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EMOTIONAL VOICES AND ACCULTURATION:

A DIALOGICAL EXAMINATION OF ROLE OF FASHION DISCOURSES IN THE (RE)CONFIGURATION OF LOCAL AND MIGRANT CONSUMER IDENTITIES

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Emotional Voices and Acculturation:
A Dialogical Examination of Role of Fashion Discourses in the (Re)configuration of Local and Migrant Consumer Identities

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ABSTRACT

This aim of this thesis is to examine how local and migrant consumers resolve identity conflicts and social tension through symbolic consumption as narrated in their acculturation experiences. When people encountered others from different sociocultural backgrounds, they may experience uncertainty and pressure to change in adapting to the conflicting identity negotiation and the (re)configuration of social relationships. In proposing a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation, this study reveals how consumers manage multiple, and even conflicting, voices within their inner selves and the counterpoint of different worldviews from others. The theoretical framework of this thesis echoes key theoretical approaches to consumer acculturation and dialogical self-theory. This qualitative study employed ethnographic methods and phenomenological interviewing techniques in researching consumer acculturation experiences connected to urbanization in Guangzhou, China. I pay attention to the feelings aroused in encounters with difference and the exercises of agency for social distinction through fashion-clothing consumption and style projects. The findings and discussions highlight that 1) consumers' emotional attachment to "homeland" and social memories in pre-acculturation experiences engage in a dialogue with past, present, or even future "other *I*-positions"; 2) everyday encounters with difference articulate emotional voices between local and migrant consumers in the acculturation process, in which individuals from both groups struggle to refigure, or refiguring, their multiple selves and to create distinctions against immediate and imagined otherness in their fashion choices; 3) four types of assumed emotion were exhibited in which consumers ascribed collective social meanings to their consumption choices in order to assert their identities as well as to resolve uncertainties and conflicts. This study deepens our understanding of the role of emotional voices in determining the strategies consumers use to navigate multiple and conflicting voices in the play of signs and meanings through their fashion choices and image consumption.

PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE THESIS

List of Journal Papers and Conference Proceedings

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2. Lam, Magnum, Wing-sun Liu, Cliff Liu, Li and Eric Li (2016), "Can Buying Fakes Make You a Bad Person? The (Re)signification of Consumer Moral Identity through Engaging in Counterfeiting in Hong Kong," Global Marketing Conference, Hong Kong, China, July 21-24, 2016.

3. Lam, Man Lok, Liu Wing Sun and Chester To (2013), "Behind Fake Luxury Brands Consumption: Understanding Embodied Brand Knowledge under Chinese Cultural Context," City University of Hong Kong and China University of Mining and Technology - China Marketing International Conference 2013, Xuzhou, China, July 12-15, 2013.

4. Lam, Man Lok (2012), "Putting Assumed Emotion in Fashion Brand Literacy: Understanding Brand-Identity Relationship in the Interdependent Asian Context," The Fourth ITC Research Student Seminar Day, Hong Kong, China, January 12, 2012 (Best Research Presentation Award).

5. Lam, Man Lok, Liu Wing Sun and Chester To (2011), "Researching Chinese Consumers: Proposal of an Ethno-semiotics Approach," 2011 Annual Conference of China Marketing Science, Guangzhou, China, August 19-22, 2011.

6. Lam, Man Lok, Liu Wing Sun and Chester To (2011), "The Assumed Emotion and Brand Literacy: Understanding Brand-Identity Relationship in the Interdependent Asian Context," The 2011 ITAA-KAMS Joint Symposium, Seoul, South Korea, May 26-29, 2011. (Best Conference Paper Award)

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background: Statement of Problems

In a globalizing world where people from different cultures are more interconnected than at any time in history, consumer identity conflicts and their social consequences for consumption have been central to the discussion of consumer acculturation theory (see Askegaard et al., 2005; Chytkova, 2011; Desphande et al., 1986; Dion et al., 2011; Jafari and Goulding, 2008; Luedicke, 2011). When people socialized in one (migrant) culture move and come into continuous firsthand contact with another (mainstream) culture, the migrant and local consumers experience different levels of uncertainty and pressure to change. This may result in 1) identity conflicts and new identity projects, 2) social and physical adjustment in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviors, 3) psychological stress and culture shock, 4) struggles in new sociocultural conditioning, and 5) adapting to the asymmetrical power relationship (Li, 2012). On the one hand, migrants are under pressure to adapt to the new cultural environment by acquiring new skills and cultural knowledge for the sake of their survival; on the other hand, the locals have to respond to the influx of migrants who drastically alter their original cultural setting. Acculturation thus becomes a contested sphere to examine the local-migrant confrontation in a mutual adaptation process for identity formation as well as a social relationship (re)configuration (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007; Luedicke, 2015; Vikas et al., 2015).

Feelings of uncertainty and instability often arise in encounters with difference during acculturation experiences (Levy and Zaltman, 1975); the confrontation with "otherness" may engender consumer agency, a term referring to consumers' ability to transform and play with meaning (Eckhardt and Mahi, 2004; Ger and Belk, 1996). Consumption thus serves as a vehicle for resolving conflicting identity positions along acculturation and prevents negative outcomes like discrimination, exploitation, and group conflict. When consumers choose to embrace a multiculturalist or cosmopolitan discourse, they may express a sense of openness and hospitability to forge, celebrate, and reinforce new social relationships by showing acceptance, gift-giving, sharing, and generosity (Kipnis et al., 2014; Sobh et al., 2013; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). On the other hand, consumers may also want to differentiate and separate from others by adopting (both visibly and invisibly), rejecting (or resisting), appropriating, or even transforming meanings in certain consumption practices and preferences to resist people from other cultures and dominated market ideologies (Bauman, 2004; Luedicke, 2015; Hannerz, 1996; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998). This results in different forms of identity narratives, such as the pursuit of a cosmopolitan ideal (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999), flexible citizenship swapping between two cultural frames of reference (Oswald, 1999), hybrid and multiple identities (Askegaard et al., 2005), shattered identity projects (Ü stüner and Holt, 2007), and even torn self (Jafari and Goulding, 2008).

These studies have largely focused on understanding how migrant consumers (i.e. members of minority groups, generally alienated and lacking the financial resources to enact the aspirational consumption styles of dominant cultures) adapt and transform their identities through ascribing new meanings to their consumption practices and preferences in order to avoid defamation, stigmatization, or even discrimination from local consumers (Jafari and Goulding, 2008; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). However, this single perspective has left several questions insufficiently discussed in the current body of consumer acculturation theory. First, in what situations is consumer agency exercised among local or migrant consumers in the play of consumption meanings in identity projects along acculturation? How do sociocultural structures condition consumers' exercise of their agency in consuming brands, stores, neighborhoods, traditions and places (Luedicke, 2015; Luedicke and Giesler, 2009)? Second, recent studies suggest that the locals may feel pressure to acculturate to the immigrant culture (Sobh et al., 2013) or even show hostility to the migrant by cultivating an "authentic" culture and local niches (Luedicke, 2015; Vikas et al., 2015). Yet little attention has been paid to understanding the role of consumer emotions in resolving multiple and conflicting voices in self-identity projects, subsequently leading to inconsistent but socioculturally situated consumption preferences and practices. Third, in response to Luedicke's (2015) relational acculturation model, does acculturation always break down to an indigene-immigrant dichotomy? Such presupposition limits the possibility of a shared worldview of intersubjectivity as well as co-creating consumption practices and values among consumers of different cultures and backgrounds. This also extends to understanding how consumers navigate conflicting and multiple identity positions with "others" as a result of an array of complex culture-informed consumption experiences and decisions. The research strives to examine how consumer agency and consumer emotion dynamically (re)configure the social relationship and (re)produce the cultural legitimacy of consumption and taste regimes (Bahl and Milne, 2009).

1.2 Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine the role of consumer emotional voices in acculturation experience which navigates and resolves identity conflicts and social tensions through symbolic consumption of fashion-clothing. The main assumption of the entire research project is that consumers engage in a dialogue of mutual adaptation in their identity projects, and exercise a sense of consumer agency in the play of signs through appropriating and negotiating opposing meanings in their consumption choices in order to differentiate themselves from the "unwanted others". To address the research gaps identified in the above, the research questions of the entire study are listed as follows.

1. What are the struggles and challenges local and migrant consumers experience in acculturation process?

2. How do the feelings / emotions triggered in acculturation connects to the past, present, and imagined identity-formation?

3. How do consumers use, or even alternate, fashion discourses to resolve identity conflicts and social tensions in acculturation experiences?

4. Do the local and migrant consumers share a common worldview in fashion consumption choices?

1.3 Research Design

To address these research questions, I draw upon ethnographic fieldwork in Guangzhou, China, focusing on the acculturation experiences and identity narratives of local and migrant consumers on interpreting and responding to one another's fashion clothing preferences and image consumption. I introduce a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation theory, which contributes to a relational understanding of the mutual adaptation process between local and migrant consumers in their identity projects as narrated in their acculturation experiences. The dialogical model is useful for exploring how consumers manage multiple and even conflicting voices within inner selves and the counter of different worldviews with others. This subsequently results in inconsistent consumption preferences and decisions (Bahl and Milne, 2010). In proposing a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation, I pay attention to the exercises of consumer agency for social distinction, the role of consumer emotions in identity conflicts and narratives, and the interchange of positions of social dominance relative to others in resolving inner identity conflicts and social tensions in the social sphere during acculturation (Ahuvia, 2005; Bourdieu, 1984; Herman and Dimaggio, 2007; Murray, 2002). A detailed review of the dialogical self-theory and acculturation will be discussed in the following chapter, Literature Review. Here, I will first explain my choice of the research context, which includes 1) the acculturation context led by China's urbanization and rapid marketization, and 2) identity projects as narrated in the fashion-consumption discourses. This further suggests the significance of this research project.

In the wake of the globalization and marketization process, China market is rife with Western brands, consumer goods, and advertising that are interwoven with multicultural ideologies as well as Chinese traditions and cultural values. The global-local connection challenges consumers' identity projects as well as transforming the Chinese traditional values and social order (Zhao and Belk, 2008; Zhou and Belk, 2004). This research extends the current discussion by studying the impact of urbanization in

China, including the government's socioeconomic policy, which encourages mass internal migration from the rural or lower-tier cities to first-tier megacities to sustain economic growth at both city and national levels. While urbanization in China has created significant economic benefits, and improved the quality of living in the urban setting, the influx of migrants moving to the cities has created social tension and stratification between locals and migrants. The influx of migrants has changed many aspects of the locals' urban life—for example, dialects used in everyday life, employment opportunities, urban housing, sharing of public resources, and local norms and traditions. In the eyes of the locals, the migrants are often regarded as "threatening Others" seizing the economic and sociocultural resources in the form of better education, higher living standards, and superior working opportunities (Griffiths, 2013; Yeung, 2002). With a research focus on rural-urban migration along urbanization in China, the entire study enriches the current consumer acculturation theories, which are largely predicated upon cross-national encounters of different ethnic backgrounds, by incorporating the acculturation experiences of people of the same ethnicity who nevertheless come from different parts of the same large country (Dion et al., 2011). In addition, the study of China's urbanization also opens how the political dimension of how national socioeconomic planning shapes the acculturation process, as well as individuals' identity projects, by intensifying the cultural interaction between rural and urban citizens.

The entire study employs an interpretive, qualitative research framework, and follows the trajectory of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) in addressing "the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 868). Research data is drawn upon 3.5 years of ethnographic fieldwork in Guangzhou China, where the researcher traveled back and forth from the research field site to conduct in-depth interviews and (non)participant observation with a group of young research participants combining both local and migrant consumers. Apart from revealing the everyday lived experiences and life histories of the participants along their acculturation experiences, I pay enormous attention to understanding the consumers' fashion choices and image consumption in their identity narratives. Following Thompson and Haytko's (1997) assertion that fashion discourses enable consumers to find meanings by contrasting and opposing values and beliefs in combination with a diverse interpretive position, I examine how the local and migrant Chinese consumers appropriate countervailing meanings in their fashion choices and brand consumption in mediating identity conflicts and group conflicts in everyday lives. The expressive nature of fashion discourse in the form of symbolic statements reveals an important aspect of understanding identity politics and subject positions in the context of symbolic consumption. I also agree with Murray's (2002) discussion that consumers engage in "dialogue among personal narratives, the discursive possibilities, and context-specific interests" (p.438). Consuming fashion for style projects also extends to the political dimension of symbolic consumption, where consumers engage in a continuous dialogue of struggle within one's multiple selves as well as with others of different worldviews in the social sphere through appropriating new

meanings in their fashion choices.

In this regard, a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation has been appropriated for the entire research design to understand consumer agency in resolving the tensions and identity conflict along acculturation. Early research has identified that consumers may exercise agency in the play of signs by selecting opposing meanings in their fashion choices and style projects (Murray, 2002; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Individual choices in fashion clothing and style projects constitute a personalized fashion statement that aligns with consumers' specific cultural values and subject positions for the sake of social distinction and differentiation from the unwanted others (Bourdieu, 1984). To understand this intertextuality of fashion statements along acculturation experiences is to constantly examine both hegemonic and non-hegemonic discourses (Murray, 2002); the dialogical approach to consumer acculturation is useful in understanding how local and migrant consumers cope with the tensions and identity conflicts in response to each other through symbolic consumption in the pursuit of fashion and style projects. The dialogical approach also helps to examine the dialectic interplay between agency and structure through which consumers continually renew and resist new meanings in their fashion choices, alongside the cultural narratives consisting of complex of acculturation experiences, relationships, and activities in a dominant position relative to others (Murray, 2002; Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

1.4 Significance of Research

The significance of the study is threefold. First, it extends the current consumer acculturation theory by incorporating a dialogical approach that pays attention to the exercises of consumer agency. I pay attention to how consumers resolve identity conflicts with the presence of "otherness" and alternate social dominance positions in their narrative of acculturation experiences. This contributes to deepening our understanding of the strategies consumers use to navigate multiple and conflicting voices in the play of signs and meanings through their fashion choices and image consumption (Ogden et al., 2004). The motivation of being distinct and differentiating oneself from the "others" through symbolic consumption exhibits a sense of consumer agency that dialectically reconstructs diverse ideological agendas in the marketplace. This further explains different consumer identity narratives and lifestyles (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Griffiths, 2013; MacCannell, 1979; Thompson, 2004).

Second, the dialogical approach also contributes to exploring the role of consumer emotion during confrontation with "others", and how it subsequently guides the formation of multiple selves, which leads to inconsistent consumption decision preferences in the context of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). While Ahuvia (2005) highlights three strategies consumers used to reconcile identity conflicts,

namely "demarcating", "compromising", and "synthesizing", this research would further extend the discussion to the role of consumer emotion in how consumers may apply these strategies in different situation under the acculturation context.

Third, from a managerial perspective, the study also sheds light on the existing market-segmentation approach, which is largely predicated upon geographical as well as demographic, psycho-behavioral factors. With more than 1.3 billion people living in China, the country is hardly represented by a single market. China's market is often characterized by its heterogeneity with great regional differences in terms of market structures, regional economic development, demographic composition, and other cultural factors such as folk cultures, rituals and traditions, history, dialects, and values. Geographically speaking, most of the megacities and Chinese consumers are condensed along the east coast (e.g. Guangzhou and Shanghai), while the western region remains largely undeveloped with vast expanses of unpopulated land (Cui, 1999). Historically, the northerners and the southerners are culturally different in terms of values, dialects, and behaviors (Fairbank and Goldman, 1998). Previous consumer studies on China market segmentation also support a significant difference in consumption values and behaviors across the rural and urban populations (Chan and McNeal, 2006; Prion, 2006; Sun and Wu, 2004). They also find that regional markets in China maintain slightly different consumer profiles in terms of demographic and sociocultural characteristics (Cui, 1999; Cui and Liu, 2000; 2001; Dickson et al., 2004). Although these studies have fruitfully divided the China market into several regional segments, they fail to address the dynamic of urbanization in mixing different folk cultures and how it subsequently changes the marketplace structure as well as creating new consumption values, patterns, and behaviors.

The understanding of urbanization highlights how those border-crossing activities across or within national boundaries reshape marketplace structures and the consumption patterns therein. Massive internal migration during the urbanization process has led to the interaction of people from wildly different cultures, and it dynamically changes the socio-economic structure of the marketplace as well as the consumption values, attitudes, and behaviors therein. In particular to the case of China, even though the country is largely dominated by the Han ethnic group, the country's sheer size forces it to incorporate diverse regional folk cultures with different histories, rituals and traditions, dialects, and consumption values and behaviors (Liu and Faure, 1996). Cohen (1991) argues that the discussion of Chinese identity cannot be separated from local identity and the regional cultural background where any given individuals grow up. While China as a country is a patchwork of local cultures, local Chinese culture is part and parcel of the overall Chinese culture. This research contributes to understanding the complexity of the Chinese marketplace structure, embedded with different worldviews about consumers' personal, cultural, or even imagined ideal identities.

1.5 The Transitioning Society - Urbanization in China

Since the context of the entire study is based on the massive rural-urban migration in Guangzhou, a brief understanding of the urbanization process in China is necessary before exploring the complexity of this transitioning market. Previous research has addressed that migration of people may lead to the social transformation of new cultural spaces, creating a platform for (re)construction and (re)presentation of identity projects as well as an asymmetrical power relationship (Appadurai, 2002; Askegaard et al., 2005). Because China is one of the most populous countries in the world, urbanization there has recently drawn attention in both sociological and marketing research to understanding the complexity of social mobility and social stratification driven by its internal population movement.

The scale of urbanization in China is unprecedented in the history of mankind (Miller, 2012). Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, boldly asserts that urbanization in China is one of the two most important developments determining the future of mankind in the 21st century. It is important to notice that urban policy in China is intertwined with the country's economic goals. Since the end of the 1990s, speeding up the process of urbanization and minimizing social impacts brought about by the explosive economic developments are the top priorities of the nation's socio-economic reform (Sun, 2003). During the period between 1990 and 2007, urban population in China more than doubled, growing from 254 million to 601 million (accounting for 45% of the total population). More importantly, urbanization has also triggered strong economic growth. The real GDP has grown almost tenfold from US$224 billion (RMB$1.57 trillion) to US$2.18trillion (RMB$15.26 trillion) (Janamitra et al., 2008).

The national urbanization planning has been predicated upon the strategy of city expansion. In general, megacities at the first-tier level incorporate neighboring land and welcome massive numbers of migrants coming from the rural or lower-tier cities. Statistics indicate that the urban population in China's cities will grow by another 350 million people (i.e. including 230 million migrants) by the year 2025. Such a figure is more than the total population of the United States today. McKinsey Global Institute (2009) forecasts there will be 1 billion people living in cities in China by 2030. Economic growth alongside urbanization has proved successful in providing China's cities with a stable supply of productive labor for economic growth. Urban inhabitants in the megacities (cities with populations of more than 10 million people) rose from 34 million in 2007 to 120 million in 2015 while the share of GDP doubled from 11% to 24% (Janamirtra et al, 2008). Midsize cities in China (cities with populations of 1.5 million to 5 million people) are expected to continue the pace of urbanization and absorb most of the new urban residents (around 40% of the total migrant population) and account for one-third of China's urban population in 2025.

The discussion of massive internal migration along urbanization must begin with the hukou system (or household registration system), a socioeconomic institution launched in 1958 to effectively monitor and control population movements between rural and urban areas. The hukou system is a product of Chinese socialism for a rural-urban divide, creating very different entitlements to rations, housing and welfare benefits for rural and urban households (Yeung, 2002). During the late 1950s to the 1960s, peasants were bound to collective farming. They largely lived in poverty and were completely cut off from many urban privileges such as compulsory education, better schooling, heath care, public housing, and varieties of foodstuffs (Bian, 2002). It was not until the post-Mao era that the state began rural and urban reforms. Since then, the communist party has departed step by step from a planned socialist economy to adopt marketization reforms (Bian, 2002; Whyte, 2012). It was not until 1978, when China commenced its "economic reforms and opening" (gaige kaifang), that rapid economic development in the country began.

Market reforms first began in the countryside with the decollectivization of agriculture and the dismantling of communes allowed and then required (Whyte, 2012). The rural household was then recognized as a basic unit of production, distribution, and consumption. The peasant laborers were allowed to move and work in the cities at higher-income, nonagricultural jobs (Unger, 1994). With a commitment to implement whatever policies and institutional changes were necessary to stimulate productivity and economic growth, economic reform in urban areas allowed private enterprises to operate in China. This subsequently led to the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs) along the coast, where tax relief and other incentives were introduced to attract more foreign companies to set up factories after 1979. The open-door policy has resulted in many more job opportunities in the cities, and subsequently migrant peasants and other labor flooded into towns and cities. By 1995, there were an estimated 80 million peasant laborers working and living in different cities in China (Bian, 2002).

After 30 years of expansion, China's rural-urban migration still grows at a steady pace. Rural migrants seek more and better working opportunities in the cities and migrate to developmental zones along the coast (Bian, 2002; Whyte, 2012). China's city population grew by 200 million people in the first decade of the century, an increase equal to the total population of Australia. Internal migration has become vital even to the economies of long-established cities. Half of the population growth in the cities is led by rural-urban migration. Miller (2012) found that there are 160 million rural migrants working far from home in the cities; another 60 million people have left their villages to live in local towns and cities. An estimated 35 million semi-migrants work at non-agricultural jobs during the day and return to their villages after work. These migrant workers have taken up most of the construction and hauling jobs as well as working in domestic and hotel services, sales, and manufacturing (Whyte, 2012). In general, the rural migrants can be divided into

two broad categories (Miller, 2012). First, traditional migrant workers (i.e. around 330 million people who live away from their villages), called the "floating population", move to the city and travel back and forth on a supposedly temporary basis. The second category includes growing millions of farmers who agree, or even are forced, to give up their land in exchange for a new urban life. In sum, around one-third of the migrants in China currently crossing provincial borders are doing so in search of jobs in the cities. Most of them come from inland China and travel to the east coast, where the prosperous cities are located.

While rapid urbanization in China has resulted in massive internal population movement from rural to urban areas, the process not only brings significant economic development and prosperity to the city setting, it also changes the sociocultural environment of regional cultures in the city. Research shows that internal migration along with urbanization has created dramatic social changes and stratification since it raises social inequality in the cities (Bian, 2002; Whyte, 2012; Yeung, 2002). Marketing scholars also highlight that regional markets in China are now driven by social differences between people coming from different regions (Cui and Liu, 2000; 2001; Dickson et al., 2004; Doctoroff, 2005; Griffiths, 2013). The influx of migrant workers in the cities has greatly impacted the life of local residents. According to the 2010 census, Guangdong remains a popular destination for migrant workers; one out of three migrants who cross provincial borders works and lives in that city. The number of migrant workers in the region has long outnumbered that of local residents (Miller, 2012). However, this does not mean that the migrants will have a better life than that of the locals. Although urbanization has created more job opportunities for migrant workers from the rural areas, the rural-urban income gap is still huge and still growing. Migrants' life in the city is tough and they have to face systemic discrimination and denial of basic rights of citizenship. The hukou system has aggravated the gap between the rural and urban population (Whyte, 2012). While urban citizens can enjoy housing, employment, health care, schooling, food rations, and the right to work in state jobs, the rural population struggles with few social benefits, and have to rely on their land for sustenance and security. Miller (2012) reports that there are at least 220 million Chinese migrants living outside their places of household registration. Rural migrants who work in the cities on a temporary basis are regulated by the hukou system, where they are not entitled to any access to health care, utilities, subsidies, housing benefits and, in many cases, schooling for their children, despite the fact that they have legally worked in the cities for years.

However, the highly unfair household registration system does not stop the youth from moving to and working in the cities. Whyte (2012) found that the younger generation of rural migrants still feels optimistic about their chances to become rich and powerful through hard work, talent, and schooling. Many young migrants choose to work in the manufacturing and service sectors in the cities as these jobs are regarded more favorably than physically demanding construction jobs. In fact, most of them do not know farming and are reluctant to follow in their parents' footsteps by returning

to the countryside. Living and working in the city sustains a dream of hope and a future, where the youngsters believe that they can pursue a better working and living standard in adapting to the city setting (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). However, as shown in this study, the reality is that the adaptation process exists among both local and migrant consumers. The local consumers, in confrontation with the migrants, may express hostility to differentiate or even exclude the migrants through symbolic consumption and the resources available to them. Thus, my research examines to what extent the local and migrant consumers may engage in a dialogue of (re)constructing their identities and (re)producing social boundaries from each other through appropriating opposing meanings to their consumption choices in resolving the identity conflicts that occur during acculturation experiences (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Thompson, 2004).

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The outline of the research is divided into five parts. The first chapter, Introduction, discusses the research problems identified from the existing literature on consumer identity projects as well as consumer acculturation. I clearly outlined the research design along with the research questions of the study. A brief introduction of the research context (i.e. urbanization in China) is also provided. In the second chapter, Literature Review, I trace previous academic discussions on consumer acculturation theory as well as the role of symbolic consumption in self-identity formation. More importantly, I revisit the theoretical discussion on the dialogical self and how symbolic consumption and consumer emotion resolve identity conflicts. The third chapter, Methodology discusses the ethnographic methods used in the entire study with a short description of the field site—Guangzhou, China. The fourth (Findings and Discussion) chapter covers my analysis of data collected in the research field site together with a discussion of how the dialogical approach to consumer acculturation helps to understand how local and migrant consumers resolve identity conflicts and social tensions through symbolic consumption as narrated in their acculturation experiences. Last but not least, the fifth (Conclusion) chapter summarizes the study's findings, highlighting the limitations of the study as well as providing some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer Acculturation Theory

2.1.1 Definition and origins

Consumer acculturation is a subset of acculturation theory, studying the complexities and dynamic of acculturative forces in shaping consumer behavior and marketplace structure[1] (Peñaloza, 1989; 1994; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). In general, acculturation is defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936: 149). Acculturation is often conceived as a temporally (i.e. historical) and spatially bounded process rather than a result of cultural interaction between groups (Herskovists, 1937). It is primarily concerned with how individuals experience identity conflicts when they confront people from other cultures, and adapt reactively (i.e. resisting change but assimilating into the dominant group), selectively (i.e. involved in intergroup contact and deciding what elements of their culture they wish to surrender or to incorporate from the new culture), or creatively (i.e. simulating new cultural forms not found in either of the cultures in contact) to the presence of "Otherness" in negotiation of their identity formation, psychological adjustment in value and attitudes, as well as other changes in behavioral repertoire [2] (Bhatia, 2002; Berry 1997; 2005; Ger and Ø stergaard, 1998; Maldonado and Tansuhaj,1999; Padilla and Perez, 2003).

While archaeologists have long known from historical evidence that acculturation took place in many early civilizations[3], and can identify the social impacts and changes brought about by ethnic migration and cultural interaction[4] (see Boas, 1888, Nava et al., 2005; Powell, 1880; Rudmin 2003), a research focus on consumer acculturation only emerged in the early 1980s, when marketers in the United States found that the consumption patterns of immigrant groups were different from those of other ethnic groups, and in turn from those of the mainstream Anglo-American population (Luedicke, 2011; Ogden

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[1] Acculturation is a discipline in anthropology studying the process and outcomes when two different cultural groups come into firsthand contact. In a memorandum for the study of acculturation, Redfield and his colleagues (1936) outlined an approach to acculturation research. This includes a binary opposition between donor and receiving group, an approach to problem identification and the types of data needed; the analysis of acculturation through identifying types of contact, situation, process involved (i.e. selection, determination, integration); the psychological mechanisms of selection and integration of traits under acculturation; and the outcome of the process (i.e. acceptance, adaptation, reaction).

[2] The Social Science Research Council (1954) states that "acculturation change may be the consequence of direct transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors" (p.974).

[3] Archaeological evidence of acculturation has been found in many early civilizations including Rome, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and China (see Rudmin, 2003)

[4] The term "acculturation" was first coined by Powell (1880), and primarily refers to the force of the overwhelming presence of European culture in the United States and the subsequent changes to the Native American language. Powell's work has called for more research to study the acculturation process among ethnic minorities, in particular to their integration into the mainstream American culture (i.e. Americanization) and its effect on the national immigration policy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Boas, 1888; Navas et al., 2005; Ogden et al., 2004; Üstüner and Holt, 2007).

et al., 2004). Marketing scholars at that time began to identify how and to what extent these immigrants "assimilate" to the national majority culture through "the acquisition of skills and knowledge relevant to engaging in consumer behavior in one culture by members of another culture" (Peñaloza, 1989, p. 110). In this regard, Peñaloza (1994) defines consumer acculturation as "the general process of movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another country" (p.33). By examining how consumers engage in buying and consuming goods and services as well as learning the meaning attached to them, the study of consumer acculturation sheds light on the consumer socialization process[5]. This thus contributes to a wealth of knowledge on consumer behaviors and preferences, market segmentation and strategies formulation, policymaking for the protection of national sovereignty (e.g. anti-immigrant sentiment), and increasing competitiveness in the global economy (see Peñaloza, 1989; 1994; 1995; Luedicke, 2011).

To provide a solid foundation for the discussion of a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation theory, it is important to outline the theoretical trajectory of consumer acculturation. The current discussion of consumer acculturation theory can largely be divided into two main bodies of knowledge, which differ in their paradigmatic assumptions and methods (Chytkova, 2011). On the one hand, the assimilationist approach follows a positivistic direction, assuming a universal conceptualization and measurement of acculturation. It offers insights into how ethnic awareness and cultural identification influence consumption patterns, preferences, and perceptions of marketing activities. On the other hand, the post-assimilationist approach adopts an interpretive fashion in which consumption, along with acculturation, is conceptualized as a symbolic project for consumers. It posits that both local and migrant consumers groups engage in a mutual adaptation in identity formation and the negotiation of cultural positions with the marketing and social resources available to them in a specific sociocultural market structure (Bardhi et al., 2010). In this chapter, I first briefly discuss the two approaches and then explain how they contribute to the study of consumer identity projects and their consequences for consumption behaviors and patterns in acculturation studies.

2.1.2 The assimilationist approach

Early studies of consumer acculturation follow an assimilationist approach, better known as the melting-pot theory (Park, 1950). Acculturation is conceived as a linear and progressive process through which consumers from migrant cultures can only dissociate themselves from their groups of origin and subsequently assimilate to the mainstream host culture (O'Guinn et al., 1985). The "host culture" is treated as an "empirical reference point set by the average consumption decisions of

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[5] Socialization refers to the process through which individual members of a community learn, adapt, and conform to a society's norms, rules, and expectations based on the interpretation of reality. Peñaloza (1989) argues that acculturation is predicated upon the theory of socialization, while consumer socialization refers to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace. This stream of research primarily focuses on childhood and adolescent consumer learning as well as the context of consumer learning.

indigenes (i.e. locals) living in similar regions and earning similar incomes" (Luedicke, 2015, p.110; emphasis added). Under this process-oriented approach, the terms "acculturation" and "assimilation" are used interchangeably, regardless of the differences in their original meanings (see Table 2.1). It conceptualizes acculturation as a continuum, with varying levels of acculturation in each subculture. At one end of the continuum is the unacculturated extreme, where the consumer's heritage and homeland culture are the strongest influencing factors. At the other end is the acculturated extreme, where the consumer is fully assimilated to the host culture through adopting the prevailing consumer attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge of the host population (Hair and Anderson, 1972). This bipolar model requires the immigrant population to maintain an orientation either toward their group of origin or toward the host society (Navas et al., 2005).

	Acculturation	Assimilation
Nature of Process	Dynamic process	Dynamic process
Types of Phenomena	Either individual or group process	Either individual or group process
Types of Contact	Direct contact required	Direct contact required
Directionality	Bi-directional (i.e. two –way reciprocal)	Unidirectional (i.e. one-way)
Changes in Values	Not required, though values may be acculturated	Changes in values required
Changes in Reference Group	Not required	Required
Internal Change	Not required	Required
Out-Group Acceptance	Not required	Required

Table 2.1 Summary of acculturation and assimilation (Teske and Nelson, 1974, p. 365)

The assimilationist approach laid the foundation for understanding consumer acculturation, with a focus on designing a measurement scale for the examination of the degree (i.e. high, middle, and low) and directionality (i.e. home versus host culture) of the consumer acculturation process. Hirschman (1981) introduces the notions of "ethnic affiliation" and "ethnic identification" as two acculturation measures to examine how one's intensity of cultural affiliation may affect one's consumption behaviors and attitude. In general, weak ethnic identification with the original culture is presumed to be high assimilation, while strong ethnic identification refers to individuals retaining strong connections with their original ethnic culture (Desphande et al., 1986). These constructs have been well-attested in studies of migrants' acceptance of products in a new culture (Schiffman et al., 1981), as well as consumers' perceptions and preferences over consumption choices (Desphande et al., 1986; Kim et al., 1990), media consumption and advertisements (Khairullah, 1995), exchange of market information (Cleveland et al., 2009), and brand loyalty (Podoshen, 2006). It proves how consumers' cultural identification affects their consumption patterns in terms of 1) use of information sources, 2)

product preferences, 3) consumption orientation, and 4) perception of marketing activities and advertising (Deshpande et al., 1986; Hirschman, 1981; Jamal and Chapman, 2000; Kara and Kara, 1996; Khairullah, 1995; Lee and Tse, 1994; Quester and Chong, 2001; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983).

Even though the assimilationist approach is limited to explaining consumers' identity projects during the acculturation process, it provides crucial insights into how consumers' self-perception toward cultural identification (i.e. cultural position) affects their consumption behaviors and patterns. In the spirit of the assimilationist approach, immigrant consumers are thought to be gradually abandoning their culturally defined consumption patterns in favor of a consumer behavior typical of the host culture (Chytkova, 2011). However, such presuppositions are being criticized as oversimplifying the complexities and dynamicity of acculturation phenomena. In an extreme, Rudmin (2009) asserts that a positivistic understanding of consumer acculturation has resulted in a proliferation of acculturation measures and confusion of acculturation concepts. The theoretical approach produces data showing "poor convergent validity, poor divergent validity, poor reliability, confounded factorial structure and excessive acquiescence" (p.111). As such, some marketing scholars have shifted to focus on the consumers' narratives and alternatives of acculturation experiences and interpretations. This has resulted in the post-assimilationist school of consumer acculturation theory (Askegaard et al., 2005; Lindridge et al., 2004; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1989; 1994; Skuza, 2007).

2.1.3 The post-assimilationist approach

The post-assimilationist approach challenges the assumption that consumer acculturation is a linear progress through which immigrant consumers assimilate to a dominant host culture through learning and adapting to their local consumption patterns alone (Askegaard et al., 2005; Peñaloza, 1989; 1994; Oswald, 1999; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006). Instead, this stream of research anchors itself in the tradition of Consumer Culture Theory[6] (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), and follows an interpretive trajectory to understand the acculturation alternatives consumers adopt in adapting to a new cultural environment. It pays particular attention to how consumers ascribe and appropriate new meanings to their everyday consumption choices and practices for their identity projects (Askegaard et al., 2005; Oswald, 1999; Lindridge et al., 2004; Luedicke, 2011; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). This stream has attempted to "explore the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings that exist within the broader socio-historical frame of globalization and market capitalism" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 869). It offers a multidirectional and

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[6] Consumer culture theorists see culture as the very fabric of experiences, meanings, and actions (Geertz, 1983). This stream of research emphasizes the dynamic of fragmentation, plurality, fluidity, and the intermingling (or hybridization) of consumption traditions and ways of life (Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). These theorists share a "distributed view of cultural meaning" and reject any causal relationship between cultural forces in shaping consumer behavior. Arnould and Thompson (2005) refer to the work of Kozinets (2001) and state that this school of thought conceptualizes consumer culture as "an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that groups use—through the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities, and meanings—to make collective sense of their environments and to orient their members' experiences and lives" (p.869).

multidimensional understanding of acculturation lived experience among consumers (Askegaard et al., 2005; Bhatia, 2002; Chytkova, 2011; Li, 2012; Skuza, 2007). Moving beyond the behavioral and cognitive science perspective, in which consumer choice is seen as an outcome of a series of rational decision-making processes, interpretive consumer researchers view consumption decisions and experiences as embedded in the meaning-creation process through which the identity narrative is situated and shaped by a diverse cultural frame of references (Kadirov and Varey, 2011; Thompson and Troester, 2002).

