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An Exploration of Consumption Strategies of Chinese Homosexuals with Social Stigma

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Abstract

This research investigates what consumption strategies are used by Chinese homosexuals in social places where the stigma of homosexuality exists. This paper includes theories related to social places, gay spaces, legitimate image and social stigma. The findings identify three major categories of social places with significant others. The findings also reveal five consumption strategies that are used by Chinese homosexual in social places. The cultural settings reflect the power distribution of the social spaces while the consumption strategies reflect by Chinese homosexuals' reactions to the significant others and power distribution.

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1. Introduction

Commercialization that targets homosexual consumers has drawn enormous attention in both the academic field and the consumer market. A series of studies have investigated homosexuals' consumption in the last two decades (see examples Browne, 2007; Kates, 2002; Huges, 1997). Most of these studies are from western cultural contexts such as UK, Australia or USA, and these studies largely agree that homosexual consumers are a lucrative market segment, and homosexuals have different consumption pattern compared with heterosexuals.

In China, some local companies are trying to target Chinese homosexual groups (Bao, 2012). The overall Chinese culture is deemed to be more conservative and rejects homosexuals, compared with the western counterparts, since homosexuality greatly conflicts with the traditional Chinese gender image and family values (UNDP & USAID, 2014). Thus, Chinese homosexuals are facing significant stigma at a social level. Also, the Chinese homosexual consumptions do not seem to comply fully with the findings based on studies conducted in the western context. The differences in cultural background and consumptions motivate me to conduct a further study.

This study will explore the consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals when the social stigma of homosexuality exists. This study will start with examining the relevant theories and compare the context of China and western countries. The research question will be formulated at the end of the Literature Review. Methodology part will illustrate how and why the study is conducted. The Findings chapter will present the social places where homosexuals conduct consumption and then present the consumption strategies. Finally, this study will compare the findings and literature review, and purpose managerial implications.

Considering the social situation and consumption strategies of homosexuals are gender-specific, and also due to the higher availability of studies on male homosexuals' consumptions, this study focuses on male homosexuals. In the following text, 'homosexual' refers to male homosexuals, unless further notice.

2. Literature review

This chapter examines the existing literature on consumption strategies deployed by homosexuals when social stigma exists. This review will first look into the theories about social places, gay spaces, image legitimacy, stigma and their influences on consumptions. Then this review will compare the contexts of China with western countries and identify the cultural differences that motivate further studies on the consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals about legitimate man image.

2.1. Social places and social power

2.1.1. Introduction of different social places

People have their social life in social places, and three major categories of social places are identified in the theory of Oldenburg (1998). The first category of places is a home, where people have interaction with family members and relatives. Home is the major place for people experiencing the circle of life. The second place refers to a workplace, in which people conduct career activities and interact with colleagues and business partners. People gain income in the second place to support activities in first and third places.

The third place is other social places where people gather for “*camaraderie*” and have their informal public life to “*supplement and complement home and work routines*” (Oldenburg, 1998, p.11). Third places can be a bar, restaurant or shop, where people frequently visit on a regular basis with a relatively low cost. Unlike first and second places, people face fewer constraints on their individual roles and manners in third places. Third places provide opportunities for people making and meeting friends, providing mutual support and unifying people in the community. The development of third places heavily relies on people’s habituation of gathering. In short, Oldenburg’s theory (1998) identifies three types of places for people to conduct their social activities. Such classification is useful but descriptive, and it cannot fully explain why people conduct a consumption choice instead of alternatives in these social places.

2.1.2. Gay space and social power of the homosexual groups

The third places mainly for homosexual social activities are gay spaces, such as gay clubs, gay bars, and LGBT festivals. Gay space is defined as safe and gay-friendly public places dedicated to the socialization of homosexuals (Browne, 2007). The commercialization of gay space particularly addresses the needs of homosexual gathering, sexuality safety, and sexuality celebration (Markwell & Waitt, 2009; Kates, 2002). Hence, gay spaces are important for fulfilling homosexuals' social life.

The emergence of gay spaces in metropolitan areas reflects the uprising of LGBT groups' social power and their mounting visibility in public domain, according to a number of studies conducted in western countries, such as UK (Huges, 2005; Binnie & Skeggs, 2004), Australia (Markwell & Waitt, 2009; Kates, 2003), Canada (Kates, 2002), Ireland (Browne, 2007), USA (Walters & Moore, 2002), Spain (Melián-González, Moreno-Gil & Araña, 2011). These studies describe a western ideology of homosexual life in which LGBT right is legally protected, and public opinion towards homosexuals is neutral or positive. Such western ideology contrasts China, where LGBT rights are not protected and even cannot be publicly discussed. The existence of gay spaces in western countries demonstrates homosexuals' social power and voices an open challenge to the heterosexual assumption of public space (Pritchard et al., 1998). Together, from studies in the western context, the power dynamic between mainstream and homosexual social sub-group influences the existence of gay space. These studies are illuminating to bring in the concepts of 'power' for explanations of commercialization and social behavior in gay space. However, their cultural background is confined to a western perspective.

2.1.3. Safety zone of a man image

The study of Rinallo (2007) on metrosexual consumption among Italian men reveals the relationship between consumption and image legitimacy in social places. According to his study, a man learns and adjusts his consumption, as well as interprets others' consumption, according to what male images are appropriate or inappropriate in the cultural setting. The set of culturally appropriate images defines the imagined safety zone of the legitimate man images, and outside of the safety zone is the danger zone with

illegitimate, suspicious or risky images. Normally, a man will make consumption for maintaining himself in the safety zone with a legitimate man image.

Based on this conceptual construct of safety zone and danger zone, Rinallo (2007) further argues that in Italy the marketing promotion of men beauty products and image of metrosexual in pop culture are educating men and intruding the safety zone with aesthetic consciousness, blurring the traditional 'tough guy' image. In other words, the boundaries of the safety zone are changed due to the social and cultural power of companies and media.

Rinallo's study on the legitimate image, safety zone, and danger zone is very enlightening for explaining why a consumer makes a consumption choice instead of the alternatives. This study also highlights the importance of the cultural setting for understanding the safety zone and the danger zone of a man image. Nonetheless, his study is based on a unitary social environment and should introduce different social places to elaborate the environmental settings. Furthermore, his theory did not explain the consequence when someone has an illegitimate image.

2.2. Illegitimate image and stigma

2.2.1. Stigma theory

Theory of stigma developed by Link & Phelan (2001) provides important concepts to explain the process and consequence when a person is regarded as illegitimate by others. Stigmatization takes place when significant power imbalance between social groups occurs. In the social process of stigmatization, the powerful groups construct categories of groups based on the differences and associate the differences of the weak group with negative attributes. Then, the powerful groups cognitively separate the weak groups to recognize the powerful groups as superior ones.

At the interpersonal level, the power imbalance between social groups gives members in the powerful groups the dependence to stigmatize the underdog individuals with negative attributes. Also, the stigmatized individuals internalize the negative attributes and

convince that he or she is inferior due to belonging to one social category. Consequently, the stigmatized person may suffer from discrimination, devaluation, deindividuation, individual prejudice and status loss (Link & Phelan, 2001).

