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**Advertising in China and the  
representation of women and of  
the LGBTQ+ community**

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# ADVERTISING IN CHINA AND THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

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## INTRODUCTION

The cultural portrayal of gender in modern Chinese advertising and marketing practices is the first topic of this thesis. In this dissertation, we describe and analyze how gendered meanings are formed and encoded, and how this process contributes to the discursive production of femininity and masculinity in the sociocultural context of China. We do this by combining content analysis and cultural studies.

The LGBTQ+ community and its representation in Chinese advertising is the second topic of this thesis. We first describe the discrimination that this community may face in China, and then we focus on the pink economy, that refer to businesses serving the lesbian and gay communities.

After an historical overview of the birth of advertising, I introduce advertising for different categories of products, like cars and motorcycles, households and appliances, body care and cleansing products, the clothings, ecc.. Then I focused on the history of advertising in China, that originated around 1840, after the first Opium War, when the Unequal Treaties imposed a commercial flow of goods and capital to the exclusive advantage of Western powers.

Advertising in China went through several difficult periods, In 1949, for example, with the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party and especially during the period of the Cultural Revolution, advertising stopped its evolution in China as it represented at the time the maximum expression of the capitalist economic and cultural system, a system that the Communist Party considered illegitimate (Palumbo, 2014).

Today advertising in China is not just about national products; major global brands and multinationals have also entered the Chinese market and have relied on advertising to achieve greater success.

In the second chapter, I then looked at the role of women in Chinese society and how they are represented in newspapers and advertisements. In the first documented study ever done about the role of women as portrayed by advertisements, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971), observed that only 9% of the women represented in the advertisements were portrayed in working roles, compared to 45% of the men depicted in the advertisements. Moreover, this study further concluded that advertisements published in the 1970s characterized women as being dependent on men, as not making important decisions, as having a place only in the home, and as being regarded primarily as sex objects. Over the next two decades or so, other several studies were conducted using the same methodology (Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976;

Busby and Leighty, 1993; Kerin et al., 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Pingree et al., 1976; Sexton and Haberman, 1974; Venkatesan and Losco, 1975; Wagnet and Banos, 1973). A general conclusion derived from these studies is that the same stereotyping in the portrayals of women continued during the 1970s, however, from the 1980s to the 1990s, the portrayal of women as subordinate to men decreased somewhat, but their portrayal as alluring sex objects increased. In addition to television commercials, it is possible to observe the role of women in television news. For the people, television news is a source of information, therefore, the frequency and intensity of the presence of the woman, selections of female topics, the point of view of broadcast on television news likely influence the opinions in society. Unlike most private television media in Western countries, Chinese television media mostly present information to the public following the official points of view of the State: The government designates the media as its route of dissemination, and they carry out this role by directing the public to the declared information. In this way the media have helped the government disseminate policies and rules for ensure that women have equal rights to men in the political sector, economic, cultural, social, and family life. Currently the frequency of presence of women in the news has increased, women's voices are heard, clearer and louder. However, in fact, the woman still represents the weak and marginal part, they do not have many speaking rights in the television news. In the last part of chapter two, I presented concrete examples of stereotypical images of women in the media. A striking example is the advertisement aired by Audi in 2017 which encourages viewers to visit a website selling “Audi-approved” secondhand cars. In the advertisement a bride is literally mistaken for a used car and is inspected to see if it is in good conditions.

In the third chapter I dealt with the topic of sexuality in China and same-sex eroticism. Referring to the results of a nationwide survey conducted between 1999 and 2000 by the Research Institute of Sexuality and Gender of Renmin University in Beijing, Pan Suiming speaks of a real sexual revolution taking place among the urban classes of contemporary China, especially among the youngest (Jeffreys, 2006, pp. 21-42). Then I defined the term Tongzhi, commonly used in China to designate the homosexual, and the LGBTQ+ community in China. China is home to one of the world’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities. In China, the LGBT community remains largely invisible in society, and its members consistently report experiencing barriers in their lives. It was only in 2001 that the Chinese Society of Psychiatry declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Despite this reconsideration, the Chinese Society of Psychiatry maintains that people could be conflicted or suffering from mental illness because of their sexuality, and

that condition could be treated (Jun, 2017, p.37). Due in large part to developments like the Internet's widespread use and HIV prevention programs, the LGBT community is today significantly more united than it was in the past. Many LGBT people are no longer as completely alone as they once were because of the Internet's widespread use and the option for anonymous expression it provides.

In chapter four, I analysed the phenomenon of the pink economy, how it originated, and how it developed in the United States, and then presented its evolution in the Chinese market. According to Geng Le's statements, BlueD CEO and founder, the pink yuan is strong and confident, ready to conquer China:

“The consumer power of the gay community is robust, but it has always been neglected... We want to tell people that the pink economy is very strong.” (Campbell, 2017)

Finally, I proposed some examples of pink market advertising in China, like the one published during the eve of the Spring Festival, in 2017 by BlueD. It is a 3-minute 只用生活来回应 Zhǐ yòng shēnghuó lái huíyīng ( "Just Respond with Life") brand image promotion video that represented four homosexual boys who, for cultural reasons, are forced to keep their homosexuality a secret and their development was depicted in this short film. BlueD clarified that there is a firm yet kind power behind the slogan "Just respond with life." This is not just a person's outlook on life, but also how "minorities" interact and converse with the majority.

## 前言

本论文的主题是现代中国电视广告中的性别文化形象。论文描述并分析了性别意义是如何形成和编码的，以及这一过程是如何在中国的社会文化背景下对女性气质和男性气质进行话语生产的。本研究通过将内容分析与文化研究相结合来实现这一目标。

LGBTQ+ 群体及其在中国广告中的表现是本论文的第二个主题。它描述了这一群体在中国必须面对的歧视，然后具体谈到了粉红经济，即服务于女同性恋和男同性恋群体的企业。本毕业论文分为四个主要的部分。

根据 Arcangeli (2015 年) 的说法，关于广告传播的正式出生日期，主要有两种观点：第一种观点认为，广告史应遵循城市化的历史；第二种观点认为，在活字印刷术发明、工业发展和相对大规模生产开始之前，我们不能谈论广告。广告的数量在 18 世纪末开始上升。在概述了广告诞生的历史之后，我介绍了各种广告流派，如汽车和摩托车流派、家居和电器流派、身体护理和清洁用品市场流派、服装流派等。然后，我重点介绍了中国的广告史，它起源于 1840 年左右，即第一次鸦片战争之后，当时的《不平等条约》强加了对西方列强有利的商品和资本的商业流通。广告在中国经历了几个困难时期，例如，1949 年，随着中国共产党的上台，特别是在文化大革命期间，广告在中国停止了发展，因为它在当时代表了资本主义经济和文化体系的最大表现形式，而共产党认为这一体系是非法的 (Palumbo, 2014 年)。

在第二章中，我探讨了妇女在中国社会中的角色以及她们在报纸和广告中的形象。Courtney 和 Lockeretz (1971 年) 首次对广告中的女性角色进行了有据可查的研究，他们观察到，广告中只有 9% 的女性被描绘成工作角色，相比之下，广告中男性的比例为 45%。此外，这项研究还得出结论，1970 年发布的广告将女性描述为依赖男性、不做重要决定、只在家中占有一席之地以及主要被视为性玩物。在接下来的二十多年里，又有几项研究使用了相同的方法 (Belkaoui 和 Belkaoui, 1976 年; Busby 和 Leighty, 1993 年; Kerin 等人, 1979 年; Lundstrom 和 Sciglimpaglia, 1977 年; Pingree 等人, 1976 年; Sexton 和 Haberman, 1974 年; Venkatesan 和 Losco, 1975 年; Wagnet 和 Banos, 1973 年)。从这些研究中得出的一个普遍结论是，在 20 世纪 70 年代，对妇女的刻板印象仍在继续，但是，从 20 世纪 80 年代到 90 年代，将妇女描绘成男人的附属品的情况有所减少，但将她们描绘成诱人的性对象的情况有所增加。除了电视广告之外，还可以观察妇女在电视新闻中的作用。对于人们来说，电视新闻是一种信息来源，因此，女性出现的频率和强度、女性话题的选择、电视新闻的播报观点都有可能影响社会舆论。与西方国家的大多数私营电视媒体不同，中国电视媒体的主要功能是传播中国的意识形态：媒体代表了政府所表达的传播渠道，遵循政府的指示，引导公众获取所公布的信息。通过这种方式，电视媒体帮助政府传播政策和法规，确保妇女在政治、经济、文化、社会和家庭生活中享有与男子平等的权利。目前，妇女出现在新闻中的频率越来越高，妇女的声音也越来越清晰响亮，但事实上，妇女仍然是弱者和边缘人，她们在电视新闻中没有太多发言权。在第二章的最后一部分，我列举了媒体中女性刻板形象的具体



例子。一个突出的例子是奥迪公司在 2017 年播出的广告，该广告鼓励观众访问一个销售“奥迪认证”二手车的网站。在广告中，一位新娘真的被误认为是一辆二手车，并被检查车况是否良好。

在第三章中，我讨论了中国的性问题和同性性欲问题。潘绥铭提到了北京人民大学性与性别研究所在 1999 年至 2000 年间进行的一项全国性调查的结果，他说在当代中国的城市阶层中，尤其是在年轻人中，正在发生一场真正的性革命（Jeffreys, 2006, pp. 21-42）。国内外的报纸都发表了不少有关该现象的文章，制造了关于同性恋群体权利意识的社会舆论。国内知名男同社交软件 BlueD 的 CEO 耿乐指出：

“由于同性恋没有家庭，没有孩子，没有更多的经济负担。所以同性恋群体的消费能力大概是异性恋群体的三倍以上。与此同时，同性恋更容易被歧视、被边缘化，因此，他们需要用更优秀的事业更好的收入来证明自己的价值，所有他们生活的更小资，也更有消费欲望。”然后，我定义了“同志文化”（在中国通常指同性恋者）和中国的 LGBTQIA+ 群体。中国是世界上最大的女同性恋、男同性恋、双性恋和变性者（LGBTQIA+）社区之一。在中国，LGBTQIA+ 群体在很大程度上仍然不为社会所关注，其成员不断反映在生活中遇到障碍。直到 2001 年，中国精神病学学会才将同性恋解密为精神疾病。尽管进行了重新审议，但中国精神病学学会表示，一个人可能因为其性行为而产生矛盾或患有精神疾病，这种情况是可以治疗的（Jun, 2017 年，第 37 页）。在很大程度上，由于互联网的广泛使用和艾滋病预防项目等发展，如今的 LGBT 群体比过去更加团结。由于互联网的广泛使用及其提供的匿名表达选择，许多 LGBT 不再像过去那样完全孤独。

在第四章中，我分析了粉红经济的现象、起源和在美国的发展，然后介绍了它在中国市场的演变。90 年代在西方国家的媒体流行的粉红经济这个现象最近几年进入了中国的舆论。粉红经济指的是由 LGBTQIA+ 群体（LGBTQIA+ 是女同性恋者，男同性恋者，双性恋者和跨性别者的总称）消费产生的经济体，换句话说就是经济上出现的一个趋势，企业因此对由同性恋组成的市场越来越感兴趣而投入大量的资金去吸引他们的消费力。一方面企业了解到一项对同性恋更加包容的营销策略能增加企业利润，另一方面很多同性恋者（也叫作“同志”）非常愿意去购买专门为同性恋群体创造的产品来体现一个现代化的中国同志市民。根据 BlueD 首席执行官兼创始人耿乐的说法，粉红人民币强大而自信，随时准备征服中国：

“同性恋群体的消费能力很强，但一直被忽视..... 我们想告诉人们，粉红经济非常强大”。（坎贝尔，2017）

中国的中产阶级的消费习惯十分重要。不仅很多中国人日渐愿意消费，而且他们在消费中找寻各种问题的答案。因为同志市场对于同志的生活有很大的影响，所以需要慎重的考虑。

最后，我提出了一些中国粉红市场广告的实际案例。其中有一则广告值得特别关注，那就是麦当劳以 LGBT 为主题宣传其新推出的 McCafe 杯。该广告讲述了一个同性恋儿子向父亲出柜的故事。因此，麦咖啡杯代表了父母与儿子之间的沟通渠道。

# CAPITOLO 1

## THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING FROM THE BEGINNINGS UNTIL NOW

### 1.1 THE HISTORY OF ADVERTISING

For what concern the official date of birth of the advertising communication there are two main approaches according to Arcangeli (2015): the first one states that the advertising history should follow the history of urbanization, the second one state that we can't talk of advertising until the invention of the movable type and the beginning of the industrial development and the relative mass production. The invention of the movable type by Gutenberg, however, did not immediately produce any fruit in terms of the dissemination of advertising messages. We have to wait until the XVII century to see the first examples of advertising of a mineral water in the gazettes, ancestors of the modern information periodicals. The first example ever seems to be the one that appeared on the sixth issue of the gazette founded by a French doctor, Thèophraste Renaudot. More than a century after this first example of advertisement, there are the first examples of advertisements in Italy. In 1759 "small advertisements" appeared on the Neapolitan *Diario Notizioso*. Ten years later the Venetian *Notizie dal Mondo*, an economic information newspaper, saw the light.

Starting from the late eighteenth Century, the number of advertisements increased in quantity. The informative press releases are flanked by notices that reserve a special space for the image, and graphic and typographic symbols are multiplied. In those years the figure of the advertiser was created, a real advertising supplement that advertises products of all kinds: books but also tobacco, articles for the hair, pastimes, shows, pills, tailors. In the temporal scansion proposed by Casetti (1991), advertising communication represents the second of the three phases of an epochal path initiated by advertising and which will then continue with advertising. If it is the daily press, with posters on display in the city streets and squares, the privileged location for the various nineteenth-century advertisements, it is however the advent of urban artist posters which gives a decisive boost to the evolution of the first forms of advertising towards more persuasive models.

The static advertising of the paper notices, the posters, already known since the eighteenth century, of the then nascent department stores, or the *Galleries and Magasins de Nouveautés* of Paris, were flanked in London by the first examples of dynamic advertising. In 1835, the first world press agency was born in Paris and, in the forties, the first real advertising agencies were founded.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the debate between the proponents of "rational" advertising and the champions of "emotional" advertising became quite heated in the United States. The former, organized in a coherent system of thought, provides a communication that is always contextualized, firmly anchored to the real world and to the principles that regulate it. The latter, on the other hand, replaced impressive advertising for reason why advertising: advertising that attaches great importance to image and to a serious and reasoned text prefers an evocative and allusive, captivating, and poetic one. It is difficult to say whether, from a general point of view, an advertising message based on a rational model has a greater persuasive force than a constructed information message.

The first known radiocommunication in the world was broadcast in the United States in 1922, where the advertising broadcast on the radio preferred the sponsorship formula for several years. The first Italian radio communications were born in 1926. The first advertisements broadcasted by the radio were very simple: the announcers read the announcements during the pauses of the concerts or in liminal positions, without fixed times or fixed prices. In the 1930s, in the meantime, radio advertising replaced the female voice, using specially created jingles, dialogues and skits.

On January 3, 1954, Italian television officially began its broadcasts, which had already started regularly in the 1940s both in Great Britain and in the United States. In 1950 the advertising revenues of TV exceeded that of the radio and in 1953 the color broadcasts began. The years between 1981 and 1988 are marked, in the United States, by the liberalist policy of Ronald Reagan, whose effects were also felt in Italy. In 1985 Séguéla invented the star strategy, this strategy aims to transform the product into a star by making it last, seduce, convince, thus replacing the reason why with the passion why.

In the 1990s, studies and market surveys on specific categories of consumers began to improve. Neo-television<sup>1</sup>, which was already a reality in the 80s and was already starting to deal with the competition of the internet, multiplied its channels in the meantime and began to think about how to entertain rather than how to inform. Entertainment, in the 90s, became shoptainment with increasing frequency. Compared to the convenience shopper, who plans his expenses, the recreational shopper is not necessarily willing to buy something but is looking for an original point of sale, with a pleasant atmosphere and a great variety of quality goods that guarantee fun, surprises and excitement, but also a feeling of security.

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<sup>1</sup>“The principal characteristic of neo-television is that it speaks less and less (..)of the outside world. It talks about itself and of the contact made with its own audience. It doesn’t matter what it might say and of what it might speak(..) [N]eo television tries to hold the viewer, saying to him ‘I’m here, I’m me, and I’m you’.” (Connel and Curti, 1985:103)

## 1.2 FROM THE PRODUCT TO THE MESSAGE

How exactly does the creation of an advertisement happen? The document from which you need to start to create an advertising campaign is the brief, the one who will then take care of its drafting is the product manager, responsible at the company for the sales objectives and the marketing and communication strategies used to achieve them. The most frequent case is that the initial brief is modified during meetings between the two parties, that is:

- a marketing person
- the account executive, who acts as an intermediary with the client
- the strategic planner, a recently introduced figure who is not always present.

In this phase, the objectives to be achieved with the campaign must be clearly defined, the target, so the consumers to whom the advertising will address, the communication channels through which it will be transmitted and the distribution network, the costs to be incurred for the creation of the adv and much more.

At this stage, moreover, it is necessary to provide answers to some questions that specifically concern the goods; those questions will refer to:

- the strengths and weaknesses
- its positioning within the market
- the benefit that his purchase can bring to the consumer, the promise he intends to make to him and the data demonstrating that this promise is well founded
- the tone of voice to be assigned
- lastly, the packaging must ensure that the product is immediately recognized and identified by the consumer

The person in charge within the agency to draft the texts of an advertising message is the copywriter, while the art director is the creator of its visual part; the two form a creative couple and report to a creative director. Once its task is finished, the

creative department leaves the production department with the task of materially realizing the developed idea, calculating the overall production costs and talking with the suppliers of the images through an art buyer.

To ensure that an advertising message is effective and successful, the copywriter and the art director must work in symbiosis, cooperating with each other. The goal is to build a symbolic universe of values that represent a promise of lasting happiness, of professional success; the fundamental function performed is to load a commodity with a series of intangible qualities that characterize it, to evoke the effects that its purchase can have well beyond its usability.

An advertisement in a newspaper or a billboard, in addition to the main visual, any secondary visuals and various graphic components, generally includes:

- the title
- a descriptive text
- the brand
- a short final sentence

## 1.2 ADVERTISING GENRES

### -Cars and motorcycles

The car in advertisements is represented as comfortable and safe, of good quality and reliable, fast, stylish, and elegant. The study of the language of car advertising must be conducted, to be profitable, with a breakdown of messages by car manufacturers, as each house has its own physiognomy and its advertising style, partly due to different audiences, partly to different national and international traditions.



Figure 1.1: Spot Giulietta<sup>2</sup>

For example, in this advertisement for the Giulietta car, the car is represented almost as something unattainable, unreal: "I am Giulietta, and I am made of the same material that dreams are made of." just to give the idea that it is the car of your dreams, able to satisfy your desires.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.engage.it%2Fbrand-e-aziende%2Fca-marchionne-spot-piu-belli>. 09/01/2022

## **-Household products and appliances**

In advertisements for household items, unlike advertisements for cars and motorcycles, neologisms, metaphors, hyperboles, word games and then easy rhythmic combinations are used. Compared to household products, which belong to the genre of convenience goods, represented by a low unit cost and high purchase frequency, household appliances, on the other hand, belong to the category of shopping goods, i.e., goods with a high cost and low frequency purchases that require a high emotional investment.

