

# Reading Men's Lifestyle Magazines in Contemporary China

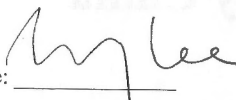
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## Declaration

I, Tracy Kwok-fong Lee, declare that this thesis is my original work, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature: 

Date: 31/10/2013





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## Abstract

Men's lifestyle magazines came to China at the turn of the 21st century, as a result of commercialisation and the globalisation of the media. These publications have prospered in the last decade along with the emergence of a new "middle class" in China and their pursuit and imagination of a consumerist lifestyle. Reflecting dynamic negotiation and hybridisation between global and local discourses, the men's lifestyle magazine, as a form of popular culture, points to new possibilities of gender and sexuality in post-socialist China. In particular, targeting the newly emerged social elite, these magazines construct and promote a new mode of masculinity that is characterised by hedonism, consumerism, and cosmopolitanism. The thesis develops a framework for understanding men's lifestyle magazines in China by focusing on this new mode of manhood, which, as an aspirational model, represents a new Chinese masculinity that is significantly different from both the Confucian and Maoist discourses. At the centre of the discourse of consumerist masculinity is the pursuit of a *pinwei* [good taste] lifestyle which readers render modern and Westernised and is closely associated with a middle-class identity and fantasy.

As an interdisciplinary study of men's magazines in China, the thesis uses research methods of both media studies and gender studies. From the perspective of media studies, it investigates the ownership patterns of the magazines, i.e., local copyright ownership versus

shared copyright ownership and compares these ownership combinations with overseas magazines. I also compare the local produced and copyright-cooperated magazines in terms of their representations of lifestyle, masculinity and consumerism. Based on interviews and surveys with magazine editors and readers, my research examines the production, reception and interpretation of these magazines and how they construct and promote the male images. The study also compares Chinese editions of international titles such as *For Him Magazine (FHM)* and *Esquire* with their Western counterparts and considers the localisation of Western hegemonic masculinity in China. The social and ideological context of post-socialist China has embedded the distinctive “Chinese characteristics” of the magazines, namely elitism and nationalism. In terms of gender studies theory, my research interprets different types of spectatorship of the body in the magazines and examines the cultural habitus of the new “middle class” as desiring subjects.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

In the cultural landscape of contemporary China, the rise of men's magazines in recent years is an interesting and significant phenomenon, which has not yet received much scholarly attention. Although men's lifestyle magazines have a long history in Western countries, they have only emerged in China over the past 14 years. Since the first men's lifestyle magazine appeared on the market in 1999, there has been a proliferation of titles. Currently, there are at least 14 men's lifestyle titles circulating nationally in China. Targeting affluent and professional males in their late twenties to early forties, these new magazines have contributed to the construction of a modern masculine image in contemporary China: a stylish new man with a hedonistic lifestyle partaking of high levels of consumption. The central objectives of this thesis are to map out changes in the discourse on masculinity in contemporary China by viewing men's magazines as a "mobilizing force of crucial cultural shifts in masculinity" (Benwell, 2003, p. 7) and to explore the consumerist masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines as a new mode of manhood and a product of the commercialisation of Chinese society.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive study of men's magazines in China to use the research methods of both gender studies and media studies. From the perspective of

media studies, my research investigates the ownership patterns of Chinese men's magazines, namely, local copyright ownership versus shared copyright ownership with established overseas magazines. The two types of magazines are compared in terms of discourses on lifestyle, masculinity and consumerism. The present study will also be the first to investigate how readers receive and interpret men's lifestyle magazines in China. In terms of gender theory, the study examines men's lifestyle magazines' role in the construction of new modes of masculine thought, values and behaviour. The magazines' editorial content and advertisements have contributed to ideals of manliness, focusing on images of wealthy, metrosexual and hedonistic new men. These ideals and images are totally different from those that prevailed in both imperial and Maoist China.

Three types of publications come under the rubric "men's magazines" in the West, summarised by Edwards (1997):

a list of fully style-conscious and self-conscious general interest magazines aimed directly and overtly at a male readership, including *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Arena*, *For Him Magazine (FHM)*, *Loaded*, and *Maxim*; a series of supposedly more specific periodicals with a more open readership that carry regular features concerning men's style and fashion, including *Attitude*, *i-D*, *The Face*, *The Clothes Show Magazine*, *XL*, and *Men's Health*; and lastly, a gargantuan group of men's interest magazines that

covertly target men as their primary readership group, including car, computing, photographic, sport, and technical titles (Edwards 1997, p. 76).

In this study, “men’s lifestyle magazines” mainly refer to the first group of magazines, i.e. the style-conscious and self-conscious general interest type. The discussion, therefore, does not include magazines of special genres and categories, such as finance, automobile, real estate, military, computer, and sports magazines that are also targeted at male readers and are read mostly by men. The study focuses on men’s lifestyle magazines in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and does not include men’s magazines published in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, or other Chinese-speaking communities. However, the study does involve content comparisons with some Taiwanese and Japanese, as well as Western (Australian and British) editions of international titles.

Men’s lifestyle magazines came to China as both products and transmitters of the global, neoliberal ideology of consumerism. At the centre of this form of popular culture is the “increasing construction of masculinity according to commodities” (Edwards, 1997, p. 76). It is, thus, most interesting to explore how this global version of consumerist masculinity, or as Connell and Woods (2005) put it, the “transnational business masculinity” (p. 347), negotiates and interacts with local and traditional discourse on masculinity in Chinese society.



This dissertation develops a framework for understanding men's lifestyle magazines in China by focusing on the following research questions:

1. What ideals and images of masculinity are found in men's magazines in China? To what extent are these influenced by foreign cultures?
2. How do the ideals of masculinity in the lifestyle magazines embody the neoliberal ideology of consumption, and how do they differ from Maoist and Confucian ideals?
3. How is the body represented in the magazines? How does this representation of the body demonstrate different possibilities of gender and sexuality in post-socialist China?
4. Do magazines play a powerful role in constructing masculinity? And how do magazine readers interpret the images of masculinity in the magazines?

The main arguments developed in the thesis are, first of all, that men's lifestyle magazines emerged in China as a result of globalization and consumerism. Second; these magazines construct a new type of manhood, quite different from Confucian and Maoist ideals—a consumerist masculinity, which serves as an aspirational model for most of their readers. At the centre of the discourse on masculinity propounded by these magazines is the pursuit of a lifestyle defined by *pinwei* or “good taste”, which is seen as modern and

westernised by readers and is closely associated with a middle-class identity. Reflecting dynamic negotiation and hybridization between global and local discourses, the men's lifestyle magazine, as a form of popular culture, points to new possibilities of gender and sexuality in post-socialist China.

The remainder of this introduction is divided into four parts. In the first part, I discuss the emergence of Chinese masculinities as a field of study in the 2000s. Part 2 reviews existing research on men's lifestyle magazines across the world, and Part 3 provides an historical account of the emergence of men's lifestyle magazines in China, and some basic information about the magazines that are the subject of this study. Part 4 introduces the methodology of the present study and provides a chapter outline.

### **Chinese Masculinities as a Field of Study**

Over the last decade, Chinese masculinity has emerged as a significant field of study. A group of articles, mainly by cultural historians, on masculinity in Chinese culture appeared in a forum entitled "Gender and Manhood in Chinese History", published in 2000 by the *American Historical Review*. By focusing primarily on various kinds of male relationships in China from imperial times up until the 1940s, the five studies in the forum show that the activities of men, no less than those of women, have a gendered dimension and a gendered

history. Another two important studies appeared in the new millennium: Xueping Zhong's *Masculinity Besieged?* (2000) and Kam Louie's *Theorizing Masculinity* (2002). Both studies focused on 20<sup>th</sup> China, however, I believe Louie's study is more important to my research and thus I have elaborated Louie's study more than Zhong's. Zhong's study examined men's representations in the literature of the 1980s to investigate how the pursuit of modernity has informed changes in male subjectivity—the male's sense of himself—and how such changes have, in turn, informed the relationships among men, masculinity and modernity. The study conducted by Louie, on the other hand, aimed to use the dyad *wen-wu* as a framework for understanding masculinity in both pre-modern and modern China, rejecting the conventional *yin-yang* binary of traditional Chinese thought. While both *wen* and *wu* are used to describe a man's characteristics, *wen* describes the cultured or civil aspect and, at the same time, incorporating his refined qualities. On the other hand, *wu* refers to a man's physical attributes and in particular, his physical strength or prowess. Louie (2002) believed that the dyad *wen-wu* was "one of the single most important Chinese paradigms explaining the performance of gendered identities—in particular masculinity" (p. 4). As he stated, "Male leaders of every persuasion and historical period therefore try to demonstrate both *wen* and *wu* prowess. That is, all ambitious males strive for both *wen* and *wu*, and those who achieve both are great ones. Lesser men may achieve only one or the

other, but even their partial success will bestow upon them the aura of masculinity, and the right to rule over a certain domain, however small” (Louie, 2002, p. 17).

According to Louie, the *wen-wu* dyad is not only relevant to historical figures such as Confucius and Guan Yu, fictional figures like Wu Song, and the protagonists in the stories written by Lao She and Zhang Xianliang, but also to characters in modern films portrayed by Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Chow Yun Fat. Regarding the contemporary consumer masculinity, Louie (2002) asserted the following:

With the advent of the consumer society in the late twentieth century, the traditional predominance of the *wen* over *wu* within the *wen-wu* model is further destabilized. Capitalism is concerned with production and profits. Male ideals are increasingly imbued with buying power. The result is that images of masculinity are moving away from their traditional core attributes of literary and cultural learning and martial expertise (p. 161). This is in line with the consumerist masculinity being discussed in this thesis.

One of the first works to study masculinity in pre-modern China from a theoretically informed perspective was Song Geng's *The Fragile Scholar* (2004). He employed the *yin-yang* dichotomy to point out that Chinese masculinity was primarily power-based rather than sex-based in traditional Chinese society. According to Song, *yin-yang* refers to

“different subject positions in a political culture that defined people’s social being and even their inner sense of themselves” (p. 13). His main argument is that “masculinity” in pre-modern China was conceived as a hierarchy of social and political power in a homosocial context, but not constructed as the repudiation of femininity. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the power-based discourse on masculinity still has its currency in today’s China. However, different from the men with textual power in traditional society, nowadays, men with wealth and economic power are represented as the ideal men in popular discourse. This phenomenon also explains the absence of lower class pornographic magazines in China because of the lack of consuming power among lower class men, a point I will take up in Chapter Two.

Baranovitch’s study (2003) on popular music in post-Mao China is significant too. Baranovitch devoted a chapter to gender construction and negotiation in post-revolutionary popular music culture, in which he discussed the popular musical expression of gender, for example, the link between Chinese rock-n-roll and (Western) masculinity and modernity, the so-called 1990s “neotraditional mode of manhood” and the empowerment of women by commercialisation. Baranovitch provided a neotraditional image of a male with qualities that have been “traditionally regarded in both the West and China as essentially feminine: sentimental, fragile, passive and gentle that he does not even dare to face his lost love”

(2003, p.134).

Nevertheless, there is a gap in empirical research on masculinity in contemporary Chinese society, especially of studies that regard masculinities as a set of competing constructions. All the above-mentioned studies shared a common interest in eagerly finding the “differences” in gender construction between Chinese and Western cultures, assuming a fixed, monolithic and unchanging “Chinese masculinity”. As Lo (2004) points out “[i]n a rapidly globalizing Asian environment, the simple East-West dichotomy and confrontation is insufficient in regional gender studies, as is the sheer assertion of some uniquely Asian realities” (p. 265).

### **Post-Mao Chinese Masculinities**

As noted above, the consumerist masculinity promoted in Chinese men’s magazines is a new kind of manhood, different from Confucian and Maoist ideals. The Confucian ideal of manhood emphasised fulfilling one’s social obligations to family and state. As Song (2004) stated:

the Confucian prescriptions for a real man include filial piety to his parents, obligations to family (among them the most important one is the ability to carry on the family line), and above all, loyalty and contribution to the sovereign and state. In other words,

masculinity is not defined by a man's relations with his woman, but by his relations with the political mechanism. For Chinese men, manhood is the ability to honor their family name and achieve fame in serving the state. This is to be accomplished in the public world. It is therefore not difficult to understand why sexuality was absent in the construction of masculinity in the heroic discourse" (pp. 171-172).

The Maoist period, on the other hand, was known for the advocacy of a desexualised and politicised male body; mighty workers, soldiers and peasants in propaganda posters represented these ideals. Among the political figures, the most well-known one was the heroic soldier Lei Feng, who in his diary compared a person's role in society to that of one screw in a large machine (Landsberger, 2001, p. 550). Even today, the state uses "learning from Lei Feng" and Lei's self-effacing and self-sacrificing images for propaganda purposes, although these images have been re-styled in order to fit contemporary Chinese society. For example, "he has appeared as a homeowner, as the possessor of a savings account and was even touted as a possible patron saint of private entrepreneurs" (Landsberger, 2001, p. 555). Lei's masculinity is a highly politicised, disciplined and idealised model of manhood. In today's China, as Landsberger (2001) has argued, Lei's model behaviour has been seriously out of sync for some time. The stylish, muscular and metrosexual male models in men's magazines have replaced Lei Feng as the new-era

models of masculinity.

In 1980s China, there was unprecedented questioning of men's (gender and sexual) identity. For example, in the early 1980s, two female writers, Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin, adopted a critical view of men in their stories concerning the relationship between the opposite sexes. The story *Fang zhou* [*The Ark*] written by Zhang Jie (1982) portrayed the struggles of three middle-aged women with men at work and at home. In her many stories about the relationship between the two sexes—such as *Wo zai na'er cuoguo le ni?* [*How Did I Miss You?*] in 1980 and *Zai tongyi dipingxian shang* [*On the Same Horizon*] in 1981—Zhang Xinxin questioned the incapability of men to treat “strong” women on equal terms. “*Xunzhao nanzihan*” [*Searching for real men*] was a predominant theme in both intellectual discourse and popular culture in the 1980s. For example, *Xunzhao nanzihan* [*Searching for real men*—an influential 1986 play by male playwright, Sha Yexin—attempted to explore men's images in urban China at that time through a young woman's search for her ideal partner, who

should be one of paramount virtues of manhood, one of virility and manly physique. He

should not only be an ideal man but most importantly the backbone of the nation, a role

model for others to follow. He should by implication be an embodiment of accepted



social values (Chen, 1996, p. 1).

“Manliness” took on implications of being tough, independent and rebellious—a striking contrast to the asexual, politically conformist and selfless revolutionary hero of the Maoist era.

In addition, many post-Cultural Revolution literary works showed a preoccupation with and anxiety over the emasculation and sexual impotence of Chinese men, supposedly resulting from Chinese Communist Party political oppression. One of the earliest and most popular works exploring masculinity and male sexuality is Zhang Xianliang’s novel *Nanren de yi ban shi nuren* [*Half of Man is Woman*], published in 1985, in which the dysfunctional protagonist, a male intellectual, suffers from a “mental castration” because of the repression of the Communist regime. Avery (1988), who translated the novel into English, believed that the author was criticising China’s political system for “de-sexing” its people. The system had

not only instilled in its people profound distrust, which ranges from distrust of the Government to distrust of one’s own relatives, it has castrated the will of people to stand up for themselves. They have been made both mentally and physically impotent.

In *Half of Man is Woman*, Zhang wonders if China’s entire intellectual community has

not been emasculated (Avery, 1988).

Besides Zhang Xianliang, Jia Pingwa and the winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in literature, Mo Yan, are two prominent male writers who have dealt with the theme of male anxiety in their works. For example, the protagonist in Jia Pingwa's novel *Feidu* [*Defunct Capital*], Zhuang Zhidie, is known for being effeminate and even genderless. His impotence functions as a symbol in the national search for China's potency. As Wang Yiyuan (2006) stated, "gender identity remains an important aspect in the symbolism of the Chinese nation" (p. 91). During the 1980s, a close connection was established between the search for masculinity among Chinese intellectuals and the *Xungen* [Root-Seeking] cultural movement. As Zhong (2000) defined it, *Xungen* [Root-Seeking] literature emerged in the 1980s when a group of young male writers "searched for alternative cultural roots by turning to other versions of Chinese culture they believed to have been marginalized or repressed by the official or mainstream culture" (p. 154). Ji Hongzhen, a Chinese critic, believed that the history of China in the twentieth century, mixed with the "ignorance that exists in the rural society" and the "hypocrisy found in urban civilization" produced a deep depression in literary writers (1987, p. 23). According to Zhong (2000), the difference between *Xungen* [Root-Seeking] writers and others was that in representing their male characters, the former were "not interested in them as individuals per se, but as part of a

cultural landscape within which the characters interact. *Xungen* literature, in this sense, means a move toward intellectual inquiry into something more general and significant, such as the collective psyche of the Chinese” (pp. 156-7). The theme of dysfunctional masculine sexuality was turned into an allegory representing the fate of the nation as a whole. As Baranovitch (2003) stated,

the Root-Seeking cultural movement was closely tied to China’s opening to the world, especially to the West, and the disappointing realization that China was not the strong, rich nation that people had been made to believe it was during the revolutionary period (p. 128).

It was widely perceived that the Chinese nation had lost its virility due to longstanding political and cultural oppression, and there was an urgent need to revitalise China and revive its masculinity (Baranovitch, 2003). In light of this nationalist quest for the revival of Chineseness, many intellectuals and artists turned to primitive Chinese culture for “genuine” Chinese masculinity. Zhang Yimou’s prize-winning film *Hong Gaoliang* (1988) [*Red Sorghum*], based on Mo Yan’s “Root-Seeking” novel of the same name, celebrates the psychical and libidinal liberation of Chinese men. According to Chen (1996), “it shocked the public with its bold expression of unrestrained sexuality and outrageous description of

tough masculinity” (p. 7). The film was so successful and influential that a “Red Sorghum Phenomenon” took place in the country immediately after its screening. As Chen (1996) observed, “with provocative visual images of uninhibited manners of masculinity extolled in drinking, brawling, banditry, and other masculine activities, the film seems to be pandering to male fantasies of domination and potency” (p. 8). The raw and natural masculinities presented in the film were regarded as the stereotypical attributes of men in northwestern China. About the same period, cassettes of pop songs about northwestern China, entitled *Xibeifeng* [*Northwestern Wind*] and *Shaanbei*, gained national popularity. These songs, mostly sung in a hoarse male voice, symbolise the myth of the regained virility of the ancient land. The ideal man was no longer the refined, reserved and effeminate scholar-intellectual type prevalent in traditional Chinese culture, but a projection of primitive vitality.

The trend of “searching for real men”, characterised by criticism of, and disappointment over, Chinese men, as compared to the strong male images borrowed from America and Japan, continued into the 1990s. Some films during this period, such as Xie Fei’s *Xianghun nü* [*Women from the Lake of Scented Souls*], depicted the weakness of men and showed that women were stronger and not satisfied with the quality of their men as compared with Western and Japanese men. As Song noted, “Chinese men have been

disappointingly described as weak, immature, selfish and impotent, while the real masculinity is embodied by Rambo, Takakura Ken and the rural men from China's northwest" (2004, pp. 8-9).

Market reforms gathered speed after Deng Xiaoping visited Shenzhen in 1992 during his southern China inspection tour. With China's accelerated integration into global capitalism since the late 1990s, the influence of the Western "hegemonic masculinity" has become increasingly prominent in popular discourse. "Hegemonic masculinity" is one of the most important concepts in gender studies. Connell (1995) divided masculinities in a given society into three categories: the hegemonic, the subordinate, and the marginalised. He believed that "these two types of relationship—hegemony, or domination/subordination, and complicity on the one hand, and marginalization/authorization on the other—provide a framework in which we can analyse specific masculinities" (p. 81). He defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p.77). Kimmel (1994) further interpreted the hegemonic definition of manhood as "a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power" (p. 125). To be specific, white, middle-class, early middle-aged, heterosexual men represent the hegemonic discourse of masculinity in

contemporary Western society.

In contemporary China, as in the West, wealth, which signifies power, has become a primary criterion of hegemonic masculinity. The prescription for the ideal man is wealth and consumption. New images of successful businessmen, the *da kuan* [literally, big money], have emerged in Chinese popular culture. According to Farrer (2002), “given the identification of masculinity with earnings and career success, men experience tremendous dislocations through the segmentation of the labour market into high-paying and low-paying sectors” (p. 16). The popularity of images of wealthy entrepreneurs as ideal men demonstrates this division in films and television, including television dramas such as *Da ranfang* [*The Big Dye House*] and *Da Zhaimen* [*The Grand Mansion*]. These dramas eulogise the heroic traits and accomplishments of entrepreneurs, and as a consequence, significantly link material success with masculinity. Take *The Big Dye House* (*Da ranfang*), a 24-episode TV drama serial, as an example. It attracted huge ratings when it was shown by CCTV in 2003. The drama centres on the life of a successful entrepreneur in the Republican period (mainly the 1920s-1930s). The protagonist, Chen Shouting, a self-made businessman, is the hero, in contrast to the previous hostile or even disdainful depictions of entrepreneurs in Chinese media. As Song (2010) argues, “a real man is a man who is able to change his (and others’) fate by making a fortune from scratch” (p. 416). In this way, the

material success of a businessman is linked with masculinity, which becomes a new model to be learnt. This supports what Louie (2002) and other scholars have written about the rise of business people as models of masculinity in the post-Mao period.

Although the interaction between the discourse on masculinity and the commercialisation of society has attracted some scholarly attention (see Baranovitch, 2003; Hird, 2009; Song, 2010), researchers have neglected the lifestyle magazine as an important site for the construction of masculinity. As stated above, this thesis seeks to investigate the dynamic interplay between men's lifestyle magazines as a genre of popular culture and the construction of masculinity in popular discourse and commercial undertakings. As Jerome notes:

men's magazines today have become sites of significant inquiry that offer alternative views on the representation and construction of modern male identity as men's magazines have become important sites for men to learn how to become a man in this modern age" (2008, p. 113).

The reason is, as Gauntlett contends, "men's magazines signify the potential for new forms of masculinity to emerge even as [they] are simultaneously reinscribing older and more repressive forms of masculinity" (2002, p. 170). By considering the written and

visual content of these magazines, my study examines the male images in men's lifestyle magazines as a benchmark of masculinity in contemporary China. It argues that the construction of masculinity is based on wealth and consumption, with tinges of traditional Chinese culture reflecting the interplay between global and local forces. This thesis thus fills an important gap in the study of masculinity in contemporary China. Treating gender as an important aspect of identity, I probe into the construction of self in the light of consumerism and globalisation.

### **Existing Research on Men's Lifestyle Magazines**

Unlike the richness of feminist works on women's magazines, studies on men's magazines are much more limited. Most existing studies have examined the editorial content and advertisements in men's magazines circulating in the United States or the United Kingdom. Pioneering studies on men's magazines were conducted by Mort (1988, 1996), in which he claimed that the consumer boom in the 1980s resulted in the emergence of lifestyle magazines like *Arena*, *i-D* and *The Face* in Britain. Mort also discussed the emergence of a homo-social gaze, which is a bond of intimacy between men other than a homosexual gaze, particularly found in the fashion spreads of men's lifestyle magazines. According to Mort, the fashion pages of magazines like *Arena* and *The Face* expressed



new, more sexualised representations of the male body. With their own visual coding, these fashion pages attracted increasing numbers of straight men, in addition to homosexual and bisexual men.

Nixon (1996, 1997) investigated the changes in advertising in men's magazines—the “new visual codings” of masculinity in menswear retailing, advertising and marketing, and magazine culture. He analysed the visual culture by focusing on fashion pictures in men's magazines such as *The Face*, *Arena* and *GQ*. He found that the models presented in the advertising were soft and sexualised, which he believed opened up new and differentiated forms of masculinity. Nixon (1996) stated that the advertising and publishing nexus focusing on new male readers was an important site for the development of men's magazines within a general interest genre. He also pointed out the important correlation between advertising and readership. He believed that in order to create revenue, magazines have to attract advertisers and to attract advertisers they have to have a high-class readership. This point is illustrated in relation to Chinese men's lifestyle magazines in Chapter Two, where I examine the advertisements carried in local and copyright co-operated titles.

Edwards's *Men in the Mirror* (1997), an analysis of the relationship between fashion,

masculinity and a consumer society, was based on the expansion of men's fashion that took place in the 1980s in Britain. Applying a sociological approach to the understanding of men's fashion, Edwards explored how masculinity and men's fashion are constructed, particularly in relation to consumer society. He asserted that it was the expansion in the concept and practice of men's fashion from the mid-1980s that resulted in the emergence of style magazines such as *GQ* and *Arena* in Britain. The study also looked into the representation of men's fashion in the media, particularly the development of men's style magazines such as *GQ* and *Esquire*. He conducted content analyses of six major British men's magazines—namely *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Arena*, *For Him Magazine*, *Loaded* and *Maxim*—to examine the different editorial strategies of these magazines. To do so, advertising content was distinguished from editorial features in the magazines. Then, he created categories within these two groups for easy recognition. Thus, four categories (“fashion”, “technology”, “alcohol/tobacco” and “other”) were defined to cover all the advertising, while ten central categories (“issues”, “fiction”, “interviews”, etc.) were defined to cover all the editorial contents in the magazines. The advertising and editorial pages devoted to the related categories were then added up and converted into percentages. His findings showed that certain men's titles under study displayed a particularly strong emphasis on specific categories. For example, *Esquire* had the highest concentration of

features on serious issues, indicating that it was a magazine of general interest rather than style consciousness. *Loaded* and *Maxim*, on the other hand, had the largest number of features on women and sex. In addition, he also found that these up-market titles were “strongly concerned with the self-conscious marketing and consumption of masculinity and narcissism employed in heavy uses of advertising and features on fashion, lifestyle and appearance” (p. 80). Moreover, his findings illustrated that each of the titles distinguishes itself from the other with its own set of characteristics or values, which centre on a particular construction of masculinity. While his pioneering study is highly illuminating, there are some inadequacies and drawbacks in the design of his table. First, ten categories of editorial features are defined, which is too broad to examine the subtle emphasis of content in each magazine. Second, all of the data is based on only one-issue (May 1995), which is not sufficiently reliable and representative to reflect the general characteristics of a magazine. His study inspired me to conduct a comparative content analysis between the Chinese editions of *FHM* (*Nanren zhuang*) and *Esquire* (*Shishang xiansheng*) with each other on one hand, and these issues with their Western counterparts on the other hand, in terms of discourses on lifestyle, masculinity and consumerism. A content analysis of the same title in two different countries was conducted, as I believed that it would be interesting to see the differences in emphasis and the differentiation of editorial features. In

addition, the content analysis conducted in my study aimed at finding out whether or not there is a different target readership for the same title in these two countries and to what extent the masculinity in the Chinese editions is influenced by its British and American counterparts. In Edwards's study, some editors of the style magazines were interviewed in order to find out their interpretation of, and intentions for, these magazines, which was a good way to receive firsthand information from the production teams of the magazines. Similarly, conducting interviews with magazine editors and publishers was also an important research method for me to collect primary and firsthand information about the magazine industry in China. Edwards argued that the changes in masculinity observable in the magazines had little to do with changing identities in gender, but much more to do with changing commercial cultures. He believed that the perception that the consumer was defined historically as feminine is becoming increasingly displaced and that men are actively involved in all aspects of consumption. This leads to the reconstruction of masculinity through consumption. As stated above, men's lifestyle magazines emerged in China as a result of consumerism and globalisation. In this regard, his argument is relevant to the Chinese context, i.e. the consumerist masculinity promoted by the magazines is a product of commercial culture. However, it is argued in this thesis that the construction of masculinity in contemporary China involves a mix of global and local forces. This is

analysed in Chapter Two from the perspective of cultural hybridity.

Edwards (1997) also pointed out that there are at least five characteristics of British men's lifestyle magazines. First, they are relatively expensive, usually about \$6 for monthly magazines. Second, there is an "overt legitimization of consumption itself as a socially acceptable leisure activity for men and as a symbolic part of a successful lifestyle" (Edwards, 1997, p. 75). He stated that men's magazines in Britain carried a large number of advertisements, ranging from fashion, cosmetics, cars, digital products and the like, leading to the increasing construction of masculinity according to commodities. Third, all of these men's titles target single, young and rich men in urban cities, thus relying on an urban environment for their existence. Fourth, these titles promote "aspirationalism", which can be defined as upward social mobility through consumption patterns. Last, Edwards believed that men's magazines in Britain exhibit a strong heterosexuality, "often with a near-defensive vengeance" (p. 76). He suspected that this was due to "the felt necessity of off-setting the near-pornographic and homoerotic nature of much of the imagery used to advertise products or illustrate features on fashion and style" (p.76-77). In my study, I try to find out whether these characteristics are applicable to their Chinese counterparts.

The three authors mentioned above—Mort, Nixon and Edwards—focused on men's

fashion and the male image in the 1980s, paying very little attention to the subsequent emergence of a different male image in the 1990s. Recent years have seen a burgeoning research interest in this genre of popular culture; and the content of men's lifestyle magazines has also gained certain attention. Most of these studies have centred on the emergence of the "new man" and "new lad" types of masculinity in the West since the 1980s and how these images were constructed through magazines (Benwell, 2002; Beynon, 2002; Edwards, 2003; Gill, 2003). To put it simply, the "new man" of the 1980s refers to men who were more caring, nurturing and sensitive, or else more narcissistic, passive and introspective, while the "new lad" of the 1990s is associated with drinking, sports and sex. To what extent something like the Western "new lad" was also a dominant image of masculinity in the Chinese magazines of the late 1990s, and whether or not one can discern a shift in images of masculinity from the 1990s to the 2000s, are important questions for my thesis that will be discussed in Chapter Two.

As far as methodology is concerned, most of the above-mentioned studies relied heavily on content analysis or semiotics, and failed to account for readers' perception in their studies of men's magazines. Boni (2002), however, incorporated audience perception into his study of the Italian edition of *Men's Health*. He argued that the success of *Men's*

*Health* in Italy was a reflection of men's changing gender roles and identities. Based on his focus group discussions with magazine readers, he also found that global media was representing a single model of masculinity that was hegemonic and globally determined.

Another study that incorporated readers' perceptions into the findings was presented in *Making Sense of Men's Magazines* (Jackson et al., 2001). This study focused on both the gendered and commercial character of these magazines. The study took place in the late 1990s, when the laddish form of the male image replaced the new man in western media. Jackson et al. (2001) argued that members from different classes (defined in terms of their access to economic and cultural capital) had different orientations towards the magazines and it was unhelpful to approach the magazines in terms of a singular moral stance. As one of the first attempts to incorporate audience perception into a study of men's magazines by having focus group discussions with male readers, the researchers examined the way the magazines were read and talked about by different individuals and groups of men, and how they "made sense" of the magazines. The authors argued that "magazines represent a commodification of men's current gender troubles, opening up the potential for radical change but using humour, irony and other devices to distance men from any significant commitment to personal or collective change" (Jackson et al., 2001, p. 22). Another

example of research on men's magazines looking at readers and reception can be found in Benwell's work in 2005. She argued that a study of reader reception can help us to understand the cultural meanings of the discourses in men's magazines. The methods these authors used to obtain readers' opinions on men's magazines so as to understand audience reception form the basis for Chapter Five of this thesis.

*Masculinities and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (2003), a collection edited by Benwell, included essays exploring the production, consumption, and the related constructions of masculinity of the men's lifestyle magazines that were launched in the mid-1980s. Apart from the articles exploring production, the book also provided interdisciplinary studies on men's lifestyle magazines from the fields of sociology, media studies, cultural studies, and linguistics, focusing predominantly on modern British magazines, but also involving a discussion of men's magazines across a range of historical and cultural contexts. The contributors adopted various methods in their studies. The studies on men's magazines from media studies and from different cultural perspectives are relevant to my research, and the interview questions put to editors in this study were used as a reference for my own interviews.

*In Representing Men: Cultural Production and Producers in the Men's Magazine*



*Market*, Crewe (2003) examined the commercial success of consumer magazines, in particular men's magazines such as *Loaded*, *FHM*, *Maxim*, and *Men's Health*, in the political and cultural economy, as well as with regard to the occupational culture behind the publication of these lifestyle magazines. By conducting interviews with the magazines' editors and publishers, he tried to find out how influential the editors were in setting the tone and style of their magazines and how these publications could be seen as models for the lives of the men in their target markets. Crewe also examined the ways men are portrayed in today's media. The interview questions Crewe asked editors served as one model for my research in China. For example, Chapter Two in this thesis explores the different tone and styles of copy-righted and local magazines and I have asked my respondents questions about similar topics.

Olsberg's master's dissertation *Maxim-sizing Profit: New men's magazines and the rise of consumer masculinity* (2006) was a content analysis of *Maxim* magazine, the most widely circulated men's magazine in the United States. This study was an exploratory study dedicated to finding out exactly what the magazine offered that allowed it to attract and maintain such a large audience. Olsberg examined the magazine's form and editorial content in order to investigate whether *Maxim* is truly about providing entertainment as

opposed to attract advertising revenue. His finding showed that the claim that its main aim was to provide entertainment did not stand up at all. He found that though *Maxim* provided entertainment for its readers, its publisher and editors were more interested in attracting and retaining advertising revenue. Moreover, Olsberg surmises that “*Maxim* is filled with stunted articles that utilize a series of clever and manipulative methods to indoctrinate their readership into the culture of consumption, all the while hiding behind a banner of purposeful political incorrectness”.

In his PhD dissertation titled *White-Collar Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Urban China*, which was primarily built on an ethnographically-framed research approach, Derek Hird (2009) examined white-collar men in both real life and popular culture, including men’s lifestyle magazines, a focus close to that of the present study. In addition to discussing the kinds of bodies and lifestyles displayed by media, Hird argued that the material environments of white-collar men were formed through aspirational consumerism, which is manifested in a negotiation between global and local tastes. Borrowing from Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and Butler’s theory of performativity, Hird believed that young men take up the subject positions of white-collar masculinities through a habituated performance of grooming and fashioning the body in a particular look, which to a large

extent depends on their consumer capacity. He argued that mass media, including the newly-emerged lifestyle magazines, encourage white-collar men to indulge in fashionable consumption. He believed that men's lifestyle magazines are important sites of discursive domains, containing a variety of discursive practices presented in the editorial pages and advertisements, acting as guidance and teaching young men how to train themselves into appropriate white-collar habits and daily routines. Based on his fieldwork interviews, participant observations and media texts (including those appearing in men's lifestyle magazines), Hird maintained that young people in China "mould themselves as subjects of media discourses of 'fashionable consumption' through the acquisition and display of particular objects" (p. 55).

One of the differences between Hird's work and the present study is the conceptualisation of the middle class. Hird suggested that magazine readers represent the "middle class", consisting mainly of white-collar men. The reception study in Chapter Five of this thesis, however, indicates that, in reality, magazine readers include people from middle and lower-middle strata, who are remarkably different in terms of social standing and income from the social elites that the magazines target. I will also argue in Chapter Four that the term "middle class" is sometimes misleading in the contemporary Chinese

context. Rather than a readily identifiable class or stratum, marked by a middling ranking in the socio-economic order, I understand the noun “middle class” to refer to the financial and social elites in China, and the adjective “middle-class” to refer to a desired label, status and type of lifestyle associated with these elites”.

In addition, reception studies conducted in this research show that reading lifestyle magazines creates a fantasy for the readers. Apart from looking for subjects to emulate and mold themselves into, I argue that readers’ desire to read magazines stems from their desire to elevate their social status and their aspirations of a higher-class lifestyle through conspicuous consumption. Results from the focus group discussions in Chapter Five also support the argument of this thesis that the construction of masculinity in today’s China reflects cultural hybridity—the interplay between global influences and local realities. Thus, my analysis of men’s lifestyle magazines in China contributes novel perspectives to the current debate about the discursive and subjective production of masculinity in popular culture in China. Another thing that distinguishes my study from Hird’s is that I look into the production of men’s lifestyle magazines in China, including issues of copyright cooperation and cultural hybridity, which are absent in Hird’s work.

As the men’s magazine is a new cultural phenomenon in China, not many scholarly

studies can be found on this topic. Five master's dissertations and one PhD dissertation on men's lifestyle magazines have been written in Chinese by mainland Chinese students, all of them from the field of media studies. The study by Wang Jiameng (2005) examined the current management systems of some popular Western magazines, such as *Playboy*, *FHM* and *Maxim*, and probed into the social background of the emergence of men's magazines in China. She also analysed the management pattern of China's largest magazine publishing company, *Trends Media Group* (*shishang jituan*), as a successful model for newcomers to the industry, from the perspectives of human resources, advertisements and market promotions. In her dissertation, she even offered advice to companies that want to enter the market. Wang Peng's master dissertation (2006) included an analysis of the emergence of men's magazines in China and the construction of men's images in the magazines. He also studied the target audience of these magazines and examined the kind of lifestyle promoted by the magazines. Gao Yuan's master thesis (2006) mainly explored the subject matter from a woman's stance, using content analysis to examine representations of women in men's magazines. Bi Qiumin's study (2006) was the first attempt to include a case study of a men's magazine in mainland China. *Metropolis*, as an indigenous and small magazine, was in a difficult situation compared with those magazines with an international copyright background, such as *Shishang xiangsheng*, which had copyright cooperation with *Esquire*,

and those with the financial backing of large media companies, like *Mangazine*, which had support from the *Nanfang Media Group*. Bi used a case study of *Metropolis* to find out the shortcomings in the magazine's management strategies. She found that insufficient audience studies, an advertisement-oriented release strategy, and lack of brand expansion and promotion were the management problems for *Metropolis*, and she provided some valuable insights for its improvement. Wang Lin (2006) examined the developmental history and culture of some foreign magazines like *FHM*, *Esquire*, *Playboy* and *Maxim* in her dissertation. Wang also looked into the contents of three local magazines: *Shishang xiansheng*, *Nanren zhuang* and *Mangazine*. The author discussed the frustrations faced by the local magazines and suggested three ways to solve the problems: brand establishment, promotion strategies and circulation. *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue he dazhong wenhua zhong de nanxing qizhi (Masculinity in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Popular Culture)*, a PhD thesis by Zhang Bocun (2006) of East China Normal University focused on *Mangazine* and included an exploration of the construction of masculinity in one of the chapters. Zhang examined the construction of businessmen as elite men in post-socialist China. Zhu Dan (2009) used a case study of *shishang xiansheng* to find out the practical problems of Chinese men's lifestyle magazines. What is interesting about her study is that she did a content analysis of the *Shishang xiansheng* and found that literary artists and

scholars frequently appeared in the magazine. The *wen* masculinity promoted by *Shishang xiansheng* is a significant feature that the magazine uses to distinguish itself from other titles.

There are several limitations to these dissertations. For example, they lack theoretical frameworks, and as they are all grounded in the field of media studies, they focus mainly on the production and consumption of magazines. Furthermore, relatively few textual analyses were undertaken in these dissertations. Apart from these dissertations, there have also been some journal articles, newspaper articles and media texts on the emergence of the men's lifestyle magazine market in China in recent years, most of which are mentioned elsewhere in this study.

The current study distinguishes itself as an interdisciplinary examination of men's lifestyle magazines in China from the perspectives of gender studies and media studies. It focuses on three interconnected aspects: (1) content analysis and textual analysis of both editorial content and advertisements in a critical reading of the consumerist masculinity in these magazines; (2) investigations into magazine production and editorial processes; and (3) research of audience reception (questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions and interviews with readers). As products of popular culture, men's lifestyle magazines are

recognized as cultural texts produced by specific organizations under specific social and cultural constraints (Schudson, 1987). Altheide (1996) points out the importance of studying media products: “documents are studied to understand culture, or the process and the array of objects, symbols, and meanings that make up social reality shared by members of a society..... Most human documents are reflexive of the process that has produced them” (p. 2). However, a thorough and adequate understanding of a media text relies not only on studies related to its production and text, but also on studies of how the audiences interpret it (Skalli, 2006). As Fejes (1992) suggested, there should be more studies on the effects of media to investigate “how audiences, particularly adult male audiences, use these images [of men and masculinity in the media] in the construction and maintenance of their own masculinity” (p. 19). Giles (2003) believed that reception studies could provide the evidence currently lacking on audiences’ responses to the messages about men and masculinity in the media. This is especially true in the Chinese context where audience reception of the representation of men in media products are rare.

### **Background of the Emergence of Lifestyle Magazines**

Since 1978, the Chinese government has been gradually shifting the country from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy while remaining within the political framework provided by the Communist Party of China. This system has been called



Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The economic reforms have incorporated measures aimed at reducing the government's control on the economy; increasing the importance of the private sector, and a growing corporatization of the previous public sector (Harvey, 2005). As David Harvey notes, China's economic reforms have led to the "construction of a particular kind of market economy that increasingly incorporates neoliberal elements interdigitated with authoritarian centralized control" (Harvey, 2005, p.120). These reforms have succeeded in bringing high-speed economic growth. By the second quarter of 2010, the economy of the PRC surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy when measured by gross domestic product ("China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-Biggest Economy", 2011). This dramatic economic revolution has induced profound changes in Chinese society. First, it has created a variety of choices of occupation and profession for its citizens, which has resulted in the emergence of new social groups, for example the "middle class" (Goodman, 2008) (The topic of the newly- emerged middle class and their consumption practices will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four). Secondly, it has increased the mobility of people, and resulted in urbanisation, industrialisation and rural-to-urban migration (Donald & Benewick, 2005). Thirdly, rapid economic growth has increased some people's disposable incomes, personal property, and purchasing power, which, in turn, has led to increases in consumption. Simultaneously, however, various

social problems have emerged, including a rise in the unemployment rate and a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and between urban and rural incomes. The economic reforms have also led to major changes in the system of mass media, including the changing role of advertising and the commercialising of mass media. These have been key factors in the emergence of men's lifestyle magazines in China.

When China was still a command economy, the role of advertising was limited. It was mainly used to address problems of over-production and obsolescence, and to move seasonal products that could not be stored (Frith & Mueller, 2003, pp. 66-68). The role of advertising changed, and advertising grew in importance during the reform era. In 1983, the government implemented the four-tier policy,<sup>1</sup> which decentralised the administration of broadcasting and encouraged alternative forms of investment (Huang, 1994). The decentralisation of management helped stimulate the rapid growth of print media. With the growth in commercialised media, an increasing demand for effective advertising channels from both foreign and local enterprises led to the rapid growth of the advertising industry. With the government's support and a rapidly expanding market economy, advertising in China has become one of the fastest-growing industries since the early 1980s and international media companies have been eager to access this booming advertising market (Keane & Spurgeon, 2004).

In the mid-1980s, Ogilvy and Mather, an American-based advertising and marketing agency, established the first Sino-foreign advertising joint venture in China. As the venture showed, there are certain advantages to Chinese companies in working cooperatively with foreign advertising agencies: First, this facilitates the transfer of the knowledge-based technologies that are fundamental to advertising. Second, local services become more resilient and potentially competitive in the international and domestic markets when exposed to international advertising services (Keane & Spurgeon, 2004, p. 108). With China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2002, the number of foreign-owned advertising agencies increased enormously. It is estimated that the advertising and media industries in China will become the second largest in the world by 2015 (Gurein, 2005). Though magazines occupy the smallest media segment in China, their growth rate in advertising revenues is among the fastest of any media. In 2009, the market for print media in China was worth approximately 91 billion *yuan*, of which 71.89 billion *yuan* was attributable to newspaper advertising and 19.11 billion *yuan* to magazine advertising (China Advertising Industry Report, 2010). However, the development of newspaper media is declining while the magazine industry is increasing. The main reasons are that the "entrance fee" of publishing a newspaper is quite high; competition mainly exists between big newspapers with wide distribution; the profit model tends to be diversified; and the

profit margin is relatively narrow. In contrast, the “entrance fee” of publishing magazines is comparably low; magazines of various categories have their own readership; their profit is derived primarily from advertising; and profitability is higher (China Advertising Industry Report, 2010).

During the Maoist period, newspapers and publications were either state-owned or funded by the state. They served as the mouthpieces of the Chinese Communist Party. Since the introduction of economic reforms in 1978, the state has no longer been able to bear the burden of funding publications. The print media in China, including magazines, though they are still state-owned, have been authorized to become self-sufficient, i.e., to bear their own profits and losses. Making a profit has become the primary objective of these media companies, and corporate-based management systems have been adopted (Zhao, 1998). Since the 1980s, there has been fierce competition among media operators. The survival of each magazine hinges on its popularity in the market, the key element for success in the media sector being boosts in circulation.

As a result of commercialisation, advertising has become the single most important non-governmental source of media revenue (Zhao, 2000). In fact, the emergence of magazines in China is closely related to the growth of transnational corporations and transnational advertising agencies in the nation. According to Bagdikian (1997),

transnational corporations, advertising agencies, and the global media are all closely integrated and benefit from each other's existence. As Silk and Andrews (2004) argued, they are "developing what are deemed to be more cost-effective global campaigns that circumvent national borders by creating global consumer tribes linked by lifestyle values or preferences rather than spatial locations" (p. 180). In China, transnational advertising has become a lucrative source of revenue for men's magazines. Rapid economic development and loosened regulations in the media environment have provided a platform for the emergence of magazines in China's market, and magazines have successfully become one of the media outlets for major advertising in China. According to figures from the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP),<sup>2</sup> from 1978 to 2006, the number of periodicals increased more than ten times, from 930 in 1978 to 9,468 in 2006 (as quoted in Liu, 2008). As of October 2008, there were over 9,000 periodicals, and among them, approximately 1,200 were consumer magazines ("China has more newspapers and magazines", 2008); some of those consumer magazines were the men's lifestyle magazines included under this study. In addition, these consumer magazines could be divided into several categories: culture and arts (40.83%), entertainment and leisure (29.94%), lifestyle and living (19.59%), and social and financial (9.64%) (as quoted in Li Shuang, 2010). This is because the entry costs for magazine publishing are relatively low compared to the costs

for electronic media sectors, such as television and film production. Besides, changes in lifestyles and increasing affluence also predispose people to look for more diverse and segmented media, including magazines, and the wide variety of commodities and services that they advertise (Keane & Spurgeon, 2004). At the same time, Chinese marketers are finding magazines more relevant to their products, in terms of price, market segmentation, and the ability to deliver a desirable target audience (Gurein, 2005). These factors have led to the rapid growth of the magazine market in China.