2.2.2. Stigma of homosexual image in the danger zone

Compared with the traditional man image that is commonly a rough guy who pays little attention to his appearance, the homosexual image is usually associated with a self-conscious, refined and fashionable image. Such homosexual image deviates from the traditional image and is deemed as feminine and gender-inappropriate for a man; this image suggests the lack of masculinity and power (Brookey, 2000). Hence, a homosexual image is often reckoned as an illegitimate man image in the danger zone. Furthermore, as this homosexual image is easy to be visually identified and spectated from other man images, homosexuals are easy targets to stigmatize.

2.2.3. Homosexuals' responses to stigma

Considering the risk of stigma, it is natural for a man to comply with the personal consumption with the legitimate image in the safety zone to gain approval from the loved ones and significant ones (Rinallo, 2007). Some homosexuals stay in the safety zone to avoid negative sanctions from others. Meanwhile, with the blurred legitimate man image in Italy mentioned previously, some Italian homosexuals play around the boundaries of the safety zone and enjoy more freedom and fun in such 'gay vagueness' (Rinallo, 2007).

2.2.4. Conceptual framework summary

Prior work identifies three categories of social places and gay space which particularly satisfies homosexual's social need. The cultural context shapes the safety zone of a legitimate man image and the stigma of homosexuality in the danger zone. As a result, homosexuals make consumptions based on recognition of a legitimate image and the stigma of homosexuality.

The existing literature also suggests that the social setting is important for understanding the situation. The main body of the studies on gay consumption is limited to a western cultural context. For this study of Chinese homosexuals, it is necessary to identify the cultural differences between China and western culture and speculate the influence of such cultural differences on previous conceptual constructs.

2.3. Chinese context compared with western counterpart

2.3.1. Restricted gay space in China and a different power distribution

For the three categories of social places identified by Oldenburg (1998), it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese have their social activities in approximate three social places. However, compared with second and third places, it is expected that social life at home should be more emphasized due to the long-held family values. Besides, among the third places, gay spaces described in the western literature are largely not available in China. Gay bars and clubs can only be found in major metropolitan areas in China (Bao,2012). Nonetheless, the authorities frequently interfere with these venues and homosexuals are not able to feel secure to carry out regular social activities (Human Rights Watch, 2015, 2014, 2012). Consequently, gay venues in China are not gay space because they fail to be a public place for Chinese homosexuals' regular social and supporting network.

From a broader perspective, the lack of safe gay space in China indicates a different power structure of LGBT groups, compared with the western counterparts. The major elements that contribute the differences are concluded in the chart in Figure 1 and an extensive chart can be found in Appendix A. In both charts, the 'western ideology' refers to a aggregative status quo or a pursuing prospect in countries or regions where LGBT rights are legally protected, drawing data from United Nations, European Union, United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, etc. In comparison, the Chinese government has not released specific plans for LGBT rights, and this paper highlights the current situation of Chinese homosexuals based on the recent reports from United Nations and Human Right Watch (short for 'HRW').

From the chart, though being homosexual is not illegal in China, no laws protect homosexuals from discrimination in any aspect of life (Bao, 2010). More importantly, unlike the western counterparts, Chinese homosexual groups have an inadequate social power to stand out and voice themselves in the public domain under official censorship (UNDP & USAID, 2014). Furthermore, the public opinion holds a negative attitude towards homosexuals. “*Discrimination towards and disapproval from family, relatives and acquaintances of LGBT people remain common as the latter are deemed to have deviated from traditional heteronormative family values*” (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p.11). Hence, Chinese homosexuals are deficient in power and at a much greater disadvantage compared with western counterparts.

	Situation of Chinese homosexuals	Western homosexual ideology
Civil right	Homosexual conduct is decriminalized (HRW, 2011). Laws barely prevent homosexuals from discrimination (HRW, 2012). Public discussion on LGBT rights is largely forbidden (HRW, 2014).	“ <i>LGBTI persons have the same human rights as all individuals, including the rights to nondiscrimination.</i> ” (Council of The European Union, 2013, p3)
Family policy	Same-sex partnership is not legally recognized (HRW, 2015). A man who does not have children is a family disgrace (Neilands Steward & Choi, 2008).	Marriage and civil union between same-sex partners is legally recognized (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003).
Gay activism	Chinese have tight regulation on the NGOs (Reuters, 2015). Homosexual groups lack political alliance (UNDP & USAID, 2014).	LGBT NGOs advocate LGBT rights and support the LGBT community.
Media	Stigmatizing and stereotyping on media homosexuals are common. (UNDP & USAID, 2014) Lack of positive homosexual public figures.	“(Media should) <i>take greater responsibility for negative images and stereotyping</i> ” (Barwick, 2013, p.35). A number of LGBT public figure, such as Tim Cook, Anderson Cooper, Neil Patrick Harris, etc.

Figure 1: The social status of Chinese homosexuals and western homosexual ideology

2.3.2. Clear boundaries of the safety zone of a legitimate Chinese man image

The findings of Rinallo's study (2007) are not completely applicable in the Chinese context. Though the boundaries of the safety zone of legitimate male image do exist, the image of metrosexuals is not embraced by the majority due to the strong Chinese social and historical conventions. Furthermore, in China, gay characters in popular movies or TV series are often portrayed melodramatically 'sissy' or hyper-feminine (Zhang, 2014). These characters stereotype and demonize homosexual image. Hence, the boundaries of a safety zone of consumption for a man in China are relatively clear, and any divergence from traditional masculinity image will be regarded as an illegitimate in China.

2.3.3. Stigma of homosexuality in the danger zone

The significant imbalance of social power between Chinese LGBT groups and the 'mainstream' empowers the heterosexuals to stigmatize. As an embodiment of a stigma of homosexuality, Chinese homosexuals are labeled with negative attributes of 'filthy', 'not normal' and 'unreliable' in China. To start with, the most prominent negative label of homosexuals is filthy, more precisely 'yin-hui', which have multiple meanings in the Chinese context. Explicit homosexual content in the publication is usually considered as 'obscene' and banned by the government. Also, in news reports, homosexuality is often disproportionately associated with the spread of HIV (UNDP & USAID, 2014). Thus, homosexuality also indicates 'unclean'. Furthermore, homosexuality is frequently depicted as having an enormous fascination in sex and multiple sexual partners, and it is against the idea of 'self-restraint' in the Confucian school. Hence, homosexuals are filthy as they are 'morally inferior'.