First wave of post-assimilationist approach

Peñaloza's (1989; 1994) ethnography of Mexican immigrants in the United States is one of the influential works contributing to the theoretical understanding of consumer acculturation phenomena. In general, Peñaloza views acculturation as a consumer socialization process, through which consumers learn to acquire new consumption knowledge, skills, and behaviors from the host culture in order to gain social acceptance from the local community (i.e. functional level). They simultaneously maintain emotional links to their Mexican cultural heritage with original American objects (i.e. symbolic level). More importantly, the scholar finds that immigrant consumers selectively draw cultural meanings from consumption objects in relation to two cultural references (i.e. the home culture versus the host culture). Peñaloza (1994) concludes with an empirical model of consumer acculturation that largely corresponds to Berry's (1997) fourfold model[7]. The model incorporates the factors, agents, and process involved with four possible acculturation outcomes (see Figure 2.1).

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[7] John W. Berry's (1997) fourfold acculturation model is one of the influential theories on consumer acculturation. In general, Berry (1997) sees acculturation as a bi-directional process referring to "the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters, while the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are employed to refer to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation" (p.6). Thus, he affirms two independent dimensions for acculturation considerations, which are 1) cultural maintenance: to what extent cultural identity and characteristics are considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for, and 2) contact and participation: to what extent they should become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves (p. 9). He concludes a fourfold classification of acculturation outcomes. Assimilation refers to acculturating individuals who do not wish to maintain original cultural identity and seek daily interaction with another culture. Integration refers to acculturating individuals who adopt some degree of cultural integrity, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network (mutual accommodation). Separation refers to the acculturating individuals who maintain their original culture, and simultaneously try to avoid interaction with others. Marginalization refers to those acculturating individuals who have little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance and interaction with the host cultures. Berry's fourfold acculturation model assumes that the optimal acculturation strategy for immigrants is integration, which "appears to be a consistent predictor of more positive outcomes than the three alternatives" (Berry and Sam, 1997; p.138).
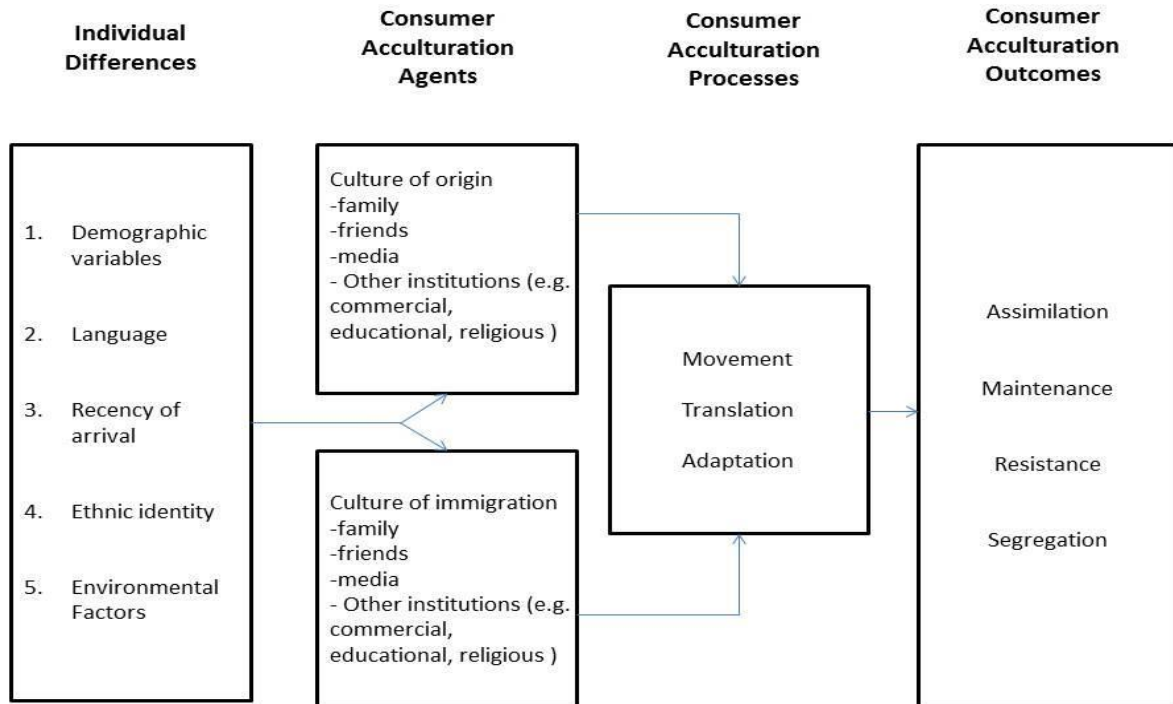
Figure 2.1 Peñaloza's (1994) empirical model of consumer acculturation (p.48)

The work of Peñaloza (1989; 1994) has successfully outlined the theoretical approach to consumer acculturation phenomena, with a focus on the relationship between acculturative forces and consumer identity projects (Luedicke, 2011). However, early post-assimilationist consumer acculturation studies only offer a single perspective with attention to the struggles immigrant consumers face in adapting to the host culture (Mehta and Belk, 1991; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). With limited economic and social resources, immigrant consumers are required to adapt to the "established social relations, cultural practices, and individual expectations of indigenous citizens" upon their arrival. Previous research addressed the fact that immigrant consumers adopt different acculturative strategies to forge an "authentic" sense of identity in their everyday symbolic consumption (Bardhi, 2010; Elliott, 1999; Wattanasuwan, 2005). For example, Peñaloza (1994) identifies four acculturation outcomes where immigrant consumers may choose 1) to resist the host culture (resistance), 2) to adopt both cultures (maintenance), 3) to fully assimilate to the host culture (assimilation), or 4) to physically segregate from both cultures (segregation) through symbolic consumption. Other studies also found that immigrant consumers may over-assimilate to the host culture (Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983), over-identify with their original ethnic culture (Mehta and Belk, 1991), or even negotiate their cultural positions through swapping between two cultural references (host culture and original ethnic cultures) in constructing their identity projects (Oswald, 1999). After all, these studies indicate that people constantly negotiate their cultural identities and choose "when and where their ethnicity" (Oswald, 1999, p.135). More importantly, the discussion clearly indicates how immigrant consumers make expedient consumption decisions to adopt, adapt, ignore, or reject certain cultural elements from

home and host cultures available to them in the marketplace. On one hand, individuals can possess consumer objects representing their host culture without relinquishing their cultural identity; on the other hand, they also can develop more and deeper ties with the homeland culture (Metha and Belk, 1994; Lee and Tse, 1994; Sandikci et al., 2006).

Second wave of post-assimilationist approach

The above studies have clearly examined the attitudinal and behavioral changes in consumption where consumers constantly negotiate their cultural identities in adapting to the host cultural environment and maintain a linkage to home culture. However, the discussion is still limited to the premise that consumers must choose between two cultural references. Kipnis et al. (2014) wrote that "in postmodern reality, migrants, even those of the same ethnic origin, can form identities that differ significantly by strength of identification with cultures and subcultures they interact with. Some develop multi-cultural identities, i.e. internalize two or more cultures as equally significant and accessible systems of being in a marketplace; the identities of others are uni-cultural, i.e. internalizing one culture as a core system that guides being" (p. 232). Kipnis et al.'s assertion opens the door to the notion that the host culture may not be the only or primary acculturative agent for consumer identity projects.

Recent acculturation studies have rejected this modernist view (i.e. assuming a socially integrated and culturally homogenous entity) and have called for alternate thinking about identity, acculturation, and immigration. In consideration of more acculturative agents and acculturative strategies adopted by local and migrant consumers, I summarize three key dimensions, namely *2.1.3.1.) multiple, hybrid identity projects and acculturative agents*, *2.1.3.2.) sociocultural structuring and consumer agency*, *2.1.3.3.) local culture is not always hosted and dominated*, to show how multiple consumer identity projects "can be formed through a moving junction of multiple and diverse cultural and subcultural forces" (Sandikci et al., 2006, p.430).

2.1.3.1. *Multiple, hybrid identity projects and acculturative agents*

Central to the discussion of consumer acculturation is the study of consumers' identity projects and their consequential changes to consumption behaviors in resolving identity and group conflicts. The discussion of consumption and self-identity has been heavily influenced by Belk (1988), who has solidified a body of consumer research in suggesting how consumption helps define people's sense of who they are. Possessions and brands are key symbolic resources for consumers to extend, expand, and strengthen their sense of self in terms of meaning creation, self-images, self-identities, and values (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988; Elliott, 1999; Levy, 1981; McCracken, 1986; Wattanasuwan, 2005). While the "body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences" are linked to the

core self, extended self refers to those people (i.e. including group affiliation, specifically individual, family, community, and group), places, and things to which one feels attached (Belk, 1988, p. 141).

Self-identity formation can be conceptualized as a narrative project in which people use goods and possessions to enact and make sense of a connected identity from past to present, and into imagined futures (Gidden, 1991; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). Recent research has been extended to identify the challenges consumers face in developing and maintaining a coherent sense of self (Ahuvia, 2005; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Schouten, 1991). In resolving conflicting or even competing self-identity positions, consumers assign both private and public meanings to their possessions to forge an authentic sense of identity (i.e. social situations, roles, and relationships). This results in inconsistent consumption preferences and brand choices (Bahl and Milne, 2009; Richins, 1994). While some postmodernist researchers propose the notion of "fragmented and multiple sense of selves" in which consumers do not necessarily need to reconcile identity conflicts for a unified experience (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), such claims have not been supported by evidence showing that consumers abandon their desire for a coherent self. Instead, recent research finds that consumers seek ways to use consumption to form a coherent identity within the context of a fragmented society (Ahuvia, 2005; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995)

This discussion is particularly relevant to the study of identity projects within acculturation (Ger and Østergaard, 1998; Joy and Dholakia, 1991; Mehta and Belk, 1991). First, acculturation experiences facilitate identity evolution and role transition in response to contextual change. Thus, consumers use brands and consumption choices to "(re)discover, preserve, (re)construct, and dispose of a part of identity" in adapting to the new cultural environment (Kipnis et al., 2014, p. 231). These consumption choices can be viewed as part of the extended self that help reflect and narrate a self-developmental identity project by retelling the stories of their possessions in the context of (pre-) acculturation experiences (Dittmar, 1992; Karanika and Hogg, 2010; Wong et al., 2012). More importantly, they are symbols that inform consumers' identity to connect with significant others as well as to connect the communities of their home cultures or the new culture of residence (Banister and Hogg, 2004; Hamilton and Hassan, 2010). Second, migrant consumers may experience different levels of uncertainty and struggles that challenge the original values, dogma, and ideologies restricted and confined to the self in an earlier time[8] (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007). Consumers may experience complex identity conflicts and role transitions when they acquire new consumption knowledge and skills in adapting to the new cultural environment during acculturation[9]. Recent studies have moved beyond a dichotomy of home/host cultural references or any attempt at

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[8] Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) identify four aspects of uncertainty. Complexity refers to a great number of parts that have a large variety of relations. Ambiguity refers to a suspension of clarity, as the meaning of one part is determined by the flux and variation of other parts. Deficit knowledge refers to the absence of a superordinate knowledge structure that can resolve the contradictions between the parts. Unpredictability implies a lack of control of future developments

[9] Maldonado and Tansuhaj (1999) argue that they undergo five stages of role transition, including 1) movement into a new culture, 2) role destabilization, 3) changes in symbolic consumption, 4) new roles, and 5) role stabilization.

suggesting stable identity positions in acculturation experiences (Berry, 1997). Instead, consumers are found to use different consumption discourses in negotiating and articulating a diversified cultural identity in order to tackle a series of ideological tensions in a new sociocultural setting (Jafari and Goulding, 2008).

In a globalizing world, consumers constantly interact with multiple systems of cultural meanings—those of local cultural groups and those of global market ideologies (e.g. introduced through media and advertising). These acculturative forces have constantly shaped consumers' identity outcomes and cultural adaptation strategies. The diversification of cultural identity dispositions and cultural alternatives has resulted in different responses and interpretations of consumption and culture-based brand meanings (Kipins et al., 2013). In this regard, recent studies have introduced the hybrid nature and fluidity of identity projects in the acculturation process, and reject previous assumptions of stable identity construction that follow only one of the two cultural references (Luedicke, 2011). More importantly, it has called for examination of more than one acculturative agent in shaping consumers' identity projects. Oswald's (1999) research on Haitian immigrants in the U.S. is one of the early proposals that migrant consumers do not maintain a fixed identity position, but "swap" between cultures and multicultural identities through symbolic consumption. The argument supports a postmodern conceptualization of hybridity and fragmentation of consumption. The liberal nature of consumption allows consumers to interchange and negotiate cultural meanings through switching cultural codes in consuming goods and services available in the marketplace (Firat, 1995; Oswald, 1999; Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

Askegaard et al. (2005) reject Oswald's (1999) notion of "swapping identities" since the concept still suggests a clear-cut boundary between host and home culture. In researching the Greenlanders in Denmark, they found that transnational consumer culture has resulted in fluid and hybrid identity projects while symbolic consumption provides significant existential implications for the immigrant consumers. Askegaard et al.'s (2005) argument has laid the foundation for understanding how consumers mix and match a wide range of discourses available to them in forming multiple and hybrid identities in the face of global consumer cultures and multiple market ideologies (Matthews, 2000; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). This surpasses the traditional thinking that consumers' cultural disposition is only subjected to a dominant/minority dichotomy. In the beginning of the study of "consumer multiculturation", Kipnis et al. (2013) wrote "the mobility of cultures facilitates the emergence of identity discourses whereby individuals can simultaneously integrate composite identity links with several cultures that become interwoven within a given locale" (Hannerz, 1996). Since people use goods to extract "contingent identities derived from the [cultural] differences (Askegaard et al., 2005, p.2) and to "create and survive social change" (McCracken, 1990, p. 11), such complex identity discourses "differentially affect consumption" (p. 237).

Related research also supports the above claim that consumers negotiate hybrid and multiple identity positions through (re)interpreting the meanings of global consumer culture as well as "modifying" traditional cultural ideologies and heritages in their everyday consumption and practices. Chytkova's (2011) research on Romanian women's cooking practices and food consumption practices in Italy found that the negotiation of gender identities lies between Western modern women's discourse and the traditional definition of gender roles in the home culture. In the particular case of fashion-clothing consumption practices, Sobh et al. (2014) found that young Arab ladies adopted the strategies of "cloak of invisibility" and "mimetic excess" to reconcile the opposite fashion discourses of Islamic conservatism and Western modernity. Covered by the loose-fitting abaya with Western clothing and accessories underneath, these young consumers display an innovative layered fashion discourse that can be interpreted as "intentional resistance" (Ger and Belk, 1996) to local hegemony and affirms their powers in managing their appearance as well as enacting their identities in a patriarchal society. Rather than following the fashion discourse in either home or host cultures, Sobh et al. (2012) introduce the notions of "reserve assimilation" and "double resistance" in reflecting how consumers appear to negotiate, juxtapose, and reinterpret local and Western discourses in identity formation that fit the circumstances of their immediate social settings and to create their original "lived cultural ideology" (p. 365). Sandikci and Ger (2009) found that the way in which Turkish women transform and destigmatize the meaning of wearing veils creates a hybrid identity that lies between the traditional Islamic world and the secular Western way of living.

The reconciliation between two or more conflicting discourses in identity transitions and negotiation may not be conflict-free but may create profound social tensions and identity conflicts for consumers. In an extreme case, Jafari and Goulding's (2008) research on Iranian immigrants in the UK introduces the notion of the "torn self" to describe the impact of politicized ideologies on the identities of young consumers. In the throes of a moral dilemma over whether to adopt Western dress or maintain Islamic modes of dress, these young Iranians are living and negotiating their cultural identity between two contradictory ideologies as revealed in their symbolic consumption (i.e. Islamization, which opposes individuality, versus Western market-based liberal ideology, which emphasizes individual life-project and obligatory freedom). This discussion of consumers' identity projects further points to the fact that consumers' identity negotiation and the associated acculturative practices in symbolic consumption are inseparable from the sociocultural context in which they are situated and the confrontation of multiple ideological meaning systems. More importantly, consumers may exhibit a sense of consumer agency in resisting, negotiating, or even juxtaposing meanings in the mainstream marketplace hegemony, or may escape from various daily personal problems and tensions faced in adapting to diverse cultural discourses.

2.1.3.2. Sociocultural structuring and consumer agency

The discussion of hybrid, context-dependent consumer identity projects is inseparable from the market discourses and sociocultural structure it channels and conditions. A body of research has focused on how sociocultural structures determine the acculturation process as well as the outcomes of identity negotiation (Chytkovs, 2011; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). Üstüner and Holt (2007)'s research on poor Turkish migrant women living in squatter areas in Ankara outlined the dominated consumer acculturation model (see Figure 2.2), which identifies three modes of acculturation structured by context, namely 1) "shutting down the dominant ideology", 2) "pursuing it collectively as a myth", and 3) "giving up on both and ending up with shattered identity projects". They found that immigrant consumers may not be endowed with sufficient social, economic, and cultural capital to elevate them out of poverty as expected in pre-migration imagination. Curtailed by the dominant consumer culture, these migrant consumers face ideological conflicts between mainstream and minority cultures and are not free to construct an ideal of modern consumer identity through symbolic consumption. The hegemony of consumer culture only allows for assimilation into, or collective marginalization from, mainstream society. This result in a "shattered" self-identity project where consumers remain collectively marginalized from the dominant culture (Luedicke, 2011). Hybrid identity, in Üstüner and Holt's (2007) understanding of "controlled acculturation"[10], is impeded and determined by specific sociocultural contexts (i.e. the minority culture is legitimized by its ability to assimilate to the mainstream ideologies) and circumstances (sufficient capital resources among migrants to participate in consumer culture). Chytkova (2011) argues that Üstüner and Holt's (2007) study has contributed to considering how sociocultural factors channel market representations and cultural ideologies, and structure the process and outcomes of identity negotiation. However, the same study also remarks that not all sociocultural contexts hold equivalent dominant positions in limiting the liberating effects of postmodern acculturation and forcing consumers into forbidden hybrid identity projects. Migrant consumers, in other words, can experience and construct hybrid identity through the commodification process when identity definition engages an ideological conflict

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[10] Controlled acculturation refers to the process through which one culture maintains dominance in legitimating a practice from another to be integrated or separated as a new identity.

Figure 2.2 Dominated consumer acculturation model

While consumer identity projects are partly shaped by sociocultural context and different global, local, or even glocal ideological discourses, it is interesting to note that individuals express a sense of consumer agency in interpreting, appropriating, or even alternating cultural meanings in their consumption strategies (i.e. choices and practices) for self-expression purposes and to cope with the conflicting demands of identity negotiation (Sobh et al., 2012; Tinson and Nuttall, 2010). In general, consumer agency refers to the ability of individuals and groups to transform and play with meanings (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). For example, consumer acculturation studies found that consumers (re)interpret and innovate new symbolic consumption practices to resist immigration myths (Hu et al., 2013), to enact a double resistance to both original and Western cultures (Sobh et al., 2012), to innovate new consumption practices that reconcile traditional cultural practices with the Western myth of modernity (Chytkova, 2011; Jafari and Goulding, 2008; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Sobh et al., 2014), to rework a local version of the Western lifestyle myth with limited socioeconomic and cultural capital (Üstüner and Holt, 2007; 2009), and to appropriate global cultural rituals in a local context (Tinson and Nuttall, 2010). Consumer agency is also found among local consumers in response to the changing cultural landscape brought about by the influx of migrant culture and the prevailing of global consumer culture. For examples, studies found that local consumers may transform hospitality practices into exclusionary acts (Sobh et al., 2013), produce new social obligations, contests, and solidarities (Vikas et al., 2015), or even assimilate in reverse to a foreign milieu (Sobh et al., 2012).

The above discussion further investigates why and how such consumer agency is triggered and conditioned, and how it helps to resolve identity conflicts in acculturation experiences. In

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contemporary consumer culture, the ideological aspect of fashion is inscribed in consumer behaviors and experiences, which provide a point of entry into a complex system of cultural meanings communicating the nature of self and society (Mikkonen et al., 2013; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Baudrillard (1981) argues that fashion discourses enshroud the profound nature of social relationships[11]. The dynamics of social change (i.e. the mobility of social signs) embeds in fashion discourses the interpretation and appropriation of a multitude of countervailing cultural meanings. Consumers are found negotiating and deploying "countervailing meanings" in everyday fashion discourses to resolve "the tensions and paradoxes that exist between consumers' sense of individual agency (autonomy issues) and consumers' sensitivity to sources of social prescription in their everyday lives (conformity issues)" (Thompson and Haytko, 1997, p.15-16). Particular to the study of style projects that emerge in consumers' lives, worlds, and social systems, Murray (2002) empirically supports that consumers find meaning by selecting fashion statements that align them with specific cultural values and subject positions. More importantly, such alignment provides a vehicle for expression and enables the individual to mediate a number of tensions arising from 1) cultural complexity, 2) the need to balance autonomy and conformity, and 3) problems that may occur while managing class dynamics. However, recent studies have explored to what extent consumers negotiate their cultural identities through (re)appropriating countervailing meanings in their fashion statements, reconciling the ideological conflicts between traditional dressing norms and Western, modern way of dressing (Sandicki and Ger, 2009; Sobh et al., 2012; 2014). This study further extends Murray (2002) and Thompson and Haytko (1997) to the consumer acculturation context. It pays particular attention to how local and migrant consumers engage in a dialogue of negotiating fashion meanings as portrayed in their acculturation experiences.

2.1.3.3. *Local culture is not always hosted and dominated*

Previous consumer acculturation literature has been largely focused on the adaptive strategies and identity outcomes of immigrant consumers in resolving identity conflicts and tensions in a new cultural environment. This, however, largely ignores the roles and responses of the local consumers in view of the acculturation of migrant consumers. The traditional approach assumes that the citizens and institutions in the "host culture" are always fixed and stable in promoting a welcoming and caring attitude toward the guests (i.e. migrants) with a temporary granting of extraordinary rights and appreciation to those guests (Luedick, 2011). This proposition is now being challenged since the locals may interpret and respond reactively to the migrant who acculturates to the local cultures through symbolic consumption (Luedicke, 2015). They may also create new consumption practices in response to the hegemony of global consumer culture, which largely shapes their traditional social status hierarchies, obligations, and norms (Vikas et al., 2015). The locals are generally perceived as

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[11] I follow the assertion of Mikkonen et al. (2013) that the term "ideology" is interchangeable with a general term "discourse". "Ideology" can be understood as "a theory of reality" which refers to a "normalizing discourse that fixes certain meanings within a society as 'true' and 'acceptable'" (p.2). The societal function of ideology endows the members of a society with the basic tenets of mentality about how life ought to be lived.

the non-migrants, those who are "born into" the local majority of that marketplace. Given that the locals have lived in a multicultural marketplace with migrant consumers, they experience and undergo their own parallel, complex identity evolution and multiple cultural experiences in the acculturation process (Kipnis et al., 2014). Luedicke (2011) argues that the understanding of the evocation of identity conflicts, as manifested in different acculturation conditions, deserves more public attention since it has implications for political and social remediation of local citizen responses to cultural change led by the acculturation efforts and outcomes of migrant populations. Thus, recent studies have called for more attention to understanding how local consumers make sense of and negotiate between multiple cultural meanings to the "global-local" perspective as well as their responses to the changing cultural landscapes alongside the influx of migrants (Kjelaard and Askergarrd, 2006; Luedicke, 2011; 2015).

Because the acculturation experience is not always voluntary or gentle, early sociologists Devereux and Loeb (1943) have identified the hostile dimension of acculturation with the notion of "antagonistic acculturation". They wrote that "culture change normally involves not only the addition of a new element or element to the culture, but also the elimination of certain previously existing elements, and the modification and reorganization of others…No society as long as it exists as a distinct entity, will take over even the purely objective aspects of an alien culture in total…If one group admires another it will take a great deal of trouble to be like. It despises them to be unlike them" (p.469, 487-488). Devereux and Loeb (1943) point out two important aspects of acculturation. First, the locals may develop hostility toward the immigrant population, thus fueling group conflicts (Luedicke, 2015). Second, members of the local culture may commit exclusionary acts to differentiate themselves from the migrant population (Sandicki et al., 2006; Sobh et al., 2013).

The notion of antagonistic acculturation implies individuals' desire for cultural distinctiveness and in-group/out-group distinction (Teske and Nelson, 1974). It is primarily concerned with a resistance to adopting the goals of outside groups, which includes 1) defensive isolation, 2) adoption of new means without a corresponding adoption of the relevant goals, and 3) dissociative negative acculturation. While it is well-documented that immigrant consumers may suffer from different levels of acculturative stress and mental-health problems in adapting to a different culture and being discriminated against by different social institutions in everyday life (Rudmin, 2009; Ruggiero et al., 1996), research on the locals' side remains largely insufficient. In this line, several consumer acculturation studies have reported that local consumers deploy different adaptive strategies in consumption in response to the migrants' acculturation. Sobh et al.'s (2013) research on Islamic Arab hospitality makes the interesting observation that the local may not find himself or herself in a dominant position, but rather in a numerical minority (e.g. when the local population is composed of 10% locals and 90% immigrants). Threatened by a loss of identity and the numeric dominance of the migrant population, Arab locals use their hospitality rituals as rituals of exclusion, used to assert their

sovereignty and to define the symbolic boundaries between the two groups where the migrants largely remain strangers and "others" in the Arab culture. In understanding fashion consumption among women living in the Arab Gulf countries, Sobh et al. (2012; 2014) introduce the concept of "reverse assimilation", where local consumers are pressured to acculturate to the immigrant culture, and to reconcile the ideological conflicts between local religious, patriarchal principles and the pursuit of Western gender and dressing discourses. Vikas et al. (2015) also found that marketization, together with the introduction of capitalist ideology, has largely challenged the caste systems in the village setting in India. Consumers of high and low caste were found recasting social distance and transforming the status rituals through changes in consumption.

All of the above support the dynamic of identity outcomes and adaptive strategies in symbolic consumption employed by local consumers in response to the influx of migrant cultures as well as multiple ideological discourses in the marketplace. It contributes to understanding how the identity processes of local consumers are affected by the diversification of society, as well as how cultural practices and norms adopted by local consumers from migrant populations contribute to changes in their self-identity projects (Kipins et al., 2013). Local consumers may interpret, transform, and reconfigure their identity narratives and boundaries with otherness (i.e. both ideological discourse and immediate ethnic relationship) by appropriating new meanings to adjust their consumption choices and practices. In a similar vein, Luedicke (2015) adopts a relational configuration approach to study how the indigenes interpret and adjust to the immigrant consumption practices, leading to possibilities for mutual adaptation and explanations and to the occurrence of ethnic-group conflicts in the course of acculturation. This opens a recursive model of acculturation in which the consumption of otherness shapes the acculturative consumption behavior as well as the identity discourses, as narrated in the acculturation experiences.

2.1.4 From recursive consumer acculturation to a dialogical approach

In reviewing previous literature on consumer acculturation, Luedicke (2011) extends the current discussion of consumer acculturation theory with his model of recursive consumer cultural adaptation (Figure 2.3). In general, the model explicates an ongoing identity-negotiation process between the local and migrant consumers through symbolic consumption. The constant interaction between the two groups subsequently (re)produces cultural boundaries and leverages an asymmetrical power relationship that results in different in identity outcomes. The model places equal emphasis on the acculturation experiences of the migrant and local community members, who share the same sociocultural discourses within a given (and ideally typical) social context and span a range of identities from socially legitimized to transgressive (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). Luedicke (2011) highlights the recursive nature of a circular system of mutual observation and

adaptation between local and migrant population. This helps exhibit consumers' multi-directional, even sometimes actively contested, forms of acculturation experiences. He identifies the central role of symbolic consumption practices and brand enthusiasm in the representation and development of cultural relations between migrant and local consumers. Under the influence of global consumer culture, the social organization of acculturation context is in a state of constant change, innovation, fashion, and variation (Bauman, 2004), where migrant and local consumers are co-producers and co-consumers of meanings and practices and affect brand meanings as well as the social desirability of goods (Sandıkcı and Ger, 2010).
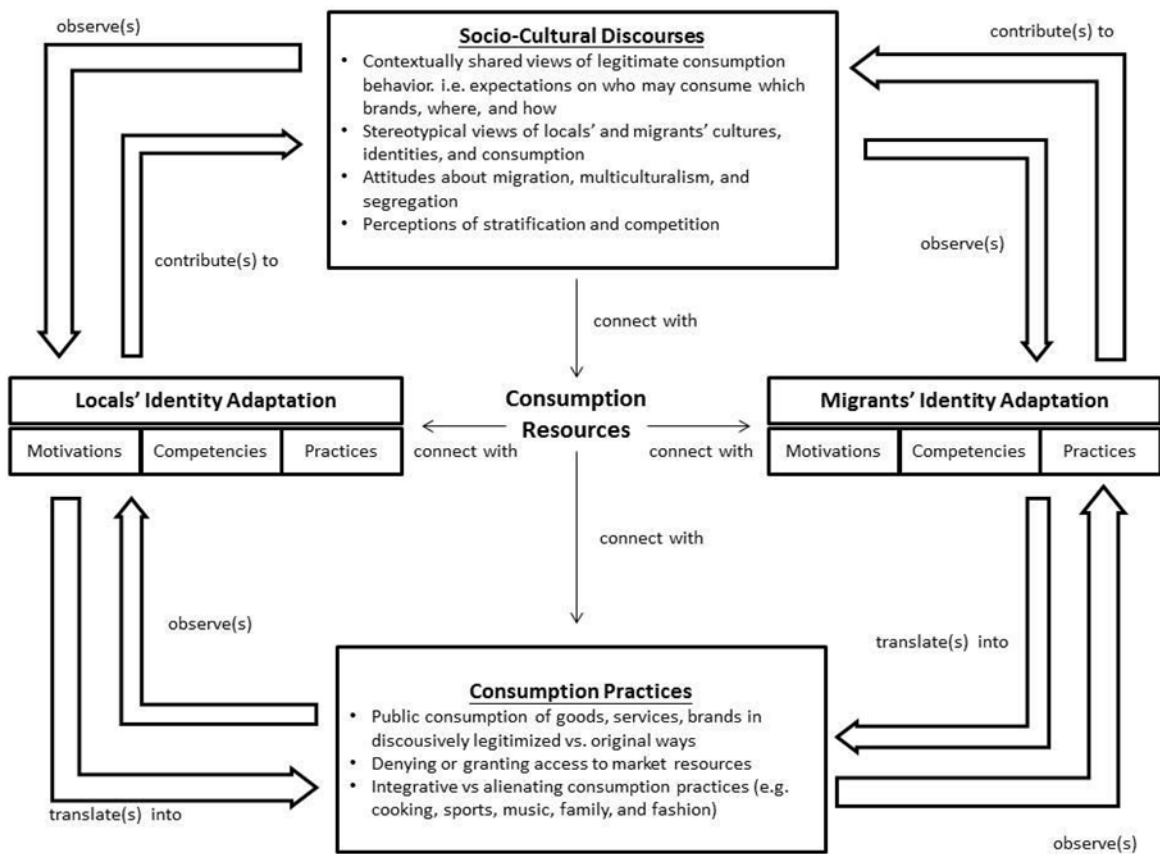
Figure 2.3 Luedicke's (2011) model of recursive consumer acculturation

The above discussion of the co-creation of acculturation experiences between local and migrant consumers works in line with the understanding of the role of otherness in shaping self-identity formation. Joy et al. (2010) argue that the formation of self-identity engages in "a simultaneous process of identification and differentiation from selected others, which is someone fraught with ambivalence and even pathology" (p.338). When people from different cultural backgrounds come into firsthand contact with one another, both migrants and locals engage in a dialogical process of adjusting and perceiving one another's consumption choices, behaviors, ideologies, and status ambitions. This alters consumers' subjective experiences and interpretations of consumption practices as well the negotiation of identity projects in acculturation (Bhatia, 2002; Dion et al., 2011; Luedicke,

2011; 2015). It is argued that the self-identity project embeds the very nature of consumers' desire for social distinction through utilizing the social, economic, and cultural capital available to them (Bourdieu, 1984). The presence of immediate or imagined "otherness" constantly triggers consumers' emotions and a sense of individual agency such that local and migrant consumers employ different consumption strategies and practices to define their cultural positions in relation to one another. Sandikci et al. (2006) support the claim that acculturation is a dialogical process through which consumers engage in a "constant move back and forth between incompatible cultural positions with the presence of others along acculturation" (Bhatia, 2002). Because Luedicke's (2011; 2015) acculturation model does not include a dimension of consumer emotion and power negotiation along acculturation, I thus follow the theoretical trajectory of Sandikci et al. (2006), and call for the revisiting of a Dialogical Self Theory (DSF) to examine how a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation can explore the role of consumer emotions in resolving identity conflicts alongside the acculturation phenomenon.

2.2 The Dialogical Approach to Consumer Acculturation

2.2.1 The dialogical self theory

The dialogical approach to acculturation was first introduced in the study of identity formation among diasporic communities. It originally attempted to understand how diasporic communities, the non-European immigrant population from the Third World who inhabit their new lives in the First World countries, struggle and negotiate their fragmented and hybrid cultural identities in the era of post-colonization (Bhatia, 2002; Hermans and Kempen, 1998). The approach is predicated upon the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), which focuses on self-conception in relation to cultural positioning (Hermans, 1996; 2001; Hermans et al., 1992; 1993). Rejecting the traditional Cartesian view of self[12], the dialogical self is conceived as a dialogical narrator that is spatially organized and embodied. The psychological process of self-identity formation thus is not something that emerges inside someone's mind, but something that is constructed "in between" people's dialogues and joint actions. More importantly, it represents a social nature in which the "other" is understood not as something outside of the self, but as something within the self-structure. The dialogical approach is useful for understanding self-other relations, relational processes, dialogues, and discourses (Burkitt, 2010), as well as understanding the multiplicity of dialogically interacting selves (Hermans et al., 1992). Here, I first describe three features of the dialogical self (*Multiple voices and I-positions*, *Otherness in the dialogical self,* and *The reflective self*), and further discuss its relevance to the study of acculturation

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[12] The Cartesian view of self (i.e. cogito – "I think") presupposes one centralized "I" as a disembodied mental process of reasoning and thinking (i.e. the mind) and essentially distinguishes the mind from the body, the social others, and the external world (Hermans, 2001; Hermans et al., 1992).

and identity negotiation.

2.2.1.1. *Multiple voices and I-positions*

The idea of the dialogical self is a reconciliation of Bakhtin's polyphonic novel[13] and the Jamesian multivoiced self[14] (Bhatia, 2002). The concepts of "voices" and "positions" are key to understanding the formation of the dialogical self (Hermans, 2001), which metaphorically represents an "imagined space" with different ideological positions (Bhatia, 2002). The term "voices" does not refer to audible human vocal sounds, but rather to the "speaking personality" or the "speaking consciousness" expressed during a dialogue with immediate and imagined others (Wertsch, 1991, p.12). The term "speaking consciousness" suggests a key phenomenological claim that the individual subject is "world-experiencing subjectivity", not primarily a spectator of its environment (i.e. discovering the world), but rather an agent in it (Dion et al., 2011; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009). The "voices" thus function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Each of them has a story to tell about his or her own experiences from his or her stance. As different voices, these characters exchange information about each respective "*Me*", resulting in a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans et al., 1992).

The concept of "voice" can be metaphorically linked to the term "position". It defines the dialogical self in an "imagined space" composed of a number of relatively autonomous *I*-positions (i.e. ideological positions), and can be analyzed using the metaphor of space (Bhatia, 2002). Hermans (1996) addresses the nature of the "positions" occupied in defining the dialogical self, which can be understood as temporary or permanent, positive or negative, supported or condemned by institutions, traditions, and various collective groups. The spatial nature of the self is expressed in terms of "position" and "positioning". These are more dynamic and flexible referents than the term "role" used by traditional social interactionists. Hermans (1996) argues that "voice assumes an embodied actor located in space", acting and coordinating with other actors (p.44). In this connection, the "self" is represented in a space composed of a multiplicity of positions in two concentric circles (see Figure 2.4). All points, whether located inside or outside of the internal and the external circles, are

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[13] Bakhtin's (1973 [1929]) polyphonic novel explores the dialogical functioning of mind. In the book "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics", the Russian scholar describes how Dostoevsky persistently sees all things as being coexistent, and there are several "voices" communicating in his head with emerging ideas and stories. He proposes that the individual engages in an "internal" dialogical process with him/herself, which is embodied by different characters and composed of a number of independent and mutually opposing views (Hermans, 1996). The dialogical relationship between different voices thus presents "a plurality of consciousness and worlds" (Hermans, 2001, p. 245).

