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**The new generation of lifestyle magazine journalism in China:  
the professional approach**

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School of Media, Arts and Design

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THE NEW GENERATION OF LIFESTYLE  
MAGAZINE JOURNALISM IN CHINA:  
THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

S. Li

PhD

2011

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The New Generation of Lifestyle  
Magazine Journalism in China:  
The Professional Approach

Shuang Li

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Westminster for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

Chinese consumer journalism is a new type of journalist who has been working in Chinese lifestyle magazines since the 1990s. This study examines the elements and roles of magazine journalists' professionalisation, and contextualizes them with the main trends of Chinese media development during the transition era.

While investigating the daily practice of consumer magazine journalism in China, by exploring the ideology and ethics behind their practices and by discussing the original connection between consumer journalism and other more 'serious' forms of journalism in China, the Researcher found that consumer journalists actually share the same journalistic ethics and ideology as their 'serious' counterparts. To avoid political retribution and commercial pressure, consumer journalists have reoriented the multiple functions of journalism to present their social role as an 'information vehicle', 'serving the rising class', with 'independence from media ownership and commercial forces' and 'contributing to culture and traditional society'.

The elements involved in this new genre of journalism include financial and operational autonomy from the state, and editorial independence from their international parent magazine companies. Moreover, this genre of journalism shows a trend towards a combination of the internationalist, consumerist and cosmopolitan, unlike other journalism in China.

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# CHAPTER 1. Introduction

*“Commercial magazine titles in China are now attracting top brand names in luxury and fashion labels, all eager to advertise their products in China. This has seen the burgeoning expansion of China’s magazine publishers.”*

(China Knowledge Press, 2006)

*“To some extent, the global publishers working with Chinese publishers present several areas of concern, danger and risk.”*

(Li, 2008: 62)

Using an overview of the development and current state of the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry, the purpose of this research is to discuss the new approach of Chinese consumer journalists in the context of journalistic professional development. Contributing to Chinese lifestyle magazines since the 1990s, these consumer journalists have become an increasingly professionalized section of the media during China’s era of social transition. This study will examine the different elements and roles played by magazine journalists in regard to their professional autonomy and ethics, place the three main trends into their context within the development of the Chinese media during last twenty years, look at the internationalisation of Chinese media companies, and consider consumerism in Chinese society and culture. The emergence of an ideology of ‘self-regulation’ and ‘self-identity’ among young journalists is the undiscovered issue and a further trend in the Chinese media industry.

## 1.1 Introduction

In China today, international lifestyle magazines are regarded as the cutting edge of the consumer magazine market. Aware of the emergence of a middle class,<sup>1</sup> eager for what they consider a ‘Western lifestyle’, these magazines have attempted to feed this hunger over the last decade, and in the process generate profits for their overseas investors.

In 2008 there were 59 Chinese editions of foreign consumer magazines (Sun, 2008). Foreign publishers began enthusiastically entering the Chinese market after China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. This was done either through publishing a Chinese language edition of a parent magazine, or through the licensing of a brand and content to their Chinese counterparts. Having been given access to the experience and resources of foreign magazine partners, including the training of magazine professionals and mature business models, Chinese magazines are quickly improving the quality of their publications. Tom Gorman, the Publisher of Fortune (China), which his consulting company based in Hong Kong, concluded: “this is either the largest half-empty glass in the world for magazine publishers, or one helluva half-full one” (cited by Hayes, 1998). Mr. Green, the director of Hearst Magazine International also pointed out that “it’s not surprising that magazines control such a small percentage of national advertising spending less than 3 percent”(cited by Hayes, 1998). The above discussions indicate that western magazine

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Middle class’ is still a controversial and unclear concept in Chinese sociology. However, most glossy consumer magazines still use this concept to describe their target audience. For that reason, the author borrows this concept as one that is universally understood within academic theory and industrial practice.

publishers consider the mainland of China as one of their developing markets.

There is no doubt that over the last twenty years the magazine industry in China has developed a renewed vitality. Disposable personal income is growing. Consequently consumers want to buy glossy publications that will teach them how to spend their money. Moreover, this group still has great potential for growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the Chinese government maintain a tight control over all sections of the media, the magazine, and in particular the lifestyle magazine, is less restricted due to reasons of domestic demand and an 'Open Door Policy' towards the media sector.

## **1.2 Consumer Magazines Go To China**

The launch of new magazine titles has led the market to mushroom during the past twenty years. In August 2005, a Chinese edition of the world's top fashion magazine, *Vogue*, appeared in China. This is a remarkable example of the international consumer magazine flourishing.

The birth of the international consumer magazine has made seven historical records in China over the last twenty five years. Firstly, in 1985, Hachette Filipacchi (French Media co-operation) with the Shanghai Translation Publishing House, published the Chinese version of *Elle*, the first international fashion magazine on the Chinese mainland. Secondly, in 1993, the China Light Industry Press with Shufunotomo from Japan published *Rayli* magazine in a black and white version. The third significant moment was in 1998 when Hearst Magazine International (US magazine company)

introduced *Cosmopolitan* to Chinese readers in conjunction with the Trends Media Group in glossy colour print. In 2001, Hearst Magazine International licensed *Harper's Bazaar* to be published, and in 2002 Hachette Filipacchi with the China Sports Press Group published *Marie Claire*. These are counted as fourth and fifth. The sixth is in 2005, when Condé Nast International (US magazine company) with the China Pictorial Publishing House launched Chinese *Vogue*; EMAP UK launched *FHM* China with Trends Media Group. Finally, in 2009 *GQ* licensed by Condé Nast International issued its Chinese edition in the mainland of China.

These consumer magazines have succeeded in gaining both large circulations and a sizeable share of the advertising market. According to the co-operating international magazine firms, these magazines mainly belong to four magazine groups in China: the Japanese style, *Rayli*; the Europe style, *Elle* and *Marie Claire*; the domestic style, Trends Media Group with *Cosmopolitan*, *FHM* and *Harper's Bazaar*; and the American style, *Vogue* and *GQ*. Although the Trends Media Group has two American partners and shareholders: Hearst Magazine International and International Data Group (IDG), it is still seen as the leading national consumer magazine company. In contrast, very few local consumer magazines compete with all these foreign brands in their content subdivision and attractiveness to advertisers. In the context of high-end glossy consumer magazines that attract the attention of the burgeoning middle class and the international brands of advertisers, China's domestic glossy magazine industry does not really and truly exist.

There are several reasons for this absence. First of all, it is difficult to say that China has its own fashion industry because its

fashion magazines have very little content originating from its own national industry sector. Secondly, there is a deep contrast between the aims of the western lifestyle magazines and China's domestically produced ones. The western approach is to provide niche interest articles on specific topics related to their readers' individualistic lifestyle values. In contrast, the aim of their Chinese counterparts is to provide a guide to life values with a mass audience appeal. Therefore, for many domestic consumer magazines, flashy concepts are more important than real services for readers. Thirdly, the development of the press and magazines in particular, has been interrupted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the National Internal War and the Cultural Revolution, which delayed the reform of the traditional Chinese periodical industry until the 1990s. While the publishers of Chinese lifestyle magazines for a long time faced a lack of competition and a huge market demand, the editors focused on the portrayal of a nouveau lifestyle. As a result, the advantage of transition in the international magazine era arises from the fact that Chinese magazines reflect Western trends as the publishing industry grows more liberal, 'Over the last few years, China has indeed been liberalizing the publishing industry's financial -- and editorial -- constraints' (Rampell, 2004).

These significant changes have resulted in the emergence of the new magazine journalists working routinely in China.

## 1.3 Research Questions

During the development of the Chinese lifestyle<sup>2</sup> magazine industry, journalists working in this area were dramatically rejuvenated. This study addresses the sea changes that are taking place in the practice and ideology of Chinese magazine journalists: the conflict between factionalism and pragmatism, and between journalistic ideals and practical realities. In particular, the study attempts to answer the following four questions:

- What are the working processes and consequent achievements of Chinese consumer magazines with regard to their journalistic culture?
- Is a new generation of realistic magazine journalists emerging?
- Is professionalization a new achievement for journalists working in the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry?
- What new characteristics in journalism have magazine journalists contributing to ‘professionalism’ in China created?

In order to find the answers to these questions, the Researcher hypothesizes that the practices of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists exist on three levels: the global level of systems, such as media globalisation cultures, the national level of society as numerous consumerist cultures, and the micro level of individuals as pragmatic cultures. By analysing these three levels, the Researcher intends to discover how each could affect the possible direction of the entire hypothesis.

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<sup>2</sup> Within a Chinese context, the definition of ‘lifestyle’ means a fashionable or desirable attitude and consumer behaviour, and a higher standard of living, taste and pursuit, which distinguishes a person from the ordinary population.



## **1.4 The Theoretical Overview: Professionalism, Globalisation and Consumerism**

This research concentrates on the professionalism of the Chinese consumer journalist, who, as a blank page, needs to be defined and discussed. Media globalisation and the trend of consumerism are two of the theoretical aspects considered in this study. The reasons for this are that, firstly, media globalisation forms the economic foundation for launching foreign-licensed lifestyle magazines in China, and secondly that consumerism is the social basis of the change in journalistic practices and readers' demands.

The role of the consumer journalist with regard to professional development is still highly complex and little investigated. In the present journalistic climate, consumer journalists are obliged to adopt the same practice requirements of other professional journalists, both in China and the West. For the Chinese media industry, however, journalism is a significant process its practitioners now viewing their "readers as the clients" (Wasserman, 1997). This approach was only made possible because of the media reform after 1990; before which the industry was merely the state's propaganda machine. The changes in the Chinese media industry have been significant. As Ma highlighted (2000: 21), "the most distinguishable characteristic of the Chinese media in the 1990s is the tension between rapid commercialization and continued ideological control." Thus, the rise of professional knowledge-based control by journalism's community was hugely expanding during that decade. Rather than market and political control, there was also a trend towards a 'democratization of political communication in

China' (Zhao, 1998: 10). Furthermore, 'gaining freedom with self-discipline can offer more flexibility for China's journalism' (Chen, 2005). The consumer journalists, however, are facing a new challenge: that domestic and global capital forces are becoming a more powerful form of control in daily practice.

For the global media giants, media globalisation brings more economic control over the 'deregulation and privatization of mass media organisations' (Shah, 1998) and an increase in soft news content among the mass media. Hence, the globalisation of the media has enabled foreign media firms to gain entry into the Chinese media system; bringing not only economic force and cultural content but also a new political ideology and the ideal of capitalism. The more the Chinese media system gets involved, the more the system will be affected by the foreign media conglomerates. This was now led to the creation of a new commercial journalism, which is exhibited in different types of news reporting and content which is balanced to attract both readers and advertisers. However, it is vital for the ideals of journalistic objectivity and public service to be rediscovered and restored among consumer journalists.

Consumerism not only brings a new lifestyle to, and social stratification of, the Chinese metropolitan elites, but also causes China's new generation of journalists to reflect on their career beliefs and daily practices. The consumer media, and particularly consumer magazines, are broadly accepted because of their consumer dream-building function. In this sense, the professional practice of consumer magazine journalists can only be centred on accurate sources of information, and the quality of their completed

work. Without ethics, however, how can these journalists theoretically be called journalists?

## **1.5 Study Focus on the Chinese Magazines**

In communication studies, the magazine is a very special media form as its most outstanding feature is its content on which it is based. The content is particularly important as it is what promotes a magazine's values to the public, and thus differentiates a magazine from other media forms. Being a simple media form, the magazine, in its history of development, has reflected the social changes in that have taken place in China.

The development of magazine industry in China has not yet reached a level of maturity on other types of media. Essentially social development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century impeded the consistency of and shortened the magazine's developmental process. Nevertheless, the magazine for mass media communication initiated, in 1815, (see Chapter 2) the process of media development in China. The newspaper and magazine basically belonged to the same category at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were some excellent magazines which reflected the changes of Chinese culture and society in the 1930s. However, the developmental process was interrupted by the social development instigated the Communist Party of China. The process of development did not resume until the 1980s, by which time magazines in other countries [mostly in the west] had had as much as 250 years of continuous development<sup>3</sup>. At the time of the political and social liberalization movement of the

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<sup>3</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary claims that the first general interest periodical was *The Gentleman's Magazine*, published monthly in London from 1731-1907.

1980s and the economic reforms, China's society was in the process of recovering from the effects of The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). For a brief period the Chinese magazine flowered and prospered. The magazine's short period of development during the 1980s provided it with sufficient robustness to withstand the reaction to the events of the Tiananmen Square Protests in 1989.

The magazine in China did not embark on a new stage of development until the 1990s, when the phenomenon of revenge consumption appeared, heralding a recovered growth in consumption levels. Since then international media firms, together with their business operating models and experience in the magazine industry, have been introduced into China. This has led Chinese magazines to have a more global perspective; being open to the world outside. Magazine professionals in China are now able to see their own shortcomings and the achievements of their overseas competitors. The magazine therefore represents the mainstream media as it reflects China's social development. There is, nevertheless, room for further improvement in the magazine industry, which has developed since dramatic changes were first made in 2001. Zhu (2006) argued that the Chinese magazine market was experiencing a long term developmental stage; the industry embarking on a rational and healthy market-oriented path of development in a new era of internationalisation.

Currently, as part of this long term phase, the key element involved in the development process is the on-going entry of leading international magazine brands into the magazine market. Their entry has brought great (but necessary) competitive pressure on domestic counterparts, which cannot compete with the

outstanding advantages of the international brands: their high-profile images, powerful capital, advertising resources, and advanced publishing business plans. The biggest challenge for these international magazine publishers in China is maintaining their unique brand features within the requirements of the rules on localisation. The major challenge facing domestic magazine publishers is the need to modernize their management systems. However, as one of the Government's entry requirements for foreign investors is the need to be 'teamed' with a domestic publisher, this major challenge to the domestic publishers is not insurmountable. The foreign publishing firms are introducing their publishing philosophies, professional training, technologies, management skills, and their publishing business models. In this light, these fresh new ideas will have a great influence on the future of domestic magazine publishing in China.

This era endows magazines with numerous possibilities. A notable trend is the increasing individualization, based not only on content and philosophy but also appearance. The magazine has become a symbol on paper of a certain kind of lifestyle, which as Zhan (2005) explains is expressed in a more purified way, reflecting the 'pure philosophy that is embedded in the magazine with their characteristics.' State politics still has a great influence on the media, and will to some extent still play a crucial role in determining the future of the magazine. The industry has however made remarkable progress and achieved a great deal since the economic reforms thirty years ago. Insight changes have occurred during the past fifteen years, particularly when marketing-oriented economic policies were adopted that were similar to those of other industries. These changes

to the magazine industry were for the most part caused by the transformation of the market rather than politics.

## **1.6 Hypothesis of Study**

The hypothesis consists of three levels enabling the research to focus on journalists' practices over the past twenty-five years.

The first level is the global at which a new occupational ideology and standards have emerged within Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists' practice and thought. This is a new process among consumer journalistic practice in China. There are two reasons for this change. Firstly, the reform of the Chinese magazine industry has required journalists to be capable of fulfilling multi-tasking roles which require technology skills, creative ability and business acumen within the working environment because of the increasing business awareness of the industry. Secondly, investment from western magazine groups has increased the quality of the media sphere. Journalists working in high-end consumer journals are obliged to adopt a global perspective in their work. This is, and will remain, a major trend within the wider process of media globalisation in China.

The second level is the national level where journalists are influenced by the marketization of the internal (domestic) publishers. There are many reasons behind the changes in this occupational ideology in contemporary Chinese magazine journalistic practice. Niche markets of consumer magazines have changed dramatically. The Government's 'Open Door Policy' has increased competition and led to a decrease in the obligation of lifestyle magazines to function as a media mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP). Lifestyle magazines are being forced to change the appearance of their content in a desperate attempt to hold onto their circulation and valuable readers. Market competition has increased financial pressures on magazine firms, and this encourages outlets to explore new avenues for investment and co-operation. The advertorials and special advertising supplements adopt a format with contents intended to replace journalistic feature contents. They are also imbued with all the other contents, news styles, and brand credibility of the magazine in China. However, young Chinese readers desire luxury goods and a 'Western' lifestyle, and seem to become westernised through their consumption. Lifestyle magazines are therefore treated as their 'consumption bible' instead of a 'cultural production'. The journalists who work for lifestyle magazines realise that they are facing pressure not only from their competitors, but also from international advertisers and a desirable national readership. These changes have brought the new professional standards to journalistic practice and thought.

Finally, on an individual level, the practices and ideology of 'professionalism' are becoming an important symbolic resource in the restructuring of the social role and function of the media and its journalists. Obviously, consumer journalists rely more on this symbolization for social status and respect from both readers and the journalism community than other types of journalists. The working environment of Chinese journalists has changed rapidly since the last century. Justice, freedom and objective reporting have played a vital role in the spread of media professionalism in China. However, just as there are many debates in the Western world about the existence of professionalism, these concepts in China are also fiercely contested. Of particular relevance to this study is that the

reporting of consumer news involves a new genre of journalistic practice and ideology. Consequently, there are two major ethical problems facing this development. The first is that the concept and debate about professionalism is being made part of the occupational ideology of consumer journalists. Secondly, the ‘Me Generation’ who focus on their self-interested, apolitical pragmatism and freedom, are not only ‘firewall’ avoiding apply the media’s traditional function as state mouthpiece, but also a reflection of the changing ideology of a new generation of journalists.

## **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

In order to investigate the ethics, autonomy, and daily practice of lifestyle magazine journalists’ professionalism, the thesis is divided into eight chapters. **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 2** provide a background introduction to the research project and the consumer magazine industry in China. Consumer magazines, often called ‘fashion’ magazines in China, enjoy high prices, elegant printing, and high profits. According to the definition of the phrase ‘fashion’, these magazines advertise suitable consumer products to a particular reader’s profile and provide those readers with information about a suitable lifestyle. Therefore, when considering that the content is ‘lifestyle’ specific, the Researcher believes the categorization should be ‘lifestyle’ magazine as opposed to ‘fashion’ or ‘consumer’ magazine for this high-end glossy media production. Through the media globalisation process, the core values of magazines to publishers are brand and copyright of content. China has tapped into these values through the business of co-operation deals.



**Chapter 3** presents the literature review and the theoretical concepts, and **Chapter 4** presents the methodology of analyses. Based on three major theories of journalism study, media globalisation, and consumerism, the Researcher tries to argue the main trends that have occurred in the Chinese magazine industry during the last fifteen years. The news content that consumers of mainstream mass media are often left with is generic and emphasizes titillation, sensational events, and politically 'safe' topics (Shah, 1998). This sort of news content has resulted in the formation of consumerism journalism. In Chapter 4, the discussion of research methods will explain the use of the combined methods of analysis: qualitative analysis, qualitative data analysis and in-depth interviews. The Researcher invited 72 interviewees including Chinese magazine professionals, media researchers and state officials to participate in the study from April 2006 to August 2008 in Beijing, China. The qualitative data such as publications and magazine content were collected twice from October 2006 to February 2007 and then from March 2007 to September 2008.

**Chapter 5** provides an in-depth discussion on the mission and journalistic practice of consumer journalists. Contemporary Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists rarely consider themselves as journalists in the cultural and social order. With encroaching influences from media commercialisation and globalisation, these journalists face some of the pressures that their hard news counterparts do. All of them are facing the new challenge in which capital forces, domestically and globally, are becoming increasingly significant influences on media operations. In **Chapter 5**, the Researcher has also examined the characteristics of contemporary lifestyle magazine journalists. These characteristics consisted of

*internationalisation, self-satisfaction, hyper-skilled labour, commercialisation, self-mockery and fetishism.* In regard to the Researcher's analysis, although today's fashion trends are still at the 'copycat' stage, the data suggests that in the not too distant future Chinese lifestyle magazines will be enjoying a 'professional era'.

**Chapter 6**, analyses the processes of the China Periodical Association (CPA) through interviews with Zhang Bohai, a former executive of the CPA and now the consultant of CPA, and examines the professional standards and working ethics of magazine journalists. Zhang Bohai's controversial role in the globalisation of the Chinese magazine market is also discussed. In addition, the Researcher has examined the two most significant regional business models: the European and American. They are represented by the Chinese editions of *Marie Claire* and *FHM* respectively. These two models succeed by applying their journalists' creativity and independence.

**Chapter 7** compares the ethics and professional standards followed by the main body of journalists and lifestyle magazine journalists. Generally speaking, they all have a low rate of satisfaction with their remunerations and promotion potential. However, the significant difference between them is that the lifestyle magazine journalists are more pessimistic and realistic. Furthermore, magazine journalists have greater opportunities to participate in improvement courses and network face-to-face with their international counterparts. **Chapter 7** concludes that the diversity of experience of the globalisation of media has conferred a similar diversity on the working standards and professional ethics of lifestyle magazine journalism.

In **Chapter 8**, the concluding chapter, the Researcher discusses the overall findings of the study and assesses the professionalisation of Chinese magazine journalists who now contribute to media globalisation and internationalisation. Moreover, the chapter outlines the thesis's possible contribution to the theory of journalism study and magazine study, and also highlights its limitations.

# CHAPTER2. The Historical Development of the Chinese Magazine Industry

## 2.1 Introduction

During the last twenty years, leading international consumer publications like *Elle* and *Vogue* have entered the Chinese glossy high-end magazines market. Today more than 50 foreign-brand publications exist in Mainland China. Chinese and international publishers produce these lifestyle products for consumers and compete fiercely in one of the world's most vigorous and important consumer economies.

As a 'cultural product', magazines carry the interconnection between culture and economy in the Western world (Cave, 2000; Moeran, 2006: 727). This concept has been transferred into China<sup>4</sup> since the liberalisation / opening of the media in the 1990s. It is therefore problematic to categorize any Chinese publication in a particular niche, such as a fashion magazine, women's magazine or men's magazine, because until recently all the glossy high-end consumer magazines competed with each other in a market determined by the reader's actual lifestyle, consumption habits, occupation and income. However, these factors are often in sharp contrast to the luxury goods presented within the text of these high-end magazines and by the publication's price, which is usually 20 CNY/per issue, or nearly 1.8 pounds. By contrast, the daily Chinese

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<sup>4</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all references in this paper to the *magazine market* refers to Mainland China.

newspaper is only 1 or 2 CNY/ per issue (0.9 or 1.8 pence), which is less than ten percent of the cost of a glossy consumer magazine.

There appear to be two primary reasons why high-end magazines have historically failed to directly cater to their audiences. The development of the press, and magazines in particular, was interrupted by the National Internal War and the Cultural Revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The reform of the traditional Chinese periodical industry took place in the 1990s (Zhang<sup>5</sup> Bohai, President of CPA in 2004 to 2008) . Throughout the process of economic liberalization, the Chinese press experienced a period of transition from being politics-centred to having an economic outlook; from being a privileged branch of the authoritarian party-state system to being an industry with ‘private interests within the economic system’ (Zhao, 1998: 118), and from being a state-monopolized structure to being a fragmented and diversified structure. Secondly, for the last twenty years the publishers of high quality Chinese consumer magazines faced both a lack of competition and a huge market demand, while the editors have focused primarily on the portrayal of a nouveaux lifestyle.

But such a quandary is hardly new worldwide. British publishers had similar problems in the 1980s (Ballaster etc., 1991) when many companies believed the consumerism concept was determinative of ‘lifestyle’. Similarly, Chinese publishers today may believe that the concept of ‘lifestyle’ better interprets their editorial goal and thus limits their reporting boundaries. In the Chinese context, the definition of ‘lifestyle’ means a fashionable or desirable attitude and consumer behaviour, and a higher life standard, taste and pursuit, which distinguishes a person from the ordinary population. Thus,

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<sup>5</sup> Interviewed on 07-07-2006, Beijing.

for many media industries in China, the idea of ‘lifestyle’ can produce a sustained sense of consumption and expanded consumer culture (Guo, 2008), so they must therefore satisfy the needs of advertisers and other business sectors. In addition, the media content suggests a lack of interest in segmenting readership by gender or other categories, thus allowing for a broad expansion of the target readership. From a business perspective, this might appear beneficial to potential advertisers and boost profits.

International magazines, nevertheless, have since the 1990s reaped the profits of business success through a combination of the burgeoning popularity of consumerism, unique but high quality consumer contents, and advanced business models in a market with few competitors. The success of the international magazines is due to three other key factors: (i) the diversity of co-operation models in China and the relatively low costs of production (translation *versus* locally produced content). Although current regulations stipulate that at least 50% of the content of fashion magazines must be locally produced, official documents do not indicate any penalties for reducing locally produced content to between 10% and 40%. (ii) The use of commercialised reports to take the place of locally produced content. (iii) The reliance on advertising as opposed to circulation sales to enhance profitability. This situation has arisen partly because most of the international magazine partners have not set up long-term business plans. The insecurity of the Chinese entry policy concerning the media industry and the rapidly changing magazine market hinder the development of long-term business plans, which are also affected because the Chinese magazine industry works at a low-grade and development level.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Pin Li, the Director of China Periodical Research Institution, Beijing,

If ‘Development – Growth – Shakeout – Maturity –Decline’ is the model of a magazine’s lifecycle, and it is applied to the magazine market and industry, as media expert and critic Zhu Xuedong’s (2006) suggests, be heading towards a new magazine era is advancing. The magazine industry would therefore appear to a rational and favourable marketisation in the future.

## 2.2 Historical Perspective

The foundations of China’s magazine industry were laid when the English language periodical *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, printed by Robert Morrison and edited by William Milne (Zhang, X. 2007: 36) arrived. Although the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* was aimed at the population of mainland of China, the printing works were located in Malacca (now the smallest state in Malaysia). The first periodical magazine to be printed in China (in Canton, now Guangzhou) was the American missionary Elijah Bridgman’s *The Chinese Repository* in 1832, although Zhang Xiantao claimed the honour should go to the Prussian Karl Gutzlaff’s *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* in 1833 (Zhang, X. 2007: 39).

Missionary magazines were predominant until the end of the century when in 1898; the first illustrated magazine *Mengxue Bao* (Children’s Educator) was launched in Shanghai. In 1902, the political movement Tongmenghui [known as either the Chinese United League or Chinese Revolutionary Alliance] founded the *Dalu* (The Continent) magazine in Shanghai. The monthly periodical exemplified the complexity of the political landscape during this period. Two decades later, the best known early 20<sup>th</sup>

century Chinese periodicals, *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) and *Liangyou Huabao* (Young Companion) appeared. *Xin Qingnian* launched in 1925 in Guangzhou, and *Liangyou Huabao* appeared in 1926 in Shanghai. *Xin Qingnian* was the most influential Chinese magazine of the 1920s, reporting political and cultural issues of the Revolution. The magazine represented one of the most significant intellectual movements of the 20th century, the May Fourth Movement, and was important for modern Chinese intellectual history. By contrast, the glossy entertainment magazine *Liangyou Huabao* was seen as the first of the leisure magazines; responding to the dissemination of the new Western concept of leisure time in the 1930s.

Business-to-business (B2B) journals also began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the publication of *Nongxue Bao* (Gazettes of Agricultural Science) in 1897. This periodical along with *Shang Bao* (Business Report), which launched in 1903, and *Yinhang Zhoukan* (Bank Weekly) which started in 1917, pioneered B2B magazines in China.

### **2.2.1 Periodicals Development in Media History**

The development of Chinese periodicals in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, was similar to, and parallel with, the development of newspapers. This parallel development occurred for two reasons. Firstly, magazines and newspapers were the most important sectors in the media industry; indeed the word 'baokan' (newspaper-journal) applies to both of them, just as they were now known collectively as 'print media'. Secondly, Xinwen Baokan Si (the Newspaper-journal Department) of GAPP oversaw the administration of all print media.



By the late 1970s the number of magazine titles had risen to between 930 (Liu, 2008) and 1200 (Howkins, 1982: 87). Over the next two and a half decades their growth was exponential; 9468 titles being counted in Liu's speech (Liu, 2008). During this period from 1978-2006, the newspaper and periodicals industry had experienced three distinct stages of growth: Phase 1 from 1990 to 1993, Phase 2 from 1994 to 1999, and Phase 3 from 2000 to 2004 (Liu, 2008). Among these stages, the most thriving stage was the period from 2000 to 2004. This closely mirrored the overall economic development in China, and as Liu (2008) argued the industry was able to take advantage of the emergence of marketing oriented strategies and was thus able to strengthen its competitiveness.

The systematic reform and management of the newspaper and periodical industry initiated by the Chinese government since 2003 is the most important structural reform since 1949. Since the reform programme took effect, 282 newspapers and 432 periodicals have ceased being published, with the reduction in circulation of 1.2 billion copies and a subscription worth 500 million CNY (approximately 45 million GBP) in China (Liu, 2008). The most important aspect of the reform programme is that central authorities no longer have any administrative power over circulation and management. These measures have removed the commercial connections between the authorities and the business management of newspapers and periodicals. This has been consequently improved the resource division and has played a positive role in the industrial development of newspapers and periodicals. It has created a healthy and equal environment for the industry.

Three trends have emerged during the last twenty years. The first trend is that the structural changes in the magazine industry have led to a healthier and more beneficial business environment. In the process of changing from the planned economy to the market-oriented economy, fewer non-commercialised magazines are involved in the industry as the market-oriented magazines gain influence. This trend is a direct result of the change of market and the policies that guide the industry, in which there are two key factors. The development of a large scale market-oriented economy has led to the reduction of state owned enterprises and publicly funded units, which in turn has increased the pressure on non-publicly funded publishers to succeed in an increasingly competitive industry. The traditional subscription sales mode for newspapers and magazines (i.e. publicly funded sales) has consequently experienced an unprecedented and difficult situation. In 2003, the government took 395 magazines out of circulation (CPA, 2003: 4). The second factor is the removal of control in management and distribution from central authorities, increasing the responsibilities of the publishers. The side effect of this change is that the capacity of the traditional distribution channels has shrunk to the point where distribution of government owned magazines and newspapers is limited.

The second trend is a consequence of the removal of publicly funded subscriptions, in that magazines are increasingly reliant on income generated by commercial advertisements and circulation sales. Commercial advertisements exert a great influence on the circulation of magazines. According to the statistics, the readership of the high priced fashion magazines with a monthly income of at

least 3,000 CNY (270 GBP) who purchase 3.4% of aggregate sales, has increased from 5.9% in 2002 to 13.2% in 2005 (Zhu, 2006). The readership of news and current affairs magazines with a monthly income of at least 2,000 CNY (180 GBP) has increased from 13.8% in 2002 to 26% in the same period (Zhu, 2006). However, in the survey of CMMS (China Marketing and Media Study), the same target income groups purchase 9.3% and 15.4% of the respective aggregate sales (Zhu, 2006).

The third trend is the influence that consumers have on the magazine industry. Female consumers (with their high degree of 'title' loyalty) are major factors in the development of the magazine industry. Their importance is underlined by the existence of surveys on specific topics aimed at determining out which female consumers (particularly those who purchase lifestyle magazines) are interested in the commercial advertisements in the magazines, and if so whether they consider those advertisements as being an important element of them. This is good news for the enterprises that place the advertisements, because this is symbol of acceptance among the readership for their products. A key function of a magazine is to connect these two groups and their interests.

According to the data provided by the Press and Publication Administration, there were 59 Chinese editions of foreign magazines in 2008, of which 23 were categorized as consumer magazines (Sun, 2008). International magazines have experienced relative success because of low levels of competition in China's market since 1990s. Many of these publications combine a minimum of content produced or edited locally, featured alongside advertisements or advertorial content. This disparity is partly

because most international-Chinese magazine publishers have not set up long-term business plans with their partners in the Chinese media market (Zhang, Xiaoqiang<sup>7</sup>). This media market often experiences unclear and changeable policies concerning foreign businesses directly connected to the rapidly changing nature of China's market.

In terms of profit structures, magazines in China can be classified into circulation-driven and advertisement-driven models. Magazines adopting the former model aim to reach low-income readers, while those adopting the latter achieve their revenues mainly through advertisements targeted at higher-income readers such as the wealthy urban youth or the newly emergent middle class. Figures (Wei, 2007: 280) show that in 2007 only one in four periodicals relied on the circulation-driven model, and that less than half of the titles utilizing it had made a profit. These statistics illustrate the impetus for most local and international glossy magazines to enter into the 'lifestyle' and 'female fashion' categories in China before 2005; because they deduced that the market was filled with advertising and ready-target readers.

Nevertheless, since the 1990s, international magazines have experienced business success as a by-product of the burgeoning popularity of consumerism, unique but high-quality consumer content and advanced business models in a market with few competitors (Ma, 2007). Moreover, the proliferation of international magazines in China is linked to other key factors: The diversity of co-operation models in China and the relatively low costs of production (Lin, 2007). Although current regulations stipulate that at least 50% of the content of fashion magazines must be locally

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<sup>7</sup> Interviewed on 30-07-2008, Beijing, China.

produced, official documents do not indicate any penalties for reducing locally produced content from between 10% to 40%. In short, the instability of the Chinese policy hinders the development of long-term business plans, and thus the Chinese magazine industry works at a low-grade development level (Li, Pin<sup>8</sup>).

It is additionally important to comprehend the nuances within this shifting industry. By understanding title and circulation, revenue and characteristics, readership profile, distribution and advertising, and transition versus transnational policies in China, one can better grasp the new paradigm of the Chinese lifestyle magazine.

### 2.2.1.1 Title and Circulation

There were 9,468 magazine titles in China in 2005. They can be divided into three major categories: Consumer, Business to Business (B2B) and academic and professional journals (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1 China Magazine Market by number of Titles 2005**



The majority of these are B2B periodicals (4,899) followed by

<sup>8</sup> Interviewed on 16-11-2006, Beijing, China.

Academic and Professional Journals (3,500) and Consumer magazines (1,200). There were 3,151 monthlies, 2,857 bi-monthlies, and 2,230 quarterlies in 2003. The aggregate sales figures amounted to 2.758 billion in 2005.<sup>9</sup>

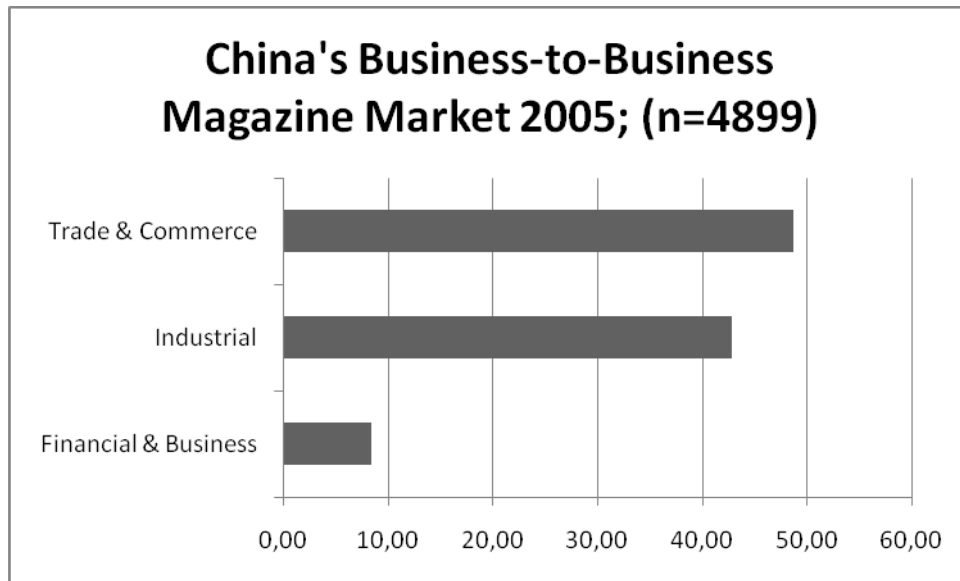
Although, as mentioned earlier, the magazine market experienced exponential growth in titles from 1978 to 2006, there had been a sharp decline in the number of consumer magazine titles since the Government's reform programme in 2003. In the two-year period since the Government reforms were enacted, almost 50% of the 2,300 consumer titles in 2003 had ceased production by 2005. The categories of B2B and Academic and Professional journals were the only categories that experienced growth in both magazine numbers and their percentage of total magazine titles over the same period. This trend reflects an increasing market demand for B2B and Academic scientific magazines and the fierce competition in the Consumer magazine market.

Each of the three major categories of the magazine market can be further divided into sub-categories, see Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.

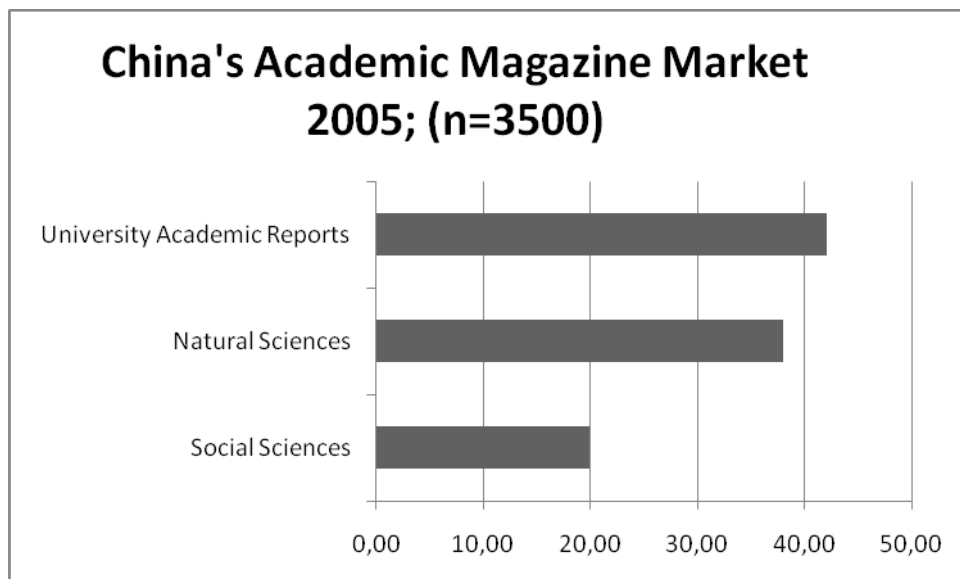
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<sup>9</sup> All the statistical data from section 2.2.1 onwards, comes from unpublished Chinese language documents which China Periodical Association provided to FIPP 36<sup>th</sup> International Congress. Authorization to reproduce the data, in this thesis, was granted by President Zhang Bohai in May, 2007.

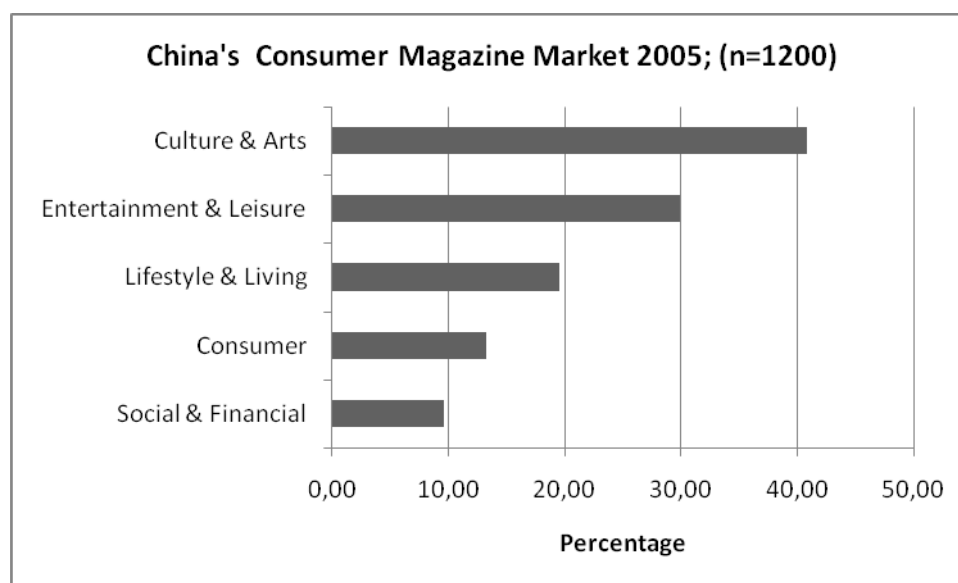
**Figure 2.2 China's Business to Business Magazine Market by number of Titles (2005)**



**Figure 2.3 China's Academic Magazine Market by number of Titles (2005)**



**Figure 2.4 China's Consumer Magazine Market by number of Titles (2005)**



### 2.2.1.2 Revenue and Characteristics

The majority of Chinese magazines are owned by government-funded institutions in China. As there are not any new Government owned or funded periodicals, by default all 2000 periodicals that have entered the magazine market wholly rely on non-governmental funding or subsidies (CPA, 2003). Non-government owned magazines in China operate within the parameters of one of two models, either circulation-driven or advertisement-driven. However, according to industry estimates, approximately two-thirds of all magazines in China chronically lose money (CPA, 2003-2006 Collection).

In 2005, 154 billion CNY (approximately 14 billion GBP<sup>10</sup>) was generated in circulation revenue. The Chinese media's total advertising revenue during that year was 67.5 billion CNY

<sup>10</sup> ISO 4217 Currency Code List refers to China's currency the Renimbi as CNY and the British Pound as GBP. At the time of going to press the CNY:GBP exchange rate was fluctuating around 10CNY:1GBP.



(approximately 6.1 billion GBP) in 2005; an increase of 17.3 % compared to 2004. Advertising revenue in the magazine market in 2005 was 2.49 billion CNY (approximately 227 million GBP), which amounts to 3.7% of the total advertising revenue (Yu, 2006: 3). The magazine market's share of advertising within China is still relatively small compared to other media sectors in China as well as other magazine markets around the world. Nevertheless, the growth of magazine advertising in China averaged 33% per year between 1984 and 2002 (Yu, 2006: 3-5).

In the consumer magazine category in 2005, the gross advertisement revenue of the top ten ranking consumer magazines was 2.1 billion CNY (approximately 190 million GBP), which equates to 33% of the total magazine advertisement market in China (Yu, 2006: 3-5). Furthermore, eight of the Top Ten magazines were international brands: *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health*, *Esquire*, *Bazaar*, *Rayli Fashion* and *Rayli Cloth* and *Fortune China*. As Lu (2006) highlighted, "the main challenge to these magazines is the fact that their business models are still circulation-driven. For instance, *Reader* is estimated to have received RMB 66 million in gross advertisement revenues in 2004, which is only 22% of the advertisement revenue received by the Chinese *Cosmopolitan*. However the official circulation of the former is five times that of the latter." At the same time, the B2B sector which dominates the magazine market by quantity of its titles but has fewer readers and a smaller share of the advertising revenue than other sectors, is expected to grow rapidly in the future.

In terms of characteristics, there are two significant features that seem to drive consumer-purchasing psychology. The first is that

Chinese readers prefer to buy glossy fashion magazines with more pages, placing emphasis on ‘the thicker, the better’, according to a Chinese ICP NetEase survey (2007). This is likely a by-product of the high price of the magazine. From a business perspective, the publishers of Chinese glossy magazines also wish to produce a thick publication in order to illustrate their ability to attract advertisers. Examples of such ‘big books’ in China include the 20th anniversary edition of *Elle* (September-2008) which printed 1,000 pages, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary edition of *Trends Bazaar* (October-2009) which featured 950 pages. Rohn (2010: 245) wrote: “The fact that Chinese editions are printed in higher quality paper than their Western counterparts, and, also higher than domestic magazines, is rooted in the fact that this is what Chinese readers expect from Western magazine brands as they see the Western brands as status symbols.” In addition, international magazine publishers and their Chinese partners see these western brands as the advertising vehicles to attract the multinational advertisers. The ratio of advertising revenue to circulation revenue of the most popular consumer titles in China’s magazine market is 75:25, which is the highest among the world’s magazine markets (Huang, 2008).

Thus, the magazines those have translation and copyright agreements with foreign companies have purchased most of the advertising space, leaving only a fraction of advertising space to the local Chinese magazines.

### **2.2.1.3 Readership Profile**

China’s publishing industry has at the present the basic economic and structural conditions and ample space to develop rapidly.

China’s young and youth populations, based on the 2007 figures,

equate to 270 million and 303 million respectively, representing a sizeable potential readership for the magazine industry.<sup>11</sup> The profile of readers in China is 2.31 billion daily readers each with an average daily reading time of 46 minutes. The profile of a typical magazine reader is: Female, healthy and active, aged 34 to 35 years, who is a university graduate with an income higher than the national average (Yu, 2006: 3-4). The average literate person reads 7.4 magazines per year. The majority of China's urban population (68.2%) read magazines, whereas slightly less than half (47.9%) of the rural populations reads them. Urban readers on average purchase 11.3 copies, whereas the rural readers purchase 5.3 copies (Yu, 2006: 3-5).

The emphasis that the magazine market places on female readers and the potential markets of youth (teenager) and youngsters (children) is clearly visible in the number of titles available to these three specific sectors in the market (Table 2.5)<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 2.5 Gender and Age Specific Consumer magazines (%) (n=260)**

	Women	Men	Elderly	Teenagers	Children
Titles	29	3	7	36	25

Consumer preference (based on sales figures) indicates a strong preference for leisure time activities (Table 2.6)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> UNESCO defines the ages of youth as 15-24 while the World Bank ways it is 15-25. The CIA Factbook contradicts China's demographics for youth, claiming it is 15-29 which is 22.8% of the 2007 population.

<sup>12</sup> Data collected from unpublished Chinese documents which the China Periodical Association provided to FIPP 36<sup>th</sup> International Congress, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Data collected from unpublished Chinese documents which the China Periodical Association provided to FIPP 36<sup>th</sup> International Congress, 2007.

**Table 2.6 Readers' preferences for Consumer Magazines (n=184)**

Classification	Titles (%)
Healthcare & Sports	28
Home living	26
Computer	15
Travel	15
Auto	11
Food	3
Pets	2

Professionals' preferences reflect the importance of economic sectors in the burgeoning national economic development (Table 2.7)

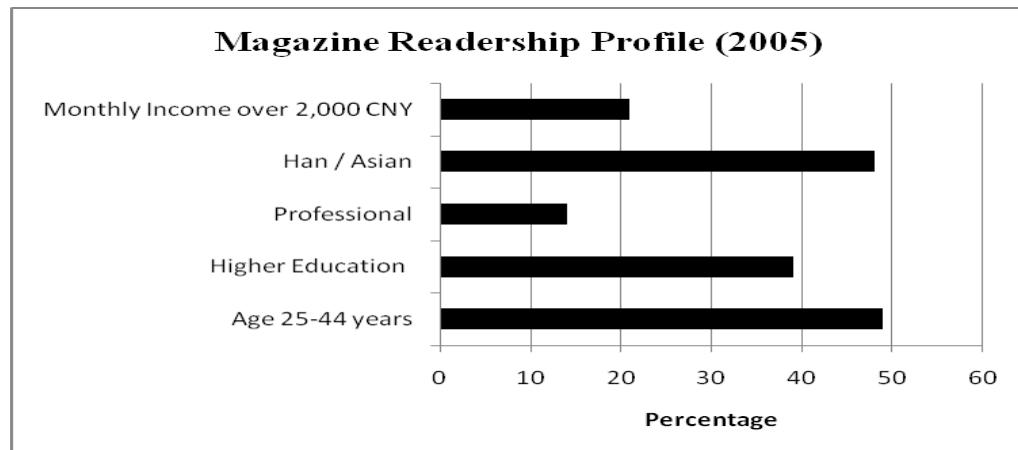
**Table 2.7 Readers' preferences for Business to Business Magazines (%) (n=2831)**

Category	Titles
Manufacturing & Engineering	40.76
Medical	16.32
Agriculture, Farming, Fishing	14.52
Economy	7.21
Computer, Internet, Communication	7.06
Transportation	5.48
Management	3.50
Finance	2.40
Service Trades	1.41
Accounting	1.34

Due to China's rapid economic development the number of graduates from higher education has increased. This has consequently led to an increase in the size of the high income social group. As a result the core potential of magazine readers has increased on a yearly basis. According to market research data

collated from 2004-2005, 39% of the core readership is aged 25-44 years, 39% have graduated from higher education and 14% have gained a professional qualification. Consequently 22% earn a monthly income of at least 2,000CNY (Roughly 190 GBP).

**Table 2.8 Magazine Readership Profile in 36 cities (2005)**



#### 2.2.1.4 Advertising

“The magazine should be designed mainly for their readers, then for the commercial advertisements.” This is the principle that Hachette Filipacchi Medias inherited from Lagardere Medias Group when considering the proportion of commercial advertising revenue and circulation revenue against the contents of the magazines. However, this principle cannot be applied in the Chinese market. The essential theoretical revenue-specific problem facing magazine markets anywhere in the world concerns the aspect of content independence based on (i) the size of the target audience and (ii) the influence of advertisers. If the target audience is too small to bear the costs of production, advertising revenue becomes a major factor with a large degree of influence on content. For instance, in France where Hachette Filipacchi Medias is based, the income from circulation is almost twice that of advertising revenue, which is relatively

common in the European market. If we compare this with the highly commercialised situation in US, it is not surprising that French magazines are able to keep their independence and not feel threatened by interference from commercial advertisers. The explanation for the most popular titles in China's magazine market having such a high reliance on advertising revenue is the size of their target audience. Their core readership consists of young professionals who comprise a very small percentage of the national population. As this small target group cannot meet the sales budget that would ensure a profit, the magazines have to rely on advertising revenue.

Table 2.9 below shows the different age groups and incomes of the readers of *Trends Cosmopolitan*, *Elle* and *Rayli Her Style*, the three most widely circulated lifestyle magazines in China. The readers of all three magazines are high income earners, with 75% earning over 3000 CNY (approximately 270 GBP). This is substantially more than the average monthly income of the Chinese population which is 979.9 CNY (approximately 88 GBP) (NBSC, 2007).

**Table 2.9 Age group and income of *Trends Cos*, *Elle*, *Rayli Her Style* (Zeno Management, 2006)**

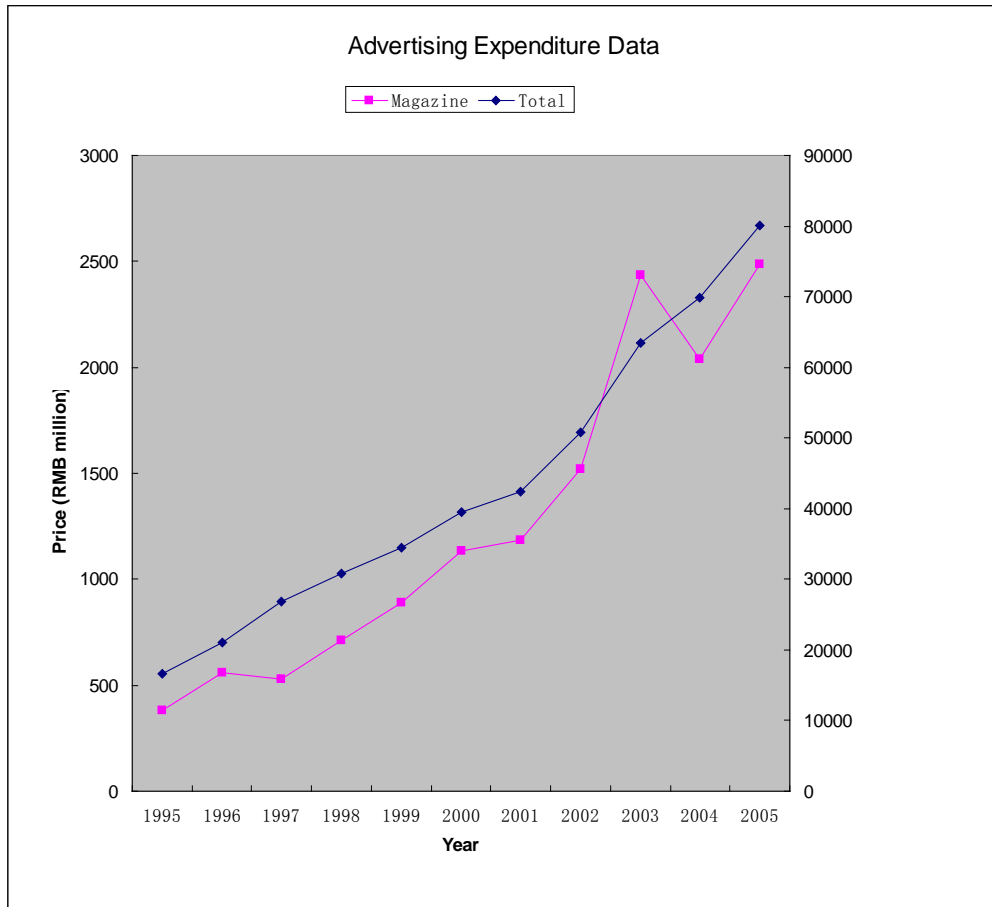
Titles	Age years (%)				Monthly Income CNY (%)			
	< 24	25-34	35-41	>42	< 2999	3000 to 4999	5000 to 9998	>10000
<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	30.2	48.6	12.8	8.4	16.4	24.6	35.1	23.9
<i>Elle</i>	28.2	52.3	11.5	8	23.7	30.4	30.4	15.6
<i>Rayli Her Style</i>	51.9	37.7	6.5	3.9	22.4	37.4	25.2	15

In China, the advertising industry has developed rapidly in recent years (see Table 3.0). In 2006, the expenditure for advertising in China stood at 155.5 billion CNY (approximately 14 billion GBP), up by 18% compared to the same period the year before. The cosmetics industry was the dominant player spending 25.6 billion CNY (approximately 2.3 billion GBP). This was followed by medicine and the commerce and service and food and beverage industries. Starting 2007, it is predicted that the global advertising market will maintain an annual growth rate of approximately 5%. Significantly, the growth rate of the Chinese advertising market is estimated to increase by 19%. Furthermore, advertising spending in China reached 386.6 billion CNY (approximately 33 billion GBP) in 2007, with television representing 81% of the total. However, the fastest growing sector was magazine advertising, which posted a 27% year-on-year growth in expenditure, giving it a 2% share of the overall advertising market. The industry sectors with the largest advertising expenditures were pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and toiletries, and retail services. Nielsen<sup>14</sup> indicated (Davies, 2007), the combined advertising expenditure of these three sectors accounted for over half of the total market.