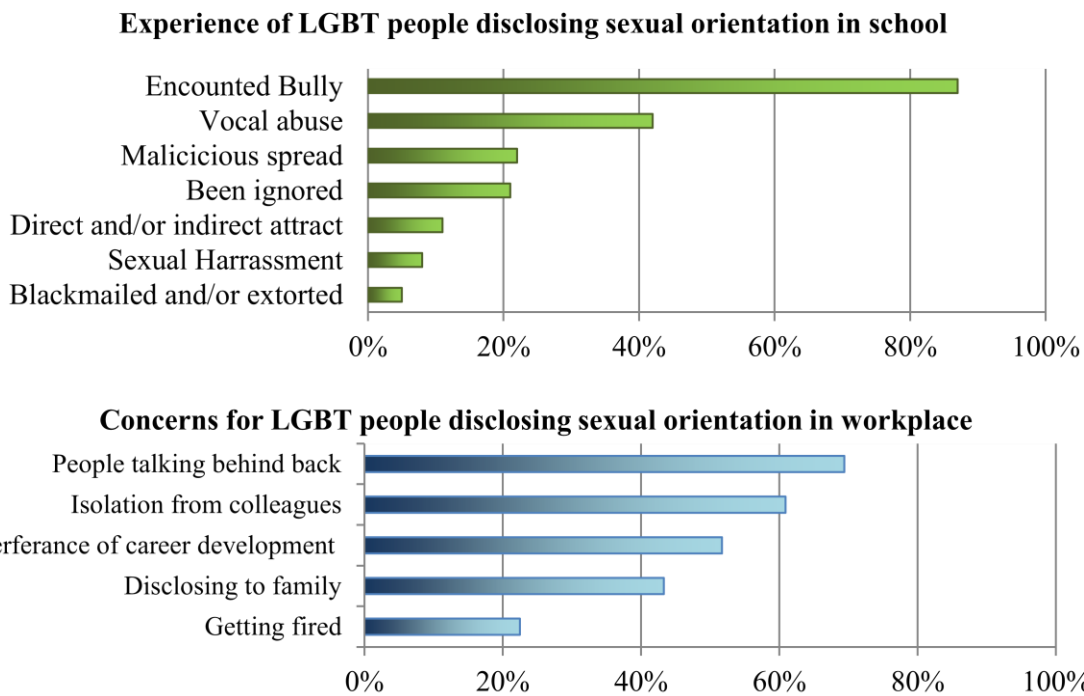
Secondly, homosexuals are labeled 'not normal' in associations with marriage and reproduction. Having their children and expanding family based on kinship relationship are crucial in fulfilling Filial Piety, which is the foundation of the society in the Confucian (Neilands, Steward & Choi, 2008). Homosexuals who cannot have their children are a great rebellion of the long-standing notion of Filial Piety so that homosexuality is 'not normal'.

Furthermore, homosexuals are often reckoned as ‘unreliable’. It is expected that one-third of Chinese homosexuals participate in traditional marriages with heterosexual women under social pressure (Li, 2014). Some married homosexuals even continue to maintain homosexual affairs behind the backs of their wives (Bao, 2012). Such conducts are serious deception and cause great harm to the women. Besides, it is also a public notion that homosexuals are incapable of being good parents (UNDP & USAID, 2014). These phenomena imply that homosexuals cannot truly take responsibility so that they are reckoned to be ‘unreliable’. In conclusion, these negative attributes not only directly refer to the sexual behavior of homosexuals, but also describe homosexuals as morally corrupted and incompetent social groups.

The stigma of homosexuality is also reflected on the negative experience and risk of homosexuals in school and workplace, as shown in Figure 2 on next page. From Mian’s survey (2012) of 421 Chinese LGBT students in senior schools and colleges, 77% of the respondents experienced bullying, and 44% experienced verbal insult from peer students and teachers. In the workplace, according to aibai’s survey (2013) of 2161 LGBT employees, homosexual employees face a number of risks, such as isolation, interference of career development and unwanted disclosure of sexual orientation.

2.3.4. Chinese homosexuals’ responses to stigma

In recognition of the stigma and risk of homosexuality, Chinese homosexuals tend to conceal their homosexuality. Only 6.27% of employees completely disclose their sexual orientation, while 47.62% is completely concealed (aibai, 2013). Other studies (see examples Li, 2014; Neilands, Steward & Choi, 2008) agree on Chinese homosexuals’ high percentage of concealing sexual orientation in the workplace and the family. Chinese homosexuals’ avoidance to be identified is highly likely to influence their consumption strategy for a man image. This speculation in a Chinese context is different from the finding of Rinallo’s study (2007) among Italian men, as he suggests a number of Italian homosexuals are enjoying the gay vagueness and play around the boundaries of safety zone of legitimate man image.



Source: Mian,2012, p6; aibai, 2013, p8

Figure 2: LGBT people in school and workplace

2.4. Summary

To summarize the concepts and contexts, from the literature, the cultural context influences the safety zone of legitimate man image and the stigma of homosexuality. Thus, the cultural context also influences the consumption strategies for one's image in social places. As China is a collectivist society with an emphasis on family values, and Chinese LGBT groups have an inadequate social power, Chinese homosexuals are suffering from strong stigma that are specifically related to the Chinese cultural context. It is likely that Chinese homosexuals deploy different consumption strategies in such context, compared with strategies identified in other countries.

2.5. Research question

So far, limited studies have investigated the homosexual men's consumption strategy regarding image legitimacy and social stigma in a non-western context, especially in a

Chinese context. This gap motivates further study of homosexuals' consumption strategy in a Chinese cultural context. So that the research question for this study is formulated as following:

In a Chinese cultural context, what are the consumption strategies that are deployed by Chinese homosexuals in social places where the homosexual stigma exists?

With this research question, this study will first look into the Chinese social places, where homosexuals have their social life with others, along with the social stigma of homosexuality. Then, this study will investigate what consumption strategies are used under the cultural setting of social places.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research design. As homosexuals' consumption strategy in a Chinese cultural context is under-studied, it is necessary to conduct an exploratory study and conduct inductive reasoning based on empirical data.

3.1. Research strategy: a single case study

This research adopts a single case study and takes consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals in the cultural context as a single case. A single case study is chosen for the following reasons. Primarily, case study captures the both the incident and the environmental setting of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2013). For this study, the comprehension of cultural setting is essential for the researcher to understand and interpret the homosexuals' consumption strategies. Besides, deliberation of samples selection in the case study increases the feasibility of the research and variety of the data. As Chinese homosexuals are reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation, it is unrealistic to access a large number of randomly distributed homosexuals. Hence, it is more practical to focus on a small amount but heterogeneous samples. Last but not least, by focusing on each sample separately, it is easier to unfold the complex process of how

homosexual individuals perceive the cultural environment and make an evaluation of choices. In short, this study uses a single case study and selects a small number of diverse Chinese homosexuals.

3.2. Data collection: in-depth interview

The data collection technique of this study is an in-depth one-on-one interview for following rationales. Firstly, an in-depth interview provides rich primary data (Myer, 2013). This research relies on primary data as no available and suitable secondary data about how Chinese homosexuals consume under the stigma of homosexuality. Secondly, an in-depth interview provides narratives with a vivid description of the situations and thinking from the perspective of consumers (Shankar, Elliott & Fitchett, 2009). These narratives help the researcher to generate an empathic sense of individual understanding.

Thirdly, a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to balance the control and flexibility of the data collection process. On one hand, this study involves collecting data cover several concepts, structured pre-formulated questions help the researcher to control the flow of the interview and keep all the concepts covered (Esterberg, 2002). On the other hand, flexibility for improvisation is essential because the moderator has to lick the cultural assumption beneath the phenomenon (McCracken,1988). Furthermore, a researcher can proactively change the style of the interview to get more authentic information (Chrzanowska, 2002). As homosexuality is a very personal topic, the moderator needs to accommodate the interviewees. Thus, this study uses semi-structure in-depth interviews to collect qualitative data for empirical evidence from real people to create a consumer-centric understanding.