[14] William James' (1902 [1890]) concept of the multivoiced self can be understood as a spatial representation of the psychological process of self. The "*I*" stands as an actor who continuously organizes and interprets experience in a purely subjective manner. Hermans (1996) further elaborates three main features of "*I*" position – a) continuity, b) distinctness, and c) volition. Continuity is represented by a sense of personality and sameness through time. Distinctness is intrinsic to the concept of "*I*", which has an existence of separating from others. Volition refers to the "*I*" that takes an active role in continuously appropriating and rejecting different thoughts. The function of the "self" exists in a spatial context where "*I*" observes the "*Me*" and relates the movements of the "*Me*" in a story-like fashion (Hermans *et al.*, 1993). In other words, "*Me*" plays the roles as a narrative figure that represents his/her possessions in describing him/herself, including body, psychic powers, possessions including clothes and social environment, history and memories. The narrative construction allows the "*I*" to reconstruct the past, describe the current self, and even imagine the future. Thus, Hermans et al. (1993) argue that "*I*" stands at a position that treats "*Me*" as the main figure in the story of one's life. James (1902 [1890]) sees this volitional "*I*" guarantee the self's identity through continuity. He addressed the intrinsic social nature of the self, which is composed of competing characters and form the multiplicity of self. Thus, the everyday narratization is an essential characteristic of all human activities on earth.

I-positions represented by dots. These dots thus are part of the self, and extend to the environment in response to those domains in the environment where they are perceived as "mine" (Hermans, 2001). In this regard, there is no single core self, but dots in the inner circle represent concepts that are felt as part of the self (e.g. *I* as a mother/friend) while dots within the outer circle are people and objects regarded as part of the environment (e.g. *My* children/ friends /colleagues).
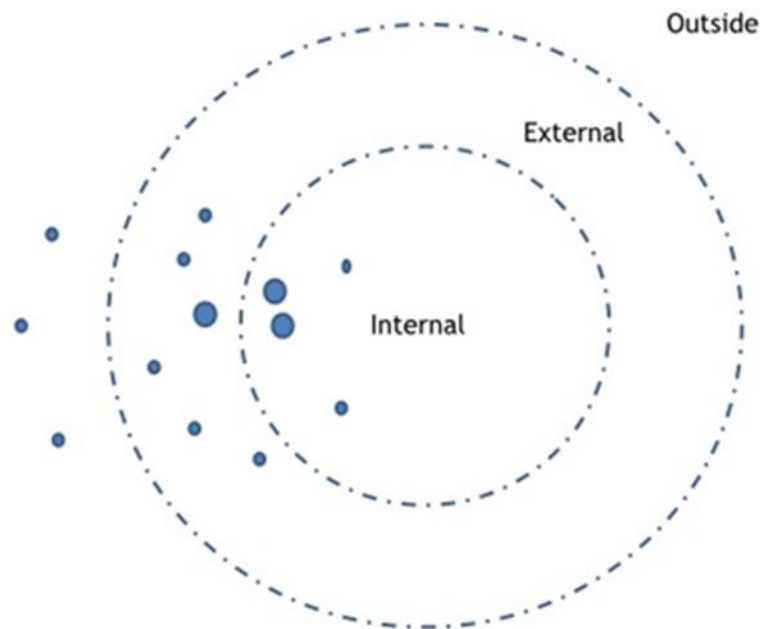
Figure 2.4 The internal and external *I*-positions in the dialogical self

Although the multiplicity of "*I*" positions is an emphasis of the dialogical self, the concept is slightly different from the notion of "possible selves" (see Markus and Nurius, 1986). The possible selves (i.e. what one would like to be or may be afraid of becoming) assume one centralized "*I*" position that constitutes a part of a multifaceted self-conception. In contrast, the dialogical self has the character of a decentralized, polyphonic narrative with a multiplicity of "*I*" positions (Hermans, 2001). There are two particular features of understanding the dialogical self in regard to the multiplicity of "*I*" positions. First, it combines both continuity and discontinuity. The nature of self is a continuity of experiences. However, a discontinuity of self also exists within the same character since they represent different, or even opposing, voices in a spatial realm of the self. For example, if we compare two identical phrases—*My* wife and *My* son versus My *wife* and My *son*—the former stresses the continuity of one's experience, seeing both wife and son as a possession of "*Me*". However, the latter expresses the discontinuity of different characters with different voices in the structure of self-formation. Second, the nature of the dialogical self implies a spatial and temporal characteristic of the narrative structure of the self. The temporal dimension refers to a constitutive feature of stories or narratives of self across one's lifetime. Bakhtin (1973 [1929]) also emphasizes the spatial dimension of self as both time and space are seen as equally important for the narrative

structure of the dialogical self.

2.2.1.2. Otherness in the dialogical self

The second feature of the dialogical self is its social orientation to the understanding of the self-other relationship. As there are many *I*-positions that the dialogical self can occupy in the same person (Hermans, 2001), the intrinsic nature of the self is multiple and social, composed of many competing characters. The self-conception engages in a dialogue with "others", which can be either immediate or imagined. The dialogical concept of self and mind is co-created, guided, relational, and mediated. It stresses the significance of relationships to others in self-identity formation (Joy et al., 2010). Concerning the self as a complicated, narrative structured process, Burkitt (2010) argues that the dialogical self is the "society of mind", a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions intertwined with the minds of others in the "land of the mind".

The mechanism of a dialogical understanding of the self-other relationship is that the "*I*"s can move freely in the imaginal space, which allows different "*I*"s to intimately intertwine with physical space, from one position to another. Since the "*I*"s have the ability to move from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time; they fluctuate among different and even opposing positions, and have the capacity to imagine and to endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between different positions can be established. The multiplicity of *I*-positions implies three types of relations, including 1) internal-external relations, 2) internal relations, and 3) external relations. It suggests that a dialogical and co-constitutive relation is formed between internal and external positions as they emerge from their interactions over time. The internal positions receive their relevance from their relationships with one or more external positions. In a dialogical understanding, the external positions are only relevant from the perspective of one or more of the internal positions. This parallels the phenomenological account of human sociality. Social reality is not a fixed and objective external reality, but is essentially a product of human interaction and cognition. It is constituted and negotiated through the intersubjectivity of interlacing varieties of everyday lived experiences and ritual activities in the world, which creates the basic form of human existence (Duranti, 2010; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009).

The multiplicity of "*I*"s thus implies the idea of the "otherness" in the dialogical self. The sociality of the self, as the basic form of subjectivity, embeds and immerses in a concrete relation to a world of objects and environment (i.e. the "other") as well as the immediate social relationships (i.e. the "Other") (Joy et al., 2010). The "other" is partly a product of imagination created by "*I*" as an author. The perception of "other" is simultaneously intertwined with the "actual" other and can be completely imaginary (Hermans et al., 1993). It should be addressed that the self is not an entity that can be described in terms of internal positions, but should be understood in the context of relation to

other positions and groups of positions. As shown in Figure 2.4, the two concentric circles are highly permeable. This suggests the open-bound arise not only between the internal and external domains of the self, but also between the self and the outside world (Hermans, 2001). The ideological *I*-positions constitute an internal dialogue with the imagined self-image or with external other *I*-positions that takes place in an imaginary realm (i.e. the negotiation between imagined and real selves), in which direct face-to-face contact may not be necessary (Bhatia, 2002). When two people enter into any interaction or engage in a dialogue, there is a complex inter-relational process involved that cannot be simplified as merely what appears to happen between the self and the other. Burkitt (2010) identifies at least eight possibilities that are evident in self-other relations.

1. The way that A wants to appear to B
2. The way that A actually (bodily) appears to B
3. The way that A appears to himself
4. The way that A imagines he appears to B
5. The way that B wants to appear to A
6. The way that B actually (bodily) appears to A
7. The way that B appears to himself
8. The way that B imagines he appears to A

Burkitt (2010) opens a systematic understanding of how "*I*" attempt to communicate with another in an interaction that constitutes an image of '*Me*'. "*I*" projects an ideal image of how "*I*" would like the other to see "*Me*". Thus, the "*other*" may also form an image of "*Me*" different from the one "*I*" am trying to project. Based on the experience of past relationships, it is likely that "*I*" communicate through my behavior something to the "*other*" that "*I*" do not intend or am unaware of. Thus it is evident that internal and external dialogues are strongly interwoven. This, however, is necessary to make a distinction between the imagination and reality as defined by a particular community. An imagined dialogue may take a direction entirely different from that of an actual dialogue. The overlapping and non-overlapping areas in the interaction between two people allow for a more articulated formation of the problem of dialogical relationship. As shown in Figure 2.5, Hermans (2001) outlines five possibilities when two actual people engage in a dialogue.
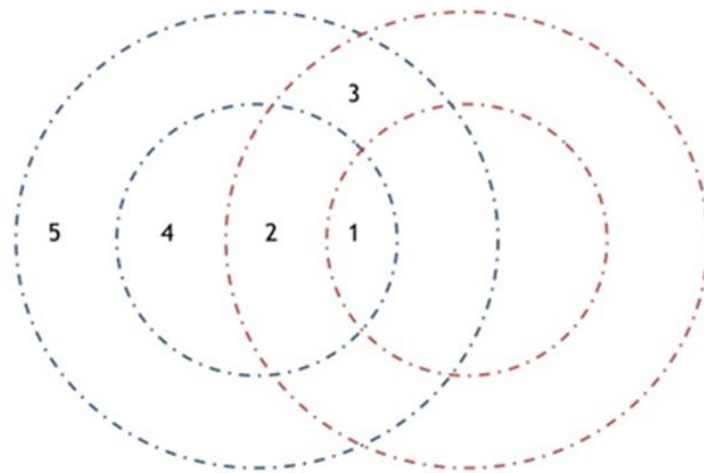
Figure 2.5 Hermans' (2001) The five zones resulting from two actual people engaging in a dialogue

Area 1 represents a two-way internal sharing, in which two people exchange knowledge on the basis of a common knowledge with a common understanding of their respective internal positions. More importantly, they understand the differences between them through agreement and disagreement with those positions. Area 2 denotes a one-way internal sharing, through which one person positions the other in a particular way and the other is aware of it. Area 3 indicates an external sharing, when two people interact and position someone or something else in a common way. It suggests that both people share a negative attitude toward the third party, and are aware of the attitude. Area 4 is the non-sharing internal area where one of the participants positions him/herself in a particular way while the other person remains unaware of this. Area 5 is the non-sharing external area, where two people interact, but while one person positions other people in a particular way, the other person is unaware of this.

The above discussion is relevant to exploring the possibilities of identity outcomes and configuration of social relations that emerge in the context of acculturation. While people of different cultural backgrounds may come into contact with others, the migrant and local consumers engage in a process of mutual adjustment and perception toward one another's consumption choices, behaviors, ideologies, and status ambitions as manifested in their subjective experiences, interpretations and practices (Bhatia, 2002; Dion, et al., 2011; Luedicke, 2011; 2015). Burkitt (2010) further highlights that in this relational way, we dialogue ourselves into existence with the "other", whether an imagined other or the other "*I*"-positions that result from internal self-reflection. Hermans (2001) points to the fact that the interpretation of another's acculturating practices may result not only in direct contact (Area 1-3), but also in non-sharing areas (Area 4-5) where a dialogical misunderstanding is caused by faulty assumptions as to the nature of the actual dialogical contact. In addition, the theory also suggests that there is a possibility of different levels of interpretation of

"others". For example, Person A may interact with Person B on the basis of Area 1 while Person A is unaware that Person B has chosen to interact on the basis of Area 4.

2.2.1.3. *The reflective self*

The above discussion of dialogical self works similar to Araon et al.'s (1992) Inclusion of Other Index (IOS)[15]. However, the dialogical self model not only helps us to understand the self-perception of "otherness" in the relationship, but it further explores how one may perceive and imagine his/her representation in front of others. Burkitt (2010) introduces the term "dialogical unconscious", in which one can engage in a dialogue with his/her own imagined self-image (i.e. *Me* as opposed to *I*). The scholar argues that any interaction or dialogue, even between two people, is always a multidimensional and complex process involving "my" response not only to the "other", but also to "my-self". It is not just a dialogue between myself and the other, but is also a micro-dialogue between the "*I*" and "*Me*". Each of us brings our own self into a relationship or interaction, in which the dialogical self is composed of the aura of messages and evaluations that others have communicated to us in the past, the sediment of relationships with the other, as well as other voices. This is especially when the "*I*" come to recognize my own voice and speak as "*I*" to the "other *I*-positions", while the otherness emerges in "*Me*" (i.e. the "*Me*" hears it as a response). This implies that the "*I*" also speak to myself as though "*I*" were another.

However, this is not to imply that the dialogical self is self-contained when it comes into social contact with others. The different "voices" in the multiple *I*-positions form a dialogical relationship that exchanges information about their respective "*Me*"s. This result in a complex, narratively structured self, and creates a dynamic field for meaning creation through self-negotiations, self-contradictions, and self-integrations (Hermans et al., 1992). Owing to the power of imagination, the person can act as if he or she is the other and the other is him- or herself. It is also to suggest that the individual can construe another person or being at "*I*" position that creates an alternative perspective on the worldview and the self.

In other words, the dialogical self is an active process of meaning construction (Hermans *et al*, 1993). In telling one's life story, the scholars found that individuals tend to have positive (i.e. pleasant), negative (i.e. unpleasant), or ambivalent (i.e. both pleasant and unpleasant) values for a wide range of phenomena in their lives. It is in self-reflection that people choose to value and organize their lives into a system, with the meanings attached to specific times and places. For this reason, the imaginal figure represents a relatively independent "other *I*-position", which also serves as an author with his or her own story to tell. This view also implies that the other "*I*" position may have a "*Me*" with a

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[15] The Inclusion of Other Index (IOS) is a measurement toolkit studying the structure of closeness of social relationships. The scale identifies two dimensions of closeness, namely "feeling close" and "behaving close" with both subjective and objective measures. It identifies a gender difference in perceiving the closeness in a social relationship.

content and structure different from the "*Me*" of the usual "*I*" position—a position that is usually called upon in self-reflection. Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) ascertain that the understanding of self-reflection further opens the discussion of the emotional voices in self-identity formation, and of how individuals express and resolve identity conflicts along acculturation.

In sum, all these help create and articulate different aspects of the self through confirmation and dialogue, even though they may fail to recognize it or try to deny it. Since the "voices" engage in a dialogue that can be concealed in another, it not only structures the field of perception and the way we speak and respond to others, but extends to what we know, see, hear, and feel. This further extends to the embodied experiences of self-identity in everyday acculturation experiences (Dion et al., 2011). The dialogical self contributes to understanding individuals' evaluations, emotions, desires, and speech embedded in the self-reflection in dialogue with others. Every dialogue is filled with both moral evaluation and emotion, provoking emotions for the person to whom it is directed. This includes the emotions of shame and anguish, and also feelings of worthlessness. This provides important cues to the understanding of the acculturation context since migrants may express contrary desires for social recognition as a worthy person, and hide their expressions of worthlessness. In addition, the locals may respond very differently to demarcate the social boundaries through moral evaluation and stereotyping practices to differentiate themselves from the unwanted migrant others.

2.2.1.4. Emergent theme: Understanding the dialogical self from a Chinese perspective

The emphasis of otherness and reflective self in the dialogical self theory echoes with the Chinese understanding of self-other relationship. The Chinese sense of self is 'we' conscious – the formation of self-identity is built upon the social system (i.e. norms, values, and hierarchy) and is inseparable from the social network one embedded (Mooji, 2004; Morris, 1994; Pellow, 1996). The connectedness with others in an interpersonal relationship (i.e. significant others, family, and friends) not only define their social role and position, but also establish, reinforce, and extend their self-identity formation in their web of interpersonal connection' (Nguyen and Belk, 2013; Wong et al., 2012).

Over the past few decades, researchers have strived to understand the Chinese sense of interdependent self-construal through tracing its philosophical root back to the Chinese belief - the emphasis of harmonious social order (Eckhardt and Houston, 2001; 2008; Joy, 2001; Nguyen and Belk, 2013; Tse, 1996; Wong et al., 2012). These studies have argued that Confucianism and Taoism, the two primary systems of thought in China, have significantly channeled the belief of social harmony to the construction of interdependent self-construal, and results in a culturally-specific set of consumption values and behavior (Eckhardt, 2000; Joy, 2001). Gu and Zhu (2000) argue that the Chinese belief system is subjected to a holistic view that human conception, intention, and action cannot be separately understood from their surroundings or from one another since human beings understand and create the world simultaneously. Li (2008) follows an etymological understanding of harmony, and ascertains

that the meaning of the Chinese word *he* comes from either the mixing of various sounds in music or the mingling of different flavors. It is not merely a matter of mixing or mingling of elements, but is understood as a process than a state which focuses on the 'balancing of opposite elements into an organic whole' (p.85). In other words, different elements, even they are in conflict, form a relationship in which they mutually complete, compensate, and smoothers each other (Cheng, 1977; Nguyen and Belk, 2013).

The Chinese belief emphasis on a holistic, harmonic relationship further explains how Chinese people interpret the whole situation they embedded (i.e. social position) and their responses in different social situation (Hsu, 1972). Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that interdependent view in achieving a sense of social harmony 'does not result in merging of self and other, nor does it imply that one must always be in the company of others to function effectively, or that people do not have a sense of themselves as agents who the origins of their own actions. On the contrary, it takes a high degree of self-control and agency to effectively adjust oneself to various interpersonal contingencies' (p.10). In others words, the principle of social interdependence is based on the emphasis on self-disciplined, greater tolerance of others, and a constant social concern, through which a harmonious relationship is preserved through self-reflection and a stable social hierarchy and norms (Joy, 2001).

Chinese culture has placed great emphasis on regulating the inner self as both an active and a reflective force (*chi*) that motivates and guides individuals to become the architects of their social networks. Individuals are a part of and that they continuously build through their outer selves (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Central to the Confucian's thought, individual' existence is defined by his/her relationship to other; while social relationship is hierarchically structured and immovable. Individuals should conform to the role of the social position and meet the requirement of the social order (Eckhardt, 2000). One of the most influential teaching in Confucianism is the rule of the 'five cardinal hierarchies' (i.e. father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger, emperor-subject, and friend-friend), in which at each level of social relationship one maintain certain authority and require some respects (Wong et al., 2012). Chinese also formulates 'pseudo-kinship relationships' with romantic partners or friends and treated them as close family members (Bedford and Hwang, 2003). According to their social positions in the Confucian hierarchy, individuals are asked to perform their own role and fulfill certain social obligations. The Confucian ethics has emphasized on the inherent connectedness to others in which social relationship is fostered through 'reciprocity, sentiments, and kinship network' (Joy, 2001, p.240).

While Confucian thinking stresses on social interdependence that guided by a continuum of intimacy relationship, the emphasis on social harmony rests on the closeness of social relationship - the togetherness and embeddedness with significant others (Wong et al., 2012). Chinese culture emphasizes on a harmonic social order through regulating interpersonal relationship in social networks

at different levels of hierarchy, Fei Xiaotong (1946), the first anthropologist in China, argues that Chinese social relationship exhibits a pattern of gradation and follows a ring-liked rippling effect - the ripples successively propel outward on the surface from the center when a stone is thrown into water. Each individual is at the center of the rings in which emanates from his/her social influences. The scholar ascertains that Chinese affiliations occur wherever the ripples reach; while the boundaries between each rings become ambiguous and unclear as long as it is away from the center. He states that 'the further away from the center, the thinner the ripples…Normally, the closer to the center, the stronger are the moral and instrumental obligations' (p.96).

To further explicate the social orientation of Chinese culture, some scholars have introduced the concepts of "gangqing" (affection) and "guangxi" (network of social relations) (He, 2008; Hwang, 1987; Yang, 2001). "Gangqing" (affection) connotes two distinguish levels of affection (qing), which are assumed emotion and real emotion (Hu, 1949). Real emotion refers to a spontaneous and true emotion (i.e. affection); while assumed emotion refers to compulsive and normative emotions generated by the influences of cultural norms, such as family tradition, situation and etiquette. The concept of assumed emotion separates affection (qing) and social norms (li), which is a key guiding principle of how Chinese express themselves in different social context and relationship. For examples, Yang (1981) argues that the Chinese may try to anticipate other expectations and social norm even it contradicts with ones' internal wishes or personal attributes. Chinese is regulated by social norms (li) to give somebody assumed affection (qing), even that there is no real affection attached to the social relationship at all. This emotion of obligations is hidden in everyday social relations among Chinese members (He, 2008).

From a consumer research perspective, a sense of balanced relationship guides consumer behavior in the oriental cultures (Nguyen and Belk, 2013). Chinese consumers are responsible for fulfilling codes of ethics in their everyday consumption to maintain personal and social harmony in a hierarchically structured interpersonal relationship (Eckhardt, 2000; Joy, 2001; Lau and Leung, 1996; Mills and Clark 1982; Wong and Leung, 2001; Triandis, 2001). Tse (1996) finds that Chinese consumers value consumption by its ability to harmonize with their social environment. Eckhardt and Houston (2001) argue that the private meanings ascribed in the possessions are intended to signify a harmonious relationship with others rather than representing social status in relation to others. Joy (2001) also finds that Chinese consumers use gift-giving as a mean to save face for someone in order to maintain a harmonic relationship. Eckhardt and Houston (2008) reveal that consumers may hold malleable meanings in their possession in order to avoid dissonance in different social situations. It is generally agreed that Chinese consumers are willing to make sacrifice, and accept or juxtapose conflicting and incongruent information and emotion for the sake of social harmony (Aaker and Sengupta, 2000; Williams and Aaker, 2002). Chinese consumer also express a sense of "gangqing", both real and assumed emotion, in their symbolic consumption of brand in order to denote their own social positions

as well as their relationship with significant others. Yang (1981) ascertains that Chinese may try to anticipate others' expectations and social norms, even when these conflict with their own wishes or personal attributes. Wong et al. (2012) argue that Chinese consumers view possessions as an extension of the self, and as the purpose of the material objects is to stabilize the social relationship with others and to consolidate in-group boundaries in order to counter ever-changing narratives of identity. Previous studies also support how Chinese consume brand meanings to define their social locations (Hsu, 1972), helping individuals to fit in social relationship (Joy, 2001; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), asserting Chinese national identity with foreign brands (Dong and Tian, 2009), and facilitating imagination of an Asian-pacific community where shares similar consumption pattern and lifestyles (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2008). Some studies also adopt the concept of assumed and real emotion in understanding local and foreign brand preferences (He, 2008), and examine how Chinese values towards social relationship that can be correlated with brand-identity relationship (He and Lu, 2007; Lam et al., 2011).

2.2.2 Implication of dialogical self to acculturation

In response to the increasing impact of a multicultural world on self-identity formation, Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) argue that the dialogical conceptualization of self and identity has become important to examining how local and global "voices" engage in a continuous interchange and negotiation. The order of our world is rife with consumer goods and multiple market ideologies circulating beyond national and cultural orders (Oswald, 1999). Cultural identity is no longer treated as an exception to a norm, but is commodified as the product of actions, or social ascription, that subscribe to a labeling process engaged in by oneself and others for the sake of identity formation (Holt, 1998; Li, 2012; Mathews, 2000; Nagel, 1994). The expression of self is a personal notion exercised for social, emotional, or spiritual reasons. Oswald (1999) concludes with a delicate description of identity formation along acculturation in the multicultural era.

Since the marketplace forms a crossroads for multiple voices claiming a place on the stage of culture, the consuming subject is always and already pulled between personal and public claims on his or her attention; is always and already divided among his or her allegiances to self, culture, country and the world at large (ibid, p.317)

When consumers of one culture come into contact with people from other cultures and multiple ideologies in the marketplace, they encounter the challenges of occupying two or more different and heterogeneous positions (i.e. *I* as migrant versus *I* as citizen). The cultural interaction thus results in multiplicity and profoundly heterogeneous external positions (Hermans, 2001). The dialogical approach to acculturation works parallel with the post-assimilationist approach to acculturation,

which stresses the hybridity and dynamicity of the cultural identity projects along consumer acculturation experiences. Here, I discuss how the dialogical approach to acculturation addresses the research gap found in previous literature and contributes to understanding the role of consumer emotions as well as negotiation of power and dominance in resolving identity conflicts and group tension (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007).

2.2.2.1 *Consumer emotion in the multivoiced self-identity negotiation*

Bhatia (2002) argues that the nature of self-identity is primarily dialogical and multivoiced, in which acculturation can be conceptualized as a "dialogical process that involves a constant moving back and forth between incompatible cultural positions" and entails "feeling simultaneously assimilated, separated, and marginalized" (p.57). The dialogical approach to acculturation sees the formation of cultural identity as something not fixed by any core, singular, essential, universal properties. Instead, identity projects are multiple, constantly contested, and shifting across various cultural and historical practices, and can only be understood relationally (Bammer, 1998). The construction and negotiation of a dialogical self thus implies the study of the multiplicity and dynamic shifting of cultural meanings of different "*I*-positions" as manifested in everyday lived experiences. It seeks to understand how consumers negotiate and articulate their cultural identities through symbolic consumption and practices in resolving identity conflicts and group tensions of being a "stranger" and a "foreigner" as narrated in their experiences of departure, dislocation, and movement (Askegaard et al., 2005; Bardhi et al., 2010; Luedicke, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Ü stüner and Holt, 2007).

The study of "voices" is central to the dialogical understanding of self-identity formation and negotiation along the acculturation process. While previous post-assimilationist acculturation literature has largely followed an interpretive approach to understanding consumers' narratives of their acculturation experiences, studies have highlighted how individuals (i.e. both local and migrant consumers) attend to different voices, thoughts, and perspectives on their acculturation experiences, which subsequently results in different identity outcomes with inconsistent consumption choices and practices in the marketplace (Bahl and Milne, 2009). While individuals engage in dialogue with the immediate others or multiple ideologies in their acculturation experiences, the dialogical approach allows the study of how the voices manage multiple perspectives of different "*I*-positions" that coalesce into a systematic construction of life story. In this regard, one can dialogically engage the addressee as a participant, or an interlocutor, in an ongoing conversation. Bhatia (2002) elaborates that the addressee can be treated as the "other", either an immediate one or an "unconcretized" imagined other, as portrayed in everyday interaction or in marketing imageries (Hu et al., 2013), which is a dialectic partner defining the self (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). The social interaction between the local and migrant consumers along acculturation not only allows us to incorporate cultural rules within our being (i.e. internalized as the 'Me'), but also to anthropomorphize our

cultural meanings systems through sharing and communication with ourselves and interaction with others (Joy et al., 2010).

While each has his or her own voices to recognize his or her relationship to persons, objects, and events, individuals express their multitudes of characters and feelings through narrations (Joy et al., 2010). In this line, Bahl and Milne (2009) highlight three trajectories for employing a dialogical approach to understanding how consumers engage in a dialogue between selves at multiple *I*-positions and navigate conflicting consumption preferences to resolve identity conflicts. The study calls for understanding 1) how people make sense of who they are through constructing their life stories, 2) the life story not as an integrated narrative but as one that can be told from the perspective of different *I*-positions, and 3) the most important symbolic valuations or attachments in the social (i.e. people), temporal (i.e. events), bodily, and physical (i.e. objects and places) spheres. The scholars found that dialogue between selves at multiple *I*-positions can be used to avoid identity conflicts, and explain inconsistent consumption preferences.

The above discussion is highly relevant to the study of acculturation context. The acculturation process provides a context to study the phenomenon of multiple identities, in particular how people (re)organize their self-systems in such a way that they are able to share with other people cultural elements that may be highly divergent (i.e. partly unknown and laden with power differences) (Bhatia and Ram, 2001). Gülerce (2014) argues that the dialogical approach to acculturation focuses on understanding the distance (i.e. multiplicity of the relation between *I*-positions) between several relations including 1) "*I*" and "Me", 2) "*I*" and "Thou", 3) "Self" and "Other", and 4) "self-in-the-other" and "otherness-in-the-self" (p.251). The study stresses the understanding of how acculturating individuals draw a conceptual boundary to differentiate the "self" and "selfing" from the identity and identification, including personality, identity, and its dynamic formation/functioning. The acculturation context thus provides an "inherently contested site" to understand how cultural identity projects entail a constant, ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of one's position between past and present, traditional and modernity, and self and other.

The nature of an identity project in an acculturation context is a "mixing and moving", ongoing process through which the migrant and local groups continuously reconstitute and negotiate their cultural identities by perceiving and adapting to one another's cultural practices along acculturation (Ashcroft et al., 1995). This suggests that a negotiation of their sense of belonging is a symbolic project that creates their sense of being hyphenated and in between cultures. It may also engage between different ambivalent, multiple, and shifting cultural "positions" and "voices" that are constantly conflicting with one another. In other words, the negotiation of sense of belonging is a co-created, intersubjective worldview embracing cultural identities of incompatible positions. Said (1993) argues that cultural identities are composed of "contrapuntal ensembles" that engage in an

ongoing negotiation of identities involving multiple mediations and incompatible cultural positions. The "*I*-positions" can be felt as multiple, self-contradictory, and constantly shifting in the meaning of the cultural identity project as narrated in different ideological voices and in the resulting hybrid forms of multiple identities (Bammer, 1998; Hermans and Kempen, 1998). In other words, one "*I*-position" may choose to assimilate to another culture while a conflicting "*I*-position" may want to dissociate certain parts of the culture; this results in different narratives and inconsistent consumption decisions across different situations.

In understanding the conflicting voices in multiple "*I*-positions", Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) observe that the encounter of difference along acculturation has resulted in experiences of uncertainty. The study argues that such uncertainty resulting from the multivoiced context does not allow meanings to be fixed, and permits no superordinate voices for resolving contradictions and conflicting information in an unpredictable context. Voices in the self thus can be emotionally laden. The dialogical self along acculturation may express the feelings of anger, joy, sympathy, love, anxiety, fear, hate or disgust as people relate to their environments or to themselves. Although consumer research has long identified that possessions are a part of the extended self where emotional attachment to loved items can help 1) resolve identity conflicts, 2) express the self with visible internal dispositions and preferences, and even 3) transform the self into some new desired form (Ahuvia, 2005), consumer emotions in the acculturation context have not been a focal point of study, even in literature related to acculturation. For examples, Vikas et al. (2015) found that young and more affluent low-caste members have shifted from envy avoidance to envy provocation in their conspicuous consumption, challenging the old hierarchical caste system. In understanding group conflicts between indigenes and immigrants, Luedicke (2015) found that indigenous consumers feel "puzzled" and "disappointed" toward the Turkish immigrants' assimilative consumption practices, which destabilize the social hierarchies and authority relationships between immigrants and indigenes. This further triggers the indigenes to foster coping strategies to resist immigrants' assimilation to resolve the fear of the "threatening Others". Sobh et al. (2014) also found that local Arab women use "mimetic excess" as a new styling strategy to resolve their envy of Western consumption but in a religious and nationally appropriated fashion discourse. In a negative sense, Jafari and Gouldings's (2008) notion of the "torn self" also displays how one can engage in dialogical tensions between the past self (i.e. Iranians' perception of their own history) and the present self (i.e. the resignification of sense of historical self), and develop strategies of symbolic consumption to resolve the identity conflicts for new self-expression. This provides relevant support to the call for deeper understanding of the role of consumer emotion in shaping identity formation and the articulation of new consumption strategies in the acculturation context.

2.2.2.2 Power, dominance, and identity conflicts

The dialogical approach to acculturation is highly sensitive to social power issues as manifested in the narratives of the lived acculturation discourse (Bahtia, 2012; Skuza, 2007). Emerson (1991) observes that human beings maintain a sense of "dominance" within their behavior, in which they tend to repeat habitual actions and accumulated behavior patterns without thinking about them. In other words, relative dominance is not extrinsic but rather intrinsic to the dialogical process (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007) There is a compassionate response to the "other" in dialogue so as to interrupt this dominance. The "other" may become aware of their habits and render them open to change. Such dialogical interchange and dominance are found to be intrinsic features of the dialogical self along the acculturation process since individuals or groups exercise different forms of social power or influence over other individuals and groups.

Burrkitt (2010) argues that the power relation involves not only interpersonal conflict, but also conflict on the level of ethical and ideological judgements. The voices of some *I*-positions in the self are more easily heard. Hermans et al. (1992) argue that the movement between a "multiplicity of *I*-positions" reveals the dynamics of "domination", "asymmetry" and "conflict" in the dialogical process. In other words, the different "*I*"s can agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, challenge, the other "*I*"s at another position. However, there are more opportunities for self-expression and communication in some situations than in others. Thus, the conflicting voices and "*I*-positions" exercise power in the dialogue. In this vein, Bakhtin (1973 [1929]) introduces three levels of conflict that may occur.

1. Unresolved conflict with another's word on the level of lived experience.
2. On the level of ethical life based on another's judgement, recognition or non-recognition by another.
3. On the level of ideology based on differences in the worldviews of characters, understood as unresolved and unresolvable dialogue.

However, it should be noted that when the "*I*" comes into conflict with others, it is not only through the words they speak about us and the way those words seek to define us, but also through the ethical evaluations embedded in those words, which are essentially linked to the clash of ideologies. Gülerce (2014) also observes that the power issues in acculturation are linked to the concerns of moral and sociopolitical perspectives. He argues that the identity is an ontological and epistemological category that belongs to the symbolic reality, while the self-identification "is regulated by some social order, or discourse, from without, toward sameness and homogeneity, within its general normative system" (p.253). Thus, he suggests that the authentic and moral self categorically belongs to the imaginary reality as a valued idea, or image, from within, and transcends boundaries like national borders and languages, social institutions and discourses in the social and symbolic world.

Hermans (1996) explains that the issues of power positions and dominance arise when different cultural groups engage in a dialogical communication that is structured by both horizontal and vertical dimensions. The voices engaged in a dialogical communication, on the one hand, can move horizontally from one *I*-position (here) to another *I*-position (there), and vice versa. On the other hand, communication can be vertically structured between *I*-positions, moving from up and down, and vice versa. This results in both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships along acculturation when some *I*-positions have a certain privilege in taking initiative to express their views, and continually alternate the roles of power holder and power subject in the ongoing reciprocity of the conversation.

The "asymmetrical relationship" is comprised of different conflicting "voices" and "positions", which can be seen as "reproductions of institutionally established provisions and constraints on communicative activities" (Hermans, 1996, p. 45). This explains how individual members of local and migrant communities negotiate and (re)produce the boundaries of social relations as manifested in their co-created acculturation experiences and the narratives of their perception of the other (i.e. voices). Sarbin (1995) also emphasizes that the credibility of memories is conferred in a social context through interchange and communication. The negotiation of one's migrant dialogical self-formation is a back-and-forth movement between different voices, and involves multiple mediations and practices that are linked to and shaped by other voices of culture, history, and power. The dominant host cultural groups also "maintain their power positions by engaging in monologues that masquerade as dialogues" (Sampson, 1993, p.143). The dialogical approach to acculturation thus calls attention to the themes of multiplicity, opposition, and conflict of self and other, which constitutes the formation of cultural self-identity projects as well as the reproduction and reconstruction of cultural boundaries (Bhatia, 2002). Wertsch (1991) examines the asymmetrical relations and constraints among different cultural groups in the dialogical approach in order to understand how "privileging" one voice over another works as domination. Such domination may quickly transform into complete expropriation, extinction, and erasure of all voices.

2.3 Summary: Dialogical Approach to Consumer Acculturation

With a focus on understanding the "voices" and "positions" as narrated in consumers' acculturation experiences, the dialogical approach to acculturation explicates the ongoing negotiation between local and migrant consumers on their self-identity works as manifested in their inconsistent consumption practices and choices. It also explains that the asymmetrical power relationship between local and migrant consumers may arouse different levels of emotion, feelings of uncertainty, and struggles in the legitimization of sociocultural structures and marketplace ideologies. These subsequently shape the negotiation of different identity outcomes and consumption practices

(Üstüner and Holt, 2007).

