social status (Belk 1984). Literature also suggests the direct link between envy and conspicuous consumption, because the social signalling of extravagant lifestyles would have brought envy towards expensive goods that one cannot afford (Belk 1984, Wong & Ahuvia 1995, 1998). This study also showed that envy was linked to the dynamic of conspicuous consumption of luxuries, but it curbed conspicuous consumption, rather than reinforced it, under the pressure of family kinship. The social consequences of Lily's conspicuous consumption were social alienation and social distance with potentially damaged family relationships. In this case, China's face value theory did not explore the point at which enhancing the family honour through conspicuous consumption stops and could begin to have a negative impact on family kinship. As Chinese traditions value family kinship, many products have been marketed by emphasising this theme. With the increased income gap between the rich and poor within China, the tension among family members would be inevitable. This would make an interesting area for further study.

6.2.2 The Cultural Idealist Status Consumption Strategies

6.2.2.1 The Practice of Confucian Intellectualism as Cultural Capital

Data analysis in this study suggests that informants are adopting Confucian Intellectualism practices as cultural capital. Their emphasis on aesthetic appreciation and individual expression through consuming exclusive authentic products seemed to share similarities with the American middle-class consumers (Holt, 1998). However,

the perceived stakes of the luxury fashion consumption game was not about consuming, but an individual development and cultivation in aesthetic expression and calm attitudes towards material culture. They advocated other game players to be more resilient towards material stimuli.

Holt (1998) confirmed Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital centred consumption practice as consumers' expression of sophisticated taste emphasising authenticity, eclecticism, cosmopolitanism, and improvisation. This study also found traces of these in informants' tastes.

6.2.2.2 Authenticity

Product authenticity was highly regarded by informants, as this offers individual uniqueness, social exclusion, and social distinction for individual subjectivity. This was similar to American consumers' requirements (Holt, 1998), but there are some differences behind these apparently similar demands.

Holt (1998) argues that decommodification as a class practice has become an important resource and marks class boundaries between HCC and LCC consumers. LCC consumers tend to accept the products' meanings attached to the brands and pay attention to the brand's functionality and product scarcity, which is aligned with their social conditioning in the past. On the other hand, HCC consumers tend to avoid consuming market-constructed images and meanings and disguise their consumption of mass products by emphasising individual subjectivities. The ability to decommodify established product meanings by HCC consumers is a natural expression of their class habitus.

The informants' idea of individuality and their demand for authentic products were not generated from the rich material culture and products they consumed, but rather from status competition with other consumer's groups. They did not disagree with the marketized meanings created by fashion designers and manufactures. Unlike the American HCC consumers' view of contrived product images, the informants' social conditioning in material culture did not allow them to develop this level of understanding. They did not reject the branded products themselves, nor the

established product meanings carefully crafted by marketers, but instead wanted to avoid consuming similar brands to other consumer groups. They were against the social phenomenon of luxury fashion rush. It was not the brands or designers' goods imported from HICs that they found illegitimate, but other consumer groups' intentions, tastes and practices towards those brands.

Holt (1998) contends the emerging trend of using authentic products to attract those HCC consumers who tend to decommodify product meanings, as it can leave room for consumers to develop their own product meanings. It is doubtful whether a similar marketing strategy could attract Chinese newly rich consumers, because brand names and marketing messages were still very important for them. Their requirements of product exclusivity rested on other consumers' consumption choices, not on product meanings. This perhaps was directly linked to their social trajectory positions and revealed their habitus of social conditioning as new consumers, which were markedly different from their HCC American counterparts.

6.2.2.3 Cosmopolitanism

The cosmopolitanism, the transcultural differences between foreign culture and local culture were acknowledged, yet embraced and appreciated by HCC consumers (Holt 1998, Hannerz 1990, Thompson & Tambyah 1999). As consumers from LICs, informants showed great interest in HICs material culture. Informants attempted to express their enlightened fashion sense and transnational tastes after coming back from abroad. However, consumption after this stage often became the site of struggle, between local and global cultural values where the local sociocultural obstacles were highlighted and the experiential tension become salient in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, their fashion tastes reflected the key feature of cosmopolitanism - embracing cultural differences, and not being limited to express only localised cultural aesthetics.

6.2.2.4 Using A Set of Tastes that Were in Opposition to Materialist Practice

Holt (1998, p.19) argues that the term of ‘materialist’ has been used by HCC consumers for social classification purposes by referring to consumers who tried to highlight their high volume of economic capital through conspicuous consumption. For economic elites, materialist status consumption is centred and formed by economic capital and they tend to consume the newest fashions, the latest technologies, and the most luxurious pampering products and services. In the consumption field, with materialism as the dominant status game, HCC consumers who hold more cultural capital tend to develop different strategies to combat the materialists’ status and dominant position by relying on their strength, which is that they hold a relatively higher volume of cultural capitals accrued from childhood (Holt 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010). They strategically develop a set of tastes that are in opposition to materialism and construct the materialist as “a pejorative term” to “denigrate the practices of people whose taste are formed by economic capital” (Holt 1998). The strategically developed set of tastes was also in opposition to collectivism to denigrate the practices of people whose tastes are formed by mass consumption. In this study, informants developed a set of tastes that were in opposition to materialists, but had the aim of differentiating themselves from not one, but three different social groups: the SRG with much more economic capital than cultural capital; the commoners with lower levels of both capitals; and the younger generation whether or not their levels of capital were equivalent to their own. The set of tastes were carefully crafted to highlight their social strength: their educational credentials, their professionalism, and their age-related experience in consumer goods. The materialism and collectiveness of mass consumption was their central target.

Holt (1998) questions whether the materialists are more prestige seeking than idealist consumers. In the consumption game both types of consumers participate and develop exclusionary practices that mark their social distinctiveness. In this sense, the cultural idealists, despite their efforts in disowning the materialist’s taste and methods of consumption, were in fact equally interested in status claims. This is an important reminder for this study, for consumption is a game in which consumers are taking positions to play their part with their own understanding of the game rules and with

their social strength (Bourdieu, 1984). In fact, the informants' invidious comparison with other social groups indicates their desperation to make status claims and to have their own particular social strength held in high regard.

6.2.3 Habitus: the Deterritorialized Cultural Capital and the Embodied Cultural Capital

Informants shared some typical features found in Western HCC consumers' cultural practice of consumption (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). However, the accumulation process was significantly different from the Western HCC consumers whose habitus demonstrated the consequences of social conditioning, and a wealth of experience in material cultural centred in individual subjectivities (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). The informants' aesthetic appreciation of luxury fashion objects was accumulated through an autodidact learning process with the reference to the HIC's lifestyle myth, the deterritorialized cultural capital accumulation process, just like Üstüner & Holt (2010) suggested. The slight difference in this study was informants' lack of material cultural in their indigenising socialisation which had prevented them to develop a full understanding of the Western lifestyle.

This study also found that the Confucian Intellectualism, the embodied cultural capital, which they accrued from childhood had also facilitated their status consumption practice. The practice of Confucian Intellectualism as cultural capital held education, morals and cultivation in high regard, which was exactly what they had been taught from an early age. Improvisation was considered to be the most potent expression of cultural capital to showcase one's ability to appreciate a lowbrow material object and turn it into a highbrow object through the expression of language and knowledge (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). The most successful expressions of cultural capital are improvised, applied in an unexpected manner, leading to interesting expressions of taste (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). In this study, not all informants acquired this skill in terms of appreciating fashion objects. Most informants did not appreciate mass produced fashion goods, and even for those who could appreciate them, the appreciation only appears privately, not publicly, so there is no opportunity to use language and specific knowledge to try to show more mundane fashion objects in a

different light. However, what they had done was to turn fashion consumption, a popular material culture, into a high cultural activity by linking a mundane activity to moral intellectual understanding and by linking everyday appearance management with moral cultivation.

6.2.4 Field: Indigenising the Chinese Field

6.2.4.1 The Global Cultural Force

The power of global culture has shifted the traditional mechanisms of status consumption by breaking up national boundaries and ranking countries in a hierarchy based on national economic status. This status hierarchy is different from Bourdieu's suggestion of the social construction of distinction which is only limited to the national level (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). On the other hand, the global culture has offered alternative resources, pathways, and options, for consumers to seek new ways to gain status in their perceived social field. Informants in this study had used the Confucian Intellectualism as cultural capital to facilitate their status distinction. Informants situated consumers from HICs as higher in the hierarchy, but their status competition remained within the Chinese field and their status competitors were other Chinese consumer groups. This is slightly different to Üstüner and Holt's (2010) findings where they distinguished between HCC who acknowledged HIC consumers as higher status to themselves and LCC who only saw the status game as extending to their own national borders.

The process of indigenization in the cultural globalization literature suggests a form of national identity construction that plays off the cultural dominance of the West (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). This study confirmed the HICs' domination in China's consumption field. However, the indigenizing process in informants' cultural consumption practice was demonstrated differently. Rather than competing with Western cultural dominance, informants' indigenization involved submission to Western cultural dominance, but adopting a cultural interpretation of HICs lifestyle myth which was in congruent with their own cultural ideals – Confucian Intellectualism. Holt et al (1984) was right in terms of HICs unchallenged position in global culture hierarchy and LIC's emulation of consumption practices. However,

informants interpreted only the cultural aspect of others' consumption practices, and paid no attention to their materialist consumption behaviour. Therefore, this study did not confirm Üstüner & Holt' (2010) proposed the theory of 'deterritorialized cultural capital' as a general practice applied across LIC. Instead, informants' indigenising socialisation and confirmation bias (Owad, 2006) had prevented them from developing a full understanding of Western material culture. In this sense, global cultural forces had a limited impact on informants and their local cultural values, rather, it facilitated and upheld the indigenous cultural values. Hence, it was in a sense reterritorialized cultural capital.

6.2.4.2 The conflict between stylistic strategies based on individuation and the collective identity

This study has showed a specific Chinese form of cultural consumption practice practiced by the G1 generation in luxury fashion consumption. Bourdieu (1998) suggests that the high cultural capital habitus would produce a 'taste of luxury' consumption practice, whereas the lack of habitus would produce a 'taste of necessity' consumption practice. This study has demonstrated how the social trajectory informants, who lacked material cultural experience in childhood, could consume luxury fashion products in a similar fashion as the American HCC consumers. Yet, their consumption practice was not an emulation of the West, but rather a form of cultural consumption as a way of individual cultivation and moral perfection. This type of social distinction could be a specific feature of Chinese consumers, particularly those who had higher education and hold more cultural capital. This has not been discussed by Bourdieu (1984), Holt (1998), or as part the amended status consumption theory specifically designed for LICs by Üstüner and Holt (2010), and is ripe for further study.

Data showed that there was a conflict between informants' stylistic strategy, normally centred on individuality and fashionability, and the collective identity as members of groups or society. Informants showed varying degrees of tensions, struggles, and sometimes compromises in the process of consumption. However, Bourdieu's theoretical framework seemed unable to provide sufficient insight to allow a full understanding of their social conformity efforts.

6.3 Contribution

This study has studied the Chinese social trajectory group's status consumption and found that they adopted two different status consumption strategies. This indicates that Chinese newly rich consumers do not form a homogenous group and do not adopt similar conspicuous consumption strategies. Deng's open-door policy has allowed many Chinese people to gain social status through different social trajectory routes, some with more economic capital, others with more cultural capital. Bourdieu's notions of volume and composition of capitals and social trajectory help to identify their relative social positions and offer an explanation for the variation in their consumption behaviours. This study confirms Bourdieu's suggestion that informants' status consumption strategies were aligned with the capitals that they hold.

Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010) used comparative studies to establish the opposition of two distinctive consumption practices, the HCC and LCC. They have predefined the two group's boundaries and examined their opposing differences. This study did not deliberately set up this kind of opposition within the sample from the outset due to the many unknowns as a result of the lack of previous research of this kind in China. Instead, this study treated the Chinese newly rich consumers as a whole to study their status consumption behaviour. This unrefined group selection has allowed the researcher to discover that informants did not set themselves in opposition to a single social group like the studies by Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010). Informants took multi-positions to tackle varied opponents from multi-dimensional points in order to establish their taste and social stance. By adopting Bourdieu's field analysis, the logics and mechanics of their choice of status consumption strategies could be understood.

By collecting very rich lifestyle data from individuals, focusing on a single consumption field and subjecting that data to several layers of very detailed analysis it has been possible to offer more insight into the differences in gender habitus, thus answering Holt's (1998) call for more nuanced work in this area. It has also been possible to look at luxury fashion consumption in different realms of each individual's life, giving insight into how different social situations, such as visiting relatives or

going to work might affect consumption practices, bringing a new level of detail to the examination of LICs.

This study confirms the importance of Chinese family kinship and peer group in influencing consumers' luxury consumption choices. However, the influence may not necessarily only encourage status claims, but may also discourage them. Chinese consumers' collective identity and group affiliation created much pressure and tension on the supposedly individual subjectivity centred consumption activities.

Bourdieu's field analysis framework has been proven to be a very useful tool in making sense informants' distinctive consumption practices aligned with their volume and composition of capitals and social trajectory. The cultural omnivore research stream has increasingly found it difficult to map out patterns of lifestyle differences supported by the structures of social space as depicted in *Distinction* (see section 2.3.2.1.2). Holt (1998) argues that in contemporary consumer culture, there is no epicentre from which cultural capital flows, and that virtually any category of consumption or locale is susceptible to appropriation via cultural capital. This is exactly what happened when analysing informants' collective tastes. It was difficult to pinpoint the informants' exclusive taste without looking at other issues, such as manners, morals, and attitudes towards luxury lifestyles (5.3.2.1.3). However, this only began to make sense when looking at the way they learned to play the game (5.3.2.2.1). Informants' "deterritorialized cultural capital" was accumulated from various channels such as mass media, acquaintances from highly industrialised countries, overseas studies, or through leisure activities like travelling and shopping abroad. They also picked up information from different countries, such as America, Europe, or Japan. This way of accumulating cultural capital would be totally different from the HCCs in both HICs (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998) and LICs (Üstüner and Holt, 2010), whose learning was comparatively systematic and consistent. The lack of epicentre also showed in the *illusio* which they committed to playing the game, but advocating individual wisdom, to improvise when playing the game. Hence, this study shows that studying taste alone can make it difficult to understand social exclusion and inclusion, especially for the social trajectory groups. Because of their lack of habitus and cultural capital of in the social field, the competitive capitals are borrowed

or learned during later life stages. This short of capital for competition would make them to recruit every resource possible to compete in the field.

This study offered a new perspective in understanding the global cultural impact on local cultural values. Through Bourdieu's habitus concept, this study showed how consumers digested unprecedented information and made sense of them in order to integrate them with their habitus, in such a way that the new information was made congruent with their existing cultural values, ideas, and system of thinking.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

6.4.1 Limitations of the Research

In this section, I would like to reflect on my research journey through three iterations of my thesis. I will concentrate on two, interrelated issues: The evolution of the research focus; and the shortcomings of the research design and analysis. Following this, I will discuss the implications of what I have learned and how that will be useful for me in the future.

6.4.1.1 The evolution of the research focus, the research questions and the theories guiding the thesis

My initial research interest was in revealing the symbolic meanings that fashion brand consumption had for Chinese newly rich consumers, particularly in relation to the informants' constructions of social identity. In the literature review, I initially selected Confucian Dynamism to guide my exploration and understanding of the cultural meanings the informants ascribed to their consumption behaviours. However, attempts to apply this theory systematically revealed that it had limited utility for the data analysis. I thought that Confucian Dynamism would enable me to understand the homogenous characteristics of the informants that were inherited from, and influenced by, traditional Chinese socio-cultural factors. However, attempts to apply the model in practice showed that although it could address bits of Chinese consumer culture, that, far from being comprehensive, it was only of use in explaining a few cultural values and therefore the resultant analysis was too narrow and partial, offering a restricted

explanation of Chinese consumer behaviour. In particular, the Confucian Dynamism model that I had chosen lacked explanatory power with respect to informants' desires to be socially distinctive through consuming fashion brands, which was one of the most interesting issues that emerged from the data analysis. In addition, I realized that Confucian Dynamism theory could not explain how China's economic reforms have affected informants' changing consumption behaviours as fashion learners. In the first version of the thesis, this aspect was explained and associated with China's macro-economic development. Informants' consumption of working and leisure clothes were also tangled together in the initial analysis. I then used Bourdieu's cultural capital theory to explain this perspective, allowing me to address the areas that Confucian Dynamism could not tackle in a satisfactory way. Unfortunately, the two theories that I had selected did not sit well together, making it very hard both theoretically and practically to make the explanation coherent, and as a result the data analysis was unsound. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with either theory, as a result of my inexperience in the use and application of theoretical frameworks at the beginning of my research journey, I selected theories which did not necessarily sit well either with my data or with each other and so I needed to revisit my initial choices.

The main ambition of the second version of the thesis was to tackle this problem of incompatible theoretical frameworks and make the data analysis both systematic and comprehensive. In the second version, the Confucian Dynamism model was dropped due to its limited ability to explain informants' complex consumption behaviours and their intentions to be socially distinctive. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory was extended to Bourdieu's field analysis framework, as it was better able to cover the changing social environment that China is experiencing and that is affecting informants' consumption intentions, habits, and behaviours in terms of their luxury fashion consumption. The merit of this theoretical framework was its ability to deal with complexity, bridging individual differences and the impact of shared social conditioning. It helped explain informants' intentions to gain social distinction by using the capital concept whilst examining social class inheritance by using the habitus concept, as well as understanding their social struggles within China's social environment. In line with this refinement of the theoretical framework for the thesis, the research question in the second version of the thesis shifted from exploring

cultural meaning to exploring the homogeneity of class boundaries developed by Chinese middle-class consumers through their luxury fashion consumption behaviours. The data analysis focus moved to the informants' efforts in developing social distinctions, perceived social privileges and social status, and their evaluation of those social superiorities. Consequently, the focus on the Chinese newly rich group was changed to the Chinese middle class, but in hindsight this change of scope would never have been feasible given a) how contested the notion of a 'Chinese middle class' is and b) how small the sample size is . Again this was a research design error on my part which was based on a lack of practical research experience and little understanding of the interdependent relationships between research question, sampling approach and data analysis. In addition, this shifted research focus did not fit well with the existing literature review of fashionability. In the second version of the thesis, fashionability was still at the centre of the research gap and theoretical underpinning. It was framed as a Marketing thesis addressing a gap in the consumer behaviour literature pertaining to this newly forming and under-researched consumer group. Nevertheless, this aspect was dropped in the third version and gave way to the final perspective on this research theme and a revised set of research questions which focused on the CNRP's status competition and consumption strategies, informed by a detailed analysis of their luxury fashion practices.

The third version has narrowed down from exploring class boundaries to examining status competition, in particular, the CNRP's development of consumption strategies. This shift in perspective allowed me to see that the informants' consumption behaviours were the consequences of their social struggle with other social groups, rather than only taking the informants' perspective of social distinction. Following the second round of data analysis the importance of international influences on the CNRP's consumption strategies became apparent. This led me to introduce globalization theory to supplement Bourdieu's field analysis theory which did not permit a full consideration of the effects of globalization on consumers operating within less industrialized contexts. Globalization theory considers the effects of globalization, such as advertising Western ideology through a worldwide media, on consumers from less industrialized countries. Globalization theory facilitated the conceptualization of China as a specific, local context which is influenced profoundly

both by its own cultural and political history and at the same time by images, ideas and values projected internationally across cultural contexts. Holt (1998) and Üstüner and Holt (2010) have helped me to understand the importance of this perspective. Their use of Bourdieu's theory to explain their data also helped me to tackle the aspects that I was unable to theorize in my data about informants' learned fashion knowledge and their interpretation of 'Western contact'. It also facilitated an understanding of the consequences of the hierarchy of globalization and the important myths of Western lifestyle as cultural capital. Following this third layer of data analysis, the addition of globalization theory has allowed me to discover informants' deterritorialized habitus (Üstüner & Holt 2010). This, in turn, led me to categorize informants' shared and inherited cultural capital, Confucian Intellectualism, as a form of embodied cultural capital. These two aspects of habitus contributed to how the CNRP consumption behaviour was being structured and at the same time to how they were structuring consumption behaviour. These contributions were made possible by my deepening understanding of the analysis process, which was gleaned through many cycles of refining of my research questions, re-reading key literature and refocusing data analysis. I have learned that although making unwise choices at the beginning of the research process can produce poor quality outcomes, that an iterative, open approach to these problems and limitations, coupled with a willingness to re-examine and reconsider my initial choices and assumptions has led me to a more robust design for this study, which addresses some of its initial limitations, and an even stronger sense of how better to go about this process in the future. When I started this research, I thought that research approach and design decisions were something that were decided at the start of the study and then carried out. My experience of this project is that the data collection, data analysis, and writing up processes have in fact exposed some of the shortcomings of my initial choices and then shaped new decisions which have helped me improve the design and develop the thesis in a different direction.

The most difficult part of the data analysis was exploring habitus. For example, in the second version of the thesis, the data analysis in habitus highlighted a 'true-to-self' aspect. I later realized that this analysis was taking the informants' perspective as if this was an isolated consumer group. After reading Holt (1998), I realized that the

informants' choice of actions reflects their competition in the field with others. The habitus should also reflect this competitive spirit towards others. Thus shifting perspective allowed me better to develop my analysis of habitus in the third version.

My initial attempt at framing a research question was far too broad and unworkable, leading to problems in everything from data analysis to articulating the contribution. As the literature reviews have become more focused through these three iterations of the thesis, the research questions have also become more specific and focused, rather than defining a broad topic for study. In some ways, this is to be expected, both because the area was under-researched, making the enquiry exploratory, and due to the grounded nature of the research, which has privileged the role of the empirical data within the research process. This increased focusing of the research has affected every area of the thesis, from literature review and research methods, to data analysis. Through this process I have learned a huge amount, both about how to conduct research and about myself. This iterative approach has not been the fastest path I could have taken to this version of my thesis, but it has been a productive and instructive journey. I have found this process of learning to research both challenging and rewarding. The processes of reading and re-reading and writing and re-writing have been especially difficult and at the same time necessary.

Now that I have the luxury of thinking back over my research journey, I realise that I did not take necessary steps to develop focused enough research questions. In the end, I have learned both the importance of specific, focused research questions, and also how to go about narrowing my research focus. My research journey would have undoubtedly been shorter and more straightforward had I mastered this skill earlier in the process. Nonetheless I realise now how much good research design relies on the craft of the researcher rather than the application of research rules. Learning this by doing (and re-doing) research has been a really powerful lesson.

The arguments that are presented in this final version of the thesis have evolved throughout the research process. The whole thesis has revolved around the data collected from the CNRP informants and the analysis and re-analysis of those data. The arguments have been developed through many iterations of the data analysis and

theorising processes. As such the arguments presented here, although they have undoubtedly strengthened and clarified over time, are carefully tied to those data and are thus both supported by and restricted to what the data has allowed. In order to further the arguments presented here, further data collection would be necessary (see, for example, the discussion on sampling in the next section).

6.4.1.2 The Shortcomings of the Research Method: Lessons Learned

If I were to design this study again now, building on what I have learned throughout my research journey, there are some aspects of my research design that I would retain and some that I would change. I would retain the same ontological, epistemological and methodological positions that I began this enquiry with. A subjective, inductive approach has been important for framing research questions in an area of consumption where little was previously known, apart from some economic information that pointed to increased spending in specific product sectors by the CNRPs. The qualitative research methods used were essential in addressing these research questions which sought to understand not what the CNRPs were doing, but how, why and what their behaviours meant to them and to others within that social context (Van Maanen, 1982; McCracken, 1988a). The repeated, extended interviews were effective in producing the data necessary to address these research questions, even as they evolved over time. I would therefore take the same general approach if I were to start again.

The small sample of informants for this study has been the source of both important strengths and weaknesses for the research. The relatively small number of informants has allowed room for repeated interviews, allowing reflection on each, as well as their relation to each other, in between interviews. In other words, this research design has supported both researcher and informant reflexivity. The small number of informants has also made it far easier to undertake and keep track of the many layered, detailed level of analysis that has been undertaken, as described above, in three iterations, examining more and more focused research questions. The selection of informants at the beginning of the research process was designed to sample those who had both economic and cultural capital with an emphasis on capturing the practices of those who had different amounts of each. However, having surfaced two differentiated

consumption strategies (the materialist status consumption strategy and the cultural idealist status consumption strategy) through this repeated data analysis, I have only a single informant, Lily, following one of the identified strategies. Thus, the small sample has also been the source of many restrictions in terms of both data analysis and theory development. It has restricted me from developing a well-rounded collective explanation for theorising consumption behaviour within this context.

If I were to start the data collection again, I would make three main changes to the approach I have taken within this thesis. First of all, now that I am sure of my exact research question, and am better practiced in interviewing I could interview each informant only once and thus include a larger number in my sample. Secondly, I would include a comparative element in my sampling, inspired by Holt's (1998) approach, in order to sharpen the differentiation of the two consumption strategies that have emerged through my data analysis processes. Thus, I would seek out a similar number of informants following both strategies, giving me a minimum of 20 informants. This would mean a less detailed level of data analysis could be presented within the word limit of a PhD thesis, but I think that it would still be possible to present a robust analysis of these differing strategies, using the strategy of putting the initial analysis of each individual account in an Appendix, as has been done in this third version. Finally, this thesis demonstrates that gender, age, economic condition, and geographical background all contribute to consumption differences. However, the findings suggest that education (both level and place) was a prime factor that differentiated consumers' consumption strategies. Therefore, within a future sampling strategy I would deliberately sample informants with these different characteristics in equal numbers in order to allow cross studying of their differences. Again, this would inevitably add to the overall size of the sample, but it would allow the data analysis to underpin more robust and nuanced explanations of the practices within the field of luxury fashion consumption.

In the first version of the thesis, my presentation of the data and discussion of the data analysis were not sufficiently detailed to convey a good understanding of each step of my data analysis process. This made the data analysis very difficult for the reader to follow and also made the analysis seem less than comprehensive and systematic,

causing concern about the rigour of the analysis and findings. In the second version, I tried to remedy this by treating each individual case as a case study to highlight the individual differences, followed by a cross-case analysis. This way of presenting and discussing data has dramatically improved the transparency of the data presentation. Unfortunately, the discussion of my data did not revolve around the research question. In the third version, I have moved the individual case studies to the appendix section in order to provide background reference. This has allowed me to use more space in the thesis to explain the cross-case analysis, and has also cut down on repetition. The latest version of data analysis was presented step by step, signposting the key differences, leading to further discussion which is clearly linked to the data and data analysis. I have learned through this process of drafting and redrafting the accounts of my data and data analysis process how to present and discuss data in a way that demonstrates its robustness but sticks to the research questions. I will continue to adopt the same approach developed for this version of the thesis in any future research.