## **-Body care and cleansing products**

A bar of soap or a deodorant are required to answer first for their functionality and effectiveness, the case of beauty products is different, which immerse in fascinating and rarefied atmospheres, introduce into suspended and unreal worlds, and pretend to indulge distant dreams of ascents and identifications. sometimes impossible. So, in the former the practical aspects are valued, while in the latter the utopian aspects. As for advertisements for women's perfumes and cosmetics, these generally reproduce an identical model:



The ad is full-page, the verbal text is absent, the brand name, together with the pack shot, is in the foreground at the bottom, a young and sensual female figure appears in the background.

Figure 1.2: Dior spot<sup>3</sup>

The testimonial model is the most used in advertising campaigns as it can interpret the values of success, independence, and wealth.

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.profumiagroup.com/images/capire\\_profumi/jadore\\_Dior\\_marketing\\_brand\\_moda\\_pr\\_ofumia\\_profumatori\\_ambiente\\_personalizzati.jpg](https://www.profumiagroup.com/images/capire_profumi/jadore_Dior_marketing_brand_moda_pr_ofumia_profumatori_ambiente_personalizzati.jpg) 09/01/2022





There are many examples in which a female testimonial is used in perfume advertising: the perfume is given a name that incorporates the characters or attributes of the testimonial such as Sicily by D&G which, in addition to recalling the origin of the two stylists, uses Monica Bellucci as

testimonial, a typical Mediterranean beauty.

Figure 1.3: Dolce and Gabbana spot<sup>4</sup>

### **-Clothing, accessories, models**

This branch of advertising has many characteristics in common including the lack of any form of verbalization other than the brand name and the presence of a testimonial while wearing the garment or accessory. The main promise in jewelry advertisements is often the durability of the item to be purchased.



Figure 1.4: Levi's spot<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://persolaise.com/2020/07/dolce-2020-2.html> 09/01/2022

## -Food and beverages

As for food and drink advertising, the common feature that all advertising campaigns must have is appetizing, i.e. all foods must make you hungry. What the customer is looking for now is the genuineness and naturalness of the product. Moreover, another important feature is the way in which the product is created, the buyer now wonders: This product is made as it was once and again, is it in line with the culinary tradition of my country?



Various companies have succeeded in this intent such as: "Le Conserve Della Nonna", which pay a lot of attention to the consumer and the simplicity of their preparation. Lately the company has even launched a contest regarding the theme of tradition, in fact, the theme is: Who will be able to make recipes as good as grandma's?<sup>6</sup> The themes chosen for the recipes with which to participate follow the 4 main courses of a meal:

Figure 1. 5: Food contest Le conserve Della nonna<sup>7</sup>

The appetizer (October and November), the first course (December and January), the second course (February and March), the dessert (April and May). Each month, an influencer will launch the challenge by making a dish and inviting users to participate in the game by doing the same and uploading the recipe to the website [www.sfidalanonna.it](http://www.sfidalanonna.it). There is only one rule: using a product branded "Le conserve Della Nonna"

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.evermind.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/levis3\\_0.jpg](https://www.evermind.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/levis3_0.jpg) 09/01/2022

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CVzz-txslTr/?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CVzz-txslTr/?utm_medium=copy_link) 30/01/2022

<sup>7</sup> <https://distribuzionemoderna.info/news/sfida-a-colpi-di-ricette-in-barattolo-per-le-conservedellanonna> 09/01/2022

As for ice cream and alcohol advertisement, these would require a separate discussion, where the female figure is reduced to dolls immolated on the altar of male desires.

### **-New technologies: mobile phones, computers, and accessories**

For some years the most advanced technologies have seemed to point to the idea of an ever-greater interpenetration between the reality of men and that of machines. Now the technology has become more and more dedicated, even if at times it turns out to be too complex and not usable by everyone.



Figure 1.6: iPhone spot<sup>8</sup>

A separate discussion could be made for mobile phones, whose manufacturing companies have for some years been committed to impressing consumers with a range of technical and stylistic solutions suitable to satisfy any type of taste. Mobile phone advertisements first of all exalt the multifunctionality and the value of means of fundamental importance to be able to face the frenetic rhythms imposed by everyday life.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unieuro.it/online/apple-iphone-se> 10/01/2022

### 1.3 THE HISTORY OF ADVERTISING IN CHINA

In China, advertising has had a particular path. According to Puppin (2020: 2-5) the history usually traces the roots of the phenomenon back to ancient China. Going back to the Xia and Shang dynasties (2070-1046 BC) we found the first examples of advertising that consisted of clan and tribal totems. Then advertising continued to develop in Imperial China during the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC), when it took the forms of goods displays and street hawking; in the Spring and Autumn Period (771–476 BC), wooden signboards started to appear; during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), popular advertising media included banners, lanterns and signboards; and in the Song Dynasty (960–1279), we found the first print advertising.



It is a copper plaque, promoting sewing needles produced by the Liu family store in Jinan, Shandong province, which was used to print wrappers for their products. On the two sides, the text reads: ‘Recognise the white rabbit outside the entrance’ (*Rèn mén qián bái tù wèi jì* 认门前白兔儿为记), referring to the signboard placed at the entrance to the shop.

Figure 1.7: copper plaque promoting sewing needles<sup>9</sup>

Advertising intended strictly as a paid form of commercial promotion originated around 1840, after the first Opium War, when the Unequal Treaties imposed a commercial flow of goods and capital to the exclusive advantage of Western

<sup>9</sup> Huang, Ding and Liu 2006, 91. China's first brand, Northern Song Dynasty

powers, whose citizens enjoyed a privileged status. In those years, westerns arrived in China in order to trade their goods to the local population using the first promotional tools. In those years there was also the advent of the first advertising agencies, they were concentrated in the main center of China's commercial activities – the city of Shanghai. Those years represented the so called “golden age” (黄金时代 *Huángjīn shídài*) before the revolution. Advertising was everywhere, from newspapers to billboards, from radio to neon signs. The first examples of mass advertising were calendars for the Chinese New Year, the so-called *Nianhua* 年画: shopkeepers distributed calendars, containing small advertising posters, before the beginning of the new year; in this way, also the masses, could see advertising. The subjects depicted in the advertising calendars varied, ranging from historical figures to religious rites, from Confucian legends to natural scenarios. Over time, another kind of advertising spread, especially in the city of Shanghai: it was the posters displayed in special advertising spaces, inside the first shopping centers.

In 1949, with the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party and especially during the period of the Cultural Revolution, advertising stopped its evolution in China as it represented at the time the maximum expression of the capitalist economic and



Figure 1.8: Mao's Red Guards, destroyed a huge amount of advertising material and documents on the history of advertising<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://m.epochtimes.it/assets/uploads/2021/02/Religious-Books-1200x720-1.jpg> 09/01/2022





Figure 1.9: Mao's Red Guards <sup>11</sup>

cultural system, a system that the Communist Party considered illegitimate (Palumbo, 2014). Advertising therefore stopped its evolution for about thirty years. Between 1949 and 1967, Mao's Red Guards, icons of the Cultural Revolution, destroyed a huge amount of

advertising material and documents on the history of advertising, while those who practiced the advertising profession were harshly criticized and persecuted.

The Chinese national media became state owned and could only publish political news. An example of this phase of closure in the history of Chinese advertising is the spread of 'propaganda posters' (宣传画 *Xuānchuán huà*).

During the third plenary session of the 21st CCP Central Committee, held in 1978, there was a great change; after the session, China began to implement the policy of reform and opening promoted by Deng Xiaoping, starting an era of social and economic development.

The development phases of the advertising industry since its return in China can be identified chronologically as follows:

- phase 1: 1979–91; The policy of reform and opening was undoubtedly positive for the development of advertising: in January 1979 an advertisement was finally published in the Tianjin daily, after a long period of absence. Obviously, however, given the long period of cultural isolation, China was not in step with the rest of the world: the first advertisements, until 1989, devoted little importance to the visual and graphic aspect, and instead reserved ample space for captions, resulting to not be very effective both from the aesthetic point of view and from the point of view of the appeal to the public. The advertising language was standardized and made use of

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<sup>11</sup> [https://chineseposters.net/sites/default/files/2020-06/30051001321444-%28Cropped%29\\_0.jpg](https://chineseposters.net/sites/default/files/2020-06/30051001321444-%28Cropped%29_0.jpg)  
09/01/2022

*chengyu*<sup>12</sup> and other expressions that often recurred within advertising slogans, such as "reliable quality" (*Zhìliàng kěkào* 质量可靠) or "advantageous price" (*Jiàgé yōuhuì* 价格优惠).

- phase 2: 1992–2001; It was in the nineties that modern advertising took hold in China: within the CCP some ideological questions concerning the advertising sector were definitively resolved; then came into force the legislation concerning advertising, which had been discussed within the Council of State since 1982. These historical events, combined with an impressive economic growth and an increase in GDP, made advertising the means of communication *par excellence*, and China finally began to catch up with other countries, especially from the point of view of creativity. In the television commercials of the nineties special effects and colored graphics dominated, while as regards the printed media, the illustrations gave way to photography and the layout became more and more refined, rich, and captivating. Moreover, in this period advertising communication began to spread and be used in all sectors, from the industrial to the cultural and services sectors. The language, which in the past was descriptive and lacking in vivacity, changed, becoming more evocative, flowing, and direct. Slogans began to be used (in Chinese *Kǒuhào* 口号), written in a colloquial language (*Dà bái huà* 大白话), so that they could be understood by the whole population; some slogans were so popular with the public that they were taken as a model for subsequent slogans.

Since the 1990s, the advertising industry in China has continued to develop in conjunction with the economic boom that has contributed to the modernization of the nation.

- Phase 3: 2001-2009; In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO); this obviously demonstrates its integration with the world economic market. From March 2004, foreign advertising agencies were allowed to hold a

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<sup>12</sup> Idioms are defined as multiword expressions consisting minimally of two words, including compound words, non-literal or semi-literal in meaning, and generally rigid in structure. *Chengyu* 成语 are the most renowned type of Chinese idiomatic expressions and play an important role in Chinese as a foreign language

majority share in Joint Ventures, as the share ceiling for foreign partners was increased to 70%. The following year, wholly foreign-owned enterprises (WFOEs) were gradually allowed to operate in advertising services. This constituted a big challenge for China that opened its doors to transnational advertising agencies (TNAAs), which were much bigger, stronger and, therefore, more competitive. In 2006, the cultural association Ad European Events (ADEE) dedicated the sixteenth edition of the Ad Spot Award, an international exhibition of social, public, and business communication, to China. This event is dedicated to an emerging nation, to stimulate dialogue between the various countries on issues of a social nature. Social advertising in China, often consisting of billboards posted across the nation, is one of the many aspects of the advertising market, which has benefited from the impetus of two major events that took place in China: the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and the Shanghai Expo in 2010. On these occasions, China decided to operate on two different levels: as regards the propaganda for the local market, concepts such as tradition, power, pride and splendor were proposed in a nationalistic key, in order to keep the country united; for the international market, on the other hand, China has represented itself as a friendly and hospitable country, which has both a long history and a millenary civilization, and a radiant and modern future.



- Phase 4.: 2010-today; After 2008, the Olympic year that consecrated China on the world scene, a recurring metaphor has spread in numerous advertisements, that of running: the image of running wants to represent the tenacity of the

Figure 1.10: Beijing 2008 Olympic Games<sup>13</sup>

Chinese nation, which despite prejudices about “made in China”, often considered synonymous with low quality, aims to play a leading role in the world market. In 2008, a Chinese campaign ‘Together in 2008,

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Beijing-2008-Olympic-Games#/media/1/1453062/115949>  
18/02/2022



Impossible is Nothing’ created by TBWA Worldwide Shanghai for Adidas was awarded its first Cannes Lion for its creativity. In those years, the government continued to support the advertising industry and the main contribution was given by the ‘Plan for the Development of the Advertising Industry during the ‘12th Five Year’ Period’, which noted the crucial role played by advertising in the economy and in society. In 2005, online

advertising surpassed all the other types of advertising, starting from 2011 has had an average yearly growth of 40% and in 2016 its business volume was bigger than the sum of all the other types of advertising, and the following year, by hitting 300 billion yuan, it contributed almost half of the yearly turnover of China’s advertising industry.

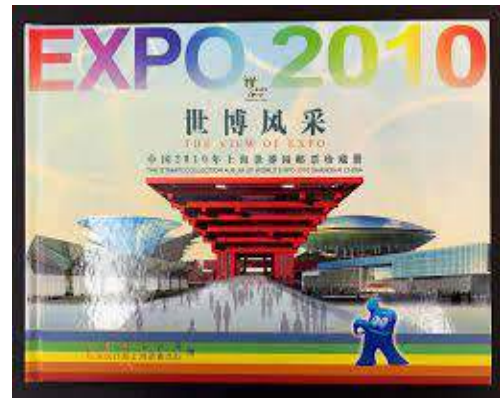


Figure 1.11: Expo 2010<sup>14</sup>

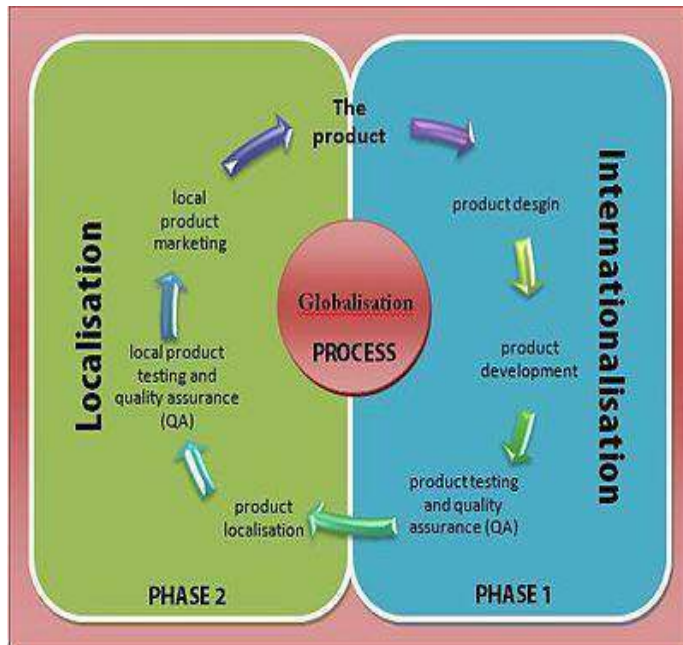
By June 2019, China’s Internet users numbered 854 million, and the country’s Internet penetration rate increased to 61.2%. Some 847 million Chinese used their mobile phones to surf the Net, making up 99.1% of total Internet users. This contributed to the creation of many apps such as TikTok (*Dǒu yīn* 抖音), a short-video streaming platform targeting Generation Z (below 24 years old), and Little Red Book (*Xiǎo hóng shū* 小红书), China’s most trusted shopping platform for luxury items, especially fashion and cosmetics.

Today advertising in China is not just about products belonging to the local market; major global brands and multinationals have also entered the Chinese market and have relied on advertising to achieve greater success.

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<sup>14</sup><https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD2010%E5%B9%B4%E4%B8%8A%E6%B5%B7%E4%B8%96%E5%8D%9A%E4%BC%9A%E5%B0%8F%E7%89%88>  
18/02/2022

Companies that export their products to multiple countries should diversify the way they advertise as each country has its own communication model, its own sensitivity, which the exporting company should take into consideration to avoid



being criticized. To adapt an advertisement to the target it is intended for, the localization procedure must be used. Localization is a translation strategy that involves the elimination of all the cultural elements of the source text that do not belong to the receiving culture, and their replacement with elements

close to the recipient of the target text. If the

Figure 1.12: The Globalization Process <sup>15</sup>

localization strategy is adopted correctly, the text will be perceived by the recipient as original, and received correctly; in the case of advertising, the correct reception of the message will then be synonymous with commercial effectiveness. The first step in the localization process is therefore a careful study of the receiving culture. In the case of China, analyzing the advertising market, it can be seen that advertising has recurring characteristics, such as a strong repetition and a predominant nationalistic component. As for the testimonials, companies often choose children, since their sweetness strikes the Chinese imagination. It is also frequent to resort to settings that re-propose a Western lifestyle, mostly European, which for the Chinese represents an ideal lifestyle. Chinese advertisements use family values, solidarity, team play and sincere social relationships, stories or words familiar to Chinese culture, revisited in a modern way. Localization, for companies wishing to export their products to China, is a strategy that must be adopted from the beginning, even

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Globalization-process\\_fig1\\_31914952](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Globalization-process_fig1_31914952) 18/02/2022

in the choice of the name of the company or the product advertised, since it is precisely on this that the success of a product depends on the positive reception of the brand by Chinese consumers. In the event that a company does not apply this strategy, it could incur accusations and penalties, as happened for example in 2018 with D&G.



Figure 1.13: D&G spot 2018<sup>16</sup>

and #DGTheGreatShow, were supposed to promote the Shanghai fashion show but were received very badly: they were accused of re-proposing a stereotypical image of China that no longer exists, including lanterns, ridiculous music and red everywhere, and to be not only ignorant but also derisive.



Figure 1.14: D&G spot<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> ” Il gran guaio di Dolce & Gabbana in Cina” <<https://www.ilpost.it/2018/11/21/dolce-gabbana-sfilata-cancellata-cina/>> 09/01/2022

<sup>17</sup> [https://static11.blastimgcdn.com/media/photogallery/2018/11/22/660x290/b\\_1200x680/dolce-e-gabbana-uno-degli-spot-contestati-a-seguito-del-quale-i-prodotti-del-marchio-sono-stati-boicottati-in-cina\\_2149487.jpg](https://static11.blastimgcdn.com/media/photogallery/2018/11/22/660x290/b_1200x680/dolce-e-gabbana-uno-degli-spot-contestati-a-seguito-del-quale-i-prodotti-del-marchio-sono-stati-boicottati-in-cina_2149487.jpg) 09/01/2022

The cannoli video also has a certain degree of sexism, with a male voiceover telling the girl: "Is it too big for you?" The controversy led to the removal of the three videos from Weibo - a social media popular in China - within 24 hours. A popular Instagram account called DietPrada - considered highly feared by fashion houses and who has had a bad relationship with Dolce & Gabbana for years - harshly criticized the campaign, and posted screenshots of private messages between Michaela Tranova, a collaborator by DietPrada, and Stefano Gabbana. Tranova had asked Gabbana to account for the videos and had received in response from Gabbana a series of cascading messages in which he insulted the Chinese division of his company for having deleted the videos from Chinese social networks, and China in general: "From now on onwards I will say in all the interviews I do that China is a shitty country and that it can rest assured, we live very well without you ».