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<sup>14</sup> The Nielsen Company is a global information and media company with leading market positions in marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement.

**Table 3.0 Advertising Expenditure of Magazines and all other media**



Based on *ZenithOptimedia 2006*

*Excludes agency commission and production costs but includes classified advertising, before discounts*

Lifestyle magazines, particularly those in co-operative ventures with foreign publishers, comprise the most dominant subdivision of the Consumer magazine sector in receiving advertising expenditure. For example, Table 3.1 shows the gross of advertising revenue of the top ten magazines in March 2008; eight of the ten were foreign brands, while the only two national brands were *Trends Housing* and *National Geography*.



**Table 3.1 Advertising expenditure of the Top Ten lifestyle magazines in March 2008**

Advertising Revenue of the Top Ten lifestyle magazines in March 2008		
Rank	Title	Revenue (CNY)
1	Trends Cosmopolitan	14,250,000
2	Elle	13,270,000
3	Trends Bazaar	11,050,000
4	Rayli Fashion & Beauty	10,970,000
5	Rayli Her Style	10,230,000
6	Trends Esquire	8,760,000
7	Marie Claire	7,240,000
8	Trends Housing	5,360,000
9	Trends Women's Health	4,230,000
10	National Geography	4,020,000

Resource from 2008 《Monthly Report of Chinese Advertising market》

The figures in Table 3.0 clearly show that Chinese advertisers do not consider the majority of Chinese magazines as being their first choices in the market, opting instead for international (foreign) brands. Hayers (1968) stated that “...many magazines really don't offer much of interest to the average Chinese and tend to be read on a subscription basis by those in a particular interest group, thereby limiting advertisers' interest.” Li (2008: 62) also summarised the problem, stating that “the quality magazines which have translation and copyright co-operation agreements with foreign companies have acquired most of the advertising space budget and the advertising revenue leaving only a fraction to the local Chinese

magazines. Lacking in advertising revenue, the local Chinese magazines are deprived of the capital needed to develop content and growth”. Despite the lack of competition from these local magazines [which represent the vast majority of the lifestyle sector], competition has reached unprecedented levels on the news stand. Circulation managers started a ‘cover-mounted gift’ war in 2005. The ‘cover mounted gift’ was not a new marketing innovation. However, the increasing frequency of its use was a growing problem as it proved expensive for all the competitors in the market. For example, the October 2005 issue of *Vogue* had a cover-mounted sample of a Dior lipstick, which was worth more than 120CNY. This was far more expensive than the magazine’s price of 20CNY. The consequences for the local Chinese magazines were dire. Li (2008: 62) concluded that most of the “women’s fashion magazines of Chinese publishers without foreign partners have disappeared without trace. There are still magazines struggling to live under the support of business enterprises or sponsors. However, those remaining ones lack the ability to compete with the market leaders. ”

#### **2.2.1.5 Distribution**

With 60,000 outlets The Chinese Post Office holds a monopoly on the distribution of mass market magazines (Baensch, 2004:41). Post Office outlets, many of which have retail display counters with magazines on sale, also accept subscription orders. However the Post Office charges the publishers an average of 40% of the cover price and furthermore the subscribers’ data is retained at the local Post Office at branch level (Baensch, 2004: 41). In China’s magazine market, an overwhelming 80% of total sales have

traditionally moved through the Post Office channel, with the balance being single copy sales, mostly at newsstands. (Lin, 2007) Wei's research showed that only a quarter of periodicals have adopted the circulation-driven model, of which less than half have made an operating profit (Wei, 2007:280).

### **2.2.2 Industry Reform**

The reform of the traditional Chinese periodical industry has been taking place since the 1990s. The opening up of the Chinese media market to non-government funded publications is partly due to the new regulatory regime for the media. In an effort to rationalize the media sector, the Chinese General Administration of Press & Publications (GAPP) has, since July of 2002, no longer required Communist Party members who subscribed to many of the turgid, grey newspapers, magazines, and journals published by ministries and municipalities. GAPP has also banned mandatory subscriptions that many publications depended on. Essentially the Chinese press industry, in the process of economic marketisation, is making a transitional move on three levels: (i) from a politically-controlled to a market-driven business environment; (ii) from being a privileged representative of the authoritarian party-state system to being an industry with private interests within the economic system, and (iii) from being a state-monopoly to a fragmented and diversified structure.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) sought to promote a business model in which the economic of the free-market be compatible with CPC editorial control. One of the fundamental strategies that the CPC employed to achieve this unlikely compatibility was to establish regulatory high entry barriers when

the periodical market was made available to international publishers. The key barrier was ‘co-operative’ ventures. Nevertheless, the new era endowed magazines with numerous possibilities, among which was the trend for them to become increasingly individualized.

The CPC’s politics and policies still have great influence upon the activities of the media and retain a crucial role in determining the future of the magazine market. However, as with other industries, the most conspicuous changes that have occurred in the magazine industry were mainly caused by adjustments in the market rather than the CPC’s politics.

In conclusion, the CPC sought to take western business models and re-mould them with the characteristics of Chinese culture so that “then the Chinese people can completely gain benefits from their own culture and make the sustainable development, which combines the essence of both western and Chinese cultures” (Li, 2007). The Chinese editions of foreign consumer magazine brands produced in co-operative agreements are examples of these combined cultural productions.

### **2.2.3 Policy and Regulation**

A triumvirate of central authorities controls China’s media: The General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP), The State Council and the Central Propaganda Department (CPD). Although all three are interrelated (as CPC organs) their activities are not always harmonious (Baensch, 2004: 30). Whereas the CPD has direct overall control of the newspaper industry, GAPP is tasked with managing the magazine market. Nevertheless, licenses for new publications for agreements overseen by GAPP need approval from

the CPD. GAPP does however control the issuing of Periodical Registration Numbers (PRN), which all publications with nationwide distribution are required to display. The PRN indicates the region in which the publication is registered, its format, and sometimes the subject matter it covers.

Current rules and regulations on Sino-foreign publishing co-operation dictate that licensing is an acceptable means of bringing international magazines into China as long as the content does not violate any rules on political sensitivity, pornography, or a few other 'no fly' zones. Licensing faces few if any regulatory hurdles, although the Chinese licensee needs to obtain approvals from GAPP. There are also policy guidelines restricting the ratio of imported content (30%) to local content (70%) and the relative size of the imported brand's identification on the front cover versus the local licensee's brand.

GAPP released The Periodical Publishing Regulation on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2005, which was implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005 (GAPP, 2005). This is the first regulation in China's media history to concern the magazine industry specifically. The regulation has been viewed as positively as other media regulations: "...it is fair to say that China has clarified a confusing area of media restrictions and regulations" (McCullagh, 2007). While some new areas of investment are offered, other areas of permitted investment, especially printing and distribution are simply restatements of existing policy. Nevertheless, the State Council directive is emphatic about content ownership and control in any sector. However, what that means to outside investors is unclear and ambiguous. Although some international media companies have equity stakes, of sorts, in Chinese publishing companies, all central

regulations and directives are interpreted at provincial, regional and local levels. In a country where some domestic publishing companies are 'quasi-private', what is meant by non-state capital will be the subject of much debate. Moreover, the fabled grey area of Chinese business is unlikely be banished by new directives from the State Council. There currently appears to be less room for manoeuvre.

In April 2006, Liu Binjie, GAPP's Deputy Director General, stated that the foreign news agencies, broadcasting groups and news report agencies can set up their own offices in China with approval from the Chinese government, and can undertake ordinary interview activities. During this speech, Liu (GAPP, 2006), speaking regard to the publishing field indicated that foreign newspapers, periodicals and books rather than being totally denied entry into China, simply need to follow the regulations on how to gain access to the country. Liu also stated that there were three major channels of entry into China. The first channel was through the import and export trade companies in China. The second channel was through individual subscription. Subscribers had the right and freedom to subscribe to any newspaper or magazine and gain access to books from all over the world on every subject; there was no limitation on the number of their subscriptions. The third channel was through copyright co-operation. There were many instances of newspapers, periodicals and books from different countries that had established collaboration agreements in China. As this channel was open to any publishing institution, this was possibly the best way to enter the Chinese market. Any publishing related company or commercial group was able to have a collaboration agreement within t the publishing industry in terms of a retail and wholesale business. Liu

also stated that the presence of numerous foreign publications concerned with technology, culture and education in the Chinese market was determined by the current situation and requirements of social development.

Although China, through the policy changes of the last ten years seems to have opened up the markets to foreign publishers, as Jeff Sprafkin (2007) contended, China was simply reinforcing many existing regulations. The big difference, he noted, was that the government made clear it had the right to squeeze violators out of the flourishing grey areas of publishing (Sprafkin, 2007). There remained a disagreement on the practicality of the range of entry methods, as Li (2008: 62) explains:

*“Chinese scholars have different opinions regarding the patterns of foreign publishers and their capital’s entry into China market. Some believe that there are three ways for international cooperation including joint investment, co-publishing and copyright or translation rights sales. Others summarize the development as the following five methods: joint ventures like Global China Media Service Co., Ltd set up by People’s Daily together with Sing Tao News Corporation Limited from Hong Kong; overall cooperation such as Electronic Products China by Publishing House of Electronics Industry and International Data Group (IDG); co-investments in projects like Mickey Mouse including investments by Posts & Telecom Press in China together with Egmont from Denmark; copyright license such as Elle sold by Hachette Filipacchi Media to Shanghai Translation Publishing House; and advertising agency service agreements like that provided by Asia In-flight Ltd for the CAAC In-flight Magazine published by General Administration of Civil Aviation of China.”*

## 2.3 Chinese Consumer Magazine Industry

### 2.3.1 Rise of Consumer Magazines

“When members of the general public think about magazines, they tend to have consumer titles in mind.” (Morrish, 1996: 4) In China, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Forbes*, *Auto*, *Golf* and *China Women* are all consumer periodicals which can be divided into a multitude of subdivisions, e.g., fashion magazines, financial magazines, sports magazines, women’s magazines, etc.

The year of 1993 not only witnessed the birth of the fashion magazine in China but also the emergence of high-class brands, such as Elizabeth Arden and Pierre Cardin. This is when the culture of famous brands began to appear.

Hachette Filipacchi Medias<sup>15</sup> was the first international consumer media group to enter the magazine market in 1988 with *Elle*. When the Chinese version of *Elle* was launched, it incurred high translation and revision costs. However, the magazine now has more local content, the quality of which is improving (Zhang, 2006). Hearst Magazine International and IDG in a co-operation agreement with Trends Media Group imported *Cosmopolitan* in 1988. Although both *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* are defined as fashion or women’s magazine in the Western world, they chose to enter the ‘lifestyle’ subdivision of the consumer market in China. Chaney defines lifestyle as “patterns of action that differentiate people embedded in a culture of consumerism and invested with ethical and

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<sup>15</sup> In 2006, Hachette Filipacchi Medias (HFM) became known as Lagardère Active. In order to avoid confusion, as this thesis covers the period of China’s magazine market from 1988 to 2007, HFM is used in all references to Lagardère Active pre and post name change activities.



aesthetic significance” (Jackson, Brooks etc. al.; 2001: 182).

Michael Vermeulen, the founding editor of GQ defined it more succinctly as a euphemism for “fashion and neat shit to buy” (Jackson, Brooks etc. al.; 2001: 182). The Researcher argues that the term ‘lifestyle magazine’ is more suitable to most international brands and their counterparts in the Chinese magazine market than either ‘consumer’ or ‘fashion magazine’. There are three reasons for this argument.

Firstly, *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, and even *FHM* in China all claim that by advocating consumer products to their readers they promote a better lifestyle for the emerging urban elites. Secondly, the concept of a ‘lifestyle magazine’ is more focused than ‘consumer magazine’, and is directly related to the niche market in the magazine industry. Thirdly, ‘lifestyle magazines’ in China are defined as high-end glossy magazines, most of which have international co-operation partners or parent magazines overseas, which contrast with the domestically produced black-and-white women’s or family magazines.

WTO-mandated reforms are already bringing long-awaited diversification and new players into the Chinese magazine distribution business and shrinking the dominating role of the post office in China. Chinese magazine publishers are beginning to benefit from the introduction of competition in the distribution sector. At the same time, the rapid development of the Chinese economy has led to the growth of the higher educated and high-income social group. This in turn has increased the magazines’ core readership. As Borton (2004) pointed out, “the proliferation of market economy led the news media to become privatized, more

commercial, combative and fiercely competitive”. From the Chinese media professional’s point of view, the development of Chinese periodicals is less than 30 years old and very immature in comparison with the western periodical’s evolution, which has spanned over 200 years. Consequently, many magazine professionals place great expectations on co-operation models with western brands to achieve domestic success in China.

However, Wei (2007) criticized the advertising revenue of Chinese magazines as being heavily concentrated on very few high-end glossy consumer magazines with the international media giant’s involvement. Most top ten high-end glossy magazines have over 100 million RMB Yuan (nearly 9 million GBP) of advertising revenue, but less than a hundred thousand copies per month in circulation (Zhang, Xiaoqiang<sup>16</sup>). This demonstrates that the Chinese periodicals market is still chaotic and far from being fully developed. While the top five of the most popular magazines earn advertising revenue in excess of 10 million CNY (nearly 0.9 million GBP, see Table 2.6) they have circulation figures of less than 12,000 copies. Therefore, the urgent task facing Chinese publishers is to establish their own path or model of development for the magazine industry, which will in turn enable them to reach the international standard and create their own success. However, as Li (2008: 59) pointed out, “to some extent, the global publishers working with Chinese publishers present a range of concern, danger and risk.” Li used *Rolling Stone*’s Chinese case as an example of investing risk in Chinese market. “In March 2006, the Chinese music magazine, *Audio Visual World* once had translation rights and copyright co-operation with the world famous popular music

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<sup>16</sup> Interviewed on 28-08-2009, Beijing, China.

magazine *Rolling Stone*, but ended with one issue published. *CANCAM*, *World Fashion Dynamics*, *Happy*, *Trends House*, *Trends Style*, *The Young Beauty Consumers* all stopped publication during 2006 and 2007” (2008:59). Most of them were stopped by Chinese publishers due to the high financial risk and low reward. These Chinese publishers usually thought (foreign) international magazines should work as cash machines, so that none of them would set long term plans for their co-operating magazines. Few magazines were stopped by the international publishers. This is because these international magazine publishers used their Chinese issues to test the local market and subsequently found it hard to earn their return. Interestingly, none of the lifestyle magazines was stopped by the Chinese government according to the Researcher’s interviews with Zhang Bohai and other state officials. They all confirmed that the content of lifestyle magazines were unlikely to be politically incorrect or insensitive. As a consequence, finance is the most important factor for both Chinese and international magazine publishers who are concerned for the health of their business in China. “Then there is the challenge that Western magazines depend primarily on advertising income for which they must have meaningful circulation numbers” (Li, 2008: 62).

## **2.3.2 The History of the Chinese Lifestyle Magazine**

### **2.3.2.1: 1988 - 1993 Early Stage**

Hachette Filipacchi Medias (HFM), working in co-operation with Shanghai Translation Publishing House, launched *Elle*, the first fashion magazine in China, in 1988. At that moment, there were social and economic developments in China. The word ‘vogue’

firstly emerged in Chinese citizens' lives in the late 1980s. People were curious about the new things that came out of China's social development. Therefore, the publishing of *Elle* was significant for the development of spirit culture. As *Elle* was the only colour-glossy fashion magazine at that time, it dominated the competition which comprised of domestically produced 'black-and-white' magazines. The downsides of this early entry into the magazine market included issues concerning the quality of printing and design and technology, as well as the limited size of *Elle*'s target readership. However, its entry and survival in the magazine market indicated that the glossy high-end magazine had the potential to prosper. Furthermore, with the introduction of 'life-styles' initiated by the fashion magazine, China was narrowing the gap with the international community.

### **2.3.2.2 1993 - 1995: Period of Exploration**

*Fashion (Shishang)* was established in Beijing in 1993<sup>17</sup>. Like the majority of newly emerged magazines, the lifestyle magazine industry experienced hardship in its exploration period. *Fashion* was the first domestic fashion magazine that was owned by *China Tourism News*, a business to business broadsheet. They tested *Fashion* as their 'guinea pig' in the business to consumer market.

### **2.3.2.3 1995 - 1998 : Period of Development**

The period from 1995 to 1998 saw two major fashion magazines facing fierce competition in Beijing. It was during this period that

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<sup>17</sup> *Fashion (Shishang)*, a precursor of *Cosmopolitan*'s Chinese version, established in 1993, co-operated with Hearst Magazine International in 1998.

these two major magazines gradually established their own characteristics.

In 1995, China Light Industry Press collaborating with Shufunotomo, publishers of *Japan Housewife Magazine*, issued *Rayli* in Beijing in a black and white version. This magazine with its unique feature as the fashion magazine for ordinary people was targeted at the widest range of readership in China.

In 1998, Hearst Magazine International (the USA's largest publisher) teamed up with International Data Group (IDG), the largest international publisher in China, and in a co-operation agreement with the domestic publisher Trends Media Group, launched the Chinese edition of *Cosmopolitan*. IDG and Hearst converted an existing title, *Fashion*, into the Chinese version of *Cosmopolitan*. Since China's Ministry of Tourism (which is the department that publishes *China Tourism News*) owns an equity interest in Trends Media Group, The Hearst Magazine International inadvertently teamed up with a Chinese governmental agency. Despite this link to a Government agency, Hearst also made it clear that the "editorial content of *Cosmopolitan* in China would reflect China's more conservative tastes, with original, local stories and international material overseen by a Chinese editor and Cosmo founder Helen Gurley Brown" (Hayes, 1998).

At this stage, the Chinese market witnessed the emergence of some new industries, such as cosmetics and photography. However, the undeveloped fashion concepts hindered the prosperity of these industries. At the same time, urban elites of high-income earners emerged in the major cities. This allowed a decent sense of pragmatism to enter the magazine market. With economic development, new societal defining words emerged, such as 'petit-

bourgeois' and 'white-collar' etc., which showed the enhancement of consumer levels, and created a larger market demand for the lifestyle magazine. It was a sign of the beginning of the media economy.

#### **2.3.2.4. 1998 - 2000 Period of Maturity**

From 1998 to 2000, there was the phenomenon of the 'Three islands of stability' of *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Rayli* in the fashion magazine market. Besides these three, there were some second tier brands entering into the market. Expanders of these included *Madame Figaro* and *Friends* etc. These second tier magazines mainly developed through copyright collaboration. Among these, *Friends* has taken the effective localisation strategy based on the sole use of domestic resources.

During this period, China had gradually clarified the routes to manage the entry of magazines into market. The majority of magazine publishers sought copyright co-operation opportunities. With the development of related industries, such as luxury goods, consumer magazines gradually created their brands. There were more professionals involved in the magazine industry, enriching the human resource for the business.

#### **2.3.2.5. Since 2000: Period of Prosperity**

Since 2000, the lifestyle magazine industry has experienced important changes. The most significant development is the emergence of the industrialized group management model, which is represented by *Elle* and *Rayli*. The important distinction of this model is that it operates in a totally free market, which has now

replaced the modern magazine industry. It is therefore completely different from the Chinese propaganda media's previous direction. While the magazines are being classified into more specific categories, the periodicals that are under the management of the publishing groups have increased in number making further development possible. *Rayli* continuously launches periodicals like *Rayli Fashion Pioneer* and *Rayli Deco*, etc. while *Cosmopolitan* puts increasing efforts into expanding its brand image with the annual issuing of two to three new magazines. The activities of the group management model have been carried out in response to an increasing trend in the industry of magazines attempting to establish a fashion style. Although there are hundreds of lifestyle magazines in the magazine market, huge gaps in quality exist between them. Since the target readership for lifestyle magazines is limited to a small group, it has become more difficult for them to find success in a market where the leading brands have cornered all of the resources. Consequently the lower tiers of the fashion magazine market have followed the themes of the leading brands, which have caused the contents of the magazines to overlap. This is essentially viewed as a short-cut to success. Since the magazine publishers lack management experience and do not, by and large, set up a management target for their readership, they experience hardship and struggle to survive in the market.

After experiencing the dizzying profits of the Internet economy, the magazine market expects a similarly profitable experience on the back of society's overall prosperity. There have been some outstandingly profitable brands, such as *Rayli* and *Esquire*, etc. For example, four years after launching its first issue in March 2000,

*Rayli Women* became the second best-selling magazine in the Chinese market.

### **2.3.3 Co-operated Lifestyle Magazine Groups in China**

In China today, the most significant high-end consumer magazine groups are those in co-operation agreement magazine organisations including HFM (Hachette Filipacchi Medias), Trends Media Group, Rayli Group and Conde Nast China. This is so not only because these four media organisations own the most famous brands, but also because most of them are ranked among the top earners of both advertising and circulation revenues in the entire magazine industry in China. HFM has nine magazine titles and Trends Media Group has fifteen. *Rayli* has co-operation agreements with both Shufunotomo (Japan) and Gruner & Jahr (G&J) (Germany), and manages four of the most highly circulated fashion magazines. The last magazine organisation, Conde Nast owns *Vogue*, *GQ* and *Self*, the first two of which are seen as the top brands in the fashion, men's and lifestyle magazine sectors of the market.

#### **2.3.3.1 Hachette Filipacchi Media ---- European Model**

As mentioned earlier, HFM (Hachette Filipacchi Medias) was the first Western magazine organisation to enter the magazine market. HFM is now one of the largest international players in China. The reason it has reached this position is partly due to it publishing several international brands' Chinese editions, such as *Elle* (First published in 1988), *CAD (Car & Driver)* (1995), *Friend of Health (Woman's Day)* (1997), *Marie Claire* (2002), *25ans* (2004),



*Psychologies* (2006), *Elle DECO* (2006), and *Quo* (2007). All of these magazines are published through copyright co-operation agreements between HFM and its Chinese partner publishers. Additionally, HFM has over the past twenty years developed a business model to control the Chinese versions of all the HFM magazines. To this end, HFM invested in Beijing Hachette Advertising Co. Ltd. and Shanghai Consulting Co. Ltd., which act as the sole agents for all of its magazines' advertisements and distribution. Furthermore, Beijing Hachette Advertising Co. Ltd. controls the recruitment and wage payments for the editors and other employees of the HFM magazines. The decision by HFM to move the editorial department of *Elle* from Shanghai to Beijing in 2006 showed that they had gained total control over their Chinese titles, leaving no controlling power to either Shanghai Translating Publishing House (HFM's first partner) or more recently Chinese publishers, who offered PINs (Publication Issue Numbers) to HFM. Beijing Hachette Advertising Co., Ltd now has more than 400 employees in mainland China<sup>18</sup>.

The model of *Elle* that entered into the Chinese magazine market did so because of a specific reason. In 1988, the Chinese government ensured that the Chinese partner (Shanghai Translation Publishing House) held 51% of the shares. Thus, at the beginning of the co-operation agreement, HFM was only responsible for overseas advertising sales and content delivery. Shanghai Translation Publishing House's responsibilities included overseas press content selection, collating content editing and publishing, and examination of advertising content. When HFM registered its advertising and distribution companies in China, it also engaged the editor and

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<sup>18</sup> Some of the data comes from HFM China website, access from <http://www.ellechina.com/aboutus>

journalists. The domestic press professionals only worked on the content and advertisement implementation.

As can be seen from the above case, for international publishing groups seeking Chinese partners, the starting point for creating a true market is not the original requirement of meeting local needs, but negotiating a lower entry policy. Compared to the decentralization model, which is characteristic of U.S. companies, HFM comes from a strong safeguard of French national cultural autonomy, which has operated around the globe. Consequently, given the mentality of different cultures, cultural industries and operating models from a Chinese perspective, an adherence to a certain threshold percentage of foreign control is deemed necessary.

### **2.3.3.2 Trends Media Group---- American Model**

Trends Media Group, the domestic magazine publishing house established in 1993, is the most important consumer magazine publishing firm in China. Due to the success of publishing *Fashion* (时尚, means ‘fashion’) as a quarterly since 1993, George Green, the president and chief executive of Hearst Magazine International, with his old friend and colleague Pat McGovern, the founder of IDG (International Data Group)<sup>19</sup> made a joint investment in Trends Media Group to publish *Cosmopolitan* in China in 1998. Since then, Trends Media Group has used “时尚” as the subheading for *Cosmopolitan*. *Cosmopolitan* is printed as the US version on heavy paper, with lots of colour and numerous advertisements. Hearst Magazine International did not only license the content, but also bring media contacts with the Corporation’s global advertising partners. This was the first time China had its own high-end glossy

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<sup>19</sup> IDG have invested in publishing in China since 1980

consumer magazine. The other big change that *Cosmopolitan* brought to the magazine industry concerned the number of advertising pages. The annual number of advertising pages in *Cosmopolitan* climbed steadily from 395 in 1998 to 623 in 1999, reaching 1,720 in 2003.

Both Hearst and IDG benefited from their investment. The majority shareholder in the Trends Media Group – the Chinese partner – is the Ministry of Tourism (50%); the minority shareholders are Hearst (20%), IDG (20%) and Trends Media Group's employees (10%). Trends Media Group now publishes half a dozen of Hearst's titles in China. China has risen to become Hearst's fourth largest international market after the UK, Russia and Australia. From 1997 to 2009, Trends Media Group has published the international brands of *Cosmopolitan*, *Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, *Good House-keeping*, *Cosmo Girl*, *FHM*, *Robert Report* and *Trends Travel* as well as the domestic brands, which include *Trends Home*, *Trends Time*, *Trends Food and Wine*, *Trends Auto* and *Trends Bride*<sup>20</sup>. Among these, *Trends Men* entered into a co-operative agreement with *Esquire* in September 1999; Hearst Magazine International granted *Harper's Bazaar* to Trends Media Group on 8th October 2001, and in November 2001 National Geographic Traveler, a subsidiary of the National Geographic Association of America, signed a formal agreement on copyright co-operation with *Trends Travel*<sup>21</sup>. Most Trends Media Group magazines beached among the Top 10 list for circulation and advertising revenue duringin the last five years (*Trends* online resource).

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<sup>20</sup> Data comes from Trends Media Group website, access from: <http://www.trends.com.cn/aboutus/>

<sup>21</sup> Trends Media finally gained official permission from GAPP to use *National Geography* as the subtitle in 2008.

Trends Media Group continues to develop as a media giant that owns 15 different lifestyle magazines. 13 of these have adopted foreign investment models which include, for example, foreign joint-venture, long-term co-operation, co-investment and content co-operation.

### 2.3.3.3 Rayli Group ---- Japanese Model

*Rayli* (瑞丽), the other important enterprise in the consumer magazine industry, began in 1993 with Japanese backing, when it obtained the copyright for *Housewives Friend* of Japan. *Rayli* has since published *Rayli Her Style*, *Rayli Fashion & Beauty*, *Rayli Deco*, and *Rayli Lovely Pioneer*, all of which are high-end glossy lifestyle magazines<sup>22</sup>.

Sponsored by the China Light Industry Press, Beijing Rayli Magazine House is one of the top enterprises in China's magazine industry. In 1993, the Light Industry Press copied the Japanese fashion magazine published by Shufunotomo. After several years' development, international copyright co-operation was *Rayli*'s main objective. For instance, *Rayli Deco* is the result of a copyright co-operation agreement with Casaviva (Italy), and two Japanese and Korean home and living magazines. In 2006, the renowned German magazine group G&J planned to change their Chinese entry strategy. At the end of 2006 it expanded its position by buying shares in the Chinese BODA New Continent Company, the sole advertising agent of *Rayli*. This process included the consolidation of the four Rayli magazine titles that BODA used to supervise with those of the

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<sup>22</sup> Datas come from Rayli website, access from: <http://about.rayli.com.cn/>

Chinese versions of G+J (German). These comprised of three magazines: *Parents*, *Fitness*, and *Car and Motor*.

The triumvirate of HFM, Trends Media Group and Rayli Group, now possess almost 80% of the fashion magazine advertising market in China. If the three dominant magazine groups: Rayli Group (Japan dominated), Trends Media Group (American-influenced) and HFM (European-backed) and their share of the market are not taken into consideration, only 15 to 20% of the market remains for dozens of other fashion magazines, most of which are domestically owned and produced.

**Table 3.2 A selection of Chinese Consumer Magazines and their International partners**

<b>Magazine Title</b>	<b>Co-operation Year</b>	<b>Foreign Partner</b>	<b>Nationality of Foreign Partner</b>
Elle	1988	Hachette Filipacchi Medias	France
Rayli	1995	Shufunotomo	Japan
Cosmopolitan	1998	Hearst Co.	USA
Esquire	1999	Hearst Co.	USA
Traveller	2001	National Geographic	USA
Bazaar	2002	Hearst Co.	USA
Good Housekeeping	2002	Hearst Co.	USA
FHM	2002	EMAP Consumer Media	UK
Automobile	2003	Primedia Inc.	USA
Bride	2004	Primedia Inc.	USA
Vogue	2005	Conde Nast	USA

### **2.3.3.4 Other Lifestyle Magazine Groups**

Besides these three dominant magazine groups, the Stock Exchange Media Council (SEEC) in Beijing owns long-term and exclusive advertising rights for a number of quality magazines in China.

These include *Caijing Magazine*, *Securities Market Weekly*, *New Real Estate*, *Successful Marketing* and the Chinese edition of *PC Magazine*. Since September 2006, SEEC, in association with Time Warner Inc., the leading international media and entertainment media company, published *Sports Illustrated* in China, which was seen as a new milestone in SEEC's media expansion.

Conde Nast International entered the magazine market in 2005 with just three titles: *Vogue*, *Self* and *GQ*. However, these three are amongst the brand leaders in the global fashion and men's magazine markets. Bentham Liu was a key figure involved in Conde Nast's entry. Liu established Taiwanese versions of *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, and *People* in the 1990s, and has been the Managing Director of Conde Nast's operations in China since 2003. With the assistance of Bentham Liu, Conde Nast entered into a copyright co-operation agreement with China Pictorial to publish *Vogue* (Fushi Yu Meirong) in September 2005. Then in 2007, Conde Nast entered into a copyright agreement with the *Women of China*, part of the Women's Federation of China, to publish *Self* (Yue Ji). In 2009, the group published *GQ*.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been numerous minor magazine groups involved in publishing fashion or lifestyle magazines using co-operation copyright models. In 2001, China Fabric Press co-operated with Jiangtan Press (Japan) and launched *Vivi*, a magazine covering the most advanced technology from Japan. *Zhuiqiu* magazine now prints the name of the Figaro Group (France) on its copyright page, while Hudong Group's *Youth Generation* co-operated with Hearst Magazine International's *Seventeen*. Japanese fashion or lifestyle magazines have several Chinese editions including *Mina*, *With* (Xiu), *Scawaii* (Kana) and

*Sotosoko* (Lehuo). Korean beauty and men's magazines started entering China in 2007. For example, *Ceci* (Jiemei), whose co-operation partner is *Beijing Youth Daily* arrived in 2008. Other western consumer magazines still seek entry into the Chinese magazine market. Time Warner intended to launch the Chinese version of the women's magazine *Instyle* by the end of 2007 or 2008 [the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of China's *Instyle* appeared on 9 June 2008]. *Vanity Fair* studied the Chinese market several times and appeared to be waiting for the most advantageous time to enter. Copyright co-operation has almost become the grim reaper of Chinese fashion magazines: so much so that some people hold the opinion that future fashion publications will be nothing except copyright agreements with existing titles (Borton, 2004).

Furthermore, Cai and Liu (2004) summarised that, "women's magazines in China can be divided into two categories: the first mainly local titles such as *Zhiyin* and *Family*, contain lots of stories and are based on emotional appeal; the second type are the fashion and beauty magazines, such as *Rayli* and *Cosmopolitan China*, with international content."

### **2.3.4 High-end Glossy Magazine Model**

A survey in *Vogue*, which started publishing in China in August 2005, showed that the magazine generated a great deal of advertising revenue even before it was launched. The top global brands who had been complaining that there was no appropriate advertising platform in the Chinese market, were content to queue to send money to *Vogue* (Zhang, 2006). This is part of the reason why international magazine giants seek to enter the Chinese market, and why domestic magazines prefer to 'sell' their Publication Issue

Number to a foreign publishing company. Yang and Frith (2008) discussed this phenomenon as:

*“In order to serve the needs of trans-national advertisers, global women’s magazines have expanded across borders through the franchise system. This model works by allowing the parent company to build up branches or subsidiary networks of local agents and in this way, they can establish important connections and alliances in foreign markets (Herman & McChesney, 1999). Loong (2003) noted that in China when new editions are to be launched, local publishing companies form joint ventures with the head office of an international publishing company. Then the staff from the head offices will be sent to train the staff and editors in the new foreign office. Also, the local editions of foreign magazines will receive text and pictures from the head offices. By making use of the parent publication’s brand name, reputation, format, and experience, the local editions of the international magazines have more of a chance to attract international advertisers.”*

The magazine industry globally acknowledges that magazines should be designed initially for the readers, and then for commercial advertisers. However, this principle cannot be applied in the Chinese market where the target audiences are numerically too small to pay for the production costs. Consequently the Chinese magazine market is highly dependent on advertising revenue.

Advertisements take up page space and there is a direct correlation between the number of pages in a magazine and the desire of the reader to buy it. This is especially true for expensive magazines. The mean price for general information and financial magazines is 10 CNY per issue. The high-end glossy magazines retail at a mean of 20 CNY. The magazine industry believes that the



high price for the high-end glossies is closely connected with the selected target readership of youthful, professional high income earners, who will in turn determine the profit model. The clear and accurate readership profile and consistent content format and style have been the great supportive factors for the 20 CNY price. This has led to high rewards from the commercial advertising sector. The high price further enhances the status of high-end magazines; providing guidance to high-class consumers. The significance of a high issue price was clear from an analysis of advertising revenue for three magazines during the first quarter of 2003. Advertising revenue for *Elle* (priced at 20 CNY) was three times greater than *Shanghai-Style* (6.5 CNY), the most famous domestic fashion magazine. The negative aspect of a high-end price-tag to the reader is that these magazines remain a luxury purchase to populations outside the large metropolitan cities. A 20CNY price-tag equates to 1% of an urban high income earner's monthly income of 2,000 CNY.

Although the price of high-end magazines is high, the cost of producing each issue is also very high, as all the high-end magazines aim to compile the largest number pages in each issue. In 2002, on the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Cosmopolitan*, the publisher issued the largest ever volume of the magazine, with 500 pages. *Elle* in comparison produced an edition with 320 pages during the same month. Ultimately without brand loyalty most readers would choose to buy the magazine with number  $t$  of pages when spending the same amount of money.

However, the supply and printing costs of glossy paper are high, which makes it difficult for publishers to make a profit on circulation revenue alone, as the example below indicates. The Unit

cost of printing a Sheet of Magazine paper [Cny] multiplied by (the Page count of the magazine [P] divided by the Number of Pages per Sheet of art paper [psh]) equals the Issue Cost of printing the magazine [I]. The formula could be expressed as:

$$\text{Cny} \times (\text{P}/\text{psh}) = \text{I}$$

Current costs in the magazine print industry (in China) for printing a sheet of glossy paper of average weight is 0.9 CNY. The high-end glossies have a standardized page count per sheet of art paper of 16.

The printing cost for each copy of a 500 page magazine could be calculated as:

$$0.9 \times (500/16) = 28.125 \text{ CNY}$$

The maximum number of pages that do not incur an automatic loss on the cover price within these parameters is 355. However, a major external cost is distribution. The Post Office charges an average of 40% of the cover price. If this cost as (D) of 8CNY is factored into the formula

$$\text{Cny} \times (\text{P}/\text{psh}) - \text{D} = \text{I}$$

the optimum number of pages drops to 210.

Therefore, the only ways open to the publishers to make a profit is by either selling large volumes of advertising space or selling the space at a premium. There is, however, one further factor affecting the fashion magazines in particular. The market price (cover price) refers solely to retail sales. The effective discount for wholesale orders is approximately 35% of the cover price, or 7CNY on a cover price of 20CNY. The cheapest unit cost of printing (1 sheet of art paper producing 16 magazine pages) is 0.8CNY. Since lifestyle magazines on average consist of 300 pages, a similar formula can be used to calculate the profit or loss.

$$\text{Cny} \times (\text{P/psh}) = \text{I}$$

$$0.8\text{CNY} \times (300/16) = 15\text{CNY}$$

As the wholesale price is 13CNY, production of a 300 page high-end fashion magazine incurs a 2CNY loss per copy.

Interestingly the cover (market) prices for some of the best-selling magazines (non high-end glossies) do not reflect the formulaic reality. The cover price for *Readers* (Du Zhe) is 3CNY while both *Bosom Friend* (Zhi Yin) and *Family* are 3.5 CNY. These three are the most popular domestic consumer titles in China.

While the major consuming force for the lifestyle magazine is the younger element of the population living in China's larger urban areas, a monthly outlay of 20CNY is still considered fairly high. This is the key reason for ensuring that subscribers are kept to a limited number.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In China, foreign publishers have had a presence in China since the 1980s. However, it was not until after China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 that foreign publishers sought access to the potential of the world's largest untapped magazine market. The most popular channels of entry are either through publishing a Chinese language edition of a parent magazine or through the licensing of brand and content to Chinese counterparts. Chinese magazines with access to the experience and resources of foreign magazine partners and their business models, as well as the training of magazine professionals, are rapidly improving the quality of their publications.

Top global international lifestyle magazine brands, like *Vanity*

*Fair*, are trying to enter the Chinese magazine market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The magazine market is, however, satiated with over a hundred foreign lifestyle magazines, of which more than fifty are officially registered with The General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), which is the central institution tasked with overseeing the management of print media. Foreign publishers equate to about 10% of the magazine market but are in direct competition with the domestic magazines that have cornered 80% of the advertising revenue. Chinese magazines, which have the opportunity to stay ahead of their domestic competitors, could gain a niche in the market.

The first Chinese-language edition of a foreign magazine was *Computer World* in October 1980. The magazine is jointly run by IDG and China's Electronic Technology Information Institute of the National Information Industry Department. By 2004, IDG had launched 32 titles in the magazine market (Li, 2005).

Chinese magazines are quickly reaching a level of professionalism that is often more than a match for their foreign counterparts. For example, *Rayli* has impressive features and photo spreads and has a higher level of circulation and revenue compared to its parent brand in Japan.

The defining feature of the magazine market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the increasing integration, diversification and internationalisation of global media corporations. The global expansion of news can be viewed as cultural imperialism in which both the communications and the sources of revenue for the media are crucial elements. Foreign publishers are an integral element of the global marketing system and also possess facets of cultural imperialism. China was

“chosen as the global market beachhead by international media firms” (Fan, 2005).

During the process of economic marketisation, internal and international efforts have made it possible for Chinese consumer magazines to achieve international standards in just a few years. Due to the formation of a monopoly, the entrance barriers in China have been raised accordingly in three aspects: (1) The monopoly on news gathering and editing. Most internationally recognised brands have entered the Chinese mainland market through copyright co-operation. Domestic content resources are willing to co-operate with their editors and journalists. (2) The monopoly on the advertising market. The high end AD market in China is controlled by 4A advertising companies<sup>23</sup>. Most advertisers representing international brands of clothes and cosmetics enter the Chinese market through international magazine brands, as well as through 4A AD companies. (3) The monopoly on distribution. The important channels and sales terminals (airports, metro stations, and kiosks) in three metropolitan areas (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) have set up a close co-operative relationship with HFM and private distributing companies. The two biggest distributing companies both have foreign capital involvement.

The lifestyle category of consumer magazines in China has traditionally had a broad content horizon, covering anything from clothing and cosmetics, fitness and leisure, to home and travelling.

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<sup>23</sup> Founded in 1917, the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) is the national trade association representing the advertising agency business in the United States. Its membership produces approximately 80% of the total advertising volume placed by agencies nationwide. – from <http://www2.aaaa.org/about/Pages/default.aspx>

While the profile of a typical reader of fashion and lifestyle magazines is a 30 year old graduate professional, the content of these magazines is beginning to diversify to appeal to a younger age group. The inclusion of modern topics such as the digital technologies of cell phones, digital cameras, DVD players, MP3s, and Play Stations are attractive to a younger generation. In the view of young people, these topics are essential fashion concepts and demonstrate the emergence of a mainstream culture. Consequently the target group for lifestyle magazines has been made not limited to the typical 30 year old professional. The change in the topic content of these magazines is in response to societal change and market forces.

The inability to respond to changes external to the market is a persistent ailment the periodical industry needs to overcome. The main problems are a natural conservatism to resist change, a lack of professionalism, and a general absence of the knowledge skills necessary to solve the problem. Thus, the content is not so extensive.

Another key problem linked to market research is the absence of market forces, which are vital for sustainable development. Fashion is a prime example. It is a new social concept in China dating back to the economic reforms of the 1980s. There is arguably a lack of understanding about fashion amongst both the populace and the magazine professionals. Many magazines simply copy the 'fashion content' of their competitors. However, the sole fashion conscious group in Chinese society consists of people living in China's major urban areas who, earning high incomes, can afford to follow the trends. Since the urban high income earners represent less than 20% of the population, the group is not large enough to provide sustainable development for the domestically published fashion

magazines. The problem is compounded by the foreign owned magazines with their intimate knowledge of international fashion and its trends. Consequently the domestic magazines face the prospect of being frozen out of the market.

As the number of international magazines entering into the Chinese market increased, so has their readers acceptance of the pragmatism that they advocate. These magazines can take a large proportion of the market.

An important issue pertaining to the sustainable development of the domestically published magazine market is unresolved: – the production of a localized magazine. *Cosmopolitan* has made a remarkable achievement in this market because it adopts an advanced publishing concept, i.e. the globalised viewing and localised contents. *Cosmopolitan* not only collaborates with its business partners on pictures and images, but also learns the publishing concepts of other magazines; further developing them into a comprehensive philosophy. The common problem that occurs when Chinese magazines collaborated with Japanese magazines or indeed any foreign magazines is that they become over reliant on their partners' content. Put simply, 80% of the contents of the Chinese edition of a magazine are purely a translated version of their international partner's magazine. This simple processing of the contents lacks any creativity.

A further problem concerns attempts to classify the Consumer magazine as being representative of China. This is inherently both difficult and confusing. In the context of the publishing industry, China needs to find a way forward that combines the characteristics of the Chinese publishing tradition within a global strategy which will enhance the international appeal of Chinese culture. The

imbalance developing between China's society and its economy has provided an opportunity for the development of the magazine market. The invasion of foreign magazines into the domestic market and the consequent conflict with domestic publishers is not limited to American magazines.

The structure of the magazine market is shaped like a capitalized Roman I (“工”). The major brands, which rely on advertising revenue, form the upper horizontal line; the vertical line represents domestic magazines ‘playing catch up’ with the major players, and the bottom horizontal line represents the majority of the magazines lacking the financial ability to modernize. The major brands are representatives of international organisations such as HFM, G&J, Hearst and Conde Nast, and domestic organisations like Rayli and Trends Media Group. All these organisations have been focusing on the magazine market for a long time and reflect the highest level of periodical management in China. The keys to their success are a combination of internationalised concepts towards publishing ideas, marketing ability, information availability, human resources and pertinent management systems. Although the threshold to enter into the Chinese publishing industry is becoming increasingly high, the list of potential participants remains strong. Therefore, the competitive aspect of the magazine market will remain for the foreseeable future.



# CHAPTER 3. Literature Review

## 3.1 Introduction

Journalism study is a very important area in media studies. During the last twenty years, researchers into the field of journalism study, worldwide, have conducted many significant practical investigations in a broad variety of topics including gender media, ethnic media, media business, media regulation, social environment, philosophy, regional media, political perspective, new media form, and historical development. Overall, a central discourse is the issue of professionalism. Most studies into professionalism of media journalists address issues such as ethics, education, social status, and cultural impact. In the context of the concept of professional or occupational ideologies, challenging questions concerning professionalism have driven essential debates since the last century. These included whether a professional culture really exists in the Western media world; whether professionalism is a positive or negative factor, both on the ideology and practice of journalists, and whether professionalism exists in other geographic socio-political cultures, such as China or other non western countries. Within the parameters of these questions, media research has attempted to determine and explain the different influences of ethics, cultures and practices on the media of different regions and whether they could in turn affect the daily practices of media organisations under different conditions. In this chapter, the Researcher is going to review theoretical approaches to media studies in the 'west' and China that are pertinent to this thesis.

Recent comparative media research studies have investigated the diversity of journalistic practices in different countries. This research attempts to distinguish the occupational ideology of Chinese journalists working in lifestyle magazines through the changes occurring within their journalistic practices. The Researcher hypothesized that the practice of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists occurs on global, national and individual levels. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the theories concerning professionalism, globalisation and consumerism, which are the foundations of this research project.

Media studies focusing on professionalism examine journalists through their social status and working performance, personal ideology and professional association. During the last two decades, media studies have witnessed an exponential increase in discourses concerning journalism professionalism because it is vital to journalists' discipline, education and working practice. However, among the corpus of research on the professionalism of journalists, little work has been done on magazine journalists and none at all on lifestyle magazine journalists. This thesis aims to fill this gap by researching the working performance of Chinese lifestyle magazines journalists (employed by internationally owned magazines) and their ideological transitions since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter will therefore, provide an introduction to the classical theories on 'professionalism' in western media studies, on 'professionalism' in China, and analyse how the western concept is applied in China.

This research also addresses the theory of 'globalisation', which Held et al. defined as 'processes of change which underpin a

transformation in the organisation of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents' (Held etc al., 1999: 15). Globalisation is the most pertinent and influential social theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within the field of communication theories, there are many aspects of globalisation, such as political control, free market economics, cultural imperialism, media consumption and global-localised production. Consumerism is a key aspect of globalisation, and together with the idea of 'media globalisation', from the core concepts on which this thesis is based. 'Media globalisation' has provided the economic foundation for the launch of foreign-licensed lifestyle magazines in China, while the development of 'consumerism' has formed the societal background effected the transition of journalistic practices in lifestyle magazines.

## **3.2 Journalism Study**

### **3.2.1 Journalism Study in the Western World**

#### **3.2.1.1 Journalism Study in General**

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of whether journalism is a 'profession' or a 'craft' is of concern to media researchers and journalists. As Tunstall (cited by Aldridge and Evetts, 2003: 3) discussed, in the "1960s British Journalism was far from being an established profession, but it was moving in a 'professionalizing' direction ...by the 1990s". However, the foundings of the National Union of Journalists and The Chartered Journalism Institute in the UK in early 1990s are seen as a sign of original concept of

profession. These two trade associations shared the same goals and principles of achieving professionalism in journalism, e.g., professional status, ethics, duties and qualifications. Journalism should, therefore, be viewed as an occupational form and not simply as a craft, which infers basic skills required by working environments, and which should be included in the norms, values, and so on. However, a variety of 'professionalism' issues that are relevant in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context have remained unresolved since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The issues include: the differences in journalism professionalism as viewed from within the profession and outside it; the meaning of 'professionalism'; the application of 'professionalism' in journalistic practice, and whether 'professionalism' exists in real working conditions or only in academic discourse. In 1909, Holt posed the question "is journalism a profession or a business?" (Holt, 1909: 2) The reason for the uncertainty was because the business models of media enterprises had required journalists to chase profit maximization throughout the last century. Then, as now, achieving a balance between business pressures and journalistic values was difficult. Now, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the issue remains just as pertinent for both scholars and journalists.

Traditionally, English dictionaries use collations of similar words or phrases to define journalism, for example, 'job or activity', 'collecting', 'news', 'writing', 'newspapers', 'magazines', 'television', 'mass media', 'the Internet', 'radio' and even 'cell phones'. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, journalism, a new framework for professional ethics, ideology for journalism scholars and journalists. The common definition of journalist is any individual who is located where discoveries or events occur, and

who shares this information through public platforms such as media. From this point of view, journalistic philosophy is more related to the elements of democracy, linked between societal impact and civic rights. Therefore as the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), founded in 1909 stated, the philosophy of journalistic practice advocates that, “professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility” and “public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy” (Society of Professional Journalists, 1996). Journalism, ‘was an integral part of the democratic process; it had purpose. That core importance gave substance and meaning to an otherwise low-paying trade’ (Merritt, 1998: 65). In other words, the standards of professional journalistic practice are all related to this philosophy (Zelizer, 2004; Scannell, 1992; Herbert, 2001; Golding & Elliot, 1979; Dennis, 1991).

Bromley and O’Malley (1997: 59) stated: “Journalism in the last two hundred years has produced many strident advocates rushing to defend its activities and to speculate on its role and function”. Scholars believe journalistic news ought to provide people with knowledge concerning events or situations that will help them make good decisions (Bovee, 1999: 60). However, in practice, from different perspectives, complex stories often require to be summarised and the facts interpreted, especially if there is limited time or space for a story. Zelizer (2004: 33) argued that journalism involves all those traits which sociologists identify as pertaining to a profession “...certain levels of skill, autonomy, service orientation, licensing procedures, testing of competence, organisation, codes of conduct, training and educational programmes”. Weaver and Cleveland (1996a: 64) indicated that education and qualifications

were vital: “Yet the larger meaning of profession - as the autonomous practice of work that is based on strict educational requirements and licensing”. Thus, there are at least three measurements of professionalism in journalism: craft skills, autonomy, and licensing.

The strengths of professionalism give editors and reporters a measure of independence from the owners’ regulations and from commercial pressures to shape the news to satisfy advertisers as well as the ‘bottom line’ of making a profit. Early in the 20th century, industrial technology allowed businesses to produce mass media at a cost that outclassed the capacity of non-corporate media, with were unable to compete. As a result, radical publishers were marginalised and media diversity rapidly narrowed. “The journalist as an instrument for materializing the people’s right to true information –the truth being understood as objective reality to be discovered and communicated to the public as accurately and comprehensively as possible” (Nordenstreng, 1989:282).