The focus of my study is on Chinese consumers, but I am physically in the U.K. This has limited the explanation building process and restricted me from accessing and re-accessing informants with ease and as such is a practical limitation for this particular study. The iterative nature of data collection, data analysis and building a discussion within an interpretative study was not something that I fully appreciated at the outset of this research journey. I realise now that I put myself in a particularly difficult position by taking an interpretative approach to the study of CNRPs when I was physically and socially located at such a distance, making it unnecessarily hard for me to obtain high quality qualitative data.

6.4.2 Implications for Future Research

Now that this work is completed, it may offer future researchers a basis on which to build more explanatory research designs. As discussed in the section above on the shortcomings of my research design, future research should address the issue of CNRPs consumption strategies with a larger, purposeful, qualitative sample. Future research could also pursue the differentiation of the two strategies through more

focused purposeful sampling of informants pursuing the different consumption strategies. This will allow better description of those following Lily's materialist status consumption strategy and sharpen the distinction between the two. It would also be useful to apply this kind of work in other consumption areas in order better to understand whether luxury fashion consumption strategies are similar from, or different to, the purchase of other product categories such as designer furniture, holiday travel or art work.

Informants were selected as representative of the social trajectory G1 group. Their status consumption practices were characteristic in representing their social position and stance. Further research may develop more understanding of the younger generations who are the second to the G1 consumers in terms of their conspicuous consumption.

The data suggest that there were some links between occupation and different tendencies for taste consumption, but it is difficult to pinpoint whether the characteristics were associated with the geographic privileges or occupations alone. Future research may carry on this line of inquiry to study occupation differentiated taste consumption. This study has incorporated gender and occupation differences into the analysis in order to provide a more refined understanding of diverse status consumption practices. Future comparison studies could be developed to investigate consumption differences between G1 vs. G2 (the 80's generation), entrepreneurs vs. state office workers, or male vs. female consumers.

Given that this study has established that the Chinese newly rich professionals have distinct consumption practices with respect to both Western consumers and at least one other Less Industrialized context (Turkey (Üstüner and Holt (2010))) it would be interesting to carry out similar work within other LICs who also have rapidly expanding and globalizing economies, such as India (for another Asian Tiger comparison) or Oman (for a burgeoning standard of living not set within an Asian context). Until more work is done in LIC contexts, it will be hard to know whether the differences seen in Turkey (Üstüner and Holt, 2010) or demonstrated here for China are part of a wider response to globalization, represent anomalies or are part of a

continuum. Equally it a similar study undertaken with a sample of Chinese professionals raised in China but living in the West would help deepen the nuances of this study and could help extend the explanatory power and reach of the arguments presented in this thesis.

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Appendix I: Pre-screening Questionnaire

This pre-screening questionnaire is part of my dissertation research for doctoral degree at The Robert Gordon University, U.K.. The aim of my research is to understand Chinese consumers' fashion consumption experiences and practices. Your answers will be entirely confidential and will not be passed to any other third parties. I appreciate very much your kind help if you could complete this questionnaire and return to me ASAP. Alternatively, you may pass this questionnaire to any of your friends who are branded fashion fans and would like to talk about it with me. My email addresses are zhangwei29@hotmail.com and w.zhang@rgu.ac.uk.

此调查问卷是我的博士论文研究的一部分。我研究的课题是关于中国消费者的品牌服装消费行为，而不是大众对品牌的一般看法。希望不购买品牌服装的朋友不要填写此调查问卷。对于填写此问卷的朋友，我保证会对您的回答完全保密。请将填好的问卷尽快发给张巍小姐。

电子邮箱是：zhangwei29@hotmail.com 和 w.zhang@rgu.ac.uk.

Personal Information 个人信息:

Name 姓名: _____

Gender 性别: Male 男 [] Female 女 []

Age 年龄:

- below 25 (25 岁以下) []
- 25-30 []
- 31-35 []
- 36-40 []
- above 40 (40 岁以上) []

Family Status 家庭情况:

- Couple 有伴侣 []
- Couple with Children 结婚有孩子 []
- Single no children 单身 []
- Single parent 单亲 []

Job Information 工作情况:

The nature of your company (industry) 工作单位: _____

Position in the company 职位: _____

Net Income per month 月收入: 人民币 _____

Purchasing Information 购买信息:

Clothing expenses per month 每月服装服饰的消费:

人民币 _____

What are your favourite brands? 您最喜欢的品牌

- Formal Clothes 正装: _____
- Casual Clothes 休闲装: _____
- Shoes 鞋: _____
- Accessories 服饰品: _____

What did you buy in the last three months? 在过去的三个月您购买的品牌

- Formal clothes 正装: _____
- Casual Clothes 休闲装: _____
- Shoes 鞋: _____
- Accessories 服饰品: _____

Using one sentence to describe your attitude towards fashion clothes?

用一句话来形容您对品牌服装的态度

Please choose one below, as this would help me to understand your preference. 请选择您喜欢的交流方式。

- I would like to share my experience with other people. 我希望和其他朋友分享我的经验

- Regarding fashion issues, I prefer to talk individually. 对于时尚问题, 我喜欢单独讨论我的观点。

Preferred interview time. 方便的会面时间.

Contact phone number. 联系电话

I look forward to talking with you. 我会尽快与您取得联系并安排会面时间

Thank you for your participation! 谢谢您对我学习的大力支持!

Appendix II Individual Fashion Discourses

Grace – Private Taste and Public Consumption

Interview Impression

Grace is from South China and got married after she graduated in Beijing. I interviewed her and Doris together when we first met. We met at an elegant restaurant in Beijing – their choice. The restaurant had a dark brown theme with matching table and comfortable sofa-like seats. When we first introduced ourselves, I began to study her dressing style. She is a typical Southerner – petite with pale skin. She has refined facial features. She wore a soft green nicely tailored unbuttoned top embroidered with lighter green lace along the fringe, matched with a simple dark coloured knee-high skirt and high heeled shoes. She carried a light brown handbag which again has a detailed design on the cover of the bag. The bag was so full that it could not close. The simplicity of the overall clothing design became more sophisticated when my eyes were drawn to the embroidered lace. Grace's style showed her exquisite taste and attention to detail. I found that she was very easy to talk to and she seemed to have the ability to understand what I wanted to ask even before I had finished my sentence. She looked very friendly and relaxed. When she was talking, I felt that she was smiling at the same time.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Grace: "I usually buy a lot. I went shopping last week, bought some beautiful clothes. Not of any designer label, but they are sold in sophisticated clothing stores. They all have a brand, though not big. Beautiful and fashionable, but I didn't realize that they are not suitable for my work till I was asked about them. They are best worn in spare time, but I don't have much spare time. So I brought them home and put them in my wardrobe. My wardrobe is full of clothes-for-spare-time, and I don't even have any spare time. (Laughing) And I find that many people around me have the same problem. The only reason

for our consumption is that we like the things we are buying. Not of much practical use.”

Grace was genuinely passionate about fashion clothes for those beautiful colours and feel good materials. Shopping trips were part of her leisure and socializing activities with friends and family. She did not shop exclusively in luxury department stores, but also visited local boutiques and sometimes went for shopping trips to other cities or overseas. The innovative style and luxury brand names were not what she was looking for, rather she preferred those with sophisticated designs for aesthetic pleasure with some concerns about practicality for daily usage. She refused to follow fashion trends without considering or adding individual elements, but was convinced that individuality could not be freely expressed through public consumption. Grace normally would separate her public and private consumption practices which contains public and private meanings. In her public consumption, she *“need(s) to consider the clothing labels, the material, tailoring and stuff... I pay much attention to the details”*.

Her private collections were driven by personal pleasure, the emotional feelings aroused by the beauty of products, not as an indicator of prestige because of their high price. The importance of the emotional value that she placed on her private collections is associated with hedonic consumption (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Quite often, she could not resist an impulse purchase. In one particular case, she described how she fell in love with a red handbag at first sight in a French clothing shop in Hong Kong. Its design was exquisite, but it was very small, and therefore not practical in her terms. As usual, she struggled with the temptation to buy which would be indulging her own emotional feelings generated by the beautiful design and colour, but began to question her normal habit of not buying something that was not suitable for her lifestyle. She not only referred to the high price value, she also thought about the waste of such beauty if it was not being used.

Grace: *“I have had this handbag for two years now. Though I seldom use it, I feel good whenever I lay my eyes on it. It is so beautiful. It is something that I like. Although I don’t get to use it often due to my work and stuff, its sight makes me happy. Actually, it represents my ideal of life, which I cannot live due to many reasons. And I decided to have it in spite of the high price. It is something that I want deep in my heart.”*

Consumer researchers have long recognized that possessions have value for their role in expressing or reinforcing the sense of self (Richins, 1994). Here, her wardrobe was a private world that harbored a large collection of individual aesthetic appreciation that was thought to be forbidden in the outside world and a private self that was locked up in the wardrobe.

Grace's fashionability was exhibited in her critical selection of her clothing, not through trendy styles, but revealing her elegance and class through subtleness and paying attention to details that were appropriate to her age. Age also played an important role in her consideration of suitability, "*age plays the key role in deciding what you should wear. At different age, you have different understanding about beauty.*" Grace drew a distinguishing line between her own ideal of beauty and the younger generation's aesthetic approach to fashion choice. The Western idea of femininity was normally associated with sexuality (Woodward, 2007). This Western idea of femininity had exerted some dramatic impact on many Chinese consumers, particularly the younger generation, as they were not afraid of showing off their figures and exposing their bodies through trendy clothing. By showing her distaste of 'see-through clothes', Grace dismissed this style and its related representation of individuality. Kaigler-Walker and Gilbert (2009) explained the difference between Western and Chinese ideas of elegance: elegance in the West is the level of sophistication and a degree of formality; elegance for the Chinese means having a feminine body shape and looking nice. Grace adopted the Chinese historical view of femininity which stressed Chinese women's conservative manners and reserved character (Finnane, 2007), as opposed to the Western femininity of openness and boldness. Hence, the individuality Grace conveyed through dressing was through the subtleness of decoration and accessories.

Grace: "*Perhaps your difference doesn't need to be exposing your back, you can demonstrate it in other ways. Like...some people like wearing traditional Chinese costume and that's different from most people. Or, some use scarves or other small accessories. You don't have to wear exposing clothes. Maybe the westerners, ladies should dress up that way, but for Chinese, not all of us accept it. We are not completely westernized.*"

Professionability

Grace: *“I think the clothes you are wearing contain the information whether you want to communicate or you prefer to keep a distance. If you wear overly formal clothes, sitting stiffly in an office, and you give people the impression that you are rigid all over. People will feel uneasy talking to you. Clothes speak...A Human Resource manager needs to have strong affinity, which means, people would love to tell you their feelings... you should be able to make people open their heart to you...That’s why affinity is so important for our work...”*

Grace saw that fashionability and individuality could not be reconciled with professionability. Dressing in the work place was neither about making individual statements nor expressing individual aesthetic appreciation, but choosing accordingly and suitably to fit in with the social circle and working environment. She chose a style between formal and casual, used soft materials, and light colours to achieve a clean, neat, and welcoming effect. She emphasised ‘*paying attention to detail*’ such as accessories (including buttons), colour matching, the quality of the clothes, and design patterns. Taking a relatively cautious approach to make sure no mistakes were made (e.g. clothes too short, buttons missing), she always shopped in mainstream branded stores. This dressing routine is ‘*out of willingness*’, but a sensible choice as a professional who intended to create looks that could portray a friendly professional human resource managerial image on one hand, and on the other hand, a tasteful manager who has achieved a certain social position.

Grace: *“I need some shirts this season, unisex style, neither formal nor too casual. Then I go to large department stores. Brands, like Jessica, Zone, those are quite good as office wear. FHE suits office women very much, too. I go to chain stores of these brands regularly for my office wear. Basically, it’s not for looking good, but they are all OK. Suitable and the prices are reasonable. Most importantly, they go well with office work. Not gaudy, they are of the subtle style.”*

Grace showed a great awareness and understanding of what she wanted to communicate at work; how to dress suitably to convey the message of social affiliation and reflect her managerial role (Kaigler-Walker & Gilbert, 2009). Being

friendly, trustworthy and showing affinity allowed company employees to feel at ease in communicating with her. To serve the social communication purpose, she emphasised that the style of clothes should not be terrifying to others, over exaggerated, or showy, but with a comfortable and harmonious look which required a high degree of coordination between every single piece of clothing, accessories, and even hairstyle.

“*Clothes can speak*”, Grace said, by which she meant that one should know how to dress in accordance with one’s identity and be alert about the message that clothes can convey. Many professional clothes were socially approved styles which Grace showed with a rather standard and routine like consumption practice. She did not shop around, but stuck to the mainstream brands that had been accepted by other professionals, so whatever she wore would not “*become different from others*”. This supported the notion that as women choose an outfit as a medium through which their intentions were externalized into a form by which they can affect how other people interpret their appearance and react accordingly (Gell, 1998). By consuming the publicly acknowledged brands for ‘gold collar’ (higher position than white collar), she could make sure that her expected viewer could interpret her appearance with no mistake because of the shared understanding of the dress codes, and hence react as she predicted.

Grace addressed the social conformity and significance of shared tastes among the social circle she was in to show the bond and understanding as a member of a group. Failing to dress in the ‘right’ way when attending her first managerial club party, she learnt quickly how to choose for the following party. She made every effort to match her dressing style to others, aiming to identify with the similar social position that they hold (McCracken 1988, Dittmar 1992) and foster an affirming sense of social belonging with the group to whom she belongs (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Yau (1986) notes that consumers in Eastern cultures face conformity pressures from members of their social network; therefore they focus heavily on the public meanings of their conspicuous consumption rather than on hedonic experience.

Researcher: “*You just said once the position get to a higher level, the taste rises with it. How do you explain that?*”

Grace: *“It’s not that when you buy a piece of clothing, you think of your position, and you buy clothes to match your position. It’s not like that. Once you get to a higher level, the people you are meeting, your social circle and others all influence your taste.”*

Researcher: *“Can you explain more about the influence of your social circle?”*

Grace: *“Actually, your friends and acquaintances usually have similar background with you. You influence each other. Like, when go shopping with friends, you all have similar background, similar salary, similar position, and you give each other suggestions about whether this or that sort of clothes is suitable or not. Your friend’s appreciation shapes your dress sense gradually.”*

Deep down, she understood that her social role as a human resources manager had progressively taken over the majority of her leisure time, personal life and encroached on her personal space. She owned many sets of clothes that were not a representation of her private self, but a reflection of how she was expected to dress in the public space. In spite of this realisation, she was powerless to change the situation. Grace’s situation was similar to many other working mothers in China where she works long hours and then goes home to look after her family. In general, she almost had no spare time for leisure and no private life of her own (Mastercard & HSBC, 2006).

Grace: *“Being a professional woman really changes much of a person. Even the colours of my clothes have changed. Gradually, there are more and more blue and black. I open my wardrobe and see all those colours. I feel depressed.”*

Habitus

Habitus for Bourdieu (1984) is created through social rather than individual processes leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another. The following habitus were identified in Grace’s fashion discourse and these were the enduring elements that embedded all her taste and consumption practices.

How to Learn to Play the Game

When she was little, Grace’s mum and aunt made every effort to dress them up *“not to compare with the rich...looking back...the beauty in poverty!”* She noticed that

clothes different from others could make her stand out from the crowd to the extent that it generated envy among her friends. When she started high school, she refused the homemade clothes, but went to the professional tailors for more publicly accepted fashionable designs. This is different from the West where tailors provide much more exclusive and personalized service with premium costs, whereas the Chinese went to tailors because they were cheaper than buying from the shops.

Grace: "I think dress sense is something we need to learn about. From zero to one hundred, it is a process of continuous learning. Reading fashion magazines, paying attention to what people around you are wearing, even watching TV, to feel and to learn."

Grace emphasised the importance of the learning curve in public consumption through accumulated knowledge and enriched experiences with age. She made many mistakes along the way before developing some skilful and clear understandings of how to make the 'right' choice in different circumstances. Those accidents gradually shaped her divided consumption practice and made her realise the significant disparities between her private tastes and the legitimated public consumption.

Her first learning curve occurred when she just began to work. She put on whatever she felt beautiful at the time, such as long skirts with bright colours and flowery patterned designs, but this dress sense was challenged and received scorn from one of her colleagues who made her realise that the most important thing in the office was not how pretty the dress was, but how to convey professional attributes through clothing. After wearing a trendy, but short office shirt, she learnt to pay attention to detail, like the movement of her limbs. A small detail like buttons off the shirt could have indicated a careless outlook, devalued her taste (Gell, 1998), and may even have sabotaged her managerial image. Consequently, she refused to consume cheap clothes and fake brands (Wee et al, 1995) and showed more favour to Western or H.K. brands for their quality manufacture and design (Wu & Delong 2006, Mastercard & HSBC 2006).

In summary, her learning curve resulted in the gradual process of accepting established fashion brands and she became more demanding in terms of the quality of

her overall personal appearance which demarcated herself from others (e.g. her former classmates) and also claimed her membership within her social circles. In this way, the branded consumption could guarantee the presentation of her 'tasteful' choice and provided the established cultural legitimation at the same time. In the spirit of learning, she reached a stage that she could manage her look more effectively and to make herself look outstanding and receive compliments (accepted and admired by others) for her dress sense. She was regarded as '*the rainbow in the office*' by her colleagues. She developed the ability to read dress codes correctly and understood clearly the requirements of her social circles for the various social activities she participated in.

The Generative Scheme: "The inconsistency"

Grace's learning experiences showed the power of cultural legitimation impacting on her individual presentation at the front stage and back stage fashion consumption.

Grace: "*I think the person of me at office is much different from when I am at home. Sometimes, there is consistency. I have my principles. It's my dream...to live the idyllic life, wearing long and loose dress. That's my dream.*"

Grace lived in a bothersome sense of disparity struggling between a public self and a private self. This inconsistency of everyday requirements created public consumption and personal aesthetics which are two different matters in a way that fashion and clothes are different (Carter, 2003). DeLong et al. (2005) explain such practices as a result of habitus based economic restraint - a history of limited discretionary income that forces a separation of the influence of other reasons than preference that may influence their desire to buy, such as degree of fashionability. However, Grace's practice may also have revealed individual strategies to deal with social restrictions in the fashion consumption field. Chinese social development and Confucius' profound influence on the individual's self-concept development have imposed many restrictions on the individual. When one conforms to social norms and pressures, there is often no consistency between the internal private self and the public self (Wong & Ahuva, 1998).

The struggle of individual appreciation and social conformity has been structuring Grace's private taste and public consumption practices. This pattern of action

constantly emerged in her fashion discourse, also associated with two different emotions: pleasant and depressed. She was very passionate when talking about her private collection of beautiful clothes and accessories, but turned to a tone of duty and routine when she talked about her public wear, even depressed and worried about her being fundamentally changed internally when she looked at her wardrobe of cold colour schemes. Research shows that Chinese consumers focus more on functional attributes and lack of emotional connections with products as a result of them being new to the market (Magni & Poh, 2013).

Grace's emotional connections with products were linked to her private consumption, but she placed more emphasis on the functional attributes of her public consumption. The red handbag she could not resist buying was caught in between the private and public consumption which revealed the almost impossible linkage between functional attributes and emotional connections to the products. The private meaning of 'idyllic life' of feeling free, out of restraints was expressed through her private consumption which was idiosyncratic to herself (Richins, 1994). Hence, for public consumption, she placed an importance on recognisable branded labels. This confirms Wong and Ahuvia's (1998) suggestion that consumers with independent self-constructs tend to place more importance on the symbolic value of public meanings when consuming luxury items. Grace's luxury consumption was mainly publicly consumed therefore was to signal group membership within an identified social circle.

Field

Doxa: "Fashion is rather distant from our real life"

Grace: *"I simply know nothing about clothes... the fashion, I feel, is rather distant from our real life."*

The concept of field to Bourdieu (1984) means a social arena in which people manoeuvre and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources to gain a dominant social position. Knowing and displaying the most recent modern and innovative styles are important in gaining a dominant social position in the luxury fashion field. However, Grace did not see the competing style as a field struggle, but challenged the fashion meanings created by media which placed a great importance on individuality and

ideology that moved away from the everyday dressing as a mundane task (Woodward 2007, Thompson & Haytko 1997). In fact, it was the everyday mundane task that presented much more complexity and limitations when making choices. The points of duties and obligations of consumers had never been touched on by the fashion media, but they come hand in hand under public scrutiny when making judgements of the taste of the wearer. The enjoyment of aesthetic appreciation with fashion disappeared in the daily routine and was surrendered to the principles of achieving the desired look expected by others.

Grace struggled to present the real individual self in the public sphere. For her, individuality (standing out from the crowd) was a dream only shown in the fashion media. The reality of her life presented too many social restraints for her to think about the presentation of individual beauty. She almost refused to sanction her own aesthetic view and believed that it was an illegitimate choice to consume in the public arena. Her cultural consumption choice was frequently regarded by standards and her social superiority in public consumption was laid out through quality consumption using luxury brands.

Fashion consumption for her is a struggle between fulfilling public roles and individually centred aesthetic display. Private consumption was associated with the exploration of novel objects, enjoyment, pleasure, relaxing, freedom and sense of comfort. Consequently, Grace developed a free rein in symbolic representation through fashion goods (Murray, 2002). It represents her aspiration of individual expression and a bridge between her real life and the high fashion created freedom and glamour that she cannot have because of her juggling lifestyle (Thompson, 1996).

Illusio: 'You cannot go beyond what is proper'

Grace: "Actually, I'd like to be comfortable. I want to be free and a little lazy; I don't want to care too much, but you can't when at office. One needs to have some principles. You can't go beyond what is proper. I have to live this way for my career, changing myself. But I don't want to as long as I arrive home."

In Bourdieu's view, behaviour in fields is interest driven. *Illusio* represents an 'investment in the game' or 'interest' by the player. Grace has demonstrated her passion for private consumption, but feared to display her personal aesthetic view to public scrutiny. If fashion consumption is a game, she showed more resistance in playing the game by sounding more like having been forced to continue the game. It was her everyday task to negotiate a balance between dressing appropriately, fitting in and being accepted, and also how to address the inner self. Her everyday dressing choice therefore conjoins personal preferences and social expectations and her consumption practices were influenced by her internal desires for dressing beautifully on the one side and on the other side by meeting social expectations and dressing suitability as a busy professional working mum (Thompson, 1996). Her commitments to the shared stakes for public consumption are not self-motivated, but grounded in social role commitments and obligations. This is evident in her inconsistency of appearance management between inside and outside of her home and the ways that she has invested her efforts, emotions, and strategies differently in the game.

Cousins (1989) argues that social roles in Asian culture are important in the construction of self-identities. In describing themselves the Chinese employ more terms that relate to family roles (grandson, daughter, elder, brother, and so on). Grace in particular, found it difficult to realise individual interests and aesthetics in a public space. The lack of personal time and space, due to work commitments, took its toll and eventually developed a conflict with her individual self.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A1 Summary of Verbatim: Grace

Concepts	Themes	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	My wardrobe is full of clothes-for-spare-time, and I don't even have any spare time. (Laughing) And I find that many people around me have the same problem. The only reason for our consumption is that we like the things we are buying. Not of much practical use.
	Professionability	I think the clothes you are wearing contain the information whether you want to communicate or you prefer to keep a distance.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	I think dress sense is something we need to learn about. From zero to one hundred, it is a process of continuous learning.
	The generative grammar: the inconsistency	I think the person of me at office is much different from when I am at home. Sometimes, there is consistency.
Field: Doxa	Fashion is distance from real life	I simply know nothing about clothes... the fashion, I feel, is rather distant from our real life.
Illusio	You cannot go beyond what is proper	I'd like to be comfortable. I want to be free and a little lazy; I don't want to care too much, but you can't when at office. One needs to have some principles. You can't go beyond what is proper.

Doris – The Single-Patterned Dressing Style

Interview Impression

Doris originated from Sichuan and remained in Beijing after obtaining her bachelor degree. In the interview, she mentioned: *“personally, I think my legs are comparatively fat. So I wear...following my character, I like wearing skirts, but sometimes I may not be able to because of my current work and the climate in the north, because it’s not convenient. So I turn to some wide-leg trousers matched with smaller tops.”* On the interview day, she was wearing light grey wide-leg high-waisted trousers matched with a sharp white tight shirt with a stand-up collar and a purple flowery scarf around the neck was jumping up and down when she walked. This made her look very feminine, because she created a curved body shape with the tight white shirt and the wide-leg trousers. She had no excessive accessories and held a big dark blue leather hand bag. Her overall look makes her look very tall and her dressing style left an impression of a typical capable and experienced career woman.

The follow up telephone interview made me feel frustrated as the interview was open questions without right and wrong answers as I clearly stated and reassured her that it was her individual experience I was interested in. However, during the whole interview, she constantly asked me if what she said was what I wanted, as if it was an exam and she had to know if her answer had scored anything. She normally would ask for reassurance halfway through her story. This requirement for confirmation later proved in the interpretation of her dressing choices, as she had a single-patterned dressing style – the style that she felt comfortable with and had been confirmed by others. She sought social approval for her choices.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Doris: *“The way I dress is single-patterned...I will not even try other styles that might display another side of my charm.”*

Similar to Grace, Doris also possessed two types of clothes, public and private wear. The private wear comprised casual styles which reflected her pure personal aesthetic

view without giving consideration to brand names and others' reactions to her choices, whereas the public wear was mainly professional wear in a 'mix and match' style which she wore most days of year because her long working hours included the weekend. She actively participated in fashion consumption activities by shopping in a range of places from department stores to local boutiques alone or with friends as leisure. She was a frequent reader of fashion magazines. Discussing what was beautiful and who should wear what was part of her daily conversation with her friends and colleagues. However, '*not a fashion follower*' herself, she paid a particular attention to seasonal accessories, which allowed her to integrate any fashion elements into her existing personalised look.

Doris: "*I'm not particularly up for the real big brands...probably I want my daily wear to give the effect which designer clothes have, but the essential thing is that it has to be suitable for my position, my practical need and my taste.*"

Doris refused to pay a premium price for a designer label "*even if it is extremely beautiful*", and did not purchase counterfeit branded products. She intended to create the effects of vibrant, lush and quality effects, normally seen in fashion designers' clothes shows, but with her choices of normal brands. The look was not through buying exclusive luxury brands, but through paying attention to details in the presentation of quality, current design features, and colour coordination in her daily wear.