According to Gabbana, the videos were imagined as a tribute that simply shows the reality of China: if the Chinese are offended, it is they who feel inferior, and not Dolce & Gabbana who are racist. Screenshots of Gabbana's messages have been shared on Weibo hundreds of times, increasing the indignation and shortly after leading several Chinese actors, models and other celebrities to decide not to participate in the show anymore, and to announce it publicly; Vogue China director Angelica Cheung also canceled her attendance, and agencies Bentley and Xing Li said they would not send their models to the runway. In the end, the scheduled show was canceled and the Dolce & Gabbana company apologized, saying that its accounts were hacked and that the messages in question were not authentic: "We are very sorry for the inconvenience caused by these posts, comments and unauthorized direct messages. We only have respect for China and its people. "

Food products, together with beauty products and clothing, represent one of the most exported product categories, in China as well as all over the world. Many large companies, especially multinationals such as McDonald's, KFC, Pepsi, enjoy great fame in China, and this is partly due to the successful advertising campaigns they have produced. Among the multinationals in the food market that have distinguished themselves in the creation of tailor-made advertising for Chinese culture, the Coca-Cola Company stands out, the giant that produces and markets various soft drinks worldwide, including the famous Coca-Cola.



The Chinese name that the company has adopted is *Kěkǒukělè gōngsī* 可口可乐公司, hence the name of the drink, *kekou kele*, more simply called *kele*.

Figure 1.15: Coca Cola spot in China<sup>18</sup>

The name of the drink may seem, at first glance, a simple transliteration of the original name, and in fact in part it is. However, if you carefully study the characters that make up the name, you can see how the first two, which make up the compound *kekou*, (an adjective that means "good, tasty") are wisely combined with the adjective *kele*, which instead means "cheerful, fun"; the result is a name that communicates two concepts to the Chinese consumer, that of happiness and, at the same time, that of goodness and pleasure, as if these two moods were directly connected to the purchase and consumption of Coca-Cola. A name chosen in such a careful way is the result of a conscious work of localization, which has guaranteed the American multinational a broad consensus. However, the company did not limit itself to locating its name but carried out an ad hoc campaign aimed exclusively at the Chinese population. A successful example is a television commercial produced in Harbin. The advertising scenario is a small town in Northern China, where the main actors of the commercial live, two children; the scene takes place mainly outdoors, in winter; the musical background consists of a cheerful traditional Chinese motif. The two children, wearing bright red winter jackets, are first at the window, and then run outdoors, in a snowy field, where one of the two builds a small red pinwheel. Meanwhile, the wind seems to increase, and the children, smiling, welcome the first snow of the new year. The other villagers, who are all wearing at least one piece of red clothing, also run outdoors, under the snow, and on

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.panorama.it/media-library/image.jpg?id=19722452&width=980> 09/01/2022

the same background music, which has become even more cheerful, Chinese lanterns and an expanse of red paper pinwheels, including the one built by the protagonist, placed on straws planted in the snow. One of the two children then shows the camera the name of the drink of which she has been holding a bottle since the beginning of the advertisement: it is, of course, Coca-Cola.

The "Sinization" of this commercial is immediately noticeable, starting from the music and the typical setting of Northern China, ending with the choice of the predominant color, red, which recalls both the color of the Coca-Cola brand but also of China. Red is the color of most of the elements contained in the spot (dresses, hats, scarves, lanterns, pinwheels), and stands out clearly also thanks to the skillful combination of the color itself with a dull scenario, mainly consisting of the white of the snow and from shades of gray or brown, dark colors that characterize the remaining elements, such as the houses or the rest of the protagonists' clothes. Furthermore, advertising lacks the narrative part; this choice, which gives even more importance to the scenes, was a conscious choice, since Chinese consumers are accustomed to advertisements composed purely of images and without a narrative voice. The advertising campaign described represents one of the most successful attempts at localization and has met with enormous success not only in China but also in other nations of the Asian continent; the commercial fits perfectly with the policy of the American multinational, summed up by the company itself in a motto that all companies targeting foreign markets should adopt: think locally.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMWEN IN THE MEDIA

#### 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW: NATURE OF GENDER AND ITS CONNECTIONS TO CULTURE-SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

As James and Saville-Smith (1989) stated, “individuals may be born female or male but they have to become masculine or feminine”. According to Aaltio and Mills (2002), sex is a biological classification of humans into women and man, whereas gender is a cultured knowledge that differentiates them, so, the gender is directly correlated to the cultural dimension. Feminine and masculine genders reflect the ideals and values distinctive of the culture. To understand what are the aspects that characterize each culture, in 1980, Hofstede (2010) identified four dimensions of culture that help explain how and why people from various cultures behave as they do. Initially he derives his data from two questionnaire surveys with over 116,000 answerer from over 70 countries around the world, making it the largest organizationally based study ever conducted. Despite being published nearly 40 years ago, Hofstede’s study continues to be a focal point for additional research, including the most recent GLOBE project which we will talk about later. The four dimensions examined by Hofstede were:

- Power Distance: represents “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally “. Are countries with high power distance those countries in which people obey without hesitation the orders of their superiors.
- Uncertainty avoidance: represents the level of tolerable ambiguity a society is comfortable with, and is often revealed in legislation, religion and security practices. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and

security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. For example, in Germany there is a reasonable high uncertainty avoidance (65) compared to countries as Singapore (8) and neighboring country Denmark (23). Germans are not too keen on uncertainty, by planning everything carefully they try to avoid the uncertainty. In Germany there is a society that relies on rules, laws and regulations. Germany wants to reduce its risks to the minimum and proceed with changes step by step. The United States scores a 46 compared to the 65 of the German culture. Uncertainty avoidance in the US is relatively low, which can clearly be viewed through the national cultures.

- Individualism: is the tendency of people to care only about themselves and their immediate family only. Hofstede considered also the opposite dimension, the collectivism, that is the tendency of people to become part of a group and to care for other peoples. For example, Germany can be considered as individualistic with a relatively high score (67) on the scale of Hofstede compared to a country like Guatemala where they have strong collectivism (6 on the scale). In Germany people are more inclined on personal achievements and individual rights. In an individual country like Germany people tend to have more loose relationships than countries where there is a collectivism where people have large extended families.
- Masculinity and femininity: masculinity is defined by Hofstede as a "situation in which the dominant values in society are success, money, and things." Femininity is the term used by Hofstede to describe "a situation in which the dominant values in society are caring for others and the quality of life." Countries with a high masculinity index are more interested in earnings, advancement, and challenge. Countries with a low masculinity index tend to place more importance on cooperation and living in a friendly atmosphere.
- Time orientation: originally called Confucian Work Dynamism, time orientation is defined as "dealing with society's search for virtue". This dimension was added in order to distinguish the difference in thinking between the East and West. Therefore, Hofstede created a Chinese value survey which was distributed across 23 countries. From these results, and with an understanding of the influence of the



teaching of Confucius on the East, long term vs. short term orientation became the fifth cultural dimension. Some characteristics of long term orientation are:

- persistence
- ordering relationships by status and observing this order
- thrift
- having a sense of shame

Some characteristics of short term orientation are:

- personal steadiness and stability
- protecting your 'face'
- respect or tradition
- reciprocating of greetings, favors, and gifts

Given the definition, it may not be surprising that China is ranked the highest on long term orientation, placing a strong emphasis on status based relationships and thrift, whereas Norway and Nigeria for example, fall on the other end of the spectrum, of those countries that were measured for this dimension.

- Indulgence versus restraint: this is the most recent dimension and measures the freedom to satisfy one's natural needs and desires within a society. Indulgence refers to the freedom of individuals to enjoy life and achieve gratification of natural human drives, whereas restraint refers to limiting this gratification, often through the use of formal and firm social standards

The Hofstede cultural dimensions and country clusters are widely recognized and accepted in the study of international management. His work was taken as a reference to recent cultural studies and research projects.

In 1994, another Dutch researcher, Trompenaars, did another 10 years study on cultural dimensions, expanding the research of Hofstede. Trompenaars derived five relationship orientations that address the ways in which people deal with each other and these are very to the dimensions studied by Hofstede. These dimensions are:

- Universalism versus particularism: universalism is the belief that ideas and practices can be applied everywhere without modification. Particularism, on the contrary, regard the fact that every circumstance requires a particular behavior.
- Individualism versus communitarianism: a person is individualist if regards himself as a single individual, a communitarian person, on the contrary, regards himself as a part of a group.
- Neutral culture versus emotional culture: in a neutral culture emotions are not expressed, in an emotional culture, on the contrary, emotions are openly expressed. Examples of neutral cultures can be found in Finland and the UK among others, and emotional cultures are located in countries such as Spain, France and Poland
- Specific culture versus diffuse culture: a specific culture is one in which individuals have a large public space they share with others and a small private space that share with only close friends and associates. A diffuse culture, on the contrary, is a culture in which public space and private space are quite the same.
- Achievement culture versus ascription culture: an achievement culture is a culture in which people are accorded status based on how well they perform their functions. An ascription culture, on the contrary, is a culture in which status is attributed based on who and what a person is.
- Concept of time: how individuals look at the concept of time is the sixth dimension put forth by Trompenaars. Sequential oriented cultures look at time in a series of scheduled or planned events and strict deadlines, and often embody the philosophy that the ‘time is money’. Synchronous time based cultures, on the contrary, prefer to look at past, present, and future at the same time, and tend to be more flexible with deadlines and commitments whenever the situation allows for it.

Another research program, the most recent, called the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational behavior Effectiveness) reflects an additional approach to measuring cultural differences. Conceived in 1991, the GLOBE project is a research project based on the theories of Hofstede and Trompenaars. Divided in four phases.

- The first phase involved the development of research instruments

- The second phase assessed nine fundamental attributes, or cultural dimensions, of both societal and organization cultures, and explored how these impact leadership in 62 societal cultures.
- The third phase is primarily studying the effectiveness of specific leader behaviors on subordinates' attitudes and performance
- The fourth phase, that started in 2020 is the current project phase that has two main objectives:
  1. Develop and test a theoretical framework examining the dynamics of change in its nine dimensions of culture in the original 62 societies in its first phase in the early 1990's
  2. Develop and test a theoretical framework examining relationships between antecedents of interpersonal trust and national culture.

This last study will be useful to improve the reliability and validity of GLOBE's culture dimension instrument, develop a new dimension (religiosity); and design measures of interpersonal trust within and across cultures.

## 2.2 CULTURE AND HOW IT INFLUENCE ADVERTISING

Advertising is one of the most effective forms of communication, not only for the numerous platforms, as radio, television, social media it can be transmitted, but also because of the role it plays in increasing profitability by helping increase sales and revenues. Nowadays there is an ever-increasing number of companies that have to interface with international customers, competing globally with other companies. For this reason, in fact, advertising has taken on an increasingly important role, so companies have had to get involved to create innovative content to promote their products globally, taking into consideration cultural differences, consumers' beliefs and shared values. The role of advertising in the new global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is very useful for local businesses to face the competition of other companies globally. Using a successful advertising campaign, companies can have the possibility to surpass other companies. Hence, it is essential for any campaign to consider the different perspectives on community issues, focus on the content and harness technological advances to create a creative concept.

Of course, the effects of an advertising on the society can be positive or negative depending on the content of the message and how it resonate with the values, norms and culture of a specific society.

For what concerns China, what influenced the most its culture is Confucianism, this tradition originates in the period of the Zhou Dynasty (1122BC-221BC) and still plays an important role in present day Chinese culture. Confucianism established a series of moral principles and codes of conduct that I will outline above.

- Harmony and group orientation: Hofstede(1980) used the term “collective” instead of “group oriented”. With this term he indicated that the Chinese, as well as Asians, represent a collectivistic population. This collectivistic nature of Chinese people is reflected in the Chinese family and kinship system (Hsu,1968). Hsu argued that "the primary concern of a majority of Chinese was to protect and enhance their private kinship interests". He indicated that the Chinese regard the kinship system as a basis for relating to others. It means continuous and long-lasting human ties which do not have clearly defined boundaries. For example, in many European countries, the parent-child relationship legally stops at the age of 18 or 21, after which, parents

can't no more decide over their children's choices. The Chinese, on the contrary, tend to behave in the opposite way. When getting married, children still regard seeking approval from parents as mandatory and necessary (Salaff, 1981). Sons and daughters, even though they live apart or are married, still support their family. Marriage is not only an affair between the bride and the bridegroom, but an occasion for the family to reciprocate affection to friends and other members in the kinship system (Salaff, 1981). Chinese may well be able to sacrifice themselves for benefits that largely accrue to a particular social unit, or even to a society as a whole.

- Gender: Confucianism also influenced gender-related values and principles. Within this tradition, a gendered regime comprising fundamental rules shaped by the patriarchal hierarchy governed both women's and men's lives (Croll, 1995) where individual roles in society were separated according to sex and age (Tan, Ling, & Teng, 2002). In this system, women were subordinate to men, and young women occupied the lowest strata of the hierarchy (Bauer, Feng, Riley, Xiaohua, 1992, p.333). Confucianism includes 'Five Cardinal Relations', known as Wu Lun, the relationships between sovereign and minister, father and son, husband and wife, old and young people, and female and male friends (Feng, 2009).
1. Between the government and citizens: the government must effectively and intelligently protect the safety of the people and their property, this being the equivalent of in the olden days of rulers to be "competent rulers", while the citizens must pay taxes to the government, obey the government's laws, serve with loyalty and the utmost diligence when recruited or conscripted by the government, and when appropriate give opinions to the government or try to dissuade the government, these being the equivalent of the obligation in the olden days of subjects to be loyal;
  2. Between parents and offspring: parents must raise and educate the offspring, while the offspring must carry out 孝 *xiào* ("be good to parents") and support and care for aged, weak parents;

3. Between husband and wife: both must be of one heart and mind, and help each other to together build a family life where both the next generation is raised and the previous generation is cared for;
4. Among siblings: older siblings must be kind and helpful to the younger ones, the younger siblings must be respectful to the older ones, and all siblings must help each other;
5. Among friends: friends must help each other, especially with mutual encouragement, mutual advice, and dissuasion from what is wrong. (Feng,2009)

These cardinal relations controlled the individual and social behaviors of Chinese people. More specifically, Chinese women were bound to feudal ethics known as the “Three Obedience” (When she is young, she follows her father, when she gets married, she follows her husband, and when her husband dies she follows her son), and the “Four Virtues” (fidelity, physical charm, good manners, and efficiency in needlework) (Chen, 1990). These principles had a significant impact on the women’s public and private roles and expectations of how they would ‘perform gender’.

Within the Confucian cultural system there were very limited roles for women (Leung, 2003). As Li (1988) points out, “few societies in history have prescribed for women a more lowly status or treated them in a more routinely brutal way than traditional Confucian China” (p. 5). Foot binding is perhaps one of the most notorious of treatments forced upon women by Chinese Confucian culture.

In the Chinese Confucian tradition, the gendered opposition of 德 *Dé* (moral virtue) and

采 *Cǎi* (literary talent) contributed to characterizing women and men by means of different behavioral expectations, types of work and positions in the family. Under the concept of 德 *Dé*, remaining ‘inside’ was perceived as the virtue of femininity and, in particular, a touchstone of female chastity in terms of physical discipline and self-sacrifice (Mann & Cheng, 2001).

In contrast,采 *Cǎi*, which refers to “a variable content of profound lyricism, deep intellectuality, and analytical skill” (Larson, 1998, p. 2), constituted a marker of

masculinity. In dynastic times, almost any man could participate in the imperial examinations (科舉 *kē jǔ*) in order to enter the lofty ranks of the “scholar-officials” (Gunde, 2002, p. 39) and enjoy power, prestige and wealth, while women had no right to take the exam. Indeed, Confucian ethics regarded women as unworthy or incapable of education.

- Family and gender roles: In Chinese Confucian culture, family and marriage were “arranged and celebrated to underscore gender differences and to emphasize the complementary and separate responsibilities of man and woman in the conjugal relationship” (Mann, 2002, p. 98). Such family systems particularly emphasized the unity of the household through demanding “blind obedience from women of any age to the male”.

One of the norms of Confucius – 男属外女属内 “Nán shǔ wài nǚ shǔ nèi” (Men are primarily outside the home; women are primarily inside the home) – resulted in women being restricted to “relationships within the family and kin circle”, while men “could function outside the household” (Larson, 1998, p. 2). It was deemed “natural” according to expectations of “obedience” and “duty” that women would sacrifice everything for their families. Men, in contrast, were required to be responsible for the material well-being of the family. However, although the norms for women in Confucian tradition were domestic-oriented, there were some alternative role models. One example is Hua Mulan who was a semi-mythical heroine in the 5th or 6th century AD. She masqueraded as a man and went to war to protect her family, so that her elderly father did not have to fight (Gunde, 2002).

Even so, Hua Mulan’s motivations were still to serve her father and protect her family. The legend of Mulan has featured in both elite and popular cultural forms such as films, textbooks, and television series, promoting a non-traditional example for women in modern China.

- Devotion to family: Within the Confucian tradition, while the domestic sphere of the home and family was presented as the prime environment for women and society (Gilmartin, 1994), the traditional Confucian gender concept of 贤妻良母 *Xiánqī-liángmǔ* (virtuous wife and good mother) formed the moral basis of womanhood (Hare-Mustin & Hare, 1986; Sin & Yau, 2001). Also nowadays, in

China, this concept is used to define women in terms of their domestic achievements and in relation to men. The concept of 贤妻 *Xiánqī* (virtuous wife) traditionally typified the roles fulfilled by women within a marital relationship. The duty of a virtuous wife, according to Lin (2000), focused on playing a 内助 *nèizhù* role (internal helpmate) in her Husband's life, and remaining faithful to him. In addition, the 良母 *liángmǔ* (good mother, or exemplary mother) in the Confucian tradition was conceived as providing the standards for a mother. The care of children is conventionally reserved for women (Lieberman, 1998). Under Confucian-dominated moral codes, the meaning of 良母 *liángmǔ* involved not only motherly love, lifelong obligations and nurturing capacity, but also “the education and training of children in line with certain ethical norms from the mother's angle” (Leung, 2003; Lieberman, 1998).



## 2.3 WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN NEWSPAPERS AND ADVERTISING

In the first documented study ever done about the role of women as portrayed by advertisements, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) examined the images of women in eight general interest magazines published in 1970. They observed that only 9% of the women represented in the advertisements were portrayed in working roles, compared to 45% of the men depicted in the advertisements. Moreover, this study further concluded that advertisements published in 1970 characterized women as being dependent on men, as not making important decisions, as having a place only in the home, and as being regarded primarily as sex objects. Over the next two decades or so, other several studies were conducted using the same methodology (Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976; Busby and Leighty, 1993; Kerin et al., 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Pingree et al., 1976; Sexton and Haberman, 1974; Venkatesan and Losco, 1975; Wagnet and Banos, 1973). A general conclusion derived from these studies is that the same stereotyping in the portrayals of women continued during the 1970s, however, from the 1980s to the 1990s, the portrayal of women as subordinate to men decreased somewhat, but their portrayal as alluring sex objects increased.