In practice, the concepts of professional journalism include both normative and situational empirical factors shaped and reshaped by journalists in their routines on the basis of the needs of the market and values prevailing in the profession and society (Pasti, 2005). Nevertheless academic research is critical of the idea of journalism as a profession (Zelizer, 2004) and “Wilson (1933: 284-5) rejects journalism’s claims to professionalism because of the absence of specialized intellectual training” (Henningham, 2008:47). Tunstall (2008: 31) argued that if it is accepted that “professions are characterized by a code of ethics” it should be noted that, “In Britain there is no codified collection of such ethics for journalanalists”. Therefore it becomes very difficult to view journalist

as a profession. Furthermore, Soloski referred (2008: 54-55) professionalism were “as an organisational and institutional firewall”, “a more efficient method for controlling behavior” of journalists and “closely related to capitalism” rather than ideology. Others such as Weaver and Cleveland (1996a: 125) also argued that the main concern of professionalism in journalism would be “its potential effects on the diversity and robustness of news”. They cite Glasser and Ettema’s opinion that “Such objective vocabularies for the description of conduct transform moral claims into empirical claims and allow journalists to maintain their pretense of dealing in facts and not values” (Weaver & Cleveland, 1996a: 126). However, the debate is not limited to scholars in the U.S. worried about the abuse and insularity of using the concept of ‘professionalism’ as the tool of media commercialism also it has also been argued that an acceptance of journalism as a profession would aid the dominance of the media conglomerates. The debate has now become global. Bromley and O’Malley discussed the issue from a historical perspective:

*“...during the period of the greatest expansion of the media (since c.1880) journalists might have been expected to have been in the forefront of the competition among the emerging ‘professional class’ for income, power and status ... nevertheless, in the 1970s further ‘limited professionalisation’, exploiting the journalist’s relative autonomy in the workplace.”*

(Bromley & O’Malley, 1997: 333)

This issue does not merely concern the function of practicing codes for journalists, but also the purpose of their practicing. In other words, if the motivation of journalists’ work has changed to balance the self-interest of capitalist media owners and the public

interest, do any differences exist between market-led journalism and the obligations of democratic society? In this sense, evaluating journalism as a craft does not aid the interpreters or propagators of democracy in the current diversity of the commercial media environment.

Cyrano (2005) suggested that corporate publishers promoted the professionalism of journalists to counter societal claims of corporate media hegemony, to the extent that journalists would “be trained in special ‘schools of journalism’ to master the arts of objective, balanced reporting”. McChesney (2004: 67) argued, “Savvy publishers understood that they needed to have their journalism appear neutral and unbiased, notions entirely foreign to the journalism of the era of the Founding Fathers”. In general, there are four main training and entry routes for the print journalist, which consist of pre-entry courses and company training schemes (Niblock, 1996:13-14). As a consequence of this agenda, media corporations have total control over journalistic practice, from the original service to final production.

Nevertheless, the core function of journalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century remains the establishment of a democratic society and people’s freedom, whatever journalism scholars or journalists believe. The primary concern about news production, among most media critics, is the move towards “soft news” (Carter etc. ed., 1998) and “infotainment” (Anderson, 2004). Commercial pressure not only comes from media enterprise and owners, but also from market competition and audiences changing their habits. Media owners, as McChesney (2004: 87) noted “pushed journalists to make content directed at demographics considered desirable by media owners and



big ticket advertisers”. Furthermore, market competition has led to a situation that “even the best media, when caught up with a riveting but essentially trivial story that may combine varying elements of celebrity, sex, crime, or scandal (preferably all four) can compete vigorously with the bottom-feeding tabloids for tidbits of scandal” (Hachten, 1998: 174). In addition, all the readers today are “regarded as passive, alienated dupes indoctrinated into a state of ‘false consciousness’” as Allan (1999: 108) highlighted out. However, although professionalism may have some negative sides, journalists still need professional ethics and codes to operate in public life and serve public interests.

To summarize, the independence of journalism would play a vital role in the modern context; consisting of independence from governments, parties, media organisations, institutions, advertisers, public relations, and so on. In conclusion, in modern society, the purpose of the journalist is to fairly discover and report truth, which is the cornerstone of democracy. This argument holds true so long as journalism does not have the formality that comes with education, qualifications and licensing. Weaver and Cleveland (1996a: 127) argued that although journalism was a profession in an “abstract formal sense”, journalists in their nurturance of the field were unlike other professionals. Their rate of membership in professional groups is remarkably low, and the influence of those associations on the professional styles of their members is negligible.

In human history, when the concept of “professional” was raised two hundred years ago, lawyers, physicians, accountants and doctors were immersed in debates concerning career training requirements and formal qualifications. All of these vocations were

encouraged to have their own codes of ethics and conduct. This has similarly occurred within the profession of journalism, which for instance, has an occupational standard in that:

*“Journalism views itself as supporting and strengthening the roles of citizens in democracy. Many individual journalists undoubtedly feel the same way, reflecting the ideals of their profession but in addition, informing citizens so they can play their democratic roles is the journalists’ work and source of income as well.”*

(Gans, 2003: 21)

In conclusion, McNair stated:

*“...in the twenty-first century the production of news, and journalism of all kinds, is big business. The supply of information (whether as journalism or as rawer forms of data) occupying an industry of major economic importance, employing huge human and financial resources, and enjoying high status.”*

(McNair, 2003: 3)

The professionalism model not only permits journalists to exercise judgment in deciding what needs coverage, but also makes exercising judgment a central obligation of the job. The ‘professionalism of journalism’ needs to consider its business and social aspects in order to establish the new standard definition of the concept.

Furthermore, comparative media research of journalists across national boundaries and cultures is becoming increasingly popular, as media scholars try to draw a general picture of journalism in the global transition and trans-national environments. Analysis of the changing dynamics of journalism in global terms indicates that three

political themes have been particularly salient over recent years: ecology, human rights, and democracy (Volkmer, 2011: 309). These themes have been legitimized in the national and international codes of journalistic ethics, which in the 1970s typically emphasized the universal values of “peace, democracy, human rights, social progress and national liberation” (Nordenstreng, 1989: 282). The discussion about journalistic professionalism is often blurred by a simplification or homogenization of the view on professional journalism (Ruusunoksa, 2006), or as Glasser argues “professional techniques of journalists are trans-national in nature” (Glasser, 1992: 134-135). Schudson summarised:

“...early cross-national surveys supported the view that, despite different national cultures and patterns of professional education and organisational forms of the trade, the stated professional values of the journalists did not differ greatly from nation to nation.”

(Cited by Ruusunoksa, 2006:83)

However, when David H. Weaver and Wu edited “*The Global Journalist*” in 1998, many differences were found among countries and regions. The surveys were conducted over a period of lasted nearly 20 years in 21 countries, from East to West, involving developing and developed nations. In conclusion, Weaver emphasized:

“...there’re still many differences among journalists from the 21 countries ... many of them seem to reflect social influence, especially political system difference, more than the influences of media organisations, journalism education, and professional norms ... Even so, cultural norms and political values do appear

to have some influence on journalists; views of their roles and ethics.”

(Weaver & Wu, 1998: 477-478)

Another significant comparative survey was made by Hallin and Mancini that Ruusunoksa referred to:

“... they take into account the national differences and the distinctions between different media systems in relation to professionalism ... Hallin and Mancini have developed a way of interpreting professionalism in the frame of a political system of a given country. They single out three main dimensions in professional journalism: autonomy, distinct professional norms and public service orientation of the profession.”

(Ruusunoksa, 2006: 84)

Another American media scholar John C. Merrill edited two books on global journalists spanning twenty years. The first book published in 1983 (revised in 1991 and 1995) was “*Global Journalism: Survey of International Communication*”, and then in 2003, Merrill worked with Arnold S. de Beer on “*Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems*”, which addressed the vast and rapid changes taking place in international journalism. In China, Chaudary and Chen (1995: 44) argued in the 1995 edition that “the vehemence of the June 1989 crackdown could mean that Chinese citizens may not gain the right of free expression for another 15-20 years’, and that ‘self-restraint has been evident since 1984’”. The overall picture of global journalists’ professionalism was not wholly discussed by Merrill in the 1983 book.

Another international journalism study is David H. Weaver’s book “*The Global Journalist: News People around the World*”, which was published in 1998, in the US. Chapter 2, by Chen, Zhu et

al. in Weaver (1998) paid special attention to Chinese journalists, which the Researcher is going to discuss in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Chen's study was based on information from governmental statistics and a survey of more than 5,800 journalists in China in 1995, and showed that Chinese journalists were "well educated, worked for social impact more than material incentives and played to stay in the profession" (Chen, Zhu et al. 1998: 29). However, as the authors summarised, the study 'raised more questions than answers about the professionalism of Chinese journalism' inferring that 'further research needs to compare the perceived and practiced journalistic professionalism by Chinese journalists' (Chen, Zhu et al. 1998: 29). However, Weaver (1996b: 87) analysed that "there was more disagreement than agreement over the relative importance of these journalistic roles considered together" and cited Zhu's analysis of data from the US, China and Taiwan:

*"...the political similarities and differences are far more important than cultural similarities and differences, organisational constraints, or individual characteristics in predicting the variance in perceptions of three roles (timely information, interpretation, and entertainment) by journalists in these societies."*

(Weaver, 1996b: 87)

In regard to the theme of this research, the next section emphasizes the professionalism of journalism and magazine journalistic practice from the business point of view rather than through social ideology within the context of contemporary China.

### **3.2.1.2 Consumerism Journalism Study**

Consumerism is further developed in the media field and is interpreted as news consumerism. There are two major issues involved in news consumerism. Firstly, news broadcasting can have unlimited access to the target group audience via news resources and can therefore maximize commercial profits. Secondly, news broadcasting can create an atmosphere of a consumer society through news reports that highlight cultural consumption. News broadcasting, therefore, stimulates the public desire for material and spiritual consumption.

News consumerism emphasizes the responsibilities of news media, for although the media seeks to gain more benefits, they still have to strengthen their responsibilities towards society. In this case, the demands from the target group have been fully respected and the nature of humanity consequently has a freer development. This can be contrasted with a situation where politics manipulates news reports. As the social status of the target group has been enhanced, so has the status of the mode of media communication. This complies with the philosophy of serving the public through communication. From this perspective, the approach can only further improve the news reports, and enhance the implementation of news theories.

### **3.2.2 Journalism Study in China**

Journalism study in China is more than a hundred years old. Drawing from two decades of studies, Xu (2001: 161) noted that, “in early-twentieth-century China, journalists and writers were both born of the development of the modern press.” Lee has observed

that Journalism and media are “in the midst of sorting out these contending ideologies—Communism, Confucianism, and the market logic of professionalism—in the context of vast transformation in the larger political economy” (Lee, 2003: 25). Journalists saw themselves and were identified as professionals, a status that writers had yet to gain. The significant aspect in the transformation of journalists from “literary men’ to professionals was at the same time ‘a process of journalists growing increasingly independent of and resistant to state control, as they began to struggle for freedom of press and speech” (Xu, 2001: 162-163). A more serious problem than editorial skills, however, was a lack of professional ethics among journalists, as the establishment of professional ethics was a hallmark of professionalisation. Writing in 1931, Zhang Jinglu (Cited in Xu, 2001: 165) noted that while Chinese “journalists represented the interest of the public, their professional status was low because they worked hard but received meagre pay”. “Most do not recognize their own ‘social’ status and human dignity”. The problem as sociologist Xu Xiaoqun debated was that these early journalists have a “lack of knowledge of journalism” and “are incapable of creativity” (Xu, 2001: 165). A turning point in the professional growth of Chinese journalists was reached in the early 1930s. MacKinnon (1997) emphasized the importance of the 1930s in the history of the Chinese press. In the 1930s the Chinese press was “characterised by newspaper and magazine publishing as a business, political patronage as an essential condition, a symbiotic relationship with the Western press circle, and subjection to censorship by the state” (MacKinnon, 1997: 32). Xu explained the importance of the 1930s:

*“The journey of Shanghai journalists from “literary*

*men” to professionals provides an example of how the urban politics and state—society relations in Republican China were informed and mediated by the rising Chinese nationalism and the job-specific concerns of professionals. The arrival of Shanghai journalists at becoming a self-conscious profession was marked first by the formation of their professional association in the 1920s and second by their demand for freedom of speech in the 1930s.”*

(Xu, 2001: 188)

The efforts of the journalists in the 1920s and 1930s to establish ethics and work practices were dispersed by the Chinese Communist Party’s new government in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, together with the development of an immensely robust propaganda system. However, by the 1990s, China’s central government had set themselves the goal of establishing a market economy. The concept that media should be operated as a business rather than as an advocated propaganda machine was accepted by the new leadership in China. The role of the media would be redefined in order to serve both the political party and the interests of the population. Therefore it was decided that the contexts of media content were to both ideological and information-based, or “industrial” in nature. However, the phraseology has changed from “industrialized trends” to “market-oriented trends” as the former only referred to the Chinese government’s administrative achievements.

Due to the new movement of media industry in China, media researchers both in China and the West, are focusing on professionalism in Chinese journalists practice and ideology. Pan and Lu (2003) carried out significant research on localised



professionalism in China's media reforms, and Polunbaum (1990) examined how the reforms allowed journalists in the People's Republic of China (PRC) to be "aspiring professionals". Others also focussed their investigation on the concept of "professionalism" in China as follows: Most of them highlighted the fact that professionalism is the most important norm of news professions; western journalists having scrupulously abided by its obligations since the last century (Pan, 2005; Zhao, 2003; Lee, 2000, 2003; Huang, 2005; Lu, 2002, 2003; Wu, 2004). The core of the concept of professionalism has two sides: objectivity is the most important, while a combination of the independence and uniqueness of the media and journalists' positions are the other. Professionalism, objective reporting and the independence of media are cross concepts which all point to journalism's highest ideal; spreading the truth. In a historical context, contemporary journalistic professions in China correlate to the responsibility of national social and cultural roles. In China, individuals become journalists because they either have writing skills or their demeanour suits the profession; journalism is a key job in the cultural sphere in China. Thus, the need to raise the debates on journalists' professionalism is important, at least in theory or from the media academic's perspective.

According to Lu and Yu (2003), professionalism is the 'imagination of making a name by journalists'. From their point of view, the professional practice of journalism and public information systems discourse emphasize the universal application features of press organisations and journalism practitioners. Lu and Pan also declared:

*“A rise of professionalism with the rapid media commercialisation in China ... has raised questions as to the identity of journalists, the nature of their work, their roles in society, the principles for their work, and criteria for evaluating and rewarding their work. Imagining journalistic fame is a discursive process of answering these questions.”*

(Lu and Pan, 2003: 218)

From the ethics prospective, journalists’ professional ethics as practitioners of a consciousness of their own norms and constraints are the indispensable connotations of the journalistic profession (Wu & Wu, 2004). Huang Dan (2005) emphasized that the propagator of journalism research was generally limited to the scope of the journalistic profession and that around this centre was built a freedom of the press, objectivity and justice and a social responsibility discourse.

The above descriptions of the journalistic professionalism put journalism ethics, occupational beliefs and social responsibility into one holistic argument. However, these concepts also separately stress the highest ideal of journalistic professionalism and the sought for reality of the journalistic profession as a discourse model of the scope and independence of control performance. Data on the basic skills of journalism and the knowledge system is not considered in the argument. This concern lies in the contextual background of Chinese society and political control. Media scholars hope that the ideology of journalistic professionalism refers to the disengagement of the news from the political system and the market.

Journalists in China today place a higher priority on objectivity than other aspects of their profession. This level involves the ideas of freedom and human rights. Therefore, the foundations of the

journalistic profession focus on professional ethics and code of conduct standardization.

One of the fundamental issues in the debate over ethical journalism in China is whether the professional environment for journalism can be improved without party control.

*“The kernel of the professional spirit of journalism is the self-control of journalists. Gaining freedom with self-discipline can offer more flexibility for China’s journalism.”* (Chen, 2005)

### **3.2.3 How Journalism Studies in China Have Developed Since Being Exposed to Western Journalism Studies**

Zelizer (2004: 13) emphasized that defining journalism was an important issue in the academic discourse concerning journalism study: “Although one might think that academics, journalism educators, and journalists themselves talk about journalism in roughly the same manner, defining ‘journalism’ is not in fact consensual”. Zelizer argued that journalism had been defined from two perspectives: tacit knowledge and interpretive strategies, when people thought about journalism as a phenomenon. She contended:

*“... journalism’s study emerges from and through different interpretive communities ...This means that interpretive communities are seen not as preliminary to questions of value but as a way of settling and resettling questions of value.”*

(Zelizer, 2004: 13-14)

Ruusunoksa (2006) argued that more recent surveys indicated that even if some general patterns and trends among the journalists

around the globe could be found, there were still many differences.

Thus, Ruusunoksa (2006: 83) summarised as follows:

*“...there was more disagreement than agreement over the relative importance of journalistic roles.”*

(Weaver, 1998: 468, Cited by Ruusunoksa, 2006:83)

*“It is important to see professionalism as a diversified construct. Hallin and Mancini (2004) ... singled out three main dimensions in professional journalism: autonomy, distinct professional norms and public service orientation of the profession.”*

(Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 34-37, Cited by Ruusunoksa, 2006:8

3)

In China, “the most distinguishable characteristic of the Chinese media in the 1990s is the tension between rapid commercialisation and continued ideological control” (Ma, 2000: 21). Ma used three types of operating models to classify the Chinese state-owned media units: administrative units, nonprofit units and profitable enterprise. de Burgh (2003) noted the implications of Chinese journalists practice in transition and suggested the debate about the progressing of modern Chinese society could continue for more than a decade. de Burgh’s arguments concerning Chinese journalism asserted the shift from a command economy to market based ideology changes the stratification order of society, essentially eroding the relative power of the administrative elite. In other words, China’s media reforms coupled with media globalisation have enabled the paradigm of professional journalism to emerge as a direct competitor to the Party-journalism paradigm. While the former gets manifested in journalists’ positive appraisal of the elite western media outlets, the latter is related to praising the official Party organs. Furthermore, there are key differences in the emphases of

the opposing paradigms. The paradigm of professional journalism is related to an emphasis on the disseminator role of the media and the desire for more liberal arts training in journalism, whereas the Party-journalism paradigm is related to an emphasis on the interpretive and popular advocacy roles as well as the desire for more training in Party propaganda and the official journalistic theories (Pan, 2000). In discussing the reality in China, Pan pointed that, “market forces have not led to a wholesale acceptance of Western professionalism among China’s journalists, but have complicated their work conditions with new possibilities” (Pan, 2000: 79). Certainly, the restructuring of the reward systems within media organisations created another new career paths for Chinese Journalists. Media workers traditionally have ascended the career ladder by political commitment to the market which contributes to the development of alternative career ladders. Thus, the popular disdain of journalists profiteering from the market, as expressed in the widely circulated saying, “beware of fire, beware of burglars, and beware of reporters,” raises a serious question as to whether the reforms are combining the worst of both the authoritarian and free market systems” (Zhao, 1998: 118).

Furthermore, journalism studies showed that Chinese journalists have evolved from Party propagandists to professionals who exhibit many contradictions, as Lu and Pan explained:

*“They avoid confronting the news-value judgment principles of the party-press directly. Instead, they devise non-routine practices as situations permit and describe such practices carefully to contain them discursively as local occurrences or as special applications of the general party-press principles under specific situations.”*

(Lu and Pan, 2003: 218)

From the discussion above, the concept of the journalism profession in China is only one of the overarching ideas, constantly referred to and sliding into variations. Researchers argue that there are three aspects of professional journalism based on Chinese research. The first is that journalistic professionalism is a strategy breaking away from administrative intervention. Secondly, new recruits to journalists' professions do not want to carry the social responsibility and lack any creed. Thirdly, avoiding politics and being business oriented is the path of new journalists' professions. This is because, in journalistic practice in China, marketisation is the effective way for journalists to get rid of the political control and the propaganda system (Li, 2007). In the Chinese media environment, the state tightly controls both the organisational structure and management of large media firms through regulation and the central administration systems. The government does not, however, bear the costs of maintaining either the structure or the management system. Therefore, these media firms must enter the market and compete with other media enterprises. Simultaneously, the liberal economic aspect of the media market exerts a high degree of influence on media practitioners, regardless of political pressure, to maximize profits. In conclusion, professionalism in the Chinese media needs the support of economic strength. Without this support, journalism cannot adhere to professional standards, which is a pre-condition for professional practice. Chinese professionalism in journalism differs from American professionalism, and also from the old *literati* style of journalism in China in the 1920s.

Overall, Lu and Pan concluded that “under the political and economic conditions of the reforms, China’s journalists cannot and

do not approach their work with fixed conceptual categories derived from a universal model” (Lu & Pan, 2003: 230).

### **3.2.4 The Particularity of Magazine Journalism**

The magazine catalogues cover a diverse range of topics and vary in style from glossy magazines to trade newsletters in contemporary China. According to Prospect’s description, “The three main branches of magazine journalism are news writing, feature writing and sub-editing” (Prospect online). This also applies in China. More importantly, the last branch, sub-editing is the one which this thesis has examined. Ultimately the work of magazine journalists differs from that of journalists in other print media. This applies particularly to newspaper journalists who have been the subject of extensive media research during this century and the last. The main difference between magazine journalism and newspaper journalism is that the practice of magazine journalists always focuses more on the business function than other media functions, both from a practical and academic point of view. There are three reasons for this. The first is that business in magazine practice is essentially a profit-making machine, which is not necessarily true in other media forms (particularly in the Chinese context). In addition, according to Crewe:

*“...the emerging paradigm of cultural economy in which this work is located has been developed as a challenge to traditional production approaches to commercial culture, yet it retains many of the concerns of political economy and other established branches of media sociology”.*

(Crewe, 2003: 186)

These professional discourses structured the direction in which “commercial production was liable to proceed; and were responsible for the paradigmatic shift in men’s magazine’ publishing during the mid-1990s” (Crewe, 2003: 192). The second reason relates to journalistic practice in that many journalists see promotion to an editor as the pinnacle of their career (the summit of their ambitions). The irony is, however, that editing is not solely about journalism. Morrish recognized this, stressing: “editors need to learn a publishing role, a managerial role and a leadership role” (Morrish, 1996: 4). Due to these differences, the discourses on the professionalism of magazine journalism need new approaches both in theory and in practice. The third reason concerns status. When describing the women’s magazine business in Britain, Braithwaite and Barrell (1988:141) observed that, “editors are stars and should be treated like stars”. Therefore, in many ways, magazine journalists, particularly the senior editors are more concerned with their status in producing quality society than journalism and becoming a craft man or craft woman. Here, self-recognition is very essential in their awareness.

#### **3.2.4.1 Current Study on the Magazine Industry**

Current studies of the business practices of magazines normally address internationalisation and industrialisation. When Hafatrand (1995) first examined the variety of strategies and tactics being used by European magazine publishers to expand internationally they included exporting titles, licensing titles and joint ventures. Being based on the European approach, these strategies of internationalisation can be used to enter a foreign market by setting up foreign subsidiaries.



Other Western researchers address the gender of the readership of women's magazines from the cultural studies perspective. Previous scholars in this field have offered 'feminism' or 'cultural hegemony' for the theme of research. Many studies have focused on the textual level, analyzing readers from social and cultural points of view. Others, for example McRobbie (1991, 1999) argued that women's magazines could be understood by exploring the ways in which their readers consume them through readers' diaries and focus group interviews. The most significant researches in the field of cultural studies analyse how certain groups of readers consume particular magazines; reflecting their identity and social status. McRobbie (1991) investigated young female readers' self-identity through their consumption of British women's magazines. Crewe's research (2003) is almost unique for concentrating on male representation in the content and production of men's magazines. Last but not least, Jackson et al. (2001) focused the gendered and commercial character of men's magazines in the UK market and analysed their understanding of mixed phenomena on capitalism, masculinity and consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Only a few studies maintain analysis of women's magazines can be approached through their conditions of production. Anna Gough-Yates (2003) is the first scholar to pay attention to the ways their meanings are produced and circulated at economic sites. In her book named "*Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships*", Gough-Yates looked at how media practitioners in the women's magazine industry understand their product, marketing and advertisers, and represent their readers' social, political, cultural and commercial stature and identity. Rather than being based on a semiotic analysis of women's magazines, therefore,

Gough-Yates' study deals with the discussion of texts that took place in the trade press and newspaper commentaries.

Societal viewpoints of magazines pose a number of problems for magazine studies. Abrahamson argued that "magazines remain second-class citizens in the journalism academy" (Abrahamson cited in Fosdick, 2008: 2). Additionally, Carolyn Kitch summarized three biases on magazine studies:

*"Magazines are something other than journalism—better or worse. 'If they're better than journalism, they're art...artifacts of literary sensibilities...a realm that floats above news.'... Rarely are studies of magazines considered a good fit for journals about journalism."*

*"Magazines are best studied 'as a window on something else...a device to better understand history itself.' ..... We diminish the special status of magazines."*

*"Perhaps the most insidious assumption: "Magazines are not on the cutting edge of media developments or media scholarship" and are not relevant to the 'hot topics'"*

(Kitch cited in Fosdick 2008: 2-3)

At the end of 2008, Marcia R. Prior-Miller (2008) published online data on magazine studies during last twenty years. She selected all the related research topics on four basic types of non-newspaper periodicals which included *lifestyle, occupational, scholarly journals* and *'in-house' organisation publications*, as well as advertising in each type. Prior-Miller (2008) found that there are 13 kinds of research topics under "the magazine as media of communications": 1. historical and qualitative methods, 2. quantitative methods and methodological studies, 3. magazine industry, 4. studies of the people and the social structure of the

magazine industry, 5. audience and media / magazine effects studies, 6. studies of magazine editorial content, 7. magazines and advertising, 8. magazines: design, layout and visual treatment, 9. studies on producing the product, 10. management, economics, and marketing of magazine publishing, 11. magazines in international markets, 12. magazines, ethics and media law, 13. preparing for careers in magazine journalism and publishing (Prior-Miller, 2008). Of course, the data seems to cover a very broad research base where more than 2,000 papers were found. However, during last twenty years, there has arguably been no substantial research into the magazine as a medium. The research from Prior-Miller (2008) showed that “among the 100 papers published, covering more than 13 topics on average every year, there were only 7 to 8 papers of magazine research published for one topic on each unit every year. [These are] very small achievements compared to the coverage of other media, such as broadcasting or the internet in general”.

Finally, the ‘Mapping the Magazine’ conferences<sup>24</sup> of 2003 and 2005, led to a special issue of *Journalism Studies: Comparative Studies in Magazine Journalism* which was published in October 2007. It was released as a book in 2008. The ten chapters in this book covered the most important areas that magazine researchers focus on. Authors in the book studied the magazine business, technology, internationalisation and readership consumption, leave a few focused on women’s magazines and consumer magazines. Nevertheless, none of these studies examined the daily practice of magazine journalism. Therefore, in summary, this book should be treated as evidence that media research ignored the dynamics of the practice of magazine journalists.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/newsandevents/events/mappingthemagazine.html>

In China, the history of magazine studies started in the late 1990s. Alongside the development of the media industry in the late 1990s, magazine studies in China moved from publishing text-books into media literacy in 1997 and editorial theory in 2001, to carrying out investigations on the magazine industry. Several studies exist concerning the link between fashion magazines and cultural codes. For instance, Meng (2007) presented that fashion magazine was a cultural symbol of middle class. Li (2007) emphasized that “media constructs new crowd during the fashion communication.” Besides using cultural symbolism to examine fashion magazines and their readers, business operation and management were aspects that some media researchers have paid attention to. Others inspected the consumer periodicals industry to analyse the brand strategies of fashion magazines, and the fashion magazines. They also looked at how latter have been effected by the force of globalisation, using case studies of *Cosmopolitan*, *Rayli*, and *Elle* and so on. The failure of their research lies in the absence of investigative methodologies to prove their conclusions.

#### **3.2.4.2 Focusing on Journalistic Practice**

Consumer magazines have been international since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their emergence ran in a trend with the advent of globalisation in the sense that publishers had begun to import ideas, inspiration, and knowledge from other national markets. Another main reason behind this trend is that magazine publishers transferred their titles to other national markets outside their domestic throughout the 20th century. As magazines are fundamentally business concerns, the editorial characteristic is related to business management more than journalistic practice.

Abrahamson (1995: 7) pointed out that, the editor not only needed the confidence that comes from a thorough mastery of the fundamentals of journalism, but also required t“more important type of maturity. You must ask yourself how you will cope with the responsibilities of leadership.” Thus, a new standard of these magazine journalists’ professional practice is raised. In this context, as well as having a firm knowledge of how particular business operates, the editor would also be expected to have financial knowledge and management skills, which are not normally required for strict journalistic operations. However, if we take the business oriented work of the editors of magazines into account, the construction of magazines’ journalistic professionalism needs to be reconsidered as it involves both journalistic and business practice. This is a further area in need of research and investigation. The career patterns of journalists in most western countries can be clear discerned as they have a professional career ladder which “was instituted to reward successful professionals by increasing their salaries and rank without having to increase their supervisory or managerial responsibilities” (Soloski, 2008: 57). In China, however, the media institutions or organisations use a system in which promotion of successful journalists through the senior ranks enables them to become senior supervisors, managers and ultimately in charge of the whole business.

The other import element the Researcher considers about magazines’ journalistic practice is the difference the individual has on media content. Magazines are so intensely personal; the effect of individual journalistic practice by magazine journalists is more significant than journalists working in other media forms. Taking

this into account, the investigation of magazine journalists' practice is an important sector in media studies, even though there is currently less research in this particular sector compared to others in media studies.

When studying Chinese lifestyle magazine journalism an issue arises here is how media professionals operating in this field are able to effectively compete in the market with their Chinese colleagues working on international magazines, while also obeying party regulations and ideologies. An additional issue is raised over how the professionalism of Chinese magazine journalists should be measured if they choose to pursue the same career patterns as their western counterparts?

### **3.3 Media Globalisation and Global-localisation**

#### **3.3.1 Myth or Truth of Media Globalisation**

Studying communication media increasingly entails studying communication in its international contexts. As the processes of globalisation influence what was once a national space, we are compelled to address empirically the relationship between 'local' and the 'global'.

Global media corporations have, during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, broadly experienced integration, diversification and internationalisation. One aspect of media concentration is overseas investment, as Murdock and Golding (1973) have highlighted. The participation of news in the expansion process of cultural imperialism was crucial both as the communications arm of the 'empire' and as a source of revenue for the media. Any overseas

company is part of the global marketing system (Hafstrand, 1995) and also a facet of 'cultural imperialism'. Therefore, any study of the Chinese media system needs to address media globalisation or internationalisation.

The definition of globalisation is the "process enabling financial and investment markets to operate internationally, largely as a result of deregulation and improved communications" (Collins Dictionary) or - from the US - to "make worldwide in scope or application" (Webster Dictionary). The term seems more related to financial power in the early 1960s under which the theme "globalisation" first appeared. Giddens (1990), Appadurai (1990) and Robertson (1992) defined the theory of globalisation as different aspects of the tendency for business process, technologies, or philosophies to spread throughout today's world. 'Hyperglobalist', 'Sceptics' and 'Transformationalist' are acknowledged as three theoretic genres. Keohane and Nye (1998: 1) suggested globalisation "can be linked through flows and influences of capital and goods, information and ideas, people and force ...", or as Michael (2005) contends "creating a shared social space". The more complex processes of globalisation have been "qualified and debated from political economy theories" (Cottle, 2003: 10).

"Cultural imperialism" is according to Schiller (1992) a fundamental element of the dependency theory, which drawing on a Marxist analysis of the global economy, rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. Schiller held that in the developing world's dependence on US communication technology and investments, US cultural imperialism was transformed into trans-national corporate cultural domination. Lee provided a more critical view of "cultural imperialism" emphasizing that,

*“...the West, especially the U.S., has sought to drag Third World countries into the market-oriented capitalist world economies by offering, to use as an analogy, sugar-coated exogenous cultures in seemingly harmless communication media products.”*

(Lee, 1994: 26)

Schiller (1992: 39) traced the multinational enterprises within the global system finding them “with many nationally based trans-national corporations employing the communication and cultural practices and processes that originated, and continue to prevail, in the United States”. Arguably, Schiller’s theory, based on the argument of cultural hegemony system of cultural export, replaced the traditional value system and framework of imports. Cultural imperialism in the context of globalisation seems to ignore the influence of local culture and consumer power. Sun (2003) has argued the following:

*“Tomlinson and Appadurai assert that cultural flow is a one-way communication. Tomlinson in Globalisation and Cultural maintains that, the idea that globalised culture is a hybrid culture has a strong intuitive appeal that follows directly from the notion of de-territorialization. This is because the increasing traffic between cultures that the globalisation process brings suggests that the dissolution of the link between culture and place is accompanied by an intermingling of these uprooted cultural practices producing new complex hybrid forms of culture.”*

More importantly, globalisation and cultural imperialism are not simply a one way process from the US and the Western world to the developing world. Pieterse argued that “Contemporary globalisation means not just Westernization but also Easternization, because of



the influence of Japanese and East Asian forms of capitalism” (Pieterse, 2004: 38). The colonizing process of the cultural aggressor is so complex that further adequate theoretical explication is needed. Moreover, as Pieterse (2004: 38) indicated, “Imperialism often sought to impose a clear division between colonizer and colonized; in contemporary globalisation, the lines of inclusion and exclusion are blurred.” Furthermore, the main weakness of this “New Imperialism” is that it lacks a systemic structure to discuss the interaction between the major actors in the process of cultural imperialism. Other empirical research also points out that studies of cultural imperialism should give emphasis to the rules and regulations of international communication in order to gain an insight into interactions among the media exporter, the state and the audience. Among the globalisation and trans-national flow of the media firm, “International media organisations are increasingly becoming conscious of the varying tastes of their consumers in different parts of the world in a gradually fragmenting global market. . . . .adapting their products and services to local cultural conditions has become a commercial imperative” (Thussu, 2006: 166).

Hafez and Alex argued the following:

*“The globalisation debate has produced an internally inconsistent dual myth. This is the notion that culturally imperialist ‘Americanization’ or ‘Westernization’ may be accompanied by the ‘globalisation’ or ‘hybridization’ of cultures ... The second variant of the myth of globalisation asserts not only that American and Western cultural hegemony is expanding, but takes possible counter-arguments into account by conceding that non-European cultures are capable of making*

*local adaptations in response to globalisation.”*

(Hafez and Alex, 2007: 171)

Hafez and Alex (2007) suggested that the generalization of globalisation as a concept did not adequately acknowledge the conflicts between different nations; maintaining that a hybrid cultural harmony existed with violent in and even between eastern countries.

Looking from the theoretical perspective, at the most fundamental level, economic globalisation basically means an expansion of the range of possible commercial activities. Acts of buying, selling, producing, borrowing and lending that used to be ruled out by geographic, technological, or legal barriers have now become practical. “Globalisation” often becomes a catch-all term for capitalism and injustice [indeed, for some protestors, referring to capitalism and injustice would be redundant]. However, economic globalisation in reality describes a specific phenomenon: the growth trade flow and financial capital across national borders. The directions of the flows have consequences in many areas. These include sovereignty, prosperity, jobs, wages, and social legislation. Globalisation, as Taylor (2002) suggested, is too important to be consigned to buzzword status. From this point of view, media globalisation has brought foreign firms into the Chinese media system that not only has economic force and cultural content, but also political and capitalist ideologies. The more the Chinese media system gets involved, the more the system will be influenced by these foreign media giants.

### 3.3.2 Globalisation Discourse in China on Media

#### Practice

“Economic and cultural globalisation arguably would be impossible without a global commercial media system to promote global markets and to encourage consumer values” (McChesney, 2001).

Therefore, as Chaudhary and Chen, quoting Tran Van Dinh (1989), argued, there were three factors that have influenced the development of mass communication in modern Asia:

*1. Western domination, motivated originally by Europeans' desire to reach India by trading purposes, but resulting in transplanted technology, media institutions and popular culture. 2. The modernization of Japan, whose use of an Eastern ethics, Western science strategy stands as a model that still influences developing Asia nations in the 1980s. 3. Independence, resulting in regional rather than colonial alignments for communication systems and individual solutions regarding the role and form of national mass media.*

(Chaudhary and Chen, 1995: 44)

These factors, with slight amendments, can be applied to the Chinese media system. Thus, Ang (1996: 153) describes “glocalisation” stating that “local culture everywhere tends to reproduce itself precisely, to a large extent, through the appropriation of global flows of mass-mediated forms and technologies.” That is could be seen as an appropriate way of describing Chinese media, both in theory and practice. Furthermore, from the political economy prospect, concerning structures of corporate control, markets and advertising, sets limits on how much

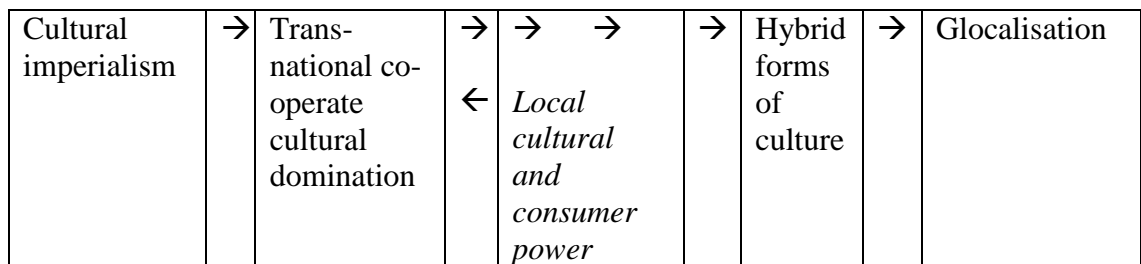
can be done by media workers. This perspective, linked to the economic aspect of the globalisation of media, provides an explanation of the media’s role in the globalisation process,

*“Perhaps the best way to understand how closely the global commercial media system is linked to the neo-liberal global capitalist economy is to consider the role of advertising. ....The commercial media system is the necessary transmission belt for businesses to market their wares across the world; indeed, globalisation as we know it could not exist without it.”*

(McChesney, 2001)

The process of ‘globalisation’ concerning the ‘glocalisation’ of media creates this schematic:

**Figure 1 Process of globalisation leading to Glocalisation**



Thus, local media firms should not just supply a medium for international advertisers to communicate with consumers but should “co-operate with their global partners to create more opportunities for a local medium to attract international media planners and possible advertising revenue” (Muelle, 2004: 42). According the media in China, magazines offered an excellent medium for American companies to expand their market in China with its emerging global consumer culture (Paek & Pan, 2004). Zhao (2003) further pointed:

*“WTO entry is not just a business story. The Chinese press means it literally: to join the WTO is to rejoin the world, to become a*

*member of the international community, to become part of civilized society.”*

(Zhao, 2003: 62)

### **3.3.3 The Lifestyle Magazine in China as a Representation of Media Global-Localisation**

In the late Twenty century, Hachette Filipacchi Medias (HFM), a French media enterprise, licensed the brand and content of *Elle* to Shanghai Translation Publishing House for the mainland Chinese version in 1988. Entry into the Chinese magazine market was just part of HFM's Asia strategy. The media group had previously launched the Hong Kong edition of *Elle* in 1987 and would follow with the Japanese version 1989 and Taiwanese version in 1991 (*Elle* online resource). In the context of the Chinese market, *Elle* was only published as a black-and-white quarterly from 1988 to 1998.

Zhang Bohai, the President of The China Periodical Institution, recalled the historical reason for licensing *Elle*:

“I worked as an official of the Newspaper and Periodical Publication Management Division in General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China in 1988. There were two reasons for licensing *Elle* at that time. First, the Fourth China Politburo plenary session pointed that the Chinese coastal zone strip provided comparable international exchange and competition into the international market economy. Shanghai was one of the 'pilot fields' (Shiyantian). Secondly, light industry was chosen for the aspect of Shanghai's development. We found *Elle* was the media which could lead residents in Shanghai to experience the foreign fashion world, and would also take on the

task of propagandizing the fashion industry. I worked with Hachette Filipacchi Medias to find a Chinese partner for several months. Finally, we decided Shanghai Translation Publishing House would get the contract.”<sup>25</sup>

The decision to publish a foreign lifestyle magazine in China at that time was, as this interview revealed, not market-driven, but based on strategic politics. The absence of market forces in the decision also explains why *Elle* was initially a quarterly publication on mainland China.

Chinese law has permitted foreign publications to enter the mainland market in one of three ways since the 1990s: (i) several issues can be published by contract as long as they are given away for free and do not have illegal content; (ii) publications can be imported from abroad for distribution through a state-owned company such as the China National Publications Import and Export Corporation; (iii) content can be licensed to a domestic publisher, as long as no more than 70% of the content is imported. The latter remains the most popular method of entry. The Chinese government views joint ventures as crucial in achieving the following objectives: the attraction of foreign capital; the import of advanced foreign technology; the promotion of exports and the earning of foreign exchange; the import of modern management experience; and the creation of job opportunities (Strange et al., 1998: 6-7).

After nearly ten years development, China’s publishing market was technically closed to foreign publications. However, many international brand magazines were permitted to circulate, subject to partnership with local publishers, strict licensing and content

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Zhang Bohai, 2006, July, Beijing.

guidelines. Zhao described the period:

*“...rather than being deprived by a tightly controlled domestic publications regime, China’s consuming elites are served with the best of all possible worlds through the magazine industry’s flexible advertising and copyright co-operation with trans-national publishers. The resulting Chinese consumer and lifestyle magazine market is truly trans-national and trans-cultural, constituting a trans-national consumer culture embellished with various national tastes.”*

(Zhao, 2003: 65)

As Lee (2000: 11)’s explained, ‘marketization [had] reduced press dependence on the state.’ Today, the Chinese government no longer holds exclusive control over the consumer magazine. Non-governmental and private sector activity is growing, as long as the globalisational cultural and business exchanges in the national market. The new political economy in China has ‘produced the latent consequence of creating a wider institutional space within which news organisations and journalists can improvise news practices beyond the official confines’ (Lee, 2000: 15). This is a clear indication of the liberalization within the Chinese publishing industry of consumer magazines. Trade publishers can now find an open avenue to China’s rising middle class, and thus act as a springboard for Western publishers in their joint ventures with Chinese partners

### **3.3.3.1 Consumer Journalists and Industry Reform**

Wiest (2002) pointed out that, “financial journalism in China is a product of industry reforms as well as a means for promoting

reforms”. However, consumer journalism in China is in the same position as financial journalism. This is partly due to the reform process of the Chinese media industry. The increase in the number of consumer magazines launching over recent decades has led the whole industry towards an international standard. This is due to the increasing implementation of western journalistic techniques and industry standards. In comparison to other models in different countries, Lin (2006: 80) discovered that “media transformation in China has not followed the classical path of liberal modernization exhibited in Great Britain and the United States..., nor did it follow either a Scandinavian model or an interest-group conspiracy model”. This factor should be considered when investigating the professional processes of Chinese consumer journalists.

Additionally, from the state propaganda system point of view, the consumer media, especially magazines, is the media that encourages people to consume. It therefore has a less harmful effect on the public media under tight political control. In 2007, an American magazine chair, Charles McCullagh, looked at aspects of Chinese consumer magazines, at the 36<sup>th</sup> FIPP World Magazine Conference in Beijing in May:

*“[The] heavy emphasis on fashion, lifestyle, and health, was a reminder of how much this market, spurred by the big-brand international titles, has changed in the last five years. The number of new domestic Chinese magazines seems astounding, perhaps suggesting that the government’s plan to limit media subsidies and force a free market solution is bearing some fruit. The production quality of the titles on display has certainly improved. But that can be confirmed by looking at the rich display of*



*magazines at any kiosk or book store in a city of size. At the same time there is, to a degree, a haunting similarity to many of the women's titles—domestic publishers have certainly learned from their international cousins. The demure Chinese model looking out on the world seems almost archetypal, a concept not unrelated to the selling proposition. Imitation remains the highest form of flattery.”*

(McCullagh, 2007)

The reason for the rich and colourful emergence of Chinese consumer magazines can be analysed from two points. Media policy strategy: by which the Chinese government views the “foreign-licensed” magazines as a “pilot field” to bring the national media industry up to international standards and also provide a platform to display the “Open Door policy”. In order to achieve these, the government has allowed these magazines more freedom in their content delivery and business practice. The economic reform policy: the Chinese government needs media to advocate consumerism and consumer magazines were chosen specifically for this task. However, in the context of emerging consumer journalists in China, their profession is likely to be either a “high skills and well-paying-driven model” or an “informing citizens” model (Gans, 2003: 21). This is in contrast to the traditional propaganda model: the mouthpiece of the Party.

The rise of consumerism in China has increased the popularity of consumer magazines. As Hung, Li and Belk (2005) argued:

*“Since the reintroduction of the market system in China in the late 1970's, China has experienced ... cultivated consumerist values as well as a desire for self-actualization (Pan and Wei 1997) and the ‘good life’ characterized*

*by possessions, pleasure, and luxury (Belk and Pollay 1985). Instead of emphasizing production as the driver of the economy, domestic consumption becomes 'an activity, a way of social life and as 'the work of the imagination'' (Munshi 2001, p.7) that could help realize a 'relatively comfortable life' (xiaokang) (Davis 2000). ”*

China's enthusiastic adoption of consumerism has meant that consumer magazines, especially international lifestyle magazines, are starting to become “consumer bibles” or “lifestyle bibles” for the enthusiastic advocates of western lifestyle living in the metropolitan cities. From this point of view, consumer magazines, particularly glossy lifestyle magazines, are required to maintain their promotion and marketing to their loyal readers. As McCullagh (2007) mentioned, Zhang Bohai, the President of China Periodical Institution

*“...noted earlier that the magazine business was segmenting into two groups: the general interest domestic magazines, largely appealing to a rural audience, and the international lifestyle titles. As Mr. Zhang noted, the international brands are receiving the lion's share of advertising.”*

There is no doubt that modern China has a history of inviting investments in areas that they wish to develop. Foreign capital in the magazine industry is just example of this. Two journalists, Fowler and Qin believed that investment is needed if lifestyle magazines are to develop:

*“China has imposed curbs on investors before and then eased them or overlooked exceptions. But this rule is a big setback for publishers of lifestyle magazines, which had been one area in which foreign media could expand.”*

*“Liberalization of the Chinese publishing industry, the magazine industry’s consumer and trade publishers found an open road to China’s rising middle class, a springboard for many Western publishers in their joint ventures with Chinese partners.”*

(Fowler & Qin, 2006)

Wiest (2002), looking at the state of the financial media in China, observed that “despite restrictions on private ownership of media in China, many financial news publications have struck deals with investors for joint operations. While outside participants tend to steer clear of core editorial decisions, commercial influence has brought changes to packaging methods to attract readers and viewers.” Lifestyle magazines also opened their doors to overseas investors, but with restrictions both on their editorial input and organisations’ investment.

Since *Elle* launched its Chinese edition in 1988, the foreign lifestyle periodicals have been entering the Chinese market. For over two decades, they have brought significant changes to the industry, society, and culture in China. The change addresses the industrialism and marketisation of the Chinese magazine industry.

“Chinese periodical publishers are becoming more and more aware of the need to closely follow the development of periodical publishing in foreign countries, to conduct friendly exchanges with foreign publishers and learn from their advanced experiences and to make our contribution to the development of the world periodical press.” This is an excerpt from the speech which the President of The China Periodical Association, Zhang Bohai gave during 2003 in the 34th FIPP World Magazine Congress (FIPP data). However, through the process of global media localisation, the lifestyle

magazines with foreign investment are emerging as a collective oligopoly. This means that China's magazine industry has opened a welcome door to foreign enterprise while the other media forms, such as newspapers, television broadcasting and the Internet remain tightly controlled by state government. The majority of foreign magazines with Chinese editions that make up the current market fall into lifestyle categories. However, this does not mean that other types of magazine, for instance, political, financial or news titles ignore the Chinese market. As fashion and lifestyle magazines tend to cover less sensitive topics than opinion-centred titles, like *The New Yorker* or *Time*, censorship issues rarely arise when translating their content. Consequently, the notion of investing in consumer magazines seems to be a part of the strategy of exporting Chinese periodicals into the international market. Li (2008) thus declared that:

*“As one of the realisations of change in the social, economic and cultural development, magazines in China are influenced by the process of globalisation and thus formed remarkable characteristics in this century.”*

(Li, 2008)

Moreover, as Huang Hong, the CEO of China Interactive Media Group pointed out:

*“We were a bit early, but we thought media would be a huge business in China. We knew the government would eventually open up the market for collaboration with non-state companies, so this is a good place to sow some seeds.”*

(Hong, 2008a)

### 3.3.3.2 Media Research on Fashion Magazines

We can divide the research for fashion or lifestyle magazines in China since the 1990s into two stages. Phase I: 1993 to 2003. In 1993, the launching of *Fashion* was the first fashion magazine to be published in mainland China. Since then, a number of academic researchers have carried out studies on the fashion magazines. These studies analysed the contents, publishing backgrounds and the reasons why they were published. They also focussed on the types and features of magazines, as well as the problems that existed in the fashion magazine industry. Phase II : 2003 to the present. There was no comprehensive and insightful understanding of fashion or lifestyle magazines. The research undertaken at that time was concerned with a general analysis of the foundations of magazine development, and the types, contents, and appearance of fashion magazines (i.e. quality of paper, volume, printing quality, etc.). The studies focused on describing the commercialisation and commonness of fashion magazines. Since 2000, particularly since 2003, in-depth research into fashion or lifestyle magazines in China has considerably expanded. This trend is mainly fallen into two aspects. The research and academic analysis has been undertaken in a more comprehensive and detailed way. The research projects have covered many professional fields, which have further improved the quality of the in-depth research. Since that time, research in fashion or lifestyle magazines in China has drawn from overseas theoretical resources which have raised the academic standards in China. The fashion magazines in China have combined the global view with knowledge of sociology, semiotics, ideology studies, and feminism, etc.

One of the major trends of fashion magazine studies lays in the connection between the magazine and social class studies. Fashion magazines establish a cultural platform and a space where the white-collars can express their views to the public. It enable them build their image and provides them with access to a lifestyle and philosophy that is targeted at them.

Through the literature review for the research that has been taking place during the last decade, two major issues have been found that enlighten our understanding of the magazine industry. Firstly, it has provided the reference and theories for the subsequent studies on fashion magazines. Secondly, it has highlighted the shortcomings of the research undertaken in the past.

Those shortcomings are as follows: firstly, the in-depth research on the fashion or lifestyle magazine has not been undertaken comprehensively. By highlighting out this issue, the Researcher does not infer that the experts has a low level of research ability, but rather wishes to emphasise that fashion or lifestyle magazine study has yet to become mainstream discipline in the field of social science in China. Moreover, the public have not paid a great deal of attention to this discipline. Some scholars undertake this research only out of their interest, rather than putting in the effort to carry out systematic and comprehensive research on the fashion or lifestyle magazine; viewing it as an important discipline. While fashion or lifestyle magazine study is one of the subjects that they are researching, it is not a central part of the majority of scholars' field. Without this analysis, we will not be able to explain why we are still lacking professional studies and high quality academic papers on fashion or lifestyle magazines in China. The same problem also applies to the text analysis for the fashion or lifestyle magazine in

that it is still at an initial stage, with the general information available. There are few scholars who can conduct long term context analysis for a fashion or lifestyle magazine. The current method adopted is for the researchers to simply select several paragraphs and make a general outline that can support their arguments. However, this leads to shortcomings in terms of scientific authority.

Secondly, there is a problem in terms of the research module and areas covered by fashion or lifestyle magazine studies. Currently, fashion or lifestyle magazine research in China mainly conducts the theory of cultural industry criticism from the Frankfurt School. There have been an increasing number of academic essays on semiotics research on fashion or lifestyle magazines. Although generally, the models adopted in the fashion or lifestyle magazine researches are not diversified. Furthermore, domestic research is still at the stage of general description and direct utilization of the model without adaptation; researchers adopting the theories of cultural industry, ideology, and feminism without further analysis as they focus on merely general description of the magazine researchers are only able to arrive at a general conclusion.