Doris had a large collection of scarfs, hats, shoes, and handbags with similar colour schemes (purple was her favourite), so she could create some coherent elegance and yet present a fashionable look effortlessly. Her fashionable looks lay in her effort to maintain the balance between being viewed as feminine or sexy. She was also very particular about the feminine look on everyday presentation. Doris' ideal feminine look possessed natural grace and elegance with loose plain clothes and long hair, accompanied by suitable accessories. This ideal image of femininity was under the influence of Qiong Yao, a Taiwanese writer, who published a number of romantic novels in the 80's and most female leading characters in her novel were strikingly beautiful, slim, with long hair and fond of wearing long loose clothes like celestial

beings. This may demonstrate that the femininity is socially learnt and mediated through cultural activities (Stone & Desmond, 2007).

Camisole tops were in fashion at the time of interview, but Doris completely rejected the body exposing style and believed that those styles were too revealing, too sexy and not suitable as daily wear. For her, she associated body exposing styles with showing the sexiness of a female. In the West, being sexy is a complimentary remark (Woodward, 2007), but the word sexiness in China contains more negative connotations and implies that females intend to seduce males with a flirting manner or by wearing any short, see-through, or body exposing style of clothes, as these are contrary to the traditional aesthetic view for female dressing (Wu, 2011).

Doris: “my classmates told me that actually as a woman who is growing older and older, I should wear such and such clothes to display my sexy side. I told them that was impossible for me, I mean, no matter in my life or in my work. I don’t think there is any need to display ‘sexy’ ... I can’t accept it. I simply feel that it is not my style; I would feel awkward if I dress that way. I will feel uncomfortable, while I consider it important to be comfortable, besides for my taste, my character and suitable for my environment; it has to make me feel comfortable. I don’t think I would feel comfortable in those clothes; I would feel awkward....”

The key concern for Doris was whether the style was comfortable to show the ‘real me’. This ‘me’ involves balancing personal style with external sartorial expectations and cultural conceptions of the image of the decent female (Woodward, 2007). Many people wanted to look and feel like themselves without spending hours in the process. As a result, they tend to choose those items that are worn on a regular basis and require no thought or planning. This is how most women routinely choose what to wear and it becomes habitual practice and the safe choices could be boring (Woodward, 2007). What Doris did was to add a fashionable element to her single-patterned dressing style that gave her different, fresh looks every day. Hence, Doris’ social distinction was constructed through her individualised single-patterned style which was embodied in her conception of femininity and aesthetics.

Professionalability

Doris: *“what I wear during office hour, personally I believe I’m not the conventional type ... I make it look fairly delicate. But not like today’s girl employees, their office wear has become more and more feminine; it will distract their co-workers’ attention. For example, my colleague, the other day, I saw her wearing a sleeveless and collarless camisole-dress or the now-in-fashion low-cut trousers, though look a bit like suit trousers; too much of the body was exposed for a working environment. I make sure my office wear is formal enough for office work, but I pay attention to details, a little bit feminine, not completely looking rigid...Affinity is important; I believe adding something feminine helps to make the affinity stronger, since my work is mainly dealing with customers.”*

Doris worked for a state owned property development company as a marketing manager, she emphasised that *“you have to make sure your outfits are suitable to your position* by shopping in the mainstream branded store for ‘gold collars’. Doris strived to create a professional look that made her clients feel comfortable and easy by choosing the ‘mix and match’ styles. Her affirming attitude towards a feminine look and against a sexy look was continued in her professional dress sense. Her effort to create a positive identity made a contrast between two extreme positions: one representing the current fashion trend which is in favour of exposing one’s body in the work place; and another one representing the view of associating formal business attire with masculinity. Although the masculine look may show one’s unchallenged authority and power, it would have totally lost any femininity. Adopting the masculine professional look in the work place would produce unfavourable working relationships with her clients. Both Grace’s and Doris’ fashion discourses showed that for Chinese business women, showing affinity with others, but resisting a sexually related image was inevitably associated with professional female identities in the workplace.

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Doris: *“My family is like any in the past, especially my father. He told me to study hard, as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up...At that time, if you pay too much attention to clothes, trying to be different from others, your dress would be regarded as outlandish. And that was bad. Without doubt education was like that at that age.”*

Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1986, p.471) shows how the ‘social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds’ through ‘cultural products’ including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life. Doris’ family education emphasised education over appearance, social conformity over individuality, conservativeness over modernity. These emphases have deeply influenced the development of her tastes: down to earth, conventional, and invariable and a look that emphasised femininity rather than sexuality (Finnane 2007). In particular, the association made that ‘trying to be different from others’ was ‘bad’ had subsequently and subconsciously restricted her choices of clothes and led her to seek social approval. Doris admitted that she had been overly concerned with many factors when it came to buying clothes, such as age, gender, social position, education, family and social roles, colour scheme, styles, materials, and prices. She would reject many styles of clothes that other women at her age including her former classmates or colleagues would consider. Preferring one particular style of clothes which had been approved by others, she swiftly used fashionable accessories to match the same style of her choice.

Growing up in Southern China, Doris genuinely loves fashion related subjects and showed great interest in creative thinking and aesthetic appreciation of beautiful objects at a young age. Her mother respected her opinion when making new clothes at the tailors. Doris would *“think about buying clothes of pretty colours at a low price, wearing comfortably and looking tasteful”*. The sensitivity to price and maximum aesthetic appreciation were aligned with general understanding of consumers from the south of China (Kwan et al. 2003, Liu & Wong2004).

Many informants recalled some mistakes they made as part of a learning curve. On the contrary, Doris’ learning experiences were formed with positive results and

involved many anecdotes of favourable comments from others. She recalled a particular wonderful experience in an interview in terms of how her dress sense received specific applause from a head of a recruitment department. Those positive experiences with extensive social approval had confirmed her aesthetic view and legitimatised her dressing styles. By sticking to a similar dressing style, she avoided unnecessary social criticism and negative judgments.

The Generative Scheme: The Conservativeness

Doris's childhood experiences suggested the importance of her social circle's appreciation and conformation of her taste as a female who cared more about internal as opposed to external beauty. These emphases limited her considerations and making judgement of the 'right' choice. As a result, the change of fashion trend would have had no impact on her choice of clothes.

Doris: "I am a conservative person, which restricts me to...probably other people think I would look good dressed in another style, but due to my own conservativeness, the way I dress is single-patterned... I now have fixed ideas on how I should dress."

Despite rapid changes in fashion, Doris created a timeless personal style that allowed her to integrate current fashion pieces into her wardrobe seamlessly. One of her signature looks was matching wide-leg trousers with a well-tailored shirt and a beautiful scarf around her neck. Doris' fashionability was not about fashion trends or recent styles, but about her ability to maintain a suitable style without being swayed by fashion trends, knowing what was suitable for her and what best represented her disposition. One of the supposed characteristics of post-modernity is that '*everyone can be anybody*' (Featherstone, 1991), because the ever changing fashion styles create many possible potential selves. For Doris, she strived to maintain her individuality through her invariable choice of clothing and refused to create different identities that were contradictory to her true self.

Her strategy of buying cheap but presentable pieces played an important role in her consumption practice, as she insisted that she would not overspend on extravagant designers, "*even though they are extremely beautiful*". She would not pay for brand names, or pure aesthetic appreciation, but rather a combination of practicality and

aesthetics. She accidentally bought something with poor quality in a luxury department store recently. The quality of the clothes, colour, material, and tailoring were below her expectation as a high end fashion brand sold in China's World Trade Centre. What she was looking for was a beautiful outfit suitable for her daily activities, not something presentable only (Dickson et al. 2004). This habitus may be also derived from her poor family background which meant that she learned from an early age how to spend her money wisely.

Field

Doxa: "We have too many restrictions"

Sharing the same understanding as Grace, Doris also believed that social forces restricted individual consumption choices. There was a big difference between the Chinese way and the European way of dressing. In Europe, the freedom of individual choices based on occasions and expressive language used through dressing were incomparable to the Chinese who were not accustomed to the idea of dressing based on occasions (e.g. formal or casual) as Westerners have been doing for centuries (Wu 2011); effort and money to be spent on overcoming existing social restriction.

Doris: "I've been to Europe, and as I saw, the Europeans are not like Chinese, who spend a lot of money and energy on clothes, instead, they dress very simply. However, they are bold to wear...they are very careful about occasions, and they are bold to wear whatever is suitable for the occasion, while the Chinese are not. Although Chinese spend a lot on clothes, we have too many restrictions."

Bourdieu (2006) stresses that actors are complicit in accepting the rules of the game they play and this acceptance goes unacknowledged, or 'misrecognized' (Bourdieu, 1986). Doris acknowledged and accepted that the Chinese had many restrictions that prevented them from being creative and dressing accordingly. These restrictions were perceived as *guoqing*, which means national characteristics or a country's special circumstances that needs to adapt when encountering problems, not the other way around (Yan, 1994). In fashion consumption, despite the widespread fashion fever in China as the result of globalisation, social restrictions as part of *guoqing* still existed

regardless. Growing up in a strict family background, she did not recognize that it was the society that was imposing restrictions and felt the restrictions were pre-existing and could not be altered, so she accepted those restrictions as social reality unconditionally (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Her personal style was not designed to challenge the status quo of the conservative Chinese society, but to abide by it by refusing to wear anything exposing her body as a way of expressing a sense of sexuality in public.

Europe and America were seen as the centre of fashion development and Chinese consumers have a positive perception of fashion which originates from the West (O’Cass & Choy 2008, Wu & Delong 2006). Western consumers were more experienced, therefore, in Bourdieu’s terms, exhibited some calmer attitudes towards material wealth, while Chinese as the newcomers were still too excited about the new experience of fashion products (Eckhardt & Houston, 1998). Doris pushed the boundaries of the fashion field within China to an international consumption field. Taking role models from Western consumers, she questioned the legitimation of insatiability and extravagant display of the Chinese public towards material culture. This belief helped to organise her own consumption practice, for example, in resisting conspicuous display, developing an invariable personal style, and her ‘*not a fashion follower*’ principle.

Illusio: “I stick to my own style”

Consumption is a particular status game and the stake for this game is to gain social distinction in relation to social status and position (Bourdieu, 1984). Consumers’ heavy expenditures on luxury fashion products are evidence of the interests shown by participants in the game. By criticizing fashion leaders’ exaggerated styles which are unsuitable for daily living and their inappropriate choices as misleading common people to make insensible choice in the real world, Doris showed a significant disinterest in playing the game by the rules: chasing the stake of the game – fashion trend.

Doris: “I don’t know if it is right or not, that, “novel” is fashion. Like, many of what the models are wearing is not beautiful, in my eyes, nor can that be brought into real life. But it seems everyone is after it, including some “stars”, and those stars trying to dress up and wear in that style. But they are really

not beautiful in my eyes. Maybe because I am living in a comparatively confined atmosphere, where nobody dresses too exaggerated, I simply don't understand what those famous models want to lead people to. I think it is ridiculous. I'm not fashionable. Usually, I stick to my own style. I think that's suitable for me. I am not after the fashion."

Doris was pleased to hear that Grace really appreciated her conventional and invariable dressing style, as Grace commented on Doris' style in their pair group interview and thought it was better to have a personal style than mindlessly following the fashion trend: *"I've always thought Doris has a good taste in clothes... I'm telling you the truth! I know quite a few girls... But I think they simply go with the mainstream. Doris has her own style, and she adjusts the style as the fashion changes. But the nature won't change. She has her own style."* Grace believed that Doris was able to create a personal style that was suitable for her and at the same time integrated with current fashion and reflect her temperament, social position, and age. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) argues that central to the ways for the Bourgeois to demonstrate their taste is their ability to go against the grain to consume and appreciate objects appropriately, even when others do not appreciate them. Unfortunately, Doris' conventional and single-patterned dressing style was not an example of Bourdieu's individuality centred taste, but reflected her conservative upbringing environment and family education regarding the traditional Chinese female beauty which was inscribed in her mind from early socialisation. This personal style she developed reflected her self-restraint and reserved individual disposition that were both derived from childhood and cultivated through socialisation.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A2 Summary of Verbatim - Doris

Concepts	Themes	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	The way I dress is single-patterned...I will not even try other styles that might display another side of my charm.
	Professionability	I make sure my office wear is formal enough for office work, but I pay attention to details, a little bit feminine, not completely looking rigid...Affinity is important; I believe adding something feminine helps to make the affinity stronger, since my work is mainly dealing with customers.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	My father... told me to study hard, as a girl, not to concentrate much on dressing or make-up. At that time, if you pay too much attention to clothes, trying to be different from others, your dress would be regarded as outlandish. And that was bad. Without doubt education was like that at that age.
	The generative grammar: the conservativeness	I am a conservative person, which restricts me to...probably other people think I would look good dressed in another style, but due to my own conservativeness, the way I dress is single-patterned... I now have fixed ideas on how I should dress.
Field: Doxa	We have too many restrictions	I've been to Europe, and as I saw, the Europeans are not like Chinese... Although Chinese spend a lot on clothes, we have too many restrictions.
Illusio	I stick to my own style	...I simply don't understand what those famous models want to lead people to. I think it is ridiculous. I'm not fashionable. Usually, I stick to my own style. I think that's suitable for me. I am not after the fashion.

Lucy – “The Diamond and Glass Ball Effect”

Interview Background

My high school friend introduced Lucy to me, as they used to work together for an American company. Lucy was the representative in the Beijing office and then she left to work for a German company, but they kept in contact. Lucy and I met in my friend’s office located in CITIC building, a skyscraper in Beijing. Part of the building is for renting purposes for foreign companies. The rest is a shopping area where you may find all the most well-known international brands from clothes to snacks. Bentley, the British hand-crafted motor car has its sales office on the ground floor.

Once Lucy arrived, we enjoyed the panoramic view of Beijing in the meeting room for a while before we started our interview. Lucy was wearing a flowery patterned silk traditional Chinese changshan (cheongsam in English: a traditional style of body-hugging top with high collar and buttons that go from around the neckline to underarm), and dark straight cut trousers. She wore matching silver framed glasses, and an unusually designed necklace around her changshan collar. At that time the changshan style was very popular, but I had never seen the design she was wearing before and the material gave a feeling of luxury and its rich tone was flattering to her facial colour and intellectual disposition. Although the changshan design is a traditional Chinese style, she looks modern in it with some kind of foreign flavour. I was not sure if this has something to do with her clothing style or her disposition. She looked very poised and elegant indeed. She spoke slowly with some unusual tones for a Beijingness, but with a strong resemblance to a typical Taiwanese tone when they speak Mandarin. My friend told me that Lucy used to date a businessman from Taiwan. That might be where her unusual spoken tone was coming from. She was certainly proud of her unusual tones which she commented on in her interview. Lucy left an impression that she had a very calm character which reminded me of all those well cultivated Chinese female figures in the movies and novels.

Fashionability and Individuality

Lucy: *“I don’t like clothes that are too fashionable. Perhaps no one could remember it a year later....I tend to be conservative. I don’t try to be deliberately unconventional. I wouldn’t wear the clothes that can easily attract others’ attention. Of course this kind of attention is not a result of appreciation. People look at you simply because you are wearing improperly.”*

The importance of fashion consumption was not about attention seeking, but creating consistent looks of a high standard that convey the aesthetic disposition of that individual which could also be appreciated and admired by others. Lucy was a snob consumer (Mason 1981) searching for exclusivity. Her age appropriated unique designs, quality material, and classic styles could only be conveyed through brand consumption. Lucy had relatively expensive taste and showed her superiority in exclusive styles which were delivered through her strong beliefs in brands and luxury expenditure in clothes. She shopped only at some luxury department stores or flagship stores from a selection of designers, but avoided over-popular brands and provoking styles.

She regarded people who wore cheap plain clothes as *‘having no taste’* and those who wore see-through clothes and counterfeit designers as attention seekers. Lucy found it difficult to appreciate the clothes sold in local booths and disregarded those widely available styled, badly made, and cheap price tagged fashion wear. The cheap clothes, she believed, were mostly a typical Eastern way of cutting with straight lines and did not highlight the body shapes. She appreciated more Western designs which enhance the female curved lines and shaped the body as a three-dimensional form (Kim, 1989).

She enjoyed some exclusive access to certain designer labels and was willing to pay a premium price for clothes that were *“not loud”* and suitable for her age. She bought those designer brands whenever she *‘got the money’*. She believed that only those branded clothes could deliver her pursuit of a long lasting effect and fulfil her standard of beauty. Despite their high initial costs, it could actually be value for money, because they could be appreciated for a long time. Some of her choices come into fashion even a few years after her purchases. Many were still stylish and could be

passed on to other people. She was very proud to tell the researcher that she still wore some of the clothes she bought ten years ago; her colleagues still ask to have some of her old clothes. This not only made her feel satisfied that she could stretch long enough to keep her clothes fashionable and desirable, but also a confirmation as a fashion consumer that her clothes were still stylish after many years' consumption.

Lucy was reluctant to buy clothes which were cheap or discounted and maintained a high standard of clothing choices. She completely rejected counterfeit products due to their poor quality and the potential damage to the wearer's image and reputation of having a high standard. There was an association between the quality of clothes and the personal quality of the wearer. Many people, in her view, have got this point wrong by placing the clothing labels above individuality and mistaken brand names as superior to individual disposition. It is at this point, people are motivated to buy counterfeits, she believed.

Lucy: "I never do. They make use of the name brand's reputation in quality. But I'd rather see clothes using a common name brand. On the contrary, if you have a real famous name brand clothes, but your temperament, your personal income etc are not consistent with it, other people would. It's like if you are really wearing a diamond ring, people would mistake it for a glass ball because of your temperament. On the contrary, if your temperament is good, people would think you're wearing diamond ring even if you are actually wearing glass ball. That's the way things go!"

Without displaying the right disposition, anything could be taken as a fake. Lucy's comments on the glass ball and diamond effect further argued from a viewer's point that even someone dressing in real brands could be mistaken for wearing a fake if the clothes were not worn appropriately by the right person. A person who had taste would make other viewers believe that all her/his choices were equally high standard in quality and cost, while for some others even wearing a diamond would make people believe that they are wearing a glass ball, similar to the different effect for clothes worn by a cleaner and a model. She believed that her expensive taste and dress sense had reached a stage where whatever she put on would make others believe that they are a unique, tasteful, and high standard choices, even if she was only wearing a

glass ball. Even so, she would not buy a glass ball, because that would against her taste.

This diamond or glass ball effect made a stark contrast with the younger generation who are well-informed by mass media, but lack cultivation and experience to make appropriate choices. With the difference in their ages, Lucy's generation and the Y generation hold different values and identities. Therefore, their clothing choices vary significantly (Rocha et al., 2005). Lucy challenged the Y generation's taste and consumption practices at various stages. Fast fashion and mass media enabled young people to access fashion brands and knowledge a lot more and faster than when she was young (Reinach, 2005), but she cast doubts on whether the younger generation could have the right knowledge to choose wisely based on individual dispositions which is the core element in fashion consumption.

Lucy: *“People who are younger, for example, those in their thirties or twenties, probably have a better acquaintance with fashion. But it's not necessarily that they can...they know more about fashion, but how much use they are able to make of fashion to add to their own character and quality...I don't know about that. Probably they need time to fully understand and make use of fashion. As we all know, the world has changed a lot. They see more; they learn more; however, they might not understand well. In my opinion, after more life experiences, with the growing of age, they might be able to deal with it better.”*

Professionability

Lucy's professional wear was not restricted to any particular styles or sending messages of affiliation to others like Grace and Doris did. Instead, she emphasised the requirement for specific office working environments and conditions which were totally different from factory working environment. However, as the rules were not so restricted in terms of what to wear in her working environment, she chose less formal wear, without any justification in terms of her choice of style.

Lucy: “At my office, since our work is sales and marketing, we need to go around a lot; sometimes, we might...if you have a meeting with a customer, probably you will dress up for it; while if you are going to the factory, possibly

you won't wear fancy clothes; probably, if this person is going a long way down to a factory, she will wear flat-heeled shoes, not stiletto heels."

Lucy continues to show her absolute authority in taste at the workplace where she held a managerial role. She praised her colleagues if someone dressed nicely and criticized them if they did not. Throughout the interview, she made no comments on how her own clothes represented her or affected her credibility and professionability in the workplace like Grace and Doris did. Instead, she made strong points on how subordinates should dress to show their reliability and trustworthiness at work. Lucy believed that staff's attitude to work could be aligned by their dress styles. She was in favour of a less edgy look and was against overly fashionable dressing styles.

Lucy: "There are two secretaries in our office. One, as I mentioned, wears exposing clothes. It's true that she does everything quickly. But compared to the other one, who wears very common clothes, I would complain the first one's work more. She doesn't wear the name brand, but she wears properly and never wears weird clothes. When she wears a business suit, the size is totally suitable to her figure, neither too short nor too long. She won't wear make-up too much either. She is a very dependable person in terms of working. I believe she would show the same quality when she is conducting herself."

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Lucy: "We were extremely poor when I was young. All the clothes at that time are left by my parents who had worn them in the army...To know the outside world...without anyone around you...you went in and out...unless someone told you, you wouldn't have known. You had no access to either written materials or the media, you absolutely wouldn't have known, simply wouldn't. A few years later, fashion magazines appeared; fashion programs appeared on TV; much publicity was given to fashion. It was only by then that people's awareness was raised. 'Ah, this is a designer label. I should display my character through shopping.' and blah, blah, blah.. I think that's a gradual process."

Not coming from a strong family background, Lucy was a watcher or follower due to the lack of strong family background, social connection, and economic capital. Consequently, her fashion consciousness and personal likings were not legitimized. Still attending high school back then, she recalled, how she stopped wearing a light blue-t-shirt because of its possible negative connotations of a ‘bad’ student. Without any brand knowledge she first consumed an “ugly” Christian Dior handbag and then happily used it after knowing its brand’s prestige. Due to her life chances in being the first of few Chinese to have contact with outside world, she became one of the earliest birds to learn how to play the game in China.

Lucy: “I remember I had a clothes which was blue. In others’ eyes, that kind of blue was only worn by bad students, so I never worn it again. I was in high school and it attracted much attention when I wore it. After all, not many people wore that kind of clothes at that time. And I had a feeling that students who wore that color of clothes were those mischievous and not strive to make progress in their studies- simply not good students, although I don’t know where I got this feeling. So I rarely wore it.”

This collective reaction towards someone who was different remained even after Den’s open-door policy. Some people like Lucy who were able to consume fashionable objects bought from the Western countries, the public simply did not appreciate. Lucy expressed the frustration she had experienced when the majority did not appreciate her brand choice because of their lack of knowledge about fashion brands and the negative reactions generated by others “*at the time of materially bad off and spiritually poor*”.

Lucy: “Regarding brands, someone gave me a CD’s bag as a present. I had no knowledge about brand at that time. When I carried it in the public, people said it was not pretty. But one of my colleagues from Singapore told me: “oh, your bag is a very good brand.” It was not until then that I started to know something about brand...After they got to know the name...I felt quite good myself at the time...when the others knew the name and showed their jealousy through saying good things about my handbag, it was another feeling.”

Researcher: “*What do you mean by ‘another feeling’?*”

Lucy: *“Hm, with all the compliments and jealous, your heart would heart swelled with pride in the fancy stuff in your possession. Hm...and cosmetics, for example...I would buy some Estee Lauder when I went to Hong Kong at the time...”*

Derived from the West, the concepts of fashion and brands were initially developed, consumed, understood, and legitimised by Westerners and their understandings and knowledge of brands passed on to her had gained absolute cultural legitimacy in this situation. Lucy’s fashion knowledge acquiring process resulted in the transformation process from “*a watcher or a follower*” to “*the centre of the crowd*” to reach the point that “*when discussing matters, they listen*”. Lucy believed that her whole life changed due to her educational credentials and her opportunities of having close involvement with fashion for decades. As such cultivation in learning and experience has transformed her whole self from a young follower to a confident well off Chinese middle-aged woman, who displayed some Westerner flavour that made her stand out from the crowd and became the one who wore glass balls that could be mistaken for diamonds.

The result of her exposure to fashion products for a relatively long time had led to her taste becoming embodied and dispositional, as Bourdieu’s (1984) cultural capital embodied state indicated. She was very proud to tell how she was misrecognized as a person coming from outside China because of her taste by someone who had been exposed to Western culture for a long time.

Lucy: *“I hadn’t been the centre of the crowd. After all, I was not good at sports, although I was extremely excellent in study. And my family was poor and had no background. So when there was an activity I wouldn’t be able to participate in it. I’d always been a watcher or follower. This situation was changed later... So with more knowledge you would have something interesting to say when talking about fashion with colleagues or friends. You had the privilege of speaking and you knew a lot. Otherwise, you wouldn’t...for example, if I had been working in the factory, I wouldn’t have known all of these, nor would I buy those designer clothes, nor would I be jealousy of anyone who had the fancy stuff.”*

The Generative Grammar: "I knew a lot"

Lucy's learning experiences suggested the superiority that she gained through her relatively early equipped fashion knowledge and rich consumption experience resulted from contact with outside world. This gave her an authority and cultural legitimacy in this field to make judgement to others' taste, especially the younger generation: critical to various 'bad tastes' and fast fashion consumption practices and the 'not knowing' of the essences of fashion consumption such as the counterfeit or the body exposing consumers.

Lucy: "...As I had travelled abroad, I had seen a lot and knew much more. Probably it had an influence on me. It was not only because of what I had seen or what I was wearing; it must have been something about my whole self. I was influenced imperceptibly. It was not like I had been trained or something. All happened imperceptibly: look and listen. It was simply like that."

Central to her consumption practice was exclusivity achieved first through exclusive access to designers' labels, but later when fashion brands become more prevalent within China, she moved to some less well-known brands to maintain the exclusivity and limited accessibility. However, no matter how clothing styles or brands be selected throughout the time, the unique individual disposition that those clothes dressed upon showed that she had come a long way from learning brands names to develop a more coherent unique individual who was distinguished from most mainland Chinese. It was not fashion knowledge that matters in the process of clothing selection, brands consumption had transformed overall outlook in her life, including her internal self.

Field

Doxa: "Envy the Youth"

Lucy: "I think today's young people are living in a good age. There aren't many restrictions, nobody telling them what they must do and stuff like that. They can do something that no one else dares to do in the past... That is to say, they are not so silly as my generation used to be, I really envy today's young people...."