The data collected in case studies is qualitative in nature. Compared with quantitative data, qualitative research is more suitable for studying in-depth and culture-related subjects (Mayer, 2013). In this case, as it is an explorative study, limited pre-defined categories or scales are available to help to develop a quantitative study. The researcher needs to comprehend the consumption in the cultural background and conclude the categories from the qualitative data.

In practice, the informants selected for interviews are seven homosexual men as shown in Figure 3. These informants are selected because of the variety of the age, profession, disclosure degree of sexual orientation. Consent forms and information sheets as shown in the Appendix C and D were sent and signed before the interviews. Regarding confidentiality, the signed consent forms are not included in this report. Interviewees also received the pre-formulated questions, as shown in Appendix B, one week before the interviews. The moderator spent a week to familiarize with and gain trust from the interviewees beforehand. The interviews are recorded and transcript for analysis.

Alias	Age	Any work experience?	Who knows your sexuality?	Profession
Lin	36	Yes	Only two ex-boyfriends	Machinery engineer
Wu	24	Yes	Openly gay	Advertising consultant
Juzi	30	Yes	Only close friends	Unemployed
Rong	33	Yes	Only close friends	IT engineer
Zilu	25	No	Close friends and roommates	Master student
Ryan	26	No	Openly gay	Master student
Yume	21	No	Close friends and roommates	Bachelor student

Figure 3: Information of interviewees

3.3. Data analysis

Data analysis focuses on coding and hermeneutics analysis. Coding helps to retrieve and organize the descriptive data from the whole transcript and develop different categories under the themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Themes can be derived from the literature or the transcript itself (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). For this case, the researcher summarizes and compares the description and terminology of the themes including social place, significant people, legitimate image, stigma of homosexuality and consumption strategies.

In parallel with coding, hermeneutics analysis is used to understand the meaning of the text (Radnitzky, 1970). Consumption strategies are examined in the social places and connected with the significant people, legitimate image, and stigma, as the latter four themes are the carriers and reflections of cultural context. The researcher interprets the consumption in a way that is cohesive with the cultural elements in the social places.

3.4. Ethical concern

The biggest ethical issue in this study is the confidentiality of the interviewees and data, considering homosexuality is a very sensitive and personal topic. A researcher should conduct the research under informed consent from the participants and avoid any physical and psychological harm to them (Bryman and Bell, 2003 & Bryman, 2008). Several techniques are used to ensure the ethical standard of this study. The potential informants in this study are approached by a gay friend of the researcher or an interviewed informant and introduced the study. Thus, only those who are willing to attend the study are contacted by the researcher. Second, the researcher has explained the goal and process of the study, and interviewees have signed the informed consent forms before any data collection. The consent forms notify to how the data is collected, stored and used. Third, alias are used to increase the anonymity of the interviewees. Fourth, recording is only used after interviewees' permission. Finally, the full transcript is not displayed in this study for the confidentiality of the interviewees.

This ethical consideration not only protects the benefits of people involved in this study but also improves the quality of the study. If participants do not feel secure and confident about the study, they may hold back some important information or provide fake information and both cases will damage the quality of the data.

4. Findings

4.1. Important social places

From the interviews, the social places identified by Chinese homosexuals are home, workplace, school, and other public places, including streets, restaurants and gay bars, etc. Social places are important because of the significant others who are physically or psychologically close with homosexuals. These people have the power to define the legitimate man image in a safety zone and stigmatize homosexuals who have illegitimate images.

4.1.1. First place: home

Home is identified as the foremost important place for homosexual consumers. To clarify, according to all informants, ‘home’ refers to their parents’ place instead of their own personal place and their parents are the most significant people. Such reference reflects that home, family and kinship relationship are highly valued in Chinese culture and homosexuals identify with this cultural norm. Furthermore, from this reference, it can be seen that homosexual adults are still psychologically dependent on their parents, though they have left their parents for college or work and started their adult life and, even are financially independent of their parents. This mindset puts homosexuals in a subordinate position in the relationship with their parents and gives parents the power to request their version of a legitimate man image.

At home, the safety zone as a legitimate man image is a straight-looking man who marries a woman before his 30s. From the interview, parents are often described as ‘traditional’ or ‘orthodox’, with few having understanding or experience of homosexuals. They rely on their personal experience to define a man. Their experience in the Maoist period deeply seeded a strong collectivist ideology in their mind, and they believe that being unique or different from the others is concerning. They married at a young age and believe that having more children, especially sons, means more happiness and financial security when they get old. As a result, parents request homosexuals to have the legitimate man image as a guy who looks like other men, gets married and has his child at relatively young age.

Homosexuals are at great risk of being stigmatized by parents if homosexuals are not in the safety zone of legitimate man image at home.

My parents will never say ‘I think you should get married and have a baby’, but rather in an implicit but more demanding way, ‘Mrs. Chen in the office or your aunt just has a grandson, and she looks so happy’. It can be even worse, ‘I truly hope I can see my grandson before I die’. Then I feel bad, but also angry that THEY do not get THEIR grandson.

(Lin, 36 years old)

In this case, Lin, who is not known as gay by his parents, use ‘demanding’ and ‘their grandson’, which indicate the power of his parents and the tension between him and his parents because he is not engaging in conventional heterosexual marriage and having children. Meanwhile, Lin also feels guilty, due to the continuous disappointment from his parents. Third, the use of ‘relative and colleague’ suggests that parents also experience peer pressure, and they are passing this pressure to their son. This also reflects that in Chinese culture, a collectivist society, private matters are observed and discussed in public, and marriage and raising children is not a personal decision but a family matter, in which parents have certain power and authorities. Fourth, this further indicates that homosexuals’ being openly gay in the family is only adding pressure to the parents. This interview illustrates that Chinese homosexuals who do not marry or have children are illegitimate and stigmatized by parents in the social place of home.

4.1.2. Second place: workplace

The workplace is identified as the second most important place for homosexuals who have working experience. Colleagues, especially supervisors are the significant people in this place. Colleagues of young homosexuals are likely to age between 20 and 45 with a certain degree of understanding about homosexuals from media or personal experience.

In the workplace, the legitimate man image is an employee who follows the company dress code and shares his personal life with co-workers.

People expect employees to dress more fashionable in an advertising agency. But if it is in an IT company, people can dress more casually, like T-shirt and jeans, even slippers can be allowed.

(Wu, 24 years old)

According to Wu, the clothing of legitimate man image in workplaces should follow the normative social convention of the company. It demonstrates that the cultural setting within the companies can vary and affect the legitimate image.

An employee also needs to share some personal life with colleagues, as a part of legitimate man image in the workplace.

My colleagues know I am gay, and sometimes they make fun of my sexuality in the agency. It was very annoying, but I pretended it is fine because I don't want to have conflicts with colleagues.