Lastly, further analysis on fashion or lifestyle magazines and metropolitan elite groups is needed. Almost all studies have indicated that the magazine industry is closely connected with the metropolitan elite groups (professionals or administrative workers), comprising the burgeoning middleclass in China. However, the research results that are connected with this social class have only been available during recent years. Despite the achievements that these researchers have made, further in-depth analysis carried out in a systematic and comprehensive way is a distant prospect. Although metropolitan

elites have adopted the image, lifestyle, and taste established by the lifestyle magazine, and considered it a major method of dividing the social classes, the public do not have concrete ideas towards those issues mentioned above. In other words, they do not have any specific ideas about the contents, dynamics and features of lifestyle magazines. Little contemporary research has focused on their contents, functions, and possible impacts, etc (Xu, 2008).

### **3.4 Consumerism and Social Stratification in**

#### **China**

##### **3.4.1 The Debates on the Historical Development of**

##### **Consumerism**

TheFreeDictionary (Collins English Dictionary) says that the definition of consumerism is “advocacy of a high rate of consumption and spending as a basis for a sound economy”. Hilton (2003:1) further summarised it as “consumption, consumerism, consuming, price, and material culture are all crucial to our understanding of twentieth-century history” because it is a “mobilising force at the heart of twentieth-century social and political history”. Although Brown (1996) defined consumerism as “an ideology of materialism”, the people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are purely living in a time where “everyday life in the developed world appears... to be dominated by our relationship with consumer goods” (Miles, 1998: 1) Consumer culture is successful because the consumers hope that their reality of life is able to be changed by their consumer behaviours and habits. This means that when they



are enamoured with consumer goods, “people recognise themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment” (Marcuse, 1986:9).

Stearns defined consumerist society as one ‘in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence or for traditional display’ (Stearns, 2001:166). However, scholars like James B. Twitchell still treated this phenomenon neutrally by saying: ‘We live through things. We create ourselves through things. And we change ourselves by changing our things’ (Cited by Wyatt, 1999: 2). Being an advocator of consumerism, Twitchell further indicated that “consumption of goods may be the key to a ‘more peaceful and stable world’”, thus “commercialism is wonderfully amoral’ and “Americans are healthier and more prosperous than ever by consuming things, ironically spending more and more time at the carnival, less and less in church” (Cited by Wyatt, 1999: 2). Miles (1998: 4) even pointed out that “while consumption is an act, consumerism is a way of life.” Thus, it is clear, why today’s people rely more on consuming goods than other social behaviours, for instance going to church, Fraser’s analysis of consumerism found the following:

*“First, it can help us understand how people's social identities are fashioned and altered over time. Second, it can help us how, under conditions of inequality, social groups in the sense of collective agents are formed and unformed. Third, a conception of discourse can illuminate how the cultural hegemony of dominant groups in society is secured and contested. Fourth and finally, it can shed light on the prospects for emancipatory social change and political practice.”*

(Fraser, 1997: 152)

As a consequence, consumer society emerged during the last century this century. Based on the new trend of globalisation, transnational consumer community has also been re-structured. Cancilni (2001: 44) summarised, “the hegemonic sector of one nation has more in common with the elites of another than with the subaltern sectors of its own nation.”

Further researches on consumerism are involved within the relationship between consumerism and social class structures. “By championing hedonistic consumerism and encouraging individuals of all classes to believe that ownership of a particular object mediated the realities of class, mass media created a new image of the rich” (Hooks, 2000: 71). Furthermore, a revolution happened to the notion of citizenship in Europe. As Slater (Cited by Cronin, 2000: 12) discussed, “The erosion of narrowly defined access to social status highlighted the role of consumption in Western societies in displaying social distinction”. More importantly, “social contract is a particular discursive structure which frames individual agency through citizenship, belonging, entitlement and consumerism. Yet, the shift towards ‘consumer-citizenship’” (Cronin, 2000: 36).

By analysing the link between consumer, consumerism, citizenship, and social status, one of the linkages is advertising. For instance, Goldman (1992: 2) argued that advertising was “a key social and economic institution in producing and reproducing the material and ideological supremacy of commodity relations”. Furthermore, Goldman summarised, “advertising as a means of ‘selling the system’ grew more pervasive in the 1920s, as the nascent corporate advertising industry sought to deflect class consciousness among workers through the construction of a new

political ideology of consumerism” (Goldman, 1992: 86).

Advertising never addresses an individual, but is aimed at defining how human beings differentiate themselves from the crowd, so that it always “creates a spectacle, a display of a person’s ‘self’ that calls in their friends and relations, the group, and society, to bear witness and validate it” (Baudrillard, 1998: 64).

Additionally, from the theoretical debates, the “identification of an essentially American consumerism is as a new worldwide ideology” (Jameson and Miyoshi, 2003: X i V). Therefore, starting from this point, consumerism extended worldwide, especially into Asia. Since the mid-1970s, the rise of East and South-east Asian economies has brought crisis to the world economy. With this development, consumerism, which benefited from rapid economy growth, also became a new trend in these countries. Chua summarised the changing society in his book, *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities*:

*“The need to ‘maintain’ a lifestyle is all the more necessary for one of the newly rich to communicate to the world that is falling apart around him/her that he/she remains ‘unaffected’ and continues to be doing well economically, in hope of retaining the confidence of colleagues and business associates.”*

(Chua, 2000: 18)

However, other problems which the expansion of consumerism in Asia causes, include identity confusion among Asia youth: “consumerist culture might lead to ‘excessive’ materialistic orientation” (Chua, 2000: 9), conflicts in policy making in different countries, the growth of Westernization or Americanization expansions, and so on.

## **3.4.2 Approaches to the New Chinese Consumer and Social Stratification**

### **3.4.2.1 Consumer Society Emergence in China**

The suggestion that social classes are in part constituted through cultural practices, and recent studies emphasizing consumption practices or “lifestyle” have served to differentiate between social groupings.

In China, new identities and expressions through choices of consumer goods and services have multiple meanings, and these are not always about modernity and resistance. Whether it is a choice of Western-style wedding gowns or calling for anonymous advice on sex and relationships, it does not always relate to the working of the party state and the search for political freedom.

Moreover, the rapid rise of China’s economy has brought a new consumerism approach to the whole society. According to Yan (2000), consumerism became a new ideology influencing the everyday life of ordinary citizens as well as the policy-making process. Its appeal had been so great that the consumer market slowdown in 1998 was regarded as a dangerous signal by both Chinese economists and government leaders. People use consumption as a critical way of defining their social positions and changing power relations. To prove and further secure their newly obtained social status and prestige, they have taken the construction of a different lifestyle most seriously. They tend to follow the changing trends of fashion and taste in the outside world closely. Nowadays, wealthy Chinese are able to use their financial power to pursue new lifestyles that are not affordable to the mass majority. As

a result, new elites are emerging, and they form the basis for a rising Chinese middle class whose status is not based on Party membership (Li, 1997; Pearson, 1997). Among them are members of a new professional group that has emerged as a direct result of China's participation in the global market. According to Stearns (2001), consumerism has become so closely associated with an almost fantasy-like modernity, that some people would commit to aspects of consumerism – like fast food in China – which objectively they did not particularly enjoy, because of the larger symbolism involved.

Another factor in the crisis, according to some analysts, is that consumerism also awakens an awareness of individual rights, which in turn has sparked the consumer protection movement. Deborah Davis concludes that Chinese consumers' enthusiasm for individual choice has diversified the venues in which individuals from a broad spectrum of urban society socialize (Davis, 1999). For ordinary consumers, the influx of imported goods has opened a completely new horizon of consumption and also brought in new cultural values that in turn could influence their lives (Yan, 2000). What we see emerging is a consumer style that could offer itself as the high culture model of modern Westernization that matches China's restructured social relations and freedom from the old social regime. Moreover, via the impersonal means of the marketplace, rather than the ideological machinations of the powerful, culture becomes defined in terms of consumerism not citizenship and standardized products instead of expressions of cultural creativity. Consumers are segmented by income and technological access not citizenship rights or cultural needs (Cottle, 2003).

The definition of consumption in Chinese dictionaries, had no

special significance, as it did in other language dictionaries, e.g. English and French dictionaries. However, in China today, when the suffix ‘-ism’ is added to words in Chinese, consumerism becomes the target of public criticism, with almost the same weight as the ideology of criticism for extravagance and materialism. Compared with the first thirty years of “Only life, no consumption” in Chinese society after 1949, the coming of consumerism is unveiling a quiet revolution, which opens China to the global world and gives the Chinese more freedom in their lifestyles and social class restructuring.

From some social scholars’ debates, consumption is the essence of culture, and because there is not much consumer culture to be learnt from the Chinese people, consumerism is destined to be unique in nature. In relatively short course of a few decades, from the period of “only life, no consumption” to the wealth of a materialistic modern commercial society, Chinese people have not had time to gain much consumer experience. While the study of consumption is a science in itself, has a strong inheritance and influence. In the context of the burgeoning middle class and newly rich elites, the need to learn about the new concept of consumption and its power seems to be vital in China. Consequent to the impact of consumer culture, China’s domestic consumption is experiencing a cultural transformation, shaking-off the traditional concept. At this particular stage of the process, following the lead of more advanced consumerist societies and adapting their modes is the avenue China must follow. The concepts of learning and adapting and slowly forming an unique style, ensure personal awareness of identity and status. This is also an important reason why Chinese middle class groups are concerned about fashion and brands and lifestyles. There

is a quiet consumer revolution occurring in which Chinese middle-class consumers are stating a subconscious revolutionary identity (Yan, 1995; Garner, 2005). From imitating consumption towards forming its own unique style and personality, the real significance of China's mainstream consumer culture is established. This refers to the concept of consumption in the 'western' world, where consumption is not intended to meet the real needs of society, but is created by the constant pursuit by stimulating the desire to meet it. In other words, the consumer is a powerful popular symbol, which can be recognised by community feeling.

The historical qualities of Chinese community, like pride of self-confidence and calmness, have in the industrialisation and urbanization process turned into material consumption, which has led to societal imbalance and insecurity. The Chinese community believes that self-acceptance and social recognition can be gained from the power of extraordinary consumption. Regardless of the reason, consumerism will bring to China more of its negative aspects. The concept that consumerism will create a resource-saving, environment-friendly and harmonious society is at odds with the tension within the environment and society that consumerism creates (Gong, 2007; Garner, 2005).

The identification of an essentially American style of consumerism is a new worldwide ideology (Fine, 2002). However, consumerism in Europe and America is based on a harmonized system of political and economic systems, in which the consumption behaviour of consumers relies on rational thinking to guide them. However, in China consumption has become a means to display the worth of the bearer; the only way to self-fulfilment: "I consume, therefore I am" (Xiong, 2007).

At the same time, economic globalisation is changing the whole global system, economically, politically and even culturally.

Consumerism is a force of globalisation:

*“...the 1990s later, the China more deeply involved in the global capitalist production relations and economic and cultural relations of production, the material desires and the global consumption process.”*

(Xiong, 2007: 16)

The debates above suggest that there is correlation between consumerism and the change of ideology in China. The new economy is not only raising living standards but is also creating and reshaping old attitudes toward Chinese traditions, culture, the economic system, reform, personal freedom, and equality. As elsewhere in Asia, where consumption expansion is a recent phenomenon, a common public discourse in China was a critique of consumerism as a culture of “excessive” and “blind” materialism. Furthermore, there was the fear that the ostentatious consumption of the relatively wealthy might provoke the anger and frustration among the poor, thus reawakening class divisions and social conflicts. For these reasons, moral criticism of excessive consumption was constantly being produced by governments and mass media, creating a kind of “moral panic” or ideological battle. The Researcher will discuss some characteristics of contemporary consumption patterns, in particular the excessive consumption of the middle classes and the younger generations. Three identifiable patterns of lifestyle will be discussed, namely, that of the progressively fashionable new generations, the rational middle class, and the traditional conservatism of a general public as reflected in



public opinions. A cultural politics of consumerism has been developing amongst the Chinese middle classes and new generations; integrating identity formation, status symbols and de-politicization, all of which may be said to be major functions of capitalist consumption.

Moreover,

*“Luxury goods are the way Chinese women reward themselves ... this is the first time in 50 years that they can look beautiful without feeling guilty, and indulge themselves in material desires without being politically incorrect.”*

(Rampell, 2004)

The majority of professional journalists who work for lifestyle magazine are female. These female magazine journalists engage in this consumer game and treat consumerism as their life reward. Thus, this group of people even be called “Gold Miss”, which refers to their ability to solely consume international brands rather than domestic goods.

There is no doubt that mass media and consumerism seem to be twins. Consumerism not only affects Chinese society, but also journalism practice. What consumers of mainstream mass media are often left with is generic news content that emphasizes titillation, sensational events, and politically safe topics (Shah, 1998). Consumerism journalism is one of the results.

#### **3.4.2.2 Social Status Stratification**

The last change in China in recent years affecting the consumer journalists’ practice is stratification of social status. According to Li

Peilin, Li Qiang and Sun Lipin (2004)'s arguments, social stratification in China today should be defined as a "pyramidal society" rather than a "rhombic society" which many researchers had forecast in the 1990s. The difference between these two models is "there is no steady middle class status in the model Chinese society as a western model" (Li, Li and Sun; 2004: 3). Furthermore, they also emphasized that stratified consumption can truly reflect the factual situation of social stratification. For example, as Stearns pointed out:

*"There was a key way for successful young professionals to define themselves, creating a display and a fantasy at the same time, such as the "fast-food outlets suggested modernity and equality as well as unusually friendly service and hygiene".*

(Stearns, 2001: 166)

Differentials in purchasing power and increased choice in housing, leisure, and other components of material life provide a wider space for mainland Chinese to make commercial lifestyle choices. The middle and upper echelons of these professionals are referred to by some Chinese as "yuppies". In addition to the original denotation of the English word, the Chinese term has the connotations of global orientation, trendiness, and sophistication. China's consumption demand for luxury goods showed a 20% annual growth prior to 2008. China emerged second in the global luxury market, after Japan, with young premium customers forecasted to spend US\$26.4 billion (nearly 13 Billion GBP) by 2016 compared to US\$18 billion (nearly 8.7 Billion GBP) by their older counterparts. By 2015, China's consumption of luxury goods will rise from an annual 12% to 29% which is an estimated US\$80 billion (nearly 37 Billion GBP)a year (CLS, 2008).

As these statistics indicate, China's burgeoning income provides an avid market for the consumption of luxury goods and international media receptivity. It is arguable that the appearance of the international consumer magazine is timely, as magazines mostly act as mirrors to culture and social impact. Thus, consumer magazines, particularly lifestyle magazines in China, reflect the impact on society of consumerism and globalisation.

### **3.4.2.3 New Generation of China Youth**

*"The link between a majority middle class and democracy was highlighted by Aristotle centuries ago. He noted that the disappearance of kingship and military aristocracy occurred as Greek society became more commercialised."*

(Glassman, 1991: 3)

According to the western theorists, the new middle class individuals would become narcissistic. Lasch and Arendt criticized the generations of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States with accusations of political withdrawal and a lack of fraternal and humanistic concern (Glassman, 1991: 10-11). When consumption became a principal contemporary expression of youth and identity in China, many young people who did not hesitate to purchase luxury consumer overdrafts were called the new generation. This new generation has three characteristics: openness, aggressiveness and youth (Meng, 2007). Their openness is displayed in their willingness to accept fresh and creative ideas. This is a consequence of the Chinese people's lack of belief in the current social system. Furthermore, this openness has enabled the young Chinese to manage effectively with a diversity of

consumer demand. The second feature is aggressiveness. This describes the younger generation is willing to spend beyond their disposable purchasing power in order to gain seniority in the social status of consumption. The third characteristic is their youthfulness. Young people play an important role in the reshaping of this new society of popular culture. One consequence of young people's new western style values and style characteristics has been the tendency for the community as a whole to imitate their style. Nevertheless, it is important to theorize about the new generation's culture-ideology of consumerism, its role in confusing the issue of the satisfaction of basic needs, and the difficulty of mobilizing against globalisation on the basis of anti-consumerist ideology (Chua, 2000).

The burden of the argument has been a decrease of government intervention in the consumer market since the consumer reforms in 1979. The Chinese government has established policies to encourage foreign enterprises to invest in retail business in China. For instance, in 1992, all economic zones (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen, and Hainan) and six major cities (Beijing, Tianjin, Dalian, Qingdao, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) were permitted to launch selectively joint-venture retail business with foreign investors. Six more cities (Shenyang, Harbin, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Xian) have been allowed to open businesses in joint-ventures since 1994. In addition, the government started launching licensed chain stores in several testing areas. The results for implementing these policies are encouraging. Consumerism has been increasing and domestic competition has been growing rapidly in this emerging market. Although consumerism increasingly occurs

globally, resistance to global capitalism can be effective only when it is possible to disrupt its smooth running (accumulation of private profits) locally and establish the methods of globalizing these disruptions. No social movement appears even remotely likely to overthrow the three fundamental institutional supports of global consumerism that have been identified. Nevertheless, in each of these spheres resistance has been expressed by social movements. The new generation's desire for a new lifestyle of consumerism is a phenomenon that is spawned not only by rapid economic growth in contemporary China, but also by the global expansion of consumerism.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the keystones of concepts based on this research regarding the context on theoretical literature will be discussed. To sum up, there are three theory approaches that lead this research to provide a contribution to media study.

The three theories in this approach are journalism studies, media globalisation, and consumerism. The first two approaches are from a communications perspective, the latter from the perspective of social science, although consumerism can also be categorised as globalisation theory.

Journalism studies in this thesis focus on journalistic practice discourse and professionalism. In regard to magazine journalists, the theoretical approach relates to journalistic practice as many journalists seek becoming an editor as the pinnacle of their career, and that editing is not solely about journalism. Thus, editors need to learn a publishing role, a managerial role and a leadership role in

both their journalistic practice and professional context. In the context of Chinese magazine professionals, particularly lifestyle journalists, they need to play their market role on the one hand, but obey party regulations and ideologies on the other. They then compete with their Chinese colleagues as well as with international participators in the media sector.

According to media globalisation, from the political economy perspective, the purpose of this thesis' theory is to account for the influence of global-localisation and global transition on media workers' practice. Concerned with the structures of state regulation, media corporate control and markets and advertising working together, Chinese magazine professionals' working standards and ethics are influenced by the process of global-localisation and harmony of Chinese intellectuals' ideology.

Lastly, consumerism and social stratification are the new trends in today's China. Certainly, consumerism not only affects Chinese society, but also journalism practice. From some perspectives, the concepts of learning and adapting and slowly forming a unique style, ensure personal awareness of identity and status. Similarly, learning from or being trained by international media groups with advanced experience, and slowly but steadily forming their own working standard and ethics is also the way that Chinese magazine journalists highlighted their professional career during the last decade.

# CHAPTER 4. Research Methods

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research method and polite research are analysed and investigated.

This research combines elements of qualitative methods, qualitative data analysis and in-depth interviews. As in ethnographic approaches to research, various forms of in-depth interviewing and participant observation are necessary in order to characterise and delimit the context of data gathering. Data from interviews, government published regulations and policy treatments act as primary data sources. Data extracted from publications, academic literature, magazine content and blogs are used as additional sources which are critically crosschecked with data gathered from the primary sources.

During the pilot research, the Researcher chose the newly launched (Autumn 2006) *Sports Illustrated* as a case study for ethnographic observation. Case studies and ethnographic observations are very popular methods in small-scale research within social science, and performing a case study on *Sports Illustrated* in this pilot research allowed ethnographic observation to be applied at the same time.

During the pilot research, the Researcher identified some general operating and journalistic practices among all consumer magazine journalists. Additionally, the Researcher also found that it was very difficult to address this research to business operations and other approaches within communication studies.

## 4.2 The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative and quantitative are the two main paradigms in media and communication research. The differences between these two are:

*“...quantitative research instruments are particularly suited to establish the recurrence of events or objects (e.g., the expression of a particular opinion, or a specific content feature). Qualitative approaches, in their turn, explore the singular occurrence of meaningful phenomena, but with reference to their full context (e.g., a film narrative or everyday media uses in a household)”*

(Jensen, 2002: 256)

Regarding journalism studies, both quantitative and qualitative methods are applied for different research purposes. For instance, to investigate journalists' professional behaviour or ethical ideology, the options are semi-structured questionnaires or one-to-one interviews, with the former categorised as a quantitative method and the latter as qualitative methodology. Neither is better or more suitable for research purposes, as the choice depends on the goal of the research or project budget. However, for small-scale projects, researchers normally choose qualitative methods because of time constraints and limited budgets.

Magazine research throughout communication history has also employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate projects with different analytical aims. Content analysis or a combination of data collection and focus groups, both of which are quantitative methods are used to support descriptions of magazine readership and readers' reception. Qualitative methods such as



semi-structured interviews or focus group interviews are normally applied to business operations and journalistic practice.

Usage of combinations of the two paradigmatic methods varies from one researcher to another. Magazine researcher Jackson used three basic methods: “one-to-one interviews with magazine editors and writers, content analyses of the magazines themselves, and focus group discussions with a wide range of men (and a small number of women)” (Jackson, Brooks et al. 2001: 159). Crewe (2003) also used three methods including interview, secondary recourse collection and a questionnaire to investigate men’s magazine production in the UK. After failing with several methods, Gough-Yates finally used “discussion of texts that took place in the trade press and newspaper commentaries” (Gough-Yates, 2003: 24), and “a series of case studies to develop a theoretically informed account of the social, economic and political discourses that underpinned the development of women’s magazines” (Gough-Yates, 2003: 25).

Based on the experience of other researchers, the Researcher decided to combine elements of qualitative methods, qualitative data analysis and in-depth interviews in the design. As with ethnographic approaches to research, various forms of in-depth interview and participant observation are necessary in order to characterise and delimit the context of data gathering. The primary data, for instance, interviews was collected from October 2006 to February 2007. However, additional data such as publications and magazine content was collected from March 2007 to May 2009.

As Moeran (2006: 726-727) analysed, ‘there is invariably some disparity between what people *say* they do and what they *actually* do’, so the Researcher also chose the anthropological research

method of participant observation among *Sports Illustrated* (China) and other Chinese glossy magazines, at the beginning of the research. However, the Researcher failed in this task, as *per* Moeran (2006: 727) and Gough-Yates (2003) and Ben Crewe (2003).

Moeran argued researchers might use their own judgement and experience to interpret the truth and therefore avoid “unconsciously, subconsciously or consciously presenting a rather more glowing picture of that unattainable truth” (Moeran, 2006: 727). However, by applying 12 years of print media working experience, both as a journalist and media manager in China and also the experience of working in news magazines for 3 years, researchers, as Moeran also experienced, does not need “in very large part...to rely on what I was told during interviews” (Moeran, 2006: 727). Being keen to avoid personal over-interpretation, the Researcher also used additional data to check the findings.

### **4.3 In-depth Interview**

The in-depth interview was the main method used in conducting this research. This is because, interviews undertaken in research, “involve a set of assumptions and understanding of a situation” (Denscombe, 2003: 163). The interview can be “described in terms of individuals directing their attention towards each other with the purpose of opening up the possibility of gaining an insight into the experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs ... and action of others” (Schostak, 2006: 10)

Certainly, the interview has both advantages and disadvantages when used to conduct research. As Bell (2005: 157) discusses, “a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe response, and

investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do.” And of course, Bell (2005: 157) also analysed the problem, “it is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always the danger of bias.” However, based on the working experience as a journalist in China, in this study, the Researcher certainly took advantage of her position as “a skilful interviewer”, and also used her own experience to check the validity of interviewees’ data.

During the interview design, choosing interviewees and making contact with them are the first tasks.

Firstly, interviewees were chosen on the basis of their employers, which restricted the sample to those working at lifestyle magazines, most of which were at least indirectly owned by an international media company. In each magazine, the choice of participants was based on three levels of the office hierarchy: junior, middle and senior level editors. Specific research instruments were developed for each of these levels. On the individual level, an open-ended questionnaire and group discussions were conducted with a sample of journalists who had at least 5 years work experience in print media. Four journalists were chosen from each of the 10 media organisations selected. One journalist was selected from the lowest level of the editorial hierarchy (non-decision-makers: feature reporters, editors, art designers, etc.). Two journalists were chosen from the highest level (strategic leadership: editors-in-chief, publishers, etc.), and another journalist was selected from the middle level of the editorial hierarchy (operational decision-makers: editor-directors, senior reporters, advertising managers, etc.).

Most of the interviewees worked, or had previously worked, for one of four international magazine groups: Hachette Filipacchi

Media, Hearst Magazine International, Conde Nast and G&J. A few also worked for domestic lifestyle magazines groups: Trends Media Group, SEEC and others. However, Trends Media Group and SEEC also have some of copyright agreements with two or more international magazine companies. Furthermore, aiming at the overall perspectives of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists, the author chose a small number of competitive domestic lifestyle magazine publishers as interviewees. These publishers were veterans of the Chinese consumer industry, which means they had worked in their positions for at least ten years and came from a wide range of famous Chinese brands in China including *Readers*, *Story Time*, *The Finance*, *Business Week* and *South Windy Window*.

Secondly, considering that all the participant interviewees were senior journalists, the in-depth interviewing used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions to allow a range of responses and to allow the participant to interpret each question in a variety of ways, and therefore to outline the reality of the production and practice process in Chinese lifestyle magazines. In addition, all the interviewees were unlikely simply to answer “yes” or “no” to the questions because their experience as journalists or media managers inferred that their opinions were not easily swayed. Thus, respecting the interviewee's status and gaining their trust was vital.

Thirdly, the method of connecting with individual interviewees was also very important in this study. Editors were initially contacted by phone and this was then followed by an email explaining the study's purpose and outlining all of the details. Unfortunately, this formal connection failed. During the first twelve days of the research in Beijing, October 2006, the Researcher contacted five magazines: *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*

and *Rayli*. All the calls were connected with the individual Editor-in-Chief's Personal Assistant (PA), all of whom claimed the Editor-in-Chiefs had no time to be interviewed. Furthermore, no responses were made to emails sent to the Editor-in-Chiefs via their PAs detailing the specific questions designed for each of them. Middle level professionals in these five magazines were then contacted during the following five days. The Researcher contacted, via phone and email, ten individuals (feature editors, advertising managers and copyright editors) at these five magazines. *Marie Claire* and *Elle* provided three concrete responses from a feature editor and a copyright editor (*Marie Claire*) and an advertising manager (*Elle*) who agreed to be interviewed in the following month. However, the other seven magazine professionals declined, saying that they were too busy, and did not have any time for any interviews.

Since almost 90% of all contacts declined to participate, the Researcher found that a formal research connection instrument did not work with these "busy" lifestyle magazine professionals. Therefore, the Researcher used the network of her previous colleagues and friends working in newspapers and TV stations to get in touch with the major players in the magazine industry, who included chief-editors and their close acquaintances in the most popular magazine firms. However, when the Researcher later contacted the senior editors at lifestyle magazines and all the top journalists, the sample was no more than 100 people of whom 72 were chosen to participate in the study. The factors influencing their selection were: shared background, similar work experience, the site of their work practice, the representativeness of their work. The Researcher had obtained an agreement from Trends Media Group (TMG) in Beijing, prior to October 2005, to conduct participant

observation. Unfortunately, the TMG contact was on maternity leave, and the TMG publisher refused any participant observation giving the reason that TMG was a domestic brand without international co-operation. Consequently the Researcher had to change the methods to one-to-one interviews with magazine publishers, editors, and advertising managers and group discussion with editors.

During the first stage of the study, research instruments were collaboratively developed and translated from Chinese into English.

#### **4.4 Selection of Samples**

In terms of research strategy, *Sports Illustrated (SI)* was selected for the pilot research as it was a new international brand in China in June, 2006. *SI* is one of Time Warner's most famous magazine brands, and also a best selling international sports magazine. *SI's* Chinese version is a weekly magazine. The joint venture consists of three partners: *China Sports Daily* (Magazine Issue Number providing), *SEEC* (Chinese magazine operating) invested 40 million CNY (approximately £3.6GBP million) over a four year period and *Time Warner Co.* (Copyright licensing). *SEEC* is responsible for launching the magazine; *Time Warner* is the business partner supplying content and advertising and marketing co-operation. This is a very formal business model, pushed for by foreign media firms eager to extend their business in China.

In addition, a diverse range of other magazines was selected for the fieldwork: *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Rayli*, *FHM*, *Esquire*, *Self*, and so on. The reason these magazines were chosen is that they are foreign consumer brands, which have

Chinese versions, and most importantly, they all achieve a distinct level of quality (measured in terms of circulation and advertising revenue).

## 4.5 Case Study

Case study is another common method to apply in social research.

*“Some researchers attempt to make a case that their limited sample is representative of a much larger aggregate. Liebes and Katz (1988, 1989) used a purposive sample that they said was not randomly generated but that “one can make a good case that these are bona fide members of their respective subcultures” (p. 220). Also, Jhally and Lewis (1992) said they got the people for their 52 focus groups from Springfield, Massachusetts, which they argued was “a fairly typical small North American city. . . . Its ‘ordinariness’ indeed, was commented upon by journalist Bill Moyers, who in 1990 chose Springfield as the venue for a TV program because he felt it was a microcosm of national attitudes and opinions”*

(Potter, 1996: 9-10)

By applying the method to this study, the Researcher contended the implication of using a case study can maximize the understanding of journalistic practice in magazines by choosing representatives. However, to find a critical case or a typical case, even a set of cases is one of the tasks in the study. There are several rules for examining a properly representative case. Firstly, this representative example needs to be influential on journalistic

practice in the industry. Secondly, some perspectives presented by this individual case must be seen as representative of common practice in the industry. Thirdly, the researcher needs a detailed understanding of the representative case, and also to have no difficulty in contacting any employees in the representative example in case further data collection is required.

Based on these conditions, *FHM* and *Marie Claire (MC)* China were chosen for case studies from among the other international brands as they alone met all the requirements.

## **4.6 Data collection**

Data collection is a quantitative method used to gather information for any research project. “Whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should be always examined critically to assess to what extent it is to be likely to be reliable and valid” (Bell, 2005: 157).

From the national level, data relating to media organisations was collected by means of qualitative data analysis (annual business reports, public databases, etc.) and face-to-face interviews with CEOs or publishers of organisations and institutions. Data at the world level was obtained from public and commercial databases, such as the International Federation of the Periodical Press (FIPP) and the British Periodical Association (BPA), as well as from interviews with international licensing agents.

Furthermore, by visiting China Periodicals Research Institution and China Periodicals Association (CPA) in Beijing, the Researcher was allowed three days to go through all the data collections from



their libraries. All the related magazines samples and research papers and books have been checked: a small reference part having been copied from both libraries. Moreover, all the CPA newsletters from 2002 to 2007, China Periodicals Encyclopaedia (2002 -2007), China Media Report (2004 to 2006) published by Xinhua online were also collected as primary data. Another three online academic libraries in China were also checked by the Researcher during and after field work, namely: China National Knowledge Infrastructure (<http://www.cnki.net/index.htm>), which is the key national publishing data collection, the WangFang Data (<http://www.wanfangdata.com/>), which is the biggest commercial publishing data collection, and China VeiPu Data (<http://www.cqvip.com/>), which is another famous commercial publishing data collection.

The Researcher also regularly checked all the online international consumer magazines and magazine forums, media researchers' and scholars' blogs, e-magazine channels and other internet data to get up-to-date information.

Through the entire network above, regarding the research materials, all data relating to the entire scope of the magazine industry in China was collected during both the research and writing. The research used all the data to cross check the data from interviewees in order to establish a real picture of Chinese magazines as a whole.

## **4.7 Pilot Study**

*“The ethnographic researcher’s methods are to go into the field to live with the people in their natural community for a long*

*enough period of time in order to understand how they construct meaning about their communities and their own places in those communities. Ethnographic researchers almost always use the data-gathering methods of observation and interview.”*

(Potter, 1996: 52)

The Researcher also conducted pilot research in Beijing during July and August, 2006, and finished the pilot research in *SI* (China) in August, 2006. By spending two weeks working with the editorial department and the advertising and marketing department, the investigation addressed the general working process and duties of editors and advertising and marketing staff. The Researcher conducted a total of thirteen interviews with publishers, Editors-in-chief and media researchers. Some interviewees worked for *SI* (China) as editors and managers, while others came from broad academic backgrounds and other foreign-licensed magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Rayli*.

The pilot study enabled the Researcher to reach a number of conclusions that benefitted the main body of the project's research. Firstly, data quoted in the research needed to be corrected; secondly, there was evidence that an ability to control content had resulted in cultural imperialism in some of China's foreign-partnered lifestyle magazines. However, in light of the *Cosmopolitan* model, the most important aspect of current practice that needed investigating was how the Chinese partners create international views based on the sense of locality. Finally, the method allowed for the adjustment of the project in light of the pilot findings.

## 4.8 Fieldwork

After carefully researching and then preparing fieldwork, the Researcher spent three and a half months in Beijing, China, conducting fieldwork from October 2006 to March 2007.

The field work enabled the Researcher to gain insights into two key aspects of China's consumer magazine market. (i) The investment routes of four international media groups (Hachette, Hearst, Conde Nast, and G&J) ; (ii) The pieces of the puzzle of the status of Chinese consumer magazines, from the perspectives of a range of market players, different forms of talent, investment, finance, and so on.

The Researcher attended FIPP 36<sup>th</sup> World Magazine Conference in Beijing in May, 2007, which also gave her an opportunity to re-discuss some debates with publishers she had previously interviewed during the fieldwork. Also, the Researcher added eight interviews with international agents to the study.

The answers of interviewees to the open-end questions also highlighted several previously unconsidered points:

- 1) International magazine brands have brought advanced contributions to the development of China's magazine industry.
- 2) International brands have an unbeatable competitive advantage in the relationship with advertisers and their agencies.
- 3) The journalists who are working, or have worked, for foreign brands have changed their ideology to professionalism or practice reality.

In total, the Researcher conducted 72 interviewees during the study. Although some of the interviewees were interviewed twice or more, when accounting for the total, each individual was only

counted once. Additionally, the primary data and document collection was begun in May, 2007, and continued to the middle of 2009.

The Researcher began to organise and analyse data collected from fieldwork. All the recorded interviews (taped) were transcribed in Chinese and then translated into English. In total, 51 out of 72 interviews were tape recorded and notes were taken. For the remainder, because interviewees were unwilling to be recorded, the Researcher made notes from memory after the interviews. Although many of these interviews were conducted on the condition of confidentiality, some of the interviewees did not agree for their names to appear in the text of this thesis. However, their general attributes, like occupation, are citable to add to the credibility of the data. Additionally, all the interviewees are attached by appendix to the final thesis.

## **4.9 Sports illustrated China Case Study**

Research was carried out on *Sports Illustrated (SI)* in Beijing, China, in August 2006 in order to gain insight into the case and into data collection. The Researcher's visit to *SI* involved desk research, in-depth interviews with several editors and managers, and observation and participation.

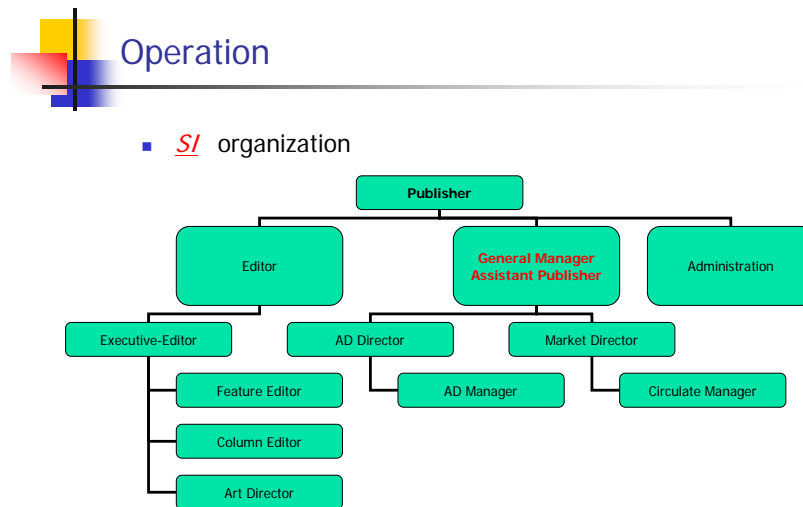
The participant observation took place mostly in the General Manager's Office and editor's meetings (twice per week). The reason the General Manager's Office was chosen to do observation was because of its dominant role in the process of production (see Figure 4.1). The internal communication was in Chinese, and notes were taken in English. In-depth unstructured and semi-structured

interviews were carried out with all department editors and managers in the area of organisational structure, duties and work process, and business culture and work ideology. The average duration of the interviews was approximately one hour. Interviews were held in Chinese, and useful information was translated into English later during transcribing.

#### 4.9.1 Ownership

*SI* is one of Time Warner's best selling sports magazines worldwide. Time Warner attempted to enter the Chinese market for several years after Deng's "Open Door Policy". In 2006, *SI* finally launched its first pilot Chinese version in mainland China. The *SI* Chinese version is a weekly magazine, which formally launched in September, 2006. The joint venture consists of 3 partners: *China Sports Daily*, who offers the magazine Publication Issue Number; SEEC, the famous financial media group will invest 40 M CNY (£3.6M GBP) in the following four years, and Time Warner Co., the copyright licensing partner. In this model, the duty of SEEC is to implement the whole business into the market, while Time Warner collaborates on the content supply and advertising/marketing co-operation.

Figure 4.1 *Sports Illustrated* Organisation



Through interview, the General Manager and publisher emphasized that the key worker in the *SI* organisation is the General Manager. This position plays the key role in the whole enterprise, replacing the publisher in the daily job. The duties of this position not only involve conducting the advertising and marketing operation and managing the distribution and subscription, but also supervising all editorial matters. This high profile job involves dealing with financial matters (including budgets), daily administrative work and meetings with editors and other key people in the company. Another important obligation of this position is ensuring the satisfaction of Time Warner and acting as the corporate gatekeeper. One example is the reader definition of *SI* China. The target readers' profile (middle and upper-middle class people who desire a healthy lifestyle) comes from the advertising and marketing departments, and is then transferred to the editorial department with a one month work lead-in from the General Manager. Otherwise, the Executive editor supervises the daily operation of the editorial department and plays

a substantial role in acquiring, selecting, and supervising the manuscripts for editing.

The interviews took place with eight editors at *SI*. From Executive editor to Feature editor, with six out of eight emphasizing that the rule to report news and value news is 100% to copy the *SI* American version. To approach this aim, all the editors were required to have good English skills and also to have visited Time Warner for one week. Furthermore, they were required to train in *SI* (US) for 1 month after they joined *SI*. One of the feature editors even stated: “I have no reason to think about why we shouldn’t 100% copy *SI* (US) version, as they have launched this magazine and got big success worldwide for more than 40 years, they do have advanced experience, and this is the thing we really lack.”<sup>26</sup>

#### **4.9.2 Content**

If we take the content of *SI* China into account, i.e. the news value according to all the editors interviewed: the findings could be drawn from four aspects: Firstly, all the columns are copied from *SI* (US) under a translated Chinese title. Secondly, all the photos are downloaded from *SI* (US’s) Photo storeroom. Thirdly, the ratio of international news against Chinese news, in the pilot issue (June 2006), was 55:15 out of a total of 80, the ratio in the second pilot issue, Aug-2006 was 53:15. Lastly the international events featured in four sections, NBA (National Basketball Association), FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), Golf, and FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) whereas Chinese athletes featured in just two sections, a ratio of 4:2, in the first pilot

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<sup>26</sup> Interviewed on 08-08-2006, Beijing, China.

issue (and 6:3 in the second pilot issue, Aug-2006).

The *SI* data above indicates that, through media content control and ownership, the media business culture of *SI*'s foreign partner, Time Warner, has played a central role in the Chinese version, whether by influencing the organisation's structure or through the production process. The function of media commercialisation in China has forced media organisations to distinguish themselves from their competitors, and launching a joint venture with an international partner is deemed to be useful as one of the solutions.

## **4.10 Conclusion**

In this research, various quantitative and qualitative methods have been involved and combined to investigate the phenomenon of journalistic practice in lifestyle magazines in China. Jensen (2002) summarises the contrasts between the two paradigms as being the difference between core-based and case-based analyses.

First, there is a trend that communication study tends to employ a combination of traditional qualitative and quantitative methods in one study, if time or finances allow. However, from the point of view of "reliability, validity, generalization, and probability" (Jensen, 2002: 254), in attempting to verify and validate findings, and gain several perspectives on the same phenomenon, the general strategy of employing as many possible methods as you can is usually seen as the best choice. From this perspective, categorizing methods according to their paradigm is not really important. This research confirmed this conclusion by using both core-based and case-based analysis-seeking methods.



Secondly, from other media researchers' findings, using ethnographic participant observation methods in modern magazine study is crucial, although no one has conducted this type of research in the last five years. By contrast, with other media firms - for instance newspaper or TV stations - many researchers have successfully employed the method of participant observation. The reason behind this is that magazines in today's society respond more to business than to media functions. Therefore, if the requirement is to conduct research across the industry as a phenomenon rather than in one or two cases, magazine firms would refuse researchers because of trade secrets.

Thirdly, when conducting media or communication studies in China, every researcher certainly needs a strong and trusting relationship with owners, journalists and media scholars. If this relationship does not exist, especially in the media industry, researchers will not have any chance of effective involvement with the community or "small circle" that is vital to the study. Consequently, researchers may get some of the required information or data, but not the crucial information at the core of the issue. Of course, on the other hand, the requirement of a strong and trusting relationship in the Chinese media industry also proves that Chinese media scholars have gained trust, as well as their reputations, from media participators, while at the same time Chinese media professionals have not benefited or been helped by the scholars.

Fourthly, although this study analyses journalistic practice among magazine journalists in China, the Researcher still paid much attention to collecting data from the whole magazine industry in China in order to get a deep understanding of the context of this genre of journalism and the relationship between industrial reform

and social change. Because of this key point, it was necessary to collect data from across the industry as well as from *Sports Illustrated* China.

To sum up, the Researcher completed all the required original investigations of the magazine industry in China during this study. Certainly, there are advantage and disadvantages of all the methods chosen on this research. The advantage has already shown as the above-mentioned, the disadvantage will show in the Conclusion chapter later.

# CHAPTER 5. The Practice of Chinese Consumer Magazine Journalism

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains analyses of a number of aspects of the magazine industry in China, which are crucial to the research project: The differing objectives of magazine journalists and newspaper journalists; the traditional distinction between “consumer” news and serious news, the differing concepts of news as “trade” and “professional”, the differences in practice between journalists from “party mouthpiece” publications and those engaged in marketisation.

By giving the first in-depth discussion on the objective and journalistic practice of lifestyle magazine journalists, this chapter tries to distinguish consumer journalists from other journalists in China. Journalists working for lifestyle magazines rarely consider themselves to be journalists within the established cultural and social order. With encroaching influences from media commercialisation and globalisation, lifestyle journalists face some of the same pressures as their ‘serious news’ counterparts. All of them are facing the new challenge of marketisation, in which the domestic and global capital forces are becoming important controlling powers of media operation in China.

## 5.2 Distinguishing between Magazine

### Journalism and Newspaper Journalism

In China today, due to historical reasons, consumer magazines did not appear in the market until the late 1980s with the arrival of *Elle* in 1988, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In the book “*The History of Chinese Periodical’s Development*” Song (2000, 3-5) classified Chinese periodicals in nine catalogues: 1. political theory and Party developing; 2. academic; 3. literary; 4. cultural and lifestyle; 5. educational; 6. youth, women, and children; 7. digested; 8. news; 9. science. From these categories, it is hard to assess where the ‘fashion magazine’ fits. Even under the category of “cultural and lifestyle journal”, Song gave examples such as “*After 8 Hours*” or “*Female Friend*” which were all leisure rather than lifestyle magazines. It was still not possible to find something that fitted the accurate concept of ‘lifestyle’ magazine as used in this research.

The reasons for this lack of concept of ‘fashion’ or ‘lifestyle’ magazines in the Chinese market are threefold. One reason is that in China the newspaper has been developing for quite a long time, even if only after the developments after 1976 are taken into account. From the political perspective, the newspaper is counted as “mass media” and belongs directly to the propaganda system. It is therefore an important mouthpiece of the CCP and the Party newspaper is benefiting from increasing policy initiatives and funding from the Chinese government. By contrast, from the cultural perspective, the magazine, particularly the non-political one, is counted as “leisure media” which is more concerned with the leisure time of the Chinese population. Most of the non-political

magazines are, therefore, published by less important non-political government departments, such as National Tourism Administration, the Light Industry Council, or China Women's Federation.

Therefore, the CCP uses magazines as part of the superstructure of their machine of cultural and philosophical control.

The foundations of this distinction have changed since marketisation and economic reform in China during the 1980s. A new genre of magazine was established for the newly categorised social classes, like the white collars and metropolitan intellectuals, which of course also attracted consumer flow from the Western world. The new genre of magazine here is the "lifestyl" magazine. As the Researcher has discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the Chinese fashion industry was very weak in the 1980s, so although *Elle* in the Western world would definitely be categorised as a fashion magazine, in China it is categorised as a lifestyle magazine. When *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, *Rayli* and *Elle* circulated in the country's major cities like Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, and became popular in the later 1990s and early 2000s, a new genre of lifestyle magazine journalism practice emerged.

By establishing the weekend newspapers<sup>27</sup> and consumer magazines concerning consumer or leisure issues, the Chinese media has provided a major channel for the general public to express their ideas or discontent towards the existing consumer society. From this point of view, consumer journalism in China is a product of market reforms, because according to journalistic practice in mainland China, it nevertheless is allowed more freedom

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<sup>27</sup> The weekend newspaper and weekly magazines were very popular in the 1990s. The reason for this popularity is that Chinese readers of contemporary society prefer to receive consumer news and entertainment. Many party newspapers, like *China Youth Daily* and *Beijing Youth Daily*, publish a weekend newspaper which reports "soft news" for their urban readers.

to debate future paths for political development. It is the only area in which the media can quite openly discuss major social and cultural issues without harming the current political system but can nevertheless lead to redistribution of consumer interests and affect people's lives.

This freedom led to a media policy change concerning consumer magazines. Regarding the establishment of *Elle* as a model of the "Open Door Policy" for global interest and the "openness" of the Chinese media market, consumer magazines have been under less strict control by the government media policy than other Chinese media categories. On the other hand, consumer magazines are ignored and condemned by the government and other "hard news" journalists. Wu Hong, the publisher of Trends Media Group (TMG), stated in his interview,

"We are less important to the government, even the Chinese Periodical Assistant [CPA]. For example, every time the CCP or government think about some successful examples of consumer magazines, they always mean *Zhiyin* (Bosom Friend), *Jiating* (Family), *Nuyou* (Female Friend), and *Duzhe* (Digest). I know all these consumer magazines have a long history (more than 20 years<sup>28</sup>), and they have very strong relationships with local provincial governments and the central government as well. However, if the CPA thinks about funding for some events, they will call me and give me the chance. Of course, 'Trends' [TMG] always agrees to sponsor."

(Interviewed on 21-12-2006, Beijing, China)

The meaning behind this conversation is, even though TMG has 15 consumer magazines in the group, and famous brands in the first

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<sup>28</sup> Noted by the Researcher.

rank of both circulation and advertising revenues of consumer magazines, the organisation or publisher is still not respected by the CCP or Chinese government officials and treated as their official circles<sup>29</sup>.

Furthermore, the understanding of consumer journalists in China, from most of the academic and industrial perspectives, is more related to a cultural advocator than to journalism. This is the same concern of “soft news” not being news, and is an issue that could be related to advertising and public relations.

Thus, in China today, unlike the West, where consumer journalists rarely consider themselves as journalists, they believe that no serious consumer journalist should concern themselves with working with social justice. This means, there are differing objectives for consumer magazine journalists and newspaper journalists in China, which are related to the traditional distinction between “consumer” news and “hard” news.

## **5.3 The Objective of Chinese Consumer Journalism**

The objective and ethics of professionals discussed here are elements of the new genre of lifestyle magazine journalists who work in international lifestyle magazines in China.

From the Researcher’s point of view, there is no doubt that Chinese lifestyle journalism is influenced by the marketisation of internal competitors and also a growing consumer culture. The “Open Door Policy” of the 1990s increased market competition in

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<sup>29</sup> Because all the media are owned directly or indirectly by the State, all the staffs working at media organisations are treated as journalists and the officials or civil servants.

media industry, and led to a decrease in the obligation of the function of the lifestyle magazines as a media mouthpiece for the CCP. As *per* the background introduction in Chapter 2, the objective of lifestyle magazine journalism in the early 1990s, is “to serve the empty magazine niche of white collar class spirit life, and the empty advertising market of foreign consumer goods” (Li, 2003: 12). In another words, the increase of lifestyle magazines in the 1990s represents the transition of social change in China.

During this special historical period, the social transition not only presents the consumerism of Chinese society, but also indicates the rise of a new genre of journalism: lifestyle journalism. This new genre has a very different mission, ethics, and media practice compared with traditional journalism in China. Zhao contends that the objectives of these trans-national magazines are to:

*“Help the Chinese consumer elites to globalise their lifestyles and to connect with their counterparts in Paris, New York, and Tokyo, they also teach them to view China through the trans-national consumer gaze and to construct new discursive relationships with fellow Chinese citizens.”*

(Zhao, 2005)

If Zhao is correct then the opinions of media analysts and executives in the industry concerning the objectives of consumer journalism are also viable: “to interpret a new modern society for Chinese readers” (Wu Hong, of TMG)<sup>30</sup>, “creating a dream which is filled with reports on fashion, luxury goods, and the top lifestyle in the world” (Ma Lan, the media analyst)<sup>31</sup>, “learning how to be a regeneration journalist who seeks cultural value and ‘fashion’ on

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<sup>30</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>31</sup> Interviewed on 12-05-2006, Beijing, China.



spirit” ( Zhu Xuedong, Chief-editor South Windy Window)<sup>32</sup>, “spreading new values and new important lifestyles and has a comparatively extensive impact on the ‘newly emerged middle class’ and becoming their spokesperson” (Xu Fang, Vice Publisher in Lifestyle Media Group)<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, the objectives of consumer journalism are fourfold: 1. Interpret modern society, 2. Report on consumer goods which relate to an aspirational lifestyle, 3. Seek cultural value, 4. Spread new consumer values.

Unsurprisingly, none of them are related to the political or propaganda mouthpiece of CCP in China. The function of this new-genre of journalism seems to depart from the traditional function of Chinese journalism as either a state organ of the party, or a representative for the mass population in China. The Researcher prefers to borrow the critique of “Chinese news language” by Yu Guoming as

*“...essentially, it marks the beginning of China’s mass media move from a single function and role-playing of ‘political textbook’ in the past, (which has an organisation medium but uses mass media as the external format), towards multiple functions of society and directions of a variety of restructuring.”*

(Yu, 2008)

In this sense, lifestyle journalism is not as some Western media analysts called it “political authoritarianism”, nor as other media researchers pointed out “the representation of Communists capitalists”. - Zhao’s description of China’s popular journalists as “underdogs, lapdogs, and watchdogs” (Zhao, 2004) does not apply to the journalists of this new genre, which is staffed by de-

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<sup>32</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>33</sup> Interviewed on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

politicised and decentralised news professionals, who through their working structure and self-discipline show great autonomy and diversity.

## **5.4 The New Occupational Standards of Chinese Consumer Journalists**

In this research, as the interviewees are selected from different levels of their working professions, their answers to “why do you choose work in your media organisation?” also show significant differences, which mostly depend on their professional positions. After analysing the interview data, the Researcher found the following features that can characterise the new occupational standards, as well as self-identity and self-discipline among these lifestyle journalists.

Firstly, according to the data collected, when asked about their reasons to work at the current magazine, or for previous consumer magazines, the largest proportion, 53 out of 64 magazine professionals, chose “international” as their main concern. Most of them had no doubt in emphasising that this was their main reason to work in lifestyle magazines. For example one interviewee referring to the magazine he worked for said:

IN/05<sup>34</sup>:“This platform is much better, as they [the foreign partner, author’s note] have much experience on the reporting and operating models, so there’re so many things worth learning from them.”

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<sup>34</sup> IN is the abbreviation for Interviewee Number  
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IN/05:“They [the foreign partner, author’s note] have brought so much experience and resources as well, to us, including the whole theory of the operating model, which is quite different from the Chinese one.”