But, the stereotyping of women is not limited only to advertisements in newspapers but also to television advertisements, in fact, a study done by Dominick and Rauch (1972) and then followed by Courtney and Whipple (1983), McArthur and Resko (1975), and Schneider and Schneider (1979). In addition to supporting most of the findings generated from studies of gender-role portrayals in US magazine advertisements, they also reported that voice-overs in US television commercials were dominated by men (Cheng, 1997).

In a study comparing advertising in Western and Eastern countries (Cheng, 1997), It is showed that advertising in both Mainland China and the United States portrayed more men in occupational roles and more women in non-occupational roles as well as more men in recreational activities and more women in decorative situations. However, Chinese television advertising was found to reinforce more stereotypes than similar US advertisements.

In 1997, two researchers, Liu & Wei (1997), carried out a survey of advertisements broadcast in prime time about 10 television stations, in which there were 1179 samples to be analyzed. From this survey, they noted that the number of ads featuring more than one woman was 426, or 35.8% across all samples, 6.9% more than ads featuring a man. Of the 957 roles that appeared in the commercials, 426 of them had a starring role, and 91 of them had a secondary role.

Then, in 2006 the research group on female and male images of the Capital Association of television commercials Female Reporters released the monitoring research report like that in Chinese TV commercials in the second half of the year 2005. Using the research method of 1997, they took 4935 samples from advertisements from 10 television stations broadcast in prime time. From the samples used, the advertisements that saw women as protagonists occupied 83.1% of the total number, of which 26.5% of the advertising was of a sexual nature.

The literature on the topic shows that advertisers have traditionally exhibited a preference for using ‘physically attractive models and actors in advertising’ (Joseph, 1982). This is in part due to the commonly held belief that, in order to be able to secure consumers’ attention, marketers must modify the stimulus presented in multiple ways including making sure that the stimulus is pleasant; one way of achieving this is to use attractive models within the communication (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2010). The benefits of using physically attractive models in marketing communications is not limited simply to generating more attention and interest in the advertisements, but also can provide other advantages. Research has revealed an overall ‘beauty is good’ stereotype (Eagly et al., 1991), in which attractive individuals are subconsciously associated with other, unrelated, traits, such as possessing a higher degree of social competence. Advertising effectiveness is also positively affected by the attractiveness of the models used (Halliwel and Dittmar, 2004). When the attractiveness of the model is manipulated, there is a significant difference in effectiveness, independently of whether or not the model is of an average or thin body size. Thus, due to this and other positive impressions created by using attractive models, advertisers have an increased incentive to use such individuals in their communications (Till and Busler, 2000).

In addition to the beautiful and sensual woman, in advertising we also find another type of woman, that is the housewife, hardworking, kind, nice, tender, and permissive. This type of woman is very simple and generic, she represents the good wife and the good mother. On the Asian continent, most of the images of the woman in television commercials fall into the three categories mentioned: the beautiful and sensual girl, the good, sweet wife, the good hardworking mother. An analysis of the female images in advertising made by Liu & Wei(1997) shows that 51.6% of the female roles in advertising were a housewife, unlike the role of male housewife, which was not present in any advertising, in 47% of cases, the role of the man was the manager, the administrator.

Comparing the female and the male image in advertisements, it can be noted that the beautiful girl usually appears as a boy's lover, or, together with others, as a group ready to attract males, and their attraction derives from the products they use such as make-up, perfumes, heels, luxurious clothes.

The figure of the wife, on the other hand, appears in advertisements together with household products, such as washing machines, laundry detergents, etc., finally receiving thanks from her husband, admiration from family members and the smiles of children for having done the housework and for having prepared lunch or dinner. And the image of the "mother" role of all ages is like that of the wife: committed to creating a cheerful atmosphere in the whole family. However, at the same time most of the men appear in advertising with a bright career and a stylish image: beautiful and cool, he dresses in elegant clothes and a well knotted tie, he drives the car. This suggests the people that in Chinese society the man is the dominant figure within the family, the one who is dedicated to work and to the company. On the other hand, advertisements aimed only at feminine consumers that follow the beauty of the woman, like the advertising "Taitai Koufuyue", addressed to middle-aged women, the advertising of the cleansing cream for the face of the brand



"Mininurse" to the young girl and advertising of the shampoo of the brand "Pantene" and so on, almost all deal with the theme of "the charm of the woman is presented only for her beauty".

Figure 2.1: "Taitai Koufuyue" advertising<sup>19</sup>

Obviously, looking at this type of advertising, in the long run, a concept remains in your head: apart from beauty, women have nothing else, their meaning in life is to make themselves beautiful for the eyes of her man. Only this side of the woman is emphasized because unfortunately she is not considered a complete being, endowed with intelligence and courage, her value is defined by beauty or from the appreciation by the man who has at his side.

<sup>19</sup> <https://cf.shopee.sg/file/a2657e9d1a8e526a6b729ff0482fb14b> 21/02/2022

## 2.4 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TELEVISION NEWS

In addition to television commercials, it is possible to observe the role of women in television news. For the people, television news is a source of information, therefore, the frequency and intensity of the presence of the woman, selections of female topics, the point of view of broadcast on television news likely influence the opinions in society. Unlike most private television media in Western countries, the main function of Chinese television media is the spread of Chinese ideology: the media represent the channel of diffusion as expressed by the government, following the governmental indication for lead the public to the information announced. In this way the media televisions have helped the government disseminate policies and rules for ensure that women have equal rights to men in the political sector, economic, cultural, social, and family life. Currently the frequency of presence of women in the news has become higher, women's voices are heard, clearer and louder, however, in fact, the woman still represents the weak and marginal part, they do not have many speaking rights in the television news.

Who Makes the News (WMTN), a knowledge, information and resource portal on media, gender and other axes of discrimination, hosts the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the world's largest and longest running research and advocacy initiative that seeks to advance gender equality in and through the news media. The first GMMP report has been published in 1995, analyzing the data it can be noted that in the television and radio news of the 71 countries considered, the presence of women concerned 17% of the news, against 83% of men; in 2000, in the news around the world, 18% concerned women and 82% concerned men; in 2005 women occupied 21% of the news in the 68 countries, which means that there is one woman each six men in the news. It has gone from 17% to 21%, despite it being there, a relative increase is still a disappointing reality. One of the authors of GMMP, Margaret Gallagher, said this speed will serve 75 years to achieve gender equality in information. But what is the situation now? Analyzing the data of the last <sup>20</sup>GMMP published in 2020, women are still seen, and their physical attributes described more than their voices are heard in the news. A person's age is not always relevant to the story, and images in journalism are included to grab a reader's attention.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports/> 13/04/2022

At the same time, the greater propensity to describe women more than men, and to include their images particularly in various stages of undress, betray a different underlying motive. “When women do show up in the news, it is often as eye candy, thus reinforcing women’s value as sources of visual pleasure rather than residing in the content of their views”, Jia et al. (2016), women’s images are used to or excite an assumed male audience.

In the GMMP 2020 sample, 37% of women compared to 33% of men appeared in multimedia clips in online news, and 27% of women in contrast to 24% of men were photographed in print news. Age was not coded for 67% of women and 74% of men in newspapers, replicating patterns in earlier waves of a higher likelihood for women to be described in terms of their age in print news. In newspapers, the age of the person is captured only if it is explicitly mentioned in the story. Women are also more likely to appear or be described by age in television images; 84% of women compared to 82% of men in the broadcasts were coded for age. On television, the person’s age is coded if it is specifically cited in the story or the person is visible in an image accompanying the story.

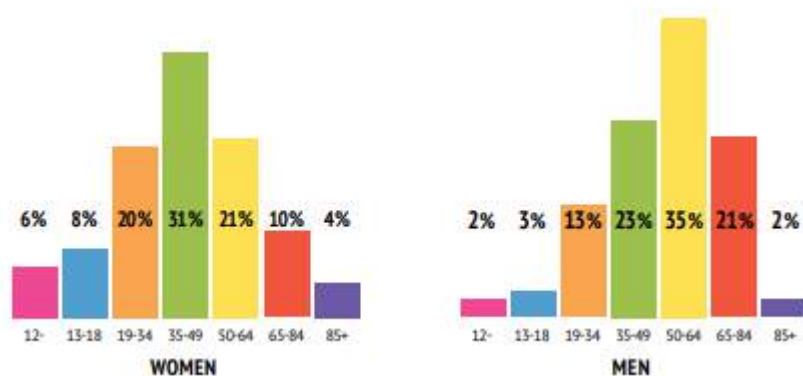


Figure 2.2: . Age of subjects and sources in television news. Distribution by sex. 2020. <sup>21</sup>

According to data from the GMMP 2020, female characters appear in only 21% of all news (79% for the male), and their opinions represent only 20% -39%.

<sup>21</sup><https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports/> pag.39 13/04/2022

	Africa	Asia	Caribbean	Europe	Latin America	Middle East	North America	Pacific	OVERALL
Politics and Government	18%	15%	21%	22%	20%	12%	26%	32%	20%
Economy	19%	21%	23%	29%	24%	12%	36%	27%	24%
Science and Health	30%	25%	28%	35%	28%	15%	36%	33%	30%
Social and Legal	23%	24%	42%	34%	34%	23%	45%	40%	31%
Crime and Violence	24%	22%	26%	26%	24%	19%	29%	30%	24%
Gender & Related	66%	31%	67%	58%	51%	75%	50%	58%	*47%
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	17%	25%	20%	30%	21%	24%	26%	21%	25%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>25%</b>

\* 1% of total sample

Figure 2.3: Women subjects and sources in print, radio and television news, by major topic, by region. 2020<sup>22</sup>

As for journalists, around 80% of government employees, civil servants and politicians represented in the news was male, this means that men had and continue to have a better chance of working in government or large organizations. Instead, most of the time a woman was represented in an advertisement, she represented the figure of housewife and mother, occupying 75% of the news.

In the Chinese edition of the GMMP, in 2020, women occupied 19% of all characters represented in the news, against 81% as regards men; as regards the rate employment, only 10% of women occupied the position of state employees and employees of public bodies.

On the main Chinese television news program, the situation on such news is: the profession and the role of female characters in the news are not balanced and rational; the most prominent social roles are male, woman can be protagonist only in the news where his role is predominantly family or as the protagonist of a love story; the roles of power are completely masculine, for example in important conference news or on the visit of the president, the protagonist is usually masculine, the woman always plays a secondary role. With the increase in the amount of news about people's lives, the frequency of the presence of the woman has increased, however the way it is represented remains unchanged. She appears more frequently as the protagonist of some tragedy, as a victim. For the increase in the view index, they are produced of gossip news in which the protagonist is usually

<sup>22</sup> <https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports/> pag.22 13/04/2022

female. In women's news or in the news with women's materials they are narrated always the quarrel of a couple, or the story of the husband with another woman.

Let's see the following case in the comparison of the frequencies of presence of the woman between the daily life news program and the financial news in the HBS television station, that is China's second biggest state-owned television network after China Central Television (CCTV). In the news of life daily the woman appeared with the role of the mother of the family, of the third person of a couple or wife who quarrels with her husband; in financial news the frequency of female presence is low, and she usually appeared as the co-star. After comparing these two types of the television news it can be concluded that in the television news the woman is underrepresented in the public sphere, her images are generally that of the wife, the mother, the housewife, from this we understand that the woman lives not for herself but for the man. The media talk to the woman indicating how to be a perfect mother, lover, wife, housewife, secretary to meet the needs of male society, if not, the woman will be disappointed and sad. This is the image of the woman produced by the media who perpetuates the stereotypes of society real in the media world. In the television news, men still occupy the main place, women are marginal. Hence, the female images depicted in the television news are stereotyped and having few rights to speak. So, how to build a social environment to foster promotion and development of gender equality via television news is the problem that the media must consider.



## 2.5 THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE IMAGES IN CHINESE TV DRAMAS FROM 2009 TO 2018

TV dramas is an art form that integrates many artistic elements. It brings together stories, phenomena, and popular elements in real life, which are interpreted by actors and presented to the audience on the screen. It carries the current popular culture in society and meets the entertainment needs of the people in daily life (Li, 2020). Often, the characters and plots of TV dramas become the subject of discussion among the spectators, and at the same time influence people's lifestyle and values. In the past, most TV dramas focused on men but, with the awakening of Chinese feminist consciousness, TV dramas with feminine subjects have been introduced and the influence of female characters is also increasing. According to the "2018 Weibo Drama Series White Paper", in 2018, there were 130 million users interested in drama series, indicating that the audience of TV dramas is very wide. The image of female characters portrayed by TV dramas shows the public's understanding and attitude towards women. Based on the framework theory and the use of content analysis methods to study the female character images portrayed in the "Annual Anthology of Chinese TV Dramas" by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television from 2009 to 2018 as a sample, in the analysis made by (Li, 2020), it turns out how the Chinese Year TV dramas construct female images and the problems.

For what concerns body appearance, from the analysis emerged that Female characters in China TV dramas are mostly youth, up to 76.48%, while middle-aged women and old women account for a relatively small proportion, 19.48% and 4.04% respectively. It can be seen that most of the TV dramas creators choose young women as their main targets when shaping female characters, such as Song Nuan and Zhou Gege in "Best Get Going", Luo Yiren in "Game of Hunting" and other young and beautiful women. Song Nuan and Zhou Gege are students who are preparing to graduate from university, full of youth; Luo Yiren in "Game of Hunting" was 25 years old at the beginning and 29 years old at the end, and there is not much difference in age. And some TV dramas show the life of women, such as the Xiancao in "White Deer Plain", which was more than ten years old at first and was only 38 years old when she died of illness. "The Story of Zheng Yang Gate"

portrays the legend of the two women Xu Huizhen and Chen Huiru. From (Deng, Li, and Xu, 2018)", it emerged that the total number and proportion of China's youth population have declined, while the decline in female youth is even greater. Chinese young women account for 31.02% of the national female population. It can be seen that the current female population in China is that middle-aged and elderly women account for the majority, and the proportion of young women in TV dramas is higher than that in the real society. The age portrayal of female images in TV dramas is too concentrated on young women, neglecting to explore and create the lives of women of other age groups (Li, 2020). Of such women, 59.55% of them are good-looking women while only 1.47% are less beautiful female characters, and ugly-looking female characters are rarely accepted by the public. The public always has a certain pursuit of beauty, and TV dramas are a form of popular art. Beautiful women are easy to attract the attention of the audiences, especially the male audiences. In real life, beautiful women are always more attractive and more advantageous. So, from this data it is possible to assume that TV dramas will choose good-looking women as the main characters in TV dramas in order to cater to public tastes and satisfy male visual desires.

In addition to the appearance characteristics of a person, his or her character performance is also an important symbol of his or her attraction (Li, 2020). From the analysis is revealed that 32.35% of female characters in tv dramas are aggressive, firm and persistent female characters, followed by bold and daring to love and hate, accounting for 16.18%, and then the traditional, introverted, weak and dependent, accounting for 14.34%. The number of female characters who are active and persistent, daring to love and hate, and decisive and capable is gradually increasing due to the improvement of women's social status. For example, Tang Jing in "The First Half of My Life" presents the image of fashionable and capable professional women in the play, and Xia Bing presents the fashionable and bold image in "Hot Mom". Nowadays, audiences are fonder of female characters who are independent and daring to love and hate. Although the image of kind, gentle and considerate female characters is very good, the independent and public women show the modern female consciousness and embody the style of women in the new era. It can be seen that in the past ten years, the personalities of female characters in Chinese TV dramas have also been enriched with changes in the social

environment, and the characterization of the characters has become more stereoscopic (Li, 2020). For what concerns the ethical roles of women in TV dramas, those are strictly related to the three universal roles of mother, wife, and daughter. Mothers account for 34.56%, wives 46.70%, and daughters 23.90% (Li, 2020). Looking at some examples, It can be seen that the shaping of female ethical roles in TV dramas focus on the two most basic images of mother and wife. In Cheng Kaiyan in "Like a Flowing River" and Tong Jiaqian in "Naked Marriage Age" belong to the three family roles. In reality, the ethical roles played by women in the family are usually mothers, wives and daughters. The ethical role of women with the development of the times and the awakening of female consciousness is not only here, women's freedom is liberated, and their love, marriage, and childbirth can all be freely chosen. There are also the emergence of the ethical image of the "third party", such as Ling Ling in "First Half of My Life" and Gao Xiaoqin in "In the Name of People". According to data from the National Data Website, the number of registered marriages has been on the decline in recent years, while the number of divorces has increased. People are more cautious about marriage choices. The image of wives in TV dramas still accounts for a relatively high proportion. TV dramas on family ethics in China are mostly based on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, causing conflicts between husband and wife and never digging into the topic of marriage.

For what concerns occupational identity, with the development of the times and the progress of society, more and more women get rid of the shackles of being attached to men and separated from the family, and begin to move towards the society to realize their self-worth. When TV drama creators create female roles, their professional identities are gradually diversified. Women can enter various fields of society and take up roles regardless of their family environment. From the analysis done by (Li, 2020), has been noted that women's occupational identities are more abundant in modern society. Government officials accounted for 12.87%, followed by rural women or housewives, accounting for 10.28%, company white-collar workers accounting for 7.35%, and service industry personnel accounting for 6.25%. Women of government agencies accounted for 12.87%, managers accounted for 5.88%, and rural women accounted for 10.28%, while rural cadres only accounted for 0.37% (Li, 2020). It can be seen that TV dramas have relatively few

women participating in decision-making. However, the situation of rural women's political participation in the TV dramas is still similar to reality.

In conclusion, according to (Li, 2020), the majority of female roles in Chinese TV dramas is represented by young and beautiful women, with diversified personality characteristics, mostly family ethical roles, and the career choices of female roles are more diverse.

First of all, the age of the women represented in TV dramas is mostly young age. Therefore, main female roles in most TV dramas are seldom middle-aged and elderly women. In addition, those women are mostly single and middle-aged and elderly women are rarely represented. Secondly, the female characters in TV dramas in the past ten years are rich in personalities, and the female images portrayed are more three-dimensional. Third, the ethical roles of women in TV dramas are mostly mothers, wives and daughters. Marriage, family, and childbirth are still women's final destinations. Although it is a manifestation of the status quo of society, it ignores the more possibilities of the living conditions of unmarried women. Finally, the career of female roles in TV dramas is not limited to the family, and the types of occupations cover multiple fields. Women enter the public domain of society and pursue the realization of self-worth.