(Wu, 24 years old)

Colleagues will think you are too serious if you only talk about work. If you don't talk about your personal life, people will speculate that you have something horrible to hide and avoid working with you.... If a gossip about you will get around in the company. Your boss will doubt your moral and capability, and he or she can just simply not give you any opportunity. Then you are doomed in the company.

(Juzi, 30 years old)

The two interviews demonstrate that the stigma of homosexuality effects on gay employees, no matter whether he conceals or discloses his sexual orientation in the workplace. The Wu's case shows that an openly gay homosexual employee may face public discrimination and humiliation, and he tolerates for the sake of the relationship with co-works. This also indicates that he has an inadequate power to fight back, and he is afraid of being alienated in the office. In the case of Juzi, sharing personal life is to indicate that he is approachable and to increase the intimacy of the relationship with colleagues. Supervisors have an enormous amount of power and gossip will influence the judgment of the supervisors and affect homosexual employees' career. Both narratives indicate that the Chinese work culture is not purely based on profession and the co-worker relationship in the workplace is crucial. Illegitimate image may create a bad relationship and damage not only the emotion of homosexuals but also their income and career development.

4.1.3. Second place: college

College is identified as the second most important place by homosexuals who have no working experience and are studying in college. As people enter college to gain knowledge for career development, college is classified as a second place as well. In

general, homosexuals feel that college is a friendly place because homosexuals have much power and autonomy in deciding whom and how often they meets in college.

Homosexuals select dormitory roommates as significant others because roommates are the people that homosexuals most frequently interact with in college life. To clarify, the conventional Chinese dormitory is designed as a room shared by 4 to 6 same-sex people. With no divisions, each room is a very compact and open area with a limited place and privacy. Most of the college students choose this accommodation because of its low fees and the convenience to live on the campus. Roommates are randomly assigned by the school, and they commonly live together throughout the whole period of education. In other words, homosexual bachelor students live with randomly-selected roommates for at least four years. The closeness between homosexuals and their roommates makes roommates significant people for homosexual college students.

College including dormitory is a friendly environment for homosexual people, and the legitimate appearance is an average straight-looking guy. The young generation has more understanding about homosexuals, and they are more tolerant to variety. Besides, sexual activities in the dormitory barely take place due to the limited privacy. Furthermore, the relationships between students have few benefits of conflict. Hence, people do not care much if a man is gay or not in the dormitory and college in most cases unless it is extremely visually apparent.

4.1.4. Third place: other public places, including non-gay spaces and gay spaces

Apart from home, workplace and college, other public areas such as restaurants, cinemas and streets are also mentioned by the informants.

When I am in a common public area, like walking on a street, I don't care about strangers. They are not people who pay me or raised me. But it's hard to ensure the intimate behavior with my boyfriend not to be seen by an acquaintance. That is the real problem

(Zilu, 25 years old)

From the interview, regarding non-gay space, homosexuals do not worry about being identified as homosexuals by strangers, as homosexuals do not have crucial relationships with these strangers or need their approval. However, Chinese homosexuals do have concerns of encountering family, relatives and colleagues in public areas. Hence, they will try to maintain a common legitimate man image in non-gay public space in case of meeting people from first and second place.

Some interviewees also mentioned gay bars and nightclubs.

I have been to a gay bar and nightclubs like five times. I mean those kinds of place are not really for me. People go there to hook up with strangers for a one-night stand. It is risky, and I might get diseases. If I truly need casual sex, I can just find someone on the APP.

(Ryan, 26 years old)

According to Ryan, visiting gay venues is reckoned as predominantly for casual sex, instead of gathering with gay friends regularly. ‘That kind of place’ shows the interviewees distant himself from the gay venues and not perceived gay venues as a decent place for social life. Thus, gay venues are stigmatized by the Chinese homosexuals. It is also noteworthy that, according to the interviewees, young Chinese homosexuals heavily depend on the virtual social network to communicate with other homosexuals. They, in fact, more depend on the exclusive communication channel to find the same kind, instead of going to gay venues.

In a conclusion of three types of social places, Chinese homosexual particularly focus on social activities in first and second places, especially home and workplace, and third place is less significant according to the interviews. Gay venues in China do not function as a regular social place for homosexuals. Specifically, for first and second places, Chinese homosexuals recognize the parents and colleague as significant people and need to maintain a good relationship with them. The legitimate man image in the safety zone is clear, and the image can include the appearance and participation in certain social activities depends on the social places. Stigma occurs when Chinese homosexuals fail to

align with the legitimate image and homosexuals can be stigmatized without declaring homosexual orientation.

4.2. Consumption strategies

Based on the social places, significant others and risk of a stigma, the homosexuals evaluate the consequence and develop consumption strategy for their personal image. The following section presents the five major strategies identified from the interviews.

4.2.1. Conformity

The most common consumption strategy is conformity, which means homosexual proactively use consumption to comply with the legitimate image. This strategy usually involves internalization of the legitimate image, believing ‘this is who I am or who I am going to be’. This strategy is commonly used in the selection of appearance to fit in with the masculine man image.

Wearing brightly colorful clothes screams ‘G-A-Y’. That is too sissy for a man and nobody like that, not even gays. I dress like a normal guy, those straight masculine guys... at least I try to. I would say most gay agree that sport-type guys are the most popular ones; even bottoms try to look masculine to attract tops.

(Yume, 21 years old)

Yume suggests that the essence of the conformity strategy is to highlight the masculinity. Saying ‘nobody like that’, Rong recognize the risk of compromising the masculinity - being socially excluded or disfavored. The mentioned ‘wearing colorful clothes’ is typical for melodramatic and feminine homosexual characters in the TV series and movies and it is interesting that homosexuals also suggest that such consumption is illegitimate and too extreme. Such exaggerated and misrepresented homosexual image in the cultural context have great practical meaning to help homosexuals avoid being identified as homosexual in their lives. In short, homosexuals with conformity

consumption strategy comply with the legitimate masculine image and pursuit masculinity to increase his attraction and affection from others.

4.2.2. Escaping, silence or lying

When compliance with a legitimate image is difficult or impossible, homosexuals may focus on using consumption to avoid being associated with the illegitimate image by escaping, being silent, and even lying. This strategy is more commonly used when more powerful people are also in the social place, and homosexuals are in a passive position.

My boss, colleagues, and clients went to karaoke. All of us are men. After some alcohol and happily drunk, my boss ordered soft sexual service to show some good intentions and close the deal with the clients. Of course, nobody wants to come out in that situation or get fired for that. So I pretended to smile, mouth shut and did what other men did... I was a salesman before, and that happened a lot.

(Lin, 36 years old)

Lin demonstrates a situation with strong pressure in the workplace. It happened in a confined area with the presence of boss and clients who are very important for his career. In this situation, the homosexuals faced peer pressure to ‘socialize’ as a man and the pressure from the supervisor at the risk of losing the job. Though sexual service is in the gray area under Chinese law, it is not rare in business settings. The purpose to have this kind of consumption is to increase social bonds and it can be interpreted as ‘we are all in the same boat’. This scenario hints again that the workplace can be a very relationship-based environment. Similar consumption situations could be a big family reunion dinner in a restaurant with relatives and topics are all about children, study, salary, marriage and having babies. Homosexuals can escape by not attending these social consumptions however they risk being regarded as arrogant and rude. Thus, their relationship with significant others will be damaged and potentially incur benefits loss. He can also attend these social consumptions and be silent or tell lies to maintain the relationship with significant others, and then he will physically or emotionally suffer. Summarily, homosexuals use this consumption strategy when they need to make a choice between the

long-term relationship with the significant others and short-term personal benefits and feelings.