IN/05:“For example, when we report a popular star as our cover girl in China, we used to find a good local photographer, asked or trusted the photographer to borrow some clothes for the model. The editor only needed to wait for the photos from photographer, and add some texts. But, according to their [the foreign partner’s, author’s note] style, they used to find an international art director and international photographer working together, the reporter needs go through several interviews with the model, which may last one or two months to finish the whole process. So I felt it’s more like a ‘creative process’ than an ordinary editing process.”

IN/05:“It, of course, will cost a lot more than the ordinary process, but they (the foreign partner) have a working procedure to guarantee the final result. It’s a really systemic effect.”

Another interviewee, IN/23<sup>35</sup> told of how *Vogue* China finished a Feature report in 2006. Before taking the chief reporter position at *Vogue* China, she had worked for more than five years on some Chinese news magazines and foreign consumer magazines’ Chinese versions, such as *Good House Keeping*<sup>36</sup> China. She was very proud of the international operating model that *Vogue* offered.

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<sup>35</sup> Interviewed on 24-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>36</sup> *Good House Keeping*, China’s Chinese name is “Hao Guan Jia”. It belongs to Trends Media Group, co-operates with IDG and Hearst, and has been published since September, 2002.

IN/23: “We designed a feature film of the images of Louis Vuitton in 2006. In the show, all the photographers, cosmeticians, and models came from *Vogue* US. We chose the Forbidden City and the Great Wall as the film background. From the beginning, we hadn’t paid any attention to the expense, not like other domestic magazines, which normally have limited budget. For us, it didn’t matter how expensive the ‘feature’ was. This showed the international standard we were at, and that we have more room to pursue our aim of art or creativity. This might explain why I chose *Vogue* China, as it is a real international top rank magazine.”

From the discussion above, the learning experience of Chinese journalists reflects the fact they have concentrated on improving the editing procedure and the editorial essentials. This emphasis on operating experiences, as opposed to business models, is because IN/05 and IN/23 work at the level of editor and reporter, the middle positions in the magazine institutions. However, at the higher level, such as Chief-editors and publishers, their concerns were more focussed on the international working standards and brand building experiences. Pang Wei<sup>37</sup>, the Chief Editor (2000-2005) of *Esquire* China talked about the benefits of a co-operative business model:

“I joined Trends Media Group in 1999. At that moment, there were very few magazines that had international copyright partners. The greatest benefit of these co-operation models is for attracting international advertising clients. Of course, there’re some other advantages we have got from the content developing or business operating model, although not as important as the value on the advertising side. The reason behind this is that the market

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<sup>37</sup> Interviewed on 17-12-2006, Beijing, China. Pang Wei is the first Chief-editor of *Esquire* China, Wang Feng became Chief-editor in 2005, after Pang Wei.

competition was not as high as now [after 2006, author's note], so unique content was not essential at that moment.”

“I have learned from the marketing success element of *Trends* that brand is everything, publishing regime is everything.”

“You can find from the history of our consumer magazine industry in China, that foreigners have led Chinese professionals in branding and establishing a system, through co-operative models.”

“This branding model is the essential philosophy in the modern publishing industry, and the Chinese have no experience or thought on business operating models on media before.”

Wang Feng<sup>38</sup>, the Chief-editor (2005-2009) of *Esquire* China, reviewed the advantages of a co-operative model as:

“International co-operating models have a big influence on the industry, and international standard and knowledge are very important elements in this sense. As you know, international media firms use to have unique resources and mature business models. These are particularly valuable experience for Chinese partners.”

“On the other hand, the international brands have better impact on the advertising clients. For example, if I introduce my magazine as *Trends Gentlemen*, no one will be interested; but if I changed it to *Esquire* China as the title of my magazine, at least the

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<sup>38</sup> Interviewed on 22-12-2006, Beijing, China.

international advertising agents, public relations agencies and other international beauty and luxury brands know who I am.”

“I know I have taken quite a lot advantages from international magazine brands in Beijing, especially the international platform and global resource they offered. I think we could learn a lot from this chance.”

Having been the Executive Chief-editor at “Binfen”<sup>39</sup> for nearly two years, Su Yan (Wang, 2001) reviewed her life in the magazine industry:

“I have worked in *Trends Cosmopolitan* and *Trends Home* for four years. For these two magazines, I had the chance go through the launch periods of both magazines. The reason I chose this is I wanted to learn more, have new experiences and new working styles. It’s very important if you get the chance to go abroad work or study in other international magazines.”

Su Mang, the Assistant Publisher of TMG, Chief-editor of *Bazaar China*, joined TMG in 1994 as one of the pioneers in TMG. She thought that a fashion magazine would be her dream work place.

*“I belong to the first generation of Chinese fashion magazine professionals. I attended joint international professional training three times until 2003. This is a job that needs so much professionalism and specialization. All the editors in my magazine want to create a first class of international standard fashion industry and magazine.”*

(SOHUWomen, 2003a)

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<sup>39</sup> Ben Fen, ‘Profusion’, a domestic home design magazine first published in 2000 in Beijing. The publishing house of Ben Fen has had several copyright co-operation experiences with Japanese publishing houses, starting in 2002.

The application of ICTs (Internet Communication Technologies) within the media industry in the globalisation development process means the media is increasingly viewed as breaking down national boundaries; the trans-national magazine has an exponential future. Xu Ting, the Chief-editor in *Shizhuang*<sup>40</sup>, discussed the challenge:

*“You don’t need go abroad to meet the world-class master of the contest. Although, the contest may be full of the risk of death, there is also a temptation with a fast-growing chance to become even stronger behind the competitions. All challenges with the younger industry of the fashion world in China are the best activators.”*

(Wang, 2001)

As one editor, IN/10<sup>41</sup> concluded:

IN/10: “Foreign magazines attract our greatest strengths and this is also a regular basis for us to do training, as on the one hand international co-operation provide the training opportunities for employees to go abroad or attend training workshops in China, and on the other hand also offers a lot of foreign periodicals in the organisations as reference to allow their employees to gain more and all kinds of information. We have to look at many foreign magazines, as we ourselves must also maintain a strong curiosity.”

Being the editor-in-chief of *iLook*<sup>42</sup>, Xiao Xue<sup>43</sup> (2006-2008) saw many of her friends became successful professionals in the fashion and consumer magazine industry. Xiao Xue described herself at that

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<sup>40</sup> Shi Zhuang, ‘Dressing’, domestic Chinese fashion magazine first published in 1982, has the circulation up to 800 thousands copies in the 1990s. Now, the magazine has spent huge money to go to the U.S., France, and other foreign countries to design and report their “features” on fashion dressing.

<sup>41</sup> Interviewed on 02-02-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>42</sup> *iLook*, the first rank of circulation Chinese lifestyle magazine. The publisher is Hong Huang, a famous Chinese writer.

<sup>43</sup> Xiao Xue, The editor-in-chief of *iLook* in 1999, and now Chief-editor of *Elle* China since 2006.

time as having the mentality of “strength and self-confidence of two.” (Wang, 2001) Another successful story comes from Song Juan, the Executive Editor of *Rayli Women*. Song got her Masters degree in Film Review but joined TMG in 1997 in the position of editor at *Fashion* for two years, and online editor for six months. She was then offered the higher editorial job at *Rayli Women* because:

*“She is quite confident, believes that the value of fashion magazine editor-in-chief is for overall quality, and her experience and knowledge of film, such as colour, light, control of the scene, could be of use in the fashion industry, therefore, when she entered the “Rayli Women”, she felt like “a hero who had found the arena.”*

(Chinapostnews, 2006)

From all the interviews and discussions above, the Researcher finds the first rank of choices indicates the international standard of work is the most important value for these journalists, while on the other hand it also indicates these journalists have very strong self-realisation.

Secondly, “self-satisfaction” is the second most popular answer as, 47 out of 64 interviewees chose this as their main concern when talked about the reasons they chose current magazines. From the Researcher’s point of view, “self-satisfaction” is a positive life philosophy based on people’s self-confidence, a good economic situation and membership of the middle social class in China.

Despite the fact that the media is tightly controlled by the CCP in all respects, including recruitment, labour and the wage system, there is more freedom in trans-national magazine firms. The ages of most Chief-editors in these foreign brand magazines are less than 35



years old in 2000s. Furthermore, roughly 70% of Chief-editors are women. These characteristics are impossible in other media firms, even in other magazine institutions. On the one hand, there are still some biases within fashion or lifestyle magazines in the media industry in China, as discussed before. Most of the journalists pay less attention to this category of media owing to it not being a news magazine or elite magazine which relates to less important issues in the changing society and has lower political implications. This means that they would not choose to work in lifestyle or consumer magazines. Consequently, only very few journalism professionals decide to work for these trans-national magazine firms. The rapid development of co-operation magazines has led to more senior positions, which need to be fully by local professionals due to considerations of localisation. In an interview held by SOHU Women, Zhu Yun talked about the opportunities for young women in China who wish to become fashion editor:;

*“I was born in the 1970s. Our generation just catches up with the fashion media in the fastest-growing years in China, so many fashion editors are the roughly the same age as me. You know, it’s a real opportunity that someone could be a Chief-editor at my age, the rare opportunity for this generation, as you know that in many European countries, fashion Chief-editors of magazines are 40 and 50 year-old excellent female intellectuals.”*

(SOHUWomen, 2004)

Zhu Yuan also used her own career path to prove her point:

*“In 1999, three years after I graduated, I entered the fashion media and started working in a French publishing company’s*

*Beijing office, and later in other local fashion media. Until July 2001 I was positioned in Hong <sup>44</sup> as the Executive Chief-editor.”*  
(SOHUWomen, 2004)

At the age of twenty seven, Zhu Yun was appointed as the Executive Chief-editor of the French consumer magazine, *Madame Figaro* Chinese version, which seemed a very young age compared to international magazines in the U.S., U.K. and other European countries.

However, this is not the only case in which a young Chinese journalist has been selected as the master operator on a trans-national consumer magazine in China. Before joining *Vogue* China in 2005, Angelica Cheung (Less than 40 years old in 2008) served at *Elle* China as the editorial director, *Marie Claire* Hong Kong version as the editor-in-chief, the Hong Kong English fashion magazine *B International* as the deputy publisher and the Hong Kong English-language newspaper *Hong Kong iMail*, as founding executive editor. Su Mang, the Assistant Publisher at TMG, Chief-editor of *Bazaar* China, went from General Editor to Chief-editor in less than ten years. Song Juan, the Publisher and Editor Director of *25ans*<sup>45</sup>, also took ten years to be positioned in the top job in the fashion magazine industry. She worked at *Cosmopolitan* China between 1997—2000 as editor, and was promoted to Vice Editor-in-chief of *Rayli Women*, where she worked from 2000 to 2004, and then became the Publisher. Talking about the international competition between Chinese versions and parenting magazines, Xu

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<sup>44</sup> *Hong*, in Chinese is Rainbow, is the *Madame Figaro* Chinese edition, first published in 1999.

<sup>45</sup> *25ans*, (25 years) in Chinese is *25 Xuan Se*, first published in 2006, HFM and Zhe Jiang Publishing House.

Wei<sup>46</sup>, the Chief-editor in *Cosmopolitan* China, also discussed openness for young fashion editors:

*“I went to participate in the Cosmopolitan editor-in-chief world forum, where I found I was regarded as one of the youngest. There’s at least ten to fifteen years’ working experience in one magazine if you want to be positioned as the editor-in-chief in many foreign countries. At this point, Chinese fashion editors are also very young compared to the rest of the world, making fashion in China very vibrant and dynamic industry. I did not realise I can work eight years in the fashion industry.”*

(SOHUWomen, 2003b)

The reason behind this is the short history of glossy lifestyle magazines in China, which is no more than fifteen years if the 1995 launching of the monthly high-end magazines *Elle* and later the 1998 launching of *Cosmopolitan* are taken as the pioneers of the genre. The industry has had just fifteen years to develop talented achievers and consequently they are few in number. However, as around a hundred international magazines have Chinese versions, the talented achievers are in such great demand that their ascents to prominence are rapid in the Chinese market. Owing to these reasons, the professionals have good salaries, high positions, working respect and so on. Most of them also benefit by the new entries because it raised a headhunting game again and again. As Zhao Jingwen explained:

*“When Vogue China entered the Chinese market, the first thing Conde Nast did was to head-hunt nearly half of the professionals including the Chief-editor from Elle China, to enrich Vogue’s*

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<sup>46</sup> Xu Wei, holds a BA in Journalism from Renmin University of China, 1994, became a reporter in *San Lian Life Weekly* in 1994-1995, then became editor at Trends *Cosmopolitan* and Trends *Gentleman* in 1995 and Chief-editor in 2000.

*editorial force on one hand, and attack this competitor on the other hand.”*

(Zhao, 2006a)

## **5.5 The Complexity and Confusion of Working Standards**

The interviews with top level editors in consumer magazines suggest each has a clearly defined map of their career, which is highlighted by “internationalisation” and “self-satisfaction” as their working standards. However, as with all debates from an academic or practical perspective, “internationalisation” and “self-satisfaction” have brought three other related topics, “hyper-skilled labour”, “commercialisation” and “self-mockery” into journalistic parlance among Chinese lifestyle magazines.

### **5.5.1 Hyper-skilled labour**

Firstly, although so many magazine journalists choose “internationalisation” as a fundamental reason for their working preference, they also complain that their job descriptions require them to be more like “hyper-skilled labourers” than intellectuals. The reason behinds this is that for a smooth-running business in the Chinese media sector, both skilled and non-skilled labourers are vital and indispensable. The lifestyle magazine is, from the international media enterprises’ point of view, a business dressing or “cultural coat” rather than a medium. From this sense, although highly skilled technical knowledge has transferred to Chinese editors from international headquarters, knowledge of local fashion

or cosmetics or furnishings could not be transferred as a strong local fashion industry does not exist in China, as the Researcher discussed in Chapter 3. In other words, although all the international magazine enterprises have set up training workshops on magazine editorial skills and business models, the training still concentrates on the skilled experiences, which are more related to practical methodology than to a solid editorial ideology. Therefore, Chinese journalists feel more like skilled labour than journalists who hold journalistic ideals and ethics.

Xia Hong<sup>47</sup>, has fifteen years of media experience, and was the former chief reporter at *Beijing Youth* newspaper and Director of *Xinhua Online*. He is now the General Manager at *X-Plus*, the online interactive magazine distribution platform. Xia Hong made the following criticism:

“Because China is the world factory for OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer), the trans-national magazines also ask their Chinese partners to be their magazines’ OEM. What Chinese magazine journalists are able to learn at these magazines is just a ‘shell’, a ‘shell’ that fills within the operating model. This is not enough for Chinese magazine journalists. Certainly, one of the reasons magazine journalists remain in their current situation is that the journalists working in the magazine industry really lack cutting edge thoughts, when compared with the newspaper industry in China.”

Yi Wei<sup>48</sup>, who was Executive Publisher at *Fitness China*<sup>49</sup>, Chief Editor at *iLook*, *Seventeen China* and *CAR & MOTOR China*,

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<sup>47</sup> Interviewed on 10-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>48</sup> Interviewed on 19-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>49</sup> *Fitness* and *CAR & MOTOR* all belong to Gruner + Jahr publishing house, the largest European printing and publishing firm.

discussed the dark side of his working experience in the lifestyle magazine industry is:

“There’s no reputations on Chinese fashion magazines (if you compare to other media organisations). I was Executive publisher when I was twenty nine years old. At this age, if you worked in Europe, there’s no chance to be a chief reporter, much less to be a chief editor or editor-in-chief. However, I had so many working experiences when I achieved the position. I found there’re so many ‘skilled editors’ in the magazine industry. I mean they only knew to operate one kind of magazine, when he or she moved from one magazine to another, he or she would bring all previous employees to the new magazine and repeated all his editorial essential and business model in the new one. In other words, they did not use their heads on the one hand; on the other hand, they didn’t know anything except the old model. However, until now, you could find these ‘skilled editors’ still have their market. This is because we have this soil in China. This soil is you are recognised as a professional if you possess high skills, and, you may gain market success. This is why all the fashion media or media use fashion as the symbol to gain their business profit still keep very high profit and operate smoothly in China today.”

For instance, Yi Wei gave an example of how superficial and ignorant the editors and reporters in Chinese lifestyle magazines are:

“Once, a famous British designer came to visit Beijing, the reporters from all the fashion magazines were his fans, so all the reporters looked up to the designer and missed themselves during the news gathering. But, still these reporters, they all had another face that was looking down on their readers. If you found all these

are the media workers at lifestyle magazines, how could you respect them, how could they have credible contents in their magazines?”

Ling Hulei, known as Rocky Leung (Leung, 2006), a renowned magazine critic, was an Editor at *Newly Weekly* in 2005, and is now the Creative Director at *Life Magazine*<sup>50</sup>, expressed his disappointment at the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry:

*“We are entering a ‘big dye vat of Chinese characters’, and consciously fitting ourselves into a so-called ‘template for means of subsistence’, exaggeration strategy, parroting others’ views of the operating mode and diving into a no originality surrounding of the magazine operating system.”*

*“As stepping into the desire of the consumer society of superficial enjoyment, running short of profound verve is the ugliest face of Chinese magazine. The sort of stylish high-end magazine that is current in China can be defined as basic ‘no brain’ material, which is embodied only by glossy paper, formed from face-lifting moulding with gaps left to provide positions for advertisements.”*

The core of Leung’s argument is that these high-end lifestyle magazines in China are simply following a copy business model, which is underpinned by capital investment.

From the interviews above, the problems of these high-end lifestyle magazines point to the same phenomenon and indicate the

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<sup>50</sup> *Life Magazine* belongs to Modern Media Group, a national media firm since its establishment in 1993, which now has seven magazines, including *Audi* (1997), *Modern Weekly* (1998), *The Outlook Magazine* (2002), Hong Kong’s *City Magazine* (2003) and *Life Magazine* (2005).

market-homogeneity of the competition. The criticism from Jacky Jin, the Assistant of Publisher in *FHM* China, points this out: “the tendency towards homogeneity of fashion magazines is faster growing in China, and quicker than professional progress” (Jin, 2006: 91). Although internationalisation of the Chinese magazine journalism has brought the high editorial standards of international publications in terms of credible, trusted and primary fashion industry information to the industry, local freedom and creativity are still the main problems obsessing the Chinese professionals. As Rampell asserted,

*“Producers look to each other to decipher market demand, emphasizing precedence rather than novelty. As a result, all the Mandarin men’s magazines look like GQ,” however, “as competition and foreign investment grows, publishers will learn that brand loyalty and product identification are vital to magazines.”*

(Rampell, 2004)

In summary, the co-operation model of these high-end lifestyle magazines offers great chances for domestic journalism to chase the global media trend, open windows for them to promote themselves with high professional standards, and compete with international magazine firms in the Chinese market. On the other hand, the copy business model and unique contents also restrain some magazine pioneers’ creativity and freedom of journalistic practice.

### **5.5.2 Commercialisation**

It seems that all the high-end lifestyle magazines serve their Chinese readers by “encouraging them to reject worry, anxiety, shallow



materialism, and embrace elegance and elevated spirituality”, “offering a newly global lifestyle and high quality standards to aspiring individualism, and self-enjoyment in their daily life” (Zhao, 2006a). Journalists working for these magazines are quite open about saying that this is a business operating paradigm to attract advertising, rather than the loyalty of readers. However, this is the first and most useful lesson Chinese magazine professional have learned from their international partners: “...before being a medium, a magazine is a business.” As researcher Huang criticised:

*“During the process of constructing their own values, fashion magazines frequently link with the concepts of self-realisation and modern women’s consumption. It is essentially a ‘fashion world’ highlighting people’s social status through the luxury consumer grade, which it co-creates with advertisers.”*

(Huang, 2008)

In China, this process has been constructed by high-end glossy magazines, especially international consumer magazines. So, since the first day the Chinese magazine professionals worked with their foreign colleagues, they learned marketisation and industrialisation through their daily practice. Zhang Bohai<sup>51</sup> reviewing the arrival of *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* in the later 1990s, said these magazines

*“...have brought very new concepts to Chinese magazine practice, including ‘brand principle’, ‘readers segment strategy’, ‘industrial operating model’ and ‘advertising revenue driving model’.”*

Liu Yongmei<sup>52</sup>, the current senior editor at *Marie Claire* China, explained her working experiences in the consumer magazine industry as,

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<sup>51</sup> Interviewed on 06-04-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>52</sup> Interviewed on 17-01-2007, Beijing, China.

“Chinese magazine industry has changed a lot during this decade, there’s no one tells you what marketisation of the media is, and then it comes. I still remember when I joined a French co-operation magazine company eight years ago, the marketing manager told me to do an interview for one advertiser, the photo I need to polish-up in order to better evoke consumer desire. You know I worked in *SanLian Life Weekly*, the news magazine before, so you can guess how hard it was. It was absolutely compelled. And he also controlled the whole process to see if you were doing well.”

“That is not just the case I met in that magazine. All the consumer magazine journalists have to face this until now. It’s really hard for previous serious journalists like me even to think about serving advertisers instead of readers.”

This is the significant change in the media world in China, and can even be called an epochal change. From a positive perspective it should be born in mind by all journalists that they are subject to real market forces as they are not financed either by the Chinese Government or state institutions. However, from the negative perspective, it is also a crisis if all the professionals working in the commercial media are driven by profit, as capital will damage the fundamental function of the media. IN/12<sup>53</sup> was a financial journalist for five years before joining an international fashion magazine’s Chinese version. He complained,

IN/12: “Everything you find here (at the magazine) is connected with money, I mean, the final profit. When you plan a feature, you need to pass your plan to the marketing and advertising

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<sup>53</sup> Interviewed on 16-08-2008, Beijing, China.

departments to see if there're any advertisers interested in it. If so, of course, the advertisers will normally put their message into your report, so it seems all the work I have done is only for advertisers."

**Author/interviewer:** "Is there any journalistic freedom or news value here?"

IN/12: "No, absolutely, no. The reason I stay here is that it's a well paid job, and has less stress than being a financial journalist, because it's far away from political and sensitive issues."

Another interviewee, IN/20<sup>54</sup> has resigned his director-editorship at an American men's magazine.

IN/65: "I followed my director to join this magazine four months ago, before that we served in another auto magazine as chief editor and assistant chief editor. In the previous magazine, the chair came from the US, and couldn't speak much Chinese, but his assistant, a Taiwanese was very horrible. The Taiwanese even commanded that the advertising department co-operate with the editorial department to establish editorial principles, so we were in a very strange working process. For example, all the contents needed to be checked by the advertising manager to see if there's any harm to the advertisers, and if so, the first thing was to revise the contents and maybe replace it with another 'soft advertisement'. We disliked it all, and decided to change to this magazine, but finally found the rule was similar to that one. I think I am not the right person to work in these kinds of 'foreign' magazines, and I also know why other journalists have pride and prejudice when looking down on consumer journalists."

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<sup>54</sup> Interviewed on 29-12-2006, Beijing, China.

His meaning for “pride and prejudice” is that traditional journalists believe consumer journalists should not be respected as journalists as they more work as public relation staffers or advertising writers.

From this point of view, as most lifestyle magazines are said to be an “advertising sheet”, Zhou criticized the magazines as materialistic.

*“In any case, using industrial mass production and copy methods, the fashion magazine is no longer the same past traditional cultural form. It is a compound of culture and economy; marketing and profit are the greatest motivations for survival. The fashion magazine has become a commodity, aiming at promoting mass consumption and entertainment. It can be said that the fashion magazine lost its own cultural and spiritual richness: materialism is the basic characteristic.”*

(Zhou, 2008)

### **5.5.3 Lack of Objective and Self-mockery among Young Journalists**

In 2008, the January Issue of *Feng Cai*<sup>55</sup> published a feature named “Fashion Editor: Without a Future” (Feng Cai, January-2008). The feature was divided into six sections that included: (1) The entry requirement of a fashion editor, (2) The image of a fashion editor from ordinary people, (3) Ten embarrassments of the Chinese fashion editor, (4) The final sketch of the Chinese fashion editor, (5) The future of various fashion editors, (6) The requirement of seven

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<sup>55</sup> *Feng Cai*'s English translation is “Frends”, as it shows on the cover, first published in 1995 and is one of the domestic fashion magazine in China.

necessary skills to become a golden editor. The whole feature was filled with humour, but also with reflections of self-mockery on the current social conditions and social stratification of lifestyle magazine journalists. On close examination of the third section, the “ten embarrassments of the Chinese fashion editor”, the article recounted the secrets behind the respect and envy of Chinese fashion editors.

The first “embarrassment” is “the celebrities always put on airs”. In the current Chinese society, celebrities gain more power than ordinary people so that the fashion editor needs to serve them instead of reporting on them, and has very little reporting freedom; However, compared to the situation in Western countries, the celebrities are more appreciative if they are chosen by fashion magazines as cover girls because this represents the approval of the whole fashion industry. Thus, editors in Western world have more reporting freedom than their Chinese colleagues. Secondly, “big brands are commanding”, and owing to this, Chinese fashion editors need to have very good relationships with all the luxury brands, and plead for their products if they need to photograph them, while in Western countries fashion brands always offer these products to even a very junior fashion editor to get more news coverage. The third one is “most depressed labour of all”, because in China the editor plays many roles, for example contacting the stars, liaising with brands, getting a photographer, makeup and film studios, working with art editors, and in this way specialist knowledge is usually required. However, their foreign colleagues are used to working with assistants across different sectors of business in order that they can concentrate on the editorial contents. The fourth, fifth

and sixth “embarrassments” are: “the industry influence is too small”, “professionals are more like fast translating machines for Western fashion”, and, “they are cheap-ism”. However, in comparison with the Western fashion professionals, the Chinese fashion industry is rather small and immature in the business sectors and industrial influence. The mature Western fashion magazine penetrates the fashion industry deeply, has a decisive influence and in a sense represents the interests of different industry groups, and on their behalf has a direct impact on the output value of billions of U.S. dollars. Therefore, the editors at these fashion magazines have genuine power. By contrast, the Chinese fashion magazines are seen more as hardcover information booklets with expanding pages of advertisements, rather than as fashion media. The significance for the entire magazine industry is perhaps the significance of advertising and publicity. On the another hand, in Europe and the United States, spending tens of thousands of dollars to get a cover photo or photo feature is very common, while in China even a shoot of a few thousand Yuan is not easily permitted by the publishers, who often choose to buy a photo from other resource instead of shooting one by themselves. Of course, if there is a need to shoot, editors usually plan to take these photos in the local places, like Beijing or Shanghai. The reason behind this is that the spending on every issue needs to be tightly controlled as the magazine is a business in a not very profitable industry. Furthermore, in China, the largest lifestyle magazine organisations are almost all copyright co-operating models with foreign magazine firms who have a lot of copyrighted content available, showing that the standard model for internationalisation is to attract both readers and advertisers. It seems there’s no need for Chinese journalists to write their own

contents. In addition, the fashion industry in China also follows, step-by-step, the trends from Paris, Milan, Tokyo and New York, meaning there is hardly space for China's own fashion voice to be heard. Therefore, Chinese fashion editors are more like fashion deciphering machines, facing a wealth of information which otherwise would not reach ordinary people. Consequently the editor, by adding and subtracting the information, works for local readers. The distress of Chinese fashion editors is that they have no chance to create, only to catch up.

To sum up, the immature fashion industry and magazine industry have not offered a rich content environment for the localisation of Chinese lifestyle magazine professionals on the one hand, while on the other hand, too many co-operation models with international magazine firms have emphasized profits, resulting in the limiting of the creativity of Chinese professionals.

In this context, there is another case still to come from *Feng Cai*. After the aforementioned feature, the magazine published a series of features like "These things are not luxury", in February, "Criticism of Chinese Luxury", in March, "Just a copycat banquet", in April and May, "High price of luxury", in June, after which the editor of these features resigned their position in *Feng Cai*. From the headlines of the features above, we can deduce that they were plainly a criticism of the whole fashion industry and also fashion and lifestyle magazines. Although the circulation of these six issues rose 45% compared to same period the year before, the advertisers and advertising agencies were not happy with the critical comments at all. Thus, the editor of these features was forced, as a logical result, to resign. From this case, it is difficult to conclude that

Chinese journalists have no creativity or independent thought whatsoever, but rather that this creativity or independent thought needs to serve the market or capital forces. Yi Wei criticised the launch of *Self*<sup>56</sup> China as:

*“Even practitioners deep understanding of the ‘simple reproduction’ of the new magazine lacks professionalism, but they also understand the wide gap between the Chinese reality of ‘Content is King’ and the ideal of, ‘advertiser is King’. The market rule is to encourage business, and the editorial team, to use the most efficient method (to ‘bring’ or ‘copy’) as soon as possible to meet the needs of advertisers.”*

(Yi, 2007)

During the interviews, the Researcher found that the complaint of “no-objective” almost always comes from ordinary editors or some anonymous interviewees; others, who have higher positions in their organisations like publishers and chief editors, seemed to have very positive attitudes to their current situations and futures. However, the “self-mockery” complaint could also be found from the high position interviewees, and reflects more on their social status and occupational homage. The complex finding here is that when a senior editor becomes anonymous after the Researcher has gained their trust, they seem to have many of the “no-objective” type complaints about their work standard and future, rather than light self-mockery. This attitude was indicative of IN/10<sup>57</sup>, IN/24<sup>58</sup>, IN/36<sup>59</sup>, IN/51<sup>60</sup>, IN/52<sup>61</sup>, and

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<sup>56</sup> *Self* China: the Chinese name is Yue Ji, meaning “make yourselves happy”. It was launched in March 2007, as a co-operation between Conde Nast Publications in the U.S. and Women of China Magazine Publishing House, in China.

<sup>57</sup> Interviewed on 02-02-2007, Beijing, China.



IN/62<sup>62</sup>. IN/10 was a local fashion editor working at a bridal magazine for five years, and is now employed as chief editor at *Bride* magazine, which is a copyright partner with Conde Nast. Media kits include *Modern Bride*, *Brides*, and *Elegant Bride*. IN/10 grumbled that the co-operative model has limited the freedom of her editorial practice.

IN/10: “Our magazine is a niche readers’ lifestyle magazine. I joined in the first year of the publishing, in 2001. I knew we were not doing very well especially on advertising revenue. So we got American’s [Conde Nast, author’s note] involvement. Now, we receive all the English language magazine versions of *Modern Bride*, *Brides*, and *Elegant Bride*, and can copy all the contents and photos from them. You know what happened, although the contents of my magazine has risen to a very stylish level, and some international advertising agencies are involved, my editors and reporters relied on foreign contents too much, paid their attention to getting ‘gravy’ like advertising royalties or promotional red envelopes. I wonder if we stop our copyright contract, how much our contents and advertisements will fall.”

The concern behind this statement is not only at *Bride* magazine, but also at all other international magazines’ Chinese versions, and for the co-operative models at other Chinese consumer magazines. Some magazine professionals call this, “standing on the giant’s shoulder”, but they did not mention anything about the giant not wanting to offer their shoulder anymore, so where could they stand?

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<sup>58</sup> Interviewed on 12-05-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>59</sup> Interviewed on 18-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>60</sup> Interviewed on 20-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>61</sup> Interviewed on 16-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>62</sup> Interviewed on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

Another interviewee, IN/36, was an editor in the consumer magazine industry for six years, and is now the Chief-editor of *Zcom*, an e-magazine website. He explored the reason behind the no-objective being an awkward position:

IN/10: “The situation is more like a sandwich with these editors (working for foreign brand magazines) as the ‘meat’ and advertisements and audiences as the bread. On one hand, all the advertisers desire advertorial contents instead of formal advertisement, as you know, this has interfered with the independence of journalism. On the other hand, the Chinese readers of these magazines are fans of all foreign fashion contents and luxury products, their judgement of top magazine is more centred on ‘internationalisation’ standards, such as the percentages of photos, contents, features; even the number of English headlines are taken into account. So for a fashion magazine editor, writing advertorial-like ‘soft’ features and translating and copying contents from foreign magazines are becoming the essentials of their professional career.”

IN/10: “From this point of view, of course, you can say ‘internationalisation’ is the big issue in the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry.”

Similar evidence can be found from other resource. A magazine professional’s internet forum launched a topic called “How should we love you, fashion magazines?” (Blog, 2008) The participants gave an example on the copy action on photo shooting.

*“Finally, the editor will offer a photographer a photo feature directly from European, US or Japanese fashion magazines, and*

*tell him only shoot a picture similar to this! So, the photographer only needs to change the international model to a domestic beauty, coupled with a very characteristic Chinese background, and copy all the creative ideas. As a result, the so-called Chinese localisation of fashion photo features came into being.”*

Thus many of the important tasks of localising and creativity belonging to the journalists’ working standard are squeezed out of the judgements of occupation of consumer magazines in China.

From the above discussions, the achievement of internationalisation by Chinese consumer magazine professionals is, it would seem, “in cahoots with foreign investment and advertising capital to ‘cheat’ Chinese readers with a dream of upgrading class lifestyle and consumerism.” (Xia Hong,<sup>63</sup> 2007) The Publisher of *iLook*, Hong Huang, said mockingly in her blog that her Editor-in-chief, Xiao Xue, was “the minister of the Propaganda Department, who’s main task is to promote the publicity for luxury goods” (Hong, 2008b). “As long as they stay in their positions as Chief-editors of fashion magazines, these professionals will forget the core things of an editor, and will be controlled by the advertisers” (Hong, 2008b). These laments are based on the reality in the Chinese magazine industry; the immature industrial environment has offered a very capricious condition for the growth of these magazines. As Zhao Jing wen criticised this issue in his blog,

*“Hong Huang believed that the popular fashion magazine in the market were serving no brain and no thought of the female readers, so that she should published a magazine for the thoughtful women bringing knowledge to those ‘not thoughtful female readers’ through criticism in order to change these*

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<sup>63</sup> Interviewed on 10-01-2007, Beijing, China.

*women's vulgar fashion concepts. She had her iLook. However, she found she was wrong. She needs a consumer magazine instead of a thoughtful fashion magazine. After Xiao Xue was appointed as the chief editor, she imitated the U.S. fashion magazine Instyle and changed the whole style of iLook. Although iLook was successful in raising profit afterwards, it was evaluated by the industry as a product category brochure."*

(Zhao, 2006a)

This situation occurred in most of the Chinese fashion magazines, once some magazines have succeeded in the market, they are likely to become a product category brochure. The professionals working in these magazines may be well paid but they generally lose their professional ethics and directions.

#### **5.5.4 Age Fear and Fetishism**

The history of the lifestyle magazine in China covers no more than twenty years. Thus finding the talented achievers is always a serious topic facing every publisher and chief-editor, as discussed at the close of Section 5.4. The economic condition had improved up until the global economic slowdown of 2008/2009; all the general lifestyle magazines with concerns of advertising, target audience, pricing, etc., preferred to hold tight to "fashion" as a banner, which has led to the increase of "fashion magazines". The demand for skilled and internationally known lifestyle magazine professionals is rather higher than the few people in the market. This is why all skilled, experienced, professionals have opportunity to be appointed chief-editor at a young age, which the Researcher has discussed in the previous chapter. However, in Chinese lifestyle magazines,

experience is far more important than academic qualifications. Therefore, if a 23-year-old undergraduate with magazine experience and a 26-year-old postgraduate student without experience enter a fashion magazine at the same time, the former is more likely to advance their career to the top. This is why age is a fear that all the consumer journalists dislike talking about, although they need to face the situation.

As some editors told the Researcher, if a general editor is over 28 years old, and does not get promoted, this is definitely not beneficial to their career. The reason is that after four to five years working in editorial positions, only a handful of both skilful and very able people will be promoted to managerial positions. Only with access to management positions can these fashion editors have a bright future to further positions such as chief-editors or publishers in international magazines, or local consumer magazines. Others who have not been promoted will not stay long in the industry, as the industry relies on junior journalists with low pay and strict working conditions, rather than experts who want high salaries and working freedom.

Being under high pressure is another characteristic that all lifestyle magazine professionals have in common. From the winter of 2006 to spring 2007, when she carried out her fieldwork in Beijing, the Researcher found that several chief-editors became pregnant at almost the same time, and those on maternity leave included Deng Li, the chief-editor of *Marie Claire* China; Angelina Zhang, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue* China; and Lynne Zhang the copyright manager at TMG. They were all over 33 years old, which counted almost as late motherhood (35 years and over). Lynne

Zhang<sup>64</sup> said of this that “they hardly had time to rest, even when pregnant.” Therefore, all of them delayed their motherhood until they were in the high risk age category.

However, these journalists worked hard not simply because of the fear of others taking their positions. They worked like “night animals” or with “strong physical strength”, and these are also common characteristics in Chinese fashion magazines. “Night animal” means that most of the fashion professionals used to work from the afternoon through the night until the next morning, because of approaching publishing deadlines. Most of all, as they need to organise much of the editorial materials for every issue and every page, they are normally working a whole day and night without any rest. Therefore, coffee, cigarettes and wine come with their stressful working hours. Yuan Xiao Juan, the former senior editor at *Trends Esquire*, and editor-director of *Trends Food and Wine*<sup>65</sup>, was diagnosed with gastric cancer when she was 34 years old in 2006. She summarised the cause of her bad health as due to a serious lack of sleep, erratic diet and high stress. This is probably a common problem of fashion magazine professionals. In Yuan’s case, as to the hard work, she only slept for four to five hours during the establishment period of *Food and Wine* (Yuan, 2006).

Unfortunately, TMG stopped Yuan Xiao Juan’s contract in 2006, and Yuan died three months later. She wrote in her blog some days before her death, “We live in such a rush that we forget about our inner feelings and what life is all about.” (Yuan, 2006) The distinctiveness of Yuan’s case is that she died of cancer, and that this may be related to her job, and at least from her own review of her

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<sup>64</sup> Interviewed on 11-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>65</sup> *Food and Wine*, launched in 2006 by Trends Media Group, has copyright agreement with US magazine *Food & Wine*.

life, the negative sides of her work affected her health.

Another interviewee, IN/25,<sup>66</sup> quit her work at *Marie Clare China* after Yuan's death. She was a friend of Yuan:

"I felt very tired and disappointed not only about Trends, but all the top co-operative magazines here (in China). We work very hard, and suffer great stress at the same time. This is a 'rice bowl' of youth; we may face health problems when we are getting old. I don't want to use my life in an exchange just for a job."

In addition to this there are another two stories the popularity of which is spread not only through consumer magazines but also among ordinary people who keep an eye on the Chinese lifestyle magazines or media industry. The first is named "the thermal pants incident"; the other is about the "fetishist" Shou Ma and other Editors. The first took place in 2008. Su Mang, the Editor of *Bazaar China*, was interviewed by Phoenix TV talking about fashion in China, and said:

*"I do not allow people around me wearing thermal pants, it's not fashionable. Even, I have checked my editors' language and confiscated the thermal pants when I found them."*

*"Once, we needed to go abroad for training and I advised my boss, 'you should not wear thermal pants, the Americans will have discrimination if foreigners wear thermal pants, and we will lose the positive image of the Chinese people.'"*

(Tianya, 2008)

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<sup>66</sup> Interviewed on 17-08-2006, Beijing, China.

This interview went through the most popular and active internet forums, such as *Tianya* and *Sina*, and raised debates on whether Chinese people should wear thermal pants overseas. Is this a fashion trend or a personal issue? And so on. Most Chinese network users criticised Su Mang as “a slave to fashion” (Su, 2008), “she doesn’t really understand fashion even though she’s the Editor of *Bazaar China*” (Tianya 2008). The reason why an interview with Su Mang would spread so broadly, and raise an online debate, is that so many online users are white-collar or university students and they enthusiastically yearn to know about and participate in international lifestyle standards or fashion trends. Thus, in their eyes, *Bazaar China* represents international fashion tastes and trends, so they did not want to miss out on this gossip and wanted to be involved. Arguably, of course, there were other participants who were critics of Chinese fashion magazines and Chinese fashion concepts as well and they took this chance to vent their anger. From their point of view, Chinese lifestyle magazines did not have their own standpoint on fashion but rather had despicable motives with all the appearance of business profit.

The other story is of the “fetishist”, a characteristic of some famous magazine professionals in Chinese fashion magazines. The first gossip is about Shou Ma, the Chief-editor in *FHM China*. One day, Shou Ma met an editor in a toilet, the editor said, “very good shoes.” Shou Ma immediately turned up the sole and said “PRADA” (Mancity, 2007). Here, the popularity of this story is because many of the critics thought Shou Ma is a representation of the “slave to fashion”, so as other top position editors. Xiao Xue, now the Chief-editor in *Elle China* has more than one hundred luxury handbags including Prada, Louiv Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel,



Dior, Celine, Fendi, Tod's, Lowes, Marc Jacobs, Versace, Annya Hindmarch and Marni (Purseblog, 2008). A similar case is Su Mang, the Chief-editor of *Bazaar* China, who is proud of her store of more than hundreds, up to 6 cm high, high-heeled shoes at her home. In fact almost every fashion magazine's editor-in-chief is famous for maintaining a certain degree of "fetishism", or enjoys the use of luxury products to distinguish themselves from ordinary people and show their social class. The life background of these magazine professionals is that they are all over 30 years of age, lack aesthetic education and also lack life attitude based on fashion. The simplest way for these editors to become fashion animals, is to believe and support mainstream magazines, patronise luxury brands, and it is not easy to err. However, as well as their limitations, they are also driven by commercially intensive products (Maxim, 2006).

In fact, from the cases above, the Researcher found that Chinese lifestyle magazine professionals are not self-confident in the local community, and find ways to have links abroad. Hong (2004b) therefore satirized all the international magazine Chinese versions, the "adopted daughters of rich and powerful international families".

## **5.6 Implication**

What are the implications of the characteristics of the working standards of Chinese lifestyle magazines' journalists in Chinese media study? Are they special when compared with their international colleagues working in the same consumer society? What research should be used by specialists when investigating Chinese magazine operating circumstances? The Researcher makes

several points that are primary, each of which could be treated as the star point.

Firstly, from Chapter 3, the emerging consumer society and social segmenting provide the background to all the developing lifestyle magazines.

Secondly, the lifestyle magazine in China, as the pioneer of the industry's reform and development, has intensified competition within China's domestic lifestyle magazines, forcing the magazine industry to speed up its reform and development. Moreover, the fragmentation of the media industry structure in some ways is invisible to the media that casts a protective umbrella over the industry, meaning that the media can easily lose the drive for reform, and is not fully released so dynamically. The entry of foreign media will gradually break this pattern, so that much of the media will feel the pressure of the external environment, or feel this pressure through co-operative joint, or self-reform. In short, they need to rescue themselves by helping magazine professionals, and enhancing competitiveness. Thirdly, foreign media not only bring world-class operational experience and professional standards into China's media industry, but also new and fresh information about the world. For example, *Business Week's* Chinese version offers those readers who do not understand English timely information on the world economy and trade, technology, and management experience that helps decision-makers grasp the international market and improve a dynamic enterprise management level. Finally, the open door policy helps Chinese media reach the mainstream media around the world, as well as letting the world understand China's investment environment, history and culture.

Regarding the magazine as a particular medium, the battle between journalists and business staff is always a topic in the industry, especially in consumer magazines. As media researchers in the Western world have discussed, “in the magazine world, the effect magazine editors have can be seen as intermediaries between advertisers and the target reader” (Gough-Yates, 2003: 24).

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the Researcher has examined the characteristics of contemporary lifestyle magazine journalists in China, through their essential working standards, as they make contributions to significant elements of professionalism in magazine journalism. These elements consist of “internationalisation”, “self-satisfaction”, “hyper-skilled labour”, “commercialisation”, “self-mockery” and “fetishism”.

From the Researcher’s analysis, the future for Chinese lifestyle magazines will be a professional era. Although today’s fashion trend is still at the copycat stage, rather than showing creativity and localisation, along with waves of social change and the development of industry, this media trend will automatically stream. The pursuit of fashion will also diversify, and at that time the “catch-all” type of lifestyle magazine will lose the market, and professional men’s, women’s and fashion magazine, will occupy the mainstream. From this point of view, the current magazine professionals will need to learn the essentials from their foreign colleagues.

Here is a typical portrait of a journalist from the survey carried out in China in 1995.

*“The journalist is a 35-year-old male, from the Han ethnic majority, who is a member of the ruling Communist Party and has worked on a newspaper for ten years. He attended university with a major in humanities or social sciences [not in journalism or communication, author’s note] and was assigned by the state to be a journalist [i.e., rather than through his own choice, author’s note], but has not received on-the-job training for more than one month.”*

*“He is earning 586 CNY a month”*

*“His professional title is a Report/Editor [i.e., the second lowest rank in a four-tier system, author’s note], with primary duties in news reporting, mostly on economic affairs. The journalist believes that he has some degree of autonomy in his job, is somewhat satisfied with the job, and plans to stay in the profession given a chance to choose. He believes that the Chinese media should perform chiefly as information provider, interpreter for current affairs and as a government mouthpiece, but should not be an advocate of ideology, forum for free expression, or entertainer.”*

(Chen, Zhu et al., 1998:28-29)

By comparison, the typical lifestyle magazine journalist is a 25-year-old female, graduated from university or has one or two years working experience in other media. The age factor, and the lesser seniority of the lifestyle magazine journalists, is obvious here.

Therefore, she chooses to join a fashion magazine because she’s a fan of luxury goods, or this is a well paid job. The big difference here between the traditional journalist and lifestyle magazine journalists is that the lifestyle magazine journalist chooses their job of their own accord.

Although from the survey the journalist believes she has some degree of autonomy in her job, all lifestyle magazine journalists complain they have less freedom and are very stressed, although from the business and marketing point of view rather than the political or social.

Thus, the Researcher views the working standard, promotion opportunities, ideological change, and attitude changes which international lifestyle magazines bring to Chinese magazine journalists as being at the individual level. The individual characteristics that appear within the occupational group have been discussed conceptually here. Additionally, with the support of comparisons between lifestyle magazine journalists and ordinary journalists, the findings highlight the many ways in which they differ. Furthermore, the Researcher would like to summarise this by saying that consumer lifestyle journalists should be socially represented as journalism, which reflects the changes present in Chinese social and economic development.

# CHAPTER 6. Global and Local Creativity in Chinese Magazine Journalism

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the journalistic behaviour of journalists in lifestyle magazines in China are affected by national institutions and the organisations they are working in.

From the discourse of theoretical professionalism, Kultgen (1988: 3) summarised the characteristics of professions, with the most common characteristics being “the profession is organised and it is represented by associations of distinctive character; integrity is maintained by adherence to a code of conduct”. This talks about the importance of an organisation of the representative professions.

So, from this point of view, the Researcher chooses the China Periodicals Association (CPA) as the professional organisation instead of China Journalists Association (CJA), as the CPA is more focussed on providing a service for magazine professionals rather than CJA, which is concerned with the whole journalism professions in China.

The Researcher also chose two magazines, *FHM* China and *Marie Claire* China, as the representatives of lifestyle magazine organisations in China, to determine whether and how their journalistic behaviour is affected by organisations. There were three reasons for this choice.

The first reason is these two magazines have encouraged the free

practice of journalism during the last five years, and also showed high standards of ethical behaviour in journalism. Autonomy of journalistic practice in these two magazines is also very high. Therefore, how did this relate to the editorial policy of the journalist's media organisation? Furthermore what are the elements of journalism, in these two magazines, that contribute to contemporary lifestyle magazine journalism professionalism? These two issues are going to be analysed in this chapter.

The second reason is on the representatives of these two magazines. *FHM* China is operated by Trends Media Group (TMG). TMG is a national magazine firm with an U.S. partner, Hearst Magazine International, so the journalistic behaviour should be treated as coming from the American influenced model. By contrast to *FHM* China, *Marie Claire* China is operated by Hachette Filipacchi Media (HFM), which represents the European model.

Finally, both *FHM* China and *Marie Claire* China have gained business success both in advertising revenue and circulation. Thus, the investigation of their editorial policy and journalistic practice will provide more significant contributions than other magazines.

## **6.2 Organisational Role - China Periodicals**

### **Association needs to persuade Chinese magazines to engage with the international flow**

#### **6.2.1 What is the Impact of the CPA?**

The China Periodicals Association (CPA) is the largest non-profit industry-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) for Chinese journals, set up in April 1992. More than 4,000 periodicals and publishing houses had become members up to 2007<sup>67</sup>. The CPA also set up 16 sub-regional branches and 24 sub-industry periodical Branches of the Association. In its mission statement the CPA says that it provides

*“a link or a bridge between government and periodicals, solidifies the magazine professionals working on the efforts to strengthen and develop the Chinese periodical industry, increases the exchange between professional and readers, promotes the members’ professional ethics, expands international exchanges, and strengthens industrial self-regulation management.”<sup>68</sup>*

The following is a contrasting mission statement from, the Magazine Publishers of American (MPA), a major US magazine association:

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<sup>67</sup> Figures come from: <http://www.cpa-online.org.cn/other/2007/13759.html>

<sup>68</sup> The researcher translated from Chinese, <http://big5.cgan.net/english/zgqk/html/third/22.htm>



*“We provide support to our members in the following ways: encouraging editorial excellence and expanding the market for magazine brands; promoting the value and benefits of advertising across all platforms; championing the rights of editors and publishers before Congress, the courts and state governments; informing and educating our members about changes in technology, law and industry best practices.”*

(Magazine Publishers of America, 2008)

Both organisations aim to provide information and educate their members with professional elevation, although the MPA works specially on services for all the members, including industry related aspects such as marketing and advertising. However, the CPA directs all efforts towards professionalism and internationalisation in its main aims. The divergence between the CPA and MPA indicates the different degree of maturation of the magazine industries in China and America. Chinese magazines are certainly facing the challenge of developing and becoming mature, so as the representative of the magazine trade, the CPA has positioned itself to champion professionalisation and internationalisation in the Chinese magazine industry.

The question that arises is whether the CPA can be representative of the Chinese magazine industry? If we count only the 2007 figures, of 8,946 magazine titles available, CPA members account for only about half of the total (more than 4,000 periodicals and publishing houses). However, there are two facts that need to be considered. The first is that some publishing houses produce more than one magazine title in their portfolio. TMG, for instance, has 15

magazines; The *Family* Group has 6 and The *Digest* Group has 5 titles. The multiple contents of publishers' portfolios infer that the CPA represents more than half of the magazine titles in China. This makes the CPA the biggest and most important organisation for Chinese magazines, and one which should be treated as being representative of these publications in China. The second fact is that the figure of 4,000 first appears in 1997 from an official document, although in that particular year, magazine titles in China were 7,918. From the analysis above, the members of the CPA have covered the majority of the Chinese magazine publishing units. From this standpoint, the Researcher considers the CPA as the professional NGO that serves most of the trade.

Another fact of the importance of the CPA in Chinese magazines is that the founder and chairman of the CPA – Zhang Bohai – has had a large influence on the industry for almost two decades. According to official documents, Zhang Bohai worked at the CPA since it was established in 1992, at which time he was the Vice-president and General-secretary of the CPA, and also the Director of the International Co-operation Department (CPA Newsletter 1992: 2). From 1998 to 2007, he was the Chairman of the CPA and from 2007 to the 2008 he acted as an 'honoured' advisor to the CPA. Before Zhang Bohai first worked for the CPA in 1992, he was the first General Director of the Periodical Department of General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) in 1987 which was when GAPP was first set up. A check of the career path of Zhang Bohai shows that he held the position of Director-General of Periodical Department of GAPP from 1987 to 1994, but from 1992 he was also working for the CPA. This means that Zhang Bohai was the official governor of the magazine trade as well as an executive

of the sole NGO of Chinese magazine industry for at least two years, from 1992 to 1994. When the Researcher enquired about this double status, some media critics explained that it was the requirement of media reforms in the 1990s. IN/33<sup>69</sup> was an old colleague of Zhang Bohai, and summarised:

“It is because the CPA needs strong support from the Chinese government for launch and development on the one hand, on the other hand an NGO member was more convenient than a CPC party member for communicating and negotiating abroad.”