At the same time, there are also certain problems with the image of female characters in Chinese TV dramas. First, the body images of female characters in TV dramas are too centralized. The body images of women in TV dramas are focused on youth and beauty. Most young women are shaped for beautiful looks, while middle-aged women and old women do not highlight their appearance due to age. For example, the mother of Yuan Bao in "Hot Mom" is portrayed as a traditionally introverted mother who depends on her son. Moreover, the roles of middle-aged and elderly women are mostly mothers and above, but they lack their attitudes towards life, work, marriage, etc. Their main scenes are in the family, and these kind of single scenes limit their image shaping. In addition, TV drama creators tend to be younger in the construction of female roles, which leads to a lack of diversity in female images and causes an imbalance in the female actor market. The second problem of the representation of female characters in Chinese TV dramas is the characterization of characters that differs from the reality. "Truth, goodness and

beauty" are the beautiful qualities that people pursue, but people are complicated, and a person's personality is also complicated. The character of a character should be shaped more three-dimensionally, and the audiences will have a sense of substitution. The third and last problem is the proportion of female roles in TV dramas, that is uneven. Women's occupational types are becoming more abundant, modern women's level of education is getting higher and higher, as are professional and economic abilities, and their roles in the social field are becoming more and more important. Although women's occupations in TV dramas are relatively diverse, the types of occupations of female roles are not balanced. For example, the women in the occupations such as designers, professional technicians, rural cadres, and rural wealthy people are few. In contrast, housewives, teachers, medical staff, etc. are relatively more. The creators did not explore the role of women in many fields of society and their performance in the workplace and reflect their value.

## 2.6 STEREOTYPICAL IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Gender stereotypes in advertising is a topic with more than five decades of related research. The outcome of literature was ignited by social and historical contingencies. The first cause of stereotyped images of women is to be found in traditional Chinese culture: "男尊女卑" *Nán Zūn Nǚ Bēi* this is an expression used to describe the condition of superiority in Chinese feudal society of men over women. About 3500 years ago in the <sup>23</sup>Shang Dynasty the patriarchal society was established, in which powers, material goods and authority were concentrated in the hands of men and the social status of women was decided by the social position of their father, their husband and of their son. In the distribution of business, the men went to work while the women stayed at home to devote time to domestic chores. The situation remained unchanged until 1949, when it came the People's Republic of China was founded: in this context changes in public opinion regarding stereotypes currents on women took place, thanks to the government promotion of the idea of equality between men and women; despite this, public opinion does however, it still leaves the patriarchal idea to influence it in a non-irrelevant way. Today women are still represented with a stereotyped setting, reproduced by the media under the influence of traditional Chinese culture: the representation of gender equality in the media is compromised.

In addition to the cultural and traditional cause for which the images women represented in the media are stereotyped and often expression of prejudice, we can also speak of an economic cause. The birth of stereotyped images of women in the media is also linked to the commercial interests of the media themselves. For the media it is essential to attract as much attention as possible from the widest audience, to obtain more earnings: in the Chinese market there is a ferocious competition and therefore it takes a lot of money to survive and get out winners from his vortex. The media only make a profit if they are capable to attract the attention of the public in an effective and consistent way. So, how to get maximum attention? The simplest way is to meet the needs of most of the public, especially the male audience, holders of greater purchasing power. The contents on women presented by the media correspond to the opinion of the medium man and once

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<sup>23</sup> Shang Dynasty: 唐朝 (pronunciation: Tángcháo) in chinese, the second historic chinese dynasty

mediated, they do nothing but strengthen the stereotypes and prejudices about female images. Furthermore, these contents, are attractive not only to men, but even to that part of women who accepted this kind of male opinion about them. Once again, the choices revolve around economic motivations: the greater commercial profit is the goal that each type media arises, pursuing it to the detriment, in this case, of the image of the woman represented within the media itself.

Lack of awareness of gender equality in workers employed in the media along with the imbalance in the number of male and female employees in the same sector are two other important causes attributable to the stereotyped images of women in the media. In China, the employees who work in the media come from undergraduate degrees in Journalism and Communication: unfortunately, not many are provided knowledge about gender equality in that university experience, therefore, it is more difficult for students and future workers to recognize content stereotyped with respect to gender and therefore ask themselves the real problem of their removal or modification. Sometimes, in fact, unknowingly, gender discrimination information in the media have been published. Often, contents portrayed in the media and focused on women are those who teach them how to keep themselves beautiful and young, like cooking well, how to help husbands and how to educate children. Apparently, these contents do not include discrimination on women: they seem, instead, to promote a vision of life, promoting their improvement through advice and teaching. In fact, however, these contents vaguely express a concept: women represented in the media do exactly what society expects that they do. Through such types of representations, it was formed in the society public opinion that believes that women are not interested to social problems; moreover, the rights of decision and speech in the media are exclusively in the hands of men. So, to please the slice bigger audience, to get bigger profits and to follow the influences of stereotypes in traditional Chinese culture, the media choose or otherwise transmit mainly topics and information containing biases about women, these regressive attitudes toward women often perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes.



Figure 2.4: Audi  
2017 commercial <sup>24</sup>

So now let's look to some <sup>25</sup>examples of sexist advertising. In 2017, Audi released a commercial that compared women to used cars, <sup>26</sup>The advertisement opens in a pastoral setting, with a bride and a groom about to take their vows. But the mother of the groom frantically interrupts, rushing up the aisle to “inspect” her would-be daughter-in-law. With a stare, the woman proceeds to pinch the bride's nose, pull back the bride's ear and then examine the inside of the bride's mouth. “What are you doing?!” the horrified groom asks in Mandarin, as he pulls his mother away. The older woman begins walking back to her seat, then turns around to flash an “A-Okay” hand sign. The bride and the groom sigh in relief. But the relief is short-lived because the groom's mother again focuses her attention on the bride, this time casting a glance at her breasts. The anxious bride quickly covers her chest area with her hands.

The commercial then cuts away to footage of a red Audi sedan zipping along an empty highway, as a man's voice declares: “An important decision must be made carefully.”

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<sup>24</sup> [https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/1024/branded\\_news/39A7/production/\\_96995741\\_audiad1.jpg](https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/1024/branded_news/39A7/production/_96995741_audiad1.jpg) 21/02/2022

<sup>25</sup> <https://signal.supchina.com/sexism-and-gender-stereotyping-in-chinese-advertising/> 21/02/2022

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/07/18/an-audi-commercial-in-china-compared-women-to-used-cars-it-didnt-go-well/> 21/02/2022



An animation encourages viewers to visit a website selling “Audi-approved” secondhand cars. “Only with an official certification can you rest easy,” a male voice-over says.

Obviously, there were not a few negative comments relating to the brand, there are those who posted tweets asking the company to apologize and delete the spot.

<sup>27</sup>There are also people that, on their personal Weibo account, an important social media present in China, published a post saying that : "We had a Volkswagen at home and my husband planned to get an Audi, and now I see it is definitely impossible to buy any Audi car. They build shoddy cars and make a huge profit in China, and now release such a vulgar commercial. Shame on you, Audi."

Then, an Audi spokesman told The Washington Post that the company “deeply regrets” the commercial, which was produced exclusively for the Chinese market, and said it has been completely withdrawn. “The ad’s perception that has been created for many people does not correspond to the values of our company in any way,” Audi spokesman Moritz Drechsel said in an email. "The responsible department of the joint venture has arranged a thorough investigation of the internal control and coordination processes so that an incident like this can be excluded in the future.”

Another example is the Ikea commercial advertising, in which a mother scolds her daughter for not bringing home a boyfriend. She tells the young woman not to call her “Mom” if she fails to find a partner soon. As the tension escalates, a well-dressed young man suddenly shows up at the door with a bouquet. After the daughter introduces the man as her boyfriend, her parents joyfully welcome the guest to their dinner table with Ikea tableware.

The ad attracted a great deal of criticism in China for its insensitivity toward single women. Widely stigmatized as “leftover women,” these singletons, despite their achievements in many aspects of their life, still face an undue amount of pressure from their families and society at large to get married.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/07/18/an-audi-commercial-in-china-compared-women-to-used-cars-it-didnt-go-well/> 15/04/2022



Figure 2.5: Sony sexist message on Weibo<sup>28</sup>

“When your girlfriend quizzes you about lipstick shades again, just fire back with questions about these lenses.” Obviously, the advertising quickly went viral on social media, eliciting a deluge of criticism from people arguing that the post implied that photography — as a profession or hobby — is beyond women’s grasps. The

post was especially disrespectful to female photographers who own Sony equipment. “I spent thousands of yuan on your cameras in 2019. Turns out you think I don’t know how to use my stuff!” an offended customer commented.



Then, five days later, the brand has apologized to those who may have been offended by the last post published. The apology came with a Weibo post featuring four women taking photographs with a caption that read, “We appreciate your serenity. We admire your excellent skills. More importantly, we cherish your longtime companionship. The account disabled comments from Weibo users on the post, but it replied to itself in the comment section, noting that the

Figure 2.6: Sony apologies on a Weibo post<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> <https://supchina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/005Oz2qKgy1gc2nj4jzppj30ku0z9adg.jpg> 21/02/2022

<sup>29</sup> <https://supchina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/005Oz2qKgy1gc3a6btxy6j30ku1cw0yt.jpg> 21/02/2022

employee who wrote the earlier sexist post had been “forced to take a one-year leave.”

In the same year that Audi and Ikea came under fire, Juewei Duck Neck (绝味鸭脖 *juéwèi yābó*), a retail snack chain with more than 9,000 stores across China, created a poster depicting a woman lying on a bed with her legs chained. Besides her is the marketing punchline: “Do you want it? It’s fresh, tender, and juicy.”



Figure 2.7: Juewei Duck Neck spot<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, with this post the company crossed the line and given the indignant reactions of the people, had to delete the post. It seemed that everything was resolved, but just two days later the company published another post on Weibo that read, “My time of the month arrived sooner than it was supposed to. It’s full of taste and heavier than ever before,” the post’s subtitle reads, a clear reference to menstruation. Given yet another break-in, local authorities in Hunan Province fined the company 600,000 yuan (\$88,750).

<sup>30</sup> <https://signal.supchina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/juewei1.jpg> 21/02/2022

Another example of advertising in which we see the figure of the woman represented in a sexist way is found in this advertisement for the Coconut Palm brand. As we can see from the image, there is a woman in a tight-fitting T-shirt holding a can of coconut milk and the inscription reads: "Drinking coconut milk can make breast plump".



Figure 2.8: Coconut Palm brand advertisement <sup>31</sup>

Judging from these major missteps, it's evident that sexism is alive and well in Chinese advertising, even as outcry over gender stereotypes and objectification has become louder. Fortunately, however, in recent years there are more and more brands that embrace feminist ideas and female empowerment in their marketing campaigns. <sup>32</sup>In 2016, some Chinese beauty brands began to focus on the identity and rights of Chinese women. Among them, Japanese cosmetic brand SK-II with campaign addressing "leftover women" in China. <sup>33</sup>The video, published in June 2017 shows the opinions of various people about unmarried women over 25 years old. Moreover, it demonstrates that these women are still looking for love, while their parents worry that their daughter is still single. The YouTube video has garnered hundreds of thousands of views around the world and has spread widely among Facebook users. In China, the video has received over 4,000 likes and has been posted about 20,000 times on the official SK-II Sina Weibo account.

<sup>31</sup> <https://signal.supchina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/61ff32dely4g04q7fyvzlj20rs0hcaau-1.jpg> 21/02/2022

<sup>32</sup> <https://daxueconsulting.com/feminism-chinese-marketing/> 21/02/2022

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.campaignasia.com/video/sk-ii-addresses-elephant-in-the-room-for-leftover-women/437552> 20/04/2022

## CHAPTER 3

### SEXUALITY IN CHINA AND SAME-SEX EROTICISM

#### 3.1 CHINESE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Referring to the results of a nationwide survey conducted between 1999 and 2000 by the Research Institute of Sexuality and Gender of Renmin University in Beijing, Pan Suiming speaks of a real sexual revolution taking place among the urban classes of contemporary China, especially among the youngest (Jeffreys, 2006, pp. 21-42). This revolution originates from five essential changes: separation between sex and procreation; increased recognition of the importance of sex in marriage; wider consideration of love concerning the constraints of the traditional concept of marriage; emancipation of sexual desire by the bonds of the feeling of love; and emancipation of female sexuality. This revolution was not the result of the influence of Western countries alone, nor of changes in the sphere of sexuality per se, but it rather derived from radical changes in what is called the "primary life cycle" (Jeffreys, 2006, pp. 21-42).

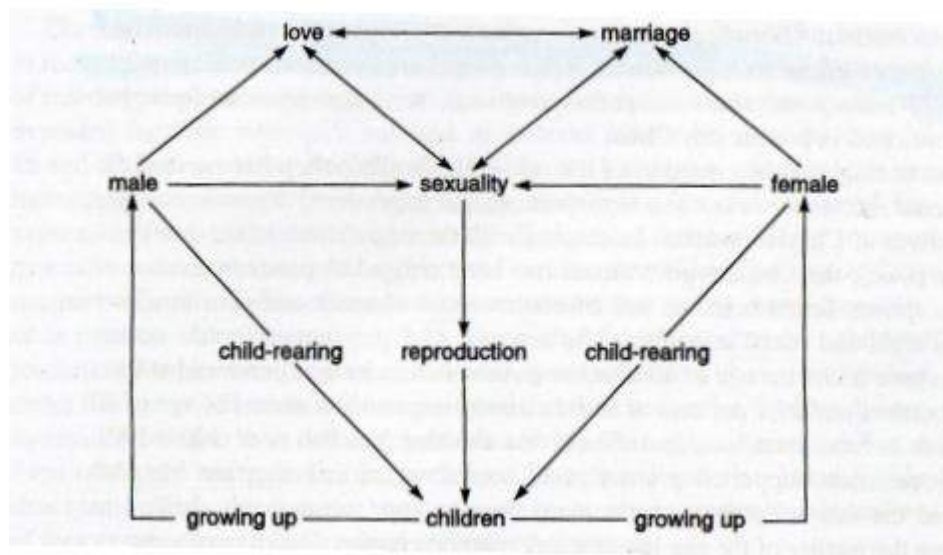


Figure 3.1 Primary life cycle. Adapted from Pan et al. 2004, qtd. In Jeffreys, 2006, p.24

The "primary life cycle" represents "both the sum and the relations between the most basic of human activities, such as sex, reproduction, physical sustenance, and the social and sexual interactions between members of the opposite sex.". Pan et al. decide to use this concept and

not the family concept because the “primary life cycle” always includes sex and sexuality and inserts them into a system of social relations; therefore, it is more suitable for the analysis of sexuality.

China is one of the most populated countries in the world, with a population of more than one billion four hundred million. To reduce the country's population growth, the Chinese government limited births in 1979. Under the motto 晚,稀,少 *Wǎn, xī, shǎo*, that means late, scarce and less, people are urged to wait longer between pregnancies and space them out more frequently (Yuan, 1980, pp.65-70). The birth quotas might be reevaluated annually in the provinces where population indications suggested a decline. In the cities, only one kid per family was permitted; in the countryside, two children were permitted, but only if the oldest was a girl and there was a gap of at least four or five years between them. As a result, according to a One-Child Policy spokesman, 35.9% of the population was subject to statutory restrictions for offenders, especially in rural areas where tuition fees had skyrocketed, precisely in those areas where only about 27% of families had a single child. The government had pledged to keep the birth rate per couple stable at 1.8% starting in the twenty-first century.

According to Pan et al., this revolution reached its maximum development rate precisely when the one-child policy came into force. It was a profound shock in the structure of the Chinese family: for the first time, sex was officially released for the purpose of procreation. If a married couple maintained an active sexual life after the birth of the first child, it could only be for pleasure or mutual affection. The intense promotion of birth control made the restrictions of extra-marital sex less risky of an unwanted pregnancy.

In addition, women who have completed their first pregnancy could invest time and energy in other activities and also in their sexual lives; in this way, they ceased to be only mothers. Before this sexual revolution, Pan et al. observed that sexuality had never been considered an autonomous category but was always framed in a system of social relations. The traditional Chinese view is that relationships with other people serve as an indirect means of regulating and controlling sexual behavior. We can notice this via the terms used to refer to sexuality; for example, 人 *rén* refers to the unit that is part of the family 家 *jiā*, not the single individual; also, 性 *xìng* does not constitute a category by itself but the element of a system of social norms (Jeffreys, 2006, pp. 21-42). In Chinese society, sex has never been banned, provided that it took place within the confines of marriage and that its ultimate goal was to bring an heir to the world. During the Cultural Revolution, similarly, sex was not repressed

but hidden. It is widely believed that, during this period, sex disappeared from both the public sphere and the private one. However, the Communist Party did not limit the sex life of the people in any way; rather, every element of life was wholly absorbed in the imperative of class struggle and of the continuing revolution. However, different aspects of the primary life cycle were rearranged according to the function of class struggle, from the family, which was bypassed in its role by the work unit, to marriage, which saw spouses living apart in the name of collectivization. In the public debate, revolution had to be the dominant theme, and any reference to sex and love was considered bourgeois and therefore frowned upon.

Throughout Chinese history, same-sex eroticism has not been a prominent social, political, or scientific focus. In Confucian and Taoist philosophies, sex is not regarded as a central aspect of life but rather as an integral part of human existence, inseparable from other aspects (Coleman, Chou, 2013). As a result, it was not treated as an independent subject of study. In strict terms, the modern classifications of heterosexuals, bisexuals, or homosexuals were not explicitly defined or recognized in Chinese historical contexts. The association between the English term "sex" and the Chinese word 性 *xìng* has only emerged relatively recently due to the persistent modernization efforts during which many Western concepts have been translated and integrated into the Chinese language and culture. The notion of sexuality itself has been imported from the West, and before the twentieth century, there were no direct Chinese equivalents for terms such as "sex" or "sexuality." In the past, various Chinese words existed to convey erotic sentiments, such as 色 *sè* (sensory) or 情 *qíng* (passion or sentiment). However, none of these terms could be simplified to refer solely to sexual acts, although, at times, they might have carried implied connotations related to sexual activities. There were other words to refer to sexual acts, such as 交合 *jiāohé*, but they were used mostly in marital relations. The word for sex that is currently used is 性 *xìng*. The essential Chinese phrase 性 *xìng*, which means "nature," reveals the country's naturalistic view of sex. Reputable Chinese dictionaries continue to refer to 性 *xìng* not as "sex" but rather to its original meaning of the "nature of things." The two parts of the Chinese character for nature, 性 *xìng*, are 心 *xīn*, which denotes the heart or mind, and 生 *shēng*, which consists of the words "grass" and "soil," which, when combined, denote life or birth (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.14). The fundamental source for the claim that before the thirteenth century, the Chinese had a fairly open attitude toward sexual practices and that sex was not something to be feared nor considered wicked is Van Gulik's book *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (1961). In traditional China, it was unheard of to link sin and guilt to sexual intercourse per se. Without



a belief in God or any theological orthodoxy, Chinese culture was governed by the social hierarchy of human connections, which corresponds to the Mandate of Heaven, rather than by any absolute or sacred order (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.14). Up until the nineteenth century, when Westernization brought a new set of discourses on sexuality, China underwent a steady process of "neo-Confucianization" that was characterized by a trend toward conservative, antisex, and anti-women sentiments. The desire for modernization, which Chinese intellectuals always equated with Westernization, in the late nineteenth century cleared the stage for the superimposition of the Western discourse on sexuality. A new set of contemporary Western sexological discourses, such as gender, sex, orgasm, perversity, and heterosexuality, gradually superseded the more relational and integrative terms like 色 *sè*, 情 *qíng*, 交 *jiāo*, and 阴阳 *Yīnyáng*. Similar to 性欲 *Xìngyù* (sexual desire), 性教育 *Xìng jiàoyù* (sex education), 性别 *Xìngbié* (gender), and 浪漫 *Làngmàn* (romance), these new categories were not entirely value-free but rather emerged from the particular setting of Western industrial-capitalist, positivist, biological determinist, and individual traditions.