The dialogical approach extends current theoretical discussion to stress how individual members, as constituted by the culture, history, memory and politics of cultural groups, perceive and constantly negotiate with those who are different from the original culture, and resolve identity conflicts within conflicting *I*-positions. The consciousness of "belonging to" and "different from" a cultural group is not predetermined by specific transcendental cultural characteristics, but emerges and constantly engages in the dialogical process of production and reproduction of cultural boundaries when people come into contact, recognize, and imagine as a different other. Venkatesh (1995) argues that self-identification of the members is mediated by the perceptions of others and channeled through marketing discourses and offerings. There are two principles of defining cultural boundaries. First, it embraces an inclusionary-exclusionary principle where a group tie only includes people who display pre-approved characteristics and exclude the other. Second, "the difference-identity" refers to the subjective claimed and socially accorded labelling process, through which cultural boundaries have become contentious and led to political and power struggles. This implies the forces of resistance and conflict in an asymmetrical relationship between different cultural groups.

The dialogical approach understands the above through revealing different narratives (i.e. voices) and practices of both local and migrant consumers, in particular to show how members employ these lived discourses as a strategy to foster and reproduce the boundaries of cultural identity through inventing and adopting new cultural practices in consumption. This is not limited to the study of the dynamic between "*I*" (self) and others, but also the formulation of a collective difference between "us" and "them". However, Bhatia's (2002) dialogical approach does not extend to how consumption works as a symbolic project that channels marketplace ideals and other sociocultural discourses into the dialogue between different cultural groups. It neither pays attention to how consumption serves as a symbolic resource for resolving consumers' identity conflicts nor acknowledges the role of consumer emotions along acculturation (Ahuvia, 2005; Bahl and Milne, 2009' Peñaloza, 1995) Thus, this opens the discussion of developing a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation theory that recognizes consumer emotion and the role of consumer agency in resolving identity conflicts of multiple *I*-positions, subsequently leading to different consumption discourses.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Choice of Research Method: Rationale

This research is a qualitative study examining the acculturation experiences of local and migrant consumers inhabited in Guangzhou, China, where I employed ethnographic methods with phenomenological interviewing techniques across the entire study. The research design aims not only to analyze the "structures of meaning-producing events…and the system of signification that underlies them" (Mick, 1986, p.197) but also to reveal consumers' subjective experiences and emotions in resolving identity conflicts and the resulting changes to their consumption patterns and fashion tastes (Thompsons et al., 1989). The use of mixed interpretive methods allows an in-depth understanding of consumer behavior and experiences, and provides explanations for the multiplicity and complexity of the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption (Anderson, 1991; Anderson and Poole, 1994; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Goulding, 1999; Sherry, 1991). I paid particular attention to how consumers resolve identity conflicts and express a sense of emotion in their everyday fashion and style consumption along acculturation. The narrative of fashion discourses displayed a sense of aesthetic judgment and taste distinction that not only helped define and communicate one self-identity, but also symbolically re-marked the boundaries between "*us*" and "*them*" among the consumers (Bourdieu, 1984; Joy et al., 2010).

3.2 Ethnographic Research Approach

While ethnography is regarded as the "hallmark methodology of cultural anthropology" (Sunderland and Denny, 2007, p. 13), the application of ethnographic methods in consumer research aims to develop a holistic, comprehensive "thick description" of "multiple realities" composed of individual consumers' everyday lived experiences and behaviors (Fetterman, 1998; Geertz, 1973; Spradley, 1979). This approach calls for a combination of multiple research instruments to supply multiple facets and layers of perspective on socio-cultural patterns of life and meaning. This particularly refers to the meanings ascribed to consumption activities under a specific cultural context (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Elliott and Fankel-Eliott, 2003). The ethnographic setting of this study is concerned with "the shaping and transformation of identities" through acculturation practices and consumption choices in fashion clothing, brandings, and image products (Li, 2008).

3.2.1 Introducing the field site

Guangzhou City was selected as the research site due to the massive internal migration to the city as well as the level of marketization; both characteristics make it an ideal site for understanding consumer acculturation phenomena. Guangzhou is now the largest first-tier city in southern China, and is the administrative and economic capital of Guangdong Province (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2009). With a population of more than 14 million people, the city of Guangzhou has expanded rapidly along with massive internal migration from the rural and other provinces. It is estimated that the population will exceed 18 million by 2020 (South China Morning Post, 2011). Guangzhou has long been an ideal destination for Chinese migrants from nearby regions who seek a better living and more working opportunities. The fast-growing economy has attracted millions of migrants to move in search of a cosmopolitan fantasy. According to reports by Savills Research & Consultancy (2009; 2010), the retail market in Guangzhou has experienced a rapid increase in the past five years. The retail sales index increased by 110.1% from 2003 to 2008; the market growth rate in terms of retail sales is much greater than that of Beijing (99.8%) or Shanghai (88.7%).

As for internal migration, there were around 10.33 million registered residents as of the last year for which figures are available (World Population Review, 2014), and there are about 3 million non-permanent citizens in Guangzhou who came from other provinces (Savills Research & Consultancy, 2010). Thanks to encouragement by the national urbanization policies, around 300,000 migrants move into Guangzhou City for work or study each year. The floating population (i.e. temporary citizens) in Guangzhou, who only stay and live in the city for six months or less annually, adds another 30 million people to the city's total population (World Population Review, 2014). The influx of the migrant population has significantly challenged the established social relations, cultural practices and dialects, as well as everyday consumption in this 2,200-year-old city (Luedicke, 2015). This has fueled social conflicts and hostility among the locals. Antagonism and hostility toward the migrant population are not uncommon along China's rapid urbanization; similar phenomena can be found in other large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Chongqing. This was largely due to the government policy in favor of massive rural-urban migration for economic expansion in these cities at the expense of the locals' cultural life and social norms. Anti-migrant posters are easily found and shared online to express the locals' hatred for migrants' seizure of social and economic resources as well as uncivilized public behavior (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Figure 3.1 A propaganda poster in Gungzhou pointing out that migrants have seized substantial economic resources from the local community

Figure 3.2 Similar propaganda posters were found in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing

Guangzhou has experienced similar social conflicts between locals and migrants. During my stay in Guangzhou, one of the remarkable incidents was a protest during the 2010 Asian Games. Because the government had initiated many construction and infrastructure projects in preparation for the Games, the locals' lives were significantly impacted; the city's landscape was changed and everywhere was jammed with traffic and rural workers. During the interviews, many of the young locals expressed their hostility toward the Asian Game since they considered the event a national policy favoring migrant workers for jobs rather than the local people. The fuse was lit when the Official Guangzhou Television Station proposed to expand its broadcast in Mandarin. This resulted in hundreds of young local inhabitants, afraid of their culture being sidelined by the government, holding an unusual mass rally in the Guangzhou People's Park in order to defend their local dialect (The New York Times, 2010).

In the West, it is common to find multiple ethnicities living in a single country, but the dominant Han ethnicity in China does not limit the country's cultural heterogeneity thanks to its many regional and local variations (Liu and Faure, 1996). Guangzhou city is the cultural hub for the Canton culture and the ancestral home of the Cantonese people (or Yue Chinese). Cantonese, also known as the Yue dialect, originated in Guangzhou and is the major dialect spoken in the city. Historically, the word "Cantonese" refers to the native Guangdong people, who are linguistically different from the vast majority of the Chinese population (Liu and Faure, 1996). Although Cantonese is not an official language in the country, Thompson (2013) found that there are around 52 million people in the province of Guangdong and in the city of Guangzhou who speak the dialect as their mother-tongue. While the Chinese government has been keen to promote its official language, Mandarin, through education, media, and other official communication since the 1900s (Zhou and Sun, 2004), it has not been fully accepted by the people of Canton, who argue for the "regional uniqueness" of their own culture and dialect. The Canton culture, in particular the Cantonese dialect, occupies a position of cultural prestige (Liu and Faure, 1996). However, in the fact of rapid urbanization and an influx of migrants, the Canton culture is losing its dominant position in the city. Around half the population of Guangzhou now cannot speak Cantonese (Branigan, 2010). If language and social discourses are the keys to understanding the construction of the social world and reveal how consumers interpret the symbolic meanings in cultural objects (Elliott, 1996), the case of Guangzhou implies different imaginations of a "cosmopolitan ideal" as well as "cultural life being a Cantonese". This subsequently affects the locals' identity projects, through which consumption serves as a vehicle for consumers' identity formation and social differentiation as in everyday consumption and lifestyle pursuits.

Guangzhou City thus became a well-contested cultural space for acculturating individuals who use dialogue to negotiate and differentiate their identity projects. While migrant consumers struggle to

adapt to the Cantonese dialect as well as a cosmopolitan lifestyle and outlook in order to avoid stigmatization as country bumpkins, the local consumers strive to maintain a boundary to differentiate themselves from the unwanted migrant population and to display respect for their roots in the Canton culture. However, an unanswered question remains: the role of consumer agency and consumer emotions in drawing a symbolic boundary in their identity projects.

3.2.2 Fieldwork

The data was drawn from three and half years of ethnographic study in Guangzhou City, from July 2010 to January 2014. My extended presence in the field allows a depth understanding of how the consumer subjects view the symbolic world they inhabit (Elliott and Fankel-Eliott, 2003). To facilitate data collection in Guangzhou, I traveled from Hong Kong to Guangzhou once a week, and spent two to three days for data collection. To develop a "thick description" of the research phenomenon (Geertz, 1973), my fieldwork in Guangzhou was in a natural setting where I conducted in-depth interviews, casual conversation, as well as (non-)participant observations at various sites and shopping districts (Belk et al., 2013; Elliott and Fankel-Elliot, 2003). During my stay in Hong Kong, I frequently used different online messengers (e.g. QQ, WeChat, and Sina Blog) to keep in touch with the research participants. Even though it was not the focal point of this research to conduct netnography (Belk et al., 2013; Kozinets, 2008), I did examine the participants' WeChat and QQ messages and postings to understand their life and struggles in adapting to the changing cultural environment in their everyday lived experiences. In general, data were collected through mixed qualitative methods, including (non)participant observations, in-depth interviews and conversations. All data were documented in the forms of field notes and photographs, which helped me to develop a deep and full contextualized description of consumer behaviors in relations to the sociocultural context that the research participants inhabited.

3.2.3 Participant observation and non-participant observation

To allow a better understanding of the mainstream consumption culture, fashion tastes, and lifestyles in Guangzhou, I also participated in different research activities including daily shopping trips, taking street snapshots, and joining groups of consumers where they gathered. Projective techniques and visual analysis were carried out during the entire research; photographs taken in the shopping mall and with the research participants allowed me to address individuals' differences on their interpretation of fashion choices and image preferences. Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) argue that observation provides "etic perspectives in action" that manifest the internalized cultural norms, values, and beliefs of consumers (p.493). All observations were conducted in the most natural

settings available where I could directly involve myself in community life through observing and talking with the people living in Guangzhou. This allowed me to observe ordinary events in consumers' lives and to understand their view of reality (Agar, 1996; Elliott, 1999). For participant observation, I joined in the research participants' leisure activities, including having meals and tea, paying several home visits, having social gatherings and hanging out with their friends, and going shopping together. Through participating in these activities, I was able to understand the cultural rules and how the research participants performed their social roles and interact with others (Liu, 2008). I also went shopping with the research participants to understand their consumer behaviors, preferences, and aesthetic judgment in their choices of fashion clothing.

For non-participant observation, I arranged several trips on my own to take street snapshots and field notes in some of the shopping areas in the city of Guangzhou (Elliott and Fankel-Elliott, 2003). These trips served as the impetus for my research since I was told in an interview that the locals and migrant populations would go to different places in the city for shopping; the retail setting, together with the street fashion styles, might exhibit significant geographical differences between locals' and migrants' consumption behaviors and taste preferences. To understand the phenomenon, I made several visits to the shopping malls and areas mentioned in the interviews. I documented the fashion brands available in these locations, jotted down field notes, and took pictures in these locations. The field notes and photographs served as mechanical observations to illustrate the temporal flows of consumption activities (Belk et al., 2003). This allowed me to interpret the data, and contrasted the etic perspective with the emic verbal claims obtained from the in-depth interviews.

3.3 Phenomenological Interviewing Techniques

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to reveal how a group of young Chinese consumers appropriate meanings and display a sense of their aesthetic judgment and taste distinction in their consumption of fashion clothing as part of their narratives on consumer identity work in everyday life. Phenomenological interviews were conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of Chinese youngsters in Guangzhou on consuming fashion clothing. The phenomenological interviewing method employed in this study has been found to be an appropriate method for studying the lived experiences of consumers from a cultural perspective of consumption (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Thompson et al. (1989) suggests that phenomenological interviews focus on obtaining first-person, subjective descriptions of consumption experiences.

I recruited 23 research participants (Table 3.1) for the research. The research participants were Chinese young people in their early 20s and were students from local universities and community colleges at the time they were interviewed. Young consumers were selected as the focal point of

study because they were at the important stage of self-identity construction with the symbolic resources available in the marketplace (Wattanasuwan and Elliott, 1999). I knew most of the informants through a business consultancy project for a local casual-wear fashion brand. The established relationship allowed me to further develop *guanxi* with them. I became part of their communities and they started introducing friends and relatives to participate in this project. This facilitated the snowball sampling method (Browne, 2005), in which I utilized their social networks to extend the pool of research participants and enrich the depth and variety of information available to the investigation. This allows me to purposively select and capture a diversity of inter- and intra-understanding of the folk culture and its subsequent impact on consumption behavior.

No	Name	Sex	Age	City of Origin	Arrival Date	Education Background	Language of the Interview	Interview took place
1	Chi Pang	M	19	Guangzhou	Local-born	College	Cantonese	Participant's home
2	Chi Yeung	M	19	Guangzhou	Local-born	College	Cantonese	Participant's home
3	Chun	M	22	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Local restaurant
4	Ho Chai	M	19	Guangzhou	Local-born	College	Cantonese	Participant's home
5	Ho Wing	F	19	Guangzhou	Local-born	College	Cantonese	Coffee Shop
6	Ka Bo	F	22	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Coffee Shop
7	Kong Wa	M	26	Guangzhou	Local-born	College	Cantonese	Participant's home
8	Kwok Yu	F	23	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's home
9	Lun	M	21	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's home

10	Ming	F	22	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's dormitory
11	Si	F	22	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's home
12	Yuen Yuen	F	21	Guangzhou	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's home
13	Anchi	M	20	Chao Shan	Local-born	University	Cantonese	Participant's dormitory
14	Bosco	M	20	Zijin	2009	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
15	Chui Leung	M	21	Hubei	2009	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
16	Fong Fong	F	21	Chaoshan	2009	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
17	Han Ling	M	21	Lufeng	2009	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
18	Hiu Yuen	M	20	Chaoshan	2010	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
19	Luk Mei	F	20	Chaoshan	2010	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
20	Sim	F	22	Fujian	2008	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
21	Siu Tin	F	22	Chaoshan	2008	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory
22	Tin Cheong	M	20	Lufeng	2009	University	Putonghua	Local restaurant
23	Yim Dan	F	23	Chaoshan	2007	University	Putonghua	Participant's dormitory

Table 3.1 Summary of research participants' profile

The sample included local consumers who were from families that had inhabited Guangzhou for several generations, and migrant consumers who had been living in the city for one to three years. The tenancy of the research participants was deliberately highlighted in the recruitment to distinguish the local and migrant youngsters. Most of these migrants came from other regions of Guangdong, while a few of them came from other provinces in southern China. The primary motivation of border-crossing was undergraduate study in the university, while some of them sought to work and live in Guangzhou after graduation. Most of them could not speak Cantonese and were not familiar with the culture in Guangzhou prior to their first arrival. This provided an acculturation context to understand the differences between local and migrant consumers in their consumption preferences and fashion tastes, as well as their interpretation and perceptions of consumption values and meanings.

To facilitate a natural setting, the interviews were conducted at the homes or dormitories of research participants, or other places where the research participants could feel relaxed. Each interview lasted around 2 to 3 hours. Rather than a question-and-answer session, all interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, using non-direct questioning techniques to engage informants in a dialogue on their subjective lived experiences (Atkinson, 1998). I began with a "grand tour" of questions, followed by a life-history approach to encourage the informants to describe their everyday lived discourses in detail, as well as their interpretations of the consumption of fashion clothing and perceptions over the local-migrant relationship (McCracken, 1988). Questions were asked only to encourage more extended, detailed, and comprehensive descriptions of the participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings regarding their acculturation experiences as well as their aesthetic judgement and attitudes toward fashion tastes and preferences (Lam et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 1990). By engaging the research participants in a dialogue, I attempted to elicit and understand the acculturation experiences as manifested in everyday consumption, which offered me a window into the mental worlds through which individuals see and experience the world they are constantly constructing (McCracken, 1988). During the interviews, we also examined the wardrobes of the informants as a projective technique to deal with sensitive subject matter and topics (Eckhardt et al., 2010). The purpose of this arrangement was to allow visual elicitation to uncover rich descriptions of the context and fashion styles that the consumers preferred and experienced (Venkatesh et al., 2010).

3.4 Data Analysis

All of the interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed using iterative interpretive and hermeneutic methods, and all went through the triangulation processes (Kozinets, 2008; Thompson et al., 1989). Photographs were taken during the interviews, wardrobe examination, and street snapshots whenever possible to enhance inspiration and exploration during the interviews. All of the

data that were collected was thus used for analysis and interpretation. Analysis involved close reading of the transcripts, including identifying central and meaningful themes as they emerged. A triangulation analysis technique was adopted to achieve more accurate results through comprehensive reviewing and cross-checking of data collected from interviews, observations, field notes, media, and other documents (Belk et al., 1988). The themes were refined until they were satisfied that had been captured in the quotes (Spiggle, 1994). The organization of the themes was integrated with the interpretations, and several themes were generated from the data collected. A translated English version of the interview guide is provided in Appendix 1. However, the questions were asked in either Cantonese or Putonghua, depending upon the research participants' preferences. Since the interviews were semi-structured to encourage participants to present personal narratives as well as their acculturation and consumption experiences, many of the emerging topics and themes were expanded beyond the scope of the interview guide.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Using the dialogical approach to consumer acculturation, I paid attention to the multiple, or even conflicting, voices that emerged in consumers' narratives of their acculturation experience as well as their inconsistent fashion-clothing and image consumption preferences. My findings demonstrate how consumers' fashion discourses reflect their struggles with identity conflicts during encounters with difference in the acculturation process, and to what extent consumer emotion plays a role in reconciling the tensions between agency and structures in the social construction of fashion and style for identity purposes (Murray, 2002). Bhahha (1989) wrote that "cultural differences become a problem not when you can point to the Hottentot Venus, or the punk whose hair is six feet up in the air; it does not have that kind of fixable visibility. It is as 'the strangeness of the familiar' that it becomes more problematic, both politically and conceptually…when the problem of cultural difference is ourselves-as-other, others-as-ourselves, that borderline" (p. 72). As it will be shown in the following discussion, my data supports Bhahha's assertion that it is not only what makes consumers look and buy very differently that draws a symbolic boundary between the local and migrant consumer groups. Rather, it is also how the two groups subjectively interpret and perceive one another in their everyday lived experiences, and constantly engage in a dialogue of negotiating their self-identity projects in the play of consumption symbols that constantly reflect several conflicting relations to "*I*-positions"

In this line, my findings and discussion follow Dion et al. (2011)'s understanding of cultural phenomenology that stressed consumers' practices, processes, and patterns of experiencing the world (i.e. *being-in-the-world*). Through revealing the life histories and lived experiences in consumers' acculturation, I explore the role of consumer emotions with Burkitt's (2010) identification of four sets of social situations (expecting, appearing, reflecting, and imaging), in which they navigate and resolve identity conflicts in acculturation by appropriating different meanings in their aesthetic choices in fashion and image consumption as they negotiate a fluid and malleable self-identity project in the presence of Otherness (Burkitt, 2010; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1992). I follow Burkitt's (2010) four sequences of acculturation and divide the findings and discussion into three main themes, namely "*I*" and "*Me*" (i.e. Section 4.1) , "*I/Self*" and "*Thou/Other*" (i.e. Section 4.2), as well as "*Self in the other*" and "*Others in-the-self*" (i.e.4.3) (Gülerce, 2014; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

4.1 "*I*" and "*Me*" – Consumers' Knowing and Expectation in Pre-acculturation Contact

The dialogical approach to consumer acculturation sees the conception of self as a dialogical narrator (i.e. "*I*" as the author). Everyone has a story to tell about their lived experiences from their own

stance. The narrative construction allows the "*I*" to (re)construct the past, describe the current self, and even imagine the future through body experience, consciousness, and possessions (i.e. clothes and social environment, history and memories). Each respective "*Me*" has resulted in a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans et al., 1992). In this section, I paid attention to the emotional voices of local and migrant consumers in describing their pre-acculturation experiences, in which their emotions result from real, imagined, anticipated, or recollected outcomes of social relationships (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007)

Tracing the roots of their early childhood memories and lifestyle consumption at home provided important insights into the formulation of different "*I*-positions", which later come into conflict with other "*I*-positions" during acculturation. The narratives of pre-acculturation experience express different levels of consumers' emotional attachment to their homeland as well as their expectations of starting a new life in Guangzhou. This subsequently shaped consumers' interpretation of their social roles and the purposes of acculturation, and encompassed their identity projects and how symbolic consumption (i.e. culturally relevant sets of consumption values, attitudes, and behaviors) resolved the tensions and identity conflicts (Askegaard et al., 2005; Luedicke, 2011; Oswald, 1999)

4.1.1 Feeling close to home: Anchoring "Me" in the social memories in the home culture

The first dimension I explored in the life history of the young consumers was the emphasis on feeling attached to their homeland as well as their identity affiliation to regional culture. In a city with a mixed population of locals and people coming from other provinces, it was interesting to note that the young consumers were consciously aware of highlighting where they come from, or more specifically, their local identities. However, it should be noted that the regional differences between local and migrant consumers were not as significant as what the research participants subjectively perceives since a majority of them actually came from other cities within Guangdong Province (e.g. Chaoshan, Lufeng) or nearby provinces (e.g. Hubei and Fujian). Sharing similar cultural practices, norms, and Chinese traditions, the main difference was largely in the standards of living and socio-economic settings between a first-tier city like Guangzhou and small, rural towns. The notion of "*Guangzhou Ren*" (i.e. locals of Guangzhou) or any other regional affiliations addressing their city- or province-of-origin frequently emerged during the self-introduction in the long interviews.

> *Interviewer: How would you introduce yourself?*
> *Tin Cheong (M_20_Lufeng): Yes…I am Tin Cheong…20 years old…and it is the second year I've been staying here in Guangzhou…Um…I am not a Bendi Ren (i.e. local people)…I come from Lufeng. I come here to study! That's all! (Laugh!)*
> *Interviewer: You did mention that you're a Lu Feng Ren; is it important to you?*

Tin Cheong (M_20_Lufeng): Yes…it is because that is my home village and somewhere I belong to…I don't know how to describe such feeling in wording…Perhaps it is kind of an emotion, something that you want people to know when they ask you.

Interviewer: How would you introduce yourself?
Yuen Yuen (F_21_Guangzhou): Um… you may call me Yuen Yuen. I am 21 years old, local Guangzhou Ren… I find myself to be a friendly and positive person…I like singing and hanging out with friends!
Interviewer: Does it have any meaning being recognized as a Guangzhou Ren?
Yuen Yuen (F_21_Guangzhou): That's something important for us! I mean for people in Guangzhou…You know what there lots of migrants living here now! Being Guangzhou Ren is important nowadays… I lived here since I was born…and I belong to here!

Tu (1991) argued that "being Chinese" is a geopolitical concept and a living reality. In the data collected from my fieldwork, it was not uncommon that the youngsters used the terms "*Bendi Ren*" (i.e. insiders; locals; us) and "*Waidi Ren*" (i.e. outsiders; strangers; them) to identify whether or not they come from the local community. While identities are understood through our individual sense of who we are as well as our sense of social place and belonging, the question "*where do I belong?*" was crucial for both local and migrant youngsters (Anthias, 2008). In explicating the notion of "home", the young consumers reckoned with the sense of locality that was not simply defined by the geographical territory where one was born and raised; it was also rooted in the feelings that stem from the lived experiences as well as the associated social memories and knowledge attached to a particular place (Brah, 1996). I found that both migrant and local consumers expressed an emotional tie to immediate others (i.e. beloved family members or close friends), in which the '*I*' can engage in a dialogue with 'Others' (Duranti, 2010; Hermans, 1996). During the in-depth interviews, I heard stories in which the research participants recalled their childhood memories and described the city life at home—for instance, the cultural practices and norms, food and activities they used to enjoy, family relations, as well as their school life with their friends. All these memories and associated emotions were narrated in their childhood experiences, and created a subjective notion of "being home" as part of the extended self (Belk, 1988).

In recalling those precious moments in their hometown, Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) and Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) recalled their deep relationships with their classmates. They described many rebellious behaviors and dangerous things they did. Luk Mei (F_20_Chaoshan) and Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) recalled stories about puppy love during the self-study period in high school. They spoke sweetly about how the lovers strolled on the athletic field at night and kept their dating relationship underground. Yim Dan (F_23_Chaoshan) was thankful to her parents for taking good care of her during the preparation for her high-level examination. Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan) felt

happy and joyful every time he went back to his hometown in Chaoshan during the Lunar New Year to meet his family members.

> *Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan):Those happiest moments in my life should be the Lunar New Year… since everybody can gather together…my father used to do business outside and Lunar New Year is the time he will come back home in a year… Our family will buy lots of things back home…Since every one of us live and work in different parts of China, we have to drive back and stay for a couple of days…we eat a lot, gather together, and chat happily…That is the feeling of being home.*

While Chinese culture emphasizes a harmonious social order by regulating interpersonal relationships in social networks at different levels of hierarchy, the Chinese youngsters intertwined the notion of locality with the Chinese understanding of family (*Jia*). It was not uncommon to see young consumers maintaining their family ties through gift-giving even after they had moved to the city for study (Joy, 2001). For example, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) bought lots of gifts, including shoes, sweaters, and medicine, for her mother every Chinese Lunar New Year in order to express her gratitude to her mother for her support and care. The young participants, in particular those from the local community, often recalled with nostalgia the good old days they had with their family and close friends. In the interview, Lun (M_21_Guangzhou) particularly enjoyed the lifestyle in old Guangzhou where you knew everybody in the estate whenever you went out. He met an old lady who was his neighbor on the day of interview, and they greeted each other with a warm smile. This was something touching and made him feel at home.

> *Lun (M_21_Guangzhou) : We used to have a friendly neighborhood and I am happy to know everybody here… We greet each other in the morning and the whole environment is harmony. However, things change when more outsiders are moving in and the atmosphere turns very alienated…*

It was important to point out that the above social memories and feelings of affection toward family members and peers at home were transferred to the emphasis on "locality" and attachment to homeland. The social memories and emotional attachment to homeland subsequently resulted in formulation of a dominant voice as one "*I*-position" in the negotiation of the identity project along the acculturation process. More importantly, the participants express a moral sense in preserving their cultural identity by demonstrating consumption knowledge and taste in expressing a feeling of home. In the eyes of my research participants, it was important to highlight their regional cultural identity and express a sense of assumed emotion[16] to maintain a sense of difference from those

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[16] The concept "gangqing" (affection) in the Chinese context is essential in our discussion of the interdependent self-construal. "Gangqing" (affection) connotes two distinct levels of affection (qing), which are assumed emotion and real emotion (Hu, 1949). Real emotion refers to a spontaneous and true emotion (i.e. affection), while assumed emotion refers to compulsive and normative emotions generated by the influences of cultural norms, such as

coming from other places (He, 2008).

4.1.2 Feeling (not) interested: Differences in consumption experiences and knowledge at home

The second dimension of the notion of "linkage to locality" concerned consumers' knowledge and experience back in their hometowns. I was trying to understand their consumption lifestyle and fashion judgment at home in the fieldwork. It was revealed that the local and migrant consumers had different perceptions and interpretation of consumption values, attitudes, and knowledge. While the young consumers came from different cities where the lifestyle and marketplace culture varied, their narratives of consumption preferences displayed a very different habitus in how they thought, experienced, interpreted consumption taste, and practiced everyday consumption (Bourdieu, 1990).

During the interviews, the migrant youngsters loved to share stories about their hometowns, including food, places of historic interest, tourist spots, school life, and other trivial things that had happened in their pre-migratory experiences. However, they did not have much to share when it came to the topic of buying clothes and fashion. Si Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) claimed that she had never been concerned about her image at home since village life did not care much about a person's appearance and fashion taste. Buying clothes was treated as a luxury in the rural setting where everyone struggled to earn a living. Relatively poor, Si Tin's family did not even own a camera and her computer was a gift from her uncle who bought it from a secondhand store at very low price. Similar circumstances were also found among other migrant consumers; they did not care much about fashion. Coming from relatively poor economic backgrounds with lower educational status, all they were concerned about in clothing-consumption was that the price should be affordable, while quality and style might not be a major concern (see Figure 4.1)

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family tradition, situation and etiquette. The concept of assumed emotion separates affection (qing) and social norms (li), which becomes a key guiding principle of how Chinese express themselves in different social contexts and relationships. For example, Yang (1981) found that the Chinese may try to anticipate other expectations and social norms even if they contradict one's internal wishes or personal attributes. This can be understood since Chinese are regulated by social norms (li) and expected to give somebody assumed affection (qing), even that there is no real affection attached to such relationship at all. This emotion of obligation is hidden in everyday social relations among Chinese people (He, 2008).

Figure 4.1 Illustration of migrant students' dressing style

Coming with the purpose of college or university study, most of the migrant youngsters showed no interest in exploring and trying out different sorts of entertainment and leisure activities even though they were living in the city rife with consumer goods, advertising, and brands. Anchi (M_20_Chaoshan) admitted with some embarrassment that he was not very familiar with the places in Guangzhou even though he had been living in the city for several years. Most of the migrant youngsters did not have a sense of belonging to Guangzhou City, or a feeling of being home living in Guangzhou. In talking about the differences in fashion offerings in his hometown, Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) compared the format of the store and different fashion brands he could find in Hubei to those in Guangzhou. He said that there were not as many stores in Hubei as in Guangzhou—only a few small boutiques selling clothes. He boasted that he knew everywhere to shop and all the goods available in Hubei.

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei): I lived there (Hubei) since I was born! I know the places pretty well! Believe or not, I'm able to tell you where to go you for any fashion product you want to get in Hubei! Comparatively, I'm still not very familiar with the places here in Guangzhou…

As discussed in the following section, the migrant consumers struggled in adapting to local fashions and in gaining skills and knowledge in consumption during the acculturation process. In contrast, the local youngsters were thrilled and enthusiastic to share their lifestyles and anything related to fashion. In a first-tier city, fashion and a material lifestyle were treated as an essential part of everyday life. They paid attention to their images and appearance. They were eager to pursue trendy items even if they were not passionate about fashion. To a certain extent, practicing fashion is just part of their everyday ordinary life, in which they might mix and match, adding fashion accessories and paying attention to the details and cut of their clothes to demonstrate their aesthetic sense (Venkastesh and Meamber, 2008; Venkatesh et al., 2010). Of the female research participants, most wore makeup and consumed skin-care products in everyday life (see Figure 4.2)

Figure 4.2 Illustration of Local Students' Dressing Style

The pursuit of a fashionable lifestyle did not mean that the local consumers came from wealthy families without any financial burden. Some of the youngsters came from the lower middle class and they still had to work part-time jobs for pocket money. However, being immersed in the consumer culture and city lifestyle, the local youngsters found knowing where to shop and what to buy were

common sense among the local community, and were essential cultural capital to distinguish the locality of *Guangzhou Ren*. During my fieldwork in Guangzhou, the local consumers guided me to different shopping districts and malls that they frequented.

During the fieldwork, I conducted several shopping trips on my own and in the company of the research participants. It was found that most of the popular shopping districts among the local consumers were situated along the Guangzhou Mass Transit Railway – Line 1. A number of luxury and state-of-the-art shopping malls were located and concentrated in the *Tianhe* District, or the new Central Business District. For example, luxury shopping plazas like *TaiKoo Hui*, *Tianhe Festival Walk*, and *Tianhe Teemall* offered a wide range of services such as shopping, dining (including Chinese food and Western food), entertainment, beauty, business affairs, and exhibitions. However, the youngsters usually went to districts like *Yuexiu* and *Liwan*, where a variety of affordable fashion items were available in small-scale shopping malls (see Figure 4.3). Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) and Ho Chai (M_19_Guangzhou) even guided me to a remote shopping mall where they claimed that the shops sold the styles favored by the local community in Guangzhou. Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou) kept challenging me on how much I knew about the city in order to demonstrate his expertise and pride at understanding the city life in Guangzhou.

Figure 4.3 Some popular shopping malls among local consumers

While knowing where to shop demonstrated one's geographical understanding of the consumption landscape in Guangzhou, it was found that consumption knowledge of what to buy and how to shop

were also keys to define one's belonging to the home culture. Most of the local consumers shared a common list of fashion brands and styles they preferred. During the interviews, I conducted several brand-recall tests with the research participants to examine whether the local and migrant consumers had different brand knowledges and preferences. While the migrant consumers could only recall local brands, the local consumers recalled more fashion brands, including Esprit, Baleno, I.P Zone, Samuel and Kelvin, Giordano, Uniqlo, H&M, Levis, etc. The local youngsters preferred international brands or other imported brands from Hong Kong. For example, in the category of sneakers, many of the local Guangzhou youngsters preferred Nike, Adidas, and Reebok. More importantly, they were much willing to spend thousands of dollars on authentic sneaker brands. For example, Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) got a pair of basketball shoes from Nike that cost him more than RMB$1400 and he had another pair of sneakers from New Balance that cost him around RMB$1000 (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Two pairs of expensive sneakers from Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou)

However, many of the local consumers also stressed that they were not very loyal to particular fashion brands when compared to those migrant consumers (to be discussed in the next session). They claimed that they were looking for the unique design and style rather than focusing on the brand itself. Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) said that he found many of the fashion labels overpriced. Instead, it was a person's mix-and-match techniques that exhibited his/her fashion taste and aesthetic sense. In this connection, I did make several shopping trips with Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) and identified that many of the local youngsters liked shopping in those private labels or small boutiques in the shopping malls that sold Japanese or Korean styles, but without renowned labels. Si

(F_22_Guangzhou) discussed the case and said it was common for the local youngsters to shop in small boutiques rather than big brand names since the City had too many fashion labels that created confusion in consumption.

> *Si (F_22_Guangzhou): For the fashion brands in Guangzhou, there are just too many labels here! Like when I hang out and go shopping with my friends, it was very easy for us to say a particular fashion brand was quite good, like Baleno… However, it will only last for a short period of time… When there are more fashion brand launches, you will people keep shifting to other brands…We have many brands at a time…It is hard to say which fashion brand I am loyal to…What we should keep pace is the latest fashion style and the trend but not the brands…*

The above discussion shows how local and migrant consumer groups maintain emotional linkages, memories, and perceptions of the concept of locality and home. More importantly, it also shapes the interpretations of local consumption values, attitudes, and practices; and subsequently affects the negotiation of consumer identity projects. Growing up in a different context, experiences and social ties to the homeland nurtured the habitus of consumers, which helps in establishing one's "*I*-position", which unconsciously orients one's consumption perception, thoughts and actions. These in turn guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). This is not to say that the habitus determines one's consumption behaviors into rational choices, but rather that individuals are guided by these cultural forces in resolving identity conflicts and uncertainties in different situations along the acculturation process (Trigg, 2001).

4.1.3 Feelings of hope, excitement, and liberation: The expectation of a cosmopolitan ideal

The third theme emerged in the pre-acculturation contact concerning the migrants' expectations toward starting a new life in Guangzhou. Anthias (2002) argued that the narratives of dislocation experiences are central to understanding how belongingness is constructed. More importantly, it also helps to understand the motivations behind migratory activities, and the willingness of the acculturating individuals in adapting to the new cultural environment. This also affects the acculturation strategies in consumption one adopts in negotiating one's identity projects.