Lucy believed that fashion consumption was not only about information and opportunities to access the material objects, but also social forces that cast restraints on individual choices in the past. In her view, today's society had changed in many ways. In particular, the easy access of fashion information and more prevalent brand knowledge for the youth. The society had also become more tolerant than it was in the past, as the Y generation could wear those body exposing styles "*in the individualised society*". However, this individual freedom of expressing one's taste was pressed in the past and it was the time when everyone dressed in similar colours and styles; quite frequently one who dared to stand out would be told off; many people would be worried about being criticized if wearing something unusual; if clothes attracted attention, it had negative a connotation. In her generation, she could not be able to enjoy the "free-spirit" of appreciation to fashionable objects as today's youth. Hence, her clothing choice were in conventional style that were suitable for her age and '*not loud*' enough to attract people's attention.

Illusio: "This kind of lifestyle is common"

Lucy: "*Many people wear name brands, but they behave differently. For someone, brands have become part of their life. Whenever a new product arrives, they will go for it. This lot would only buy products that have good quality and good reputation. They just believe that this kind of lifestyle is common. If you see this kind of person on the street, you would only feel naturally instead of thinking that he/she is an upstart or pretending something.*"

Bourdieu (1984) disaggregates the taste that arises from economic verses cultural capital: whereas economic capital is expressed through consuming goods and activities of material scarcity, cultural capital is expressed through scarce aesthetics and interactional styles that are consecrated by cultural elites. It is from the appreciation of scarce taste that defines the social distinctiveness and mark social boundaries. However, Lucy believed that the importance of being consistent in consuming the same level of the products – a sustained lifestyle that showed the standard and capability of consuming designers' labels. Therefore, she emphasised the

naturalness of the luxury consumption and the calm attitudes towards expensive expenditure.

Lucy insisted that luxury fashion consumption was neither for a short-term or one-off pecuniary display, nor for negative attention seeking; instead, it was a lifestyle choice, and an aesthetic appreciation expressed through everyday clothing. She did not support the practice if one struggled to buy luxury products for the sake of brand names, or consumed fake brands, as both were pecuniary consumption practices and she found these pretentious. On the other hand, buying genuine brands required expensive taste and it would not be easy if practiced on daily bases. Her consumption practice suggested that her consumption choices reflected her genuine personal taste (cultural capital) and capability to afford (economic capital). To maintain the consistency during the course of economic reform, her practice shifted from big designers to less well-known genuine brands. The sense of consistency was also maintained through her refusal buying on-sale items or cheap clothing sold on the local booths.

The natural consumption in everyday clothes presented the consistency between taste and consumption choice and between one's disposition and presentation. As she admitted, *'not all my clothes are expensive. But my colleagues would think they are.'* So, the viewer interpreted her dressing based on their impressions of her usual dress sense, as opposed to the clothes she wore at the time (Davis 1992).

Summary of Verbatim

Table A3 Summary of Verbatim: Lucy

Concepts	Themes	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	I don't like clothes that are too fashionable. Perhaps no one could ever remember it a year later. I wouldn't wear the clothes that can easily attract others' attention...People look at you simply because you are wearing improperly.
	Professionability	At my office, since our work is sales and marketing, we need to go around a lot; sometimes, we might...if you have a meeting with a customer, probably you will dress up for it; while if you are going to the factory, possibly you won't wear fancy clothes
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	To know the outside world...without anyone around you...you went in and out...unless someone told you, you wouldn't have known. You had no access to either written materials or the media, you absolutely wouldn't have known, simply wouldn't.
	The generative grammar: "I knew a lot"	<i>As I had travelled abroad, I had seen a lot and knew much more. Probably it had an influence on me. It was not only because of what I had seen or what I was wearing; it must have been something about my whole self. I was influenced imperceptibly. It was not like I had been trained or something. No one taught me anything. All happened imperceptibly: look and listen. It was simply like that.</i>
Field: Doxa	Envy today's young people	I think today's young people are living in a good age. There aren't many restrictions, nobody telling them what they must do and stuff like that. They can do something that no one else dares to do in the past...That is to say, they are not so silly as my generation used to be, I really envy today's young people
	The kind of lifestyle is common	Many people wear name brands, but they behave differently. For someone, brands have become part of their life. Whenever a new product arrives, they will go for it. This lot would only buy products that have good quality and good reputation. They just believe that this kind of lifestyle is common...If you see this kind of person on the street, you would only feel naturally instead of thinking that he/she is an upstart or pretending something.

Saline – “The Alternative”

Interview Background

Saline is the owner of a French restaurant. I went to her restaurant with a group of Chinese and Westerners on a fine day in late autumn. Her restaurant is small and only has around ten tables, but is tastefully decorated and makes me feel cosy and comfortable. The restaurant is a well-known place for foreigners in Beijing as it is located in the most prestigious area in Beijing surrounded by embassies. Most of the people I went with had been there before. Saline was a warm hostess and talked with each individual in a friendly way once we were seated. One of my friends in the group suggested me interviewing her, because she had known Saline for some time and thought that Saline had unique clothing styles, and lots of character. Taking a closer look, Saline wore an asymmetrically cut silver grey top with greyish jeans and dark colour leather knee high boots. Her waist length hair was dyed to a light brown colour and permed with large curls. To me, she did not have a conventional style and nor look like a typical Chinese woman which raised my interest in her. After dinner, I asked to interview her and she agreed.

On the day of the interview, I met Saline in her restaurant. She welcomed me with a big warm smile and then ushered me to a corner table where we began our interview. She was wearing a shocking pink jumper with deep blue jeans this time. The style made her look very feminine, casual, and bold. She had a glass of red wine in her right hand and a cigarette in her left. During the two hour interview, she smokes one cigarette after another and we talked with each other through the smoke. I could feel her sincerity and openness while she was talking about her life, alternative dress sense, and her perception of such dress sense in society. The second interview took place on the phone. She was still very warm and chatty as if we had been friends for a long time.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Saline: *“When I put on clothes, I want it to be outstanding, not necessarily outlandish, but it has to be special, like, asymmetrical patterns, unique detailing and such...I do not want to wear clothes that look identical with others. But probably I’m bold enough to wear whatever I please... Many...both in colour and design, I’m not afraid to put on what I want to wear, as long as it looks good... I don’t mean to follow the latest fashion or something, only because I like it. I’ve got used to it, and I feel comfortable.”*

Emphasising individuality and comfortability (as opposed to being restrained) through fashion uniqueness was the central theme of Saline’s fashion consumption practice. Saline was very straightforward to express what she liked or disliked and her choices of clothes were revolved around how to express individual uniqueness and differentiation from others. Saline had particular passion for Jeans which had become one of the most popular apparel categories in the Chinese wardrobe since the early 1980s (Wu & Delong, 2006). Saline liked wearing jeans and owned many pairs with unique designs, because of the comfort and fit (Wu & Delong, 2006) and matching her casual manner and characteristics. For accessories, unlike other female informants talking about a large collection of accessories, scarfs (Doris), glasses (Lucy), bags (Grace), necklaces (Zoë), Saline only mentioned bags and shoes. She preferred functional and ‘convenient’ big bags than decorative ‘useless’ small bag and comfortable shoes, rather than high heel silhouette. Also difference from others were the usual choice of hair styles, she would dye her long hair blond or even white sometime, which were permed with a wave-shaped curls. However, those practices were not driven by the latest fashion trend, *“only because I like it. I’ve got used to it, and I feel comfortable.”*

All the designs should be unique and made her stand out. To achieve this, she admitted that *“I might be the so-called exposing kind. Tight, diaphanous and exposing are very obvious on me...My clothes, always...I don’t like loose clothes.”* Exposing styles or see-through clothes were completely rejected by other female interviewees

(see Grace, Doris, Lucy,), but they were of Saline's taste. Saline's sense of beauty was more aligned with the Western concept of beauty as she sought a more edgy and transformational look that could make her stand out (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). However, this is completely different from many female interviewees' aesthetic views (e.g. Grace, Doris) as they seek a more traditional Chinese sense of beauty; accessible, subtle and in simple form (Finnane 2007).

Saline: *"I went to the Middle-South Square for a friend's birthday. I was waiting for her upstairs. At first I sat in the hall. Then I thought, 'why not taking a look around?' Some of the stores downstairs had quite special stuff, imported from France or Italy. So I took a look around. I was...it was summer you know. A camisole sort of thing, a butterfly on the front, exposing the back completely, and the butterfly needs a few strings tied together on the back, so it showed almost everything...but I thought it was so beautiful. I decided to buy it at once; it was very small and I remember I said to that friend of mine, 'do you know what I just did?'...I took it out and showed it to her. She said, 'are you out of your mind? Don't tell me you are planning to wear it!' I said, 'Why not?'"*

Researcher: *"What did you think of it at the time?"*

Saline: *"I thought it was beautiful. I felt quite good about it. And, to be honest, I love to wear very few pieces of clothing. I'm not saying I must expose much of my body, but I feel comfortable that way. I feel comfortable, just like when I went to Europe last year. I went to the beach and swam naked. It felt so comfortable. I didn't have other special feelings."*

Other female informants revealed their increasing realisation of the importance of consuming better material and quality once they become more mature (see Grace, Lucy, Zoë). Saline paid no attention to those clothing attributes, but solely on experiential needs and individual directed values (Kim et al., 2002). Unlike other interviewees who cared for the material of the clothing and believed comfort and workmanship were connotations of quality (Chen et al., 2004), Saline rejected this way of accessing fashion clothes and classified those practices to older generations (Kaigler-Walker & Gilbert, 2009). This shopping style appears similar to some of the younger generation's shopping styles (Tai, 2005).

Saline: *“I can tell what are to my liking at the first sight. I’m not the kind of people who stay there and feel the texture. I have no knowledge of that kind of things. And you don’t need to worry how long the material lasts or whether it is easy to wash, like what our parents did before. Or whether the wool will come off, or the cloth wrinkles easily. I don’t know those things at all. I just follow my feeling at the first sight of it. If I think it is beautiful, or I’ve never seen the design before, I’ll buy it.”*

Her individuality was not only conveyed through her unique dress sense, but also her shopping styles. She was an irrational, spontaneous and impulse purchaser and many times her purchases were made when accompanying her friends shopping. However, this did not mean that shopping was easy for her, because she was difficult to please and it was rare that something so special would catch her eyes.

Woodward (2007) suggest that the consideration of colours, fabrics and styles are associated with the material means through which women negotiate their clothing identities, as aspects of a woman’s self-identity are externalized in the items of clothing in the wardrobe. Other female informants showed such consideration process and negotiation with themselves in the decision making process. Their considerations include colours, fabrics and styles, in combination of their dispositions and figures, equally they were cautious about their expenditures by evaluating the products’ price, functionality, and presentability. All of these factors contributed to their final decisions which can be complicated and indecisive (see other female informants). However, Saline tended to be more capricious, spontaneous, and irrational when making purchasing decisions and lack of those considerations which mattered so much to other female informants.

Neither price nor brand name sensitive, Saline consumed high from designers’ labels like Gucci to low from local booths bought which Zoë only wore as base layer. Saline’s purchasing decision was simply based on whether or not the piece of clothes could make her outstanding and comfortable, even it meant some negative attractions. Insisted to be one of *“the few out there to live one’s own way”*, she thought those people who wear *‘rather orthodox dress’* were *‘not natural, but superficial’*.

Professionability

Saline's principle of dressing for individuality and comfortability was also carried out to her professional look. She associated professional formal wear with stiffness and a sense of being confined. She believed that there were not much dressing requirements for her as a restaurant owner and rejected the idea of wearing any formal clothes, despite the fact that she was fully aware of those popular branded names consumed by the white collars (see Doris and Grace). Admitted that she would inject individuality for formal wear in an assumed scenario which she had to dress like others, but she insisted that she would give some twist on styles to make it different from others.

Saline: "I feel confined and stiff. The main reason is, those clothes don't match my character. You see, I behave like this one minute, and like that the next minute. It looks ridiculous for me to wear those clothes. Those clothes look formal and serious. If I were wearing them, and I went out to make a phone call, probably I would sit by the roadside. You know what it would be looked like. This is determined by character."

Habitus:

How to Learn to Play the Game

Saline: "When I was a kid, I was kind of alternative and I didn't like skirts. My mother always said, "Look at yourself, girl. Why don't you wear dress in the summer? Why do you wear trousers?...I wasn't a docile kid since my very early age. So, they don't lay many limits on me, I think...My parents are very open-minded. They gave me freedom when I was young. They neither help nor interfere with my everyday life or my business. Only they make sure I won't do harm to others. They have given me much space to develop my character, to get along with people and to come into the society."

Bourdieu's habitus emphasizes the unconscious formation: the habitus results from "early socialization experiences in which external structures are internalized" (Swartz 1997, p.103). Instead of talking about her living condition like others, Saline talked about her parent's open-minded way dealing with her individuality education and the impact on her characteristics as an alternative child. Although objecting

Saline's unconventional way of femininity of dressing and manner, her parents were very accommodating and gave her individual freedom. Saline's family education was in stark contrast to Doris' whose childhood education limited her clothing choices. On the contrary, Saline's family education provided ample freedom for her individual development and consequently developed her free will in terms of dressing styles.

Bourdieu (1984) contends that tastes and practices are learned unintentionally through many abundant experiences, mostly in childhood. Chinese women in the past were taught to follow specific rules and be mindful of the social hierarchy (Xinran, 2003). What Saline experienced was an unconventional with less emphasis of listen, follow, to conform as a female as a child. Her dress sense and consumption practice were unconventional too. Living in a society that may put pressure on individual to conform, Saline talked about the course that she had experienced from caring to not caring about others' negative feedbacks in relation to her business development (not about her dress sense), but the principle was the same: *"Now, I really give no thought to what other people are speaking of me."*

The Generative Grammar: "I don't think it matters".

Huss and Azuma (1991) suggest that beliefs developed in childhood become stronger, not weaker, as people grow older. In Saline's case, her beliefs in individuality and its harmlessness to others, formed in childhood just became stronger as she grew. Saline's childhood experiences allowed her to develop a capriciously individual aesthetic centred dress sense which did not function as symbol of member of social groups, but a reflection of complete individuality. Saline's individualized choice of clothes, no matter how outlandish they were, were a reflection of herself and her disposition. She disapproved the superficiality and pretentiousness of others' dress sense and ignored others' opinions were a way to enforce her own aesthetics as an individual. *"I don't care about other people...Especially, dressing has absolutely nothing to do with other people"*. As a result, many clothing styles were chosen without giving the consideration to the social environment she lived, whereas other informants may have taken too seriously and allowed others opinions shaped their dress sense and practices (see Grace and Doris). Saline's choice of unique clothing style was a medium through which her selfhood was externalized (Gell, 1998).

Saline: *“Once there was a person knocked onto another because he kept looking at me while riding. Yeah, it was true. My friend knows! I don’t think it matters. If you want to look, come and look. If you dare to wear, then wear it. If you dare not, then nothing can help. I have no way to change it. And I don’t think it is not beautiful. If you wear it, you must think it is beautiful. And you don’t feel uncomfortable.”*

Field

Doxa: “No rules can give free rein to one’s imagination and ability”

Saline believed that she was defending her individuality in the process of consumption. She legitimated her practice by convincing herself that it is *“an age of individuality”* and idealised the benefit of a society having no rules which would give *“free rein to one’s imagination and ability”* and allow her freely to express her aesthetics.

Saline: *“It’s an age of individuality; I believe everyone thinks same these days ...I dress myself according to my character. I feel comfortable myself. I won’t wear those clothes that no one else wears, or clothes in which I would look too glaring...As long as you don’t go too far, or you are not dressed against those rules that you have to follow, it’s fine. I follow those basic things and I won’t break the rules. I don’t care about other things... Yeah, there are rules, and I won’t go too much beyond them... I rather think no-rules is a good thing, for it gives free rein to one’s imagination and ability...”*

This doxic assumption reflected the nature of her early socialising conditions: she was raised in a situation where thinking, behaving and dressing differently and unconventionally were allowed. This is quite the opposite of the assumptions made by Grace and Doris, who felt restricted due to their doxic assumptions for living in an overly restricted society.

Illusio: “I am the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please”

Saline: *“Everyone wants to show individuality through dressing. I am the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please. I chose body exposing type of*

clothes, not because I want to be standing out that way, but I personally like wearing them and feel comfortable...just like I swim naked in Europe.”

Saline believed that showing individuality was the stake of fashion consumption game. Consequently, she showed a completely indifferent attitude towards social feedback and treated those negative social reactions as trivial. Indeed, she preferred exposing or unusual styles, but she chose to dress that way not because it could catch the attention of others, but rather because it was a reflection of her own individual taste. She did not need others to either appreciate or approve her style. What Saline wanted to establish was her strong desire to be herself and remain true to herself.

Throughout the interview, Saline set out to send the message that the distinction between her and others was not only about the style of their clothing choices, but also their intention in dressing. Her unusual styles did not intend to deliberately shock others, but the clothes that made her feel comfortable, beautiful, and were a reflection of herself, which happened to be that kind of unconventional clothing styles like super tight fitting and sometimes left the body exposed. In the fashion consumption field, she competed with others not only through dressing styles, but in terms of the encouragement to present her true self. Fashion consumption allowed her freely to express her individuality, as she claimed that *“I could pretend and exercise restraint, but that is not me.”*

Summary of Verbatim

Table A4 Summary of Individual Case: Saline

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	When I put on a piece of clothes, I want it to be outstanding, not necessarily outlandish, but it has to be special, like, asymmetrical patterns, unique detailing and such...I do not want to wear clothes that look identical with others.
	Professionability	I feel confined and stiff. The main reason is, those clothes don't match my character. You see, I behave like this one minute, and like that the next minute. It looks ridiculous for me to wear those clothes. Those clothes look formal and serious.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	My parents are very open-minded. They gave me freedom when I was young.
	The generative grammar	I don't think it matters. If you want to look, come and look. If you dare to wear, then wear it. If you dare not, then nothing can help. I have no way to change it. And I don't think it is not beautiful. If you wear it, you must think it is beautiful. And you don't feel uncomfortable.
Field: Doxa	No-rules gives free rein to one's imagination and ability	It's an age of individuality; I believe everyone thinks same these days... Yeah, there are rules, and I won't go too much beyond them... I rather think no-rules is a good thing, for it gives free rein to one's imagination and ability.
Illusio	I'm the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please	Everyone wants to show individuality through dressing. I am the one who is bold enough to wear whatever I please. I chose body exposing type of clothes, not because I want to be standing out that way, but I personally like wearing them and feel comfortable.

Zoë – “The Clothes Crazy Type”

Interview Background

Zoë is an entrepreneur who runs a computing business. Her husband, a friend of mine, nominated her. The first time we met was outside Beihai Park which used to be a palace for the emperors. Now its outskirts are surrounded by pubs and coffee shops and visited by hundreds of foreign tourists and local young professionals each day. We casually chatted while we walked along the bank, passing many cafés before we entered into a very stylish, elegant one. It is a big place, but it is cleverly sectioned with red and orange embroidered door curtains, so people at different tables would not be disturbed by others. We sat in a huge comfortable leather sofa sipping mocha and watching people passing by. It was getting dark outside and the waiter lit some candles on the table. I sat opposite Zoë who was wearing a suit consisting of two parts with a half sleeve jacket and straight cut skirt. The whole set was creamy in colour and printed with a watercolour painting. She matched the suit with a small brown handbag and creamy round toed stiletto heeled court shoes. She put her jacket collar up which made the suit more individual and made her look modern and independent. After the first interview, I interviewed her another time and also met her on several occasions in between; she always wore different styles of clothes with some unusual features or designs. She was a frequent visitor to the hair salon, because she also required her hair style to match her clothing styles. During the interview, she gave an extensive, detailed account of the colours, styles, and materials of her choice and showed great enthusiasm for the interview topic. She certainly had passion and had given a lot of thought to fashion and dressing; as she enjoyed fashion so much she was planning to open a high-end boutique fashion club in town.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Zoë: “Artists, some of them would put on extremely ‘loud’ colours, which normally are too strong for us, like, green and red, etc.. We might think that type of match is too much; but they manage to wear it to an effect that we would take as another kind of beauty.”

Describing herself as a “*clothes-crazy type*”, Zoë dressed nicely and fashionably every single day, “*even at home*”. Unlike other interviewees who clearly stated that they like or dislike certain styles, Zoë never completely rejected any particular styles. Zoë had an omnivorous taste of clothes and was an explorer who was not afraid of trying different styles, colours and designs. Taking every piece of clothes as a form of art and having its own character: some are ‘*picky*’, some are ‘*subtle*’, while others are ‘*loud*’, she wanted to incorporate and create in her everyday dressing and “*wear the clothes up to their full expression.*” It was the artistic kind of beauty and the unconventional visual effect that Zoë appreciated in clothing.

Zoë’s individuality showed through her careful collection of unique styles and unusual colour combinations which tended to test the aesthetic boundaries. Every piece was her effort to present her individual apprehension of art objects and aesthetic appreciation. Zoë’s husband referred her as the “*weird-dressed kind*”, “*likes to try daring clothes*”; “*always against the rules*”; “*match whatever clothes and colours*”; “*no one will match red with green but her!*” The colour red and green coordination was a taboo for the Chinese aesthetic view, but not for Zoë. During the interview, she showed me her favourite style in a fashion magazine in which a Western model was wearing a full body length green silk dress wrapped up with a huge bright red shawl. She acknowledged the unusual colour combination, but indicated the visual effect that attracted her and motivated her to try it herself.

Fashionability for Zoë was not about following fashion trends, but leading fashion trends, which was centred on individual appreciation and marginal trends instead of displaying the collective taste and aesthetic view of a group (Blumer 1969, Kaiser 1997, Thompson & Haytko 1997). She was also an opinion leader, taking friends shopping and giving them a completely different make-over which could shock their husbands once they were back home. This meant that the style of her choices was always ahead of mainstream fashion and what she put on quite often remained in the centre of dispute as they were simply not what people normally see around at the time, but might be considered beautiful two or three years later.

Zoë: “*Three years ago, I bought a shirt with a fringe. One of my friends, her sister and her mother all found it weird. But now, it's popular. Although it's*

not the mainstream, for I pay attention to the clothes I have bought, you can find many name-brand clothes are made into this design with fringe, the collar and the sleeves. It's difficult to say. Also this skirt...it's bought two or three years ago, too. At that time, people would think the colour and the design gave a weird feeling. But now, no one will say it is beyond what is proper, nor it is out of fashion. It's just like this. Then I think my aim of buying it has achieved.”

She rejected the purchase of cheap or fake accessories, but chose real and expensive ones, “*because small things like accessories are very important for one's image or taste. Your accessories are rough, however good your clothes are, and the look won't be nice.*” She disliked local brands, but opted for imported Korean or Japanese brands, because the colours of the fabrics were subtle and maximized the display of feminine elegance and beauty.

Always looking for unique styles had become the main drive for Zoë's enthusiastic everyday shopping trips. She could not help going shopping every day, sometimes just window shopping. This insatiability for fashion and for a high standard of presentation required economic capital to sustain. She repeatedly stressed her desires and frustrations that she had over some highly priced beautiful clothes which were beyond her financial capability. She used two strategies to overcome this problem. First of all, she would evaluate the fashion style and the expense of the clothing and chose the less fashionable one. If “*the design was a bit too fashionable, or let's say, too new. I might not like it one or two years later. So I think, as for the basic wear, normally I won't buy the overly fashionable type.*” The other strategy was to go shopping at different places for her outfits and inner layer. She maintained the quality, expensive look for her outfit and accessories by going to luxury department stores and sourced some compromise alternative choices for the inner layers from local booths which sold items much cheaper than department stores.

Professionability

Zoë believed that her profession did not have any special requirements for her to dress formally. However, she sometimes had to compromise her sense of fashion to others

especially when she sought new business opportunities or potential clients. She was obliged to amend her look, from hair style to clothing, to meet her clients' conventional tastes in a recent cooperation with government officials.

Zoë: *"That was when we had a business negotiation."*

Zoë's husband: *"She had her hair permed...pretty nice. Her customers were all normal, just like me. When she entered the room, those people were staggered. Ah!"*

Researcher: *Was the reaction that strong?"*

Zoë: *"Yes."*

Zoë's husband: *"Yeah! She didn't expect that reaction. And after that, one of the men said to her father, "Your daughter really gave me a shock that day! She went with her hair permed like that! No one else was like her in the whole building!" That department, you know, belongs to the government, and the company was also a big state-owned company. Staff members there are all dressed conservatively. Nobody is like that. Not even a little bit beyond what is proper. But she insisted on wearing these kinds of clothes and that permed hairstyle!"*

Zoë: *"Clothes...not loud, hm, as I remember, just ordinary clothes, er, not excessively...it might be about the hair; they might have thought...because the first time I met them, my hair was straight, and all of a sudden, with all those curls...they must have thought it was weird of me to walk around in a governmental agency with such a hairstyle! Especially as they were in the petroleum business, those people were very conservative."*

Zoë's husband: *"The next day, she got to have it straight, spending even more money than having it permed, as she thought they would cooperate for a long term."*

Zoë: *"I wanted to impress well as I want to have a long term cooperation...it was a very special case. At the time I wouldn't have redone it if not for business's sake. I had to sign a contract with them. There was no other choice. Eh?...Anyway, I think dealing with people, it's better if you have a fixed appearance; you shouldn't change dramatically, I think. And, compromise to the medium level...not overly outstanding, nor...."*

In the business world in China, the buyer, especially the buyer from the government has the ultimate power to decide whom they want to cooperate with. To an entrepreneur like Zoë who wanted to establish long term cooperation with the state owned company, every effort had to be made to secure the deal. Dressing played an important role in signalling one's group membership (Blumer 1969, Kaiser 1997). In Confucian terms (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), the '*ordering relationship by status and observing the order*' implies that everyone in a society is aware of one's social position by social comparison and behaves accordingly based on their observed social hierarchy. Zoë's individual fashion statement neither signalled any group membership (her look was so different from others 'in the whole building'), nor the ordering relationship (the look was too fashionable and informal to show respect to government officials). Zoë realised the need to carefully look at the group she was socialising with and dressed accordingly to suit the taste of that group in order to establish long-term business guanxi (Leung, 1996).

Habitus:

How to learn to play the game

Zoë: "When I was young in the eighties, my father bought me a jacket. A rather formal jacket, and it's very expensive, eight hundred. It goes well with my dress. The size is just suitable for me...what my father was thinking was, "As long as it's suitable for her, it doesn't matter how much it costs." It's simply like this... I was the first one to wear flared trousers in my hometown, which is a small city and nobody else wore flared trousers at that time... Like feather jackets, trainers and such. I was always of the first ones."