The biological determinism that medicalizes a woman's body as weak and passive in contrast to a man's body, which is claimed to be active and strong, progressively superseded the ancient Chinese cosmology of yin-yang in the name of modernity. The translation of "gender," a word without a Chinese equivalent, exemplifies the imposition of Western notions. The fact that the Chinese word for gender, 性别 *Xìngbié*, literally translates to "sexual differences," implying a strong biological determinist connotation of a "natural" difference between female and male, is perhaps crucial, despite the unfortunate fact that gender, which in modern Western society has a strong sense of social constructionism, was translated into Chinese (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.15). When the concept of "gender" initially emerged in China in the 20th century, it was essentialized as a heterosexual category and purportedly based on scientific and biological truths about the sexes. In addition to the ideas of sex and sexuality, the twentieth century saw the importation of the idea of love. The ideal relationship between sex and love has been outlined in modern Western discourse as one that progresses from romantic love to passionate sex via monogamous marriage. Any sexual relationships that did not follow that pattern, such as those that occurred before marriage, outside of it, or that were not based on love or between persons of the same sex, would be marginalized. Even though this tripartite pattern of love followed by sex and then marriage has become natural and accepted in modern society, it never actually took hold in ancient Chinese history. Romantic love was never a prerequisite for marriage or sexual relations in



traditional China. 爱 *Ài*, the Chinese word for love, was never used to denote an intense or romantic love between two people; instead, it was used to describe a way of walking and later, an altruistic consideration (Tsang, 1986). The philosophy of traditional China does not support passionate love. The contrary is true: Confucianists disapprove of intense love, even between a wife and husband, as it would cause them to neglect their household responsibilities. A woman engaging in sexual prowess in public, even just for her husband, is committing one of the biggest crimes. No respectable man should display public adoration for his wife. Parents arrange marriages in the patriarchal, polygamous, and traditional Chinese way. Until 1971, this system, which permitted the adoption of concubines, was recognized legally in Hong Kong. The deepest expression of closeness in the Chinese language and culture is not love but rather 情 *qíng* (deep sentiment or passion). When Chinese Buddhism does discuss love, it almost invariably does so in the context of obsession and greed. Buddhism places a strong emphasis on 慈悲 *Cībēi*, which places the emphasis on a compassionate emotion of care and concern for all things rather than on any single person or set of relationships. In current Chinese societies, the concept of 情 *qíng* is still prevalent. The so-called Chinese trait of being quiet, delicate, and introverted is not the fundamental justification for why many Chinese refuse to say "I love you" in Chinese. Many loud and expressive Chinese would likewise refrain from saying "I love you" in Chinese to convey their greatest emotions in terms of a subject-object divide. People frequently use mixed codes in Taiwan and mainland China, writing the words "love" in English and "I" and "you" in Chinese, or just saying "I love you" in English in an otherwise entirely Chinese conversation, implying that the phrase "I love you" is essentially a Western import (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.16).

For many Chinese, 情 *qíng* seems to be a more comfortable cultural option than passionate or romantic love. We must examine the fundamental structural elements of 情 *qíng* to comprehend the rationale for this.

1. *Qing* transcends the division of subject and object. Unlike passionate or romantic love, the word *qing* is not a transitive verb. *Qing* conveys the personal feelings that those involved share. Language-wise, we are unable to say 我情你 *Wǒ qíng nǐ* (I love you). When utilizing *qing*, a statement usually begins with "we" instead of "I".
2. 情 *Qing* emphasizes sentiments that are shared by multiple parties rather than adhering to an independent tradition. 情 *qíng* can be found between friends, between parents and kids,

and between the individual and the natural world. To put it another way, because 情 *qíng* takes into account the cosmic background of the natural universe, it consistently downplays the importance of humans.

3. 情 *qíng* is typically a persistent emotion that runs continuously, as opposed to a strong desire that is frequently sparked at first sight and disappears quickly.

4. Confucianists believe that 情 *qíng* should both reflect and reciprocate propriety. 情 *qíng* is a manifestation of one's inherent humanity that arises from inside.

5. 情 *Qíng* does not refer to marriage, in contrast to the Christian understanding of love. A great deal of well-known 情 *qíng* tales take place outside of marriage.

6. Sex is not a necessary, rational, or fundamental component of *qing*, in contrast to the idea of passionate love. Intimate relationships are permeated by *qing*, a deep, affectionate feeling that does not need a sexual interaction to reach its "climax."

7. *Qing* is a relation and a sentiment that circulates and flows within a particular relational context; it is not a property nor a concrete item that can be possessed.

8. It would be counterproductive to try to develop a theory of *qing* since it is an emotion that is better understood and shared in an interpersonal setting than it is when it is objectively and theoretically examined by an outsider or analyst.

9. *Qing* promotes a natural and harmonious streaming of emotions rather than the conscious or rational regulation of one's feelings.

10. The gender of those who experience *Qing* is not a factor in judging it. Author Chen Sen (1849) does not apply the homo-hetero value system when judging characters. Rather, he distinguishes ten kinds of *qing*, wild *qing*, shredded *qing*, elegant *qing*, pure *qing*, virtuous *qing*, impetuous *qing*, direct *qing*, inebriated *qing*, sensuous *qing*, and seductive *qing*, all of which apply to same-sex as well as different-sex interactions (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.17).

An explanation of the idea of Tao (The Way) is necessary for a thorough understanding of how the Chinese see 情 *qíng* and sexuality. Taoism holds that yin and yang, the two basic principles or energies that make up all aspects of life, are the products of nature and that Tao is the essential regulating principle of the universe. Tao is the organic totality of the eternal order and course of nature. Taoism rejects essentialist conceptions of reality and instead embraces an interacting, holistic view of reality. All particularities, whether human or not,

mutually constitute each other rather than existing independently and discontinuously.

According to Taoist cosmology, the fundamental binary forces of yin and yang are what give rise to the dynamics of all aspects of existence. Nonetheless, they are interactive, complementary, and interdependent rather than antagonistic, fixed, or mutually exclusive. Every individual is a mixture of yin and yang from birth, even though yin is more common in women and yang in men. There is no such thing as yin or yang in an exclusive or pure form. Taoism views sexuality as a category that goes beyond lust, one that is primarily cosmological and medicinal. The concept of yin-yang duality "differs fundamentally from Western dualism, which posits a radical separation between a transcendent creative source and a dependent object of creation" (Morris, 1991, p. 105). When done correctly, sexual practices are good for one's health and can extend one's life, according to the 房中術 *Fáng zhōng shù* (the art of the bedchamber) (Coleman Chou, 2013, p.18).

### 3.2 HOMOSEXUALITY IN CHINA: DEFINITION OF THE TERM TONGZHI WENHUA HOMOSEXUAL CULTURE

The term 同志 *tóngzhì*, commonly used in China to designate a homosexual, is relatively recent. However, 同 *tóng* (same, homo) and 志 *zhì* (ideal or orientation) were already present in classical Chinese. The use of this term with a completely different meaning of the term dates back to 1911. This was the year in which several Chinese anti-government rebels launched a political protest with anti-colonial and anti-Western connotations towards the Qing dynasty, which, among other things, they contested for having handed over the project for the development of the railway network to the Western powers, which in that historical period occupied China, which was defeated in the Second Sino-Japanese War. For the first time in modern Chinese history, these two characters were associated to allude to a form of camaraderie and the sharing of political and ideological ideals. (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.1).

The origin of this combination can be traced back to the motto of Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925): “革命尚未成功，同志仍需努” *Gémìng shàngwèi chénggōng, tóngzhì réng xū nǚ* (the Revolution is not yet completed, comrades, keep fighting), pronounced by Sun in 1925, when, despite their different ambitions, the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Communist Party (CCP) joined together to fight the warlords later (1926-1928).

Since 1949, with the birth of the People's Republic of China, there has been a real evolution in the use of the term. It began no longer to refer to the revolutionary militants within the Communist Party, but designated the common membership to a single party.

The queer meaning of the term was born in 1989, borrowed for the first time from the organizers of the "Gay and Lesbian Film Festival" in Hong Kong, to indicate an identity, Chinese homosexuality, distinct from global and transnational homosexual identity. The homosexual community began to privilege the term *tóngzhì* - a culture-specific term- when they wanted to emphasize their “Chineseness”: how they had fought for their political and national ideals. Queer *tóngzhì* also wanted to fight for their rights.

Chinese *tóngzhì* identity is, through this term, linked to a national identity, and for this reason, it is distinguished from the transnational "gay" one. The Chinese, in fact, have not only always been aware of their cultural specificity and their national identity, but they have also always shown a willingness, on the one hand, to refuse any submission to the colonial projects of the Western powers and, on the other, to recognize themselves as heirs of one

millennial culture - the Confucian one - which still persists in many areas. The community widely accepts the reappropriation of this term for its positive cultural references, gender neutrality, de-sexualization of the stigma of homosexuality, politics beyond the homo-hetero duality, and use as an indigenous cultural identity for integrating the sexual into society. *Tóngzhì* is a completely self-proclaimed identity of nonunitary position but not without social and cultural boundaries, as the word *tong* strongly hints at same-sex eroticism (Coleman, Chou, 2013, p.2-3).

Instead of stigmatizing oneself as a sexual minority or confronting the mainstream with a homo-hetero duality, *Tóngzhì* penetrates and appropriates the core of the mainstream to destabilize the imagined duality of homo and hetero. *Tóngzhì* is a strategy of inclusion and exclusion because it expresses both the sexual identity of difference and a political identity of sameness. There is no clear definition of *tóngzhì*, as its meaning and content depend on and require the everyday practices of all self-identified *tóngzhì* to actualize, define, and redefine. *Tóngzhì* identity is a step-by-step process that leads to the construction of self-identity. Every *tóngzhì* has to designate the *zhì* that she or her is supposed to share with other *tóngzhì*. Due to its inherent ambiguity, *Tóngzhì* identity becomes an ongoing process marked by repetitive acts of signification, wherein various factions vie to define its meaning. *Tóngzhì* challenges the notion of fixed, innate, or objective identity and disrupts the uncritical assumption of simply "being gay." While many *tóngzhì* individuals may not fully grasp the sociopolitical intricacies of *tóngzhì* perspectives and perceive it primarily as a positive representation of homosexuals, this does not negate the potential of *tóngzhì* discourses to encompass a diverse landscape of same-sex eroticism. Indeed, this has generated healthy debates, especially in Taiwan and Hong Kong, concerning the cultural specificity and political strategies of *tóngzhì*. Certainly, the cultural specificity and political strategies of *tóngzhì* have sparked robust debates, particularly in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

The emergence of *tóngzhì* discourses reflects an effort to integrate sexuality into social and cultural contexts. In Chinese culture, sexuality is not seen as a separate category but rather as an integral aspect of life. The slogan "We are here, we are queer, get used to it!" is based on individualism and contentious politics, emphasizing the cultural significance of body autonomy. However, demanding that everyone come out and identify solely as lesbian or gay due to their same-sex attractions can prioritize and rigidly emphasize sexuality over all other identities and differences, potentially perpetuating racism, classism, sexism, and cultural imperialism. Hence, it is essential to contextualize and analyze same-sex eroticism historically and theoretically, challenging the presumed universality of Anglo-American

experiences in forming lesbian identities. In exploring and comprehending the experiences and concepts of same-sex eroticism in various Chinese societies, the author will adopt the confrontational model of lesbian liberation. This model has been frequently idealized and universally portrayed as a prototype by numerous Asian PEPS, motivating its use for theoretical analysis. Lesbian confrontational politics emerge from a particular socioeconomic and cultural history marked by possessive individualism, industrial capitalism, urbanization, and a discourse centered around rights. The classifications of homosexuality, lesbianism, gayness, and queerness are not inherently natural or self-evident; instead, they represent highly fluid and debatable categories that may not be readily applicable to non-Western cultures. The classification of homo and hetero identities is just one particular approach to categorize and define sexual experiences. Emphasizing sexuality as a multi-dimensional aspect, encompassing class, race, gender, age, and cultural dimensions, could challenge the complacency of some lesbians and gays who solely perceive differences in terms of sexuality, limiting sexual distinctions merely to the gender of the chosen erotic object (Coleman, Chou, 2013, pp.4-6).

### 3.3 THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN CHINA

As one of the countries with the largest population, China is also home to one of the world's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities. In China, the LGBT community remains largely invisible in society, and its members consistently report experiencing barriers in their lives.

It took a long time to accept homosexuality in China. The native religions have not issued serious condemnations, and there are notable historical examples of same-sex relationships in the country. Under the Communists, the atmosphere got worse and worse. Gay men and transgender women found themselves harassed under ambiguously framed 反流氓法 *Fǎn liúmáng fǎ* (*anti-hooliganism laws*) that were removed only in 1997. But there was no systematic persecution, and the country has never maintained specific legislation criminalizing homosexuality. Results from a national survey about the Chinese public's discrimination toward the LGBT community published in 2020 by BMC Public Health state that there is strong social pressure for people to conform in China, and that means a powerful emphasis on having children and continuing the family line<sup>34</sup> (Wang, Hu, *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, this study found that over two-thirds of the 3,500 Chinese people surveyed said they would not be able to accept homosexuality. Eventually, in 2001, the Chinese Society of Psychiatry declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Despite this reconsideration, the Chinese Society of Psychiatry stated that a person could be conflicted or suffering from mental illness because of their sexuality, and that condition could be treated (Jun, 2017, p.37). For this reason, the clinics that treat this "problem" are widespread in China and offer conversion therapies that propose the vision of homoerotic images and the assumption of drugs that induce vomiting. The clients either attend these clinics voluntarily or are brought by their parents. In 2014, a clinic in Chongqing offered a man, Yang Teng, a "gay cure" that encompassed a series of treatments involving hypnosis and electric shocks. Yang Teng reported the fact, and the court ruled that such treatments were illegal and demanded that the clinic give Yang 3,500 yuan in compensation and post an apology on its website (Kaiman, 2014).

A more major event was China's admission to the WTO in 2001, which expedited the conversion of Chinese society to a market society. Due to urgent economic development and changes in the labor structure, notably in terms of mobility, new opportunities for self-

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<sup>34</sup><https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-08834-y#citeas> 18/02/2024

determination have emerged. Wei points out two important factors (Wei, 2012, p.70): First, it was extremely challenging for LGBT people to find private homes in the past because the availability of housing in the city was only accessible to married couples. The housing market's deregulation made maintaining one's privacy a practical possibility. Second, living and working far from one's birthplace and family became fairly common due to the weakening of the *hukou* system<sup>35</sup>. In the past, hiding one's sexuality was an ongoing concern as a result of living under the close scrutiny of the extended family. However, today's LGBT people have the chance to live in big cities, away from their families, and support themselves through their jobs (Wei, 2012, p.70).

The author continues by stating that these changes has had a significant impact on how Chinese LGBT people live their lives as well as how they view their relationships. In fact, before the 1990s, same-sex partnerships were typically brief, and it was unimaginable for a gay guy, for instance, to have a committed relationship with another man. The chance of a long-term relationship was jeopardized by intrusion from family and authorities, as well as a complete lack of freedom and privacy, as was mentioned above, due to the material and social situations that LGBT people live in. In the absence of a viable alternative, the prejudices and stereotypes about homosexuals that were pervasive in Chinese society—which portrayed them as promiscuous and libertine—found self-fulfillment, creating a landscape similar to that described by Li Yinhe (1998), where gays gathered in hiding in search of completely casual relationships aimed at satisfying their otherwise perpetually unfulfilled sexual needs. Contrarily, gay men were more likely to be monogamous, to live with their partner, and to be searching for a solid partner with whom to start a life. They frequently express their scorn and disapproval of the remaining homosexuals who prowl the streets looking for sexual gratification, a situation that is now rare but was very prevalent not so long ago (Wei, 2012, p.70).

Due in large part to developments like the Internet's widespread use and HIV prevention programs, the LGBT community is today significantly more united than it was in the past. Many LGBT people are no longer as completely alone as they once were because of the Internet's widespread use and the option for anonymous expression it provides. It was no longer required to cruise the streets casting furtive looks in looking for complicity; instead, it was now easy to agree online on preset meeting sites, especially if they were regarded as

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<sup>35</sup>In China, a very old system of family registration known as *hukou* makes sure every member of a family can only receive social rights, services, and benefits where they live. This strategy has been employed to deter and lessen the rapid internal migration to urban areas.



pathological cases in the home sphere. If they were treated like this, they could receive understanding and emotional assistance on blogs.

HIV campaigns, proactively funded by the government to protect the health of its citizens, frequently served as the foundation around which the gay community developed. Volunteer groups, often made up of homosexuals, attempted to disseminate accurate information about sexual minorities, allowing many to access acceptance and assistance that they weren't used to. As a result of associations' relative autonomy and the state's support for their activities, NGOs had the opportunity to significantly contribute to developing a network of support among Chinese LGBT people in this specific instance.

In China, the growth of the gay community is a notable urban trend. Although homosexuality has always existed even before that, the city and the queer are two connected elements to the extent that the construction of queer identity today as a social fact begins in history, specifically with industrialization and urbanization. Wei notes that the number and distribution of the population serve as indicators of the urban lifestyle (Wei, 2011, p.53):

[my translation] "Population size exacerbates the diversity and individuality of urban lifestyles, while population density and heterogeneity promote tolerance among strangers and anonymity in public life. The city, as a 'society of strangers', provides the necessary anonymity and inclusiveness for homosexuals, who carry a social stigma, while the large concentration of the population fosters the development of various subcultures and makes it easier for homosexuals to find their kind of people and partners in the city. These characteristics of the city not only allow homosexuals to survive in the city but also create a clustering effect that attracts more homosexuals to move to the city in pursuit of a free life."

The gay community has a symbiotic connection with the city and continuously attempts to stake out a piece of public space for itself, opposing the heteronormativity that underlies the design of the urban environment. This is accomplished through the use of queering tactics, which entail the appropriation of previously closed-off areas for LGBT people to express themselves.

Over the past forty years, the conditions of LGBT people in China have markedly improved, but unfortunately, this does not mean that they have full freedom in their daily lives.

According to a United Nations study results published in 2016, sexual minorities in China face tremendous difficulties when it comes to being open about their sexuality<sup>36</sup>. When it comes to sexual minorities, only 5% of them reveal their orientation at work, at school, or in

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<sup>36</sup> [Being LGBTI in China: A National Survey on Social Attitudes towards Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

a religious setting, but this number jumps to 15% when it comes to family members. If one takes into account those who only partially express their sexuality in the family and school contexts, the percentage rises; in fact, many people choose to selectively confide in their sexual orientation to family members (often peers), while others choose to confide in their parents alone. Many students also choose to come out to a select group of classmates at school, but teachers are very rarely the recipients of such disclosures. The total proportion of Chinese LGBT people who hide their sexuality at work, at school, and within their religious community is close to 80%. These everyday settings are actually characterized by a low degree of interaction and a high risk of being exposed to the public. It is clear that the vast majority of Chinese LGBT people have a distinct tendency to conceal their sexual orientation from the majority of people in their daily lives (United Nations Development Programme, 2016, p.26).