The decision to leave home was regarded as something remarkable in the migrant consumers' lives. Many of them had never experienced leaving home for such a long period of time, even though they might have travelled to Guangzhou City for a visit before. In the wake of rapid urbanization in China, internal border-crossing activities are very popular. Moving to a first-tier city like Guangzhou for university study was the dream of many migrant youngsters who wish to secure a better education

and a prosperous career path in the future. Coming to Guangzhou to study had been a goal for many of the migrant participants. During the interviews, I was told many stories of how hard these youngsters had tried in the national examinations in order to gain entry to top universities in Guangzhou. Bosco (M_20_Zijin) and Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) achieved very high scores in their public examination and were the top students in their original provinces. Like many other migrant youngsters, they wished to start their new lives working and living as cosmopolitans in the city, and leaving behind their rural village lifestyles.

Sin Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): I have tried my very best to study and come here to study finally… I want to stay here after graduation…find a job and settle down…Guangzhou will be my new home… Living in a big city is something I dream of… since it means "a success" for me… I hope that I can earn more money in the future so that my parents can also come here to live with me… I don't want to go back (i.e. her hometown in Chaoshan)…

Many of the migrant youngsters shared Sin Tin (F_22_Chaoshan)'s view that settling down in Guangzhou represented "hope" and "a better future". Coming from nearby lower-tier cities or small suburban towns without much entertainment or marketing resources, many of them admitted that they imagined and expected a cosmopolitan lifestyle before arriving in Guangzhou. More importantly, they claimed that they were prepared to start a new page in their lives and would like to assimilate to a middle-class, cosmopolitan lifestyle living in a first-tier city (Askegaard et al., 2005). Han Ling (M_21_Lufeng) also recalled that he felt very excited on the way to Guangzhou since he expected life in Guangzhou should be like something he had seen on television.

Han Ling (M_21_Lu Feng):   I do expect that coming to Guangzhou should be a new page of my life! It's a big city with lots of state-of- the-arts infrastructures and people here should be very civilized and modern. I was thrilled to become part of the city…My life should be similar to what I watched in the TV program! The life in Guangzhou should be colorful…There are high-rise buildings; people who dress nicely, many shopping malls and commercials were all around! Everything is modern and people are just nice since Guangzhou is a metropolitan city with a long history of being a trading port.

During the interview, the young migrant consumers said that they initially found the city life in Guangzhou "fascinating" and "exciting"; the place was rife with consumer goods, big shopping malls full of international brands, attractive advertising, and different sorts of entertainment. They also expected the local people would be trendy and civilized since Guangzhou was the largest metropolitan city in southeast China. For example, Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan) thought he could meet many well-educated and fashionable friends here. He also hoped to make more money in Guangzhou since there should be more job opportunities. It was not only the city life that attracted

the migrant consumers with high expectations and fantasies of living in Guangzhou. Some of the migrant youngsters also felt liberated in leaving home so that they could escape from the control of their families as well as the bad memories back in their hometowns.

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei):   Yes… Should be coming to the University…I feel good and don't feel that I am going to miss home anyway… since it is the first time I can finally escape from my mother! (Interviewer: Why do you feel so excited escaping from home?) You know what… there is always a generation gap between mother and son… It is often that she may not totally understand why you are doing that… and she will be worrying about when I play something not that safe…say swimming…

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) was a typical case of feeling liberated after leaving home. The young man loved X-games and hip-hop culture, in particular street dance and inline skating. However, he was not allowed to involve himself any of these back in his hometown since his mother found these activities too dangerous. During the interview, he proudly showed me the scars he'd gotten in practicing street dance and inline skating in Guangzhou (see Figure 4.5). More importantly, he met lots of friends who shared similar interests. However, he also admitted the difficulty of getting along with people in a new place.

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei): Everything is good here… I meet some new friends here… Since they don't know you, and you can just pretend to be a cool guy…not talking much and less proactive… It's a kind of protecting yourself…I would say it's better not to be a social animal… that makes people hate you… and I don't get too close with others… There is always someone who dislikes you for no reason… just stay silent and you can get rid of them… I used to have lots of friends back in my secondary school study since my academic performance is so good that I attracted people hanging around… People like to stay with me just because they gain face… Coming to Guangzhou to study opens a new page for me to meet new friends…However, I faced a big problem here in the University since there are not many people I can get along with… Some of them like studying while the others just come for a degree only… There are too many people here in this university.

To a certain extent, the dislocation experience among the migrant participants liberated the students from the strict and conservative familial system at home; they found themselves free from pressure to conform to the social expectations of their families (Eckhardt, 2000). Coming to live and study in Guangzhou brought lots of excitement and freedom in everyday life. Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) seldom called home and spent most of his time on street dancing and inline skating apart from his studies. Fong Fong (F_21_Chaoshan) and Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) favored window-shopping with their friends during the weekends and holidays. Many of them experienced a sense of liberation and

independence, away from traditional Chinese families, in coming to Guangzhou.

Figure 4.5 Chui Leung's scars

The high expectations in pre-acculturation experiences created a great discrepancy between what they expected in Guangzhou and the reality they bodily experienced. As will be discussed in the next section, the migrant consumers struggled when they came into contact with the local community and adapted to the materialistic consumer culture with little in the way of socio-economic resources available to them. Many of them experienced a tension between conflicting voices representing the pursuit of cosmopolitan ideals and an isolated migrant identity.

4.1.4 Feeling lonely: Moving in and the struggles of living independently

The last type of emotional voices found in consumers' narratives of their pre-acculturation contact was a feeling of loneliness. During the interviews, some of them felt helpless and lonely even it was not the first time leaving home. Some of them were in boarding schools for their high-school studies. However, they also found that university life was a completely different story.

Bosco (M_20_Zijin): I still remember the first year coming here (Guangzhou), I find everything here foreign... The good thing is that I start living in dormitory since secondary school and life isn't too hard for me…The first time leaving home in secondary school is remarkable and is sad… I still remember that I wanted to cry so much… However, I couldn't do that since my

schoolmates might know about it… Anyway, I started making friends here, and it's good that we don't know each other very well… People in University are much more open-minded… Usually we hang out with those coming from other provinces… and we all know nothing about this city… we go hang out and play basketball together… I still remember the first time we went shopping together was to buy a basketball.

As Bosco (M_20_Zijin) described above, the young Chinese migrants came to Guangzhou alone and had to face all the challenges and difficulties of adapting to their new environment. For many of the youngsters, making new friends to gain social support was the most important part of adapting. It should be noted that the youngsters suffered less cultural shock and stress in the rural-urban migration when compared to transnational migration. The dislocation experience, however, was full of uncertainties and struggles in which the migrants might suffer from a feeling of homesickness, and thus constituted to a strong emotional attachment to homeland culture. The interview with Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou), a local Guangzhou youngster, studying in Nanjing, was a typical case.

Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou): Every time I come back to Guangzhou from Nanjing (where Kwok Yu is studying), I really feel like I'm home since I am very familiar with the places, the food, the people, everything here! This is the feeling of being home!

Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou) admitted that her university life in Nanjing was lonely and isolated since she couldn't make male friends and was not used to the cultural environment. Each time she came back to Guangzhou was a great relief to her since the city was somewhere she truly belonged. The narratives above not only highlight how the feeling of being home was derived from the cultural knowledge and understanding of one's hometown, but also show that it was co-constituted by the experiences of leaving home (i.e. *there*) and the associated memories and emotional attachment of being home (i.e. *here*) (Anthias, 2008). It was the experience of displacement that created the connection between the place and the affective sense of belonging (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). The notion of "Home" was thus not something fixed and necessarily rooted in a particular geographical territory, but rather a series of imaginative works, constructing the sense of belonging interlaced with the first-person embodied experiences through interactions with different people and the physical environment. It should be noted that symbolic consumption acted as a vehicle to resolve identity conflicts and the insecurity of being alone. Many of the migrant consumers chose to go shopping together so that they could meet more friends and get social support in overcoming negative emotions.

Bosco (M_20_Zijin): We usually go to those commercial areas even though none of us is familiar with the places we are going…Anyway, it's fine as long as we stay together wherever we go… It is a kind of interesting social gathering… We may not know each other in the first

place… We will first introduce ourselves and go hang out together…The feeling is quite casual and good! We used to hang out in Beijing Road during weekends… We also stick together during school time… Chatting and playing card games together!

Most of the participants admitted the greatest challenge in being away from home was losing immediate social support from family and peers. In other words, making friends was one of the instrumental tools of knowing the city and adapting to the city's lifestyle. Consumption and leisure activities acted as an important cue for social links and community formation (Cova, 1997). Bosco (M_20_Zijin) made a lot of friends via playing basketball and shopping together. Sim (F_22_Fujian) was very happy to meet two important close friends through sharing her knowledge of Taobao (an online shopping platform). Her knowledge of online shopping helped her to make friends in her dormitory. She also went ice-skating with her friends in Guangzhou so that she would not feel alone living and studying in the city.

Sim (F_22_Fujian): My life is pretty good back in my hometown; I mean the family relationship as well as the economic condition…My father is a businessman and my mother is a housewife… I started to realize that it is very important to have friends after leaving home… and you have to develop a close relationship with your friends… I like browsing funny photos on the web and going to Taobao for shopping…

During these activities, they exchanged lots of information about their strange new city. For example, they chatted a lot about places to eat and hang out, trival things in school and life, or local dialects. However, some of the migrant youngsters might hide their true colors when making new friends in the new city environment. One such case was Chui Leung (M_21_Hu Bei), a young man who struggled to make friends and decided to hide his personality in order to protect himself from adapting to a new social environment. While the traditional Chinese thinking rested upon the emphasis of social interdependence and the harmony based on the closeness of in-groups (Wong et al*.,* 2012), leaving home and being away meant that the migrant youngsters had to reconfigure their social relationships so as to define and perform new roles as well as new social obligations (Joy, 2001). They concealed their personalities from their new friends and became more protective. Chui Leung (M_21_Hu Bei) clearly understood the Chinese social rules of games back in his hometown, where he claimed that his good academic performance had attracted many friends to hang around because of "mianzi" (face). However, moving into Guangzhou and studying in a top-notch university in the region, he could no longer exercise the same social privileges. Greater self-control and tolerance of others thus became a survival skill (Joy, 2001). Chui Leung (M_21_Hu Bei) is a good example of how Chinese youngsters adapt to a new social environment through of self-control and agency in order to adjust to the new interpersonal contingency, and how that continuously shapes the outer self in becoming a part of the web of relationships (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Peer influence was particularly strong among the migrant community since it was a source of social support in overcoming acculturation stress and identity conflicts. Trust among members of the migrant community was slowly nurtured in the university dormitory, where it created wider discrepancies between local and migrant consumers since they seldom had much interaction with each other. This resulted in different perceptions and interpretations of aesthetic sense and consumption knowledge along the acculturation process, subsequently leading to identity narratives through their choices of fashion-clothing as well as image consumption.

4.1.5 Summary

The conceptions of "*being home*" and "*being away*" were fabricated with different emotional voices and conflicting identity positions where the "*I*" narrated its social memories, consumption experiences in the homeland, expectations and fantasies about the city lifestyle, and the embodied struggles in adapting to a new social environment as the possessions of the extended self—"*Me*". This section demonstrated several types of emotional voices that emerged in pre-acculturation experiences and the emergence of multiple "*I*-positions" including a) a nostalgic self (i.e. Point 4.1.1 *Feeling close to home: Anchoring "Me" in the social memories in the home culture*), b) a consumption expert (i.e. Point 4.1.2 *Feeling (not) interested: Differences in consumption experiences and knowledge at home*), c) an optimistic self (i.e. Point 4.1.3 *Feelings of hope, excitement, and liberation: The expectation of a cosmopolitan ideal*), and d) the helpless self (i.e. Point 4.1.4 *Feeling lonely: Moving in and the struggles of living independently*). I demonstrated how emotional voices emerged in the dialogue within the individual, that the existing *I*-position communicated with the past, imagined and future "*other I-positions*" enveloped in "*Me*" and sustained the present individual's perception and narratives of self-identity projects in pre-acculturation experiences (Hermans, 2001).

4.2 "I/Me" and "Thou/Other" – The Encounter of Otherness in Everyday Life

While Baudrillard (1981) argued that fashion discourses enshroud the profound nature of social relation, this section revealed how the local and migrant consumers come into firsthand contact in everyday life, and negotiate their self-identities through consuming fashion-clothing and displaying a distinction in taste preferences (Aaker, 1999; Bhatia, 2002; Eckhardt and Houston, 2008; Joy et al., 2010; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Living in a first-tier city like Guangzhou, the young consumers were exposed to different market ideologies and fashion discourses, which seduced them to pursue a cosmopolitan identity and the cultural representation of being "modern Chinese" through lifestyle and image consumption (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Piron, 2006). However, as discussed in the previous section, the two consumer groups maintained very different consumption habits and acculturation goals, which unconsciously guided their consumption attitudes, preferences, and practices (Bourdieu, 1984).

This section extends the discussion of how everyday social interaction between local and migrant community aroused emotional voices, constantly (re)shaping their fashion discourses and consumption practices in order to adapt to identity conflicts and tensions that emerged in acculturation experiences. Bounded by the economic, social, and cultural capital available to the two groups of consumers, the young consumers displayed a sense of agency in (re)defining and (re)interpreting their cultural identities, their relationships with immediate others, and the mainstream fashion discourse. Similar to the findings of Thompson and Haytko (1997), these young consumers appropriated countervailing meanings into everyday fashion choices with the market resources available to them. The everyday interaction between the two groups constantly triggered self-reflection *within* the self (i.e. multiple "*I*-positions*"* as in identity projects) and *outside* the self (i.e. self-other relationship). As discussed in this section, I paid attention to the emotional voices in which local and migrant consumers expressed a sense of fashion-consciousness in seeking social recognition and acceptance in their fashion consumption choices and aesthetic preferences to overcome the identity conflicts and anxiety of adapting to the new cultural environment. The narratives of their fashion discourses thus voiced the dynamic of a constant (re)configuration of social relationships and their desire to be distinguished from unwanted others through taste distinction and consumption preferences (Anthias, 2008; Arsel and Bean, 2013; Bourdieu, 1990; Elliott 1997; 1999; Trigg, 2001)

4.2.1 Feeling isolated: The desperation of losing local acceptance

The border-crossing experience and adaption in a new cultural environment were central to the discussion of consumer acculturation. As discussed in the previous section, even though the migrant youngsters came to Guangzhou with high expectations and hope for a better life, the interviews revealed many struggles that the migrant consumers encountered in everyday interactions with the local community. While many of them admitted that it was necessary to make friends with the locals in order to get familiar with the city life in Guangzhou, they found it difficult to get along with the local youngsters even though they went to the same classes and the same university (Gentry et al., 1995; Rudmin, 2009). During the fieldwork, I met the boyfriend of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan), a young man who was reading for his PhD in one of the renowned local universities in Guangzhou (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 The outfits of Siu Tin and her boyfriend on the day of the interview

He found it difficult to fit into the local community after years of studying in Guangzhou City. Being a non-Cantonese speaker, he couldn't make many friends among the local people. He had a feeling of being excluded by the local community since people in Guangzhou treated him as a migrant worker rather than an intellectual person in an academic field.

Siu Tin's boyfriend: You know…when you come to a place like here (Guangzhou) looking

really "Tou" (i.e. old-fashioned), you can feel people just don't want to get close with you. Very few of the locals show empathy and are willing to hang out with you…The others just ignore you…It is better if you get into a school with more migrants coming from other provinces…First, most of them share similar backgrounds, mostly coming from a family in poor financial situation. Second, the migrants won't have a feeling or a consciousness to discriminate against others!

While many of the migrant consumers came from the rural village side, they had a different aesthetic understanding and preferences for fashion-clothing. For example, in the eyes of Siu Tin's boyfriend (see Figure 4.5), garment durability (i.e. woven items like shirts and denim jeans were favored) and comfort (i.e. the garment should not be too tight but rather a bit loose) were the most important criteria for buying clothes. He did not agree that mix-and-match style or creating a personal image was important to students. Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) also felt disappointed with the locals after living in Guangzhou for three years. She found that the *Guangzhou Ren* always judged others by appearance and followed trends blindly. She struggled to learn how to dress and do makeup in order to gain social acceptance in pursuit of cosmopolitan "success" (i.e. to be discussed in 4.2.3).

Ting Cheong (M_22_Lufeng): I do feel that people here don't want to be close with us… maybe because we can't speak in Cantonese… I did hear some whisper around and say that we are not trendy enough…However, I don't agree with them since appearance should not be that important for students... All you should care was your personality and whether or not you study hard…

While the migrant youngsters felt themselves being excluded by the locals at the university, none of them had an experience of being bullied or teased by the locals. The relationship between local and migrant was very mild even though not much interaction or communication was established between the two groups. The discrepancy between rural and urban settings grew out of different worldviews about life and associated consumption values, attitudes and practices. Coming from the village setting, the dominant voice for the migrant consumer was to study hard in order to secure a better job offer after graduation. Most of the migrants spent most of their time staying with those coming from other provinces and kept a distance from the local youngsters.

Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chao Shan): You know… I come from Chaoshan where we don't have so many big chain stores and fashion boutiques there… And we don't care as much about our appearance back in the hometown as here in Guangzhou… The first time I come here, I realize there are so many fashion labels that I've never heard of… Some of them are international brands… We do have some domestic labels back in hometown… like Metersbonwe and Yishion… That's all we know… I don't think we need to adapt the way people dress here… We spend most of the time studying and playing around in the campus… Here you can buy all types of necessity that you need…

While the migrant consumers spent most of their time staying on campus and hanging out with their friends coming from nearby cities and provinces, it was interesting to address how the everyday life in the dormitory affected their fashion consumption preferences and practices, and the results of different fashion narratives and identity projects. Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan) highlighted the fact that dormitory life greatly influenced the fashion discourses and aesthetic judgement among migrant consumers. During my fieldwork, I initiated a study trip to the University City with Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei), who served as my tour guide. The campus life in University City was a remarkable experience that largely shaped their understanding of the consumption lifestyle in Guangzhou City (see Figure 4.7). For the first and second years of study, most of the renowned universities in Guangzhou settled their junior students in the campus at University City, which was a mega-campus shared by eight universities and located in Punyu, at a distance from the city center of Guangzhou. Students would relocate to the main campus in the city center for their senior studies. The campus of University City was large enough to include not only the school buildings and student dormitories, but also other facilities including shopping malls, restaurants, salon, supermarkets, and parks. While students might travel to the city center during holidays and weekends, they spent most of their time living in the convenient environment that allowed them to stay in the campus. However, most of the local students would choose to travel back and forth from home to the campus to study.

Figure 4.7 Shopping environment in University City

The consumption landscape in the University City was an interesting place that gave migrant consumers a first taste of the consumer culture in Guangzhou. The small boutiques sold sundry items at prices students could afford. However, the product quality was quite poor due to the low cost. Big banners and advertisements for local brands were hoisted in public area even though there was not a store there (see Figure 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10). The University City created a different "consumption world" for the migrant consumers, one that nurtured their fashion tastes as well as allowed them to practice their consumption skills and knowledge with their peers. This is not to say that the migrant consumers were isolated from the mainstream fashion discourses since they could still access market information online or travel to the city center. However, the University City provided an important environmental factor (i.e. products, advertisement, store environment) affecting consumers' cognition, affects, and behavior (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) and largely shaped their consumer fantasies (Seregina, 2014). Sociologically speaking, the migrant consumers were accumulating knowledge in consumption as cultural capital, which helped them to formulate and negotiate a desirable cosmopolitan identity. In contrast, the local consumers, who were familiar with the consumer culture in Guangzhou, possessed higher cultural capital in consumption, which continuously stereotyped the migrant youngsters as "yokels" with "poor fashion taste".

Figure 4.8 Large advertising banners on the walls of a shopping mall

Figure 4.9 Advertising lightbox showing different brand names but without shops in the campus

Figure 4.10 Leisure environment and lifestyle consumption choices in the campus

4.2.2 Feeling awkward: A reflection of local identity and the idea of abject

While the migrant consumers felt themselves being isolated by the local community, my findings revealed that the local consumers engaged in an internal dialogue of reflecting themselves as "authentic" *Guangzhou Ren*. More importantly, the self-reflection process also created and guided new "*I*-positions*"* to formulate new interpretations and practices of culturally informed consumption values, attitudes, and behaviors. The self-reflection was triggered and negotiated in the everyday interaction with the migrant consumers, in which they identified the differences between "*us*" and "*them*" through observing others' use of dialect, norms and practices, and even consumption and fashion choices.

While urbanization had brought more migrants into firsthand contact with the locals in everyday life, many of the local youngsters experienced a sense of dislocation at their hometown Guangzhou, where they bodily encountered the differences in lifestyle and practice with those of the migrant community. During the interviews, many of the local youngsters told me that they found the migrants' habits "weird" and "unusual". For example, Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) and Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) found it funny to see those coming from Chaoshan had soy sauces with watermelon. They also found it awkward to see two migrants dress in identical outfits and go hang out together.

> *Ming (F_22_Guangzhou): That is so weird! We would never dress exactly the same even if we had been friends for years! At most, we may dress in similar style, but not the same outfits! That is something that only appeared among the migrant community!*

The encounter with difference and the dislocation experience in their own hometown triggered the local youngsters to reflect on themselves as *Guangzhou Ren* as well as their cultural values and practices. Chun (M_22_Guangzhou) recognized his identity as *Guangzhou Ren* during his university study in Shaoxing, when he started living with others coming from other places (mostly from Chaoshan) who shared very different values and lifestyles. He recalled his first year of study as exotic but difficult to adapt to. To date, he had refused to make friends with "outsiders", and did not want to engage in "natural outdoor activities" (e.g. swimming in a river and picking mangos on the roadside). His background of growing up in the city had separated him from the image of being a village man. He always wished to complete his studies as soon as possible and came back to Guangzhou all the time.

> *Chum (M_22_Guangzhou):   First year of studying in Shaoxing is unforgettable… Over 80% of the people come from other places, mostly from Chao Shan… There are only 2-3 people coming from Guangzhou… We are so different…They like to wear fancy shirts with big prints…They like*

to drink tea all the time…and they tried out different kinds of food… even worms… I am not very used to that…

During the interview, many participants used terms like "*Northerners and Southerners*", "*Bendi Ren and "Waidi Ren*", "*Old Guangzhou Ren*" and "*New Guangzhou Ren*" (i.e. migrants who have moved to Guangzhou to live for years but could not speak in *Cantonese*), all of which the local youngsters used to distinguish themselves from the migrant community. It was interesting to highlight that the local youngsters loved to impose and maintain a discursive power of cultural dominance over the migrants through labeling and stereotyping their behaviors as uncivilized and inappropriate.

Si (F_22_Guangzhou): There is such a hostile emotion among Guangzhou people to differentiate from those coming from other places! Some of us emphasize that we are the Guangzhou Ren (i.e. people of Guangzhou), we are born and grow here! Hence, there is a septum that separated us from them…they will say "these belongs to us Guangzhou Ren, those are not us…"

It was not uncommon for the local youngsters to use the term "*we*" to describe their local identity as *Guangzhou Ren*. The social labelling of "*they*" was not simply referring to a fixed and rigid cultural identity premised upon a physical space, but it also represented a discursive power of social ascription to distinguish "*us*" from the "*them*". The notion of *Guangzhou Ren* can be understood as an individual and collective narrative of self, which was embedded in the imagination of a cosmopolitan identity (i.e. civilized, educated urbanite who is used to consumer culture) as well as a cultural identity belonging to the Canton culture (i.e. understanding the dialect Cantonese and Canton traditions and norms). However, the negotiation of the *Guangzhou Ren* identity was not only an outcome resulting from the recursive interaction between the local and migrant individuals in everyday acculturation (Luedicke, 2011). Rather, the "*I*" also engaged in internal dialogue, constantly reflecting on his/her past self and memories, his/her embodied experiences in the presence of immediate others, and his/her a imagination of "otherness" in everyday life (Anthias, 2008; Burkitt, 2010; Hermans, 1996). My findings showed that the locals' identification and negotiation of the *Guangzhou Ren* identity was emotional and subjective. During the interview, the local youngsters emotionally wanted to distinguish their identities as *Guangzhou Ren* from the migrant community, which guided them to formulate three different types of strategies, including *4.2.2.1.*) the self-degradation strategy, *4.2.2.2.*) the demonization strategy, and *4.2.2.3.*) the stigmatization strategy.

4.2.2.1.The self-degradation strategies: Good Cantonese and poor Putonghua

With over half of the population in Guangzhou City consisting of migrants who could not speak in

Cantonese, many of the local participants were particularly discontented with the popularity of the use of Putonghua. Although the City was the hub of Canton culture where Cantonese used to be the dominant dialect, the influx of migrants had changed the language environment to the point where the local people in Guangzhou were more used to speaking in Putonghua in their everyday life. The popularity of Putonghua had become significant in everyday life and work. Cantonese, being the mother-tongue of the local participants, no longer served to provide a competitive edge for living and working in Guangzhou. Many of the research participants admitted that they were forced to use Putonghua during their part-time work, while some of them claimed that you had to communicate in Putonghua in everyday consumption, like going to the market, shopping or even taking a taxi. While most of the locals were able to speak fluent Putonghua, this did not mean that the local youngsters felt comfortable swapping between the two dialects.

During the interviews, it was found that many of the youngsters hated speaking in Putonghua, and felt an emotional attachment to the local dialect. For example, Lun (M_21_Guangzhou) can speak very fluent Putonghua; however, he didn't like the idea of speaking it because he thought that *Guangzhou Ren* should speak "their own language" (i.e. Cantonese) at their "home" and that it was weird to speak some "other's" language at home. Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) also asked me to pay attention to the language used in the fashion boutiques during the shopping trip. It was observed that the salespersons in many of the stores were speaking in Putonghua instead of Cantonese. Unlike the case in Hong Kong, where the local salesperson speaks in Putonghua to cater the mainland tourists, Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) explained to me that there were so many migrants living in the city that many of the chain stores started to employ more non-local salespeople to meet the current needs of migrant consumers. In facing the shifting landscape of the language environment in everyday life, many of the local youngsters treasured Cantonese as an important cultural symbol that defined their cultural identity as *Guangzhou Ren* and to differentiate from the mainstream Putonghua-speaking populations.

> *Interviewer: How do you distinguish the migrants and local people here?*
> *Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): When they speak! I mean the accent! People in Guangzhou Ren speak in Cantonese… Even though many people from the Guangdong Province also speak in Cantonese, their accent is not that accurate! We Guangzhou Ren speak the most standard Cantonese.*

> *Interviewer: What do you feel about the current situation in Guangzhou (i.e. the growing number of migrants moving into the Guangzhou City)?*
> *Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou): There are more and more migrants coming to here (i.e. Guangzhou City) and their children were born here!*
> *Interviewer: So, are their children Guangzhou Ren since they got the citizenship here?*

Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou): No way! They don't even speak Cantonese (i.e. the second generation of migrants)! How can you say they are Guangzhou Ren?

To many of the local youngsters, the ability to speak Cantonese served as a crucial mean to define their local identity as well as representing a cultural sign that separated the migrant community assimilating into their new lives in Guangzhou. The regional dialect of Cantonese was seen as cultural heritage to be preserved by the local people. The use of language for the identification of insider *Guangzhou Ren* identity thus displayed the negotiation of the dominant positions of the local culture in terms of an asymmetrical, conflicting relationship between indigenous and migrant populations (Hermans *et al*., 1992). The influx of migrants into the City for work and study not only changed the cultural landscape by switching the use of language in everyday life, but also created the tensions and anxiety among the local community over adapting to the cultural changes brought about by the migrant population. Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) claimed that it was very important to support and preserve Cantonese since the dialect was being marginalized when more and more migrants were moving into the City and fewer people felt it necessary to speak in Cantonese. Another participants Si (F_22_local) worried about the popularity of Putonghua that might affect the dominant position of Canton culture in the region.

Si (F_22_Guangzhou): I don't think it is good (for Canton people to speak in Putonghua). When you are living in Guangzhou, you ought to speak in Cantonese. People here in Guangzhou used to speak in Cantonese, no matter at home or at work. However, nowadays there are lots of people who don't speak Cantonese and say it is fine as long as they can speak in fluent Putonghua. In the past, those Guangzhou Ren teachers used to teach in Putonghua but very often they will use Cantonese to supplement if they found it difficult to express their words. It is fine for us as long as many of the students know Cantonese. However, the current news reported that there are lots of kids in Guangzhou who don't speak in Cantonese anymore…it implies that we are losing our own culture.

During my fieldwork in 2010, Guangzhou City was preparing for the Asian Games and one official of the Guangzhou Television station proposed to broadcast the event in Putonghua as the official language. Hundreds of local youngsters ran into the streets and held an unusual mass rally in the Guangzhou People's Park for several weekends in order to show their discontent and to defend the dominant position of Cantonese and Canton culture in the city of Guangzhou (*The New York Times*, 2010). Some of my research participants joined the protest and they thought that it was right to speak out in order to protect their own culture.

Kwok Yu (F_23_Guangzhou):   We should show support to that (i.e. protecting the Cantonese)… There has been many construction works for the Asian Games and the City

changed a lot… It is not for us, but for those Government officials and those outsiders… Now they are saying to use Putonghua and forbidden Cantonese in broadcasting the event! It is totally not acceptable as they want to display a Guangzhou with no Canton culture!

The incident of the Asian Games, together with the participants' narratives and voices for preserving Cantonese, displayed how the dialect served as a demarcation of the symbolic boundaries between the local and migrant communities. The local youngsters engaged in an internal reflection of resolving conflicting "*I*-positions" in which they struggled to adapt to the cultural changes brought by the influx of migrant population and the Government's current preferential policy toward urbanization with a nostalgic self (Point 4.1.1.). The local community exhibited a sense of assumed emotion toward their dialect (Hu, 1949), in which the youngsters felt themselves responsible for promoting and preserving their own cultural heritage. The discussion here extended the concept of assumed emotion from immediate social relationship to a moral concern towards preserving the intangible cultural element (i.e. the language), through which the local youngsters shared and co-created the imagined community of Canton culture (Anderson, 1991). Most of the locals treasured speaking in Cantonese since it defined them as *Guangzhou Ren*. However, the local youngsters were found taking a passive approach to resist the shifting of social dominance over the use of *Putonghua* at home rather than a proactive one. Some of them adopted a self-degrading strategy to tease their cultural identity and claimed that the deficiency in speaking Putonghua was evidence of being a local Guangzhou person rather than projecting a mainstream "Chinese cosmopolitan ideal". Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) felt proud and comfortable in addressing his poor *Putonghua*.

Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): My Putonghua is bad too… My father is even worse… When you listen to my father's Putonghua, you will find that he is not those who can speak Putonghua…It is not accurate… We used to speak in Cantonese and that is easier for us!

Deficiency in speaking another language can strengthen one's identification with one's root culture. More importantly, this local discourse also came into conflict with the mainstream ideology of the cosmopolitan ideal that is the dominant position of *Putonghua* in both China and the global context. It was also interesting to notice that some of the local participants like to speak ironically about the bad sides of being *Guangzhou Ren* than emphasizing the revered characteristics underneath Canton culture. For example, Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) thought that *Guangzhou Ren* were quite materialistic and down-to-earth, and this business-oriented thinking sometimes came across as cocky to others if they found no benefit. During the interview with Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou), he ironically said there was nothing good about becoming a *Guangzhou Ren*.

Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou): To me, the real Guangzhou Ren like bragging, and they are very selfish. (Interviewer: Why do you say so?) Selfish in a way that they are really self-centered.

For example, some of the Guangzhou Ren are very calculative and materialistic. If someone got some advantages, the others just approach and see if they can gain any benefits! You know, sometimes, they expect someone would pay for them and they just left after clubbing…Again, it is all about the face problem and people won't talk about it afterwards!

While previous acculturation research addressed the notion that diaspora and immigrants experience a sense of dislocation (Bhatia, 2002; Ger and Østergaard, 1998; Üstüner and Holt, 2007), my findings showed that the local youngsters voiced their dislocation experience at home, where they bodily found themselves losing the dominance in the dialect they used to speak in everyday life. More importantly, the relative dominance is not extrinsic but rather intrinsic to each individual's reflection of their "I-position" in relation to the imagination of Otherness in a dialogical process (Guilfoyle, 2003). The everyday encounters with the migrant community also triggered a feeling of alienation at home. The self-degradation strategy adopted by the local youngsters expressed their frustration and helpless in resisting the political and socio-economic discourse. As will be discussed, this emotion led to such uncontrollable escalation that a sense of defensive localization emerged not only to separate from the other group, but even to reject and demonize the other to overcome the intolerable uncertainty (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007).

4.2.2.2.*The demonization strategies - The dangerous and uncivilized 'abject-other'*

While the urbanization policy had altered the dominance relationship between the local and migrant populations in Guangzhou, the local community was largely restricted by the institutional and societal structures in raising their voices in public. The heightened uncertainty of the acculturation experiences among the local youngsters resulted in many defensive forms of localization in which they tried to essentialize the differences between local *Guangzhou Ren* and the migrant population (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007). From a dialogical perspective, Bakhtin (1981 [1975]) highlighted that when the "I" comes into conflict with others, it is not only through the words they speak about us and the way those words seek to define us, but also through the ethical evaluations embedded in those words, which essentially become linked to the clash of ideologies.

During the fieldwork and the depth interviews, it was not uncommon that the local youngsters kept complaining about the uncivilized public behaviors and value set through which they found the migrant population unacceptable. They stereotyped the migrant community as "dangerous" and "uncivilized". Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) was very suspicious about non-local people coming from other provinces. She believed that some of them were dangerous robbers since she was once robbed by a motorcyclist. Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) always complained about the impoliteness of the migrant population whenever I hung out with him during the field trip. Once, when I was having dinner with him, he became very angry at the poor customer service provided by a

Putonghua-speaking waitress at the restaurant. He blamed it on the policy of allowing more and more migrants to move into the city.

Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): You know what…the Guangzhou City used to be a nice place…People were nice and polite here! Nowadays, the city changes and becomes messy… It is because of the migrant workers! Yes, some of them had lots of money and invest a lot in Guangzhou; however, it doesn't mean that they are civilized! Everywhere becomes dirty… They throw rubbish everywhere and spit on the floor… You see the poor customer service here (pointing at the waitress)! We Guangzhou Ren won't serve people in such a bad manner. All you found the bad sides of Guangzhou are caused by them!

While the local participants may choose to adopt self-degradation strategies that passively resist the assimilation of the migrant community in their personal discourses, they also try to safeguard the superiority of Guangzhou City as a "civilized", cosmopolitan city over other cities and towns in China. In this line, there were lots of stories told by the local youngsters stereotyping the migrant populations and enthroning the virtue of the local citizenry. Ho Wing (F_19_Guangzhou) talked about a group of local Guangzhou youngsters who worked as volunteers to clean up the city during the Asian Games. She appreciated the efforts of the local youngsters and felt that they should be regarded as a virtue of the City's culture, where the migrant population from other provinces would not have such impulses. Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) was so resentful about the impoliteness of those migrants that she kept saying that they were uncivilized. She emphasized that people belonging to the local community never behaved that way.

Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou): I think we (i.e. Guangzhou Ren) had a very different value set from those migrants! I should say there is a great social distance between us and them… You know what… There are some university students (i.e. coming from the migrant community) who spit on the floor, talk so loud on their phone, or even throw rubbish everywhere! What's wrong with them? They are degree students and should not behave like that! The migrants are not civilized and you cannot blame why we (i.e. Guangzhou Ren) don't like you all (i.e. migrants)!