Zoë grew up in a relatively wealthy family and had been a fashion leader from an early age. Her father held a managing role in a state owned Petroleum Company which normally paid their employees better compared with other state owned companies. Due to the nature of her father's job, they had travelled and lived in many different cities and provinces throughout Zoë's childhood which provided an opportunity for her to get a better idea in terms of how people dressed and their perceptions of fashion in different areas. In her home town Na Chong located in South China a second-tier city, people were less fashion conscious and held more

conventional perceptions of clothing styles compared with her well-travelled and well informed family.

Zoë showed her confidence in leading the fashion trend, instead of following it. From childhood, Zoë's father had exerted a huge influence on her in terms of what to wear and how to present one's individuality. Setting a good example of presenting his own fashionability and individuality, her father wore pink shirts at the age of sixty "*when young men in their twenties did not dare to wear that colour*". When Zoë was little, he took her shopping and showed her that the important thing when purchasing clothes was the image that the clothes could create and advised her to buy what could make her look stunning, rather than paying much attention to functionality of the clothes; They often had discussions about fashion trends and he supported Zoë's idea of individual driven aesthetics, as opposed to being a headless fashion follower.

Zoë: "I remember at a time people loved wearing gold items for decoration. Right? Women all had gold necklace, rings, bracelet and such, and they felt them pretty. The thicker, the better, if you could afford it. I discussed it with my father. My father said, 'I still think a thin one, with an exquisite pendant is better. It makes you look more sophisticated.' I felt the same."

She believed that "*everyone has the right colour and s/he'll look good in that colour*". In order to "*wear the clothes to the full expression*", it is a gradual process to learn how to control the colour scheme. To Zoë, colour plays an important role with respect to expressing her individual disposition, as if an artist learns how to use colour to express themselves on canvas. However, there were disparities sometimes between her envisaged final results and the real one. To some extent, her developed dispositions through age and education helped widen her clothes and colour control. She developed a well-trained eye, for "*I can tell if the colour is suitable or not by taking a look at it. Then I just skip it. No need to try on. I won't bother to.*" Those colours like blue and green that she used to find difficult to wear had gradually become wearable and even could be worn beautifully. This was associated with accumulation of knowledge embedded in dispositional change in body and mind (Bourdieu, 1984).

Zoë: "With your ability of controlling colours. The ability, I think, on one

hand, is determined by your experience and your knowledge. Most importantly, I think, to put it in simple words, like, you read more with the growing of age; all the books you have read influence you...

The Generative Scheme: Being open-minded

Zoë's learning experiences, modelled by her father, directed her emphasis on individual cultivation of aesthetic disposition above fashion trends. Her everyday dressing was more driven by aesthetic experiments and symbolic leadership which could be extended to other areas such as career developments.

Zoë: "A successful person, talking from the aspect of clothes, must be very open-minded. He can accept many things... I always think, "Why is this person successful, while the other is not." Because they are standing at different points, what you see, what he sees, and what others see, are different. I think, what a successful person sees, is comparatively, not absolutely, comprehensive. The world he sees is wide and different. So he probably will become successful in the end. If you exclude yourself from a certain circle from the very beginning; you draw yourself a circle, think about it, you are...just like, an animal which is confined to its own area all the time. It walks and walks, but can't walk out of its area. At most it walks to the border of the area. Can't be any further. But for an aggressive animal, it'll cross its border, and find, "There is another land beyond. It's even better than mine..."

The key things for her to become a successful person was “*being open-minded*” and “*could accept many things*” as an essential “*personal quality*” that had shown throughout Zoë's consumption practice. For Zoë, she wanted to remain being creative, being self-challenged, so she dressed up to fulfil her different sensations and possible self every day (Markus & Nuriu, 1986). This generative scheme of ‘being open-minded’ gave rise to her consumption practice and tastes such as the exploring way of dressing to express her individual aesthetic views; allowed her to reassess situations that were commonly accepted by majorities and gave her encouragement to challenge those conventional views. Four examples are provided here as follow:

- 1). Perception of her personal disposition in relation to clothing styles.

Zoë: *“I think I can wear many different styles of clothes. I believe that there is a connection between clothing styles and one’s disposition. If you contain many sensations, you could wear any styles...I look good in them.”*

Informants frequently referred to the importance of clothing styles matching individual dispositions. Zoë also gave the same answer. However, the difference lay in her strong belief in her ability to “handle” a variety of styles of clothes which showed that she did not set up a limitation for herself in certain styles. This was completely different from Doris who considered that many clothes were unsuitable for her.

2). Aesthetic justification: She did not take the traditional aesthetic view as given (e.g. red cannot match green – colour too strong for everyday wear), instead she tended to appreciate all types of clothes from artistic viewpoints. Sometimes, it meant that her taste was unusual and not many people knew how to appreciate it, such as her husband. However, it was this courage to go against the grain that defined her individuality and fashionability.

Zoë: *“Because I’d like to search carefully in the shop. For example, not everyone appreciates this colour (pointing to a magazine-a model wears green clothes wrapped up by a huge bright red shawl). The majority would think the colour is too strong to wear in daily life. Then they would not look at those clothes in the shop, but I’m different”.*

3). Social classification: Unlike other interviewees who have favoured places to shop, Zoë did not have particular places and felt at ease in both cheap local booths and luxury department stores. She was not afraid to try top designers’ clothes even if they had a daunting price tag. Recently, she went to *Crocodile* and tried a winter coat which cost around twenty thousand RBM (£2000). She understood perfectly that she could not afford it, but she ventured herself to explore different stores and styles, so that she developed better ideas of what was suitable for her. She did not have any concerns in terms of what the salesmen would think about her local booth-bought clothes. This was completely different from what Lily did when she went to the luxury department store shopping (see Lily).

Zoë: *“Like, I make five hundred to one thousand a month, then I enter a store*

for people who earn five thousand a month, I won't feel embarrassed. I am just looking around. I don't feel there is anything that I should be ashamed of. That's what I earn. I'm calm. I feel we should have this quality. I earn five thousand a month, and I am very calm when I go and see the twenty or even thirty thousand fur coat.”

4). Factors that may restrict purchasing choice, such as age related factors that restricted consumers' choices (Kaigler-Walker and Gilbert, 2009). Unlike many people who tended to narrow down their choices when becoming older, she believed that she could wear more colour now than ever. She actively looked for solutions such as using make-up in a particular colour scheme to overcome limited colour choices that resulted from aging. This resolution allowed her to wear a wider range of colours which she thought she would not have been able to when she was younger.

Zoë: “to my mother’s way of thinking, there would be fewer and fewer clothes to choose from as you grow older, especially colours and styles; but I feel differently. I think that there even is a wider range of choice for me to choose clothes from as I’m getting older. My control over colours, I think, is much stronger than before.”

Field

Doxa

Two important assumptions emerged from Zoë's narrative, indicating the boundaries that were imposed on her, the economic condition and the social environment which she lived in, whilst the former one remained unescapable, she maintained individual freedom from the latter.

1. “You cannot compare with the rich”

First of all, the economic capital determines the level of appearance competition through dressing.

Zoë: “They (the rich people) have the money, the foundation...the service provided by the society, for people who are of a certain economic level, is different from that for you and I. I mean, the best brands won't design clothes for you, but they will for the rich. You can't compare that with the

rich...jeans, a pair of jeans. The best thing you can do is to buy one from the store. It is the so-called finished product. You may choose the most suitable one from the finished products. And that's the very best service you get. But for them, "My bum is big. No problem! The clothes are designed particularly for me. My bum won't look big in them." Right? Or, whatever else is not perfect, it can be done."

Fashion consumers are inspired by modern and innovative styles and promote consumers with insatiable desire for new styles and new clothes (Zheng, 1992). In order to keep up the pace with consumers' appetites for fashion, fashion producers have begun to move from prêt-à-porter to produce fast fashion, duplicates of designers' clothes which are cheaply made and rapidly produced (Reinach, 2005). As fashion changed regularly, at least four times a year, the implication for fast fashion consumers was to follow regular fashion changes. Zoë was highly aware of the restriction of the economic capital at play on individual consumption choices. To remain at the forefront of the game, frequent shopping trips and constant purchases were part of the game. However, the downside of these fashion trips was that they required sufficient economic resources with which she was struggling.

Acknowledging the social advantage and privilege of holding a higher volume of economic capital in this game, she came up with a plan that was to dedicate her restricted funds to the outer layer of clothes with designers' relatively expensive clothes and with more conventional styles, which lasted longer, whereas she bought inner layers from local booths. This strategy allowed her to look fashionable and maintain her fashion leader position.

2. "The environment needs them to dress like that"

Secondly, Zoë recognised that social forces such as family restrictions and peer pressures prevented individuals from displaying individuality through clothes consumption, Zoë believed that she lived in favourable conditions, as she did not have those factors that restricted her. She shared Saline's understanding of the social world and believed that they were exempted from the social restraints, because of their

relatively unrestricted occupations, and because they grew up with more individuality centred environments.

Zoë: *“I think, to be honest, most people are dressed, the way, not because they want to be dressed that way, nor do they like to, but the environment needs them to dress like that. They have to. I think I'm under the favourable condition now. I can dress the way I like....After all, I don't work everyday. I don't have rules to obey. I have heard from my classmate that you have to follow dressing rules in foreign companies. Like, you have to wear name-brand clothes, you can't wear the same clothes too often, or your colleagues will laugh at you, and your colleagues often ask you about the brands of your clothes...”*

Researcher: *“What if you were living that type of environment?”*

Zoë: *“Such is the society. I hope, I won't behave too improperly, and the society won't control too much. If you order me to be like that...Even is I'm asked to wear suits, I will change it to be different from others. That's for sure.”*

Fashion consumption is about fashionability and individuality. In the social world, society's attitude towards those attributes determines how they enact on them and behave. Grace and Doris surrendered to those social forces by developing two separate consumption practices (private and public), whereas Zoë and Saline insisted that the society encouraged individuality and they lived in favourable living conditions which allowed their individually free expression of aesthetic views.

Since both Saline and Zoë emphasised individuality through fashion consumption, both of them encountered negative social responses. Contrary to Saline's ignoring of negative feedback, Zoë considered that negative reactions by others were *“not knowing how to express their real feelings”* and in fact were admiration conveyed through the expression of envy. Their two different treatments of negative social responses were underpinned by habitus. Saline's early socialisation was individual centred by ignoring traditions (e.g. gender) and the boundaries laid on the emphasis of *“not harming to others”*. However, Zoë's early socialisation involved particularly the legitimate rights to be a fashion leader and focus on cultivating personal qualities of being open-minded, accommodating others' opinions, and not taking for granted as

things being perceived. Her analysing skill and taking things from different perspective had also helped her to interpret the scene differently. By doing so, the negative effect of those comments have been removed and changed to something more acceptable.

Zoë: "That is the culture environment of the city, if you are in small city, like my hometown Nanchong, you don't have to be too strange, as long as you are dressed a little bit unusually, people will think you are weird. They won't think you are of what style. Possibly they will envy you, but they express it in a different way. Like what my friend did, say, " Why is she dressed like a bully-girl?" But that's not what they really want to express. They just change their way of expressing."

Zoë: "I have a green dress, which I wear together with an orange no-sleeved shirt. Some said it was nice, while some said it looked strange. The colours...actually, those who said no should be divided into two groups. One is who really disliked the colours, the other is who didn't think the colours were bad, but they didn't know how to express their real feeling, and at first place, they themselves wouldn't dress like that, which made them say no, but not they couldn't accept it, only they didn't think that was suitable for themselves. They gave their opinion according to their own feelings."

Illusio: "Very few people dress the way they want to"

Zoë: "I think clothes reveal one's innate character, one's frankness. Some people try to hide it, um...very few people dress the way they want to. So I think when a person dresses as he pleases, one thing, the environment is favourable; another, he has very strong self-consciousness. I think those two aspects are what clothes represent about a person, from the philosophy's point of view."

Coming from a favourable living environment which encouraged individuality and aesthetic appreciation, the stake of fashion consumption for Zoë was not only the individual aesthetic expression, but more importantly the display of personal quality as being successful. Her unusual fashion tastes, encouragement to lead fashion trends,

vigilance of mainstream perceptions, and challenging existing rules and established boundaries marked her every effort in defining her superior ‘innate character’ in the fashion consumption field and a wider social field. Zoë ascribed success to special attributes associated with being open-minded and frank to express one’s true feelings, aesthetic views and identity. Pursuing the ‘frankness’ and displaying one’s “*innate character*” through everyday dressing as cultural capital, she dared to go against the grain in her consumption practice to overcome the restrictions society placed on individuals.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A5 Summary of Individual Case: Zoë

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability & Individuality	Artists, some of them would put on extremely 'loud' colours, which normally are too strong for us, like, green and red, etc.. We might think that type of match is too much; but they manage to wear it to an effect that we would take as another kind of beauty.
	Professionability	I wanted to impress well as I want to have long term cooperation... At the time I wouldn't have redone it if not for business's sake. I had to sign a contract with them. There was no other choice.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	I was the first one to wear flared trousers in my hometown, which is a small city and nobody else wore flared trousers at that time... Like feather jackets, trainers and such. I was always of the first ones.
	The generative grammar: being open-minded	I think I can wear many different styles of clothes. I believe that there is a connection between clothing styles and one's disposition. If you contain many sensations, you could wear any styles...I look good in them.
Field: Doxa	you cannot compare with the rich	They (the rich people) have the money, the foundation...the service provided by the society, for people who are of a certain economic level, is different from that for you and I. I mean, the best brands won't design clothes for you, but they will for the rich. You can't compare that with the rich.
	The environment needs them to dress like that	Most people are dressed the way, not because they want to be dressed that way, nor do they like to, but the environment needs them to dress like that. They have to. Such is the society. I hope, I won't behave too improperly, and the society won't control too much.
Illusio	Very few people dress the way they want to	I think clothes reveal one's innate character, one's frankness. Some people try to hide it, um...very few people dress the way they want to.

Lily – “A Bird in a Cage”

Interviewee Impression

Lily, the wife of a wealthy stockbroker, lived in a most prestigious area in Beijing in a gated apartment building (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). She and her whole family travelled extensively with their footprints on four continents from America, Europe, Australia, to Singapore. They were planning their next trip to Japan at the time of the interview.

Lily showed up wearing a sliver Armani high-neck sweater, a pair of Armani jeans, and a pair of creamy off-white high heeled shoes. She carried a Louis Vuitton hand bag and wore a pair of silver framed sun glasses. I also noticed that she was wearing a silver watch. Her style was simple, but showed the quality of her clothes and accessories. She looked elegant, knowledgeable, and much younger than her actual age. My friend wanted to be present as part of the deal when Lily agreed to do the interview. I guessed that it would either be Lily’s arrangement for extra insurance or Lily’s husband’s idea for some kind of protection. I was initially concerned that it would limit our conversation, but it turned out that my friend became an ice breaker and our interview began with their normal friendly chat and I later joined in with questions. We went to a Pizza Hut near Lily’s house. She was quite talkative throughout the interview which mainly revolved around her daily living subjects like children and family relations.

Lily was the least educated among the interviewees, but had a relatively higher volume of economic capital than many others expect Quentin. In the dimensions of taste, her taste had shown significant difference from others, in particular showed the importance of social conformity. Her usage and expression of language also showed many characteristics of those from the LCC group (Holt 1998, Üstüner & Holt 2010). Aligned with her having the lowest education credentials among the informants, her interview account centred on her daily routine activities and her fashion consumption experiences. She could easily divert my questions to something she would like to talk about, such as her children or her mother-in-law. The other frequent occurrence in her account was her struggle with other family members about the restraints projected on to her fashion choices and her dissatisfaction with being in the dominated position.

Her account provided another perspective to the scope of the informants, inasmuch as it offered an insight into how the economically well-off did not naturally lead in terms of consumption freedom and happiness.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Lily's luxury consumption practice was a case of addressing family relations and emphasizing conformity, obedience, and reliability to others (Bond 1986, Hofstede 1980b, Triandis 1995).

Fashionability and Individuality

Lily: *“My husband has the final word on all my clothes. He likes me wearing clothes with bright colour and unique styles.”*

Lily preferred a plain look including single coloured (e.g. black, pink, white) and simple pattern of clothes with minimum accessories. She shopped in both luxury department stores and local booths, as well as in overseas with her family. However, she did not have freedom to buy without the ‘go ahead’ of her husband, as she said, *“my husband has the final word on all my clothes”*. She had to wear designer clothes when her husband was around and she had been banned from wearing body exposing styles such as skirts since they got married. Lucy did not have much freedom to exercise her individuality in fashion consumption, rather she had many different consumption practices from other female informants, and detailed discussions are as follows:

A Variety of Dressing Styles to Give Contrasting Signals

Other female informants believed that clothes should be worn to match one's disposition, environment, and to reflect one's social position. Lily's consumption practice was not a statement of her own taste, but rather represented her daily activities involving image creation (Firat & Dholakia, 1998). In many cases, the aim of her dressing style was to maintain relations with family members and others (Bond 1986, Cheng & Schweitzer 1996) and her clothing choices aimed to live up to the expectations of others (Wong & Ahuva, 1998) and meet those social requirements that were set up by others (Lau & Kuan 1988, Bond 1992)

1. Fashion & Age

Lily: *“if I wear something very trendy, other people could think; ‘being a mother of a child, how come you still wear such style of clothes?’ That’s not good to give other people an excuse to condemn you like that. So, buying clothes is not easy and causes headache.”*

Similar to other female interviewees (Doris, Grace, Lucy), Lily had conventional tastes and did not like body exposing styles or see-through clothes which were considered to be challenging traditional female morality. *“It’s daunting to wear short and transparent. In the past, all the clothes I wore were baggy clothes.”* Lacking luxury consumption experience in the past, Lily’s fashionability lay in her following the latest fashion trends and keeping her style up-to-date by visiting *“quite popular”* fashionable brands. She was the only one among the female informants who had admitted following and embracing fashion trends closely and preferred the most popular brands, whereas other female informants resisted following fashion trends and insisted on adding a personal understanding of the fashion elements accordingly. However, for female informants, age appropriate clothes were considered to be one of the important factors in consumption decisions (see Zoë, Lucy, Grace).

2. Traditional Clothes & Family Hierarchy

Lily: *“My mother-in-law is General! I call her General. She means what she says. She doesn’t know what is or isn’t a brand. As long as they are loose clothes, not too colourful, not too tight. She cannot bear to see tight and exposing type of clothes. If I go to her house, the less outstanding, the better. I don’t like her being picky on me.”*

Her mother-in-law having the ‘General’ position in the family remained unchallenged in her family without a dominant male figure (Mu, 2002). In order to please her mother-in-law, she chose to dress to meet an 80 year-old’s aesthetic view: plain baggy clothes, no bright colours, no particular design, no body exposure or tight clothes. This behaviour supports Wheeler et al. (1989) research findings in terms of Chinese’ willingness to give in individual private preferences in exchanging group harmonies.

3. Status Consumption & Family Face

Lily: *“When I go for party or with my husband, I definitely wear name brands’ clothes... he likes me wearing those and people he dealing with are of different social position. People around me are normal working class or white collar, but people he socializing with are at higher social position, like CEO, so I have to wear name brand clothes. If I go out with my friends, I just wear whatever.”*

Lily presented contrasting dressing styles when she was with her husband and her friends. Her consumption choice had to reflect her husband’s taste disposition and match her husband’s social position, because *“he likes me wearing clothes with bright colour and unique styles. He doesn’t like me wearing those clothes sold in local booths.”* Reflecting her husband’s taste and preference, Lily’s luxury consumption choice announced her husband’s success associated with family honour or family face (Braxton, 1999), enhanced their social standing and highlighted the importance of their status group by consuming expensive luxury brands (Li et al. 2013). To the interdependent Chinese, status consumption reflects not only one’s achievement, but also the position of one’s group, usually one’s family, relatives, and kinship clan (Hsu 1981). A husband’s success has to be extended to his family (Belk 2004, Li and Su 2006). This face consciousness also affected Lily’s view of counterfeit products. Other female informants dislike counterfeit products for their bad quality and potential damage to their well-thought images and social position (e.g. Grace, Zoë, Doris), whereas Lily only worried that other people might have thought her husband was not wealthy enough to afford the real one.

Acknowledging the effect of wearing designers’ clothes to others, she recommended her husband to buy a jacket with “Armani” prints all over to *“show off”*. This is completely different from the rest of informants who did not support pecuniary display as it was against their own belief. In a similar vein, she deliberately chose to wear designer clothes when she went shopping in luxury department stores in order to proclaim her husband’s wealth to the salesmen who were familiar with the brands, style, and price tag. This is a status consumption practice which showed her effort in enhancing her social standing and avoiding ill-treatment by the salesmen.

Lily: *“If you go those big fashionable shopping centre like China World Hotel or Jiali Centre, you must wear something nicer like those designers clothes. Dressing this way, they won’t look down upon you.”*

Researcher *“Could you explain a little more?”*

Lily: *“For example, if you go shopping in China World Hotel, at each shop, the assistance will glance at you by the time you walk in to see if you are rich or not. Beijingers are snobbish. If you dressed like very normal, they will leave you alone and let you look around and leave as you wish. If they saw you wearing branded clothes, they would be greeting you kindly. Such is a common phenomenon in Beijing that I always wear branded clothes to go those expensive shops. If you wear the same name brand as the brand sold in the shop, they would certainly know that you had the consumption experience with their brand. Otherwise, they could assume that you cannot afford the brand. This is like when we Beijingers go abroad, we worried all the time that they may hold in contempt on us. In Beijing, even if we are all Beijingers, there are class stratification. The salesman serves you accordingly.”*

Researcher: *“Have you ever experienced that you go to those expensive shops without wearing branded clothes?”*

Lily: *“Never. If I go to those shops, I definitely put my branded clothes on.”*

Wong (1997) suggests that there is a high correlation between materialism and public self-consciousness, but a negative correlation with private self-consciousness. In Lily’s case, her public consumption practice showed a highly public self-consciousness and was inevitably related to face and status consumption (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

4. Plain Clothes & Family Tie

Lily: *“My brother always disapproves of me wearing branded clothes. In his opinion, who can tell what your wearing is a name brand. Wearing normal clothes as others do. When others come into contact with you, they will not be willing to talk to you. I understand my brother’s point, so I wear non-branded clothes when I go home. In winter, when I went to my parent’s home, we*

would choose to wear a normal long coat, which has been approved by them already. If you go to my parents' house, you'd better not to wear watch, rings, ear-rings."

Lily's current privileged lifestyle has a stark contrast with other deprived family members, such as her mother or brother. Her relationship with them suppressed her dressing choice in order to signal her group membership, despite the economic differences. Wearing luxury items may cause resentment and create barriers with the poor who happened to be her mother's side of family. The feeling towards showing wealth was mixed: desired to signal their wealthy status, but also could be worrisome when their luxury consumption could not be accepted and warranted admiration from those in the lower social class.

5. Clothes from Local Booths & "Value for Money"

Lily acknowledged that designers' clothes offer better quality, material, and enhance status, but were "*too expensive*" and required much hassle to look after, such as needing to be dry cleaned. "*Only considering of buying Armani when it was on sale*", she felt much more comfortable buying and wearing fashion clothes bought from a local booth.

Lily: "I won't feel bad if I don't like them anymore, cause I can simply throw them away even if I only wear a couple of times. Those clothes costing 2000RMB (£200) need lots of tender loving care, you worry too much-worry about them getting dirty or whatever. But the clothes bought from local booths, you could throw them away once if you don't like them even if only worn for a couple of times."

Lily's judgment of the clothes from local booths was based on the economic viewpoint: "*value for money*". In her logic, if it was cheap, it would have been less "*extravagant*" when thrown away. Lily's sense of practicality lies in her perception of carefree and easily disposable clothes, so she would not feel guilty for being extravagant by paying too much money for one piece of clothing. This principle was completely different from other interviewees (e.g. Grace, Doris, Lucy, Zoë) who also emphasized the importance of practicality in a sense that clothes should be durable

and styles should last, so they invested more on quality branded products with classic designs hoping to consume them over a longer period of time.

Her fondness for cheap clothes was also different from others. Apart from Saline who did not really care about the brand names and the places clothes being sold, all other female informants agreed that clothes sold in local booths were much less presentable than branded clothes sold in department stores. Lucy despised the clothes sold in local booths and considered them unwearable and having ‘no taste’; Grace and Doris bought those reflecting their own aesthetic views, but only stored them in their wardrobes for personal appreciation; Zoë only wore them as base layers and covered them with branded clothes.

Veblen’s (1899) leisure class use ostentatious consumption and waste as symbols of wealth and social status, as well as a way to maintain their social distinction and prevention of being imitated by lower social class. Lily’s consumption strategy did not fit in this class distinction explanation well. For social distinction, her luxury consumption was either to have shared signals of wealth and success with within-status group members (her husband’s CEO friends), or to make a social distinctive claim to outside social groups (wearing designer clothes when shopping). However, she was a fashion follower and the shortened fashion lifecycle was a consequence of media influences underpinned by habitus, rather than related to social distinction.

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Learn to Play the Fashion Game

Lily: *“I always took over my sister’s clothes. We didn’t have a good living condition when I was young. My father supported the family financially alone, because my mother was a housewife.”*

Lily grew up in a poor family with a low volume of economic capital and cultural capital. She could only have new clothes in the Chinese New Year and usually took over her sister’s clothes once they were too small for her sister. Used to wearing baggy or patched clothes, she had been keeping some of her childhood clothes

including a patched pair of trousers in the wardrobe to remind herself of her past, so she would not forget where she was from. Clothes from her past experience formed an important part of her personal biography (Woodward, 2007) and embodied former aspects of herself (Barnim & Guy, 2001).

Lily's learning experience was a result of a gradual process of education through media. In the interview, Lily knew many top designers' names and skin care products and read all the fashion magazines and regularly watched fashion programmes. Unlike other female interviewees who make justification of suitability in terms of personal dispositions, Lily's consumption choice is heavily influenced by the popularity of brand names and fashion trends. Lily admitted that she had learned a lot from the media, as they paid thousands of RMB annually to watch satellite channels, particularly fashion related programmes.

Lily: "I have little contact with the society; I don't know that many people. So, all I rely on to know the world is television and newspaper... I also read World Fashion. How can you know the world-famous name brands if you don't read those magazines? ... I just learn too much from it!... in the past, I don't know anything about facial creams. But now, my husband said "your daughter has also learnt to wear perfume before going to the kindergarten."