Although Pierre Bourdieu and some other theorists that I benefited from in this study, including Anthony Giddens, based their studies on “high modern” or “late modern” Western society, under certain circumstances the theories can effectively shed light to our analysis of contemporary Chinese society and culture, which has been increasingly recognized as being influenced by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has come to China in the field of economy, including economic liberalization, privatization and growing corporatization of previous state owned sector. As a matter of fact, neoliberalism can be found in various social contexts, i.e. Western and Asian, liberal and one-party nation-state (Ong 2006). As Couldry states, neoliberalism can be operated at different levels as the creation of meaning. First, it can be understood as market principles (“neoliberalism proper”).

Second, it can be a wider set of languages, metaphors and techniques which are used to implement neoliberalism proper (the “neoliberal doctrine”), and finally, neoliberalism can be understood as a “whole way of life” for which it provides the organizing metaphors (or “a culture of neoliberalism”) (Couldry, 2010, pp.4-5). In addition, neoliberalism produces a “hegemonic rationality,” which works to promote a particular way of narrating one’s life, while excluding other narratives from view (Couldry, 2010, p. 6). In this study, I mainly focus on the third layer of meaning by neoliberalism. In effect, popular culture in postsocialist China has been extensively and increasingly influenced by Western neoliberal culture, which constitutes a common ground for comparative studies.

### **The Market for Men’s Lifestyle Magazines in the PRC**

In North America and some European countries, “general interest” magazines specifically targeting a male readership have existed at least since World War II.<sup>3</sup> In China, however, although “general interest” magazines can be said to have existed during the Maoist and early post-Maoist eras, Western-style magazines that promote a consumerist lifestyle came into being and boomed only in the past two decades.<sup>4</sup> Among them an entire group of titles are localised Chinese editions, so to speak, of internationally popular lifestyle magazines. The key factor that gave rise to lifestyle magazines in China was the development of transnational corporations and transnational advertising agencies in the

country beginning in the early 1980s. With China's rapid economic development, the demand for advertising space by global brands has increased and magazines became one of the major advertising media in China.

The first lifestyle magazines in China targeted both men and women. To meet the market demand of some advertisers, such as toiletries producers, magazines exclusively designed for women came into being in the late 1980s, under Trends Media Group, through copyright cooperation with internationally popular titles. Men's magazines arrived not until at least ten years later as a further development based on the women's magazines. Since the first men's lifestyle magazine appeared on the market, there has been a proliferation of titles, though some were very short-lived titles and have already ceased publication. Roughly speaking, the development of the men's magazine market in mainland China in the last decade or so can be divided into three stages: (1) 1993—2002: *Shishang xiansheng*, the very first men's magazine in China, was initially published by Trends Media Group as a supplement of *Shishang yiren*, a woman's magazine launched in 1993. The magazine came in a unique format that allowed readers to read the women's magazine or flip it over and upside down to read the men's magazine. *Shishang xiansheng* became an independent title in 1997 and began copyright cooperation with *Esquire* in 1999. It remained the only men's lifestyle magazine in China until September 2000, when the second title *Da dushi*



(*Metropolis*) was launched by Shanghai Orient Press. (2) 2002–2007: This period witnessed a particularly rapid development in the men’s magazine market. The number of titles mushroomed to ten within a short span of three years between 2004 and 2007; however, some short-lived titles like *Mingshi (Prestige)*, *Pinpai dadao*, *Nandao (Men’s Way)*, *Shishang junzi (Menbox)*, *Nanren shijie (Men’s World)* and *Ling juli (China Zero Space)* soon disappeared from the market due to keen competition. (3) 2008–2011: A third wave of men’s magazines emerged on the scene—with important titles such as *GQ*, *Leon*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Mr. Modern* and *Elle Men* more recently launched.

### Major Men’s Lifestyle Magazines and Their Target Readership

**Table 1.1: Basic information for major men's magazines  
in the PRC market in 2011**

Title	Year Launched	Local/ International	Monthly Circulation <sup>5</sup>	Selling Price (yuan)
<i>Shishang xiansheng</i> ( <i>Esquire</i> )	1999	International (US)	680,000	20
<i>Xin shixian</i> ( <i>The Outlook Magazine</i> )	2002	Local	380,000 <sup>6</sup>	20
<i>Shishang jiankang</i> ( <i>nanshi</i> ) ( <i>Men's Health</i> )	2003	International (US)	520,000	20
<i>Mingpai</i> ( <i>Mangazine</i> )	2003	Local	450,000 <sup>7</sup>	28
<i>Nanren zhuang</i> ( <i>FHM</i> )	2004	International (UK)	600,000	20
<i>Daren zhi</i> ( <i>Men's Uno</i> )	2004	International (Taiwan)	378,000 <sup>8</sup>	20
<i>Meili xiansheng</i> ( <i>Men's Style</i> )	2005	Local	365,000 <sup>9</sup>	20
<i>Basha nanshi</i> ( <i>Harper's Bazaar Men's Style</i> )	2008	International (US)	450,000 <sup>10</sup>	20
<i>Shizhuang</i> ( <i>Nanshi ban</i> ) ( <i>L'Officiel Hommes</i> )	2008	International (France)	350,000	20
<i>Ta shenghuo</i> ( <i>HisLife</i> )	2008	International (Italy)	382,000	20
<i>Nanren fengshang</i> ( <i>Leon</i> )	2009	International (Japan)	535,600 <sup>11</sup>	20
<i>Modeng shenshi</i> ( <i>Mr. Modern</i> )	2009	International (France)	N/A	20
<i>Zhizu</i> ( <i>GQ</i> )	2009	International (US)	400,000	20
<i>Ruishi</i> ( <i>Elle Men</i> )	2011	International (France)	420,000	20

Table 1.1 shows basic information about current men's titles circulating in the Chinese mainland market as of December 2011. For example, *Shishang xiansheng* is the Chinese edition of *Esquire* and is the very first men's lifestyle magazine in contemporary China. It features sophisticated and mostly foreign brands of clothing and male accessories. Its pages contain a large number of male models demonstrating a sophisticated look and lifestyle taste, as well as feature stories on men thought to be style leaders (*Shishang xiansheng*, 2008). *Shishang jiankang (nanshi)* is the Chinese edition of the men's fitness magazine *Men's Health*, with editorial content that emphasises the healthy development of an individual. "*Men's Health* guides readers to care deeply about the health of their own body and mind, and comprehensively raises the self-improvement of individuals in society and self-development ability" (*Shishang jiankang (nanshi)*, 2008). *Nanren zhuang* is the Chinese edition of *For Him Magazine*. Like its British edition, its editorial stories include sex and images of sexualized women, targeting a young, affluent and hedonistic lifestyle. The advertisements it carries include foreign skin care products, alcoholic drinks and casual brand clothing.

There are also some locally-produced titles, like *Mingpai (Magazine)*, published by the local media giant *Southern Media Group*. *Mingpai* targets a more mature male readership—social elites in their mid-thirties to early forties. Its editorial content and

advertisements include upmarket cars, luxury property and foreign brand clothes. *Meili xiansheng* (*Men's Style*), another local title, carries articles on skincare products, fashion, health and fitness. Unlike most magazines that target a heterosexual readership, *Meili xiansheng* targets a homosexual readership by carrying numerous highly sexualized pictures of young and muscular men and covering gay issues. The topic of gay magazines will be further elaborated in Chapter Three.

Table 1.1 indicates that, out of the 14 men's titles in China, only 3 are indigenous titles and the remaining 11 are international titles. Generally speaking, men's lifestyle magazines in China can be divided into two groups in terms of ownership: the mainland editions of world-famous titles, such as *Esquire*, *FHM*, *GQ*, *Men's Health*, and so on, and local publications, such as *Mangazine* and *Meili xiansheng* (Song and Lee, 2012). The international titles are published in China under copyright co-operation with local publishers. The details of copyright co-operation will be discussed in Chapter Two.

As shown in table 1.1, men's magazines in China are normally priced at around 20 *yuan* per copy; therefore, they are categorised as *gao mayang* (high-priced) magazines in the market. They are not affordable for people with average incomes in Chinese cities, and their circulations are therefore limited. As one journalist commented, the magazines are "a gratification for the rich and a temptation for the poor" (Zhou, 2002, p. A1). However, it is

noteworthy that, because of the rapid development of technologies and convergence of media, many of these magazines have also introduced iPad and iPhone versions of their titles. Thus, the actual readers of these magazines are not limited to the subscribers and buyers of the hardcopy versions, but also include those who browse electronic versions. Of course, the latter are also limited to those who can afford to buy iPads and iPhones.

As the information on circulation volumes in the above table is obtained from media kits and the websites of individual magazines, the data is not reliable; the reason, interestingly, is that magazines' circulation is a sensitive topic in China and the publicised figures are, more often than not, magnified. During a personal interview, Xia Xinjia, an editor of *Nanren zhuang*, compared the circulation of Chinese magazines to male organs, saying: "Every man boasts that his is the biggest, but nobody would really take it out to show" (personal communication, January 2008). Shouma, ex-editor-in-chief of *Nanren zhuang*, also indicated that the figures provided to advertisers have been magnified at least six to ten times (Shouma, 2006, p. 118). Despite the magazines' claims of broad reach, even publicised circulation is relatively low even for the best of the bunch, usually around 20,000-30,000 copies for each issue (Zhou, 2007).

Apart from their high selling price, the low circulation of lifestyle magazines in China may also be attributed to the poor quality of the magazines' content. During our interview,

Xia Xinjia contended that there are too many magazines of the same kind in the market now. Some small-scale local titles even just copy or imitate the successful ones, without having a clear orientation. The magazines are so similar in content and so lacking in distinctive features, that if the cover page of a magazine is torn off it is not possible to identify its title (Xia Xinjia, personal communication, January 2008). According to Xia Xinjia, other factors leading to poor circulation are the shortage of experienced editorial and professional personnel, such as graphic designers and photographers, as well as a lack of established distribution channels. All this, he said, reflects the fact that the Chinese magazine industry is still in its fledging stage of development and has a long way to go before it catches up with that of "advanced countries" (Xia Xinjia, personal communication, January 2008).

**Table 1.2: Target audiences and catchphrases of major men's lifestyle magazines in the PRC**

Title	Target audience <sup>12</sup>	Catchphrase
<i>Shishang xiansheng</i> ( <i>Esquire</i> )	Targeting readers with a certain economic standing and social status, who pursue a high quality of life; age: 28-35	To construct a tasteful life for a man ( <i>dazhao nanshi pinwei shenghuo</i> )
<i>Xin shixian</i> ( <i>The Outlook Magazine</i> )	Targeting the new rich generation who are represented by urban elites ( <i>dushi jingying</i> ) and the creative new rich ( <i>chuangyi xingui</i> ), who are also the rapidly emerging super consumers; they have rigid requirements regarding life quality and unique insights into the branding culture; they also desire to reach their ultimate personal potential; they represent good taste and the new lifestyle; in particular, urban elites who live in big metropolises, with annual incomes of over 200, 000 <i>yuan</i> , a unique and sharp sense of trends.	Inspiring, creative, and lifestyle-oriented ( <i>jili, chuangyi, shenghuo</i> )
<i>Shishang jiankang</i> ( <i>Men's Health</i> )	Targeting those who have received at least university education, with annual incomes above 80,000 <i>yuan</i> ; they enjoy life and care about their health, trends, and quality of life; an inspiring and uplifting group with certain consumption desires and consuming capabilities; age: 28 to 38	Health is the only hard currency ( <i>zhiyou jiankang caishi ying tonghuo</i> )
<i>Mingpai</i> ( <i>Magazine</i> )	Targeting readers with at least university education and with minimum monthly incomes of 6,000 <i>yuan</i> ; age: 28-45	Not available
<i>Nanren zhuang</i> ( <i>FHM</i> )	Targeting "post yuppies"; age: 25-40	Men of true passion ( <i>nanren zhen xingqing</i> )

<i>Daren zhi</i> ( <i>Men's Uno</i> )	Targeting metrosexual men who are well-educated, materialistic, and like good quality; they are concerned with life quality and lifestyle; they are also keen on branded goods and loyal to the brands; they are opinion leaders and the decision makers for personal consumption	Not available
<i>Meili xiansheng</i> ( <i>Men's Style</i> )	Targeting management and executive personnel, private entrepreneurs, and members of the "SOHO tribe" <sup>13</sup> ; they have a strong desire for materialistic consumption and pay attention to trends and brands; they also display strong brand loyalty; age: 25-35	Not available
<i>Basha nanshi</i> ( <i>Harper's Bazaar Men's Style</i> )	Targeting Chinese male elites and businessmen; age: 30-40	A textbook on taste for successful men ( <i>chenggong nanshi de pinwei jiaokeshu</i> )
<i>Shizhuang (Nanshi ban) (L'Officiel Hommes)</i>	Targeting mature and sensible male elites, with good financial standing and educational backgrounds; they have good taste and pursue a high quality life; they enjoy international luxuries	Not available
<i>Ta shenghuo</i> ( <i>His Life</i> )	Targeting men with good financial backgrounds, stable incomes, high levels of education, and a certain social status and life quality; age: 28-45	Live confidently and dream wildly ( <i>zixin shenghuo, yexing mengxiang</i> )
<i>Nanren fengshang</i> ( <i>Leon</i> )	Targeting successful men, with annual incomes of at least 150,000 <i>yuan</i> ; they can be entrepreneurs, businessmen, professionals, freelancers, or experts in any field; they are also contemporary urban men, with strong financial standings, high purchasing power, and a	Image creates influence ( <i>xingxiang chuangzao yingxiangli</i> )



	desire to try something new and exciting; age: 28-45	
<i>Modeng shenshi</i> ( <i>Mr. Modern</i> )	Targeting high-end elites	Not available
<i>Zhizu</i> ( <i>GQ</i> )	Targeting elite males; age: 25-45	Look sharp, live smart ( <i>youxing youkuan, zhiqubufan</i> )
<i>Ruishi</i> ( <i>Elle Men</i> )	Not available	Sensible, stylistic, and charming ( <i>ruizhi, fengfan, meili</i> )

Table 1.2 demonstrates that most magazines target male readers aged between 25 and 45, with high levels of education and high-income jobs. For example, *Mingpai* targets those with monthly salaries of 6,000 *yuan*, and *Shishang jiankang* targets readers with annual incomes of 80,000 *yuan*. The men's lifestyle magazines in China target men who are commonly identified as the financial and social elite of society and who would like to be distinguished from their fellow men based on their status and taste, as indicated by their consumption choices. Compared with the majority of magazines in China, which have traditionally functioned as propaganda and educational tools for the party-state, the crop of titles under discussion can be categorised as "new" magazines in the market. They function as a good example of the product of negotiation between media commercialisation and the formation of new social classes (and as a consequence, new power relations in society).

### Electronic Men's Lifestyle Magazines

With the growing popularity and prevalence of internet use in China, electronic men's magazines have emerged and attract many readers. Like the print magazines, these e-magazines target professionals and white-collar workers in big cities. These e-magazines have gained popularity because they are free to subscribe to and easy to access. Advertising revenues are their single source of income. As of 2011, there were about a dozen electronic men's magazines on the market: *MANse nanse*, *WO Nanren zhi*, *37 Love*, *UOMO Nanshi*, *Meixing nan (MANbeauty)*, *Xingnan Hui*, *Fengshang zhi (Fashion Weekly)*, and so on. Among them, the most popular and well-received are *MANse nanse*, *WO Nanrenzhi*, and *UOMO Nanshi*. Founded in August 2005, *MANse nanse* was the first e-men's magazine in mainland China, and it currently has the largest circulation. This magazine aims at providing readers with guides to fashionable and healthy consumption for mainstream men. It contains 200 pages every issue, and its content covers areas as broad as those in print magazines, featuring six main columns, including fashion trends, clothing and accessories, health, luxury products, grooming, and sex/women. As of 2010, it claimed more than 3 million monthly readers and has accumulated 120 million readers in total. It is the best known e-men's magazine in China. Another popular e-magazine is *UOMO Nanshi*. This magazine was introduced in April 2007 and was the first e-magazine to cater to slightly

older male elites. It features more big-ticket items, like automobiles, luxury watches, and high-class clubs. Within one year (from January 2007 to January 2008), it accumulated over 800,000 subscriptions (Dao, 2008). Though most of the above-mentioned magazines target heterosexual male readers, some e-magazines target a homosexual audience. For example, *Fengyu tongxing (You and Me)* is an openly gay e-magazine. In common with other e-magazines, it contains articles on fashion, skincare, and other aspects of a young urban male's consumer lifestyle. In addition, it includes some articles on gay topics. For example, in its February 2012 issue, there was an article about the life of two male partners, how they overcame the difficulties in their relationship and finally came together. Although e-magazines are a new form of media gaining momentum nowadays, this study will mainly focus on print magazines because the fluidity of the e-magazine makes it a difficult object of study.

## **Methodologies**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used in this study.

### Content analysis

Kerlinger (1973) defined content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communications in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner to measure variables (p.525). It is a research method commonly used in the study of media content. The

advantage of content analysis is that it is neither limited with regard to the types of variables that may be measured, nor the content in which messages are created or presented (Neuendorf, 2002). As indicated above, in order to illustrate the difference in style between *Nanren zhuang* and *Shishang xiansheng*, content analysis was conducted of the advertisements of these two magazines. As Skalli (2006) noted, “advertising offers examples for discussing questions of transnationalism and the import of systems of meaning as well as consumption patterns” (p.13). Advertisements were collected from 12 issues of *Shishang xiansheng* (April, June, August, October, December 2004; February, April, June, August, October, December 2005, and February 2006), and 12 issues of *Nanren zhuang* (June, August, October, December 2004, February, April 2005, February, April, June, August, October, and December 2007). All full-page, half-page and one-third page advertisements have been content-analysed. This research method was also employed to examine the different editorial strategies of the Chinese and Australian version of *FHM*. The editorial contents from 12 issues of *Nanrenzhuang* and Australian *FHM*, excluding advertisements, editor’s notes and readers’ letters, are content analyzed. I have created 21 categories, i.e. sex/women; fashion/style; sports/fitness; grooming and such like to cover the editorial features. The editorial pages devoted to the related categories in the two magazines were then added up and converted into percentages.

### Questionnaire survey

Two questionnaire surveys (Appendix 1 and 2) were conducted with magazine readers. The first is composed of several parts: Part One (Questions 1-6) aimed to find out the demographics of magazine readers, including readers' gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation and monthly income. The breakdown of the occupation of the readers is based on Lu Xueyi's study of the social structure of mainland China (Lu, 2002), which divides the Chinese population into ten major categories. Compared with the occupational categories in the official statistical yearbooks published by the State Statistical Bureau, Lu's model emphasizes the hierarchy of different socio-economic strata in contemporary China, employing a five-tiered ranking: the upper, upper middle, middle, lower middle and lower strata. His categories are therefore adopted to better reflect the position of each group in this hierarchy. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the middle class in China is more often referred to by academics as a middle *stratum* (*zhongchan jiecheng*) rather than a middle class (*zhongchan jieji*), in order to avoid the Marxist term *jieji* (class). However, for the sake of convenience the term "middle class" is employed in this thesis.

Part Two (Questions 7-9) focuses on readers' reading habits, including the channels through which they obtain magazines, the number of hours they spend reading the magazines and their favorite magazine content. The main purpose is to find out which

content/elements in these magazines are most popular among readers and why. Part Three (Question 10) investigates the reasons why readers read the magazines, by asking respondents whether or not they agree with a series of statements. Part Four is designed to find out the consumption habits of the readers, including their average monthly expenditure on clothes, accessories and personal care products and their attitudes towards life and consumption practices (Question 11-12). Most of the questions in the questionnaire are multiple choice questions, except for questions 10 and 12, which use the Likert scale to measure readers' levels of agreement/ disagreement towards some statements.

The second questionnaire survey examines the impact of men's lifestyle magazines on readers' perceptions of fashion trends and luxury products, as well as their lifestyles to see the degree to which they live up to the masculinity promoted by men's magazines. Survey questions included readers' own evaluation of their fashion sense and the criteria that determine whether or not a man is fashionable, as well as readers' perceptions towards brand and luxury products. The first questionnaire was uploaded to an online website, my3qdotcom, to allow readers to respond during a period of six months (12 February 2010 to 11 August 2010). A total of 170 valid questionnaires were collected. An online questionnaire is a convenient and effective way of conducting a survey like this. However, there are several limitations of online questionnaire surveys. Firstly, internet users are

mainly young and better educated people such as professionals and university students, while the older generation does not use the internet so often (Internet Users in Asia, June 2012). The report of the 25<sup>th</sup> China Internet Network Information Centre showed that in 2009, nearly two thirds of the Internet users were between 10 to 29, and only 17 percent were over 40 years old. The report also showed that the proportion of users with an education level of senior high school and above was 64.5 percent in 2009 (as cited in Liu, 2010, p.37). Thus, an online survey may not capture a representative sample of the population who reads men's magazines. Secondly, the problem of double entry arises for an online questionnaire survey, as it is possible for the same subject to complete the questionnaire more than once. Thirdly, online surveys depend on the honesty of respondents about basic demographic information such as age, gender and monthly income. If respondents are not honest, the data can be inaccurate (Wright, 2005).

To counter the limitations of the online questionnaire, a second questionnaire survey was sent to magazine readers recommended by friends between 20 March 2012 and 21 April, 2012. As a contrast to the online questionnaire, this questionnaire targets respondents who read at least one issue of a men's magazine every month and it secured more reliable data. As the respondents were a small group of people with real names and more background information, the risk of double entry and dishonest input were also largely

avoided. A total of 30 valid questionnaires from frequent male readers were collected. The two surveys were designed in Chinese. A pilot survey of 10 samples each was conducted during my first fieldwork in China in January 2008. The two questionnaires were then adjusted to ensure more clarity.

#### In-depth interviews with editors and magazine readers

Berg (2007) indicated that in-depth interviews can be used by a researcher to obtain rich information from the interviewee if good rapport is established and maintained between the interviewer and interviewee. In-depth semi-structured interviews with editors were conducted during fieldwork trips to Beijing in December 2008, January 2009, and November 2010. In total, I conducted 14 interviews with magazine publishers, editors, and readers, including Liu Jiang, president of Trends Media Group; Wang Feng, ex-editor-in-chief of *Shishang xiangsheng* (*Esquire*); Shouma, editor of *Nanren zhuang* (*FHM*); Rita Fu, ex-editor-in-chief of *Darenzhi* (*Men's Uno*); and Xia Xinjia, editor of *Nanren zhuang* (*FHM*). The interviews were conducted in their Beijing head offices, restaurants, or cafes. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and translated from Chinese into English. In addition, I conducted telephone interviews in April 2011 with Zhou Song, editor of *Shishang jiankang* (*Men's Health*); Yu Huiming, executive editor of *Daren zhi* (*Men's Uno*); and Lisa Liao, editor-in-chief of *Men's Joker*. All interviews used



open-ended questions that focused around the following categories: the masculinity promoted by their magazines and how it differs from other titles; the editorial style and strategies; the selection criteria of editorial content; freedom or constraints in selecting editorial materials, censorship from the related party (if any); the pros/cons of having (or not having) copyright cooperation with foreign magazines; their definition of target readers, and the like. Interviews with different members of the production teams at the same magazines were conducted “as a basis to triangulate findings across sources (producers, readers, and texts) as well as to test issues of reliability and validity” (Skalli, 2006, p.12). The purpose of the interviews was to find out the source of editorial content in the copyright co-operated magazines, examine the dynamic interplay between producers and magazines consumers, and explore why the magazines appeal to local readers. Questions in these interviews included the following: Who is the target audience of the magazine? What type of masculinity are the producers of the magazine constructing as the ideal? What roles do advertisements and other commercial factors play in the construction of masculinity in popular entertainment?

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with five magazines readers, four men and one woman, in order to find out more specific reasons for them reading these magazines and how they interpret the masculinity presented in the magazines. Open-ended questions

were asked during the interviews (Appendix 3). The informants were mainly introduced to me through friends in Beijing. I spoke to informants directly about my research topic and had a brief chat about their reading habits of men's magazines. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the effects of the dramatic growth of men's magazines on everyday life in terms of men's changing identities, readers' reading patterns, and so on. Admittedly, my informants constitute a very small portion of magazine readers. But their alleged reasons for reading the magazines and their interesting comments on the "educational" functions of the magazines open a highly enlightening window for us to probe into the readers' consuming mentality and especially the image of the magazines in their mind.

#### Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions were conducted among second-year students of the China Youth University for Political Sciences (*Zhongguo qingnian zhengzhi xueyuan*) in Wanshou, Beijing during my fieldwork in January 2008. There were two sessions, one composed of 7 male students and the other composed of 6 female students. The first session lasted for one hour and 25 minutes while the second session lasted for nearly two hours. The discussions were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. The participants all claimed to be regular magazine readers. They were introduced to me by their lecturer. As

mentioned above, focus group discussions were conducted to gather respondents' views and comments on the kind of masculinity promoted by the magazine and whether the magazines reflected their notions of masculinity and the real life masculinity. The discussions also aimed to find out how close the masculinities exhibited in the men's lifestyle magazines are to the reality and culture of young people in contemporary urban China. In addition, readers' interpretations and negotiations of the masculine images created in the magazines were also examined. The lists of questions asked during the focus group discussions are included in the appendix (Appendix 4).

The data collected from focus group discussions is analyzed as suggested by Gile (2003), "from an interpretative perspective [so as to] examine the different meanings that different media products hold for people" ( p.39).

As will be seen, the university students' interpretations of the images in men's magazines differed from editors' claims: they did not agree that the magazines had great influence on their subjectivity and largely did not find images in the magazines to be embodiments of ideal masculinity. They also mentioned a variety of male images that were not represented by the magazines. This may reflect the identity and self-perception of this particular group of readers: The university students regard themselves as more critical and

intellectually superior to the more typically targeted readers, i.e. white-collar salarymen and the “middle-class” urbanites.

### **Chapter Outline**

Below is a brief outline of the remaining chapters in this thesis:

Chapter Two “Cultural Hybridity and Localisation” explores how global versions of consumerist masculinity negotiate and interact with local and traditional discourses on masculinity in Chinese society. Cultural hybridity theory is employed to examine how the global and local are articulated in the production process of the magazines. The chapter also focuses on two types of masculinities, the “new man” and the “new lad” in the West and their variations in China, which serve as a good example of the interactions between global and local forces.

Chapter Three “Desiring the Body: Spectatorship, Sexuality and Consumption” includes a discussion of the representation of the male body and sexuality in these magazines. Based on the representation of the male body, magazines are divided into two sub categories, those for men “to look at” and those of men “to be looked at”. Same-sex desire and gay magazines will also be discussed in this chapter.

#### Chapter Four: The Construction of Middle-Class Lifestyle and the Discourse on *Pinwei*

(*Taste*)

The first part of the chapter focuses on the middle-class identity and lifestyle as a discourse and a projection rather than a formed class in society. It also considers the middle class's relationship with consumption, since consumption is the centrepiece of contemporary constructions of social distinction. I particularly talk about the *xiaozi* identity (petit bourgeois) and the *pinwei* discourse. In light of Boudieu's theory of cultural capital, the chapter explores the lifestyle magazines as a symbol of status claimed by the rising middle class in China. I also apply Rofel (2007)'s argument of cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics in the discussion on consumption and emphasis will be placed on the construction of the cosmopolitan self through consumption.

Chapter Five "Masculinity and Consumption: A Reception Study" explores another dimension of the discourse on masculinity constructed by the magazines: the reception of the discourse by readers and the interplay between textual construction and perceptions of masculinity among urban youth in China. I discuss the findings of questionnaire surveys, which were designed to find out the demographics of the readers and to compare the actual readers with the target readers set by the publishers. Using the findings of focus group discussions and interviews with a sample of magazine readers, I further probe into the

complicated dynamics between representation, gender performance, and consumption.

The thesis concludes with a brief summary of key findings and arguments. As I have pointed out in Chapter Two, the western masculinities have had an immense impact on the changing discourse of masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines in China. However, Chinese editions of international titles have to face the imperative of localisation in the Chinese market and have to negotiate with local realities in China. The four types of spectatorship, metrosexual and gay identities constructed through the magazines, as I discussed in Chapter Three serve as excellent examples of the interplay between desire and the construction of the cosmopolitan self. I have argued in Chapter Four that rather than a formed social class in society, the term "middle class" can refer to both "the financial and social elites" and "a discourse on lifestyle, or a fantasy". Men's magazines in China construct consumerist masculinities through the discourse of *pinwei*. They both reflect and fashion a pursuit of cosmopolitan self and a consumerist masculinity. As I discussed in Chapter Five, magazine readers include people from middle and lower-middle strata, who are remarkably different in terms of social standing and income from the social elites that the magazines target. Readers' desire to read magazines stems from their desire to elevate their social status and their aspirations of a higher-class lifestyle through conspicuous consumption. Results from the focus group discussion in Chapter Five also support the

argument of this thesis that the construction of masculinity in today's China reflects cultural hybridity—the interplay between global influences and local realities.

<sup>1</sup> The “four-tier policy” refers to the Chinese division of the administrative system. With the central authority at the top, the other three levels were regional (31 provinces, as of 2011), local (approximately 450 cities), and county (approximately 1900 counties). According to Wu Lengxi, the policy of the then Ministry of Chinese Broadcasting aimed at getting various social groups and local authorities involved in the broadcasting field.

<sup>2</sup> GAPP is an administrative agency responsible for regulating and distributing news, print, and Internet publications in mainland China. It also grants publication licenses for periodicals and books, and liaises with other state authorities, such as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television; the Publicity Department; the State Council Information Office; and Xinhua.

<sup>3</sup> In Britain, the men's magazine originated with the rise of *Playboy*, which was launched in 1953. In the United States, *Esquire* and *GQ* were launched in the 1930s. Men's interest magazines, including titles for motoring, hobbies, and pornography, generally have a far longer history (Osgerby, 2001; Benwell, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The first Western-style women's lifestyle magazine, a Chinese edition of *Elle*, appeared in 1988. See Karan and Feng (2009, pp. 161-163) for a brief discussion of women's magazines in China before 1988.

<sup>5</sup> The information on circulation volumes is obtained from the media kits and websites of the individual magazines or from [gotoread.com](http://gotoread.com), except as otherwise indicated (retrieved March 24, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved December 11, 2011, from [http://www.admaimai.com/magazine/Detail5\\_5292.htm](http://www.admaimai.com/magazine/Detail5_5292.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved May 2, 2012, from <http://www.infzm.com/content/21993>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.meihua.info/mediasearch/medium,73711412-f2ff-4095-b6a9-f25b489002a7.htm>

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.docin.com/p-275447568.html>

<sup>10</sup> See

<http://www.meihua.info/mediasearch/medium,73711412-f2ff-4095-b6a9-f25b489002a7.htm>

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see <http://www.allchina.cn/Magazine/PMM1-7874.html>

<sup>12</sup> The descriptions of target audience are translated from the information outlined in the media kits, websites, and relevant content of individual magazines.

<sup>13</sup> SOHO in mainland China stands for “small office and home office”. SOHO tribe refers to those who work at home or as free lancers.

## **Chapter Two: Cultural Hybridity and Localisation of Foreign Magazines**

This chapter examines the Chinese editions of internationally men's magazines, in particular, their process of localisation. I use theories of cultural hybridity to analyse the global and local forces shaping the production of these magazines. In particular, the chapter explores the interaction of global trends and influences with local cultures and realities by focusing on Chinese magazines' "variations" of "new man" and "new lad" images. Based on a content comparison between the Chinese men's magazines and their Western counterparts, the chapter argues that men's lifestyle magazines in China are sites of negotiation between what Lisa Rofel calls the two aspects of "cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics", namely, "a self-conscious transcendence of locality, posited as a universal transcendence, accomplished through the formation of a consumer identity; and a domestication of cosmopolitanism by way of renegotiating China's place in the world" (Rofel, 2007, p. 111).

### **Copyright Cooperation**

Generally speaking, international magazines enter foreign markets by direct exporting, licensing, joint ventures and the setting up of wholly owned subsidiaries



(Karan and Feng, 2009). Some Chinese government-selected international trade companies are allowed to import certain foreign books and magazines but in limited numbers. According to General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), foreign investors are forbidden from undertaking business in the areas of advertising, book and magazine publishing, wholesale trading and importing of cultural products. However, they may enter the businesses of printing, book and magazine distribution and artwork sales by establishing cooperative enterprises or joint ventures with Chinese partners. The investment ratio from the Chinese side must be at least 51 percent (Frith and Feng, 2009), to ensure that the Chinese counterpart is guaranteed the leading role. This policy has enabled a magazine publisher from France, Hachette Filipacchi Media, for example, to set up several advertising agencies and an Asian- Pacific branch to control the local edition of *Elle* since 1988. In order to get a share of China's market, Japanese publishing companies, such as Kodansha and Shufunotomo have also established joint ventures in China to help distribute the Japanese media products in China and develop cooperative opportunities with local partners (JETRO, October-November, 2006).

With regards to magazine publishing, those who want to enter the Chinese market must first find a local partner and then bring out their new magazines under the partner's licence. The cooperative relationship between journal and magazine publishing houses in

China and foreign companies has a history of more than 20 years and has taken mainly three forms. The first is joint venture co-publishing, in which foreign investors are allowed to own stakes of up to 49 percent in joint venture publishing companies. For example, in 1980, the International Data Group (IDG) from the U.S. set up a Sino-U.S. joint venture, the China Computer World Publishing Company, with a 49 percent share. This was the first foreign involvement in China's media market in the post-Mao era. The second form of cooperative relationship is the translation of articles in foreign journals or magazines into Chinese. This mainly applies to scientific and technological articles. The third form is two-way copyright cooperation. In this kind of cooperation, Chinese magazines can utilise articles and pictures from their foreign partners while at the same time, the foreign magazines can use the contents of their Chinese partners (Latham, 2007). According to GAPP, this kind of copyright cooperation relationship must not exceed five years but is renewable.

Copyright cooperating titles must be supervised by a central or local government department, acting as the *zhuguan bumen* [authorities in charge], responsible for the ideological self-censorship of the publication (see table 2.1 below for the authorities in charge of different magazines). Due to the commercialisation of mass media in China in recent years, most state media outlets no longer receive large government subsidies and

have to produce market-oriented products so that profits can be generated through advertising revenue. This situation has given rise to the “marriage” between state media outlets and profit-seeking foreign or western publishing companies. The official mouthpiece of the Chinese government, China News Agency and the Xinjiang Federation of Literary and Art Circles are involved in this kind of copyright cooperation and publish lifestyle magazines (see Table 2.1).

In 1988, *Elle*, a women’s magazine published by Hachette Filipacchi in France, became the first foreign magazine published in China in cooperation with Shanghai Yiwun Press. Since then, numerous copyright cooperating publications have hit the streets, including *Vogue*, *National Geographic*, *Traveller*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Newsweek*, *Parenting*, *Marie Claire*, *Fortune*, *Esquire*, and *FHM*. Today, there are several major transnational publishing giants engaging in copyright cooperating relationships with local publishers to produce men’s titles (see Table 2.1): three from the United Kingdom—Bauer Media Group, Dennis Publishing and Hearst Magazines; two from the United States—Hearst and Conde Nast Publications and two from France—Hachette Filipacchi Media and Les Editions Jalou. Apart from the western giants, publishers from Asian countries are also endeavouring to join the competition because their local markets are almost saturated (Frith and Feng, 2009); examples are Chic Group International Co.

Ltd from Taiwan and Shufu To Seikatsusha Co, Ltd. from Japan.

Some of these media giants publish both men's and women's magazines in China. For example, Hearst Corporation, one of the three largest magazine publishers in the US, introduced Chinese versions of *Cosmopolitan* (in 1993) and *Esquire* (in 1997); Harper's Bazaar published the *Basha Nushi* [*Harper's Bazaar Women's Style*] in 2001 and *Basha Nanshi* [*Harper's Bazaar Men's Style*] in 2008; Conde Nast Publications introduced a Chinese edition of *Vogue* in 2005 and *GQ* in 2009. As Wang Hanfeng (2005) has observed, Western magazines were of the first generation of publications that entered the Chinese market while magazines from Asian countries are of the second generation. So, in terms of copyright cooperation, the magazines can be sub-divided into two groups. The first group originates from Western countries, and includes *Esquire* and *Maxim* from Britain, and *FHM* and *GQ* from the US. The second group comes from Asian countries, and includes *Leon* from Japan and *Men's Uno* from Taiwan. The Western magazines focus more on the quality of life and social status of men. They also give advice on how to pursue high-quality lifestyles (Wang Feng, personal communication, 2 January 2010). Japanese-style magazines, on the other hand, are seen as repositories of information about trendy fashion, interior decoration, hairstyles, and commodities valued by other Asian people (Iwabuchi, 2004, p.130).

**Table 2.1: Copyright cooperated men's magazines in the Chinese market in 2011**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date Launched</b>	<b>Foreign Affiliate</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Authorities in charge</b>
<i>Shishang xiansheng</i> [ <i>Esquire</i> ]	1997	Hearst Magazines	Trends Media Group	National Tourism Administration
<i>Shishang jiankang</i> [ <i>Men's Health</i> ]	2003	Hearst Magazines	Trends Media Group	National Tourism Administration
<i>Nanren zhuang</i> [ <i>FHM</i> ]	2004	Bauer Media Group (UK)	Trends Media Group	Chinatex Corporation
<i>Daren zhi</i> [ <i>Men's Uno</i> ]	2004	Chic Group International Co.Ltd. (Taiwan)	Publishing Centre of the Tibet Autonomous Region	Tibet Autonomous Region Press and Publication Bureau
<i>Basha nanshi</i> [ <i>Harper's Bazaar Men's Style</i> ]	2008	Hearst Magazines	Trends Media Group	Chinatex Corporation
<i>Shizhuang</i> ( <i>Nanshi ban</i> ) [ <i>L'Officiel Hommes</i> ]	2008	Les Editions Jalou (France)	Fashion Magazine Publishing House	China National Silk Imp. & Exp. Corp.
<i>Ta shenghuo</i> [ <i>HisLife</i> ]	2008	Rizzoli Publishing (Italy)	SEEC (Caixun) Media Group	Xinjiang Federation of Literary and Art Circles
<i>Nanren fengshang</i> [ <i>Leon</i> ]	2009	Shufu To Seikatsusha (Japan)	Beijing Rayli Magazine House	China Light Industry Association
<i>Modeng shenshi</i> [ <i>Mr. Modern</i> ]	2009	Hachette Filipacchi Medias	China Sports Publications Corporation	General Administration of Sport of China

<i>Zhizu</i> [ <i>GQ</i> ]	2009	(France) Conde Nast Publications (US)	China News Weekly	China News Agency
<i>Xing nanzhi</i> [ <i>Men's Joker</i> ]	2010	Tohan Corporation (Japan)	Eastern Youth Publisher	Linyi Daily Printing Group
<i>Ruishi</i> [ <i>Elle Men</i> ]	2011	Hachette Filipacchi Medias (US)	Zhejiang Elle Publishing House	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Zhejiang Sub-Council

(as cited in Song and Lee, 2012, p. 348)

Copyright cooperation is usually reflected in the titles of magazines. As demonstrated by the above table, most of the international magazines bear a localised Chinese title, instead of a direct translation of the original one. For instance, *Shishang xiansheng* [literally, Mr Fashion, or A Trendy Gentleman] is a compound of the brands of *Shishang* [*Trends Group*] and *xiansheng* [*Esquire*]. *Shishang*, launched in 1993, is a national title run by the China Tourism Association, which is under the National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China. This background explains the rich travel information and promotion of tours in *Shishang xiansheng* (Song and Lee, 2012).

There are certain restrictions imposed on the titles of cooperating magazines. As required by the GAPP, the Chinese title must accompany the global title which appear

alone on the front cover, but must be accompanied by the Chinese title and must be written in a font size much smaller than the Chinese one. However, in practice in magazines like *Men's Health* and *Bazaar Men's Style*, the size of the international title is much larger than the Chinese one. This is obviously designed to make the magazines more eye-catching by giving them a cosmopolitan look.

While some magazines prefer a sense of foreignness in the title, others obviously pursue a "Chineseness" that may make the magazine more appealing in the local market. Some new titles are a very free translation, or have almost nothing to do with the original. For instance, *GQ*, which stands for "Gentlemen's Quarterly," is translated as *Zhizu*, which literally means "a tribe of wisdom." The character *zhi* [wisdom] is reminiscent of the word *mingzhi* [sensible, wise], widely used to praise a consumer's choice in a consumer society. The title therefore implies the meaning of "good taste in consumption" and gives the reader a sense of elitism somewhat akin to the connotations of the word "gentlemen."

In recent years, the Chinese state has tightened its control over the influx of foreign media in order, presumably, to lessen the social impact of imported popular culture and to protect the local media industry. The policy is also believed to be part of an effort to repair the "cultural trade deficit" with Western countries, which means that the revenue from exports of cultural products to the West is less than that of its imports.<sup>1</sup> GAPP

announced a new rule in 2005, withholding approval of new foreign magazines in China except for science and technology titles ("CHINA: China freezes licences to publish foreign magazines", 8 April, 2006).

Nevertheless, cooperation has been of great benefit to the domestic publishing industry as the influx of world-famous magazines not only adds to the diversity of the domestic periodicals market, but also brings in timely first-hand fashion information and rich advertising resources. As Irene Yang observes in her study of international women's magazines in Taiwan, one factor that contributes to the success of these magazines is the financial backing from international advertising agencies, especially from brand-name cosmetics and fashion wear (Yang, 2004, p.509). As China has been growing as a consumer society, advertisers have regarded magazines as an effective medium for their messages. At the same time, the Chinese partners are normally official publishing agents with government background so have good standing both financially and politically. These copyright cooperating magazines enjoy many advantages when compared with the locally published ones. As the managing director of Trends Group, Liu Jiang, said, there are some pragmatic reasons behind the choice of having copyright cooperation with transnational media companies. First, the international Chinese editions benefit from the reputations established by the foreign magazines, which have a long history of



publication. Second, they can learn from the experiences of both success and failure of the mother editions in terms of market orientation and other things, and thus save a significant amount of time and money (Liu Jiang, personal communication, Jan 2008). Last but not least, international titles can enjoy the advantages of vast international resources, which include not only technical support, but also the most up-to-date fashion spreads. In this way, incorporating fresh elements from abroad increases the overall standard of a magazine. This is especially important for a newly launched copy. Liu Jiang believes that there is no contradiction between internationalization and localization, rather that they complement each other. Liu also claims that some magazines initially imitate the foreign version, and when they become more mature, create their own style and include more local elements. Copyright cooperation has become popular and common in the publishing industry in China and one publishing house can have several copyright cooperation partners in order to reduce its financial risk and maximise its profits. For example, Trends Publishing House works with several international publishers and publishes local editions. In April 1998, Trends Group initiated its copyright cooperation with *Cosmopolitan* from the US and *Shishang jiaren* became the model for the upcoming cooperative partners. *Shishang xiansheng* entered into a cooperative agreement with *Esquire* from Britain in September 1999. Hirst Company

from the US granted *Harper's Bazaar* to Trends in October 2001 and the Chinese versions of *Harper's Bazaar* for both women and men came into existence in 2003 and 2008 respectively (Liu Jiang, personal communication, January 2008). Other titles that under copyright cooperation include: *FHM*, *Men's Health*, *Traveller*, *Car*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Robb Report*. Rayli Publishing House started its business in mainland China in 1995, with financial backing from Japan. It publishes the local editions of the Japanese women's magazines, *Ray*, and *Ef* and men's magazine *Leon*. Another famous and influential publishing house is European-based Hachette Filipacchi Medias, which also works with some Chinese partners and publishes a few titles. These three media giants share over 80 percent of the lifestyle magazine market in China, including men's, women's and other genres, the remainder being shared by dozens of local titles (Zhang, 2006). Another advantage enjoyed by big publishing houses is their capacity to foster their own industry chains, including resourcing, distribution and post-product developments (Zhang, 2006). By integrating magazine publishing into a complete industry chain under the control of a media network, transaction costs can be significantly saved and the quality of product can be increased.

The introduction of international men's magazines has had a significant impact on the local men's magazine industry, resulting in not only a wider variety of content and

more sophisticated presentation styles, but also a conspicuous tendency for the Chinese indigenous copies to borrow from or imitate Western models of masculinity presented in the international editions. However, the entrance of some international media giants, with strong financial bases and international standards of editorial, technological and marketing operations ousted some small-scale undercapitalised local magazine companies from the market. As mentioned in Chapter One, some men's titles disappeared from the market only a few years after launching, defeated by fierce competition.

Facing tough competition from international editions, local magazines with solid backgrounds, on the other hand, re-adjusted their marketing strategies and created new channels for circulation in order to boost their circulation figures. *Mangazine*, for example, was displayed and made available in places where the social elite and wealthy people congregate, including airports, cafes, golf clubs and other private clubs. According to Zhou Xiaohua, editor-in-chief of *Mangazine*, to diversify its circulation, *Mangazine* collaborates with other institutions. Among its total circulation, 10 percent comes from airport selling venues, 16 percent from convenience stores or supermarkets, 21 percent from newsstands, 26 percent from individual subscriptions and most importantly, 29 percent from *tuanti dingyue* [group subscriptions]. Big companies that subscribe to this magazine include, according to Zhou, Ping An of China; China Construction Bank;

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and China Mobile. Free copies are also delivered to the VIP customers of these institutions or to their high-end employees as part of their welfare packages (Zhou Xiaohua, personal communication, April, 2011). In addition, free copies are given to potential local and overseas customers interested in joining *huaren jingyinghui* [the Chinese Elites Club] for trial reading. The club, founded by *Mangazine* in 2004, aims to create a platform for top businessmen in the greater China area. The marketing and promotional activities run by *Mangazine* also match well with its target audience—male elites. For example, the “The Top-10 Elite Election”, an annual activity organized by *Mangazine*, targets male elite in not only Mainland China but also Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities (Zhou Xiaohua, personal communication, April 2011).