IN/29,<sup>70</sup> met Zhang Bohai in 1999 and remembered that,

“He was the first governor who understood magazines, and also had the foresight to plan the future of Chinese magazines. So he set up the International Co-operation Department of the CPA, and held the first and also the last position as the Director of this department. He used the International Co-operation Department to handle some start-points for Chinese magazines on international involvement.”

When the Researcher enquired into the details of this: ‘start point’, IN/29 thought it concerned international copyright co-operation modules and partnerships. Furthermore, Li Pin emphasized several times that: “the Chinese magazine wouldn’t have gained as much development as it has today without Zhang Bohai’s efforts.”<sup>71</sup> The way Li Pin commented on the importance of Zhang Bohai’s personal contribution to the whole trade is that Zhang is the soul of the CPA. In the interviews, some senior magazine professionals even point out, the origin of CPA was that the Chinese

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<sup>69</sup> Interviewed on 02-02-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>70</sup> Interviewed on 14-07-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>71</sup> Interviewed on 08-08-2006, 08-02-2007, 16-08-2008, Beijing, China.

government wanted to precipitate Zhang's retirement.

Certainly, after Zhang retired from GAPP in 1994, he worked for 15 years in the important position in the CPA until 2008. In 2000, Zhang persuaded the CPA to join the International Federation of the Periodical Press (FIPP), a global magazine association, which preceded by one year China's entry to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001. CPA joining the FIPP shows that the Chinese periodicals industry has been part of the global magazine network that shares the same information and relationship with other Western countries. Furthermore, as the Researcher has discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, Zhang Bohai is the key worker who introduced HFM to the Chinese market in 1988, and granted a license to *Elle* China. Despite the launching of The Catalogue for the Guidance of Foreign Investment Industries<sup>72</sup> on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1995, the magazine co-operation model was established 7 years earlier than the policy. Zhang gave the following comments:

“The Chinese periodical industry developed rapidly in recent years, but if it really wants to get into the international market, it still needs more exchanges and to learn from advanced foreign experience.”<sup>73</sup>

“What I can do is that through the CPA we can have a better understanding of domestic industry demand, then set up a bridge for domestic periodicals ‘going out’, and foreign periodicals ‘coming into’, China.”<sup>74</sup>

Besides the advantage of having several years working experience as a government official, Zhang could also speak fluent

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<sup>72</sup> issued by Decree No.5 of the State Planning Commission, the State Economic and Trade Commission and The Ministry of Foreign trade and Economic Cooperation

<sup>73</sup> Interviewed on 06-04-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>74</sup> Interviewed on 12-12-2006, 26-07-2008, Beijing, China.

English, which is very rare in Chinese GAPP officials. This is also one of the ways in which he had wider eyesight than other traditional Chinese media regulators. In his early career, during the late 1980s, he encountered HFM and through HFM understood the global media conglomerates' demands on the Chinese market. Undoubtedly, this caused Zhang and the CPA to lead the development of the whole Chinese magazine industry in the following two decades.

In summary, the Researcher argues here that the combination of these two factors, the CPA and Zhang Bohai, is the reason why the CPA is the most important organisation of the representative magazine professions in China.

### **6.2.2 The CPA's Working Effort of International Professional Workshop**

As the CPA's internal newsletter, *China Periodicals Association Newsletter*, is free and posted to every member of the CPA, it has a wide circulation and covers most magazine professionals in China. From this point of view, the Researcher has categorised the contents over the last 5 years from 2003 to 2007, and found that the content of the CPA Newsletter is divided into five categories: official bulletin, industry data, industry research, global magazine trends, and professional training programmes or workshops. Meanwhile, industry data and professional training programmes or workshops have been released yearly. The frequencies of these joint training programmes are also available in the timetable of the China Periodicals Association (Newsletters, 2003- 2007).

The Researcher found that every year from January 2003 to

December 2007, there was a key workshop, or seminar, addressing professional training launched by the CPA. All the keynote speakers were international publishers or researchers; topics covered included editorial contents, advertising and distributing, brand promotions and other related technical issues. For instance, on 15-17th March 2005, the CPA launched a workshop with partner Conde Nast International in Guangzhou, southern China (CPA Newsletters, 2005). The *China Periodicals Association Newsletter* used 62 pages to publish the whole PowerPoint contents of each lecture in the second issue in 2005. The workshop accounted for roughly two-thirds of the 92 page issue. By contrast, the other content consisted of official releases, as a normal official newsletter, such as Li Changchun, the General Director of GAPP, inspecting Guangdong Province, and so on. Regarding the proportion of contents in this issue, one of the editors, Li Yan<sup>75</sup> recalled that

“the idea came from our President [sic: Zhang Bohai], who’s done some ‘tough’ work with Conde Nast International on giving the agreement of publishing this content publicly, so that as many of the Chinese magazine professionals as possible are able to reach these valuable concepts and experience from advanced foreign colleagues.”

The content of this newsletter covers all the areas which modern magazine publishers or professionals need to go through. The newsletter is divided into 12 lectures, including: 1. The philosophy of brand management of Conde Nast International, 2. The development of global magazine publishing, 3. Summaries of marketing, 4. Use of market surveys in magazine publishing, 5. Marketing elements of the set up a magazine, 6. Promoting to

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<sup>75</sup> Interviewed on 12-05-2007, Beijing, China.

readers and advertisers, 7. Outlets of branding, 8. Find the full potential of the brand, 9. Extension of the brand, 10. Experience of using market surveys in mainland China, 11. Managing the editing process, 12. The contribution of magazines to culture. The keynote speakers included Jonathan Newhouse, President of Conde Nast International; James Woolhouse, Director of Planning of Conde Nast International and President of Conde Nast Asia-Pacific; Bob Lloyd, Director of Newhouse Public Communication College; Albert Read, Deputy Planning Director of Conde Nast International and Business Director of Conde Nast Asia-Pacific; Jean Faulkner, Marketing Director of Conde Nast UK; Liu Dan, Director of distribution and marketing of Conde Nast China. The magazine experts from Conde Nast International focused on the company's past 100 years of development experience, especially how to mobilize the excellence of editing, how to understand the magazine market, how to promote the issue, how to publish globally, and how to conduct business training and experience. These exporters also introduced the lessons of their success and of their failure. From the topics above, it is clear that this covered the entirety of business of a modern magazine industry. However, there were more than 200 participants from 100 magazines in this workshop. It was reported that all participants were chief-editors and chairpersons of the consumer magazines in China (CPA Newsletter, 2005: 12). Li Yan commented on why there were so many magazine managers joining the workshop: "they need to learn from the advanced experience available from abroad," and, "this is what Zhang usually proposes, which is that the Chinese magazine industry has a very short history, so it could not be developing very fast using its own strength."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interviewed on 15-05-2007, Beijing, China.

Certainly, this is from the point of view of Chinese magazine professionals.

However, if taking into account the fact that *Vogue China* launched in September 2005, one of the aims of Conde Nast International co-operating in this workshop is very clear: they treat it as a promotion opportunity for its publishing house and also a chance to develop the friendship of Chinese publishers. The Researcher raised this question with Zhang Bohai.<sup>77</sup> He replied with another point relating to his original intention for all the CPA's international workshops and lectures:

“I do believe Chinese magazine publishers need to stand on a global platform and on the ‘giant’s shoulder’, so I consistently look for every possibility for international publishers to transfer their experience to our journalists in order that they join the global competition and make connections.”

This is true. This kind of workshop could be found every year since 2003. For instance, in September, 2004, HFM also organised a forum called “Core Competitiveness of Chinese-French magazines”, in Hang Zhou, at which 111 delegates from 87 Chinese magazines participated. By contrast, it is difficult to find an internal Chinese publishers’ workshop launched by the CPA during the last five years. When we look at the ‘the report on the work of Third Member Council of the CPA’<sup>78</sup> which covers the work of the CPA from 2002 to 2007, it highlights four outcomes, saying that the CPA:

“Concentrated on the development of the industry, promoted the self-discipline of the industry, actively participated in international

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<sup>77</sup> Interviewed on 17-05-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>78</sup> The Third Member Council of the CPA Conference was held on 06-02-2007, Beijing, China. The researcher attended the conference.



activities, and was concerned about the opportunity of digitalization”.

[The CPA also], “regularly organised Chinese and foreign expert workshops and lectures to improve the theoretical level and quality of employees” as evidence to support the effort of “self-discipline promotion”.

Although it takes the Chinese experts here into account, when analysing the CPA Newsletters from 2003 to 2007, it is hard to find any workshop related to the Chinese aspect of the industry. The only publication related to Chinese magazine professionals is the information of magazine firms which includes the launch of new magazines, anniversaries of magazines and very few articles from Chinese publishers talking about their working experience, etc. Over 19 issues of the CPA Newsletter there are 19 articles written by Chinese publishers talking about their advanced experience, 9 of them concentrating on business-to-business (B2B) journals; by contrast, there are 53 reports by western publishers sharing their wide experience of editing, marketing, circulating and branding topics that cover nearly every area of the magazine industry, and only 2 of them discuss B2B publishing. If we take the behaviour of the CPA as the representation of the Chinese magazine industry, from the discussion above, the visible evidence shows that the CPA values foreign working experience and theories more than domestic ones, as it believes that the Chinese periodical industry has many aspects that have benefited from international publishing houses. The CPA also tries to borrow advanced modern magazine branding experience to build the foundation of the Chinese magazine industry.

The President of the CPA, Zhang Bohai<sup>79</sup> not only conducted most of these international workshops, he was also the initiator of all the series of international workshops. He recollected the motivation behind all the international workshops:

“If the Chinese magazine industry needs ten years to go through a hundred years’ development in Western countries, we need to stand on ‘giants’ shoulders’. You could call it the ‘international view’ with ‘Chinese spirit’.”

The reasons behind this agreement between the CPA and the Chinese periodical industry are several. The first is obviously the economic benefit from joining existing international brands, contents, experience, talents, advertising clients and investments, which make the Chinese magazine industry, develop very quickly. Secondly, as the Chinese government tests magazine co-operation as a pilot field, foreign involvement is mainly restricted to business operation and content co-operation, although it seems that this involvement will also affect the editorial ideology of every involved magazine firm and its employees. From the Researcher’s point of view, there is no research or suspicion from either academic or official sites. From the political aspect, the CPA and Zhang Bohai are one of the driving forces and main promoters of the Chinese magazine development. Thirdly, the CPA and Zhang Bohai have become a bridge between the Chinese magazine industry and the international periodical conglomerates. Fourthly, despite the numerous criticisms concerning the opening of the domestic market to foreign enterprises , it is clear the involvement of international magazine professionals and also their professional standards and

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<sup>79</sup> Interviewed on 06-04-2006, Beijing, China.

working ethics is due to the CPA's assistance.

However, this is a hybrid road along which Zhang Bohai and the CPA have been leading Chinese magazine professionals over the last 15 years. Thus some media critics question Zhang as a new comprador and his approach of offering the Chinese market to foreign media conglomerates in order to gain his own professional reputation and other benefits. By contrast, others believe Zhang has coaxed Chinese magazines into a new era and involved them deeply with global trade. Overall, the Researcher argues that the CPA is a professional organisation, which represents Chinese magazine journalists as professionals. The degree of the CPA's professionalism reflects the extent of all the individual magazine professionals in China. Looking at the structure of CPA-level magazine professional's self-discipline, there is no doubt that the professionalism of Chinese magazine journalism has been engaged by the Western magazine journalistic practice of the concept of professionalism, and may be more involved with the admiring reference of new journalism and media commercialisation. The most appealing aspect is the way in which Chinese magazine publishers and editors are placed at the centre of their own style, which serves the market and readers instead of acting on behalf of the party for political purposes. This aspect is a great contrast to the traditional Chinese journalists who used to adhere strictly to party propaganda purposes in the past. Through the internationalisation of Chinese consumer magazine journalistic practice, their occupational practices and ambitions are as conceptualised as those of other Western magazine journalists, a network facilitator, a marketer of meaning, and of course, a creator of the new consumer generation and a competitor in the global media hegemony.

### 6.3. “West to East” Case Study

Before presenting the analysis of the two case studies of *FHM* China and *Marie Claire* China, it is necessary to give an alternative perspective which forms the Western point of view of how Western media enters the Chinese market. Overall, there are four ways ‘Western’ magazines are able to engage with the Chinese market. These depend on media policy, market orientation and the organisations’ business culture and investments. The most common method is to seek a business model including brand and content with a single or several Chinese publishing houses or magazine organisations. Here, the Chinese publishing house provides the necessary Publication Registration Number (PRN, which is issued by the Chinese government to give the birth certificate of the titles) and the Western media firm sets up a Chinese company to operate on all levels in the business of publishing. The Chinese partner only gains commission from the contract and the risk is that Western publishers may find other partners after the end of contract. However, the Western media seem to benefit because of the great level of freedom in the media business. There is also a high degree of risk, due to the break of Chinese media policy. French media giant, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, is keen to apply this model in China. A second method is that the Western magazine organisation would find a Chinese media firm to co-operate with on a magazine which may use both foreign and Chinese brands at the same time. The co-operative enterprise usually consists of two media organisations. The Western media firm would appoint the Publisher or Director, Manager and Editor-in-Chief. The assistants of these executives are usually provided by the Chinese business partners.

The reason for this format is that Western partners not only bring their brands and contents of their magazines, but also act as business partners in international advertising and PR companies to China. Utilising this model would give the Chinese publishers ambition and unlimited, to grow and catch up with their Western partners. Trends Media Group has several models using this method to cooperate with various US magazine groups. A third approach would be to license Western magazine brands to Chinese partners, and earn a copyright fee from the contract. With this model, Western publishing houses usually provide their magazine content to Chinese partners for a low and exclusive price. However, once the Chinese partners have translated the content into Chinese they hope it will attract readers from the outset. *Rayli* Group is using this model to get a Japanese company's brand and the copyright of contents. The final method is publishing international brand magazines in Hong Kong and distributing and gathering advertising in the mainland of China in order to avoid the political restrictions and generate maxim profits. This technique is used by *Forbes China* and has proved to be a great success during the last 5 years.

Sun Chia-Sui gave a very good example of how western publishers entered Taiwan's book market. He stressed that "the costs associated with promoting a long-term relationship between a publishing house and local Taiwanese authors are substantially more in terms of the investment of time and money" (2003). Sun argued the following:

*"The key factor, if a Western publishing house wants access to an Eastern country, is to find the right person with a suitable team to manage and operate access. This person not only needs to be a specialist in the*

*book trade, but also familiar with the connection and publishing culture in the local book markets. Moreover, this person also needs to have knowledge of global book markets so that he or she can connect the West and the East.*

*They need to know the culture on both sides, the tastes and habits of readers in different areas, the average prices of books, the cost of producing books, the connections with writers, editors and sales channels; and they also need to know the regulations and special rules for the book market. These factors are not all easy to find in the same person at any time and it takes time to train specialists in such knowledge.”*

(Sun, 2003)

This argument certainly applies to the consumer magazine market in the mainland of China, as Taiwan and China share a similar culture and psychology. During the interviews, several publishers endorsed these points. Generally, interviewees insisted, when media firms tried to launch magazine businesses in China, they needed to carefully consider of Chinese culture and its people’s psychology. Furthermore, both China and Taiwan have no advanced experience in the modern publishing business and consequently need to learn and take energy from Western countries from an industry’s point of view. Thus, the Researcher here is using Sun’s insightful discussions on Taiwan’s book publishing industry to provide a mirror image of the magazine industry in the Mainland of China. Further proof of the similarity between Taiwan’s book publishing industry and China’s magazine industry is provided by Sun’s assertion that Taiwanese publishers placed strong emphasis on “the right person [being] very important for the foreign publishing business rooted in Taiwan market” (Sun, 2003). This

research also reinforces this conclusion. The magazine participators, researchers and even governors, for instance, I/N 61, I/N 61, I/N 69, and I/N 71 all insisted that the “right person”, who is the specialist with a deep understanding of local culture and media business, was a sticking point for the international magazine business in the mainland of China.

### **6.3.1 Using *Elle* as an Example of Understanding the Chinese Market**

By using the example of *Elle*'s entry into, and strategy in, China, the overall background of magazine journalistic practice can be realised.

Founded in 1945, *Elle* is the most popular fashion magazine for female readers in the world. It is published by the HFM, a French media firm, which is a media group with 35 versions of magazines in 6 continents. Its annual sales are over 60 million issues. In France, HFM publishes 47 magazines, such as *Action Auto Moto*, *Elle France*, *Entrevue* and *France Dimanche*. Also, the brand production includes books, shoes, spectacles, and others (Lagardere. online). The Chinese title for *Elle* is *Shijie Shizhuang Zhi Yuan* (*World Fashion Garden*). Since its first issue in 1988 in China, *Elle* has become one of the most popular monthly magazines in China.

By collaborating with Shanghai Translation Publishing House, HFM have based their success on their adoption of a very technical marketing strategy. Furthermore, this strategy has been used by all the high-end glossy lifestyle magazines in China, and has become an unwritten set of rules for the Chinese magazine industry.

The first rule is the high pricing strategy. A good media circulation pricing strategy should consist of at least three factors, i.e. selecting target readership, attractive contents and style, and the rational sense of using profits as the measure to evaluate the pricing. As with fashion magazines like *Elle*, the majority of the content covers the latest trends in clothing, cosmetics and modern life. Thus, there are three models available for its pricing. Firstly, the cost of design and producing the magazine should be taken into consideration. The price should be based on the evaluation of cost, and should take profits into consideration. That means the circulation will be the key point in order to gain access to greater profit. Some widely circulated magazines like *Readers* have adopted this way to create profits. Secondly, it is necessary for the magazine to compare the price with their competitors. The strategy of compared or following up can be used to keep the same pace with them without analysis of costs. Thirdly, the price should be determined by the consuming abilities of their target readers. The price that they are willing to pay will have an effect on the costs. These three methods are called cost-oriented, competition-oriented, and customer-oriented pricing.

Significantly, *Elle* adopts the customer-oriented approach to setting their price in the market. Since *Elle* has a leading position in the industry, the market has competitive pricing among all other lifestyle magazines. Almost 9 of the top 10 lifestyle magazines with the highest income from commercial advertisements have adopted a similar price to *Elle* over the last 5 years: 20 CNY (Nearly 1.8 GBP), except *Self* whose price is 15 CNY (Nearly 1.3 GBP).

The second rule is to keep the essential of its brand in the niche market. Although *Elle* believes in the importance of brands, another



more important fact is how to connect the different fashion elements together, and adapt them so they reflect *Elle*'s style and characteristics. Style and individuality are the methods adopted by the magazines to show their characteristics to the public, which also leaves space for the imagination of the readers. Therefore, after being in the Chinese market for more than 20 years, the Chinese version of *Elle* still uses both *Elle* and its Chinese title on the cover page, which allows the magazine to remain a famous international brand while also be a local Chinese brand.

The third rule is seeking higher profits. The outstanding positioning and selection of the contents for the magazine attracts the public to buy the higher-class fashion brands. You can find every famous brand in *Elle*, portrayed with a delicate advertising image, including all the cosmetics and watches that you can see in shopping malls and shops, from L'Oreal to SKII, from Omega to Rado. It is also a visual feast. In other words, the commercial advertisements in *Elle* have also become a parameter to evaluate whether or not a particular brand is suitable for the higher social classes.

By setting a high price, seeking high profits and keeping brands high-end, *Elle* almost created a new business model for all the Chinese lifestyle magazines. So many of the high end glossy magazines are sold at a high price of 20 CNY, have international brand co-operation, and seek the high profits. However, there are countless lifestyle magazines in China. Li Chunya<sup>80</sup>, working in *Rayli*, stated:

“Although there are plenty of fashion magazines available, there is also the severe trend of ‘following’ in this field. The content of

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<sup>80</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

fashions is in a situation of severe assimilation. With the development of an increasingly competitive market, there must be some magazines that are not suitable for the readers, or lack creativity and are failing in the market.”

She also indicated that lifestyle magazines, although in fierce competition, would still have lots of opportunities waiting, as people who lived in small to medium sized urban areas do not possess as much knowledge about fashion. Another editor from *Cosmopolitan*, Xu Xiao stated: “The key issue is that each magazine should have their plan to develop the market, and find something unique” (Xu, 2007a). When facing stiff competition, *Cosmo* has to keep its uniqueness in order to dominate and retain the leading position in the market. There are also two other issues involved. Firstly, *Cosmopolitan* needs to keep an eye on the market to explore new opportunities. Secondly, it is crucial to keep talented people working for *Cosmopolitan*. “Personally speaking, I believe that the most important part is to keep the creativity” Xu Xiao stated (Xu, 2007b). Li Chunya also indicated that *Rayli* would adhere to the principle of pragmatism in the future, and focus more on the fashion needs of Chinese readers: “What we stressed is feasible fashion. It is fairly important for further development to have a fashion that caters for Chinese people.”<sup>81</sup>

### **6.3.2 Why Localisation is a Problem**

The debate on media globalisation is becoming one of the most popular terms being used by intellectuals, business, media and in other circles since the late 1980s, although to date present

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<sup>81</sup> Interwewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

academics are still struggling with the task of defining the term. When examining these international magazine mergers, the Researcher had paid much attention to the impact on personal influence, in the belief that the business strategies and corporate culture of a company often directly reflect the person (or persons) who are involved in the organisation and its business operations. The aim of this research is that has emerged in, to analyse the new elements consumer journalist professionalism in China via a study of these journalists' behaviour and change in belief. The cases of *FHM* China and *Marie Claire* China have been chosen for analysis in order to achieve this goal.

China's glossy high-end consumer magazines competed with each other on the same imagined idealized standards of their target readers: actual lifestyle, consumption habits, and occupation and income. The latter was indicated by whether readers were able to afford the relatively expensive cover price of each issue (20 CNY per issue, approximately 1.8 GBP) which presented luxury goods in the text. Overall, there is no doubt that these high-end or glossy magazines have boomed in China since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hu Xiao, an editor of *Cosmopolitan* China, commented:

*“Although more and more Chinese magazines have co-operated with international firms, the success of magazines heavily relies on the local editors with local contents. One of the characteristics in Cosmo China is that we have done a better job of making the ‘bring in’ and ‘rebuild’ hybrid, which also can be identified as ‘localisation’”.*

(SOHUWomen, 2003b)

However, the rough-and-tumble of the magazine market began steadily clearing after *Vogue* and *FHM* launched their Chinese

editions in 2004. According to Hartley and Montgomery (2007) “*Vogue* and its competitors are there to assist in the tricky business of bringing innovation (the fashion value of novelty) into convergence with imitation (the market value of replication). *Vogue* - the fashion ‘bible’ - entered the Chinese market at a “decisive moment”” (Hartley and Montgomery, 2007: 7). Interestingly, *FHM*, which is going to be analysed here, was also launched in April of the same year, quickly reaching a top rank level of circulation for Chinese lifestyle magazines in 2005. It was also being awarded “Yearly new trenchancy magazine” by *New Weekly* (Trends, 2005). Furthermore in 2006, *FHM* China also won the prize for “The 1st Grand Ceremony of Creative China—Most Creative Daily Product” as “it advocates a new attitude of consume everything and enjoy everything, renovates the traditional reading philosophy” (Trends, 2006). As a men’s magazine owned by TMG, China’s largest magazine publishing firm, *FHM* China has filled a gap in the market and heralded a new era in men’s magazine usage. As Mooney commented, “*FHM* China has proved the best example of how to translate the classic *FHM* values of ‘funny, sexy, useful’ into a more conservative culture” (2005).

However, after studying the practices of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists, the Researcher has found that since the start of the 21st century, trans-national and trans-cultural have been revised by the intellectual work in these lifestyle magazines, and toward “localisation”.

## 6.4 *FHM* - Use Creativity as the Important

### Element of Localisation: *FHM* China

How important are creative editorial principles for Chinese lifestyle magazines in the trans-national media market? The success of *FHM* China has answered this question. The magazine has been successful in business terms by generating profits both from circulation and advertisements, instead of only relying on advertising like all of the other high end consumer magazines in China. *FHM* China also had a major success in terms of creative and cultural production by building a brand profile within China in just three years; positioning itself in a new niche for reflecting the new lifestyle of the readers as Chinese metrosexuals.

Here, *FHM* China<sup>82</sup> is examined in the hope of answering the following questions: did *FHM*'s success in generating profit from circulation in China (rather than advertising only) signify the emergence of a new genre of magazine in the Chinese market? What is the core model behind the success of *FHM* China? What are the editorial principles of *FHM* China and how do these relate its market success? While investigating these questions, the Researcher conducted interviews in 2006 and 2007 with the deputy-publisher and editor of *FHM* China, Jacky Jin (ShouMa), in Beijing, as well as carrying out several interviews with other publishers and editors working in international lifestyle magazines in Beijing. In these interviews, the Researcher attempted to understand the editorial

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<sup>82</sup> To avoid confusion, the Researcher used *FHM* China instead of *NanRen Zhuang*, the Chinese name of the *FHM* Chinese edition. Actually, *FHM* (For Him Magazine) was not a historically famous brand before being introduced to China, and therefore not well known to Chinese readers. Because this, *FHM* China has used "For him magazine" under the Chinese characters 男人装, instead of the *FHM* logo on the magazine cover, so that the Chinese readers think of *NanRen Zhuang* as a local brand.

ideology and various levels of autonomy within the men's lifestyle magazine consumer magazine market in China.

As the Figures in Chapter 3 show, in 2008 there were 59 Chinese editions of foreign consumer magazines.<sup>83</sup> International magazines have enjoyed business success because of their increasing popularity with international consumers, their unique contents and transformable advanced business models in the context of low levels of competition in China's market. Many combine just a small amount of content produced or edited locally, featured alongside advertisements or advertorial content. This is partly because most international-Chinese magazine partners have not set up long-term business plans for their entry into the Chinese media market, which is marked by unclear and changeable policies concerning foreign businesses and the rapidly changing nature of China's market. There is also a suggestion that this mode of operation is a result of the developing nature of the industry.<sup>84</sup>

In terms of profit structures, magazines in China can be classified into circulation-driven models and advertisement-driven models. Magazines adopting the second model achieve their revenues mainly through advertisements targeted at higher-income readers such as wealthy urban youth or the newly emergent middle class. Figures show that in 2007, only one in four periodicals relied on the 'circulation-dominant' model. However, less than half of titles relying on this model have made a profit (Wei, 2007: 280). These figures explain the main reasons for most local and international glossy magazines crowding into the "life-style" and "female fashion" categories in China before 2005; because in part they

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Zhang BoHai, the consultant and pre-president of the Chinese Periodical Association, 17-05-2007, Beijing China.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Pin Li, the Director of China Periodical Research Institution, 16-11-2006, Beijing, China.

believed the market was filled with advertising and ready-target readers.

#### **6.4.1 New Elements from FHM's Chinese Practice**

The World Magazine Trends 2004/2005 Handbook, published by the International Federation of the Periodical Press (FIPP) and media research agency Zenith Optimedia, described men's magazines as publications with editorial and advertising which are aimed almost entirely at male readers. The handbook heralds "significant" growth for China's male magazine sector, compared to "stagnant" markets in neighbouring Asian countries such as Japan and Korea (FIPP, 2006: 68).

Earlier that year in April, EMAP began to work in co-operation with Trends Media Group by launching the *FHM* Chinese edition. In addition, there were another four new magazines on the market that aimed at men's lifestyle and entertainment, including *Maxim* and *Mangazine*, which competed with other magazines in the men's category, encompassing financial, hobbies and fashion (Godfrey, 09-2004 a). Compared to previous men's magazines, the new competitors were extending the boundaries of content by including topics such as sex, which was similar to how magazine publishers in Great Britain successfully expanded their niche in the New Man market in the 1990s (Gill, 2003: 42-46). However, due to the cultural differences in China and the editor's self-censorship, the topic of sex was used rather subtly. When these new Chinese editions were launched, the publications were criticised for projecting unattainable lifestyle goals to their readership and also for not being in synch with Chinese men's taste. To further

understand this failure, one must grasp the Chinese male demographic.

Traditionally, male readers were attracted primarily to news or technology magazines. Therefore the new high-end men's magazines found themselves in an awkward position: if the magazine used sex as the main editorial goal, their target white-collar audience might be interested in the content but ashamed to buy the magazines, as it may be culturally considered improper taste (Wang & Ding, 2010). In addition, the white-collar magazine readers appeared reluctant to change their loyalty from the traditional trade and professional publications such as financial and computer periodicals. Hence, China's high-end men's magazine market has experienced a slow start. In early 2004, there were 20 publications classified as men's magazines in China's magazine market, according to the China Periodicals Association (CPA, 2004). The question raised six years ago was to what extent could male lifestyle magazine content progress in Chinese society?

*FHM* China is owned by Trends Media Group, the biggest national consumer magazine firm in China. The magazine launched in 2004 and rose to the top of the circulation list among Chinese consumer magazines the following year, 2005 (Yi, 2007). In 2006, *FHM* China won the prize of "The 1st Grand Ceremony of Creative China—The most creative daily product", which was hosted by the SINA, the largest ICP (Internet Content Provider) in China (SINA, 2006). Certainly, *FHM* China has filled in the void of the Chinese men's consumer magazine market and commenced a new era of men's magazine usage. "*FHM* China has proved the best example of how to translate the classic *FHM* values 'funny, sexy, useful' into a more conservative culture" (Mooney, 2005).



After three years of tough competition, *FHM* China appears to be the most successful men's magazine in terms of high circulation. The publication sold nearly half a million copies each month during 2007 (Summit Media). Additionally, Opening Strategy Consultation data reported that in the third quarter of 2009, For Him Magazine (*FHM*) topped the sales list, occupying 22.09% of the total men's magazines market share. This was followed by *Trends Esquire* and *Men's Health*, also owned by TMG, which had 13% and 11.27% respectively (Wang & Ding, 2010).

Given these statistics, it seems imperative to better understand the recipe to *FHM*'s success. It is perhaps the nuanced messages within the pages that have created the magazine's cultural acceptability. According to Jacky Jin, the associate publisher and editor-in-chief, "Sex, which is so crucial to a men's magazine, has to be peddled softly and indirectly," so he "pushes the boundary ever so gently and elbows into more room for content manoeuvring" (China Daily, 2007). For example, the April 2004 *FHM* featured actress Zhao Wei as the first cover girl, with the accompanying headline: "Zhao Wei, Opium of the Youth". The photo showed Zhao Wei with a huge black dog; whereby the dog implied a more humorous take of maleness (Jin, 2007b).

The creators have said that such an approach "should not only be seen for its sexuality and sexual appeal. They tried to make that point by explaining the publication's four guiding principles: to be real, funny, sexy and useful" (Godfrey, 2004b). By contrast, the guiding principles cited by Summit Media's British version of the magazine are "sexy, funny, useful and relevant". The obvious difference is the order of editorial goals: in China, the first target is "real and funny", but in other versions it is "sexy and funny".

While the differences in word choice may seem minute, it is one of cultural significance. According to Jin<sup>85</sup>, “That’s our slogan, listed in the order of importance.” He emphasized that the “sexy” part comes only third, not first. Unlike *FHM* UK’s parenting magazine, “sexy” wasn’t transferred directly to Chinese readers due to the cultural difference. Lee (2008) referred to this as “*Nanren Zhuang*, ... is very similar to the ‘new lad’ magazines, giving expression to the ‘individualistic, hedonistic and pleasure-seeking attitude’.” One Chinese media observer also pointed out: “A new arrival in the editing room was *FHM*’s shooting of a graphic essay on urban voyeurism featuring a nude model. The scene was more comic than erotic” (China Daily, 2007).

Indeed, “Fun” is one of the editorial goals of *FHM* China. As Jin repeatedly emphasized, it is also one of the most important elements that makes *FHM* succeed in Mainland China. By using “Fun” as an angle to enter the market, *FHM* China started its own coherent editorial idea and strategy to grasp its target readers and to be finally successful. But “Fun” is only part of the editorial equation. It is also essential to further contemplate the magazine’s ideology and editorial goals.

#### **6.4.2 The Evolution of *FHM* China’s Editorial Goal and “Self-brand” Model**

Jin’s Chinese pseudonym is Shou Ma. Before joining the Trends Media Group in September 2002, he was a well-published freelance magazine writer known for his contributions to fashion and consumer magazines. In 2002, Liu Jiang, one of the founders and

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<sup>85</sup> Interviewd on 13-01-2007, Beijing, China.

publishers in Trends Media Group (the other being Wu Hong), invited Jin to launch *Men's Health* China as the editor-in-chief. In this venture, Jin was introduced to Hearst Magazine International, the parent company of *Men's Health*. It was through this experience that Jin came to understand the collaboration between mature magazine business models with high standards and international professional partnerships<sup>86</sup>.

Jin recollects this as a time when he was “free to use all the international magazines as references”<sup>87</sup>. “Although we had a very strong team of co-operated partners with Hearst and IDG, they were not inflexible and only asked that we transmit the soul of *Men's Health* into China, we were free to create a Chinese localized *Men's Health*”<sup>88</sup>. During the three years Jin was involved with the publication, *Men's Health* grew to become the most successful health magazine and men's magazine. Jin said he found his editorial ideology: “To absorb essentials from other success and find the unique niche through creation and serving a target readership.”<sup>89</sup>

Throughout his professional career, Jin expanded his international platform. When Trends joined EMAP to work on the launch of *FHM* China in 2003, Jin attended an EMAP-sponsored “Working Together” training programme, which included features and characteristics of *FHM* and EMAP.

Before the training, Jin was also asked to answer questions from the EMAP International Copyright Department, such as “What do you think has made *FHM* so successful so far? How do you aim to make it as successful for China? How can you get under the skin of your local readers and make a product that they cannot resist each

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<sup>86</sup> Interviewed with Jacky Jin on 13-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>87</sup> Interviewed with Jacky Jin on 13-01-2007, Beijing, China

<sup>88</sup> Interviewed with Jacky Jin on 13-01-2007, Beijing, China

<sup>89</sup> Interviewed with Jacky Jin on 17-05-2007, Beijing, China.

month? What will be impossible for you to do with the Chinese edition of *FHM*? What will have to be adapted and how? How much local material compared to international should there be? Making *FHM* funny is very important and very difficult, how will you do that?” (Jin, 2006: 143)

These questions gave Jin an opportunity to address the core elements of his future work with *FHM* China. Moreover, Jin and Liu Jiang considered a lesson from *FHM* Taiwan, which emphasized “sex” in its content. While this ingredient led to high circulation, the magazine lost credibility with the local advertisers. “Sex is a knife which is going out of the sheath’ (Jin, 2006: 143). It was then that Jin selected “Funny” as the core element of the editorial goal of *FHM* China, and borrowed the term “Metrosexual” from the US lingo to define the target readers, which he also calls the “New Yuppies” in China<sup>90</sup>.

Jin’s vision soon paid off. Within three years of development, *FHM* China became the biggest selling men’s magazine with 480,000 copies sold per month<sup>91</sup> (Barboza, 2007). The magazine’s success represents a unique victory in the high-end lifestyle magazines industry, and therefore inhabits a significant place in the Chinese market.

Jin’s professional experience in the consumer magazine industry leads one to conclude that there is a new model appearing in the Chinese market: “international platform + local original creativity = self brand” model. The first two elements are the soul role and effort in which the international and Chinese magazine professionals are working with through the diversity of their co-

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<sup>90</sup> Interwewd with Jacky Jin on 17-05-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>91</sup> There are no audited figures of *FHM* China’s circulation or for other lifestyle magazines, such as *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*.

operative models. However, it seems only very few magazines have achieved their own 'self-brand' like *FHM* China.

### 6.4.3 Editorial Principals of *FHM* China

As previously described, five men's magazines entered the market in 2004. *Mangazine* was published by the Nanfang Newspaper Group. "It featured lengthy articles about local rich people, entertainers and sports stars, as well as fashion advice and some articles imported from foreign publications" (Godfrey, 2004a). *Maxim*, a joint venture with *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, also entered the Chinese market in 2004 and featured sex and eroticism portrayed through pop stars' gossip and entertainment news'.

Facing this market, Jin articulates "Truth, Funny, Sex, Useful" as the editorial goal to distinguish it from other competitors. In his 2006 book "*Fashion: the Instigation behind the Curtain*," Jin described the launch of *FHM* China and the lifestyle magazines industry: "It is visible that men's magazines have a homogeneous tendency on their readership, contents and styles. All of them feature generally interesting topics, talking about everything, being very careful on 'sex', and trying to show the reflection onto the 'public highway' of mainstream culture" (Jin, 2006:151-152).

Today, Jin says that the most essential goal of *FHM* China is to be "Funny", and claims that the success of *FHM* China is not because of the erotic photos, but the original creative thought behind all the editorial content. According to Jin, "This is why we have 20% - 30% female readers, and they really appreciate our 'funny' value of a lifestyle magazine. From these intelligent

women's point of views, this is the core of life and fashion as well"<sup>92</sup>.

Many of the other *FHM* China editors echo this sentiment: "*FHM* China created a new standard for female mate choice: those men, seemingly uninhabited, but in fact, real, interesting, rich in heart, with a sense of responsibility", says former *FHM* executive editor Wang Xiaofeng (*FHM* China Blog, 2009). According to Chen Junfeng, deputy director of the "People" column in *FHM*, "*FHM* is an invader of adult party, full of humorous, unusual behaviour, but also with the open seat pants." (*FHM* China Blog, 2009)

Even editors from other Chinese magazines appear to respect *FHM*'s seemingly unconventional goals. According to Hu Xiao, an editor from *Trends Cosmopolitan*, "*FHM* is humorous rather than vulgar or erotic. It teaches you how to relax rather than how to be stylish and successful" (Gan, 2005). Goldkorn (2004) also concluded: "*FHM* China contains cartoons, visual jokes and adolescent eye candy aplenty... It's a fun read despite being comparatively tame."

The magazine's content and goals break from those of its Western counterparts and the magazine's creators articulate their cultural independence. Wang Yanlin, another *FHM* China editor explains the reason why *FHM* China didn't simply copy the editorial essentials from the parent magazine: "There's no unconditional sole resource in the world. For the co-operated magazines, the resource may be real, but holding the real resource does not mean getting the essential content. Only the technique of editorial philosophy can solve the problem of resource" (Wang, 2007).

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Jacky Jin on 17-05-2007, Beijing, China.

As executive editor of *FHM* China from 2006 and 2007, Wang Xiaofeng even insisted that up to 90% of *FHM*'s content be locally produced and less racy than other versions of the magazine. "Sex is an appealing topic to guys. But we choose not to follow our western counterparts when dealing with some pictures and sex-related topics" (Crienglish.com, 2006). Similarly, Jin says his editorial goals were "illuminated by Scott, the editor of *FHM* US, who advocated creating content that makes all readers feel comfortable" (Jin, 2006: 77). The resulting goal for *FHM* China became: "Use 'Fun + Sagacity' as an angle, based on the local content and inherit the success from Cargo's<sup>93</sup> editorial ideology, such as 'make the man cleverer', and *FHM*'s 'character of experience'" (Jin, 2006:106).

#### **6.4.4 Practical Implications of the FHM China Model**

This evolution of the *FHM* China publishing model is significant to the Chinese magazine industry for two key reasons. Firstly, it introduced the concept of "Content is King" into the Chinese consumer magazine industry. Results were a "homogeneous tendency" competition in the market and it also raised debates on whether "Advertising is King" or "Distribution is King".

When considering the ongoing professional debate on which model is more suitable for such an immature market, the question of social responsibility is often neglected. The service to the readers may be forgotten as the audience is regarded as mere consumers of the "goods" to whom the advertisers want to sell to. However, *FHM* China implemented an editorial aim that delivered a model that

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<sup>93</sup> Cargo, a men's magazine, was launched by Conde Nast Publishing in 2004 and folded in 2005.

reminds magazine industry professionals how important content is. *FHM* China achieves a historical goal by presenting the magazine as a unique creation.

Accordingly, some online forums and Trends Media Group's own (net) forum have discussed the question: "Why does *FHM* China attract you?" The online responses have included: "I am a female reader, but I really like to read *FHM* China, rather than women or fashion magazines...; because it has more interesting articles with humour, and is not like other fashion magazines which only depict dull day dreams..." (BBS, 2008) Such feedback indicates that many readers are responding to Jin's vision.

According to Jin, "this is our strategy in facing the competition. I imagine that the magazine is a person, but I prefer that "he" is a normal person who has his own desire, something he does not know, something he is not able to do. *FHM* China only relies on the new innovation of media which is brought by the new technology" (Yin, 2006b).

Throughout the editorial process, Jin specifically requested that his editorial team "keep up with the news and have creativity and superb editing skills" (Jin, 2006: 91). This is not just a paper exercise out of the editor's Blue Book, but the thought which all the editors share, and is part of their self-identity.

During the production of *FHM* China, editors say they frequently use "humour" as the angle to topics. For example, in the "Letters" column, *FHM* China copy declares: "if a person does not write a letter to the magazine, we don't know what kind of things he does in his life." This tone encourages the readers to join the activity, but it does so by using a sarcastic voice. The tactic is employed so the readers are not offended, but happy with the magazine's easygoing



personality. By applying this unique angle of funny, *FHM* China has been described as a “fresh editing model, unique point of view, sharp discussion, and funny content style, which been accepted by the market” (SINA, 2006).

Secondly, it is also the model that Chinese publishers might consider when establishing their own place in the global market. The Researcher has chosen *FHM* China as an example of how the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry can obtain success in the market. The study also suggests that research should consider the Chinese lifestyle magazine in the global media environment, as Chinese publishers cannot avoid international competition when they establish themselves in the global market place. It could be argued that the creativity of Chinese publishers has been strangled in an attempt to be successful through an easy “joint-venture” model in the immature market. Such reliance on their international partners may produce a chilling effect on the creation of home-grown brands and editorial ideology.

In 2008, nearly all the main fashion publication groups on the mainland launched men’s magazines in a search of a slice of the market. Magazines launched last year include *Bazaar Man’s Style* from Trends, *Mr Modern* from Hachette Filipacchi, *L’official* *Homes* by L’official<sup>94</sup>, *His Life*, published by SEEC Media<sup>95</sup> and *Leon* from Rayli<sup>96</sup>. Last October, the Chinese version of *GQ*, the most successful Conde Nast men’s magazine, was also published in Beijing (Wang & Ding, 2010).

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<sup>94</sup> *L’official* is the French magazine brand.

<sup>95</sup> SEEC, is a famous consumer magazine publisher in China, with several American joint partners, including Time Warner which authorised *Sports Illustrated* to be published in 2006.

<sup>96</sup> *Leno* has a Japan parent magazine.

Thus, establishing how to gain market success is undoubtedly the principle task for all magazine publishers. Rohn (2010) concluded that “a great number of content lacunae could be identified between what western magazines had to offer and what Chinese prefer to read. These include both the idea that Western magazines are culturally not relevant to Chinese readers and that content often contradicts pre-existing attitudes.” Here, the Researcher illustrates *FHM* China as the model to show how the Chinese consumer magazine industry can fill the content lacunae and gain success in the market. It also suggests that we should look at the Chinese consumer magazine in the global media environment, as Chinese publishers cannot avoid international competition when they establish themselves globally.

In the case of *FHM* China, Jin uses “creativity” as one of the essential elements of editorial autonomy to gain more editorial freedom from commercial pressure and the international parent magazine firm EMAP, and to guarantee journalistic output. The Chief of China Periodical Association, Bohai Zhang<sup>97</sup> talked about the value of such autonomy: “There are two things the co-operation magazine publishers need to bear in mind: one is that the practice of the editor should be divided from the business operation in China. This is different to the model which ‘Western’ magazine publishers operated. Secondly, Chinese magazine participators can always learn from their ‘Western’ partners, but they should build their localized own brand in the very near future, so that the market will not be dominated by international brands and content, which lack domestic competition and local news for the Chinese.”

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<sup>97</sup> Interviewed on 17-05-2007, Beijing, China.

Although lifestyle magazines rely heavily on brand advertising in China, from the case analyzed above, editorial independence is increasingly more important in this overexploited market. This is not only because Chinese consumer journalists use independence and creativity as essential elements of editorial autonomy in order to gain market success and localized branding, but also because they use it to gain the trust and loyalty of domestic readers. It is the journalists' belief that magazines should have valuable content for the readers to look at and buy, and so journalists must maintain editorial independence. *FHM* China, here, gives an example of how to use the international platform to create local brand, and how to gain market success by emphasizing the importance of the local creativity of magazine journalists. By using "humour" as the fresh editorial principal, *FHM* China not only gained its own branding but also formed a model which Chinese publishers may have even more success with in the local and global market place.

From this point of view, perhaps imitation is indeed the first step of creativity. And as creativity is a cherished resource in the Chinese media, there may be a middle ground that could prove lucrative to all.

#### **6.4.5 Creativity as One Element of Professionalism in Chinese Magazine Journalism**

The Researcher chose *FHM* China as a new creative model to show how the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry can gain success in the market. Despite the emergence of *FHM* China, readers and publishers were attracted by the significant market niche of valuable readers and the creation of a real service for the readers.

As the debate by the advertising industry in China gets ever more heated, a forum, which discussed the survival strategy of the fashion magazine in China in 2007 cited the media buyer manager Ye Weixian from Universal McCann China<sup>98</sup>: “Connection is more important than contents in the fashion magazine business in China, as the existence of fashion magazines is for the advertisers rather than readers” (Wu, J. 2007). In contrast, Li Jian, the managing director of the *Modern Media*<sup>99</sup>, voiced his opinion that “fashion magazines still should rely on the concept of ‘Content is King’; but, it is really hard to survive from the market alone relying on the copyright co-operation with the international brands” (Wu, J. 2007). The president of *Chinese Advertising*, Zhang Huixin agreed: the “fashion magazine could win from the competition by the credibility of the media. This builds on the media power of fashion. Therefore the readers and advertisers are both important for the fashion magazines.” (Wu, 2007)

Although this debate really concerns all consumer magazine professionals in China and will be ongoing as their status is distinctive from the success of *FHM* China, it is time for the Chinese magazine industry to reassemble at a new starting point in order to lay out its own strategy in the global media environment: “How creative are you in the magazine career?”

In the case of *FHM* China, Jacky Jin uses creativity as one of the essential elements of editorial autonomy, to gain more editorial freedom from the commercial pressure of the international parent magazine firm, EMAP, in order to guarantee the journalistic output.

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<sup>98</sup> Universal McCann China: one of the 4A advertising companies in China.

<sup>99</sup> Modern Media, academic communication journal in China.

If we view the magazine as being one of the important mediums in communicating the implications of competitiveness and aggressiveness of western culture, harmfulness of consumerism, and the transnational social impacts and exchanges in China, this research also takes a new angle in seeking all the relationships between media, culture and society. Magazine journalists who are working in *FHM* China share lots of western lifestyle concepts and many western values, such as independence of journalism, consumerism and fashion value, with their western colleagues. This is an aspect of globalisation. However, they also try hard to remain true to their traditional Chinese ideology and values. For instance, the concept of ‘make foreign things to serve China’, and trying to implement these principles into their daily work. Moreover, the branding of a magazine only remains to keep “the spirit of the brand”, or maybe more importantly to keep the “copy business structure”. However, localising all the contents and other business materials seems more important, so that, globalisation on magazine branding should only be treated as an ideological form, the real inherent order is localisation.

## **6.5 Use of Independence as another Important Element of Localisation: Marie Claire China**

The other case to be analysed here is *Marie Claire* (*MC*) China. There are numerous differences between *FHM* and *MC*. This was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, due to the tight control of the French media firm, the journalistic practices at *MC* also show a different approach to the one at *FHM*.

*MC* entered mainland China in 2002, and was launched by Hachette Filipacchi Media (HFM) and its Chinese partner, China Sports Press. Because of the unique business model and strategy, HFM chose to completely control all aspects of its publications in China. To this end, HFM Asia Pacific registered its advertising company and distribution company in Beijing and Shanghai respectively. It was then able to operate the editing function, recruitment and payment of wages every month, and also control all of the editorial content of Chinese guidance. China Sports Press only loan the CNISSN (Publishing Number in China) to the French partner. Therefore, HFM Asia Pacific sought Chinese co-operation partners out of a genuine sense of the market demand for localisation, and in order to lower the threshold on the policy. In contrast to the decentralization policies of American companies, HFM - aiming to preserve the national cultural characteristics of France, which operate around the world in its media industry - tried to grasp the highest proportion of foreign investment holding, and extend this model to all of its magazines published in China. Of course, *MC* China is not an exception.

*MC* China uses “嘉人” (Jiaren) as the Chinese logo, meaning “beautiful and wise women”, and also uses “Marie Claire” as the English logo just beside the Chinese characters. One of the Feature editors and the Assistant of Duty Editor, Wang Kun,<sup>100</sup> still remembered how she needed to explain what the magazine was and what kind of readers they had when she wanted to interview some Chinese film stars when she began work for *MC* China in 2004. She said:

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<sup>100</sup> Interviewed on 11-12-2006, Beijing, China.

“This is because *MC* wasn’t a well knowing brand in China at the beginning. By contrast, when I interviewed the foreign fashion or luxury brands, they knew *MC* well as it was launched more than fifty years ago in the rest of the world and has so many local versions in lots of developing countries. What I needed to do is to explain what *MC* China is.”

However, this situation changed dramatically 3 years after *MC* China had first launched. *MC* China is a well known lifestyle’s magazine in China now. Most of the Chinese female readers think *MC* China is a female lifestyle magazine more than a fashion or a traditional women’s magazine. In regard to the latter, *MC* China uses its international platform to introduce fashion and beauty goods and knowledge, which is significantly different from the content of traditional women’s magazines. Furthermore, compared to other fashion magazines, the Feature<sup>101</sup> in *MC* China, which reports all the news and social issue on Chinese women, has carried on the mission of *MC*’s duality and is also the “secret” of *Marie Claire*’s success, both as a publication and as a tool for women’s rights activism. Furthermore, other readers think that *MC* China satisfies its social responsibility, an editorial approach that they believe could previously only be found in a news magazine. However, the cultural differences and social background of women’s rights activism has been a concrete embodiment of humanistic solicitude, which the editors in *MC* China think is more related to the Chinese urban female intellectuals<sup>102</sup>. From 2005, *Marie Claire* has

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<sup>101</sup> Feature, used as the main column in a consumer magazine showing the main concern of every issue.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Wang Kun on 11-12-2006, Beijing, China.

been running this sort of domestic story on women's concerns and quality of life in each issue. This includes a series of interviews and features on Chinese women's living standards, such as *Time Can Tell, 20 Years for 3 Women*, [September-2006]; *Adults, Please don't Disturb, A Village of Children*, [July-2006]; *This is My Fashion, A Survey from Metropolitan, City, Town, and Countryside*, [July-2006]; and so on. This phenomenon breaks the natural law of the lifestyle magazine industry which only exists as business firms in China. While other international versions of lifestyle magazine and fashion magazines compete within the market on the luxury fashion and beauty brands, *Marie Claire* is the only member of the lifestyle pack to include monthly domestic news reporting about something else. "We give a good dose of fantasy and reality", the Duty Director of *MC China*, Deng Li (QQ, 2005) insisted in a interview. Indeed, as *Marie Claire* is self-styled as "glossy with brains"; *MC China* uses the features to assist with the task. Besides these, *Marie Claire* China looks no different from any of the lip-glossy women's titles. Deng Li and Wang Kun discussed the difference between *MC China* and other competitors, saying "We try to put at least one hard-hitting feature in every issue, whether a social issue or a humanistic solicitude" (QQ, 2005). "We want to do a magazine filled with soul, so we are interested in many women other than some small groups in the big cities. We also hope to observe our society from the perspective of women, and open a window to observe the world for women, in addition to their concern and care." (QQ, 2005) Of course, this is not a very new editorial policy in the



international glossy magazines, but it is an absolutely new idea in the Chinese market.

However, having an interest in social issues is not some new idea within *Marie Claire* worldwide, but an essential element of the magazine's editorial approach.

*"The marketability of tough stories in leisure magazines has been bubbling up for quite some time."*

*"Marie Claire has matched their success by tossing edgy stories into their fashion and beauty mix. This cocktail of flatter-abs tips, orgasm secrets and feminist activism has furnished women's rights organisations with instant surges in membership. And non-profit organisations report that response is immediate as soon as an issue featuring them hits the streets."*

(Sandler, 2002)

From this starting point, Chinese journalists have caught up with their foreign counterparts within a very short space of time.