Consequently, she obtained extensive fashion knowledge that helped her to keep up with her husband's social position. Nevertheless, her learning and understanding did not help her to go behind those concrete daily living experiences to an abstract level of understanding like some other interviewees did (e.g. Zoë, Lucy, Saline), because of their well-educated background which laid the foundation for their abstract thinking habits (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). Lily's lower level of education also prevented her from understanding or socialising with those from the West, particularly in terms of dress sense. She had travelled extensively across four continents with her family on holidays. However, she did not discuss anything about the Western dress sense apart from telling me about her frequent overseas trips. For other interviewees (see Doris, Lucy, Clive, Quentin, Wayne), their discussions often provided much understanding of the different dressing habits or aesthetic views between the West and the East through their overseas trips.

Learn Social Role Expectations

Lily's consumption practice reflected a typical Asian view of self as the "*centre of relationships*" (Tu, 1985). Learning to play the game for Lily reflected the weight it carried on the process of configuring her role expectations from others (Chu, 1985). For instance, she broke her husband's forbiddances by secretly buying and wearing a black skirt behind his back, but had to give it away when he found out. In another incident, her mother-in-law shouted '*disgusting*' at her in front of her children about a pair of flowery trousers that were tight across her bottom that her husband bought and asked her to wear. Those incidences, working like individual transactions with other family members (Hsu 1983), made her become increasingly aware of other's expectations of her social roles. As a result, Lily developed submissive language towards her mother-in-law including "*I won't try to make her unhappy*", "*I don't want her to pick on me*", "*I tried not let her criticize me*" to show her seeking superficial harmony and that she was prepared to give in terms of individual standing. Lily used the phrase "*I have to apply ...*" frequently referring to how she surrendered to her husband's dominant position in all matters.

The Generative Scheme

Lily's account showed that dress sense should be aligned with one's social circle and environment, therefore, her practice displayed a strong sense of social conformity, as opposed to individuality.

The Good-Woman

Lam et al. (2011) suggest that Chinese consumers, having an interdependent construal of self, tend to be more likely to integrate a larger socio-cultural context in depicting brand signs and symbols than maintaining individualistic pleasures, as they developed a series of assumed emotions (e.g. social expectations and norms placed on them) aligned with their social roles. Lily's learning experience led to her placing a great emphasis on social integration and conformation with family and society. Looking at herself with a moral gaze (Cooley, 1902), Lily expressed fear of being judged negatively or criticized by others, hence, how she was perceived by others is her central concern. The idea of "*being a good woman*" has given rise to Lily's

consumption practice and influenced her performance of each social role as a wife, a daughter-in-law, or a sister or a daughter (Fischer & Tangney 1995, Li et al. 2004, Hu 1944, Hwang 1987, Schoenhals 1993, Zhai 1995). She suppressed her individual tastes to perform this womanly virtue and expressed total submission to other family members (Honig & Hershatter 1988, Xinran 2003).

By emphasising a 'natural' look, other female informants (e.g. Grace, Doris, Lucy) expressed their age concerns and addressed the final look that was neither overly done, nor attracting negative attention by being too sexy (see Doris' feminine and sexy differences). Lily's plain look was associated with a good-woman image, understated conventional clothing with simple colour and style (no flowery patterns, no make-up, and no accessories). This was particularly important when her husband was not home. Otherwise, any attention drawn to her look would bring a sense of shame to her husband, her children and even her extended family members (Wu & Lai 1992, Mascolo et al. 2003). Therefore, the plain look was appropriate for Lily's daily appearance management and essential statement of her loyalty to her husband (Laidler, 2003).

Lily, "Actually, if I dress up beautifully everyday, people will gossip about me, something like "look your wife is doing so and so, since you left home". A friend of mine has a similar situation as me, but she is just the opposite to me. I mean she is very normal when she is with her husband. Once her husband left, she is always dressed gorgeously. In other friends' eyes, she is not a good woman."

According to Bourdieu (1984), habitus is the set of subjective dispositions that explain how individuals usually know how they are expected to behave, think and even feel in the various social contexts of everyday life. Along with her husband's career success, Lily obviously had experienced some extensive upwards social trajectory. They gradually learnt to consume luxury brands like their wealthy friends. However, her brother and mother still held their original aesthetic views and had negative reactions, even shared resentment towards this luxury consumption. The conflicts raised were not aesthetic differences, but social differences marked by material resources in modern China (Qin 2013). Being a good woman, Lily's plain look served to conceal

any social distances through clothing. As she shared her brother's living conditions in the past, she emphasised her understanding of his point in terms of luxury consumption associated with social status signals which may have led to provoking social differences and damaging family kinships. Her fashion choices reflect the strong family ties and kinship relationships which are important sources of diffuse cultural influence (e.g. taste and consumption practice) on an individual Chinese person (Hofstede & Bond 1988, Hsu 1968). Lopez (1996) notes that a Chinese individual seldom has extreme opinions or reveals their true feelings, tends to seek consensus, and stick to group norms. In Lily's case, her individuality and true tastes had been suppressed by her female gender inequality in the family hierarchy, as Bond (1992) pointed out the social orientation of Chinese people who are willing to sacrifice their own benefits or interests if necessary for the benefit of the group.

Her moral gaze (Hu 1944, Hwang 1987) of 'being a good woman' intertwined with a sense of shame (Li et al., 2004) which was seen through the looking-glass-self (Cooley, 1902) and regulated her public conduct and purchasing decisions, such as her age concerns associated with motherhood in relation to her choice of fashion styles; and her courage to correct her wrongdoing (Wu & Lai, 1992) in an effort to maintain family ties by choosing to dress down (Mascolo et al., 2003). The significant difference between Lily's habitus and other interviewees' lay in the fact that other female informants (e.g. Lucy, Saline, Grace) placed more emphasis on their efforts in maintaining a place for inner self satisfaction, but Lily placed more stress on family harmony and the satisfaction of others.

Taste of Necessity

Bourdieu (1984) suggests that consumption practice is mediated by the dispositions of habitus or externalised fundamental dispositions that are internalized primarily through early socialization, rather something that can be explained by a simple income difference (Swartz, 1997). Lily's wide range of clothing choice suggested her upward social mobility from a poor economic situation to a lavish lifestyle and the social ties she developed along the social trajectory route. Her luxury consumption practice (designer clothes matched with luxury accessories) was the result of her husband's increased wealth. Her simple, basic, and minimalistic requirements for

clothing, in sharp contrast to her luxury lifestyle, indicate a sense of familiarity with her childhood economic conditions and therefore signal the *'taste of necessity'*. Her luxury consumption practice was contrary to the condition in which she was brought up and her standard of living in the past. Despite being well-off financially, she continued to show a tendency for *'taste of necessity'* such as considering luxury consumption to be *'extravagant'* and being in favour of local booth clothes as they offered more value for money (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998). In this logic, her avoidance of having *'extravagant'* consumption practices was also a struggle between her *'thrifty'* lifestyle in childhood and her current lifestyle (Hofstede, 1980b, Wu 2011, Finnane 2007).

Field

Doxa: "It will be perfect if without having so much concerns"

Lily: *"It will be perfect if without having so much concerns. It will be very simple to choose what to wear every day."*

Researcher: *"So how do you feel when it comes to what to wear every day?"*

Lily: *"(no hesitation) A headache."*

Lily's doxic assumption revealed the overly regulated game rules in the field. She thought that she *"live(s) a little happier than other people..."* because she had less burdens in terms of economic worries due to her husband's social achievement. Unfortunately, this economic wealth cannot grant her happiness or cultural legitimation of her personal choices. She took for granted her social roles and did not challenge her dominated position in the family, due to the assumed social hierarchy she had grown up with which was associated more with obligations and duties to her family, rather than rights (Hofstede 1980b, Lau & Kuan 1988). Her individual taste was surrendered to the importance of being accepted and approved by family members (Kashima et al., 1995). Bourdieu's view is of the disinterestedness or aesthetic disposition as crucial for the dominant social group to express their domination (e.g. Bryson 1996, Erickson 1996). Lily's interests in affirming others' aesthetic dispositions were to signal her dominated social roles and obedience to others from a higher position (Bond, 1992).

Driven by social affiliation, the coexisting contradictory social forces rule the field. On the one hand, by aiming to live up to the expectations of others (Wong and Ahuva 1998), the dressing requirement is all about luxury consumption that signals their membership with their equally wealthy CEO friends. Although they did meet the social expectations of others because it was perceived as common to consume better brands when social position was raised (see Grace, Doris, Lucy), this consumption practice did not grant legitimacy from her family members who were still struggling with basic means. The discussion of envy because of an individual standing-out among others (see Zoë, Saline) had been magnified in her discussion of her brother. Due to the habitus of fear of being resented, alienated, or perhaps even disowned by her mother's side of the family, any signalling of her husband's success had to be concealed as if it was not legitimate for them to announce their success and claim their status. This perspective cannot fit in any existing model of social class differentiation (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899/1994, Bourdieu 1984). Rather unique to Chinese culture, interdependent self-construct and social affiliation come to interplay with envy and admiration of the sudden wealth of the Chinese middle class. This prevented the SRG from emphasising that they were socially discrete and distinguished from the mass.

Illusio: "I would rather work"

Lily: "I would rather work. I'm not willing to stay at home. You know what? He doesn't let me work because he doesn't want to see I achieve more than him in work...He believes I should stay and keep the home. I take care of the home and he earns the money to support the family. He doesn't allow me to work. I've applied for it many times. The last time I wanted to open a travel agency, but he refused my request."

Lily was the only one of the informants who did not work. She admitted that, "*I have been living like a bird kept in the cage*". During the interview, she constantly used the phrase '*I am not allowed*' to stress how much restrictions she had to face. The phrases '*it's depressing*' and "*it bothers me a lot*" were also used frequently to express her bothersome feelings even when talking about the game. This reflects the social pressure on the individual due to the group oriented cultural background (Kashima et

al., 1995). In particular, the gender inequality experienced as a female in family settings led to a “*restricted and oppressed*” life (Hall, 1997). The family ties and intention to remain in the pack with other family members were so strong that they had prevented her from establishing individual taste.

Lily’s consumption practices exhibited an extreme case of dressing for others associated with the prohibited impossible self. Her struggle lay in the binary lifestyle that coexisted in her current inescapable life which included: tensions between her poor background and upbringing vs. her rich current lifestyle; her habitus of ‘taste of necessity’ vs her luxury consumption requirements; the natural reaction to express her own aesthetics vs. her relatives’ ultimate control; her modern taste vs. her mother-in-law’s old fashioned taste. Her struggle lay in the strong ties and harmonic relationships she tried to maintain and integrate in the name of family. Lily assumed that her dominated position derived from her being a housewife which gave her husband his symbolic power and ruled the family by taking away her opportunities for working and making her rely on him. Acknowledging that economic capital was the key in this domination structure, she longed for work which may lead to a more independent life.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A6 Summary of Individual Case: Lily

Concepts	Themes	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	When I go for party or with my husband, I definitely wear name brands' clothes... he likes me wearing those and people he dealing with are of different social position. People around me are normal working class or white collar, but people he socializing with are at higher social position, like CEO, so I have to wear name brand clothes. If I go out with my friends, I just wear whatever... If I go to her house, the less outstanding, the better. I don't like her being picky on me... when I went to my parent's home, we would choose to wear a normal long coat, which has been approved by them already. If you go to my parents' house, you'd better not to wear watch, rings, and ear-rings.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	I have little contact with the society; I don't know that many people. So, all I rely on to know the world is television and newspaper... I also read World Fashion. How can you know the world-famous name brands if you don't read those magazines? ... I just learn too much from it!
	The generative grammar: the good woman	If I dress up beautifully every day, people will gossip about me, something like "look your wife is doing so and so, since you left home". A friend of mine has a similar situation as me, but she is just the opposite as me... In other friends' eyes, she is not a good woman.
	Taste of necessity	I won't feel bad if I don't like them anymore, because I can simply throw them away even if I only wear a couple of times. Those clothes costing 2000RMB (£200) need lots of tender loving care, you worry too much-worry about them getting dirty or whatever.
Field: Doxa	It will be perfect if without having so much concerns.	It will be perfect if without having so much concerns. It will be very simple to choose what to wear every day.
Illusio	I would rather work	I would rather work. I'm not willing to stay at home. You know what? He (husband) doesn't let me to work because he doesn't want to see I achieve more than him in work.

Clive – The Down-to -Earth Type

Interview Impression

I ran a focus group in one of FESCO's (Foreign Enterprise Human Resource Service Co-operation) meeting rooms. Clive, FESCO's finance manager back then, was one of the interviewees. He was a tall and well-built man and his figure looked more like a Westerner than a Chinese person. Coming straight from work, he was wearing a silver grey suit which fitted him perfectly with a light blue tie, sharp white shirt and black shoes. He took off his tie after sitting down. His looks were neat and spotless and the suit looked very smart on him indeed. Later, he mentioned adopting an American dress code particularly for professional wear. He was talkative and made some very interesting points during the group discussion, so I approached him and asked him for an individual interview. However, we never managed to meet again, because he was very busy at that time for he was quitting his job at FESCO to run his own company in Shandong province Northern China. I later telephone interviewed him. The fashion discourse that follows contains information from both resources.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Clive: "...It is not because of the brands that I chose them, but rather I find both the watch and the bag are simple and exquisite. The watch won't attract any attention from others when it is on a person, but when you take notice of it, you'll find it is exquisite. I like simple things, but not crude ones."

Neither a follower of fashion trends, nor overly concerned about the effects of brands on others, Clive appreciated simple and subtle exquisite styles which did not attract others' attention instantly, but required "a closer look" to appreciate. He believed that accessories like his tie, bag, shoes, and even a pen represented the owner's taste and emphasised a coherent look by 'paying attention to details'.

Clive had a great loyalty to a limited selection of genuine brands and shopped only for brands such as PUMA, Reebok, and Levis for leisure clothes and Pierre Cardin (P.C.)

for formal clothes. Rejecting national brands for their ill-fitting and ugly designs (see Grace, Doris, Lily, Zoë, Quentin), Clive's choice of consumption brands were all foreign brands which he believed "*being better*" and offered "*perfect fitness*". Another reason for him being loyal to certain brands was because it was time saving method. His logic was that those brands he had spent some time on searching for had proved to be suitable for his taste and fit his figure. It would be wasting time if he had to shop around each time. Instead, he would go straight to those brand outlets to buy for his needs. This approach was different from all female informants who tended to take shopping trips as leisure activities, whereas Clive saw shopping as a chore and preferred to complete the task as soon as possible.

Clive felt clothes with labels, particularly suits, to "*represent wealth as most suits are very expensive. Ordinary people can't afford designer label suit.*" However, Clive disdained people consuming products to show how expensive the clothes are. There were two possibilities discussed and rejected by Clive, the counterfeit consumption practice and the practice that involved consuming genuine brands beyond one's income level.

Clive: "*I never buy the fake, because I don't think I get dressed to let others see, but for myself, for my own satisfaction. The fake brand may only cost you one third or a quarter of the original price with bad quality, can you cheat yourself that it is a real brand. The feeling won't be nice unless for the purpose of showing to others. For me, I don't want to show off. Nobody will pay attention to it or they may wear a better brand than you.*"

He rejected consuming counterfeits from a moral stance by describing it as 'cheating' which was opposed to his own values. The authenticity of genuine brands he liked provided exquisite style which could not simply be replaced by brand names alone, as he believed. An example that could prove that he did not consume brand names was his choice of Pierre Cardin. Manufactured in China, Pierre Cardin, the most famous foreign brand in the 80's and 90's, had its brand name jeopardised after many fake garments were consumed by the mass market in the late 90's. When many people tried to avoid wearing this brand due to its undifferentiated status with the masses, the perfect tailoring became the main drive for Clive to consume this brand. The differentiation between him and others lay in the presentation, "*people simply know it*

is a fake” when consumed by a labourer, whereas he quite often received compliments from others, who took his clothes to be from other designers, “*your suit looks great, much better than Pierre Cardin.*” Hence, his individuality was presented through his pickiness to the overall look through perfect fitting and the subtleness of accessories associated with taste, rather than public display associated with famous brand names and high price tags. It was vain to consume counterfeit products only for showing off the brand’s name and it was equally vain to consume genuine luxury brands that were beyond one’s income level.

Clive: “*But I know some, like my business partner, my good friend, he knows a lot about designer labels. I remember once, an obvious example, he somehow went to Hong Kong, and came back with a pair of leather shoes. He asked me to take a guess at the price. I gave the shoes a look and said, ‘one or two thousand?’ He said, ‘Guessed wrong. Look at the brand.’ I’ve forgotten that the brand of the shoes was terribly expensive. It cost eight to nine thousand RMB (£800-£900). It showed that he wanted people to know the shoes were fabulously expensive. If you knew this particular designer label, you looked at that pair of shoes you would have guessed it was expensive. This was the message he wanted to indicate. I knew about it.*”

Indicating that his friend was not that wealthy, but purchased a great deal of prestige brands to establish symbolic value associated with status. It is a consumption practice driven by face value in an effort to enhance individual social standing (Li et al. 2013), the luxury fashion products were used as distinctive status claims and the consumption was intended to show off (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Clive understood what image the top fashion brands could create for a person and the manipulative aspect of luxury brands (Veblen 1899, O’Cass & Choy 2008, Gao et al. 2009, Hartley & Montgomery 2009). Many people pursued the display of wealth because they intended to compete with capability to gain economic capital and consume luxury brands to claim their status and success. Clive, however, rejected the use of economic capital as a superior form of capital in the fashion field.

Clive distinguished himself from his friend’s superficiality and highlighted that his consumption intention was associated with individual suitability and aesthetic appreciation. The suitability was not only in terms of clothing style matching one’s

disposition, but also reflecting one's income level. This viewpoint was a simple form of Lucy's discussion of the glass ball effect. Clive addressed products' quality, style, design, and authenticity, but not a designers' label associated with prestige. Those brands of his choice represented his own stand, personal quality, and values.

Professionability

Clive's disapproval of status consumption continued in the working environment. He disagreed that any business power and dominant position could be gained and demonstrated through the display and consumption of luxury brands. He believed that professional wear should "*represent nothing about oneself, but his/her working role*". Clive provided two contrasting outfits (formal and casual wear) to meet two different types of jobs. When Clive was working for FESCO, his professional wear was very formal with suits, white shirts and a tie. However, the formal wear did not represent his manager's status, but his working environment's requirement. By emphasising this point, he showed a standardised consumption practice and treated his professional suits and shirts like uniforms "*like blue-collar workers' overalls. Yes, just like that, those were boiler suits. You have to wear those, not else.*"

After Clive left his managing position in FESCO, he had begun a new business venture with his business partner to cultivate sea slugs (a delicacy which is much appreciated by many Chinese) in Shandong province Northern China. Shandong is a second tier city in China, which means that the majority of people would have less disposable income and less experience dealing with material culture (McEwen et al. 2006, Cui & Liu 2000). The nature of geographic difference in economic development between Shandong and Beijing could have made their clothing choices stand out in every way (see Zoë's habitus). As an entrepreneur, Clive acknowledged that working closely with his staff members was critical for his business success and he wanted to create a harmonic working environment. Clive used casual clothes to convey the meaning of dedication to his work and shorten the '*distance*' with his new subordinates. This working ethos was shared by other informants (e.g Grace, Doris, Zoë) in terms of the importance of social affiliation in working environments.

Clive: "*They know you are the boss from day one. If it's like, you are dressed up in neat suit, avoiding dust, or careful not to let mud dirty your shoes; they*

would feel ill at ease even talking to you. Obviously it is not a good thing if you are starting your own business. Your employees are keeping a distance away from you, right?"

In contrast to his emphasis on social affiliation, his business partner chose to wear “fancy clothes” like suits, which created “strange feelings” and “distance” from the subordinates, and were “not suitable for the environment”. He questioned the necessity to show his superior dominant position of which others already know.

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Clive: “When I was living in the United States, I found, when on formal occasions...They pay attention to every detail indeed. But Americans try their best to show their individuality at free time. However, things are different at home. People in China don't dress accordingly. For example, we go to a formal meeting. One of my colleagues is wearing a suit, but with different color and pattern. You just cannot wear a darker color trousers and lighter color suit. I also remind him that he cannot wear checked shirt. In an American shop, I was told ...blue always match. You will get used to people around you dressing this way. Once people around you don't wear the way you're used to, you will feel strange.”

Not particularly mentioning about his family background, Clive mentioned his experience in studying for an MBA in America in the early 90's when not many people had opportunities to do so at that time. Research has suggested that the increasing social phenomenon of Chinese pursuing overseas education indicates the middle class's intention in developing a way to raise cultural capital and to legitimise social status (Stafford 2004, Huang 2002).

Clive's taste and his judgement and justification of taste were based on Western aesthetics during his overseas education in the U.S. and later work along with foreign businessmen from the West. His aesthetic dispositions were cultivated in the West and

he also learnt the importance of ‘paying attention to details’, the exquisite way of conveying individual taste, but not to rely on brand names. Clive’s Western aesthetic view meant that he found it difficult to comprehend Japanese dressing habits, such as wearing a tie and cardigan together or with a waistcoat.

Intending to learn from others, Clive paid particular attention to some high profile achievers - the most successful entrepreneurs in modern China (Portes, 1998). Learning is considered to be one of the important Chinese cultural beliefs that structures and directs individual behaviour in social life (Li, 2004). Research (Li & Wong, 2004) shows that Chinese children at early stages of development already express their respect to high-achieving peers and desire to emulate them. However, instead of simply copying the dressing style of others, he also paid attention to aesthetic appreciation, conduct, and manners. Thus he extended a simple style emulation (Veblen (1899/1994), to an emphasis embodied cultural accumulation (Bourdieu, 1984).

Clive: “If you admire your boss’ style, as his style is exactly what you want to be, then, you’ll copy them unconsciously and you will go to choose similar styles of clothes as his. These things really influence one much ... his (an IT CEO) style looks really smart. And you want to learn from him unconsciously, even his conduct and his way of talking.”

Based on his experience in learning from the West and Chinese social elites’ consumption practices, he did not understand the linkage between social status and prestige consumption as many other Chinese perceived and intended to display. His western influence had supported his justification of cultural legitimacy in developing an individual centred taste which should not be easily swayed by the popularity or fame of certain brands (Stafford 2004, Huang 2002).

Clive: “based on my perception, the higher position people have in the company, the less well-known mobile phone they use”; “the president of the company owns the first private limited company in China. He is a very practical person. He doesn’t bother about the brands of the clothes.. deep down, he is not that kind of person who loves to show off. If you saw him on

the street, you wouldn't know he is the president of the first private limit company in China..."

The Generative Scheme: Down-to-Earth

Clive had had a heavy influence from the West and therefore placed great emphasis on the concrete functional values of brand consumption (Richins, 1994), as opposed to the symbolic values and public meanings that have been overly emphasised by many other Chinese (Wong and Ahuvia 1998).

Clive: "Honestly, I'm not overly concerned about the brand. I belong to the middle-low class in the aspect of clothes consumption, compared to ordinary men. I know some of my friends who buy brands only, but the best jeans I have are Levis. I'm not afraid of being joked about; I'm telling you the truth; I only buy suits from Pierre Cardin, not elsewhere...The highest price I paid is about two thousand, but I have everyone's compliment. Everyone else think it looks good and you won't feel the size is wrong or feel uncomfortable about the brand wherever you are, while actually most people cannot see the label."

Clive's learning process involved being an Asian learning from the Westerners, being a subordinate learning from the social elites, being a start-up entrepreneur learning from already successful entrepreneurs. This process required a concrete realisation in terms of how to define himself as an individual. His very down-to-earth nature helped him to develop individual understanding and improvement, yet maintain a sense of who he was.

With the understanding of the situation in which others acted/reacted on pricey items and wrongly associated them with social prestige, Clive's learning experience from the West supported him to go against the grain to choose something different, but that reflected his own taste, income level, individual dispositions, and values. Clive's down-to-earth attitudes give rise to his consumption practice by sticking to his own choice without being swayed by others' opinions toward particular brands and he disregarded other's rejections of his claims on various occasions; *"it is not because of the brands I chose them"*, *"I don't think I get dressed to let others see"*; *"I'm not afraid of being joked about"*.

Field

Doxa: “It is not sensible to compare”

Clive: “*I used to work in a company and had a fairly high salary, but after various experiencing with people, you actually calm down, because it is not sensible to compare your salary with your boss’s income. It is a far cry from their income. This is the first reason. Secondly, when you got to know many rich people, it is not like what you used to think it would be, to be a wealthy man, which deeply affects you....*”

In Confucian terms, the ‘*ordering relationship by status and observing the order*’ implies that everyone in a society is aware of his/her social position through social comparison and behaves accordingly based on their observed social hierarchy (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Clive fundamentally accepted the established social order and his position in the social space. He acknowledged that he could not compete or challenge anyone situated above him, as such his income is reflected in his consumption level. This doxic assumption organised his consumption practice for being practical, to consume only the level of products suited to his social position, environment, and income level. This assumption is also aligned with his habitus in learning to play the game where he paid particular attention to people from high social position and the generative grammar of down-to-earth attitudes operate in this unchallenged field assumption of himself as a member of the middle class.

Luxury consumption has been associated with status claims by many (O’Cass & Choy 2008, Gao et al. 2009, Hartley & Montgomery 2009) and many Chinese lacked experience in luxury consumption (Eckhardt & Houston, 1998). Clive saw pecuniary display as a result of social comparison, but that the consequences of competing may result in a number of humiliating situations for individuals: “*others might have owned better brands*”; if worn inappropriately (in terms of individual disposition and income level and environment), people might have taken it as “*counterfeit*” or “*it would be borrowed if you are in America*”. His individual justification of taste revolved around all the false perceptions of how to display wealth in relation to status consumption and

disputed the illegitimacy of showing-off consumption practice and its intention of claiming one's privileged social status through luxury brands.

Illusio: 'I don't have that eagerness'

Clive: *"I think, honestly, up to now, I think although everyone is pursuing wealth, for me, I'm not, not at all. I think I have been pursuing my 'spare-time-activities', doing various stuff out of the office. But, in my opinion, everyone has his way of spending money, not necessarily to show off your wealth. At least I don't have that eagerness..."*

Clive's foreign education (mainly Western education) provided him with the most important means of social mobility and social position when coming back to China, as well as supporting his point of a dominating cultural capital (taste) and legitimizing his judgment of taste and justification of taste (Stafford 2004, Huang 2002).