According to Li (2010), “magazines in China can be classified as circulation-driven or advertisement-driven. Circulation-driven models aim for low-income readers, while those that rely on advertising target higher-income readers” (p. 4). Compared with the majority of magazines in China, which have traditionally functioned as propaganda and educational tools for the party-state, the crop of high-end consumer magazines are relatively expensive and not affordable by people with average incomes in Chinese cities (Song and Lee, 2012). Consequently, their circulation is limited. Thus, most of them rely

heavily on advertising revenue (Song and Lee, 2012). A content analysis of *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*] and *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] has been conducted to see how advertising space is dominated by international brands.

**Table 2.2: Brands of advertised products in *Shishang xiansheng* and *Nanren zhuang* (%)**

<b>Brands</b>	<b><i>Shishang xiansheng</i></b>	<b><i>Nanren zhuang</i></b>
Local	6.1	12.4
Foreign	81.6	80.9
Joint Venture	3.2	3.4
Asian	9.1	3.4
Total	100	100

The above table shows that over 80 percent of advertisements in both *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*] and *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] are of foreign brands. The most common include Jeep, Toyota, BMW, Cooper, Mini C for automobile advertisements; Calvin Klein, Giorgio Armani for fashion advertisements; Tag Heuer, Omega for luxury watch advertisements; Biotherm, L'Oreal, Nivea for skin care advertisements; and Casio, Nokia, Motorola and Apple for advertisements of digital products. Compared with local competitors, these international companies are in a better position financially to advertise in the high-priced magazines targeting a high-income readership. As shown in the media kit of *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*], the advertising rate for a full-page advertisement in

that magazine is at least US\$20,000, depending on the position of the advertisement (*Shishang xiangsheng*, 2008). This is much more expensive than that in “traditional” magazines. For example, in *zhongguo qingnian* [*China Youth*], a full-page advertisement costs between 80,000 and 100,000 *yuan*. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the statistics in Table 2.2 are consistent with the cult of Western lifestyle in these magazines; the pursuit of taste and style is primarily and fundamentally a postcolonial imitation of a modern Western lifestyle. Advertisements of international brands make men’s titles look more western and cosmopolitan. The expansion of global luxury brands, which have a great demand for advertising space, also provides an important financial source for the men’s titles discussed. In addition to global brands, some local brands also advertise in copy-right cooperated titles because of the cosmopolitan image of these magazines. William Xia, brand manager of Gf (Gaofu, a local brand of male cosmetic products) said that their brand has been carrying advertisements in *Nanren zhuang* since 2005. In addition to *Nanren zhuang*, they also carry advertisements in other international titles like *Men’s Uno*, *Shishang xiansheng* and *Men’s Health*. Though the advertising cost is much higher, the modern and cosmopolitan image of the magazines matches with their products. He also believes that for some new local brands, advertising in high-class international titles can help upgrade their brand image (William Xia, personal communication,

3 January 2008).

Among the top ten magazines that generate the most advertising revenue in China, five are international men's lifestyle titles (see Table 2.3). The reason behind this is that foreign advertisers are reluctant to buy local media because of the absence of independent and reliable consumer measurement mechanisms in China (Keane and Spurgeon, 2004). Willis and Willis (1993) found that transnational advertisers favour international magazines because of their perceived higher quality and their attractiveness to higher income consumers. The transnational corporations spend millions of dollars on advertising space each year and thus can negotiate deals with international titles. Zhang Xian (2006) found an interesting phenomenon in China: companies from the US such as P&G and Estee Lauder tend to cooperate with US-based magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire* or *Harper's Bazaar* to promote their brands. European corporations tend to work with the European based magazines like *Elle* and *Elle Men* while Japanese and Southern Korean brands like Shiseido and Amore Pacific favour Japanese-based magazines such as *Leon* and *Rayli*. Chinese editions of international magazines become the ideal vehicle for transnational companies. Within each men's title, fashion, cosmetics and accessories take up large proportions. This also contributes to the currently increasing market share of men's magazines in China, which significantly changes the gender stereotype that men

read newspapers, while women read magazines (Mi, 2005).

The use of “product placement”, which involves the embedding of brand-name products in editorial content (McAllister, 2000), is a common tactic in international magazines. Frith and Feng (2009) found that international women's magazines in China introduce local readers to fashion and lifestyle within contexts such as “fashion news”. The same thing happens in international men’s titles as well, in which the logos of brands and product information appear frequently and conspicuously. Thus, local readers are imperceptibly influenced by product information from transnational corporations when reading editorial articles in these magazines (Rong, 2005).



**Table 2.3 Men's Magazines among the Top Ten Magazine Titles by Advertising Revenue in China**

Rank	Title of Magazine	Share of the Market (Both men's and women's magazines)	Index of Competitive Power
1	<i>Shishang xiansheng</i> [ <i>Esquire</i> ]	20.62%	1.52
2	<i>Zhizu</i> [ <i>GQ</i> ]	13.56%	1.61
3	<i>Beijing qingnian zhoukan</i> [ <i>BQ Weekly</i> ]	8.43%	1.13
4	<i>Fengshang zhi</i> [ <i>Fashion Weekly</i> ]	7.46%	1.03
5	<i>Yizhou</i> [ <i>Femina China</i> ]	7.27%	1.20
6	<i>Nanren zhuang</i> [ <i>FHM</i> ]	6.07%	1.01
7	<i>Daren zhi</i> [ <i>Men's Uno</i> ]	5.99%	1.46
8	<i>Nanren fengshang</i> [ <i>Leon</i> ]	4.09%	1.15
9	( <i>COSMOBride</i> )	3.57%	1.48
10	<i>Nuyou Jiayuan</i> (Love)	2.41%	1.10

Data from *Chinese Newspaper and Magazine Advertising Market Report*, September 2010 (as cited in Li Yanle, 2010, p. 33).

### Localisation and Repositioning of Foreign Magazines

Although financially advantaged, transnational magazines must deal with the imperative of "localisation" (Song and Lee, 2012). Their editors face the need to strike a balance between maintaining the style and peculiarities of the foreign "mother edition", as it is called by the Chinese editors, and catering to the taste and conditions of the Chinese market (Song and Lee, 2012). An international title that fails to adopt localisational strategies may not be able to survive in the market. An obvious example is *Maxim*, which was launched in 2005 with a copyright cooperation agreement with the

official propagandist publication *Beijing zhouban* [*Beijing Weekly*] but ceased to publish after 4 years. While other magazines were aggressively diversifying their distribution channels, this magazine did not adopt a localized marketing strategy and ran limited promotional activities. In addition to its poor marketing skills, the contents of the magazine did not appeal to locals as it included too many Western elements. As Liu Jiang, explained, it is hard for a magazine dominated by Western culture to survive in the Chinese market. Under their contracts, *Shishang xiansheng* and *Nanren zhuang* are entitled to use up to 40 percent of the contents in the Western editions; nonetheless, their average use is less than half of that (Liu Jiang, personal communication, 10 January 2008). The localisation of an international title does not come overnight; rather, it is a gradual process entailing the magazine's justification of its existence in the market. Take *Shishang Xiansheng*, the men's title with the longest history in the market as an example. For its first 8 years, the magazine looked outwardly like its British partner, with Western faces on its cover and with most visual contents directly borrowed from and many texts directly translated from its western version. There are two reasons behind this: first of all, being the only men's magazine with no competitors, *Shishang xiansheng* lacked the motivation to change. Second, the editorial team may still have been adjusting its position and may not have realized the importance of localization. It was not until March 2005,

when Wang Feng became the executive editor-in-chief, that the magazine took a rather different direction, with more Asian faces on the cover and more features with local elements included inside. In an interview, Wang Feng described the magazine's goal as a "harmonious" balance between material and spiritual wealth, echoing the government's rhetoric of "to grab with both hands, with both hands tough".<sup>2</sup> According to him, a magazine cannot meet the needs of male readers in China with "materialist" content alone; it should have more "spiritual" and "cultural" content as well (Wang Feng, personal communication, 10 January, 2008). His comments also reflect a long standing and common myth in Party as well as popular discourse in China, which equates Western culture with materialism and Chinese culture with spirituality (Song and Lee, 2012).

Thumbing through a copy of *Shishang xiansheng*, one finds that, on the one hand, it looks very similar to its Western counterpart, being flooded with images of branded watches, luxury limousines, top-class men's fashion, high-class villas and so on. On the other, however, it distinguishes itself with apparent "Chinese elements", such as a column on *Yijing* [*Book of Changes*] and the *bagua* [eight hexagrams], a system of cosmology and philosophy that is intrinsic to ancient Chinese cultural beliefs, a column called *yangsheng* [regimen], which contains recipes for Chinese herbal soups, and articles on contemporary Chinese art, the art market and such like (Song and Lee, 2012).

As for *Nanren zhuang*, the local editorial staff has re-prioritised the magazine's publishing theme. According to Liu Jiang, the president of the Trends Media Group, the publishing theme of the American version of *FHM* has three elements: Sexiness is No.1; being funny is No. 2; and being practical is No. 3. For *FHM* in China, being funny is given first priority, being practical is priority two; and sex appeal is placed in the third position. Thus, the Chinese magazine contains more humorous articles and fewer focusing on sex. Furthermore, unlike its Western counterpart which solely emphasizes the breasts and buttocks of female models, the Chinese magazine highlights the "tastefulness" of these images and promotes a Chinese style of sexiness (see below for a discussion of the Chinese style of sexiness) (Liu Jiang, personal communication, 11 January 2008). Shouma, then editor-in-chief of *Nanren zhuang*, said that the four main sections in the Chinese version of *FHM* are the same as in its British counterpart, namely: news, scanner (information about the hottest books, films, DVDs and television programs of the month), features, and fashion. However, there are also differences. For example, while the cover pages of the British magazine emphasize the sexual exposure of women, the covers of *Nanren zhuang* are usually related to a feature story inside. Apart from using sexy women as a selling point, *Nanren zhuang* also explores the crisis that career women face, including their *qinggan weiji* [emotional crisis] and *shiye weiji* [career crisis]

and tends to explore and analyse stories told by these women themselves. This also explains why *Nanren zhuang* successfully attracts so many female readers (who make up 30 to 40 percent of the total readership) (Shouma, personal communication, 10 January 2008). Differences can also be seen in the fashion section. *Nanren zhuang* only uses local models in its fashion spreads. Its aim is to combine international trends with local appeal. According to Shouma, *Nanren zhuang* also has its own characteristics in graphic design. Compared with the British edition, which looks rather messy and chopped, graphic design in *Nanren zhuang* is “cleaner and clearer” (Shouma, personal communication, 10 January, 2008). This can be attributed to the fact that the former aims to cater to the *suiyixing* [casual life] of men and clearly indicates that the magazine is for blue-collared male workers, while *Nanren zhuang*, with a more *guizheng* [tidy and standardized] look, targets a different, more elite group of readers (Shouma, personal communication, 10 January 2008).



Image 2.1

With a distinctive cover picture and a special feature story of Chinese artists born in the 1970s, known as the “post-1970 generation”, this is perhaps the most conspicuous example of the “Chinese characteristics” of these magazines found in the November 2005 issue of *Shishang xiansheng*. Five celebrated artists—all born in the 1970s (the architect Ma Yansong, the director Lu Chuan, the pop singer Xu Wei, the musician Zhang Yadong, and the actress Xu Jinglei)—appear wearing white shirts with a red scarf tied around their necks and blue pants (Image 2.1). Their attire is supposed to be a “mark of time” for this generation and unmistakably alludes to the uniform of the *Shaoxiandui* [Young Pioneers], the mass organisation for children in China, which is operated by the Communist Party. A legacy of the former Soviet Union, the Young Pioneers are cultivated as “the heirs of communism”. The red scarf symbolises the blood sacrificed by martyrs of the revolution. Although the Young Pioneers organisation is still very active today and children wearing

red scarves are a ubiquitous sight in China, the white shirt and blue pants were primarily the uniform of the Young Pioneers during the 1980s, when the “post-70s” generation came of age, but are rarely seen today. Hence, the image has become an icon of childhood memories for the post 70s generation. Researchers believe the “post-70s” to be the last generation in China educated by Maoist ideology. They are now in their late thirties and early forties and are gaining increasing political and economic power in a society that is simultaneously undergoing turbulent and profound social transformation. Topics relating to this generation’s nostalgic memories of childhood in the context of rapid social change have been becoming popular on the Internet in recent years, for instance, the i70s website ([www.i70s.com](http://www.i70s.com)). The cover picture of the artists wearing red scarves and the feature entitled “The Post-1970 Generation Shout Loudly”, in this issue, are both remarkably “Chinese” (Song and Lee, 2012). They further demonstrate a discernible appeal to a social group with increasing consumer power in China. A sense of unity is sustained by an evenly shared common stock of knowledge and a distinctive cultural experience to which collective memory gives a lasting character (Skalli, 2006, p. 25).

## Cultural hybridity

The localisation of international men's lifestyle magazines in China demonstrates a dynamic interaction between global and local forces and invites analysis from the perspective of cultural hybridity. Nederveen Pieterse identifies three distinct perspectives on cultural difference in a globalizing world: namely, cultural differentialism or clash of civilisations, cultural convergence or cultural homogenisation, and cultural hybridisation or increased mixing (Pieterse, 2009, p. 44). The first stance may be represented by works of the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (Huntington, 1993, 1996, and 2004). In his most influential article, "The Clash of Civilizations?", Huntington suggests that there are eight civilisations in the world, comprising Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African. He proposes that

a crucial, indeed a central, aspect of what global politics is likely to be in the coming years... will be the clash of civilizations... With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among Western civilization (Huntington, 2004, p. 23).



By contrast, advocates of cultural homogeneity theory believe that cultural convergence is the direct result of global contact, and globalisation leads to cultural homogenisation or imperialism worldwide (Pieterse, 2009). There are variations on the theme of cultural imperialism, which may come in the form of consumerist universalism or global media influence. For consumerist universalism, Pieterse (2009) suggests that McDonaldisation, or, as known earlier, Coca-colonisation, is a result of the world-wide homogenisation of societies through the impact of Western multinational corporations, mainly those from the US or Europe. Scholars like Schiller (1991), Ritzer (1993), Hamelink (1995) and Bagdikian (1997) contend that globalisation is an extension of the transnational expansion of corporations in which the corporate media giants play an enormous role in leading the world toward standardisation, “resulting in the erosion of local experience and knowledge due to accelerating global forces” (Skalli, 2006, p. 4). However, in her study of Moroccan women’s magazines, Skalli (2006) argues that

the generalizing homogeneous scenario does not permit us to understand the complex processes of absorption, assimilation, subversion, and resistance strategies, which imperialized cultures can adopt toward mass and consumer products produced locally or transnational (p. 39).

Nowadays, more and more scholars (Brah and Coombes, 2000; Kraidy, 2005; Burke, 2009; Pieterse, 2009) take the view that globalisation leads to cultural mixing across different locations and identities, rather than to either differentiation or homogenisation. According to Flew (2007), cultural hybridity theory “seems to be the most plausible point between these two bipolar perspectives [differentiation or homogenisation], for its fluidity, open-endedness, and interconnectedness” (p. 163). This trend of hybridization is probably most evident in the transnational circulation of visual images and entertainments. Skalli (2006) contends that global trends and influences do not replace local specificities or realities in the media products, but rather they interact with them in a ceaseless, dialectic and asymmetrical fashion. Kraidy (2005) also argues that hybrid media texts have inter-textual traces of an increasingly standardised global media industry, where successful formats are adapted and hybridised to cater to various audiences but remain firmly grounded in the same commercial logic of achieving maximum profits.

In light of this theory, it is not difficult to observe that most of the lifestyle magazines under discussion serve to promote a highly hybrid version of masculinity and consumer culture; a mingling and intermixing of Western influence, influences from transnational media and cultural flows within Asia, including the interaction between East

Asian cultures (especially from Japan, Taiwan and Korea) and increasingly visible local elements. According to Kraidy (2005), “‘hybridity’ involves the fusion of two relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as cultural boundaries” (p. 5). Thus, when entering into the mainland Chinese magazine market, international men’s magazines not only promote global culture, but interlock and intertwine with local culture. These magazines therefore can be called “cultural hybrids” (Frith and Feng, 2009).

As Karan and Feng (2009) have explained, the ownership pattern of joint ventures in China allows lifestyle magazines to “negotiate the tensions and contradictions between the global players and local publishers” (p. 348). The “localisation” process of foreign lifestyle magazines in China usually involves three aspects: repositioning of the target market, self-censorship of contents in the Chinese context, and the incorporation of localised editorial and marketing strategies. With regard to the first, during interviews with editorial personnel and publishers in China, I found that some magazines tend to target members of a group that are 5–10 years older than the readers of their “mother editions”. This may be attributed to the fact that in developed Western countries and some Asian nations, like Japan, the commercial markets are more sophisticated and teenagers or college students can afford luxury goods due to the generous pocket money they

receive (Tanaka, 2003). Research in Japan shows that the average pocket money for a college student is around \$400 per month, which reaches the average disposable income of a “salary-man” or a general company employee who earns \$420 per month (as cited in Tanaka, 2003, p.222). Thus, international advertisers favour men’s magazines targeted at teenagers. However, lifestyle magazines in China are still high-end luxury commodities, affordable only to the newly emerged affluent class, who are also the primary consumers of the products advertised in the magazines. For instance, *FHM* and *Maxim* are both internationally known magazines targeting the younger generation of men (aged 18–35). However, since younger men consume less, their Chinese editors have increased the average age of the targeted readers to 25–35 years (Shouma, personal communication, 10 January 2008). The same is the case with *Darenzhi*. Rita Fu, an ex-editor of *Darenzhi*, points out that the mother edition in Taiwan is targeted at a younger generation, however, they re-target their readers in order to fit the Chinese market (Rita Fu, personal interview, 8 January, 2008). In addition, the Taiwanese version has more digital products content, including digital cameras and I-phones, aimed at a younger generation of readers, while the mainland version focuses more on fashion, grooming and other luxury products (interview with Yu Da-ming, 30 March 2011). In this case, the men’s lifestyle magazines in China, whether they are of the international, local and Asian editions, target similar

segments of the population and are competitive with each other.

Another example of the repositioning of a target market is provided by Japan and Taiwan, lifestyle magazines, which are magazines of specific interests, focusing on fashion, grooming, cars, entertainment and so on. However, in China, these magazines have been repositioned as general-interest magazines to fit into very specific market needs. The reason behind this is that the magazines' major revenue comes from advertising rather than circulation and they cannot afford to be reliant upon a homogeneous type of advertisement. Take *Darenzhi* [*Men's Uno*] as an example: The top three advertisers for this magazine are in fashion, automobiles and luxury products (including watches, liquor and jewellery). The same applies to *Men's Joker*, which is a fashion magazine in the Japanese edition, but was modified into a general-interest magazine when published in China by covering a broader range of articles (Lisa Liao, personal communication, 10 April 2011).

Editors also have to take the unique socio-cultural context and political environment of China into consideration when deciding how much they would like to appropriate from Western/Japanese editions. Of course, they must also work within the content restrictions established by GAPP. According to the *chuban guanli tiaoli* [Publication Management Regulations], Chapter 3 and Article 25, publications are banned from including the

following:

- a. Content that goes against the basic principles of the Constitution;
- b. Content that is harmful to national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- c. The disclosure of national secrets, endangering national security or harming national honour or interests;
- d. Incitement to ethnic hatred, ethnic discrimination, undermining national unity or infringing national customs and habits;
- e. Preaching cults or superstition;
- f. Content that disrupts social order or harms social harmony;
- g. Propagating obscenity, gambling or violence or abetting crime;
- h. Insulting or slandering others, injuring the legal rights of others;
- i. Going against public morality or the excellent national cultural traditions;
- j. Any other content that is prohibited by legal, administrative or state regulations
- k. Any other content that violates the legal, administrative regulations or that prohibited by state regulations (GAPP, 2006).

Apart from political taboos, there are restrictions on the representation of excessive sex and direct mention of homosexuality. Advertisements for tobacco and condoms are

also banned. In the case of *Men's Uno*, “authorities in charge” review the cover page and around 20 percent of the contents of each issue (as indicated in table one in this chapter) prior to publication every month. This is to ensure that the visual and textual content is in line with the directives from GAPP. The executive editor of *Men's Uno* also explained that a sample copy of each issue has to be sent to the “authorities in charge” after publication. Censorship is even stricter for newly launched titles (Yu Huiming, personal communication, 10 April 2011).

The localisation of international men's magazines has increased at an accelerating rate in recent years, which presumably reflects both the increasingly keen competition of the market and the rise of China's “soft power” in the arena of culture. Today, more Chinese faces appear on the covers and localised content is growing rapidly. This increasing process of localisation can be seen in *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*]. The magazine was launched in 2003, and for the first twelve issues, it looked very much like its American edition; even the cover images, showing Caucasian and American faces, were directly borrowed from the Western edition. In its second year, however, the magazine totally changed its editorial direction. A study of its cover pictures reveal the discernable tendency of replacing European and American faces with Chinese stars, such as the muscular actor Liu Ye, national football players Zhen Zhi and Liu Yunfei and model Hu

Bing. Portraying bare-chested Chinese men on its cover is really a breakthrough for the magazine and even the media in China, as the editor put it:

In 2004, *Men's Health* invited many famous male stars to be photographed as topless models: this was a first for the Chinese media. To keen appreciation and wild abuse, to support and questioning, the cover of every issue became a hot topic on the web. (as cited in McDonald, 2011, p.170)

As Dexter Roberts points out, “the educated Chinese have become a lot more savvy in the past decade and no longer see foreign publications as their only window on the world”. Instead, “they are looking for articles that will be relevant to their lives in China” (Roberts, 2003). Rather than translating articles from the West, Chinese writers or freelancers in the mainland are commissioned to write articles even for the copy-cooperating magazines. A content analysis of *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*], in comparison with Western editions of the magazine, reveals that a significant portion of the Chinese edition reflects distinctive features of Chinese culture and society, including such things as Chinese cuisine, martial arts, such as *kungfu*, Chinese ways of keeping fit and the other things. According to the editor, these “Chinese elements” have even been translated and used by *Men's Health* editions in other countries. An article on *Taichi boxing* in the April 2008 issue, for instance, was published throughout the world—in 13



different editions of *Men's Health*. The editor also indicated that the fashion column in *Shishang jiankang*, which focuses on jeans and sportswear, has to be produced locally because of the different body sizes of Chinese and Western men. Due to the different levels of tolerance and acceptance of certain topics, the same is true for columns on sex and relationships (Zhou Song, personal communication, 15 April 2011).

Far fewer materials from foreign issues are used now compared with when *Men's Health* was launched in China. Editors nowadays only select translated materials when the content cannot be locally found or produced, for example new health information. This includes articles about new equipment in fitness rooms, and new ways of body-building or achieving fitness. The reason behind this is that fitness rooms or body-building in mainland China are not as common as in the West, and body-building coaches on the mainland are not as professional. Many Chinese coaches learn new information about body-building by reading *Shishang jiankang* and then teach their members (Zhou Song, personal communication, 15 April 2011). Articles on green-living and environmental-friendly lifestyles are also translated from the Western edition.

Localised content is also found in the Taiwanese version of *Men's Uno*. Rita Fu, an ex-editor of *Darenzhi*, points out that though, geographically, Taiwan and the mainland are close to each other and they share similar cultural backgrounds, some differences can

be found between the Chinese and Taiwanese editions. An example relates to different aesthetic judgments on beauty and dressing. American Hip-Hop culture and Japanese and Korean street-fashion style influences *Men's Uno* in Taiwan, welcomed by teenage readers in Taiwan. Like Wang Feng, executive-editor-in-chief of *Shishang xiansheng*, cited above, Fu also states that while material goods that promote a hedonistic lifestyle flood the contents of the Taiwanese edition, magazines in China cannot be so materialistic; they have to cover some topics with spiritual connotations. Otherwise, the magazine will be criticised as too superficial, shallow and snobbish (Rita Fu, personal interview, 8 January, 2008).

While sex and fashion are closely associated with consumption, and thus, a cosmopolitan identity, they also reflect the paradoxical desire of domesticating cosmopolitanism (Rofel, 2007, p. 121). A characteristic example in this regard is the recent promotion of the notion of *Zhongguoshi xinggan* [Chinese-style sexiness], mostly for women only, by *Nanren zhuang*. Since 2008, Chinese-style sexiness has been the slogan and theme of a host of events, including a nation-wide beauty pageant every year, organised by *Nanren zhuang*.<sup>3</sup> In a headline article titled "What is Chinese-style Sexiness?" on the official website of the 2010 beauty pageant, it is stated that the event is organised in the hope of expounding the connotations of "Chinese-style sexiness" in a

globalising China and thus “instigate an all-around inspection and exploration of the Chinese culture of sexiness amongst the mass population”:

In China, the notion of sexiness has always been short of a standard definition, with “sexiness” being only an idea borrowed from the West [...] Through hosting this “Chinese-style sexiness” event we aim to recognise a kind of sexual appeal and beauty that is uniquely Chinese. [...] We are setting on a national hunt, giving all you Chinese women the opportunity to express yourself and your understanding of sexiness. In addition, we ask you to tease out a native definition for sexiness which reflects China’s own particular take on the word and spread the boundless potential of Chinese-style sexiness by using your own expression.<sup>4</sup>

The article quotes Li Fang, the associate editor of qq.com, laying bare the differences between Chinese-style and Western-style sexiness:

Even just twenty years ago, China barely engaged with the notion of “sexy” but rather, emphasised the value of having a beautiful heart and soul. The Chinese were still a bit ill at ease with openly discussing bodily features. In fact there was not even a proper synonym for it [sexiness] in written form. Only through the channels of Europe and

Japan much later on were we introduced to the idea of sexy—through imported magazines and the rise of the internet. The West, Japan and the likes all exaggerated the size of breasts and buttocks, though two minor differences between them were that the West put more focus on buttocks whilst the Japanese drew more attention to breasts. It was a shame however that neither of these features stood out on the average Chinese woman, and so it became hard to say whether enlarged breasts and buttocks suited Chinese passions. It really was best to find a symbol of sexual appeal distinctive to a Chinese person.<sup>5</sup>

According to him, instead of breasts and buttocks, which are the female body parts commonly associated with sexiness in Western and Japanese cultures, Chinese men are more interested in women's tiny waist, feet and flat belly. Those parts are "symbols of sexual appeal distinctive to a Chinese woman".<sup>6</sup> Discussions like this reveal an essentialist perception of "Chineseness" in the China/West dichotomy and the anxious pursuit of a Chinese identity.

### **Two Types of Male Image**

Discussions on masculinities and men's magazines in the West, and in particular, in Britain, have focused on a distinction between "new man" and "new lad" images

(Benwell, 2003). This distinction is also palpable among Chinese men's magazines, evidencing a global influence on Chinese popular culture. The "new man" and "new lad" are two predominant types of male images in Western lifestyle magazines; consumption defines both identities which are media created and driven. Roughly, the terminology "new man" is associated with the launch of the men's style magazine, *Arena*, in the UK in 1986 while "new lad" is linked with the launch of *Loaded* in 1994. Unlike the "traditional man", consumption defines the "new man" rather than what he creates through labour (Cortese and Ling, 2011, p.7; Alexander, 2003). The "new lad", on the other hand, refers to a male image that emerged in the 1990s. Sexy girls, risky sports and sexism under an "overcoat" of jokes and irony are the hallmarks of the "new lad" magazine. Relating these notions of masculinity and paid work, Tim Edwards further points out that the "new man" was the archetype of an aspiring yuppie, while work is curiously considered to be either unimportant, absent or simply invisible in the world of the "new lad" (Edwards, 1997, p. 81).

Both images "replicate the persistent cultural features of hegemonic masculinity" (Cortese and Ling, 2011, p. 4), in that they construct gender around consumer goods (Alexander, 2003). At the same time, the "new man" shows the influence of feminism. Since the late 1960s, feminism has had a significant impact on many aspects of British

society, from education to working opportunities and even on the transformation of gender roles, including the division of labour at home, childcare and consumption. According to Chapman and Rutherford (1988), feminists also came to question many taken-for-granted aspects of traditional masculinity and blamed men's responsibilities for atrocities from rape to nuclear war. And they criticised traditional manhood as "distant, uninvolved, unemotional and uncommunicative" (Gill, 2003, p. 42). These criticisms helped to create the "new man", who was emotional, intimate and internalised the principles of feminism and a new commitment to fatherhood, distinct as "new man" as "narcissist", "nurturer" (Beynon, 2002, p.99) and also "ambivalent in his sexuality" (Beynon, 2002, p. 118; Edwards, 2003). At least on the surface, he is anti-sexist and "turn[s] his back on competitive sports [and] sexist jokes" (Morrell, 1998, p. 7). In "drinking with mates, taking risks, telling dirty jokes, and most of all, looking at skimpily dressed women", the "new lad", on the other hand, represents a distinct "backlash against the feminism that gave birth" to the "new man" (McKay, Mikosza and Hutchins, 2005, p. 282). The "new lad" is constructed as a misogynist and has predatory attitudes toward women. He refuses to acknowledge the changes in gender relations produced by feminism (Gill, 2003, p.47). Whelehan (2000) argues that the emergence of the "new lad" is "a nostalgic revival of old patriarchy; a direct challenge to feminism's call for social

transformations, by reaffirming—albeit ironically—the unchanging nature of gender roles and sexual roles” (p.5) However, what distinguishes “new lad” manhood from traditional manhood is

an unrelenting gloss of knowingness and irony, reflexivity about its own condition which arguably rendered it more immune from criticism. It was also a construct which drew upon working-class culture for its values and forms, was younger than ‘new man’, was little invested in the world of work...made barely any reference at all to fatherhood... (Benwell, 2003, p.13).

In addition, the traits of the new lad—individualist, hedonistic, pleasure seeking—cannot be simply read in terms of a backlash against feminism, but can be understood as a reaction to and rebellion against the image of man as breadwinner and family provider (Jackson, et al, 2001).

According to Rosalind Gill (2003), “new man” and “new lad” “represent perhaps the two dominant and most pervasive constructions of masculinity circulating in Britain over the past decade and are frequently represented as products of particular chronological moments, with the “new man” representing the zeitgeist of the 1980s and the “new lad” the 1990s” (p. 37). These two images of masculinity are summarised by Gill (2003) as follows:

The “new man” is generally characterized as sensitive, emotionally aware, respectful of women, and egalitarian in outlook—and, in some accounts, as narcissistic and highly invested in his physical appearance. He is as likely to be gay as straight. By contrast, “new lad” is depicted as hedonistic, post- (if not anti) feminist, and pre-eminently concerned with beer, football and “shagging” women. His outlook on life could be characterized as anti-aspirational and owes a lot to a particular classed articulation of masculinity (p. 37).

As a matter of fact, although “new man” and “new lad” are “antagonistic phenomena” (Simpson, 2002), both can be included in the “Metrosexual” trend in the West and are intimately related to each other as products of glossy magazine culture.

As Simpson states:

both [the “new man” and “new lad”] were about a kind of commodified masculine self-consciousness that stemmed from insecurity and rootlessness—though, ironically, “new lad” was much more successful in selling men’s fashion and vanity products than “new man”. In this case, “new men” and “new lads” had strong metrosexual tendencies” (Simpson, 2002). (More discussions on metrosexual masculinity will be included in Chapter Three).



The influence of the new man/new lad dyad of masculinity on Chinese men's magazines is strong. Chang Xiaowu (2007) has divided current men's titles in the Chinese market into four sub-categories, namely: *shenshixing zazhi* [gentlemen magazines], *pjiu wenhua zazhi* [beer culture magazines], *linglei zazhi* [alternative sexuality magazines] and *nanyi guilei de zazhi* [magazines that cannot be included in the previous three] (p.57-61). He observes the distinctive differences of the "gentleman" magazines" and the "beer culture" magazines in the Chinese market. According to him, the gentleman magazines, which include *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*], *Pinpai Dadao*, *Mingshi*, *Mingpai* [Magazine], *Da Dushi* [*Metropolis*] and *Xin shixian* [*The Outlook Magazine*], target successful men in their late thirties to mid-forties. Promoting an elite lifestyle, they construct a masculinity characterised by a mature personality, attractive appearance and successful career and wealth. This masculinity strongly resembles that of the "new man". These magazines construct an image of an elite lifestyle by focusing on high-brow artefacts, delicate food, luxurious housing and fashion, elegant watches, exotic travel, fitness advice and financial management and so on. They aim to provide social elites with advice on leisure and at "uplifting" the taste and quality of their life (interview with Wang Feng, Jan 2008).

The very first men's lifestyle magazine in China, *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*], is

without doubt the epitome of this discourse of mature and successful masculinity, catering to the fantasies and desires of well-off early middle-aged men. “Esquire Men of the Year” competitions have been held annually since 2005 and have become a highly popular event nationally. According to their website, an “Esquire Man” should be distinguished in four respects: *jiankang*, *qinggan*, *ganxing*, *caifu* [health, emotion, sensibility and wealth] (*Shishang xiansheng*, 2008, p.10). The four criteria for selection are *chenggong de shiye*, *chuzhong de caihua he meili*, *qizhi youya*, *yibiao bufan* [successful career, outstanding talents and glamour, tasteful disposition, dignified bearing and remarkable appearance] (*Shishang xiansheng*, 2008). However, the list of past winners includes celebrities such as actors, directors, writers and, most predominantly, entrepreneurs, most of whom are not particularly handsome. The magazine’s cover often features middle-aged men and celebrates the notion of mature masculinity.

By contrast, the “beer culture” magazines, which are epitomised by *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] and *Fengdu* [*Maxim*], slant more toward a hedonistic lifestyle, and resemble the “new lad” discourse by focusing on wine, sports, sex and women. They reveal a raft of blatant front cover images of scantily clad young women and headline articles concerning sex or women. As noted before, the representative magazine of this group and the one that enjoys the largest proportion of sales in the market in China is *Nanren zhuang*

[*FHM*]. In an interview, its editor, Shouma, said that their readers were all “fully confident” in life. They buy what they like, without concern for the price of the products. They care very little about the future and enjoy the present. They want to be independent from the domestic responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood. They are keen on fashionable and new technological products. Comparatively speaking, they are more open-minded and are more ready to accept a Western lifestyle. This social group is younger than the “gentlemen” readers in age and has been called “post-yuppies” by Shouma (personal interview, 10 January 2008). To a certain extent, they represent the worldviews of the post-70s and post-80s generations in China.

The dyad of “gentleman” and “beer culture” magazines demonstrates conspicuous influence from the “new man” and “new lad” types. However, despite the influences and similarities, there are also some differences between Chinese constructions and the Western dyad. In the West, the “new lad” represents primarily a young working-class masculinity, normally associated with working-class or juvenile audiences, and is therefore frowned on by high culture critics (Edwards, 2003, p. 144). *FHM*, for instance, has been regarded as a soft-porn magazine read mostly by construction workers and truck drivers (Edwards, 2003). It is scarcely imaginable that this magazine could be associated with good taste and high social status. Its Chinese version, *Nanren zhuang*, however, has

been transformed into a form of cultural capital and status claim for the elite in contemporary China. As will be discussed further in Chapter four, this magazine has been marketed as an high-end magazine that is affordable only by the new rich. It is therefore a symbol of status of the rich “post-yuppies.”<sup>7</sup> Its contents celebrate the mercantile spirit and the lifestyle of being “cool.” One column on luxurious accessories, such as men’s silver ribbed pens and cufflinks, is entitled *xuanwu* [something to show off], in keeping with the culture of showing off by rich people in today’s China. In addition, the magazine also functions as a good illustration of the metrosexual type of masculinity, featuring advertisements of men’s cosmetics and advice on dressing and body-building. Therefore, as Liu Jiang has said, the “DNA” of all men’s magazines in China is the same: successful men, leisure and entertainment (interview with Liu Jiang, Jan 2008).

### **Advertisements and Masculinities**

Advertising plays an important role in the construction of different types of masculinities. To illustrate the different styles of the “gentleman” and “beer culture” magazines and the degree to which they are influenced by Western magazines, I have undertaken an analysis of advertisements in *Shishang xiansheng* and *Nanren zhuang*.<sup>8</sup> The reason for choosing these two magazines is that they are best-selling men’s lifestyle magazines in China and therefore are potentially widely influential in terms of their

contents.

### ***Coding of Variables***

I have categorised the advertisements. First of all, according to the type of product they market, they are divided into 10 categories, as described below:

1. *Formal fashion* includes items such as suits, ties, shirts and leather shoes.
2. *Informal fashion* includes items like T-shirts, shorts and sport shoes.
3. *Accessories* include watches, sunglasses, pens, bags and wallets.
4. The *beverage and wine* category includes products for beer, hard liquor and other alcoholic drinks.
5. *Automobile* advertisements are for cars, trucks and motorcycles.
6. *Technical products* include anything electric or electronic, from refrigerators, cameras, computers and televisions to automatic toothbrushes and shavers, etc.
7. *Travel* includes advertisements for tour sites and airlines.
8. The *Sports and Leisure* category includes products for sporting, e.g., golf courses.
9. *Body enhancing* is defined by perfumes, and hair and facial products.
10. The *Other* category includes items that could not be grouped into the above-prescribed categories.

The *Gender* of the models depicted in the advertisements is coded as “not applicable”

(i.e., no human figures are visible), “male”, “female”, “both male and female” and “indeterminate”. The *Racial features* of the models depicted in the advertisements are coded as “black”, “white”, “Asian”, “not applicable”, “indeterminate” and “mixed.”

### Discussions

**Table 2.3: Product categories of advertisements in *Shishang xiansheng* (*Esquire*) and *Nanren zhuang* (*FHM*) (%)**

Product categories	<i>Shishang xiansheng</i>	<i>Nanren zhuang</i>
Formal fashion	19.4	3.9
Informal fashion	25.1	12.9
Accessories	20.5	18.5
Beverages and wines	5.0	5.6
Automotive	6.7	18.0
Technical	10.7	18.0
Travel	1.6	0
Sports and leisure	1.0	1.1
Body enhancing	6.2	14.6
Other	3.8	7.3
Total	100	100

Table 2.3 shows that advertisements marketing informal fashion occupy 25 percent of all the advertisements in *Shishang xiansheng* while accessories and formal dress advertisements each occupy about 20 percent. The advertisements are consistent with the style of the contents because models in suits are also most commonly seen in the fashion section of *Shishang xiansheng*. This table indicates that advertisements on fashion,

including both formal and informal dress, occupy 40 percent of all the advertisements in *Shishang xiansheng* and 17 percent for *Nanren zhuang*. Both magazines include large percentages of advertisements on body-enhancing products, with 6.2 percent and 14.6 percent for *Shishang xiansheng* and *Nanren zhuang* respectively. This shows that both magazines have metrosexual tendencies. However, we can see that body-enhancing products definitely carry more weight in *Nanren zhuang* than *Shishang xiansheng*. As explained earlier, the readers of *Nanren zhuang* are comparatively younger and mostly without family burdens. They care about their image and would not hesitate to spend money to improve their appearance.

In *Nanren zhuang*, advertisements for accessories (18.5 percent), automotive (18 percent) and technical products (18 percent) have the highest percentage. By contrast, the percentage of advertisements for automobiles and technical products in *Shishang xiansheng* is only 6.7 percent and 10.7 percent respectively. Advertisements for beverages and wines occupy a slightly higher percentage in *Nanren zhuang* (5.6 percent) than in *Shishang xiansheng* (5.0 percent). But the difference cannot hold a candle to that between “new man” and “new lad” magazines in the West, where “drinking with mates” is a signature theme of the “new lad” titles. This may be attributed to the fact that targeted readers of *Nanren zhuang* are relatively older in age and enjoy higher positions in the

social hierarchy.

As products of copyright cooperation with Western media, both magazines are influenced by the above-mentioned “new man” and “new lad” modes of masculinity in contemporary Western culture. From the table, it is clear that *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*], is a shadow of the “new man” type, focuses more on men’s dress and appearance and helps construct images of elite, narcissistic executives and professionals as the ideal masculine type. These features can be easily detected from the above analysis of advertisement types in *Shishang xiansheng*. As Rosalind Gill points out, the defining characteristic of the “new man” is that he is “narcissistic and highly invested in his physical appearance” (Grill, 2003, p. 47). *Nanren zhuang*, by contrast, is very similar to the “new lad” magazines, giving expression to the “individualistic, hedonistic and pleasure-seeking attitude” (Grill, 2003, p. 47). The advertisements obviously show more interest in the pursuit of material pleasure. The readers of the magazine are mostly young professionals and other young people from rich families who would like to spend money on accessories, automotives and technical products like computers and mobile phones.



**Table 2.4: Gender depicted in the advertisements in  
*Shishang Xiansheng* and *Nanren Zhuang* (%)**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Shishang xiansheng</i>	<i>Nanren zhuang</i>
Female	4.3	10.7
Male	56.1	45.5
Both	8.8	7.3
Not applicable	30.8	36.5
Total	100	100

Table 2.4 shows that in *Nanren zhuang*, advertisements depicting female models constitute 10.7 percent of the total, which is more than double those in *Shishang xiansheng*. This sex appeal is in keeping with the overall style of the magazine, which uses the objectified erotic female body as a selling point. For example, a section called *Youwu* [rare things] is full of pictures of sexy women and the “sex confidential” column interviews women about their sexual life, with questions about their attitudes towards sex and expectations from sexual partners.

#### **Duplicates of the Western Model?**

Nevertheless, it would be an oversimplification to reduce the “new man” and “new lad” in the Chinese market to duplicates of the Western model. Nuanced readings of the Chinese magazines as texts reveal some interesting “Chinese characteristics” of these male images, which serve as good case studies of cultural filtering and cultural hybridity (Song and Lee, 2012). The following pages will focus on the global/local interactions in

the construction of consumerist masculinities by lifestyle magazines.

Let us start with the “new man” type. The “new man” in the West, is totally different from the “traditional man.” The latter adheres to four themes: first, as Brannon puts it, no ‘sissy stuff’ (must never display strong feminine characteristics); second, ‘big wheel’ (achievement compared with other men); third, ‘sturdy oak’ (convey confidence, self-reliance, and stoicism) and finally, ‘give ‘em Hell’ (aggressiveness and violence, typically as a way to obtain sex) (Brannon, 1976). The “New man”, in contrast, embraced the concept of egalitarianism in the domestic sphere and parental duties even though he did not necessarily do more around the house or child caring (Messner, 1993). In addition, he possessed a willingness to display the emotional side of his nature (Beynon, 2002, p. 118). However, this pro-feminist tendency is largely absent in the crop of titles that Chang categorised as “gentleman magazines” in the Chinese market. On the contrary, these magazines, which explicitly target the “new rich” in China, are in keeping with a discernable return to traditional patriarchal ideology and a reaction against the Maoist discourse on women’s liberation. In the words of Xiaoying Wang,

the Maoist insistence on gender equality (“women make up half the sky”) has all but evaporated, giving way, with neither endorsement nor resistance from the state, to an alarmingly rapid emergence or revival of blatant gender inequality. Such inequality

takes the form not only of the de facto revival of concubinage and various discriminatory practices but also, more subtly and pervasively, of the cultural reinscription of sexual difference that validates and naturalizes gender discrimination” (Wang, 2003, p. 147).

The practice of keeping concubines, which was regarded as the privilege of elite autocratic families in pre-modern Chinese society, has been a symbol of success and status of the new elite class, including high-ranking government official, businessmen and entrepreneurs (Xiao, 2011). In their studies of the “second -wife” phenomenon in mainland China, scholars found that second wives were composed of not only “low quality” migrant women from rural villages but also “high-quality” urban women with higher educational and economic status (Osburg, 2008; Shen, 2005). Li Yinhe, a sociologist in mainland China also described the widespread reemergence of keeping mistresses (*bao ernai*) as “part of a resurgence of ‘old-style’ masculinity” (as cited in Song & Hird, forthcoming). Levin (2011) notes that keeping one or more mistresses has become a “pastime” for the China’s newly rich, for which they pay up to six thousand *yuan* a month for keeping “a modern concubine”. This amount of money may seem nothing to them but is equivalent to several months’ income of a man of a lower class. As Levin (2011) argues, the economic boom in China after the reforms “has bred a

generation of nouveau-riche Lotharios yearning to rival the sexual conquests of their imperial ancestors". He argues that "even the Chinese term for mistress—"ernai"—second wife, harks back to that polygamous tradition of yore" (Levin, 2011). He contends that for Chinese men, having a mistress is just like playing golf; both are expensive hobbies and are possible only for the corporate titans, private entrepreneurs and high-ranking government officials whose power and privileges are gained from their jobs allowing them to obtain ill-gotten gains (Levin, 2011). Xiao Suowei, in her study of the "second-wife" phenomenon argued that keeping a "second-wife" helps construct differing "class-coded masculinities", which enable low-class men, like workers, to "negotiate their class disadvantage" and help businessmen to manifest their social class privilege (Xiao, 2011, p. 610). According to the office of China's top prosecutor, 90 percent of the country's most senior officials felled by corruption scandals in 2006 kept mistresses (as quoted in Levin, 2011).



Image 2.2



Image 2.3



Image 2.4



Image 2.5



Image 2.6

Discrimination against women and a patriarchal ideology can be found both in society and the media. The “A Woman We Love” article of the May 2011 issue of *Shishang xiansheng*, for instance, features a series of sexy pictures of a lesser-known actress with the name Dong Xuan. The pictures, combining her exposed body with tempting poses in the act of doing household chores, constructs an image of a *ju jia xiao nü ren* [small

woman at home], as a popular term goes. The young woman is mopping the floor, washing clothes and vacuuming the house—while displaying her attractive shape in the pictures—all done with blatantly obvious sexual suggestion (Song and Lee, 2012). The female body is represented as not only an object of male desire and fantasy but also as a timid tool of housework service, included along with such images as a washing machine, vacuum cleaner, kitchen gloves and, bank notes (Images 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6). The power that (re-)positions women in a submissive and obedient role at home is represented by the banknotes, which signify wealth, power and thus, masculinity. As a matter of fact, objectified women are commonly found in Chinese men's magazines. As a promotion slogan goes, a successful man is a "BMW man": B = business, M = money, W = women (see Zhang, 2006, p. 54). Women are discursively linked with money and consumption (Song and Lee, 2012). This is in stark contrast with Western editions of a typical American 'new man' magazine, *Esquire*, which at least on the surface, strives to maintain a "politically correct" image in terms of gender ideology. As a reader's letter summarises, the (USA) *Esquire* is known for "brilliant advice about clothing and lifestyle, hilarious columns, insightful journalism, and adoring appreciation of women that doesn't subjugate or patronize" (*Esquire* (US), January 2010, p. 14).