4.2.3. Compensating

Homosexuals can also directly conduct consumptions to maintain a good relationship with the significant others. This strategy is more commonly used at home or in the workplace.

My parents want my marriage more than anything else, but I cannot. So I will buy them some delicious food that they can't often enjoy, that is what I can afford now. In the future, I may buy them medical insurance. I really wish them to have a happy retired life.

(Lin, 36 years old)

It is natural for children to love their parents and buy them gifts, however, in this case, consumptions of food and insurance is not simply out of goodness but more driven by his self-awareness of his illegitimate image. A similar case is that homosexual employees buy gifts to colleagues in the workplace, which also implies that homosexuals respect how the power is distributed among co-workers, including supervisors. Both scenarios hint that homosexuals are afraid of potential alienation or frustration of significant others and try to alleviate this concern by compensation in terms of buying gifts to significant others.

4.2.4. Borrowing the practices and power from other cultural forces

In some cases, a homosexual admit that he has an illegitimate image but he also argues for the legitimacy via their consumption by using practices and powers from other cultural forces. This strategy includes more negation of the cultural setting in the social places and is often used when it involves discussion of marriage.

I mean it is not 1960s any more. It is not easy for any man to find the one he loves and also appropriate to marry. I mean a man needs a house and a car first to be qualified to marrying anyone. That's why I don't buy a house or a car.

(Juzi, 30 years old)

In this case, Juzi makes consumption decision (not to buy a house or a car) to legitimize his suspicious image (remaining single at his 30). In another case, a homosexual, Lin (36 years old), buys luxury things and claims that he remains single because he does not want to compromise his life quality after getting marriage and having a child.

Though, as mentioned, interviewees agree that being single over 30 is a suspicious man image, but homosexual use this strategy claims that it is not his fault to be single due to social changes. For example, in last three decades, women have greatly raised their expectation when they are looking for husbands. Another example could be the increasing number of young people attend higher education and put off their expected age to get married. Homosexuals need to capture social changes and makes consumption decisions to make his suspicious image seem legitimate. With this strategy, what is important is his argument with his consumption practice to convince others about his legitimacy, instead of what consumption object he buys or not buys. This consumption strategy is used in home and workplace but more common in the workplace, because parents are more likely to counter-argue, and they are more resistant to social changes compared with colleagues.

4.2.5. Open and honest

Last strategy is to conduct consumption that is regarded typically homosexual and illegitimate for a man.

My friends and siblings know that I am gay. I am very honest about it ... That does not mean I wear a rainbow every day. I have a common guy wardrobe with only one or two gay pieces. Like a pink suit jacket...OK, even that sounds gay... I wear it occasionally. I know that it is like having neon says 'gay' on my head, but I am tired to make sure everyone is happy but me.

(Wu, 24 years old)

With this strategy, homosexuals are aware that some of his consumption could be reckoned as illegitimate, yet they more values on their personal feelings instead of the

relationship with significant others. This strategy is also used when homosexuals are not afraid to be recognized as gay in places, and it is rare at home and workplace, but more common in college and third places. As Wu has been made fun in the workplace, homosexuals who do not have much power may feel vulnerable with this strategy. This strategy is also used when homosexual goes to gay bars or nightclubs. In all, this strategy is not commonly used because it is risky to expose sexual orientation, especially at home and workplace where the stigma of homosexual is distinctive.

4.3. Summary

Based on the interviews, this chapter reveals following findings. The legitimate man image requires homosexuals not only to look like a straight masculine guy, but also to participate in certain social interactions and fulfill a specific role at home and in the workplace. Homosexuals need to use consumption to negotiate the embedded legitimate man image and the stigma of homosexuality with significant others. Five strategies are identified regarding how homosexuals use consumption to negotiate image. Homosexuals deploy consumption strategies, according to different situations of their social life. The following Figure 4 includes the common social places, images and strategies.

Places and images Strategy	First Place		Second Place			Third Place	
	Home		Workplace		School	Non-gay space	Gay space
	Look	Role	Look	Role	Look	Look	Look
Conformity	√		√		√	√	√
Escaping, silence or lying		√		√			
Compensation		√		√			
Borrowing cultural practices		√					
Open and honest					√	√	√

Figure 4: Legitimate image in different places and consumption strategies

The first strategy is to use consumption to comply himself with the legitimate man image by purchasing products that highlight masculinity. The second strategy is when others consume for social bonding and their legitimacy, homosexuals choose to suffer passively in terms of escaping, being silent or lying to avoid being identified as homosexual and illegitimate as a man. The third strategy is to purchase gifts to compensate relationships

with the significant others due to homosexuality's illegitimate image. The fourth strategy is to make consumption decisions to borrow social power from on-going social changes to argue legitimacy for his image. The fifth strategy is homosexuals choose to display his illegitimate image with consumptions.

5. Discussion

This chapter addresses the empirical findings of consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals in the light of the relevant theories. At the end of this chapter is the answer to the research question.

5.1. Social places and social power

5.1.1. Three social places, gay spaces, and social power

The theory of Oldenburg (1998) classified three categories of places for people's social life and the findings of this study agree and extend the theory. Chinese homosexuals have their social life in first, second and third places. More specifically, Chinese homosexuals think highly of social life in the first and second places and pay less attention to third places which should be the main social places for informal social life. Such preference of Chinese homosexual relates to the Chinese social norm which emphasis of tradition, social order, and collectivism. Thus, Chinese cultural context does influence homosexuals in terms of their emphasis on social places.

Besides, the finding of gay space as a third space also agrees that people's habitation is important for developing the third places, suggested by Oldenburg's (1998). Chinese homosexuals do not go to gay venues regularly for gathering, and this explains why few regular social activities and connection are perceived in the gay venues. The findings also illustrate that the development of social media and people's reliance on virtual interaction prevent Chinese homosexuals from establishing informal social relationships in third places.

5.1.2. Significant others, their social power, legitimate image and stigma

This study also identifies that in a social place, certain people are more important than others, such as parents at home, supervisors in the workplace. At a glance, they are significant because they are close to homosexuals and homosexuals benefit from a good relationship with them. At a deeper level, these people gain their significance because they have more social power than others in the place. Their social power may come from social conventions or norms such as filial piety or hierarchy. In contrast, homosexuals are the younger people who have little social capital and power. By entering the social space, homosexuals are forced to recognize the importance of significant people. Furthermore, since the maintaining social order and hierarchy are valued at home and workplace in China, Chinese homosexuals face strong peer pressure when they try to challenge the powerful significant others. Thus, we can see that social activities are interactions of the power of different people in social places. Further, due to the power distribution in the social place, significant others dominate the place and the social relationship with the homosexuals.