Central to Clive's taste and consumption practices was his pursuing exquisite quality clothes and subtle individual presentation through quality products, rather than consuming the reputation of brands. Clive's consumption practices suggested that he placed no importance on displaying wealth and status and consumption for him was not a status game. His encouragement to remain truthful to himself and others by choosing to wear the obsolete brand of Pierre Cardin and honestly admitting his consumption choice showed his down-to-earth attitudes. His consumption intention was different from those *"pursuing the wealth"*.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A7 Summary of Individual Case: Clive

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	It is not because of the brands that I chose them, but rather I find both the watch and the bag are simple and exquisite. The watch won't attract any attention from others when it is on a person, but when you take notice of it, you'll find it is exquisite.
	Professionability	They know you are the boss from day one. If it's like, you are dressed up in neat suit, avoiding dust, or careful not to let mud dirty your shoes; they would feel ill at ease even talking to you. Obviously, it is not a good thing if you are starting your own business. Your employees are keeping a distance away from you, right?
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	When I was living in the United States, I found, when on formal occasions...They pay attention to every detail indeed. But Americans try their best to show their individuality at free time...You will get used to people around you dressing this way. Once people around you don't wear the way you're used to, you will feel strange.
	The generative grammar	Honestly, I'm not overly concerned about the brand. I belong to the middle-low class in the aspect of clothes consumption, compared to ordinary men. I know some of my friends who buy brands only, but the best jeans I have are Levis. I'm not afraid of being joked about; I'm telling you the truth; I only buy suits from Pierre Cardin, not elsewhere...
Field: Doxa	It is not sensible to compare	I used to work in a company and had a fairly high salary, but after various experiencing with people, you actually calm down, because it is not sensible to compare your salary with your boss's income. It is a far cry from their income. This is the first reason. Secondly, when you got to know many rich people, it is not like what you used to think it would be, to be a wealthy man, which deeply affects you.
Illusio	I don't have that eagerness	I think, honestly, up to now, I think although everyone is pursuing wealth, for me, I'm not, not at all. I think I have been pursuing my 'spare-time-activities', doing various stuff out of the office. But, in my opinion, everyone has his way of spending money, not necessarily to show off your wealth. At least I don't have that eagerness.

Wayne – The Armani Bargain Hunter

Interview Background

Wayne was introduced by a friend of mine as a social elite because of his high achievements. I was told that Wayne was from a poor family in southern China and later he obtained his Master's degree in architecture from Tsinghua University in Beijing (Tsinghua University is one of the top universities in China). According to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2011–2012, Tsinghua ranked 71 worldwide among universities (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsinghua_University). Once he graduated, he was recruited by a firm of architects in Hong Kong and was later elected as one of the top ten Hong Kong elites. He returned to Beijing to run his own firm of architects some years later.

We made an interview appointment on the phone, then I went to his company to interview him. His company was located in Tsinghua University in the West of Beijing. We met in the lobby of a business building. He was very tall and slim. With tanned face, big eyes and a firmly closed mouth, he was handsome by Chinese standards. He wore a purple Armani suit jacket without fastening the buttons and a pair of black trousers with black formal leather shoes which were nicely polished. He wore no tie and left the white shirt slightly open - a casual smart style. His office was partitioned into many cubicles on the side with a big open space in the middle. His colleagues were discussing their blueprints when we walked in. We went straight in to his working area decorated with antique style furniture. A Chinese style beautifully crafted dark wood table and a matching arm chair and a couple of book shelves piled with books and displaying some building models occupied most of the space. He sat comfortably in his chair and started the interview. I looked forward to this interview, because of his social elite background. However, I realised later that it was very hard to pin point what exactly his taste was, as he never really elaborated on it as Quentin did. Although both of them majored in architecture and shared the view that there were some similarities between architecture design and fashion design, because both of their final results require being pleasant to look at and functional to use, Quentin showed much greater skill in elaborating and describing his taste than Wayne did.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Wayne: *“Personally, I don’t think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani. But for some people, none of their clothes is name brand and they bought from clothing booths, but they look perfect with those clothes. Maybe these people have better taste...I rarely buy goods at the original price, usually buy at a discount.”*

Wayne’s fashion consumption choice was driven by top designers’ fame, best quality and unique designs. Wayne believed that fashionability for a man was not as important as for women’s clothes. Trying to avoid local brands because of their poor quality making with no design features, Wayne preferred Western brands sold in Hong Kong. He was not loyal to any brands, as *“they were not your wife, you don’t have to remain loyal”*. Admitting his relative lack of dress sense, he chose to consume *“the best one in the market”* – Armani – which in a recent consumer study showed that this prestige designer label was the most well-known and the first choice among the wealthiest in China. This also supports studies on Chinese consumers’ positive perceptions of branded goods imported from the West (Frumkin et al. 2006, Ahmed and d’Astous 2004). His first incentive to buy Armani was because *“the stores are beautifully designed and quite different from others”*.

Wayne admired those who could dress nicely without spending too much money. Since designer labels always cost more, Wayne chose to go shopping in H.K. in the discounted season and would normally buy Armani on sale. The contrast between Armani’s prestige name and the discounted or after season sale of Armani made Armani a lot better value for money to him, so *“why not”*. His bargain hunting practice was just the opposite of Lucy’s who made sure the items she bought were non-sale items to achieve a certain level of exclusivity.

Both Wayne and Lily adored Armani, but for different reasons. Wayne admired those who had the ability to dress beautifully with non-branded low-priced clothes and considered them as having better taste than himself. Unlike Lily’s pecuniary display, Wayne’s choice of Armani was selected to facilitate his lack of taste in a very competitive aesthetically driven world to show his aesthetic disposition and

appreciation. On the other hand, Wayne's Armani choice was also different from Clive's in as much as Clive chose Pierre Cardin for its perfect fitness to his taste and figure, but completely ignored the brand's reputation to the public, whereas Wayne's Armani choice was based on the combination of quality, design features and brand reputation. Their considerations in fashion brands were aligned with consumer studies which indicated that quality and style were identified as the most important product attributes and comfort and workmanship were a connotation of quality (Chen et al., 2004) and symbolic brand consumption was inevitably developed alongside a series of assumed emotions to reflect other people's social expectations and norms placed on him or his social roles (Lam et al., 2011).

Professionability

Wayne: *"I often hear people complaining about the dressing of some designers. They wonder how such architect could have a good design for a building... There was an architect called Fei Yuming and His family was extremely rich. His father is the president of Industrial Bank. He only wears those extremely expensive clothes. When he has meeting with clients, quite often his clothes were even better than his clients. So he can give his clients a feeling that he is not a man who can be easily ordered about, but has a high status and dignity... basically, we should be equal (with clients). That is, we design a building for a client, but not necessarily mean that we have to beg for somebody. What I mean is that we certainly make profit from our design, but we try to make our clients happy. We don't beg for 200,000 to 30,000 RMB on each project."*

Wayne's idea of perfect dress sense and the disassociation between being tastefully dressed and wealth were initiated from the professional field. Wayne's perfect dress sense, as a way to demonstrate his ability to appreciate artistic objects, highlighted his aesthetic view on both building design and clothing choice. Wayne saw the business world as highly ranked and was very consciously aware of his social status and rank in the business field (Hofstede, 1980a). As an architect, any projects he took on required not only funding to attract an investment party, but also power negotiation between architect and property developer. It was at that moment that clothing could convey and indicate aesthetics view and power.

Creating an image of a professional architect who “*is not a man who can be easily ordered about, but has a high status and dignity*”, Wayne adopted the professional expensive look that not only won his customers through aesthetic appreciation, but also empowered him to gain dignity and power. In defence of his less powerful position in the business hierarchy, he aimed to rely on Armani’s prestige status to negotiate a more balanced business relationship. This manipulative function of wearing designer labels was the very point that Clive was against.

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Wayne: “*When I was a child, my family is poor... The trousers I wore when I was young was like bamboo joint. I grew taller year by year and the trouser legs increased with my height.....as I knew nothing about fashion wear before university, I mean, before going to Hong Kong, nor were there opportunity, due to the financial circumstances; and no one cared about it at university. Your life style has changed, as well as your income and the nature of your work, which, therefore, causes the change of your requirement for clothes and stuff...*”

Wayne was originally from a poor family in the countryside and grew up without sufficient economic means to care about dress sense, but dressed only to meet the functional needs to cover the body (Sproles 1979, Kaiser 1997). “*The trousers I wore when I was young was like bamboo joint. I grew taller year by year and the trouser legs increased with my height*”. People in Wayne’s home town were equally poor and they were too poor to care about how they and others looked. When a factory shut down and sold all the stage costumes to the locals, he found it amusing that “*the New Fourth Army (the Chinese army in the civil war) and the Kuomintang army (KMT) (the enemy of the Communist Party) walking together*”. For Mao’s generations who were sensitive to political parties and had strong hatred of KMT, their material constraints made them unable to identify themselves to the extent that they did not have means to choose what they put on: comrade or enemy did not matter in this case. Later he followed the military uniform fashion trend at college and began to wear a leather jacket mainly “*for the sake of convenience...you don’t have to wash it very*

often...At that time, we didn't care much about clothes...you were expecting to study when you grew up a bit. I was good at study in Hunan." These requirements for function and convenience of clothes including being simple to buy and wear were carried on in Wayne's choice of Armani.

Wayne's consideration of the cost of the product and his pursuit of value for money were a reflection of his economic constraints in childhood (Wu, 2011). Wayne's bargain hunting habits showed his sense of thrift and sensitivity to financial resources (Bourdieu, 1984). Even when Wayne improved his financial conditions dramatically, these habits would be unlikely to change, as one's sense of living is created and reproduced unconsciously from childhood (Bourdieu, 1984).

Wayne's economic constraints and limited consumption experience had a significant impact on his current shopping habits (Tai 2005, Kim et al. 2002), value and lifestyle (Gao et al. 2009, Tam & Tai 2008), fashion perception regarding fashionability (Law et al., 2004) and economic practicality (Liu & Wang, 2004). His understanding of dress sense came to realisation and was improved dramatically through his career advancement which began in Hong Kong, the Asian fashion hub and being mostly associated with the significant influence of Western culture (Tam et al., 2005), from where Wayne learned the importance of symbolic fashion consumption, with a view that clothes provided a visual clue for his professional aesthetic appreciation and disposition.

The Generative Scheme: "Clothes can reflect one's cultivation"

Wayne's learning experience that had taken place in H.K. where he developed an understanding of some significant effects of wearing designer labels on others and that because those choices could assist in improving the view of an individual's aesthetic disposition, to some extent it could immensely improve one's appearance presentation.

Wayne: *"Clothes can more or less reflect one's cultivation. But we can't judge one's taste from how much money he earns. It's how he spends his money that we see his taste, not how he earns the money. I once accompanied a person from Gui Yang to buy clothes. He is extremely rich. When he saw me*

he said he wanted to buy the same clothes as the one I was wearing. But I persuaded him to buy Laowen. Because I think that Laowen was fatter and shorter, therefore suitable to him. He bought the most expensive range in Armani, but he still looked strange when he is in Armani...he had never been well educated. So, that is the difference.”

Wayne did not believe that there was a direct link between wealth and taste. A rich man might have the worst dress sense even if he could afford the best brand in the market. Instead, Wayne held strong beliefs that taste was not something that money could buy and dress sense needed cultivation to learn consciously. It was rather shallow to just follow the popular brands without considering the suitability of one's own disposition and figure.

Wayne used Armani, a top international designer label, to transform himself from a young man from the countryside to a well-dressed architect. However, the magic power Armani held for him would not work for another man, because the difference between him and the rich man lay in education and aesthetic dispositions. Wayne was well-educated and cultured in Beijing and H.K., whereas the rich man coming from a little town only had money with almost no understanding of brands, and had no clue of what designs, tailoring, and figures were (Hessler, 2001). It was bound to lead to presentation failure if one chose to wear clothes based only on brand reputations.

Education had played an important part in Wayne's life inasmuch as it allowed him to progress steadily in academic achievement and later in his career. Bourdieu's institutionalized state in cultural capital describes the possession of knowledge and qualifications that an individual uses to gain entry or secure a position in a particular social circle (Bourdieu, 1984). For the Chinese, university credentials or qualifications have always been important for an individual to claim their achievements and define their social status (Lu, 1922). It is not unusual for a Chinese person without any family background to climb the social ladder successfully, as long as s/he has outstanding performance in national exams. From ancient China to modern China, people have been considering cultural capital, particularly the institutionalised state, to be a social ladder rather than a barrier to achieve higher social position (Laidler

2003, Bond 1992). This has created many opportunities and success stories, especially for those who are initially from poor family backgrounds who have advanced their social positions through education.

Wayne's childhood lack of economic capital and the consequent lack of cultivation of taste showed in his way of discussing fashion, and his lack of language for aesthetic expression. Throughout the fashion discourse, he repeatedly referred to the word design, but there was a lack of detailed description of his clothing styles or the materials used. Other informants talked about colours, patterns, accessories, but all of those associated with design could not be found in Wayne's account. There was a significant contrast from Quentin who went into great detail when discussing what tasteful style was and what it meant to him. Wayne's interpretation of 'a good taste' in cultured self and disapproval of its linkage to one's wealth had allowed him to reconcile himself to buy everything at a discounted price without feeling he was being compromised in terms of image.

Field

Doxa: "Men are born free but restriction is everywhere"

Wayne: *"We are influenced by the environment. Like, many of my friends at the time were dressed one way in America and another when back in Hong Kong...I was more or less the same with them. It is not right to wear the overly fashionable type (e.g. a pink Armani shirt) in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, it's like, hm; no matter how weirdly you are dressed, people will take it for granted; while in Beijing, people will say, 'who is that? Why is he wearing that thing?' Men are born free but restriction is everywhere."*

Dressing well for Wayne was considered to be part of *"pursuing the quality of life after becoming fairly well-off"*. Despite the wide acceptance of Armani's prestige status in luxury brands among the social elites, Wayne found it difficult to wear it anywhere such as a subway in mainland China, because people looked at him with disdain. Metropolitans who travel frequently to different places sometimes encounter huge cultural value differences which provide them with reflexive assessments of

their own cultural heritage and positions and at the same time, they present the cultural adaptability for communal affiliation (Thompson & Tambyah, 1999).

He appraised the tastes presented by people from H.K. and dismissed people's tastes from mainland China, by using trope of "*metropolitan child*" and "*countryside child*" that highlighted the taste and dress sense differences between these two cities. Wayne identified himself as one of the metropolitans and Wayne's consumption experience revealed the tensions he experienced between the two opposing fashion characters individuality and social affiliation; Hong Kong represents modern Westernised individuality due to its long history of having colonial status and China represents the traditional collective view (Lam et al., 2011). Wayne dressed differently to meet the social requirements; to be conservative and emphasise the collectiveness of fashion (Blumer, 1969) in mainland China; to address individuality and fashionability in Hong Kong. Representing the Jing-Pai culture and attaching great value to the Confucian doctrines of hierarchy, stability and control (Ariga et al., 1997), people in Beijing are relatively more conservative than people from Hong Kong in terms of their aesthetic view. Wayne accepted the established social order in China and tended to abide by the traditional aesthetic view with less individual statements (Solomon 1986, Blumer 1969, Levy 1959). The pink shirt certainly challenged the well-established vestimentary signs of Chinese male dressing (Finnane, 2007).

Illusio: "Clothes play no important part in my life"

Wayne: "*Clothes...clothes are just clothes. It plays no important part in my life. The most important thing is your career. What do clothes bring you anyway? What's the good of dressing up like a butterfly? It's not like I'm selling clothes...*"

From knowing and caring nothing about clothing in the past to learning to consume luxury brands, to being considered 'weird' dressing in mainland China, Wayne's consumption experiences have come a long way. Against the common symbolic linkage between fashion and one's status, taste, or wealth (Wong & Ahuvia, 1995 & 1998), Wayne's consumption practices showed that he invested a minimum of time and money on this game. Armani was a convenient choice for him to compensate his lack of a perfect dress sense. He was not convinced that the stake of game was to

show-off status and make wealth claims, like Lily did. For him, clothing styles were important to some extent to represent his taste as an architect. His learning was initiated from a professional field and with the motivation to demonstrate his professionability and his luxury consumption practice and perception of the stakes of the game were also limited to the professional field.

This limitation was aligned with his habitus. Dressing in a certain style has never been part of his habitus cultivated from childhood, but studying and achieving had always been the main drive for him to progress in life. Dressing to him was only a front stage performance after years of assimilation in a fashionable environment (Goffman, 1971). As an entrepreneur, he had a strong career, driven spirit and fashion clothes could only serve a purpose for his continuous professional pursuit.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A8 Summary of Individual Case: Wayne

Concepts	Themes	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	Personally, I don't think I am good at dressing. So to save time, I just go to Armani. But for some people, none of their clothes is name brand and they bought from clothing booths, but they look perfect with those clothes. Maybe these people have better taste...I rarely buy goods at the original price, usually buy at a discount
	Professionability	We design a building for a client, but not necessarily mean that we have to beg for somebody. What I mean is that we certainly make profit from our design, but we try to make our clients happy. We don't beg for 200,000 to 30,000 RMB on each project.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	As I knew nothing about fashion wear...before going to Hong Kong, nor were there opportunity, due to the financial circumstances; and no one cared about it at university. Your life style has changed, as well as your income and the nature of your work, which, therefore, causes the change of your requirement for clothes and stuff.
	The generative grammar	Clothes can more or less reflect one's cultivation. But we can't judge one's taste from how much money he earns. It's how he spends his money that we see his taste, not how he earns the money... He bought the most expensive range in Armani, but he still looked strange when he is in Armani...he had never been well educated. So, that is the difference.
Field: Doxa	Men are born free, but restriction is everywhere	We are influenced by the environment...It is not right to wear the overly fashionable type (e.g. a pink Armani shirt) in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, it's like, hm; no matter how weirdly you are dressed, people will take it for granted; while in Beijing, people will say, 'who is that? Why is he wearing that thing?' Men are born free but restriction is everywhere.
Illusio	Clothes play no importance in my life	Clothes...clothes are just clothes. It plays no important part in my life. The most important thing is your career. What do clothes bring you anyway? What's the good of dressing up like a butterfly? It's not like I'm selling clothes...

Leo – The Aspirant

Interview Background

Fashion should be available to everyone in the market place, but each must have a different approach to consuming fashion. Therefore, I secured interviewees having a higher volume of cultural capital like Quentin and a high volume of economic capital like Lily, I also sought opportunities to find someone at the beginning of their career ladder with less cultural capital and economic capital. Therefore, I sent my pre-screen questionnaire to those part-time and full-time MBA students in Beijing University with Professor Fu's help. I received a few completed questionnaires from the full-time students, but not even one from part-time students. Leo was one of those who replied to my questionnaire and agreed to be interviewed.

I went to Beijing University to meet Leo who greeted me outside his classroom as he had just finished his morning class. Leo has a typical Southern Chinese man in figure and appearance, not very tall and with a round face. He wore a dark suit with a white shirt and tie with black shoes. He shouldered a bag and carried a neutral colour trench coat. He dressed very neatly and made me feel like he was a serious man. When we started talking, I realised that he was very friendly and easy to talk to. We chatted all the way to a student café in the university. It was late morning and many students were still in their classes, so the café was quiet. I interviewed him for one hour and had to stop, because he had a group discussion to go to. The second time we met in the library building, a week later, he wore another dark suit which was not much different from the previous one.

Taste and Consumption Practice

Fashionability and Individuality

Leo: "if he was wearing famous brands all over, I might think he was of high qualification...external thing won't take the place of his internal, but indeed, one has some influence over the other, because there will be comparison. If a person is dressed up well, people will think he might be good at every other respect. That's the feeling."

In his discourse, Leo's discussions about clothes mainly revolved around how one should be dressed when one reached a certain position or status. In reality, Leo liked simple and conventional formal styles with a plain colour scheme. He found that sophisticated and unconventional designs were unbearable and wanted to avoid them completely. Unusual modern design features such as *"terrifying heads, a whole bunch of small accessories"* for Leo were *"gaudy"* and had negative connotations associated with disobedience. That was in complete opposition to his principles in life, *"I don't appreciate them and I don't like seeing them."*

Leo: *"These days, those people want to be weird. Some people appreciate that, but I don't. Terrifying heads, a whole bunch of small accessories...that's gaudy. I don't like those things. What does that stand for? Disobedience? And those huge earrings! There are places in Beijing selling those bizarre things. I don't appreciate them and I don't like seeing them."*

Neat, clean, and comfortable were basic dressing requirements for him, his list of important accessories include shoes, ties, and bags. Unlike other interviewees who had many different sets of clothes ranging from casual to formal styles, Leo did not have a large collection of clothes, but a few suits that were effectively worn on a daily basis. It is understandable for a student struggling with finance, but he refused to consume counterfeit branded clothes, as *"those fake clothes are that much cheaper than the real ones, there must be problems."* Instead, he insisted on buying fewer clothes but better quality products. He held a strong positive opinion about real branded clothes as a part of a quality presentation, because if *"they are the real brands, the quality and other aspects must be good"*. This positive association between brand and quality also extended to the wearer, as he believed that if someone dressed well, it indicated *'care(ing) about one's appearance'*, *"of high qualification"*, potential ability to achieve, *"must be good at every aspect"*. Fashionability for Leo was not about the trendy look, but a sustainable look that reflected the conventional gender roles, to be trustworthy, steady, reliable, and carry social prestige. Studies (Dubois & Duquesne 1993, Leibenstein 1950) suggest that his way of consumption was associated with a bandwagon effect and motivated by the hope of enhancing self-concepts and being one of the people who possess prestige. Leo's consumption was not for emphasising the price, but the effect of consuming branded products.

Shopping for him is a task to complete, only looking for what he intended to buy with “*a clear purpose*” and without spending too much time on it. Leo prefers go shopping with a few friends on his side to consult, especially when buying something expensive. He recently bought a sweater by Playboy. Although he did not like it at first sight, he bought it anyway for all his friends said it was nice. Later he found “*the famous brands are really comfortable. If the clothes are fit, it is really comfortable to wear them. It is worth buying.*”

Professionability

Leo: “*I feel this one...I think...it shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It’s a good feeling. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.*”

Leo felt it was not necessarily to be dressed in any particular brands, but wearing name-brand clothes would be “*pleasant to the eyes*” of others. The branded clothes were highly regarded and gave a direct indication of success and achievement. Leo idealised that everyone who dressed well must be good at everything without acknowledging that not everyone who had the ability to put on luxury brands knew how to dress as other informants (Wayne, Clive) discussed. Before quitting his marketing manager role from a national car manufacture company, Leo chose to wear formal branded clothes to meet his subordinates’ expectations and his aspirations in achieving life goals through career success.

Clothing has long been known to reflect consumers’ social life, aspirations, and fantasies and their affiliations (e.g. Solomon 1985, Blumer 1969, Levy 1959). Leo’s fashion discourse was full of his dreams of the future in terms of how he could achieve in life. He envisaged his career success and improved lifestyles for his family. Leo was serious about what his look suggested to others, as he wanted to convey his aspirations in life and dressing was one of the ways for him to prepare for his successful career; he dressed himself in suits most of the time as part of his cultivation process. Clothing had genuinely become a symbolic representation of success for him and this became increasingly appealing as his life goal became gradually clearer.

Leo's negative perception of wearing fashionable clothes carried on in the professional field. Casual clothes at work were associated with easy-going, loose, ignorant, and inattentive attitudes which were considered to be unwanted attributes for a serious and successful business. He gave an example to show that he made a judgement in staff recruitment based on their appearance management that resulted in recruiting the less capable, but more attentive and cooperative person.

Leo: *“There were two totally different persons. That was when we wanted some planning members. Actually, planning staff is a special group. They can dress differently or wear strange hairstyle. One person, he was fine at work, judging from his working experience; he was dressed formally. We took him in at last. The other one was dressed in a casual manner, far too casual we felt. We thought he was better at work than the first one, but we refused him in the end. We thought he was much too loose. Even if he had excellent ideas, we were not sure he would carry it out, as he seemed inattentive. It was determined by the company's demands. If the person had the capability to meet the company's need, and we found he was meticulous and precise in his work, we would accept him.”*

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Leo: *“My hometown locates in the west of Hunan, which is a poor area. My family lived in the country. Experiences of dressing...we didn't have the financial ability to pay particular attention to clothes; I even rarely have chance to wear new clothes...When I was at university, not working yet, I dressed casually. I didn't care. But after working, I saw people around me...especially I was one of the managers. People cared about my dressing. So, there is a change of conception. I've changed from non-caring to caring. I become to...about my image.”*

For Leo better brands and quality clothes reflected his learning from non-caring to caring about his image. The requirement for better quality and branded clothes was a way to meet others' expectations as a manager to preserve 'face' which means that

others would have expectation on him which not only rested on his management skills, but also his image as a boss who should demonstrate taste whether he had it or not (Ho, 1976).

Growing up in a small village in south China, Leo only had a chance to wear new clothes in Chinese New Year. Like Wayne, his living standards and environment did not offer him the opportunity to pay attention to his appearance, as no one around him did and there was no observable difference in clothing among them. Not knowing anyone could stand out in terms of their dress until he studied in a small town, the first person that inspired him to dress well was a female teacher in junior school, *“...always dressed fashionably. She would change clothes the whole week, for she was from the county, and she was taken notice by people. She was from the county and she came down to the township to teach English for some reason. She would make up. Looking back on it now, I feel she was elegant. But I didn’t know the word “elegant” at that time. In junior high, I felt that teacher was special. She dressed well, so she must be good at every respect. I kind of admired her at that time.”* The teacher came from an even bigger place. Here, the geographic difference produced someone dressing differently that attracts people’s attention and his admiration. When he went to the county to study at high school he noticed that some students dressed fashionably and wore brands.

Through ‘looking-glass self’ (Cooley, 1902), Leo’s countryside ‘tu’ look which indicated him as having no taste and having no understanding of aesthetics (Hessler, 2001) had made him develop a sense of shame, which related to the negative judgement that others might have on his comparatively cheap and ugly clothes (Fischer & Tangney, 1995). This sense of shame was not about misconduct, but considered as socially inappropriate in a way that showed one’s being different from others. In Leo’s case, it associated with an inability to be integrated with others (Mascolo et al., 2003). Instead of turning away, hiding his face, or escaping (Li et al., 2004), Leo showed desire to change his situation (Wu & Lai, 1992) through learning and buying better quality and more expensive clothes.

His poor family background had highly motivated him to study hard to change his situation and improve his dress sense. The sense of shame derived from marked differences in his clothes motivated him to understand those commodities on the market by intentionally choosing business studies in university. He learnt all brands' names, company profiles, the level of their reputations and prestige in the international market. He watched top designer fashion shows regularly and paid particular attention to dressing skills in the magazines. Despite those efforts, he still maintained the conventional aesthetics and found "gaudy" for those "terrifying heads, a whole bunch of small accessories".