A content analysis of the American *Esquire* reveals that among common topics of the

magazine are marriage and fatherhood, which can be hardly found in *Shishang xiansheng*. In its May 2011 issue, for instance, an 11-page feature story entitled “Hitched: A Man’s Guide to Getting and Being Married” interviews men at different stages of marriage, ranging from first dating to the end of marriage, about their feelings and tips on marriage. It also includes a quiz for the reader to test whether or not he is a good husband and advice on how to maintain a good relationship with women. The main idea of the piece is to teach readers the importance of respecting and appreciating their wives and sharing household chores with their partners. In its June/July issue, an article entitled “How to be a Man in 2011” offers advice and exhortations on living well with others, including with their partners at home. To be a man, “You: take out garbage. Fix appliances when broken. Clear table. Her: Wipe down counters. Sweep floor. Clean out fridge.-Everyone: Buy groceries. Do dishes. Cook” (*Esquire* (USA), May 2011, p. 142). Sharing of housework is regarded as an important trait of being masculine. As a matter of fact, as early as 1940, the American *Esquire* began publishing “Man the Kitchenette,” a cooking column included for its male readers. Studies have been done to examine how representations of food and cooking construct images of appropriate femininity, and to instruct women on how to perform their gender roles. As Fakazis (2011) states, the emergence of this column challenges the notion that an interest in food and cooking was largely the concern of

women, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Inness (2011) argues “when women are in charge of the majority of cooking tasks, they are not only making a school lunch or cooking a Saturday morning breakfast, but also demonstrating and affirming their gendered identity” (p.9). DeVault (1991) also believed that when women engage in her daily chores, she performs expectations of what it means to be a proper woman. “It is not just that women do more of the work of feeding, but also that feeding work has become of the one of the primary ways that women “do” gender...by feeding the family, a woman conducts herself as recognizably womanly” (p.118). Thus, cooking is an important criterion to “identify whether a female is sufficiently womanly” (Inness, 2011, p.9). As Fakazis (2011) argues, when a man engages in cooking, he is performing a task in a domestic space that used to measure femininity. In this way, the traditional gender roles between men and women have become blurred.

Another example of pro-feminist “new man” discourse are topics on fatherhood, again largely absent in Chinese editions of magazines. In the June/July 2011 issue of the American *Esquire*, an article “Father of the Year” features John Lasseter, one of the creators of Pixar, an animator studio, and his close relationship with his five sons. John Lasseter is represented as a role model of a good father for the readers. Similar content on fatherhood advice also includes “How to Teach Your Kid about Money” in the March



2010 issue. Child care and children's education, which have been traditionally regarded as women's jobs, are constructed as new constituents of the "new man" image.

When making a comparison between the British and Chinese editions of *Esquire*, it is easy to notice that there are significantly more advertisements and features on luxury goods in the Chinese magazine. These include luxury watches, brand suits, expensive automobiles, hi-tech products and so on, all of which are coveted by the new elites. Luxury commodities, which reflect the culture of "showing off" in today's Chinese society, define the identity of the elite and cater to their desire for markers of their status.

Elitism is a discourse ubiquitously found in the Chinese "gentleman" magazines, but largely absent in their Western counterparts (Song and Lee, 2012). This can be attributed to the fact that the consumers of high-end magazines and the luxury products they advertise are exclusively from the "new elite" in Chinese cities. In order to appeal to readers' aspirations for a higher class lifestyle, some magazines organize various kinds of elections to decide role models for readers. For example, *Mangazine* organizes the yearly "shida jingying nanshi xuanju" [Ten Great Male Elites Election], and *Shishang xiansheng* organizes the yearly "zhongguo shishang xiansheng xuanju" [China Esquire Man Election]. When talking about the purpose of organizing the first "China Esquire Man Election", Feng Wei, then chief editor of *Shishang Xiansheng*, said, "What we need to do

is to promote and set the model of our generation, as well as a model for men...the China Esquire Man selected by us today will be a *junjie* [real elite], who can demonstrate features of the modern era and show his charm and light in all aspects of his life. By setting up the model, we wish to inspire and attract more people to be real modern people and to lead a fashionable life. This is our selection criterion and the purpose of our election<sup>9</sup>. Four years later, in 2008, Dou Jiangming, the new editor-in-chief of *Shishang xiansheng*, explained the mission of *Shishang xiansheng* and provided a new interpretation of the purpose of the “China Esquire Man Election”:

Being China’s earliest fashion publication, *Shishang xiansheng* has been at the forefront of experiencing China’s leading fashion trends. Put enticingly, *shishang xiansheng* is a pioneer in introducing fashion into China. Over a decade of growth and intensive development has established *Shishang xiansheng* as the industry standard in terms of men’s fashion magazines in China, holding the responsibility of heralding the vogue lifestyle to men in China. Because of this role as the number one men’s publication in China, the magazine intends to create a standard for China’s front-running men, providing a role model for the elite of Chinese gentlemen through the “China Esquire Man Election”. This election is not in fact an event intended to publicise *Shishang xiansheng* itself, but rather, a mission that it has been assigned

with. As such, this election for the male elite is not simply a beauty contest for men, nor is it a ranking of the millionaires. It is an election for the fashionable man.<sup>10</sup>

According to Zhang Bocun (2006), most men's magazines in China target the comparatively small group of society known as the "male elite", that is, rich men, and subsequently construct them as special, outstanding and desirable. Additionally, the discourse of cultural nationalism links to the masculinity of the new elites. More than one magazine defines itself as a "textbook" for the lifestyle of "elite men", who are supposed to determine the future of China. As the slogan of *Mangazine* goes, "the kind of men you have determines the kind of country you will get" (Zhang, 2006, p. 85). A large portion of the content in this magazine, which mainly targets businessmen and executives, is devoted to the combination of traditional Chinese thought with modern management strategies. The following passage from the December 2004 issue of the magazine calls for a "return to tradition" for Chinese (elite) men:

China can only be China, after all. The Chinese people will sooner or later return to their Chineseness. Foreign thoughts are useless if they are not rooted in our own soil [...] Among those who were born in the mainland during the 1950s to 1970s, few are interested in traditions. This, of course, would not impede their achievements in the areas of economics or science. But, with generation

replacement, it would be a great risk for our nation if this ancient country is governed by people who don't really know where they are from and where they are going, let alone lead the country through its historical transformation! Hopefully more outstanding men that can be called "elite" will emerge so that our worries are unnecessary.

For today, it is important that our next generation has a full understanding of both modern civilization and traditional culture so that, as integrated modern Chinese, they can avoid the educational failure that their fathers suffered. This coincides with the aims of our "elite men" contest: China will be China only when its streets are full of genuine Chinese! (Editor's note, *Mangazine*, Dec 2003 issue)

The discourse of elitism and nationalism can also be found in another "gentlemen" magazine, *Shishang xiansheng*. This is reflected in the speech given by Dou Jiangming, the editor-in-chief of *Shishang xiansheng* in the "2008 *Shishang xiansheng* of the Year" award ceremony:

One of the ongoing challenges for "*Shishang xiansheng*" is to restore and recover the connotations associated with the word *xiansheng* [gentleman] in China and to rediscover the noble elements at the core of Chinese tradition.

"*xiansheng*" [gentleman], the era belongs to the leader or pioneer.

We need to find people who are at the forefront of the times, those whom we can respectfully refer to as “gentlemen”. What we continue to strive for is to deeply imbed the notion of in-trend men as leaders of the current time, into the word “fashion” (*shishang*), and to actively advocate the universal values which allow the human race to progress.

The public usually understands “fashion” as being fashionable, taking care of appearances and pleasure-oriented. But “fashion” in fact carries a much richer connotation. Fashion implies a kind of leader-like life concept, with the attitude of approaching the world as a front-runner of the times.

This is essentially what *Shishang xiansheng* intends to achieve for the past, present and future; to discover, portray and model this positive image of the era.

This is what we feel most honoured about-when we ourselves feel that a magazine’s future merges with the future of a nation, and that as we present this upbeat image to the public each year, we are continuing to fulfil the cutting edge definition of fashion. *Shishang zaojiu xiansheng, xiansheng dingyi shishang* [Fashion builds the man, the man defines fashion].<sup>11</sup>

Discourses involving elitism and nationalism echo popular social and intellectual trends in today’s China, and thus make the “gentleman magazines” in China seem less

light-hearted when compared with their Western counterparts (Guo, 2003).

Masculinities constructed in Chinese men's lifestyle magazines also invite analysis from the perspective of the *wen/wu* matrix. As noted in Chapter One, Kam Louie contends that traditional Confucian notions of masculinity were characterised by a dyad of "*wen*" or "literary masculinity" and "*wu*" or "martial masculinity". The centrality of "*wen*" is related to literariness, scholarship and learning to the "traditional" Confucian image of masculinity and power. This comes through in contemporary new gentleman magazines in a way that makes them different from 'new man' magazines in the west. This is epitomised, for example, in the cover of March issue 2008 in which Hong Kong *kungfu* star Jacky Chan appears, holding a large Chinese brush pen, an image that is highly reminiscent of the call for the revival of the "Chinese tradition" by mainstream ideology in Chinese society since the mid-1990s (Image 2.7). However, gentleman magazines often focus on entrepreneurship and financial success, which makes them different from "traditional" notions of *wen*.



Image 2.7

Chen (2013) believes that men's lifestyle magazines in China often use "literati masculinity" to attract their middle-class readers. Chinese view literati as possessors of good taste, and label this type of manhood formal keepers of elite cultural traditions (Larson, 2002). Chen (2003) groups "literati masculinity" in men's lifestyle magazines into three categories: (1) those whose occupations are defined as literati, such as writers, poets, teachers and scholars; (2) practitioners working for institutions involved in the production of symbolic capital, examples are designers and people working in media and publishing industries; (3) businessmen and entrepreneurs who used to engage in literary field or exhibit literary talent as amateurs (Chen, 2013, p.3). "Gentlemen" magazines frequently give exposure to literati. Zhu Dan's (2009) January to August 2009 content analysis of *Shishang xiansheng* found that among the 164 personages who appeared in

the magazines, 27 percent of them were literary artists or scholars.

Below, I compare Chinese and Western editions of *FHM* for “new-lad” masculinity.

As was previously stated, *FHM* in the West is primarily read by working-class men and/or juvenile audiences, and high culture critics frown upon it (Edwards, 2003, p. 144). However, *Nanren zhuang*, the mainland Chinese edition of *FHM*, is an upmarket magazine that defines itself as a status symbol of rich *hou yapi* [post-yuppies]. Granted, there are both upper-class and lower-class pornographic magazines in Western countries such as the US (Dines, et al, 1998, pp.37–63). But, generally speaking, in the words of Laura Kipnis, “insofar as porn is relegated to a low thing culturally, it takes on all the associations of a low class thing” (Kipnis, 1999, pp.174–175). In China, the absence of lower class pornographic magazines may simply point to the lack of purchasing power of lower class men. The phenomenon, however, may also reflect a discursive tradition of correlating sexuality with power in Chinese thinking, which merits particular analysis from the perspective of cultural studies. Unlike in the US where magazines depict working-class and Black men as hyper-sexual, with abilities to seduce and consume many women (Skeggs, 1994, pp.106-126; Hodes, 1999), in China, magazines depict male hyper-sexuality as a privilege of the rich, like other forms of consumption (Song and Lee, 2012). Some men without money simply cannot have sex at all. Compared with the new



rich, who can keep one or more mistresses as one of their “leisure” activities, men of the lower class are neither able to seduce women outside of marriage nor able to find wives. Popular TV dating shows demonstrate the plight of many Chinese men looking for a wife. A web article entitled “When Lights of the Poor Are All Off, You Will Be in a World of Darkness,” for instance, tells the story of how a migrant worker participates in such a show in the hope of finding a wife in vain.

Standing in front of a group of attractive girls in lovely make-ups, stunning outfits and a line formation, the lack of appeal of the poor fellow was breathtaking: he had no house, no car, didn't have a good-looking face or any education worth mentioning. Nevertheless, he thought he had one advantage over the other suitors, that he was willing to *daochamen* [marry into the wife's family]. In the old male-centered society, such a concession might be considerable, but in today's world where husbands can switch wives and a flat is worth more than almost everything in a relationship, it is anything but. And in the eyes of the girls... [marrying into the family] was not worth a fart. Literally, as even the buttock of another suitor garnered more attention than the peasant worker.

Every girl looked as though they despised him, as if their white wedding gown had just been tarnished by the hand of a beggar, and their words were no more

comforting. They *mafan* [pleaded with] the peasant worker *huode xianshi yidianr* [to be realistic], asked him to *laojia huidao zhenshi de shijie* [please come back to the real world], made clear that “he had their pity, their sympathy, but not their acceptance”. One of the girls had this extraordinarily harsh response, that her family had a villa and two Ferraris, she herself was a post-graduate, that she would consider marrying someone who has two Lamborghinis, that she was looking for a boy-friend but not a male servant (Huang, 2010).

These dating shows reflect that the emphasis on relationships has shifted to financial considerations as male contestants on shows regularly make statements such as “I bought a BMW and own several houses” in order to assert their worthiness. China has been going down the path of “broadening the gap” since its economic reform decades ago. As China’s “market economy” evolves into “market society”, the value of emphasizing wealth has become so dominant that it is millions of people’s motto to laugh at the poor but not at those who have ill-gotten gains [*xiaopin bu xiao chang*] (Huang, 2010). In another episode of the same TV show, a lady commentator even went so far as to say, “I’d rather weep in the backseat of a BMW than smile on the backseat of a bicycle”.

The strong correlation between sexuality and power is not only commonly found in

present-day China. According to Sigley (2006), prior to the establishment of the PRC, when China was suffering civil war and Japanese invasion, the Guomintang accused high-ranking members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of promoting immoral and *luan* [chaotic] sexual conduct (for example, the 'collectivization' of women) and in return, the CCP also attacked the social elites of Guomintang for wallowing in moral decadence (p.46).

The cultural component of this discourse, i.e. sexuality and power, can be traced back to the Confucian concept of masculinity, which appears more power based than sex based as discussed in Chapter One (Song, 2005). The *caizi* [scholar], for instance, is the man who embodies all the desirable masculine qualities and the power of the text [*wen*] in Confucian discourse. Only the weak scholar is capable of seducing the beautiful girls in the stories while all the macho warriors seem to be desexualised. According to Zhong (2000), in Communist culture, by contrast, male intellectuals were in a sense "emasculated" by the regime and were thus deprived of the privilege of sex (p. 52–86). Women would only be interested in men who were politically dependable. As discussed in Chapter One, the popular reform-era imagination, however, represents successful and wealthy men as the ideal, giving expression to the mercantile spirit in society. In the new globalised market economy, a man's worth is decided by his wealth and how closely he

matches the Western macho stereotypes portrayed in media such as Hollywood movies (Louie, 2002).

Chinese today equate masculinity with wealth and power and women and sex are proof of men's success. This contemporary masculinity does not fit in the traditional *wen-wu* model, in which people viewed cultural achievements (*wen*)—such as literary excellence, civilised behaviour and general education—as the preeminent markers of success and masculinity, while physical achievements (*wu*)—such as powerful physique, fearlessness and fighting skills were subordinate to *wen* (Louie, 2002, p.142). As the local expression goes, “Men become bad when they are rich, women become rich when they turn bad”. This cultural context explains why in Chinese soft-porn magazines, men use sex as a status symbol and, to a certain extent, indulgence in women and sex constitutes part and parcel of the lifestyle of a successful man.

Nonetheless, the Chinese *FHM* is by no means a soft-porn magazine. It would also be misleading to argue that it represents the desires and tastes of the post-80s and post-90s generations in China only. As a matter of fact, like *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*], *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] is another magazine targeting the new rich and constructing the identity of “successful men” through consumption and an elite lifestyle, although with a different emphasis and style. While resembling the “new lad” in style, it also features content that

confirms a deeply rooted social and cultural Chineseness. Because some features cater to a collective memory much beyond that of the post-80s and post-90s generations, it targets a readership at least 5–10 years older than the “new lad” counterpart in the West. For instance, in its December 2010 issue, there is a special feature entitled “White Paper on Chinese Men over the Past 30 Years”. The article nostalgically lists events and developments during the past 30 years (1980–2010), which, according to the editor, have significant meaning for Chinese men of this generation. These images and events include, among others, the Taiwanese pop singer Deng Lijun [Teresa Teng], the implementation of the one-child policy, the first romantic movie in the reform era (*A Love Story at Lushan Mountain*), Tomokazu Miura and the popular Japanese TV dramas, the first transgendered person in China, the rock star Cui Jian, and the “hooligan” writer Wang Shuo. Through this list, something is conjured up from out of the collective memory of men who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s in China and who are rising in the social and economic ladder today. These are the above-mentioned “elite men”. Magazine features such as this play an important role in the formation and construction of the identity of “elite men”; for, as Skalli (2006) points out, “a sense of unity is supposed to be sustained by an evenly shared common stock of knowledge and a distinctive cultural experience to which collective memory give a lasting character” (p. 25).

To pinpoint the differences between *Nanren zhuang* and the Western “new lad” magazines, I conducted a comparative content analysis between *Nanren zhuang* and the Australian edition of *FHM*. Tim Edwards’s (1997) content analysis of major British men’s magazines (pp. 77–79) inspired the following table. As mentioned in Chapter One, while Edwards pioneering study is highly illuminating, there are some drawbacks in the design of his table: the categories of editorial features are defined too broadly (“issues”, “fiction”, “interviews”, for example) to examine the subtle emphasis of each magazine in content; and all of the data are based on one issue (May 1995). The small sample size is not a sufficiently reliable selection of the general characteristics of each magazine. For the present study, I have collected data from all 12 issues of 2010 for each magazine in order to have a larger sample. I constructed a more detailed table in which the editorial features of each magazine are divided into 21 categories in terms of theme and content area. Using Edwards’s calculations, the pages devoted to the categories were totalled and converted into percentages of the entire magazine (p. 78). The division of the categories is based on the editorial contents of the magazines while all advertisements are excluded.<sup>12</sup> The results are shown in the following table:

**Table 2.5: A comparative content analysis of *FHM* (Australia) and *Nanren zhuang***

Content	<i>FHM</i> (Australia)	<i>Nanren zhuang</i>
(Pictures of) sexy women	22.9	18.7
Sex/women	6.7	3.4
Fashion/ style	10.1	26.0
Sport/fitness	11.7	5.5
Grooming	3.2	2.1
Motors	5.3	4.1
Hi-tech/internet	5.4	3.1
Celebrities	0.9	6.5
Travel	1.8	1.9
Facts/tips	3.3	12.0
Film/TV	5.3	3.1
Music	5.4	1.1
Games	1.9	1.7
Food/recipe	4.0	1.3
Health	4.0	2.0
Books	0	0.7
Alcohol	1.9	1.4
Home	0	1.3
Military/wars	3.4	1.3
Survey	0.5	1.4
Other	2.3	1.4
Total	100	100

“Pictures of sexy women” refers to large-size pictures of scantily-clad sexy women, a hallmark of both magazines.<sup>13</sup> Table 2.5 shows that both the Australian edition of *FHM* and *Nanren zhuang* display a particularly strong emphasis on female sexual allure with pictures of sexy girls occupying the highest percentage of content among others, with

22.9 percent and 18.7 percent respectively. It is clear that both magazines use heterosexual desire to sell their magazine. As Tim Edwards (1997) has argued, in heterosexual magazines, the display of the “near soft-core pornographic features on sex or women often seems set up in defensive opposition to the endlessly homoerotic displays of men’s fashion, style and accessories” (p. 78). The number of pictures of sexy girls in *Nanren zhuang* and Australian *FHM* are roughly the same. The 4.2 percentage difference may be due to the fact that a copy of *Nanren zhuang* is much thicker than a copy of *FHM*; with around 200 pages and 140 pages respectively, the ratio of sexy girls’ pictures thus decreases. Generally speaking, the men’s magazines in China are thicker than their international editions. The reasons behind this may be that the Chinese editions are comparably more pricy than the international copy, costing around 20 *yuan*, and are also more than ten times the price of an ordinary newspaper in a newsstand in China. A thicker copy makes it appear to be more worthwhile to purchase. Another reason is that the Chinese copy contains more advertisements. As usual practice, the ratio between advertisements and editorial content is 3:7 while that of the Western editions is roughly 4:6 (Shouma, personal communication, 9 Jan 2008). More editorial content has to be included in the mainland copy in order to be compatible with the large advertising space carried. The “Fashion/style” column consists of tips for the readers on how to mix and



match one's clothes and includes product placement of new and trendy clothing. The above table also shows that *Nanren zhuang* occupies 26 percent of Fashion/ Style content, while that of the Australian edition is only 10.1 percent. The "sex/women" category includes articles and Q&A sections that answer the readers' questions and educate them about sex and women. Australian *FHM* occupies 6.7 percent of sex/women content which is nearly double that of *Nanren zhuang* (3.4 percent). The "celebrities" are interviews and features on celebrities or famous people. This takes up 6.5 percent of editorial content in *Nanren zhuang* and only 0.9 percent in the Australian *FHM*. A prominent characteristic of *Nanren zhuang* in comparison with the Australian *FHM* is that a significant number of these interviews or features are about private entrepreneurs, who are, for the most part, represented as successful role models for the readers. The "fact/tips" include general knowledge features, such as history, science, nature, etc., and a variety of useful tips for men in their daily life, this takes up 12 percent in *Nanren zhuang* and only 3.3 percent in the Australian *FHM*. *Nanren zhuang* surpasses its counterpart in this category because it features a large number of advisory articles that aim to guide the reader in everyday life, thus supposedly promoting an elite lifestyle. Articles like how to maintain your leather coats in summer, how to keep your leather shoes in good condition can be found. The "books" category, which includes reviews on new books, and "home", which contains

information on home design and renovation, are absent from the Australian *FHM*.

Table 2.5 further confirms that the targeted readers of *Nanren zhuang* are significantly older than those of the Australian *FHM*. *Nanren zhuang* distinguishes itself by rich content in two categories, specifically, “fashion/style” and “facts/tips”. Another interesting phenomenon is that, for the “fashion/style” categories in *Nanren zhuang*, articles on formal fashion surpass those on informal fashion. For example in the *Nanren zhuang* August 2010 issue, an article on how to choose a comfortable suit in summer was included. It starts as follows: “Summer is meant to be the season for you to put on your T-shirts or shorts. However, for those who work in the fields of finance, a suit is just like ‘combat gear’ that is essential through the year...” (*Nanren zhuang*, Nov 2010). In its November 2010 issue, an article on how to choose shirts was added. The article says, “French-style shirts, because of their delicacy, elegance and unique characteristics, are increasingly favoured by men...French-style shirts have also become essential business-style dresswear for men....” (*Nanren zhuang*, Nov 2010). Other editorial on fashion and style feature Italian leather shoes, belts and cufflinks, which cost several hundred to a thousand *yuan*. Their targets are single, high-earning and high-spending professionals or executives who work in foreign-owned enterprises. However, articles on informal fashion occupy the largest proportion of the fashion/style category in the

Australian edition in which a mention of suit or tie is seldom found. In the Australian *FHM*, the “fashion and style” category focuses on casual dressing, which includes T-shirts, sports shoes, jeans and jumpers, which are more appealing to the working class or young readers.

In addition, the Australian *FHM* excels in all the categories that accommodate the interests of youth, such as “film/TV” (5.3 percent), “high-tech/internet” (5.4 percent), “music” (5.4 percent). The music category includes rock and pop music, rather than classical music or opera. This again reflects its emphasis on younger men. Particularly noteworthy is the remarkable difference in the sports category. Sports content in the Australian *FHM* (11.7 percent) is more than double that in the Chinese copy (5.5 percent). This, of course, can be attributed to the general enthusiasm for sports in Australian culture. However, it also indicates the age gap between readers of the two magazines, since, generally speaking, *Nanren zhuang* displays more content focused on the interests of middle-aged men. Features on risky sports like skiing, mountain climbing or sky diving are particularly rare in the Chinese magazine. Instead, articles on fitness are more popular. Also absent in *Nanren zhuang* is a column called “Job and Career” in the Australian *FHM*, which, for purposes of this study, is included in the “other” category. The column introduces tips for job hunting and career development for young men.

Though the “alcohol” category occupies nearly the same percentage in *Nanren zhuang* (1.5 percent) and Australian *FHM* (1.9 percent), the types of wines displayed are different. In *Nanren zhuang*, high-priced imported wines, like French red wines, VSOP, Martial, etc, are given greater exposure, while those in Australian *FHM* are on beers and other locally produced alcoholic drinks. The “food/recipe” category in Australian *FHM* (4.0 percent) also outnumbers its Chinese counterpart (0.9 percent), attesting to the fact that cooking is stereotyped as a woman’s task in Chinese culture.

### **Conclusion**

Chinese men’s lifestyle magazines present a fascinating case study of cultural hybridity and localization in a globalizing era. The transnational publication of men’s lifestyle magazines has introduced China to the Western “new man” and “new lad” masculinities, which, as many critics contend, are different expressions of hegemonic masculinity. As a global influence, these images have had an immense impact on the changing discourse of masculinity in Chinese society today. At the same time, however, magazines face the imperative of localisation in the Chinese market and have to negotiate with local realities in China, such as the rise of nationalism, the formation of an elite identity, and a return to a traditional view of gender relations. As a result, we can see that local and transnational influences are inextricably interwoven into the production process

of international men's magazines in China. This process of hybridisation conversely enriches our understanding of hegemonic masculinity from a global perspective. As mentioned above, scholars have pointed out that “new man” and “new lad” are different forms of hegemonic masculinity in the West, which serve to assert the naturalness of heterosexual male domination. In the Chinese magazines, as this chapter demonstrated, these images have been imported and negotiate with indigenous discourses of patriarchy and male dominance, such as *nanzhu wai, nüzhū nei* [Men take charge of external matters and women internal matters] and the male fantasy of concubinage and polygamy. By the global circulation of popular culture, hegemonic masculinity has been re-enforced and narrativised in different forms.

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<sup>1</sup> See a recent *China Daily* article ([http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-05/30/content\\_9908342.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-05/30/content_9908342.htm)) for the Chinese government's efforts to fight “cultural trade deficit.”

<sup>2</sup> This is a pet phrase of the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. He used this metaphor on a variety of occasions to talk about the need for striking a balance between economic reform and the maintenance of social control and between “spiritual civilisation” and “material civilisation”. See <http://wenda.tianya.cn/wenda/thread?tid=19e48cf114172cfd> (accessed 7 June, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.trendsmag.com/trendsmag/FHM/project/20080620/> (accessed 2 May 2011) and <http://pic.women.sohu.com/group-207377.shtml#g=207377&p=1795405> (accessed 2 May 2011) for details of arts exhibitions, beauty pageants, and other activities organised by *Nanren zhuang* on the “Chinese-style sexy”.

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.nanrenzhuang.net/fhm\\_girl/fhm\\_girlclass/2010-03/254373.shtml](http://www.nanrenzhuang.net/fhm_girl/fhm_girlclass/2010-03/254373.shtml)

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<sup>5</sup> See the above link.

<sup>6</sup> See the above link.

<sup>7</sup> Yuppie is an acronym for the young urban professionals of the affluent 1980's in the US, while post yuppie originally referred to those Americans coming of age in a country that was post-modern, post-cold-war, post-baby-boom, post-prosperity. See

<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/31/opinion/topics-of-the-times-post-yuppies.html>

<sup>8</sup> These advertisements were selected from 12 issues of *Shishang xiansheng* (April, June, August, October, December 2004; February, April, June, August, October, December 2005, and February 2006), and 12 issues of *Nanren zhuang* (June, August, October, December 2004, February, April 2005, February, April, June, August, October, and December 2007). All full-page, half-page and one-third page advertisements have been content-analysed, with 803 advertisements in total. Out of the 803 advertisements displayed in the two selected magazines, 625 advertisements are from *Shishang xiansheng* and 178 are from *Nanren zhuang*.

<sup>9</sup> <http://eladies.sina.com.cn/2004-04-26/92767.html>. Accessed 13 October 2011.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bullogger.com/blogs/esquire/archives/247152.aspx>. Accessed 1 April 2013.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bullogger.com/blogs/esquire/archives/247152.aspx>. Accessed 25 February, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> The editorial content is from 12 issues of *Nanrenzhuang* and Australian *FHM*, excluding advertisements, editor's notes and readers' letters. There are 1468 pages from Australian *FHM* and 2016 pages from *Nanren zhuang*

<sup>13</sup> The category 'pictures of sexy women' includes large pictures of a single woman which sometimes occupy over half the page, with little additional text. The category 'sex/women' contains more text and smaller pictures.

## Chapter Three: Desiring the Body: Spectatorship, Sexuality and Consumption

As elaborated in the first chapter, men's lifestyle magazines construct a consumerist and hedonistic lifestyle in post-socialist China. The centrepiece of this discursive construction is the body as an object of desire. According to Bourdieu (1986), "Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment" (p. 244). Flipping through most men's lifestyle magazines, whether Chinese or Western, is like walking through a forest of "erotic bodies". The images included range from sexy young women, male and female fashion models, celebrities and muscular men to gay erotica. However, one thing the images have in common is that the body is constructed as something to be looked at, admired and consumed (Song and Lee, 2010). It is an object of desire.

As Anna Clark (2008) points out, although desire is often experienced through the body, desire is created and stimulated through the mind and the imagination, through cultural representations (p. 3). Desire as a discourse is historically, socially and culturally produced. Michel Foucault (1985) observed that desire is a site through which individuals make themselves subjects of specific regimes of power/knowledge. For him, the body is

associated with various training techniques which he calls “disciplines”. Foucault argues that the birth of the “disciplines” inaugurated a certain “art” of the human body. This art certainly aimed at extending the skills of the body but was more concerned with reorganising the body’s forces to foster “useful” obedience (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p. 68). “What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act on the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, and its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). In a modern society, power manipulates stimulation and regulation of “desire” through training techniques on the body.

Based on this theory, Lisa Rofel (2007) identifies “desire” as the core of China’s “contingent, piece-by-piece reconfiguration of its relationship to a post-socialist world” and argued that “if socialist power operates on the terrain of ‘consciousness’, postsocialist power operates on the site of ‘desire’” (p. 6). Rofel contends the production of various desires creates neoliberal subjectivities—material, sexual and affective—and that people in China are imaging and practising “appropriate” desires for the post-Mao era largely through engaging in public culture. Therefore, exploring how narratives of desire normalise the body in the men’s magazines becomes interesting .

In this chapter, I discuss representations of the body as an object of desire in Chinese



men's lifestyle magazines. I first examine four kinds of spectatorship in the reading of men's magazines, which are men looking at women, women looking at men, men looking at men and women looking at women; and explore the narratives of desire and sexuality associated with different representations of bodies and different types of spectatorship. I analyse representations and discourses in light of new trends and fashions related to gender and sexuality in a rapidly transforming China, especially among youth in the cities. These representations are dynamically intertwined with globalisation, commercialisation and cosmopolitanism in urban China. In discussing the male body and desire in men's magazines, I focus on the "metrosexual" image of the masculine body in the Chinese context and the relationship between same-sex desire and the portrayal of men's bodies in gay magazines. Both cases are fascinating examples of how magazines create new identities and new possibilities of gender and sexuality in the context of global/local interactions.

### **Spectatorship and Consumption**

Tan Qiong (2008), a Chinese critic, maintains that there are two kinds of men's magazines: magazines for men to "to look at" and those for men "to be looked at". In other words, included under the rubric of "men's magazines" are magazines *for* men and magazines *about* men. In terms of bodies on display, the magazines can be roughly

divided into two groups, featuring mostly men's and women's bodies. The distinction is most observable from the magazines' cover pictures, which range from sexy girls (e.g. *Nanren zhuang*) to nude men (e.g. *Shishang jiankang*). Images of spectacular men's bodies can be further divided into two sub-categories, which engender a process of identification and objectification for spectators. A psychoanalytical perspective explains, the pleasure that readers obtain by looking at the pictures in the magazines as the scopophilia-deriving pleasure of looking. As Sigmund Freud (1962) argued in his first essay on the theory of sexuality, *The Sexual Aberrations*, scopophilia designated "the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds the *sexual object* and the act towards which the instinct tends the *sexual aim*" (pp. 45-46). According to this theory, scopophilia is obtained through viewing other people as objects of sexual stimulation and subjecting them to the controlled gaze of the viewers. Mulvey (1989) believed that scopophilia can also "develop through narcissism and the constitution of the ego which comes from identification with the image seen" (p. 749).

Therefore, reducing the spectatorship of the body in men's magazines to merely the sexist objectification of women is an oversimplification. There are four different types of spectatorship: men looking at women, women looking at women, men looking at men and women looking at men. In each case, bodily rhetoric is interwoven with power

relations. In what follows, I focus on the four types of spectatorship and discuss how the body as a commodity is constructed to cater for different kinds of desire and sexuality.

### 1. *Men Looking at Women: The Female Body as a Sexual Object*

Let us start with women's bodies. Soft porn publications have great influence on British men's lifestyle magazines, not only in the consumer appeal to the wealthy bachelor and man-about-town but also in the objectification and sexualisation of young attractive women (Benwell, 2002). The same can be said of their Chinese counterparts. As discussed in Chapter Two, "beer culture magazines" feature numerous erotic pictures of the female body. *Nanren zhuang*, like its partner *FHM* in the UK, epitomises heterosexual soft-core pornography. The magazine is popularly known for the "*zhuang nilang*," that is, sexy girls posing provocatively on the cover of each issue. Each year, readers select the "hottest" cover girls. The winners usually become overnight sensations. The bold exposure of the female body and open attitude toward sex in this magazine appear noteworthy even to Western journalists:

[The] February issue of *For Him Magazine* [...] features a Chinese singer, A Duo, on its cover wearing a white V-neck leotard that reveals every other inch of her rather substantial figure. Inside, A Duo poses like a dominatrix, clutching her breasts, wrapping her naked body in celluloid and bending, sweat-drenched,

over a submissive man.[...] The racy *For Him Magazine* also offers tips on “how to do it in five minutes” (because a “sex break is the same as a coffee break”) and features stories with titles like “The Dangerous Sex Journey of Qi Qi” (Barboza, 2007).



Image 3.1

After her sexual photographs appeared in *Nanren zhuang*, A Duo, a young unknown woman from a minority ethnic group (Tujia Minority), became famous across the country overnight and became the object of sexual fantasy for many men (Image 3.1) (Song and Lee, 2010). A man writes in his blog, “I desperately want to make love with A Duo! Can anybody help me contact her?” (See <http://blog.sina.com.cn/aduo>) Clearly, the sexual images of women are the selling point of magazines like *Nanren zhuang*, catering to the “male gaze” of readers and exemplifying the objectification of the female body in a

male-dominated society. The following statements by male readers found on online forums serve as good examples of the sexual fantasies generated by magazines such as *Nanren zhuang*. A man working for an IT company wrote:

The director of our website subscribed to one year of *Nan Ren Zhuang* [*Nanren zhuang*]. When we were not busy, we stole a few looks. Of course, we only looked at the beautiful girls, and don't even look at the remaining 90% of content. <sup>1</sup>

The photographs are so sexy that even the position of photographer for *Nanren zhuang* has become an enviable job for men. When the deputy director of a well-known website was asked about his future career plans, he half-jokingly replied: "I just want to be a photographer for *Nan Ren Zhuang* [*Nanren zhuang*]. If this [dream] cannot be realized, being an intern at *Nan Ren Zhuang* [*Nanren zhuang*] works for me as well". <sup>2</sup>

The sexiness of the young women is also contrasted favourably with the more androgynous image of Li Yuchun, a star who emerged during the Super Girl competition, a very popular talent show among young Chinese women, similar to American Idol:

The models of *Nan Ren Zhuang* [*Nanren zhuang*] are really *zan* [meaning very good].

Their faces may not necessarily be good, but their bodies are *chao zan* [meaning super beautiful and hot]. Now [No] matter how they are PS [photoshot], these kind of bodies put all women to shame, and make all guys excited. After the garbage tomboy

trend of Super Girls, the appearance of *Nan Ren Zhuang* [*Nanren zhuang*] is undoubtedly a life-saving shot of cardiac stimulant for all male comrades' sense of aesthetic beauty!!!<sup>3</sup>

Gentlemen magazines which target older males use sexy women as a selling point a marketing strategy. *Mangazine*, for instance, has columns such as *Stunner*, *Beauty* and *Youth*, all of which are flooded with pictures of women. In the May 2005 issue, an 11-page column called *Da pian* [Big Shot] features a series of photographs of young women from Sichuan. What is interesting is that the women are labeled with flower names such as Chinese flowering apple, violet, magnolia and cole flowers. The analogy between flowers and women is longstanding in Chinese culture, by which women are objectified and reduced to sex objects, to be viewed and played with. According to the article, these women are like flowers that "need admiration from heroes" (*Mangazine*, May 2005, p. 105). In other words, men's appreciation defines women's worth. The women depicted in this column appear not only sexy but also submissive and obedient. They are ready for men to caress and consume, just like vulnerable decorative flowers.

Apart from the image of the obedient woman, there is another type of erotic female image in the same magazine: the wild and demonised woman who men need to tame. In a column called "*Youwu*" [rare things] which is included in nearly every issue of

*Mangazine*, narrative photographs (photographs put together that tell a story) portray women as something to be conquered. The photographs are mostly shot outdoors, in places such as the ruins of the Yuanming Yuan (the Summer Palace), Palace Gardens, the yard of a winery or a disused factory. The imagined dramas include themes of nostalgia, mania and adventure, and are packed with temptation and flirtation. The background is displayed as murky grey or gloomy, suggesting an eerie and mysterious scene. The facial expressions and gestures of the models are also noteworthy: sometimes empathic and sometimes arrogant. However, the models all have an aggressive and tempting gaze to seduce readers. The male readers are provoked with the desire to tame or conquer the female models.

*Mangazine* created a column in 2005 to feature only photographs of female college students, a group of women generally regarded in China as being *gao suzhi nüxing* [high quality]. According to the editor's letter in the January 2005 issue, this was to "help the readers look for the youthful dreams they have lost" (p. 4). The magazines suggest consuming women achieve upward class identification. In the book *The Otherness of Self*, Xin Liu (2002) recorded an interesting story of local businessmen in Beihai, Guangxi, treating visiting government officials to massage parlor girls and then commenting on how inexperienced the cadres were in not knowing how to act and how to properly

consume women in this context (pp. 47-48). Thus, “high-quality”, beautiful women are not only rewards for elite men but also an important indicator of their status (Song and Lee, 2010). This elite masculinity, performed through consuming young and sexual women in entertainment venues, including bars and nightclubs, serves as an important means of networking and socialising (Osburg, 2008; Zheng, 2006, 2009). The discourse of elitism is in line with the traditional link between sex and power in Chinese culture, which has been discussed in Chapter Two.



Image 3.2



Image 3.3





Image 3.4

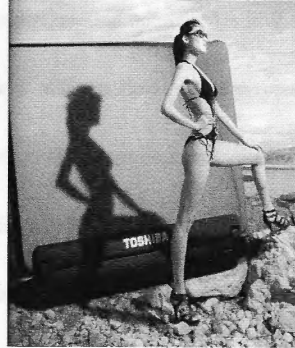


Image 3.5

Targeting a heterosexual male readership, even magazines' advertisements are full of sexy women. As many products advertised have nothing to do with women, these advertisements convey the message "buy the product, get the girl!" Pictures of attractive women draped over luxurious motorbikes or cars are typical. In the May 2010 edition of *Shishang jiankang*, an article on different brands and models of laptop computers included pictures of each laptop accompanied by an expressionless female model in a swimsuit or bikini (Images 3.2 to 3.5).

In addition to women with Asian faces, blonde, blue-eyed Caucasian women are found in the magazines' advertisements. Johansson (1999) observes that western women are portrayed as powerful, attractive and on equal terms with men in Chinese advertising. He also argues that:

[t]he White female body is inscribed in a larger geopolitical and historical context of Chinese-western relations. She appears not only in a Chinese economy of pleasure, but also in an economy of discourse, domination and power. These images represent a threat, not only to Chinese Self-identity, but also to Chinese aspirations of becoming a modern, strong rich and potent nation" (Johansson, 1999, p. 387).

Buying the product in the advertisement, or in other words, consuming the White woman, is a patriotic act, i.e. a metaphor for Chinese revenge against Western imperialism and a sign of China's increased economic status on the world's stage (Johansson, 1999; Barme, 1995). White women become a symbolic sexual reward for consumers.

However, with the rapid localisation of magazine content, images of Chinese women have been gradually replacing Western models. My own survey shows that less than 10 percent of images of women in men's magazines are blonde and sexualised western women. Such images are usually found in advertisements for Western brands, to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism.

## *2. Women Looking at Women: Projection and Lesbian Gaze*

Unquestionably, in most "mainstream" Chinese men's magazines, women's bodies are primarily the objects and focus of the eroticised male gaze. However, in addition, about

20 to 30 per cent of the readers of men's magazines are women. For some titles, the figure is as high as 40 per cent (Tan, 2008, p. 65). Women read men's magazines for various purposes, but generally speaking, the women want to view images of men and learn more about men by reading the magazines (Shouma, personal communication, Jan. 2008). Shouma pointed out that, apart from looking for pictures of attractive male stars/models, women sometimes read a magazine to buy the trendiest gifts for their male family members, acquaintances or business associates, or to understand topics men are interested in. Alternatively, female readers regard the sexy women in the magazines as something they should aspire to imitate to attract a man (Shouma, personal communication, Jan. 2008). Women's images in men's magazines are most often eroticised bodily images. These female models can act as role models for female readers because the images in the magazines reflect the male gaze, and "tend to portray what women should look like and what men should look for" (Malkin, et al., 1999, p. 650).

The psychological concept of "projection" may explain female readers' admiration of the sexy (female) images in the magazines. As Sigmund Freud conceptualised, "projection" is a psychological defense mechanism by which one "projects" one's own undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires and feelings onto someone else (Quinodoz, 2005). According to Fenichel (1945), projections are "emotions or excitations which the

ego tries to ward off' so they are perceived in another person (p. 146). Through sexy images, female readers "project" their sexual desire onto female models and thus "ward off" the anxiety and guilt associated with sexual desire, as proscribed by traditional discourse on womanhood in China, especially in Confucian culture. Of course, the phenomenon of "women looking at women" should not be interpreted only in the realm of heterosexual desire. There are also lesbian readers who cast desiring looks at the sexy female models in the magazines. As a woman wrote on an online forum, "Embarrassingly, I am a girl, but seeing the photos of this magazine [*Nanren zhuang*] makes me excited".<sup>4</sup> Although there are no explicit lesbian readers among my admittedly limited number of informants, adequate attention should be given to lesbian desire, a category that remains a taboo in today's China.

In a patriarchal society, providing men with sexual pleasure can bring status and power to women. As Machin and Thornborrow (2003) argued, "women are also [positioned as] naïve and vulnerable...relying on the reaction of men for their self-image and power" (p. 464). Women are persistently encouraged to cater to men's sexual needs and desires in a relationship or sexual encounter and to become or embody men's fantasies. As argued in Chapter Two, sex and power are discursively interwoven in Chinese culture. Women compete with each other for men's attention and affection, and

may learn from magazines about how to use their body to please a man. The media are “ideologically manipulative” (Gough-Yates, 2003, p. 7), conveying the message that the nature of femininity serves to legitimate and naturalise patriarchal domination.

The objectification of women and encouragement for them to be reduced to bodily existence is in line with the restoration of a more overt patriarchal culture as a result of the denunciation of Maoist feminism in post-socialist China (Rofel, 2007, p. 117). Hooper (1998) believed that from a situation of imposed austerity and asexual representations at the end of the Mao era in 1976, post-Mao China presents “a striking case study of the creation of a gendered consumer culture” (p. 167). She contended that in this culture, women are being utilised to create and manipulate personal desire, both as consumers and as sexual objects of consumption (Hooper, 1998).

During the Maoist period, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), gender differences were largely eradicated in propaganda representations (though not in reality). Women were encouraged to work alongside men rather than stay at home; to dress in the same drab green, grey and blue uniforms as their male counterparts; and to see makeup and accessories as signs of sexual and ideological deviancy (Evans, 1997). As Andrews and Shen (2002) observed, images of ideal Chinese women in official magazines such as *China Reconstructs* and *China Pictorial* were without exception

workers or peasants in plain clothes, who sacrificed their sexuality and individuality and were whole-heartedly devoted to serving the poor and lower-middle-class peasants.

However, in the post-Maoist period, gender difference has been made possible and encouraged due to the emergence of a new consumer culture. Firstly, in contrast to the image of “iron women” popular during the Maoist period, new globalised media forms such as magazines and advertising promote an image of femininity that is urban, beautiful, young and successful (Evans, 1997). Women can now use the newly available makeup, jewellery and fashions to discard the uniformity and drabness of the revolutionary period and become “women who know how to be women” (Croll, 2006).

Secondly, the sexualisation of women has become essential to material success in the new consumer culture. Middle-aged women were disproportionately laid off or forced to retire early from state-owned enterprises in the 1980s as “surplus labour” because of the advent of the market economy in which state sectors were gradually replaced by private sectors. In contrast, young beautiful women found jobs in the private service sector as secretaries, sales assistants and clerks (Zhang, 2000). This *qingchun fan* [rice bowl of youth] replaced the traditional *tie fan wan* [iron rice bowl] and relied on a woman’s youth and beauty—rather than experience and education—to gain employment opportunities (Hanser, 2005). Today, it remains the case that in many areas of employment women with

beautiful faces and attractive figures find jobs more easily than others. There is even an unspoken understanding that some employers put more weight on physical appearances than on educational background when hiring workers (“More than skin deep: Chinese youth increasingly favor plastic surgery”, 2012). And some aspiring young women even undergo plastic surgery to change their looks in the hope of better employment opportunities in the fierce competition of the Chinese job market (“More than skin deep: Chinese youth increasingly favor plastic surgery”, 2012). This means that for women, especially young women, to be successful in the new consumption-driven economy, it is crucial to be feminine.

Female models in men’s magazines are scantily clad, and their bodies are portrayed in provocative poses that highlight the women’s curves and cleavage. Feminists have noted that in the West, many women admire these female models, rather than criticising or condemning them. Admirers even include college students who long for the glamour-modeling culture and see exploiting their sexual allure as a way of becoming powerful (Walter, 2010). Most women have accepted the perception that sexuality as a means of self-empowerment, which can bring them fame and fortune (Walter, 2010). The new hyper-sexual culture redefines female success in terms of a narrow framework of sexual allure: Stripping to their knickers for lads’ magazines is women’s best possible

route to success. "The rise of a hyper sexual culture...has reflected and exaggerated the deeper imbalances of power in our society" (Walter, 2010, p. 8). China has a hyper-sexual culture, as well. As Levin (2011) argues, in China, an *er nai* [concubine] industry has sprung up that lures young women with promises of sexually-oriented shortcuts to success. In April 2011, the Beijing police broke up a "college concubine agency" that claimed to connect university students with sugar daddies for up to a hundred thousand *yuan* a year. To combat the moral crisis, local governments preached against moral turpitude and tried to encourage young women to rely on their own accomplishments rather than carnal skills. For example, officials in Guangdong announced in March 2011 that, starting in autumn 2011, all girls in elementary and middle school were required to take a new course on "self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement" (Levin, 2011).

The fashion and cosmetic industries make vast profits by promoting the notion that looking sexy will make women successful. Make-up, considered a sign of conspicuous decadence, has become a daily necessity for many young Chinese women. The cosmetic industry in China is one of the first consumer-marketing industries and has been expanding first since the 1980s (Croll, 2006). The beauty and cosmetic industry in China was ranked the fourth largest consumption zone in 2004 – after real estate, cars and tourism ("Chinese



women go 'crazy' for cosmetics", 2005). A few years later, China climbed to Asia's second-largest cosmetics market and the eighth in the world in 2010 (Wang, 2011). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the cosmetics industry in the mainland market saw an 88.9 billion *yuan* turnover in 2010, and the figure was expected to exceed 100 billion *yuan* in 2011 (as cited in Wang, 2011). With the changing perception of beauty, magazines advise young Chinese women to lose weight and have a good figure. With millions of young women desperately seeking to "look more beautiful," the demand for cosmetic surgery in China has also grown rapidly. Every year, more than 3 million people have plastic surgery in China, and there are more than 50,000 cosmetic plastic surgeries across the country (Wang, 2010).

Ariel Levy (2005) criticises two types of women, i.e. "lipstick feminists" and "loophole women". The term "lipstick feminists" refers to women who believe that stripping is empowering for women and attending sexual shows (for instance, strip-tease or girl-on-girl physical contact) to attract men is not contrary to the goals and ideals of feminism. Women who hold key positions in the magazine production industry, such as chief editors and writers, are the kind of women Levy calls "loophole women", who make their way in a male-dominated field by playing by men's rules and objectifying other women. She argues, "[I]f male chauvinist pigs were men who regarded women as

pieces of meat, we would outdo them and be female chauvinist pigs, women who make sex objects of other women and of us” (Levy, 2010, p. 4). In the Chinese magazine industry, many women work in leadership positions for men’s lifestyle magazines. To give a few examples, Lisa Liao and Li Wei are managing editors for *Darenzhi* [*Men’s Uno*] and *Ta shenghuo* [*His Life*], respectively, Li Lingmin is an advisor for *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] and Zhang Yan is the fashion editor for the same magazine. To succeed in their careers and to increase magazine sales, these women must learn to look at women the way male readers look at them and access women’s bodies through the lens of male readers (Walter, 2010, p. 37).

### 3. *Women Looking at Men: The Male Body as a Commodity*

Traditionally, sexual objectification is discussed in terms of representations of women and femininity. Media images of men before the 1990s emphasised the face rather than the body (for example, Archer et al., 1983). The media rarely depicted male bodies until the early 1990s (Bordo, 1994, 1999; Kimmel 1996; Davis 2002). Bordo exclaimed when he saw a 1995 Calvin Klein underwear ad, “[It was] the first time in my experience that I had encountered a commercial representation of the male body that seemed to deliberately invite me to linger over it” (1999, p. 168). Since the late 1990s, scholars have begun to find that not only women’s bodies have been exploited: “[M]en’s bodies too

these days, are dismembered, packaged, and used to sell everything from chain saws to chewing gum” (Kilbourne, 1999, pp. 26-27). The sexualised male body is found not only in movies and television, but also in magazines and advertisements. As Gill et al. (2005) observes, “[M]en’s bodies are on display as never before, from the heroes of the cinematic action genre, to the ‘sixpacks’ who grace the covers of *Men’s Health*, and the ‘superwaifs’ of contemporary magazines.” As Rohlinger (2002) suggests, although male and female sexualised images have different social meanings, the social effect is similar. The bodies become “an object that is disciplined, manipulated, and viewed by others” (p. 70). Eroticised and idealised male bodies are common in Chinese men’s lifestyle magazines (Song and Lee, 2010). This phenomenon resonates with current trends in Western mainstream popular culture, in which “men’s bodies *as bodies* have gone from near invisibility to hypervisibility in the course of a decade” (Gill, et al., 2005, p. 37). The rise in the visibility of the male body has changed viewing patterns in which “men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at” (Berger, 1972, p. 47). There are many perspectives from which to interpret the visual discourse of the male body in these magazines: the narcissistic self-expression of men; the impact of gay culture; the impact of the metrosexual trend from the West; and the impact of the empowerment of women by capitalism (Song and Lee, 2010).



Image 3.6

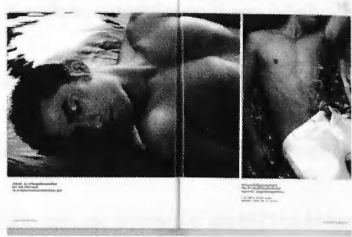


Image 3.7



Image 3.8

Passive or sexualised images of men with directly confronting gazes or naked flesh, however, convey a clear message of the celebration of the male body as an object of sexual desire (Images 3.6-3.8). These images mainly target women and gay readers. Paradoxically coexisting with the restoration of patriarchal discourse, there is another social trend in contemporary China, that is, capitalism empowering a small number of women. The rising class of female entrepreneurs in China has attracted increasing attention from the media in recent years. For instance, Current TV has aired a feature entitled *China's Rich Women*, focusing on the stories of self-made female millionaires.

Thirteen of China's 100 richest people are women, according to the 2007 Forbes list ("Yang Makes It Two in a Row for China's Rich Women", 2007). More recently, the *Hurun Report* indicates that China is home to 11 of the world's 20 richest self-made women, and boasts 153 female *yuan* billionaires (as quoted in Burkitt, 2011). It is not only female entrepreneurs who are making a fortune. The rapid growth in the world's number two economy has provided great job opportunities and earning potential for the salaried class of both sexes. Women in China are becoming more independent, more career-oriented and more powerful in the career market. After achieving great success in their business or career, these women are now rewarding themselves with the finer things in life-luxury products. According to a survey by consultancy McKinsey & Co., women accounted for more than half of China's estimated US\$15 billion luxury-sales in 2010 (as quoted in Burkitt, 2011). Chinese women purchasing luxuries is driving China's luxury market – expected to become the world's largest by 2020. Women are spurring the growth of Swiss-made watches, jewellery brands such as Cartier and luxury handbag brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci. With stronger purchasing power and higher status in the business and career spheres, women in China not only play important roles in the luxury market but also exert increasing influence on cultural production with their consumption power.

An article in *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*] may help further illustrate the importance of the "female gaze" in these magazines:

Since the existence of written records, it is women's looks [women's beauty] that have always been a commodity and an object of consumption for people (mainly men). Men have had power and control of money, so their values have been the values of the whole society, and their aesthetic trends have determined women's aesthetic trends. But the rapid development of socio-economic culture in the present age has also shifted men and women's gender roles. More and more women have begun to have more and more power and money; they have mastered the discourse, and are increasingly influencing social culture and roles...

Sex as a consumer item is no longer something disgraceful: mutual appreciation and pleasure between the sexes is one of the important driving forces of historical development. It's only when men also become a consumer item that the consumption of women will be revealed as equitable, no longer a type of sexual exploitation.

The age of men's looks [men's beauty] has arrived. Whether it's F4 [a Taiwanese boy band] or male beauty pageants, the boom in male beauty parlors or indeed the male covers of *Men's Health* [*shishang jiankang*], they're all doing the same

thing: making men's looks into a commodity for people to appreciate, buy, use and consume. The consumers are men, and they're also women. They set out from their own latitude to find their own goal and direction. (*Men's Health*, December 2004, p. 54; as cited in McDonald, 2011, p. 172)

As another article in the August 2010 issue of *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*], titled: "the Era of Male Beauty: Are You Prepared?" argues, the era of male beauty has brought about a revolutionary change in audience perspective, by which men have turned the spotlight away from women and onto themselves. This focus on men partially releases women from material and bodily obsessions and encourages them to re-evaluate their needs. This attention to men encourages them to learn how to *shandai ziji* [pamper themselves]. The hot topics among some men nowadays are how to lead a healthy life, how to live to the utmost and how to live with confidence. Last but not the least, they care about female approval (*Shishang jiankang*, August 2010). *Nanse* [Male beauty] refers to the sexual allure of young men, attractive to both men and women. Their sexual allure is not only through a hip and honest outer appearance filled with vitality, but also with solid inner standards—sexuality and sensibility being of prime importance. Male beauty resonates with *nuse* [female beauty]. The four members of F4 (F for flower), a boy band from Taiwan, are good examples of male beauties. These young men, who are

relatively handsome, “with quite distinct features and are generally provided for by women, are sometimes described as ‘little white faces’” (*xiaobailianr*) (Hird, 2009, pp. 187-188). However, male beauty is a phenomenon not exclusive to the *yule quan* [entertainment circle]. Cool Guy (Cover Model) Contest hosted by *Men's Health* gives its readers a chance to demonstrate their male beauty. The winner of the contest, the Cool Guy of the Year, becomes *Men's Health's* cover boy. It is undoubtedly the crowning moment for the champion of a male beauty era. Equally importantly, becoming an ambassador for healthy living through the competition and obtaining the opportunity to share the stage with fellow men of the same generation in gaining experience as a male style icon can give a major boost to a man's social status and career (*Men's Health*, August 2010). *Men's Health* also gives its readers some tips on how to cultivate one's male beauty:

Capturing a male beauty isn't necessarily that complex or structured, rather, it is more akin to a journey of personal development that focuses on nurturing the body and strengthening the character and soul. The models with the greatest impact are indeed those who can pull off a look even when dressed in the plainest outfits and adornments and yet are able to achieve the same vibes as stylish men who are easy on the eye and deliciously attractive regardless of their attire. *Men's Health's* 2009



cover 'Cool Guy' of the year, Gu Youming, can be described as possessing these qualities – fresh and natural with a healthy physique and regular lifestyle, whilst remaining genuine and outgoing in conversation. Friends who know him jokingly refer to him as being worthy of idolisation. The male-beauty era means a change from fashion trendsetter to signifier of physical aesthetics (faces and skin). The male style increasingly in the public arena is less aggressive, eccentric and rock-and-roll influenced, turning instead to a more personable and affinitive style, breaking away from the image of an idol. In the wake of the female consumerist's cry at its most prominent stage in modern society, male beauties reflect an alternative concept and preference more than anything else (*Men's Health*, August 2010).

Men's lifestyle magazines that objectify the male body as a sexual fetish, as something to be "consumed", therefore demonstrate a significant and profound change in gender relations in contemporary China, because, according to some western theorists, there is a "contradiction between the vulnerable passivity arguably implicit in the state of being-looked-at, and the dominance and control which patriarchal order expects its male subjects to exhibit" (Kirkham and Thumim, 1993, p. 12). Nimrod Baranovitch also observed this reversal of the "male gaze" in Chinese popular culture and maintained that

“[f]or the first time in Chinese history, men became a commodity for female consumption” (Baranovitch, 2003, p. 143).

#### *4. Men Looking at Men: The Consumer Revolution*

Scholars, for example, Edwards (1997, 2003) argue that the increasing pervasiveness of men's images in the mass media conflicts with the traditional mode of masculine activity and feminine passivity and points to the increasing role of men as consumers rather than producers. Previously, work and production defines masculinity and masculine identity. Analysts considered consumption a feminine activity. Bowlby (1985) identified a bi-polar split between “masculine” and “feminine” forms of cultural practice which are “constructed in terms of oppositions between work and leisure, rationality and emotion, practicality and the ‘instinct’ for beauty” (p. 11). In a consumer society, a shift of roles has taken place, and the traditional gender boundaries are blurred. This is because:

What has been understood as masculinity, with its implications of hardness and emotional distance, was at odds with the more feminine traits appropriate to a consumer oriented society; traits such as self-indulgence, emotional liability and a soft receptivity to whatever is new and exciting. (Ehrenreich, 1983)

The consumption of fashion and grooming, which were seen as feminine activities,

has become more popular among men, and can be detected in men's lifestyle magazines in which editors and advertisers try to promote anxiety among men about their appearance and drive home the importance of looking good through consuming the products advertised in the magazines.

As noted, male bodies in Chinese men's lifestyle magazines, ranging from metrosexual handsome men to macho-type muscular men, serve two purposes depending on the interests of the spectator: identification and objectification. Both exemplify consumer society's manipulation of the body. Magazines such as *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*] represent a fetishisation of muscles and muscularity. The ideal male body is a healthy body associated with hedonism. The tanned skin and highly developed muscles, which readers view frequently in *Shishang jiankang*, signify fashion, leisure and money rather than participation in manual labour (Gill, et al., 2005, p. 40). Consumerism reinforces the body as a site of self-expression and projection. The bodies in advertisements come to represent an ideal. In response to the images of the perfect male, men are getting manicures and facials, dyeing their hair and concealing blemishes or pimples. Men are going to great lengths to achieve a more youthful and hard-bodied appearance. The skincare market for men in China was worth about US\$269.6 million in 2010, higher than that of North America, which was worth US\$227.4 million (Yu, 2011).

It is also estimated that the Chinese skincare market will see annual growth of 29 percent between 2009 and 2014, compared to 5.7 percent in North America and 7.9 percent in Europe (as cited in Yu, 2011). L'Oréal SA, the world's largest cosmetics company claimed to have a 32 percent share of the Chinese male and female cosmetic market in 2009, with other foreign brands that have entered the market in recent years, including Beiersdorf AG with Nivea, Japan's Shiseido with Aupres JS and Proctor and Gamble (Yu, 2011).

The body functions as an important form of embodied capital for upwardly mobile men. Embodied capital will be discussed further in Chapter Four. In what follows, however, the discussion focuses on two specific types of representation and consumption of the male body, namely, the metrosexual trend and same-sex eroticism.

### **The Male Body Refashioned: Metrosexual Images**

The fashioning of the male body in lifestyle magazines and its relationship to consumer culture includes the flourishing of the metrosexual image in recent years. The term "metrosexual", a neologism derived from "metropolitan" and "heterosexual", was coined in 1994 by Mark Simpson, a British social commentator, to describe a man (especially one living in an urban, post-industrial, capitalist culture) who spends a lot of time and money on shopping for his appearance.

In another article published in 2002, Simpson further elaborated on the attributes of the metrosexual man and his sexuality, which more often than not confused people around him:

The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis—because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference. Particular professions, such as modeling, waiting tables, media, pop music and, nowadays, sport, seem to attract them but, truth be told, like male vanity products and herpes, they're pretty much everywhere.

Metrosexual became a buzzword and was voted the “most influential word of 2003” by the American Dialect Society. In the same year, the word was translated into Chinese and appeared in Chinese media. In recent years, discussions of the metrosexual and related types of “new” male images in China have become increasingly popular, attesting to what Harriet Evans called a “conscious queering of conventional gender boundaries” and diversified possibilities of gendered practice in contemporary China (Evans, 2008, pp. 372-373). However, there have been different versions of the translation in the Chinese media, as listed in Table 3.1:

**Table 3.1: Different versions of the translation of metrosexual in the Chinese media**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Rendering</i>
Aug 03	Sina.com	都市玉男 <i>dushi yu'nan</i>	Metropolitan jade
April 04	Men's Health	花样男子 <i>huayang nanzi</i>	Decorative male
May 04	MenBox	型男 <i>xingnan</i>	Model male
July 04	MenBox	都市质男 <i>dushi zhinan</i>	Metropolitan quality male
Aug 04	MenBox	城市新男人 <i>chengshi xin nanren</i>	New urban male
Aug 04	Men's Health	花色男人 <i>huase nanren</i> 后雅皮 <i>hou yapi</i>	Variigated man post-yuppie
Jan 05	Men's Style	門士 <i>menshi</i>	Sulky scholar
Oct 05	Men's Style	魅力先生 <i>meili xiansheng</i>	Mr. Charming
Oct 06	Men's Style	都市美型男 <i>dushi mei xingnan</i> 杰尼斯型男 <i>jienisi xingnan</i>	Metropolitan beauty model male Johnny's model male

Source: McDonald, 2011, pp. 157-159.

There is no consistent translation for the term metrosexual in China. As illustrated in

Table 3.1, even within the same magazine, different renditions coexist and writers use different definitions interchangeably. Although the meanings of these Chinese terms may not be the same as those of “metrosexual” in the West, in all cases Mark Simpson’s “metrosexual” is alluded to as the origin of the term. Generally speaking, a more androgynous appearance, a narcissistic personality and a fashionable lifestyle characterise metrosexual and reflect a new trend among wealthy young men in Chinese cities. Consumption defines ‘metrosexual’ identity. According to Sun and Liu (2005), *bailing linan* [white-collar metrosexuals] are the *zhongjian lilian* [mainstay] of metrosexuals. They typically possess workforce presence for more than 5 years and monthly salary of around 6000 *yuan* in industries not related to fashion; they hold mid-level positions in the workplace, are single and live alone; around 60 percent of their daily expenditure goes on clothing items, and they love international brand products.

Like many other Western terms that have been translated and introduced to China, the definition of “metrosexual” has also undergone changes in China. Yang Lin, ex-senior editor of *MenBox*, made significant modifications to the connotations of the word in the Editor’s Message in the magazine (*MenBox*, issue 171, 2005):

The famous author Mark Simpson coined a new term ‘new urban male’—metrosexual. They’re *a nucleus of 25 to 40 years olds who love fashion*,

*beauty-care, and have received a good education.* They live in big cities, because big cities provide the best eating and entertainment venues, including boutiques, bars, gyms, beauty salons etc. They *love life, beautiful women, games, risk-taking, enjoyment, cars, having fun* (cited in McDonald, 2011, p. 163, emphasis added).

I have italicised the *MenBox*'s editor's additions to Mark Simpson's definition of metrosexual. Although Simpson did not specify an age range for of metrosexuals, the *MenBox* editor did because that is *MenBox*'s target readership. Wang Yipeng, executive editor-in-chief of *Men's Style*, provided her own interpretation of the metrosexual in the January 2005 issue of the magazine:

The term metrosexual invented by the English is generally translated *dushi yu'nan* [metropolitan jade men], referring to straight men who like shopping, are crazy about fashion, and have highly developed tastes. Calling someone a "metropolitan jade man" implies that they lack masculine strength -- that's roughly my intuitive impression-- as though men should all be rugged, and so I think it's better to call metrosexuals *menshi*. The word *men* can be explained as a phonetic rendering of metrosexual, and at the same time understood as implying how sulky (*mensao*) fashion-loving metrosexuals tend to be. The word *shi* [scholar, gentry] can be used to emphasize the group included under this term: those with an adequate income and



sense of taste who can correctly spend their ever-increasing spare money (as cited in McDonald, 2011, p. 163).

Although Mark Simpson was rather ambiguous about the sexual orientation of the metrosexual in his articles, the Chinese media seem anxious to confirm that “the metrosexual is not gay”. An article in the *China Daily*, the official English newspaper in China, took a firm stand on the sexual orientation of the metrosexual, straightforwardly stating that “He’s not gay--perish the thought!-He’s metrosexual”:

He’s religious about moisturizer. He knows what colors he looks good in. He knows his Zegna from his Armani. He’s not gay... He’s metrosexual.....He goes to hairdressers rather than barbers and avoids using soap because it’s too harsh for the skin. A subtle hint of cologne glorifies his body. He drapes himself in a sharp outfit before hitting an evening hotspot. He has a discretionary income to keep up with the latest hairstyles and the right shoes. He’s a fan of *GQ* magazine and not ashamed of it. He may not be your father’s idea of a macho man, but nevertheless, he loves women. (“A new breed of man, the ‘metrosexual’”, 12 May 2004)

As discussed; however, a significant proportion of gay readers consume of the images of the male body in these magazines. According to McDonald (2010), these magazines are not trying to promote a specifically gay identity; rather, “they are catering for a

particular market, whose significantly gay identity is, as it were, sneaked past the censors in the perfectly respectable guise of a metrosexual” (p. 169).

Compared with the metrosexual image of the West, which primarily embodies narcissism, most of the metrosexuals represented in Chinese magazines show a more direct link with consumption and the “white-collar” identity (Hird, 2009). These metrosexuals are usually found in big cities in China and account for about 30 percent of the urban male workforce in Shanghai where they dress for success and embrace a “hedonistic” lifestyle (Sun and Liu, 2005). As Hird (2009) argues, people attribute metrosexuals with characteristics which are commonly deemed to be ‘feminine’ or ‘*wen*’. For example, a metrosexual can cry easily, which marks him apart from traditional manly behaviour. There is also a popular labeling of metrosexuals as androgynous as the ‘ordinary’ man pays little attention to his appearance. Barthel believes that advertising attributed to metrosexuals feminised beliefs. As he argues, “Advertising has encouraged a ‘feminization’ of culture, as it puts all potential consumers in the classic role of the female: manipulable, submissive, seeing themselves as objects. The feminization of culture is evident in men’s advertisements, where many of the promises made to women are now being made to men” (1999, pp. 148-149). A discussion on a blog, however, suggests that metrosexuals have started to copy the lifestyles of gay men, who spend a lot

of time and energy dressing up, taking care of their health, working out, pursuing luxury and enjoying life to the utmost (as cited in Evans, 2008 ). The following description of the life of Li Yong, an archetypal metrosexual and presenter at CCTV, serves as a good example:

Li Yong, a 37-year-old show presenter on China Central Television may be a good example of a metrosexual. He has been working for fourteen years, is married with one daughter, and has a salary, the size of which will remain confidential. In the Western cafeteria of China Central Television Corporation, Li Yong is wearing casual black attire with some decorative white details in front of the chest. His personal style as reflected through his style of dress and the black and white colour match is particularly noticeable from his shoes. As Li Yong says, "Matching the shoes and outfit together has become a habit of mine." All of his T-shirts and everyday outfits for summer have been specially designed for him by Japanese fashion designer Takanobu Sato and are all one-of-a-kind. He likes the avant-garde element in Takanobu Sato's fashion designs and its sense of individuality. Li Yong explains that he even meticulously designs his stage outfits, allowing the audience to experience a kind of aesthetic beauty and sending the message that 'men should take more care' in dressing.

Li Yong's hair is styled by a French hairdresser. In the beginning, he did not particularly favour the idea of a foreign hairdresser but now actually enjoys the atmosphere that this singing and dancing hairdresser creates when styling his hair. When his hairdresser is on vacation he would rather leave his hair to grow than find another hairdresser. Li Yong also gets facial treatments at the same parlour. At home he will sprinkle some salts and essential oils into his spa bathtub to enjoy full relaxation of the body and mind. He also selects different brands of colognes to use for the different seasons; woody scents for winter, fragrances with heavy leather notes such as Po-Lo, by Armani, and a fresh, elegant Chanel scent for summer. After washing his clothes he will spritz some cologne onto them while they are still in the drier so as to permeate them with a light fragrance. He also keeps some Easter lilies inside his home as he says that their fragrance helps him to fully relax his mood.

Li Yong uses the phrase "I'm pretty cool" to describe his external image and he believes that "cool is really an attitude towards life". Li Yong drives a Porsche Carrera S but says that he doesn't actually see his car as something that reflects his social status, rather he just likes the fact that every hidden nook and cranny on a Porsche is made with fine detail and exquisiteness. He keeps many different

suits in his car; driving to and from work in this “pure blood” (Porsche) that stands out from the crowd, is a kind of pleasure. “I’m not a slave to brand labels but will select the things that I truly like as long as it is within my capacity to do so in order to enrich life” he says. (See <http://blog.sina.com.cn/liyong>)

Interestingly, the metrosexual image has generated a range of other new terms and identities in the Chinese language, which the media covered widely:

#### *Peacock Men (kongque nan)*

Falling in love with their appearance, these men look like peacocks, grooming and fluffing their own feathers. Not only are they meticulous about their daily hygiene routine which includes rituals such as face-cleansing, use of skincare products and an ample amount of time spent on makeup. In addition, they carry a pocket mirror with them at all times and also often take milk baths. Their makeup product collection is bigger than their girlfriend’s and some even like to wear their girlfriend’s nightgown at home. Peacock men represent the breaking of gender boundaries by fashion. When the “Peacock male model” is wearing smoky makeup and has nail-polish applied, he resembles a female model in all respects from his style of dress to his makeup and even to his figure. This creates an image that is indistinguishable as to whether it is male or female and thus marks a new footnote in regards to this era’s “rebellious attitude toward gender

stereotypes” (Song and Hird, forthcoming).

#### *Allure Man*

The allure man is comparable to the alluring female or temptress; they have in common a very trendy, decorative and flirtatious dress style. “Allure Man” is the label used to refer to a very trendy man and can describe a tendency towards androgyny (Song and Hird, forthcoming). The top ten essential characteristics of allure man are: clean, fashionable, smile, sweet-talker, confident, narcissistic, petty bourgeois, leisurely, good physique and lively (*Men’s Way*, June 2009).

#### *Narcissus Man*

“Narcissus man” refers to someone who is extremely selfish, self-absorbed, conceited and vain. He understands fashion, is knowledgeable about brand names, pampers himself and only really loves himself (*Fengdu*, October 2009).

#### *Cologne Man*

Cologne men, that is, men who use cologne, are often gentle and filled with vigour and a passion for life. They have sunny temperaments but are not just big boys; they are still sexy and refined. Many cologne men either work in the civil service or in other white-collar jobs. Their lifestyles follow routine schedules, and they have allocated times for relaxation. This lifestyle is not especially luxurious but must be filled with passion and

tastefulness (*Zhizu*, July 2011).

### **Gay Magazines in Mainland China**

The emergence of gay magazines demonstrates the growing visibility of homosexual expression in Chinese media and popular culture. The loosening of government policy partly explains the burgeoning of gay culture in the 1990s. Analysts describe the government's general attitude toward homosexual culture as a "Triple No" policy: no approval, no disapproval and no promotion (Song and Lee, 2010). According to a Western journalist, in the late 2000s, there has never been a better time to be gay because "[t]hat hands-off approach – a sort of commercial don't ask, don't tell policy – is emblematic of the delicacy with which the Communist regime is learning to deal with many of the issues concerning personal liberties that are increasingly being raised by its burgeoning middle class" (Elegant, 2008). With a relative loosening of restrictions on (the representation of) homosexuality in recent years, gay websites, bars and activities are now blossoming in the mainland. However, GAPP has not granted ISSNs or ISBNs to gay publications.

Though the government has loosened its attitude towards homosexuality, the public, family members, especially parents do not support gay men and generally disapprove of their non-normative sexuality. As indicated by Liu Dalin, a well-known sexologist in

China, about 80 percent of gay men choose to marry straight women, in order to fulfil their filial duties (as cited in Song and Hird, forthcoming). Some gay people are distressed at being unable to be themselves, and reading gay magazines may meet the psychological needs of the homosexual population.

Gay magazines, though in a marginal, semi-legal position, target a potential readership of nearly 20 million men. China has a homosexual population of 30 million in China, of whom more than 20 million are male, though the government tries to put the figure at between 5 and 10 million (Qian, 2009). The gay male population in China is interested in mainstream magazines with muscular male pictures and the openly *tongzhi* [gay] magazines.

I found similarities between magazines aimed at a heterosexual readership and those aimed at gay readers. Both publications tend to include features on fashion, grooming, automobiles, health and relationships. The main differences are that gay magazines use attractive semi-clothed male models on the cover to attract the targeted readership and the magazines' feature articles contain more sexy male images. These images serve two purposes for gay readers. The images appear as models of consumption to straight readers but are sexually appealing to gay men (Baker, 2003). Thus, the depiction of "ideal" or new masculinities in gay magazines may create two types of desires among the target



audience, namely, object cathexis (a desire to own the other person) and object identification (a desire to be the other person) (Freud, 1977).



Image 3.9

*Ling juli* [China Zerospace], a bi-monthly magazine launched in September 2006, was the first explicitly gay men's magazine in mainland China (Image 3.9). The magazine was officially registered in Hong Kong with an international standard serial number. During an interview in 2008, Yi Shengguo, the publisher of the magazine, said that he was facing serious financial difficulty in continuing the magazine (Yi Shengguo, personal communication, 16 October 2008). In fact, his home was the editorial office, and he had been the only person producing the magazine. When asked why he had established a gay magazine, he said that he was trying to fulfil his social obligations and to help gay men as a minority and marginalised group. However, despite a potentially large readership, the

magazine was suspended in March 2009, for various reasons. For one thing, public vendors cannot sell publications without a local serial number. In Beijing and Xiamen, local police confiscated *Ling juli*. In addition, according to Yi, even when his magazine was available on the market, very few people dared to buy it from the stands as gay identities were still hidden in most cases. Yi also said that subscriptions constituted the main source of his readership, but there were fewer than a hundred. Yi could not secure advertising revenue, a further financial constraint. No advertiser was willing to use *Ling Juli* because, in Yi's words, they thought that advertising in a gay magazine would "downgrade" the image of their products.

According to *Ling Juli's* website, the aim was "to promote public understanding of this vulnerable social group, the queer, and to provide the gay population with concern, education, and guidance" (China zerospace.com, 2009). Apart from homo erotica, the magazine also contained useful information on psychological and physical health care for male homosexuals, such as precaution of HIV, written by experts in China. A column called "Dairies of True Feelings" was particularly arresting because it provided a channel for readers to share their personal stories. As Paul Baker (2003) points out, one of the most significant differences between magazines targeted at heterosexual men and those aimed at homosexual readers is that "the latter are likely to include a section for personal

advert, allowing its readership to engage socially, romantically or sexually with each other” (p. 243). Gay men are in the minority, and they have to use less mainstream means to make romantic and sexual contacts (Shalom, 1997).

Other mainstream magazines that evince conspicuous homo eroticism include *Shijue zhinan* [*Visual Man*], *Shishang junzi* [*MenBox*], *Meili Xiansheng* [*Men's style*] and *Shishang jiankang* [*Men's Health*]. They display sexual male bodies under the cover of body-building or artistic appreciation. In these pictures, the male models are commonly broken down into a number of body parts, such as “boobs and bums”, dismantling them into a set of objects, used to fulfil gay readers’ desires and needs.

According to an online Chinese article, to attract the attention of a gay reader, a magazine must fulfil three criteria. Firstly, the cover image must be a sexy man, half covered, with a bath towel slipping down. Secondly, inside the magazine, there must be at least two pages of semi-naked or naked men. Thirdly, narcissistic content should occupy the magazines, mainly body-building, grooming, dressing and so on (“Luonan, xing ai cheng shishang xuetou, nalei zazhi zao tongzhi xi ai”, 2007).

*Shijue zhinan* [*Visual Man*] was a magazine popular among the gay population that openly covered topics of homosexuality. The slogan of *Visual Man* was “caring for men every day”, and the magazine included such themes as “to care about men, protect men,

taste men and know more about men". By paying 18 *yuan*, a reader could get an issue of *Visual Man* with two supplements: one of "artistic" pictures of the male body and another full of advertisements for luxury goods. Apart from the erotica in the main issue, the editorial articles related to same-sex desire were also one of the magazine's selling points. For instance, in the July 2007 issue, the article "Love against the Light: Same Sex Love" discussed the frustrations and anxiety faced by same-sex lovers. The story concluded: "If it is painful that two people in love cannot be together, then what sort of feeling will it be if two people fall in love but cannot let people around them know...is love between those of the same sex not love at all? This happens to these two young men [in the story]. In order not to let their family members be heart-broken, in order not to let people cast strange eyes upon them, they hold the risk of having this love of 'terminal illness', and live in a dark corner of a city" (*Visual Man*, July 2007).

Same-sex love stories were common in *Visual Man*, the target audiences of which, however, were not exclusively male. According to the editor, a certain proportion of the female readers belonged to the group of "*funü*", the Chinese version of the Japanese term *fujoshi* [literarily, rotten girl]. This is an ironic pun on the homonym "*fujoshi*", meaning "woman" or "lady" in Japanese. The term refers to women who are fans of *YAOI* or *Boy Love* manga. *Funü* are generally female students and young working

women who are also heavy internet users (Liu, 2009). Boy Love (BL) stands for the love between boys and young women create this literature for their young female readers. It is also known as youth love. *Danmeilang* [*danmei wolves*, “*danmei*” means “indulging in beauty”] is another term that has also become prevalent as a self-description of Chinese BL producers and fans (Liu, 2009). Boy Love has blossomed in mainland China since the late 1990s (Liu, 2009) and encompasses a wide range of genres, from hard-core pornography to innocent romances, which construct a life of purity free of sexual suggestion. *Danmei* comics describe a world in which people can traverse the gender boundaries set between the two sexes and break through the domination of heterosexuality when choosing their love. “You choose your partner based on love, not on sex” (Bai, 2006). *Danmei* participants have similar characteristics, such as being passionate and generous, enjoying fantasies and appreciating beautiful things and affection. It is believed that women are fond of looking at handsome men in the comics and indulging in their love for each other.

Other features in the magazine that more specifically targeted gay male readers included a survey on single gay men in *Visual Man*'s September 2006 issue. The aim of the survey was to discover the characteristics of sexual desire and sexual practices of the single gay population. The survey included sensitive topics for gay men: “Why are you

single?” “What do you do when you have a sexual need?” “How often do you masturbate?”

In August 2006, *Visual Man* faced civil litigation from a Hong Kong artist, Edwin Siu, for including his image on the cover of the July 2006 issue in the feature story without permission. According to an online article, Siu’s lawyer protested that *Visual Man* was an illegal publication full of topics on gay men, which may have misled readers on Siu’s sexual orientation. Thus, Siu asked for 500,000 *yuan* in compensation (“Xiaozhengnan zhaopian dengshang tongxinglian zazhi suopei wushi wan”, 2007). There was no follow-up story on this case. However, *Visual Man* disappeared from the market in 2007 without explanation.

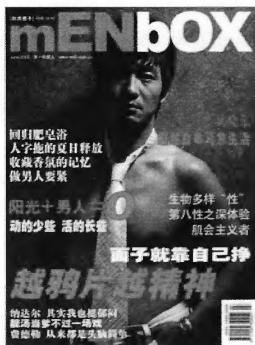


Image 3.10

Another well-known gay publication was *Shishang jurzi* [*MenBox*], which was launched in July 2003 under copyright cooperation between Modern Civilizations

Pictorial on the mainland and *MenBox* magazine in Taiwan. With the slogan “Men at first sight”, *MenBox* claimed it was the most avant-garde men’s magazine in China. Men’s bodies were often depicted with strong sexual connotations. Unlike most “mainstream” men’s magazines in which pictures of sexy women dominate, *MenBox* featured only pictures of men, most of whom were half nude or in sexy poses. For instance, the June 2006 issue of *Shishang junzi* featured actor Guo Xiaodong on the front cover, stripped to the waist and with a white tie around his neck (Image 3.10), conveying a clear message of the hedonistic celebration of desire for the male body. An online description by a reader vividly depicted how the magazine appeals to its homosexual readers:

Trust me, the magazine is targeted for gay audiences. Straight men don’t buy magazines showing naked men standing under waterfalls, or hugging other naked men. I bought a copy of *Menbox* (I live in Shanghai). In this issue 100 percent of the photos are sexy Asian guys (and one white guy) in underwear or nude, usually in sexy poses, sometimes with another guy. I think any females who appear in the magazine are strictly for “cover”.

Chinese women just don’t buy magazines of nude photos (they like magazines of rock stars like F4), and straight guys would not be interested in erotic photos of men. So who does that leave? Gay Chinese males. (“Shanghai Foreigner”, 2004)

A complementary supplement came with each issue and is full of pictures of semi- or fully naked male models. With these homo erotic images, *MenBox* depended largely on sales, which peaked at about 10,000 issues per month, instead of advertising revenue (McDonalds, 2011, p. 168). However, after a short life of about three years, the magazine ran out of money and ceased publication in mid-2006.

*Meili Xiansheng* [*Men's Style*] adopted a different marketing strategy. Rather than relying on circulation income, the magazine managed to attract more advertising revenue by publishing pictures that were less erotic in the main issue. According to the editor, 50 percent of readers are gay men, 35 percent women, and 10-15 percent straight men (McDonald, 2011, p. 169). The magazine has been successful at striking a balance between meeting the needs and tastes of gay and straight readers. On the one hand, the main issue does not look like a gay magazine so advertisers and straight readers are happy. On the other hand, to cater to gay readers, a VCD and supplement comes with every issue, containing videos and pictures of half-nude and sexy young men. McDonald (2011) observed that "by including with each issue a VCD with about an hour's worth of video of the 'fashion' shots being done--in most of these the models start off clothed, but very soon lose most of their covering" (p. 169).

As discussed in Chapter Two, (self) censorship is a key issue in the magazine



publishing industry in China. An official censor examines the main magazine issues about twice a year to make sure that they are ideologically correct—that is, there is no excessive sex or direct mention of gay identity (McDonald, 2011). Restrictions apply to the images as well. Half nudity is acceptable, but pictures with full nudity face trouble. Models in the pictures have to be “artistically” posed, and each magazine is only allowed one nude model. According to an informant who works for *Men’s Style*, the government tightened its restrictions on the images shown in these magazines after the 2008 Olympic Games. Accordingly, the magazines changed the originally erotic “flesh shots” to milder “sexually dressed shots” recently as a strategy to survive state censorship (Liu Wei, personal communication, 8 June 2011).

Two other magazines in the market (*Men’s Health* and *Men’s Uno*) claim to target heterosexual readers but are also very popular among gay readers. According to a gay website, these magazines are popular because of the topless pictures of muscular men, who embody “sunshine and vitality” (“Luonan, xing’ai cheng shishang xuetou, nalei zazhi zao tongzhi xiai?” 2007).

The appeal of *Men’s Health* to its gay readership is reminiscent of Clark’s (1995) discussion of magazines’ “dual marketing approach,” which caters to heterosexual and homosexual readers:

Avoid explicit references to heterosexuality by depicting only one individual or same-sexed individuals within the representation frame. In addition, these models bear the signifiers of sexual ambiguity or androgynous style. But “gayness” remains in the eye of the beholder: gays and lesbians can read into an ad certain subtextual elements that correspond to experiences with or representations of gay/lesbian subculture. If heterosexual consumers do not notice these subtexts or subcultural codes, then advertisers are able to reach the homosexual market along with the heterosexual market without ever revealing their aim. (p. 144)

*Daren zhi* [*Men's Uno*], on the other hand, features rather effeminate male images. According to Yu Huiming, the editor, *Men's Uno* is known among gay readers as a gay magazine with effeminate male images. He said this has not affected the magazine's circulation as there is a perception that gay men are fashion and beauty trendsetters (personal communication, May 20, 2011). Edwards (1997) also asserts that the gay community sets fashion trends as gay men care a great deal about their appearance. According to Edwards (1997), there are two reason:

firstly, appearance has an added importance for the gay community in terms of the formation and expression of its identity; and secondly, gay men, in not trying to live up to the ideals and stereotypes of heterosexual masculinity which still include a

disdain for dandyism, are more open to the impact fashion marketing may have upon them" (p. 114).

Edwards (1997) contended that there are two main differences between gay men and heterosexual men in relation to consumption. Gay men tend to have fewer financial commitments and therefore often higher disposable incomes; and magazines use gay men's consumption patterns to reinforce their sexual orientation, whether through spending the pink pound [meaning the gay market in the United Kingdom] or in maintaining a distinctive lifestyle or identity. Analysts quote fashion as a prime example (p. 74). Li Yinhe, a sociologist and an expert on homosexual issues in mainland China supports this argument. She believes that gay masculinity is an important yet largely neglected aspect of media constructed consumerist masculinities in contemporary China and is closely related to the rise of a middle-class society. In an interview article in the April 2006 issue of *Visual Man*, Li Yinhe maintained homosexual culture is also a kind of middle-class culture, because, although homosexuals can be found in every social stratum, they are keen to live in more "cosmopolitan" large cities so that they can presumably enjoy a more interesting life. Though homosexuals in every social stratum have a diversified culture, middle-class homosexuals have higher consuming power. This phenomenon is especially obvious in China, where the middle class has not yet formed its

own cultural morphology (*Visual Man*, April 2006, p. 51). As Li Yinhe argued in the interview, middle-class spending mainly goes toward purchasing property and raising children. Middle-class Chinese do not know how to spend money on themselves. However, middle-class homosexuals tend to have more conspicuous consumption and lead hedonistic lives (*Visual Man*, April 2006, p. 51). They visit the opera often, watch Broadway performances in Beijing, watch theatre dramas and listen to musicals (*Visual Man*, April 2006, p. 51). Li believed that, comparatively speaking, middle-class homosexuals face less pressure in life. They have more energy (and money) to publicly and overtly engage in material and cultural consumption. Thus, this group constructs a core component of middle-class culture in mainland China (*Visual Man*, April 2006, p. 51).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the dynamic relations between spectatorship, sexuality and consumption in men's lifestyle magazines, centring on the representation and consumption of the body. In particular, I divide spectatorship of the body into four types of gender, i.e. men looking at women, women looking at men, men looking at men and women looking at women. In each category, using critical readings of the bodies exhibited in the magazines, I analysed the power relations involved and the emergence of

new possibilities of gender and sexuality in contemporary Chinese popular culture. The four types of spectatorship discussed in this chapter and the metrosexual and gay identities constructed through the magazines serve as excellent examples of the interplay between desire and the construction of the cosmopolitan self.

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<sup>1</sup>See: <http://www.chinasmack.com/2009/pictures/chinese-fhm-magazine-controversy-popularity.html>, accessed 25 August, 2011.

<sup>2</sup>See the above link.

<sup>3</sup>See the above link.

<sup>4</sup>See the above link.

## **Chapter Four: The Construction of a Middle-class Lifestyle and the Discourse of Pinwei (Taste)**

In this chapter, I examine the men's lifestyle magazine as a status' symbol for a rising middle class in post-socialist China. As Entwistle (2000) has stated, the rise of the middle class provided one of the social bases for the emergence of men's fashion magazines in the United States. This also applies to China, where individuals, self-identifying as "middle class", are eager to distinguish themselves by consumption patterns and lifestyle. In this chapter, I focus on a ubiquitous term in these magazines: *pinwei* [good taste or highbrow]. What or who are the "middle class" in China? What is *pinwei*? How does the discourse of *pinwei* help construct elitism in men's magazines, an important characteristic that distinguishes Chinese men's magazines from their Western counterparts? These are the main questions discussed in this chapter. Most of the discussion on the relationship between high-end lifestyle magazines and a middle-class lifestyle can be applied to men's and women's magazines.

### **The Emergence of the Middle Class in Post-socialist China**

A high-income group, whose members are the beneficiaries of economic growth and analysts label the "new rich" [*xingui*] (Goodman, 2008) or the "middle class", has emerged

in China because the Communist Party introduced the economic reforms in 1978. In Chinese, academics and the general public refer to this social group a zhongchan *jieceng* [middle *stratum*] rather than a zhongchan *jieji* [middle *class*]. This is a strategy to avoid the Marxist term *jieji* [class], a core concept in Maoist ideology, the post-Mao regime has rejected.<sup>1</sup> Apart from a similar level of income and social status, consumption patterns define middle-class individuals in China, like their counterparts in other parts of the world.

Although the middle class has become the subject of burgeoning research in and outside of China, analysts contest the actual size and members of this middle class. Based on an investigation in 1999 and 2000, Chen (2002), for example, estimated that the Chinese middle class numbered between 35 and 45 million. They constituted 9 to 11 percent of the urban population but might not exceed 4 percent nationwide (Chen, 2002, p. 410). A Chinese Academy of Social Sciences report (2004) stated that the middle class on mainland China had occupied 19 percent of the total population in 2004, with a 1 percent increase every year since then. The report also suggested that this social group will constitute 40 percent of the total population by 2020 ("Dissecting China's Middle Stratum", 2004). Western scholars have also conducted research on the population size of this group. Meredith (2004) claimed that the Chinese middle class had reached between 35 million and 200 million people by 2004. Ford (2007), however, expected the middle class to increase to

700 million by 2020.

For all the discrepancies, these statistics suggest that the Chinese middle class is proportionally much smaller than those in most developed countries. Thompson and Hickey (2004), for instance, used a five-class model to discuss the social and economic structure of the US. The study showed that the upper class accounts for 1 percent, the upper middle class 15 percent, the lower middle class 32 percent, the working class 32 percent and the lower class 20 percent. The American middle class thus comprises nearly half the total population. Burtless (1999), an economist at the Brookings Institution, believed that the annual income of the US middle class ranges from US\$25,000 to US\$100,000. He also stated that this class encompasses the portion of the labour force that earns from one-half to twice the country's median income.

Unlike developed countries, such as the US, where a large group of middle class forms the main body and smaller portions represent the upper and lower classes, forming a social structure commonly known as olive-shaped or spindle-shaped, many scholars suggest that the social structure in China is more like a pyramid. A small portion of rich people are at the top, a certain number of people in the middle class form the centre and a much larger population of poor people forms the pyramid's base. In this social structure, the smallest number of people in the country (the ones at the top) holds the largest proportion of the



country's wealth. He Qinglian (2000) contended that 84 percent of the population are lower class, and 5 percent of the total population—those who represent the privileged group of people in government departments or enterprises, such as senior government officials, including provincial, regional and central governments, managerial positions in state-owned banks and state-owned large enterprises and so on—use their power or privilege to gain wealth.

However, according to the International Social and Economic Index (ISEI) study conducted by Li Qiang (2005),<sup>2</sup> who relied on data from China's Fifth National Population Census conducted in 2000, the structure of Chinese society is more like a reversed T-shape than a pyramid. Based upon an international socio-economic index, with a score ranging from 1 to 100, 64.7 percent of the population fall below the single low score category of 23, and at least 84.1 percent of the employed are lower class. Only 0.5 percent of the total workforce fell into the 85 to 88 score range. This includes high-end professionals, such as managers and directors in the banking, financial and securities industries; doctors and professionals; government officials; and lawyers and judges. The remaining groups are distributed in a pole-shaped structure with no transition in between. Therefore, he concluded that the majority of the Chinese population is considered poor or lower class, and the middle and upper classes consist of a very small portion of the population (Li,

2005).

The term “middle class” is misleading in the contemporary Chinese context as there is nothing “middle” about them, either objectively, in terms of their income and consumption, or subjectively in terms of what they aspire to. Their incomes are “elite”, and they aspire to the social status of an elite. The “middle class” is, then, in effect the newly emerged financial and social elite in China (Song and Lee, 2010). The middle class is sometimes considered a synonym for “*dakuan*” [big money]—those who spend generously on luxury items and enjoy a level of material comfort out of reach of most ordinary people (Cheng, 2010). This feature is important for the present study because it helps explain the discourse of elitism in the magazines under discussion, a distinctive characteristic when compared with their counterparts in the West.

Thus, instead of an actual bounded social class with clear definitions in terms of income level, professions and the like, analysts might consider the “middle class” more like a fantasy that heavily depends on self-identification. As Stephanie Donald and Yi Zheng (2009) have pointed out:

the ‘Chinese middle class’ is not a descriptive category, ‘reflecting’ an emergent or existing social group. In its Communist Party origin, its state-bureaucratic employment, and their attendant think-tank terminologies, as well as in popular

commercial evocations, it remains a utopian vision, a *desired social stratum*, and an *object of emulation*" (p. 503; my emphasis).

Following Donald and Zheng, I refer to "the middle class" as "the financial and social elites in China" and the "desired label, status and type of lifestyle that are associated with this social group", rather than a real social class in society. Those who identify themselves as "middle class", as well as others, commonly identify middle class status and lifestyle as being marked by high levels of consumption and leisure. As Luigi Tomba (2004) observed, members of the middle class "appear increasingly to shape their status around a new set of collective interests, especially in their modes of consumption and access to resources" (p. 3; see also Tomba, 2009).

### **The Middle Class and Conspicuous Consumption**

Consumption in China has come a long way since the Maoist period (1949–1976) when the state monopolised the production and provision of goods. Back then, consumption was uniform with few differences in consumption patterns regardless of occupation or region and remained at the subsistence level with more than 55 percent of household income spent on food (Yan, 2009, p. 209). To counter any potential citizen outcry at the limitations in the variety and quantity of material goods, the state also launched ideological attacks on the individual pursuit of luxury goods and comfortable lifestyles, labeling them manifestations

of “corrupt bourgeois culture” whilst promoting an ascetic existence captured through the popular slogan *jianku pusu* [hard work and plain living] (Zhao, 1997, p. 46).

The creation of a highly consumer-oriented professional middle class, however, has been among the objectives of economic reforms of the last three decades, to achieve a “well off society” in which a larger proportion of people lead a relatively *xiaokang* [comfortable life] (Tomba, 2004). The nation has moved from one ideological extreme—*jianku pusu* [hard work and plain living]—to another—*zhifu guangrong* [to get rich is glorious]. This new emphasis on consumption has been a byproduct of China’s growth as well as a deliberate policy promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to fuel capitalist accumulation by stimulating consumer demand whilst keeping the costs of production down with low wages for workers. In addition, the CCP now relies on the hedonism brought by consumption to legitimise its rule, supplant the bitter collective memory of failed utopianism under collectivisation and ease post-Tiananmen social tensions (Ci, 1994, p. 10). The CCP has made a tremendous effort to expand the middle class to spur domestic consumer demand and to ensure the development of a more sustainable and healthy local economy. A materialistic and bourgeois lifestyle, once condemned during the Cultural Revolution, is now the standard for social success in China.

The government’s motives for encouraging consumption have varied from one period to

the next. Before 1997, the government implemented a series of policies, which included increasing salaries, restructuring industry, lowering the rate of accumulation and so on, to eradicate the disastrous after-effects of the Maoist Revolution, to improve the living conditions of the public and to “overcome the legitimacy crisis” (Wang, 2009, p. 235). After the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the government promoted consumption again to stimulate domestic demand. As ex-premier Zhu Rongji stated in a report on the government’s work in 2001, “new consumption highlights such as housing should be created; residence construction should be made a key industry; and consumption of telecommunication, tourism, culture, entertainment, health care and other tertiary industries should be encouraged” (Zhu, 2001, p. 11).

Just over a hundred years ago at the turn of the 20th century, Thorstein Veblen offered a critique of the American *nouveau riche* in *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899). Although separated by a century in time and an ocean in location, the America he described—driven by conspicuous consumption and leisure—has many parallels in contemporary China. Since Reform and Opening Up, consumption is no longer limited to the base subsistence level for a growing proportion of the Chinese population. Instead, consumption and a consumer culture offer a way for individuals to create and solidify identities as well as a way to interact with others. Conspicuous

consumption is no longer merely a matter of having possessions, since consumer items are no longer necessary for survival. Instead, conspicuous consumption is the set of images and values associated with the good conferred to the individual through the act of consumption that makes the good significant (Liechty, 2003, p. 34). For example, men associate car ownership with sportsmanship, celebrity, success and speed rather than appreciate it for its inherent ability to get them from one place to another (Croll, 2006, p. 92).

According to Max Weber's (1947) "three-component theory of stratification" of society, there are three ways to conceptualise an individual's position in society: social class (a person's economic position in society), status (a person's prestige and social honour) and political power (a person's ability to make his or her way through political affiliation). In Maoist China, status and political power were the main ways in which individuals could differentiate themselves and prove their worth in an egalitarian and classless society. People defined themselves mainly through their productive identities, "good" versus "bad" class backgrounds, as well as educational and political capital (Hanser, 2008; Yan, 2009). However, with the emergence of large income inequalities in the post-Maoist period, social stratification is now based on economic power rather than political or social power. According to Guo Quanzhong (2008), the Chinese middle class is made up of 400 million individuals who use consumption—rather than production—to assert their class identities

(p. 38).

Based on observations of the leisure class in America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Veblen argued that the upper classes invented fashion to distinguish themselves from those below. When the behaviour of the upper classes was imitated by their social inferiors, the upper classes were forced to reconstitute themselves to maintain the prestige of exclusiveness. Veblen maintained that expenditures of conspicuous consumption were not made for comfort or use but for purely honorific purposes to inflate the ego. People spent money on artefacts of consumption to give an indication of their wealth to other members of society. Conspicuous consumption (the consumption of goods of no inherent value) alongside conspicuous leisure (the non-productive use of one's time through pursuing sports and music) became essential to furthering and maintaining one's prestige and position on the social ladder (Veblen, 1899, p. 70). This conspicuous waste—through consumption and leisure—has been traditionally associated with the leisure class which included those involved in the military, the priesthood, nobility, government and sports in pre-modern times and were seen as superior to the working class. This process is one without end, as one must continuously consume to catch up to the higher classes and prevent the lower classes from catching up to one's own status (Veblen, 1899, p. 21).

Veblen's theory is enlightening for understanding the conspicuous display of wealth

through consumption by the middle class in China, who are seeking higher personal status through esteem and envy from others in the community. As Phau and Prendergast (2000) pointed out, two motives for conspicuous consumption in Veblen's theory explain the desire for luxury products, namely, "pecuniary emulation" and "invidious comparison". The former refers to consumers who strive to project an image of belonging to a higher class whilst the latter refers to consumers who strive to distinguish themselves from people in the classes below. These two motives explain the obsession with luxury brands among the middle class in China today. With increasing disposable income, members of the middle class want their lifestyles to be compatible with their economic successes. Nowadays, status-related consumption—for example, owning a modern apartment and a prestigious car—is a high priority on the wish list of those with high incomes. As Croll (2006) observed, "owning your own home" has become the most important material prerequisite for a good life or a successful lifestyle among high-income groups in China's cities (pp. 87-88). As she observed, among the newly rich and aspiring, property purchases are one of the main dinner-table subjects of conversation, and sales figures confirm that home ownership and home furnishing are a "hot topic" among this relatively privileged younger generation, which is perhaps the first to have an opportunity to live separately from their parents and express their independence and individuality in their own separate "life space"



(Croll, 2006, p. 88).

Owning an automobile is another significant status symbol among the middle class and is supported by statistics showing that the number of automobiles reached more than 104 million on China's roads as of November 2011 ("104m automobiles on Chinese roads", 2011). Among them, 13.61 million were new automobiles, up 14.98 per cent on the previous year ("104m automobiles on Chinese roads", 2011). As Croll (2006) argued, "For the young, an automobile perhaps more than any other object signified a fast-moving lifestyle and a new-found sense of freedom" (p. 91). A cell phone or smart phone is another consumer product middle-class citizens use to indicate their status. According to statistics released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China's mobile phone subscriber base surged to 929.84 million users in the first seven months of 2011 (cited in Swati, 2011). Apple has seen phenomenal sales growth in mainland China and opened Asia's largest Apple Store in Shanghai in September 2011. The company announced in July 2011 that revenue from the Greater China region, which includes Hong Kong and Taiwan, reached US\$8.8 billion for the first three quarters of the fiscal year of 2011, a more than sixfold increase compared with the same period in the previous year (Jiang, 2012).

Those who identify as "middle class" in China often use luxury products to assert their worthiness. Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argued that luxury products are functional and

cultural. The authors believed that luxury is not only an indicator of one's wealth and a symbol of status but also can recreate social stratification. People who can afford to purchase luxury goods would like to enjoy the satisfaction of exclusivity brought about by owning them. When *getihu* [private entrepreneurs] first became rich in the post-1978 era, they found themselves confronted with a different West than they had been told about. To deal with the ideological disillusionment and "loss of faith" in Chinese goods (Croll, 2006, p. 28), the entrepreneurs chose foreign brands to emulate the superior lifestyle associated with foreigners. Others, such as professionals and managers, also copied the foreign brands following *getihu* and institutionised the preference for foreign brands as part of the canon of good taste. A large proportion of the middle class in China was also formed by *haigui* [returnees from overseas] who became obsessed with brand names such as Armani and Rolex when they were studying abroad<sup>3</sup> (Louie, 2012). To show that the returnees are "international" and "modern" among their fellow Chinese, "they publicly perform activities such as speaking English, drinking French wine and driving American limousines" (Louie, 2011). Foreign brands, especially Western ones, are popular not only among the *haigui* group but also among other consumers in China who tend to combine image and exotic feeling with the products they purchase. Furthermore, brands from the West have the image of being particularly high quality. This is why, even today, the most popular car brands are

BMW, Mercedes Benz, Berwick (GM) and Volkswagen (Croll, 2006, p. 92). An online survey found that European cars were most popular among white-collar men in Beijing and Shanghai because of the cars' high speed and easy handling ("Zhongguo bailing qiche xiaofei baogao fabu", 2008). Chinese, just like their counterparts in other Asian countries, have a "bottomless appetite ...for things Western" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 3).

According to a survey conducted by the World Luxury Association in 2008, China was the world's second largest luxury market, surpassed only by Japan ("China becomes world's 2nd largest luxury market", 2009). In the same year, China's consumers bought a quarter of the world's luxury products<sup>4</sup> ("China becomes world's 2nd largest luxury market", 27 July, 2009). Three years later, in 2011, mainlanders bought US\$10.7 billion of luxury goods, or a fourth of the world's total (So, 2011). Ouyang-Kun, the China chief representative of World Luxury Association, believed that total Chinese spending on luxury items would be even larger if the luxury goods Chinese tourists buy overseas were taken into account (as cited in "China becomes world's 2nd largest luxury market", 2009). By 2015, China is expected to supersede Japan as the world's largest market for luxury goods, and then China's share of the world's total luxury goods purchases will grow to 32 per cent. Luxury shoppers in China are relatively young. According to consultancy McKinsey & Co., 80 percent are under 45, compared with 30 percent of luxury shoppers in the United States

and 19 percent in Japan (as cited in “Luxury brands look to China amid global crisis”, 2009).

Conspicuous consumption is a behaviour strongly associated with materialism. Materialism has become the new national ideology, and burgeoning consumerism has taken hold in China’s big cities (Leavy, 2007). Richins and Dawson (1992) identified materialism as possession-defined success, in which materialists are defined as people who tend to judge their own and others’ success based on things people own. In China, conspicuous consumption is an end in itself. The more money you spend, the more you flaunt it, and the higher status you gain in society, as wealth and success are demonstrated through the conspicuous consumption of not only luxury brands but also memberships in exclusive clubs, such as the Chang An Club, where the initiation fee is 18,000 *yuan*.

In addition to consuming goods, the middle class also shows its class identity and status through conspicuous leisure. The quality or nature of leisure time has also changed compared with that during the Maoist period when life was far more strongly oriented towards the collective, usually represented by the work unit, even for popular entertainment (Latham, 2007, p. 227). As Latham (2007) states, “[G]oing to watch a film or listen to a concert was a very different experience in the Maoist period, compared to the post-Mao period. Tickets were rarely, if ever, available for individual purchase, and most people’s

experiences of going to the cinema or the theatre would have been collective” (p. 228). This collective use of leisure time has been completely replaced by individual consumption, and leisure time is “more individually organized and domestically focused” (Latham, 2007, p. 228). A group of informants told Yan (2000) about the difference in leisure practices and space between those of the Maoist era and the post-reform era:

A significant change in public life during the post reform era has been the disappearance of frequent mass rallies, voluntary work, collective parties, and other forms of what I prefer to call “organized sociality”, in which the state (through its agents) plays the central role. In its place are various newly emerged forms of private gatherings in public yet commercialized ventures, such as shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, bars, and clubs...[celebrating] individuality-and private desires in unofficial social/special contexts (Yan, 2000, p. 185).

With increasing prosperity and wealth, people have more money to spend on consumerist activities, such as culture, shopping, entertainment and travel. People like to watch Hollywood movies, attend concerts and vacation in foreign countries. The relaxed regulations on issuing foreign visas coupled with rising income levels and increased leisure time enable millions of Chinese to travel abroad each year. This, in turn, has led to a booming Chinese travel industry and China has become the world’s fastest growing tourist

source market. Today, destinations for holidays are no longer limited to the Asia-Pacific region; rather, Chinese visit countries as far away as Europe, Africa and Mediterranean destinations, meaning that the average spend per holiday is greater. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Chinese tourists, who spent \$102 billion on foreign trips in 2012, have also overtaken Germans as the world's biggest-spending travelers (as cited in "Chinese overtake Germans as biggest spending tourists", 2013). In addition, they spent 41 percent more on foreign travel in 2012 than the year before. The UNWTO also states that Chinese tourists made 83 million foreign trips in 2012, compared to 10 million in 2000 (as cited in "Chinese overtake Germans as biggest spending tourists", 2013). The emerging middle class in China takes up a significant component of the big-spending travelers. As UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said, "The impressive growth of tourism expenditure from China and Russia reflects the entry into the tourism market of a growing middle class from these countries" ("Chinese overtake Germans as biggest spending tourists", 2013).

According to Chen and Yi (2004), taking holidays abroad has become the most enjoyable activity of the middle class, and the two scholars believed that the experience of travelling abroad not only has increased the middle class's understanding of the outside world but also has enhanced their sense of openness and the world (p. 283). Even the

destination one chooses for one's holiday is associated with one's social status, and the middle class would like to demonstrate its taste and social standing through choosing destinations within Europe (Zhang, 2004, p. 237).

Middle-class subjectivities are also constituted in and expressed through sports and exercise. Playing golf is described by Xu Rong (2005) as a "refined and graceful activity" in which middle-class individuals can demonstrate their social identity (p. 288). An informant described to Xu Rong: "Playing golf required tens of thousands *yuan* every year, ...and a thousand *yuan* for one round; unless you are a member, altogether you must pay over a hundred thousand *yuan*" (Xu, 2005). Thus, golf becomes an exclusive sport for the middle class. Though the high cost involved has put off many people, some middle-class parents in Shanghai who regard golf-playing as a "noble sport" [*guizu yundong*] send their children to golf courses even though the children are only 3 years old and the hourly fee can be up to 120 *yuan*.<sup>5</sup> Wealthy parents in Beijing, on the other hand, regard golf as a "gentleman's sport" and send their children to golf learning courses with a different purpose. These parents want their children to stand out from the crowd by being involved in sports, such as playing golf, that are "associated with well-heeled Westerners" ("China's children turn to golf in a bid to get ahead", 2010). At the SGA Golf Academy in Beijing, a 10-hour package of one-on-one sessions costs 10,000 *yuan*, about two-thirds the average

annual salary of an urban worker (as cited in “China’s children turn to golf in a bid to get ahead”, 2010). Wealth is key factor to determining one’s choice of leisure, entertainment and other sporting activities in China.

Fitness clubs have also become popular among the professional middle class as healthy living becomes a new buzzword. Fitness centres have mushroomed in China in recent decade, especially in urban areas and large metropolises such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. According to the government’s General Administration of Sports, investment in sports and other recreational equipment increased 8.5 percent in the first seven months of 2008, compared with the same period of 2007, to 10.3 billion *yuan* (“China’s new prosperity is fueling a fitness craze”, 2008). According to a report by *China Youth Daily*, the total value of the fitness and slimming industries in China might reach 70 billion *yuan* in 2011 (as cited in Wu, 2012). Middle-class individuals have become conscious about their health, and a fitness centre is a good place to de-stress, though the price of a gym annual membership can be up to 4,000 *yuan* depending on access to training courses and equipment (Wu, 2012).

Shopping is playing an important part in middle-class lives, too. A global survey covering 6,000 shoppers in the four BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and 2,000 of their counterparts in France and the US was conducted by McKinsey & Company



to discover shoppers' needs. The results showed that Chinese consumers spend 9.8 hours a week shopping, whilst their American counterparts spend only 3.6 hours. In addition, more than 40 per cent of the Chinese respondents said that shopping was one of their favourite leisure activities (Chan and Tse, 2007). International retailers such as Walmart, Best Buy, the Home Depot and Carrefour, to name but a few, have expanded tremendously in China by buying into local chains, and it is estimated that, at least until the financial crisis, an average of one new hypermarket opened per day in China (Leavy, 2007). Take Walmart as an example. Since opening its first store in China, Walmart has opened 338 retail units on the mainland (Walmart dotcom, 2011).<sup>6</sup> Kharas and Gertz (2010) compared middle-class consumption in the 10 largest economies in the world. Adopting an absolute approach, the authors defined the global middle class as those households with daily expenditures of US\$10 to US\$100 a person in purchasing power parity terms (Kharas and Gertz, 2010, p. 34). The study showed that although China accounted for only 4 per cent of global middle-class spending in 2009, the country could reach the top of the table and become the largest middle-class market by 2020, surpassing traditional advanced economies such as the United States, Japan and Germany. China might be overtaken by India in the following decade, but will still be the second largest market in terms of middle-class consumption (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Consumption/expenditure among the middle class – Top 10 countries:**

**2009, 2020 and 2030 (Billions of 2005 Purchasing Power Parity dollars)**

Country	2009 Total annual expenditure (billions of dollars)	2009 Global share (per cent)	Country	2020 Total annual expenditure (billions of dollars)	2020 Global share (per cent)	Country	2030 Total annual expenditure (billions of dollars)	2030 Global share (per cent)
US	4,377	21	China	4,468	13	India	12,777	23
Japan	1,800	8	US	4,270	12	China	9,985	18
Germany	1,219	6	India	3,733	11	US	3,969	7
France	927	4	Japan	2,203	6	Indonesia	2,474	4
UK	889	4	Germany	1,361	4	Japan	2,286	4
Russia	870	4	Russia	1,189	3	Russia	1,448	3
China	859	4	France	1,077	3	Germany	1,335	2
Italy	740	3	Indonesia	1,020	3	Mexico	1,239	2
Mexico	715	3	Mexico	992	3	Brazil	1,225	2
Brazil	623	3	UK	976	3	France	1,119	2

Source: Kharas and Gertz (2010), p. 40.

Consumption is also at the centre of Lisa Rofel's "cosmopolitanism with Chinese

characteristics,” namely, “a self-conscious transcendence of locality, posited as a universal transcendence, accomplished through the formation of a consumer identity; and a domestication of cosmopolitanism by way of renegotiating China’s place in the world” (Rofel, 2007, p. 111). Cosmopolitanism can be traced back to ancient Greek culture. The original meaning of the term is “citizens of the cosmos” (Appiah, 2006). A wide range of social and political theorists have reactivated the concept, with various competing definitions and usages of the term (see Robbins, 1998; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Appiah, 2006; Holton, 2009; Theodossopoulos and Kirtsoglou, 2010). In this thesis, however, the term is mainly used to refer to a desire to transcend one’s locality, and, in particular, national identity, through consumption. This desire is closely associated with the imagination of globality and the flow of global capital in today’s world.

As Lisa Rofel (2011) argued, “[W]ealth and, by association, consumption make a better cosmopolitan person” (p. 116). For her, consumption is not just for needs or pleasure but also “a post-socialist technology of the self by which Chinese young women and, by metonymic association, the Chinese nation, enables themselves to transcend the specificities of place and identity and be part of the ‘world’” (p. 118). Commodities or even food is connected with a cosmopolitan subjectivity (Henningesen, 2011). What matters for members of the Chinese middle class, who have the economic capacity to consume

imported goods and services, is that they can imagine themselves participating in a way of life perceived as foreign.

The cult of cosmopolitanism is only too obvious in men's and women's lifestyle magazines, with information about the trends in clothes, watches, cars, beers, films etc., directly translated from international editions. Interviews with foreign stars and stories and information on overseas travels are also common topics in these magazines. The ratio of foreign and Chinese topics is about 75:25 in terms of pages. The percentage is even higher for advertisements. Almost all of the magazines claim to be manuals for men with a global vision. According to the questionnaire surveys in Chapter Five, most readers buy and read the magazines because they want to improve their lifestyle and thus get rid of the marks of "provincial" status. By reading the information in these magazines, the male reader can *imagine* that he is leading a life similar to his counterparts in the "central metropolis" and thus transcend his peers around him.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the average price of a men's magazine is 20 *yuan*, which far exceeds the average daily income of a farmer in rural China. The high-end magazine thus becomes a luxury good and a status symbol itself (Song and Lee, 2010). Most of the magazines also promote themselves as "manuals of taste", textbooks of lifestyle for the middle class. The middle class are trendsetters in society with a high degree of fashion

awareness. The lifestyle magazine market prospers due to the growth of the middle-class population and their increasing concern about status, fashion and lifestyle. According to the 2005 China Marketing and Media Study, the number of fashion and lifestyle magazine readers more than doubled from 5.9 million in 2004 to 13.2 million in 2005 (as cited in Jin, 2010). A statistical report by Beijing Opening Strategy also indicated that approximately 20 million read fashion magazines, including those who are either subscribers or regular buyers of these magazines (as cited in Jin, 2010).

In what follows, I elaborate on the intertwined relationship between identity, lifestyle and consumption by focusing on the construction of the *xiaozi* [petty bourgeois] identity and the pursuit of *pinwei* [taste] in Chinese men's magazines.

### **Consumerism and the Identity of *xiaozi***

The "middle class" discussed here is mainly a label of identity and lifestyle rather than a clearly defined and formed class in society. This is also reflected in the popularity of the term *xiaozi* in today's China, especially in the magazines under discussion. Though Wang Jing (2005) suggests that the term *xiaozi* had gone out of fashion by the early to mid-2000s, this term remains popular among magazines. *Xiaozi* is the jokey shortened term for *xiao zhanjieji* [petty bourgeoisie]. According to Mao, the petty bourgeoisie, composed of owner-peasants, master handicraftsmen, the lower levels of intellectuals—students, primary

and secondary school teachers, lower government functionaries, office clerks, small lawyers—and small traders, were allies during the Chinese Revolution and members of a united front. However, at the same time they were vulnerable to the influence of bourgeois ideology and thus were wavering elements and not reliable in the political struggle (Mao, 1925). Throughout the Maoist period (1949–1976), this term had negative connotations such as selfishness, weakness in revolution and other backward ideologies that made members of this class the target of criticism and self-criticism. A common phrase in revolutionary discourse, for instance, was “to overcome one’s petty bourgeois mentality”.

It was not until the 1990s that the shortened form *xiaozi* came into being, itself a parody of the revolutionary discourse on class and class struggle, or, in Xin Yang’s (2006) words, a reflection of the de-revolutionisation of daily life. In most cases, the term refers to bohemian or yuppie tastes and lifestyles and has little to do with income and class status (Guo, 2009). In other words, *xiaozi* are not defined by how they *make* money but by how they *spend* it (Ng, 2010; my emphasis). An online article lists 20 questions to determine if someone fulfils the criteria for a *xiaozi*:

1. Is he/she jaded about Chinese national events, and resists being defined by “official” and mainstream culture?
2. Does he/she like to sit in cafes? Does he/she like to drink coffee?

3. Does he/she appreciate red wine (and really appreciate it, not mix it with Coke)?
4. Does he/she crave outbound travel? Do he/she want to visit Tibet?
5. Does he/she focus on self-expression through fashion? Does he/she look down on people who spend money on brands without true appreciation of fashion?
6. Does he/she sometimes have a sense of being somehow different from the rest of society? That he/she is seeking something that cannot be found?
7. Does he/she use their English name, even with other Chinese people?
8. Does he/she like to socialise with foreigners? Does he/she like to date foreigners?
9. Is he/she picky in his/her love life? Does he/she feel that most traditional members of the opposite sex don't understand his/her love of life, and his/her need for creative self-definition? Attitude of "if I'm not in love, I'd rather die"
10. Does he/she like foreign hobbies like Yoga or Salsa dancing?
11. Does he/she know multiple languages? Does he/she have good scores on TOEFL, the GRE and other foreign placement tests?
12. Does he/she like popular intellectual western literature like Italo Calvino or Jorge Luis Borges?
13. Does he/she like western popular music, electronica or jazz?

14. Does he/she tend to watch Western TV shows and like to complain about the low quality of Chinese media?
15. Is he/she Web-savvy? Does he/she like western Web 2.0 sites and the cleaner western aesthetic of Web design?
16. Does he/she like all things Apple Computer?
17. Does he/she like blocked western websites like Twitter and Facebook?
18. Does he/she use Google, not Baidu?
19. Does he/she use MSN Messenger or Skype, but not QQ?
20. Does he/she visit Douban, Onlylady or Rayli.com.cn? (Ng, 2010)

Connotations of *xiaozi* include narcissism, good taste and cultural elitism. Lena Henningsen (2011) argued that *xiaozi* is a way of living that places “I” at the centre of attention and serves as a means for distinguishing oneself from others. Apart from the label for a group of people who share common consumption styles, people use the word as an adjective to describe the “quality” of a particular experience or situation. Those who think they are *xiaozi* have a sense of superiority, especially over the peasants and workers who make up the overwhelming majority of China’s population. The term thus is related to “the good life” of cozy houses, cars and fashion, and therefore implies a rosy ideal in the eyes of the urban public. The media and the commercial market have sold this ideal as an attractive



“other”, as can be seen in the following quotation:

*Xiaozi* individuals like big metropolises such as Shanghai, Beijing, or Paris. They regularly use the Internet. They drink coffee and like French cuisine. Their wardrobes are filled with brandname clothes. They have Zhang Ailing's books on their bookshelves. They watch European theatrical and musical performances and listen to Italian violin music (Yang, 2006).

The cultural commodities that *xiaozi* identify with are mostly related to a transnational imagination. Consuming globally circulated commodities confirms a *xiaozi*'s “taste,” identity and status, thus enabling imagined participation in global fashion. The discourse of *xiaozi* is a demonstration of the middle-class desire for consumerist cosmopolitanism.

In the urban *xiaozi* discourse, the lifestyle magazine plays a double role. The magazine is a major media space in which the editors and writers construct and circulate the *xiaozi* fantasy. At the same time, the magazine presents the *xiaozi* image. In many magazines, editors have used the *xiaozi* identity and lifestyle have been used as a hook for consumers. There are numerous articles and pictures on how to look like, behave like and consume like a *xiaozi*. In advertisements and lifestyle articles, this term repeatedly appears to sell products, ranging from toiletries, perfumes, films, food and restaurants to holidays in foreign countries, to readers. There are specific columns and discussion forums in the

magazines on how to decorate one's house in a *xiaozhi* way or how to celebrate Valentine's Day with your lover in a *xiaozhi* atmosphere. The publisher of an online female magazine was so obsessed with the term *xiaozhi* that he titled the magazine *Xiaozhi fengshang* [*Chic Elegance*], and all of the column names start with this term, such as *Xiaozhi Fashion*, *Xiaozhi Women*, *Xiaozhi Home* and so on.

Combining colour illustrations of the latest fashions with feature stories on travel, automobiles, cuisine and grooming, these men's lifestyle magazines encourage their readers to think of themselves as men of taste who can demonstrate their status through purchasing distinctive products and services.

In addition, reading lifestyle magazines is itself an important status symbol for the *xiaozhi*. Readers use magazine purchasing as a signifier of the *xiaozhi* identity. In advertisements promoting commodities associated with the *xiaozhi* lifestyle, high-end lifestyle magazines, especially internationally famous titles, are often used as props. In TV dramas and movies, these magazines often appear in the rooms of the *xiaozhi* characters.

Publishers also place their magazines in luxurious places such as beauty salons or high-class dentist clinics as free gifts so that the magazines are associated with a middle-class lifestyle (interview with Liu Jiang, Jan 2008). In a study of the cultural taste and status anxiety of the middle class in China, Xu Rong recorded a middle-aged woman's

comments on a lifestyle magazine when she encountered its editor-in-chief by chance:

Your magazine is terrific. It sells very well. I flick through your magazines now and then. But it is too expensive. I cannot afford it. I often see it in places like beauty salons, a bit up-market. Another place is a dentist clinic, a high-class one. I did my porcelain crown there. There are many high-class magazines, and I flip over them there. But I've been there for one year, and there are just three issues (of your magazine), all dog-eared. I said why don't you buy new ones. They said they are too expensive. 20 *yuan* a copy. Amazingly expensive! Such a high-class clinic can only afford three issues (Rong, 2007, p. 177).

### ***Pinwei* [taste] as Cultural Capital**

Closely related to the construction of the *xiaozhi* image, most of the magazines under discussion use the discourse of “good taste” as their typical marketing strategy (Song and Lee, 2010). The catchphrase that repeatedly appears in their *jingying linian* [operation philosophy] is *pinwei* [good taste, style]. *Pinwei*, *gediao* [which can also be translated as “good taste” or “highbrow”] and *jingying* [elite] are keywords editors commonly use to attract readers. For instance, the promotion slogan of *Shishang xiansheng* is *dazao jingying pinwei shenghuo* [To build elite men's tasteful life], and the flash banner on the top of the *Da dushi* website reads: *shenghuo, gediao, shangwu, dazhao zhongguo xin shenshi* [Life,

Taste, Business—To build up a new Chinese gentleman]. Moreover, the new *Basha nanshi* is so fascinated with *pinwei* that the magazine defines itself as a *chenggong nanshi de pinwei jiaoke shu* [*pinwei* textbook for successful men] and advocates that *ni de pinwei jue ding ni de diwei* [your taste defines your position].

The overwhelming emphasis on *pinwei* distinguishes Chinese magazines from those of other parts of the world. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the discourse of elitism constitutes a distinctive characteristic of men's lifestyle magazines in China. Reading lifestyle magazines is an indicator or marker of lifestyle and this lifestyle is associated with social elites, who would like to distinguish themselves from their fellow men based on their status and taste, their consumption choices being key indicators. *Pinwei* is often translated as “good taste”, and taste, in the words of Peter Trifonas and Effie Balomenos (2003), “involves classifying yourself and others so that you can try to find a common ground on which to be accepted for the choices you make, and, in the process, working out where you want to belong and with whom you have a collective bond” (p. 2). However, the English definition fails to convey the semantic content of the hierarchy and elitism of the original Chinese word. In Chinese, *pinwei* is a compound of *pin* and *wei*. Etymologically, *pin* means “grade” or “quality” (the character was also used for the ranks of court officials in ancient China), whilst *wei* indicates “position” or “rank” (Song and Lee, 2010). The cult of *pinwei*

is in keeping with the ubiquitous discourse of *suzhi* [quality] in contemporary China, which, according to Ann Anagnost (2006), “articulates the boundaries of China’s newly differentiating social strata” and “produces subject positions necessary for capitalist accumulation” (pp. 310-311). Anagnost (2004) also believed that the sense of *suzhi* has extended from an earlier “discourse of backwardness and development (the quality of the masses) to encompass the minute social distinctions defining a ‘person of quality’ in practices of consumption and the incitement of a middle-class desire for social mobility” (p. 190). Two primary examples of the fetishised use of the term in Chinese society are the alleged absence among rural migrated workers and the preoccupation with *suzhi* education among urban, middle-class only children.

As Jacka (2009) has stated, *suzhi* “refers to the innate and nurtured physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and ideological qualities of human bodies and their conduct” (p. 524). In this way, *pinwei* can be understood as an external marker of the internal quality of *suzhi*. *Pinwei* is an external marker of the choices one makes about how one looks and acts and thus indicates one’s educational background and aesthetic disposition (Song and Lee, 2010). This will ultimately determine how others will view, appreciate and class one’s attempts to present oneself (Donald and Zheng, 2009). Popular usage of *suzhi* since the 1980s, demonstrates it has become a keyword in contemporary

China (Williams, 1983 and Kipnis, 2006). The term is relatively new, and has acquired particular significance in the contemporary market economy and for post-socialist forms of state governance and social control. However, *suzhi* is also closely correlated to other, much older keywords such as “civilized” [*wenming*] and “modern” [*dangdai*] (Jacka, 2009).

*Pinwei* is associated with the recent term *suzhi* and with other, older notions of *wenming*. The English word “taste” has been included as one of the keywords in Raymond Williams’s (1983) *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, in which he stated that taste “became significant and difficult” in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “it was capitalized as a general quality” and “correction” and then it became “rules...among the Polite World” or was “equivalent to discrimination” (Williams, 1983, p. 313). As Donald and Zheng (2009) observed,

the gendered ‘manuals’ of elite civility that are mushrooming as part of the formation of taste structures in contemporary China are in every sense concerned with the setting up of rules and standards for the ‘polite’ (as expressed in the hope for a harmonious society [*hexie shehui*] built on civilization [*wenming*] and quality [*suzhi*] in the population) post socialist class game (pp. 509-510).

*Suzhi* has been included in the official discourse whilst *pinwei* is commercialised and

linked with a bourgeois lifestyle. The latter has become an increasingly popular term in the Chinese mass media recently and is closely related to middle-class social positioning. The social group most concerned with “good taste” or *pinwei* consists of well-off, white-collar urban dwellers. Fundamentally, the pursuit of *pinwei* illustrates the overwhelming impact of global consumerism empowering western lifestyles.

I interpret the discourse of *pinwei* and lifestyle magazines’ fascination with it through Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital. Bourdieu distinguished between three types of capital in his widely cited “The Forms of Capital”, namely, social, economic and cultural capital. He also maintained that cultural capital exists in three distinct forms:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

In light of this classification, middle-class lifestyle magazines are a material form of

cultural capital , whilst the lifestyle the magazine promotes, the “habits and dispositions” and even the healthy, fit male body associated with leisure and consumerism are embodied forms of cultural capital. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu further pointed out that cultural consumption serves to solidify social differences and class stratification. Cultural capital becomes a class signal that helps to strengthen the distinction between the classes. “The network of oppositions between high (sublime, elevated, pure) and low (vulgar, low, modest), spiritual and material, fine (refined, elegant) and coarse... Is the matrix of all the commonplaces which find such ready acceptance because behind them lies the whole social order” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 468). The bourgeois, therefore, are known as “status seekers” who are anxious to separate themselves from the lower class by playing “the game of distinction”, i.e. pursuing “highbrow” art and culture (Bourdieu, 1979). Bourdieu (1979) mapped the struggles of differing social groups through their “cultural consumptions”:

Taste is at the heart of these symbolic struggles, which go on at all times between the fractions of the dominant class and which would be less absolute, less total, if they were not based on the primary belief which binds each agent to his life-style. A materialist reduction or preferences to their economic and social conditions of production and to the social functions of the seemingly most disinterested practices must not obscure the fact that, in matters of culture, investments are not only economic but also



psychological (p. 310).

Bourdieu believed in the ability of the dominant class, the elite and powerful groups, who are rich in economic and/or cultural capital, to designate their taste of cultural products as refined or distinguished, whilst simultaneously defining those of people deficient in these forms of capital as vulgar or coarse. Social groups define and institutionalise taste through the force of pecuniary emulation in which individuals of a lower class mirror the rituals and ceremonies of those in the class directly above so that they will associate with the honour and prestige of that class (Veblen, 1994).

Bourdieu (1984) sees lifestyles the product of habitus which, expressed in and through taste and the different aesthetic choices that people make, are all forms of distinction, i.e. choices made in opposition to those made by other classes or status groups (i.e. food, clothing and lifestyle to preferences in art). Taste is thus an indicator of someone's social distinction and status. Under capitalism, people with higher social status possess greater economic and cultural resources than those with lower social status. In this way, the choice of lifestyles and their association with "refined" or "coarse" tastes can create hierarchy and thus lead to material forms of inequality in society (Carlisle et al., 2008, p. 632).

I apply the concepts of cultural capital and distinction to the study of lifestyle magazines in contemporary Chinese society, where the notion of culture as a form of

capital is still a new phenomenon. Jing Wang (2001) observed the recent shift in the social function of culture in China:

No longer packaged as a Marxist category, as a superstructure that reflects or disguises the economic activities of society, culture now parts with ideology and is turned into capital itself, that is, into an economic activity in itself, and perhaps the most important economic activity of all. [...] In fact, the logic of cultural capital was inconceivable as late as the 1980s, when Chinese cultural production was still largely dominated by anti-market-thinking cultural and literary elites. The historical continuity of Chinese elitist tradition made the collapse of culture into capital such a radical phenomenon (p. 83).

For the first time in Chinese history, the Chinese produce, consume and exchange culture as a commodity. This development is dramatic if one bears in mind the longstanding prestigious position of culture exemplified by the Confucian notion of *yenyi zaidao* [literature as a vehicle of moral principles] and the Maoist use of literature and culture as an important tool of ideological engineering.

The pursuit of *pinwei* in Chinese popular culture illustrates that postmodern cultural capital is “a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status” (Barker, 2004, p. 37). What lies behind

the phenomenon is the drive to promote consumers' interests in luxury goods, which is palpable if we examine the advertisements in these magazines (see Chapter Two on the empirical analysis of a sample of advertisements collected from *Shishang xiansheng* and *Nanren zhuang*).

However, *pinwei* in the Chinese context differs substantially from the form of aesthetic competence delineated in Bourdieu's account of French lifestyles. Analysts cannot explain the content as the adoration of knowledge, educational background or even aesthetic aptitude. Shakespeare and European classical opera, for instance, are not typical *pinwei* topics in these magazines and other forms of popular culture. Thus, what is *pinwei* in the current context? As previously noted, the "how-to" guides in these magazines, such as how to dress, behave, dine, travel etc., "like a gentleman", to a certain extent, represent a superficial "copying" of the Western lifestyle, or an imagined Western lifestyle (Song and Lee, 2010). A typical example of the fetishistic fantasy of Western lifestyle in pursuit of *pinwei* and masculinity is a widely circulated essay on the internet, "Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Managers" (as cited in Song and Lee, 2010).<sup>7</sup> The topic is the stereotyped "finer things" in the male lifestyle, which, in the anonymous author's view, indicate the high level of a man's *pinwei*. The article describes various products and activities that men use to gain enjoyment and define their social status and taste. The article specifically

examines alcohol tasting, cologne, cigars, Swiss Army knives, antiques, lighters, golf, tea, fishing and, finally, selecting a wife. Although the article is a light-hearted look at wealthy male Chinese society, the way in which the author presents his argument depicts an overtly consumerist, materialist and sexist society. Among the areas of life and possessions described are the Swiss Army knife and Zippo lighter. The author also believes that the Swiss Army knife “in a strict sense is no longer a knife; it has simply become a high-class toy for adults. The symbol of a white cross-shaped character on the case is spiritually worshipped by some people as a totem. ...In a sense, the army knife is an emblem of masculine taste”. In regard to the Zippo lighter, the author argues:

Every smoking man loves lighters, especially Zippo. In this world there is no number two brand of lighter that possesses such a throng of stories and reflections. For many a man, a Zippo lighter is their most loved and enjoyed topic of conversation, it is their symbol of stepping towards male maturity. If on their birthday they can receive the present of a Zippo lighter from an admired female friend, they will definitely cherish her as a close companion (“Shida jinglire caifu pinwei (nanshi) [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Male Managers]”, 2005).

The other indicators of *pinwei* listed include cologne, cigars, whisky and golf. Interestingly, apart from these extravagantly exotic commodities, the author also thought

that “the ultimate taste of a man lies in his selection of a wife” because:

what sort of wife he chooses will equate to what sort of life he chooses. As the saying goes, women fear marrying the wrong men. Men fear exactly the same. In fact, the vision a man takes in choosing a wife is just a man’s most ultimate taste, as half of the choice of your life depends on the choice of your wife. In the end, life is not an advertisement. When you were young, perhaps you were captivated by the beauty of outside appearances, but as days roll by, little by little, a good wife will take root in your life (“Shida jingliren caifu pinwei (nanshi)”[Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Male Managers], 2005).

The article then listed traditional Chinese standards for a good wife:

When choosing a good wife, there are at least a few points: virtuous and dutiful, with a childish innocence and an enjoyment for reading and music...she’s real, considerate, forgiving, intelligent but unassuming and allows people to relax...A good wife can do a lot of things for you: preparing the bed, washing the clothes and dusting. When you are free, sipping a cup of coffee made by her, and then have a chat with each other in the balcony. With a wife like this, what more could one wish for? (“Shida jingliren caifu pinwei (nanshi)” [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Male Managers], 2005)

By including “taste in choice of wife” as one of the “ten commandments” of taste

alongside those of consumer items and activities, women are treated as a commodity. Additionally, the author believes that a good wife is not necessarily a soul mate but a middle-class housewife. Her everyday activities are to look after the family and do the household chores such as preparing the bed, doing the laundry, cleaning and serving the family.

As Hooper (1998) stated, the creation of the Chinese housewife has been a major feature of the changing public discourse in the post-Mao era, together with the revival of femininity. The idea of a middle-class housewife in China emerged in the mass media in the early 1990s. *Xiandai Huabao* [*Modern Magazine*] in 1994, a glossy magazine, contained an article with arguments fully supporting the idea of middle-class housewives. As the male author maintained, the division of labour would allow men to devote their full effort to their work when their wives looked after the whole family during the day (as cited in Hooper, 1998). However, there may be other reasons behind the creation of the housewife. A single Chinese woman in her thirties commented, “Chinese men are very insecure” and “care about face too much,” preferring traditional feminine qualities such as *wenrou* [gentleness] and the ability to be a “virtuous wife and good mother” over independence and assertiveness when choosing their partners (Gaetano, 2010). This segregation of gender roles also fits under Veblen’s leisure class framework as the leisure class can show off their

status through the actions of others, i.e. the vicarious consumption and leisure of middle-class housewives (Veblen, 1899). This is why men prefer women who devote themselves to the home and are very well made up. This shows off the men's ability to support the lives of two people. Another reason for men (i.e. those who are at least middle class and can support a family) to pull their wives out of work is that men would like to maintain their decision-making power at home. Acting as the breadwinner of the family is a significant part of the masculinity and decision-making power of most Chinese men (Song and Hird, forthcoming). As cited in a survey of urban transition, Smart and Zhang (2006) found that non-working housewives do not have as much domestic authority as working wives: "[A]mong Wenzhou migrants gender inequality has increased most among wealthy households where women are pushed out of work, while in lower-and middle-income households, wives are the primary producers and have more family decision-making power" (p. 492). This is compatible with the results of the research conducted by Li Yinhe in 2010, in China's five major cities. She found that decision-making power was strongly correlated with the respective income levels of married couples (as cited in Song and Hird, forthcoming):

Another article widely circulated on the Internet, "Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Managers (Female)"<sup>8</sup>, described various activities that women use to define their social

status and taste. These activities include Ikebana, music, sado, health, reading, culinary skills, attire, travelling, social events and parties, managing finances and having a study room. The author of this article, who may be the same author of the Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Male Managers, also believed that a tasteful woman or wife should enjoy reading and listening to music. A look into the deeper connotations and overtones of this article shows the author's overly simplistic propagation of female stereotypes. He argued, for instance, that Ikebana is a compulsory course for beautiful women. The article stated:

Although it may seem a little outdated to describe women as flowers, yet there remains an unexplainable destiny between women and flowers. Ikebana is a sophisticated form of art, both ancient and modern and filled with a rich essence of life. There is even more value for today's women to bring nature's foliage and blossoms into the home, to balance life and cultivate sentimentality through one's own handcrafts. Ikebana is thus a compulsory course for beautiful women. A beautiful woman with her own Ikebana creation is such a touching image in itself...In a life filled with the fragrance of flowers, women shall never grow old! ("Nüxing jingliren shida caifu pinwei" [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Female Managers], 2007)

The author also believed that the ability to cook well is another indicator of taste in women:

Those women who were once shouting for gender equality and leaving the kitchen



one-by-one ought to return. Be presentable to the outside world and skilled in the kitchen. Women have inherent ladylike qualities—as a wife or as a mother, a woman’s gentleness has never left her. Staying within the home to take care of the husband and educate the children is in itself the most beautiful image of a woman, let alone fastening up a pretty apron, pulling back locks of long hair and walking into a polished kitchen of pale shades. Shredding and slicing away, cooking up a storm of delicious flavours between quick stir-frying and unhurried steaming, or perhaps stewing a hearty soup to share with the loved one—just another side of a woman’s lasting charm. Certainly, cooking has other reasons also. To give it your all in cooking for love and preparing a banquet of scrumptious dishes, only to hear his words “I love eating the food you make” which beat any other sweet talk (“Nüxing jinglire shida caifu pinwei” [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Female Managers], 2007).

As long as women of good taste are willing, the author believes that there are at least a multitude of social gatherings and parties that can provide women with company to cure their loneliness. He also argues:

Women are the focal point of these gatherings, with the most avid party-goers of them all known as the ‘Party Queens’—whom in fact only hold a professional attitude towards partying. Hermes scarves, limited edition Louis Vuitton handbags and Gucci’s

new style high-heeled shoes in all the right sizes plus celebrities of all sorts can all be seen here (“Nüxing jingliren shida caifu pinwei” [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Female Managers], 2007).

Constant product placement can be found in this aspect of “taste”, in the author’s exhortation to readers to spend a lot of money following particular fashion pursuits and behaviours, buying the “right” commodities and doing the “right” activities. In addition, for women to maintain mental and physical vitality, glow radiantly from within and project an energetic and proactive attitude, they should participate in activities such as “visiting the spa, shaping and practicing yoga on a regular basis. Whether it’s swimming, fencing, scuba-diving or abseiling, women should be adept in at least one of these activities in order to indicate their tastes and social status”. According to the author, women are also materialist and money-oriented, and he claimed that “a chillingly clever woman not only knows how to make money but also knows how to manage and spend it. A money-wise woman hammers away on the abacus when it comes to calculating income, expenses and loans” (“Nüxing jingliren shida caifu pinwei” [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Female Managers], 2007).

Additionally, the author stated that a woman with taste should pay full attention to her attire, and in this regard, she cannot be careless for even a second. Regardless of whether

she is a home-dwelling woman or a party queen, the author believed that a woman should dress to suit the occasion and an astute woman will always ensure the most appropriate arrangements to be made. As the article stated:

Style is a woman's second language, making it obvious at a glance, her occupation, her class, her temperament and her level of sophistication, all without the need for verbal communication. As such, even when lying on a deck chair out on the porch to have a little rest on a weekend afternoon, one must still dress in the most elegant outfit ("Nüxing jingliren shida caifu pinwei" [Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Female Managers], 2007).

The idea behind this is clearly to be an object of desire and to attract men's attention. Both articles are compatible with Davidoff and Hall's (1987) arguments, who in their influential book on the formation of the English middle class from 1780 to 1850, claimed that during the late-18<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an ideology of separate spheres for men and women became central to the creation of a distinct middle-class identity. Within this middle-class culture, men and women were to occupy distinct arenas with women remaining within the private domestic sphere of the home, taking care of the home and concerning themselves with reproducing and bringing up their children, whilst men occupied the public sphere. Middle-class women, as Davidoff and Hall (1987) argue,

rather than being the “makers” of the class, were preeminent bearers of class. Married middle-class women were understood to represent their husbands and were seen as indicators of his taste. The idea of these two articles matches that of Bourdieu, who maintains that women, even those of the middle class, are central in the family and home, can appear predominantly as aesthetic objects and assume only aesthetic functions in their homes and social world. In Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (2001), he positions women as “objects” of symbolic capital:

Being...socially inclined to treat themselves as aesthetic objects and, consequently, to pay constant attention to everything concerned with beauty, the elegance of the body, its attire and its bearing, within the division of domestic labour, women quite naturally take charge of everything concerned with aesthetics, and more generally with the management of the public image and social appearances of the members of the domestic unit—the children, of course, but also the husband, who often delegates his choice of clothing to his wife. It is also women who see to and look after the décor or everyday life, the house and its internal decoration, the element of gratuitousness and ‘purposefulness without a purpose’ which always finds a place there...

Being assigned to the management of the symbolic capital of the family, women are

quite logically called upon to transport this role into the company, which almost always asks them to provide the functions of presentation and representation, reception and hospitality (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 99-100).

Present-day China copies the 19<sup>th</sup> century British or French concepts of middle-class femininity and masculinity.

The quest for *pinwei* represents an anxiety to be distinguished not only from the poor, such as laid-off workers and migrant labourers, but also, and perhaps more importantly, from the notorious *baofahu* [explosively rich], a disdainful term for those who were not well educated in their youth but made a great fortune overnight under the reformist state (Song and Lee, 2010). Those private entrepreneurs without adequate education have, however, “struggled against public prejudice which portrayed them as uneducated greedy individuals, and sometimes even as criminals” (Carrillo, 2008). Many seek to distinguish themselves morally with intellectual trappings, such as adding intellectual credentials to their resumes or presenting themselves as spiritual people by building Christian churches or Buddhist temples. In a study on the new entrepreneurial class of Christians, known as “boss Christians”, in Wenzhou, Nanlai Cao (2008) observed how these individuals display their newfound wealth and secure their social status by building spectacular “Wenzhou model”

churches all over the world (pp. 63-87). Others try to demonstrate their entrepreneurship by donating to charities and/or by investing in the education and health care sectors (Carillo, 2008). In comparison, members of the “middle class” under discussion adopt different means to distinguish themselves. The middle class is relatively well-educated, and some members have even received a western education. However, they are not yet rich enough to build churches and hospitals. Middle-class individuals’ major method of playing the game of distinction is through displaying or performing the high-quality *pinwei* lifestyle, such as connoisseurship of luxury goods, high-end fashion and overseas holidays.

As revealed by the dialogue between the reader and the editor, the allure of up-market lifestyle magazines lies in a sense of luxury. Readers buy the magazines in the hope of “improving” their *pinwei*, keeping themselves informed on topics and commodities related to the “middle class”, such as travel, golf, cars, watches and so on. Being considered “in style” or “in fashion” gives the desirable cachet of good taste. With advertising revenue, publisher-produced this cultural capital, in turn has the capacity to generate social capital (being recognised and accepted as a member of the social elite) and economic capital (winning the confidence of clients and partners, etc) for them. This attests to Jing Wang’s (2001) observation that in today’s China, “culture serves only as a means to an end, not an end itself. [...] culture is an alternative source of wealth whose value is re-convertible into

cash" (p. 88). Party-speak of uplifting people's cultural standard, and guiding their lifestyles encompasses this change in cultural capital. For instance, the publicity message of the "Esquire Men of the Year Award" by *Shishang xiansheng* read as follows:

Since 2004, the "Esquire Men of the Year Award" competition has been held for four years. It demonstrates that *Shishang xiansheng*, apart from providing overall guidance to men on daily consumption, expresses the ideals, hobbies, interests and zealous lives of mature men. It even contains more connotations: the representation of advanced productive forces, advanced culture and the ideals of life by the new rich in China.... *Shishang xiansheng* is not only a magazine but also a weather vane of men's vogue in China. It has exerted extensive and profound influence on Chinese men and even Chinese people in-general (as cited in Song and Lee, 2010, p.168).

It is ironic that this passage borrows heavily from the official rhetoric of "the three represents" by the Party.<sup>9</sup> Mimicking the old discourse of culture as a tool for ideological education and guidance covers up or legitimises the new role of culture as a commodity. However, the Party-state itself also endorses the discourse of *pinwei* or self-improvement to increase consumerism and, therefore, boost the market economy.

## Conclusion

This chapter focused on the “middle class” as an imagined and aspirational identity, instead of a category of people, defined, by income, occupation or position in relation to the means of production. In this chapter, I examined the close relationship between the discourse of middle class and consumption. As I have discussed, consumption is the centrepiece of contemporary constructions of social distinction. This chapter also explored the *xiaozhi* identity [petit bourgeois] and the *pinwei* [good taste] discourse, how the discourse of *pinwei* helps construct elitism in Chinese magazines and how *pinwei* reflects the redefinition of culture as capital in China today. Magazines commercialise *Pinwei* and link it to a bourgeois lifestyle. The term is popular in lifestyle magazines and other forms of mass media in China and is closely related to middle-class social positioning. The obsession with *pinwei* by the rising middle class illustrates the overwhelming impact of global consumerism empowered Western lifestyles.

In light of Boudieu’s theory of cultural capital, I discussed how the rising middle class in China claim lifestyle magazines act as a status symbol. Through *pinwei*, men’s magazines attempt to equate the consumption of luxury items and women with the embodiment of cultural capital. In so doing, these magazines promote forms of constructed masculinity that are distinguishable from Confucian and Maoist masculinities, as well as



from the “New Man” and “New Lad” masculinities of the West. This important characteristic distinguishes Chinese men’s magazines from their western counterparts.

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<sup>1</sup>The group is also referred to as *xinfu* [new wealth] or *dakuan* [big money], *xinzipenja* [new capitalists] and *xinrui* [new blade]. Sometimes, even pre-1949 terms such as *xinquangui* [the new influential] and *fu hao* [the rich and powerful] are also used to describe the members of this social group (Goodman, 2008, p. 1). For the sake of convenience, the term “middle class” is used in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> The ISEI study assessed the occupation status of the population, and provided a score from 1 to 100.

<sup>3</sup> Here, I follow the explanation of *haigai* made by Louie (2006), which refers to the tens of thousands of young people who left China after the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 to study in western countries such as the United States, Australia and New Zealand and then resettled in China again after completing their studies.

<sup>4</sup> Luxury can be defined as something inessential and an expenditure on it goes beyond what is necessary. Vigneron and Johnson put forward that luxury has a strong element of human involvement, with very limited supply and the recognition of value by others are key components (Vigneron and Johnson, 2005, p. 485).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fumuhui.com/news/65056.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> <http://wal-martchina.com>. Accessed 23 July, 2011.

<sup>7</sup>“Shida jinglire caifu pinwei (nanshi)” (2005) (The Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Managers [male]), <http://biz.cn.yahoo.com/050223/16/80n4.html>, accessed 15 July, 2011. The essay was allegedly first published by *China Fortune* magazine but cannot be found in past issues of the magazine.

<sup>8</sup> “Nvxing jinglire shida caifu pinwei” (The Ten Indicators of the Good Taste of Managers [female]) (2007). Available at: <http://www.chinaacc.com/new/207/437/462/2007/10/xi5443733411610170025180-3.htm>, accessed 28 July 2011.

<sup>9</sup> “The important thought of the Three Represents,” first put forward by former CCP leader Jiang Zemin in 2000, maintains that the Party must always represent “the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.” It has been enshrined in the Party constitution as a guiding ideology of the CCP in the new era, together with Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. See

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/92169/92211/6274616.html> (Accessed on 9 Jan, 2009).

## Chapter Five: Masculinity and Consumption: A Reception

### Study

This chapter compares textual readings of men's lifestyle magazines with reader reception studies. While in the previous chapters, visual and written discourse analysis was the primary method employed, this chapter looks at how readers receive the magazine articles to provide a broader investigation of the practices surrounding men's magazines. In particular, I focus on the influence of representations of male images on readers' perceptions of masculinity. The central questions that motivate this chapter are: 'Are readers of men's lifestyle magazines the "middle-class" elite that the publishers explicitly target?' 'How do the magazines influence readers' perceptions of masculinity and lifestyle?' and 'How do readers react to the magazines' constructions of gender, class and sexuality?' Two questionnaire surveys form the basis of the chapter. The first survey aimed to find out who the magazine readers are and explore their reading habits, their reasons for reading the magazines and their general attitudes toward life. The second questionnaire survey focused on the impact magazine lifestyles had on frequent readers. The results of the surveys support the argument made in previous chapters that the desire to elevate social status as well as the aspirations for a higher-class lifestyle through

conspicuous consumption generate readers' desire to read these lifestyle magazines. Apart from questionnaire surveys, this chapter also includes the results of focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews to see how men's lifestyle magazine publishers, their audiences and the market negotiate a discourse of consumerist masculinity.

### **Survey Approach and Methodology**

As mentioned in Chapter One, existing studies of both men's and women's magazines employ content analysis and textual readings as research methods, with the exception of a few readers' studies (see Jackson et al, 2001; Boni, 2002; and Loong, 2003). However, content analysis and textual reading have their limitations in studying magazines. Focusing on editorial text, images and narrative constructions by the editors and publishers, content analysis has only limited power to explain the continual presence of a limited representation of men and women in media as it ignores the underlying power dynamics of gender relations (Loong, 2003). In addition, the processes of coding and categorizing involved in content analysis assume coherence and uniformity of meaning of content, and thus "ignore[s] the fact that meaning is fluid and ambiguous as it is constructed and mediated socially and therefore must be understood within a specific context" (Loong, 2003, p. 11). Scollon (1998) also contends that "there has been a general questioning of content analyses...[and] a growing awareness in media studies and

cultural studies of the need for ethnographic analysis of media audiences” (p. 267). He thus emphasizes the importance of social interaction of text and audience in the analysis of media studies. As a reaction and complement to these methods, reader studies emerged, in which, according to Benwell (2004),

a unilinear, functional approach to cultural texts in which the analyst’s interpretation is privileged and representations alone are seen to constitute cultural and social shifts has been rejected in favour of considering the active role of the reader in the creation and negotiation of meaning (p. 8).

However, textual reading, a predominant method in literary and film studies, is highly subjective and thus in most cases may only reflect one reader’s interpretation of the text.

Audience reception theory, commonly known as reception theory, emphasizes the mass readers’ reception of a literary text or media. This means that a “text”—be it a book, a magazine or other media product—is not simply passively accepted by the audience, but that each member of the audience interprets the meanings of the text based on his or her own cultural background and life experiences. In essence, the meaning of a text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader. As Hirschman and Thompson (1997) suggest, “audience members bring to

their viewing of mass media vehicles a wide range of unique personal experiences and a wealth of socially derived knowledge grounded in their different occupation, gender, social class, and ethnicity” (p. 475). Taking into account two-way communication, the audience reception approach explores the role that media texts play in the lives of their audiences and focuses on the meanings that audiences bring to the interpretation of a text (Jensen, 1991). In his book *Rethinking the Media Audience*, Pertti Alasuutari (1999) suggests that there are three generations of reception studies. The first is characterized as reception research. It employs a semiotic approach in analyzing the way media messages are created by the communicator and received by the audience. The second generation, characterized as the audience ethnography paradigm, employs empirical reception studies and places more emphasis on analyzing “interpretative communities”—the audiences (Alasuutari, 1999, p.5). As for the third generation, Alasuutari believes that it applies discursive or constructionist views to audience research as it “brings the media back to media studies, but conceives of the media and the media messages in a broader sense than just as an encoded text and then decoded by a particular “interpretive community” (p.7). He also suggests that reception research of the third generation focuses mainly on the role of the media in everyday life in the modern world. My analysis believes to the third generation. Although data in this study is far from being representative or comprehensive,

it helps map out the identity construction of (at least some) readers and the impact of reading the magazines on their everyday life, in particular, their perceptions of masculinity.

This chapter focuses on audience reception of men's lifestyle magazines and the discourses associated with audience responses. I conducted two questionnaire surveys, two focus-group sessions and five personal interviews with frequent magazine readers in China. As mentioned in Chapter One, the first questionnaire survey aimed to find out the demographics of magazine readers and their reasons for reading the magazines; the second questionnaire investigated the impact of the magazines on readers' perceptions of lifestyle, fashion and consumption in order to see the degree to which they endorse the masculinity promoted by the magazines. In addition, I supervised two focus-group discussions with male and female university students and interviewed regular readers in order to map out how the publisher, the audience and the market negotiate the discourse of consumerist masculinity.

## The first questionnaire survey

**Table 5.1: Gender of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N = 170**

Gender	Percentage
Male	71.1
Female	22.9
Total	100

Table 5.1 shows that men are main readers of the magazines under study. This distribution is consistent with survey results in the media kits of such magazines as *Shishang xiansheng*, *Shishang jiankang*, *Zhizu*, and *Nanren zhuang*, which indicate that males comprise a majority of their readers, while women account for about 25 to 30 percent of readers.

**Table 5.2: Age distribution of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N = 170**

Age distribution	Percentage
Below 25	24.7
26-30	36.5
31-35	28.8
36-40	6.5
41-45	2.9
46-50	0
51 and above	0
Total	100

Table 5.2 shows that most of the magazine readers who participated in my survey are in their late 20s and early 30s. These age groups account for 65.3 percent of the total sample population. Nearly one-quarter (24.7 percent) of the sample readers were under



25. Only 6.5 percent of sample readers were 36-40 and less than 3 percent were 41 to 45 years old. No sample readers were 46 or older. As indicated in Chapter One, this may be due to the fact that fewer people from that age group use the Internet. The findings from this survey also show that some young people, who may be undergraduate students or may have just recently joined the work force, were also frequent readers of the magazines. Readership contrasts with the magazines' target audience, who, as discussed in Chapter One, are generally in the age groups of 31-45 years. The numbers might be inaccurate as students group together and buy one magazine, however. As one student explained on an online forum, "This magazine [*Nanren zhuang*] is also very hot in my university. If our dorm room only buys one issue, each roommate only pays 5 *yuan*".<sup>1</sup>Comparatively speaking, students and those who have only recently joined the work force and who usually lack purchasing power but may aspire to the middle-class lifestyle advertised in these magazines.

**Table 5.3: Marital status of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

Marital status	Percentage
Single	63.5
Married without child(ren)	26.4
Married with child(ren)	8.9
Other	1.2
Total	100

According to Table 5.3, 63.5 percent of readers were single, and 26.4 percent were married without children. These statistics indicate a strong link between being single, with lesser or no family burdens, and reading material that encourages a carefree, hedonistic and somewhat narcissistic lifestyle. Single and affluent men are also financially in a better position to spend money on luxury goods.

**Table 5.4: Education level of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

Education level	Percentage
Junior middle school or below	1.8
Senior middle school	20.6
University graduate	70.6
Master's degree or above	7
Total	100

From Table 5.4, we can see that most readers were highly educated. More than 70 percent of magazine readers were university graduates and more than 20 percent were graduates of high school. Seven percent of them had even obtained a Master's degree or more. In comparison, among the population over eighteen years old, about 7 percent nationwide and 17 percent in cities had received higher education in 2005 (China Statistical Yearbook, 2009).

**Table 5.5: Occupations of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

<b>Occupations</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Guojia yu shehui guanlizhe</i> [State and social management personnel]	4.7
<i>Guanli renyuan</i> [Managers]	9.4
<i>Siying qiye zhu</i> [Private business owners]	7.6
<i>Zhuanye jishu renyuan</i> [Skilled workers]	17.5
<i>Banshi renyuan jieceng</i> [Clerical workers]	28.9
<i>Shangye fuwuye yuangong</i> [Service and retail workers]	27.1
<i>Chanye gongren</i> [Manufacturing factory workers]	0
<i>Nongye laodongzhe</i> [Farm labourers]	0
<i>Chengxiang wuye, shiye, bangshiye zhe</i> [Non-employed, jobless and semi-jobless]	0.12
<i>Xuesheng</i> [Students]	4.7
Total	100

According to Table 1.2 in Chapter One, most of the magazines in question target readers who are social elites, including businessmen, entrepreneurs and professionals who have high incomes and a high level of consumption and belong to the upper- or upper-middle- strata according to Lu Xueyi (2002)'s five-tiered ranking. However, as can be seen in Table 5.5, more than half of the respondents were in clerical, service and retail

jobs, which fall into the middle- and lower-middle strata in Lu's study (ref. to Lu, 2002).

Another 4.82 percent were students or non-employed, jobless or semi-jobless. This shows a discrepancy between the targeted readership and the actual readers.

**Table 5.6: Monthly salary of readers (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

Monthly salary	Percentage
3000 <i>yuan</i> or below	11.8
3,001 – 5,000 <i>yuan</i>	51.2
5,001 – 7,500 <i>yuan</i>	18.2
7,501 – 10,000 <i>yuan</i>	7.6
10,001 – 12,000 <i>yuan</i>	5.3
12,001 <i>yuan</i> or above	5.9
Total	100

As shown in Table 5.6, nearly two-thirds of respondents earned a monthly salary of less than 5,000 *yuan*. Among them, 11.8 percent had a monthly salary of 3,000 *yuan* or less, and more than half earned 3001 to 5,000 *yuan* a month (51.2 percent). About 18.2 percent of sampled magazine readers had a monthly salary of 5,001 to 7,500 *yuan*, and 11.2 percent had a monthly salary of 10,000 *yuan* or more. These figures indicate that more than 60 percent of the respondents do not meet the income criterion for “middle class” stipulated by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). According to the NBS, a person must have an annual salary of at least 60,000 *yuan* to be categorized as “middle

class". In 2007, NBS deemed 80 million people, or 6.15 percent of the population middle class ("Guojia tongjiju cheng zhongguo you baqianwan zhongchan zhuangjia bu tongyi, 2007").

**Table 5.7: Channels of access to men's magazines (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

<b>Channels</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Monthly subscription	7.0
Purchase from a newsstand, supermarket, etc.	26.5
Read the online version of the magazine	17.1
Borrow from the library	10.0
Share with friends, colleagues or family	18.8
Read at clinics, hair salons or beauty salons, etc.	20.6
Total	100

An interesting phenomenon shown in Table 5.7 is that only about one-third of the respondents to survey 1 were subscribers (7 percent) or buyers (26.5 percent) of the magazines. Instead of purchasing a copy, more than 20 percent of them read the magazines in public areas, such as clinics, hair salons or beauty salons. Nearly 19 percent of respondents shared magazines with friends, colleagues or family members. More than 17 percent of respondents read the magazines' online versions, and the remaining 10 percent borrowed the magazines from the library. This important finding partially explains the discrepancy between the target audience and the real readers. The majority of readers were those who may not buy or subscribe to the magazines.

**Table 5.8: Time readers spent on men's magazines in past week (%),  
Questionnaire 1, N =170**

<b>Amount of time</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than half an hour	36.5
Half an hour to an hour	40.0
One to two hours	17.1
Two hours or more	6.4
Total	100

Table 5.8 shows that the majority of respondents did not spend much time reading the magazines. More than 76.5 percent spent no more than an hour on reading men's magazines in the week prior to the survey, and only 6.4 percent of readers spent two hours or more. During interviews with magazine readers, most of the respondents pointed out that instead of reading the magazines page by page, they just flip through the magazines and stop at images or articles that deserve additional scrutiny.

**Table 5.9: Favourite magazine content (%), Questionnaire 1, N =170**

<b>Favourite content</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Current affairs	6.4
Fashion & style	11.3
Grooming	10.6
Motor cars	8.1
Sports and fitness	7.2
Sex/women	6.8
High-tech/Internet	5.4
Food/recipes	2.1
Alcohol	4.2
Health	2.3
Travel	5.4
Film/TV	2.9
Music	2.1
Games	3.3
Books	1.5
Celebrities	6.2
Military affairs/wars	1.3
Investment/financial management	2.8
Collecting	2.1
Career	5.4
History and culture	1.1
Home	1.5
Total	100

Table 5.9 indicates that a large proportion of readers' favourite content in men's magazines relates to fashion (11.3 percent) and grooming (10.6 percent). Readers also favour content on motor cars (8.1 percent) and sports and fitness (7.2 percent). On the

other hand, respondents did not read the sections on culture, military/wars, home, books, film and TV (less than 2 percent). However, celebrity stories, including interviews with entrepreneurs, were quite popular among respondents. Readers may regard the entrepreneurs as role models and may be interested in knowing more about their financial management and their formula for success.

In addition, many readers liked content on travel (5.4 percent), alcohol (4.2 percent) and careers (5.4 percent). The popularity of career content suggests that there are many readers seeking advice on career development and especially on how to deal with their bosses and colleagues.



**Table 5.10: Reasons for reading men's lifestyle magazines (%),  
Questionnaire 1, N =170**

<b>I read men's lifestyle magazines because</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Comment</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
The articles attract my interest	24	42	18	15	1	100
The advertisements attract my interest	14	53	12	19	2	100
They provide information on the most up-to-date fashion trends	43	47	8	2	0	100
They tell me what new products are on the market	49	45	4	1	1	100
They help me get temporary relief from my work or study	56	43	1	0	0	100
They tell me about the life and thoughts of others	39	49	9	1	2	100
They tell me what a tasteful and fashionable lifestyle is	57	38	3	1	1	100
They provide entertainment	34	38	10	15	3	100
They satisfy my needs for social interaction	28	33	24	10	5	100
They arouse me sexually	23	21	24	20	7	100

Table 5.10 summarizes the reasons these people read men's magazines. About two-thirds (66 percent) agreed (either strongly agreed or agreed) that they read them because the articles attracted their interest, while 67 percent said that the advertisements attracted their interest. Ninety percent of them agreed that reading magazines informed them about the most up-to-date fashion trends. In addition, 94 percent of readers agreed that the magazines told them what new products were available on the market, and as many as 99 percent agreed that reading magazines was an excellent leisure activity that provided temporary relief from their work or study. Furthermore, 88 percent of readers indicated that they read the magazines because they wanted to know about others' lives and thoughts, while 95 percent regarded the magazines as guides to a tasteful and fashionable lifestyle. Lastly, 72 percent of readers indicated that they read them for entertainment, and 61 percent because they met their social needs. Given all these high percentages, men's lifestyle magazines appear to provide a guide that can help to ensure a young man's social acceptance by his male peers.

The middle-class lifestyle presented in men's lifestyle magazines acted as an 'aspirational model', offering readers continually changing fashion, beauty, and physical ideals to which they could aspire but which they perhaps could never actually achieve in real life. Shouma, editor of *FHM*, claims that readers buy the magazine primarily for two

reasons: they enjoy the aspirational fantasy of a middle-class lifestyle, and they hope that by following the magazine's advice or buying the products it advertises, they will achieve the ever-changing looks that the magazine promotes via models and photographic wizardry (Shouma, personal communication, 2 January 2009). The findings from my first survey, shown in Table 5.10, provide some support for this claim.

**Table 5.11: Average monthly expenditure on clothing, accessories and personal care products, Questionnaire 1, N =170**

Monthly expenditure	Percentage
500 <i>yuan</i> or less	11.7
501—1000 <i>yuan</i>	17.1
1000—2000 <i>yuan</i>	35.3
2000—3000 <i>yuan</i>	30.0
3000 <i>yuan</i> or above	5.9
Total	100

Table 5.11 indicates that, generally speaking, magazine readers cared about their appearance and spent rather generously on purchasing personal products like clothing, accessories and personal care products. More than 70 percent of respondents spent 1000 to 3000 *yuan* a month on purchasing items. According to statistics published by local authorities, the average monthly wage for an employee in Beijing in 2011 was only 4,672 *yuan* (“China’s 2011 average salaries”, 8 July 2012). Beijing is a first-tier city and it topped the list of employee’s salary among the 23 provinces and cities included in the

statistics. However, even in this context, the personal consumption levels of these magazine readers seem high compared with the average monthly wage an employee have. Another 29 percent of respondents spent less than 1000 *yuan* on clothes, accessories and personal care products monthly, while 6 percent spent more than 3000 *yuan* on these products monthly.

Table 2.11: Average monthly expenditure on clothing, accessories and personal care products (Yuan)

Monthly expenditure	Percentage
3000 yuan or above	6%
2000 - 3000 yuan	12%
1000 - 2000 yuan	29%
501 - 1000 yuan	43%
100 yuan or less	10%

**Table 5.12: Magazine readers' life attitudes and consumption practices (%),  
Questionnaire 1, N =170**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No comment</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am financially stable (i.e. I have a secure job with a stable income)	68	12	5	13	2	100
I don't have any financial burdens	27	35	18	4	6	100
I belong to the "moon-light" tribe <sup>2</sup>	33	28	15	18	6	100
I like buying brand products	46	32	11	5	6	100
I think it's important to look fashionable	42	35	10	7	6	100
I change my mobile phone, digital camera and other digital products very often	28	43	5	14	10	100
I like trying new products	33	28	17	12	10	100
I travel overseas at least once a year	51	33	9	6	1	100
I find the advertisements in men's lifestyle magazines very useful and appealing	47	38	8	2	5	100
I buy advertised products very often.	29	30	19	18	4	100

Table 5.12 shows that as much as 80 percent of magazine readers agreed (either strongly agree or agree) with the statement that they were financially stable. Moreover, 72 percent

of them agreed that they did not have financial burdens, while 61 percent belonged to the yueguang zu [moonlight tribe], which means those who use up all their monthly salaries. Unlike older generations, who were brought up to be heavy savers, the “post-80” and “post-90” generations,<sup>3</sup> that is, those born since 1980 and 1990 respectively, like to spend rather than save. It is understood to be a typical “post-80” and “post-90” belief that one should live for the moment and spend “future money”. Statistics also show that the number of credit cards – epitomizing “future money” – in use in China rose from 13 million in 2005 to 180 million by the end of 2009, younger generation fuelling the growth. The number of credit cards is expected to grow at 25 percent a year for the next three years (Rein, 2009). As Table 5.12 also shows, 78 percent of respondents indicated that they like buying brand products, and 77 percent agreed that it was important for them to look fashionable in daily life. In addition, 71 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they changed their mobile phone, digital camera and other digital products very often, and 61 percent of them indicated that they like trying new products. Eighty four percent travelled abroad at least once a year. However, while 85 percent indicated that they found the advertisements in the magazines very useful and appealing, only 59 percent agreed that they bought advertised products very often. This discrepancy shows that reading lifestyle magazines creates a fantasy for readers, especially for those from the lower-middle strata who do not have high consuming

power.

Based on these figures, it can be argued consumerist ideology affects deeply the younger generation in urban China, though not all are financially well off enough to buy expensive products. Most desire to join the elite group and indulge themselves in luxury goods. Compared to older workers with similar financial assets, younger workers have fewer family responsibilities and thus lead a more carefree life. In terms of consumption, they were significantly different from their parents' generation, who tended to live frugally and simply. Guided by the philosophy of "live now and pay later", some young workers in Chinese cities spent all of their income and even accrued debts.

One magazine reader, Jason Chen, a 25-year-old Shanghai man, was a typical example of the "moonlight tribe". He earned 6,000 yuan a month as a marketing executive at a Taiwanese company. Being the only child in his family, he lived with his parents, who provided his food and daily necessities. As his living expenses were low, he spent his entire monthly salary buying things and enjoying life. He was a regular reader of FHM. He enjoyed buying cosmetics from Estée Lauder. He was a member of a fitness club. He had a new Apple iPhone and travelled at least once a year for leisure, either within China or abroad. He was very happy with his life and optimistic about the future. As he said, "I have a stable job and don't have any family burdens. My parents have a monthly retirement

pension. I want to enjoy life before I get old. My salary increases every year and spending can improve my image, which will then help me get a better career when I want" (Jason Chen, personal communication, 1 October, 2011). As Croll (2006) has noted, the co-residence of unmarried youth with older generations is a significant characteristic of life in China's cities. The lack of alternative housing, the cost of living, and the fact that co-residence of generations, even after marriage, has long been a custom may explain this social phenomenon. By living with their parents, young, single people have more money for the fashionable lifestyle that they desire.

#### **Discussion of findings of first questionnaire survey**

The results of the first questionnaire survey are thought-provoking in at least two regards: the majority of magazine readers were not members of the middle class in terms of income and job category; and readers used magazines as a kind of guide in their daily life and regarded the celebrities or entrepreneurs featured in the magazines as role models. After reading success stories and those about the lifestyles of the middle class, they emulated its interests and tastes, aspiring to join it and dreaming of doing so. As mentioned above, the desire for upward social mobility generates the desire to read lifestyle magazines; in turn, the magazines stimulate reader's consumption of luxury goods and other commodities that were closely associated with middle-class identity.



People read men's lifestyle magazines because they encourage readers to think of themselves as men with taste who express their identities and status through the purchase of distinctive goods and signifiers. As Giddens (1991) argues:

[t]he notion of lifestyle sounds somewhat trivial because it is so often thought of solely in terms of a superficial consumerism: lifestyles as suggested by glossy magazines and advertising images. But there is something much more fundamental going on than such a conception suggests: in conditions of high modernity, we all not only follow lifestyles, but in an important sense are forced to do so—we have no choice but to choose (p. 81).

Giddens argues that modern society promotes a diversity of choice of lifestyles; however, external factors, such as group pressure, role models and socio-economic circumstances, influence an individual's choice of lifestyle. As stated above, role models are created by men's magazines for readers to learn from and copy, but there's still a question about whether or not they succeed. Giddens continued to argue that:

A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity (Giddens, 1991, p. 81).

In line with Giddens' definition, Bell and Hollows (2005) point out that the term "lifestyle" carries different connotations in different social contexts, ranging from personal

health to marketing strategies. They also note that lifestyle can be seen as choice-made or a notion of social identity. Class, race and gender no longer constrain concept of lifestyle but an individualist, consumption-driven idea underpins the concept of lifestyle in the new millennium (Lewis, 2011). Thus, people belonging to the lower social rung (like some of the respondents in the questionnaire survey, who aspire to a middle-class lifestyle) are able to invent (and reinvent) their life “biographics” through reading the magazines and following the consumption pattern. The significance of the role models promoted on the lifestyle magazine role models suggests a choice-based transforming identity. Consumption practices suggested by the lifestyle magazines thus shape readers' selves/ identities.

Rosenberg (2011) on the other hand, defines lifestyle as “a reflexive and disciplined process of self-construction and self-presentation reliant upon modes of consumption--increasingly deployed in creative and productive ways--which is at the heart of neo-liberal models of citizenship” (p.175). This conceptualization of neoliberal citizenship sheds light on a more in-depth interpretation of the aspirational consumption of magazine readers. Since the late 20th century, neoliberalism in the West has been “characterised by the ‘death of society’ and the rise of ‘individuals’ who are in need of a new kind of management, surveillance and control” (Davies et al, 2005, p.344). In other

words, neoliberalism is all about the individual, who will actively self-improve, rather than betterment of the collective. Neoliberalism “does not seek to govern through society but through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now constructed as subjects of choices and aspirations of self-actualization and self-fulfillment” (Rose, 1996, p. 41). As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) contend, the most powerful current in modern society is “the ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement” (p.22). The creator of an individual identity, including the choosing, deciding and shaping of human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, is the central character of the post-modern time (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p.23).

Neoliberal discourse produces subjects who think they can fulfill their individual dreams and achieve goals by means of their own choices, and that nothing can stop them from doing this—not their gender nor geography. The “entrepreneurial self” is an individual who seeks to “enterprise” herself, and who does it through acts of “choice” (Alloway & Dalley-Trim, 2009, p.52). She believes that she has the capacity/power to transform herself and to make her own life the object of practices and self-shaping. As Foucault points out, knowledge is formed within practices of power and is constitutive of the development, refinement and proliferation of new techniques of power (Foucault, 1991).

This Foucauldian approach to power/knowledge sheds light on our interpretation of the practice of lower class reading lifestyle magazines. For example, readers of the magazines under investigation include people from the working class whose lacking of taste has become a subject of middle class judgment and discrimination. By reading magazines, those being subject to the techniques of taste/knowledge/power and neoliberal truth regimes, come to acquire middle class values (or have it imposed on them). In other words, the self-improving subject attains knowledge from the lifestyle magazines and gains some power through exercising control over his/her own body or lifestyle. In both China and the West, reading lifestyle magazines empower the readers (as subjects of neoliberal discourse); they gain confidence, find their “new me”/self-actualization and learn how to self-monitor.

### **The second questionnaire survey**

As mentioned above, the second questionnaire survey aimed to find out more about the lifestyle and tastes of male readers. It also explored the extent to which the magazines’ representations of men and masculinity affect magazine readers.

**Table 5.13: The channels through which magazine readers discover various items (multiple options) Questionnaire 2, N = 30**

Channels	Fashion	Skincare products	Cologne	Luxury products	Electronic products
TV	16.2	20.6	12.7	11.7	7.2
Magazines	29.3	27.3	34.1	33.3	33.3
Newspapers	6.6	7.7	5.8	6.6	11.1
Internet	15.2	16.0	17.3	18.3	16.1
Shop displays	20.5	14.4	17.9	18.8	22.2
Friends and relatives	11.4	13.4	11.6	11.3	9.5
Others	0.8	0.52	0.6	0	0.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5.13 shows that compared to other media, magazines are the favourite reference for respondents when purchasing the above items (commonly associated with a young and hedonistic lifestyle). This finding provides evidence that magazines have an impact on readers' attitudes and lifestyles. Nearly one-third of respondents used magazines as a reference when they purchase cologne (34.1 percent), luxury products (33.3 percent) and electronic products (33.3 percent). In addition, 29.3 percent of respondents used magazines as their main reference for fashion, and 27.3 percent used magazines to get information on skincare products. It is evident that the lifestyle magazine plays a crucial role in the formation of the "middle-class" lifestyle and the promotion of consumption that defines

new identities.

**Table 5.14: Magazine readers' perceptions of using cologne  
(% strongly agree and agree) Questionnaire 2, N = 30**

Magazine readers' perceptions toward using cologne	Percentage
It is necessary for a man to apply different scents in different situations.	67
Applying cologne can increase a person's confidence and make them more sexually attractive.	80
Applying cologne is one way to show respect to others.	77
It is very important for a man to apply cologne in his daily life.	57

Table 5.14 indicates that respondents' attitude towards using cologne is generally positive; 67 percent of frequent readers agreed with the statement that "it is necessary for a man to apply different scents in different situations", while 80 percent of frequent readers believed that "applying cologne can increase someone's confidence and make them more sexually attractive". In addition, 77 percent of respondents agreed that "applying cologne is one way to show respect to others", and 57 percent of respondents believed that "it is very important for a man to apply cologne in his daily life".

**Table 5.15: Magazine readers' perceptions of skincare products  
(% strongly agree and agree) Questionnaire 2, N = 30**

Magazine readers' perceptions toward using skincare products	Percentage
Using skincare products can make someone look young.	83
Using skincare products can increase someone's confidence.	77
Using skincare products can attract female attention.	77
I would like to try some professional facial treatments and body treatments.	67

Table 5.15 shows that a large proportion of respondents believe it is important to maintain good skin. They also believe that using skincare products can help someone look younger and can increase his confidence. More than three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) agreed that using skincare products can attract female attention. About two-thirds (67 percent) even said they would like to try some professional facial treatments and body treatments. Readers' highly positive attitude towards male cosmetics and using skin care products reflects the metrosexual attitude to these products. As discussed in Chapter Three, metrosexuals pursue a narcissistic and hedonistic lifestyle, and would spend a lot of energy and time dressing themselves up, taking care of their skin and health, and enjoying life to its utmost.

**Table 5.16: Readers' perceptions of using brand products**  
 (% strongly agree and agree) Questionnaire 2, N = 30

Readers' perceptions of using brand products	Percentage
Using a brand product can indicate the taste of a person.	77
I care about the brand name of a product that I buy.	66
Using a brand product can make me confident among my peer group.	87
It is worth spending your whole month's salary on purchasing a brand product.	47

Magazine readers have high brand awareness. Table 5.16 indicates that a significantly high percentage (87 percent) of the respondents thought that using a brand product could make them confident among their peer group. Indeed, 77 percent of the respondents agreed that "using a brand product can indicate the taste of a person". About two-thirds (66 percent) agreed that "I care about the brand name of a product that I buy", and 47 percent of respondents even agreed that "it is worth spending your whole month's salary on purchasing a brand product". Readers' strong favouring of luxury products also explains why the fashion sections of men's lifestyle magazines are some of the most-read parts.



**Table 5.17: Readers' perceptions of fashion trends**  
 (% strongly agree and agree), Questionnaire 2, N = 30

Readers' perceptions of fashion trends	Percentage
In contemporary society, it is important for a man to look fashionable.	87
I care about fashion trends.	78
3.3. I would like to be a creator and leader of fashion.	66
A fashionable lifestyle can upgrade the quality of my life.	90

As many as 90 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "a fashionable lifestyle can upgrade the quality of my life". Furthermore, 87 percent agreed with the statement that "in contemporary society, it is important for a man to look fashionable". In addition, 78 percent cared about fashion trends, and 66 percent even expressed a wish to be a creator and leader of fashion themselves. As we see, there is a discrepancy between Table 5.13 and the above table. The above table shows that respondents perceived being fashionable as important in their daily lives and Table 5.20 will show that few readers thought being described as fashionable important. This may be due to the fact that being fashionable is a goal or a desideratum for the respondents. However, as being fashionable is contingent on consumption, a fashionable man has to spend money generously for luxury goods and services in order to publicly display his economic power. As indicated above, the majority of the respondents are without consumption capacity. Thus, they were not able to claim themselves as being fashionable. This discrepancy also shows a distance

between imagination and reality and further affirms the fact that readers read magazines as a kind of projection.

**Table 5.18: Readers' perceptions of personal appearance and lifestyle  
(% strongly agree and agree), Questionnaire 2, N =30**

Readers' perceptions of personal appearance and lifestyle	Percentage
I can have many advantages by having a good appearance in my career and daily life.	97
Nowadays, men can enjoy shopping, grooming and body shaping just like their female counterparts do.	77
Materialism is very important in my daily life.	73
I am an open-minded person and can accept those who have different lifestyles.	90

Generally speaking, a significant percentage of respondents believed that having a good appearance was important to them, which means that they were willing to spend a large amount of time and money on taking care of their external appearance so that they could impress others. Indeed, 77 percent of respondents agreed that "Nowadays, men can enjoy shopping, grooming and body shaping just like their female counterparts do". This subverts the traditional belief that shopping, grooming and body shaping are confined to women.

**Table 5.19: Readers' perceptions of "fashionable men" criteria (multiple option)  
Questionnaire 2, N = 30**

Criteria for being a fashionable man	Percentage
Is handsome	23
Has taste	93
Leads a fashionable lifestyle	87
Is responsible toward family and society	83
Has a successful career	77
Has a charming personality	83
Is active and enterprising	77
Respects and has concern for others	70
Is well-cultivated	80
Is humorous	77
Has a perfect body shape	60
Is masculine	60
Knows how to dress	90
Is knowledgeable	63

The responses of the survey in Table 5.19 suggest that respondents believed that the most important attributes of fashionable men were "having taste" (93 percent), "knowing how to dress" (90 percent), "having a charming personality" (83 percent), being "responsible toward family and society" (83 percent) and being "well-cultivated" (80 percent). In addition, 77 percent of respondents believed that a fashionable man had "a successful career" and "was humorous". About 60 percent of respondents agreed that a fashionable man had "a perfect body shape", "was masculine" and "was knowledgeable".

In contrast, only 23 percent of respondents believed that being “handsome” was an important criterion for being a fashionable man. These results largely conformed to the construction of consumerist masculinity in a variety of magazines (see Chapter 2).

**Table 5.20: Self-image: How magazine readers would like to be described (%),  
Questionnaire 2, N = 30**

Terms that magazine readers would like others to use to describe them	Percentage
<i>Jingying</i> [an elite man]	24
<i>Shengshi</i> [a gentleman]	3
<i>Chenggong renshi</i> [a successful person]	21
<i>Bailing</i> [a white-collar worker]	7
<i>Nanzi han</i> [a masculine man]	10
<i>Xing nan</i> [a fashionable man]	12
<i>Jun nan</i> [a handsome man]	7
<i>Zhuanye renshi</i> [a professional]	15
Other	3
Total	100

Table 5.20 shows that, compared with other popular terms of masculinity such as “gentleman”, “white-collar man”, and “handsome man”, most magazine readers preferred others to describe them as “an elite man” or “a successful person”. Chapter Two discussed the commonness of these terms associated with masculinity in magazines. The results thus

show an overlap between magazines' discursive construction of ideal masculinity aimed at the target audience and the self-identification of readers.

### **Discussion of findings of second questionnaire survey**

The second questionnaire survey examined the impact of men's lifestyle magazines on readers' perceptions of fashion, luxury products and their attitudes toward lifestyle. It aimed to find out to what degree they adopted the lifestyles promoted by the magazines. Findings show that, to a large extent, magazine readers internalized the lifestyle of masculinity portrayed by the magazines. Most of the respondents viewed magazines as textbooks on masculinity and were inclined to emulate the male models featured in the magazines. Regarding consumption as an important way of validating masculinity, they cared about their appearance and believed that good appearance was crucial to success. They agreed that a perfect appearance could make them feel more confident and improve their prospects, in both their private and professional life. Although not all of them were able to afford the expensive items advertised and promoted by the magazines, the pleasure they gained by viewing images of the products and imagining themselves to be consumers of them was one of the most important motives for reading. As Edwards (1997) has stated, men's magazines "define successful masculinity in terms of money equally conspicuously

earned and spent” (p. 76). Magazines also informed their readers of the significance of fashion and fine clothes, “and advise of the fundamental importance of personal appearance to success and even to personal security” (p. 76). The visual and textual stimulation from the magazines will then stir up “anxieties, all-consuming dreams, desires and allures and thus lead to material aspirationalism” (p. 76). My findings attest to what C. Wright Mills (1956) described as an “aspiration to be a member of the power elite”:

The fit survive, and fitness means, not formal competence...but conformity with the criteria of those who have already succeeded. To be compatible with the top men is to act like them, to look like them, to think like them: to be of and for them—or at least to display oneself to them in such a way as to create that impression. This is, in fact, what is meant by “creating”—a well-chosen word—“a good impression.” This is what is meant—and nothing else—by being a “sound man,” as sound as a dollar (p. 141).