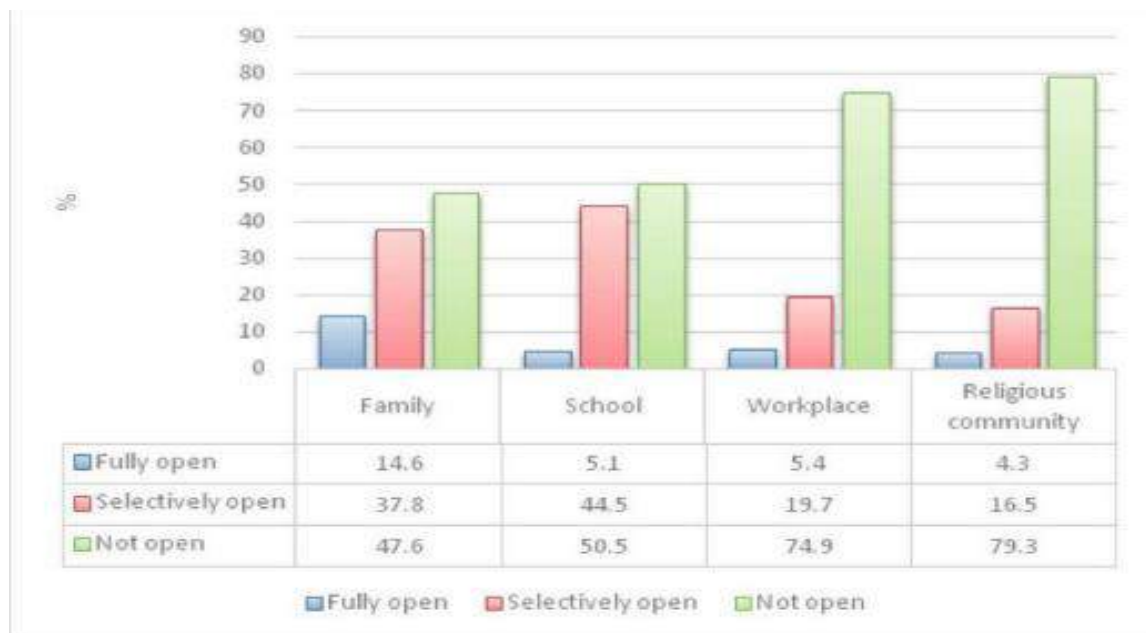


Figure 3.2: “Coming out” of minorities in different daily life environments (%) (United Nations Development Program, 2016, p.26)

There is more openness, but also more discrimination, when it comes to the family. More than 56% of LGBT respondents report having faced discrimination in their own homes; among them, the most frequent forms include being pressured into a heterosexual relationship and being reprimanded for their appearance, language, or behavior, but there have also been instances of verbal and physical abuse. Family members may do significant emotional and behavioral damage to their children when they attempt to change their sexual orientation by invoking parental authority or filial piety.

It is a well-known truth that LGBT people feel compelled (directly or indirectly) to get into a heterosexual relationship and have children in order to live up to their parents' pressing expectations, except for extreme circumstances like the aforementioned electroshock treatments. The rate of marriage among sexual minorities is typically substantially lower than that of heterosexuals; among those who are already married, 84% say they are married to a heterosexual, 13.2% are in a "marriage of convenience"<sup>37</sup> and only 2.6% have registered their union abroad. The survey also indicates how young Chinese LGBT people are able to defy parental expectations even as the pressure mounts as they get older.

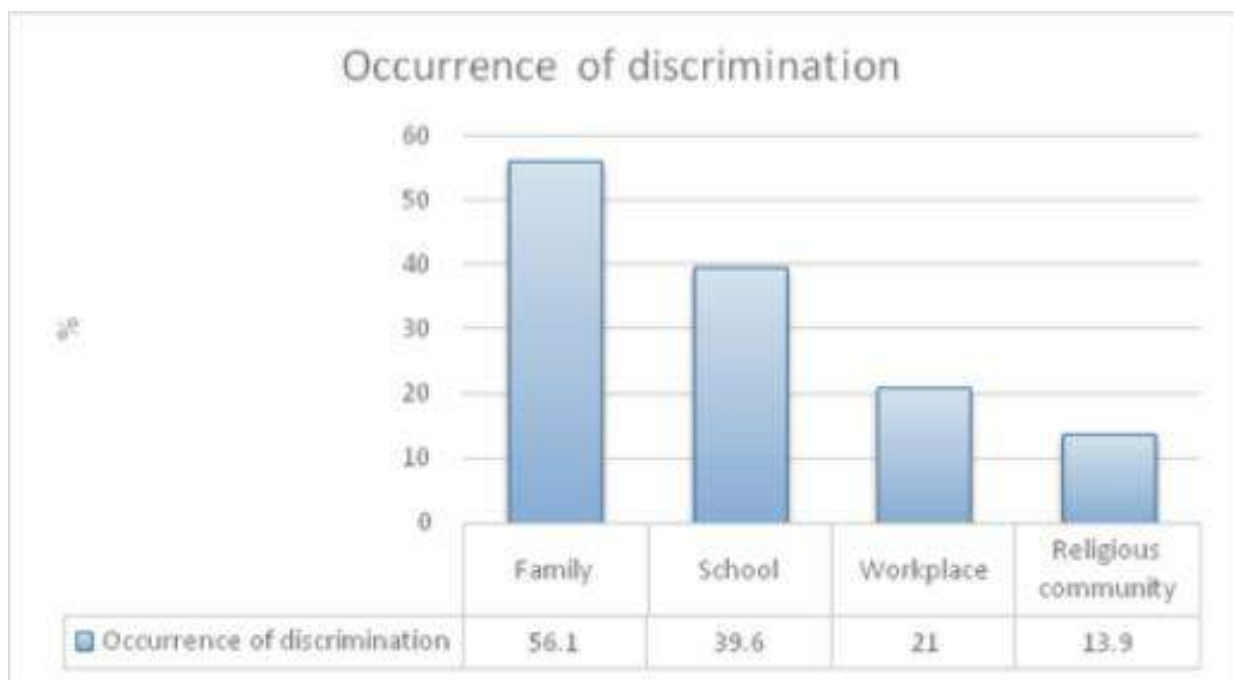


Figure 3.3: Occurrence of Discrimination (%) (United Nations Development Program, 2016, p.27)

Due to a greater dropout rate, sexual minorities generally have poorer levels of schooling. However, compared to their heterosexual colleagues, they experience higher rates of unemployment and job instability, as well as poorer incentives in some positions. For transgender people, issues in school and at work are particularly severe among sexual minorities. I cite the example of an unpleasant situation a homosexual woman had to face in the workplace: “In the company I worked before, I used to have lunch with a bunch of female colleagues. But after they knew I was a lesbian, although they said they could understand and accept me, they never invited me to lunch anymore. At first, I would invite

<sup>37</sup>假结婚 *Jiajiehun* or 形式婚姻 *xingshijiehun*, a common phenomenon in China, is when LGBT people stage marriages with other LGBT people of the opposite sex to appease their family members. The couple after that leads separate love lives away from their parents' prying eyes.

them to lunch instead, but they always gave me lame excuses like “I need to withdraw some cash today” or “I have to go somewhere tomorrow.” That’s when I sensed the problem. Since they were unwilling to have lunch with me and found me hard to accept, I stopped to approach them and have eaten alone ever since” (United Nations Development Program, 2016, p.30).

In general, the survey points out that there is a lot of misunderstanding and prejudice in society, which is a result of the very poor coverage of sexual minorities in the mainstream media.

However, different opinions exist in China, a fact which opens up a lot of room for deeper information work to increase inclusion and reduce discrimination. To avoid the bureaucratic hurdles that NGOs must navigate, some NGOs structure themselves as corporations. Then they use these corporations as "safes" to hold money legally until it can be returned to them so that they can use it to fund particular initiatives and projects. Because these NGOs serve as a helpful instrument for the state to comprehend and monitor what is happening in society, relations with governmental authorities remain largely cordial (Battaglia, 2017).

## CHAPTER 4

### PINK ECONOMY

#### 4.1 THE PHENOMENON

The terms ‘pink dollar’, ‘pink pound’, and ‘pink economy’ are widely circulated in discussions around the growing interdependence between queer communities and the marketplace. Originating in Anglophone capitalist liberal democracies, the term ‘pink economy’ can refer to businesses serving the lesbian and gay communities (Jary and Jary, 1991, p. 471), lesbian and gay businesses (Bell and Binnie, 2000, p.96), or even the “relationship between gay and lesbian consumers and the market” (Bengry, 2011, p.1093). Gay men, and to a lesser extent, lesbian women, have been identified as a niche market of untapped disposable capital, and mainstream commercial involvement in gay and lesbian communities has intensified accordingly (Burns, 2012).

Thus, the collection of phenomena collectively referred to as the ‘pink economy’ or ‘pink capitalism’ consists primarily of marketing tactics targeted at the LGBTQIA+ market.

Seeing gays and lesbians as a business sector worth targeting, many organizations decided to implement marketing tactics aimed at this demographic (i.e. they expect the gains from these strategies to outweigh the expenditures). Conversely, some businesses feel that the LGBT community does not even exist as a market sector and do not actively seek to draw them in with their products. There are also companies that create advertisements that do not exclusively target a particular community, but this does not mean that they do not consider the LGBTQ+ community as a market segment.

The premise that there is a market sector with a non-heterosexual sexual orientation and that this orientation influences consumer choices to some degree is the foundation of the pink economy, and it is not something that is taken for granted. Those who dismiss this idea contend that LGBT individuals are too dispersed based on other factors, such as gender, age, social class, and place of birth, to be a lucrative market.

Hughes (2006, p. 153) uses market segmentation techniques to try and confirm the presence of the gay and lesbian market:

*There are a number of criteria adopted for determining the existence of distinct market segments (whatever the basis used), but they can usually be consolidated as identifiability, sufficiency, stability,*

*and accessibility. By the first is meant whether market needs can be determined and are distinctive and measurable; sufficient refers to the numbers in the segment and their purchasing power, whereas stability relates to whether the distinctive characteristics will persist long enough to allow for the generation of 'sufficient' profit. The final accessibility criterion relates to whether or not the segment can be reached through the marketing media.*

Hughes continues by applying these standards to the given portion. Since the LGBT community is not homogeneous and because definitions of sexual orientation are contentious and subject to ongoing debate, there are already issues with the first criterion, identifiability: sexual orientation alone is insufficient to identify a market segment. The LGBT segment that the pink economy mostly targets is gay men in the white middle class. Due to the difficulties in obtaining an accurate estimate of the LGBT population in a particular country, the sufficiency requirement is equally challenging to verify.

Regarding the third criterion, the homosexual population should be regarded as reasonably stable. If more homosexuals choose to come out, and vice versa, there may be gradual progress if there is an atmosphere of increased acceptance. The final requirement is the least troublesome one: there are many ways to reach LGBT individuals for advertisement, including online marketing opportunities, various homosexual publications, and physical locations like gay bars.

Hughes (2006, p.154) therefore draws the conclusion that:

*Gays and lesbians may well, therefore, be considered a 'market segment', though with less precision than might be applied to others.*

Now that the existence of this market segment has been established, it is reasonable to take a quick look at how it has evolved historically. Branchik's research (Branchik, 2002, pp.86-97) focuses on the US, where the pink dollar has garnered significant media attention and is a good representation of the issue overall. Branchik argues that the gay market is not a historically new phenomenon but rather a very recent development in its most visible form. This is because marketing should be viewed as a two-way street, with consumers acting as marketers' agents through their decisions and purchases. In its pre-mainstream era, the gay market was driven by the sector itself, and companies were typically unaware that they were targeting a homosexual audience.

There have been three main periods in the history of the LGBT market in America: (Branchik,

2002, p.87)

*(1) the underground phase, pre-1941; (2) the community-building phase, 1941-1970; and (3) the mainstream phase, 1970–present.*

The Industrial Revolution's heavy urbanization led to the establishment of the first LGBT communities' urban centers during the first phase. Except for gay bars and sex industries, vendors intentionally or unintentionally target gays. The primary businesses in the early pink economy were indeed homosexual bars, public baths, and brothels. Not that other areas are missing, such as catering (cheap restaurants near neighborhoods where more gay people used to live) or apparel (particular items of clothing become coded indicators to recognize each other among homosexuals). The second phase spans the years between World War II and the upheaval in sexual norms, which culminated in the Stonewall riots in 1969 and gave rise to the American gay liberation movement. Many young men were conscripted into training camps during World War II, and this led to one of the most extreme instances of cohabitation in history, providing gay men with the chance to interact with other men who shared their sexual orientation. The chance to travel the nation is another benefit of serving in the military; many gays relocated to the nation's major cities after the war, which are now home to thriving LGBT scenes. The liberalization of the gay press after a 1958 Supreme Court decision holding that homosexually oriented editorial content was not obscene editorial content, is another seminal event in the history of the American LGBT market. This led to an explosion of gay-focused periodicals published in the United States, now the primary vehicle businesses use to market their goods. The demonstrations that followed the police raid on the homosexual bar Stonewall Inn in New York in late June 1969 marked the pinnacle of a developing sense of community. Gay bars became commonplace in cities, particularly in port areas where there were many soldiers stationed. The organized underworld opened and operated a large number of these bars. By the end of the 1950s, homosexual journals were becoming rather popular, and in addition to funding from reader contributions, they were sometimes sponsored by ads for gay-friendly local activities that cater to the LGBT community. Furthermore, the first gay neighborhoods emerged, where gay men operated taverns, restaurants, and public baths.



Figure 4.1: The Stonewall Inn, New York ([I Moti di Stonewall, la lotta per i diritti LGBT - The Pitch, www.thepitchblog.it](http://www.thepitchblog.it))

The gay market expands in tandem with the accomplishments of the American gay liberation movement throughout the third phase, which spans from the Stonewall riots to the present. Businesses are finding the LGBT community to be more and more appealing due to its growing visibility. Right-wing religious movements are slowing down this rapid expansion by threatening to boycott businesses that support homosexuality; In the 1980s, this growth significantly slowed down as a result of the AIDS crisis and its impact on public opinion.

However, from the 1990s forward, the LGBT market began to develop anew, thanks in part to a more politically progressive period. The belief that the LGBT community is made up of people who are wealthier, better educated, and more likely to be consumers is what has led to the expansion of marketing efforts directed at this group. This belief was established through some polls conducted in the late 1970s. Due to this, several international companies have begun to directly target American LGBT Americans in the pages of gay magazines. The first was Absolut Vodka, which was advertised in *The Advocate* magazine in 1979, it represents the oldest and largest LGBT publication in the United States and the only surviving one of its kind that was founded before the 1969 Stonewall riots. Other companies that have done so include Apple, Ikea, and American Airlines.

With the perception that gays travel more frequently and consume better booze, the tourism





## **ABSOLUT OUTRAGEOUS** *Cocktails Perfected*

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF GOING OUT AND COMING OUT

and alcoholic beverage industries are among the market drivers for the LGBT community. Under the title *Shocking Gray: The Catalog for the Other 25 Million People*, a catalog targeted solely toward gays was released in 1991, while in 1994 the first Gay Expo was held in New York. (Branchik, 2002, pp.87-95)

Figure 4.2: [Absolut Heralds Its Marketing to Gay Consumers - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

Advertisements that specifically target the LGBT community will be received far more favorably than those that target other market segments. Because queers are not accustomed to being portrayed in conventional marketing methods, their portrayal elicits a disproportionate response, meaning that the investment is more than repaid (Hughes, 2006).

Selling yourself to the pink market can be done in a variety of ways. One alternative for items that appeal to broad markets, irrespective of sexual orientation, is to take no action at all. Conventional public relations tactics can work just as well on gay and lesbian consumers. However, many businesses want to focus on the LGBT community because they think it will increase their revenue; this is often the case when selling a home in a certain neighborhood or a record by a particular artist. Advertising campaigns that target LGBT individuals tend to be the most successful; those that are viewed as being instrumental or disingenuous, on the other hand, tend to have the opposite effect from what was intended. The most effective ones are those that use gay-themed imagery or speak to LGBT people straightforwardly and sincerely.

Dual marketing, or appealing to both homosexuals and heterosexuals, is another tactic that

works particularly well with mainstream media. This ambiguity arises from the fact that not everyone understands the "gay point of view," and advertisements can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Men's underwear ads like Calvin Klein, Abercrombie and Fitch that feature pictures of athletes without shirts are good examples of these kinds of ads. Creating an image of oneself that is gay-friendly is another strategy for marketing in this industry. Developing a gay-friendly persona for oneself is another strategy for marketing in this market. One way to achieve this is by supporting events with a homosexual theme, promoting one's social commitment to the LGBT community through charitable donations, or implementing policies that promote greater diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Another way is to ensure that one's public-facing staff members are gay-friendly (Hughes, 2006, pp. 160-168.)

Companies mostly employ radio, television, the Internet, and newspapers and magazines to reach the LGBTQ+ population. Magazines and newspapers are among the finest advertising platforms since homosexuals and lesbians read more than heterosexuals do, according to surveys. Advertisements in mainstream newspapers work better since gay magazines are harder to come by. LGBT websites in the United States and Great Britain are very visible and appealing to businesses looking to advertise their goods (Hughes, 2006, pp. 170-174).

Another available channel is social networks, which offer the possibility of tailor-made advertising for each user. LGBT-focused applications are essential. The most common category is dating apps, with the most well-known ones being Grindr, Growlr, Scruff, Hornet, and Jack'd. However, LGBT users also frequently use Tinder, despite it not being specifically designed for them.

## 4.2 THE PINK MARKET IN CHINA

According to the 3rd Annual 2016 China LGBT Community Report<sup>38</sup>, China's pink market is thought to be valued at about two trillion RMB. As society becomes more accepting of sexual variety, a large number of domestic businesses have entered the competition to take a piece of this lucrative industry. It's clear that there is a gay market even when businesses don't openly acknowledge it; the phenomenon isn't even recent. That being said, we may claim that the media case took off when Taobao, the biggest e-commerce site in China, unveiled its new 'We Do' campaign<sup>39</sup> for Valentine's Day of 2015. It offered ten LGBTQ+ couples the chance to travel to Los Angeles and get married before Californian law. The couples simply needed to post a brief video about their lives together and why marriage would be essential to them to be entered to win this trip. After Taobao reduced the selection to twenty couples, the choice was made by the website's users, who cast over 75,000 votes for their favorite couples. The ten couples that received the most votes would get the coveted prize. Along with offers for five additional travel packages featuring honeymoon routes for same-sex couples, the contest page also featured multiple sets of LGBT-themed bedding. The non-profit Beijing LGBT Center, the underwear brand Bliss, the internet service provider Danlan together with its most popular offering, the gay dating app Blued, are some of the campaign's sponsors. In addition to providing gay-specific services to its clientele, Blued is an example of a business that invests in its public image by actively supporting the rights and empowerment of Chinese LGBT individuals through a variety of social initiatives. Through Blued's Pink Economy Innovation and Entrepreneurship Contest, over 60 LGBT firms were able to secure private capital to launch as new ventures (Campbell, 2017).