While Ka Bo's (F_22_Guangzhou) criticism of her roommate might seem unreasonable, especially as she generalized her bias to the entire migrant community, her remarks revealed that the discontent over the migrant community was subject to individual experiences, with strong personal value-judgements toward the opposite community. The local youngsters were strongly affiliated with the image of being civilized, with a virtue ethic in everyday discourses and identity narratives. They generalized and imagined the migrants as dangerous and uncivilized, through which they created a space for themselves in order to cope with the uneasiness and anxieties of "homelessness" at home. While the local youngsters would not take a reactive approach to resist or attack the influx of

migrants, it was not difficult to see that the mild anti-migrant discourse narrated the stereotyping and generalization of the migrant population as threatening others to the civilized Guangzhou society. More importantly, the voices from the local community collectively exhibited a sense of marginalization of the migrant community as "the enemy in ourselves" as the hidden face of identity narrative (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007). In other words, the formation of local identity narrative was dialectically co-created, guided, and mediated in relation to the presence or imagination of others that don't belong to the indigenous community (Bhatia, 2002). Rather than seeing the identity of Guangzhou Ren as a "core self" (Erikson, 1968), the local participants were found to be engaging in the dialogue of identification processes (Joy et al., 2010). Following Hermans and Dimaggio's (2007) discussion, the local youngsters saw the migrants as "cultural invaders" who showed no interest in assimilating to become a civilized Guangzhou citizen and to understand the local culture. In the eyes of the local youngsters, the migrants were perceived as "abject", neither subject nor object. While the locals saw the migrants who came to Guangzhou to seize and plunder the socio-economic resources, the local youngsters emotionally rejected them and did not consider them as an integrative part of their selves. To a certain extent, this explained why they felt angry at migrants but it had not led to radical movement against the situation. Positioning the migrant population as "abject-other", the locals reduced their anxiety and increased their ontological security (Kinnvall, 2004, p.753). Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou)'s discussion of the distinction between *New Guangzhou Ren* and *Old Guangzhou Ren*[17] portrayed how the local people feel helpless to change their destiny and they could only accept their fading with hostility towards the dominant political-economic discourse.

Interviewer: Do you hate those "New Guangzhou Ren"?

Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou): We did hate them in the past! However, it is now just a term to differentiate them (i.e. migrants) from the native Guangzhou people here… I can't say that we hate them now! (Interviewer: Why is that?) Well…It's a kind of herd behavior and people just get used to it…(Interviewer: So why do the Guangzhou people suddenly accept them?) You know the size (i.e. the non-local population) is getting bigger and bigger … you can feel it when you walk into the street… even they won't disturb you…however, you can feel it; the city is now less harmonious… those from other places turn the city into a mess… sometimes there is some stealing and plundering… and the city becomes much more complicated and in a mess… I am not blaming them since I know that it is the prosperity and growth of the city that attracts the people to come…but the more the people come, the poorer the city becomes…You can't prevent the fact that there are more outsiders moving into the city… all they need to do is buy an apartment here and they become New Guangzhou Ren.

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[17] The "New Guangzhou Ren" was a newly invented term created by the local people to refer to those coming from other places and staying permanently in Guangzhou City. While this group of people may see their children born and raised in Guangzhou, those children may have permanent citizenship yet may not be familiar with Cantonese and the traditional Canton culture. However, many of the local citizens felt they could not avoid accepting the changing cultural landscape of Guangzhou City with growing number of non-Cantonese speakers living and working there.

Interviewer: So what do you feel about the New Guangzhou Ren?

Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou):For the New Guangzhou Ren, I think there are two types... some of them are labor workers who come here for low-paid jobs...They are less civilized and my impression is very bad anyway... However, the other types are those bosses who come here to buy and build houses and transfer their citizenship here.

Interviewer: So do you think that you are much closer to those who are much civilized?

Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou):   Not really... however, at least they bring prosperity to this city and will not commit crimes... it is not about money, but just the feeling....

4.2.2.3.*The stigmatization strategy – Dominating fashion discourses through stereotyping*

Stigmatizing the migrants' appearance was one of the acculturation strategies commonly adopted by the local youngsters to distinguish themselves from the migrant consumers in their everyday lived discourses (Sandikci and Ger, 2010). To demarcate a separation between "*us*" and "*them*", the local youngsters often stereotyped the migrant consumers with their poor fashion taste and their village-man appearance. The discrepancy between the city culture and that of the lower-tier cities or rural parts of China had resulted in different perceptions and lived experiences toward everyday consumption and aesthetic judgement, as well as fashion knowledge and practices (Dion et al., 2011). During the interviews, the migrant consumers were found showing less concern about their image and appearance because they prioritized their studies and working part-time as the most important things to be achieved in the adoption of their new urbanite lifestyle in Guangzhou. Lacking sufficient economic and cultural resources to pursue fashion, the youngsters spent most of their leisure time in the university campus and many of them were reluctant to acquire additional fashion knowledge to keep up with the pace of prevailing trends.

Embracing a completely different worldview, the local consumers were nurtured and raised under a materialistic consumer culture, where personal image and aesthetic lifestyle was highly praised (Featherstone, 1991). The locals continuously maintained and exhibited a dominant voice in exercising discursive power in fashion taste through stigmatizing the migrant community. During the interview, the term "*laau tau*" emerged; the local youngsters used the phrase to stereotype the poor fashion tastes and unsophisticated appearances they observed in the migrant community. More importantly, the local youngsters maintained a sense of pride in their fashion choices since they possessed the higher cultural capital in consuming fashion knowledgably and aesthetically (Bourdieu, 1985).

Ming (F_22_Guangzhou): I do think we, as the Guangzhou Ren, have much more fashion sense than those coming from other places! We have a term called　"laau tau… It is different from "leung" (i.e. lame)… The notion　"leung"　means lame…However, "laau tau"…um...It sounds a bit impolite since we use the term to label those who are not local Guangzhou people… However, for those who are coming from Shenzhen and Hong Kong are not "laau tau" (Interviewer: How can you tell whether one person is a "laau tau" or not?) Well…since they (laau tau) are coming from other places (i.e. not Guangzhou), I used to think those "laau tau" can't speak fluent Cantonese or there is always an accent in it… Nowadays, we have too many migrants moving in and it becomes much obvious to identify those "laau tau" by means of observing their look and dressing style!　(Interviewer: Can you elaborate with more examples?) It's quite hard to describe in words… what I mean is that you can easily identify them by looking at their style and clothes they are wearing… They dress like a rural worker…and it is easy that you can feel who are from the cities while the others are not…

The stereotype of the migrant population as "*laau tau*" represented a silent but antagonistic acculturation emotion that guided the local consumers to demarcate a boundary between "*us*" and "*them*" in the fashion discourses[18]. More importantly, local youngsters believed that they maintained a superior, dominant position in defining what "fashion" was or was not. Under the rapid urbanization policy, the economic development in southern China had attracted more migrants from other lower-tier cities and rural parts of China moving into Guangzhou for study and work. As discussed, this created hostility among the local consumers who thought that the influx of migrants had seized their economic and social resources. During the interviews, many of the local youngsters complained about the impact of rural-urban migration in changing the city landscape as well as the everyday life they used to have. Living in Guangzhou became increasingly tough as the locals faced socio-economic problems in their everyday lives, including rapid inflation, high rents, a highly competitive job market, the changes in using Putonghua in everyday life, the development of new city centers through building large-scale infrastructure and demolishing old Guangzhou heritage sites. All these had deeply broken the locals' hearts since they found their home city unfamiliar and distant.

In witness of the changing socio-economic landscape in Guangzhou, the term "*laau tau*" voiced the helplessness of the local inhabitants in adapting to the influx of migrant population into the city. More importantly, many of the locals worried about losing the dominant position in their home city. Being civilized and consuming fashion knowledgably became a kind of cultural resistance strategy that set a cultural barrier preventing the migrant consumers from assimilating into the local Guangzhou in-group identification. While the stigmatization of "*laau tau*" was generally understood

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[18] The original meaning of "laau tau" could be dated back to the early 1990s, when soldiers from the provinces in northern China came to the southern region for military purposes. However, since these people could not speak in Cantonese, very often that they called the locals "lao xiong" which meant "brothers" in Putonghua. The locals then translated the term into "lauu cung" in Cantonese and used it to address those who came from places outside Guangdong.

by the local community as having to do with a person's appearance, many of the locals could hardly define what the dressing style of "*laau tau*" was and to what extent it differed from those of the local community. Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) claimed that those people who dressed like grassroots rural workers were probably "*laau tau*". Si (F_22_Guangzhou) admitted that the stereotyping toward the migrant consumers was very subjective and emotional, based on their instinct and first impression about someone.

> Si (F_22_Guangzhou)   *Well…you know it (i.e. how to define laau tau) when you walk into a street… It's hard to tell concretely… maybe it's just an immediate feeling or impression about a person…*

Coming into everyday face-to-face contact with the migrant population, the local youngsters bodily encountered and experienced "difference" through observing how the migrants managed their appearance and style through consuming fashion and clothing. The notion of taste distinction was performed as "a system of classification" in which the local consumers operationalized the stigmatization process as "a set of embodied preference" in justifying, classifying, and relating their aesthetic preferences on particular consumption objects and practice (Arsel and Bean, 2013). In other words, the aesthetic judgement and taste preference in fashion discourses was subjective. Many of the local youngsters found it difficult to describe in words, but they could easily tell the difference through observation. In this line, I conducted several field trips to some of the major shopping districts in Guangzhou to take street snapshots and make observations. The analysis of the pictures was triangulated and cross-checked with the description of "*laau tau*" during the interviews with local youngsters. In general, the "*laau tau*" could be categorized as those who were slovenly in dress and manner, even though some of them had put some effort into mix-and-matching their styles and personal image. While there was a clear gender difference between how the male and female consumers dressed, it should be remarked that both groups deliberately aimed to construct a conventional gendered identity through consuming fashion-clothing. In other words, the boys wanted to dress in a masculine way while girls wished to look feminine.

In the eyes of the local youngsters, male migrants mostly had tanned skin and dressed in either "homely villagers' look" or "gangsters look" (see Figure 4.11). For the image of "homely villagers' look", it was not uncommon to see boys wearing light-colored, oversized shirts with a pair of twill chinos or loose-fitting denim jeans. Some of them would wear loose-fitting vests or T-shirts with cargo shorts. The quality of the garments was usually poor due to heavy washing and long use. Colors were often dull and faded, silhouettes worn and out of shape. Another interesting point to address was that the shirts were normally long enough to cover half of the back pockets of the pants. Trousers were usually slightly tapered. To avoid looking "gay", I observed and cross-checked with the migrant consumers' interviews that they did not prefer skinny jeans and there should be enough

allowance in the legs. Another key point to highlight was that the migrant community paid less attention to their shoes. Many of them simply wore a pair of flip-flops or dilapidated sneakers that could go with different styles. While the "homely villagers look" migrants were casually dressed without any attempt at mix-and-match styles, the "gangsters look" migrants were deliberately constructed to showcase a rebellious image, which was very similar to the characters in the gangster movies of Hong Kong in the 1990s. For the hairstyle, the boys usually had a mop-top or a side part with long sideburns covering their ears. There was not much layering but a solid, sloping fringe. However, the hair looked chunky and oily since many of them did not dye their hair in lighter colors. They also liked to wear shirts with several buttons left open, suggesting they were confident about their masculine image.

Figure 4.11 Street-snap shot of male "*laau tau*"

In contrast, the female consumers who were being stereotyped as "*laau tau*" were much more concerned about their appearance than the male consumers. However, the local youngsters found these young ladies "over-dressed" since they selectively wore what they liked, top and bottom, without considering the total look of the outfit. In the eyes of the local youngsters, the female migrant consumers lacked adequate knowledge of fashion and mix-and-match style to achieve an appealing image (see Figure 4.12). While the local consumers preferred subtle designs and basic colors (e.g. black, grey, and white), many of the migrant youngsters favored bright colors and large motifs on their garments to look attractive and feminine. The silhouette of the clothes was usually slightly slim-fitted or layered (e.g. a loose-fitting, wide-neck T-shirt that showed part of the inner garment underneath) to show their waistlines. Hot pants, skirts, and wider neck openings were favored by the migrants while the locals found them too "sexy" and "exposed". In addition, the locals also found the migrant population looked a bit old-fashioned and yokel-like, since they loved to wear "fancy" scandals with lots of trim, stripes, and other décor on them. Sometimes, they even wore flip-flops, which did not match with the total look. Prints and fancy details with the use of lace fabrics were also welcomed by the female migrants, who wished to demonstrate their feminine identity. While the girls paid attention to choice of clothing, it was interesting to note that not many of them actually paid attention to any skin-care or cosmetics. It was not uncommon to see girls without any makeup in the street. During the interviews with the migrant research participants, they explained that it was too hot and time-consuming for them to wear makeup every time they hung out with friends. Some of them did not think it was necessary to learn how to do makeup during their studies. In contrast, many local youngsters wore makeup as a daily habit.

Figure 4.12: Street snapshots of female "*laau tau*"

As shown in the above two figures, the locals' stereotyping of "*laau tau*" highlighted a subtle difference from the mainstream fashion discourse. To a certain extent, it only represented more of a personal taste preference in fashion discourse rather than a significant distinction from the mainstream fashion styles and choices. The stigmatization of the migrant community was emotional and subjective; more importantly, the generalization could be imaginative. For example, Chi Pang (M_19_Gaugnzhou) told me that the image of "*laau tau*" stayed away from the mainstream fashion since they often dressed strangely.

Interviewer: Have you ever heard of a term "laau tau"?

Chi Pang (M_19_Guagnzhou): Yes! It means those "feizhuliu" (i.e. non-mainstream/ alternative)…It refers to those coming from other provinces who look extraordinary! Some of them look like "Master Gold Lion" (i.e. a character in a famous Chinese story), while some

of them look like those characters in the Dragon Ball Z comics … They dyed their long hair in different weird colors, and make it into those punk hairstyle…(Interviewer: So can the local Guangzhou Ren be "laau tau" too?) We Guangzhou Ren can never be "laau tau"! We look like those in Hong Kong… We dress normally and casually… Believe it or not, you can easily identify (those "lauu tau") in the street…It is very easy since you may see someone on the street who is very confident about their outfit and thinks they are very trendy and stylish! Have you ever seen someone in the street wear very skinny and really tight pants? It looks really weird since they got a loose top with a really tight bottom…

Chi Pang's (M_19_Guangzhou) understanding of "*laau tau*" was different from that of the other local youngsters since he associated them with the "*feizhuliu*" (i.e. alternative) culture, which belonged to a visual subculture in China. The notion of "*feizhuliu*" (i.e. non-mainstream) was a commonly used Chinese internet meme which referred to a group of youngsters who deviated from the mainstream in their lifestyle, attitudes, and behaviors (see Figure 4.13). This group of young kids was self-centered and narcissistic, and their punk-looking and extraordinary hairstyles were despised by the general public. Chi Pang's (M_19_Guangzhou) definition of "*laau tau*" might seem extreme since it was not common to identify these *feizhuliu* (FZL) in the street. However, it pointed out to us that the stigmatization process was imaginary in nature and the perception of otherness was guided by the negative emotion the locals had toward the migrant population. Associating the migrant population with the "*feizhuliu*" also meant that the migrant population was being stigmatized as engaging in deviant behaviors which were largely not acceptable by the local community (Sandikci and Ger, 2010). The labelling of the migrant community as the "*feizhuliu*" was clearly out of malice. More importantly, through abusing the migrant community, the local youngsters demarcated a social boundary that promoted their cultural privileges and protected the superiority of their *Guangzhou Ren* identity through exercising discursive power in fashion discourse. This discussion also echoed Emerson's (1991) discussion that the stereotyping against the migrant consumers among local consumers maintains a sense of "dominance" within their "voices". They tend to repeat these habitual stigmatization actions without thinking about it. In other words, relative dominance is not extrinsic but rather intrinsic to the dialogical process (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007)

Figure 4.13 Examples of "feizhuliu (FZL)" found on the internet

4.2.3 Feeling determined: Struggles in the pursuit of cosmopolitan identity transformation

While the local consumers seek to identify themselves as the authentic *Guangzhou Ren* through demonstrating a different set of consumption knowledge and image consumption practices, my research findings also revealed that many of the migrant participants struggled to attain their acculturation goals in the pursuit of a cosmopolitan ideal through everyday consumption choices and practices (Askegaard et al., 2005). More importantly, they underwent a series of role transitions and identity transformations through which symbolic consumption played the role of resolving identity conflicts and easing social barriers during acculturation. Many of the migrant youngsters found the acculturation experience in Guangzhou a puzzling struggle. During the interview, Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan) described what he felt about his new life in Guangzhou, which contradicted his original expectations of the city culture.

> *Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan): I have been here for around 1 year, there are lots of feelings and new thoughts…Money is most important here! When I first came to Guangzhou, I didn't know anyone here and I just hung out to meet new people. At that time, I has already earned some money in my part-time jobs before the start of the semester! I was quite happy to have money to spend… I don't care much about finance, but I was really happy to spend money buying stuff…(Interviewer: Do you find yourself changed a lot after staying in Guangzhou?) Well…It's hard to say I didn't change at all… I left home and lived here alone…You have to take care of yourself…Money becomes something important and you have to make friends and survive…I got some referrals to part-time jobs through building connections…You don't want to be excluded and that's what you have to adapt.*

The acculturation experience of Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chanshan) was not uncommon to those of the other migrant research participants, who often struggled and felt confused in adapting to city culture.

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According to many of the migrant youngsters, life in Guangzhou was money-conscious with an attention to outward beauty rather than inward reflections. They experienced distance from the local people and felt lost in adapting to the city life, not to mention they could not speak Cantonese. Sim (F_22_Fujian) and Fong Fong (F_21_Chaoshan) found it difficult to get along with the locals at the University since they didn't speak Cantonese. Yim Dam (F_23_Chaoshan) felt herself being excluded by the locals in class, and admitted that the majority of her friends came from other provinces. Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) told me that his close friends in Guangzhou were those non-Cantonese speakers who loved street dancing and inline skating.

Tin Cheong (M_20_Lu Feng): Learning Cantonese is important…even though more and more people actually speak Putonghua here… Anyway, I still want to make friends with the locals, but it seems to me that we are still distanced from the local community.

Learning Cantonese was treated as something instrumental for the migrant consumers in their pursuit of a cosmopolitan ideal. However, learning how to shop and dress up was also found to be important during the acculturation experience. As discussed in the previous section, the migrant youngsters hoped to settle down in Guangzhou City after graduation for better job opportunities and living standards. In this line, they were determined to adapt to life in Guangzhou and tried hard to acquire as much consumption knowledge and social skills as possible in order to become urbanites. As such, many of them worked hard to learn Cantonese in their everyday life apart from getting themselves familiar with the city lifestyle (e.g. university campus and dormitory environment, different shopping and dining locations, and the local transportation). Yim Dan (F_23_Chaoshan) and Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) loved watching TV programs from Hong Kong since they could practice Cantonese during their leisure time. During one of the field trips with Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei), he insisted that I speak in Cantonese, so that he could practice his Cantonese with even though sometimes he might not be able to understand it all.

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei): I feel good speaking in Cantonese… It is really difficult to learn… However, although it is easier for me to speak in Putonghua, I still refer to speak in Cantonese…you can learn on your own…I watch TVB programs (i.e. a Hong Kong Television Broadcasting Company) just because of learning Cantonese, but not for the programs themselves…I know that many Hong Kong people speak in Cantonese… I believe learning Cantonese is a way to bridge the international… I heard from my cousins that there are lots of Americans who actually know how to speak in Cantonese; is that true?

As discussed, they would also go shopping together during the weekend, exchange information about the city lifestyle, and find part-time jobs through connections.

Bosco (M_20_Zijin): I found my life in Guangzhou pretty fruitful because I have tried out new things and different kinds of part-time jobs here… Anyway, I will have to work after graduation… I see these experiences as a kind of training for my life…making me mature…. I did tell you that I have studied market research and now I am working part time in that field… I also sell mobile phones in my part-time job. (Interviewer: What makes you so engaged in these activities?) I believed these experiences are very important as a life-training… and also I can know many people!

Working hard toward the dream of a cosmopolitan and prosperous future had been a key motivation that drove the youngsters in overcoming the feelings of loneliness and unforeseeable challenges in Guangzhou. Unlike the local youngsters, who could rely on their families' immediate social and financial support, many of the migrant youngsters had to work part-time jobs to earn sufficient pocket money and made more friends through their connections to feel socially and financially secured. More importantly, they believed that these social experiences were highly valuable and beneficial for their future urban life in Guangzhou.

Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): I have to work hard and stay strong living in Guangzhou! I really have to be strong so that I can achieve some accomplishment here! I hope my parents can come to Guangzhou and live with me one day! All I want is to stay away from there (i.e. hometown in Chaoshan)… There are lots of struggles and difficulties when you move to a new place… I found myself to be a very disciplined and tough person… you should work very hard and do everything well in order to survive here!

The migrant participants saw the struggles and tensions faced in acculturation as training for better personal development. It was found that they were neither emotionally attached to the local Guangzhou culture nor inclined to be part of it. The pursuit of a cosmopolitan identity was transitional, and was an immediate adaptation to escape from the locals' stereotyping and generalization of the "poor, uncivilized villager" image. Thus, the voice of "earning money and being successful as a cosmopolitan" became one of the dominant "*I*-positions" that superseded the optimistic self (i.e. point 4.1.3) and the helpless self (i.e. point 4.1.4). It guided the self-identity in overcoming all struggles and difficulties in transforming into a desired cosmopolitan identity. During the interviews, some of the migrants admitted that the experiences of living in Guangzhou had raised their self-attention to their own image and appearance. Some of them suffered from being disparaged not only because their identity as "*Waidi Ren*", but also for their country-bumpkin appearance. Siu Tin (F_22_Chao Shan) recalled that on her arrival in Guangzhou, she found people in Guangzhou were very stylish and fashionable. More importantly, they, in particular the girls, started learning how to dress nicely and develop their aesthetic sense not to attract others, but to avoid stereotyping and stigmatization (Sandikci and Ger, 2010).

Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): My home (Chao Shan) is rather far from here (Guangzhou). I am not a local person in Guangzhou. I still remember the very first time I came to Guangzhou; I found people here dress beautifully. However, I was used to buying secondhand clothes which were cheap. People started laughing at me when they saw the way I dressed... They would say something like why I am buying these cheap clothes of such a low quality… All I bought in the past are "stall goods"…Later, I realized that there are more Guangzhou people and people from Hong Kong in this university…

The acculturation experience of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) was sad and stressful, in particular in her first year of study in Guangzhou. My impression of the young lady was a very determined and hardworking person. Coming from a deprived village in Chaoshan, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) had a particularly tough childhood. Her father died when she was small, and her mother at first wanted to dump her and remarry another man in another village. At last, her mother hid her in the village for years until the deception was finally discovered by Siu Tin's step-grandmother. Even though the village life was poor and tough, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) studied very hard and got into one of the renowned universities in the region. While she expected to be able to start a new life as an urbanite in Guangzhou, she experienced culture shock upon her arrival. She had a difficult time in making new friends at the university because of her appearance (see Figure 4.14). She did try different ways to make friends to adapt to life in Guangzhou, even though she was rejected most of the time. Finally, she also tried to become a member of the Youth Communist Party, even though she did not have any interest in participating in politics or government. Siu Tin saw that as a beneficial way for her to find friends and get a job (see Figure 4.15).

Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): I start to realize that I look "cheap" (i.e. bad taste). There is no place for me here. That's really true since I can't even get into the committee of the Student Union here… There are lots of unions that are not willing to invite me to join their committee…It's largely because of my appearance and because I come from the village side… I don't think I am going to live in this way…I earned some money from my part-time job and started learning to buy clothes of better quality…I think they (Guangzhou Ren) don't like us… We come from the rural area and had a very tough life there… We come here for more job opportunities and better education… Guangzhou was a cosmopolitan city and people here enjoy the economic prosperity and then simply look down on us… I have to be strong if I want to stay here!

Figure 4.14 Student ID card of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan)
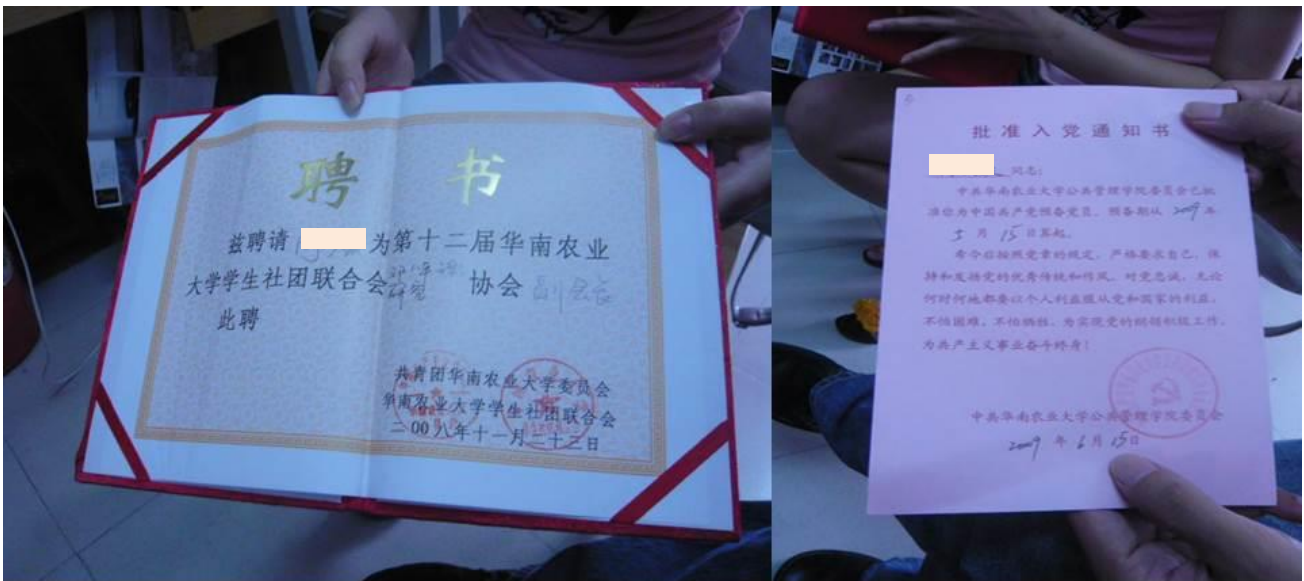
Figure 4.15 Siu Tin's (F_22_Chaoshan) certificate of admission to the Youth Communist Party

However, she felt a bit disappointed and frustrated since people simply ignored her because of her old-fashioned appearance. Lacking money to buy clothes and do makeup, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) decided to overcome her social difficulties by making money from her part-time jobs, and learned buying clothes and styling from others. She recalled her experiences of being laughed at and teased by her roommates. Being excluded by the others, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) began to pay more

attention to how people dressed up, and realized that she needed to have a good look and high social status in order to survive in Guangzhou. She began to go shopping with her friends at the dormitory, and would not reject others' recommendations on her fashion choices. Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) thought that it was very important for her to dress like an urbanite to gain the social acceptance of her peers.

> *Siu Tin (F_22_Chao Shan): My friends bring me to the places near the University and we shop around…At first, I just listened to them and bought whatever they told me to… I started spending money on my appearance… buying new clothes for myself… It was good that things sold there are not expensive and I can afford them…*

Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) had incorporated the opinions of others in her own fashion discourse, in which image consumption has become a social instrument for the youngsters to develop their social network and to gain social support in adaptation to a new environment in Guangzhou. While Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) acquired consumption knowledge from others to develop her fashion tastes, she felt socially secure and closer to her dream of being a cosmopolitan. During the visit to the participants' dormitory, it was not uncommon to see that the female participants kept a lot of cosmetic products that had never been used (See Figure 4.16). Many of them explained that they bought these products because they found it necessary to improve their image after coming to Guangzhou, especially when they observed how much their university schoolmates cared about their appearance. Siu Tin (F_22_Chao Shan) explained she had been greatly influenced by her roommate in buying all these items.

> *Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): Oh, I learn from them (i.e. roommates)… You know… I have no idea what is hand cream, lotion, or toning lotion before… I don't know anything about the procedures of using these cosmetics… so I start learning from them, watching them when they are using… I am glad that they finally start teaching me how to use these skin-care products… They will tell me that I have enlarged pores and need to apply some lotion to shrink the sweat pores…Then, I will ask for more information like what should I buy… They are happy to bring me along and we can go shopping together…*

Figure 4.16 Cosmetic products consumed by Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan)

In an extreme case, she even spent RMB$8,000 for laser surgery to remove her need for spectacles since she found herself looking better without glasses. The cost was equivalent to more than two months' salary for a fresh undergraduate in China (See Figure 4.17). She honestly admitted that she was afraid to tell her family about the surgery since her mother would be very disappointed. Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) said her mother would feel sad to know that her daughter had become so materialistic and cared so much about how others looked at her. Thus, she did not want to upset her mother and kept it a secret. After three years of staying in Guangzhou, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) was very confident about her fashion tastes and appearances. She no longer blindly followed what her friends told her to wear, but started to have her own judgement and taste in finding her own style.

In the pursuit of a cosmopolitan ideal, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) struggled in a period of liminality in which she underwent a process of identity reconstruction in developing her own fashion discourses as an urbanite. The discussion here echoed Murray's (2002) discussion that one's physical appearance and attractiveness demonstrate a person's ability to procure resources, and that a sophisticated look becomes symbolic capital that enables a person to overcome his/her background (Bourdieu, 1984). Through learning from others in acquiring the standard of beauty in Guangzhou as well as knowledge of fashion consumption and practices, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) successfully made lots of friends and gained the acceptance of her peers. She wished to submerge herself into the mainstream fashion discourse, searching for the existential meanings through learning how to consume and overcome the problems of gaining social support ahead. The term "fashion victim" thus

became relevant in the discussion since it referred to those who were victimized in the pursuit of fashion and fashion objects to provide existential meanings to define themselves (Schiermer, 2010). However, her willingness to engage in the continual process of sign competition and sign struggles in the pursuit of fashion had eased her stress and tension faced in acculturation experiences.

The case of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) truly reflected the struggles faced by the migrant consumers in adapting to their new life in the city, and to what extent symbolic consumption in fashion and image styling helped one person to ease the stress of adapting to the new socio-cultural environment and establishing one's self-identity (Wattanasuwan, 2005). She separated from her previous rural identity through giving up the fashion choices she had, adapting to new fashion knowledge and taste solely from her friends' advice in the transition, and incorporating a new definition of cosmopolitanism through her bodily experiences in getting along with others (Schouten, 1991). However, Siu Tin's (F_22_Chaoshan) also extended the current discussion of role transformation in consideration of the emotions that emerged during the liminality period. It was the feeling of struggle in the encountering of differences and the determination in the pursuit of cosmopolitan ideals that guided her adaptation of new knowledge and practices in fashion and image consumption. In addition, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) still suffered from her emotional tie to family at home. Even through the dominant "*I*-position" of chasing a cosmopolitan ideal had superseded the "*I*-position" of nostalgic self (Point 4.1.1) in Siu Tin's case, it was found that the young girl still struggled to maintained an distant connection with her family through sending gifts, but kept her materialistic identity (i.e. paying much attention to appearance and fashion) from those at home.

Figure 4.17 Siu Tin's (F_22_Chaoshan) new look

4.2.4 Feeling modest and modern: Gendered perception of cosmopolitan ideal

While many of the other migrant youngsters experienced similar struggles in that they found themselves becoming much materialistic and paying much attention to lifestyle and image consumption, symbolic consumption acts as a very important social instrument for migrant participant in the adaption to the cosmopolitan ideal as an urbanite in Guangzhou. Similar to the case of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan), common topics for the youngsters were mostly related to lifestyle consumption apart from their studies and gossip—for example, what to buy, where to shop, the latest trends, or popular issues in media entertainment. Sim (F_22_Fujian) enjoyed surfing Taobao (an online shopping platform) and talking with her roommate about the clothes and accessories (e.g. handbags) that she found nice and worth buying. She claimed that her knowledge in using Taobao had successfully brought her more friends and helped her get used to the university life in Guangzhou.

It was interesting to highlight how the migrant consumers portrayed their cosmopolitan ideal in their own fashion discourses. While they were heavily influenced by the mass media and mainstream fashion, it was found that the migrant consumers stressed on dressing "casual but decent". This resulted in a "overdressing strategy" in which the informants interpreted the image of "an urbanite" as an opposition to the rural image of dull colors, ragged fabrics, and poor-quality garments. During the interviews and the wardrobe examination, it was found that the migrant youngsters were not concerned with the quality of the garment, but they paid lots of attention to the representation and details that signified their understanding of "urbanite". During the wardrobe check, it was not uncommon to identify lots of low-quality garments that were worn out and deformed. The youngsters did not care much about the quality of the garment as long as they loved the style and were still wearable. More importantly, their fashion choices clearly exhibited their gender perceptions. The female research participants wanted to be "girly"; they loved to wear clothes with bright colors or with floral prints and motifs. The attire was feminine in that they preferred the use of drapery design, shorts, and more lace, chiffon, ruffles and gathering (Figure 4.18 and Figure 4.19). However, they were quite body-conscious, insisting that what they wore should be modern and conventional. Even though they might choose T-shirts with wide necklines to show their clavicle or garments with a see-through design, they preferred not to be too sexy or to wear anything that showed their cleavage or undergarments.

Figure 4.18 Urbanite outfits owned by the female migrant youngsters

Figure 4.19 Feminine clothes preferred by the migrant research participants during window shopping

The male research participants, however, claimed that they did not change much after moving to Guangzhou. I argue that they follow a reductionist approach, since it was believed that a successful

man in the city should not care too much about fashion and his appearance as long as he looked neat and tidy. The image of a cosmopolitan man should look earnest and could not be feminine. They preferred to have a mature and masculine image, which made them look older. During the interviews, I found most of the research participants dressed in a simple manner without any layering or mix-and-match techniques (Figure 4.20). They seldom wore accessories, and most of them did not often bring their watches. In general, they looked more or less the same, a basic outfit with a plain tee or polo shirt on the top, a pairs of jeans or trousers, and a pair of sneakers. Many of them preferred polo shirts and collared shirts rather than tees and vests. They loved basic colors (e.g. black, white, and grey) accented with colorful but small prints. For jeans, they told me that jeans with stone-washed effects were fine; however, they disliked ripped jeans since they found the style looked utterly rotten, like beggars or gangsters. To avoid looking feminine, they loved loose-fitting clothes and trousers with fewer design details and accessories. On the day of his interview, Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan) found my skinny jeans "gay" and feminine, and he did not think local people would like them either.

Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan): Your jeans were too tight-fitting and they outlined the shape of your legs… I won't wear something like this since I don't think it is comfortable and you look like a girl in it…I don't see people in Guangzhou wearing jeans of this kind too…

Figure 4.20 Urbanite outfits owned by the male migrant youngsters

To build a masculine image, the young men preferred clothes that could make them look muscular and burly. Thus, shirts with horizontal stripes and check-patterned design were favored among the migrant consumers. It was obvious that they wanted to portray a conventional idea of "men" as narrated in their fashion discourses. It was found that the young men never used skin-care or hair products, and they looked a bit slovenly in their hairstyle and appearance. It was interesting to note that the young men found not paying too much attention to their outfit was treated as "casual" and "comfortable". Many of them kept only a few garments at their dormitory rooms, and many of them were quite reluctant to talk about fashion. One typical case was Bosco (M_20_Zijin), whose wardrobe in the dormitory was found almost empty, and he told me that it was sufficient for him to keep several tee-shirts, jeans, and pairs of shorts.

> *Bosco (M_20_Zijin): I think that's enough for me! I can wash them and wear it afterwards. I don't see a problem in that (i.e. buying too few clothes for daily use).*

All of them stressed the criteria of purchasing clothes on "quality" and "durability" and they emphasized the utilitarian value and functionality of the clothes. However, the notion of "cost-quality ratio" (i.e. x*ing jia bi*) was stressed during the interview. It was found that cost was the most important purchasing criterion while the quality of the garment came second. Even Hiu Yuen (M_22_Chao Shan) worked several part-time jobs in his spare time and should have earned enough money for leisure and entertainment, but he preferred to spend money on social gatherings with friends rather than buying clothes for himself. He was strongly opposed to buy expensive clothing and was only willing to spend no more than RMB$100 on each fashion item, no matter whether it was a piece of clothing or a pair of sneakers. A sense of "brotherhood" appeared in their consumer acculturation experiences in which many of the migrant youngsters would rather spend on social gatherings with their friends since it gave them "face" (i.e. *mianzi*) and facilitated an emotional-social tie for affection. Consumption and a generosity in sharing thus served as a social instrument in the pursuit of a male version of the cosmopolitan ideal.

> *Tin Cheong (M_20_Lufeng): I would rather spend money with friends than buying clothes… At least I found it worthy to do say since we can have a happy moment together… The Chinese saying that you need the help of your "brothers" when you are away from home…I think it is much more worthy spending money with friends than for yourself…*

The above narrative was captured during a meal with Tin Cheong (M_20_Lufeng), who was introduced by Bosco (M_20_Zijin). As a researcher, I could feel that the two young men were very generous since they wished to pay for my dinner for the very first meeting. They told me it was fine and socially appropriate to do so since it was a social strategy they learnt in Guangzhou in order to make friends. Another migrant research participant, Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei), also insisted on

buying my lunch during our visit to the University City in Guangzhou. Compared that with my experience with the local Guangzhou youngsters, some of whom would wait for me to pay for their lunch or dinner, I experienced the differences between the two groups in employing consumption as an instrumental tool to facilitate social relationships. Without the pressure of adapting to the new cultural environment, the local youngsters paid attention to hedonic consumption, while the migrant consumers still struggled with the Chinese social rules of games in utilizing consumption as a means to maintain and develop social relationships in the course of the social harmonizing process (Joy, 2001).

In the above, I discovered the struggles the migrant consumers encountered in their pursuit of the cosmopolitan ideal with their gendered perceptions. Given that the migrant youngsters possessed limited economic and social capital, they have to remain modest in their fashion and image consumption with a focus on the utilitarian value and the image it signified while sacrificing the quality of the garment. The female migrants adopted an "overdressing strategy" in pursuit of a feminine cosmopolitan identity, while the male migrants followed a reductionist approach in which they would save money for social gatherings and pay less attention to appearances to demonstrate their masculine urbanite ideal. During the interviews with the migrant participants, even though most of them expressed a great desire not to be excluded by the local community, that desire did not amount to a wish to be recognized by the locals as an authentic member belonging to the insider community. It was the drive of a cosmopolitan ideal that forced the migrant participants to adapt and assimilate to the local Guangzhou way of living. At the same time, they utilized the competitiveness of a flexible citizenship that moved and swapped between different cultural frameworks to gain political and economic privileges (Ong, 1997).

In light of the massive urbanization and rapid economic reform in the first-tier cities in China, a new segment, namely the floating population, emerged in which people from the rural parts or lower-tier cities travel and stay in the first-tier cities for work. However, the floating population did not want to anchor themselves in a local cultural setting, but became flexible citizen who selectively gave and took those local practices and consumption knowledge that helped to ease the acculturation tension in adaption to a macro-cosmopolitan setting. Unlike Üstüner and Holt's (2007) observation that the poor Turkish migrant women's identity projects were largely impeded by the socio-cultural structures, my research found that the migrant youngsters felt themselves liberated to construct their ideal gendered cosmopolitan identities, not necessary subject to the local discourses, but only to their imagination of cosmopolitan ideal in a progressive, step-by-step manner depending on the socio-economic resources available to them. Through maintaining control in re-distributing their economic resources for economic and social purposes, they maintain their own discursive power in composing their fashion narratives with their gendered perception, resulting in different consumption acculturation strategies to assert their citizenship in a new cultural environment.

4.2.5 Feeling superiority and indifference: The different exhibits of consumption knowledge

The internal migration facilitated the acculturation between the local and migrant consumers, through which the two groups came into firsthand contact and experienced different levels of uncertainty and struggle in adapting to the presence of otherness. The encounter of difference further challenged their original values, dogmas, and ideologies restricted and confined to the self in everyday lived experiences (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007). In resolving the feeling of being threatened by the "others" and in pursuit of dominant voices of "*I*-position", individuals struggle to negotiate and navigate different conflicting "voices" into order to alternate or maintain the asymmetrical relationship in an ongoing reciprocity of the conversation between and within the multiplicities of selves (Hermans, 1996).

Central to the thought of Bourdieu (1984), the organization of all forms of social life follows the logic of distinction, in which individuals, groups, and social classes of any differentiated society cannot escape from this logic but are submerge in the dynamic of a constant process of social identification and differentiation. During the ethnographic fieldwork and the phenomenological interviews, I revealed how consumers of either local or migrant groups found meanings by selecting different fashion and consumption statements and aligning them with specific cultural values and subject positions (Murray, 2002). More importantly, the process of alignment was guided by their emotions and perception toward the opposite others, while the expression of alignment enabled the consumers to resist or subvert the others and mediated a number of tensions in acculturation experiences (Bocock, 1993; Lury, 1999; Murray, 2002). While the local consumers strived to introduce and calibrate new sets of cultural knowledge in consumption to oppose and devalue the assimilation of the migrant consumers, the migrant consumers, meanwhile, appropriated countervailing meanings in their fashion choices to differentiate themselves from the mainstream Guangzhou fashion discourse.

4.2.5.1.<u>Resistance to imagined assimilation: The agency of self-fulfilling and sense of superiority</u>

Murray's (2002) study of the politics of consumption in fashion discourses highlighted that the understanding of consumers' decisions could not be isolated from the specific context of an individual's life world and its nexus to the social system in situ. The emergence of the migrant consumers in the city not only triggered the local consumers to reflect on their cultural identities and citizenship, but also challenged them to differentiate from the unwanted others (i.e. "*laau tau*") through performing and ascribing new meanings in their consumption practices and preferences. To avoid being treated as "*laau tau*", some local consumers exhibited a sense of agency in shifting their consumption preferences and practices in their fashion style projects

During the interview, it was discovered that knowing where to shop was considered important for many of the local consumers to differentiate themselves from the migrant community. The local consumers were very sensitive to the sources of social prescription in their everyday lives and they would exhibit a sense of agency to remark their distinction through demonstrating a 'difference' in consumption knowledge and practices (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). During the interview with Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou), he observed that the locals and migrants shopped in different parts of the city.

> *Interviewer: Where do you usually go shopping?*
> *Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): I usually go "Yuefu Plaza", and I will bring you there after the interview...There are lots of small boutiques there selling their own local designer labels and you can't find any big brand names... More importantly, it is because those "laau tau" don't know the place...*

> *Interviewer: Based on your understanding, where will they go?*
> *Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): "Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street"! There is a mall call "Dongji Xintiandi Shopping Mall and many of the "laau tau" will go there! I won't shop there anymore! Things sold there were low-quality and cheap... (Interviewer: So, what are the places that you think the local Guangzhou Ren will go?) Beijing Road Pedestrian Street should not be a place where those "laau tau" will go since I often go there for shopping too... The Teemall is also fine for us since it is located in the Central Business District in Tianhe District! Things sold there are relatively expensive... I prefer to go "Popular Front" and "Tasty Plaza"... Even though some of the stuff sold in "Popular Front" becomes somehow quite suitable for those "laau tau". However, Tasty Plaza should not be a place for them...*

While Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) claimed there were different destinations where the locals and migrants shopped, the interview with Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) identified a slightly different observation. She found that the migrant youngsters would tend to assimilate the locals' shopping behaviors and fashion taste preferences.

> *Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou): Definitely yes! I think most of them like going to "Beijing Road Pedestrian Street" and "Xiajiu Pedestrian Street"... However, it is quite interesting that you found these "laau tau" like staying and walking on the street rather than walking inside the shop... It means that they just like window shopping and hanging out there! Not many of them really buy something! But for "Yuefu Plaza", you can really find lots of Guangzhou Ren there... However, it is quite difficult to say where will those "laau tau" go or not since they can learn and follow the Guangzhou Ren to shop! It's quite easy for them to know and follow us to shop*

since there are only a few shopping centers here in Guangzhou… That's why I think it's very difficult to distinguish… I can only confirm with you that "Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street" is the only place where you can easily differentiate those who are the Guangzhou Ren from those who are not!

From the narratives above, Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) and Ka Bo (F_22_Guangzhou) ascribed a collective meaning of labelling the places that "belonged" to the migrant community. The interviews with the migrants youngsters confirmed that many of them usually shopped in "*Beijing Road Pedestrian Street*" and "*Xiajiu Pedestrian Street*" since these places were tourist spots and could be easily accessed by public transportation (see Figure 4.20). During the interviews, it was found that the local youngsters were very suspicious of being treated as "*laau tau*". Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou) ascertained that the migrant community only wanted to buy cheap clothes and they didn't care much about the quality.

Kong Wa (M_26_Guangzhou): Believe it or not, if you see somebody on the street wearing faint or muddy colours… They are not Guangzhou Ren and should be those "laau tau"! They are not willing to buy good quality clothing since they found them expensive!

The locals were not happy with the massive rural-urban migration that brought thousands of people from lower-tier cities or rural China to "seize" their socio-economic resources from Guangzhou. The bodily experiences of everyday interaction with the migrants as well as witnessing the changes in the city and lifestyle resulted in hostility against the migrant community. Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) always complained that the influx of migrant population had turned the city into a mess (i.e. more infrastructure and more incidents of poor public behavior) and the general public had become less civilized. The interviews voiced the locals' desire to demarcate a symbolic boundary to avoid being identified as migrants through consumption and fashion choices. The locals highly praised their consumption knowledge about the places for leisure and shopping not only because it signified to what extent the local youngsters were familiar with the places of Guangzhou City, but because it also showcased one's belonging to the urbanite lifestyle and mainstream fashion discourses (Bourdieu, 1984).

Figure 4.21 Local brands concentrated in Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street

Extending the concept of threshold places (Vikas et al., 2015), the consumption spheres (i.e. different shopping districts) in Guangzhou had become a contested place for the struggles of symbolic power and social status between the local and migrant consumers. The coexistence of acculturation experiences thus led to the transformation and reconfiguration of the use of threshold places among the local community. Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) highlighted that it was the migrants' assimilation of local consumption behaviors that led to such acculturation resistance in shifting of preferences for shopping locations. In recalling his past memories, the young man used to shop in areas like "*Beijing Road Pedestrian Street*" and "*Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street*" in his secondary-school life. This was because these places were located in Laiwan District, which was regarded as the original city center where you could find the heritage and history of Guangzhou. However, as more and more migrants moved into the city, it had become more a tourist spot than a place serving the local community. The migrant research participants also admitted that "*Beijing Road Pedestrian Street*" or "*Xiajiu Pedestrian Street*" were some of their favorite places for shopping, while many of them had never heard of or been to the places like Yuefu Plaza. Chui Leung (M_22_Hubei) had been to *Popular Front* (a shopping mall favored by the local consumers) once but he saw no reason why

these places were much popular than "*Beijing Road Pedestrian Street*" or "*Xiajiu Pedestrian Street*". The migrant youngsters highlighted that they preferred going to these shopping areas since there were many local fashion chain-store brands. They were confident about the quality of the clothes sold under these labels. At the same time, there were also shops selling clothes and accessories at affordable prices. In light of the growing number of migrant consumers moving into these shopping districts, Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) no longer went to these places often; he also claimed that he had given up some of the local fashion brands since he felt uncomfortable that the migrants had started imitating their fashion brand choices.

> *Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou): I used to shop in Baleno and S&K (Samuel and Kelvin). However, I won't go there anymore since there are more and more and more "laau tau" shops there... They are learning from us... and nowadays we shifted to another brand instead...*

Distinction through shopping districts and having different brand choices was seen as a self-fulfilling strategy for the locals to display their symbolic status in possessing higher cultural capital in understanding the urbanite culture and local lifestyle, even though the migrants may not find it necessary to learn and adapt to the changing behaviors. Many of the local youngsters refused to visit the large chain stores or migrant-centric clothing shops since they found the styles old-fashioned and standardized. Instead, they preferred to shop in the small boutiques in *Yuexiu District,* even though they charged more for private labels or imported brands. Si (F_22_Guangzhou) claimed that the locals were brand-loyal and began to shift to other fashion brands or even small boutiques. Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) ascertained that the locals did not care much about the brand names and the price as long as the style looked fashionable and trendy enough.

During the interviews, I did a brand-recall test with all the research participants to see whether the two groups of youngsters maintained different levels of brand knowledge or had different brand preferences. I found that the two groups of consumers recalled different sets of fashion brands they liked. Si (F_22_Guangzhou) told me that there were some fashion brands that were favored and "belonged" to those migrants and the local people just stayed away from those brands. She argued that the locals pursue fashion by purchasing clothing in small boutiques or imported mass-fashion brands (i.e. Hong Kong or international fashion labels) and the migrant consumers preferred local Chinese brands. In the brand-recall tests done with the local consumers, some of their favorite fashion labels which they found affordable included Esprit, Baleno, I.P Zone, Samuel and Kelvin, Giordano, Uniqlo, H&M and Levis. It was found that most of these brands were either imported brands from Hong Kong or international labels. For sneakers, the local Guangzhou youngsters preferred brands like Nike, Adidas, and Reebok. While many of the locals stressed that they were not loyal to particular fashion brands since they were looking for the design and style rather than the brand names, it was a person's mix-and-match techniques that exhibited his/her fashion taste and

aesthetic sense. The local consumers paid comparatively great attention to pursuing fashion and were willing to spend money on consuming clothing in managing their style projects. Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) loved window-shopping and she would buy one or two garments each month. Her monthly expenditure on fashion and clothing was around RMB$ 500. Si (F_22_Guangzhou) also argued that some of her friends were wealthy enough to travel to Hong Kong for shopping. Si (F_22_Guangzhou) preferred to go shopping with her mother so that she could afford to buy more and more expensive items. Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) said he seldom bought clothes, but would ask his parents to give him some money to buy clothes as the seasons changed. Having a fashion sense and caring about personal image was regarded as an essential element in the city culture. Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) ascertained that looking good was something important for the local community to make friends and blend into the daily life (Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22 Fashion style of Ming (F_22_Guangzhou)

During the fieldwork and interviews with her, Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) was well-dressed with makeup whenever she went to school or hung out with friends. She cared a lot about her appearance, and kept mentioning she was fat and that this was why she tried different styles to look slim.

Ming (F_22_Guangzhou): I am a kind of person that is very sensitive to others' comments… There is a classmate who always judges and comments on my appearance and I found it so annoying… I do think I am fat, especially my fat little arms… That's why I used to wear loose-fitting clothes that can cover my arms and hips…

As shown in Figure 4.22, Ming's (F_22_Guangzhou) body figure was average when compared with other girls of a similar age. However, she was not satisfied with her body and did mention several times that she looked fat and chubby during the interview. To look slim, she kept a long, straight hairstyle to cover her round face, and she felt she looked slim in her outfit. Being the second child of the family, she often felt being ignored by her parents, and was dependent on the social support from her friends. Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) found it was important to seek social recognition and appreciation from her friends. She agreed that it was part of the city culture where local people cared a lot about appearance and personal image. She had started to learn makeup from the internet since studying in high school.

Ming (F_22_Guangzhou): I used to wear makeup whenever I go out, especially in the occasions where I will meet my friends. There is a saying that "every girl looks good if they have a white skiny! I use sun cream and bring an umbrella with me if there is sunshine outside… That's what Li Bingbing (a famous movie star in China) teaches me about that! (Laugh)

In an extreme, Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) was not convinced that brands helped construct one's identity (Elliott, 1999), and he opposed mainstream fashion by consuming garments bought from private labels and small boutiques that did not carry any labels on them (Figure 4.23). While Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) ascribed countervailing meanings to his everyday fashion choices and consumption (Thompson and Haytko, 1997), Chun (M_22_Guangzhou) explained that one of the reasons why the locals shifted their attention to the mix-and-match techniques was because of the resistance to migrant assimilation. It was the imagination of threatening otherness (i.e. afraid of being stereotyped as the "*laau tau*") that became the dominant voice guiding the local community to exhibit a sense of consumer agency to differentiate from the migrant community. However, as discussed in the following, the resistance to migrant assimilation functioned like a self-fulfilling prophecy to ease the tensions and acculturation stress among the local consumers rather than imposing a new legitimacy of taste regime to separate the migrant consumers.

Figure 4.23 Fashion style of Chi Pang (M_22_Guangzhou) (Right)

4.2.5.2.Voicing out indifference: Does it matter to be different?

While the above discussed the narratives among the local consumers who claimed to adopt different consumption strategies to stigmatize and separate from the migrant community (Bourdieu, 1986), it was, however, interesting to highlight that many of the migrant participants had no idea about the notion of "*laau tau*" and to what extent the local consumers wanted to differentiate from them through consuming fashion. Even though the locals believed that they looked much fashionable than the migrant consumers, the voices of the local consumers were not salient in the public and only resonated within the local community. Thus, it became a "muted sound" of fashion legitimation serving the locals' imagination of "presences of threatening otherness" with the discursive power of social disapproval and stereotyping to ease their acculturation stress (Arel and Thompson, 2011; Thornton, 1996).

Many of the migrant youngsters found it financially difficult to manage their personal style in the pursuit of fashion. Coming from a lower-class family in the rural part of China, consuming fashion was something of a luxury for migrant youngsters like Han Ling (M_21_Lufeng) to impress others and make friends (see Figure 4.24). In order to save money, he did not pay much attention to the quality and style of his clothes as long as they were durable. Hang Ling (M_21_Lufeng) embraced a utilitarian value in his fashion-clothing consumption where he would not spend more than RMB$100 for a garment. The most expensive fashion item he owned was a pair of sneakers from 361 Degrees, which cost him around RMB$200 (see Figure 4.24; right bottom corner). Similar to other migrant youngsters, Hang Long (M_21_Lufeng) preferred to pay much attention to acquiring more social skills and to make friends with others instead of adapting to the mainstream fashion trends to seek local recognition.

Figure 4.24 The fashion style of Han Ling (M_21_Lufeng)

However, unlike the experience of Siu Tin (F_20_Chaoshan) discussed in the previous section, it was interesting to highlight that some of the migrant youngsters saw no difference between local and migrant consumers in terms of their appearance. More importantly, some of them saw no reason to make such a change in their styles.

Interviewer: Do you see any difference from how you dress from those local people in Guangzhou?

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei): No, I don't think so! Basically, I think we dress very much the same! I don't see that you can observe anything different, do you? If you really need me to highlight a difference, perhaps people in Guangzhou like to wear something unique with many details on their outfits…

Contrasting the experience with Hang Ling (M_21_Lufeng), Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) was one of the migrant youngsters, who was confident about his personal image and saw it necessary to construct a hip-hop identity through consuming fashion-clothing and managing his style project. However, he also did not see a need to change his image and style after coming to Guangzhou City.

Interviewer: So, have you ever tried to copy the way they (i.e. local Guangzhou people) dress?

Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei): No! I dress in my own style! I don't think people here look fashionable… You can say they are trendy… but I don't think they look good…Sometimes you can see that they wear something really feminine…say a colorful short with check patterns on it… Some of them even had a round hat… To me, these kinds of outfit were for girls but not for the boys…it's just bit feminine…(Interviewer: So, can you elaborate more how it is different from what you observed in your home town (i.e. Hubei)?)   I would say there are a lot of fashion labels here and some of them I have never heard of… In Hubei, we don't have so many fashion brand names as what I see in Guangzhou… At home, we did have many specialty stores and the flea market that sold casual wear… We also have some Chinese fashion brands like Semir, Metersbonwe, Yishion, Jeanwest, Baleno… However, we do care more about the styles than the brandings…Guangzhou Ren love to wear big brands for the clothes…For us Hubei Ren, you basically can't really identify any of these big brands… There are only a few fashion brands commonly worn by people… I would say they are just the mass fashion brands…In Guangzhou, you have so many fashion brands and the retailers keep telling you that they are the emerging fashion labels…

Coming from a better-off family in Hubei and currently studying in a renowned university in Guangzhou, Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) was a very intelligent young man who achieved very good academic results during his secondary-school study in his home town. In adapting to his new life in Guangzhou alone, he had become very independent in adapting to and protecting himself in a new environment. He met new friends who shared his interest in inline skating and street dancing. In particular to his fashion style, Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) loved hip-hop culture and the associated images. The young man successfully followed a standard hip-hop outfit where he often mix-and-matched with oversized tees and jackets with camouflage patterns, loose-fitting denim jeans,

and a pair of sneakers (either Converse or Air-Jordan trainers) in representing his belonging to the subculture (Figure 4.25).

Figure 4.25 The fashion style of Chui Leung (M_21_Hebei)

The six-foot tall young man always dressed in hip-hop outfits whenever I met him. He was very confident about his outfit and the hip-hop style, and did not think it necessary to follow the local style of dressing and appearance. However, it is worth noting that Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) bought a lot of counterfeit products in his pursuit of a hip-hop fashion discourse. As shown in Figure 4.24, the Bathing Ape jacket and the bag were fake items; he did not notice that the print on the bag had gone so wrong that it was still a development sample. In defending his weak brand knowledge in consuming the counterfeit products, he told me that he had never heard of the brand, and all he could recognize was the icon of an "ape" representing hip-hop culture.

> Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei):   I don't think I have to buy a real one to get this icon (i.e., ape). I love hip-hop culture and I know this symbol represents it. However, it doesn't mean that I should buy a real product from Bathing Ape…. It is too expensive! I don't think it is necessary to express

my identity as a hip-hop fan through purchasing products from a real brand…. The icon is there and is fine!

Chui Leung's (M_21_Hebei) discussion in the above went very similar to that of the local participant Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) as discussed above. While Chui Leung (M_21_Hebei) had adapted to the material lifestyle in the city, both Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou) and he cared less about the perceived brand reputation than the styles and images it signified. While the locals had better brand knowledge and tried to avoid consuming counterfeits, migrants like Chui Leung (M_21_Hebei) accidentally bought counterfeit products but embodied a sense of aesthetic value through interpreting and appropriating cultural meanings in their "ethical" consumption of counterfeits (Joy and Sherry, 2003). Paradoxically, through the consumption of counterfeits, they found themselves in tune with mainstream fashions, which allowed them to construct themselves as very fashion-conscious and trendy. Our participants also had their own interpretations of the aesthetic meanings of fashion brands, and appropriated these countervailing meanings (i.e., projecting a desired image using fake products) in their everyday consumption of counterfeits (Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

Both Han Ling (M_21_Lufeng) and Chui Leung (M_21_Hebei, or even Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan), as discussed in pervious point, had no intention to assimilate the way local consumers dressed as portrayed in their fashion-clothing consumption and style project management. However, these migrant consumers were guided by dominant voices in negotiating their self-identity and personal goals living in the new cultural environment. More importantly, they had developed their own set of fashion preferences and practices, which they found relevant in adapting to the everyday acculturation conflicts and stress. It exhibited the fact that the two groups of youngsters maintained different capitals (cultural and economic) and occupied different positions in the field of consumption (Rocamora, 2002; McQuarrie *et al*, 2013). While the local consumers always teased the migrant population as having poor fashion taste, migrant youngsters like Chui Leung (M_21_Hu Bei) argued that he found it weird to see the way some of the locals dressed and did not consider it necessary to assimilate to the local ways. Others like Han Ling (M_21_Lufeng) and Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chao Shan) embraced a utilitarian value in their fashion-clothing consumption where they cared nothing about style. They would rather save their money for social gatherings with friends. All they cared about was the functionality of the garment instead of the aesthetic value.

Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chaoshan): It doesn't matter since I wear these T-shirts for street-dancing and exercise… I don't care much on the quality as long as they are cheap enough… No one care about it and it doesn't matter the quality… I would rather pay attention to the print on my t-shirt since that's something people can see!

Although it was found that most of the local youngsters were confident about their knowledge in consuming quality garments and stigmatized the migrant consumers as having poor fashion sense, the migrant youngsters were largely bounded by their economic constraints, which provided fewer alternatives in choosing good-quality clothes at higher prices. In fact, many of the migrant youngsters shifted to consume local fashion labels destigmatized for self-transformation (Sandikci and Ger, 2010).

Consuming local mass-fashion labels provided them with a better confidence in the product quality at an affordable price. Some of them did not prefer to shop in those small boutiques or private labels where the locals usually shopped. This was because they found the reputation of these private labels not sound enough and not worth the price. More importantly, this group of migrant consumers enjoyed the one-stop services provided by these local fashion brands, and they were very much attracted by the interior design as well as the visual merchandising in the store.

> *Interviewer: Does fashion branding matters?*
> *Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): Yes! I spent most of the time in Yishion (i.e. a local fashion brand)... I just love it and shop for a long time... Maybe it has three stories high and I can spend more than an hour there! For the other shop, I just have a glimpse and walk away if I don't have a feel for it... But for Yishion, I will stay a longer time and try that on...*

For all these additional values provided by the mass-fashion retailer, the migrant consumers preferred to buy branded goods from local fashion chain stores at the same price at the expense of the design and style. Some of these migrant consumers preferred a number of local fashion brands including Yishion, Meterssbowne, Freebird, Jinyuan, and Jeanwest. While many of the local youngsters disliked local Chinese athletic brands like Peak and Li Ning, the interview with Hiu Yuen (M_20_Chao Shan) demonstrated to what extent they were emotionally attached to these local brands. The young man was shocked when I told him I had not heard of a local Chinese athletic brand called Anta before. It was argued that the migrant consumers expressed very different fashion consumption patterns and brand preferences through which they navigated conflicting voices in considering their socio-economic constraints and adapting to the new socio-cultural environment. Rather than assimilating to the local fashion tastes, this section demonstrated how migrant consumers learn and ascribed new meanings to their fashion choices in easing everyday acculturation stress and uncertainties in self-identity formation (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007).

4.2.6 Summary

The everyday encounter with difference in the acculturation experiences between the local and

migrant communities triggered consumers' emotions and the imagination of "Otherness". This section demonstrated how different sets of emotional voices guided the interaction and perception of "threatening otherness" and had resulted in changes in consumption patterns and fashion discourse. While the migrant consumers struggled in adapting to the new cultural environment by gaining social recognition and acceptance, their style projects and fashion consumption practices were largely restricted by the socio-economic resources available to them (i.e. Point 4.2.1 *Feeling isolated: The desperation of losing local acceptance*). The young migrant consumers exhibited their sense of consumer agency through appropriating new meanings to the everyday fashion discourse to echo the dominant voice in becoming a cosmopolitan in Guangzhou through adapting to the mainstream fashion discourse (Point 4.2.3 *Feeling determined: Struggles in the pursuit of cosmopolitan identity transformation*) or to separate from mainstream fashion (Point 4.2.4 *Feeling modest and modern: Gendered perception of the cosmopolitan ideal*). In response to the influx of the migrant community, the locals exhibited their helplessness in resisting the changing consumption lifestyle and socio-economic situation in their home city (Point 4.2.2 *Feeling awkward: A reflection of local identity and the idea of abject*). More importantly, they seek to overcome identity conflicts and anxiety by adopting a self-fulfilling strategy to stigmatize and differentiate from the migrant consumers (Point 4.2.5 *Feeling superiority and indifference: The different exhibits of consumption knowledge*). The narratives of their fashion choices and consumption experiences along acculturation thus voiced out consumers' negotiation of conflicting "*I*-position" in the dynamic of a constant (re)configuration of the self-other relationship (i.e. "*I*" versus "*other*" and "*us*" versus "*them*").

4.3 "Self in the other"/"Others in-the-self": Extending Consumers' Real to Assumed Emotion

The dialogical approach to consumer acculturation pays attention to the "self and other" relationship as a constant negotiation of identity and the reconfiguration of social relationships (Bhatia, 2002). Acculturating individuals engage between different ambivalent, multiple, and shifting cultural "positions" and "voices" that are constantly conflicting with each other in self-identity formation (Gülerce, 2014). Previous consumer acculturation research studied how consumers of either local or migrant groups seek to differentiate from, or even resist, each other in the everyday consumption discourses; little attention had been paid to the extent to which the notion of self is co-created and recognized by the immediate and imagined "presence of otherness" as narrated in consumers' acculturation experiences – the intersubjectivity of different worldviews (Joy et al., 2010). In other words, the formation of self-identity is partially constituted through performing and fulfilling specific social roles and attributes legitimatized by the group affiliations and social situations (Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944; Hsu, 1972).

In this section, I discuss to what extent the Chinese consumers exhibited a sense of assumed emotion in their consumption choices (Hu, 1944), and engaged in an ongoing malleable process in bolstering their own identities through appropriating social meanings to their possessions as well as consumption practices (Aaker, 1999; Eckhardt and Houston, 2008; Joy et al., 2010; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). While Chinese culture is often characterized as socio-centric, holistic, collective, constitutive, connected and relational, the notion of self-identity is centered on the social orientation in relation to other people and the whole situation (He, 2008; Lustig and Koester, 2006; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis 1995; 1999). The principle of Chinese social orientation had been subjected to the concepts "*gangqing*" (affection) and "*guangxi*" (network of social relations) (He, 2008; Hwang, 1987; Yang, 2001). "*Gangqing*" (affection) connotes two distinct levels of affection (*qing*), which are assumed emotion and real emotion (Hu, 1949). Real emotion refers to a spontaneous and true emotion (i.e. affection); while assumed emotion refers to compulsive and normative emotions generated by the influences of cultural norms, such as family tradition, situation, and etiquette. Previous marketing literature supported the notion that Chinese consumers might foster their identity projects and interpersonal relationships through juxtaposing the traditional beliefs in Chinese culture with prevailing political and market discourses in their everyday lived consumption (Hung et al., 2007; Dong and Tian, 2009). I argue that Chinese consumers display a sense of assumed emotion that helps resolve their identity conflicts and provides a feeling of security guiding their identity projects as narrated in their acculturation experiences.

Separating affection (*qing*) and social norms (*li*) in assumed emotion, the local and migrant consumers I interviewed shared similar worldviews in their identity formation through anticipating other expectations and social norms even though they may contradict one's internal wishes or personal attributes. I distinguished four different dimensions of assumed emotion to illustrate how Chinese consumers struggled in negotiating different "*I*-positions", and ascribed social meanings to their consumption choices to assert their identities and to resolve uncertainties and conflicts. The Chinese youngsters I interviewed carried multiple identities at the same time, such as students, family members (sons/daughters), friends (peers), while both local and migrant consumers faced conflicting voices in viewing themselves differently across social situations (Aaker and Lee, 2001; He, 2008).

4.3.1 Feeling distanced to luxury consumption - Being a student

Living in the interdependent Chinese context, the adoption of brands for self-expression was more than just maintaining congruence with one's personality (Aaker 1999); Chinese participants also expressed a sense of assumed emotion in their fashion and brand consumption that was culturally appropriated to assert their social positions (Hsu, 1972; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). During the interviews, the research

participants expressed different levels of concern toward the assertion of social positions through their fashion and brand choices.

While the participants in the project were studying in colleges or universities, the youngsters felt it necessary to be self-regulated and conform to their identity as "student" as in their fashion and brand consumption. Studying in China was relatively difficult and competitive for both local and migrant youngsters. Chinese society places great emphasis on education. Parents usually have great expectation for their kids. Study takes up a significant position in the participants' lives when all their memorable moments are largely related to study. In recalling those remarkable experiences, Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) and Hiu Yuen (M_ 20_Chao Shan) felt sorry for their parents as they did not work hard and perform well in their studies. Chui Leung (M_21_Hu Bei), Bosco (M_20_Zijin), and Ming (F_20_ Guangzhou) recalled those hard times preparing for the public examinations for university admission, times in which they were asked to sacrifice all their entertainments, and even were "restricted" and forced to break up with their sweethearts at that time. Within the interdependent Chinese context, being a student was more than just attending school and working hard in one's studies; they had to meet and conform to social expectations, which included culturally "proper" values and behaviors in consumption among students.

Living in the largest cosmopolitan city in Southern China, both local and migrant youngsters in Guangzhou were exposed to different kinds of media, branding and advertising that portrayed a city life full of entertainment and excitement. However, it was interesting to notice that both groups of research participants showed a relatively low concern for luxury fashion brands even though a plethora of fashion brand choices was available in the market. As discussed in the previous section, it was identified that the research participants usually could recall around ten mass-fashion brands; while a few of them could come up with several foreign fashion and luxury brands. The local and migrant youngsters recalled very different sets of fashion brands they knew and could afford to purchase; the discussion here extended to explain why both local and migrant youngsters were only aware of those mass fashion-labels (or even fashion clothing bought without any labels). Many of them found it difficult to name many fashion and apparel brands even though they proclaimed themselves interested in the pursuit of fashion. However, most of them claimed that they had no particular brand preference in consuming fashion and clothing.

Anchi (M_20_Chaoshan): What I cared is about the style and the design of the clothes… It doesn't matter whether there is a brand or not… sometimes, a piece of garment with a label just charges you more; it doesn't mean that you look good in it…

Surprisingly, the youngsters found it easier to recall brand names from other product categories such as mobile phones and electronic devices that they commonly used. It was obvious that price was not a

determining factor since a mobile phone normally cost a lot more than a piece of clothing; but it was the perceived value and worthiness of fashion-clothing that bothered the Chinese youngsters a lot. During the interviews, the students showed little interest in luxury fashion brands since they on the one hand could not afford these fashion labels; on the other hand, there was a feeling of "being distanced" when the students leveraged their perception of these luxury fashion labels and their current social positions. Lun (M_21_Guangzhou) bought a fake agnès b bag online, unaware that it was a knockoff . When I informed him the price of a real branded bag (around a thousand dollars), the young man said that it was not the price that deterred him from buying the real product, but his current social position.

Lun (M_21_Guangzhou): I felt myself distanced from those luxury brands. I don't think I will buy these brands even if I have enough money to do so.

In accordance with traditional Confucian beliefs on social relations (Wong et al., 2012), hedonic consumption was largely forbidden for many of the youngsters who came from a lower-middle-class family in China since a good student should concentrate on his/her studies. Extending the findings of Shen et al. (2005) that Chinese tended to believe high-priced luxury brands offered better quality of product, the students would prefer to express a sense of modesty in their fashion choices and avoid being stigmatized as materialistic. In line with this assertion, spending too much time and money on pursuing luxury fashion brands was not preferable for students, who should remain modest in both dressing style and fashion consumption. Some of the most commonly recalled luxury brands included Louis Vuitton, Dior, Prada, Chanel, and Gucci. Even though our participants were able to recall some of the these luxury brand names, most were hardly able to recognize any brand's logo and knew little about such information as product price range, category, country of origin, brand story, or even the correct pronunciation of the brand's name. For instance, Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) pronounced the luxury fashion brand Chanel as "Channel," while Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) did not know that the "Red Heart Face" was an iconic logo for the luxury fashion brand COMME des GARCONS. Upon hearing that a handbag from Louis Vuitton costs thousands of dollars, Chun (M_22_Guangzhou) found this hard to accept. Chui Leung (M_ 21_Hubei) believed that students should not spend too much money on branded goods even if they could afford to buy such products. During the wardrobe examination, I found that many of the youngsters, especially the migrant youngsters, did not have many clothes; needless to say they bought these clothes from renowned fashion labels (Figure 4.26). Some of them even kept lots of fake products from luxury fashion labels and were unaware of this fact before the wardrobe examination in the interviews (Figure 4.27).

Figure 4.26 The wardrobe of Bosco (M_20_Zijin)
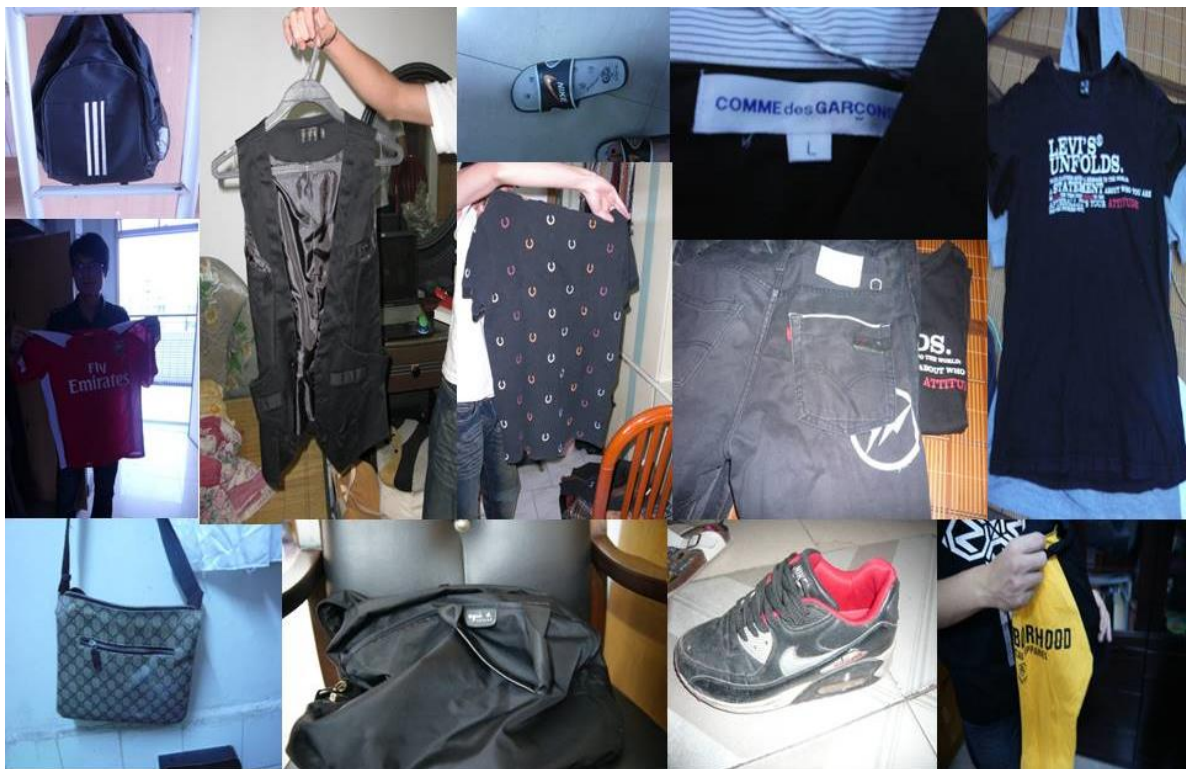
4.27 Counterfeits found during the wardrobe examination

The youngsters exhibited a sense of assumed emotion in consideration of how others perceived the meanings signified by consuming luxury fashion brands—for example, higher social status, wealth, extravagance. All these meanings might conflict with their current identity as students. Sharing a similar worldview in perceiving luxury brand consumption, the Chinese youngsters found themselves unsuited to buy or use these fashion labels at the moment; even if they could afford to buy these brands, the Chinese youngsters still refused to use them.

> *Si (F_20_Guangzhou): For the brands like Louis Vuitton, Gucci…um…There are just many people around you keep saying that it is too young for us to carry a Louis Vuitton handbags. It's too old for us to do so. I know a wealthy friend whose mother bought her a RMB$3,000 handbag from L.V.; my friend feels very uneasy when she carries the luxury handbag with her.*

Another research participant, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan), was shocked when I mentioned to her the situation in Hong Kong where some high-school students carried luxury handbags to school. She thought that it was not appropriate for students to spend too much money on consumption even if they could afford it. As indulgence in enjoyment was not encouraged in Chinese culture (Tse, 1996), a sense of assumed emotion was shared among the local and migrant Chinese youngsters. The students had become "volitional choosers" in that the choices they made had to be congruent with socially sanctioned ideals, their socially constructed identity, or an assumed identity (Iyengar and Devoe, 2003). The participants found themselves obligated to remain modest in their brand consumption in such a way that they should always concern themselves with others' opinions and avoid making "mistakes" in matching brand usages and social identity.

Pricing occupied an important position in the participants' mind-map of brand perception. Many of the youngsters found it critical to remain modest in their consumption. Most of the participants claimed that pricing was one of the most important selection criteria in their fashion consumption. Apart from avoiding purchasing expensive clothing, it was interesting to note that the participants refused to visit any stores or brands once they perceived them as expensive and not for them. During the shopping trips with the participants, the youngsters refused or were not willing to walk inside the stores whenever they thought the brands were very expensive, even if they had never checked the price tags attached to a garment before. A typical example was Si (F_20_Guangzhou); I jotted down the following field notes after a shopping trip with her.

> *Although Si was very excited in talking about brands during the interview, she looked very uneasy when I went shopping with her. At the time we visited the brands she had just mentioned, there was no discount or seasonal sale. She was reluctant to walk inside the stores and only had a glimpse of the window display outside. She kept telling me that she had to wait until there was a price cut even if she could actually afford them now. When we came to Joy and Peace, the favorite*

brand of Si, she refused to walk inside to see any of the latest products as she thought the shoes were too expensive when there was no discount offer. However, I could see how much she adored the brands as she turned her head several times while walking up the escalator.

The discussion and field notes above reveal how Chinese youngsters navigate conflicting "*I*-positions" where the assumed emotion in conforming to others' expectation suppresses one's real affection for fashion and brand choices. The narratives of self-identity formation have been subjected to the inclusion of "otherness", in which consumers' choices are regulated to have a higher degree of self-control and agency (e.g. engaged in counterfeiting) to effectively adjust to various interpersonal contingencies (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

4.3.2 Feeling familial responsible - being a filial daughter and son.

Family structure and identity is one of the key constructs in the interdependent Chinese culture (Hsu 1972). Although most of the participants claimed that their family members did not have any direct influences on their fashion taste and consumption choices, it was found that familial values had heavily shaped their consumption behaviors.

Family was central to the social relationships in the youngsters' lives, even though some of them found it difficult to get along with their parents. In reviewing the happiest and saddest moments in the participants' lives, the youngsters often talked about their experiences with their family. Even though most of them had moved into dormitory after entering the university, most of the youngsters kept close contact with their parents and regularly went back home during holidays. As discussed in the previous sections, there were many touching stories the youngsters could tell how important their family relationships were in their hearts. They felt obligated to try to meet the expectations of family and show care and empathy to other family members. Most of the research participants, like Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan), felt it necessary to support their families after graduation.

Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): I used to buy some gifts for my parents and younger brother, everything when I went back home for holidays…I usually buy new clothes and medicines for them to make them feel I am doing fine here in Guangzhou! Each time it costs me thousands of dollars… Anyway, I think it is important to make your parents feel relief when their daughter was away…

Being the big sister in the family, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) felt obligated to take good care of herself and her family. Through buying and sending gifts to family members, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) showed her affection and care to maintain a close connection in an expressive familial tie (Hwang,

1987; Joy, 2001). More importantly, the gift-giving activities also helped to ease identity conflicts and social tensions in acculturation since the assumed emotion in gift-giving and consumption reminded the individuals with a dominant voice in achieving the acculturation goals and social expectation one should fulfill. In other words, the assumed emotion provided a sense of social security and support to the acculturating individuals. Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) kept a pair of sneakers in her dormitory that was a gift from her younger brother (Figure 4.28). Even though she disliked the style and wore them only once or twice; she found it so touching whenever she saw the shoes since her brother used most of his first paycheck for the gift. It reminded her to work hard and overcome all the challenges of living and studying in Guangzhou since the family had such high expectations and so much care for her. A similar case was found during the interview with Bosco (M_20_Zijin).

> *Interviewer: So, will you treat Guangzhou as your home?*
> *Bosco (M_20_Zijin): I haven't thought of that! Perhaps, I may go home (Zijin) when I'm retired or quit my job one day. I only want to stay and work here for money...I won't ask my father and mother to come here even if I earn lots of money here...If I have money... I want to help my family and give my parents better living conditions, say buying houses...However, it is difficult to say... If I have my own family here, I will ask them to come and here will be my home...*

Figure 4.28 A gift from the younger brother of Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan)

In particular to the discussion of how family identity became a dimension of assumed emotion in structuring brand literacy (Firat, 1995), it was found that the participants demonstrated a familial concern in their consumption in such a way that they avoided disappointing their parents or other

family members. Most of the participants did not have any experience buying their own fashion and clothing until they went to the university and started living independently. While the young participants were used to shopping with their parents, most of them claimed that their parents would instill their consumption values, such as the emphasis on product quality and durability, worthiness, brand selections, etc.

Although the youngsters maintained very different fashion tastes from those of their parents, they respected and followed the consumption values their parents taught them. Si (F_22_Guangzhou) went shopping with her mother, and claimed that her mother had largely influenced her brand knowledge and consumption values. Even though she sometimes disagreed with her mother's fashion taste, she still respected her mother's choices. Another example, Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei), claimed that he needed his parents' consent before buying an expensive pair of sneakers, given that he was the one who paid for it. Coming from a middle-class family background, Chui Leung got more than $1000 as pocket money per month. However, he refused to spend more than $90 for a T-shirt. He believed that he should not burden the family since he received pocket money from his parents. He tried to remain modest in consumption and be considerate to his family. As discussed, Siu Tin (F_22_Chao Shan) also reminded herself not to spend too much for personal enjoyment. However, it would be fine for her to spend money buying gifts for her mother and her brother.

> *Siu Tin (F_20_Chaoshan): To me, I should not spend too much money; especially on clothing…My mother's life is very hard. I will try my best to give her a better life in the future…In the meantime; I bought a lot of things for her when I got money...to make her feel happier…*

4.3.3 Feeling monitored –Peer pressure to conform

Peer influence was found to be another significant factor in understanding symbolic consumption of fashion and clothing, especially when the young generation started to learn about different products and brands favored by their peers and take them into consideration for self-evaluation (Elliott and Leonard, 2004). Living in an interdependent cultural context like China, maintaining a harmonious social relationship with others is key (Markus and Kitayama 1991). While most of the research participants spent most of the time with their friends and schoolmates in the dormitory and lived apart from their family, it was found that peer influence greatly shaped their fashion consumption and brand perception.

Walking into the university dormitory, it was not uncommon to see a setting of four to six students living in a small room while everyone was displaying their possessions in their "own" area. Most of the

participants claimed that they knew everyone very well in the room; while some of them became close friends and would hang out together. Spending most of the time living with people of similar ages, the youngsters talked about everything including their shopping experiences, entertainment, places they went for shopping, and evaluation of different brands and products they had been using. As discussed in the previous section, they would also go shopping together and comment on one another's dressing style and fashion taste.

However, it should be noted that a tension was created within the students' relationships that facilitated a sense of assumed emotion among the youngsters in which they were watching out for one another's fashion tastes and brand consumption. For instance, Ming (F_22_Guangzhou) claimed that people in the school actually kept an eye with others' dressing style and there was lots of gossip if someone didn't follow the "norms" in school. As discussed in the previous section, Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan) also experienced lots of criticism of her fashion tastes and appearance in her first year of study in Guangzhou. She was urged to follow her roommates' fashion advice in order to adapt to the new social environment studying in Guangzhou. The above illustrated a different picture of assumed emotion that the youngsters were not always free to consume whatever they liked, but they displayed a social concern for their consumption choices and brand preferences in working in line with others' expectation and to avoid any social "pain" that resulted from not dressing appropriately.

Another example for how peer influences regulated and monitored consumption choices could be understood through how the young consumers perceived each other in engaging counterfeiting. During the interviews, it was not uncommon to discover that many of the youngsters had accidentally bought fake fashion items and labels. Most of the young participants felt uneasy and embarrassed, not because they had been found to be involved in the unethical consumption behavior of violating property rights or of being disrespectful to the original design, but because they risked "losing face" in front of others who knew the brands better than they did.

> *Ming (F_22_Guangzhou): I prefer non-branded clothing from small boutiques to counterfeit goods! The feeling is so bad if your friends know that you are wearing counterfeit goods!*

> *Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan): I avoid buying fakes since people may recognize them. It is so embarrassing! Sometimes, I am aware that some shops are selling counterfeit goods, like those sales promotions of "buy one get one free" for Nike athletic shoes!*

In some extreme cases, even though some of the participants felt embarrassed when they first discovered that they had bought counterfeit goods, they also felt a sense of pride that their choices and the design came from an international luxury fashion label (Figure 4.28)

Siu Tin (F_20_Chaoshan):   I haven't heard of this brand (holding a fake Y-3 bag)? Is it well-known? It cost me 10 dollars only…. It is so embarrassing! (Researcher: It costs around 2 to 3 thousand dollars each.) What? It was a gift from my brother. I think it must be fake!

Chi Pang (M_19_Guangzhou):   I know it must be a fake. I recognize the brand name, but had no idea about this brand. How do you call this? Is it Dollar? (Researcher: It is a very well-known international brand called Dior). (Chi Pang felt shy when he pronounced the brand name incorrectly.) … Er … I like the style and the design of this jacket only!

While Chinese culture places an emphasis on addressing the social meanings behind consumption choices informing status claims and face problems (Hwang, 1987; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), the participants expressed a sense of social concern toward the consumption of counterfeits largely based on the perceptions of otherness. While Eckhardt et al. (2010) ascertained that shopping for counterfeit goods can be an ordinary part of everyday life in China, it should be pointed out that many of the Chinese consumers had a relatively weak knowledge and understanding of luxury brands, and easily engaged in deceptive counterfeit consumption. To many of our participants, the consumption of counterfeits may bring up ethical problems when one comes face-to-face with a social other in everyday life. Si (F, 22) recalled how embarrassed she was when she hung out with a group of friends. One of them carried a real Louis Vuitton bag that everyone thought it was a fake item. This experience was especially remarkable to Si (F, 22) since she realized that the way one looked and dressed should conform to one's current social identity.

Si (F_22_Guangzhou):   When I see a student carrying such an expensive bag, I immediately think it is fake rather than real. (Researcher: How do you know?) It's just the way I perceive a person with my eyes and my understanding of how a student should look like…. The bad side of counterfeiting is that others may think that you are a showy person! We are students … and should behave as what we are…. We are not supposed to buy luxury things that we cannot afford…. If you buy a counterfeit product, people might think that you want to appear to be rich and are pursuing a materialistic lifestyle.

Perceiving the otherness through the body (e.g., vision and face-to-face social interaction) (Joy et al., 2010), the young informants subjectively perceive one another in everyday life and place great emphasis on whether a person's consumption choices match his or her social position and meet social expectations (Jiang and Cova, 2012; Lam *et al.*, 2011). The primary ethical concern in buying counterfeits was not the issue of disrespecting the original design or violating intellectual property rights, but the extent to which the social group to which they belonged had the same understanding of the brand. Most of the youngsters were happy with their counterfeit products since by buying fakes they were thereby spending less on personal pleasures and enjoyment. They considered themselves to

be moral consumers as long as the others did not care about it. Interestingly, with the small amount of money that they could spend, many shifted to concerns about the style, quality (i.e., color, comfort, and durability), and price of the products rather than to the issue of brand images and names. This further showed how the Chinese participants ascribed moral meanings to their consumption of counterfeits, and considered the consumption of luxury brands ethically inappropriate for them.

> *Chun (M_22_Guangzhou):   I should not spend too much money on things and clothes, even though I have started a part-time job and have some money for clothes.*

> *Hiu Yeun (M_20_Chaoshan): I don't care if they are counterfeit or not…. At least, my friends don't care about it since they don't know the brands, either. (Laughs.) … They are cheap! It is much more important that you like the style and feel comfortable.*

Hu (1949) posited that assumed emotion is the influence of cultural norms, such as family traditions, situations, and etiquette, which lead to compulsive and normative changes in behavior. In this case, Si (F_22_Guangzhou) expressed a sense of assumed emotion—she displayed a kind of social concern and felt a sense of insecurity about counterfeit luxury goods. This came through her body (i.e., seeing) and her previous experience of understanding how a student should behave and dress. Thus, it was her social surroundings (her peers) that exerted the social pressure that regulated her outfit and appearance.

Figure 4.29 A fake Y-3 bag owned by Siu Tin (F_22_chaoshan)

4.3.4 Feeling mature - changing identity in different life stages

The fourth dimension highlighted that the Chinese youngsters would adopt different fashion brands and styles in order to assert their changing identities across different stages of life. This further suggested that Chinese consumers had to maintain an assumed emotion towards congruence in their brand selection and meeting social expectation of their changing their identities, in particular to the role transition from study to work (Iyengar and Devoe 2003).

> *Siu Tin (F_22_Chaoshan):   Branded labels mean something, since they ensure the quality of the clothing. Yet I don't think brands can represent me all the time. However, the way I dress should communicate something about me…. Some brands like Gloria (a local brand selling formal suits) do represent a person's social status…. However, it is much more important that the style and color suit your personality.*

During the interviews, most of the participants claimed that their fashion style and taste would change when they started working in society. More importantly, they addressed that it was "necessary" for them to change their fashion styles and their consumption preferences when they got older and went through different life stages. In asserting their changing identities and exhibiting a sense of "maturity" in the eyes of others, the youngsters claimed that they should acquire more fashion brand knowledge and had their fashion tastes and styles changed according to the social position they could reach. For example, Chi Yeung (M_19_Guangzhou) started to wear polo shirts when he entered college. He wished to buy a formal suit from Giorgio Armani one day when he became very successful in his career. Chui Leung (M_21_Hubei) believed that he would be able to carry brands like Apple, Levis, and Lee Jeans once he started working in the industry. The Chinese youngsters believed that there existed a life progression in acquiring different brand knowledge and using different fashion brands to define one's social position. Ones should conform to the social norms and expectations that defined brand association under the cultural context.

> *Siu Tin (F_20_Chaoshan):   After graduation, I will be a junior in the workplace. Depending on how much money I earn, I will choose fashion brands like Gloria (a domestic fashion label selling formal wear)… I don't think it is proper for a junior staff member to be overdressed in the workplace. They should remain low-profile and be considerate of others… I think we should avoid gossip in the office. Some brands are only for managers, such as Freebird (a domestic high-end fashion label selling formal wear). I would buy those brands only when I become a successful manager in my career at the age around 40.*

The above highlighted the observation that the youngsters' fashion consumption was guided by a sense of assumed emotion (Hu, 1949). The Chinese youngsters not only demonstrated a clear understanding of the social positions they were at; more importantly, they understood the associated social expectations and norms placed on them. During the interviews, the youngsters exhibited these cultural concerns by depicting a sense of culturally specific fashion and brand knowledge through their choices and consumption experiences. In other words, the Chinese youngsters ascribed moralistic meanings into their fashion choices, in which their consumption behavior was culturally legitimized and granted the youngsters a sense of liberation in participating in different social occasions.

4.3.5 Summary

The discussion of the Chinese sense of self-identity was inseparable from the social network one embedded (Morris, 1994; Pellow, 1996). Mooji (2004) also argued that the Chinese self was "we"-conscious, in which the identity construction is built upon the social system (i.e. norms, values, and hierarchy) which regulated one's behaviors and cultural practices. Following a dialogical perspective, this section explicated the role of assumed emotion in self-identity formation, in which consumers might suppress their real emotion and navigate through conflicting voices between different "*I*-positions". The notion of "self in the other" or "others in-the-self" thus represented multiple or even conflicting "*I*-positions" where consumers tried to conform to and meet the social expectations to maintain "the connectedness to and interpersonal relationship with significant others, family, and friends" in order to define their social role and position (Wong et al., 2012, p. 937). The assumed emotion surpassed the real emotion, and guided the Chinese youngsters in overcoming identity conflicts and social tensions to achieve certain acculturation goals. This section also exhibited the extent to which consumers might ascribe new social meanings to counterfeit consumption in order to assert their social identity. This also supported the notion that Chinese consumers maintain a different cultural interpretation of their self-construal and perception of otherness than do their Western counterparts (Belk, 1984; Eckhardt and Houston, 2001; Piron, 2006; Wong et al., 2012).

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Thesis

Encounters with difference fill our everyday life experiences (Beckstead, 2010). When people come into contact with others from different sociocultural backgrounds, they may experience uncertainty and pressure to change in adapting to the conflicting identity negotiation and the (re)configuration of social relationships. While previous literatures on consumer acculturation contribute to a single-perspective (i.e. either migrant's adaptation or indigene's responses) understanding of the outcomes of the acculturation process and identification, very little research has been done to offer a theoretical framework to understand how consumers' emotional voices guide and resolve identity conflicts and social tensions, and subsequently result in different acculturating strategies and identity outcomes as narrated in a mutual, co-created acculturation experience between local and migrant consumers. Thus, the focal point of this dissertation is to understand the role of consumer emotional voices in navigating and resolving identity conflicts and social tension through symbolic consumption of fashion-clothing as narrated in their acculturation experiences.

I introduced a two-way, relational approach (i.e. the dialogical consumer acculturation) to illustrate how consumers from local and migrant groups engage in dialogue in constructing and negotiating their self-identities and in maintaining group differences by symbolically consuming fashion-clothing. The dialogical model is useful for revealing how consumers manage multiple and even conflicting voices within their inner selves and the counterpoint of different worldviews from others. I pay particular attention to the feelings aroused in encounters with difference and the exercise of agency for social distinction through fashion-clothing consumption and style projects. The narratives of fashion consumption practices serve as a vehicle for understanding different dimensions and levels of consumer acculturation because the profound nature of fashion combines social equalization and segregation forces, whereas the acculturation process is always mingled with consumers' struggles to maintain a connection with the original culture while adapting to the new cultural environment. Fashion, as one of the many consumption domains and the most "visible" identity marker, provides a context to examine the intersection of taste and identity among internal migrants in mainland China. I argue that the narratives of consumers' lived experiences and the construction of fashion discourses are embedded in social interaction and contextualized by ongoing dialogues between the "us" and "them" or the "self" and the "other". In revealing the interchange of different "*I*-positions" and social dominance relative to others in consumers' narratives of their acculturation experiences, this subsequently explains the inconsistent consumption preferences and decisions that are the results of resolving inner identity conflicts and social tensions (Ahuvia, 2005; Bahl and Milne, 2010; Herman and Dimaggio, 2007; Murray, 2002).

The essence of the theoretical framework of this dissertation echoed key theoretical approaches to consumer acculturation and dialogical self-theory. The content of the literature review section provides an extensive review of previous studies on consumer acculturation and consumer identity projects. I also provided a discussion of how the dialogical approach to consumer acculturation extends the current recursive approach (Luedicke, 2011; 2015) by including the dimensions of consumer emotion in inner selves and the power negotiation between migrant and local consumers along acculturation (Bhatia, 2002). The section on dialogical self theory explicates the idea of "voices" and "*I*-positions", and how these concepts can be applied to the understanding of consumer acculturation experiences, in particular to a) consumer emotions in multivoiced self-identity negotiation and b) the asymmetrical power relationship between local and migrant groups and the resulting identity conflicts.

This ethnographic study selected urbanization in Guangzhou, China to provide a context for the investigation since massive internal migration (largely rural-urban) has intensified social interaction, and even conflicts, between urbanites and those from the rural areas. Internal migration has received little attention from previous acculturation studies since many of them paid attention to cross-cultural differences and adaptive behaviors led by cross-national border activities. This, however, was limited in its capacity to explain the significance of rural-urban distinctions between locals and migrants in shaping marketplace culture and characteristics. The data was drawn from three and a half years of fieldwork in Guangzhou City (from July 2010 to January 2014). The research instruments employed in the entire study included (non)participant observation, phenomenological interviews, and other projective techniques such as street snapshots, photograph-taking, and wardrobe examination. A total of 23 Chinese youngsters were recruited from both local and migrant populations. The data were analyzed through iterative, interpretive and hermeneutic methods with triangulation techniques (Kozinets, 2008; Thompson et al., 1989). The themes were refined until I was satisfied that they had been captured in the quotes (Spiggle, 1994).

The key findings and discussions of this dissertation are an in-depth examination of the "emotional voices" and "consumption practices" in the context of re-defining the "self" and "others" between local and migrant consumers. I paid attention to the multiple, or even conflicting, voices that emerged in consumers' narratives of their acculturation experiences and their inconsistent fashion-clothing consumption choices and style projects. Three key themes emerged from the ethnographic research. First, I argued that consumers' emotional attachment to "homeland" and social memories in pre-acculturation experiences engaged in a dialogue with present or even future "other I-positions". The different emotional voices thus represented four types of "I-positions", namely 1) nostalgic self, 2) consumption expert, 3) optimistic self, and 4) helpless self, all of which maintained very different expectations toward acculturation goals and identity outcomes. The

understanding of pre-acculturation antecedents also revealed how individuals' consumption habitus and fashion tastes level were embodied. This also provided important insight into why acculturating individuals perceived "the encounter with otherness" differently, subsequently leading to inconsistent and diverse acculturation strategies and identity outcomes through symbolic consumption of fashion-clothing and style management.

Second, I argued that everyday encounters with difference in the acculturation process created conflicting "I-positions" in which individuals struggled to negotiate their past and present selves with immediate and imagined otherness. More importantly, the encounters and experiences with people of different sociocultural backgrounds triggered different levels of consumer emotions that altered their perception of "self/other relationship" and subsequently guided their symbolic consumption behaviors for social distinction purposes. The meaning of *Guangzhou Ren*, or an urbanite identity, was polysemous, and its meaning shifted based on the social interaction and situation. The label referred not simply to residents of a city, but to a new status and a new class identity for both local and migrant consumers. Unlike prior literatures that assumed a host-guest or dominant-minority cultural dichotomy (Jamel and Chapman, 2000; Ogden et al., 2004; Peñaloza, 1989; 1994), this study found that consumers engaged in consumption practices for different identity outcomes in order to highlight the cultural and ideological differences of "rural" and "urban".

While local consumers were forced to reflect and (re)configure the authenticity of being local *Guangzhou Ren* in response to the migrants' assimilation of their lifestyle and consumption preferences, the migrants treated themselves as transient guests in the City who were pursuing a cosmopolitan ideal that granted them political and economic privileges. Unlike the locals, they showed less interest in appreciation of the Canton culture and *Guangzhou Ren* identity. It was also important to highlight that both locals and migrants experienced a feeling of diaspora during the acculturation process. The conceptions of "being home" and "being away" were linked to the translocation and dislocation experience when the consumers interacted with the immediate or imagined others. Fashion style and consumption preferences had become an important dimension to differentiate the urban consumers from the rural. Living like a cosmopolitan was not taken for granted among many consumers, particularly migrant consumers. Therefore, consumers experienced a series of changes and learning throughout their stay in the city. However, it was surprising to notice that some of the migrant consumers did not feel it necessary to imitate the fashion styles of the locals in the pursuit of a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Instead, given the limited social and economic resources available, the migrant consumers redefined a fashion taste regime that was different from that of the local consumers. These changes and shifts in practices therefore had become key discourses to elaborate the Modern Chinese identity through everyday interaction and dialogue. In seeking social recognition and distinction in their fashion choices and aesthetic preferences, both local and migrant consumers overcome identity conflicts and the anxiety of adapting to the new cultural environment.

The narratives of their fashion choices thus voice the dynamic of a constant (re)configuration of social relationships and their desire to be distinguished from the others through taste distinction and consumption preferences (Murray, 2002).

Third, I discussed to what extent both local and migrant Chinese consumers exhibited a sense of assumed emotion in their consumption choices (Hu, 1944), and engaged in an ongoing malleable process in bolstering their own identities through appropriating social meanings to their possessions as well as consumption practices (Eckhardt and Houston, 2008; Joy et al., 2010; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). I distinguished four different dimensions of assumed emotion to illustrate how Chinese consumers struggled in negotiating different "*I*-positions", and ascribed social meanings in their consumption choices to assert their identities as well as to resolve uncertainties and conflicts. More importantly, the assumed emotion shed light into the understanding of the notion of "self in the other" or "Others in-the-self", in which it represented multiple or even conflicting "*I*-positions" where consumers tried to conform to and meet the social expectations to maintain "the connectedness to and interpersonal relationship with significant others, family, and friends in order to define their social role and position" (Wong et al., 2012, p. 937). The assumed emotion surpassed the real emotion, and guided the Chinese youngsters in overcoming identity conflicts and social tensions to achieve certain acculturation goals.

While globalization has intensified cultural interaction across and within borders, migration has facilitated different level of cultural interaction, and is a key social phenomenon of our time. Acculturation has become a driving force of transforming societies as well as the patterns of consumption therein (Ü stüner and Holt, 2007). Living in the postmodern era, characterized by the fragmentary and plurality of cultural meanings, consumers, whether of different or similar cultural origin(s), interpolate multiple ideologies from their everyday interaction with co-residing cultural groups and those introduced in the marketplace. The marketplace is composited of diverse cultural identity dispositions, which elicits different interpretations of consumption experiences, attitudes, and subsequent behaviors within a same (given) multicultural context (Kipnis et al., 2014; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). As mentioned above, the key theoretical contributions of this study included the new exploration of the role of consumer emotion in resolving and guiding consumers' identity dispositions, relationship between discourses and consumer practices, the dialogue between the notions of rural and consumer in contemporary Chinese society, and the re-presentation of Chinese culture and identities through the examination of fashion and lifestyle consumption.

5.2 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The implications of the study are fourfold. First, the dialogical approach to consumer research offered a systematic understanding of a two-sided relational approach instead of a one-sided

understanding. It also serves as an analytical technique useful in understanding how local and migrant consumers came into firsthand interaction and navigated conflicting "voices" in perceiving self-other relationships, negotiating their identity projects as well as (re)configuring group boundaries. Without an in-depth investigation of the adaptation and responses of both sides of acculturating individuals, it was argued that a holistic understanding of a dynamic acculturation process cannot be captured. Resonating with Thompson and Haytko's (1997) assertion that consumers struggle in ascribing personal meanings in their fashion discourses for the sake of adapting to the social prescription in their everyday lives, my research extends the discussion to understanding the fluidity of personal and collective meanings as embedded and negotiated in the dialogue between the multiple *I*-positions defining the "self" and "other", as well as "us" and "them" (Hermans et al., 1993; Hermans, 2001; Bhatia, 2002).

Second, with a focus on understanding the "voices" and "positions" as narrated in consumers' acculturation experiences, the dialogical approach to acculturation addressed the themes of multiplicity, opposition, and conflict within different selves (*I*-positions) as well as with the social others. It shed light on the formation of cultural self-identity projects as well as the reproduction and reconstruction of cultural boundaries (Bhatia, 2002). Moreover, the dialogical approach also extended to the examination of the asymmetrical relations and constraints among different cultural groups in their experiences of encounters with difference. It explicates the ongoing negotiation between local and migrant consumers on their self-identity works as manifested in their inconsistent consumption practices and choices. It also explains that the asymmetrical power relationship between local and migrant consumers may arouse different levels of emotion, feelings of uncertainty, and struggles in the legitimization of sociocultural structures and marketplace ideologies. These subsequently shape the negotiation of different identity outcomes and consumption practices (Üstüner and Holt, 2007; Wertsch, 1991).

Third, the dissertation also enriched current acculturation theory by paying attention to the emotional voices along consumer acculturation. The understanding of consumers' emotion opened the discussions of consumers' motivations in pursuit of multiple identity dispositions and lifestyle choices (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). While previous acculturation research paid enormous attention to identity outcomes and acculturation strategies consumers employed in adapting to or resisting the mainstream ideologies in a new cultural environment, this research offered a theoretical framework to understand how consumers' emotional voices guide and resolve identity conflicts and social tensions, and subsequently result in different acculturating strategies and identity outcomes. While previous studies on consumers' emotion paid attention to how individual consumers ascribed personal feelings to beloved objects of possession (Ahuvia, 2005), my study extended to how cultural interaction and perception of otherness triggered different modes of consumers' feelings and emotions that subsequently guided individuals' consumption choices for the sake of social distinction.

Taking consumption of fashion and clothing as a selected case, the pursuit of fashion was premised upon consumers' subjective narratives of their feelings and aesthetic judgement ascribed to their everyday interaction with immediate and imagined others. In explicating different fashion discourses between local and migrant consumers, it was the social equalization and segregation forces in fashion consumption that kept consumers struggling in a continuous adaptation and negotiation of social inclusion (or exclusion) as well as identity projects along the acculturation process (Murray, 2002). More importantly, the consumption decision behind social distinction and conformity was guided by consumers' subjective emotion toward the presence of immediate and imaged others. In this connection, the assumed emotion also opened a discussion to understand how Chinese consumers were guided and regulated to maintain a different, collective cultural interpretation of their self-construal and perception of otherness (Belk, 1984; Eckhardt and Houston, 2001; Piron, 2006; Wong et al., 2012).

Fourth, this research highlighted the significance of the negotiation of identity projects and group differences in the context of massive internal migration (i.e. rural-urban migration in China). This research shed light on understanding the urban-rural distinction along intra-national migration and how that may significantly impact the marketplace structure. Hence, it provides implications for market segmentation in China. The implication of the research not only offers an alternate theoretical angle on the multifaceted acculturation experiences in the local-migrant relationship as well as individuals' identity projects, but also provides an important insight for fashion marketers and brand managers to understand the heterogeneity of China's market, led by urbanization and massive intra-national migratory movement. The China market is infused with different folk cultures, conflicting market and cultural ideologies, and different kinds of anticipation and imagination toward the Modern China dream. It is important for marketers to carefully consider the dynamic composition of consumers' profiles in China. The massive urbanization in China not only demands that marketers examine the differences between local and migrant in terms of their socio-demographic profiles and their consumption preferences, but also requires a deep understanding of the local-migrant relationship that is constantly (re)molding their consumption choices and preferences.

5.3 Research Limitations and Future Research

The entire ethnographic study demonstrates a dialogical approach to consumer acculturation in revealing the lived experiences between indigenous and migrant communities in their negotiation of personal and collective meanings of fashion consumption choices and discourses. However, bounded by the nature of interpretive research, which rests upon the comprehensiveness and saturation of qualitative data, future research can extend to using quantitative measures and larger samples in

examining and verifying the significance of consumer emotion in guiding and determining the differences between migrant and local consumers in terms of consumption motivation, values, behaviors, and preferences in fashion choices in different major cities in China.

Second, the focal group of this research is lower-middle-class Chinese youngsters engaged in their undergraduate studies. The research is limited by the narrowly defined student sample. Future research should further explore the acculturation experiences and practices of indigenes and migrants of different demographic backgrounds (e.g. ages, occupations, number of generations, and years of staying in the new place of residence). Another valuable area of investigation would be a gendered study to examine whether female and male consumers may have different identity goals and perceptions toward social groupings and demarcation. Such discussions would help to make the current theory more robust.

Third, while the current study has focused on narrations of identity projects and the sense of belonging to the home culture as inscribed in participants' fashion consumption experiences along acculturation, future research can extend to other lifestyle consumption or product types in order to increase the generalizability of the current dialogical consumer acculturation model in different products and services in the marketplace.

Finally, this research primarily focuses on the case of intra-national migratory movement in keeping with the urbanization policy in China. Given that China has a relatively unitary ethnic composition (primarily Han), future research can extend to a cross-cultural comparison between different levels of urbanization or rural-urban migration activities in other cultural contexts. For instance, countries like the United States, Australia, Singapore, and other nation-states in Europe have diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and may engage in a very different dialogue in formulating an indigene-migrant relationship as well as identity narratives in everyday acculturation experiences.

5.4 Final Thoughts

Central to the dialogical approach to acculturation is the understanding of consumers' identity formation and its relationship to cultural positioning in a fluid and dynamic social relationship (Burkitt, 2010; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1992). In the wake of urbanization in China, the local and migrant Chinese youngsters "voice" their struggles in adapting to the changing social environment as well as in the presence of "different others". As narrated in their acculturation experiences as well as their everyday fashion discourses, the consumers display their emotions in perceiving their self-identity as well as their relationship with otherness.

APPENDIX A: Interview Questions: (English Version)

1 Self-introduction and gives reasons for the description
2 Follow up demographic background (if not mentioned in self-introduction)
   2.1 Age
   2.2 Educational background and field of study
   2.3 Present occupation
   2.4 Place you come from / Places you live now
   2.5 Numbers of people at home
   2.6 Income level (i.e. salary and pocket money)
3 Life history
   3.1 Divide your life history into different section and give reasons
   3.2 Describes those important scene in each sub-division
   3.3 Describe those people who is/are important in your life
4 Social relationship: Family background, peers and friends
   4.1 Describe your relationship with each of the family member
   4.2 Things / values that family members significantly affect your consumption
   4.3 Describe your relationships with your closest / best friends
5 Daily life
   5.1 Describe your daily schedule/ routine
   5.2 Hobbies and interest
   5.3 Describes what kind of entertainments you favor
   5.4 Idols you admire and reasons
6 Consumption habits and purchase decisions
   6.1 Places you usually shop
   6.2 People you usually shop with (or shop alone)
   6.3 Frequency you shop
   6.4 Amount of money you spent each time
   6.5 Channel you received marketing information
   6.6 Describe consumption process and selection criteria in fashion-clothing
   6.7 Define your aesthetic preferences and fashion taste
   6.8 People that may affect your consumption decision
7 Brand knowledge and perception
   7.1 Name the brands that you knew
   7.2 Name the brands that you buy and own
   7.3 Name your favorite brands and reasons
   7.4 Brands that you cannot owned/ used and reasons
   7.5 Describe any experience you have with your brands

8   Perceptions of Cultural Identity
  8.1   Describe your experiences and impression of Guangzhou
  8.2   Define your Guangzhou identity / cultural identity
  8.3   Define where is your home culture
  8.4   Define which location or what culture you feel close to

**Note these questions were asked in either Cantonese or Putonghua by the researcher, and also that the interviews were semi-structured so these questions were a guide for the interviewers but many of the conversations were expanded beyond the scope of these questions

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