The central contention in *Distinction* is that taste is structured through continuity of material culture (Holt, 1998). For Leo, his family daily life must have been constrained by material shortage, consequently this limited his appreciation of aesthetics and thus a typical lower class 'taste of necessity' (Bourdieu 1984, p.177) was exhibited through neat, tidy, and comfortable as essential requirements for dressing, whereas other informants (Wayne, Zoë, Lucy) emphasised taste and aesthetic disposition. The lack of consumption experience in childhood also had impact on Leo's use of language. Leo was very expressive when describing his experiences and his goals in life, but he found it difficult to discuss his taste. He did not have the vocabulary to discuss fashion style and taste in detail, because he tended to omit words or say "I don't know how to describe it", but "the feeling is good".

The Generative Scheme: It must be good at every aspect"

Leo's learning experience suggested the significant symbolic association he made between being dressed well with the projection of the wearer who "must be good at every aspect" which fitted his serious attitude towards life goals.

Leo: "It shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It's a good feel. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success."

Leo's discussion of fashion clothes covered two extremes: complete functionality, representing his general daily consumption practice on the one hand, and symbolic

representation closely associated with his dreams and aspirations in life on the other. In his imagination however, clothing had allowed him to create a beautiful picture in association with his ideal future self (Markus and Nurius, 1986). In reality, his dress sense did not go further than 'neat, tidy, and comfortable' as it was typical of habitus resulting from a 'taste of necessity' as Bourdieu (1984) suggested.

Unlike other interviewees who condemned conspicuous consumption, Leo held positive associations between luxury consumption and being successful and perceived that those who could afford luxury brands were very "*special*", '*having high qualification*', "*must be good at every aspect*", and "*a symbol of success*". In this sense, although both Leo and Lily idealised branded clothes, Lily's showed the aspect of the superficiality by showing off the cost and the name of the brands they wore. Leo's positive association made between clothing and achievement were an indication of his own under achievement in career. His association between dressing well and being '*good at every aspect*' might be the intended consumer targeting message he learned from mass media (Thompson & Haytko 1997). Clive who felt totally unashamed in Pierre Cardin when facing people dressed better, because his legitimisation of better was based on achievement rather than appearance alone. Leo shared this aspect of cultural legitimisation.

Field

Doxa: 'Envy the Rich'

Leo: "*They must feel they were better. Spending hundreds of yuan, or even one thousand on those things...that was the living expense for a whole semester to us poor boys from the countryside. A lot of those things...such was the senior high experience. You get to know many brands, but you can't afford to buy them. All you can do is to envy the rich... That was kind of spiritual sustenance. I must have thought, "Now that my family is poor, I will get those things through my hard-working when I grow up." I must have thought about buying my own famous brand clothes; perhaps not that serious at that time; maybe I just thought about some better clothes.*"

Leo had a low volume of both inherited cultural capital and economic capital as a result of lack of material experience in childhood, but it did not have much impact on him when he was young, as he said, “*because when I was young, all the people around us were similar. No one was special or better.*” However, he clearly observed the difference in dressing between himself and others after coming out of the village and moving to township, county, Jinan (2nd tier city) and later Beijing. These observed clothing differences assisted in the birth of the system of rank and status in Leo’s perceptions (Herbert 1879). With his moving to bigger places each time, the clothing differences mark and reinforce the social differences (Carter, 2003). Leo could only envy, and endeavour to change the situation by working harder, to climb the social ladder through education and a symbolic process that eliminates the shamed self and constructs the ideal self. His consumption practice was organised by this doxic assumption by consuming better brands and quality products, despite his relatively low volume of economic capital.

Illusio: “You are waiting for an opportunity coming to you”

Leo: “*As a student, you can dress yourself casually, or formally. People can accept both styles. But, you have to follow some basic standards, like, not look dirty. If you are dressed casually, people will think you have a casual manner and easy-going; if you are dressed formally, maybe you are waiting for an opportunity coming to you.*”

Growing up in a remote small village in South China, Leo worked hard to gain his access to become a MBA student in the most prestige university in China. He held the least amount of economic capital amongst the interviewees and invested heavily in obtaining educational credentials with the hope that he could improve his social position in the future. His learning to play the game through university studies clarified that his principle of ‘wearing formal clothes only’ was derived from his adoption of business dress sense to everyday life. For him, formal style was highly regarded with positive attributes associated with personal qualifications and achievement. Motivated to achieve, he chose to wear formal branded quality clothes as a way to get ready for challenge and opportunities to come. To him, success was a synonym of the best human life obtained through practical cultivation of the social

self (Yu, 2007), regardless of one's background, but gained through knowledge and learning (Cheng, 1949). His emphasis on paying attention to dressing was an idealized interpretation of conspicuous consumption to which clothes became a tangible material for him to remain motivated and develop more self-awareness of the social group to which he wanted to belong (Gell 1998, Barnard 2002).

Summary of Verbatim

Table A9 Summary of Individual Case: Leo

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	If he was wearing famous brands all over, I might think he was of high qualification...external thing won't take the place of his internal, but indeed, one has some influence over the other, because there will be comparison. If a person is dressed up well, people will think he might be good at every other respect.
	Professionability	I feel this one...I think...it shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It's a good feeling. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	When I was at university, not working yet, I dressed casually. I didn't care. But after working, I saw people around me...especially I was one of the managers. People cared about my dressing. So, there is a change of conception. I've changed from non-caring to caring. I become to...about my image.
	The generative grammar	It shows that the man is neat and tidy, and he cares about his look. It's a good feel. And I quite appreciate...because it is a symbol of success in career. I quite appreciate it, because, anyway, I myself am going that way. I want to be like this, being successful at work. It is a symbol of success
Field: Doxa	Envy the rich	You get to know many brands, but you can't afford to buy them. All you can do is to envy the rich...I will get those things through my hard-working
Illusio	You are waiting for an opportunity coming to you	As a student, you can dress yourself casually, or formally... If you are dressed casually, people will think you have a casual manner and easy-going; if you are dressed formally, maybe you are waiting for an opportunity coming to you.

Quentin – The Social Elite

Interview Background

A friend of mine, an architect and a friend of Quentin's, had a good impression of Quentin's taste in clothing. I called him first and was asked to go to his company to meet him a few days later. When I went there, there was another lady in the waiting area. I realised that she was a saleswoman. We had a little chat and I found out that she wanted to meet Quentin as well. Twenty minutes later, a tall Chinese man surrounded by a group of Chinese and Westerners rushed into the hallway through the waiting area and quickly disappeared into one of the rooms at the end of the corridor. They seemed to discuss something important in English, as everyone was concentrating so hard that nobody took notice of us when they passed by. Five minutes later, the tall man showed up again and asked which one was the researcher. I stand up. He apologised first and then showed me the way to go with him. At that time, the sales lady intended to talk to him about her products. He quickly dismissed her by sending her to see one of his colleagues. I got time to check his clothing styles. He was tall and slim. He wore a brown corduroy suit jacket, unbuttoned with a white shirt inside and a pair of dark trousers. His shoes were not the formal type. He looked casual and smart. He took me to a Starbucks cafe in the lobby. We found a corner table next to a big window and started our interview. He did not speak fast, but I felt his energy, his spirits and he was very sharp sometimes. He showed his charisma and sophistication during the interview.

The second time Quentin suggested we went to the restaurant where I interviewed Grace and Doris to have dinner first (a Chinese way to have some informal chat) and after that we went to a café in a hotel opposite the restaurant. There are thousands of restaurants in Beijing. The coincidence of the exact same choice may indicate that they as professionals shared some similar tastes. In the second interview, he wore a loose white woollen sweater matched with dark coloured jeans and sneakers. He looked very casual and relaxed.

Talking to Quentin, I definitely felt his social privilege, his quick mind as a shrewd businessman, and his way of thinking as a social elite. He always gave interesting examples and used vivid expressions either to describe or to support his unique

viewpoints. Certainly, with his taste and education along with his architectural design background, he had no problem in articulating in great detail and in a vivid manner. His unintentional expression of tastes throughout our interview spread from his comments about the vulgar restaurant décor to the progress of Chinese fashion design. I rather think that the interview gave him an opportunity to indulge his passion and enthusiasm for fashion and design.

Unlike other interviewees who just answered my questions one after another, Quentin summarized my interview questions at the end and wanted to understand more about my research aim at the abstract level. He also gave me some suggestions for my research topic which turned out to be useful. This proved that his education and leadership experience made him possess more cultural capital. Compared with other interviewees, I understood why Quentin stood at a command level.

Taste and Dressing Style

Fashionability and Individuality

Quentin: *“I like exquisite stuff. something you may use for many years after purchase...like leather belt, including fine shirt, which you may wear for quite a long time, because they are fine stuff...Not particular brands, but I’m searching for something suitable to me.”*

Quentin had an omnivorous taste for casual clothes (Lamont 1992, Peterson 1992) consuming everything from designer labels to unknown discounted clothes. Having four holidays a year, Quentin made specific stop-by in H.K. to go shopping and checking new brands, fashion trends, and styles. He liked to explore different concepts of fashion and beauty in different countries from attending regular fashion shows in China to seeing in his own eyes of the perfect proportion of the female body in Vietnam. Similar to Zoë’s passions and excitements when talking about colour, patterns, and design features, Quentin believed that there was a similarity between architecture and clothes, he regarded highly the subtleness of clothing styles and coherence of accessories which gave an insight to the wearer’s careful consideration, aesthetic disposition, and intelligence of playing with colour and patterns.

Attending China's fashion shows regularly, he held a reserved view of national designers for "*they were not delicate enough*" and could not stand a '*closer look*'. Similar to other informants, Quentin preferred foreign designer labels over national brands for their long lasting effects (Zhang et al., 2008), but he did not regard branded clothes as highly as Leo or Wayne did. He stressed the importance of subtle presentation of clothing like Clive, but not have the brand loyalty Clive demonstrated. Quentin believed that "*there is no need to be fussy about*" designer clothes if one could not afford it. Sometimes, he wore discounted clothes without considering that cheap meant unpresentable like Grace, Lucy, Doris, and Zoë. He bought a discounted sweater in New Zealand and had worn it comfortably to the interview talking about it naturally. To pursue the ultimate quality and sense of comfortableness, he chose better brands for shoes, socks, and underwear, which was just the opposite to the approach that Zoë took.

Rejecting pecuniary display and despising the tendency of embracing materialism (Laidler, 2003), Quentin disapproved of the exaggerated consumption practices of the SRG and their fundamental motivations of consumption for showing off their property. Equipped with a similar volume of economic capital, his consumption choice was different from Lily's in a way that he tended to deliberately avoid big designers labels, but "*prefer those that are not the biggest names... the relatively weird types*" to achieve the exclusiveness and limited accessibility. This kind of fashion exclusivity gave Quentin a sense of uniqueness. He even avoided buying a BMW when choosing his car.

Quentin: "... *I think it's not only a matter of designer labels. The dress sense, colours, how to make yourself more comfortable and special at the same time; by 'special' I don't mean you have to wear outlandish clothes; it is details shown in subtle way, which I don't think is easy...*

He shared Saline's view of individual suitability and natural presentation and felt that "*there is no fixed standard of taste. Bad taste is you pretending to be who you are actually not. One's being unnatural brings discrepancy.*" Not caring about fashion trends or brands, Quentin cared more about individual presentation, for he appreciated natural beauty and believed that it could only be cultivated by exercising the body and

brain. Fashionability for him was not about wearing outlandish clothes, but something that made him comfortable and trendy like “*an artist or a student*” by wearing casual clothes and sneakers when off work. However, no man would dress that way when reached thirty years of age in China, but he felt comfortable and did not care how others responded to that, as he admitted that “*it’s true that as a man reaches a certain age, as he gets mature, has more power and confidence, he cares less and less about what other people say. It’s true. He won’t dress for others.*”

Quentin delineated an individualistic centred aesthetic disposition, placid manners and attitudes towards brands as social differentiation (Baudrillard, 1988). His freedom from other’s judgements of tastes reflected his dominant social position associated with ethnocentricity and distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner 1985, Turner & Hogg 1987, Tajfel 1981).

Professionability

Quentin’s craving for comfortable of clothes and personal preference were carried on in the professional field. Quentin’s associations of professional looks were different from other informants’ such as success by Leo, dignity by Wayne, social affiliation with clients and subordinates by Grace, Doris, Zoë, and Clive. Instead, he associated the professional wear with being ‘stiff’ and “*not in control*”. He disliked wearing formal suits because they are “too stiff” and they normally represent “*negotiating time and signing contract*”. However, he did not wear a suit for signing every contract, only when he was “*making money from them*”, so it shows “*being discreet and the willingness of making the deal successfully. But when you pay money to someone, you are more in control*”.

As a property developer, he handled a huge investment fund and made decisions on which architects or construction companies were going to undertake a project. In these circumstances, the dress code indicated each one’s position and power. He who had the absolute power controlling investment funds was perceived as “God”. As the result, he did not have to follow any established dress codes in the business world and adopting a different style, such as a casual style in a formal situation, was the key to showing his special position, authority and power.

Quentin: “... *And when they knew I am a developer, they showed great interest. Someone said to me, “Finally I meet a developer tonight.” And I myself knew the importance of a developer. It was all the same no matter what clothes you were wearing. Whatever you wore, it wouldn’t weaken your importance. Of course you need to dress tidily. And it’ll be fine. So, I don’t feel anything is wrong. Such is the situation. The other way round, if I were an architect, and I hoped to meet some developers for the sake of business, surely I would dress up specially in order to let them remember me. Things are special in businesses... When you are making profits, you’ll care, because other people are your customers. When others are making profits while you are giving, certainly you don’t need to care, because you are God in this matter...*”

The modern man’s business suits represent the ideology of corporate America and the ‘*disciplined body*’ that performs efficiently and maintains order while accomplishing the serious work of business in modern society (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). For a powerful man like him, it was unnecessary to create a ‘*disciplined body*’ through the form of a suit; rather a distinctive dressing style could deliver his ‘God’ image more precisely. Quentin’s consumption choice highlighted the distinctive character of the power distance he wanted to create in the business world and the importance of social position and prestige were emphasised (Hofstede 1984, 2001), not by pecuniary display (Veblen, 1899), but by dressing in distinctively different styles.

Within his company, he continued to adopt the same dressing strategy, because “*only if you have been leader for long and been a high-positioned leader, you can wear whatever you want to without caring what others say.*” In a similar vein, his unconventional professional dressing symbolised his superior position, authority and power. As a result, others did not dare to challenge his choice of style. Other informants’ dressing choices (Grace, Doris, Zoë, Leo, Clive) were based on their perceived subordinates’ and clients’ expectations and placed a great deal of careful consideration on understanding and respecting their opinions. Quentin showed no such inclination, but strongly emphasised his legitimation of individual choice backed by his superiority in power.

Quentin: *“We have a slogan, saying, “Living in space, for your living pace.” And I like this slogan very much. I think nowadays...one should have something that is under his control, not be controlled by others...only if you have this qualification can you talk about success. In this position, you can easily go everywhere, cities, airports, or...and your life is fashionable. Then you belong to the mainstream elite in the society, not a bystander who runs after the society.”*

It is widely recognized that fashion has the function of creating uniformity amongst equals whilst at the same time differentiating social class status and background, signposting preferences and commitments (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899, Blumer 1968, Bourdieu 1984). His strong disassociation with the ‘bystanders’ denoted and validated his membership of the social elites (Kaiser, 1997) who made significant contributions to the construction of modern China. The meaning of being successful as a powerful man or social elite was not simply reflected in the fashion brands they chose to wear but how influential in reality they were over others in society. The slogan Quentin liked represented the concept of contemporary lifestyle and the characteristics of social elites who led fashionable lifestyles and being in control in their society. For Quentin, he did not need to use fashion brands to symbolize his social position and power, but the freedom in clothing choice was a way to break social stereotype images and appearance cues that people from lower social positions used to make inferences in social contact (McCracken, 1988a).

Habitus

How to Learn to Play the Game

Local vs. Migrator

Growing up in favourable conditions, Quentin showed a great sense of national centrality as an indigenous born and bred Beijinger, an identity that holds many privileges, an important social division in comparison with many who are currently residents of Beijing being migrants from other provinces or the surrounding countryside (Hessler, 2001).

Quentin: *“Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big*

city, the capital of China. The struggle...if you stop three persons on the street, two of them are not local. Those people work very hard to achieve. But I was born here...perhaps everyone has his place in the world. One should believe he was born the way he is. Not good-looking or whatever, but you are born that way.”

Chinese people born in Beijing or big cities are considered to be more privileged than people born in smaller cities or in the country. This is a social advantage nobody could choose, because Mao's China did not encourage social mobility and no one had free will in choosing their home locations until Deng's economic reform. Bourdieu (1984) argues that the fundamental social struggle and competition were resources. The big cities in China like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong had much better conditions than rural areas (McEwen et al. 2006, Cui & Liu 2000). In Mao's era, being cadres with a military background indicated higher social class. Both authors Jung (1993) and Mu (2002) revealed their social advantages for having parents with military backgrounds. Quentin shared the same advantage. Later, this was translated into social resources (e.g. education, power, and status) and accumulated to contribute to Quentin's 'God' position (Bourdieu, 1984).

Thus '*born in Beijing with a good family background*' represented a significant social distinction and privileged cultural inheritance. This social difference was not an option, but definitive and one which not many people had. This mental state had not only revealed his superior dominant social position, but had also put other people's life struggle into a domain that was beyond human control. Since his birthplace had been blessed by the 'Gods', his lifestyle, education, and social privileges coming afterwards fall into the right place and remained unchallenged.

Quentin: *“Probably now I know all the labels, while back then, I was only blindly happy and blindly confident because everyone else were dressed plainly while you alone were wearing a big name. Now, with a good knowledge of so many designer labels, having tried many, you know which ones suit better and the different features of each brand. And the cultural elements behind certain label will win or lose your favour.”*

Quentin was born in Beijing and his parents were high officials serving in the army. Unlike some of the other informants (Lily, Leo, Wayne, Grace, Doris), his favourable living conditions meant that he had hardly experienced economic struggle and enjoyed many social privileges from a young age including a good education, an admirable career and a fashionable lifestyle. However, despite his relatively good living conditions in childhood, Quentin also experienced a learning process from “*blindly happy*” when wearing designer label to learning the “*cultural elements behind certain label*”.

He actively engaged in a wide range of social activities that enabled him to keep up with aesthetic appreciation and fashion knowledge across nations. Every single trip abroad had contributed to his understanding of fashion, design and brands, as he did in his Japanese trip. Quentin discovered that Japanese’s ways of dressing “*have a subtle way, which makes them special but not loud enough to be noticed at first sight; they put good thinking in it. I think it is fantastic.*” He described in great detail to express his passion and excitement of what he saw and learned about “*the cultural elements*” behind the Japanese fashion including their general fashion sense by the public, characteristics of home brands, and the hand making process for Kimonos. He was deeply moved by their well-tailored national brands, vibrant use of fashion elements, detailed execution of design features and the coherently orchestrated, comfortable yet fascinating styles worn by people on the street. These experiences enriched his aesthetic disposition and sharpened his understanding of individual centred dress sense, and also helped him to make distinctive clothing choices based on his desired image in a particular circumstance.

According to Bourdieu (1984), children are not simply socialised into the “*values of society as a whole*”. Rather, they are socialised into the culture that corresponds to their class and a set of cultural experiences and value beliefs. These represent a form of cultural capital and equip people for their life in society. This shows the social advantage in Mao’s cadre-dominated social structure (Bian et al. 2005, Li 1995, Davis 2000) and prejudice of geographical differences (countryside vs. urban) (Hessler, 2011). Quentin’s sensitivity and inclination to appreciate art and design were not because they were the exact discipline in which he was trained, but were derived from

his favourable living conditions, the ‘*taste of luxury*’ (Bourdieu, 1984). Wayne was trained in the same discipline, but with habitus of ‘*taste of necessity*’, his usage of language in articulating design, appreciation of aesthetics, and understanding of fashion were at a different level.

The Generative Scheme: “I enjoyed many privileges”

Quentin’s learning experience featured the essence of individually centred cultivation of aesthetic disposition and suggested the significant effect of embodied cultural capital backed by his privileged family background. Quentin’s interview account was associated with being superior not only in taste, but by the deep rooted social conditioning which shaped his tastes and the fundamental differences from others. Quentin’s taste and consumption differences were the result of his naturally equipped social privilege in geography, family background, education, and consequently consumption practices and tastes. This granted him the prerogative which was presented and originated in the naturalization of those existing social structures.

Cultured vs. Uneducated

Quentin: *“In terms of schooling, from primary school to high school, to university, and later I did my master degree. I was always studying at the best schools and all my classmates are talented. They engage in scholarship, have goals and dreams, therefore, they have no feeling of sudden rich. Some of my classmates are quite rich, but their clothing styles are quite reserved and implicit. They won’t go for something strange.”*

Confucius advocated intellectualism and the importance of education to social differences of governing or being governed (Mencius, 1932). Wayne discussed the element of education contributing to the differences in aesthetic disposition. Quentin pointed out the differentiation between those who were highly educated and those who depended on the style of clothes and motivation to dress. Central to his taste and consumption practice was the exquisite taste which conveyed not only the subtleness of personal presentation, but also an indication of a cultured moderate self (Tian, 2004), which were in complete contrast to the uneducated SRG who went to extremes due to their lack of cultivation (Yu, 2007).

Natural vs. Superficial

Quentin: "I grew up in Beijing. As you know, children growing up in Beijing have favourable living conditions. Never worry about food and clothes. When I was young, my kindergarten belonged to a big state bureau and had a favourable condition. People who have favourable living conditions when they are young don't really care about material things. When they grow up, they are more placid. You can see many people in China coming from a very low status suddenly become rich and they would buy very expensive stuff and show off their possessions to others. However, people who are more placid consume only based on their needs."

Quentin addressed the placid manner towards material culture as the consequences of living in a material wealth condition at a young age. His requirement for high standard quality products was a result of his lifestyle conditions aligned with his social conditioning in childhood, rather than a dramatic change in a way of living due to suddenly increased wealth. In comparison, their values were different, *"they don't judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances."* Coming from a different social background, he deemphasised the effect of branded names to other, but paid particular attention to aesthetic cultivation and exploring different concepts of fashion and beauty.

"People who are more placid consume only based on their needs." On reflection of Quentin's consumption practice, these needs were neither Leo's basic needs of *"nice and tidy"*, nor Wayne's needs for relying on designer labels to compensate his deficit in taste. Quentin's needs for seeking comfort in clothes were essentially high. The state of comfortability for Quentin was not only the emphasis of functional value of clothes, but a coherent internal and external state of mind and a natural reflection of one's dress sense either in exquisite designer clothes or in discounted normal clothes. That could also explain his choice of wearing better quality brands as base layers.

Field

Doxa: "They don't judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances."

Quentin's habitus revealed his underlying differentiated taste in relation to manner, attitudes, and intention to dress that originated from privileged social conditioning and education credentials.

Quentin: "I think things are different nowadays. People live to seek the pleasure in life. So people's values have changed. They don't judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances. People will notice what clothes and watch you wear. Like what I told my friend before coming here, "BMW or Benz is not suitable for the road here. But why so many people buy those cars? The very reason is that it shows their positions. It represents more." This is what is like these days, however, nothing like this before."

According to Bourdieu (2006), the doxic beliefs, although shared by all, are themselves produced and reproduced by the dominant class. Other interviewees felt varied degrees of social restrictions and limitations either in economic capital or cultural capital which reflected their relatively dominated position in the society. Quentin criticized the social value change from valuing intellectualism to superficiality. His doxic assumption challenged the current shared beliefs in luxury fashion consumption field and his understanding of what the field should value supported his distinctive individual aesthetic disposition and was backed by his habitus of governing ability of those who are highly educated and have superior intellect (Mencius (Meng-tse, 1932).

Illusio: "I don't care about other people or fashion stuff"

Quentin: "If one wants to show his character, his love for life, his fondness for study...he will look different. The society will become interesting if everyone is unique, and horrible if people look similar.... I just think that I have been like this since I was a kid, and I stay the same now. As long as I dress up suitably, I won't care other people or fashion stuff, just following my own understanding."

Coming from a privileged social background, Quentin held a relatively high aesthetic disposition underpinned by his abstract thinking. The interests he exhibited in fashion

brand consumption were a manifestation of his aesthetic appreciation and fashionable lifestyle (such as traveling abroad and attending fashion shows) as a way to show “*his love for life*”. There was a clear distinction between his interests in fashion and those who consume luxury products to indicate one’s status, success, or wealth. Quentin critically rejected the prevalent appearance-centred superficial consumption practices and provided the contrast of his own taste as inner-self-centred, cultured yet natural consumption practice. He invested different energy from other informants as his intention in playing the game was not to prove something, but a natural way of living. Gao et al. (2004) suggested that there are five groups, namely achiever, conservative, experiencer, follower and idealist within the affluent consumer groups. Quentin’s luxury consumption practice and habitus were more relevant to the category of achiever.

Summary of Verbatim

Table A10 Summary of Individual Case: Quentin

Concept	Theme	Illustrative Example
Taste	Fashionability and Individuality	“I like exquisite stuff. something you may use for many years after purchase...like leather belt, including fine shirt, which you may wear for quite a long time, because they are fine stuff...Not particular brands, but I’m searching for something suitable to me.”
	Professionability	Things are special in businesses... When you are making profits, you’ll care, because other people are your customers. When others are making profits while you are giving, certainly you don’t need to care, because you are God in this matter.
Habitus	How to learn to play the game	Probably now I know all the labels, while back then, I was only blindly happy and blindly confident because everyone else were dressed plainly while you alone were wearing a big name. Now, with a good knowledge of so many designer labels, having tried many, you know which ones suit better and the different features of each brand. And the cultural elements behind certain label will win or lose your favour.
	The generative grammar: “I enjoyed many privileges.”	Probably as I was born in Beijing, I enjoyed many privileges. Big city, the capital of China... People who have favourable living conditions when they are young don’t really care about material things. When they grow up, they are more placid.
Field: Doxa	“They don’t judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances.”	I think things are different nowadays. People live to seek the pleasure in life. So, people’s values have changed. They don’t judge by education or original ideas, but by appearances. People will notice what clothes and watch you wear...This is what is like these days, however, nothing like this before.
Illusio	“I don’t care about other people or fashion stuff”	As long as I dress up suitably, I won’t care other people or fashion stuff, just following my own understanding.