### **6.5.1 Local or Foreign?**

This appeared a very tough question when the Researcher conducted interviews in China. Before the interviews, the Researcher found reports from other media, such as the Internet and journals, which declared that the editors of *MC* China always thought *Jiaren* was a local brand.

*"In fact, we are not doing the Chinese version of a magazine; rather we are doing a 'Jiaren' magazine: we are not to do a French version of Marie Claire or the British version of "Marie Claire" localisation. We are actually doing the China magazine, "Jiaren", although we are very fortunate to join the Marie Claire global network and can enjoy freedom around the world as it's*

*very rich in beauty and fashion topic resources. So that we are in the interception of these resources, we still first consider that our readers like to see products.”*

(QQ, 2005)

However, this was not the case in 2004. In another interview, conducted by SOHU, the big ISP (Internet Service Provider) in China, Deng Li used the seven ‘S’s to explain the main goal of *MC* China. She said:

*“The model of modern Chinese women we advocate has “7 ‘S’s”: Soul (soul), Society (social), Service (services), Seduction (charm), Sex (sexual), Smile (smile), Secret (mystery). This was the slogan when Marie Claire was founded in France in 1937. Of course, the various versions in different countries in the world also aim to do this in their own magazines. But in China, I also think this is our editorial policy, which distinguishes us from other fashion, women’s, or lifestyle magazines.” “I wrote it in the inaugural issue at the time, hoping to have a magazine in addition to concerns about women’s appearance, more to explore women’s hearts, and wanting to touch the soul of the women, and so on.”*

(SOHU, 2004)

The slight difference in emphasis between these two interviews is significant. From the interview in 2005, being a Duty Director, Deng emphasized *Jiaren* was an independent and local fashion magazine rather than *MC* China, while in 2004 she cited that the “7 ‘S’s” came from *MC*, and she wanted to extend this quality into the Chinese market. Although the main theme of *Marie Claire* is “More than a Pretty Face”, the magazine in China tried hard to give readers information about different women’s living standards and spirit

around the world, their needs, struggles and stories of life, rather than simply offering fashion and beauty tips. Deng Li also followed the “7 ‘S’ s” formula of *MC* international editorial. However, she preferred to announce “*Jiaren*” as a local brand when she realised *Marie Claire* was not a big brand when it first entered the Chinese magazine industry. As the *MC* China version had a recognised and mature style of its own, she took advantage of this and *Jiaren* drew strength from the parent magazine worldwide.

This fact was supported by another interview which was conducted in 2006. Wang Kun<sup>103</sup>, assistant to Deng Li, and Features Editor of *MC* China, introduced her recent training programme, saying:

“We normally have an international meeting every year, for all the editors from all the international versions around the world. It takes a week and could be held in any country. This year’s is in France. I mean the director in our international department went to France attending the meeting, and then came back to establish a one week programme for Chinese editors. The programme lasts 10 hours a day, from 10am to 8pm, five days in total. During the programme, you could find all the best topics, best reporting styles, best magazine designs, and best examples from last year from different international versions, of which *MC* has more than dozens in Asia and other international editions. This is such a fantastic chance for us to develop our editorial skills and practices as well, as we are able to directly learn from our sister magazines very time-efficiently.”

“The eight editors in my section were involved in the whole training programme. We found some parts of the experiences and

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<sup>103</sup> Interviewed on 11-12-2006, Beijing, China.

examples could be used directly in our next features plan, and some examples also can be used as next year's editorial goals.”

Wang Kun<sup>104</sup> strongly agreed that the fact that she could gain success working within an international magazine brand was the most advantageous part for her editorial practice:

“Although I couldn't say *MC* has provided an international platform for me as a magazine journalist, I found there's an international standard and international magazine circumstance in it; you always know there's a better practice and better standard in front of you; it gives you space for you to develop yourself.”

Hong Lei<sup>105</sup>, the international copyright editor in *MC* China, also pointed out that the copyright of content was an important part of *MC* China.

“We normally have 25 to 35% content translated from other *MC* international versions, including photos, fashion and beauty. This is the guarantee of 'Being an international magazine' and an industry pioneer.”

From this point of view, there is no doubt that *Jiaren* should still be called “*MC* China” and should be seen as the International magazine's local version.

Another interview covering the detail of the Cover Girl of *MC* China could also support this conclusion. Deng Li talked about the guide to choosing the Cover Girl in one interview:

*“In general, international brands are the background to these magazines and so their search will be on a global scale to find the most attractive covers, rather than simply speaking only Chinese*

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<sup>104</sup> Interviewed on 11-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>105</sup> Interviewed on 21-12-2006, Beijing, China.

*stars. Speaking of the resources of this advantage, I think we should give Chinese readers different things. However, the face of 'Cover Girl' remains once or twice, no more than three times, a Chinese or Asian star's every year; a Chinese star's face is especially used as the anniversary issue at the end of each year."*

(SOHU, 2004)

By contrast, the Cover Girl's clothes are all international luxury brands, even the Chinese or other Asian stars. Cover Girls wear the newest season's clothes by major international brands. Every model is also sponsored by luxury brands. For instance, Zhang Ziyi's<sup>106</sup> clothing is sponsored by Christian Dior, or Louis Vuitton; Cecilia Zhang's by Salvatore Ferragamo; Zhou Xun's by Chanel (Blog, 2007), and so on. Furthermore, if you take cosmetics into account, they include all the luxury brands like Sisley, Giorgio Armani, Givenchy, Guerlain, Dior, Bobbi Brown, Chanel, Elizabeth Arden, Kose, Lancôme, and so on. One of the reasons that *Jiaren's* Cover Girl is sponsored by so many international beauty and fashion brands is, obviously, all the international brands know about *Marie Claire* and treat *Jiaren* as the Chinese version of *Marie Claire*. Even Deng Li insisted:

*"Marie Claire has 26 versions in the world, regardless of the co-operation models. Basically, it's positioning within the context of globalisation are the same, that is, it is first and foremost a fashion magazine commenting on beauty, fashion, and women's topics of concern. In fact, from its founding 51 years ago, it has been committed to opening a wider window to women."*

(QQ, 2005)

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<sup>106</sup> Zhang Ziyi and Zhou Xun are film stars in the mainland of China; Cecilia Zhang is a film star in Hong Kong.

## 6.5.2 Independence of Journalistic Practice

From the facts above, there is no doubt that *MC* China has adopted the essential editorial codes from the parent magazine, *Marie Claire* in France. Furthermore, it also benefits from being a local Chinese version of an international magazine. However, there is one new aspect in the journalistic practice of *MC* China: independence.

Wang Kun, the assistant of *MC* China, has given an example of the independent practice of *MC* China. When she worked at *MC* China in 2004, before publishing every issue the editor was required to fax all the pages to French headquarters to get permission to publish. She remembered that in 2005, *MC* China had included a report concerning a female teacher working with some dropouts in the rural Yunnan province in the features section, and that the French headquarters had seemed very confused about the guidelines of publishing this kind of report. In their mind, the urban feminism topic was more suitable to their editorial policy than the topic of the rural working class. However, Deng Li, the Duty Editor of *MC* China had discussed the different cultural and journalistic concepts in China, and this was the reason they chose rural social problems instead of feminism or sexy issues in urban life. The editorial goals of *MC* China meant that they could achieve this without breaking any of the essential editorial rules at *MC*.

“Through negotiation, the French headquarters agreed our topic.

Several months after publishing this issue, other versions of *MC*, I remembered one was Singapore, reprinted the article in *MC*'s

version in Singapore. It [has] also been collected in our annual collection of best reporting.”

“I can’t say this event has changed the attitude of the control of editorial content, but we have more freedom now than ever. We don’t need to report every page to headquarters now; only for special topics or issues do we need a formal meeting with them.”

“We are proud of this, as *MC* China now ranks in forth place of good operating in all *MC*’s 26 versions, following France, the US and Italy.”

(Interviewed with

Wang Kun, 11-12-2006)

This is not the only case where *MC* China has experienced a conflict with its parent magazine or international managers. Another editor, Chen,<sup>107</sup> who wanted to remain anonymous, worked at *MC* China for two years and was now a financial editor. He complained,

“...the French (Headquarters) had a stricter line on everything, from content, photos, advertisements, recruitment and the operating model, I couldn’t bear their pomposity.”

“From *Elle* to *MC*, the French (Headquarters) wanted to keep their cultural heritage, but ignore our local creativity. I planned several topics for the features section, but all failed. I was tired of being ordered to report or ‘discuss’ (you can use this word if you think this is more plain) everything with the French (Headquarters).

This is one of the reasons I left *MC* China”

In needed to the topic of editorial control, the Researcher had another very interesting interview with a big name in another

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<sup>107</sup> Interview on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

famous French brand, *Elle*. Yin Yan<sup>108</sup>, has worked as an Assistant on the Asian section of the *Marie Claire* Album (Paris) 1996-1997, and was also the first Editor of *Elle* China and *Women's Day*<sup>109</sup> China from 1999 to 2003.

**Researcher:** “Were there any issues or ‘fights’ for editorial control between the HFM and Shanghai Translating Publishing House<sup>110</sup> when you worked for them?”

**Yin Yan:** “There were some contests of leadership and editorial control among these two partners, if you prefer to call them ‘fights’. However, if you had some bias or took one side, you could feel an antagonistic competition sometimes. In fact, both sides were concerned with the same fact that they wanted to publish a high quality magazine in the Chinese market.”

**Yin Yan:** “When I was at *Elle* between 1999 and 2003, there was rapid change and development in the Chinese magazine industry, both from business models and journalists’ practice. My role was to adjust and balance both partners across all the publishing elements. From my experience, negotiation was in fact a big problem, which all the international media firms and the Chinese media needed to face as a challenge involving both the organisation’s culture and national culture as well.”

**Researcher:** “Is there any conflict of interest from some aspects, like editorial content or advertising?”

**Yin Yan:** “From the concept perspective, I think; it is nothing related to the editorial control of French control or Chinese. When

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<sup>108</sup> Interview on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>109</sup> Women’s Day is a Chinese version of an international consumer magazine which began publication in 1997, by Hachette Filipacchi Medias. The Chinese name 健康之友, means the Friend of Health.

<sup>110</sup> Shanghai Translating Publishing House is the Chinese partner of Hachette Filipacchi Medias, which has co-operated with *ELLE* since the 1980s.



taking a particular report into account, when the French or Chinese partner took charge, the thing was more simplified.”

“Things have changed between the 1990s and now.

When I was hired in the 1990s, my team absolutely heavily relied on the international partner for most operations, such as reporting topics, photographic plans and fashion features and so on. I called it the “baby age” of *Elle*. We almost reported every single issue to French headquarters, and also asked their permission for all operations in China. But now the current team of *Elle* China has great freedom and independence to control all the business.”

**Researcher:** “What do you think the reason for this change is?”

**Yin Yan:** “The international media firms have been challenged by Chinese hegemony, of course. You know, it’s not a joke. We have talked about Western Imperialism and Western hegemony for so many years, but in the fashion magazine market, the international media players in China have to march the local tune in this new century. There are two reasons I am concerning. One is because the Chinese magazine industry has developed a lot in the last ten years, as with the Trends Media Group, the local Chinese magazine group, which has dozens of consumer magazines now and also bought their own office building in Beijing. In comparison, HFM has only a few magazines in the Chinese market, despite entering the market 8 years before TMG. The second reason is that Chinese magazine professionals have also developed quite a lot in all aspects; they are the masters now. If they think your experience is better than theirs, they would like to learn and absorb from you. They know they can totally control your experience to become part of their structure. The latter one is quite essential.”

**Researcher:** “Do you think we still need this co-operative model for Chinese magazines?”

**Yin Yan:** “Yes, we do. But what all the international firms need to bear in mind is you are not the master in China now. The Chinese magazine industry may need international capital, need copyright of industry information and professional operating models, but all of these are not essential to the struggle for survival in the Chinese magazine industry. Chinese magazine professionals have their own ability to be the real master of the market.”

Although Yin Yan is now the former Editor of *Elle* China, through her interview we can see the professional philosophy that lies behind all the Chinese co-operative magazine models. This is that the real master of the Chinese market is standing on the giant’s shoulders.

### **6.5.3 Editorial Independence as the Challenge of the Western Media Firm**

Being the Editor of *Esquire* China for 5 years, Wang Feng<sup>111</sup> remembered an argument with the magazine’s US partner about a Cover Man in 2005. As with other co-operative magazines, *Esquire* China uses a Chinese title, *Shishang Xiansheng* (*Trends Gentlemen*), as its brand, and also uses *Esquire* English script as the background of the title. During its inception in 2005, the Chinese edition needed to report to the American parent media firm for every single issue

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<sup>111</sup> Wang Feng, the Editor of *Esquire* China (*Shi Shang Xian Sheng* – Trends Esquire) since 2005, the Editor of *Men’s Health* since 2003. Both *Esquire* China and *Men’s Health* are joint ventures of Trends Media Group, IDG, and Hearst. Before joining the Trends Media Group he was the main editor of *San Lian Life Weekly* (*San Lian Sheng Huo Zhou Kan*), the famous Chinese news magazine.

and cover character<sup>112</sup>. When Wang Feng was headhunted to be the Chief-Editor of *Esquire* China, he changed all the cover men into Chinese pop stars and celebrities, (man.icxo.com, 2007) as he thought this should be the beginning of the localisation of *Esquire*. In 2005, *Esquire* China chose Hu Bing, a famous Chinese male model, singer and drama star, as the cover man, and reported this to the Headquarters of *Esquire* in the U.S. Surprisingly, the Headquarters refused the Chinese choice, as they thought that Hu Bing was gay, and told their Chinese partner that “*Esquire* is a magazine for healthy and normal men. If you report a gay man as the Cover Man, it will harm the spirit of *Esquire*.” “But, as you know, we have very little knowledge of gay style in 2005 in China.” Wang Feng discussed this in the interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> of December<sup>113</sup>, 2006:

“I thought the Americans didn’t know much about Hu Bing, and there was no evidence pointing to Hu’s sexual orientation in 2004. He was so popular and famous in that year. Further, we had some commercial promotion with Hu’s drama promotion campaign and advertising support from Hu’s beauty brand.”

“I was unlikely to make up the leeway, as I had no other ‘spare tyre’; or in other words, the others were not better than Hu Bing. So, I discussed my reasons with the Headquarters and insisted on my choice. Fortunately, Headquarters accepted Hu Bing at last. We had a success with circulation and advertising income in that issue. The thing is I feel that *Esquire* China has gained more credit and freedom since then.”

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Wang Feng on 22-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>113</sup> Interviewed on 22-12-2006, Beijing, China.

Wang Feng now feels that there is a real co-operation model between Chinese professionals and the U.S. in lifestyle magazines in China today. He said that there is a co-operative model in “international thinking and concepts, plus local characters and contents”.

“We may catch the international standard in five or ten years, although now we only use 10% content from our parent magazine, we still need the brand of the parent magazine to attract and retain our international advertisers.”

“This is partly because the profit model is still the advertising model in almost all the high-end glossy lifestyle magazines on the one hand; and on the other hand, Chinese consumer magazine journalists need to learn how to be professional from global brands.”

(Interviewed with Wang Feng, on 22-12-2006, Beijing)

Ma Lan<sup>114</sup>, the Ads & Promotion executive in China DTV Media Inc. Ltd, criticised this, saying:

“When I did my internship in TMG, I found that if the Chinese magazine professionals didn’t digest the spirit of their parent brands, the joint-venture model used to fail in the overcrowded Chinese market; by contrast, the Chinese partners needed to find their own way to get success, find their own value and concepts in the local market.”

“From this point, I have to say, I would like to see more and more magazine professionals have their own sense of purpose and inner satisfaction when their efforts are important to the media industry in China.”

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<sup>114</sup> Interviewed on 15-12-2006, Beijing, China.

This essential sense of mission can also be found from other interviewees. Li Chunya<sup>115</sup>, the Executive vice Present at *Rayli* Magazine group, emphasized that independence is always the essential rule, and also the goal for *Rayli* in the Chinese magazine market. At the beginning of the establishment of *Rayli* in 2000, more than 90% of the contents of the magazine were transferred from Japanese magazines. However, the Chinese founders still insisted that the editorial ideological essentials should be based on the local community. Furthermore, they selected and adapted the translated contents according to local market demand:

“Through the beginning of our proposal, although we found a Japanese magazine as a partner, we always used our own guidelines and editorial policy to design our own magazine. We think the Chinese female needs her own fashion magazines, so we use international elements to create our fashion. Nevertheless, the reason we have chosen a Japan partner rather than Western partner is very simple: we didn’t have so much money at the beginning, and also we, the five founders, didn’t have very good English communication skills. So, we chose a low-key Japanese publisher to be our copyright partner.”

(Interviewed with Li Chunya, on 14-05-2007, Beijing)

Along with the improving levels of editorial integration, *Rayli* is now fully integrated with domestic and foreign resources.

“For the most reports on our magazines’ Cover Girl, we send our editors go to Japan, use Japanese models, Japanese photographers, and Japanese film studios, to create our own contents. As a result, even the professionals are not able to spot the difference between our production and the Japanese one.”

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<sup>115</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

(Interviewed with

Li Chunya, 14-05-2007)

Li is very proud on their independence. A blogger

XiuZhifu analysed the unique *Rayli* successful experience as:

*“Once, when their Japanese partner provided a lot of photos of jewellery displays, Rayli thought that if they only published photos, Chinese readers could not appreciate the role Rayli played. To give readers more information they specifically requested an expert consultant on clothing and jewellery to inspect a great deal of the information on jewellery from a more ‘human’ perspective, and also told readers a similar necklace can be purchased in the Wangfujing Street<sup>116</sup> and other places. Due to the combination of both domestic and foreign resources, the magazine was becoming very popular in the Chinese market.”*

(XiuZhifu, 2005)

Even *Vogue* China, who is now seeking the large loyal readership of American *Vogue* in China, needs to focus on localisation, as it is the most important strategy in the Chinese market. IN/ 23<sup>117</sup> underlined editorial independence as the first role the Chinese branch of *Vogue* played in Conde Nast International:

*“We made a significant contribution to the Chinese elements in the fashion world in 2006. We used a Chinese model named Du Juan as our Cover Girl in two issues in *Vogue* China since September 2005, you know, because of the influential power of *Vogue* in the world fashion industry; this Chinese face was so popular worldwide. As a result, it catapulted Du Juan into the international runway modelling scene and into the pages of*

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<sup>116</sup> Wangfujin Street is the most popular high street in Beijing, with all the famous stores and department stores.

<sup>117</sup> Interviewed on 24-12-2006, Beijing, China.

foreign magazines like French *Vogue*. Du also appeared in print ads for fashion labels like Benetton, Gap and Louis Vuitton. Now, Du Juan is a supermodel. This case has shown we are not only transferring international fashion codes to China, but also trying hard to raise the Chinese fashion industry to the international standard.”

Editorial independence is not only necessary for market success in China, but also to aid the magazines’ international operation. As *China Daily* analysed in 2006:

“*Vogue* China has set its eye on finding and developing models with qualities considered good locally and internationally. ‘We are producing a magazine for the Chinese market, but at the same time, fashion is an international language, so we need to consider models who are appealing to our Chinese readers but have the kind of looks that can carry international fashion trends,’ Cheung said. By using top-level fashion photographers, stylists and supermodels to create original and exclusive shoots and covers, *Vogue* China has developed a good reputation among the international fashion community.”

(China Daily, 2006)

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the Researcher has analysed two cases, *FHM* China and *MC* China; being examples of magazines that have Chinese success through their consumer magazine journalistic practice. The objective had been to prove that international magazine firms had a significant influence on Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists.

According to individual testimony from the journalists working on these magazines, professional ethics have been transferred from international media practice and business operations to the Chinese professionals. Among these many sites and dynamic processes in self-identity construction are those of workplaces and work organisation activities. The research on these activities and workers brings to light some significant emergent practices among highly skilled and professional employees in contemporary magazine organisations in China.

Although lifestyle magazines rely heavily on brand advertising in China, from the cases analysed above, editorial independence is increasingly more important in this overexploited market. This is not only because Chinese lifestyle journalists use independence and creativity as essential elements of editorial autonomy in order to gain market success and localised branding, but because they also use it as a way of gaining the trust and loyalty of their readers. It is the journalists' belief that magazines should have valuable content for the readers to look at and buy. Therefore journalists must maintain editorial independence. Although these magazines continue to focus on traditional topics - fashion, relationships with men, female celebrity profiles - they have incorporated serious journalism on a wide range of issues. Most women's and fashion magazines are enjoying an increase in advertising pages. Everyone is trying to draw in advertising, but the editors and reporters in some magazines like *FHM* China and *MC* China are trying things very differently.

However, the new generation of female readers, particularly those between 20 and 30 years old who are interested in high-end



name brands and tips on the latest fashions and lifestyles, have led to the rise of Chinese lifestyle magazines. “Readers are more discriminating and sophisticated nowadays. What they need is the freshest and the latest,” Li Chunya believes that so-called “localisation” does not need to clearly divide domestic and foreign content, as it is more crucial to be localised in the editorial.

*“We had previously thought to edit all content from the point of view of using domestic resources, but finally found that this is a particularly narrow-minded idea. Now that fashion is internationally integrated, we need to absorb foreign ideas. Now our information comes from abroad. But the editing and layout are absolutely in accordance with the domestic needs of the readers. Therefore, in localisation the most important thing is to know how to use foreign resources to suit the taste of domestic reader need.”*

(Gan, 2005)

From this point of view, perhaps imitation is the first step of creativity. In fact, creativity is a cherished resource in the Chinese media. When the market welcomed the first arrivals, such as *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan*, imitation almost become the method of creativity. However, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Chinese magazine participators find that they need their own professional codes to compete in the market. As Dent and Whitehead explained:

*“In sum, a profession is typically a defined group of skilled workers possessing certain characteristics claimed by the profession and more or less socially recognised as such. Members of a profession possess a body of knowledge and skill approved by the regulatory authority of that profession. They profess*

*particular codes of practice, and they profess an ethic of concern for their clients over crude economic self-interest.”*

(Dent and Whitehead, 2002: 63)

From this point of view, by looking critically at what shapes the outlooks of professionals, Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists have high professional ethics today and focus on the standards of behaviour expected of people with particular professional roles and responsibilities, creatively and independently. This is as Li (2009: 35) pointed out in the *China Publishing Journal*: “A good fashion magazine editor should not only have a broad view of the industry but also have the ability to combine internationalisation and localisation.” However, it seems that localisation is the issue that some pioneering Chinese magazine professionals have adopted as their self-discipline and self-identity.

In summary, as Xu Wei, the Assistant Publisher at TMG and Chief-editor of *Cosmopolitan China*, said when talking about her dreams in 2008 in the interview with Sohu Women (SOHUWomen, 2008):

*“Interestingly, 2008 is the 15th anniversary of the establishment of TMG. As Trends’ first published magazine, and also the largest circulating magazine, 2008 is also the 15<sup>th</sup> birthday of Cosmopolitan China. As the editor-in-chief, my dream and hope is that you will remember more our local name ‘Trend’ rather than a lot of foreign names. I also hope that we can make a real impact on the spirit of Chinese people’s fashion in local magazines, rather than foreign magazine’s Chinese editions.”*

This is not only the dream of Xu Wei, but all the other editors working in all the magazine publishing houses who the Researcher

interviewed.

# **CHAPTER 7. The Impact of Western Stands on Chinese Magazine Journalistic Practice**

## **7.1 Introduction**

From many academic researchers' points of view worldwide, whether journalism is a profession, or should be treated as a profession, is still a central debate within journalism studies. In China, professionalism has two perspectives which the Researcher has discussed in Chapter 3: Some critics claim that professionalism is a Western concept that should not be imported into Chinese practices, particularly considering the ideological differences and cultural diversity. However, other scholars also point out that in order to understand the essence of journalism, localising the Western concept of professionalism and constructing it with Chinese characteristics is the only way for the Chinese press to improve its international competitiveness. What both sets of researchers agree on is that the latter view, in which Chinese journalists need to improve their professional standard and ethics in the face of media globalisation, certainly includes magazine journalists.

From the arguments in Chapters 5 and 6, Chinese lifestyle journalists have been trained in professional standards and a professional manner from international magazine co-operation partners. The question here is whether journalists should always do their work in a professional way, or whether morality sometimes

demands unprofessional conduct in the name of something more important. On the other hand, the magazine employers in China also use their working strategies to show their professionalism, which is partly taken from Western concepts and partly from serious news journalism's ethics in China. The other question arising here is, are these questionable actions of professionals necessary in order for them to remain in their jobs or even in the profession in general?

Furthermore, this chapter provides answers to more of magazine journalism's specific questions: Does Chinese magazine journalism really need professionalism, when media observers are still debating whether the practices of other categories like investigative journalism or news journalism display professionalism? If so, what is the consequence of this professional development? Is this professionalism dependent on the contrasting aspects of globalisation or localisation? Or perhaps professionalism is an absolutely independent variable that is a short-lived and unstable prospect in the reform process of the Chinese media industry.

This chapter will address the first two sets of questions and explore the ways in which globalisation and professionalism are connected. The Researcher argues that some of the practices of the professions are defective from the Western point of view, despite the impression conveyed by their codes of ethics and other ideological instruments. This is because of the efforts of Chinese magazine journalists to label their principle role responsibilities with a Chinese character within the complex society and philosophy that is China.

Shi Anbin has a very precise view on the restructuring of Chinese journalistic professionalism:

*“One cannot deny the fact that ‘intrusive’ ‘infiltration’ of trans-national media groups in various forms will not only gradually change Chinese media ecology, but also make an impact on local news discourse and ideas. In the existing media discourse and ecological system, the contradiction between traditional political parties and the outside concept of professionalism is at this stage a problem that needs to be solved in Chinese press/media reforms. In such issues, we cannot use ‘Chinese characteristics’ as a defence to be avoided, but should be actively carrying out experiments and exploration using various internal and external systems to create a unique ‘Chinese experience’. It is expected that this ‘Chinese experience’ of globalisation itself opens a new path, solving the inherent paradox of all kinds of problems (such as ‘global localisation’).*

(Shi, 2006)

This provides an outline of what this chapter addresses.

## **7.2 Individual Senior Journalists Bring Ethics and Working Strategy to Occupational Identity**

### **7.2.1 Occupational Origin**

From the discussion in Chapter 6, there is no doubt that the CPA has had a significant influence on the professionalisation process of Chinese magazine journalists. However, from individual publishers

in lifestyle magazine firms, traditional journalism ethics and intellectual ideology have also been involved in the shaping of this new journalism's genre. Chinese lifestyle magazines started to develop in the late 1980s, at which time media commercialisation had also started to develop its own roots in China. Since then, commercialised media and lifestyle magazines have developed very quickly. Some pioneering serious news journalists moved their positions to the new commercial situations and took a new occupational route as publishers and media managers. Bai argued that

*“By the late 1990s, it occurred to state bureaucrats, captains of the media industry and advisors from academia that further business growth of the media would require a restructuring of the system.”*

(Bai, 2005: 6)

From this point of view, media commercialisation pushed China towards a more independent media system, or at least a situation in which more media might operate far away from tight political and ideological control. This new area is lifestyle and entertainment media, which allows some journalists to extend and explore their career paths away from political news reporting. Furthermore, regarding Pan's argument: “for some, a journalists' income could hardly meet their basic needs” (Pan, 2000: 79), a change in their career could be a choice if they did not want to extend their practice beyond organisational boundaries.

On the other hand, as a result of the economic development in the 1990s, the potential purchasing power and increased choice in housing, leisure, and other components of material life provide a

wider space for mainland Chinese to make commercial lifestyle choices (see Chapter 3). The middle and upper management echelons of these professionals are referred to, by some Chinese scholars and media executives, as using the new concept of “middle class” to identify themselves. The challenges facing journalists working in a variety of media firms is how to serve this new class with their media consumption, and even more, to represent them in the media environment.

Here, a personal example of the Researcher’s experience correlates to these challenges by showing how this issue affected many journalists’ careers and thinking in the 1990s. The Researcher joined *China Business* as an economic reporter in 1991, the period in which all media were party or state agency organs. There was no recruitment in the media industry and the only way one could join a media organisation was allocation by the national Human Resource Ministry. Therefore, for many journalists, the only possible route by which they could move to other media organisations was to be head-hunted by another media firm. In this instance the latter needed to apply for, or create, a post from their national or state Human Resource Ministry.

In 1993, *China Business* launched their first metropolitan lifestyle newspaper, *Shopping Guide*, reporting on commodities, stars, cars, properties and luxury brands. The Editor-in-chief, Xu Fang, selected some senior journalists from *China Business* and re-positioned them on the *Shopping Guide*, as he believed this new media had more potential and a broader space than a formal trade paper. Furthermore, Xu also showed favour to all the selected elites as the



new newspaper might have more income than the parent trade newspaper. IN/44<sup>118</sup> recalled his reason for leaving *China Business*:

“I trusted Xu’s professional choice, and believed I would be well paid in *Shopping Guide*, although I didn’t think the work in *Shopping Guide* could be called journalistic practice at that moment. However, it was important to have a high salary, which was when I first realised that people’s earnings had a wide discrepancy.”

This opinion was widely shared by many media professionals in the early 1990s. Very few of them thought reporting on consumption and consumers was a journalistic practice, as opposed to reporting political issues. Certainly, the Researcher had the same thought in 1993. Therefore, when several months later, the Editor-Director of *Fashion (Shishang)*<sup>119</sup>, Gao Xiaohong asked the Researcher if she was interested in the position as the editor in *Fashion*, the Researcher did not ask for any details about the position, such as duty or salary, saying “no” immediately. At that time, the Researcher thought her occupational ambition was to win the Pulitzer Prize by reporting on political corruption or an economic crisis. She also believed that the work in a fashion magazine related more to advertising or public relations, and that no serious journalist would work as an advertising or PR professional in the media world in China.

In light of the above cases, one thing is obvious: that a transition of journalistic practice took place in the 1990s in China, and that the consumer media extended journalistic practice from traditional

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<sup>118</sup> Interviewed on 20-08-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>119</sup> *Fashion (Shishang)* launched by TMG in 1993, and changed its title to *Trends Cosmopolitan* in 1997 in co-operation with IDG and Conde Nast International.

Chinese journalists, and offered more professional opportunities and better-paying jobs for media participants.

Thus, many media practitioners made new occupational choices through the late 1980s to 1990s and transferred their career route from political reporting to information gathering. In addition, Chinese media professionals tried to increase the number of new consumer media titles to extend their careers. For instance, from the Researcher's interview list, at least 28 media professionals (out of a sample of 72) can be categorised under this occupational change. In the context of the age factor, these 28 interviewees are all over 30 years old.<sup>120</sup> If the age of over 30 years is used as an identification parameter, then 59 of the interviewees are in this age group. This means that 28 of the 59 respondents (47%) who joined the media industry in the 1990s changed the focus of their journalistic practice. This is a relatively high percentage.

When examining these 28 interviewees more closely, it is clear that most reached their current positions in consumer magazines via two paths. Some media professionals had been appointed as publishers or chief editors by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or government institutions, and consequently became official delegates in the 1990s. Examples include the Editors-in-Chief of *Family, Digest* and *Story Time*, and the publishers of Trends Media Group (TMG) and Guangdong Publishing House. However, an increasing amount of participants could be classed as having volunteered, and this second group actually outnumbered those who were appointed. These media professionals now occupy posts such as editor-director, editor-in-chief, advertising director, international

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<sup>120</sup> Chinese youth are normally over 22 years old when they get their first job after graduating from university. If you count the year of this research as 2008, the eligible media participants are at least 30 years old now if they joined the media industry in the 1990s.

copyright director, senior editor and syndication coordinator. All have solid work experience and hold principal positions in a variety of magazines. Owing to previously working in a variety of party media systems, many of the professionals, as with the traditional Chinese journalists, obey the “Marxist view of journalism” which could be defined as “supporting party principles, criticizing the ‘bourgeois concept of free speech’, and maintaining correct ‘guidance of public opinion’” (CMP, 2007): bringing them into their new career.

### **7.2.2 Occupational Ethics**

In China, today’s Chinese journalist is not a “real journalist”. Certainly, it is an argument exists that commercialisation has destroyed the foundation of journalism in China, forcing journalists to pay all their attention to chasing the market of sensational news instead of reporting ‘serious news’. This has not just occurred in China, but worldwide, as Meyers (2010) declared: “It is harder for fundamentally ethical journalism ... providing necessary accurate information for its citizens, being sufficiently entertaining, (and) most importantly being a watchdog on powerful individuals and institutions.” However, most of the studies or criticisms are based on the news standard and on political or financial Chinese journalism’s practice, with less attention being paid to lifestyle journalists who report lifestyle news and commodity information (see Chapter 3).

### 7.2.2.1 Senior Journalists' Choice

During the in-depth interviews conducted in this research, most interviewees ranked social responsibility as the most valuable ethic in their working standard. From 1993 to 1998, Wang Feng was a Senior Reporter for *Sanlian Life Weekly*, the most popular news magazine read by Chinese intellectuals. In 2003 he joined *Trends Men's Health* as an editor, becoming the editor of *Trends Esquire*<sup>121</sup> in 2005. He is acknowledged as the journalist who has done the most to bring the news concept and ideal to fashion magazines in China.

*"I never think Esquire is a simple catalogue; it's not as simple as a magazine full of materials. As a medium, we have to add our own voice to society and our own influence as well; it could not be achieved by simple materialism."*

(Gao, 2006)

To obtain and maintain this influence, Wang Feng emphasized "news value" as the foundation of his magazine.

*"The readers are only interested in the fresh stuff and things very close to their own interests, so during cover production of our magazine, we changed the face of Hollywood to be Chinese, together with the past face to present;, these two make a magazine that has the sense of youth and vitality."*

(Gao, 2006)

Wang did not believe that "news value" would make *Esquire* any different from other fashion magazines as he thought "fashion is not a concept of material; rather, it is values and lifestyle" (Gao,

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<sup>121</sup> After working for 6 years in Trends Media Group, Wang Feng became editor-in-chief of *GQ* (China) in August, 2008. *GQ* (China) launched in a year later, 2009.

2006). Therefore, he required his team to insist that “real consumption and luxury are spirit and emotion”, and this was the “core value and belief” of *Esquire* (Wang, 2006)<sup>122</sup>. Although Yin (2007) argued that the concept of “news value”, which Wang emphasized, was used only as a means to market *Esquire*, they also maintained that this idea of “news value” generated a considerable amount of hype for the magazine, necessitated by the joint pressures of advertising, circulation and a joint-venture organization. In short, *Esquire* could not escape materialism (Wu, Q., 2007). Furthermore, as the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry is still in its infancy, business success is more dependent on foreign brand co-operative models and international consumer advertisements. *Esquire* certainly takes advantage of this business model and it has enabled its editor to unleash some personal choices such as “news value” and a “journalistic ideal” to bring value to *Esquire*’s brand in China. In addition, Wang Feng clearly recognized that in order to add weight to his new position, he would need to be seen to uphold these professional standards. Being a former news journalist, he knew that he would have to justify his career change to maintain his stature in the journalism community and not lose the respect of his former colleagues and friends. His success in this endeavour was underlined in the testimonial of one senior journalist who introduced Wang Feng to the author. He evaluated him as “one of the magazine professionals who has not lost his journalistic ideal”, so “he’s worth interviewing”.<sup>123</sup> From this perspective Wang Feng is still treated as a journalist in the community. This is simply because he upholds the ideals of the journalism profession, and is

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<sup>122</sup> Interviewed with Wang Feng on 22-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>123</sup> Interviewee No. 65. Interviewed on 14-04-2006, Beijing, China.

not categorised as a “cultural businessman” or “marketer” like other staff working for consumer magazines.

However, being an assistant publisher of TMG, Wang Feng is not alone in his career ideal. Xu Wei is another example of a journalist who holds a journalistic ideal in fashion reporting. Xu graduated in 1994 from the Journalism Department at Renmin University, the oldest and most highly respected university that teaches journalism in China. She joined *Sanlian Life Weekly* after graduation, and then a year later became an editor at *Trends Cosmopolitan*. Xu Wei has been a vocal critic of her profession, claiming that “for such a long time, this job has had no meaning for me, as I think that only political, economic and social news are the real meaning of news. Can luxuries, like a lipstick or clothes make any change in our society, can they save a human life? I doubt it” (Xu, 2007a). However, Xu also provided answers to her questions:

*“More than a decade ago, when I had just joined the media, a journalistic expert told me something that was meaningful to me, something about the passionate desire for an insight into the world through news: ‘In fact, the press should be concerned about human nature. And the nature of human sex, love, death, joy, money is an eternal theme of the press.’”*

(Xu, 2007b)

The conclusion that can be drawn here is Xu and other lifestyle magazine professionals have extended the news boundary and significance from pure news to consumer news. The former is usually translated as news that deals with serious topics or events, while the latter contains, “less quality”, and the unimportant topics in people’s life.

### 7.2.2.2 The SK-II Case

The case of the investigative news report on SK-II at *Trends Cosmopolitan* in 2006 demonstrates that the editorial choice of news value in lifestyle magazine journalism could be improved. On 14 September 2006, Guangdong Bureau of Inspection and Quarantine (GDBIQ) found most SK-II products contained chromium and neodymium, which could cause skin allergies and other health problems. All the problem products were made by Procter and Gamble (P&G) in Japan. On that day, P&G denied it had added the substances to its products. This caused an anti-Japanese campaign in China. Angry consumers broke the glass door of P&G's Shanghai office.

P&G was one the most important advertisers for many consumer media, especially fashion magazines. The issue was whether a magazine should report this news or pretend nothing had happened and still keep the advertising pages as usual. Xu Wei decided that her magazine “must have its own voice” in the SK-II cosmetics crisis. She recalled in an interview that,

*“Of course I was also considering doing a feature on this crisis, but would that offend advertisers? But, being such an important part of the media of women’s magazine industry, cosmetics were also uppermost in all the areas. If we do not express an opinion, it [is] a dereliction of duty.”*

(SOHUWomen, 2007b)

Therefore, *Cosmopolitan* analysed the case of the SK- II crisis in the context of what the readers should make of it:

“We hoped to be able not only to provide readers with information about the trend, but also ways of thinking and ideas of thinking of ideas.”

“This is the thing we focus on in every topic.”

(SOHUWomen, 2007b)

As the Researcher has previously argued, a lifestyle magazine does not need to report news, current affairs or bad news if it only considers its media business. Furthermore, most of the popular fashion magazines in the Western world have organised their features at least six months earlier, which means it is impossible to catch current news topics. *Trends Cosmopolitan* chose to speak out on an advertiser’s crisis, a fact that has further meaning behind it. This should be treated as the duty and responsibility of journalistic choice.

### 7.2.2.3 Journalism Belief

Wang Feng and Xu Wei’s descriptions of their professional self-discipline, together with their career aims, show that they believe that journalistic practice holds a high level of social responsibility and that one of journalism’s core aims should be to serve the people and society. Although upholding this principle is not as vital as ensuring that the profession remains a “keystone to democracy” (which journalists should always bear in mind during their day-to-day practice), journalism’s role is to serve the modern citizen living in the consumer society. Moreover, it is a part of that society.

According to Hamilton’s (2004: 2-3) analysis, “Anthony Downs (1957) noted that people desire information for four functions: consumption, production, entertainment, and voting”, and the information that “helps a person participate as a citizen”. There is



no quality difference if a journalist reports consumption news or voting news. However, as an individual's demand for information about politics is more likely to make an impact on the politics of government, and then the world, much research and many studies focuss on this area. The point here is that there is no agreement that news standards and elements of other categories like consumption, production or entertainment should, or should not, be investigated as political news. From this standpoint, journalists who are reporting on consumption, production and entertainment should be treated as being as vital as those reporting on voting.

Although some senior journalists have a choice on which news values they hold, others have less freedom because of the particular area of journalism they work in. Another interviewee, Li Ergang,<sup>124</sup> discussed this issue further: "Most of the fashion magazines have no reputation concerning their journalistic beliefs, because they only work for foreign bosses, profits and advertising, with very much less attention paid to their social responsibility and media justice."

The issue Li Ergang raised here was that commercialization had brought fierce competition to the Chinese lifestyle magazine market. Although magazine professionals initially tried to hold on to their original beliefs and values, enormous commercial pressures over the past 10 years finally destroyed any vestige of their former consciences and moral obligations. Other interviewees such as Yi Wei<sup>125</sup> and Xu Lei<sup>126</sup> agreed that some of the magazine professionals used "journalistic belief" as an adornment to attract credulous readers, and also to trick themselves.

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<sup>124</sup> Interviewed on 29-12-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>125</sup> Interviewed on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>126</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

When fieldwork was conducted for this study, “news values” were found to be highly valued, or acknowledged as a major principle of journalistic practice by all the very senior interviewees, such as editors or Editors-in-Chief. In contrast, none of the lower level journalists used “social responsibility” to explain their daily working beliefs or career aims.

There are two reasons for this: Firstly, people in senior positions in lifestyle magazines realized that if they wished to gain promotions, be awarded pay rises and generally survive in the media market and the organizations they work for, commercial imperatives had to take precedence over any thoughts of social responsibility in their working practices. Therefore senior management had, to a great extent, separated their career aspirations from reality. It seemed that there was no visible connection between reality and belief. Secondly, people working in current fashion magazines were normally young, with the majority of them aged less than 30 years old. It was an argument that unlike more contented senior media professionals, the younger generation demonstrated a social dissatisfaction that was mirrored in the trivial content of the Chinese consumer magazines they produced; they engaged merely with commercialism and customer service.

The Researcher believes that this overriding influence has meant that “news value” and “social responsibility” remain the two core principles that form the “self-image” of these magazine professionals. These values were reinforced when they voiced their journalistic belief in the press during interviews conducted with them between 2004 and 2008. Therefore, despite the tense commercial competition among Chinese consumer magazines, these testimonies suggest that a voice of media credibility has appeared.

However, other journalists that were interviewed did not show any evidence of holding any strong beliefs or ethics. Although some magazine journalists defined their idealized role as being a public servant, most still needed to inherit journalistic ethics and reconcile themselves with their profession's civically-minded attributes in China. This is a new trend in the community of Chinese journalists.

From this point of view, the challenge facing Chinese consumer magazine professionals is how to use conventional journalistic techniques and achieve and maintain a level of performance that is on a par with serious media.

### **7.2.3 News as the Core Business**

Just as journalists have their sense of professionalism and social responsibility, media organisations also take their core business seriously. As the Researcher has argued in Chapter 6, the media industry's transformation from a state-planned economy to a market economy has led to the motto "advertising is king" being advocated. That this has been the case since 1990s in China has meant that the concept has become an advanced productive force in the media industry rather than "content is king". This campaign was largely accepted in consumer media and very few lifestyle magazines now insist on the concept of "content is king".

According to Wu Hong, the president of TMG,

*"The first founding of a magazine at Trends walked on the road of 'propagating information of modern life' and 'leading by content development'. The subsequent five magazines also used 'making content' to become the market winner."*

(Hu, 2003)

During the 1980s, Chinese readers did not accept the concept of “information about life is news” in the Chinese market, as the particular interest in information was not segmented by age or gender or geographic audience groups in China during that time. Although the road TMG took is not going smoothly, the magazine professionals still persist in the principle of the supremacy of the content.

At same time, international luxury brands increasingly spreaded their markets to China and different social classes and levels have developed rapidly. “Stable consumerist value orientations including conspicuous consumption, aspiration for self-actualization, and worshipping Western lifestyles” (Wei and Pan, 1999: 75) appeared amongst the better educated or financially better off Chinese. “Further, bearing these values is related to frequent reading of consumer magazines and exposure to outdoor advertisements” (Wei and Pan, 1999: 75). Both the content of magazines and advertisements were read by this new reader group as information. Therefore, the practice-oriented journalism consequently rose in China during this period. Rather than parroting a party line, this new style journalism changed their daily report routing to consumer entertainment news.

Certainly, “professionalisation and commercialisation marched forward hand in hand” (Schudson, 2003: 150). The same phenomena emerged in China as it had in U.S. journalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At this point, media organisations were businesses reporting soft news, and as a serious career choice this marched forward hand in hand with Chinese magazine professionals.

TMG is not alone in commenting that “content is the King” and “consumer or fashion reporting is also the job of the journalist”. According to Hong Huang, the founder of China Interactive Media Group, publisher of *Time Out* Beijing and *iLook*, “to me, the job of magazine publishing should be posed as a journalist, not a fashion expert. We need to possess the ability to dig out the news” (Hong, 2008a). From this point of view, the first half of every issue of *iLook* is now the *iLook* Monitor, which reports on China’s own designers and inside information on creative industries.

Su Yan, the Editor of *Elegance*,<sup>127</sup> also flaunted ‘international perspective’ and news articles as the distinction with other fashion magazines. She started her career with TMG in 1996 as a fashion editor in *Fashion*, was then posted as editor-director at *Trends House* in 1999, and left TMG in 2004. Su Yan had many years experience working in the Chinese fashion magazine industry. When she was chosen to develop a new women’s magazine, the news was chosen as a way to establish an identity for this new magazine. This stemmed from Su’s criticism that,

*“Most female fashion magazines are more concerned with the material level; the articles in Elegance are news that more concern the women’s inner sentiment. If readers could draw inspiration from reading, we will be very satisfied as a media.”*

(Liu, 2009)

Su explained another reason behind her initial proposal that the media needed to have social responsibility.

*“In order to promote the magazine, certainly sometimes I will compromise with the market. But media is such a special industry;*

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<sup>127</sup> *Elegance*, launched on 1-05-2007, by the Chinese Business View group, is a biweekly women’s magazine.

*to enhance their sense of social responsibility may promote their readers and community growth.”*

(Liu, 2009)

The first half of each issue of *Elegance* concentrates on women's personal lives and the way they face difficulties, while the second half is full of the most popular trends in clothing and cosmetics. Because of this division of content, media critics still classify *Elegance* as a fashion magazine, commenting:

“There's no big difference between *Elegance* and other fashion magazines, as *Elegance* only uses news expediently to attract advertisers believing they have more desirable high social class readers. This is why *Elegance* has more than half page reports on fashion trends, and also uses foreign celebrities and models as Cover Girls.”<sup>128</sup>

Another interviewee IN/20,<sup>129</sup> further pointed out:

“The homogenization of competition in the Chinese fashion magazine market has become more serious in recent years, almost all the international famous brands have arrived in the Chinese market. On the one hand, all the magazines need to distinguish their brand essentials from others, to get desirable readers and international advertisers' attention; on the other hand, most of the fashion magazines have no reputation concerning their journalistic beliefs, because they only work for foreign bosses, profits and advertising, with very much less attention paid to their social responsibility and media justice.”

The issue IN/20 criticizes here, is that commercialisation has brought fierce competition to the Chinese consumer magazine market, and magazine professionals have tried very hard to survive

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<sup>128</sup> Interviewee No. 36, interviewed on 18-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>129</sup> Interviewed on 29-12-2006, Beijing, China.

but lost their consciences and duty over the last ten years. Other interviewees such as IN/57<sup>130</sup> and IN/54<sup>131</sup> agreed that some of the magazine professionals used journalistic belief as an adornment to attract credulous readers, and also to trick themselves.

Furthermore, as IN/57 has pointed out,

“All their magazines have very useless contents which are far removed from current readers, and diffused arrogant feeling of ‘managing fashion’. The whole circle of fashion magazines is a bubble.” Certainly, this presents the very strictures on the fashion media as a whole, which could be more critically called “a patron-client system, very effective and powerful”, which “lacks media professionalism.”

However, the Researcher has a different opinion of this comment. In regard to the field work conducted for this study, it is easy to find that, news values are highly valued, or uppermost by all the senior interviewees, such as editors or editors-in-chief. In comparison, none of the lower level journalists used “social responsibility” to explain their daily working belief or career aims. There are two reasons behind this. On one hand, in the senior positions in lifestyle magazines, the issues of survival in the media market and the organisations they work for, in order to gain better salaries and be posted to higher positions is much more of a reality. Therefore, senior management have, to a great extent, separated their career aspirations from reality. It seems that there is no visible connection between reality and belief. On the other hand, as the Researcher described in Chapter 6, people working in current fashion magazines are normally young, most of them being are

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<sup>130</sup> Interviewed on 29-01-2007, Beijing, China.

<sup>131</sup> Interviewed on 14-05-2007, Beijing, China.

under the age of 30. As such, they are very like other Chinese youths born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, who have less belief in their life and even in their careers. From some angles, these criticisms have described the major meeting traits of Chinese lifestyle magazines: the younger generation of media professionals has less belief than the senior one. Consequently the former's output is more engaged with commercialism and customer service. However, the Researcher believes that the younger generation will be guided by the senior professionals such as editors and editors-in-chief in their organisations. Therefore, the Researcher still believes that "news value" or "social responsibility" is the "self-image" of these magazine professionals.

The Researcher concludes that the reason she has arrived at this conclusion is that she has used a developing point of view to examine the Chinese magazine industry. One important aspect is that the portraits these interviewees presented of their journalistic beliefs in the press are all recent, from 2004 to 2008. This means amidst the tense competition among Chinese lifestyle magazines a voice of media credibility has appeared. If this was not the case, there would be no need for many editors to describe themselves as holding journalistic belief and ethics during the interviews. Therefore, even though some magazine journalists defined their idealized role as public servants, they still needed to inherit journalistic ethics and reconcile themselves with journalism's civically minded aspect in China. This has become the new trend in the Chinese journalists' society.

Another example in support of this finding is "Dialogues with Senior U.S. Magazine Editors" published in Chinese in 2008. The



book cited an American editor urging journalists to “use the method of reporting international news to report daily life” (Zhi, 2008: ). This approach has been the main contribution of the media industry to society, both in Western world and then in China. The author, Wang Dong emphasized the review of the Chinese magazine by Ron Javers, the Assistant Managing Editor of *Newsweek*.

*“If you are unfamiliar with the magazine industry, or you do not understand Chinese, you would think the Chinese magazines are beautiful ... .. But if you really want to read some good things, you will find that there’s nothing in fact: the format is much greater than the content. The magazines’ editors and reporters still do not know how to write a meaningful article. According to the interview and writing, magazines need to learn from newspapers and television to gain respect from society and win the standing of a serious media. Otherwise, it is impossible for China to give birth to their own Vogue.”*

(Zhi, 2008)

From this point of view, the tasks facing the Chinese lifestyle magazine professionals are how to use conventional journalistic techniques and maintain journalism’s function of achieving these magazine journalists’ working performances.

## **7.3 The Self-identity of Chinese Consumer**

### **Journalism**

After discussing the main characteristics of Chinese consumer magazine journalism, the Researcher sums up the results of the

semi-structured survey covering all 72 interviews in this research. Firstly, 72 Chinese magazine professionals, researchers, and magazine officials were invited to participate in this research. In terms of some basic demographic backgrounds, a number of issues emerge as Table 7.1. One issue that needs to be explained here is that the positions of Editor-in-Chief and Editor-Director are counted as managers for the purpose of this study. This is because, in China, the positions of Editor-in-Chief and Editor-Director are usually required to not only deal with content issues but also oversee staff recruitment and training, as well as brand promotion. Their role also involves liaising with other advertising and distribution departments. In this sense, the positions of Editor-in-Chief or Editor-Director fall into the category of manager.