Blued is not the first business of its kind in the technology industry; in fact, Zhu Qiming's Star-G Technologies is a company that makes smartphone games exclusively for the LGBT community. Characters can marry each other in Star-G's role-playing games, regardless of gender. Allow characters, irrespective of gender, to personalize their personas and trade gifts with other users; the gifts are purchased with actual money, which brings in revenue for the business. The activist Steven Bielinski launched the organization WorkForLGBT, which also supports other yearly gatherings, including the Pink Market Conference and the Annual LGBT Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Conference<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup><https://www.xinwengao.com/pr/201611181048344217/250-business-leaders-attend-3rd-china-lgbt-pink-market-conference/> 18/02/2024

<sup>39</sup>Webpage of the "We do" campaign: [彩虹热恋20讲10 \(taobao.com\)](http://www.taobao.com) 18/02/2024

<sup>40</sup>[China Holds 2nd Gay Job Fair & 3rd Annual LGBT Diversity Conference - Press Release Distribution and](#)

The 3rd Annual Lgbt China Community Report states that Chinese LGBT individuals primarily focus on electronics consumption, spending most of their money on smartphones and tablets as well as cosmetics, travel, and dietary supplements. Over 90% of participants use their smartphones for shopping and vacation reservations. Travel within China is more common than travel overseas, perhaps because many respondents do not own a passport; Thailand is the most popular destination outside of China. Only a very tiny portion of the sample made the trip expressly to an LGBT-related event.

Regarding consumer choices, the most significant element influencing purchase decisions is a company's support for the LGBT community (54% of respondents consider this when making purchases). The Beijing Gender Health Education Institute's Ecological Report on the Chinese Homosexual Population examines the primary consumption sites for the LGBT community in China (Tong, 2008, pp. 219–227) Homosexuals are opening and operating a rising number of these customer locations. Particularly well-liked venues for consumption are gay bars. Depending on whether they are meant for gays or lesbians, they can be labeled as GAY 吧 *gaybā*, or 拉拉吧 *lālābā*, however, many also have mixed usage. Another distinction is made between 闹吧 *nàobā* and 清吧 *qīngbā*; the former has a livelier ambiance, complete with singing and dancing, while the latter is more subdued and geared for an older, more sophisticated, or introverted crowd. 演艺吧 *yǎnyìbā* are gay clubs with regular entertainment and shows. Bar patrons are largely young individuals and students, with an average age range of 20 to 40. Professionals are the primary patrons of several opulent gay bars located in major cities. Gay bars are crucial to the socialization of gay people since many patrons go there looking for acceptance. The layout of Chinese gay bars differs significantly from those in the West in that there are many tables arranged around the stage, making them more conducive to socializing with friends than to meeting new ones. In Western gay bars, there are typically few tables and seats to promote movement and interaction (Wei, 2009).

Additional venues for consumption include those centered on self-care, primarily fitness centers. Because of their ambivalent feelings about masculinity, gay men often strive for an excessive version of masculinity, particularly in gyms. These gyms become known as homosexual hangouts by word of mouth rather than by openly marketing themselves as such. They become famous among gay circles and draw an increasing number of them once they

reach a certain concentration; this is an example of how the interaction between passive and active modes may sometimes produce venues for LGBT consumers. In contrast to other consumer settings, gays and straight who are mixed rarely publicly express their sexual orientation and even less frequently make sexual advances. The collective involvement in this ritual of male reverence is what fosters a sense of community in these locations (Wei, 2009).

Managing these operations can be difficult. Since they are considered dangerous investments, every attempt is made to retrieve the capital invested as soon as possible. Profit margins are constrained because the most desirable clients, who frequently occupy prominent positions in society, are less likely to appear in public in these settings (Wei, 2009).

Not every gay Chinese person visits these locations randomly. They are typically avoided by the red collars (government and civil service employees), and gold collars (highly-skilled knowledgeable people such as doctors, lawyers, and scientists), who worry that their social standing could be jeopardized if they are spotted there. Chinese people belonging to different social classes have varying levels of access to consumer locations. As we've seen, there are increasingly exclusive homosexual clubs, and the cost of entry acts as a barrier to entry for the general public; parks and bathrooms are the next best options. Certain internet chat forums restrict participation to middle-class white-collar workers only. Discrimination against gays from rural regions, the money boys- men who sell sex to other men-, and those who are completely shut out of most places of consumption is a prevalent tendency. As a result, these individuals are pushed to turn to prostitution to integrate into a metropolitan life. Gays who frequent places of consumption generally face both risks and rewards. The former entails the constant possibility of a police raid, as well as the possibility of being arrested, beaten up, and released the following day. On the plus side, these places allow gays to feel free and carefree and to relish the fleeting moments of a sense of community (Zheng, 2015, pp. 99-118. )

According to Geng Le's statements, BlueD CEO and founder, the pink yuan is strong and confident, ready to conquer China:

*“The consumer power of the gay community is robust, but it has always been neglected...We want to tell people that the pink economy is very strong.”* (Campbell, 2017)

There is a feeling that the trend of increasing openness of Chinese society towards sexual

diversity will not be reversed, which suggests that opportunities will only increase.

Within the Chinese LGBT community, there is an ongoing debate about the effects that this phenomenon has had and will continue to have. Some are skeptical of the compassion that businesses have for homosexuals and lesbians. Some companies want to show that they are embracing, welcoming, targeting, or catering to their LGBT customers, but actually, they only want their money. They only want to use this as advertisement fodder. So, they put money into it and then say that they are very pro-LGBT, but actually, they may not be. So that's what is called 'pinkwashing'. The sense of pinkwashing relevant to the context of LGBTQ+ rights is often used during Pride Month to refer to companies' use of the occasion as a marketing and sales opportunity without making meaningful contributions to the cause—or, in some cases, even working against it, such as by donating to politicians who support anti-LGBTQ+ policies.<sup>41</sup>

Other voices within the Chinese LGBT activism bemoan the fact that, frequently, the PR aspect of the movement is not matched by tangible steps to enhance the quality of life for homosexuals:

*"A lot of Chinese companies like Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu put LGBT-friendly messages on social media," said Steven Bielinski, organizer of China's first LGBT job fairs, which began in 2015 in Beijing. "But they haven't necessarily done much when it comes to internal company LGBT policies."*<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of opinions recorded by national and international media continue to be positive. The CEOs of pink enterprises, Zhu Qiming firmly believe that the growth of this industry will contribute to a greater level of societal acceptance and tolerance for sexual minorities.

*Zhu Qiming [...] said business is a smart, subtle way of raising the visibility of China's LGBT community and gaining greater social tolerance. "That's one of the social merits of the booming pink economy that we cherish most," said the former police officer, who is gay. [...] "Business development is the biggest charity (in the sense of raising awareness), particularly in the fight against LGBT-related social discrimination and stigma," he added.*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup><https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/pinkwashing/> 18/02/2024

<sup>42</sup><https://www.insidemarketing.it/glossario/definizione/pinkwashing/> 18/02/2024

<sup>43</sup>[Pink Economy' set to soar as companies target LGBT community\[2\]- Chinadaily.com.cn](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/18/02/2024/Pink-Economy-set-to-soar-as-companies-target-LGBT-community[2]-Chinadaily.com.cn) 18/02/2024

Proponents of this perspective contend that the market economy encompasses the values of inclusivity and diversity because it is built on serving a wide range of customers, each with unique needs; the pink economy can meet the material as well as the spiritual needs of the LGBT community. As a result, the market would provide a route to liberty with the full backing of the legal system and society (Tong, 2008, p. 218.) The LGBT consumption venues would contribute to the community's "modern and civilized" appearance by providing group approval and support and, on the other hand, enabling information to be disseminated at a lower cost (Tong, 2008, pp. 228-235.)

Visibility is a further argument in favor of the pink economy. Many contend that, if nothing else, these big businesses' endorsements of gays have the benefit of increasing their visibility, recognizing their presence, and bringing them into the public eye. This can only seem to be an improvement over a situation where homosexuality is taboo and a significant portion of the public finds it difficult to even conceive of its existence. To put it succinctly, businesses would rightfully want their profits, which would inevitably contribute to the normalization of homosexuality in Chinese culture. Moreover, in this consumer society, the audience that these campaigns can reach can only be larger than what civil society can reasonably hope to reach.

### 4.3 EXAMPLES OF PINK MARKET ADVERTISING IN CHINA

On the eve of the Spring Festival, in 2017, Blued published a 3-minute 只用生活来回应 Zhǐ yòng shēnghuó lái huíyīng ( "Just Respond with Life") brand image promotion video. It represented four homosexual boys who, for cultural reasons, are forced to keep their homosexuality a secret and their development was depicted in this short film. The film and the two sets of planes focus on showing the two stages of youth and adulthood, corresponding to the two sections of "problem" and "response". Taking the teenage years as the starting point of the story, capturing the special time point of adolescence, and unfolding various aspects of sexual awareness, self-awareness, family responsibilities, and campus bullying, the youth story of four teenagers shows more Human shadow. The life status of adulthood is more expressively displayed, using a modern dance to connect the changes in everyone's lives, showing the current ongoing efforts and the power to continuously extend forward. Following its publication, it went viral and provoked contentious debates among internet users. Blued clarified that there is a firm yet kind power behind the slogan "Just respond with life." This is not just a person's outlook on life, but also how "minorities" interact and converse with the majority.<sup>44</sup>

A British TV series was adapted by the American cable TV network Showtime many years ago, opening up a glimpse of the LGBTQ+ community to the general public. This TV show, titled “同志亦凡人” *tóngzhì yì fán rén* ( "Gay, Ordinary People" ), has an authentic Chinese translation that is both truthful and stylish. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are indeed regular people with needs for housing, food, clothes, and transportation.

Subsequently, on January 8, 2020, a social media trending search including a Lunar New Year promotion from Alibaba's Tmall surfaced. A homosexual couple attending a family reunion was featured in the campaign. The older parents meet them with disbelief at first, but over the dinner table, they are soon welcomed with warmth. Weibo users praised the campaign on the microblogging platform because it was uncommon for a large firm like Alibaba to normalize a same-sex relationship in a family setting. Another online campaign from the gay social app Blued, which is a localized version of Grindr, ran that same month and received over 45.7 million views on Weibo.

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<sup>44</sup> [https://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNDU0NzIwOTU4MA==.html?spm=a1z3jc.11711052.0.0&isextonly=1](https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU0NzIwOTU4MA==.html?spm=a1z3jc.11711052.0.0&isextonly=1)  
18/02/2024





Figure 4.3: A 2020 January Lunar New Year-themed campaign from Tmall depicted a gay couple coming home for the holiday. (<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/news-trends/article/3081621/china-changing-its-lgbt-views-tmall-campaigns-and-weibo>)

Taiwan's McDonald's created a heartfelt "Acceptance" commercial with an LGBT theme to promote their new McCafe cup. The narrative of the commercial is on a gay son who comes out to his father. A conduit for communication between a parent and son is the McCafe cup. It is endearing, insightful, and remarkable. With a McCafe cup in hand, the son admitted to his father that he "likes boys." The son felt anxious and confused in those brief moments. There was a long pause before the father left. He anticipated being turned down. But then, out of the blue, the father returned and inscribed three words—I accept—on his son's cup. The awkwardness between the two of them is erased by the McCafe Cup. Love is what gives them the confidence to speak up and the willingness to accept. Eventually, the son's ability to transcend all worldly perceptions will become the last smile of his father.



Figure 4.4: Taiwan's McDonald's commercial with an LGBT theme to promote their new McCafe cup ([https://www.sohu.com/a/228294068\\_390911#google\\_vignette](https://www.sohu.com/a/228294068_390911#google_vignette))

Another intriguing advertisement is the Taiwan commercial of Asus ZenFone, that has a gay plot twist. Gay Star News reported that the video has since gone viral in China.

The ad for the ZenFone wasn't in English, but the romance was universally understandable. Here's how Derek Yiu at Gay Star News interpreted the plot:

"The ad starts with a 'boy-meets-girl' scene that is way too typical for viewers to expect much out of it. Egged on by his best friend, the boy gives the girl a poem that he writes and they fall in love within days. The threesome have some happy outings, but the boy eventually discovers that his friend has stuck up many photos of them on a wardrobe - and the girl has been edited out, without exception. Shocked at first, the boy ends up looking into the eye of his friend, somewhat romantically. A Korean love song then starts playing and the tagline 'Delete the dispensable John Doe in your life' appears."<sup>45</sup>

The intended message of this advertisement is: If you're secretly gay and in love with your best friend, then the ASUS ZenFone is just what you need<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.advocate.com/business/2014/05/18/watch-taiwanese-phone-commercial-tells-gay-love-story> 18/02/2024

<sup>46</sup> [https://youtu.be/wrHhE-QXWvE?si=ms0jhJT2q\\_rSWioL](https://youtu.be/wrHhE-QXWvE?si=ms0jhJT2q_rSWioL) 18/02/2024

Some market sectors in China have unique advantages when doing 'pink marketing'. The pet industry comes first. Only 36 countries and regions permit same-sex adoption arrangements, even though approximately 50 countries and regions worldwide completely or partially recognize same-sex marriage or civil unions<sup>47</sup>. From an ethical standpoint, commercially assisted reproductive practices like surrogacy remain controversial worldwide because of their high cost and because of the ethical issues involved. Taking up pet adoption could be a useful strategy to alleviate loneliness in such circumstances<sup>48</sup>. China's urban pet market was valued at over 270.6 billion yuan in 2022, up more than 20 billion yuan from the year before. Of the total market value, the urban dog market accounted for 147.5 billion yuan, while the cat market accounted for about 123.1 billion yuan (Yihan, 2023.)<sup>49</sup>

It's impossible to argue against the fact that kittens and puppies are the newest social media stars in China. One of the most popular short-video platforms in China, Douyin, reports that cat and dog-related content has amassed over 300 billion views. On social media, several pet influencers have amassed more than 10 million followers<sup>50</sup>. The pet mania has had a significant impact on China's online marketplace. China's e-commerce market for pets is expected to reach 30 billion yuan in 2020, almost six times larger than it was in 2015. A survey found that 14% of Chinese respondents would be willing to pay for things that a pet influencer recommends<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://www.topys.cn/article/31793> 18/02/2024

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.topys.cn/article/31793> 18/02/2024

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/765681/china-pet-market-size/> 18/02/2024

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201608/china-preferred-influencer-types-on-buying-endorsed-products/> 18/02/2024

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201608/china-preferred-influencer-types-on-buying-endorsed-products/> 18/02/2024

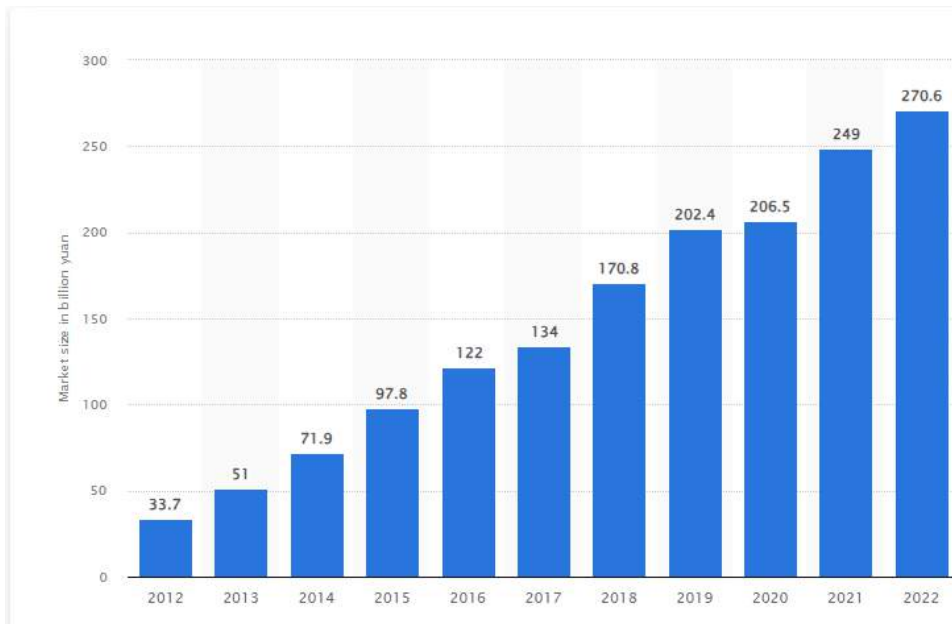


Figure 4.5: Market size of pet-related businesses in urban China from 2012 to 2022 (in billion yuan) ([w.statista.com/statistics/765681/china-pet-market-size/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/765681/china-pet-market-size/) )

The luxury market is also bearing the scars of China's rapidly growing pet economy. Luxury labels like Louis Vuitton, Tiffany, and Prada were just a few of the many options available to wealthy pet owners. Products ranged from travel carriers to collars. A survey conducted among China's billionaires revealed that this target group spent an average of 8,200 yuan annually on pets<sup>52</sup>. More and more pet owners in China are increasingly drawn to upscale pet services like pet photography and pet amusement parks<sup>53</sup>.

A poll of LGBTQ+ individuals in China found that 51% of lesbian/bisexual individuals and 40% of gay/bisexual individuals have pets. Given the large demographic base, "pink marketing," particularly that which targets homosexuals and bisexuals, will provide unanticipated advantages for the pet business if done correctly.

<sup>52</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/1290059/china-spending-on-pets-among-millionaires/>

<sup>53</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/1291019/china-penetration-of-pet-consumption-by-category/>



Figure 4.6: Chinese pet market in China among LGBTQ+ (<https://www.topys.cn/article/31793>)

It is also important to pay attention to the financial and insurance sectors. This outcome is thought to be the result of some LGBTQ+ individuals investing their excess money in the insurance and financial markets in exchange for a high-quality life in the future, rather than having to pay for daycare or further schooling.

The travel and hospitality sectors are the final ones deserving of consideration. In recent years, tourism has played a significant role in the global pink economy. It is very evident from the "Report on the Living Situation of Sexual Minorities in China"<sup>54</sup> that: 68% of lesbians and bisexuals and 53% of gays and bisexuals in China had made leisure vacation trips to the nation at least once in the previous 12 months (with the exception of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan). Simultaneously, the trend of LGBT travel companion diversification defies conventional preconceptions. "They'll go with family members, same-sex couples, straight friends, and LGBT pals. While traveling, respondents who travel with other LGBT individuals typically stay in budget and mid-range hotels (including in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan)."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cn/UNDP-CH-PEG-Being-LGBT-in-China\\_EN.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cn/UNDP-CH-PEG-Being-LGBT-in-China_EN.pdf) 18/02/2024

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.topys.cn/article/31793> 18/02/2024



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