Rinallo's (2007) concepts of 'safety zone' with legitimate image and 'danger zone' are the backbones of the theoretical construct of this study. This study have developed a lot from his study. Legitimate man images are not limited to physical appearance, as presented in Rinallo's study, and legitimate images also include social roles, which indicate engagement to specific social activity with others. More importantly Rinallo presents a one-way monolog for a man to claims the legitimacy in a place while this study presents a more like a two-way dialog with significant others in different social places, though this study focus on the side of homosexuals in the dialog.

Regarding Link & Phelan's (2001) theory of stigma, findings identify the social process of stigmatization and personal suffering from stigma in China. The negative labels and personal suffering mentioned by interviewees are in line with reports of Li (2014), Bao (2012). What is not revealed in the literature is that significant people in the social space have great power in deciding who and how to stigmatize.

Based on what mentioned above, it can be concluded that cultural context matters. Cultural context matters not in a way that limited to what is accepted by the majority of the society at a macro level, but rather in terms of what cultural elements from the macro cultural context are deliberately selected and re-organized by significant people to create a micro cultural context in a particular social place. As it can be seen, for both parents and supervisors in the Chinese context, different cultural elements are emphasized, and different stigma is used between home and workplace. Further, it is this micro cultural context that truly defines the legitimate man image and stigma of homosexuality. Homosexual image is reckoned as an illegitimate image and stigmatized because it does not fit with micro cultural contexts dominated by significant others in those particular social places. Illegitimacy in significant people's eye is what is indeed creating tension between homosexuals and significant others and influences their relationship. Thus, the Chinese cultural context does not directly stigmatize homosexuals in social places, but the significant others who have the power to rule the social places, use the cultural elements from the macro context to stigmatize homosexual in the social place at a micro level.

5.2. Consumption strategies in social places

Rinallo (2007) largely concludes the consumption strategies into either to stick with the legitimate image in the safety zone or play around the boundaries of the safety zone due to the 'gay vagueness' in the society. The five strategies and the cultural power perspective in this study greatly supplement his study.

If we take the cultural context as a camouflage of the power distribution, consumptions strategies in social place are homosexuals' approaches to displaying and negotiating social power with others in the social place. The conformity consumption strategy is the most common strategy that uses consumption to show submission to the power of significant others. This is a fundamental way to gain legitimacy in the social place, and it is commonly used in all three social places. For those using the escape, silence or lying strategy, they are not willing to submit to powerful ones at the same time they do not

have much power to overturn the domination of significant people. Hence, homosexuals are either accumulating tension in the relationship with significant people or suffering from discordances between what they want and what they do. As parents and supervisor are very powerful, homosexuals use this strategy at home or workplace. In the same social places, homosexuals with compensating strategy choose to submit explicitly to the powerful people or the current power distribution by buying them gifts.

With the fourth consumption strategy, homosexuals make consumption choices to borrow social power from other social practices and forces. The goal is to change the cultural power distribution in the space. However, this strategy will not guarantee success and has its risk. The last strategy is to be open and honest and use consumption to signal his homosexual identity. It means the individuals' indifference of the power domination of the significant others and it actually may place homosexuals in a vulnerable position in the social spaces. For college and third place, where significant others absent or not so powerful, homosexuals are more likely to be use consumption to signal certain degree of the homosexuality at his will.

Based on all the discussion above, the following is the answer to the research question of "in a Chinese cultural context, what are the consumption strategies that are deployed by Chinese homosexuals in social places where the homosexual stigma exists?"

The consumption strategies of Chinese homosexual reflect Chinese homosexuals' reactions to the power distribution of the social space in which significant others dominate and define the legitimate image and cultural stigma. Five major consumption strategies are deployed by Chinese homosexuals. (1) Conformity is usually used by Chinese homosexuals for physical appearance. (2) Escaping, silence or lying are often used at home and workplace where parents and supervisor have significantly more social power and dominate the social spaces. (3) Chinese homosexuals also buy presents as a way to compensate the significant others due to homosexuals' illegitimacy image. (4) In situations particularly involving marriage, Chinese homosexuals will conduct consumption to borrow social power from other forces. (5) The last strategy is to be open

and honest and conduct consumption that signals its illegitimate image. It can be used in any social places though it may increase individual vulnerability.

6. Managerial implications

In terms of managerial implications, this study has pointed out that homosexuals conduct their consumption in different situations. The most common cases are that homosexual use consumption to comply with a legitimate man image and avoid social stigma. Thus, for a business that targets homosexuals, offerings should highlight the masculinity rather than the feminine or gay aspect of homosexuality. This may sound bit contradictory. However, as there is a strong stigma of homosexuality at home and in the workplace, the gayness of the offering will only limit the social situation where a homosexual can use the offering.

Companies should also be aware of that homosexual consumers will consider the reaction of significant others when they select offerings. For example, when a gay consumer buys a gift for his parents, he will likely to prefer products with the package with an image of family of three, instead of two elder citizen image because with the former package can reminds his parents of his legitimacy at home.

7. Limitations and further researches

The researcher faced several challenges during the process. Primarily, the sample size is small. As homosexual is still a sensitive and personal topic, not many homosexuals are willing to participate in the study. Some social places and strategies are only mentioned once or by one interviewee, and these places and strategies are not shown in the report due to lack of thorough understanding. With more samples, this problem can be solved. Second, the interviews were conducted in English which might limit the expression of interviewees. To partly solve the problem, the questions lists were sent to interviewees one week before the interviews so that the interviewees had time to prepare.

Another limitation is that this study is specific to male homosexuals in China. The social situation is different for female homosexuals. For example, at home women are not as equal as men. Hence, female homosexuals may face less stigma and pressure in the first place and react to their parents differently when compared with homosexual men. Hence, female homosexuals' consumption strategies can be studied in the future studies.

The biggest limitation of this study is that the significant others are not well-studied in the research. From the finding and the discussion, homosexual conduct these consumptions in a social context, where the perspective of homosexuals is one aspect, and the perspective of significant others is the other important aspect. Only put two parts together can we see the full negotiation in the social places. However, it is not very feasible to put homosexuals and significant others into the one study because it there is a high risk of exposure of sexual orientation. Also, there are difficulties in collecting authentic and detailed information when the interviewees have a close relationship and benefit of conflicts. Further study may explore how the significant others perceive the social place and react to the consumption strategies of homosexuals in social place.