**Table 7.1 Occupations of Interviewees (n=72)**

	Magazine journalist	Magazine manager	Government official	Media consultant	Media analyst
Number	20	44	2	3	3
Percentage	27.8%	61.2%	3%	4%	4%

**Table 7.2 Interviewee age (magazine professionals, 64 in total)**

Birth	Journalist (n=20)	Manager (n=44)	Total	Percentage
1950s	0	0	9	14%
1960s	0	0	14	23%
1970s	13	20	33	51%
1980s	7	1	8	12%

According to Table 7.2, just over half (51%) of magazine journalists and managers were born in the 1970s, which represents the biggest proportion of those participating. This percentage reflects the fact that young magazine professionals are an important generation for consumer magazines. According to figures for magazine journalists, 13 out of 20 of the interviewed journalists

were born in the 1970s, accounting for 65% of the total. At the same time, 20 out of 44 interviewees working at managerial level were born in the 1970s, which is more than 45% of the managers total. However, the second largest proportion of magazine managers (14 out of 44) relates to those born in the 1960s. The majority of them have attained the highest position in their respective organization, such as Editor-in-Chief or Publisher. In contrast, most of the managers born in the 1970s are in middle positions at magazines, such as Editor-Director or Advertising-Director. The table shows that 7 out of 20 of the interviewed journalists were born in the 1980s and 9 out of 44 managers were born in the 1950s. Although this is the smallest amount in total, the former shows the future of journalists and the latter shows that there are still some older senior journalists and government officials working at some of the transitional magazine firms.

Thus, magazine professionals born in the 1960s and 1970s form 47 out of 64 (73%) respondents. This means that these two age groups (covering the baby boom generation from the 1960s and early 1970s, to the first generation of only-children in the later 1970s) are at the core of consumer magazines in China. From a sociological perspective the baby boom generation and the first generation of only-children have some common characteristics. Both groups were born between the older generation and the new younger generation in China and during their childhood and youth had very few material possessions and no spiritual life. Both groups are bravely trying new things in work and life, and always abide by rules. These characteristics have certainly been evident in the interviewees' careers. Their experiences during the period of reform in China have led both of these generations to use traditional

concepts of journalistic ethics and repackage them with techniques from the Western concept of professionalism. This subtle approach allowed them to achieve their aims during the economic reform and shows that by still holding on to a certain rule of belief in China, new innovations can be realized.

During the interviews, one specific question was posed to all the participants: “Which occupation do you think you belong to?” Because the author used face-to-face in-depth interviews rather than a semi-structured questionnaire in the field work, some of the respondents did not answer every question as required. Therefore, **Table 7.3** shows types of self-identity, but does not include all participants.

**Table 7.3 Self-identity of Journalists (n=64)**

	Journalist	Manager	Total	Percentage
Journalist	2	16	18	28%
Businessman	0	4	4	6.1%
Cultural Trader	0	5	5	7.8%
Publisher	0	2	2	3%
Worker	12	7	19	29.6%
Cannot Label	4	2	6	9%
Don't Answer	2	8	10	15.6%

Only 28% of respondents overall said they saw themselves as journalists. Younger respondents were less likely to identify themselves as a journalist, with only two out of 20, or 10%, of non-managers describing themselves thus. By contrast, 16 of the senior magazine workers (36 %) preferred to call themselves journalists. It therefore appears that younger magazine professionals may be required to play a less traditionally journalism-oriented role in their daily routine.

In contrast to their older colleagues, young or junior magazine journalists tend to describe their occupational situation as “worker”,

with 12 out of 20 (66%) using this title. In comparison, only 7 out of 44 magazine managers, or less than 16%, called themselves “workers”. Even more so, those that did, used the term more in self-mockery than seriousness. However, the overall number of “workers” exceeds “journalists” and represents the highest percentage overall. This indicates that there has been a loss of belief in traditional journalistic role perceptions among the new generation of Chinese magazine professionals.

As the data in Table 7.3 was collected from interview information rather than a questionnaire, the interviewees were not given a pre-determined answer to tick, but merely described their occupational orientation. Therefore their answers should be interpreted as having embedded meaning involving their situation at the time. Thus, “businessman”, “cultural trader” and “publisher” could be classed as having the same meaning as “non-journalist” when they stated their self-identity. Adding the three figures together, 11 out of 44 magazine managers identify themselves as working in a commercialized state. This is also a new trend that Chinese journalists face during media transition and reform in China. As well as having to contend with increasing financial pressure in their profession, journalists now have to operate in an environment that has become wholly part of a commercialized media world. Even if media professionals are able to keep their personal integrity and not become “red-envelope” journalists, they still need to do everything possible to make a profit for their media organisations. The managers obviously have more duties than junior journalists. However, this self-identity does not erode all media professionals’ journalistic beliefs. As IN/53<sup>132</sup> and IN/55<sup>133</sup> both

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<sup>132</sup> Interviewed on 27-08-2008, Beijing, China.

claimed during several conversations, a person's life was more important than other issues; this is a competition process, "we are alive, we have better chances than others, so we may have a chance to do the work we wish to do now and in the future." In terms of their goals, interviewee Xu Fang – the founder of *Lifestyle*<sup>134</sup>, the most popular shopping guide newspaper in Beijing – wanted to establish a Chinese *Guardian* in the future for Chinese intellectuals if there was more media freedom than now. Yang Lang, the vice-president of SEEC Media Group<sup>135</sup>, the biggest consumer media group in China, has a goal to establish a Chinese version of *Time* magazine in the future. Both see their current media formats as part of the transition in China's media reform, and they aim to survive in the current media system.

Nevertheless, 6 out of 64 respondents did not label their occupations, and 10 out of 64 did not even answer the question. The reason behind this is that some interviewees were not familiar with the author and felt no necessity to answer this question; others thought "a job is a job"<sup>136</sup>, an instrument to make a living.

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<sup>133</sup> Interviewed on 18-11-2006, Beijing, China.

<sup>134</sup> *Lifestyle* is a weekly tabloid-size light glossy newspaper in Beijing, which was founded in 1993 by *Chinese Business*, the broadsheet financial newspaper. IN/55 was the founder and president of *Lifestyle* from 1993 to 2006 and also Chief-Editor of *Chinese Business* from 1988 to 1993.

<sup>135</sup> SEEC Media Group is a media company in mainland China, but is listed on the Hong Kong stock market. It publishes *Caijing*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Sports Illustrated* etc. several co-operated magazines and domestic magazines, such as *The Finance and The Stock Weekly*. IN/55 is the senior journalist who worked in Xinhua News agency, *China Youth* (broadsheet newspaper), *Sanlian Life Weekly* and *The Finance* (financial weekly magazine), moving from reporter to Editor-in-Chief.

<sup>136</sup> Interviewee No.64, interviewed on 12-01-2007, Beijing, China.

## **7.4 Identity Study Comparison between**

### **Magazine and News Journalists**

In 2002, Lu and Yu (2003) conducted a survey of journalists in Shanghai that examined their occupational status during the process of social transformation. The survey raised some significant points in a comparison with the magazine journalists examined in this study.

#### **7.4.1 Age Factor**

Two surveys conducted within the past decade provide particularly fine details of the demography of Chinese journalists, which includes Lu and Yu's (2003) survey in Shanghai as well as the survey carried out by the combined Media Research Institute (MRI) at Renmin University of China with the Domestic Affairs Department of the National Journalists' Association in 1997 (Yu, 1998). According to Lu and Yu (2003), the average age of news professionals in Shanghai was 34.7 years. Yu's (1998) survey involved 2002 media staff selected from 183 media institutions both at central and local levels, and indicated that the average age of journalists in China was 37.4 years, with 24.6% under 29 years of age. People who chose news reporting as a career were affected by the following nine major factors. The three most important factors: news reporting could express the public's voice; personal hobbies of writing, photographing or editing; getting to know people from all walks of life. The next three were: spreading new ideas and enlightening the public; discovering social problems; and personal interests of having a risky and adventurous life. The last three

reasons were: being respected as a news professional; high income; opportunities for being famous. It was clear that media professionals in Shanghai thought social responsibility was more important than fame or social status.

As this study has found that more than 51% of consumer magazine journalists and managers were born in the 1970s, it is clear that these young professionals represent the largest age group of consumer magazine journalists in China. It also indicates that people are entering the journalism profession at an increasingly younger age in China.

The MRI survey involved 2002 media staff selected from 183 media institutions both at central and local levels. The survey indicated the average age of the journalists in China was 37.4 years of age and 24.6% of them were under 29 years of age. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that consumer magazine journalists are younger than professionals in other areas of the media. The largest proportion is under 30 years old. The age factor underlines a big difference between lifestyle magazine journalists and other media professionals.

#### **7.4.2 Overseas Experience**

According to Lu and Yu's (2003) survey, 30% of the professionals in Shanghai have visited overseas media institutions. This figure does not include those who have had collaborative experience with their colleagues from overseas (15.6 %); short or long term vocational training programmes (12.8 %) and internships in overseas institutions (5.2 %). All four groups combined amount to over half the sample. This is a great improvement compared with Yu's (1998) earlier survey in the context that in that study, almost



90 % of the respondents had never or seldom communicated with foreign journalists or foreign visitors. More than two-thirds of the journalists had never, or seldom, had the opportunities to take vocational training courses.

However, when comparing the above findings to the results presented in this paper, particularly in regard to lifestyle magazine journalists, all the participants working in different magazines mentioned that they benefited from international training or overseas media connections. Therefore, access to overseas professional training is a key difference between these lifestyle magazine journalists and other traditional journalists.

### **7.4.3 Commercial Pressure**

According to the survey in Shanghai (Lu and Yu, 2003), the concept of competitiveness causes the most stress among media professionals. Competitiveness occurs in three forms: The most dominant, which affects 82.3 % of media professionals, is competition at work. This is followed by competitive pressures from colleagues, and finally competition from online and overseas media. Although the respondents of this study are paid a higher salary than the average within other Shanghai industries, and have more opportunities to take training programmes in foreign countries, they still do not have a high level of self-esteem. Most of them are greatly affected by pressures from work, with 35 out of 64 (55 %) complaining that their work environments suffer from endless working and promotion pressure. However, the pressure on lifestyle magazine journalists comes more from commercial forces such as advertisers, investors and publishers rather than their domestic

competitors or colleagues. This also differentiates them from their newspaper colleagues, as the latter have more domestic competitors.

#### **7.4.5 Satisfaction**

The survey in Shanghai in 2002 (Lu and Yu, 2003), and the nationwide survey conducted in 1997 (Yu, 1998), found that all the participants had a low degree of satisfaction in regard to their salary, welfare bonus, and promotion potential. Generally speaking, the average career span for media professionals in Shanghai is 10 years, although some have had careers of up to 38 years in the media field. The majority of media staff (74.6 %) who have worked solely in the media industry remained with their first employer. Therefore, we can see that this is a stable job for the people who are in this field. According to the Shanghai survey, the overall satisfaction towards their work ranges from “ordinary” to “fairly satisfied” for the professionals in Shanghai (3.2). To put it specifically, the higher rates of satisfaction are in the following areas: “the relationship with the colleagues”; “the capability of the supervisors”; “social effect of the work”; “flexibility of the working hours”, “the self innovation opportunities from work”, and “the extent of independency in the work”. They are also satisfied with “sense of success from work” and “opportunities to learn new skills”. They are not so satisfied with “salary and income”, “the welfare bonus from the employer” and “the opportunities to get promotion in the work”.

In comparison, the average time that Chinese journalists have spent in their current workplace in the 1997’s survey is 11 years, with 42.1% of the journalists in the same workplace for 11 years, which is significantly higher than the majority of media institutions in the world.

However, in this study, the magazine managers who were born in the 1970s and 1980s numbered 41, with 38 of them (92 %) having spent less than five years at the same magazine. The reason behind this is the aggressive competition between older magazine organizations and newly established magazine houses. Therefore, compared to their colleagues in other media firms, consumer magazine journalists have more opportunities to move from job to job.

## **7.5 The Practices and Ideology of “Professionalism” for lifestyle Magazine**

On the basis of an empirical study of lifestyle journalists in China, this paper proposes that, impacted by the three forces of capitalism, professionalism and the political role, current journalists in China hold three values, which relate to: a) employees’ journalistic orientation; b) the extent of professionalization; and c) the extent to which they see themselves as a mouthpiece for the community. The most apparent in respondents is the employee orientation, with “mouthpiece” ranking last. This research has shown that, among lifestyle magazine journalists, employee orientation is a significant factor. Journalists working in lifestyle magazines, particularly cooperative ones, have merged the Chinese model with the West’s, and focus even more on the latter’s as they perceive it to be ideal. Although we may describe lifestyle magazine journalists as profit-driven or market-driven, they have nevertheless tried to preserve traditional journalistic values, such as editorial autonomy and societal service within this new paradigm. They have also tried to

preserve themselves as consumer-oriented journalists rather than purely as profit-seekers. Nevertheless, the motivation model of employee orientation in the lifestyle magazine industry has also given these magazine journalists more career choices.

Furthermore, consumerism is reflected in the media industry and becomes news-consumerism. It can be simply summarized as having the following two aspects: firstly, the media maximises its own information resources to achieve the greatest possible share of its target audience and achieve the maximization of commercial interests. Secondly, the media, through news reports on material consumption or the importance of consumer culture, creates a “consumer society” atmosphere that stimulates public consumption both materially and spiritually. A significant effect of this news-consumerism in China is the strengthening of the media’s obligation to fulfil its social responsibilities, despite the likelihood that the media solely strives to make more profit. It also introduces the professional concept of “public service”. Taking into consideration the current environment and the media discourse taking place, the contradiction between traditional political factionalism and outside professionalism appears to be playing out in the conflict that is occurring in Chinese news and media reform. This needs to be addressed (Shi, 2006). However, Chinese magazine journalists have actively investigated the different business and cultural systems in China and their magazines’ parent countries, such as Japan, France and the US, in order to explore and experiment with a unique “Chinese experience”. The restructuring of the social role and function of the media and its journalists has induced consumer journalists to use and ultimately rely on the symbolism of professionalization for their social status and respect more than

other types of journalists do. The professionalization of these consumer magazine journalists is a result of a global and local media cultural collision; a result of the reconciliation of commercialism and professionalism.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

From all the discussions above, there are several conclusions to be drawn here.

Firstly, lifestyle magazine journalists, particularly senior journalists, use a working strategy to show their professionalism, and distinguish their career beliefs from their junior colleagues. By applying self-discipline and self-identity, these senior journalists also shape the professionalism of the new genre of magazine journalism.

Secondly, the judgement exercised within this professionalism has moved from the political side to the moral standard, which shows that the new genre of magazine journalism is far removed from the CCP propaganda system in China.

Thirdly, although commercialism has brought many disadvantages to the media profession, in this research case it also offers some advantages to lifestyle magazine journalism, allowing these journalists to provide a service to the readers and improve the understanding of “risk culture” of the media industry in China.

The Researcher contends that the new standard and ethics of this genre of journalism can be extended to other journalistic practices in China, and that it will bring a change to the media industry, a change that may also affect international and localised creativity.

# CHAPTER 8. Conclusions and Implications

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the significance of the findings and presents the wider implications and the limitations, of this study.

The Researcher studied lifestyle style magazines and journalists through six arguments. First, lifestyle magazine practice in China in the context of the media globalisation theory is an excellent paradigm of media globalisation. Second, within the broad definition and scope of journalism studies, this study focuses on the working practices of magazine journalists, particularly on the professionalisation of lifestyle magazine journalism and therefore fills a gap within journalism studies. Third, the practice of lifestyle magazine journalists in China has contributed new elements to the concept of journalism professionalisation. Fourth, by examining the ideology of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalism, “New Consumerism” journalism has raised the standards of journalism practice in China. This trend is due to media commercialism. Fifth, the model of lifestyle magazine journalism in China reflects journalism in transition and the consequent change in journalists’ daily practices. Sixth, the implications of lifestyle magazine journalism study also reflect the transition of other aspects of journalism in China, such as profitable entertainment trends.

In short, these arguments use the concept of globalisation theory within journalism studies to provide the foundation of this research. In particular, the study tries to understand media practice in China

under these theories. The Researcher also wants to explore these two theories deeply in further research.

## **8.2 The Broad Definition of Journalism Studies**

Journalism studies, as discussed in Chapter 3, pay more attention to “ ‘hard’, investigative, and critical journalism to others on the more serious journalistic rounds politics, law and business” (Allan, 2005: 125). Certainly, commercial influence and critical independence affect news coverage and angle and then affect the audiences’ attitudes and opinions. All these are vital for the modern democratized society. However, today’s press tend more to report on entertainment, celebrities and information news – also referred to as “soft”, “yellow” or “infotainment”. Magazine journalism is seen as “second class” journalism both in academia and the industry. So, how to extend this boundary and involve more current practical issues into research is a challenge facing media research. Magazines are something other than journalism - better or worse. “If they’re better than journalism, they’re art...artifacts of literary sensibilities...a realm that floats above news” (Fosdick, 2008: 3). At the other end of the spectrum are studies of magazines of popular culture. “Rarely are studies of magazines considered a good fit for journals about journalism” (Fosdick, 2008: 3). However, magazine journalism study is a boundary this research tried to extend.

This research was conducted because lifestyle magazine journalism needed research to seek the role of journalistic practice on the line between consumer information, entertainment, and critique. Like the studies of sports journalism, which Rowe (2004) conducted in an area of popular cultural ignored by current media

research, consumer journalism is also ignored by media research agenda. Additionally, Rowe (2004) discussed both the link between institutional, cultural, and economic environment of sports journalism, and the vital role of sports journalism in popular culture, consumer society and media. This study reflected that media and journalism more frequently play a common role as an information carrier rather than an educational vehicle in contemporary popular culture.

Furthermore, from the Researcher's personal point of view, a gap exists between media research and media participants' daily practices. Many critical studies of media research are based on investigating journalistic ideology and the theoretical ideal, which are both arguably removed from the contemporary reality of the media world. The reality of today's practices varies, as many critical researchers state, from the Fourth Estate to the keystone of democracy. The theory and practice of the roles media play in and contribute to society are generally distinct from the key aspects of profitability and individual satisfaction of journalists. Hence the concerns of media researchers about the ideological influence on society are valid. Consequently many media participants complain that researchers reside in an ivory tower and have no references to the everyday practices of media.

By investigating the daily practices of lifestyle magazine journalism in China and the ideology and ethics behind its practices, and by discussing the original relationship between lifestyle magazine journalism and other more "serious" forms of journalism in China, this research has found that lifestyle magazine journalists actually share the same journalism ethics and ideology with their serious counterparts. To avoid political retribution and commercial



pressure, lifestyle magazine journalists reorient the multiple functions of journalism as an “information vehicle” in the “service of rising class”, “independent from media ownership and commercial forces”, and “creative to culture and traditional society”. Journalism is therefore viewed as playing an important social role. This new challenge means that lifestyle magazine journalism involves more elements in the professional ideological and practical paradigm than other forms of journalism in China.

## **8.3 New Concepts of Journalism**

### **Professionalisation**

Journalism is one of the most important discourses in Chinese culture. Amid the rapid and complex change of Chinese culture during the last ten years, a new concept of journalism combining traditional and modern elements appeared in the form of Chinese lifestyle magazine journalism. The definition of ‘new journalism’ refers to the journalists who use cultural instruments, commercial technologies, globalised networks and knowledge, and more importantly, the individualized creativity and socialized independency inherent throughout the lifestyle magazine industry. This new concept of journalism emerged from the major influence of media globalisation, particularly the globalised magazine industry.

Alongside the concept of professionalisation, the orientation of newly generated magazine journalists’ occupations changed to serve the public with a variety of information rather than serve a party with political needs or provide an organisation with commercial

success. The basic concept of the audiences of these magazines are created, defined and identified by the magazine professionals in China. The audiences are not the mass population. Whatever titles are given to these audiences, such as “white collar”, “middle class”, “new yuppies” or “metropolitan elite”, all are based on the economics of consumer style and consumer powers as opposed to their social or political societal attributes. By serving the advertising-oriented audiences, Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists focus their attention on informing these essential readers about all the essential social aspects they need and also guiding them to become more international and consumer oriented. Within this new challenge, lifestyle magazine journalism involves more elements in the professional ideological and practical paradigm, than other forms of journalism in China.

The process of globalisation has brought positive and negative perspectives to Chinese society as a whole, and specific sectors in particular such as journalism.

The presentation of this professionalisation uses a working strategy to show their journalistic identities, especially the identity of being a lifestyle journalist. Because the vast majority of lifestyle magazines in China were established in the last ten years, the identity of a lifestyle magazine journalist also appeared in the last ten years. Parallel to their appearance is the lifestyle magazine specific discourse; lifestyle magazine journalism does not have either the time or opportunity to construct its own theory and ideology, whatever the form of academic or practice sites. The profession can only rely on persistence and amendment to daily practice within the internal market competition and international platforms which their international parent magazines offered to

them. Therefore, examining their working strategy during these ten years is the only way to map this change, and also the only way to detail their special journalistic identity. Certainly, during the process, all individual contributions to the change reflecting this new professionalism are not established roles of the organisations and industry, but rather, norms of conduct. Through interviews with editors and key production staff in Chinese lifestyle magazines, this work seeks their views on their journalistic culture and reflections on social change. All these individuals reflect on the commercial influence of this genre of journalism on the one hand, and the political effect on the younger generation of journalists on the other.

Therefore, the basic conflict between ideology and commercial forces first appears amongst the contemporary magazine journalists. Their age (mostly under 35 years old) is correlated to being born in the 1970s and growing up in a society which experienced a commercialised and de-politicised transition period in China. Their life and working experiences are partly influenced by traditional Chinese values and moral standards but also partly influenced by western cultural and values that “Open Door Policy” brought to Chinese population after 1990s. The “old” Chinese philosophy required journalists to be intellectuals with the highest standards of social ethics and the nation’s morals, such as righteousness and faith. By contrast, the “new” western-influenced reforms of business, society, culture, and media attacked the traditional Chinese values and made “individualism”, “market-oriented”, “interested-oriented” and “consumerism” the core values. Crucially from their own independence and the self-identity of their generation, they are caught between old, traditional Chinese ideals and the newly, modern, commercialised, westernised, consumer

society. All in all, these conflicts reflect their occupational standard and ideology, and present a contradiction and fusion of their professional behaviour and ideology. Along with these conflicts, self-fulfilment of journalism, and the vulgarization of their new productions are becoming new trends. Therefore, reviewing the meaning of professionalisation of journalism, as in the western world, Soloski argued, “news professionalism is an efficient and effective means for controlling the professional behaviour of journalists” (Soloski, 2008: 66). Lifestyle magazine journalism in China shows a new technically international standard and a more commercial behavioural change that is linked to the understanding of media commercialisation and informationalization.

## **8.4 Lifestyle Magazines and Globalisation**

### **8.4.1 Magazine Research**

The magazine, as a popular media form is undoubtedly the most globalised media of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Compared to other media, as discussed in Chapter 3, whether a magazine has a trade newspaper or a tabloid newspaper format, the brand is one essential aspect of this medium, while acting as a cultural vehicle is another vital role of society. So, an apparent contradiction exists between the magazine business and the social environment that is similar to the contradiction between commerce and culture. The lifestyle magazine is a representation of this contradiction.

Within several magazine studies, in the past ten years, magazine research globally “is dominated by biographies, institutional histories, covers, and studies of women’s magazines (the latter

dominated by a focus on body image)” (Fosdick, 2008: 2). More recently, magazine studies have focused on analysis of men’s magazines market and the concepts of the overall magazine business including advertising content analysis. The former explores the role of the magazine in today’s society and culture; the latter, however, is the understanding of media economy. However, this research tries to extend the boundary of magazine studies to journalism studies rather than the study of media economy or culture study.

Although this research concentrates on Chinese lifestyle magazines’ journalistic practices, the changes occurring to this practice are provided by internationalised magazine organisations and their partners. This study therefore reflects journalism study more than the study of the magazine business. Alongside these magazine conglomerates’ commercial expansion, changes in the Chinese magazine industry not only resulted from simply using hybrid contents and modern business models, but also from employers’ daily practice routines and ideologies. Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists mainly developed their talents and skills during this encounter. Being journalists, they did not simply act out a propaganda role for fashion or lifestyle information which was mainly transferred from the “western” world and basically worked as information translators. They also tried to develop their own voices, Chinese style with local roots, which showed their professional aims and disciplines. Furthermore, they developed, in great depth, their practice throughout their daily routines, not only relying on artwork or business technology, but also on ethics and beliefs of professionalism. For instance, objective, independence

and creativity were the main elements involved in their working standards.

From all the studies on magazines, fashion, women and men's magazines are the most researched topics. The broad scholarships cover media study, culture study, sociology and linguistics. From *Inside Women's Magazines* in 1987 (Winship, 1987) to *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazine in 2003* (Benwell, 2003), the studies focus on magazine production and readers websites. None of them did research on magazine journalists' professionalism. One book *Magazine Journalism Today* (Davis, 1988) is a handbook of magazine journalism, but not research. So, this thesis is the first publication to put magazine journalism under the research approach of the professionalism discourse. Although the thesis only examined international lifestyle magazines in China, it is still the first original research to make a contribution to magazine knowledge.

#### **8.4.2 Globalisation Theory**

Media globalisation theory contains many aspects from both globalisation and anti-globalisation and from "Americanization" to "localisation", and certainly from all the aspects of economy, culture, society, politics, military, etc. Here, media research contains more analysis of influence on different cultures. As Collum argued:

*"Globalisation would be a benign engine of progressive multiculturalism. In this view, the cultural vehicles of globalisation - mainly the Internet and satellite television--would spread ideas and information across geographic and political barriers. But contrary to globalisation's multicultural promise, it is in fact creating a global monoculture, dictated by the overwhelming economic power of the United States."*

(Collum; 2007: 47)

Following this argument, this research finds that within the consumer magazine arena in China, media globalisation and monoculture are challenged by several models which included the American model – *Vogue*, the French model – *Marie Claire*, the British model – *FHM* and the Japanese model – *Rayli*, and multiculturalism. So, the localisation of media globalisation in Chinese lifestyle magazines presents multi-layers of the combinations of international and national forces. This is also an unusual situation in mass communication research. Here, language or text is not the main fact influencing the magazine, as Chinese magazine professionals use a profusion of other languages to communicate with their foreign colleagues, or translate their texts into Chinese. More importantly, Chinese magazine professionals are more motivated by creating Chinese content to communicate with their international colleagues on the demands of the competition or the needs of self-identification. The local culture of the lifestyle magazine in China has engaged with Eastern and Western, global and local cultures, but this culture is modified by local intellects.

### **8.4.3 Media Globalisation**

Using magazines to examine media globalisation, or media globalisation in China, is not new to communication studies. Zhao (2000, 2003), Huang (2004), Sparks (2007) and Ming & Ray (2008) and others all used consumer magazines, particular joint-ventures in China, to analysis the tension and dynamics of the process of globalisation in the pre-World Trade Organisation era. Moreover, China is an example of how foreign capital helps to activate the commercialised process of the media. However, all these studies

only used magazines as one of the examples as these scholars also took the Internet and TV industry as other paradigms. The stern entry policy of the Chinese government often hindered and affected the extensions of international media both from business profit making and ideology changing. However, these studies did not really mention that the Chinese magazine industry was treated as a “pilot field” by the state. Based on this special political condition, the challenge for the international media hegemony in the Chinese magazine market is for their local employees in China, rather than the ideological control of the state.

The reasons are that these employees represent themselves as journalists, or at least cultural intellectuals, rather than business people or elements of the state propaganda machine. With the role of a journalist, in particular; these magazine professionals retain many western classical ethics and beliefs in serving the audience, Chinese local populations, and not being subordinate to either advertisers or investors. Additionally, being cultural intellectuals, their task in the working process is to protect their traditional Chinese culture and to represent local society. From the arguments above, these two self-identities explain why international media conglomerates meet resistance from bottom line employees, rather than from the authority of the state party line.

Thus, this research contributes a genre to the media globalisation theory, which is that local media communicators displayed great initiative in opposing the international magazine conglomerates and global capitals. Although this initiative, from the Researcher’s point of view, is more determined to survive fierce competition from the local market, the conflict between global capital and local employees is still a new trend in China, and seldom discussed.



Furthermore, if we take the magazine as the important medium in discovering the implications of competitiveness and aggressiveness of western culture, the harmfulness of consumerism and the transnational social impacts and exchanges in China, this research also takes a new angle to seek all the relationships between media, culture and society. From Chapters 6 to 7, the interviews of magazine editors and other professionals show that the contents and ideology carried by Chinese consumer magazines not only influenced their readers, but also the producers and magazine professionals. China's magazine journalists share lots of western lifestyle concepts and many western values, such as independence and individualism, consumerism and so on, with their western colleagues. This is an aspect of globalisation. However, they also try hard to keep their traditional Chinese ideology and values, for instance, the concept of "making foreign concepts to serve China", and trying to implement these principles into their daily work.

#### **8.4.4 Economic Globalisation and Cultural**

##### **Globalisation**

Certainly, this localisation movement by Chinese lifestyle magazine journalists has more aspects. One of them is the spirited competition from the magazine industry pushing local magazine elites not only to translate and transform their foreign magazine contents and brand principles into a Chinese context but also the need to localise contents, competitively and freshly. These could be categorised as problems of economic globalisation. Throughout the branding system, competition occurs not only between the local brand and their local competitors, but also between the same brands in

different locations globally. Particularly in magazines, such as *Vogue* or *Cosmopolitan*, the Chinese pass their copyright expenses on to their international colleagues when using their partner's photos and texts, but they also try to sell photos and texts made by Chinese professionals to other countries to make a profit. From this competition, localised contents and creativity are also an important method of making profits. Under this umbrella, the branding of a magazine only remains to keep "the spirit of the brand", or maybe more importantly to keep the copy of business structure. Therefore, localising all the contents and other business materials seems more important, so that globalisation on magazine branding should only be treated as an ideological form: the real inherent order being localisation.

On the popular level, fashion and consumerism is a global culture and separated by the global culture from the western world. Under certain cultural conditions, the fashion industry and luxury goods are carried by fashion or consumer media which communicate with the global population; the magazine is the most chosen medium. Alongside the extension of the Western consumer or fashion magazines, the localised process around the world is also carried by localised consumer or fashion magazines. China is a case point in under this condition. In this sense, media globalisation also links up with cultural globalisation. So, discussions about the localisation of fashion or lifestyle magazines should also examine the localisation of global culture. Here, arguably, cultural diversity is a force to manage the localisation of Western fashion or lifestyle magazines in China. In the face of the emerging global culture, cultural diversity in Chinese lifestyle magazines appears in journalism culture. In other words, the seeking of professionalisation among Chinese

lifestyle journalists created resistance to the Western media globalised process. “Independence” and “creativity” are two essential elements of this professionalisation, which required Chinese media professionals not to accept the whole issue of anti-globalisation of media.

To summarize, the localised process carried by localised lifestyle magazines in China is a contribution by Chinese lifestyle magazine journalism, which can be analysed as proof of media internationalisation. This research has found a new angle to explore the media internationalisation process.

## **8.5 Chinese Journalism in Transition and New Consumerism journalism**

Chinese Journalism study as a paradigm of journalism study has made several achievements in recent years.

Firstly, it is widely researched by various books, paper, dissertations and presentations in the Western world, as one branch of global journalism studies. Secondly, findings proved Chinese journalism is also “a familiar pattern in which commercial media controllers keep their heads down, and avoid political retribution, by mixing tame journalism with profitable entertainment” (Tumber, 2008: 31). Lastly, all the studies examined Chinese journalism under political economic communications theories and Chinese media reform processes.

This research also follows all these routines. The differences, however, between this study and others are threefold.

First of all, this study focuses on commercial journalism rather than political journalism, so the findings contribute a new paradigm to existing studies among Chinese journalism. In this sense, the new elements involved with this new paradigm were examined in the study. Like other journalism categories, commercial journalism (market-driven journalism), tried to preserve traditional journalistic values, like editorial autonomy and society service within this new paradigm. Magazine journalism also tried to preserve itself as consumer-oriented journalism rather than pure profit pursuer. Magazine professionals in China prefer to be called press workers rather than PR people, as they believe they will gain more respects from the former. Another point, as discussed in Chapter 7, is that before joining consumer magazines, most of the senior lifestyle magazine journalists previously reported “hard” news as serious journalists in other print media forms, and then brought their self-respectability to the new occupation of lifestyle journalism. However, since lifestyle journalism is largely ignored by journalism studies, this phenomenon is also largely ignored by previous studies.

From this point of view, this research contributes an understanding of lifestyle journalism in China which is original and a valuable exemplar in a consumer society.

Secondly, Chinese lifestyle magazine journalism is also in transition. The 1990s was the time for lifestyle journalism to learn how to report news, how to structure the media operating dynamics, how to operate the technical machinery and how to satisfy the organisations’ business requirements while simultaneously serving society. Most of these skills and concepts came from international magazine organisations. However, from 2002 until the present, with the lifestyle magazine solidly founded on technical foundations,

Chinese magazine professionals found they needed to construct self-identifications. The new motivation model in the lifestyle magazine industry also meant these professionals tended to make more rational choices. This is because, during this period, the reform of Chinese media led all the media organisations facing commercial forces in the news business to embrace the new phenomena of profit-driven journalism. As a result, the main concern of media professionals was the financial promotion of their career as a Chief-Editor in an international magazine brand, instead of traditional promotion as a state official. Certainly, like the discussions and critiques in the US and Europe, the increasing commercialisation of journalism leads media professionals to be often more concerned with profits than with journalistic values. However, as Fengler and Ruß-Mohl (2008:682) pointed, “journalists can be described as rational actors seeking to promote their own interests, reacting to material and non-material incentives and rewards”. Therefore, individualism and internationalisation are seen as the two main characteristics of this new paradigm of journalism.

Thirdly, the implication of this magazine journalism paradigm is highly significant. If this new paradigm of lifestyle magazine journalism is called “new consumerism journalism”, the model not only contributes a new category, but also a new trend of journalists’ practices. Global consumerism is a new trend in 21<sup>st</sup> century as the world population becomes increasingly involved in the materialistic process. The consumer magazine is the main media to satisfy the global population’s needs. Behind the façade of consumerism, the readers are becoming trans-national and cosmopolitan. In China, this is a new social movement. Chinese consumers keen to become familiar with all the international goods and brands, try to buy

goods globally, try to read international media and information news and try to follow fashion's social and cultural trends globally. As a result, trans-nationalism and cosmopolitanism are becoming new characteristics of lifestyle magazine journalists particularly amongst those working in international lifestyle magazines. Thus, "new consumerism journalism" can be described as trans-national and cosmopolitan. Consumerism is also seen as one of these journalists' beliefs both in the workplace and life experience.

However, all these aspects position today's lifestyle magazine journalism distinctively among other journalism genres in China. The magazine journalists' ethics, professional identities, news values, and editorial autonomy all come from the new characteristics of internationalism, consumerism, cosmopolitanism, and reality. Unlike other characteristics, none of these have been researched before, and this thesis fills a gap between scholars' interests and current reality.

## **8.6 Strength and Weakness of the Research**

The strength of the research is, as discussed in this chapter, based on the contributions to media theories including journalism theory and globalisation theory. Nevertheless, primary information of magazine journalists' practice and rich insights into the Chinese lifestyle magazine industry's productions and management systems are seen as contributing to a better understanding of Chinese media.

The Chinese media system is one of the most complicated media systems in the world. The various media formats have diverse and contrasting appearances in both policy and practice, and the media systems in the centre and the regions have different regulations and

environments. Very few studies have focused on the magazine industry, even the consumer magazine.

In this study, the Researcher provides a wide-range of interviews and discussions of Chinese consumer magazine journalism, draws the whole picture of Chinese magazine industry from a media production angle, extends the boundary of journalism study of professional progress from hard news to entertaining news and contributes a brand new example to media internationalisation theory.

The ten years from the late 1990s to the late 2000s are seen as a new transition period for Chinese society. The encounter with international forces, especially invasive western cultures and the plunder of capital, is factual and also a force making Chinese society change. Media is one of the important enlightenment vehicles in China, and thus journalists play a prominent role in both the new and older societies, in both changing and making progress. The Researcher used lifestyle magazines and magazine journalists to explore the transition from authoritarian to modernization.

This study, however, witnesses the reality of the Chinese lifestyle magazines in the past ten years, and also the related changes and development of the lifestyle magazines within the broad social, economic and cultural transition in China. This is the second strength of this research. The change is not only investigated from media production, but also from media professionals, from their ideology and daily practices. Understanding the change both from production and producers can give a clue to understanding the media effort in China.

Certainly, just as the strengths of this study are clear, so too are the weaknesses, which can be delineated from the three perspectives: temporal, geographical and personal contact.

The research investigates the lifestyle magazine journalists' practices in the last ten years, but it focuses on the most recent three to five year period. A ten year period, compared to a five year period, has a broader number of aspects to be researched. This is because Chinese media is changing very rapidly and as with other social phenomena, all the phenomena are interconnected through resemblance and succession. Thus, if this study could be extended to ten years in order to address social change in China in that period, the way the magazine reflects the social and cultural change should be even clearer than at present.

Secondly, this research was conducted in Beijing, the capital city of China. Although in China, the lifestyle magazine is distributed throughout the state, and is treated as a national media, the ideology and practice of journalism in Beijing, which represents the north and Shanghai which represents south, still have some differences. The core difference is that journalists in Beijing are more concerned about political and ideological issues, whereas journalists in the south pay more attention to business and reality. If from the beginning of the research, the Researcher could have designed this study with more geographic locations, the results may have revealed more interesting differences.

The third weakness is the issue of the Researcher's personal contacts. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Researcher worked in the Chinese media industry for more than ten years, and many of the interviewees are the Researcher's friends or colleagues. Although the Researcher believes their responses were honest and truthful,



they may have hidden responses they did not believe sounded noble or sufficiently intellectual. They would not want to be seen as a person who had lost their ideals. A research questionnaire could have avoided this weakness.

## **8.7 Further Research**

As discussed in Chapter 4, this research encountered many problems. One of them was the difficulty to get permission to do participation observation in any magazine editorial department. This made the research incomplete, because the interview alone is not enough to examine whether the participants are actually practicing what they are saying. In particular, the task of this research was to determine the professional process of magazine journalism in China, so the beliefs and daily practice are the same weight for the research.

Another method, which is very useful to gain the overall opinion of journalists, is the questionnaire, using either or both open-ended and closed questions. Although this research interviewed many key editors and senior magazine professionals, the proportion was very small compared to the total number of journalists who work or have worked in the magazine industry. From this sense, when aiming to discuss professional beliefs and ethics, a questionnaire is the best tool. However, questionnaires need both time and a budget; neither of which were available for this PhD thesis.

For further research, these two methods should be designed to investigate magazine journalism professionalisation.

The lifestyle magazine in China is a complex and interesting topic. The angle of doing research on journalism practice is only one aspect.

According to journalism practice, examining the whole consumer magazines' journalism practices is also necessary and interesting. The reason behind this is that lifestyle magazines, particularly these international brand magazines, are only the top tier of the whole consumer magazine industry. In China, international involvement in the consumer magazine sector consists of no more than 100 titles, but according to the state's records, there were more than 3,000 in 2009. These 100 titles do represent an advanced paradigm of magazine journalism, but drawing a complete picture of China's contemporary magazine journalism, in its entirety, is also necessary and would help to generate an overall conclusion. Therefore, further research should investigate the professional process of the entire corps of journalists in the consumer magazine industry.

Secondly, in the context of journalism studies, examining the production of lifestyle magazines is also an important factor, which can improve, modify or negate findings of this research. This is because examining production would trace the editorial belief and thought. Therefore, performing content analyses would also broaden this research. Most importantly, examining the editorial page would be very useful material to investigate the change in an editor's thoughts over a five to ten year period. On a very personal point, this sort of investigation is as important as one-to-one interviews with editors. Arguably, content analysis also can be used to examine consumer magazines' culture and gain an understanding of readers and magazine professionals. The latter is a very important investigation of the magazine's cultural power in Chinese society. Understanding magazine society in China is also a broad task and would be very interesting.

Thirdly, the format of contemporary magazines does not have a universally accepted definition. If the research broadens to include lifestyle magazine practices of lifestyle newspapers with lifestyle media practices, examining and compared lifestyle newspapers' journalistic practices is also necessary. In China, for instance, *Lifestyle* – a weekly newspaper in Beijing and *Shenjiang Times* in Shanghai are highly popular lifestyle newspapers in their respective cities. These newspapers use 65 or 80 gsm paper, sometimes even binding, which makes their appearance slightly different to lifestyle magazines. Furthermore, from features to columns, these lifestyle newspapers also base their contents on consumer news, fashion news and information, feature their readers as metropolitan middle class or white collar professionals, and are no different to lifestyle magazines. So, further research on these lifestyle newspapers' journalistic practices would aid the understanding of the new elements involved in Chinese journalism professionalisation.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

Journalists, not only exist in their work places, but in a broader society. The change of society therefore influences the work of journalists, both in ideology and practice. In this research, the rise of the consumer magazine in China over the past ten years has been the result of the rapid growth of capitalism and the internationalisation of China's economy, culture and society, bringing about the reform of its journalistic practice.

This research contributes to media theories in three ways. Firstly, it broadens journalism studies to include magazine journalism, especially the professional practice of lifestyle magazine journalism,

which has not so far been studied. Secondly, it is an example of the localised media operation of media globalisation. This localisation is based on the efforts of editorial autonomy by local journalists, which is based on the status of cultural, social, and economic circumstances in urban China. Lastly, Chinese lifestyle journalists identify themselves as journalists. This critical act of self-identification allows them to retain their roles of social responsibility and as cultural protectors. This is a form of local power emanating from global media organisations' employees, but not from the Chinese government. From this standpoint, the process of localisation also applies at the individual level.

Furthermore, within the framework of journalism studies, from the perspectives of journalistic values, ethics, and beliefs, consumer magazine journalism is the model of "professional journalism" as Pan and Chan (2003) have discussed, but also made distinct from other professional journalism. Although we may describe lifestyle magazine journalists as profit-driven or market-driven, they have nevertheless tried to preserve traditional journalistic values, such as editorial autonomy and societal service within this new paradigm. They have also tried to preserve themselves as consumer-oriented journalists rather than purely profit-seekers. Nevertheless, the new motivation model in the lifestyle magazine industry has also given these professionals more career choices.

Consumerism as developed in the media field, interpreted as 'News Consumerism', is a new trend in journalistic practice. Through consumerism, Chinese readers are becoming trans-national and cosmopolitan, and so media professionals are also following this trend. In addition, consumerism is seen as one of their beliefs both in these journalists' workplace and daily lives. The elements

involved in this new genre of journalism include financial and operational autonomy from the state and creative independence from international magazine organisations. Moreover, this genre of journalism is a more internationalist, consumerist and cosmopolitan trend compared to other political journalism in China.

Certainly, this research has both strengths and weaknesses. Its strength lies in contributing primary information on magazine journalists' practices and providing rich insights into the Chinese consumer magazine industry's production and management systems, for a better understanding of Chinese media.

In future research, it will be necessary to extend this paradigm into other categories of journalism, for instance, into lifestyle newspaper journalism, or the consumer programmes in broadcast journalism, to gain an overall picture of the genre of "New Consumerist Journalism". Studies applying different research methods could certainly develop this study in much greater detail and with more logical results.

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# Appendix I

## Sampled Media Organisations

China Interactive Media Group: Chinese private company, publishes *Time Out*, *iLook* and *Seventeen*.

Condé Nast International: co-operates with China Pictorial Publishing House, owns *Vogue*, *Self*, and *GQ*.

Figaro Group (France): co-operates with Zhuiqiu and other Chinese magazine publishing houses, published *Madame Figaro* magazine several times from 1990s to 2000s in China.

Hachette Filipacchi Medias (HFM): French Media Group, owns *Elle*, *CAD (Car & Driver)*, *Friend of Health (Woman's Day)*, *Marie Claire*, *25ans*, *Psychologies*, *Elle DECO*, and *Quo* in China.

International Data Group: invests *Computer World* and other 32 titles Business to Business magazines in China.

Rayli Group: China Light Industry Press co-operates with both Shufunotomo (Japan) and Gruner & Jahr (G&J) (Germany), owns *Rayli Her Style*, *Rayli Fashion & Beauty*, *Rayli Deco*, and *Rayli Lovely Pioneer*, *Parents*, *Fitness*, and *Car and Motor*, and *Leon*.

Stock Exchange Media Council (SEEC): owns *Caijing*, *Securities Market Weekly*, *New Real Estate*, *Successful Marketing* and the Chinese edition of *PC Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*.

Trends Media Group (TMG): co-operates with IDG (International Data Group) and Hearst Magazine International(US), owns *Cosmopolitan*, *Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, *Good House-keeping*, *Cosmo Girl*, *FHM*, *Robert Report* and *National Geography*, *Trends Home*, *Trends Time*, *Trends Food and Wine*, *Trends Auto*, *Trends Bride*.

*Sports Illustrated*: launch by *China Sports Daily* (Magazine Issue Number), *SEEC* (Chinese media group) and *Time Warner Co.* in June, 2006.

## Appendix II

### Interviewee

1. Eckart Bollmann, Executive Board, Bauer Publishing Group, 12-05-2007, Beijing.
2. Brian Chen, AD Director, Trends-*Men's Health*, 21-01-2007, Beijing.
3. Xin Chen, Director of Editor, *Self (China)*, Conde Nast, 22-07-2006, 16-01-2007, Beijing.
4. Xinming Cheng, Senior Editor, *Ming Weekly*, MingBao Group, 29-01-2007, Beijing.
5. Yan Chen, Publisher, *Hello (China)*, 11-01-2007, Beijing.
6. JianGuo Cheng, AD Director, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 07-08-2006, Beijing.
7. Thomas D. Gorman, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, *Fortune (China)*, CCI Asia-Pacific Limited, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
8. Grace Ge, Publisher, *Bride (China)*, 02-02-2007, Beijing.
9. XiaoGuang Gu, Chief Executive Editor, *Digital Library Forum*, 18-01-2007, Beijing.
10. YouXiang Guo, Vice Chief-Editor, *Lifestyle*, 16-08-2006, Beijing.
11. ChengWei He, Publisher, *Story Teller*, 15-05-2007, Beijing.
12. Lei Hong, Editor, *Marie Claire (China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 21-12-2006, Beijing.
13. Fei Hou, Basketball Editor, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 08-08-2006, Beijing.
14. HaiYun Hu, Vice- Executive Editor, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 09-08-2006, Beijing.
15. Zhong Hu, President, Paper Tiger Ltd., 2-02-2007, Beijing.
16. Cuodao Jin, Senior Writor, *DigiTimes*, 29-12-2006, Beijing.

17. ShouMa (Jacky Jin), Assistant of Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Trends-*FHM*, 10-01-2007, 17-05-2007, Beijing.
18. Susie Lee, Manager Director, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 07-08-2006, 08-08-2006, Beijing. 09-11-2007, London.
19. Adam Li (Ergang Li), Publisher, *DigiTimes*, 29-12-2006, Beijing.
20. ChunYa Li, Executive Vice President, Beijing Rayli Magazine House, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
21. ChuJuan Li, Fashion Editor, *Self (China)*, Conde Nast, 16-01-2007, Beijing.
22. Pin Li, President, China Periodical Research Institution, 08-08-2006, 16-11-2006, 08-02-2007, 18-08-2007, Beijing.
23. Wen Li, Chief Reporter, *Vogue (China)*, Conde Nast, 24-12-2006, Beijing.
24. Yan Li, Editor, China Periodical Association, 12-05-2007, 15-05-2007, Beijing.
25. GuoWei Liu, AD Director, *Lifestyle*, 17-08-2006, 11-01-2007, Beijing.
26. JianXue Liu, Circulation Manager, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 07-08-2006, Beijing.
27. Jiang Liu, Publisher, Trends Media Group, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
28. KangNing Liu, Editor, *Marie Claire (China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 21-12-2006, Beijing.
29. SanTian Liu, Director-in-Chief, *China News Weekly*, 14-07-2006, 19-11-2006, 19-01-2007, Beijing.
30. YiNa Liu, Vice-director, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing Group, 18-01-2007, Beijing.
31. YongMei Liu, Senior Editor, *Marie Claire (China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 17-01-2007, Beijing.

32. Jing Lu, Feature Editor, *Sports Illustration (China)*, SEEC, 08-08-2006, Beijing.
33. XiMing Lu, Chief of Guangdong Periodical Association; Vice-President, Guangdong Publishing Group, 02-02-2007, Beijing.
34. Lan Ma, Ads & Promotion Executive, China DTV Media Inc., Ltd. 15-12-2006, Beijing.
35. XueFen Ma, Editor-in-Chief, *China Book Business Report*, 13-05-2007, Beijing.
36. YanHui Pan, Chief-in-Editor, Zcom EM, 18-01-2007, Beijing.
37. Wei Pang, Publisher, Dadao, 17-12-2006, Beijing.
38. ChangCheng Peng, Publisher, *Readers*; Vice-President CPA, 12-02-2007, Beijing.
39. Lin Shan, Vice Editor in Chief, *Tour*, 27-12-2006, Beijing.
40. Hao Song, Vice Director, Guangdong Publishing Group, 02-02-2007, Beijing.
41. Jeffery Sprafkin, Managing Partner, Media Pacific Co., Ltd, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
42. Zoe Tang, Secretary, FIPP Beijing 2007 Organisation Committee, 01-02-2007, 13-05-2007, 15-05-2007, Beijing.
43. Murphy Qi, Managing Director, *Better Homes and Garden (China)*, SEEC, 16-01-2006, Beijing.
44. FuGang Qiao, Vice President, *Lifestyle*, 20-08-2006, Beijing.
45. Feng Wang, Editor-in-Chief, *Trends-Esquire*, 22-12-2006, Beijing.
46. Kun Wang, Feature Editor, *Marie Claire(China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 11-12-2006, Beijing.
47. HanFeng Wei, Executive Editor, *Sports Illustration (China)*, 09-08-2006, Beijing.

48. Peng Wei, Editor in Chief, *Trendsnewsletter*, 16-01-2007, Beijing.
49. Hong Wu, President, Trends Media Group, 21-12-2006, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
50. Hong Xia, CEO, X-Plus, 10-01-2007, Beijing.
51. JingHui Xiao, Senior Editor, *Media*, 20-01-2007, Beijing.
52. Rong Xiao, Senior Editor, Women Publish House, 19-08-2006, 16-12-2006, 15-05-2007, Beijing.
53. Fang Xu, Vice Publisher, *Lifestyle Media Group*, 29-01-2007, Beijing.
54. Lie Xu, Exective vice Editor, *South People Weekly*, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
55. Lang Yang, Vice-Present, SEEC, 18-11-2006, Beijing.
56. Lin Yao, Senior Research Consultant of Media & Brand Research, CTR Market Research, 10-08-2006, Beijing.
57. Wei Yi, Publisher, GJ China, 19-12-2006, 29-01-2007, Beijing.
58. Yan Yin, Publisher, *Elle(China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 29-01-2007, Beijing.
59. GuoMing Yu, Deputy Director, School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China, 19-07-2006, 08-01-2007, Beijing.
60. Horse Zhan, Strategy Director, Wishine Marketing Consulting, 31-01-2007, Beijing.
61. BoHai Zhang, Chief of China Periodical Association, 06-04-2006, 07-07-2006, 12-12-2006, 17-05-2007, Beijing.
62. Gang Zhang, Executive Editor, *China Enterpriser*, 29-01-2007, Beijing.
63. GuanRen Zhang, Editor, *Maxim (China)*, 21-11-2006, Beijing.
64. Ling Zhang, Editor, *Maxim*, 12-01-2007, Beijing.

65. LiXian Zhang, Publisher, *DuKu*, 14-04-2006, Beijing.
66. Lesley Zhang, Assistant of Chief Editor, *Vogue (China)*, Conde Nast, 22-11-2006, Beijing.
67. Lynne Zhang, Assistant Publisher, Director of International Business Department, Trends Group, 25-07-2006, 17-05-2007, 19-08-2007, Beijing.
68. MengYing Zhang, Senior Art Designer, *Marie Claire(China)*, Hachette Filipacchi Medias, 14-12-2006, Beijing.
69. XiaoQiang Zhang, Researcher, China Social Academic Institution, 07-07-2006, 13-12-2006, 05-02-2007, 13-05-2007, Beijing.
70. Yan Zhang, Editor, *Vision*, 31-01-2007, Beijing.
71. XueDong Zhu, Chief-Editor, *South Windy Window*, 02-02-2007, 14-05-2007, Beijing.
72. Rui Zuo, Feathur Editor, *Sports Illustration (China)*, 07-08-2006, Beijing.