In this way, readers’ self-recognition was not built on their socio-economic status, but rather on their image packaging and consumption by emulating the lifestyle of those supposed to be higher on the social ladder. These readers were prone to link themselves to status symbols that indicate upward mobility. As mentioned in Chapter One, Hird (2009) has argued that young men in China form their white-collar subjectivities by incorporating the ideas expressed in discursive texts and images presented in the mass media, including

men's lifestyle magazines, and mould themselves as subjects of media discourses on "fashionable consumption" through acquisition and display of particular objects. In this case, it would be the elites of society that they would like to copy. However, since magazine readers include those from the lower-middle strata, as the statistical result indicated above, they could only daydream about, rather than emulate, the elite lifestyle.

#### Individual interviews with readers

Besides the two questionnaire studies, I conducted one-on-one, open-ended interviews with five frequent readers of men's lifestyle magazines. The interviewees—four male and one female—were introduced by editors and mutual friends during three fieldwork trips to Beijing in January 2008, April 2010, and February 2012. The aim of the interviews was to learn more about why the informants read lifestyle magazines and thus about the perceptions of consumerist masculinity among readers. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to one hour, depending on how much the participant wanted to say. Interviews usually took place in cafes or the interviewees' homes. Participation in this study was voluntary and by self-selection, and participants were reassured that responses any information provided would be used solely for this study.

My first interviewee, Chen Wei was a 38-year-old, married white-collar employee in a Japanese company, with a monthly salary of 6,500 yuan. He had been a subscriber of

Shishang jiankang for three years. He had never subscribed to any magazines before and had not heard about *Shishang jiankang* until one day when he was waiting for a bus and a half-naked body with six-pack abdominal muscles on the cover of the magazine at the newsstand attracted his attention. He was amazed and curious at how a man could be as fit and healthy as the model. The aspiration for a “middle-class”, fit, male body thus became the main reason for him to buy the magazine:

In the past, I had led a very unhealthy life and my health was not good. My health was sub-standard. I always had minor health problems like frequent colds, headaches and backaches and my work efficiency was not satisfactory. Women of my age still cared very much about health and body shape and they did a lot of exercises and ate less in order to maintain good curves and a thin waist. However, men of my age cared little about it [their body shape], or I should say life forced them to neglect it. There were several reasons for this: firstly, friends of my age were at the peak of their career development. Many of them had to work on the weekends. Also, during the week there were activities. They had to go to nightclubs with their boss or business partners and drink wine one glass after another and stay late. This not healthy but there was no choice. We did not have enough time for sleep and rest, not to mention exercising. So, many of my friends have spare tyres and a lot of extra flesh on their bodies. Some of them suffer from the three highs—high blood pressure,



high blood fats and high blood sugar.

Life for Chinese men is bitter. We are the breadwinners of our families. Take me, for example: though my wife has a stable job, our expenditure is high. I am a single child in my family. My parents are still farming, and I have to send money back to them once every two months. And I have a little girl who is in 3rd grade at primary school. School expenses increase and increase, and she has to take part in many extra-curricular activities, all of which cost money.

I am in my middle-age now. I really want to keep my body in good condition. I think I am much healthier now by following the tips in the magazine. I do not fall sick so easily and can work more efficiently. The magazine does not just encourage you to go to the gyms or join a fitness centre; it also provides you with rich information on how to keep fit at home and in the office. Also, it teaches you how to lead a healthy life, such as how to eat healthily, which is practical and useful. I cut out the interesting and useful parts of articles and make photocopies for my friends.

My only female interviewee, Zhao Xiaoyan, 41, a middle-class housewife, was a frequent reader of *Shishang xiansheng*. She read the magazine because she cared about the taste of her husband, who owned a small furniture factory in Shunde, Guangdong province: At first, my husband subscribed to this magazine, but he did not have the time to read it. As

I do not have many things to do at home, I read it on his behalf. I thought it could really upgrade my taste in clothing and grooming for my husband and myself. Our society is really changing. When I was studying at university, that was about twenty years ago, in the early 1990s, we girls seldom discussed this [our appearance]. We did not care about appearance and even if we cared about it, we did not have the money to buy beautiful things. Now we are affluent and we aspire to a lifestyle that can reflect our success. So, I really believe that we should compensate ourselves for what we did not have in the past. And nowadays in China, a person's appearance is very important. Even a salesperson in a shop will judge you by your appearance, like looking at the brand of the handbag you are carrying, to see whether it is LV or Gucci. If you dress well, she will respect you and think highly of you and serve you like a queen. However, if you dress poorly, they will just look down upon you and be rude to you. This is a general phenomenon in our country.

I read the magazine mainly for the products advertised that are suitable for mature men, that is of the age of my husband. I do all the shopping for my husband, and I look for products for him, like skincare products and what he wears, even his shoes. I know what type of clothing suits him. And I get a lot of ideas from reading Shishang xiansheng. I really like looking at those pictures in it that are about the mix and match of clothes. Yes, I will buy the products advertised in the magazines. Sometimes, I tear out the page off and

ask the salesperson in the shop whether they have the products in their shop.

Another interviewee, Li Yanhong, was a 31-year-old married man. He was a manager in a Taiwanese company, with a monthly salary of 5,500 yuan. He subscribed to *Nanren fengshang*. During the interview, he talked about the magazine's role in forming his consumption attitudes:

I like this magazine because it provides me with lot of information on new products in the market, especially on fashion and accessories. I use it as a directory for shopping. Yes, the items in the magazine are expensive, but I think it does no harm to look at them as this can help me know trends. It's more a fashion magazine (shizhuang zazhi) than a general-interest magazine.

I think the mentality of our society has changed now. Our parents' generation, because they experienced the "Cultural Revolution" and were sent to the countryside, they particularly like buying "cheap stuff" in order to save money. However, to me, the quality of cheap products cannot be guaranteed and they are not durable. This actually causes waste. For myself, I like things of good quality. You can't expect a watch costing a hundred or two yuan to last long. So, if you spend a few thousand dollars buying ten watches and keep replacing one after another, why not spend that money on one single watch?

I like those foreign products advertised in the magazines. Many of these brands have a long

history and a good reputation. Their quality can be assured. The price is high, but it's worthwhile. Like a Cartier watch, it can cost dozens of thousands of yuan, but I can wear it for several years. Besides, it is generally recognized as a good brand. This can also indicate your taste and your social status. Of course, I can't afford to buy many luxurious products. I only have two or three suits and leather shoes, and a Cartier watch. For me, I will save two or three months' salary to buy an advertised product if I really like it. I do not buy things very often, but when I do, I choose things of good quality.

Zhou Haifeng was a 19-year-old male student at a local university. He was a reader of *Nanren zhuang* and said that the magazine was also very popular among his fellow students:

Reading every issue of *Nanren zhuang* becomes an exciting thing for us. We look forward to the publication of every new issue. Firstly, the magazine is printed on very high-quality, glossy paper, and the photos of female models are glorious. These girls are really sexy, shen cai chao bang [with super great shape]. (So, you can fantasise a lot and daydream?) Ha ha, yes! And you can only find such sexy female models in this magazine, not in others. The photography in this magazine is really good. Sometimes, I cut out these photos [of female models] and stick them on the wall of our dormitory as decoration. It's really shang xin yue mua [feast for the eyes]. You feel life is full of hope when you look at them (the

photos). They are like sunshine coming from the window. Not only the photos, but the content is also very good. I read every page of it. It enlightens me about issues between men and women, not only physically but also mentally, what women think about certain things (such as men's masturbation). There is a column called Sofa Women, in which several women are invited to talk about their points of view towards a certain topic, like whether they would fall in love with someone who earns less than they do. It really helps me understand more about women and their inner feelings about certain things.

Besides women, I like looking at the car advertisements. Though I cannot afford to buy a car now, I want to know more about the different models of cars. I may buy a car when I get a job. The information about other products is also rich. Sometimes, I share the magazine with my roommates and we discuss the topics raised in the magazine.

Also interested in the sexual content of these magazines, 29-year-old Wang Zhixiong was married and worked as a technician in a publishing company. He earned 4,300 yuan a month. He was also a frequent reader of *Shishang jiankang*. Instead of subscribing to the magazine, he bought it from the newsstand. He liked the sexual tips in the magazine and thought them useful:

Sex is still a taboo to the general public, and we seldom discuss it with each other, not even with close friends or family members. After being married for a few years, my wife has

been feeling bored. This magazine offers useful tips on how to improve your sexual skills. I apply them in my daily life and it really works and helps! Sometimes, I will share [the magazine] with my wife, and she is also very interested in it. We can coordinate with each other, in order to have mutual gratification.

He also believed that bringing sexual pleasure to his partner is also a kind of masculinity: When we say whether someone is masculine or not, usually it depends on whether he is successful in his career or whether he can make big money. To me and my wife, we are not so ambitious and we do not put so much emphasis on materialism. We just want to make enough money and lead our "little life". We care very much about each other, and that of course includes our sexual life. In the past, men cared only about their own feelings [in sex] and neglected those of their partners. So, women acted only as sexual tools. I think it is not right. A modern man has to treat women on equal terms and care about their feelings, too.

These interviews provide us with rich details about the didactic functions of the magazines for this particular group of informants. For example, during interviews the readers repeatedly emphasized the usefulness of information on how to upgrade one's taste in dressing and grooming, how to improve one's health by adopting a healthy lifestyle, as well as tips on sex and relationships. In addition, the final interview, in which the informant stated that it is important for a modern man to treat women equally, shows the discernable

influence of pro-feminist thinking, which may also be attributed to the “educational” effects of the magazines.

Taken together, the findings from the survey and from the individual interviews suggest that men’s lifestyle magazines influence significantly readers’ attitudes toward masculinity and choices of lifestyle. Also, we can see that there is a circular or multi-directional relationship between magazine-constructed masculinity and readers’ ideal masculinity (Giddens, 1984). The magazines and a host of consumer products advertised in the magazines contribute in a general way to an ideal-masculinity-dominated consumer culture. This culture influences a certain group within the population, motivating them to buy the lifestyle magazines. Then the magazines further motivate them to continue buying the magazines.

#### Focus Group Discussions

During focus-group discussions, participants generally agreed that the masculinity constructed in the magazines embodies such characteristics as wealth, careerism, stylishness, fashion and elitism. There was also a general consensus among respondents that these ideal attributes were, to a large extent, fantasies that they could not easily attain in real life.

Respondents had mixed views when they were asked to define ideal masculinity. However,

all respondents, both male and female, believed that a man's masculinity depends not only on his outer appearance but also his financial status and *suzhi* [quality] (see Chapter Three for the explanation of this term). Some specified that "inner qualities" such as being "responsible" and "erudite" were essential criteria of masculinity. When describing the ideal male lover, 6 female respondents commented:

He [a masculine man] must be successful in his career. Only career success can establish a man's authority and dominance. Besides, let's say his build is tall and handsome. That of course makes him very manly, but that is only the physicality of a man. The charm of a man, however, is what's inside, his quality, through which he creates a sense of dominance and authority.

First of all, he must be rich. Next and more importantly, he must dress well. For example, if he wears a suit, leather shoes, and all kinds of brand labels, he will give people the feeling of being wealthy, but not a parvenu. He will have taste and know how to take pleasure in life.

He must be of a high inner quality, have received a good education and must be erudite. He should also have a strong sense of responsibility and be tolerant and generous to others. He should also have a sense of humour. Men with a good sense of humour are very attractive to women. External appearances are of course very important but so is inner



quality.

I think that masculinity is embodied in the kind who suixin suoyu [has his way], is buji [unrestrained], buqu burao [has his own views and is unyielding]. Besides, he has his own thoughts on things.

To me, it doesn't matter exactly how successful he is in his career, how much money he has, or how high his education level is. The main thing is zai shiye shang fuze [to be dutiful in his career], as well as dui jiating fuze [responsible toward the family], giving the people around him a sense of security.

I think that it is important [for a masculine man] to remain committed to his own opinion, to live his own preferred lifestyle, to always know what the next step to take is, to take delight in life and to have some sense of responsibility.

One male student, however, thought that masculinity should include a man's attitudes toward women and whether or not he treats women on equal terms are also criteria for being masculine:

I think that a man shows his masculinity in engagements with females. When a man is interacting with a female, his values emerge. It is difficult to determine just how successful a man is by looking at his career alone. Even if he is very successful in his career, such as a CEO, he may not be very tough kind of manager, but instead a moderate/calm, meek and

equal, the kind who sees himself at the same level as his subordinates, with his female colleagues.

To some extent, these descriptions echo the men's magazines portrayals of consumerist masculine images, especially the New Man type of masculinity as discussed in Chapter Two. Focus group respondents' comments show the interplay between discursive constructions in the magazines and real life perceptions of the students. There are, however, discrepancies between the two. For instance, no respondents mentioned any entrepreneurs or business people when they were asked the question, "In your eyes, who is the most masculine person?" This seems to contradict what Louie (2003) and others have written about the rise of business people as models of masculinity in the post-Mao period. While Louie and other scholars focus on representations in media and literature, this survey reveals more about daily conversation and popular perception among urban youth. In other words, I interpret this as a discrepancy between ideal and real. For university students, the image of an entrepreneur is rather negative, and it is not their ideal of masculinity. This may be due to the fact that the students believe the ideal masculinity in the magazines is too remote from the general public. However, as participants in the focus groups were all university students, they may not represent the general attitude in society.

Compared to men, mass-media perceptions of masculinity influenced female

respondents more easily. When asked to name some manly men, four out of six mentioned pop stars such as Jang Dong-gun from Korea, Bowie Lam from Hong Kong, and local artists like Chen Daoming. One student believed that her father was manly, and another thought that Deng Xiaoping was very masculine:

I think it is my father. First of all, physically, he looks very manly, with a very rugged look, and he takes charge. Personality-wise, he is very tenacious, he doesn't talk much but has a sense of humour, and in educating us children he is very strict. He started off with only his bare hands and has gradually built up his wealth. He always approaches life with a positive and enthusiastic outlook. It just gives people a sense of manliness.

I think that Deng Xiaoping is actually quite manly. He had a very strong side, having fought China's War of Resistance against Japan and the War of Liberation. It shows his all-powerfulness in battle. As a figure who commanded the military, this is the image of manliness. Even though he was short in stature, we needn't judge based on appearances. On the other hand, I've seen many documentaries about him which all say he had a very warm-hearted personality. At home, he was very good-natured toward his grandchildren and such, sometimes even spoiling and coddling them. I think that manliness does not actually mean having to be forceful/strong all the time. Sometimes you also need to pair gentleness with strength. Mao Zedong once referred to Deng's personality as mian li chang

zhen [an iron fist in a velvet glove]. Whether it was regarding China's foreign diplomacy or politics, he was able to move with ease between those affairs. He was very much the type of personality described in Confucianism's doctrine of the mean. Just that sense of power within gentleness.

By contrast, none of the male respondents mentioned any pop stars when asked the same question. However, among the seven male respondents, three agreed that political figures are real men:

I think it is Bush. He has strong mental resilience, and so I think he is very admirable, very masculine.

It is Zhu Rongji, who has that dominance due to his authority. He has the courage to do things, to break the norms.

Bo Xilai, Former Minister of Commerce, I think he is very bold and very humble.<sup>4</sup>

Two male respondents found some fictional figures, such as Superman and a character in Luis Cha (Jin Yong)'s swordsman fiction, supremely masculine:

I think it's Superman. He takes masculinity to a whole hyperbolic level. He has incredible superpowers, and the most important thing is that he appears when people are at their greatest times of need, and presents himself in such a down-to-earth, low-key and mature way.

I am reminded of the character Xiao Feng in Jin Yong's Tian long ba bu [The Eight Creatures], because he is a tragic kind of character in the narrative. His conduct, his attitude toward the ones he loves.... I find him to be very masculine.

Perhaps as evidence of the power of wen masculinity as discussed in Chapter One, one male respondent said that his professors were masculine:

The professors [in our college] are very manly. Firstly, they are very erudite. The other thing is that intellectual air about them; their country-serving, people-serving and striving kind of attitude is very respectable.

Respondents generally agreed that the male images represented in magazines are too ideal and far removed from the daily life of the general public. The consumerist masculinity constructed in the magazines is thus difficult to achieve by ordinary men in China:

What is presented in them [men's magazines], you see little of in reality. In them you feel as though there are a lot of elites, white-collar workers and celebrities. In real life, it's probably still a small number. The male image they portray is quite idealized, the type everybody idolizes, it's still very uncommon in real life.

I think that it might be a matter of who they [the men's lifestyle magazines] target. Their target audience is possibly white-collar, rarely do they target the general public. Look

at the products in advertisements, dongzhe [a slight adjustment] could mean many tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands [yuan]. Only those from the upper classes can afford them and use them to raise their status; we can merely appreciate the products and kind of daydream about having them.

I think so, too. Like for us students, [we read the magazines] only to learn a bit from them, observe a bit. Even for the real white-collar workers, I don't know how many of them read them as guides.

I also think it is a problem with their [men's lifestyle magazines'] targeting. They are all only available for purchase to rich people with very refined tastes, because each magazine costs 20 [yuan], very expensive. For an average person, you don't even know where your next meal lies; you definitely don't have money to buy these magazines.

I think that their [the men's lifestyle magazines] target firstly includes rich people, secondly the people who like to chase trends. As for their contents, well it's not practical for the working-class/general public; it's only for them to have a look at, admire a bit.

On the other hand, focus-group participants identified some real-life masculinity magazines do not exhibit:

The average father, like the father portrayed in the movie *Together*, who is a laid-off worker, is also a single parent and a responsible man. To me, he is very manly but is not

represented in magazines. Another type [of manhood] is the disabled kind, although [a man] is physically disabled, but he has very strong will, he is also very masculine.

In addition, what is missing in the magazines is the *dazhong yingxiong* [public hero]-Police, for example, who courageously stand up for the truth. I think these public heroes demonstrate a very noble kind of masculinity.

They [these magazines] don't fall in line with popular culture. I think that masculinity is about taking your work seriously and responsibly, even if it means being a postman in a mountainous village. Like the people shown in *gandong Zhongguo* [Heartrending China]<sup>5</sup>, where the people remain at a common place and do their own best. Leave it to those supposedly masculine men—two days in and they will collapse with exhaustion. Also, that father in the film *Together*, he is also very masculine. This kind of fatherly love, that is to say, not applicable to the middle class; you can't say that the wealthy father's fatherly love is any greater than the poor father's fatherly love, right?

Focus group respondents criticized magazines for being too materialist. Several participants mentioned that the magazines promote a single-minded masculinity that emphasises only consumption. They said that men's magazines serve only the elite and rich and neglect the needs of the general public. This shows a gap between the real readers and the target readers. On the whole, the participants in the two focus groups did not agree that

messages included in editorial text and advertisements in the magazines were powerful and influential in forming their subjectivities:

I think that magazines in the mainland are more heavily focused on material aspects. Successful men have either money or they've got power, and average folk feel more and more distant from them. Masculinity is too single-minded in this consumer society. Being successful or unsuccessful is measured in monetary terms, or they use their social standing to determine achievement. Other things don't even matter.

I think that their [men's lifestyle magazines'] market also affects their targeting. Some men undergoing difficult circumstances or experiencing setbacks—they aren't represented. They only show successful men.

I think that men who are too practical are very hard to be shown in magazines. Just like fatherly love; magazines are more likely to present a kind of perfection, a very ideal sort of thing.

I think that this is due to the magazine's way of making profit. Whatever the readers like, they [men's magazines] will carry that content. Part of their target audience includes these elite types, and what do those elite figures like? They like a feeling of superiority. These [men's magazines] all give the audience a sense of superiority, or a feeling of acknowledgement. I think that this exists throughout the higher levels of society; they



[men's magazines] aren't going to put average people's things in there, because their readership is a completely different crowd to the average person.

Another reason is advertisers push high-end goods. They won't like to see any texts related to the average people, which would downgrade their products.

To sum up, the findings from the focus group discussions are quite different from those of the surveys and individual interviews. Although the magazines are playing an increasingly important role in the construction of masculinity among urban youth, most focus-group participants did not agree that the magazines had great influence on their subjectivity. In the discussion of ideal men and masculinity, they mentioned a variety of male images that were not included in the magazines. This shows that the impact of lifestyle magazines on urban youth, especially university students, who are more critical and self-reflective, is relatively limited. The participants also believed that the magazines do not cater to the desires and needs of ordinary people. Some focus group discussion ideas, such as the disdain for businessmen and materialistic values, show the influence of the legacy of Maoist ideology.

Furthermore, all respondents agreed that the kind of male image promoted in the magazines differs from that of the Maoist period:

During the Maoist era, collectivism always came first. It was collectivism rather than

individualism being emphasised. The publications at that time would not highlight a celebrity or a person so obviously. Even if there were an image of a singular person, it would be used as a model, for example Lei Feng. It is because he is representing a particular kind of person. Nowadays, we emphasise individuals, not groups, for example, individual power, individual enjoyment, individual success, etc. The Maoist period did not emphasise these kinds of things. An individual had to obey the collective. In addition, an individual had to sacrifice himself.

The manhood being created and promoted at that time was a masculinity of sacrifice for the country, which is really narrow and limited. Individuals' [needs and desires] are repressed.

During the Maoist period, masculinity was too generalised, emphasising heroism, i.e. making contributions to the nation or self-sacrificing. A good example may be Shi Guanrong [a famous general at that time], though there were some flaws in his personality, we would still think him really manly! This is to pinpoint his male image by highlighting his heroism. Nowadays, our society can accept pluralistic values. Unlike during the Maoist period, the success of a person can be defined very widely, not only to serve the nation or to serve the people.

Mao-era ideal men were workers, peasants and soldiers. They were to serve people.

The definition of manhood at that time was simply whether a man was willing to sacrifice himself for socialism and collectivism, but nowadays, the concept of masculinity is multi-faceted.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there is a striking gap between the actual readers of men's lifestyle magazines and the targeted readership of these magazines. Although magazines target the elite in society, two questionnaire surveys found that both middle strata and lower-middle strata (as identified by Lu 2002) comprise magazine readers. These readers are interested in the magazines because reading magazines helps them upgrade their taste and lifestyle. Reading magazines stems from their desire to elevate their social status and their aspirations for a higher-class lifestyle, to be achieved through conspicuous consumption. Results from the focus group discussion also support the argument of this thesis that the construction of masculinity in today's China reflects cultural hybridity—the interplay between global influences and local realities. This attests to the argument that “middle class” is a media-driven concept and is closely linked with consumption and neoliberal ideology. On the one hand, men's lifestyle magazines have generated fantasy and projected masculinity, especially among the younger generation. These magazines promote an elite lifestyle, which represents ideals of consumption practices and

masculinity for readers. On the other hand, however, views of participants in a focus-group discussions show a tension between the consumerist masculinity in these magazines and real life perceptions. This tension exemplifies the limitations of the magazines in the construction of new identities in today's China.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.chinasmack.com/2009/pictures/chinese-fhm-magazine-controversy-popularity.html>, accessed 25 August, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> “Moonlight tribe” is the Chinese homophone for “using up all [one’s] salary every month”. The tribe consists of mostly young white-collar workers with high incomes, in their late 20s or early 30s, with no family burdens. This group is well educated, with stable jobs and regular incomes. They do not have to worry about whether they will have money to spend next month. This Moonlight tribe can be contrasted to the “saving group”, which lives frugally and tries to save as much as possible from monthly income.

See: <http://www.mysaver.cn/saving-article/2007/0813/what-is-the-moonlite-clan/>, accessed 10 February 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Post-1980” and “Post-1990” (80 *hou* and 90 *hou*) are terms widely circulated in China, referring to the generation born after 1980 and 1990. It is common in both Chinese popular discourse and in academic studies of contemporary Chinese society to distinguish between the identities and experiences of different generational cohorts in this way.

<sup>4</sup> Considered by many as a rising star in the CCP, Bo Xilai was Minister of Commerce from 2004 to 2007. He became a member of the Central Politburo and secretary of the CCP’s Chongqing branch in 2007. However, his political fortunes came to an abrupt end following the Wang Lijun incident, in which his top lieutenant and police chief sought asylum at the American consulate in Chengdu and revealed details of Bo’s alleged involvement in a homicide plot. In the fallout, Bo was removed as Chongqing party chief in March 2012 and suspended from the Politburo the following month. He was later stripped of all his Party positions, lost his seat at the National People’s Congress and eventually was expelled from the Party.

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<sup>5</sup> *Heartrending China* is a national TV contest program run by China Central Television. Each year, the ten most “moving” people throughout the country are elected, and an awards ceremony is held in Beijing. The program has been televised since 2002 and has exerted profound impact on Chinese society. See <http://baike.baidu.com/view/14280.htm>. Accessed 11 November 2012.

## Conclusion

Men's lifestyle magazines came to China at the turn of the twenty-first century, as a result of the commercialization and the globalization of print media. Reflecting dynamic negotiation and hybridization between global and local discourses, they have prospered in the last decade along with the marked emergence of a new "middle class" and the pursuit and imagination of a consumerist lifestyle. Targeting the newly emerged social elite, these magazines construct and promote a new mode of hedonistic, consumerist, and cosmopolitan masculinity. In this thesis, I have argued that the men's lifestyle magazines that have recently emerged in China construct a new type of manhood—a consumerist masculinity, which serves as an aspirational model for readers. At the centre of this discourse is the pursuit of a lifestyle defined by *pinwei* or "good taste", which readers render modern and Western and associate with middle-class identities and fantasies.

The present study scrutinized this genre of popular culture and the discourse of consumer-constructed masculinity through several lenses, derived from gender studies and media studies. Synthesizing research methods from both disciplines, this dissertation provides a case study of the construction of masculine identities in post-socialist China.

From a gender studies perspective, I investigate how the new modes of "consumerist" masculinity represent changes in the discourse of masculinity over the past

decade and the extent to which foreign cultures have influenced these consumerist masculinities. Through a critical reading and content analysis of the magazine texts, the thesis argues that, on the one hand, male images and manhood models in the magazines under discussion are part and parcel of a transnational hegemonic masculinity, and on the other, they give expression to post-socialist desire, fantasies and needs in today's China.

Centering on the research question of how the lifestyle magazines' ideals of masculinity embody the neoliberal ideology of consumption and how they differ from Maoist and Confucian ideals, Chapters Two and Three discussed the interplay between power and cultural capital. For the first time in Chinese history, masculinity has become an identity men can obtain through consumption. Men's magazines function as both a status symbol and lifestyle manual in the construction of consumerist masculinity. The Chinese men's lifestyle magazine, as a genre of popular culture imported from the West, embodies this neoliberal consumerist masculinity and exhibits the five characteristics of British men's lifestyle magazines identified by Edwards (1997, pp.75-6), namely, they are expensive, legitimise consumption, depends on an urban environment for existence; they promote upward social mobility through consumption; and exhibit strong heterosexuality. These magazines have brought to China the metrosexual images of "new man" and "new lad" as well as a hedonistic lifestyle, and these have had a significant impact on the

popular perception of masculinity.

At the same time, as mentioned above, the Chinese men's magazine, as a cultural hybrid, demonstrates distinctive Chinese characteristics. Through critical readings and analysis of verbal and visual content, Chapter Two identified elitism and nationalism as the two most Chinese conspicuous features of men's magazines compared to Western equivalents. The prominence of elitism and nationalism is in line with my findings on the distinctive cultural habitus of the rising middle class in China.

Through a comparative content analysis of *Shishang xiansheng* [*Esquire*] and *Nanren zhuang* [*FHM*] and their Western counterparts, Chapter Two further pinpointed several "Chinese characteristics" of global business masculinity, including the absence of feminist influence, a remarkable return to "traditional" gender ideology and the discursive treatment of sex as a privilege of the powerful.

Chapters Three and Four examined the masculinity constructed through men's magazines from the perspectives of sexuality and class formation, respectively. Chapter Three discussed the exhibition of the body in the magazines and put forward the theory that the body is the centre of desire and consumption, elaborating on the different types of spectatorship of the body in men's lifestyle magazines. These include men looking at women, women looking at men, men looking at men and women looking at women. In



each category, I analysed the power relations involved and the emergence of new possibilities of gender and sexuality in the men's magazines by using critical readings of the bodies exhibited in the magazines.

Chapter Four focused on the “middle class” as an imagined and aspirational identity, instead of an actual category of people, grouped together by income, occupation or position. The “middle class” in this study and in most of the magazine narratives is a discursive construction, with the pursuit of taste [*pinwei*] at the centre of the discourse. I interpret this discourse through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. As I argued in Chapter Four, magazines commercialise *Pinwei* and link it to a bourgeois lifestyle. The term is popular in lifestyle magazines and other forms of mass media in China and relates to middle-class social positioning. The obsession with *pinwei* among the rising middle class illustrates the global-consumerism powered impact of Western lifestyles.

As discussed in Chapter One, rapid globalization and turbulent social transformations in China in recent years have debunked old values and concepts, including perceptions of masculinity. Men are facing unprecedented uncertainties and anxiety about their masculinity in China, especially in the cities, today. Rapidly expanding men's lifestyle magazines, in both China and the West, play an important role in easing male anxiety by providing “some direction about what is manly in late

modernity” (Ricciardelli et al, 2010, p. 66). Men’s magazines fashion a hegemonic masculinity and construct a benchmark against which male readers scrutinize their identities (Carrigan et al, 1985; Connell, 2005). This hegemonic masculinity is represented via discourse on appearance, affects, sexuality, behaviours, occupations and domination and is by and large a fantasy and an ideal that men can never achieve. The findings of surveys reported in Chapter Five lend weight to this argument by pointing out the gap between the targeted readership (financial and social elites) and real readers of these magazines (some of whom come from the lower middle strata). This further attests to the above-mentioned argument that the “middle class” in these magazines is an imagined and sought-after identity, rather than a real and identifiable class in society. The questionnaire surveys and the interviews with readers in Chapter Five confirm that readers use men’s magazines as a lifestyle guide to “upgrade” their taste and improve their sexual and other types of performance in order to gain social approval for their masculinity. By reading men’s magazines, men become more aware of their gendered identity. Reading lifestyle magazines involves a projection on the part of readers. Their desire to read magazines stems from their desire to elevate their social status and achieve a higher class lifestyle through conspicuous consumption. However, the views of participants in a focus-group discussion showed a tension between the consumerist

masculinity in these magazines and what is perceived in real life. Although these magazines are playing an increasingly important role in the construction of masculinity among urban youth, most focus-group participants did not agree that the magazines had great influence on their subjectivity. In the discussion of ideal men and masculinity, they mentioned a variety of male images that have not included in the magazines. This shows that the impact of lifestyle magazines on urban youth, especially university students, who are more critical and self-reflective, is relatively limited. The participants also believed that the magazines did not cater for the desires and needs of ordinary people. It appears, then, that men's magazines may not play a powerful role in constructing masculinity among all their readers.

In addition to the gender studies perspective, the thesis also approached the magazines in terms of production processes. It investigated the ownership pattern of the magazines. And, drawing on a wealth of first-hand data collected from interviews with editors, publishers and readers of the magazines undertaken during fieldwork trips to China, the thesis quantitatively examined the dynamic interplay between publishers and readers; a timely and necessary supplement to textual readings. As mentioned in Chapter Two, there are roughly two types of lifestyle magazines in the Chinese market: the Chinese editions of internationally established titles and the purely local magazines, with

the former enjoying overwhelming dominance in the market. By analyzing the institutional features of these magazines, including (self-) censorship, localization, and repositioning in the market, the study probes into some important but understudied issues of globalization and contemporary Chinese media. In particular, the localization of global media is a fascinating issue, which opens new possibilities for discussions on translation, cultural hybridity and cultural circulation in a global era.

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## Appendix 1 Chinese version of questionnaire one

### 关于阅读男性时尚杂志的问卷调查

您好！我是澳大利亚国立大学性别研究中心的博士研究生。本人的研究项目是从性别和大众传媒角度，研读中国的男性时尚杂志。此问卷的对象是中国男性时尚杂志的读者。本人希望通过此问卷，以了解这些杂志的读者群，以及他们看杂志的原因。感谢您在百忙之中填写这份问卷。填写此问卷需时不超过 15 分钟。请阁下诚实作答。您所填写的内容会绝对保密，而调查结果只会用于作为本人的学术研究。非常感谢您的合作。若有疑问，请 email 至:tracy.lee@anu.edu.au

请在适当的方格里勾选 ✓

1. 你的性别:

男性

女性

2. 你属于以下哪个年龄层:

25 或 以下

26-30 岁

31-35 岁

36-40 岁

41-45 岁

46-50 岁

51 或以上

3. 你的婚姻状况是:

单身

已婚, 没有孩子

已婚, 有孩子

其他

4. 你的教育程度是:

初中或以下

高中

大学毕业

硕士或以上

5. 你的职业是:

国家及社会管理人员

经理

私营企业主

专业技术人员

办事人员

个体工商户

商业服务业

产业工人

农业劳动者

城乡无业, 失业或半失业

学生

6. 你每个月的工资是:

¥3,000 或以下

¥3,001-¥5,000

¥5,001-¥7,500

¥7,501-¥10,000

¥10,001-¥12,000

¥12,001 或以上

7. 你经常通过什么渠道获得男性时尚杂志?

每月订阅

到报摊, 超市等地方购

到杂志的网站阅读

图书馆借阅

朋友, 同事或家人互相传阅

在诊所, 发廊或美容院阅读

8. 过去一个星期,你总共花了多长时间看男性时尚杂志?

- 少于半个小时
- 半个到1个小时
- 1到2个小时
- 2个小时以上

9. 最喜欢看男性时尚杂志的哪些内容?请在适当的地方打勾。

时事	
时尚服饰	
美容	
汽车	
运动与健身	
性爱/女人	
高科技/互联网	
食物/食谱	
酒	
健康	
旅游	
电影/电视	
音乐	
游戏	
书籍	
名人/明星	
军事/战争	
投资/财政管理	
收藏	
职场	
历史文化	
家居	

10. 请根据“我阅读男性时尚杂志”为开头,在下列选项中,勾选出最能表达你意见的代码。

我阅读男性时尚杂志， 因为……	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
文章内容很吸引我。					
广告很吸引我。					
它提供最新的服装潮流 和时尚信息。					
它让我知道市场上又多 了哪些新产品。					
它可以帮助我暂时抛开 工作或学业。					
它让我了解其他人的生 活和想法。					
它让我知道什么是品 位和时尚的生活。					
它提供娱乐。					
它满足我的社交需要。					
它让我“性致勃勃”。					

11. 你每个月花在服装和其他个人护理产品(比如说护肤产品)的开支大约有多少?

- ¥500 或以下  
 ¥501-¥1000  
 ¥1001-¥2000  
 ¥2001-¥3000  
 ¥3000 或以上

12. 下面的情况是否反映了你的情况? 勾选出最能表达你意见的代码。

	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
A. 我的经济状况很稳定(我					



有稳定工作，收入固定)					
B. 我没有什么经济负担					
C. 我是“月光族”					
D. 我喜欢买名牌产品					
E. 我觉得衣着时尚很重要					
F. 我经常更换手机，数码相机和其它电子产品					
G. 我喜欢尝试新产品					
H. 我每年都会出国旅游一次					
I. 我觉得男性杂志的广告很有用，很吸引					
K. 我会买杂志里广告的东西					

调查完毕，谢谢合作！

### English version of Questionnaire One

## Survey on readers of men's lifestyle magazines in China

Hello! My name is Tracy Lee. I am a PhD student of Gender Relations Centre at the Australian National University. My research studies men's lifestyle magazines from both gender and mass media perspectives. This questionnaire targets readers of men's lifestyle magazines in China. I wish to understand the readers' demographics of these magazines and the reasons for them to read these magazines. This questionnaire will take you only about 15 minutes. Thank you very much for your time to fill in this questionnaire for me. Please answer the questions honestly. Your answers will be kept in strict confidence and the results of the survey will be used only for my own academic research. Thank you again for your participation.

**Please put a tick in the appropriate box.**

1. You are a

- female
- male

2. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

- 25 or below
- 26-30 years
- 31-35 years
- 36-40 years
- 41-45 years
- 46-50 years
- 51 and above

3. Your marital status is

- single
- married without child(ren)
- married with child(ren)
- others

4. You have received

- Junior college education or below
- High college education
- University education
- Master or above

5. Your occupation is

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a state and social leader | <input type="checkbox"/> a service personnel                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a manager                 | <input type="checkbox"/> a factory worker                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a private entrepreneur    | <input type="checkbox"/> a farm labor                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a professional            | <input type="checkbox"/> an non-employed, jobless and semi-jobless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a clerk                   | <input type="checkbox"/> a student                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a private business owner  |  |

6. You monthly income is:

- below ¥3,000
- ¥3,001-¥5,000
- ¥5,001-¥7,500
- ¥7,501-¥10,000
- ¥10,001-¥12,000
- ¥15,001 or above

7. Through which following channel(s) do you access to men's magazines?

- monthly subscription
- purchase from a newsstand, supermarket, etc
- read the online version of the magazine
- borrow from the library
- share with friends, colleagues or family members
- read at clinics, barber's or beauty salons

8. In the past one week, how much time did you spend on reading men's magazines?

- less than half an hour
- half an hour to 1 hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 hours or more

9. What are your favourite magazine contents?

Current affairs	
Fashion & style	
Grooming	
Motor cars	
Sports and fitness	
Sex/women	
High-tech/internet	
Food/recipes	
Alcohol	
Health	

Travel	
Film/TV	
Music	
Games	
Books	
Celebrities	
Military affairs/wars	
Investment/financial management	
Collecting	
Career	
History and culture	
Home	

10. Please indicate the reasons for you to read a men' lifestyle magazine.

<b>I read men's lifestyle magazine because</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somehow agree</b>	<b>No comments</b>	<b>Somehow disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
The articles attract my interest.					
The advertisements attract my interest.					
They provide information on the most up-to-date fashion trends					
They tell me what new products are on the market.					
They help me get temporary relief from my work or study.					
They tell me about the life and thoughts of					

others.					
They tell me what a tasteful and fashionable lifestyle is					
They provide entertainment					
They satisfy my needs for social interaction					
They arouse me sexually					

11. What is your average monthly expenditure on clothes, accessories and personal care products?

- ¥500 or less
- ¥501 - ¥1000
- ¥1001 - ¥2000
- ¥2001 - ¥3000
- ¥3000 or above

12. Think about the following statements, please indicate to what extent you agree they apply to you.

	Strongly Disagree	Somehow Disagree	No Comments	Somehow Agree	Strongly Agree
I am financially stable (i.e. I have a stable job with a stable income)					
I don't have any financial burdens					
I belong to the "moonlite" tribe					
I like buying brand					

products					
I think it's important to look fashionable					
I change my mobile phone, digital camera and other digital products very often.					
I like trying new products					
I travel to overseas at least once a year					
I find the advertisements in men's lifestyle magazines very useful and appealing					
I buy advertised products very often					

**This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation!**

## Appendix 2 Chinese version of Questionnaire Two

### 关于阅读男性时尚杂志的问卷调查

您好！我是澳大利亚国立大学性别研究中心的博士研究生。本人的研究项目是从性别和大众传媒角度，研读中国的男性时尚杂志。此问卷的对象是中国男性时尚杂志的读者。本人希望通过此问卷，以了解这些杂志的读者群，以及他们看杂志的原因。感谢您在百忙之中填写这份问卷。填写此问卷需时不超过 15 分钟。请阁下诚实作答。您所填写的内容会绝对保密，而调查结果只会用于作为本人的学术研究。非常感谢您的合作。若有疑问，请 email 至:tracy.lee@anu.edu.au

请在适当的方格里勾选 ✓

1. 你喜欢别人怎样形容你？

- 精英
- 绅士
- 成功人士
- 白领
- 男子汉
- 型男
- 俊男
- 专业人士
- 其他

2. 你认为怎样才算是一个时尚男士

- 外形俊美
- 有品位
- 有时尚的生活方式
- 对家庭和社会有责任感
- 事业有成
- 有个人魅力
- 积极，进取
- 尊重或关心别人
- 有内涵
- 幽默

- 美好的身形
- 有男人味
- 穿着得体
- 学识渊博

3. 关于你的个人形象和生活方式方面:

	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
1. 良好的形象能给我的事业和日常生活带来好处。					
2. 现在男人可以跟女人一样享受购物, 美容和健美所带来的乐趣。					
3. 物质生活很重要					
4. 我思想开放, 能接受别人有不同的生活方式。					

4. 你对时尚潮流的看法:

	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
1. 在当今社会, 追求时尚最男人来说非常重要。					
2. 我很关注潮流动态					
3. 我乐意创造和带领潮流					
4. 时尚生活能提升我的生活质量					



5. 你对使用名牌产品的看法:

	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
1. 使用名牌产品能显示一个人的品位					
2. 购买一样产品的时候, 我很在意它是什么品牌					
3. 使用名牌产品能让我在同辈面前很有自信。					
4. 就是花上整个月的工资来购买一件名牌产品也是值得的					

6. 你对穿着名牌衣服的看法:

	1 非常 同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常 不同意
1. 穿着名牌衣服能让我的外表加分					
2. 我留意每一季的流行时装饰					
3. 我非常在意服饰配搭					
4. 时装品牌能反映一个人的品位和生活方式					

7. 你对使用护肤产品的看法:

	1	2	3	4	5

	非常同意	同意	没意见	不同意	非常不同意
1. 使用护肤产品能让一个人看起来年轻					
2. 使用护肤产品能增加一个人的自信					
3. 使用护肤产品能吸引女性的青睐					
我会尝试一些专业的面部护理和身体护理					

8. 你对使用香水的看法:

	1 非常同意	2 同意	3 没意见	4 不同意	5 非常不同意
1. 在不同场合使用不同的香水对一个男人来说非常重要。					
2. 使用香水能增加一个人的自信, 并且更性感。					
3. 使用香水能显示对别人的尊重					
4. 在日常生活, 使用香水对一个人来说非常重要。					

9. 当你购买下列产品的时候, 会参考下列哪一种渠道?

	潮流服饰	护肤产品	香水	奢侈品	电子产品
电视					
杂志					
报纸					

网络					
店面陈列					
亲朋友					
其他					

调查完毕，谢谢合作！

English version of Questionnaire Two

**Survey on readers of men's lifestyle magazines in China**

Hello! My name is Tracy Lee. I am a PhD student of Gender Relations Centre at the Australian National University. My research studies men's lifestyle magazines from both gender and mass media perspectives. This questionnaire targets readers of men's lifestyle magazines in China. I wish to understand the readers' demographics of these magazines and the reasons for them to read these magazines. This questionnaire will take you only about 15 minutes. Thank you very much for your time to fill in this questionnaire for me. Please answer the questions honestly. Your answers will be kept in strict confidence and the results of the survey will be used only for my own academic research. Thank you again for your participation.

**Please put a tick in the appropriate box.**

1. Which of the following term that you would like others to describe you?

- an elite
- a gentleman
- a successful person
- a white collar worker
- a masculine man
- a fashionable man
- a handsome man
- a professional
- other

2. What is your perception of "fashionable man" criteria? (multiple option)

- Is handsome
- Has taste
- Leads a fashionable lifestyle
- Is responsible towards family and society
- Has a successful career
- Has a charming personality

- Is active and enterprising
- Respects and concerns for others
- Is well-cultivated
- Is humorous
- Has a perfect body shape
- Is masculine
- Knows how to dress
- Is knowledgeable

3. Your perceptions of your personal appearance and lifestyle:

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 No comments	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
1. I can have many advantages by having a good appearance in my career and in daily life					
2. Nowadays, men can enjoy shopping grooming and have body shaping just like their female counterparts do.					
3. Materialism is very important in my daily life.					
4. I am an open-minded person and can accept those who have different lifestyles.					

4. Your perception of fashion trend:

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 No comments	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
1. In contemporary society, it is important for a man to look fashionable					
2. I care about the trend of fashion					
3. I would like to be a creator and leader of fashion					
4. A fashionable lifestyle can upgrade the quality of my life					

5. Your perception of using brand products:

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 No comments	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
1. Using a brand product can indicate the taste of a person					
2. I care about the brand name of a product that I buy					
3. Using a brand product can make me confident among my peer group					
4. It is worthy to spend your whole month's salary on purchasing a					

brand product.					
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6. Your perception of using skincare products:

	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 No comments	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
1.Using Skincare products can make someone look young					
2.Using skincare products can increase one's confidence					
3.Using skincare products can attract female attention					
4.I would like to try some professional facial treatments and body treatments					

7. Your perception of using cologne:

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 No comments	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Agree
1. It is necessary for a man to apply different favour of cologne in different situations					
2. Applying cologne can increase					

someone's confidence and let someone be more sexually attractive					
3. Applying cologne is one way to show respect to others					
4. It is very important for a man to apply cologne in his daily life.					

8. Channels through which that you discover the below items ?

	Fashion	Skincare products	Cologne	Luxury products	Electronic products
TV					
Magazines					
Newspaper					
Internet					
Display at shop					
Friends and relatives					
Other					

**Thank you !**



### Appendix 3

The lists of questions were asked during the face-to-face interviews:

1. How long have you been reading men's lifestyle magazines and where do you usually get them?
2. Which magazine(s) do you like best?
3. What are the gratifications you can get by reading them?
4. Why do you read these magazines? Please elaborate.
5. Which part(s) of the magazine do you like best?
6. What is your favourite content in the magazine?

## Appendix 4

The lists of questions were asked during the focus group discussions:

7. How long have you been reading men's lifestyle magazines and where do you usually get them?
8. What's your habit of reading these magazines, i.e, page by page?
9. How often do you read them?
10. What are the gratifications you can get by reading them?
11. Why do you read these magazines?
6. What type(s) of masculinity do you think is being promoted in the magazines?
7. What type of male can be considered masculine now?
8. In your eyes, who is the most masculine?
9. What is different about the masculinity presented in magazines as opposed to reality?
10. Do you guys think that real-life masculinity is not being portrayed in the magazines?
11. How do the male images promoted in the magazines differ from that in the Maoist period?
12. Who are the target audience of these magazines?