8. Conclusion

This study looks into the consumption strategies that Chinese homosexuals use in the social place where the stigma of homosexuality exists. Based on the literature and the empirical data, five consumption strategies are identified, including (1) conformity, (2) escaping, silence or lying, (3) compensating, (4) borrowing cultural practices, and (5) open and honest. These strategies are mainly used in three types of social places, including (1) home (2) workplace for employees or college for college students (3) other non-gay and gay spaces. Home and workplace are particularly important and sensitive place for Chinese homosexuals. The use of different strategies depends on the power distribution of the social place, especially the power of the significant people.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Comparison of the social structure between Chinese homosexual and western ideology

	Chinese homosexual	Western homosexual ideology
Similarity	<p>Homosexual conduct is decriminalized by the authorities in 1997 (Human Rights Watch, 2011).</p> <p>Homosexual is not classified as a mental illness in 2001 (Human Rights Watch, 2011).</p>	
Authority attitude	<p>The authorities officially admit homosexual people exist in China but are largely silent on LGBT issues (UNDP & USAID,2014).</p> <p>Three Nos” policy – “not encouraging, not discouraging, not promoting” attitude (Mountford, 2009)</p>	<p><i>“LGBTI persons have the same rights as all other individuals...cultural, traditional or religious values cannot be invoked to justify any form of discrimination, including discrimination against LGBTI persons”</i> (Council of The European Union, 2013, p1)</p>
Authority engagement	<p>The authority have constrained freedom of expression, assembly and association (Human Rights Watch, 2014).</p> <p>Political conversation is under authority surveillance and authority can and will silence a public discussion on sexual orientation and LGBT rights (Human Rights Watch, 2005).</p> <p>Police raid and harass gay venues periodically (Human Rights Watch, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2011).</p> <p>First Gay Pride Festival experienced police interfere and LGBT pride organizer were arrested for organizing ‘illegal parade’ ((Human Rights Watch, 2014; Australia Network News, 2009).</p>	<p><i>“(Authorities) promote and protect the human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation”</i>(United Nations, 2003)</p> <p>Continuums public debates on LGBT rights are allowed by government (Pew Research Center, 2013b)</p> <p>Authorities permit even partially fund LGBT parades and festivals (Markwell & Waitt 2009).</p>
Law	<p>There is no legal protection for homosexual from discrimination in various aspect education, employment, housing, etc. (Human</p>	<p><i>“LGBTI persons have the same human rights as all individuals, including the rights to nondiscrimination.”</i> (Council of</p>

	Rights Watch,2012; Human Rights Watch,2015).	The European Union, 2013, p3)
Sex education and knowledge	Sex education is inadequate and largely absent in school and when it is available, it focuses on the heterosexual framework (UNDP & USAID,2014; Communitybusiness,2013).	“(Sexuality education seek) to contribute to a social climate that is tolerant, open and respectful towards sexuality, various lifestyles, attitudes and values.” (WHO, 2010)
Marriage	Same-sex relationship or partnership is not legally recognized (Human Rights Watch,2014; Human Rights Watch,2015). Legal marriage is necessary before having a baby, otherwise the parents will face fines or the baby will have difficulty to be documented and have a valid identity as a Chinese citizen (Communitybusiness, 2013).	Marriage and civil union between same-sex partners are legally recognized (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003).
Reproduction, adoption, and parenting	Reproduction is regarded as social contribution and responsibility (Xu et al., 2007). Homosexuals are not only avoiding the responsibility but also wasting the resources for others achieving their responsibility. To have descendent is deemed as “ <i>basic familial duties of a son.</i> ” (Neilands, Steward & Choi, 2008,p839). An adult who has no descendants is a great disrespect to his/her parents. Also, the one-child policy increases the moral burden of children (who do not have their own child) to their parents. (Neilands, Steward & Choi, 2008,Communitybusiness,2013). Surrogacy is not legal and adoption are only available for heterosexual couples (Li, 2014).	Homosexual partners have legal rights for adoption and parenting and homosexual parents are not regarded as inferior parents (Short, et al., 2007).
Collectivism / Individualism	Collectivism: It is not good to be different from others. There is no clear line between private and public matter,	Individualism: There is a distinction between the public sphere and private life (Goodman, 1992). People have a

	it is normal to discuss others' private issues in the public (Earley, 1989). A personal choice is associated with family honor or scandal for the whole family (Earley, 1989).	tendency not to discuss private matters in a public situation (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006).
Social acceptance of gay	“ <i>Public opinion regarding sexual orientation and gender identity remains predominantly negative today</i> ” (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p27). Low acceptance towards homosexual people (Pew Research Center, 2013)	High acceptance towards homosexual people (Pew Research Center, 2013)
Media	News reports imply homosexuality is the cause of crimes.(Li, 2014b) Stigmatizing and stereotyping homosexual is common on the public media (UNDP & USAID, 2014).	“(Media should) <i>take greater responsibility for negative images and stereotyping</i> ” (Barwick, 2013, p.35).
Previous Civil rights movement experience	Chinese do not have many successful cases relating to the civil rights movement for reference.	There are successful and inspiring experiences, such as Stonewall riots of 1969, legalization of same-sex marriage in New York in 2011.
Political allies	Homosexual groups lack of alliance, even “ <i>the lesbian and transgender movements developed somewhat independently</i> ” (UNDP & USAID,2014,p12).	Allied with other social minorities in the social movement, like the “Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM)” supported the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) during UK miners’ strike of between 1984 and 1985 (Goodspeed, 2014).
LGBT NGOs and CSOs	Chinese have tight regulation on the NGOs (Reuters,2015) LGBT NGOs were asked to move by the landlord due the ‘sensitivity’ (Human Rights Watch,2014).	A lot of NGOs that advocate LGBT rights and support the LGBT community.
Positive public figure	Lack of positive homosexual figures.	A number of LGBT public figure, such as Tim Cook, Anderson Cooper, Neil Patrick Harris, etc.

Appendix B: Interview questions

Part 1: Basic information

Q1: What is your name or alias?

Q2: Could you please tell me, how old are you and how long have you lived in China and which city have you lived in?

Q3: What is your occupation, if you are working?

Q4: Are you in the closet? Does anyone know your sexual orientation?

Part 2: situations that homosexual orientation makes a difference

Q5: Could you please list situations where you will particularly aware your sexuality? In other words, what are situations that you particularly notice your sexuality and adjust your behavior or what you say?

Q6: Who are the important people in these situation? Why they are important to you?

Q7: Do these people know that your homosexuality?

Part3: What is appropriate and what is not appropriate

According to major situations mentioned by the Part 2, the following questions will be adjusted and asked based on different situations.

Q8: How many people are there in this situation? Please give a brief introduction of the members.

Q9: Please describe the relationship with them. And how often do you contact them?

Q10: What are the major activities do you do with them?

Q11: How do you tell if a man is homosexual or heterosexual in this situation? And how confident you are about your judgment?

Q12: Have you participated consumption with them or for them? If you have, please describe the scenario.

Q13: Do you know any gay people in this situation? If you do, please describe him.

Q14: Is there any behavior, especially consumption that is gay or suspiciously gay?

Q15: What is the possible outcome if someone is openly gay or suspected as gay in this situation?

Appendix C: Information sheet

NHH

Name of Researcher: Jiawei Li

Research topic: consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals



Information Sheet

Hello, I am Jiawei Li. Thank you for your interest of this study. This study is to investigate the consumption strategies of homosexual regarding what is appropriate and what is not appropriate in different social situations.

For your participation, there are following things need to be clarified. (1) There will be an anonymous interview in this study. (2) Your participation is purely out of voluntarily. (3) You can terminate the interview at any point without any reason.

I sincerely thank you for your participation.

Appendix D: Consent form

NHH

Name of Researcher: Jiawei Li

Research topic: consumption strategies of Chinese homosexuals



Consent Form

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask question and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand the information I given by me can be only used under the consent of me and the researcher.

4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, article or presentation.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature