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**TOURISM CONSUMPTION OF CHINA'S RICH:  
HOW DOES HABITUS APPLY**

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PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
School of Hotel and Tourism Management

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HOW DOES HABITUS APPLY**

TINGTING LIU

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

March 2019

## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY**

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Tingting Liu

## **ABSTRACT**

Along with opening up policy and economic reforms, wealth accumulation in China has experienced tremendous growth in a short span of time. Drawing on worldwide industry reports, China has been reported as the major engine to generate the significant population of ultra-high-net-worth-individuals. Small in number but great in influence, ultra-rich individuals have shaped the tendency of worldwide capitalism. Moreover, being rich provides them great potential for constructing luxury lifestyles and seeking exciting experience in broad ranges. Although a plethora number of industry reports introduced the phenomenon of ultra-rich, limited attention has been given to this group in academic area despite their distinctive role in shaping world economy and consumption trend. This study intends to fill this void by exploring distinction practices used by the rich in the arena of tourism consumption. Specifically, present study focuses on Bourdieu's habitus, cultural capital and taste to account for tourism consumption patterns of China's rich.

By deploying a qualitative approach, current thesis aims to explore tourism consumption behaviors of China's rich and the forms of taste enacted in tourism field. Under the tenet of constructivist grounded theory, the specific technique used in this study is in-depth interview. The selection of potential interviewees was based on informants' investable wealth. Interview guide was divided into two parts including general quires on life histories and recreational practices as well as specific investigation regarding consumption behaviors in various tourism sectors. Finally, a total of 29 ultra-high-net wealth individuals were interviewed. Data analysis followed two procedures prescribed by constructivist grounded theory.

Findings of current thesis outline the objectified resources consecrated by China's rich as well as the embodied practices demonstrated by the wealthy. To link tourism consumption patterns with taste conceptualization, the homologies between tourism embodied practices and recreational practices were firstly presented. Afterwards, a remapping from homologous consumption patterns into informants' cultural capital

profiles were unearthed. Such a holistic interpretative loop captures the forms of taste happened in tourism field. Four pair-wise taste spectrums were reported and a theoretical framework towards social distinction of upper class in an emerging context was formulated.

This thesis contributes to the extant scholarship theoretically and sheds light on tourism industry practically. Theoretically, the forms of cultural capital and tastes are relative concepts and in perpetual change, dependent on the specific field and social contexts. Current research is first of its kind to conceptualize taste in tourism field. Grounded on Bourdieu's framework, current thesis meanwhile revises the extant theories on social distinction which is largely posited in Western contexts. Furthermore, a China's shabby gentility class pattern is reported which challenges the stereotypical idea about China's new rich in the academia. Practically, recent industry reports simply put the group of rich into one basket with the taken-for-granted assumption that they exhibit homogeneous behaviors and deploy the same distinction strategy. This thesis offers an alternative perspective to study the heterogeneous of the rich group and rethink the traditional stereotype. Moreover, social trickling-down effect accentuated that novel product is first introduced and adopted by rich people who are regarded as upper social class and then gradually disseminate across the society. By understanding the stratifying practices China's rich occupied in tourism arena, findings of current study enhance the apprehension of future trend of China's mass tourism.

**Keywords:** ultra-rich, tourism consumption, habitus, taste, cultural capital, conspicuous consumption

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Research Background**

China's three decades of reform since 1978 has induced profound changes in its social stratification and economic mechanisms (Goodman & Zang, 2008). Along with opening up policy and economic reforms, wealth accumulation in China has experienced tremendous growth in a short span of time. According to Global Wealth report, the size of Chinese wealth in 2000 can only match that of America back in 1932, after 15 years, Chinese wealth has increased by around USD23 trillion which equals to the time when US was 33 years later in 1972. This means China only took less than half of the time to build similar level of wealth (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014). Throughout this exceptional growth, new rich with extreme wealth have come prominence. They are not only the major beneficiary of economic reform, but also the drivers of this massive transformation.

Drawing on different industry reports, the world rich are divided into ultra-high-net-worth-individuals (UHNWIs) and high-net-worth-individuals (HNWIs). Although the criteria applied for classifying UHNWIs and HNWIs vary (see appendix I), China contributes significant population to both UHNWIs and HNWIs. World Ultra Wealth Report (Wealth-X, 2014) estimated that China has a population of 11,070 individuals who have investable assets of over US\$30 million till the end of 2014, which is fifth in the world. Furthermore, in mid-2015, the number of people with investable assets of over US\$50 million in China (excluding Hong Kong SAR) are around 9,555, ranking second in the world (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2015). Particularly noticeable in 2016, there are 198 newcomers included in the Forbes rich list, in which China occupied 70 with total US\$107.4 billion combined wealth listing on the top followed by US. In total, 320 of the 1,810 billionaires cited by Forbes in 2016 are from China, accounting for approximately 18% of the world ultra-rich (Forbes, 2016). In addition to preceding UHNWIs, China is also home to one million HNWIs with investable assets of over US\$1.6 million. There are seven first-tier cities each accommodates more than 50,000 HNWIs, while second and third tier cities including Hubei, Xinjiang and Shaanxi

witnessed dramatic increase of HNWI's as well (Bain Company, 2015).

“The richest 1% of people in the world received as much as the bottom 57%, or in other words, less than 50 million people received as much as 2.7 billion poor” (Milanovic, 2002, p. 88). Small in number but great in influence, ultra-rich have shaped the tendency of worldwide capitalism. In 2014, UHNWIs comprise only 0.004% of the global adult population, albeit they own nearly 13% of the global wealth. In the interim, they consumed 19% of world luxury goods. Similarly, China's UHNWIs only account for 0.0008% of total population, while they control 7.3% of the country's total wealth (Wealth-X, 2014). In consumer culture, being rich is the prerequisite for covering large range of luxury commodities and pleasures. The greater the wealth, the greater the potential for constructing luxury lifestyles and seeking exciting experience in a worldwide range (Featherstone, 2013). Hurun Research Institute (2015), for example, suggested that Chinese UHNWIs are found having more exclusive accesses to consume self-stratified symbols from personal jets, super-yachts to limousines. The most common types of business jet China's UHNWIs hold are Gulfstream G550 and Dassault Falcon 7X, which cost around 60 million in US dollars. Seeking for exotic experience, China's new rich travelled overseas at an average of 4 times per person in 2014, increased by 17.8% compared to 2013, and spent up to 15 million US\$ dollars aboard. More typical is ultra-rich purchased a wide range of oversea Hotels and private chateau. For instance, in 2014, Wan Jianlin, one of China's top rich, purchased hotels in Chicago and Australia, as well as Chen lihua made the acquisition of Park Hyatt Melbourne (Hurun, 2015).

Although a plethora number of industry reports introduced the phenomenon of ultra-rich, limited attention has been given to this group in academic area despite their distinctive role in shaping world economy. The rising concerns in research on this group may stem from the inaccessibility of ultra-rich, or they are too heterogeneous a group to measure (Featherstone, 2013; Beaverstock, Hubbard, & Short, 2004). Yet, some theoretical explanations on social differentiation and consumption still shed lights on researching consumption behaviors of ultra-rich. In the discipline of sociology,

consumption field has long been regarded as the consequential domain of social classification (Holt, 1998). In the scholarship of consumption, social stratification in turn reveals significant implications for consumers' purchase, use and understanding of the commodities (Dwyer, 2009). Precursors including Marx (1906), Weber (1978), Veblen (1899), Warner (1949) and Bourdieu (1984) have reviewed the social distinction and consumption either as the main theme or subsidiary theme in their studies. However, analytical frameworks offered by Veblen and Bourdieu focus more on the topic of elite distinction (Daloz, 2007b) and the relationship between social stratification and consumption serves as the central interest in both traditions (Dwyer, 2009).

Veblen (1899) researched on leisure class in American society and coined the term "conspicuous consumption" which influenced many following scholars who have regarded commodity consumption as way of prestige-seeking (Rumbo, 2009). Based on the analysis of emerging leisure class which is seen as upper class at that time, Veblen characterized this class as either waste their free time for lavish leisure activities or engage in wasteful consumption to showcase their status. However, alongside the development of society, community became more diverse and society became more mobile. In order to make wealth to be seen more effectively, conspicuous consumption preceded conspicuous time to showcase one's social status. Therefore, Veblen's approach depicts a type of crude competition whereby social agents see consumption especially positional goods as instrumental in maximizing social positions and status (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004; Dwyer, 2009).

However, changes happened in both macro level and individual level make the conspicuous consumption with single-minded focus fruitless. In a macro level, work rich and time poor is a pronounced feature in current liberal market and it is even more applicable to those of high earners and privileged groups (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2001). As consumers' time becomes increasingly scarce, contemporary scholarship suggests some contradicting arguments of Veblen's conspicuous consumption, such as inconspicuous consumption and showing status by busyness and limited leisure time. Sullivan and Gershuny (2004) found the pattern of

inconspicuous consumption in modern society, where consumers imagine using current purchased products in the future when leisure time is probably available. This postponed trait limits individuals' motivation of buying to show off. Bellezza, Paharia and Keinan (2016) demonstrated that a busy working style with scarce leisure time is the emerging elite symbol indicating social prestige rather than the conventional means of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. In an individual level, critics on Veblen's conspicuous consumption noted that consumers' purchasing behaviors direct to multiple ends than single-minded focus of lifting status. It is particularly notable in elite distinction that purchasing expensive goods can be a conventional norm, routine, habit and standard of living (e.g., Shove & Warde, 2002; Dwyer, 2009; Biggart & Beamish, 2003). Recognizing the role of habit in consumption practice contributes to nuanced and diverse understandings of elite distinction as well as the relationship between consumption and social stratification.

In social science, habit is agents' taken-for-granted propensity, conventions and routines (Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Camic, 1986). A single habitual action can be developed through past experiences as a matter of course or via mimetic learning of social surroundings (Dwyer, 2009). Beyond the single habitual action, a broader scope of habit stems from the conception of habitus that usually worked below personal consciousness. Specifically, habitus refers to:

*“system of durable, transposable dispositions...as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”*

*Bourdieu (1990: 53)*

By this definition, habitus denotes an internalized system or “modality of action” (Camic, 1986: 1046) structuring individuals' expectation, propensity, responses and actions towards the social context. Habitus, the broader version of habit, is amassed through the pertinent capital resources including economic, social and cultural capital.



These three types of capital can be transformed among each other and gained at both early childhood and later life stage. Different from economic capital and social capital, cultural capital was perceived as more difficult to access and played a most crucial role in the field of consumption and consumers' distinction (Holt, 1998; Prieur & Savage, 2013). Originally, cultural capital is derived from education field to explain the reproduction phenomenon that children from culturally privileged family have higher success rate (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). On Bourdieu (1984)'s later book of *Distinction*, cultural capital enacted a wide scope of characters linking to class-specific lifestyles, cultural participations and cultural competences (Prieur & Savage, 2013). Bourdieu explicitly pointed out the three forms that cultural capital represented: the embodied cultural capital internalized in individuals' disposition; the objectified cultural capital is represented in the form of cultural products; the institutionalized cultural capital acquired by official diploma.

The accumulation of capital resource amasses individuals' habitus, and individuals' habitus finally affect personal taste. According to Bourdieu, taste is socially constructed and reflects individuals' social position and status. It is an aesthetic capacity "to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices" (Bourdieu, 1984: 173). Different class embraces different categories of cultural tastes, including highbrow taste typical of dominant class with high cultural capital (HCC), middlebrow taste featured in middle class and lowbrow/popular taste typified by the lower class with low cultural capital (LCC). In this regard, Bourdieu offered a more nuanced way of distinction that elites differentiate themselves by displaying habitually highbrow taste and repulse other kinds of tastes occupied by lower classes (Turner & Edmunds, 2002).

Translated Bourdieu's distinction framework into consumption field, taste is manifested in consumers' objectified choices and embodied practices. The aesthetic preferences individuals display, the products consumers purchase, the consumption activities people involve in and the ways in which customers consume are all the sites where social stratification happens and cultural capital implicated in. Elite distinction

in consumption field therefore is through the aesthetic capability of understanding the purchased objects (objectified product) and the way of consuming a commodity in a subtle way so that this object can only be consumed by a limited range of audience (Daloz, 2007b, 2010; Holt, 1998; Ilmonen et al., 2010; Friedman, 2005; Gronow, 1997; Henry, 2005).

Bourdieu's opinions met its antithesis from the arguments of the decline of highbrow culture and cultural omnivore, which suggested that contemporary society is no longer structured by dichotomy of highbrow and lowbrow culture and consumers tend to purchase the same product that distinction loses its efficacy (Collins, 2002; Peterson & Kern, 1996). However, many studies offered renaissance of Bourdieu's idea (e.g., Friedman, 2011; Pieur & Savage, 2013; Coulangeon, 2005). These works directed the emphasis onto the way people consume rather than the product people consume, meaning that the rarer distinction comes from embodied tastes of consuming the mass product in an aesthetic way in which only accessible to small group of audience.

To take an example of Bourdieu's distinction, Shipman's (2004, p. 282) illustrated different patterns of consuming popular culture of rock: "millions see world-touring rock bands in concert, but only a subsection self-certifies its ability to grasp the philosophy behind the lyrics, or classical allusions in the tune." Such phenomena may not explicitly be seen as boundaries to divide class, but as an activity to see who admire this kind of art authentically, who follow the mass to love this art because other like, and who find unimpressive and so seeks to avoid. Hence, social stratification happened inconspicuously through consumer's taste.

## **1.2 Research Gap**

Although scant research on the group of ultra-rich, an array of industry reports and informal media coverage are still available. However, industry reports simply put this group into one basket with the taken-for-granted assumption that they exhibit homogeneous behaviors and deploy the same distinction strategy as opposed to mass consumers. In specific to China's HNWI's, it is rather straightforward to conceive from media coverage (e.g., Besser, Hichens, & Christodoulou, 2015; Taylor, 2013; Yang,

2016) that Chinese rich reappears the lifestyle of American Gatsby in parallel with Veblen's pecuniary waste and conspicuous consumption. However, being rich does not necessarily mean being experienced consumers and being rich does not necessarily embrace high cultural capital. Accordingly, buying a positional commodity can be socially instrumental for newly rich, but can also be habit and stand of living for aristocracy. Hence, Bourdieu's framework of habitus offers alternative perspective to study the heterogeneous of the rich group and rethink the traditional stereotype.

Extant academic literature has widely investigated either Veblen's or Bourdieu's framework in consumption field under different themes. For Veblen's conspicuous consumption, studies mainly focus on emulation of consumption (e.g., Üstüner & Holt, 2010; Trigg, 2001; Bowles & Park, 2005); status/prestige motive (e.g., Shavitt et al., 2016; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011); and leisure consumption (e.g., Arrow & Dasgupta, 2009; Rojek, 2000; Frijters & Leigh, 2008). For Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital, emphases are the investigation on forms of cultural capital within certain subcultures of consumption (Kates, 2002; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013); and the topic of how different stocks of cultural capital influence consumers' preferences, choices, and lifestyle construction (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Maciel & Wallendorf, 2016; Moisio, Arnould, & Gentry, 2013; Holt, 1998). However, no effort has been made to empirically and comparatively integrate the two frameworks together to account for the distinction practices in the group of ultra-rich.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1984) argued that cultural capital can only be realized into tastes or practices in a particular field. Moreover, the forms of cultural capital and tastes are relative concepts and in perpetual change, dependent on the specific field and social contexts (Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008). Therefore, any investigation of the form of cultural capital and taste should be framed under specific field. In Bourdieu's generic field of cultural consumption, Highbrow taste normally involves the abstracted, cultured, decommodified and cosmopolitan ways of preferring commodities. It is distant from daily necessity occupied by lower class (e.g., Prieur & Savage, 2011; Holt, 1998; Hedegard, 2015; Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Heikkila &

Rahkonen, 2011; Belk, 2000). Yet, Bourdieu further contended that rather than the generic field of cultural consumption, the rarer distinction is to “apply the principles of a ‘pure’ aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress or decoration, for example” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 40). However, scant studies have operationalized habitus and cultural capital in the field of tourism consumption, the form of highbrow and lowbrow taste remained unexplored.

Bourdieu’s concepts met its antithesis from studies which proposed cultural omnivore (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005; Lizardo, 2005). Studies espousing omnivore taste stated that elite class not only consume highbrow genres of products but appreciate lowbrow genres possessed by lower class. The diversity of tastes is increasing and cultural consumption is no longer hierarchical structured by highbrow and lowbrow tastes, but replaced by omnivorous tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Stepping into a mass tourism era with democratic luxury market, tourism per se is becoming less powerful in directly signifying social differentiations. It is therefore not surprising to find yesterday’s luxury destination like Bali becomes tomorrow’s profane place (Lea, 1993); increasing moneyed elites are trading down to items of working class during travel such as economy class on flight (Hallott, 2013). It is therefore interesting to ask whether tourism field is structured by the dichotomy of highbrow and lowbrow taste and does such dichotomy structure the objectified consumption or embodied consumption.

Finally, extant conceptualizations of the relationship between social class and consumption pattern have been developed and focused on the Western countries. It therefore perhaps poses challenges and difficulties to capture the specificities of taste dynamics in emerging markets (Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Kravets & Sandikci, 2014). Considering China’s national particularities and its ultra-rich’s special traits that they become fabulously rich within a much shorter time span compared to Western society (Forbes, 2016), it is surprising to see limited effort has been made to explore the stratifying practices of China’s rich under but not limited to the tenet of Western theories.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The overall objective of this research is to explore distinction practices of China's ultra-rich. In keeping with this grand purpose and fill the existing literature gaps, it matters to explore the following four questions: (1) what are the objectified forms consecrated by China's rich in tourism consumption? (2) what are the embodied practices exhibited by China's rich in tourism consumption? (3) to what extent does cultural capital account for rich's consumption practices? (4) what are the general distinction practices of the rich group? To answer the research questions, current thesis intends to achieve the following objectives: (1) elaborate the objectified tourism products favored by the rich and identify the potential cleavages within the rich group; (2) describe the embodied consumption practices displayed by the rich and identify the potential cleavages within the rich group; (3) identify the underlying socioeconomic logics informing the organization of different patterns of tourism consumption; and (4) summarize the distinction practices used by the rich and discuss the extent to which Bourdieu's traditions apply in the arena of tourism consumption .

### **1.4 Research Significance**

Currently, no study has examined the signifying consumption practices of China's ultra-rich in tourism field. However, it is of paramount importance to start first from the rich group to predict and comprehend the trend of consumption pattern in one community. In consumer world, wealth is usually objectified and in relation to the mastery of things. Simmel's (1957) trickle-down theory accentuated that novel product is first introduced and adopted by rich people who are regarded as upper social class and then gradually disseminate across the society. "The motive is emulation – the stimulus of an invidious comparison which prompts us to outdo those with whom we are in the habit of classing ourselves" (Veblen, 1899, p. 103). Rich class formulate the standards of status comparison for the rest. The rest individuals who are less affluent tend to emulate the upper social class via imitating rich's fashions. As such, it is not surprising to see how luxury market expand fast to middle class market over the past two decades, the trickle-down emulation of elites in luxury market has been quoted as "mass luxuries" and

“democratization of luxury” in consumer research (Featherstone, 2010, 2013). By understanding the stratifying practices China’s rich occupied in tourism arena, current study enhances the apprehension of future trend of China’s mass tourism.

Bourdieu refused the idea of emulation effect from lower class to upper class, however, he admitted that elite class set the legitimate taste or hegemonic taste in the society. This legitimate taste alludes class differences through cluster effect that individuals with highbrow taste prefer friends and colleagues who possess the same taste (Holt, 1998). In this regard, the exploration of legitimate taste and form of taste in tourism field shed lights on the cluster effect in tourism regarding travel companion about why certain individuals choose to travel together and social tone of destinations where certain group of people want to flock together. Furthermore, as the first attempt to explore the forms of taste in tourism field, present research theoretically revisits and extends Bourdieu’s existing framework in an emerging country.

Additionally, by investigating tourism consumption patterns of the ultra-rich, this article from another perspective contributes to the understandings of luxury tourism market. Being rich does not necessarily mean to involve in luxury travel, mass luxuries are accessible to everyone. To understand the real high-end segment and discern the nuanced patterns of social differentiation under the context of mass tourism, this study will use Bourdieu and Veblen’s frameworks to construct intra-group patterns within China’s rich. Therefore, present research will contribute to existing knowledge on the typologies of luxury travelers and their different distinction practices.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Social stance in a given hierarchical community plays a critical role in shaping consumers' behaviors and preferences. In turn, what has been chosen and practiced by consumers also reinforced their class identities (Bourdieu, 1984; Shavitt, Jiang, & Cho, 2016). Therefore, a thorough understanding of the consumption patterns of China's rich should start from reviewing the coevolving relationship between consumption and social differentiations. Moreover, as theories in consumer research usually posit a contextual approach for a precise explanation (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Üstüner & Holt, 2010), China's special cultural context in relation to its potential factors influencing the rich's consumption behaviors will also be reviewed. As such, this chapter will firstly introduce the representative works concerning social classes and consumption, followed in the second part by an introduction of how the symbolic capital valued by affluent consumers or the symbolic expressions have changed along with social advancement. After the analysis of theoretical works available, the third part will practically present how elite or wealthy people in the world consume in their daily life. And then the key manifestations reviewed in preceding parts will be further applied and discussed in tourism field. Finally, China's special cultural context which may limit behaviors of elites and the application of Western theories in China's context will be identified.

### 2.1 Consumption and Social Differentiations

*In a physical sense we are, still, what we eat, though even staple foods contain increasingly symbolic ingredients. In a cultural sense we are what we wear, hear, see, and otherwise sense or experience.*

--- (Shipman, 2004: 278)

Consumption has been researched by various disciplines with different focuses such as economics, psychology, marketing, sociology and so on. It has long-standing alliances to the discipline of economics from which perspective, consumption is studied to explain economic life by formal rationality of decision-making techniques, demand and supply (Rumbo, 2009). Thereby studies on this tended to be supply-side oriented and

analytically measured aggregate demand to help supply goods to consumers (Slater, 2005; Miller, 1995). Although by pure economic theories, advances have been made to understand how consumption and other factors like economic policy, price and income interrelated (e.g., Galbraith, 1998), it was limited to look at consumption merely through macro level. To understand consumption patterns, there is an observed shift in the marketplace from the privileged producer to the sovereign consumer (Bauman, 1897; Keat 1991). When attention devoted to the consumption practices from consumer side, sociologists started to conceive of consumption as unseparated off from social practices in which they are embedded (Slater, 2005; Rumbo, 2009). As such, sociologists tended to describe consumption as “a general, or even universal term in social analysis. All ongoing social life requires material and symbolic resources in order to reproduce social relations, processes and identities” (Slater, 2005: 175).

Drawing upon the discipline of sociology, consumption is intersected with self-identity, symbolic meaning making, and social stratification (Shipman, 2004; Slater, 2005). It goes beyond a single purchase behavior and involves the understandings of the underlying mechanisms such as who carry out this purchase, how this purchase distinguishes itself from others whilst identifies itself with others within a cultural setting. For instance, how different households prepare food, which family members prepare them, and how and at what time family eat them speak out different household lifestyles and much more than this, speak out in certain degree the reproduction process as different classes of families (Slater, 2005). There are two theoretical premises dominated in sociological analysis of consumption, one is symbolic reproduction of social boundaries which signifies social agent’s pursuit of status through consumption patterns, and the other one is collective consumption which stresses the role of government (Slater, 2005; Shove & Warde, 2002). In the following session, this chapter will mainly focus on the first premise and discuss the representative works relevant to the relationships between consumption and social classes.

The founding father for sociological analysis of consumption is Karl Marx, who linked consumption and social class together and offered theoretical lens to account for the



relationship between use value and exchange value (Rumbo, 2009; Ilmonen, Sulkunen, Rahkonen, Gronow, Noro, & Warde, 2010). There were two classes identified by Marx including working class (labor) and bourgeoisie class (capitalist). The hierarchical strata between two classes were mainly performed in “commodity fetishism” (Carver, 1975: 39). Explained in Marx’s book of Capital, social relations between these two classes were in essence the economic relations of commodities (Ilmonen et al., 2010). Exchange value of commodities overweighed the use value and manipulated the distribution of products and distribution of labor class themselves (Carver, 1975). Thus, social relations in this regard were embedded in consumption field measured by economic resources. In the topic of consumption and social class, Marx’s concept has been widely used in the studies of consumer social status such as Veblen’s leisure class as well as the consumer culture such as critical theorists from Frankfurt School (Rumbo, 2009). However, Marx tended to view this commodity fetishism as relations of objects with non-social relations embedded. The replacement of human-relations with pure object-relations received disputes from later sociologists (Gouldner, 1985).

In addition to materialist link and economic resources remarked by Marx, Max Weber (1978) supplemented that social stratification was also reproduced through life chances and life styles. Social stratum should not only base on economic position (commodity owners in Marx’s case), but also combine non-pecuniary factors including individual’s honor, social prestige, culture, morals and party belongings (Holt, 1998; Tsang, 2010). Interpreted Weber’s approach in the domain of consumption, different classes have different demands and preferences for commodities and capital in marketplace, this leads to different income and material ownership. Then different income and material ownership further generate different life styles and chances. And different life chances again drive differential preferences and demands for products which leads social agents to different access (Tsang, 2010). As such, this interlocking practice explained how consumption is of consequential site for forming social stratification grounded on different life styles rather than economic position in labor market (Holt, 1998). Specifically, Weber noted the shared status among the collectivity of elite group. This

group was connected by their own conventions concerning the appropriation of social, economic and cultural resources. Accordingly, the distinctive lifestyles, cultural preferences and tastes within this group aided their status honor in social structure (DiMaggio, 1982).

Veblen (1899) was the first scholar who introduced the topic of consumption and social strata to America (Holt, 1998) and was regarded as the landmark for providing sociological lens to study consumption (Friedman, 2005). He researched on leisure class in American society and coined the term “conspicuous consumption” which influenced many following scholars who have regarded commodity consumption as way of prestige-seeking (Rumbo, 2009). Based on the analysis of emerging leisure class which is seen as upper class at that time, Veblen characterized this class as rejection to pecuniary labor work while enjoying tremendous wealth and conspicuous consumption. According to Veblen, there were two ways for this class to hallmark their status: “In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods” (Veblen, 1899, p: 85). In this regard, leisure class either waste their free time or engage in wasteful consumption to showcase their status. Social outcomes toward this consumption pattern was that lower class tried to emulate conspicuous consumption of upper class, while upper class explored new consumption goods to secure status (Trigg, 2001). Simmel (1978) added to this outcome by describing trickle-down theory effect that conspicuous consumption passed from top class to lower class, as each class sought to simulate class above. Such as buying status commodities started from upper social echelons, then caught the attention from middle class and finally extended to working class. Consequently, conspicuous consumption can be regarded as a usual struggle for upper echelons to keep prestigious status (Veblen, 1899).

In response to Veblen’s conspicuous consumption, French scholar Bourdieu (1984) replenished prestige consumption by a more nuanced theory looking at agents’ cultural capital. Bourdieu’s model indeed was grounded on Warnerian analysis (Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1949) between lifestyle and social class, though Bourdieu’s presuppositions of consumption pattern as central to social stratum contrasted sharply with Warner’s

functionalist approach (Holt, 1998). Warner conducted anthropological studies in a small town in US and asked informants how they evaluated the reputation of residents in this town. It was found that the evaluation criteria and class hierarchy in one community were based on a wide range of factors including moral, ethnic, education, community judgment, religion, consumption patterns (Warner et al., 1949). Among these criteria, consumption patterns worked as the most potent judgment for social position in one community. To some extent, Warner supported Weber's opinion that class stratum should be measured by multifaceted combination. Yet, Warner researched on relational understandings of reputation hierarchy and failed to point out how consumption patterns specifically contributed to social stratification (Holt, 1997, 1998). Nevertheless, Warner's methodology relied largely on subjective design and ignored the objective social realities. How to ensure informants being equally class conscious and replicate status system developed in small community to large cities seemed to be unanswered by Warner (Daloz, 2010).

It was Bourdieu broached the mechanism, between structuralism (objectivism) and social agents (subjectivism) on social patterning of consumption practices, supplemented both Veblen and Warner's conceptions (Daloz, 2010). Bourdieu (1984) argued that consumption was a particular field where status game performed. Downplaying the material scarcity which advocated by Veblen, Bourdieu accentuated social prestige was reproduced in a relatively unconscious way of consuming goods aesthetically and distinctively. It was therefore internalized by social agents' habitus and dispositions. Critical to this process is individuals' accumulation of cultural capital embodied in consumption practices. Suggested by Bourdieu, cultural capital can be manifested in three types: embodied cultural capital in the form of individuals' disposition, objectified cultural capital represented by cultural commodities and institutionalized cultural forms in the form of education qualifications. Individuals who possess same amount and same structure of types of capital (totally three types including cultural capital, economic capital and social capital) usually exhibit "similar dispositions and interests, and thus producing similar practices and adopting similar

stances” (p. 231). Bourdieu mainly emphasized on cultural capital and economic capital in his book of *Distinction*, and argued that in consumption field, different compositions of cultural capital and economic capital will result in different practices. Although criticisms have been made about Bourdieu’s conception, it is still recognized as “the most comprehensive and influential attempt to develop a theoretical framework to plumb the social patterning of consumption” (Holt, 1998: 2).

Notwithstanding the above arguments about consumption served as consequential domain for social stratum, there are also scholars in another vein buttressed that there is decreasing potency of consumption practices which shape social classification. For example, critical theorists from Neo-Marxist perspectives such as Frankfurt School suggested that late capitalist society is typified by mass cultural production and mass consumption. This mass production obscured class boundaries that different classes of consumers tended to consume same products. Consumers from different classes were regarded as passive receptacles to mass media and trained to be indifferent to the brand differences (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). Additionally, several postmodernists also questioned the weakening link between consumption and social reproduction (Featherstone, 2007; Kelnler, 1989). Rather than inferring mass production disguise social stratum, they assumed it is postmodern culture abated traditional social structures. Consumption in postmodern culture should not be simply understood as consuming for the utility value, but for the various signs (Featherstone, 2007). Consumers were therefore regarded as exposed to free-floating signs in consumption field and they construct themselves by any signifiers they find pleasurable.

Review of above seminal works indicated how different scholars view the relationship between consumption and social differentiation from various aspects. It is found that way of capitalizing on consumption to showcase social distinction varied according to schools of social analysis and cultural contexts. Despite the noticeable variety of stances each framework employed, relevant theoretical perspectives can be observed in the literature pertinent to symbolic expressions including material symbols (e.g., Marx’s commodity fetishism; Veblen’s conspicuous waste; Bourdieu’s cultural

commodities) and embodied symbols (e.g., Weber's lifestyles; Bourdieu's habitus). To further explain the changing characters of consumption pattern, it matters to critically discuss the changes of emphasis in extent literature. Although pioneers reviewed above all examined the relationship between social differentiation and consumption either as main theme or subsidiary theme, analytical frameworks offered by Veblen and Bourdieu focused more on the topic of elite distinction (Daloz, 2007b). Next section therefore will specifically compare the theoretical contributions that Veblen and Bourdieu had made and discuss the observed shift of consumption pattern from Veblen's day to Bourdieu modern times.

## **2.2 Distinction: Symbolic Shift in Consumption Pattern**

*Jay Gatsby wants to live with Daisy Buchanan because she is a member of the established American aristocracy of wealth. Gatsby lacks the maturity to realize that Daisy cannot be obtained by money alone and in a vulgar display of conspicuous consumption, he flaunts his nouveau wealth.*

--- (Canterbery, 1999: 298)

### **2.2.1 Veblen's tradition of conspicuous consumption**

Written one hundred years ago in American society, Veblen (1899) posited in his Theory of the Leisure Class that there was an evolution of wealthy population who were relieved from peculiarly job while controlled the social surplus produced by working class. US society at that period was undergoing the transition to mass consumption, and started to produce social surplus (VomBruck, 2005). It was under this condition that "leisure class" emerged along with accumulation of personal wealth. "It becomes indispensable to accumulate, to acquire property, in order to retain one's good name" (Veblen, 1899: 29).

The accumulation of wealth inevitably led to social hierarchy between individuals who own property and who do not. Within the population of whose member owned property, there were two groups identified by Veblen. One group was the long-established aristocratic families who inherited the old money over centuries, and the other group

was the nouveaux rich who had accumulated property through efficient production newly. Veblen believed that wealth per se of the old aristocratic was more honorific than new wealth gained through efficiency. Then how to transform the newly-gained property into social status became a critical issue for the nouveaux rich (leisure class).

In order to transform personal wealth into social positions, leisure class must be putting their wealth on display for other members in society to recognize. Veblen argued two approaches that leisure class leveraged to signal their wealth conspicuously: partaking in exclusive leisure activities by a waste of time and partaking in ostentatious consumption by a waste of money. Both of the two ways were regarded as the most commonly wasteful activities initiated by leisure class: “the element of waste that is common to both... In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods.” (Veblen, 1899: 85).

Alongside the development of society, community became more diverse and society became more mobile. Veblen analyzed that under a highly-mobile society, people tended to be less informed about the leisure activities participated by others. Additionally, few people from leisure class has the independent opportunities to be fully immersed in leisure activities without any productive value. Therefore, Veblen remarked that in a fast-paced society, conspicuous consumption would precede ostentatious leisure activities to showcase one’s social status.

Recognized by Veblen, conspicuous consumption in particularly referred to the phenomenon that people purchase luxury goods and services excessively to advertise their privileged social status. On one hand, expensive goods and services usually had limited accesses for working class to acquire, which created exclusiveness for leisure class. On the other hand, leisure class downplayed the practical value of goods while waste money extravagantly as “a mark of prowess and perquisite of human dignity” (Veblen, 1899: 69). One example provided by Veblen in his book was women’s clothing. Rich women identified in Veblen’s time period worn uncomfortable and over-adorned clothes to flaunt they were relieved from necessary work and indebted to the man. As described by Veblen: “the high heel, the skirt, the impracticable bonnet, the corset, and

the general disregard of the wearer's comfort" (p. 181).

After Veblen's writing, the discussion of his conspicuous consumption is never ending. It has been widely applied to various disciplines. In consumer research, conspicuous consumption is mainly used for three themes: emulation of consumption (e.g., Üstüner & Holt, 2010; Trigg, 2001; Bowles & Park, 2005); status/prestige motive (e.g., Shavitt et al., 2016; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011); and leisure consumption (e.g., Arrow & Dasgupta, 2009; Rojek, 2000; Frijters & Leigh, 2008). The first theme emphasized that each class sought to imitate the consumption behavior established by class above. For example, Üstüner and Holt (2010) found that there was even global emulation effect that upper class woman in Turkey emulate lifestyles of American as way of showing status. While second theme referred to studies using Veblen's theory to explain prestige as a main motivation for consumers to purchase certain products. For instance, individuals who wore clothes with a logo of famous brand received more support from others when they asked for help (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Finally, the last theme accentuated leisure consumption in modern times. Rojek (2000) suggested that the rich in contemporary indeed worked longer hours and invested less time on leisure activities than common people.

In the wake of Veblen's contribution, several scholars also indicated the decreasing potency of conspicuous consumption due to the considerable changes happened in consumption field since Veblen's day. It was suggested that simply ostentatious expenditure no longer distinguish rich from middle class as increasing people are getting affluent and capable of purchasing a broader range of commodities (Canterbery, 1998; Mason, 1998; Shipman, 2004). "The middle class could now emulate the rich in dress and even in automobiles, especially as the rich downsized to Volvos" (Canterbery, 1998: 148). Taking this critique one step further, it has also been found that the wealthy changed their way in viewing consumption and shift into a less ostentatious yet more sophisticated ways (Trigg, 2001; Shipman, 2004).

Shipman (2004) described specifically the dynamic process of how the rich shifted battle from conspicuous ground onto a subtly conspicuous ground. According to Shipman, when new fortune entered into a new ladder of social hierarchy, there was

always mismatch between economic position and prestige position. Newly acquired wealth offered them high economic position but not necessarily high social recognition. When aristocrat's manner and graces took time to learn, it was the "conspicuous waste" the shortest cut to show social sanding. "Those who got rich quick have an understandably low tolerance for the time and tuition needed to gain cultural accomplishment. So they aim to let the depth of pocket prevail over depth of discernment" (Shipman, 2004: 279). By contrast, the long-established rich tried equally hard to maintain new criteria of distinction by capitalizing on cultural attachment to the products and distancing to daily necessity. Shipman (2004) referred to this symbolic shift as "conspicuous taste", which was regarded as a more abstract and sophisticated means of distinction.

If Shipman's explanation towards the struggles of old rich as "conspicuous taste" still stayed at the external level (e.g., cultural product) and deliberate level (e.g., conspicuous taste), then Elias's studies of the nurtured superior manners from the nobility offered another endeavor to account for how noble class deployed subtle strategies of distinction in royal court. Elias (1978) as well as his subsequent writings suggested that courtly elites initiated and played a key role in the process of social civilization. The internalized cultivation of manners, elegance, etiquette as well as sexual selection from the aristocratic members differentiated themselves from other social classes, and set the standards for the lower strata. These subtle representations and ritual changes in royal court advanced the holistic level of social civilization in European societies. Though Elias's examination was limited to court life, his introduction of embodied practice by upper class provided an illuminating foundation for following studies on the dynamics of social differentiation (Dalzo, 2010). For instance, similarities were found in Bourdieu's work of structural-agency approach and the development of habitus on social distinction. Albeit Bourdieu set forth from a different starting point, similar explanations were reached with Elias's embodied manners and Shipman's cultural products.



### **2.2.2 Bourdieu's Habitus: Symbolic shift in conspicuous consumption**

The theoretical background of “taste” was empirically developed by Bourdieu (1984), who offered a contemporary version of a subtler and sophisticated consumption that build upon Veblen's writings. Different from physiological sense of taste, taste in Bourdieu's analysis referred to the aesthetic judgement. In the Critique of the Power of Judgement, Kant (Kant, Guyer, & Matthews, 2000) was the first to holistically analyze the aesthetic judgement of taste and believed that the unbiased taste should be purely subjective without considering any needs and interests (Goodman, 2011). As some ironic commentary on Kant's pure aesthetics, Bourdieu conceived of taste as socially embedded and worked interactively between subjectivity (habitus in Bourdieu's analysis) and environment (field in Bourdieu's analysis). The definition of taste offered by Bourdieu (1984: 173) is “the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices”.

Taste, in Bourdieu's case, was therefore a socially constructed weapon that marks off the high culture from low culture in regard of various fields including food, vacations, clothing, home décor, reading and so on. Different class owned different level of tastes which was structured by dispositions or habitus. As such, a set of concepts including tastes, habitus, cultural capital and field in his main body of work arise. Habitus can be generally regarded as individuals' dispositions and one of its consequences is the formation of different levels of tastes. For example, based on different social positions that individuals were born, they will develop different aspirations and pick up different habits. Those born from working class may be largely influenced by lifestyles of working class and believe they will in large extent still remain in working class. This disposition is then externalized into daily preferences and practices which can be called as the taste of working class (Dumais, 2002). In particular, Bourdieu (1990: 53) referred to this disposition as “habitus” that usually worked below personal consciousness:

*“system of durable, transposable dispositions...as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their*

*outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”*

By this definition, habitus was mainly produced by agents' social positions. It was deemed as the internalization of social structure to determine the possibilities as well as impossibilities in one's life and guide the lifelong development of aspirations and demeanor. Different classes were cultivated with different habitus and therefore exhibited different external practices. Veblen may deal with conspicuous consumption as a consciously showing-off behavior while Bourdieu tended to believe the signals sent by different classes were unconsciously as they learnt from different dispositions since early childhood (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Dumais, 2002). However, the class-specific habitus were indeed not a static concept, but an evolving notion that grounded upon the amount and composition of varied capitals that individuals possessed in a given field. Bourdieu argued that the game of social status stemmed from three types of capitals: social capital, economic capital and cultural capital. These three types of capital can be transformed among each other and gained at both early childhood and later life stage. Different from economic capital and social capital, cultural capital was perceived as more difficult to access and played a crucial role in Bourdieu's framework of how social agents gain social status and enact the practices of distinction.

The argument of cultural capital was reminiscent of Douglas and Isherwood (1980)'s work that there were three types of productions: primary goods pertinent to daily necessities such as food, secondary products including capital goods and tertiary goods like culture and information. The lower level of social classes normally invested more on lower levels of productions whilst upper classes reversely were more associated with the tertiary layers. In this regard, distinction was achieved by the spheres of production and echoed Bourdieu's assertion that cultural capital defined the social status on a large extent (Friedman, 2005). Though the notion of cultural capital is the main component in Bourdieu's analysis, yet, unlike the concept of habitus and taste, Bourdieu did not offer the formal definition for cultural capital (Dumais, 2002; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Priour & Savage, 2013). Initially the concept of cultural capital was used by Bourdieu

in his inchoate works (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) in education field to account for the reproduction strategy of educated families (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Prieur et al., 2008). It was suggested that students with educated parents had a higher success rates in school as they can not only get help from parents, but more importantly have the advantage of familiarity with legitimate culture like classical music and highbrow arts. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979: 17) termed this advantage into two aspects including students' direct "habits, skills, and attitudes" as well as indirect "know-how, tastes" received from educated family.

Bourdieu rephrased these habits, skills and tastes into cultural capital in his following works and applied this concept into a broader spectrum to the whole of society differentiation in the book of *Distinction* (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Prieur et al., 2008). In these studies, Bourdieu nevertheless offered the specific definition of cultural capitals. However, Bourdieu explicitly pointed out the three forms that cultural capital represented: there is embodied cultural capital that internalized in individuals' "long lasting dispositions of the mind and the body" (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). This form indeed reflected social agents' preliminary habitus and judgmental practices and therefore gained mostly from upbringing. The second form is objectified cultural capital that in the form of cultural products such as musical instruments or arts collection. These cultural goods indicated individuals' dispositions and ability to appreciate high culture. The last form is institutionalized cultural capital which acquired by official diploma or degrees.

In line with the above three forms of cultural capital, Holt (1998) summarized that cultural elites normally lived in the social milieu as following: growing up in a family with well-educated parents who worked in industries that require high level of cultural skills, attending famous institutions that stressed abstract thinking and communicating with other cultural elites, and finally refined in occupations which required cultural skills and competence. It is argued that Bourdieu did not provide unified concept of cultural capital on purpose as he left it open for linking it to different fields at different contexts (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Prieur et al., 2008). To be more specific, he mentioned

the represented forms and measurement of cultural capital (measured by father's occupation, father's educational level and subject's educational level on the book of Distinction), but did not limited the unified attributes of cultural capital to any single culture. In Distinction, the attributes of cultural capital ranged from knowledge and preferences for musical works, books, and furniture etc. In the view of Lareau and Weininger's summary (2003: 567), cultural capital is a resource "that provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next".

The core of cultural capital is thus a type of symbolic resources provided for individuals at the primary socialization (primary habitus) or later socialization via education (Lizardo, 2008; Friedman, 2011). By integrating individuals' resources (types of capital) and the orientation that individuals have toward using those resources can the specific practices or tastes be formed (Dumais, 2002). However, cultural capital as a type of resources can only be realized into tastes or practices in particular fields which existed in distinctive format whilst overlapped with each other. The various fields identified by Bourdieu included art, politics, business, education, religion and so on. Specifically, definition of field refers to a "network or configuration of objective relations between [social] positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 99). Different fields are organized under different rules, practices, norms and patterns, which structure the social agents into dominant players and subordinated players. This in-field class division is still based on distribution of compositions and volume of capital (Allen & Anderson, 1994; Dumais, 2002). The field analysis has been applied to academic practice into various levels. First level is the macro system including the field of consumption and the field of cultural production; second level involves specific organizational field ranging from the field of education, the academic field and the medical field; and the last level refers to some physical space like museum, home decoration and art gallery (Üstüner & Thompson, 2012). As mentioned by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), "the boundaries of the field can only be determined by empirical investigation". Accordingly, the important point in analyzing a given field is not mapping out its boundary but

delineating the relational positions of social actors that shaped by valued forms of capital (Swartz, 2012).

The consumption field is also one of most important fields where cultural capital enacted. In consumption field, habitus structured consumers' preferences of acquiring objects that were consecrated in the field while disinterested objects that were profaned in the field. This process reflected a symbolic hierarchy that reinforced upper class's distance from other members in society (Allen & Anderson, 1994). When translated the structuring capabilities of habitus into consumption field, it was manifested by consumers' taste and consumption practices. Additionally, tastes can be divided into objectified taste like consuming fine art and embodied taste such as the sophisticated way to appreciate a commodity.

In consumption field, different from Veblen who underlined the material rarity as the maker of status, Bourdieu in another vein accentuated the interrelationship of cultural capital, habitus and tastes on two points (See Figure 1). Firstly, status can be obtained through the objectified taste. In this relation, it seems similar with Veblen that object can signify social status. However, in Bourdieu's analysis, the status symbol was not elicited from material scarcity but from the implied cultural capability of understanding the purchased objects. Secondly, Bourdieu put forward the embodied taste which is below the level of consciousness. Downplaying the conspicuous display of material goods, this argument revolved around how consumers consume a commodity in an exclusive and subtle way so that this object can only be consumed and fully appreciated by a limited range of audience. Significantly, the status symbol in this regard came from consumers' action. Consequently, Bourdieu's analysis offered us different rules for the status competition than that of Veblen. This study can observe a symbolic shift from Veblen's materiality competition to Bourdieu's tastes competition. The latter stressed that the competition was not a conscious behavior but an unintended result of the expression of cultural capital through consumption practices and cultural objects (Daloz, 2007b, 2010; Holt, 1998; Ilmonen et al., 2010; Friedman, 2005; Gronow, 1997). Many studies in consumer research have leveraged Bourdieu's work of cultural capital as the theoretical underpinnings to explain how individuals' consumption can be

structured by social-cultural aspects (e.g, Arsel & Bean, 2013; Maciel & Wallendorf, 2016; Moisiso, Arnould, & Gentry, 2013; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). Particularly, the application of Bourdieu's theory in consumer research can be divided into two streams: first is the investigation on forms of cultural capital within certain subcultures of consumption like Kates' (2002) research on subculture of gay consumers and Coskuner-Balli and Thompson's (2013) study of consumption practices on subculture of at-home fathers; and second stream concerns how different stocks of cultural capital influence consumers' preferences, choices, and lifestyle construction (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Maciel & Wallendorf, 2016; Moisiso, Arnould, & Gentry, 2013; Holt, 1998).

Several studies also specifically looked at new elite taste (Friedman, Savage, & Hanquinet, 2015; Savage et al., 2013; Mears, 2015; Prieur & Savage, 28) to respond to the dramatic emergence of new wealth brought by global economic changes in last 30 years. It has been argued that elite group in Britain tended to be not only wealthy in economic capital, but also exhibited highbrow tastes. They were mainly from the occupation of CEO; IT, marketing and sales directors; consultant managers; financial managers; lawyers and doctors. Moreover, most of them were coming from the south east of England and graduated from world famous universities. For this group, the conspicuous display of commodities appeared irrelevant and they became more tolerant for the emerging cultural capital (Savage et al., 2013). Additionally, another study by Mears (2015) who studied elites from a global VIP club found that their special distinction was through appreciating women's bodies to send signals of status and further using girls' capital to gain more economic and social capital.

Despite the above applications of Bourdieu's framework, many scholars meanwhile criticized its analysis. Refutations were mainly from two aspects which challenged the applicability of habitus as the marker of class stratifications. The first critique argued the decline of highbrow tastes. According to the study of Collins (2002), cultural industry in current days has destroyed the traditional boundary between high cultural products and low cultural products. The technology advancement (Savage, 2010; Bell,

1996) as well as mass production of commodities (Jameson, 1991; Baumann, 2001) have led to the highbrow cultural products valued in Bourdieu times no longer precious in contemporary world. Digital communication facilitated the sharing of the diversified cultures and goods. The previous esoteric form of commodities can be widely advocated to different classes by TV and social media (Prieur & Savage, 2013). Furthermore, along with the democratization of highbrow commodities, many types of mass culture like comic, jazz and rock music have gained its favorability in market and were appreciated in an aestheticized way (Baumann, 2001; Friedman, 2011). Bennett et al. (2009) for example suggested the elite class which signified as the professional-executive class in his book, exhibited “the more or less total elimination of hints of snobbishness or expressions of condescension towards other social classes accompanying a greater attachment to popular culture” (p. 232). Friedman (2005) also stated that the dynamic of classificatory mechanism in capitalism society was more than a static dichotomy of high and low cultural products. Increasing executives come to formal offices wearing jeans and casual clothes. It is not because they had lowbrow tastes, yet fashion is continuously changing in modern times.

Another argument challenged Bourdieu’s analysis was the culture omnivore proposed by Peterson and Kern (1996). They took music as the study background and revealed that elite class not only consume highbrow genres of music like opera and classical music but simultaneously appreciate low genres of music. This attitude of embracing both highbrow cultural forms and lowbrow cultural forms was defined as cultural omnivore. Several studies applied the concept of omnivorous into different cultural contexts and espousing Peterson and Kern (1996) from different perspectives (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005; Lizardo, 2005). For instance, Lizardo (2005) applied it into Spanish context and argued that respondents with a cosmopolitan identification were more inclined to be omnivore than that with identification specific to Spanish or European.

However, some studies added nuances to the above refutations and recovered Bourdieu’s framework from its oppositions. Using survey data on consumption of cultural activities in Danish context, Prieur et al. (2008) applied the same analytical

approach that Bourdieu used in his book (multiple correspondence analysis) to conceive the space lifestyle of 1174 respondents. Findings supported Bourdieu's priori standpoint that there is high association between amount of capital (economic capital + cultural capital), capital structure (weight of the two) and cultural consumption. Cultural distinction in terms of different preferences and participation for various cultural activities did exist in Denmark. More particularly, this study rejected the view of cultural omnivorousness and offered renaissance of Bourdieu's analysis of taste. It was accentuated that taste is in perpetual change and the form of cultural capital is dependent on social contexts. The distaste of cultural activities participated by other classes was equally important to distinction in Bourdieu's analysis. Accordingly, this study investigated omnivorousness from the perspectives of not only what respondents selected but also what they rejected. By this approach, the results indicated that high cultural participations went together with distastes for low cultural participations. And cultural omnivorousness became futile in this study.

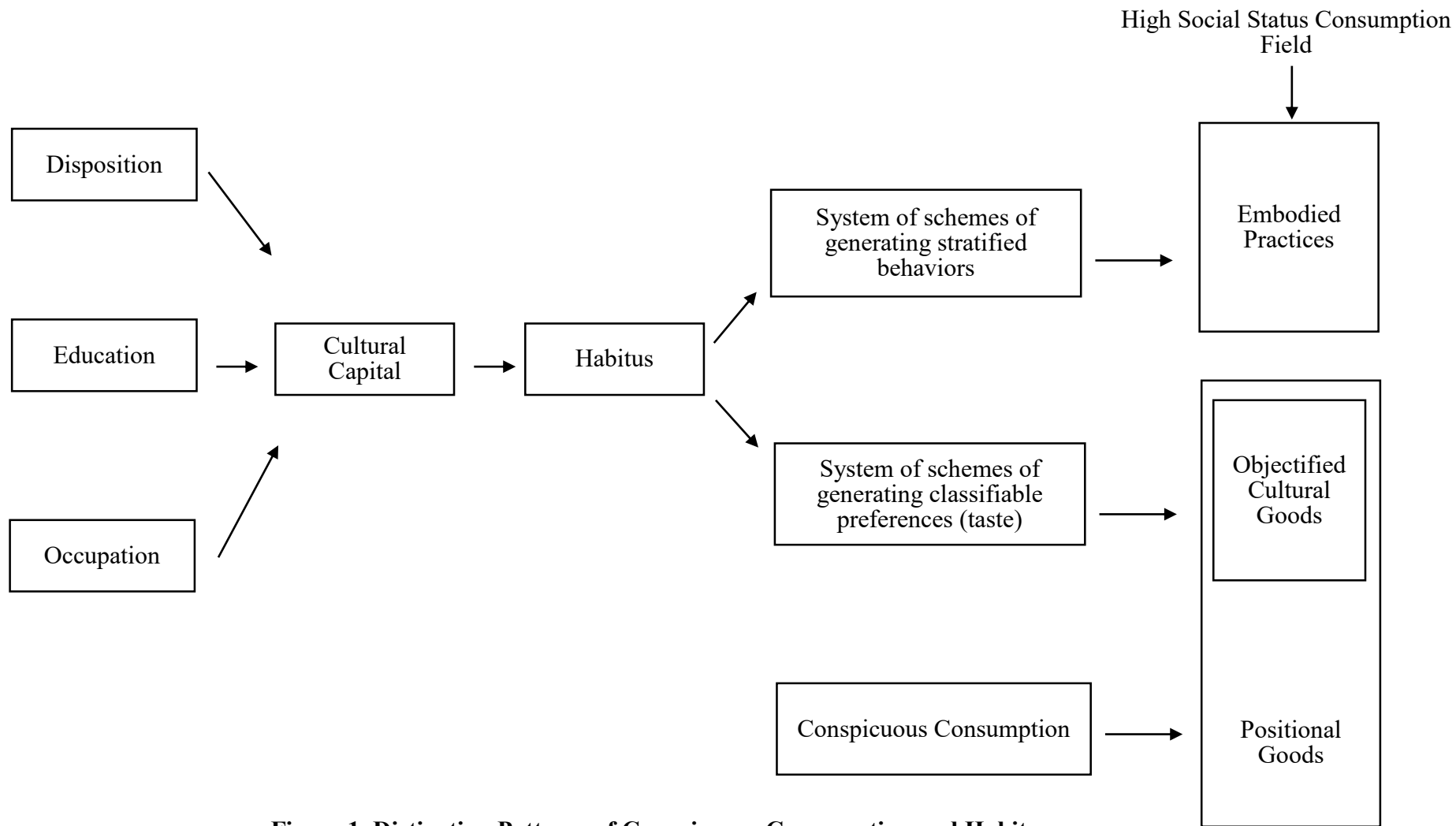
Another project conducted in UK (Friedman, 2005) applied Bourdieu's framework in the field of British comedy which is considered as lowbrow art in early days. Using same methods (multiple correspondence analysis and in-depth interviews) with *Distinction*, it was argued that British comedy was becoming more legitimated than early times. Unlike other fields, the distinction in this field came more through the expression of comic appreciation or disinterest in certain comic products and less through consumption of settled genres of comic. In short, even people were interested on same comic, they may show different styles of appreciation and understanding. It is embodied cultural capital rather than objected cultural capital matters in distinction of comic field.

In brief, recent studies which supported Bourdieu's analysis consented to the opinion that cultural capital is not a fixed but floating concept. What identified as highbrow cultural genres in Bourdieu's time may lose its efficacy in advanced capitalist. The preference for avant-garde poetry, for instance, in Bourdieu's days was always linked to highbrow culture as it required specific literary knowledge of history and poetry.



However, in modern times the avant-garde poetry may already become common material in text book. Even different society like China may exist without French avant-garde poetry (Prieur et al., 2008). This does not necessarily mean habitus or cultural capital cannot play crucial role in signifying class differences, but indicates that there are not universal signs to represent cultural capital across societies and contexts. Likewise, no longer easily classified by which cultural objects consumed in consumption field, social stratification becomes relevant in contemporary society as a matter of embodied tastes (Friedman, 2011; Pieur & Savage, 2013; Coulangeon, 2005). To be specific, distinction in contemporary consumer society comes from how and for what people consume not what objects people consume. “For fields in which there is great overlap in the objects consumed, to consume in a rare, distinguished manner requires that one consume the same categories in a manner inaccessible to those with less cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984: 282).

To summarize Bourdieu’s analysis, the research objective of his book *Distinction* (1984) can be recapped: “determine how the cultivated dispositions and cultural competence that are revealed in the nature of the cultural goods consumed, and in the way they are consumed, vary according to the category of agents and the area to which they applied” (p. 13). Bourdieu was indeed conservative towards paradigm change and therefore failed to identify how popular culture in contemporary world worked as a means of distinction (Friedman, 2011). It has been thirty years since his work of *Distinction*, how the good taste and bad taste are manifested in consumption field in this advanced society considering cultural capital and taste are relational concepts? In order to account for the inflections in modern eras, it is necessary to apply and update his habitus in different fields (Prior, 2005). As such, the following sections will firstly in particular compare Veblen and Bourdieu’s frameworks to the consumption patterns of modern rich group to discern the potential manifestations of good taste and bad taste. Then the focus will shift onto the field of tourism consumption with the investigation of the consecrated products valued by the group of rich and more importantly, the way how group of rich consume the products.



**Figure 1. Distinction Patterns of Conspicuous Consumption and Habitus**  
*(This figure is adapted from Bourdieu and summarized by the researcher based on literature)*

## 2.3 Consumption Patterns of the Rich Worldwide – Good Taste? Bad Taste?

*I got an invitation from Adnan Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian and a billionaire at that time, to come to his apartment...I was impressed by the huge size of its rooms. Specifically, it had the biggest living room I'd ever seen...Why shouldn't I have exactly the apartment I wanted?...I decided to take over one of the other apartments...It had taken almost two years to renovate, but I don't believe there is any apartment anywhere in the world that can touch it.*

--- (Trump & Schwartz, 2009: 125)

*written in Donald Trump's autobiography of his fascination for the acquisition of biggest apartment reserved on top of Trump Tower*

The last twenty years have witnessed a dramatic rise of super-rich not only in old capitalist countries such as Britain and United States which enacted neo-liberalism since 1980s, but also emerging countries like Russia and China which embraced economic reforms like privation of state-owned assets since the end of 1980s (Savage & Williams, 2008). One example cited by Atkinson (2003) is that top five percent of citizens in US and UK have almost increased twofold in their total share of national income. Besides income, another essential feature towards wealth accumulation is that the richest leverage financial market to fully exploit capital and resources. The macro financial environment in current global economy such as investments and tax solutions are in favor for those who are already rich and therefore, to be even more rich continuously (Featherstone, 2013). Accordingly, dramatic rise of wealth brings the super rich with various possibilities to customize their lifestyles and consumption patterns. The most direct consequence bestowed by wealth is the capability of sampling a vast array of materials including luxuries, residences, yachts, limousine, private jets and so on. More notably, high economic capital on the other hand indirectly opens up the potential possibilities of the construction for positive lifestyles and status transformation. However, how should this group be defined? Whether personal wealth better segment buyer behaviors? The relationship of personal wealth versus social class worth further attention before the investigation on the heterogeneity of consumption

patterns of the rich group. Only by clearly locating the rich and explicitly understanding the underpinning mechanism for in-group classifications, can the research apply both Veblen's and Bourdieu's frameworks precisely.

### **2.3.1 Locating the rich, is ultra-rich a social class?**

Working as the crucial behavioral indicator, social class played a significant role in consumption choices. Finding of a cross-section study in Houston, Dayton and Rochester showed that 55% of lower American classes and 45% of the working class lived within a linear mile of where their relatives resided. And only 19% of middle class and 12% of upper class lived in same physical distance among their kin (Coleman, 1977, as cited in Coleman, 1983). Accordingly, social class can produce their own cultures, lifestyles and even structure marriage choices (Gilbert & Kahl, 1982).

The definition of social class has been researched by different phases and contexts. According to Savage and his colleague (2013), the first phase in UK was introduced since the beginning of 19 centuries and refined in 1980s by Registrar General's Class schema (CeLSIUS, 2017). This class schema was mainly based on occupation with a six-layer divisions (Szreter, 1984). However, this occupation-based approach has been criticized by the second phase. On the second phase, representative class schema of Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) was developed not only upon criterion of occupational categories, but also other evidence such as sources and levels of income, income security, career prospects, and relative location within a given authority system (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992). Accordingly, EGP is a sevenfold model with the top two layers labelled as "service class", bottom three levels as "working class" and the rest middle levels as "intermediate" (NTNU, 2005). The second phase in UK echoed Coleman, Rainwater and McClelland's (1978) class hierarchy in US that national class system was a richly textured concept involving education, income, occupation, social skills, recreational habits and other relevant reputational indicators. In Coleman-Rainwater's structure, US society was ranked into seven classes from "upper upper" Americans to "real lower-lower" Americans.

The third phase in UK is the revisit stage of class categories by embracing Bourdieu's

concept of types of capitals including cultural capital, economic capital and social capital (Savage et al., 2013). Class divisions are therefore constructed between people with various amount and combination of these three capitals. By analyzing the national class survey collaborated with BBC in UK, Savage and his colleague together identified a sevenfold class model by measuring each type of capital. The top echelon from their study is the elite class with highest amount of economic capital, highbrow cultural capital and high social capital. While the bottom echelon is defined as the precariat class with lowest scores on every criterion.

Though different phases for class categories listed above carry different measures, the general class indicators reveal that social class is a multi-dimensional concept. By simply referring to one single shared trait from one group, this group can never be considered as a distinct social class. Even economic status is central to class hierarchy across different societies, it is not the absolute and that of other factors like education and behavioral standards are also considered as differentiating factors. Take blue-collar workers as example, they earned more than white-collar workers in early twentieth century in US, whereas their social positions were never above white-collar workers. Likewise, new wealth from lower-upper class may show off pocket to decide which house to occupy, but upper-upper class of the same income can decide neighborhood choices and more “properly” addressed (Coleman, 1983). Furthermore, it can also be reflected on the case of gentrification where economic elites enhanced their property zones by adding cultural or historical designs. This is the way how cultural capital can be of use to protect economic capital (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990).

Accordingly, high economic capital does not necessarily mean high cultural capital nor high social capital, group of ultra-rich abundant in economic capital cannot be defined as a distinct social class. In contrast, group of ultra-rich people should be regarded as a consumer collectivity. According to Holt (1997), consumer collectivity refers to “groups of people who have been socialized in similar conditions...are embedded in similar social relations...one important characteristic of collectivities, then, is that membership in not necessarily a conscious phenomenon” (p. 326). Two prominent

characteristics about collectivity include its lack of strict structure and its unconscious formation on similar social conditions and relations (Kadirov & Triveni, 2010). Ultra-rich group tend to be one consumer collectivity since firstly they are not formed consciously and structured strictly; secondly they own same level of wealth and treated by other social groups and mass media similarly with the perception of consuming in higher social status field.

The classification of ultra-rich as a collectivity rather than a distinct social class provide a provisional basis for the necessary intra-group stratifications. Although significant media coverage and academic studies indicate that members in group of ultra-rich are homologous, with members exhibiting different compositions of capitals, there is still cleavages within group, particularly in regard to consumption field. According to Bourdieu (1984), social stratification on the basis of symbolic capital is vertically oriented and therefore, the common movement that social agents seek for is upward direction which indicates a rising in social ladders. Different classes are competing with each other to struggle for enhancing the amount of cultural capital and increasing the legitimacy of the specific forms of capital they dominated. Applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus and types of resources into a dynamic milieu of social movement, McCracken (2008) argued that each individual was already born with a primary habitus or primary socialization which unconsciously guides daily choices as class maker. For those who have a primary habitus of high social stance (e.g., born in an elite family), the preferences and practices guided by dispositions may support their primary socialization (Castilhos & Fonseca, 2016); whereas for those who have a primary habitus of lower social standing (e.g., born in a farmer's family), later life can offer them chances to develop secondary habitus which challenges their primary habitus (Saatcioglu & Ozanne, 2013; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013; Castilhos & Fonseca, 2016). Consequently, habitus is an evolving concept that can be shaped at both childhood and adulthood (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Üstüner & Holt, 2007, 2010).

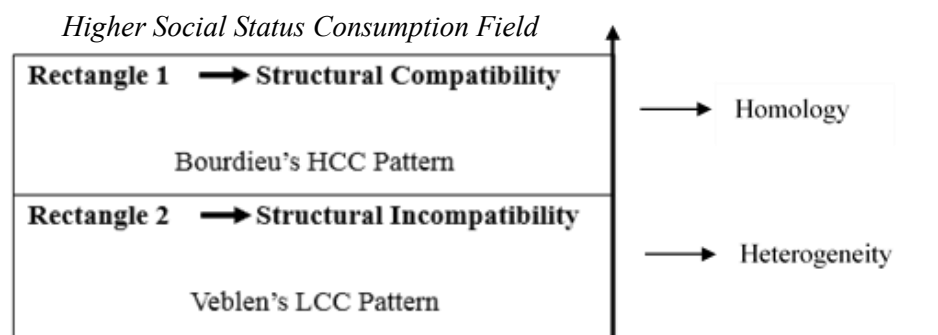
### **2.3.2 Intra-group stratification of rich's consumption pattern**

The classification of ultra-rich as a collectivity provides the basis for intra-group fractions. Moreover, the comparison of primary habitus and secondary habitus offers this article a more aggregative way of applying both Veblen's conspicuous pattern and Bourdieu's habitus pattern as a whole into the consumption field of ultra-rich. The constant struggle among the attainment of types and amount of capital to enhance social position is significantly important for social reproduction. As reviewed in section 2.2, these struggles over tastes in consumption realm is manifested by consumers' taken-for-granted preferences and practices about the appropriateness of his tastes on food, decoration, art etc. This in turn reinforced their social disposition. In particular, interests/disinterests, choices and consumption practices presented by high cultural capital consumers (HCC) are compatible with their primary socialization (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refers to this compatibility as homology where the HCCs, for instance, work as creative professionals in industry with cultural attachment; live in a gentrified area with surroundings such as exclusive neighbors, upscale restaurants and art galleries; and mingle in cosmopolitan milieu like prestigious club and privileged leisure fields (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). Even though purchasing the same product which wealthy low cultural capital consumers (LCC) bought, HCC may exhibit a sophisticated way to consume it. In such cases, what do HCC did in consumption field serve to buttress their primary or original habitus (see upper rectangle of homology in Figure 2).

However, habitus, as unpacked above, is an evolving and dynamic concept that many forms of disruption may happen for individuals to foster second habitus. Extant research may not directly explain the forces that urge the upward self-transformation, but implicitly accounted for the reasons that social agents may formulate second habitus to compete with predisposition. For example, Bourdieu suggested that people lived through previous colonial occupation may need to pursue new status which is incompatible with primary dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). And consumers may also utilize the new resources in marketplace to construct the desired social standing such as Holt and Thompson (2004)'s study on

how middle-class American men use creative sports to construct themselves as man-of-action model in daily consumption to avoid their generative disposition as breadwinner or rebel. Furthermore, consumer acculturation (Luedicke, Thompson, & Giesler, 2010) and enhancement of conversion rate from economic and social capital (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013) have also been identified as the reasons creating the incompatibility between primary habitus and desired social status.

As such, different from homology rectangle, heterogeneity rectangle (see lower rectangular of heterogeneity in Figure 2) is consumers' deliberate actions to forgo generative habitus while achieve social integration to upper rectangle (Castilhos & Fonseca, 2016). Putting this into the collectivity of ultra-rich, the lower rectangle refers to the consumers rich in economic capital while low in cultural capitals (LCC). Since primary habitus is not a static disposition that offers individuals framework for actions, it can be further shaped into a secondary habitus by the outcome of interaction of the strategies employed by other social classes (Lury, 2011). LCCs who live in a lower cultural capital milieu may struggle for transformation of economic capital to cultural capital, then structural incompatibility between predisposition and desired social resources comes into prominence. This rectangle can further account for the underpinning mechanism of Veblen's conspicuous consumption. For LCCs, newly-gained wealth brought them into a social place different from where they started. The abundance in wealth and paucity in embodied manners raise the structural incompatibility between primary dispositions and desired resources possessed by HCCs. This imbalance precipitates them to deliberately show off wealth in consumption realm with the aim of competing same resources from HCCs.



**Figure 2. Rectangles in Consumption**



The homology and heterogeneity rectangles offered a wide-angle lens to reflect the underpinning mechanism when apply both Veblen's LCC pattern and Bourdieu's HCC pattern. Comparing this two patterns under the context of two rectangles, similarity is the economic aptitude allow both HCCs and LCCs to socialize in a high social status consumption field, which means the external markers stressed by both rectangles are distant from daily necessities. Whilst differences stem from three perspectives: firstly, LCCs utilize consumption deliberately to seek for reintegration into new social standings, while HCCs consume inconspicuously and social distinction comes at an unconscious outcome; secondly, though LCCs may compete for same resources possessed by HCCs such as buying same artistic product, LCCs utilize it for display while HCCs purchase it for aesthetic appreciation; thirdly, one crucial difficulty for the transformation of LCCs to HCCs is the embodied markers which can be translated as sophisticated consumption practices by HCCs.

### **2.3.3 Forms of HCC versus LCC / Highbrow taste versus lowbrow taste**

It is fairly easy to suggest examples of the rich living in contemporary era that fit either upper rectangle or lower rectangle. However, it has to be very mindful that mere dichotomies may obscure the nuanced relationships between Veblen's LCC pattern and Bourdieu's HCC framework. For instance, when classifying LCC pattern, simple judgement on the luxury products elites purchased tend to be dogmatic. Helicopters should not only be linked to status enhancement, but also its inherent functions like ultra-motilities and flexibilities for the rich to travel extensively worldwide (Birtchnell & Caletrío, 2013). Likewise, need to buy certain products (flaunt for social status) and have to buy certain products (utilitarian perspective) enact totally different stories when discern if elite individuals fit into LCC or HCC pattern (Daloz, 2007b, 2010). Additionally, it is worth noting that habitus is an evolving concept, the volume and composition of varied capitals that individuals possessed may change at different stages of life in a given field (e.g., the formation of second habitus). Thus there is possibility for LCCs that in the later stage, cultural capital increased via ways like acculturation or further education attainment. Accordingly, LCCs and HCCs here are relative concepts

rather than static dichotomy, which should only be applied to certain buying patterns or certain period of the rich's life stages. More importantly, our previous review suggests that forms of tastes and cultural capital are changing along with the changes of social contexts and consumption fields. The signs Bourdieu used in *Distinction* such as the music of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* may not be borne out of same level of appraisal over time and across contexts. The good tastes possessed by HCCs or bad tastes disinterested by HCCs are therefore signifying practices in a perpetual change and is largely dependent on which fields the study is looking at (Prieur et al., 2008). This is exactly why examination of the forms of cultural capital to different fields meaningful. Before applying a series of concepts of habitus, tastes and cultural capital into tourism field, an investigation of the good tastes/bad tastes and HCC patterns/LCC patterns identified in various consumption fields from other studies will be firstly summarized.

Habitus is a class-based scheme that operates non-consciously to guide people with dichotomous distinction in particular fields such as good versus bad, high versus low, aristocratic versus vulgar, masculine versus feminine (Lury, 2011). Bourdieu presented three types of tastes in *Distinction*. The first type is the pure and "legitimate taste" connected to the aesthetic appreciation of cultural objects owned by dominate class. The dominate class or ruling class in Bourdieu's case included the rich with high cultural capital. Bourdieu considered this legitimate taste as good and high-brow taste; Second type of taste is "middle-brow" taste found in those of the middle class or petty bourgeoisie, their tastes were connected to more common and less valuable objects; The last kind of taste is the "popular taste" occupied by lower class in society, representing the necessary choice which lacks the artistic ambitions. Accordingly, it was deemed as bad or low-brow taste. For instance, HCC in Bourdieu's French society preferred music of *Well-Tempered Clavier* and *Concerto for the Left Hand*, and paintings by Breughel and Goya, and listen to radio station of French-Musique, and reading philosophical and political essays like *Le Monde* as their choice of newspaper, and playing instrument or visiting museums; whereas LCC preferred read romantic stories, and listen to popular and light music of Strauss waltzes and *Sabre Dance*, and

going for a picnic, and listening to popular radio station of Luxembourg (Bourdieu, 1984: 13-16).

It is autotelic that certain products in particular contexts are related to higher social status since it may be only restricted to upper classes. Besides those products, decent conducts and etiquettes are also evidently circumscribed within higher echelon only (Gronow, 1997). Looking beyond French society, Bourdieu did not provide a versatile answer to the questions that what is the representation of good taste (regarding both internal conduct and external objects) across various situations. However, his argument that taste of upper class is always the legitimate taste of the society is a starting point for studies in other contexts to discern the same issue. This reinforced previous finding that there are no specific cultural activities can be defined as good taste or bad taste, what counts for good taste stem from the competition among different classes (Turner & Edmunds, 2002). The so-called highbrow taste was understood to be the taste of certain social group, especially the higher echelon of society (Hooker, 1934). As such, to understand the changes in the forms of HCC and good taste of the modern age, it is tempting to review relevant preferences and behaviors the rich enacted from academic literature in modern times. While the studies investigated on relationships between consumption patterns and demographic characters are numerous, focus here is only on those explicitly applied taste, cultural capital, habitus or social class into social agents' distinction practices in consumption field.

By analyzing the relevant studies, several papers which explored the representation of cultural capital in generic consumption field offered this article a tentative comparison between forms of HCC and LCC in contemporary era (e.g., Prieur & Savage, 2011; Holt, 1998; Hedegard, 2015; Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Heikkila & Rahkonen, 2011; Belk, 2000; Daloz, 2008) and articles revolving around specific consumption field like VIP club, cuisine, comedy and music provided a supplementary evidence to this comparison (e.g., Friedman, 2011; Mears, 2014; Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Cheyne & Binder, 2010; Bukodi, 2007). Since these articles were conducted in different countries, it is futile to summarize on specific names of the consecrated products by HCC and LCC

but the characteristics of these external as well as internal markers (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Styles of Preferring**

<b>Characteristics of HCC Pattern</b>	<b>Characteristics of LCC Pattern</b>
Culture-directed	Necessity-directed
Abstracted	Realistic
Mental-oriented	Physical-oriented
Critical	Referential
Knowing	Ignorant
Idealism/Quality/Decommodified	Materialism/Quantity/Commodified
Subtle	Ostentatious
Disinterestedness	Imitation
Cosmopolitan	Local

HCC in modern times are normally involved in the abstracted form of consumption whilst LCC are more realistic and centered on daily-life topics. This can be reflected on their consumption of books, TV, movies and newspapers. HCC tend to be selective audiences focusing more on intellectual demanding topics and appreciate the abstract form of representation in novel and movie. Although tragedy plot happened in movie, HCC perceive it as abstracted form of art. While LCC inversely reject disturbing scenes and usually link them to daily life. They emphasize on physical pleasure or immediate emotions brought by happy-ending movies and comedies (Prieur & Savage, 2011; Holt, 1998; Prieur et al., 2008; Bukodi, 2007). This explains why HCC appreciate arts in a metaphysical way while LCC prefer the installation or story-told art which is more realistic (Prieur & Savage, 2011).

In the fields like interior decoration and vacations, LCC are regarded as the unconfident followers of fashion and popularity rather than connoisseurs. They depend largely on information and suggestions from gatekeepers (e.g., tour agencies in vacation field) and peers. Moreover, purchasing a group of houses in a wealthy neighborhood and requiring the so called over-the-top service during the trip indicated a materialistic pursuit in their daily life. By contrast, HCC seek for exotic and authentic experience during vacation and accentuate the meaning and quality of interior decoration. It is found that HCC even lived in a relatively smaller house than LCC as they prefer the house with history

and in harmony with surroundings (Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Holt, 1998). This idealism instead of materialism is also reflected on their consumption of food. HCC tend to choose handmade and small-scale cuisine though high requirements on its authenticity include geographic sources and breaking norms (Johnston & Baumann, 2007).

To refute the notion of taste omnivorousness and tolerance, only a few articles revitalize the concept of disinterestedness which is one important characteristic of HCC mentioned by Bourdieu in his *Distinction*. Most of studies applied Bourdieu's concepts by measuring which genres that respondents prefer, the overlapped preferences of objects between HCC and LCC led scholars to conclude that there is a trend of taste omnivorousness and tolerance. However, it is deficient to leave out HCC's dislike on certain types of products. As what has been pointed out by Douglass (1996) that the operational problem of Bourdieu concepts in contemporary studies is not about using respondents' preferences to match their social patterns, but is "to get at some underlying principle of discrimination" (p. 62). Bryson (1996) replenished this deficiency by measuring cultural exclusion on music field. One of the findings suggested that the class-based exclusion was found from the dislike of educated respondents on music genres valued by lower class. Similarly, some HCC interviewees in qualitative studies also expressed their slight on LCC's preference and behaviors (Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Holt, 1998). Therefore, disinterestedness is also one of the quality immanent in modern HCC pattern as a kind of position-taking standing out from LCC's emulation campaign.

Another specialty of contemporary HCC pattern that Bourdieu did not notice is cosmopolitan. Living in the fast changing world of global mobility, HCC are identified with the capacity to look beyond their own countries and critically appreciate things from more expansive geographic scope than LCC (Prieur & Savage, 2011; Cvetičanin & Popescu, 2011). To be one step further, the cosmopolitan even brings about some interesting phenomena to the dynamics of cultural capital. It is observed in some developing countries that displaying Western middle-class lifestyle can work as the status marker between HCC and LCC. In both Turkey and Zimbabwe, HCC imitated consumption practice from Western countries, especially from US, UK as well as

former colonialists in Zimbabwe's case. They distanced themselves from indigenous consumption styles which local LCC usually focused (Belk, 2000; Ustuner & Holt, 2010). Ustuner and Holt (2010) termed this new phenomenon as "global trickle-down effect" (p. 38). In this respect, whom be defined as HCC in developing countries turn out to be LCC in developed countries. This is exactly why investigation of forms of cultural capital in different fields and countries meaningful.

The real-life cases from world's richest celebrities also reinforced the above academic findings from certain angles. Firstly, some traits like ostentatious spending, materialism and seeking for quantity can still be seen very clearly from most super rich in modern times. For instance, backwards in the 1990s when Donald Trump was still a real-estate developer, he was widely regarded as not only a successful businessman who generated demands on his business but also a capacious consumer who consumed tremendously on a wide array of prestigious goods ranging from helicopter, aircraft, football team, shuttle airlines, yacht to exclusive estates (Hirschman, 1990). Reflected on his autobiography written on 1987, his acquisition towards various prestigious goods signified certain similar traits including biggest ("eighty-foot-long living room", Trump & Schwartz, 2009:125); highest (move into "the top three floors of Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street overlooking Central Park", Trump & Schwartz, 2009: 125); and garish ("Trump Tower was an unqualified success. It has given me visibility, credibility, and prestige", Trump & Schwartz, 2009: 128). Moreover, Trump attached his family name to different iconic buildings he built or purchased such as Trump Castle, Trump Plaza, Trump Parc and Trump Tower (Hirschman, 1990). In more recent time when presidential bid launched in 2015 in USA, Trump released a summary of personal wealth and promoted himself as "I am really rich" (Walsh, 2016). He is even depicted by media currently with ostentatious appetite for gold including gold motorcycle, gold helicopter, gold label of "T" standing for his last name on his Vodka (Walsh, 2016). The above activities like attachment of personal family name, chasing after the best for maximum visibility, as well as the focus on symbolic value rather than functional value indicated Trump's apparent characteristics of conspicuous consumption (Durgin, 2015).

On the other hand, characteristics of HCC pattern like preferring abstracted goods, subtle form of distinction and critical aesthetics can also be found on some super rich in the world. Philip Niarchos's passion toward art collection is an appropriate example. He was brought up in a wealthy family in which his father was a shipping magnate in Greece. Influenced by his father who was passionate about collecting arts, Niarchos had exclusive access to the originals of many famous masters since his childhood and was metaphorically described as growing up in museums. He continued his father's collection and supplemented it with contemporary masterpieces when he grew up (FineArt, 2015). Since his art collection is for personal aesthetics rather than trading and corporate use, he kept a very low-key style and never disclosed the works in their family's collection. But it is speculated by media that he has the largest collection of Vincent van Gogh's works among which, the most valuable piece worth around USD 2 billion (Blankfeld, Zeppelin, & Adams, 2009; FineArt, 2015). Though his business is related to shipbuilding, he serves as board member on NYC Museum of Modern Art and London's Tate Gallery. Additionally, he constantly donated some works to different museums in the world (FineArt, 2015). As depicted above, Philip Niarchos grow up with large exposures to arts and intellectual products. The imperceptible influences from his father and massive wealth from family create upper-level socialization milieu for him at an early age. As such, his consumption style is apparently different from Donald Trump who start relatively from a scratch to build new business empire.

By looking at patterns of LCC and HCC, it is relatively evident to summarize the external markers consecrated by the group of ultra-rich. However, there is a scarcity of discussion on the embodied markers that possessed by HCC, which serve as key stratified power to distinguish HCC and LCC. Most of studies employed genre categories by survey scales, but overlooked the way how people judge and consume products (Cheyne & Binder, 2010). This is consumption that pervades even more spectrums of life and belongs to the second respect of Bourdieu's pattern about consuming goods in a sophisticated way. Moreover, Bourdieu's notion of disinterestedness is seldom discussed by current literature, the ways of preferring as

well as despising are both needed to reveal the sensitized patterns of elite taste. Above all, the specific consumption fields of reviewed articles centered on cultural consumption (e.g., readings, music, museum, comedy), limited attention on everyday objects and activities such as tourism consumption. Rather than the aesthetic capacity of cultural objects (e.g., art, classical music), a rarer distinction is to “constitute aesthetically objects that are ordinary or even ‘common’ . . . or to apply the principles of a ‘pure’ aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress or decoration, for example” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 40). To what follows, the next chapter will direct our attention to the tourism field, which requires elites to appropriate the aesthetic criteria to the more daily and routine activities. In particular, next chapter will review how tourism is linked to social differentiation, what external products are more valued than others and if there are possible embodied markers that prove to be more effective on elite distinction.

## **2.4 Tourism Consumption and Social Differentiation**

*No doubt individual tourists have an active apprehension of the experiences, constructing their identities and lifestyles, but this construction is carried out under structural constraints.*

--- (Ahmad, 2014: 492)

How habitus structure social differentiation exist not only in general consumption field, but also among different consumption fields. It is suggested that cultural capital possess different formats and different status hierarchies in different contexts. The field-dependent capital in certain field may allude higher degree of social status than others. For example, individuals participate in the field of yachting tend to enjoy higher social prestige than individuals take part in bowling. As yachting is a scarcer field requiring higher economic investment and providing larger probability of meeting those with higher social status. Then the field-dependent capital for yachting is more easily to be converted to social differentiation than bowling (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). Therefore, it is also the reason that Bourdieu buttress on field analysis, as cultural capital enacts different power and different formats in various fields.



Accordingly, scholars from tourism field also admit that the field of tourism consumption is socially and culturally structured albeit of being individual practices (Rojek, 1997; Shields, 1991). Prominent trait immanent in tourism consumption patterns is its inclusivity of both the common consumption of material goods like hotels, cuisines, and souvenirs, but also the various services and experiences. And services with a focus of social experience are embedded in almost every step of particular holiday making. For instance, dining experience in destination restaurants cannot be simply reduced to the detail items on menu. Part of what tourists buy during a holiday indeed involve the social composition of other consumers, which create the mood or ambience of a pub, hotel or city (Urry, 1990). Bourdieu (1984) also indicated the perpetual search for novel experience inherent to tourism consumption: “a move into ever newer objects in an endless drive for novelty, and which operates in every area, sport and cooking, holiday resorts and restaurants, is guided by countless indices and indications” (p. 249). Additionally, people discussed their holidays or those of others under the context of social discourses and categorized their behaviors in reference to that of others (McCabe, 2005). This raises particular importance of the broader social discourse in shaping individuals’ holidaymaking and complexity for understanding tourism consumption. One crucial issue under this background is how social hierarchies can be maintained through tourism consumption (Harvey & Lorenzen, 2006).

In the embryonic stage of tourism, phenomenon that people who were capable of travel and those who were not hallmarked the social hierarchies. Exemplified case is the Grand Tour which was regarded as a rite of passage for the upper class from mid-16th to the mid-19th century (Harvey & Lorenzen, 2006). The background of Grand Tour was preliminarily traced back to 15th to the 16th century that European privileged families (most likely English landed classes) sent their sons abroad for education. Along with educational scheme, these young nobles travelled to nearby countries as the extension to education (Brodsky-Porges, 1981). This earlier practice was called as classical Grand Tour with the itinerary of recording and observations of museums, galleries and cultural artefacts (Towner, 1985). In the 19th century, wealthy Americans

joined this educational circuit while made their own cultural routes in Europe, which was regarded as romantic Grand Tour as it involved scenic tourism (Towner, 1985). "The so-called Grand Tour came to be regarded, in Britain particularly, as a necessary part of education -- for anyone who could afford it" (Ogilvie, 1933: 129). Therefore, it is observed from the Grand Tour that tourism at that time had been socially selective and only relatively limited to elite (Urry, 2002).

In the late stage of 19th century, travel become accessible to a wider population due to the development of mass travel by train. Social differentiations then became to be drawn between different tastes of places travelled, but less between those who were capable of travel and who were not (Urry, 2002). Hierarchy and social tone were finely established among resorts to cater to the exact status of its clientele. Certain places in Britain were considered as working-class resorts with the common, tasteless and vulgar image while several resorts were regarded as private, premium and secluded (Urry, 2002; Perkin, 1976). Social hierarchy among resorts were not static but changed over time based on supply patterns and corresponding demographic changes of its clientele. According to Perkin (1976), the social tone of each resort was determined by the characteristics of dominated capital: dominated by local large capital, by local fragmented capital or large external capital. One typical case at that period was the seaside resort of Blackpool. At the beginning of 18th century, the social tone of Blackpool tended to be 'a favorite, salubrious and fashionable resort for "respectable families"' (Perkin, 1976: 181). However, it was dominated by local fragmented freeholders and lacking of planned and high-class estate. Inevitably, it gradually developed into a cheap resort with boarding houses, small shops and café properties, which reversed itself from a respectable resort into a working-class playground. Same occasion happened in America in 19th century when wealthy people from US and Europe went to American West such as California and the Rockies for holiday. Reason for travelling American West was not the physical beauty of the West itself, but to distance themselves from the nouveau rich who flooded in resorts in American Eastern. The appearance of Parvenus in East made resorts there "dense, democratic and vulgar"

whereas the presence of privileged Europeans in West made resorts there “to see and be seen by their kind” (Santis, 1978: 12).

If tourism was an elite concept available only to few in aforementioned stages, which differentiated classes, then the question remained to be answered is how travel conferred status when it is a concept available to many in contemporary society. It was noticeable that modern tourism has experienced a steep rise and developed into a holistic industry ever since the post stage of World War II (Zuelow, 2015). The underlying reasons behind this expansion were grounded on a variety of perspectives: (a) evolution of travel agencies (e.g., Thomas Cook & Son) and the corresponding group tour; (b) development of transportation which facilitated travel to be more economical such as significant markdown on train tickets followed by budget airlines; increase of purchasing power of working class; (c) technology advancement including the advent of automobile, camera, information system etc.; and (d) growth of residual time brought up by the establishment of official holidays (Santis, 1978). Accordingly, in 1980 of World Tourism Conference in Manila, World Tourism Organization proposed its Manila Declaration with agreement on that travel and holiday is basic right and freedom to human being (UNWTO, 1980).

The popularity of tourism can be witnessed by its most recent scale that there are approximately one billion international tourists by the end of September in 2016, equivalent to a 4% increase than same period of 2015 and fortyfold than 1950 when mass tourism almost embarked with around 25 million international arrivals only (UNWTO, 2016). Hirsch (1978) argued that the advent of cheap flights has led to the stage of mass tourism with previous superior destination full of tourists from middle class. Middle class even perceived the previous exotic destinations as: “now that I can afford to come here I know that it will be ruined” (p. 167). The problem then arises as to how tourists from upper class distinct themselves from these one billion international arrivals? Beckerman responded that the concern of mass tourism only stemmed from middle class who were anxious about the emulation from masses. Super-rich however are always secure from the others on their private islands or yachts, in the scarce resorts

or concealed villas (Beckerman, 1974, as cited in Urry, 1990). Tourism products such as private islands, yachts, scarce resorts and concealed villas mentioned by Beckerman seems to be intuitively linked to one contemporary phenomenon which is luxury tourism.

#### **2.4.1 Luxury tourism**

Originally, the word of luxury stemmed from old Latin of *luxus*, meaning “excess, extravagance...vicious indulgence” (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009, p: 46). Recently, the meaning of luxury defined in The Collins English Dictionary (2017) as a type of “indulgence in and enjoyment of rich, comfortable, and sumptuous living” and in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2017) as “something that is not essential but provides pleasure and comfort”. Therefore, luxury firstly can be related to the material goods which are expensive and scarce that usually serve for rich classes (Miyazaki, Grewal, & Goodstein, 2005) and thus signify social meanings of prestige and status (Bakker, 2005). Furthermore, “comfortable” and “pleasure and comfort” are more subjective feelings, indicating a dimension of experiential nature of luxury goods (Berthon et al., 2009).

Luxury tourism as a type of luxury consumption also involves traditional perception of premium products across sectors of accommodations, travel agents, transportation, food and beverage and travel activities. These products ranging from luxury downtown hotels, design and boutique hotels, resorts or private villas, cruises, jets, cooking schools to special-interests outdoor activities (Howarth HTL, 2011). However, as a service-oriented industry, the concept of luxury in tourism field is different from traditional luxury products and emphasizes more on its experiential dimension (Park & Reisinger, 2009; Urry, 2002). This may include the exotic, authentic and unique experience (Kurtz, 2004; Page, 2015) brought by wild excursion in South Africa, adventure cruise in polar region or fine dining at the top of world’s highest tower (Park & Reisinger, 2009).

It is precisely because the luxury tourism is experience-based that judging the social positions of tourists from participation of luxury travel problematic. Here arise two

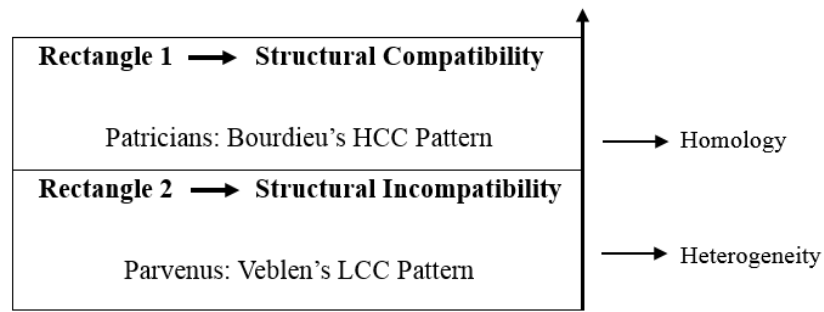
questions. First question concerns the subjective understandings towards luxury experience. What is perceived as authentic and luxury experience for one people may be interpreted as normal and common for another (Bakker, 2005). For example, living in a tropical resort with rejuvenating service such as Little Palm Island Resort in Florida for some tourists is already luxury in terms of hotel facility and service. But for others, the disconnectedness offered by this hotel like no TV, no WIFI and no smartphone (Kirillova & Wang, 2016) is luxury in terms of the physical recovery. Furthermore, not all the rich tourists behave like what we expected: living in executive suite, dining in the hotel world-class bars and escorted by private drivers. What if some stay in suite but prefer to hang out in the local night market and take taxi for experiencing real local life and food (Thirumaran, 2016)? One key question is whether this phenomenon can be linked to cultural omnivore reviewed in chapter 2.2.2 that HCC not only enjoyed highbrow preferences but also lowbrow choices? Or it is just the way of how the highbrow tastes are manifested in tourism field? It is why the differentiation of high-end market meaningful and why the inductive analysis of the rich's tourism preferences without pre-assuming which activity is more highbrow than others urgently needed.

Second question comes from the trading up or democratic luxury in fashion and luxury industry (Kapferer & Bastien, 2008; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). With the increasing disposable income, Silverstein and Fiske (2003) contended that middle-class consumers are willing to pay an extra of 20% to 200% to purchase a luxury product which is not yet available to the mass middle market. Moreover, these consumers are becoming more selective that they may save money on some products then further trade up to the exclusive products meaningful to them. More interestingly, the rich from upper society inversely trade down to certain goods. You may find people drive Mercedes but shop at Costco.

Significantly, trading up and trading down are especially prevalent in tourism field. Jafari (1987) pointed out that one typical trait for tourism is that tourists usually spend far beyond their normal budgets. They hope to experience one-week travel to compensate what they missed the whole year and even loan money to celebrate a special

event by travelling such as graduation or wedding (Hallott, 2013). This is exactly the reasons why yesterday's luxury destination like Bali becomes tomorrow's profane place (Lea, 1993); why increasing moneyed elites purchased caviar which working class cannot afford whereas cultured elites are buying items of working class like economic class (Hallott, 2013) and food like potatoes and chicken legs (Berger & Ward, 2010). Ehrnrooth and Gronroos (2013) summarized these trading-up and trading-down consumers as the hybrid consumer in luxury market.

Consequently, tourism per se is becoming less powerful in directly signifying social differentiations. By merely looking at what kinds of luxury products tourists are purchasing is far from enough to effectively differentiate up-market segment. To understand how tourism reproduces social differentiation as well as complement current research on luxury tourism, an intra-genre patterns of the wealthy tourists should be foremost elicited. Han, Nunes and Dreze (2010) for example divided the wealthy consumers into two typologies of patrician and parvenu. Parvenu is the category that high in economic resources while possess less in cultural capital, which corresponds to the LCC pattern identified in chapter 2.3.2. While patrician refers to consumers who are high in both economic and cultural capital, which accords with HCC pattern introduced in chapter 2.3.2 (See the combination in Figure 3). It is found that patricians prefer luxury goods which are quiet and inconspicuously branded whilst parvenus used loud products with brand conspicuously displaying to consumers from lower social ladders. Moreover, Brooks (2001) revealed that parvenus tend to buy luxury products that lower class cannot afford. Patricians conversely are willing to buy same product from working class but consume them in a subtle way such as consuming "free range chicken legs or heirloom potatoes from France" (Berger & Ward, 2010: 565). Yang and Mattila (2016) borrowed this segmentation into consumption of luxury hotels. Opposed to patricians, it is suggested that parvenus tend to talk more on luxury products they purchased and less likely to buy luxury service to enhance trip happiness.



**Figure 3. Rectangles in Luxury Tourism**

Inarguably, luxury market needs clients of moneyed elites who seek for symbols and consume immensely (Berger & Ward, 2010). However, no luxury companies can survive without the consumers from subdivision of cultured elites, as moneyed elites who are purely interested on symbols are easily drifted from one to another (Kapferer & Bastien, 2008). By investigating tourism consumption patterns of the ultra-rich, this article therefore from another perspective contributes to the understandings of luxury tourism market. To discern the nuanced patterns of social differentiation under the context of mass tourism and to effectively understand high-end tourism segment, Bourdieu and Veblen's frameworks offered us potential explanations on intra-group patterns encompassing different distinction practices, high-brow and low-brow tastes and the construction of social realities in tourism filed. The next section will hence review articles which appropriating Bourdieu and Veblen's concepts in tourism research.

#### **2.4.2 Bourdieu and Veblen in tourism**

Despite the recognition of Bourdieu's habitus in general consumption filed of business research, there has been a paucity of literature appropriating concepts of habitus, taste and cultural capital on tourism consumption in particular. Referring to summary in Table 2, except from studies by Holt (1998) and Üstüner & Holt (2010) which introduced tourism consumption as one part of their findings, the rest literature published on major tourism and related journals is mainly from recent years and has grappled with merely part of what Bourdieu has addressed (Ahmad, 2014).

As opposed to Bourdieu's legacy, the appropriation of Veblen's work in tourism filed is relatively more extensive and comprehensive. First, Veblen's leisure class is undoubtedly applied to leisure consumption in tourism. On one hand its original efficacy still remains in contemporary society (e.g., Scott, 2010), on the other hand revision is added to account for modern variations like the enhancement of leisure experience by mobile use (e.g., Foley, Holzman, & Wearing, 2007) and the positionality of conspicuous time instead of conspicuous consumption in Australia (e.g., Huang & Shi, 2015). Additionally, Veblen's conspicuous consumption is used to explain people's prestige-seeking motivation for travel (e.g., Riley, 1995; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Correia & Kozak, 2012; Roos, 2017) and moderating effect of customers switching intention for luxury restaurants (e.g., Han & Hyun, 2013). Some studies further tested the dimensions of conspicuousness toward luxury destinations (e.g., Phillips & Back, 2011; Correia, Kozak, & Reis, 2014) and examined relationship between symbolic meaning of destination and tourist loyalty (e.g., Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Preciado, 2013).

Notably, there are a few studies in tourism field either explicitly or implicitly applied conspicuous consumption to the emerging consumers. Here emerging consumers include consumers who are in transition from one class to above like elite tourists from or above middle class and new economy sectors. For instance, the emerging middle class in Brazil used the consumption on cruise as one of the classificatory practices. Conspicuous consumption was found to be a major characteristic revolving around the abundance of food and drink, a waste of resources on cruises and being waited on a cruise (Rocha, Rocha, & Rocha, 2016). Differently, the highly skilled professionals of IT industry from India distinguished themselves from other social classes by cross-border travel in Europe and online photograph sharing (Roos, 2017). Study from Portugal also suggested that conspicuous consumption in tourism is a way for improving tourists' social status. However, elite groups with higher public exposure were inclined to utilize subtle signs of conspicuousness like hedonic pleasure, paid holidays and conformity with families (Correia, Kozak, & Reis, 2014).



Therefore, Veblen’s leisure class and conspicuous consumption shed lights on status competition in tourism. It works as a type of lifestyles in leisure consumption and most importantly as a travel motive of prestige-seeking and a further breakdown into snob and bandwagon effect. This motive and lifestyle affect tourism system in every respect ranging from destination selection to the emergence of new tourists. This is also the reason why recent studies in tourism field started to investigate the dimensions of conspicuousness of destinations (Correia et al., 2014) and the effect of status-seeking behaviors on luxury tourism (Yang & Mattila, 2014, 2017).

**Table 2. Summary of the Lines of Research Working with Veblen and Bourdieu in Tourism**

<b>Veblen’s concept: Conspicuous Consumption/Leisure Class/Emulation Effect</b>	
Leisure Consumption / Lifestyle	Scott (2010); Dimanche & Samdahl (1994); Cleaver & Muller (2000); Foley, Holzman, & Wearing (2007); Haung & Shi (2015)
Conspicuous consumption of Destination	Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Preciado (2013); Phillips & Back (2011); Correia, Kozak, & Reis (2014); Kerr, Lewis, & Burgess (2012)
Prestige-worthy travel/ Snob-Bandwagon motive	Riley (1995); Vigneron & Johnson (1999); Correia & Kozak (2012); Roos (2017); Ricii & Holland (1992); Han & Hyun (2013); Yang & Mattila (2017); Yang & Mattila (2014)
Consumption of emerging consumers	Rocha, Rocha, & Rocha (2016); Roos (2017); Correia, Kozak, & Reis (2014); Yang & Mattila (2017); Yang & Mattila (2014)
<b>Bourdieu’s concept: Habitus/Taste/Cultural Capital</b>	
General Travel Behavior/Consumption	Holt (1998); Üstüner & Holt (2010); Ahmad (2014); Lee & Scott (2017); Backhaus (2006); Ahmad (2013)
Food Preference	Lee, Scott & Packer (2014); Richards (2002)
Cultural Attraction/Destination	Earl (2008); Cave, Ryan, & Panakera (2007); Kim, Cheng, & O’Leary (2007); Richards (1996)
Consumption of emerging consumers	Rocha, Rocha, & Rocha (2016); Yang & Mattila (2017); Yang & Mattila (2014); Urry (2002); Harvey & Lorenzen (2005); Mowforth & Munt (2003); Munt (1994)

*Source: own elaboration, one article may be included in more than one category.*

In contrast, the operationalization of Bourdieu’s concepts in tourism context tend to be limited and to a certain extent misappropriated. Perhaps two of the rigorous efforts to study consumption pattern via a Bourdieusian lens are from Holt (1998) in US context and Üstüner and Holt (2010) in Turkish context. However, the preliminary objectives

of these two articles are not to study tourism but generic consumption filed. Choice of holiday is only one part of their findings. In order to understand the embodied tastes and consumption practices over the preferences for objectified genres, these two studies deployed qualitative approaches with the focus on how people consume rather than what they purchase. By assigning rating on informants' education level, occupation level and family upbringing regarding father's occupation and education, cultural capital resources owned by each informant was therefore structured into either HCC or LCC pattern.

There is a series of holiday preferences which Holt (1998) found amongst the LCCs from US. Those LCCs exhibited preference for popular destinations including Disney World, Atlantic City and beach destinations such as Delaware and New Jersey. Highly-planned and routinized itineraries like packaged tour were favored by this group. Instead, HCCs disdained the artificial tourism products and showed a keen pursuit of authentic experience. Authentic experience for them referred to travelling like a local and entering into a real world rather than gazing at each attraction from outside. Occasionally, HCCs also visited same popular destinations that LCCs highlighted, yet, they thought they had drifted into it by other forces.

A similar travel pattern was observed in Turkey after twenty years (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). LCCs in Turkey preferred package tour and fully followed suggestions from tour agencies. Without the all-in-one arrangement by elite agencies, they found themselves disconcerting in Western cities. Besides, LCCs regarded travel as missions on scorecard and compared with each other on quantity of destinations especially those Western cities which have ever visited. This group emphasized firstly the luxuriousness of trip in terms of economically scarce experience; and secondly the fellow companion of the trip in terms of fellow travelers' wealth and status. A clear distinction line was drawn by LCCs between themselves and middle class. Consumption practices of middle class was described as greedy and uneducated by LCCs. On the other hand, HCCs strived to distinguish themselves from LCCs. They were frequent patrons to US and Europe and above all constructed their trips with a learning component. During their trips, HCCs

intended to pick up Western consumption practices and lifestyles and brought them back to Turkey. As such, the learning of original Western styles via travel became the potent stratifying practice between HCC and LCC.

Although few studies have fully applied Bourdieusian approach in tourism journals, some scholars have touched on aspects of Bourdieu's work and recognized several of his conceptualizations in tackling long-standing issues in tourism field. For instance, status-seeking is an umbrella motivation that grounds travelers' actions (Correia & Kozak, 2012). However, tourists' unwillingness to admit prestige motives (Riley, 1988) and unawareness of prestige as a real reason for travel (Tiefenbacher, Day, & Walton, 2000) have led to a paucity of studies examining social distinction in the tourism context (Correia & Moital, 2009). Accordingly, Backhaus (2006) brought scholars' attention to Bourdieu's habitus and field in that these concepts may work as the unexpressed mechanism to account for tourists' latent motives for travel. Furthermore, in a conceptual paper, Ahmad (2013) highlighted the tremendous research opportunities that Bourdieu's sociological approach can bring to a cultural analysis of tourism.

Probably Ahmad (2014)'s study of consumption patterns of Western tourists visiting India is the only tourism empirical article that offered a direct operationalization of Bourdieu's theoretical model. Ahmad conducted surveys in India and collected 291 responses from seven source countries. His interest was to examine if the consumption patterns of Western tourists visiting Third World like India are structured by cultural capital and class-based habitus. By using factor analysis, Ahmad identified three consumption patterns structured by cultural capital: "tourists" pattern of embracing daily necessities and choosing popular destinations; "travelers" pattern of consuming middle-brow activities such as visiting less crowded places and conducting independent travels; and "virtuoso" pattern of experiencing luxury cruise and visiting local theatre, galleries etc., which were linked as highbrow tourism products in India. Afterwards, Ahmad used regression analysis to investigate the relationship between the above consumption patterns and cultural capital. It is found that there was a positive relationship between cultural capital and "travelers" pattern as well as "virtuoso"

pattern, whereas no significant relationship was reported between cultural capital and “tourists” pattern.

Ahmad’s analysis and operationalization, however, revealed a fundamental misreading of Bourdieu’s concepts. First, Ahmad only measured the amount of cultural capital by respondents’ education level and their fathers’ education, while shying away another two important sources of cultural capital including respondents’ occupation and fathers’ occupation. As cultural capital is a type of accumulated resources which is evolving through the life course, occupation is therefore one of the opportunities for respondents to contact with new resources (Friedman, 2011). Perhaps the glossing over of occupations in this study was on purpose. Respondents of this study were from seven countries, it was rather difficult to find a universal scale applied to all these seven countries on which job requires more cultural skills. As such, it comes another conceptual problem of Ahmad’s measures. Bourdieu indeed tested the class-based habitus and taste in a very stable cultural hierarchy in French society, which poses a challenge for any single contemporary society wherein cultural boundaries are blurred. Faced by the situation where focusing on even one society requires prudent adaptation of measurements, conceiving the highbrow class, middle class and lowbrow class amongst seven societies by Ahmad seems to be ambitious and implausible.

As argued above, cultural hierarchies in advanced societies are blurred and overlaps among types of objects tourists consumed are ubiquitous, it is much more nuanced and subtle to differentiate consumers or tourists by how they consume rather than simply what products and activities they participated. Ahmad also agreed on this and emphasized in his literature review that investigation of embodied taste of consumption practices is more timely and appropriate in contemporary world. Unfortunately, this standpoint was not reflected on his methodology. His survey items revolving around the objectified forms of tourism products and activities, leaving out the embodied forms of tastes. Further, these survey items were elicited from author’s personal industry experiences and discussion with four sociologists. But Ahmad’s measures appeared to be unsatisfactory. For instance, both items of “attendance at popular music

concerts/carnival/street dance” and “attendance at classical music concerts/opera/performance” were classified into factor of “popular taste” (Ahmad, 2014: 497). However, what’s the definition of “popular” and “classical” amongst the investigated seven countries? Are these seven countries perceived the same towards the genres of classical and popular music? Is it contradictory to classify both attendance of popular music concerts and classical music concerts into one dimension labelled as “popular taste”? Unfortunately, similar problems can also be found in the rest survey items.

Except from above discussion, the rest studies identified in Table 2 have been largely used only part of Bourdieu’s findings to account for different themes in tourism field. No studies have specifically replicated Bourdieu’s method systematically into tourism consumption and their interpretation as well as operationalization appear to be speculate. The first common theme is using habitus as explanation for general food consumption (e.g., Richards, 2002) as well as food consumption lifestyles (e.g., Lee, Scott & Packer, 2014). It is indicated that gastronomy is one of the key experiences for tourists to maintain distinction in terms of selecting the right restaurants, ordering the right dishes and decoding the right items on menus (Richards, 2002). Meanwhile, slow food members exhibited same food lifestyle which was habitus-structured at both destination and home environments (Lee et al., 2014). The second theme is leveraging Bourdieu’s concepts to study cultural tourism especially visitation on cultural attractions. It is found that visitors to the diverse cultural attractions and heritage sites have a higher amount of cultural capital (e.g., Kim et al., 2007; Richards, 1996) and certain group of tourists adopted new distinction strategy such as participating various heritage-related lectures (Earl, 2008). The last theme centers on the emergence of new tourists. These works borrowed ideas of “new petit bourgeois” to explain the advent of new tourists such as new middle class (e.g., Rocha, Rocha, & Rocha, 2016), co-tourists (e.g., Harvey & Lorenzen, 2005), service class (Urry, 2002), eco-tourists and travel professionals (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Nevertheless, these studies which only borrowed part of Bourdieu’s findings tend to be descriptive (e.g., Urry, 2002; Harvey

& Lorenzen, 2005; Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Even though the authors used the term of cultural capital frequently, they simply equaled it with education level (e.g., Earl, 2008).

Accordingly, in a field where the forms of cultural capital are not yet systematically investigated, it should always be careful about the study design. Quantitative studies with survey measures may offer author with larger data base and statistical analysis, yet, this should not be the excuse for author to have pre-assumption about which object is highbrow taste and which is lowbrow taste. Perhaps Bennett et al. (2009)'s comprehensive study on cultural consumption in sociology field shed lights on tourism studies about the appropriate operationalization of cultural capital. Instead of assuming what is the form of high taste and low taste in cultural consumption, they conducted focus group, in-depth interview and observations with different classes at first to explore how people in contemporary Britain think of cultural interests and preferences. The possible high-brow and low-brow cultural practices generated from qualitative approach were then included into questionnaires items. Secondly, the focus of current tourism literature on Bourdieu's concepts is about which items or activities are selected by HCCs. Scant studies have looked at how HCC consume the mass products exclusively. Additionally, very little effort was made to discern the role of taste in tourism consumption by measuring disinterestedness. To sum up, the seminal studies by Holt (1998), Üstüner & Holt (2010) and Bennett et al. (2009) indicated that the form of cultural capital is a relative concept requiring consideration of nationality, contextual and field specificity. In tourism field where mass travel itself becomes less powerful in revealing social status, investigation of how people consume the same thing rather than of what people consume is more important. Secondly, methodological concerns such as the pre-assumption about forms of highbrow taste and the ignorance of disinterestedness ought to be avoided.

## **2.5 Why China Different**

*Of particular economic consequence is the rapid expansion in travel demand, both domestically and internationally, of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and*

*China)...more etic testing of the applicability of established concepts are necessary in the context of the travel behavior of the BRIC nations.*

*--- (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014: 894-895)*

The rise of the new consumers in certain emerging and transitional countries has been changing every sphere of consumption arena on a global scale (Rocha et al., 2016; Kravets & Sandikci, 2014). The remarkable surge of these new consumers was identified particularly from four pioneering developing countries including Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) (Sheth, 2011). It is predicted that the spending power of BRIC economies will be larger than current advanced countries by 2039 (Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003). Ranking as the world second largest economy in 2015 (World Bank, 2017), China's spending power is estimated to surpass US by 2041 (Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003). Economic reforms, global trade liberalization, leaking opportunities from long-rich countries whose markets are almost saturated and the emergence of the new rich are the underlying factors contributing to this extraordinary surge (Sheth, 2011). Along with these opportunities, challenges also exist and add complexity towards their spending behaviors. For instance, the polarization of the consumer base where on one hand, novice consumers living in rural places have limited knowledge towards an array of products (Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003); while on the other hand, new occupations such as private business owners, managers, industry professionals and independent investors surfaced, creating increasing mature consumers and upward mobility on the ladders of social class (Üstüner & Holt, 2010).

Given the ever-greater size of spending power as well as the more fluid social structure, it is much more pressing than ever before to understand the role of social differentiation in consumption patterns of the emerging markets. However, the key consumer theories were posited from Western societies and main studies related to consumption patterns focused on US and European contexts (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). As a contextual discipline, it is more powerful and precise for consumer culture theory to consider field and contextual specificity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Bourdieu was indeed attentive to the evolvement of new forms of cultural capital, he related every new form to the

term of new petit bourgeoisie who was the new middle class with limited economic capital but high cultural capital (Friedman et al., 2015). However, the astonishing rise of wealth elite over last twenty years indicated a trend of the rich with high economic capital but not necessary the cultural capital. In this regard, is the content of elite taste per se already being remade when borrowed French society 50 years before into modern emerging markets? Or a step backward, is the conspicuous consumption borrowed from US society 100 years before more potent in current emerging markets? Accordingly, China's national specificity which may influence the consumption patterns of the rich will consequently be introduced in this chapter.

### **2.5.1 Blurry boundaries between old money and new money**

The distinction between old money and new money, patrician and parvenu might not be clearly postulated by Bourdieu and Veblen, yet, they were the instrumental concepts underlined both Bourdieu and Veblen's paradigm development. For instance, Veblen's leisure class with pecuniary power indeed is the basic thinking based on the distinction between old money and new money. New comers used the various means making personal wealth visible such as exclusive leisure activities and conspicuous consumption to compete with the established aristocrats. In the same vein, Bourdieu was also observing the differences between the established ruling class and the emerging petit bourgeois. The French petit bourgeois can be described as parvenu who yearn for the rules of etiquette from court nobility (Gronow, 1997). Though Bourdieu used concepts of cultural capital and economic capital, it is still the campaign between the depth of wallet (new money) and the making of a gentleman (old money). But what if in one society there is no old aristocracy consisting as role model for the rest of classes to imitate?

It is not surprising to find such societies with fuzzy lines between old money and new money or even without old money. At the turn of almost 40 years since China's opening-up, China is considered as the epitome of new fortune where aristocratic class seems to be non-existent. There were totally 400 Chinese billionaires (320 from Mainland China) with a total wealth of 947 billion USD cited on Forbes list in 2016



(Forbes, 2016). Comparing with Forbes list in 1987, there were 0 billionaires reported in Mainland China, 6 billionaires in Hong Kong and 2 in Taiwan (Forbes, 2012). It is hardly to say that the increase of wealth from super rich over these 30 years belongs to the new money. Yet, the growth of billionaires in China did start from 1980s when Deng Xiaoping, Chinese revolutionary on opening up and economic reform, put forward the slogan of “to get rich is no crime” (Petras, 2008:323). Before China’s economic reform, China’s Cultural Revolution launched by Chairman Mao Zedong from 1966 to 1969 promoted the slogan that “smashed the class enemy” and especially overthrew the bourgeoisie class. This led to the situation of simple class structure where every citizen was passively made into peasant partaking of collective agriculture or workers working in state-owned enterprises (Evans & Donald, 1999). Being rich had even been regarded as shameful until Deng Xiaoping’s reform on market liberalization and resource conversion from state-owned enterprises to private entrepreneurs (Goodman & Zang, 2008). At the early days of reform, the emerging wealthy might accumulate their first amount of capital by illegal speculation such as earning differences between the planned market and new free market. And most of the new rich came from the former state-owned enterprises or worked as previous cadres in government (Osburg, 2013).

If China’s economic reform brought about the startup of billionaires, it was during the period of 1980s to 1990s under the age of President Jiang Zemin that billionaires secured their millions (Petras, 2008). Particularly after 1990 with the deepening of market of liberalization, increasing foreign investment was attracted into various cities and provinces. Furthermore, China entered into World Trade Organization in 2001 and finally involved into the wave of globalization (Osburg, 2013). This evolution of market economy offered billionaires with golden times to secure and further make wealth. At the same time, increasingly new billionaires were created within just a few years or even overnight. The means of making money also became legalized and diversified, ranging from agriculture to manufacturing, real estate to high technology, and commerce to investment in stock market (Petras, 2008). Strikingly, the creation of billionaires in China is continuing and the rate of property concentration keep growing.

In year of 2000, the 20 top China's rich owned a net worth of 7.767 billion USD (Forbes, 2000), accounting for approximately 0.6% of national GDP of the same year; While in year of 2016, the 20 top rich had a net worth of 301.05 billion USD (Forbes, 2016), accounting for around 3.2 % of national GDP of the same year.

The more recent emergence of wealth, on the other hand, has been certainly influencing the organization of power in contemporary China. Old power in modern China dated back to pre-Maoist era at the outset of twentieth century when class system was clearly labeled in the society. The dominant class in urban areas included the warlords and related political parties (e.g., Goumindang and Japanese governments) as well as a few foreign and Chinese bourgeoisies; whereas in rural regions, bully landlords were the ruling members against the majority of poor peasants (So, 2003). Afterwards, the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 under Chairman Mao changed this rigid class-divided hierarchy. The landlord class was gradually wiped out by collective farming in rural areas and the capitalist class was put down via nationalization of urban economies. Accordingly, framers and workers became the major base of social structure under Mao's era from 1949 to 1978. Ruling class therefore simply referred to political elites relating to those working for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the state-owned economies (Bian, 2002). This politically monopolized situation was finally changed by economic reform in 1978 with a revitalization of a diverse power sources. A focus of economic development as well as the relaxed household registration system provided huge possibilities for social mobility and power reorganization. New wealth along with the new class surfaced as the newly ruling members. As a result, the dominant class in contemporary China consists of current and retired key members in CCP, magnates and super-wealthy entrepreneurs, top executives and intellectuals hired in large companies (Goodman, 2014).

Compared to the ruling class identified in previous stages, capitalist groups consisting of business magnates and top executives in contemporary times seem to be the new power opposing to the longer established privileges of the political elites, especially those from earlier state institutions since Mao's era. However, the interactions between

old power and new power, and the extent to which the moneyed elites been connected to political elites added nuances to the process of power reorganization in China (Goodman, 2014; So, 2003). It is indicated that majority of entrepreneurs either have social origins from cadre class or at least integrated political members into their routinized business activities. In the earlier reform period, newly acquired wealth were mostly derived from the former power via market speculation and unfair competition. In more recent days, economic elites found it is easier to access to the privileged resources including land, banking and labor by incorporating political elites into business activities (Goodman, 2014). Regional political leaders, in turn, were actively involved themselves with the local magnates for boosting economy development and most importantly, adding personal wealth sources and personal achievement on political careers (Landry, 2008). This mutual interests shared and protected by both political and economic elites can be further glanced from the following statistics: 90 percent of millionaires reported in 2006 were from families of high-ranking cadres (Dickson, 2008); many of the super-rich were the descendants of members from Party-state either before 1979 or before 1949 (Lu, 2013, as cited in Goodman, 2014); and a three-generation pattern on regional level was found in Shanxi province where for those parents who were born in farmer family and grew up as a cadre in adulthood, most of their children become successful entrepreneurs (Goodman, 2000).

By looking at the above history of China's rich, it can be found that old money was torn down during Cultural Revolution while the newly established fortune have existed for only forty years. Forty years mean that new money might still be largely circulated within one generation, which makes China distinctive compared to French society with centuries of aristocracy and US society with hundred years' history since independence. However, the power reorganization in contemporary China reveals that there is interplay to a large extent between old power (political elites) and new power (economic elites). As such, the interplay between politics and wealth merit attention when reflect on Veblen's ostentatious display in China. From a perspective of political representation, political elites are less inclined to use external signs to manifest power,

which is termed as “conspicuous modesty” by Daloz’s study on elite distinction of Nordic politicians (Daloz, 2007a: 173). From a perspective of China’s national policies, ostentatious consumption is forbidden among political officials due to the anti-corruption movement initiated by President Xi (Yuen, 2014). Therefore, on one hand China is a hotbed for generating invisible billionaires who are in close relationship to government and made a large amount of hidden wealth (Wang, 2012), which is also the reason why there is always discrepancy on the number of Chinese billionaires released by different rich lists. On the other hand, flaunting wealth and luxury goods is still ubiquitous across all the social media (details will be further explained in the following Chapter 2.5.2). Chinese public is not surprised to see those moneyed elites and above all, the kids of high-ranking politicians showed off their wealth and luxury goods on Microblog or Wechat (Brennan, 2016). Hence, to what extent the theoretical frameworks available can successfully account for the manifold representations of elite distinction in China is rewarding to explore.

With only 30-odd years of its opening-up and 60-odd years of its founding, China is still evolving with unique characteristics on its wealth distribution and power organization. It is in particular consequential to take a contextual approach when testing the applicability of consumer theories borrowed from Western countries. To accurately adapt Bourdieu and Veblen’s frameworks into consumption patterns of China’s rich, the demographic characteristics as well as consumption preferences disclosed by media will be reviewed in next section.

### **2.5.2 Demographics and consumption behaviors of China’s rich**

This section offered an intensive review of the most recent coverage on the demographics and consumption behaviors of China’s ultra-rich. The major sources include key wealth reports worldwide (see summary in Appendix I) and press coverage from major media organizations. This section not only adds credibility of present research by examining multiple data sources, but also poses certain inconsistencies between media coverage and wealth reports regarding high-end market. In assessing the consumption behaviors of China’s rich reported by major media, high frequency

words arose including Asia Gatsby, new gilded age, flaunt, bling, ostentatious, extravagance, outrageous, naked ambition and so on.

Numerous examples are available on reflection of above portrayals: Chinese property developer Sam Guo purchased a mansion which costs USD 12 million and covers a kilometer down the road in Sydney Hunters Hill. Before that, this moneyed elite was at the center of controversy on the building of an artificial island as personal floating palace (Besser, Hichens, & Christodoulou, 2015). Additionally, a national-wide scandal was started by China's outrageous rich in year of 2013 during Hainan Rendez-Vous exhibition. This exhibition is a yachting and luxury-lifestyle tradeshow targeting at the ultra-high-net-worth individuals and celebrities. However, the event finally turned out to be a sexual party served for its ultra-rich audience. It was reported that one of the models earned 600,000 RMB by sex trade within three days (Taylor, 2013). In a more recent case, somehow as an antithesis of President Xi's crackdown on waste and graft, super rich are found to develop new fad beyond simply yacht, private jet and luxury goods. For instance, ultra-rich including property tycoons, manufactural magnates and pharmaceutical giants are starting to develop hunting habit worldwide. Their favorite hunting destinations involve Africa, Mongolia, New Zealand and Canada whereby wildlife resources are diversified and abundant. According to the news, Jack Ma, one of the top rich in China, once rented a castle in France and went for hunting deer with a bunch of friends. These riches believed that hunting offered them indulgence in bloodlust (Yang, 2016).

It is thereby rather straightforward to conceive from media coverage that rich society in modern China reappears the lifestyles of American Gatsby living 100 years ago in gilded age. Gatsby is a character in the novel of *The Great Gatsby* written in the 1920s (Fitzgerald, 1925). It alludes the popular theme of American dream in gilded age, which concerns the emulation of the rich and display of wealth. In particular, gilded age in American society is a period of time when social Darwinism was prevalent that the excessive wealth is justified as the selection of natural law. Therefore, Gatsby lived in a life parallel to Veblen's pecuniary waste and conspicuous consumption (Canterbery,

1999). In the novel, Gatsby used to be a poor guy and fell in love with a girl called Daisy who came from old-rich family. In order to win Daisy's love, Gatsby tried all means to earn money and finally became a super-rich. However, he did not realize that flaunting wealth and displaying excessive purchasing power can never win the favor from established rich. Holding lavish parties, buying luxury mansions and dressing up in gaudy suit, however, were clearly interpreted as nouveau, vulgar and naive emulation by established rich (Wang, 2016; Canterbury, 1990).

Despite the direct matching of Gatsby analogy, some points of caution, however, are needed here: First, is the group of China's ultra-rich as homogenous as what has been deciphered in media coverage? Second, if China's ultra-rich do behave like Gatsby, then to what extent Veblen's conceptual apparatus is of any use in explicating elite distinction in China? A close look at the industry wealth reports adds nuances to the media claims. The first contradiction from industry report is that the rich in China also utilize some sophisticated symbols instead of traditional luxury goods of jets, yachts and limousines. For example, flourishing EMBA programs are established to cater to the wealthy entrepreneurs' demand. The typical one is the EMBA program in Hu Pan University initiated by Jack Ma with the yearly tuition fee at US\$55k in 2016, which is an increase of 28.6% compared to last year. Following education, healthcare in high-end market is also experiencing an increase of its price by 11.7% than three years ago (Hurun, 2016). Moreover, growing number of the rich are becoming famous philanthropists to donate money in an individual's name to various fields, ranging from education, social welfare, poverty alleviation to culture (Hurun, 2017). These new trends revealed in wealth report suggested that elite distinction in recent China may not as simple as what media has reported. In contrast, the rich's behaviors covered in media seem to be more applicable in the playground of middle class.

According to Global Wealth Report (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2015), there are totally one billion adults in the world holding wealth amount at US\$ 10,000 to US\$ 100,000 in 2015, which is defined as middle-range wealth. Among them, China accounted for 36% of those individuals, double the number of that in 2000. Moreover,

estimated by China's company Alibaba, number of the burgeoning middle class and the above, with annual disposable income more than US\$ 24,000, will increase to 100 million in 2020 (South China Morning Post, 2015). Beneath the significant rise are dramatic shifts in consumption dynamics of luxury market. Chinese luxury market has experienced negative growth in 2014 and 2015 due to the anticorruption and cutting down on daigou market (grey market where luxury goods are bought and resold by Chinese travelers abroad). Finally, a slower growth has been made in 2016 on segments of cars, beauty, food and service, while traditional segments like jet and yacht market remained stagnated. It is found that the growth indeed is driven by Chinese middle class rather than high-end consumers. Considering the increasing purchase power of middle class, luxury brands are actually shift battle to middle-level market (Bain, 2016). Accordingly, with increasing people are getting rich in China, the era of mass luxury has arrived. Hereafter, it is timely to rethink if the Gatsby metaphor is more precise by taking account of middle class; if what people have called Chinese high-end market is actually only a tip of iceberg in the really rich group.

The third refutation to media's construction of the rich as homogenous group comes from a close look at demographic details of China's ultra-rich. Wealth organization reveals China's rich are much younger than whom from Western countries, with the average age at 50 (Forbes, 2016). Meanwhile, the speed of producing billionaires in modern China seems to be striking. Based on a Billionaire report (UBS & PWC, 2016), year of 2015 witnessed one new Chinese billionaire every three days. The majority of those are from segments of technology, retail and real estate. Though there is a slowdown in economic growth, the upgrading of industries and the evolution of economic diversification are creating ideal environment for grassroots entrepreneurs to get rich fast. The newly-established wealth leads to a distinct situation in China where 85% of the rich are self-made billionaires and there are hardly any multigenerational families. However, China is still facing a first-ever major handover of wealth since its open-up. The term of "fu er dai" becomes a common word recently to depict the millennials who are going to inherit the huge wealth from parents (BBC, 2016). This

transition period further opposes to the viewpoint that China's rich is a homogeneous group with Gatsby's analogy as there do have differences within rich group regarding their social upbringing and the way of making money.

In summary, the contention of stereotyped coverage on China's rich group lies in the ignorance of how rich can be defined as rich and how the rich are making money. It is pivotal for a related study to first figure out is it going to study luxury market or the group of ultra-rich per se. Considering the different ways of accumulating wealth, ultra-rich might not be involved in the luxury market while the democratized luxury market is open to the whole audience. It is therefore of significant importance to introduce the concept of habitus into China's emerging market to explore the categories of rich group per se and contribute to existing knowledge on how the real rich secure themselves in tourism arena.

## **2.6 Summarized Framework**

To summarize, the insights offered by the extant research streams contribute to conceptual knowledge of how habitus and conspicuous consumption structure and differentiate the consumption practices of high-end market. Figure 4 is a summarized framework revealing the logical flow of current literature. However, it must be explicitly reported here that this framework is only an outline of reviewed literature in present chapter, rather than the pre-assumptions of findings. Summary of existing literature better informs current research on study background, gaps and significance. More importantly, it further guides the interview design on what types of questions should be asked and which information should be gained from informants. Findings of present study will only be elucidated from data analysis and therefore displayed in Chapter 4.

In the discipline of sociology, consumption field has long been regarded as the consequential domain of social stratum. Fundamental scholars (e.g., Marx, Weber, Veblen, Simmel, Warner, and Bourdieu) have tackled this topic either as the main conceptualizations or subsidiary themes of their studies. Among them, analytical frameworks offered by Veblen and Bourdieu focused more on the topic of elite



distinction (Daloz, 2007b). Veblen and Bourdieu's legacies are relevant in one way but different in their underlying rationale to the manifestations of elite distinction.

A corollary of Veblen's general perspective is that elites or leisure class constantly distance themselves from the mass by purchasing signified products, yet, lower class continually follow these trends set by the leisure upper class (Veblen, 1899). Outlined in Figure 4, leisure class resorts to the conspicuous goods in the high social status consumption field with the aim of distinction. Different from Veblen, Bourdieu shift the arena onto a more nuanced and sophisticated ground where distinction game is grounded on the interrelationship among cultural capital, habitus, taste and field. As delineated in Figure 4, there are three forms representing cultural capital including the embodied cultural capital that internalized in individuals' disposition, objectified cultural capital represented by the form of cultural products and institutionalized cultural capital which acquired by official diploma. The amount and composition of cultural capital can be regarded as the symbolic resources further influencing the specific tastes to be formed (Bourdieu, 1984).

Translated into consumption field, both Veblen and Bourdieu mentioned objectified goods as distinction strategy. However, in Bourdieu's case, the status symbol was not elicited from material scarcity but from the implied cultural capability of understanding the purchased objects. Moreover, Bourdieu put forward the embodied taste which is below the level of consciousness. Downplaying the conspicuous display of material goods, this argument revolved around how consumers consume a commodity in an exclusive and subtle way so that this object can only be consumed and fully appreciated by a limited range of audience. Summarized in the framework in Figure 4, an observation of symbolic shift from Veblen's materiality competition to Bourdieu's tastes competition is drawn. Bourdieu's elite distinction stresses the competition was not a conscious behavior but an unintended result of the expression of cultural capital through consumption practices and cultural objects, while Veblen's differentiation strategies reside in conspicuously purchasing positional goods (Daloz, 2007b, 2010; Holt, 1998; Ilmonen et al., 2010; Friedman, 2005; Gronow, 1997).

Additionally, Bourdieu (1984) argued that, as a type of resources, cultural capital can only be realized into tastes or practices in a particular field. In Bourdieu's generic field of cultural consumption, the highbrow taste is always linked to the consuming preferences and practices of the dominant class while lowbrow or popular taste is occupied by lower class in society. Highbrow taste normally involves abstracted, cultured, de commodified and cosmopolitan form of consumption. It is distant from daily necessity and requires social agents' critically aesthetic judgement (e.g., Prieur & Savage, 2011; Holt, 1998; Hedegard, 2015; Ustuner & Holt, 2010; Heikkila & Rahkonen, 2011; Belk, 2000). However, rather than the aesthetic capacity of cultural objects, the rarer distinction is to "apply the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress or decoration, for example" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 40). Moreover, the signifying practices and objectives are relative concepts dependent on the specific field and social contexts, the forms of cultural capital as well as tastes are in perpetual change (Prieur et al., 2008). This is exactly why examination of the forms of cultural capital to different fields meaningful.

Along with the review of theoretical explanations and major concepts in this section, a number of themes emerged to be explored to account for China's rich consumption pattern in tourism field. These themes inform the formulation of research objectives and will be further addressed in the whole research procedure:

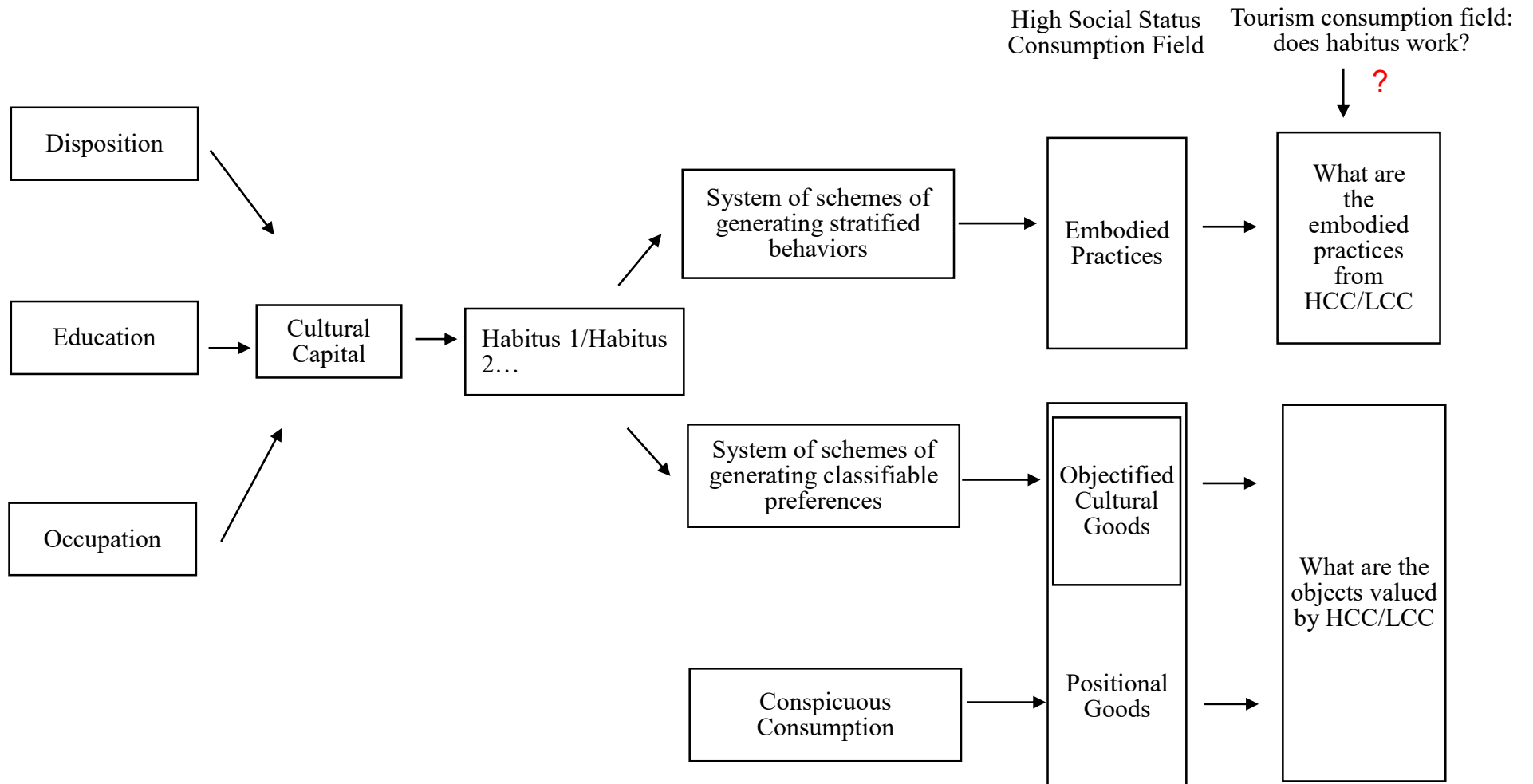
The operationalization of Bourdieu's concepts in tourism field tend to be limited and to a certain extent misappropriated. Extant literature in tourism has largely used only part of Bourdieu's findings to account for different themes in tourism field and their interpretation appear to be speculate. No studies have specifically replicated Bourdieu's method systematically into tourism consumption.

Stepping into the mass tourism era with democratic luxury market, tourism field per se has become less powerful in directly signifying social differentiations. By merely looking at what kinds of luxury products tourists are purchasing is far from enough to effectively differentiate up-market segment. It is therefore interesting to ask how China's elite distinct themselves with others in tourism field and what are the signifying

products and practices for China's rich.

If there do exist the signifying products and practices in tourism field, will the rich with high cultural capital (HCC) different from those of low cultural capital (LCC)? Differences in the two patterns will help this study define the form of highbrow taste and lowbrow taste in tourism field. To answer the above, this study will not only investigate the external markers consecrated by the group of ultra-rich, but also the embodied markers on how HCC and LCC consume the same product. Besides, Bourdieu's concept about disinterestedness, which is seldom discussed by existing literature, will also be explored since the ways of preferring as well as despising are both needed to reveal the sensitized strategies of elite taste.

Extant conceptualizations of the relationship between social class and consumption pattern have been developed and focused on the Western countries. It therefore perhaps poses challenges and difficulties to capture the specificities of taste dynamics in emerging markets. As China is still evolving with the fastest speed to generate the relatively younger ultra-rich, media has widely delineated this group as Asian Gatsby with Veblen's concept. However, it is worthwhile to ask to what extent Veblen's and Bourdieu's distinction practices are potent, and whether there are emerging forms of distinction in less developed countries.



**Figure 4. Conceptual Framework**

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

The type of glasses you wear affects the world you see. It makes sense to learn about different kinds of glasses, to ensure that you choose the pair that best suits you, and hence that you understand how different people, wearing different glasses, see the world in such different ways.

---- Tracy, 2012: 38

This chapter explicates the qualitative methodology deployed in current thesis. It starts from the introduction of qualitative inquiry and research paradigm, which present as the generic umbrella to guide the overall research design with systematic units of data collection, sampling, analysis and credibility. Additionally, the notable methodological and ethical concerns regarding researching elites are also outlined in the study procedures.

### **3.1 Qualitative Inquiry**

Qualitative research gained its first acceptance in the field of early ethnography in 1900s. Till the period of World War II, researchers using qualitative inquiry emphasized on objective accounts of field experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In the late 1970s, more interpretive paradigms focusing on subjective interpretation occurred. There was an increasing application of qualitative research across disciplines. Not limited to the traditional subjects of sociology and anthropology, studies adopting qualitative approach started to be widely accepted and acknowledged by discipline-specific journals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Comparatively, the systematic way of using qualitative inquiry in tourism field is a more recent emergence. It is suggested that most of the foundational studies in tourism field dating back to 1970s to 1980s indeed adopted the qualitative approach. However, they were mostly published in non-tourism journals. The tourism-specific journals at that period were mainly dominated by quantitative studies (Cohen, 1988). It is until the late 1990s that tourism scholars started to shift focus beyond positivism and realized the incapability of pure quantitative studies in addressing the rich meanings and the deep understandings of tourism phenomenon (Riley & Love, 2000).

The term of qualitative denotes the nature, quality, meanings and process rather than frequency, quantity and intensity of the entities. Qualitative inquiry is therefore a methodological approach emphasizing on the process of inductive reasoning and the perspective of emic understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The key nature of qualitative inquiry encompasses its focuses on naturalistic setting, contextual positioning, interpretive practices and in-depth understandings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Hence, the aim of qualitative research is to extract the meaning from a particular human phenomenon through the exploration of “how”, “why”, “what” and “when”; and the role of researcher in qualitative studies is subjective and emic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). In order to construct meaningful inquiry, data generated from qualitative studies is various and creative -- namely in-depth interview, observations, websites and written materials. These multiple forms of data are normally thick and detailed (Richards, 2014). To interpret the thick and detailed data, “funnel” metaphor is used for qualitative researchers. Researcher usually starts from a big picture and wide-open question, then slowly narrows down the focus along with the data accumulation. Therefore, sensitivity is required during the process of narrowing down (Tracy, 2012: 26).

Under both qualitative and quantitative research, there are four competing paradigms reflecting researchers’ basic beliefs and worldviews, namely positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Paradigm refers to the researchers’ ways of understanding the nature of reality, building knowledge and collecting information. It varies according to researchers’ stance on ontology, epistemology and methodology (Tracy, 2012). Ontologically, how the reality exists and what is the nature of the real world imply the basic belief of the researcher. The basic belief further impacts the epistemological inquiry on the relationship between the researcher and the unknown. Finally, ontology and epistemology determine the methods that the researcher is going to use for gathering information and finding answers to the unknown (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). On the basis of these three dimensions, paradigms of positivism and postpositivism generally assumes that the real things in the world are universal and apprehendable (positivism), or at least partly

apprehendable (postpositivism). The findings are believed to be true (positivism) or partly to be true (postpositivism) and the corresponding methodology tend to be quantitative-oriented including the testing of hypothesis and experiments. By contrast, paradigms of critical theory and constructivism address the historical realism (critical theory) or even relativism (constructivism). There is an emphasis on the interactions between the researcher and the researched object. Thus, dialogic, hermeneutic or dialectic methodology is normally adopted. Based on the above, the objectivity is losing while researcher's subjectivity is growing when moving from positivism to constructivism. With the interpretive and etic traits, qualitative research is therefore largely in association with critical theory and constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Jennings, 2012; Tracy, 2012).

The overarching objective of this study is to explore if habitus structures the consumption practices of China's rich. To achieve this objective, several issues regarding the nature of research question deserve a brief mention. Firstly, stepping in a postmodern society, extensive literature on business research has suggested that consumption practices no longer indicate class boundaries. Likewise, faced with an era of mass tourism, question about if tourism consumption still alludes social differences and if habitus further serves behind this differentiation remained unanswered. Secondly, in a field whereby habitus has not been widely examined, pre-assumption on the form of highbrow taste and lowbrow taste into survey items become inaccurate. Meanwhile, purely survey items cannot inform current study about the embodied taste, which is how the participants consume the objectified symbols. An in-depth understanding on the role of habitus and the form of taste in tourism consumption is thereby necessary before the development of measurement and formulation of hypothesis. Furthermore, group of the rich representing the high-end market has been ignored in tourism studies due to its inaccessibility. Hence, any exploration of this market can only be started from ultra-rich's own interpretations, and only participants with a certain amount of wealth level can be meaningfully contributed to this research. Considering the above, this study is exploratory and inductive in nature and a qualitative inquiry will be therefore

adopted to seek the rich understandings towards tourism consumption of China's rich.

### **3.2 Research Lens – Structuralist-Constructivism**

Structuralism has been firstly started in linguistics and Gestalt psychology. In linguistics, the seminal works were from Saussure on the syntagmatic and associative relationship of the sign system in language. The meaning of the sign is based on the combination of the signified (concept) and the signifier (word) (Echtner, 1999). In Gestalt psychology, it was indicated that all human's conscious experience is structuralized. As the meaning of Germany word "Gestalt" signifies "pattern", human beings were believed to make sense of contextual patterns by contrasting one object with the other similar ones. This relational difference further formed a system or structure shared with other categories of people (Sturrock, 2008).

Grounded on Gestalt psychology, Claude Levi-Strauss, who is regarded as the most purely structuralism representative, applied the nature of human intellectual and the mode of thought in anthropology. Levi-Strauss contended that there are universal mental structures governing individuals' meaning-making process. The mental structures indeed served as unconscious logic and its particular format may be differently presented in different societies, but universal to the whole human society (Sturrock, 2008). For instance, Levi-Strauss offered an example of "reciprocity", which is denoted as the universal knowledge guiding people on the judgement of the appropriateness of daily actions. This universal knowledge, "reciprocity", was believed as an unconscious knowledge code structured in human's mental set (Levi-Strauss, 1957).

However, the above thoughts met its fierce criticism from scholars advocating constructivism. The foundational constructivist Piaget commented that: "there is no structure apart from construction" (Piaget, 1971: 68). Different from structuralism, constructivists argued that the structure should not be regarded as static since human beings are indeed aware of this structure. Moreover, changes can always be made on structures, as social reality is constructed and mediated by human (Warnick, 1979). According to Guba (1990), constructivism embraces the multiple realities that only



exist in individuals' minds. Therefore, researchers should subjectively interact with informants for the various constructions and bring the various realities to the consensus as much as possible. Taken as a whole, "reality is a product of one's own creation" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013: 63).

Yet, the starting point for Bourdieu was a departure from the reliance on any single paradigm. With the aim of resolving the antagonism between objectivism and subjectivism which is inherent in the center of basic typology of paradigms, Bourdieu described himself as a practitioner of structuralist-constructivism (Dressler, 2001; Cunliffe, 2010). That is, Bourdieu intended to transcend the theoretical opposition between the structuralism and constructivism; and further established a dialectical dualism between social agency and structure (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990). By structuralism, Bourdieu believed that there exist social structures which are free from social agents' consciousness and capable of guiding and limiting agents' daily practices. By constructivism, Bourdieu admitted that individuals' perceptions and action are the products of social interactions. Moreover, people do have the capabilities of comprehending and accumulating experiences for future actions (Bourdieu, 1989). Taken as a whole, social structure in a particular field transcends agents' thoughts and partly determines agents' actions. On the other hand, it is co-evolving with individuals' perceptions. The final strategies adopted by the social actors are indeed the outcome of this dialectical interaction. Reflecting on specific concepts, Bourdieu termed the concept of habitus as "durable, transposable dispositions" and "structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). As a structured structure, habitus operates beyond individuals' control and thus largely formulated by dispositions or social origins. While as a structuring structure, habitus is still an on-going process embracing the opportunities of picking up specific types of cultural capital required in particular field through education or professions. To conclude, Bourdieu's focus is on "the strategies of social actors and to show how these are produced by the interplay of their individual habitus and the structures of the particular field in which they are acting" (Jackson, 2008:164).

Given the above, habitus and field are the two key concepts building the bridge between

Bourdieu's structuralism and constructivism. As this study intends to apply Bourdieu's concepts of habitus into the field of tourism consumption, the basic belief adopted in present study will be therefore in consistent with Bourdieu's theoretical position. Specifically, the ontological assumption is that habitus is a dual scheme determined by both objective structure and subjective accumulation. Likewise, epistemology of the study is therefore the constructivism. Importantly, this study regards habitus as the concept that firstly can be reflected subjectively by informants' interpretation and meanwhile can be objectively measured through the scores of social structures. By the construction of personal consumption behaviors, the nuanced differences observed in their consumption patterns will be linked to different levels of habitus (HCC and LCC in this study). Meanwhile, this study acknowledges the evolving and accumulating traits in habitus, which helps the development of first and second habitus as the underlying scheme explaining the differences of HCC and LCC (details see Chapter 2.3.2). This epistemological stance provides a perspective on the potential cleavages in group of China's rich and additional insights on how different categories of the rich consume the same tourism products in an era of mass tourism. Informed by the above ontology and epistemology, the specific methodological design will be illustrated as follows.

### **3.3 Research Design – Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory was firstly formulated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) with the aim of offering complementary method in the sociology field wherein quantitative approaches held the hegemony in 1960s. It is essentially a research method serves for the qualitative inquires and consists of a set of inductive guidelines pertinent to data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Charmaz, 2000). Although it was designed for qualitative studies in discerning and explaining social life, it stemmed from symbolic interactionism with the shared ontological assumption of the realist worldview. The premise for Glaser and Strauss's (1967) method was that reality is out of individuals' consciousness (Annells, 1996). There are several characteristics linked to the general grounded theory, namely: openness, phenomenon-related, iterative

process and theory building. Openness refers that no priori theories existed for the researched area. The aim of using grounded theory is to inductively explore a phenomena and build a new theory rather than deductively prove the preconceived theories. Moreover, this newly-built theory focuses on the explanation of a particular phenomenon, not the generalization of the findings to the larger population. Lastly, iterative process involves the cyclical iteration on comparing and collecting data. Grounded theory requires a continuous comparison of the collected data. Data will only be regarded as complete when there are no newer insights contributing to the manifold categories of existing data (Gibson & Hartman, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Initially, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) work as well as Glaser's (1992) later work are more related to a positivist canons and they are regarded as objective grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2000; Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017). By saying grounded theory under positivist tenet, it means objective grounded theorists treated the whole research process objectively and rigorously with the minimum scholar's bias. This process emphasized that the researchers should play an objective role in the processes of interviews and data treatment. Objective grounded theorists prescribed a rigorous and systematical procedures for their proponents to follow so that qualitative studies can be regarded as scientific and legitimated. Specifically, there is a series of coding procedures such as axial coding and selective coding (Charmaz, 2000). And scholar is suggested to collect data before the reading of literature. That is, data should be the only primacy which reveals concept and produces research topic. The ignorance of literature and research topics is indeed suggested on purpose, as objective grounded theorists believed it is the way to keep researcher in neutral position when analyze data. Data is therefore viewed from a positivist paradigm that the reality can be collected "as it is" (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017: 52).

After Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original reflections on grounded theory, a number of researchers have revisited this original texts and offered new interpretations. Most of the critics on the classic grounded theory revolved around the objectivist and positivist epistemology. It is questioned if the researchers can really take a neutral position and if

the concepts emerged from data can be viewed as pure reality without considering contextual situations. Moreover, as a heuristic tool, is grounded theory a tool of extracting concepts to discovery theory or narrating stories to understand phenomena (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017)? The version of Charmaz's (2000, 2008) constructivist grounded theory responded to these inquiries. Grounded on the same ontological stance of realism, Charmaz (2000) indeed proposed a new epistemology assumption of constructivist for grounded theory. This version suggested that data cannot be objectively emerged as reality. Rather, the reality will only be discovered from the interactions between researcher and informants and between the researched and its situated context and culture. Accordingly, the role of scholar under this version is more subjectively as a member of meaning-making. Notably, this interactive process of meaning-making is constructed only under certain conditions including the exploration of the underlying values, structures and situations behind these meanings. Consequently, constructivist grounded theory posits that "how participants' meanings and actions are connected to larger discourses and social structures of which they may be unaware" (Charmaz & Bryant, 2016: 350).

In addition to the prior differences, constructivist grounded theorists recognizes researchers' prior familiarity with relevant concepts. Rather than the ignorance of research topics and prior reading of literature posited by classic grounded theorists, the preconception about the possible knowledge categories before the data collection is accepted (Charmaz, 2008). Besides, the understanding towards theory building is also different. Objectivist grounded theorists believed that grounded theory is a useful tool to generate formal theory. Instead of proclaiming it as formal theory, constructivist named it as middle-range theory only catering to the particular context, places and groups (Charmaz, 2006). A middle-range theory may be developed into a formal theory applicable to varied contexts in later stage, but the value of theory building for constructivist refers to the "the interpretive understanding of phenomena" (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017: 55).

Informed by the above portrayal, it can be seen that these two versions of grounded

theory shared the same research premises about the philosophical ontology. Both two versions assume the realism ontology that reality is independent from individuals' mind. However, classic grounded theory takes the epistemological stance of positivist whilst constructivist grounded theory adopts the relativism epistemology. In particular, this study will employ the approach of grounded theory, especially Charmaz's (2000, 2006, 2008) constructivist grounded theory as the guidelines to shape the upcoming phases of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The specific reasons are as below: firstly, habitus and the format of taste have been researched in business and sociology literature, yet little effort is made in the field of tourism consumption, let alone the tourism consumption of high-end segment. Grounded theory allows the researcher to inductively explore the new understandings and build new theory of this segment wherein new insights are needed. Additionally, the paradigm of this study is structuralist-constructivism which views the reality as independent from social agents' consciousness. However, on the other hand, individuals' actions are the products of interaction between social structure and self-perceptions. This basic belief determines the specific methodology used in this study should also be consistent with the philosophical premises. The constructivist grounded theory echoes this dualism and embraces the realism ontology but relativism epistemology. It assumes that the multiple reality exists out of individuals' mind, but it can be constructed under certain conditions. It takes into account people's interactions with the unaware contexts and structures while creating meaning. Therefore, this study consider the constructivist grounded theory as an appropriate method and the following sections will also adhere to its principles and guidelines.

### **3.4 Data Collection – In-depth Interview**

The design of data collection in qualitative research takes a variety of forms such as observation, interview, case studies, documents and visual methods. Among them, interview is a method of gaining information, opinion and belief from people. It normally involves the face-to-face interaction between the interviewers and interviewees (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954). Moreover, interview is deemed as one of

the most popular interests in qualitative inquiry as it offers in-depth understandings towards the complex issues from individuals' direct opinions and experiences (Turner, 2010). Oftentimes, interview gives researchers the opportunity to explore the intangible human-related phenomena like feelings, thoughts and intentions which cannot be directly observed by other forms of qualitative design (Patton, 1990). Focusing on the individuals' constructions about what, why and how to consume tourism products from a constructivist perspective, the present research will use interview as the method for data collection.

There are various forms of interviewing types including the most formal format of structured interviews from one end, semi-structured interviews in the middle and the most informal unstructured interviews at the other. In this continuum, other forms of interviews reside between the two ends. While the structured interviews with standardized questions are largely used for survey designs with the aim of generating quantitative data, semi-structured and unstructured interviews take on the conversational form and are more related to the in-depth interviews (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). There are some typical characteristics inherent in in-depth interviews. Emphasizing on the conversational format, a significant length of time and increased interactions with informants are required. In addition, the valued information is sought from informants instead of researchers. A familiarity with informants' language and symbols is therefore needed for researchers to deliver reliable accounts of interviewees' world (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Specifically, in-depth interview, from a constructivists' view, is a journey negotiated and created by both interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer is regarded as a traveler that "asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation as wandering together with" (Steinar, 1996: 4).

Comparing the unstructured interview with semi-structured approach, the unstructured ones seek for the in-depth understanding without any prior knowledge framing the conversation flow. However, this informal approach poses challenges for researchers

on accessing specific interview settings, locating the right interviewees and gaining trust to make the interviews as casual as possible (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Nevertheless, unstructured interview usually generates the highest drop rate of the irrelevant data (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Traditionally, it is chosen by ethnographic research as a way of complementing field trip and participant observations. More recently, it is also favored by postmodern studies to seek for the creative way of collecting and understanding data (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Accordingly, most qualitative researchers adopted semi-structured approaches. By semi-structure approach, researchers offer some guides or structures based on the top interests but proceed with the conversation flexibly with the greater room for the informants' recounts and narratives (Brinkmann, 2014). In this regard, semi-structured approach allows the researcher to focus on research topics and induce a more valid accounts of informants' perception towards reality. Considering that this study is guided by explicit topic area on tourism consumption, the content of interviews is therefore scheduled around this topic. Accordingly, semi-structured interview will be employed in present study to efficiently align with the study objectives but meanwhile allow for the greater flexibility on the mode of asking.

Under the tenet of constructivist grounded theory, the semi-structured interviews in present study will also fit the strategies of constructivist grounded approach. According to Charmaz (2006), a semi-structured cast is particularly well suited to the grounded theory since the both approaches require open-ended mode of asking yet paced process, unrestricted expression yet directed topic. Particularly, a constructivist grounded method keeps researchers closely involved in the process of data collection through the data analysis at the beginning stage of interviews. This means unlike the normal qualitative interviews, grounded theorists start to go through the ideas and themes once they obtain the preliminary data. After studying the preliminary data, a narrow-down is needed by resorting to additional interviews for the focused data to fill in conceptual void. This engagement fosters researchers to combine the strategies of flexibility as well as control during the data collection. Therefore, a direct control over interview

procedures by following the preconceived topics and a flexibility offered to informants on the private thoughts enhance the incisive understanding on the realities as well as the underlying situations and structures (Charmaz, 2000; 2006).

In addition to the general strategies postulated by constructivist grounded theorists, this study should also attend to the distinct characteristic of the informants. The interviewees in present study are the members from ultra-rich society, which is the thinnest layer of people with greatest wealth and influence across various institutions. “Elite interviewing is characterized by a situation in which the balance is in favor of the respondent” (Burnham, Grant, & Layton-Henry, 2004: 205). This might pose difficulties for less skilled interviewers to control the interview flow and direction (Bygnes, 2008). As such, aside from the general interview strategies, anyone studying the fine structure of the rich should pay extra attention to the tactics during the interview process (Zuckerman, 1972). Elite interview initially referred to the interviews with politicians and policy-makers (Dexter, 1970), it subsequently developed into a single research method in social science for interviewing-up the informants with higher positions and knowledge (Darbi & Hall, 2014). Based on the extant literature pertinent to interviewing elites, a summary of strategies for interviewing the rich is offered as follows:

### **3.4.1 Intensive preparation**

Preparations prior to the interview is highly important for interviewing elites. As business magnates, ultra-rich might not be willing to dedicate time to something trivial. The same amount of time probably will generate high benefit if spent on business projects. Moreover, normally interviewer will only have one chance to interview the informant once the interview request is permitted. Therefore, preparations can affect the informants’ willingness to continue and the interview completeness of obtaining answers to all the questions (Zuckerman, 1972; Lilleker, 2003). Preparations can involve prior communications with the prospective informants and the information search for the informants’ background. The prior communication with informants usually concerns the clear and brief statements on the aims, length, venue, time and



recording issue of the interview (Beamer, 2002). By expressing the nature of the researched topics and emphasizing the value of informants' input can help enlighten the chance of co-operation. Furthermore, a mention of people and institutes supporting your research adds legitimacy and credence to the interview. And a mention of informants already interviewed offers credibility if the consent is gained from the interviewed people (Richards, 1996). Secondly, online information search of the interviewees' details is necessary. Piecing together the interviewees' basic information on demographics, occupation and preference may help the scholar to customize interview questions under the direction of standardized interview guide. Moreover, a familiarity with the elites' environment can send positive message during the interview that researcher is not completely ignorant of the world where the informants live. Furthermore, it increases the seriousness of the interviewer as well as the legitimacy of the interview process (Zuckerman, 1972).

In present research, informants were recruited through the introduction of two ultra-rich individuals, who are the researcher's personal contacts. By these two gatekeepers, the researcher gained the opportunity of participating in the elites' conferences with the gatekeepers and obtained contacts from the prospect informants. Therefore, the follow-up appointments with the prospect informants on the interview request always started from a mention of gatekeeper and a mention of researcher's supervisor and institute. This added credence on the research and generated almost 50% of response rate on the consent of being interviewed. Additionally, as these prospect informants are ultra-rich and taking key positions in various industries, most of them have their information and speeches published online. An intensive study on informants' details was conducted and brief remarks were made before the interviews.

### **3.4.2 Interview guide/Types of questions**

Interview guide can also be seen as one part of the preparation. However, the making of interview guide is not a one-time task, but an on-going procedure with continuous updating (Leech, 2002; Zuckerman, 1972). Semi-structured interview with open-ended questions is regarded as most appropriate format for elite interviews (Leech, 2002;

Tansey, 2007). But it is improper to use standardized interview questions for the ultra-rich who have considerably more interview experiences than normal people. The dogmatic question can be easily detected by elites whether it is customized into their interests. Therefore, a continuous revision on opened-ended and probing questions of tailoring them into the context in which the informants live is needed (Zuckerman, 1972). Another reason of updating interview questions resides in the assumption of constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theorists suggested a cyclical iteration at the beginning of data collection. After several interviews, the data should be analyzed for recurrent ideas and a narrow of topics is needed, so that extant questions may be adjusted to obtain specific insights (Charmaz, 2000; 2006).

Types of questions asked and the techniques of phrasing questions also affect the outcome of elite interviews. Some questions were anticipated as sensitive and threatening, especially those strongly relate to study objectives, yet require elites to disclose confidential details. In this case, question order seems crucial. It is suggested that personal and sensitive questions should be put off at the end of interview, as a start from nonthreatening questions helps building rapport and creates relaxed atmosphere for the elites (Leech, 2002). Therefore, present research put the information of wealth level under the demographic part with the format of multiple choice. This will only be ticked by informants at the end of the interview. Secondly, the phrasing of the questions by using nuanced techniques and nonjudgmental wording is worth attention as well. For instance, Zuckerman (1972) aimed to understand the working conflicts of high ranking politicians. He phrased his question as “I’m much more interested in the types of occasions that make for conflict and what happens rather than in the people involved” (p. 172), which reassured the informants that the interview was not to probe into confidential information. Specific to the present research, in order to understand to what extent conspicuous consumption may apply to the rich’s tourism consumption, current study phrases the question as “Can any accommodations or guest behaviors make you different from others? What kind of different? How can it make you different?” This phrasing avoids the sensitive and negative words like conspicuous and ostentatious.

Given the above, the present study has conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with China's ultra-rich. Under the tenet of research objectives, open-ended questions and probing questions were established under each research objective respectively to obtain the rich insights from China's rich. Specifically, the interview started from a broad-scope investigation of informants' background information, overall recreation consumption and afterwards revolves around their tourism consumption (See Appendix II). The crucial implication here is distinction in tourism consumption should be understood under the bigger picture of recreation consumption and social influences rather than in isolation. Moreover, the focus of this study is on informants' leisure travel behaviors instead of business travel.

### **3.4.3 Ethical issue**

This study researches on human subject, therefore it generally complies with the broad ethical principles stipulated by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee, 2016) -- namely, the requirement to gain consent from informants, the ensuring of the confidentiality on research data, voluntary involvement by the informants and the protection of the informants' rights with minimum risks. Aside from broad principles, ethical considerations should be discussed in details when it comes to elite settings (Phillips, 1998). Based on the aspects of general guideline and specific study context, this study adheres to the ethical codes in different stages of interviewing elites. First, as anonymity is essential when the researched topics are relatively sensitive (Lee, 1993), informants' detailed information (e.g., names and company) are disclosed in this study. Secondly, interviews were only conducted by the researcher of this study and a tape recorder was used after reaching an agreement with informants. If informants refused to be recorded, only interview notes will be taken. Copies of transcripts and interview notes were sent to interviewees for their acknowledgement, so that they can adjust any misunderstandings (Woliver, 2002; Dexter, 1970). Furthermore, to ensure the confidentiality of interview data, the whole data set was only transcribed by the researcher of present study. The transcripts data was secured in locked office and shared with co-researchers as well as committee

members after stripping from identifiers (Tracy, 2012). Finally, being aware of the sensitivity on the term of “being rich” in China (Wang, 2012), the notion of “rich” was not mentioned and rephrased as “high-end” or “high-level” in the interview. The research objective expressed to interviewees was therefore the exploration of tourism consumption from high-end members rather than from the rich individuals. This follows Ellis (2007)’s remarks on ethics that researchers “constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling” (p. 26).

### **3.5 Research Sampling – Selection of Interviewees**

It has been argued that qualitative studies have devoted little attention to the sampling strategies, and few studies employing interview method have reported the sampling processes in detail (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). In general, sampling refers to the steps of deciding specific sampling criteria, sample size and the way of accessing to the targeted participants (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). In qualitative sampling, the selection of informants is based on the judgement of whether samples can provide in-depth understandings towards the key research interests of the study (Bernard, 2011). Since elite group is regarded as more difficult to access (Desmond, 2004; England, 2002) and the gaining of access involves various ethics concerns (Thuesen, 2011), it is of vital importance to introduce the sampling procedures of present research.

#### **3.5.1 Theoretical sampling strategy**

Whilst Patton (1990: 243) proposed that there are several sampling strategies in qualitative studies including snowball sampling, case sampling, homogeneous sampling, theoretical sampling, intensity sampling and criterion sampling, theoretical sampling is regarded as the defining quality of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). Theoretical sampling refers to the process wherein the researcher looks for more relevant data to supplement and extract the categories of the emerging theory in existing data on hand. This process will only finish when the data is saturated and no new ideas emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It matches the central interest within grounded theory for a comparative analysis of data and a continuous refinement on emerging

categories. There are three stages pertinent to theoretical sampling: collecting and starting with initial data, constructing provisional concepts or categories, and refining these categories through further data collection (Charmaz, 2000).

Operationally, the necessity in implementing theoretical sampling is that interviews should not be only conducted within single data collection period. Rather, it requires the gaining of preliminary data and developed tentative pertinent categories. Afterwards, these categories take back the researcher to the interview field to obtain more explications on how, when and to what extent these tentative categories relevant (Charmaz, 2006). Guided by constructivist grounded theory, the current study will also employ theoretical sampling strategy. Since the forms of tastes in tourism field are open to exploration, theoretical sampling strategy therefore helps the present research to fill out the tentative categories for the rich's consumption. Meanwhile, data of current thesis was collected in three stages. Data analysis started right after the completion of first-stage data collection. Interview guidelines were therefore revised and narrowed down after each time of data collection.

### **3.5.2 Sampling criteria**

This research sampled the informants who can be regarded as ultra-rich Chinese. The threshold of ultra-rich is US\$ 30 Million in investable wealth, which is the mostly-used criteria for UHNWI (Ultra-high-net-worth-individuals) in the industry wealth report (see Appendix I). Notably, a number of studies indicated that Bourdieu's habitus and taste has hidden some important sociocultural index such as gender (Bennett et al, 2009) and age/generation cohort (Turner & Edmunds, 2002). In order to expand Bourdieu's general distinction framework, gender and generation cohort will not be controlled in this study, and findings will still examine the differences between older rich and younger rich, female and male. In particular, informants of this study should satisfy criteria as below:

1. Individuals with more than US\$ 30 Million in investable wealth
2. Participants from Mainland China (including those currently with another nationality while satisfying all the criteria as below: originally from Mainland,

grew up in Mainland and major business in Mainland)

There is no fixed requirement for sample size in this study. Firstly, sample size in qualitative study depends on the aim of the inquiry, the richness of obtained information and the study resources available (Patton, 1990). Secondly, theoretical sampling in grounded theory demands the study stop sampling when the conceptual categories are saturated (Charmaz, 2006). This study finally stopped sampling after 29 interviews when the conceptual categories and cultural capital profiles reach theoretical saturation.

### **3.5.3 Recruitment/ Gaining access**

It has been widely acknowledged that studying-up of elite groups is more difficult than other studies due to the inaccessibility (Desmond, 2004; England, 2002). One of the most important concerns in sampling elite interviews is getting in the door. Without the gaining of access, none of the research objectives regarding elite studies can be fulfilled (Goldstein, 2002). Based on this, some suggestions are made in extant literature on how to recruit elite interviewees. For example, Gamson (1995) suggested that seeking the help from a referee with powerful network and social capital is of paramount importance in facilitating access to elite groups. Making connections with right referee and potential informants requires researchers to build trust with participants yet without compromising ethical codes (Thuesen, 2011). Moreover, the identification of research objectives and a nice way of illustrating general topics to potential informants enhance the chances of getting feedback. A nice way of explicating research topics usually concerns the emphasis on the value of informants' input and perspectives of viewing interviews as co-operation (Richards, 1996).

Current thesis also adopts the preceding suggestions. Based on the sampling criteria, the initial referees or gatekeepers were identified from researcher's friends. Three friends satisfying the sampling criteria were located and approached. All of them were telephoned for a brief introduction on the aim of interview, study objectives and the request of recommending potential informants. As the research topic of current study is tourism consumption of high-end segment, which is not as sensitive and threatening as political and personal issues, all of the three informants agreed to be interviewed and

two of them consented to be the gatekeepers for recommending more potential informants. Subsequently, face-to-face informal gatherings were made with the two gatekeepers during December 2016 to March 2017. A detailed plan on participants' recruitment was discussed and the researcher was invited to their club meeting held on April 2017. By the introduction of the two gatekeepers, the researcher gained contacts from 36 potential informants on that club meeting. One week after the club meeting, the researcher sent the follow-up interview requests to these 36 prospect informants. Finally, 17 of them replied and agreed on a face-to-face interview in the coming four months. Ultimately, these 17 participants comprised the first batch of interviewees. By the introduction of informants interviewed in the first batch, another 15 interviewees were approached and interviewed in another two rounds of data collection. However, three interviews were excluded from final data analysis due to the physical disability of two informants which generates bias in their tourism consumption and incomplete interview (very short session) with one informant. In total, 29 complete interviews were finally made with China's UHNWIs face to face, lasting from one and half hours to four hours. The specific demographic details of those 29 informants are listed in Appendix III.

### **3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Grounded theory is an effective method for offering flexible guidelines of collecting, mining, refining and making sense of data (Riley & Love, 2000). Different from the data analysis procedures within general grounded theory, constructivist grounded theorists emphasize the influence from context and culture in which informants live. Furthermore, theory is not generated from itself, but from a comparative analysis by researchers. Subjectivities are acknowledged in data analysis and researchers therefore have the responsibilities of being reflexive about what they are constructing, where are the constructions meaningful and to what extent the constructions make sense (Charmaz, 2008). Specifically, this study will follow the analyzing guidelines offered by constructivist grounded theorist of Charmaz (2000, 2006).

### 3.6.1 Coding

The major analytical step in grounded analysis involves data coding. Qualitative coding refers to “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006: 43). Therefore, the aim of qualitative coding is to move beyond the concrete sentences in data set to concise ideas and analytic interpretations. There are different strategies to conduct coding process, namely, Glaser’s (1978) initial coding and focused coding; Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) axial coding; and Glaser’s (1978) theoretical coding which is the advanced version of focused coding. The most used approach by Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2008) under the constructivist grounded perspective is, however, the initial coding and focused coding. Initial coding is especially practiced by line-by-line coding, which concerns the examining of interview data line by line and the subsequent defining on the actions or events of each line (Glaser, 1978). This approach keeps the researcher open to subjects’ views of reality and obtains a close look of the informants’ world (Charmaz, 2000). However, the understanding of openness towards participants’ world has a nuanced difference between Galser’s (1978) classical perspective and Charmaz’s (2000, 2006, 2008) constructivist approach. In Galser’s perspective, the reality exists in data and no prior knowledge should be involved before the initial coding. Yet, Charmaz’s constructivist view believes open-ended coding should be conducted under the familiarity with preconceived concepts. “There is a difference between an open mind and an empty head” (Dey, 1999: 251). Hence, line-by-line coding under constructivist approach in particular demands researchers to pay attention to sensitizing concepts pertinent to study background and to critically code data with the considerations of underlying process, structures and contexts (Charmaz, 2000, 2006).

The second stage of data coding is focused coding. Focused coding is based on the codes elicited from the initial coding. The aim of focused coding is to select the most significant codes to account for the large amount of data. Therefore, it requires researcher to determine which initial codes make sense and further categorize and synthesize them into analytic framework. Along with this selective process, the



constant comparative analysis is needed (Charmaz, 2006). Specifically, Charmaz (1983) listed the following techniques of making comparisons: comparing different interview transcripts; comparing different sections in one interview transcript; comparing incidents to incidents; comparing data with codes; and comparing one code with other codes. While the former three are mostly used in the initial coding, the last two are key steps in focused coding for researcher to decide the adequacy of initial codes. Aside from generating selective codes and analytic framework, making comparisons also informs the researcher when to finish gathering data (Charmaz, 2006). For grounded theory, when there is no new characteristics of theoretical categories emerging from the fresh data, the saturation point is achieved. This saturation criterion also echoes the theoretical sampling strategy in grounded theory.

### **3.6.2 Memo writing**

Along with the journey of qualitative coding, memo-writing is a crucial step to involve the researcher in the data analysis and link researcher's thoughts and comparisons at different points of analysis. By capturing the emerged codes, memo-writing facilitates the development of new ideas and helps the upward move from initial coding to focused coding. Therefore, memo-writing connects the whole coding stage as a systematic research process (Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006). The exercise of memo-writing starts from the initial coding session and finishes until the end of writing-up stage. As the purpose of memo-writing is to spontaneously reflect on the analysis, it varies in length and forms based on research process and personal styles (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). "We write our memos in informal, unofficial language for personal use...Keep writing memos however you write and in whatever way advances your thinking" (Charmaz, 2006: 80).

Yet, some suggestions are made regarding memo-writing by grounded theorists. Charmaz (1995) argued that memo-writing can be structured into early writing and advanced writing. Early writing is to foster the researcher to immerse in the emerging data. It is an exploration period in which the researcher can discover the ideas, codes and conjectures. Freewriting and clustering are suggested to enable an open mind of

understanding data. Thereafter, the advanced writing is mainly to raise the relevant codes into conceptual categories. It concerns how the categories develop and what are the representing codes under each category. By writing and comparing the categories, the researcher builds the potential analytic framework (Charmaz, 2006).

Based on the above steps, current thesis also followed the analytic procedures of initial coding, focused coding and memo writing. The analysis stage started when the researcher finish transcribing the initial data set. Thereafter, the initial coding was conducted on a line-by-line basis. Remarkably, the comparative analysis in current study involves the comparisons between two fixed categories, namely, HCC and LCC pattern. However, this was not proceeded in the initial coding as the researcher in the former stages looked at participants' consumption patterns with open mind. After the analysis of both participants' tourism consumption and leisure consumption, a tentative match of consumption patterns to cultural capital profiles were made after each round of data collection.

During initial coding, memos were kept taken manually on excel for facilitating the emergence of action codes and comparative analysis. After the initial coding, focused coding were practiced. Focused coding stresses the selection of action codes and development of conceptual categories. Notably, it is until the stage of focused coding that the researcher started intensive comparisons of different consumption patterns with different cultural capital profiles.

### **3.7 Data Credibility**

The evaluation of qualitative work resides in the usefulness of findings rather than if another researcher can explore the similar concepts and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In the case of grounded theory research, the findings should be credible, original, resonant and useful. However, the credibility of the qualitative findings will only be achieved if the researcher is able to make strong logical connections between the wide range of data set and the emerged conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2006) and explains clearly on the methodological procedures to make the reader well informed (Wells, 2013). In sum, the credible findings are those

“generating understandings” (Stenbacka, 2001: 551).

In order to test the credibility of qualitative studies, triangulation is regarded as an effective strategy to enhance the evaluation of the research (Mathison, 1988; Decrop, 1999). There are mainly four ways of judging triangulation by engaging multiple data sources (Healy & Perry, 2000), multiple methods of collecting data (Burke, 1997), different investigators of interpreting data (Burke, 1997), and multiple theoretical perspectives of interpreting data (Denzin, 1978).

This study conducted the triangulation through multiple data sources. Various sources of using data include primary data from interviews and observations, and secondary data such as documents, newspaper, photographs and video. Additionally, writing field notes during interview also falls in this category. Field notes can be regarded as additional textual document as well as the reflection on certain specific concerns which might not be directly indicated on interview transcripts (Decrop, 1999). Specific to current research, firstly, a review of wealth reports and media coverage on the consumption behaviors of China’ rich in literature addresses a multiple sources of data. Secondly, this study wrote field notes during each interview process. The focus of field notes covered several observations on interviewee’s living environment (if it is conducted in the rich’s office or home), interviewee’s confidence and familiarity when introduce the way of consuming one tourism product and interviewee’s non-verbal behavior. Finally, the field notes were used to supplement the memos written during data analysis. This consistent way of writing and thinking enhances the engagement and reflexivity of the researcher on the study process.

Instead of researcher being a stranger in data collection and data analysis as prescribed by classic grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory underlines the co-construction of the reality between researchers and participants. That is, constructivist grounded theory recognizes the researchers’ role in influencing and shaping the knowledge creation (Charmaz, 2006). In current thesis, to reflect on the author’s position during the research process, personal memos recording researcher’s on-site feelings and involvements were conducted. Such personal memos are not only worked

as supplements to field notes for enhancing research credibility, but also used as reminder for the researcher to manage the boundary between informants' construction and the researcher's pre-assumed concepts in an interview setting. Apart from the personal memos, a supervisor-supervisee relationship also plays as a way of reflexivity in participant selection, interviewing and data analysis. Regular check-in of research process by the supervisor of current thesis assist the author in positioning herself throughout the research process.

#### **CHAPTER 4: TOURISM CONSUMPTION OF CHINA'S RICH**

*"One of the factors that distinguish money from some other kinds of resources is that it can be invested to generate more of itself, with the amount of money returned a function of the risks taken."*

---McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2012, p.139

According to Bourdieu (1984, 1990), cultural capital should be conceptualized in different fields and takes pluralistic forms of field-dependent resources. These field-dependent resources can be further mobilized according to the indigenous logics of particular field for context-specific status game. Specifically, field-dependent capital can be conceptualized as objectified forms and embodied forms. The objectified forms refer to the possession of commodities that are symbolically worthwhile, whilst the embodied forms represent consumers' inherent knowledge and practices in one field that both unconsciously and consciously formed via socialization (Erickson, Johnson, & Kivel, 2009). In an emerging economy, the new rich from China are showcasing wide-ranging consumption interests and related distinction practices which shed light on the worldwide dynamics of status competition. This chapter reports the objectified and embodied resources happened in travel field. First, the objectified symbols are linking to three segments of rich and the possible sociocultural structures behind these segments are outlined. Second, the embodied practices of China's rich in tourism consumption field are identified.

## **4.1 Objectified Resources Favored by China's Rich**

Field-dependent resources consecrated by the rich takes a variety of objectified forms covering major tourism sectors including destinations (travel distance), hotels, restaurants, carriers and booking channels. In the analysis of the travel behaviors of twenty-nine informants, different types of travel products preferred by this group emerged. Drawing from these objectified travel products, three categories of the rich who tend to travel in different degrees of materialistic styles are classified as Sweet Rich, Sour Rich and Bitter Rich (Figure 5). The underlying socioeconomic factors differentiating these three categories are further derived from the data. The following sections explicate in detail about the objectified symbols embedded in the three categories and the socioeconomically distinguished status of the three groups. The coding frame of objectified consumption forms exhibited by China's rich in travel field is summarized in Table 3 at the end of Chapter 4.1.

### **4.1.1 Three categories of the rich with embedded material symbols**

#### **4.1.1.1 Sweet Rich**

The informants described how they become vested in travel field by taking frequent long-haul leisure trips, staying at leading luxury hotels, patronizing worldwide Michelin restaurants, commuting flexibly via private jet and booking travel products with great ease from private bank or experienced secretaries, which are indicative of their abundant financial strengths. Interviewees falling into this category tend to be experienced travelers who are “on-the-move” across the globe to cater to both business and leisure needs. When the interviewer asked which countries they have visited, informants normally rephrased the question and listed the places they haven't visited. Their hyper-mobility is reflected in the data that most of them have multiple oversea residences and company branches. High exposure to a transnational landscape cultivates their habit of taking up leisure trips as yearly routine. For instance, Informant #21 and # 12 described:

*“Most Chinese rich now have second home in some destinations and stay there for several days per year. Sometimes it is also a place for friends gathering. Although*

*my company is based in Beijing, my home or family is in Singapore. I stay in Singapore half of the time per month.” (Informant #21)*

*“I must travel several times a year and it is my routine...These trips even exclude yearly family gatherings to Los Angeles and Sanya as we have houses there and I regard them as home cities instead of destinations...But beside these cities, I need to go to a new place for travel. It may be convenient for me to plan a trip to some destinations where my corporate divisions based.” (Informant #12)*

Within their global reach, informants under this category favor top luxury hotels and VIP guesthouses with average room rate over 5K RMB per night during travel. Several informants mentioned that suite room is a must when booking a hotel and hotels with Michelin restaurants and exclusive SPA just inside the property will be the first choice. Beside Michelin, they select restaurants with superior food and cuisine. Above and beyond the material symbols consumed in destinations, money also creates new enclaves for the informants whereby they can bring material symbols from destination back to home place. As informant #1 mentioned that:

*“Every time I travel to Chongqing I will eat XX (brand name) hotpot, which is quite authentic Sichuan taste. One day I found that they opened the first chain store in my city but it takes two to three hours in queue to get a seat. It is just inconvenient when you miss that taste in everyday life. So what I did was to open another chain store of same brand in my city... your restaurant, so just eat anytime you want...and meanwhile make money.”*

In order to access to the privileged tourism products and garner exotic travel experiences, specialized booking channels and insider information cues are needed. Some informants used black card released from financial organizations to enjoy VIP services when booking travel products worldwide. Both Informant #1 and Informant #17 reported that they resort to private bank for arranging unordinary travel products such as visiting mysterious yet unopened island (Informant #1) or booking a famous Michelin restaurant which costs half year in waiting via normal reservations (Informant

# 17). In addition, secretaries play a key role in serving as insiders and making the whole travel plans:

*“For China’s companies, most secretaries follow the boss since the company started and have become vice presidents now. But they still work as secretary in front of us and make travel plans as they are indeed very experienced and professional in doing this. They have a secretary social circle where everyone shares destinations that their boss has been to. My secretary always contacts the secretary of XXX (one of China’s top rich) when she designs travel activities for me.” (Informant # 12)*

All informants from this group fly business class and some of them have family private jets. When they travel with big group of friends, chartering a plane is preferred so that time flexibility and friends’ interaction on flight are guaranteed. Besides, two informants own private yachts. Informants also have requirements for the car uses in destinations. All informants ask for new cars of certain brands which haven’t been used for more than two years. Three of them specifically request limousine service in destination.

#### 4.1.1.2 Sour Rich

Different from Sweet Rich, informants under Sour Rich devote relatively less leisure time on travel and demonstrate moderate materialistic pursuits of travel consumption. Bleisure is a prominent characteristic of this group that business-related activities come the first. Many informants are used to take leisure trips nearby the destination after their business trip was completed. Some informants regard travel as a leisure pastime, but the primary motivation in taking up this habit is to seek for new business ideas and enlarge business social contacts. For instance, Informant #16 expressed that:

*“I like travel, but my current career status doesn’t allow me to partake of pure leisure travel very often...the trigger point for starting a trip is usually to enlarge social contacts and get refreshed business ideas. For example, I was in Singapore last week as my friend introduced me the son of local top rich. I visited his company*

*and discussed potential partnership opportunities. Of course, afterwards I took two-day leisure trip by joining some parties and watching pop concerts...if there is no such invitation, I won't just travel to Singapore for concerts."*

During trips, informants in this group prefer to stay at normal five-star hotel with average room rate around 2K RMB per night. They normally book standard room type. Many of them mentioned that they have highest membership in international hotel groups, which in most of the cases helps them upgrade to a higher standard room type. As what Informant # 4 explained:

*"I have platinum membership in Starwood group. They usually upgrade platinum guests into suite rooms depending on room availability. So just book standard room type."*

Both Informant # 5 and Informant # 19 commented that they will only book suite rooms when friends visit them in hotel.

*"Normally if I stay alone, I book standard room. What you need is just a comfortable bed. For me, I even skip breakfast. But if I know there is friend or business partner visit me today, I will book suite room as it is more convenient to discuss things in living room of the suite. We can also go to lounge as all suites are in executive floor." (Informant # 5)*

This cost-effective consumption value is also mirrored in their selection of travel carriers. The majority choose economy class when fly short haul trip and business class is acceptable when the flight is over three hours. Informant # 11 and Informant # 18 shared their strategy of class upgrade on flight.

*"Travelling by air for us is like taking bus for normal people. I mean, it is just too frequent and we are typical flying trapezes. If the flight is within two hours, I always go for economy class. But I normally book full rate ticket. Airlines tend to upgrade guests with full rate economy class to business class." (Informant # 18)*



Aside from cost-effective value, this group of rich also display down to earth trait in selecting travel products comparing with Sweet Rich. Instead of having professional secretaries as travel insiders, rich informants under this category rely on online search and online booking to pick up travel information. Secretaries are only offering booking and logistics support instead of deciding and planning the whole trip for the informants. Informants are oftentimes interested in local special food whilst disfavor Michelin restaurants. Checking online about restaurant ratings and reviews is also their norm during travel. Rather than limousine service chosen by Sweet Rich, informants under Sour Rich favor self-driving or rent a car by themselves from online sharing platform. When making decisions about which destination to visit, some refer to the customized niches outlined by high-end travel agents whilst some follow the updates of travel celebrities from Microblog and Wechat.

#### 4.1.1.3 Bitter Rich

Analyzing from data, four informants fall into Bitter Rich wherein their travel consumption is much restricted compared with foregoing groups. All of the respondents plan their trips via travel agencies and most of their leisure trips happened within Asia regions. Long-haul trips to Europe or US are associated with business (e.g., government tour) and learning components (e.g., EMBA class tour). Informant # 15 remarked that:

*“I have been to Europe last year for twenty days. It was organized by local government who called on the owners of top taxpayers to have a study tour together in Europe. Other than that, I have only travelled within Asia regions. I was quite busy on my business whose scope is largely within the province, so I don’t really have chances to visit other places in both senses of business and leisure in past ten years. These years I started to realize that maybe I should travel occasionally to relax. I began from closest destinations in Asia via travel agents first.”*

Limited attention and indulgence in travel experiences meanwhile leads to a relatively frugal style of spending on tourism segments. Two of them only fly with economy class although their wealth status to a greater extent allows them to travel more decently:

*“I make money from scratch and I always consider if it is necessary to spend money. When it comes to travel, I don’t think it is necessary to fly business class. It is also a way to educate your kids for being frugal. Of course, if I travel with friends, I will book business class to conform to others’ custom.” (Informant # 20)*

Respondents in this group expect four to five star hotels with average room rate around 1K RMB during trips. They play a passive role in travel by accepting extant hotel and restaurant arrangements included in travel agencies’ mass packages: “What I do is to find a travel agency and select an existing package. It is convenient and I prefer state-owned travel agencies as they are more reliable.” (Informant # 15)

#### **4.1.2 Socioeconomically distinguished status**

In past three decades, China has moved up to a global scale with its industrial transformation from resource-exploitation and labor-intensified genres to value-added production. This leads to a considerable number of rich entrepreneurs starting up their business and accumulating initial wealth from traditional manufacture industries such as mineral exploitation and construction, whilst stabilizing and transiting into recent industries including real estate and investment. Accordingly, all of the interviewees of present study are entrepreneurs. Two thirds of the interviewees come from similar backgrounds relevant to real estate wherein further breakdown falls into shopping malls, hotels, business real estate and property management. Besides, new professions such as owner of fashion corporation, advertisement company, wine merchant and founder of drink company are also identified.

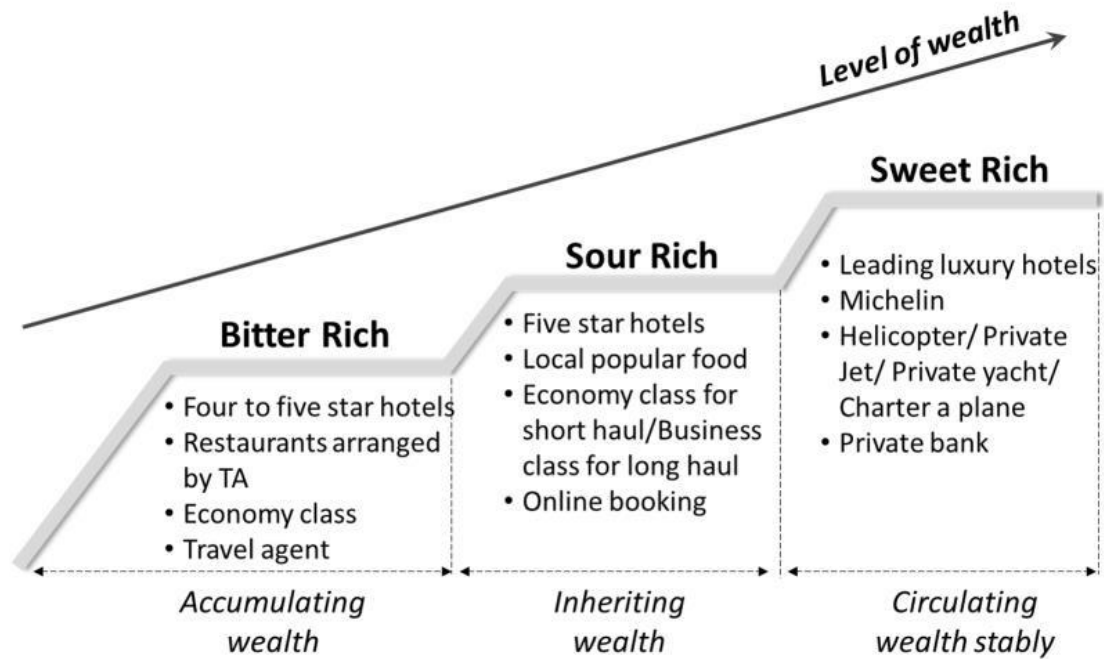
Except two participants who are relatively younger (29-year-old) or older (51-year-old) than others, the rest stay at similar life course with ages ranging from 34 to 41 years old. Five of the informants are the first-generation rich, the remainders are the second-generation rich working as the successors of family enterprises. The substantial wealth allows these informants to participate extensively in consumer culture. Same cases happened to tourism filed that most of the interviewees were exposed to travel since an earlier childhood when their parents brought them together to domestic or oversea business trips. Some of them went for oversea studies since high school or bachelor,

which enlarged significantly their travel distance. Yet, it is widely agreed that most extensive travel arrived when they started work and took business trips as a working style.

Regarding the leisure trips, informants normally travel 3-6 times on an annual basis. The majority consider travel as visiting oversea attractions, irrespective of domestic destinations. It is noted that Middle East (e.g., Israel) and South America (e.g., Peru) are regions where many interviewees haven't been to and intend to visit, whilst the rest regions such as Europe, North America, Africa and Asia have been frequently mentioned in their descriptions. Furthermore, many respondents demonstrated preferences for new hotels opened within two years. Location and opening time are two key criteria for selecting hotels during trips. Aside from business and leisure trips, government and EMBA studying tours prevail in China rich's travel experiences. Above all, safety is the biggest concern that all respondents have emphasized. Most of the respondents often check the size of the plane and reputation of the airline company when travel. Some also pay attention to hotel safety measures:

*“My secretary knows that every time she passes me travel schedules, she needs to prepare the floor evacuation plan of booked hotels. I always make sure every aspect of safety details before departure.” (Informant # 28)*

Despite the common characteristics illustrated above, cleavages are reflected on the appropriation of different material symbols from different socio-economic groups. A closer look at interview data and respondents' backgrounds reveals that several factors, of which in relation to wealth level and wealth status, account for the variation between levels and cornucopia of consuming positional goods that are usually perceived as luxurious. As depicted in Figure 5, Bitter Rich, Sour Rich and Sweet Rich are labels indicative of respondents' wealth levels and wealth status. First, the level of wealth still remains a central attribute in mapping out China rich's symbolic participation in tourism consumption. Respondents with higher level of wealth are associated with greater ease and greater frequencies of using private jet, yachts and VIP services. They are also strongly associated with higher familiarity of consuming in a luxurious milieu



**Figure 5. Objectified Forms and Socioeconomic Stages**

due to not only financial strength but also accessibility to insider information cues offered by professional secretaries, private bank and worldwide friends.

However, wealth alone cannot fully grasp the rich's consumption patterns of symbolic participation in tourism. For instance, some informants under Sour Rich tend to have similar level of wealth of Sweet Rich, whilst consume more modestly. Analyzing from data, it is wealth status and time of being rich that working together with wealth level in structuring China rich's appropriation of objectified products in tourism consumption. China is facing its first-ever major handover of wealth from first generation rich to second generation rich since opening up. More than half of the respondents in current study are second-generation rich who largely stay at the stage of inheriting wealth. They are the acting or vice CEOs of family enterprises, sheltered from the power of parents' generation remained in company. As such, career status determines that they focus more on business ideas and socialization. Pure leisure travel and material indulgence in tourism consumption arena is still less important for them compared with Sweet Rich. Unlike the stage of wealth inheriting, a few second-generation rich who have dealt with business maturely without shadows of parents, together with several long-standing first generation rich, instead have entered into a

stage of stable wealth circulation. Most respondents under Sweet Rich took their companies public on stock markets and settled companies into a more stable organizational structure, which enables them to have time for developing personal potential and enjoyment in recreational field. They consider travel as important leisure pursuit. Finally, four respondents, who got rich recently in the last decade, fall into Sour Rich who have primary objective as accumulating initial wealth and demonstrate inexperienced and frugal trait when travel.

Whilst wealth level, wealth status and time of being rich capture the different material symbols that different rich may be affiliated with, the objectified trappings are not necessarily revealing enough to allude China rich's distinction practices in the arena of tourism consumption. It is important to note from data that while some Sweet Rich consume conspicuous positional products for its intrinsic material rarity, there are also Sweet Rich who regard the positional goods as norms. Although informants from Sour Rich consume less frequently in highly prestigious field, many of them present better understanding of the products they are consuming. For instance, when two informants were asked to further clarify why they like Israel, Informant # 12 from Sweet Rich explained that:

*“For Chinese citizens once you have an Israel stamp on passport, you will be rejected if you visit Arab countries afterwards. Therefore, we tend to not risk visiting Israel. But there are some chances for me to visit through government tours which won't leave any stamps on my passport. I should go this year and post it on WeChat timelines to give an account of my WeChat friends.”*

Unlike the emphasis on the inaccessibility of Israel expressed by Informant #12, the main appeal of Israel to informant # 11 from Sour Rich was its “religion” and “history”. Informant # 11 recalled that:

*“I still remembered the moment I stood before Western Wall. It was a shock to feel how Jews spoke to God in front of the only remnant of old days after thousand years of travelling homeless. In China, we have poet expressing similar meaning:*

*Things remain as ever, yet he is here no more. For me, Jerusalem is such a beautiful name, that's why I was almost the first batch of Chinese tourists visiting there with disregard for safety. No regrets."*

Although both informants show the same preferences for the objectified destination, the descriptions of reasons offer completely different readings to their distinction practices. As such, symbolic baggage is not accurate to figure out the rich's distinction practices by simply looking at which exotic destinations have they been and which hotels have they stayed. In order to tap into informants' social distinction strategies deployed at tourism site, the following section will further report the findings related to informants' consumption practices.

**Table 3. The Coding Frame of Objectified Consumption Forms**

**Sweet Rich (10 Interviewees)**

I1, I7, I8, I12, I13, I17, I21, I23, I27, I28		No. of informants	No. of informants	No. of Informants	No. of Informants						
1	Hotels (average rate around 5k/night)	The best/most expensive five-star hotel	5 (I1,I12,I17,I23,I28)	Leading luxury hotels (Peninsula, Four Seasons, Upper House etc.)	8 (I1,I8,I12,I13,I17,I23,I27,I28)	VIP guesthouse	5 (I7,I8,I13,I17,I27)	Suite room	5 (I1, I12,I17,I23,I28)		
2	Restaurant	Michelin restaurants	6 (I1,I13,I17,I23,I27,I28)	Flexibility in bringing local dining back home	3 (I1, I17, I21)	Superior food	6 (I13, I17, I21, I23, I27, I28)				
3	Carriers	Helicopter/Private Jet/Charter a plane	3 (I1, I12, I17)	Business class	10 (All)	Limousine service in destination	3 (I1, I12, I28)	Private yacht	2 (I8, I1)		
4	Destinations	Large radius of travel	10 (All)	Hyper mobility: frequent patron to certain overseas destinations	Oversea Estate: 8 (I1,I7,I8,I12,I13,I17,I21,I27) Oversea Company Branches: 6 (I1, I8, I12, I13, I23, I28)	Participation: Frequent leisure travelers/yearly routine	10 (All)				
5	Booking tools/ Info cues	Private bank	2 (I1, I17)	Black card	4 (I1, I12, I13, I17)	Experienced secretary in planning leisure trip	6 (I1, I7, I12, I17, I23, I28)	Worldwide local friends	4 (I8, I12, I13, I28)	Independent travel	10 (All)

**Sour Rich (15 Interviewees)**

I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I9, I11, I14, I16, I18, I19, I24, I25, I26, I29		No. of informants	No. of informants	No. of Informants	No. of Informants				
1	Hotels (average rate around 2K/night)	Standard room type/upgrade to suite due to membership/ book suite when friends visit	9 (I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I16, I19, I24, I29)	Five star hotels (W, Shangri-La, Macro Polo, Marriot, Hilton etc.)	12 (I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I14, I16, I18, I19, I24, I26, I29)	Boutique/design hotel/Airbnb	6 (I2, I9, I11, I16, I24, I25)	VIP Guesthouse	1 (I3)
2	Restaurant	Disfavor Michelin	6 (I4, I5, I6, I9, I14, I25)	Local popular food	11 (I2, I4, I5, I6, I9, I11, I14, I16, I19, I24, I25)	Restaurants with good ratings and reviews	4 (I2, I4, I9, I24)		
3	Carriers	Short haul--economy class Long haul -- business class	9 (I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I9, I14, I19, I25)	Economy class/ full rate economy class for upgrade	2 (I11, I18)	Rent a car online/self-driving/	5 (I2, I4, I5, I9, I19)		
4	Destinations	Large radius of travel	9 (I2, I4, I5, I11, I14, I18, I24, I25, I29)	Medium radius of travel	6 (I3, I6, I9, I16, I19, I26)	Participation: Less pure leisure travels due to work duty/ travel for business ideas or social contacts	11 (I3, I6, I9, I14, I16, I18, I19, I24, I25, I26, I29)		
5	Booking tools/ Info cues	Online booking	10 (I2, I4, I5, I9, I11, I16, I18, I24, I25, I26)	Secretaries help booking but not planning	4 (I6, I9, I14, I19)	Cewebriety from Microblog or Wechat	3 (I3, I5, I19)	High-end travel agent	3 (I3, I14, I19)

**Bitter Rich (4 Interviewees)**

I10, I15, I20, I22		No. of informants	No. of informants	No. of Informants	No. of Informants				
1	Hotels (average rate around 1K/night)	Standard room type	4 (All)	Four to five star hotels (Wyndham, Days Hotel, four star hotels arranged in TA package)	3 (I15, I20, I22)	Boutique guesthouse	1 (I10)		
2	Restaurant	Meals arranged by TA	2 (I20, I15)	Local food with good ratings	1 (I22)				
3	Carriers	Short haul--economy class Long haul -- business class/	2 (I10, I22)	Economy class	2 (I15, I20)				
4	Destinations	Short radius of leisure travel (Asia Region)	4 (All)	Limited long-haul travel experience	4 (I10, I15, I20, I22)				
5	Booking tools/ Info cues	Travel agent	4 (All)	Asia countries with business partners (Taiwan, Japan)	2 (I20, I22)	Online booking	2 (I10, I22)		

## **4.2 Embodied Resources Practiced by China's Rich**

In contrast to objectified resources which are explicit and straightforward to observe from data, the embodied resources or the manners of how China's rich consume travel products are instead implicit and sophisticated. Line by line coding and constant comparisons of pieces of data were used in analysis to decode the aesthetic appreciations and distinguished manners of consuming from the respondents. The analysis led to four pair-wise themes which are emerged from an array of focused codes. The pair-wise themes with their underlying focused codes offer systematic differences in the rich's consumption practices when travel. The following parts report on the embodied ways of consuming shown in the informants' recounts. The coding frame of embodied resources is summarized in Table 4 at the end of Chapter 4.2.

### **4.2.1 Aesthetic sensibilities VS surface skimming**

#### **4.2.1.1 Mentally Demanding and In-Depth Comparisons VS Relaxation and Direct Comparisons**

Some respondents demonstrate confidence in judging and understanding their personal trips by critical thinking. They characterized the destination they preferred based upon attractions' enlightening resonance in triggering tourists' deep thinking and in-depth comparisons. These respondents emphasize learning components when travel and tend to easily mobilize personal intellectual ability in appreciating what they are visiting. Informant # 21's reflection highlighted why he accentuates learning elements and mental acuity during trips:

*“Nowadays people always regard travel too leisurely and ignore its key nature in knowledge seeking. There is Grand Tour in the West, but China also has its own Grand Tour. In ancient China, Confucians and scholars were required to travel to refine their humanistic feelings. You can see that all of the classical poems by Su Dongpo were completed at the scenic spots during his trips. That's why once I have time to travel, I do meaningful trips with the aim of further developing my personal interests: wine trips, music trip and literature trips...When I find some poetic*



*couplet displayed in one attraction, my interpretation of the poet is normally different from the reading at home, as I can read it out to the rivers and mountains.”*

Associated with a passion for knowledge and humanistic quest, this type of tourists is also good at providing their own interpretations of how to judge similar genre of attractions by in-depth comparisons. Unsurprisingly, museums, historical places, concerts and venues carrying strong local sociocultural elements are the most mentioned destinations in their recounts. Taken museum as an example, almost all the respondents said that visiting famous museum is on the list when travel, whereas only a few offered logical reasoning on why certain museums in the world become their favorite. Informant # 4 described his passion for visiting museums:

*“I love travel; it is my biggest pastime. Specifically, visiting museums is my favorite travel activity... Visiting a particular museum can be my full reason to go to one destination. I won't get tired of flying a long way to one destination just for the museum there and I won't get tired of looking at one piece for couple of hours.”*

*Interviewer: Which museum do you like the best?*

*“I have been to many museums in the world. I like The Acropolis Museum of Greece and Beijing Palace Museum the most. The Acropolis Museum houses the artworks dated back to ancient Athenians. Ancient Athenians is the period appeals to me in Western history. One small piece of the work in its gallery represents its local culture and history. After visiting it, you will look upon the city from a different perspective. That's also the reason why I don't like British Museum wherein most items are from other places. Yes, it is an epitome of worldwide history, but apparently it doesn't satisfy my needs on the matches between local museums and local culture.”*

Visiting worldwide museums and offering detailed personal judgments tend to be bound up with respondent's stock of knowledge and habit of critical thinking. Some respondents also repeatedly claimed that they are the museum fans, however, the good museums for them seem to merely hinge on the number of artworks that the museum

collected and the reputation of the museum among local attractions: “I like the British Museum and Louver. They are most famous, other museums cannot compare with them in terms of the amount of collection.” (Informant # 12). Informant # 12 refers to the most straightforward indicators to justify his choices. In fact, a number of informants seem to use superficial evidences such as visual images and intuitive feelings to express their direct comparisons of the various destinations and hotels they have been consumed.

*“I went to some cities nearby London like Cambridge and Oxford. I visited iconic attractions, but they looked so-so. I mean, they cannot compare with China. The attractions there visually lack magnificent and grand style...they said this is the biggest lake, but it is not big at all...they said it is the deepest valley, but it is not deep enough... Although UK is the old empire, it is not comparable to China who has the real ‘biggest’ and ‘highest’ attractions.” (Informant # 9)*

Furthermore, for respondents who offer direct comparisons in describing their trips, relaxation is inclined to be the currency of travel. This is often described in the light of entertainment, where the recreational expectation of travel is used as a device to relieve stress, or as a means to aid togetherness with friends and family in a pleasurable environment. They do their best to avoid any tourism products that might invoke negative emotions such as visiting dark attractions. Informant # 6 explained why he does not like visiting The Memorial of the Nanjing Massacre on his trip to Nanjing: “You are out for fun, not for class or training. Do not make yourself tired and do not let anything disturb your good mood.” By comparison, Informant # 2 wanted his trip to be “worth remembering” that he can keep learning from even after the trip. He mentioned his travel experience in Auschwitz Concentration Camp:

*“People somehow have selective amnesia of the tremendous pain they have gone through. I had very clear panic and depression when visiting Auschwitz Concentration Camp. After that trip, I used three weeks to read the book about World War II I bought in Poland and compared it with the version we learnt in high school history class in China.”*

#### 4.2.1.2 Metaphysical VS Pragmatic

When discussed the understanding of travel, a few respondents sought to summarize their feelings into a metaphysical and ambiguous way. In their accounts, they skipped the listing of concrete travel process whilst elaborated their inner psychological mood of travel moments and the overall vibe that one city may bring to them. They desire the touching points which arouse affective interactions. Interestingly, the products that arouse their affective feelings seem to be obscure places or subtle travel trivia, which are largely unnoticed by mass tourists. Informant # 7, a real estate developer who opened a small aquarium on the side, elucidated that instead of pure real estate, how he became committed to building several other industries which can create happiness after a touching moment happened several years ago in France:

*“There is a small aquarium under Eiffel Tower. Eiffel Tower didn’t impress me but that small aquarium touched me. A little girl with blonde and curly hair was sitting in front of aquarium glass and talking to the fish. She kept talking to the fish using her own language... That scene was so healing for me and my vents of feelings opened. I still have that moment as a picture in mind after so many years. I realized that travel can break through my existing cognizance...rather than being busy finding solutions to practical problems, travel reorganize my affective and cognitive structures, which is the foundation of life quality.”*

As depicted above, this informant differentiated his travel pattern by separating his appreciation from the commonsense practice that only iconic and typical destinations are worthwhile to consume. His gaining from the trip such as the “breaking-through of affective and cognitive structure” manifests the informant’s abstract thinking and creative appreciation towards tourism. If a small aquarium offered ever-lasting inspirations for Informant # 7, then what touched Informant # 16 turned out to be travel trivia. Informant # 16 studied in UK for 6 years and have a habit of watching US talk shows. He thought he supposed to be very familiar with US culture until he visited it in person:

*“I always believe that only by presenting in one place physically can we really feel the vibe of that place. When I stayed in US, I found what I had thought before remained at surface. For instance, the atmosphere of freedom, which is manifested in local living style. They like saying "let's go!"... This sentence itself is subtle, in China, not many people say 'let's go' or 'let's do it'...But in US, you heard it so often. They support you and give you the freedom to do what you want...It is very subtle and difficult to express.... nothing really limits you, from eating to driving and to accommodation, people give you a signal that it doesn't matter, try it...as long as not violating the law... nothing is a big deal.”*

By the codes of local language, Informant # 16 felt the free vibe of the city. In similar way, he further illustrated how different cities project different moods on him. Although he has been to relatively less destinations than other respondents, he is observant of details, which adds up to his own travel philosophy such as *“only by presenting physically can we really feel the vibe.”* Seeking greatness in trivialness and conceptualizing travel discovery into a higher level of logic thinking are not commonplace to all the Chinese rich. Such open codes stand in contrast to those respondents who are pragmatic tourists when travel. By using pragmatic, it refers to respondents' keen focus on utilitarian and practical ends when consuming tourism products. For instance, Informant # 19 used the satisfaction of corporeal need to judge his earliest attempts of dining in Michelin restaurants:

*“I remembered that in Turkey Michelin restaurant, they served us dish by dish. My friend told me that he ordered lamb chop for us. I thought lamb chop is the most famous local food, I should eat less for previous dishes and leave enough stomach for the main course of lamb...but you know what, the lamb chop was so small...when the lamb chop arrived at table, we were shocked...it was funny and I realized that Michelin normally serve dish by dish in a small amount...I was not full at that dinner. After that time, I seldom try Michelin no matter how delicious it is, since you cannot even become full!”*

Echoing to this code, the pragmatic traits in others' recount are reflected in some respondents' shallow memory about travel content whilst a deep impression of travel process. Firstly, some respondents talked frequently about travel procedures and tangible entities such as their agendas during travel and the objectified commodities they have consumed, but they didn't invoke a discourse of intangible travel content and travel experiences. When the interviewer asked informants to share their consumption experiences, both Informant # 20 and informant # 23 admitted that they did not have very fresh memory of certain moments with particular products. Instead, Informant # 20 remembered clearly how much money he usually spends on different sectors of tourism and kept listing the iconic sites and cuisines each city is famous for. Likewise, Informant # 23 recalled exhaustively his normal schedules when visit New York including the names of his must-go restaurants, must-stay hotels and must-visit attractions, but was not able to describe how did he feel in the hotel, the restaurants and the city though he has travelled there for many times. Secondly, pragmatic characteristic is also mirrored in some rich's tendency in being calculated consumers when travel. Precisely as what Informant # 25 commented: "*some just travel too hard.*" Some informants in current study mentioned that they have very detailed and strict plans when travel. Visiting most iconic attractions and shopping the latest version of brand product abroad are: "*schedules if you didn't finish, you felt the trip is incomplete*", in a way of fulfilling tasks. Their travel pattern is therefore reduced to ticking scorecard of which destination has been visited, which country has been passed and which latest bag has been collected as completing a practical work:

*"For us, of course we visited the most iconic sites via VIP tickets...I am always a person with strict plans, no matter on work or travel. Once I finalized daily routine during travel such as visiting four attractions a day, then stick to it, don't change...If certain places or restaurants I didn't visit as planned, I felt that I lose something."* (Informant # 23)

## 4.2.2 Sophisticated status markers VS moneyed status markers

### 4.2.2.1 Maven in Consuming Esoteric Products or Experiences VS Moneyed Material Symbols

The intention to consume idiosyncratic products and exotic experiences when travel is likely applicable to all participants since their financial status guarantees the basic material abundance, yet the ability to find the most authentic products and be involved in esoteric experiences is not common to every Chinese rich. Among the informants, some become the characters depicted by their friends that: “*the maven who knows how to travel and how to be an interesting rich*” (e.g., Informant # 13). A maven is particularly mirrored in two aspects: knowing and consuming the products/experiences that other rich ignore or have little chance to access to; and reconfiguring the mass commodities that other rich are also enjoying but applying a nuanced approach in consuming them. The first code of consuming esoteric products/experiences is evident in some rich’s narratives on the ease of finding unique insiders’ commodities and having conversational competence in sharing their personalized travel guides. Taken Informant # 13 as an example, he is a second generation rich working at his family enterprise of electrical appliances but has kept close relationship with elites from various backgrounds including Chinese pop stars and fashionistas. His elite friends have always asked his suggestions prior to travel since he is a well-informed person with extensive unique travel experiences and a famous nick name: “*flesh Wi-Fi among friends*”. He shared his various consumption experiences during travel:

*“Some travel activities I engaged in ten years ago have become quite popular among Chinese entrepreneurs recently such as playing golf in Cancun Mexico, visiting Tibet, watching the great migration in Africa, and travelling to South Pole as well as Eskimo villages. But it is a pity that most places have been overly commodified recently. If you visit Tibet now, it is completely different from what it was before when the scenery was still divine and people were still simple...now it is somehow vulgar. What I am doing now is trying to find destinations that few people have been to. This year I am going to Burning Man festival in US and cruise*

*at Komodo of Indonesia for twelve days. The cruise is special and exclusive... The boat 'DAMAI' is a totally hand-made wooden boat with 50-meter length, which accommodates ten guests only. On that cruise there are personal diving coach and professional photographer following you all the days to train your diving skills and take picture of your diving. I recommended my wife to participate last year when the first boat was just launched. The second boat 'DAMAI II' is under construction; I will join the cruise when the boat is completed."*

*Interviewer: "How do you find those exclusive activities and destinations?"*

*"Half of my business is based in US, which offers me chances of getting to know friends worldwide. I have been interested in garnering authentic restaurant & travel information from worldwide local friends. Searching online by using local APPs and language is a must. You can't always search information from Ctrip (Chinese travel application) where all the content is written by Chinese tourists. Besides, I like to visit a place repeatedly and try different hotels/restaurants. The real tasty food is always hiding behind neighborhood where few tourists visit. Like the really delicious beef noodle in Taipei is never the ones recommended by tourists, but Chen Ba Beef Noodle in a local residential area."*

Doing business in China while maintaining connections to worldwide information flows is a quality that many Chinese rich are currently pursuing for. Being informative is therefore reflected not only in general business field but travel context. Informant # 13's ability of knowing and consuming worldwide exclusive products/experiences is admired by other rich who have money yet limited chances to access to the esoteric products. Just as what Informant # 9 stated: *"although many travel agencies claim that they are dealing with high-end segment, they are still profit-oriented. I am not willing to book through travel agency. I do admire some entrepreneurs who have very amazing friend network all around the world and who know what are the best to buy and where are the best to visit."* While not all the participants have sufficient spare time to highly commit to travel field as an insider as informant # 13, a few respondents are still able

to consume unique travel products that not often cited in others' accounts. Informant # 11 disclosed his means in accessing to the exclusive:

*“How to throw yourselves into the tides of local flows is indeed a skill... Sometimes I hired local gourmet critics or editors of gourmet magazine who can lead me to dining places that few mass tourists can access to. In Italy, we went to a log cabin for lunch. We need prepare lunch ourselves by going outside to search truffles with the assistance of an Italy hunting hound. That hound can smell truffles and dig them out professionally. After hound's help, we wrapped the hole carefully so that new truffles could emerge after raining...For hotels, I prefer design hotels and Airbnb. Location and host are two key criteria...I chose a homestay near Central Park in New York. It is the district where the old money stays. The host is a Jazz musician and he collected many classic Jazz CDs. You know, New York is famous for Jazz. Living there is a perfect combination of city dynamism and Jazz. I felt I am closer to the city.”*

Both Informant # 11 and Informant # 13 revealed their means of accessing to the rare travel commodities and experiences. Apart from the aforementioned exclusive products, the other way of being a maven is some respondents' nuanced and sophisticated approaches in consuming the mass commodities popular among other rich. Wagyu beef is a type of trendy food recently in China and a number of respondents revealed that Wagyu beef is a must try when travel to Japan, but few of them could identify how to select a good piece and what are the processes making the beef delicious. Informant # 13 elaborated the knowledge behind this food:

*“In most famous restaurants there are normally two types of Wagyu beef, one from Japan and one from Australia...the one from Japan can be classified from A1 to A5, and the one from Australia can be classified from M1 to M12...The higher level, the higher ratio between fat and meet; That's why we should select M9 Australia beef or A4 Japan beef onwards, as the fat is distributed more evenly and the beef texture is more tender...Last week, I went to Japan and visited INAKAYA, a Michelin barbecue restaurant. There are different barbecue styles in Japan, the*



*style of INAKAYA is Robatayaki which stresses the freshness of seafood. Chefs can roast fish and beef for you. Normally they only put one seasoning -- sea salt to keep near-fresh condition of the food...After cooking, chefs should serve guests using one hand only by putting the dish on a wooden oar. It is a style which was only available to upper class (the ruling samurai) during Japan Edo period.”*

Likewise, Informant # 21 also showed his exquisite preferences on cuisines. He believes that eat locally and culturally is part of travel and dislike people who eat arbitrarily disregarding the underlying cultural and health components. For instance, wine collection as a hobby has been mentioned by three respondents, but only Informant # 21 reconfigured the normal products and displayed a refined and cultivated means in appreciating an array of wines. Product reconfiguration is particularly related to his elective drinking, contingent on seasons, pairings and atmospheres. This leads to a distinct style from others who drink the preferred type of wine all the year around.

*“Visiting Shaoxing and Moutai (China’s two towns famous for rice wine and Chinese liquor respectively) annually to collect some wines is the highlight of my yearly travel. In different seasons, I taste different wines. For instance, drinking rice wine in Winter and Autumn is healthiest. It is also why all the rice wine occurred in Lu Xun’s (Chinese modern writer) literature was accompanied by winter scenes. I also collect shots and cups when travel since it is an art to use the right cup with right wine. I have special pot for rice wine and it can warm the wine to 45 degrees automatically, which is a perfect temperature in drinking rice wine. Whilst in summer and spring, I tend to drink sake. The type of sake I collected tastes the best with temperature around 10 degrees. Thus, the sake should be chilled in a wine chiller before tasting. In order to have good pairing for sake in daily life, normally Japanese Sashimi, I send my chef team to Japan for annual training. Tasting sake at home is therefore similar to that in Japan as not only the raw material is original but also chefs’ slicing is exquisite...Wine is culture and requires atmosphere... that's why most of my friends like to do wine tasting in my*

*place (a traditional Beijing hutong courtyard), we are not drinking to drunkenness, but to discuss wine, poems and enjoy the beauty of magnolias in my yard.”*

Informant # 21’s passage underlines a series of trying to consume wines like a connoisseur including training private chefs to the standards like the locals and collecting the authentic commodities on destinations. Hiring a chef team and training the private chefs to the standards that the respondent picked up during travel is also observed from Informant # 17’s interview data. One of the routines for Informant # 17 when travel is visiting all the local Michelin restaurants. He enjoyed Michelin services on trips and started to train his chef team by using proclaimed “*Michelin standards*”. He equipped himself with two chef teams, one team based at office who is responsible for his lunch and one at home who is in charge of family meals. The Informant invited the interviewer for lunch at his office. The chef team based at office includes three chefs in kitchen and three servers for serving dishes. Three servers dressed up in uniforms and introduced the dishes one by one carefully to the interviewer. Based on author’s observation notes and the informant’s interview accounts, his consumption of Michelin service at daily life however stands apart from Informant # 21’s delicate reappropriation of wine pairing, but unfolds a yearning for material scarcity and luxury in the name of Michelin standards:

*“My chefs used to work at five star hotels, I hired them and trained them for years. Besides, I trained my servers in Michelin standards such as how to serve a dish in a right gesture, how to place the tableware and how to introduce each dish... Every day they will serve me eight dishes, like Michelin, small amount but delicious. I also require them to decorate the dishes in Michelin style, my aim is not to become full, but enjoy Michelin service in daily life. I invited some of my friends (who are also rich) to have meals in my office often, they joked that they felt ‘humiliated’ as sometimes they just eat very casually and even street food. But street food is something that I can never accept. As you can see what I eat here: this is the wild fish from the deep fish; this rice is the best rice in China, it grows on lava only; also for the duck with strict requirement of growth cycle and organic feed, you*

*cannot find the second place which stews the duck in such a good taste...”*  
(Informant # 17)

Although “*Michelin way*” occurred repeatedly in Informant # 21’s expression, it is more akin to his own interpretations of Michelin standard. For him, Michelin standard he picked up during trips is often cast in terms of a feeling of superiority brought by the material abundance and scarcity. Eating alone in front of a big round table with eight dishes, emphasizing the scarcity of the food, and indulging in over-the-top service offered by uniformly dressed servers are the standards he imposed on his personal chef team. Similarly, other respondents also naturally take pride in material symbols to hallmark the uniqueness of their tourism consumption. For instance, Informant # 1 used “*the most expensive*” as the sole criterion for judging the quality of hotels and restaurants, and explained that price is the most reliable indicator in telling the product level. He can easily identify the differences between a luxurious hotel and a normal five-star hotel based on the quality of room amenities and the range of services. Even though he barely uses extra services except gym in luxurious hotel, he requires booking luxurious hotels which are equipped with comprehensive service genres and advanced interior apparatus since he deems that: “*the hotel matches me*”:

*“For the familiar destinations, I prefer the brand like Peninsula. There are big gaps amongst five-star brands. For instance, a normal Marriot with daily rate around 1500RMB can never match Peninsula with daily rate around 5000RMB. They vary extensively from the texture of faucet, the quality of the bath foam, the equipment of hygienic automatic toilet seat, refined selection of bathroom marble to interior fragrance. These product differences bring distinct consuming moods to guests and a pleasant mood is always the thing I am seeking for...The service I can use in hotels is indeed very limited as long as it has gym and swimming pool, but all the services and facilities need to be there. I mean by having this, the hotel can match me –the hotel should have these services to match my status. This is also why we tend to argue that brand personality should match guests’ social position...For the unfamiliar destinations, I will ask my secretary to select the most*

*expensive hotel since room rate equals to quality as mentioned just now. High flexibility should be assured as I might change the hotel immediately once I found it is not up to my satisfaction level upon arrival...I mean just book a new one and check out this one quietly, no need to raise the complaints and ask for the refund. Money is never a problem, but trouble-free is.” (Informant # 1)*

#### 4.2.2.2 Exclusive Experiences Based on the Transformation from Money to other Resources VS Exclusive Experiential Symbols Achieved by Money

There is a notable tendency of accentuating conversions from economic capital to other personal capital such as political resources and social resources when a few respondents narrated their unforgettable travel experiences. Whereas the majority of informants are still using moneyed markers in tourism field to justify the exclusiveness of their trips, several participants have already shifted to the discourses that are beyond solo travel field and revealing personal resources in not only economy but social networks and politics. That is, they are able to share some exclusive travel experiences which cannot be simply achieved by money but together with other types of personal resources. As exemplified by Informant # 13, his most impressive travel experience is the “trip” to an overseas National Bureau of Investigation:

*“The most impressive trip for me is that I have been invited by XX (name of an overseas country) National Bureau of Investigation to their office since they doubted whether I was a Chinese spy on certain business issues. I visited there to negotiate about the issues together with my team of lawyers. Finally, it turned out that one staff I hired in my overseas company served as a whistleblower who sent biased information to local government. After we settled down the disputes, the magistrates intended to invite me out for lunch, but I refused, I want to eat in their canteen! I mean the canteen National Bureau of Investigation. Why not have a look at the place occurred on movies?... After security check at the entrance of their canteen, I felt like walking into a blockbuster movie: all the uniformed agents were sitting there neatly and having lunch, especially female agents with hair in ponytails. The female agents are very tall, having lunch whilst putting guns right*

*beside them. It is so cool, they are exactly the same with those on movies, it is so movie style! ... For me, it is a fantastic travel experience. Such experiences are important. Experiences are something putting yourself ahead of others. That's also why I have been invited as a guest lecturer in Peking University to share my various experiences related to business and travel...”*

What appeared to arouse Informant # 13's sense of distinction is his exclusive travel experience. A closer examination on the above passage unfolds that this exclusive experience hinges on certain implicit conditions: first, not all the participants are able to have such large international enterprise that generates potential economic disputes which attract oversea National Bureau of Investigation's attention; additionally, the ease of handling disputes and defining this event as an unforgettable travel reveal the informant's abundant social resources; Furthermore, although the informant intended to illustrate travel experiences, things worth pride from him are more likely to be the terms such as “*National Bureau of Investigation*” and “*guest lecturer in top university*” which carry varying degrees of social prestige. If Informant # 13's account is still less-obvious in observing personal social and political resources, the narratives of Informant # 21 and Informant # 7 offered more straightforward cases wherein the interplay of social and political capital is prevalent in their tourism consumption.

For instance, the author of present research conducted interview with Informant # 21 at his office which is a complex of typical Beijing courtyards. The courtyards are located amidst modern buildings. Both privacy and accessibilities to city center are guaranteed. Inside the courtyards, the design style keeps the most original architectural and cultural ties. Informant # 21 introduced that he has the habit of collecting several authentic souvenirs during annual travel and bring them back to this courtyard such as wines and cuisines. He planted over a dozen types of trees in the courtyard and designed several functional areas including table tennis room, calligraphy room and atriums. The reasons that he moved his office from his own highrise to this “*secret garden*” are that the yard collects his favorite travel souvenirs and it remains connected to Chinese

culture. More importantly, it has served as an important social hub that many high-level government officials oftentimes patronize:

*“For instance, in winter of Beijing, hotpot is a must. I tried different combinations during travel and found that hotpot soup made from Mongolia lamb and Yunnan mushroom is the best. I also bring back other interesting souvenirs like calligraphy, poems and young plants to my yard. Many government officials like to come to my yard. The atmosphere is good as we seldom talk about politics or business, but discuss poems and Chinese traditions whilst enjoying the beauty of various flowers...The most beautiful season in my yard is early spring when Magnolia blossoms. We always gather together and see the Magnolia in bright moonlight at night. That is also the perfect occasion to have a pint...They (government officials) don't really have time for leisure travel, coming to my yard is a relax for them. It is also an extension to my travel. Colleting cultured traditions and making my courtyard a more interesting place is a primary motivation for me to continue travel.”*

Facing with China's anti-corruption campaign, the socialization between rich entrepreneurs and government officials has been handled with great caution and become somewhat sensitive. However, Informant # 21 still exhibits rich political resources and gains trust from high-level cadres. He capitalizes on his insightful understandings on travel and manages to transform tourism material symbols into political resources. Likewise, Informant # 7, a real-estate developer and highly experienced tourist himself, has also tried to leverage travel to increase personal social influences. He has designed a series of trips as citywide events between him and his shopping-mall customers. These events include *“musical festival in Edinburgh, Burning Man festival in US, visiting polar bear in Churchill and playing Golf in Mexico”*. According to him, the reason that he launched these events is that: *“I have to become a personalized leader, people felt closer to the public character when I travel with them together”*. Meanwhile, the interplay between various types of personal resources can also be gleaned from his recall on certain memorable travel stories:

*“When I went to XX (an oversea city) with several friends, the governor with his team standing there waiting for us and dressed very formally...I didn’t expect this...My friends and I dressed very casually since I thought it was just a leisure trip. Although I did contact some local officials in advance for potential meeting opportunities and informed them my personal trip, I never expect their governor would be there! With the great warmth and hospitality that I have received, I decided to promote this city through all my travel agents and promised that my company would bring at least half a million Chinese visitors to the city. My company did it! ... When one of the tourist groups exported from our travel agents visited their ocean park, it was closed at that time. My company called the governor's office, then the government re-opened the park immediately just for our tour group. Even the curator came out to serve as a park docent.”*

What this passage illustrated is that the informant distinguished himself by intentionally showing his ability in not only enjoying exclusive travel experiences for himself but as a leader who can influence the travel of others at the industry level. Seeking political connections and further serving the community legitimately after gaining success of family business seems to be one of the prominent patterns for Chinese successful entrepreneurs (Li & Liang, 2015). In contrast, informants who are not as well established in manifold social networks or not as mature in their travel experiences do not act with the same sense of distinction indicative of personal power accumulated from other sources. A handful of informants also constantly underline the unique experiential components of their travels, however, their expression of the exclusiveness still buttresses the advantages of economic resources.

For instance, Informant # 1 kept mentioning how he is vested in travel field by forging a pioneer identity through an array of prestigious travel experiences: *“being the first batch of guests to register the upcoming space travel from Virgin group”*, *“passed 7 airports within 24 hours”* and *“climbing the Everest with helicopter standing by near the mountain foot to fully guarantee safety”*. According to him, these experiences are exclusive and remain inaccessible to most of the mass. The inaccessibility to mass

tourists as a distinction-enhancing resource is also echoed in his recall of his most impressive trip:

*“I rented a helicopter via private bank and flew to an unexplored island which nobody has ever stepped on. The bank arranged a bodyguard armed with a gun for me and the whole trip lasted for around five hours. I cannot remember the details of the island clearly...it has several historical palaces which haven’t been dug up due to limited resources for protection and management. But I still remember my mood at the moment: thrilled! ... I mean what others see are the ones have been dug up and visited by billions of tourists. However, I am the first to be on that island, like a journalist or adventurer!”*

Informant # 1 was not able to illustrate what he has seen about the island itself, but clearly resorted to material symbols such as *“private bank”*, *“bodyguard”* and *“the first visitor”* to solidify how thrilling the trip was. In a similar way, Informant # 17 also highlighted the uniqueness of his trip by stressing on the scarcity of the experience such as *“I am the second Chinese guest visiting there”*. However, a closer look at their exclusive experience unpacks that although the emphasis of consuming exceptional experiences seems to be subtler than simply consuming rare commodities, the so-called exceptional experiences are still achievable by a certain amount of economic resource, which makes a contrast to those whose exclusive travel experience goes way beyond solely economic rarity. The below passage by Informant # 17 portrays how he become a wannabe tourist who booked a prepackaged hotel stay rather than a self-directed process of aesthetic discovery. He took pride in being an early visitor to Chiang Rai and early adopters of the hotel package although Chiang Rai has already been visited by many of the participants:

*“My wife and I went to Chiang Rai in Thailand. People always visit Chiang Mai, but few have been to Chiang Rai. We stayed at Four Season Chiang Rai which only has 13 tent rooms. All tents were on cliff top. We booked a three-day hotel package at a cost of 60K RMB. We were escorted for accessing to the hotel by taking a small boat. The hotel designed several activities such as elephant ride and fishing*



*in the package. Their elephant ride was that the rider sits on the back of elephant directly without any chairs, you cannot find this in other parts of Thailand. After riding, they also offered you spa in a forest with bird tweeting around. Most people know Bangkok, a few know Chiang Mai, and almost no one knows Chiang Rai. The hotel said I am the second Chinese guest there!”*

### **4.2.3 Proactive actor VS passive reactor**

#### 4.2.3.1 Define New Travel VS Comfort Zone

A few respondents in this study are looking for more than “ordinary” formats of travel, the format that is only unique to themselves. As highly experienced travelers, existing ways of travel somehow lack the immanent excitement in creating surprises for the rich. Informant # 11 affirmed that: *“how to transfer money into exciting yet meaningful points seems to be a challenge facing by most of the rich in China now.”* Several informants brought up similar expression of their personalized trip that: *“it is not a format of travel for others, but to me I would like to define it as travel.”* The descriptions in their recount of brand-new forms bear strong affinities to two open codes including ontologically challenging and strong initiative. Firstly, the code of ontologically challenging is well represented in Informant # 11’s interview. Informant # 11, a second-generation rich who used to refuse succeeding his father as CEO and become a journalist for a while, discussed in depth about how to use money to create new form of travel which can challenge personal ontological security:

*“I am trying to create contrasts in travel experiences. In India, I booked one night in hostel at the cost of 10 USD per night. And one night in Taj Mahal hotel with room rate around 1500 USD per night. In hostel, living in shared room, someone snores, someone farts, someone sweats and someone talks in dream...In hotel, living in the suite and enjoy pleasant personal time with wine and fantastic atmosphere. You have the financial abilities to try the best and the worst to get to know what is happening there. So finding contrasts is my way of travel.”*

*Interviewer: “Why do you aspire to find contrasts?”*

*“Contrasts make you uncomfortable...and overture your pre-existing knowledge... I bumped into a temple in India. A group of sadhus was sitting there chanting...I chanted with them and felt quite moved. I mean I felt the spirit of religion at the moment...However, the sadhus turned to me after chanting and charged me 5000 Rupee...Oh, I realized that it is a commodified activity! These contrasts make me reflect on why my inner touch is so cheap? Am I touched because of what I have seen or because of myself? These questions pull myself out of the comfort zone. This is my way of travel.”*

Significantly, Informant # 11 is actively involved in his self-defined travel format by putting himself out of the comfort zone. Besides seeking out ontologically challenging way of travel, some proactive interviewees also exhibit strong sense of initiative spirit in inventing new activities from normalized tourism consumption practices. Unlike other informants who attributed their non-participation of travel to the busy business and family obligations, proactive respondents didn't cast about for excuses of non-travel, although most of tourism products and designs available in market are not interesting anymore to them. Rather, they initiate their own activities to keep themselves active and they regard travel as important in life no matter how busy other obligations are:

*“Now travel for me is no more visiting places but creating content for life. If I can't meet interesting people for a while, I would be very listless... So I fly all around the world and meet interesting people. I flew to Japan before to meet Mr. Naomi Uemura, an adventurer who crossed the north pole solo and lost four fingers during the trip. I am keen to meet these people and listen to their stories. People who are willing to risk life in achieving something must be the ones you can learn from. When you look inside your heart, you may find yourself panic as no belief and religion can support you being an independent person. To race with yourself is always the most important thing.” (Informant # 7)*

Drawing from data, in sharp comparison with the foregoing discussion, there are also a number of informants who strongly favor a tourism consumption pattern that is

comfortable yet unchangeable to themselves. They particularly accentuated preconditions for taking up personal trips. The most frequently mentioned prerequisite is a “*super comfortable hotel with over-the-top services provided*”. To a certain degree, a great hotel seems to be the primary reason for some respondents to visit a destination, irrespective of other local consumption sectors such as culture and attractions.

*“Booking the best hotel is the essence of my travel since spending a whole holiday just in the property is kind of my habit. Best hotel means special and comfortable ones with good spa, Michelin restaurant and in-room swimming pools. No matter which hotel I stay, my routine kept unchanged for several decades: I brought my own tea, tea set, sound box and pajamas...then asked the stuff to prepare VIP fruit plate in advance...small amount but a variety of types. The first thing for me upon arrival in hotel is to soak in a bath, play a piece of music, drink tea and enjoy my fruit plate... no need to visit any places, this is travel...That’s also why I have been to Maldives for so many times.” (Informant # 17)*

Unlike the respondents who try hard to initiate new forms of travel and place themselves out of comfort zone, Informant # 17 extends his residential living style with tea, sound box, tea set and pajamas bought from home to an all-inclusive resort hotel. He acts as an audience watching and enjoying the same performance in the utmost comfort from different stages. If the best hotel is the primary concern for Informant # 17, then one more precondition for informant # 12 for starting a trip is the travel companion.

*“I am a social animal. I must travel with a group of friends. I seldom travel only with wife. Two people are just boring. We travel with friends twice a year.” (Informant # 12)*

*Interviewer: “Will it be difficult to travel with friends all the time since they might have different economic levels with you?”*

*“I don’t have friends who have different economic levels with me...I mean otherwise we won’t even be friends... I grew up with them and we have similar*

*financial and family backgrounds. It is a very stable circle. I only travel with them, no dramas.”*

Such a remark also provides insight into a phenomenon of stability in the rich society. Rich people mingling with similar class is therefore not only reflected in other spheres of social life, but as well as tourism consumption field for certain respondents. Probably, Informant # 12 consciously sticks to his style of travel while unconsciously confines himself within a safety range wherein chance of getting to know others is slim. Keeping an unchanged way of travel, such as only traveling with same friends identified by Informant # 12, is indeed a strategy of being “*trouble-free*”, an open code echoed by a few interviewees. They were somewhat disconcerted by improvisation and exploration happened on trips. As such, money is leveraged to its greatest advantage in reducing any possible improvisations or “*troubles*” which cost extra effort to learn. What money bought in turn help the respondents enlarge their environmental bubble and anchored to their residential style: booking a luxury hotel with a butler who can speak Chinese; visiting an island with friends together to drink at night whilst sleep in the day time; patronizing the same restaurants and doing the same activities when visit one destination repeatedly. As what Informant #19 summarized:

*“Some individuals said they want to climb the Everest, but I don’t understand it. I don’t have a strong motif to seek for any exciting travel experiences including self-driving and hiking, or to have a destination that I must see... travel should be just comfortable.”*

#### 4.2.3.2 Enthusiasm and Curiosity VS Less Autonomy

In many respects, respondents who consume inside their comfort zone interpret their personal role in travel as a passive audience, rather than an active player with natural curiosity and enthusiasm in planning and conducting various trips. Apart from respondents who consume inside comfort zone, there are also respondents who are not willing to travel at all if there is no triggering point. Such passive experiences are particularly shown when many of them expressed that “*my secretary does all the plans*”

or *“I just follow my friends, wherever they go, follow them”*. Part of the reasons to these statements are structural constraints including busy work schedule and family obligations, whilst most of the cases are due to a lack of compelling incentives in taking up a trip. For instance, Informant # 15, who have only undertaken long-haul trip via government tour, explained why he seldom travel:

*“Travel is not important for me; it is mainly to accompany kids for spending summer...In the past several years, I seldom travel since I just started to work in my parents’ enterprise, many things to learn...These years, my daughter has entered into primary school, I am thinking that perhaps it is time to take her to travel since it seems everyone is travelling these days. I usually travel via travel agent, select a product and follow the travel group, it is easy.”*

Busy work status accounts for Informant # 15’s less autonomy in travel, and the triggering point for him to travel is family obligation. The narrative from Informant # 6 offers a further clarification on how lacking of interests in travel determinate a passive role one is playing during trips:

*“I am lazy, I don’t like to move myself, it is my personality, quiet and introverted. I do travel, but I prefer to find an island and just zone out. I can zone out for one to two days without stepping out of my hotel. So where to go is not a problem for me, just a seaside hotel, enough...As far as what I remember, I haven’t planned for any trips yet, every trip was planned by my friends. I follow them and I can accept anything they booked. They said I am a person lacking ambition. I agree, especially no ambition in travel field.”*

While busy work schedules or introverted personality might potentially lead to non-participation and less autonomy for travel, it need not necessarily do so for others. It is worth noting that financial status and work obligations do influence the objectified forms of travel (e.g., time devoted in travel, frequency in being active in privileged tourism field) as illustrated in Chapter 4.1, but it doesn’t mean these factors will lead to a dichotomy of passive and active travelers. Tourists who have less time for travel may

still regard travel as important and actively devote more energy in planning and experiencing the trip. Observed from data, there are informants who have heavier and busier workload than Informant # 15, whilst regard travel as important leisure pursuit; there are informants who are introverted and quiet as Informant # 6, but devote time regularly for solo travel and demonstrate confidence in introducing personal experiences. These informants share a common embodied practice that they have shown great curiosity and enthusiasm in travel, which is different from respondents who empowered friends, secretary and travel agents to plan every detail. For instance, Informant # 13 has three professional secretaries while still planned all his leisure trips on his own:

*“When you spend time on selecting destinations, restaurants and hotels, it is already part of travel. For me, planning trips is something emotional and subjective, you cannot just give requirements to the secretary and reduce the task into a concrete and objective thing. Secretary cannot replace your role as a tourist. For example, I went to Barcelona last month. I selected 10 hotels at the beginning, then narrowed down to 4 hotels. I tried different hotel each day. Every time after booking, I look forward to visiting it. I am curious to know if my real experience accords with my expectation. In Barcelona, some of my booked hotels are chic hotels by famous designers and some are renovated in historical buildings...One is like a haunted house which is centuries old ...I mean if you give this task to your secretary, can she do it as specific as I did? Researching on the destination prior to the trip is kind of my interest, nobody can replace myself.”*

Informant # 13 views travel planning as personal interest and remains curious about all the upcoming travel experiences. Unlike those respondents who travel with friends and have others make travel schedules, Informant # 13 further elaborated his ideas on travel companion:

*“I like to travel alone or in maximum with two people. As you can have your own pace to appreciate things... If you need to gather with friends or family, then ok, you can go to an island and drink together or visit an amusement park with*

*family...that's called gathering rather than travel... The aim of gathering is to mingle with boisterous crowd. However, travel and gathering are two different things. I do gathering very often, but I need time for personal travel as well."*

Likewise, a number of respondents such as Informant # 2, Informant # 24 and Informant # 27 expressed similar opinions with above quotes. They regard travel and gathering as two distinct activities which individuals need both in daily life. However, when it comes to travel, self-planning beforehand is a must. They believe that only they know their inner needs when book a travel product and they are more curious and sensitive in raising up reflective questions during trips where it is not explicitly observed from respondents who are passive tourists. When the interviewer asked those passive respondents about their possible future engagements in travel, the respondents cannot offer specific proposals but responded generally that they may visit the places they haven't been yet. But when the same question was asked to respondents who are enthusiastic about travel, they provided a variety of detailed intentions such as: going heli-skiing off-piste in Canada; participating in Burning Man festival in US and visiting Peru since it is the center of creative Maya culture.

#### **4.2.4 Disinterestedness VS trend followers**

##### **4.2.4.1 Distinction-Over VS Distinction-Between**

Participants in present study often naturally articulated their dislikes and negative inferences alongside their sharing of personal consumption stories, though the interviewer prepared a specific question concerning dislike of something in the end. Such act implies that the respondents tend to gain distinction through contrasting their own consumption practices with those of others. However, to whom do participants distinguish themselves is differently shown in interview data. There are two patterns of dislike observed from data: distinction-over and distinction-between. Central to the pattern of distinction-over is the differentiation over everyone else within the participants group, whilst the pattern of distinction-between accentuates the differentiation between groups. That is, some participants displayed aesthetic refusal of

other rich (within rich group), whereas some participants asserted discrimination of the mass tourists' practices (between rich and mass groups).

Connected to the code of distinction-over is several respondents' strong objection of other rich's travel practices. In most accounts, this dislike is particularly linked to the phenomena of emulative orientations and material extravagance happened to some of Chinese rich. For instance, informant # 7 disavowed those rich who simply emulate the travel activity itself whereas lack the sophistication in understanding the self-directed and pioneered spirit underlying the activity:

*“Wang Shi (Chinese famous entrepreneur) said he has climbed 10 mountains (including The Everest); Huang Nubo (Chinese famous entrepreneur) said he has climbed 10 mountains...then every entrepreneur thinks that climbing 10 mountains means travel and to be an aspiring entrepreneur, he must climb 10 mountains, he must climb The Everest....But who has ever thought of being initiative instead of being defined?”*

In addition, some informants also use this distinction-over practice to classify those who over-indulge in material comfort as *“pretentious rich”*. A pretentious style in the way that many rich consume actively and excessively in almost every sector of tourism whilst experience passively. Both Informant # 4 and Informant # 25 raised a question about *“if it is necessary?”*. They questioned the necessity of owning private jet and of purchasing first class all the while.

*“I can afford high status products, but I will think if it is necessary. There are many rich currently must book first class, must eat the best, must stay in the most expensive, must shop for the most updated items...I felt tired of travelling with them. Although I like hand bags, I won't go to visit a place just to find Channel shop; I won't book the first class for a one-hour flight...I mean it is not necessary.”*  
(Informant # 25)

Apart from material extravagance, what some respondents repel are the contrast of spending actively but experiencing passively exhibited by some Chinese rich.



Informant # 11 described his observations on his friends and explained why he refused to travel with them:

*“I hate those people who can’t fall into asleep if it is not a five-star hotel. They are too pretentious...I don’t like some second generation rich who drink three to four days in an island without any attempt to understand how locals are living. There is an inside motto in the circle of Chinese second generation rich: not to be active, not to be responsible, not to reject. They use this principle for travel as well... ‘What can I create during travel?’ No one will think, just lay down there for three days, that is travel.”*

In contrast, informants who are not as well vested in tourism field or rich social networks don’t embody a same way of impunity toward their peers. Rather, they act with a distinction-between strategy wherein their dislike is put on other group, namely, mass tourists. These participants intentionally demarcate themselves with other mass tourists by indicating their indifference to and repulsion of the consuming practices revealed by mass tourists as well as the commodified products served by the so-called “low-end” staff. For instance, Informant # 28’s narrative on his change of airline companies reflects his repulsion of both “low-end” staff and normal consumers:

*“Before I often flied with Cathy Pacific, recently I have shifted to Singapore Airline. Singapore Airline is doing very well on facilities, meal arrangement, service and safety. More importantly, their flight attendants are carefully selected from local Singaporean who are beautiful and amiable. Instead, service provision from Cathy Pacific has declined dramatically. These years, they tend to have some staff from low-end countries. I mean developing countries such as middle east and even Africa...Besides, the quality of their guests is also declining. Though it is business class, sometimes passengers beside you look just like normal tourists who can disturb you in a certain degree. By contrast, passengers of Singapore Airlines still remain at high-end segment in general.”*

Informant # 28 differentiated himself from normal consumers and service staff hired from developing countries. Likewise, Informant # 5, Informant # 6, Informant # 26 and Informant# 29 have all projected negative connotations toward the destinations, especially domestic destinations, which have been largely patronized by Chinese mass tourists. They dislike Chinese mass tourists who take group bus tour and flood into famous attractions. As Informant # 5 commented: “*Chinese group tourists have made previous divine destinations into commodified and vulgar ground such as Tibet and Lijiang. Only oversea trips can be regard as travel now.*” Moreover, they disgust some oversea destinations wherein local people can speak Chinese and “made-in-China” souvenirs pervade the market. Informant # 29 recounted that: “*the capital of Maldives was terrible, almost all the peddlers can speak Chinese and the souvenirs are imported from China without any local characteristics.*”

#### 4.2.4.2 Cosmopolitan VS Imitation

Through a further look at the data, this study finds that participants who symbolically demarcate themselves from the mass tourists instead indicate an aesthetic admiration of two major groups: western long-standing families and other Chinese famous rich or entrepreneurs. This aesthetic admiration is clearly reflected in their imitations of other rich’s practices and the perceived western lifestyles. Firstly, some participants showed a strong faith in western products and lifestyles whilst attributed this faith to a superficial reference which reveals limited personal aesthetic motivations and values. In the case of the favorite destination, Informant # 17 went to extreme length to narrate how he develop his residential lifestyle as aristocratic as Westerners:

*“My favorite destination is Bordeaux, I like their lifestyle which is the one I will follow in future: buying a castle in Bordeaux with garden, vineyard, wine cellar and servant. I’d like to hire my own European chef, driver, steward, translator and lead my workers to grow grapes and produce my own wine. I will sign on the bottle of each wine and treat my friends.”*

*Interviewer: "How does the visit to Bordeaux influence your future pursuit? Can you share some detailed trip moments or events that trigger your interests?"*

*"I couldn't memorize exactly. But I watched Downton Abbey many years ago and I admired European aristocratic lifestyle since then. Indeed, my financial ability allows me to buy castle and Chateau in Europe, but my business is based in China that I can't fully move to Europe currently...Although I couldn't live in that kind of lifestyle now, part of my current life is indeed similar. For instance, I have my own chef, my own wine cellar, and silverware...My silverware is from Danish Palace. I also bought candlestick from them during my trips there. They were made since 1916 in European royal family. I use the silverware for my meals and sometimes once I light the candlestick, I feel like I am living in Europe."*

Although Informant # 17 identified Bordeaux as his favorite destination, he was unable to illustrate specific travel experiences that trigger his reflection on Western aristocratic lifestyle. Rather, he uses the episodes of TV series as a frame wherein travel is used to reinforce his imaginative image. As such, his mimicking of Western life stays at objectified level including buying a castle, hiring Western chef and steward. In order to enjoy his imagination of Western lifestyle myth, a constant collection of royal objects becomes his highlights during oversea trips. This imitation practice inevitably results in a blind worship in foreign things. It is therefore commonplace to find such expressions from Informant # 17's interview like: *"I seldom travel in China. Although I stay at the best hotels, domestic service standard is not up to the satisfactory level even, let alone compare with oversea hotels."* Similarly, when Informant # 19 concluded that US is a more civilized society, he simply used his only two short trips to US as a reference to verify an idea often viewed by others:

*"I have travelled to US twice, I really like the environment and air quality there. From the two trips, I can feel that their soft power, lifestyle and hospitality are much better than us...I mean the quality of people. When you are overseas, Chinese tour groups are noisy; people jostle each other in the queue...It is a shame...After the trip, I decided to have my kid born in US. My daughter was born in LA. I guess*

*what others said should be right: China's education system is too dated and cramming, but US education system emphasizes imaginative capacity and the quality of people."*

Apart from incorporating Western lifestyles, imitating other famous Chinese rich is also manifested in some participants' tourism consumption practices. Several respondents reframed their travel interests according to what other successful entrepreneurs have done to invoke a more legitimate and credible means of travel. When discussing future travel intentions, Informant # 1 answered that:

*"Climbing the Everest in the coming two years. I will find an experienced coach in Nepal who can lead me to climb. Besides, I will ask the private bank to prepare a helicopter standing by near the mountain foot in case any emergency happened."*

*Interviewer: "Why do you want to climb the Everest?"*

*"Why did Wang Shi (Chinese famous entrepreneur) climb the Everest at his 60s? That is a challenge. Not all people are able to climb the Everest, and not all the rich are willing to climb the Everest... it is why travel is an indicator for personal capacity."*

Likewise, Informant # 3 described her unforgettable travel experience in a local magnate's VIP club in Milan by frequently referring to "local magnate" and other Chinese rich's presence to increase the uniqueness of her trip:

*"This magnate took us to his private club which collects some of Da Vinci 's original pieces and manuscripts. The club is very special: it is in a garret located at a bustling commercial street. It was mysterious to immerse yourself into a magnate's own collections...Oh, by the way, Chinese entrepreneur Wang Shi and his girlfriend were also there in the meantime! I was excited, at least, the place should be special enough to attract him to visit."*

Such admirations of Western lifestyles and of other famous rich to certain degree have influenced participants' practices in tourism consumption field. Most of the participants

as shown above oftentimes quote others' practices as the credible support to their preferences. Furthermore, some participants even totally changed their previous behaviors to conform to the trendy norms prevalent in the rich community. Informant #23 used to collect a range of cigar and wine when travel overseas, but he has become a Marathon zealot in recent years and gave up smoking and drinking. He mentioned that: *"One of top graduate in our EMBA class said that he participates 50 Marathon and read 30 books per year. I realized that I should abandon bad behaviors while pick up good habits to be as successful as others. Now Marathon is my special-interest tourism practice. I have completed 59 Marathons this year and my target is 100!"* In contrast to above referential reception and imitative behaviors, a few participants understand the differences of international destinations in a more expansive scope. They also recognize the advantages of Western society, but rather than holding a blind faith for Western lifestyle, they embrace international diversities and meanwhile identify the fine contents that China may draw from, based on first-hand oversea experiences between Eastern and Western societies. Informant # 17 and some other participants have shown their keen worship of European chateau life, Informant # 11's account of his stay at European chateau offered an informative comparison:

*"In Italy, we stayed at a chateau, you can feel that Italian have a close tie to their land and family. They have a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to the things they built. It is not about conspicuous rich, but a sense of ownership. The chateau I stayed was renovated by the later generations into a complex with family culture embedded. They plant grapes, arrange exhibitions, build family museums and create workshops on wine, cuisines and handicrafts. Visitors can feel in great details about their lifestyles and their expectations of good life. When such family traditions and treasures are well protected and presented through daily practices, this is not only a matter of money, but culture. Chinese also stress on family bond, in this sense, we have commonalities with Italian. But Italian have a similar attitude with French: C'est la vie (this is life). No matter good or bad, they are all*

*the gifts of life that we should cherish. Their embracing mindset and concentration on life are something we should learn.”*

Unlike Informant # 17 who demonstrated Western lifestyle fetishism, Informant # 11 constructed a cosmopolitan attitude to view Western society from detailed cultural and social evidences. A cosmopolitan perspective is therefore mirrored with an inclusive mind in *“learning the essence whilst discarding the dross”* marked by Informant # 13. As what Informant # 13 remarked: *“When we interact more with other countries, you will find that not only Chinese, but also some foreigners may have uncivilized behaviors during travel. We are emerging tourists who are learning how to behave properly, but this doesn’t mean we should always imitate others’ practices whilst ignoring our own backgrounds.”*

**Table 4. The Coding Frame of Embodied Consumption Forms**

<b>Aesthetic Sensibilities (11 Interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of Interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Surface Skimming (15 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
<i>Mentally demanding and in-depth comparisons</i>	11	77	I7, I2, I4, I8, I11, I13, I16, I18, I21, I24, I27	<i>Relaxation and direct comparisons</i>	11	49	I1, I6, I9, I10, I12, I14, I15, I17, I19, I20, I22, I23, I26, I28, I29
<i>Metaphysical</i>	9	24		<i>Pragmatic &amp; Shallow Memory about travel content</i>	12	25	
<b>Sophisticated Status Markers (9 Interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of Interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Moneyed Status Markers (12 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
<i>Maven in consuming esoteric products or experiences</i>	8	48	I7, I8, I11, I13, I18, I21, I24, I27	<i>Moneyed material symbols</i>	13	89	I1, I3, I9, I12, I14, I17, I19, I22, I23, I25, I26, I28
<i>Exclusive experiences based on the transformation from money to resources in other fields</i>	3	9		<i>Exclusive experiential or implicit symbols can be achieved by money</i>	4	18	
<b>Proactive Actor (9 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Passive Reactor (16 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
<i>Define new travel</i>	5	16	I2, I4, I7, I8, I11, I13, I16, I21, I24	<i>Comfort Zone</i>	13	45	I1, I3, I6, I10, I12, I14, I15, I16, I17, I19, I20, I22, I23, I25, I26, I28
<i>Sensitivity and curiosity</i>	8	34		<i>Less autonomy</i>	14	36	
<b>Disinterestedness (9 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Trend Followers (16 interviewees)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number of references</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
<i>Distinction Over</i>	8	37	I4, I7, I11, I13, I18, I21, I25, I27	<i>Distinction Between</i>	12	40	I1, I3, I5, I9, I10, I12, I14, I15, I16, I17, I19, I20, I22, I23, I26, I28, I29
<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	4	10		<i>Western Life myths</i>	6	16	
				<i>Trend followers</i>	5	20	

## **CHAPTER 5: Homologies Between Fields and Cultural Capital Profile**

*“...when tourists enter particular stages, they are usually informed by pre-existing discursive, practical, embodied norms which help to guide their performative orientations and achieve a working consensus about what to do.”*

*--- Edensor, 2001, p.71*

While travel consumption field may have its own indigenous logics for social distinction which are manifested as the embodied spectrums revealed in aforementioned Chapter 4.2, they don't exist as spontaneous entities. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argued that fields are homologous to certain degree despite their relative autonomies. The homologies as “a resemblance within a difference” can often be found between two relevant fields which share common functional and structural logics (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.2). As a broad continuum, leisure encompasses tourism at one end (Ryan, 1997), where tourists' behaviors are largely influenced by their leisure practices in residual environments (Carr, 2002). Situated in a wider recreational picture, tourists' social distinction and status seeking practices can be conferred more naturally. Therefore, this chapter firstly explores the homologies of embodied practices between travel and leisure fields. Secondly, these embodied practices are linked to broader socioeconomic groupings which consider not only the sources of cultural capital but also other social collectivities like gender and class.

### **5.1 Homologies Between Tourism Consumption Field and Overall Leisure Field**

The responses of informants to their leisure pursuits identify four leisure patterns: (a) the mode of drifting; (b) the mode of intellectual quest; (c) the mode of purposeful amateur; and (d) the mode of relaxation. The following sections describe the activities and motivations of each leisure pattern. Remarkably, homologies are found between the field of overall leisure engagement and the field of travel consumption. That is, participants from different leisure modes exhibit similar embodied practices occurred in travel field which have been detailed in Chapter 4.2. The coding frame of homologies between fields are presented in Table 5 at the end of Chapter 5.1.



### 5.1.1 Leisure patterns – The mode of drifting and the mode of intellectual quest

The mode of drifting often includes those informants (Informant # 8, Informant # 11, Informant # 16, Informant # 18, Informant # 21) who have developed special interests during leisure time and incorporated these special interests as major travel activities. These drifting informants are mostly knowledgeable about their leisure pursuits and offer engaged narratives on their own reactions and intense involvement with what they loved, indicating a personal yet significant interest in the leisure activity per se. A range of leisure activities are identified including playing golf, skiing, yachting and wine tasting. Freedom, concentration and challenging are the intrinsic motivations for both Informant # 11 and Informant # 18 to take up skiing and golfing:

*“I like Skiing and Golf. I learned skiing in US when I was 16. Golf was influenced by my dad who plays golf for more than 300 times a year. I like skiing is because it brings me freedom. You are a dot in the vast white world and you can enjoy the speed of a freely-falling body. You are cooperating with the centrifugal force and this physical phenomenon brings you freedom. Besides, it practices your concentration when you are interacting with the earth. Both golf and skiing are lonely activities that you can communicate with the nature.” (Informant # 11)*

*“No two golf swings get the same result: the strength of the force, the angle of the swing and the flying curve of the ball are all different for each swing. Actually, sport itself is competition which is mostly challenging. What does sport bring to us? It replaces war. Sport mobilizes human’s inherent aggression and impulse. It is the thing that makes you burnout, but it is different burnout from daily pressure, it helps you fully focus on other fields so that you can let the pressure go.” (Informant # 18)*

Similar to Informant # 18, Informant # 8’s appreciation to yachting also accentuates the challenges and sense of achievement inherent in the leisure activity itself. Informant # 8 talked knowingly about the type of yacht designs and technique for racing. He has two yachts and summoned a team for yachting regularly. Apart from regularly yachting

with the team at residential city, he also takes his team and yachts to other destinations for racing such as Hainan, Hong Kong and Japan:

*“I like sailing, it is a sport brings you closer to the nature, it is a quiet sport but requires complex skills. You have to pay attention to the wind patterns, ocean current and teamwork. I have an amateur sailing team comprised of my close friends as stable members who also love this sport and professional sailors who used to work in national team or provincial team...I feel that being a captain in the sailing team has similarities of being a CEO in a company. You need to evaluate the potential risk and give useful information to the members. The professional sailors in my team work as advisor and offer suggestions to me... It is same logic in operating a company.”*

Both Informant # 8 and Informant # 18 have devoted almost their entire leisure time for golf and yacht. Their trips have also fully revolved around golf and yacht. For instance, the major motivation for Informant # 18 to visit a city nowadays is to see if the city has a golf course. His routine is to play golf in a new golf course and visit the city afterwards. Informant # 8 also mentioned his future travel plan as conducting a long-haul sailing:

*“I want to travel by sailing...I mean sailing to Japan and Hawaii from China. I believe it will be very interesting. The longest time I stayed on the sea is 60 hours for a yacht racing in Hainan. We sailed the boat from Penghu island to Hainan at that time and passed several isolated islands. I hope to sail back to those small islands again. Nowadays, everything is fast. By flight you can easily get to another place, but we lost some mood. The mood of doing things slowly, sailing to a destination slowly will definitely be my future engagement.”*

Drawing from the interviews of the five participants who deploy a drifting mode in leisure consumption, homologues were found in their embodied practices exhibited at both leisure and travel fields. Firstly, disinterestedness in other rich's practices introduced in travel behaviors is also seen on their leisure consumption. Those

informants who enjoy the leisure activity for its own sake clearly disdain the other rich who mainly utilize certain activities for upsurge in social ladders. Except Informant # 16, the rest four participants refuse to join any VIP clubs regarding their leisure pursuits. Instead of practicing yachting at yacht club, Informant # 8 formed his own yachting team from his most close friends. He said he felt uncomfortable in yacht club wherein members tend to change a place to discuss business rather than enjoying the activity itself. Informant # 18 also comments about the emerging phenomena in China that rich people oftentimes resort to golf club for obvious utilitarian purposes:

*“I play golf with only three to four stable friends. I don’t like people who use golf as a means of socialization. I try to avoid such ‘socialized golf’. Nowadays, many clubs host the match that hundreds of members joining together to play golf. Their highlights are not golfing, but the corresponding banquet and social events. Many members there are just too keen to expand their social network. That’s why I hardly join any so-called VIP clubs.”*

Apart from disinterestedness, consistent embodied practices that connect travel with leisure field also include participants’ in-depth comparisons in what they are consuming. Although a full focus on special-interest activities may limit the drifting participants in experiencing as many travel formats as others, they still delivered insightful dialogues in elaborating their own evaluations on different leisure and travel service providers. Informant # 18 said he didn’t really have enough time to travel as normal tourists in recent years since playing golf occupies almost all his spare time, but this doesn’t stop him from being a critical consumer who compare various service products predominantly from detailed observations:

*“Different golf course brings me different feelings. For instance, I played at one course in Chongqing last week. It was at the bottom of a valley surrounded by cliffs. When you played golf and looked up, the cliff was so tall and gave you a special experience. It directly manifests the characteristic of Chongqing -- mountain city...For the oversea courses, I prefer Thailand. Thailand delivers the best service*

*to the players. Since the salary cost is relatively lower in Southeast countries, they tend to hire more staff. Besides, you can feel that the mindset of local people is very peaceful. Staff are not in a rush and they are able to facilitate a smooth and relaxed golfing experience. I felt comfortable to play golf leisurely and slowly rather than fast-pace in mainland courses where the staff used different hints including facial expression and subtle attitude to imply that time is limited.”*

Furthermore, with considerable time and efforts devoted to certain leisure activities, these drifting informants are specific mavens and even experts in the realm of interest. Having wine tasting as a major leisure activity, Informant # 21 can easily identify the vintage and appellation of the wine. Beyond this, he compared different types of wines across countries and personalized a specific wine menu for himself annually. According to him, how to taste wine culturally and healthily is the basic principle when designing the menu. He consumes the wine sophisticatedly in a way that combines both cultural traditions behind the wine and personal health needs. His wine menu stipulates the specific season, pairings and utensils for specific type of wine. In the same vein, Informant # 11 as a ski fanatic discussed actively in the interview about the detailed feelings of skiing at worldwide resorts. Being a mature skier, the traditional way of skiing cannot satisfy his needs anymore. He is therefore looking for a ski safari:

*“I am going for an off-piste heli-skiing this year. In Canada, there is a product that skier can take helicopter to a heli-only snowy zone. You can practice off-piste and freeride technique in a wild mountain that no cable car available... Normally, the provider will match two skiers with similar ability as a team since there are many deep tree holes which skier may easily fall into. Skiers will also be equipped with air bag and rope in case any avalanche happens. It is the activity I expect the most this year!”*

The mode of intellectual quests comprises 9 respondents (Informant # 2, Informant # 4, Informant # 7, Informant # 8, Informant # 11, Informant # 13, Informant # 21, Informant # 24, Informant # 27) who seek intellectual and spiritual enhancement at leisure time. Their leisure involvement is mostly concerning with reading, poem, opera, design and

calligraphy which require a certain stock of knowledge. When the interviewer asked why would they immerse themselves in these hobbies, the reactions of interviewees took relative longer time as most of them regard their leisure hobbies as daily habits and seldom thought about the motivation behind these habits. For instance, Informant # 4 explained that:

*“I lived with my grandparents when I was a child. They are scholars in architecture and you can find nothing but books at their residence. No TV, no mobile, no laptop... What I can do was only reading books. Since then, reading is kind of my lifetime habit, it is something natural and I never thought about why I love it...Nowadays my business keeps me extremely busy, but I still pick up some history books to read. Reading the past ignites my great interest in visiting worldwide museums when travel.”*

If reading history books for Informant # 4 is an unconscious action, then reading botany is the hobby that Informant # 7 intentionally picked up recently. Informant # 7's company is building a large-scale indoor botanic garden. Even though he hired a professional team consisting of an expert panel responsible for the specific operations, he still tries to get botanic knowledge from reading on daily basis. He reflected on his way of reading that:

*“I do understand that people nowadays tend to regard reading as the slowest way in garnering information compared with internet, mobile and social media...But reading for me is still the most reliable means of developing a personalized knowledge system. I mean I can just believe in what experts said to me when building a botanic garden, but a proactive learning process is the ability everyone needs. That's why I have been keeping a habit of morning reading for 45 minutes every day. Personally, I like reading philosophy since I think there are multiple realities in the world and being a team leader, different value systems are needed to view a situation...Recently, I have to change to botanic books for business needs.”*

Lifelong learning is not only shown in the pursuit of reading, but also in other quests including wine tasting, literature writing and architecture. As exemplars, several informants demonstrated persistent involvement with their initial interests developed in earlier ages although their business no longer engages in any components related to their specific interests. Based on personal interest, Informant # 24 selected architecture as his major for bachelor and master studies and worked as an architect in a designing institute after graduation. However, as the oldest son in the family, he had to give up his job and succeed his father as CEO in a traditional family enterprise. Despite that inevitable trivia happened in a family business challenged his pervious thought pattern, he is still trying to leave time for his personal interest in reading architecture magazines and visiting new design buildings worldwide: *“it is my interest, I may need to give it up for the sake of family responsibilities, but I won’t give it up as my lifetime learning activity.”* Similarly, Informant # 21 fully developed his interest in literature and poems which is also his major in bachelor studies. He merged this interest into other leisure hobbies. Collecting Moutai (Chinese liquor) personally at its locality every other year, he revealed that he barely uses the original bottles of Moutai. Instead, he wrote a poem for the liquor collection of each year and put the poem on self-designed bottles:

*“A good Moutai takes time to ferment and to age. Different grains, water and brew produce distinct aroma and tastes, although its overall mouthfeel is sweet and pure as commented by Emperor Wu from Han Dynasty. Same to people, different periods we often have divergent insights and experiences which are also the sources for my poem creation. I compose poem for each batch of Moutai collection and use seal cutting to put the poem on personalized bottles. Of course, keeping the original bottles is important for people who collect Moutai for investment. But for me, the collection has personal meanings and I will never sell my liquor. I will pass my whole cellar to my daughter at her wedding as a family heritage.”*

The elite participants who unpack intellectual quests in leisure consumption clearly do use their intellectual interests to make connections to other social spheres. Notably, these participants showed great overlaps of embodied practices displayed in both

leisure and travel fields. It is obvious from data that metaphysical, in-depth comparisons and mentally demanding tendencies exhibited in travel field are also well manifested at leisure site for informants under intellectual mode. For instance, Informant # 24 reads extensively about architecture at leisure time and involves an architect's logic in comparing various products at great length:

*“If I visit urban cities, I prefer hanging out at local streets, especially hanging out at local parks. I do like visiting parks where local citizens converge. Park has its own social functionalities. Every metropolis has an iconic park like Hyde Park in London and Victory Park in HK... Why doesn't the belt in front of Victory park open during Occupy Central movement? Observing parks offers interesting angles to get to know the style of each city. In Hyde Park, there is a 'speak corner' for citizens to deliver free speech. People can express anything they want and there will be audience who find the speech interesting and relevant. Compared to Victory Park in HK, although there is a city forum at the park every Saturday, the forum appears to be official and government-related... Same case to China's Square Dance which is a typified Chinese phenomenon. People use this activity to spend leisure time and it is regarded as their way in achieving harmony society. So parks are indeed the epitomes of societies.”*

In a same way, Informant # 27 discussed the virtues of various well-known operas based on personal accumulation of opera and literature knowledge. Not all informants express knowingly and widely about culture genres and works, but participants under intellectual category talked confidently about an array of techniques, iconic works and celebrities involved in their interested realms. This offers foundations for their critical comparisons and metaphysical thinking. For instance, Informant # 7 identified his favorite philosophers from several philosophical schools and offered the historical connections with them. A deep affinity with philosophy reading demarcates Informant # 7 from those rich who attend philosophy and religion training as a fashion. It is therefore common to see from data that informants who seek for intellectual enhancement oftentimes demonstrated disinterestedness towards other rich who lack

profound knowledge and refined taste for leisure practices. Both Informant # 7 and Informant # 11 commented on the recent fad of Chinese entrepreneurs rushing for the proclaimed “*training into the inner soul*”:

*“Many Chinese entrepreneurs these days are keen to partake of several religious and philosophical trainings such as recent popular one in India established by Chandra Mohan Jain...The training for Chinese rich these days normally takes a form of having classes worldwide including camping in Kenya and desert journey in Dubai. They teach the same thing but in different environments...They even teach students what is the universe, how to resonant with the universe and hypnosis...very abstract...I do understand this phenomenon. Many Chinese entrepreneurs have no backgrounds, no education and limited power. When their enterprises reach a certain level, they felt spiritual void and lack of confidence to take the responsibility of managing the quick money. They said they need certain tools to understand inner self and these tools are widely believed to be philosophy or religion...But I really doubt if the so-called training into the inner soul can challenge their cognitive thinking. Of course some meditation and yoga sessions may help them empty minds, but a complete belief system can never be reached through the superficial learning of chicken soup.”* (Informant #11)

In addition to disinterestedness, intellectual respondents can also link nicely their leisure interests with the resources in a broader context. The power of discourse in China’s elite social circle always requires wide-ranging humanistic topics to dig around the conversation rather than to discuss relevant business matters directly. As such, individuals of wide interests managed to convert leisure pursuits to high quality social capital naturally and unintentionally. As a modest second generation rich, Informant # 2 has a feeling that he seems to be older than his peers since not all boys at early 30s would devote most of leisure time in reading. He said he sometime struggles about attending friends gathering at pubs or staying at home to continue reading, but reading history becomes daily routine that he keeps since middle school. Interest in reading and learning helps Informant # 2 fit to the worlds of first generation rich which majority of



the second generation rich at his age have yet to step into. Informant # 2 disclosed the table manners in his social circle:

*“I need to have dinner meetings with senior officials and elite citizens from time to time. We are in a much more sophisticated and subtle society where you cannot contact people only when you need them. A long term relationship needs frequent communications based on similar tastes... For instance, we never discuss business on tables. Instead, hot spots especially international political matters and recent book readings run through the dialogues. I always find somebody admirable during dinner since their talks were rich in substances. Some seniors can quote from classics and histories with great ease to offer incisive insights into contemporary issues... Compared with them, I am too young. Recently, besides reading history books which is my long-standing interest, I do like reading some novels by Yu Hua who wrote significantly in the context of China’s 1970s. Not because I want to have a say at dining tables, but I want to understand the mood of my parents’ generation and understand how did they experience their ages.”*

### **5.1.2 Leisure patterns – The mode of purposeful amateur and the mode of relaxation**

The mode of purposeful amateur generally involves functional participants who picked up certain leisure pursuits intentionally and evinced an orientation towards leisure consumption that echoes an upward mobility in social ladders. When it comes to the question of leisure pursuits, respondents in this group always have stories to tell, mostly triggered by their learning process of honing the skills in several fancy hobbies. Interestingly, for some in this category, intense feeling of distinction was displayed at leisure site, although these are not explicitly shown in their tourism consumption narratives. A wide range of hobbies are identified for the mode of purposeful amateur including grooming, shopping, reading, Marathon, wine and room design. Despite several hobbies are overlapped with those under the modes of drifting and intellectual quest, the underlying motivations to take up the hobbies are completely different. Whereas participants in latter groups understand their leisure participation as a site of

enhancement in esthetic interests, purposeful amateurs accentuate the aspect of autotelic sociality inherent in the activities. Grooming serves as a good example of this point.

Except Informant # 16, the rest participants in this group have all mentioned their aesthetic changes in grooming. A common pattern of their grooming changes is: from big brands and visible logos at the beginning to big brands with less conspicuous logos to customized high-end suits with a focus on detailed matching such as cuffs and pocket square. Not all participants arrive at the third stage, but a clear change from first stage to second stage prevails in interviews. For instance, Informant # 17, a first generation rich, married a girl from a top rich family. Since then, he started to step into a social circle surrounded by friends and business partners who are largely second generation rich. He recognized his wife's role in leading him being a "decent rich" and proudly shared that: "many people think that I am a second generation rich instead of the rich who started from famers' family." Grooming is one part wherein he has learned to be sophisticated and well-versed:

*"My wife is like my teacher as she was in UK since 14 and her family owns a really big enterprise. The first time she met me, she said I was very rustic with a whole body of logos: I drove white Audi Q7, carried LV bags and brought Vertu cell phone...She taught me a lot about how to behave in a tacit way. I am a good learner and grooming is one reflection. Now I have tailor-made cufflinks for each of my shirt. I bought the raw jewels and diamond, then ask some shops in HK or Italy to transform the raw material into customized cufflinks...my shirts are also tailor-made in HK with the initials of my names on it...In the past, I simply bought clothes in luxury brand like Dior, but I found that my friends with good taste always tailor-made their suits. Then I started to go to the same tailor shop as them...but now I am even one step further than them. I even tailor-made my cufflinks, different color of shirt has different cufflinks!"*

In addition to the changes in grooming, Informant # 17 also demonstrates the same consumption pattern in other recreational pursuits such as wine collection, calligraphy

and piano. He showed the interviewer around his wine cellar and introduced the characteristics of different categories of wine. However, his introduction appeared to recite speeches from textbooks as he started every sentence with “*if my memory serves me right*”. When the interviewer asked how can he remember so many characteristics by only looking at each bottle, he frankly shared that:

*“I have made great efforts to develop this hobby and as mentioned earlier, I am a fast learner. I believe that individuals should have certain highbrow hobbies and wine is one of them. Hence, three years ago I started to research on wine by reading many relevant magazines. What I introduced to you is also memorized from those readings. I am confident to say that in XX (Interviewee’s city), I have the most complete collection of extraordinary wine with official score between 96 to 100. For instance, I have collected all the first-growths of Mouton Rothschild since 1960s. I asked my secretary to attend wine auctions regularly in HK to continue expanding my collection. The most expensive bottle here is around 400K RMB.”*

*Interviewer: “Besides score and bottle appearances, could you tell them by mouthfeel since you have so many bottles?”*

*“Indeed I am a person easily gets drunk. I like to collect wines but won’t really open a bottle just for myself. It is a waste as I will only take a sip. I open a bottle for some events or gatherings.”*

Studying hard on red wine by memorizing all the knowledge from books instead of indulging in the experiences of wine tasting, a professed love of wine is therefore shown markedly in above narrative. Beyond this, Informant # 17 remarked that he intends to learn calligraphy, piano and English as his newly developed hobbies concerning they are the pastimes require “*decent skills than simply dinning out which every moneyed elite can do*”. In a same rhetorical approach, Informant # 1 also dissected individuals’ leisure consumption, noting how leisure pursuits serve as the markers for the stratifications amongst the rich. He personally believed that two dimensions can

generate classifications of their own rich group, namely, moneyed dimension and humanistic dimension. By humanistic dimension proposed by Informant # 1, it refers to the aspiring rich who are able to have eclectic interests outside of work. Informant # 1 said he made several famous Chinese entrepreneurs as his role models and has tried to adopt similar leisure practices as them. That's the reason why he has pushed himself hard to keep diary every day, to register oversea EMBA/PhD courses on part-time basis and to prepare for climbing Mount Everest.

The foregoing accounts chime with participants' travel stories who purposefully mimic a more legitimate orientation established by other famous rich or western society, although the imitations stay at a superficial level. However, it is worth noting that there are several participants (Informant # 6, Informant # 19, Informant # 23) who have revealed limited interests in travel field whereas demonstrated a mode of purposeful amateur in leisure consumption. That is, although travel is still new and implicit regarding social distinction for several China's rich, leisure has long been a relatively mature site for social reproduction. For example, Informant # 6 admitted that travel for him is not important and he has limited experiences to share. Yet he delivered a rich dialogue about personal leisure practices. Despite being a second generation rich and succeeding his father as CEO at family business six years ago, Informant # 6 said he has long been under the shadow and influences of parents' generation. His struggles in building the image of an independent leader are also reflected on the changes of leisure hobbies:

*“Shopping and room design are the hobbies I have engaged in for years. Rethinking my leisure involvement these years, there are apparent changes. Taking shopping as an example, in the past, I always bought the most updated collections from seasonal fashion shows and dressed myself in a very mixed style -- as colorful as I can -- without considering my own personal characteristics. I visited HK weekly just for shopping the most updated versions. I thought that as long as I dress uniquely and prestigiously, my team can recognize me as a new-generation leader who is different from his father... Now I realize, in retrospect, it was too naïve to*

*think that people would judge a conspicuous person as a reliable one. Recently, I tried to be temperate and changed my dressing style into a low-key and comfortable way. Thus the way how I judge a brand and dressing style has totally changed.”*

Personal reflections on grooming evoke Informant # 6’s disinterestedness towards the mass individuals who wear conspicuously: *“now I cannot bear anyone who wears logos from head to toe. Real rich won’t dress like that but some affluent middle class will”*. However, he still lacks the confidence to comment within group. He said he is learning the dressing styles of entrepreneurs from China’s top tier cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai: *“they can dress professionally and meanwhile comfortably.”*

The last leisure pattern is the mode of relaxation. It covers the respondents who often associate leisure hobbies predominantly with playful and enjoyable senses without the overall display of in-depth knowledge and skills towards their leisure consumption. Most within this group demonstrate passive and simple engagement with leisure. Occasional travel and friend gatherings are the most mentioned leisure activities. Except two participants, the rest informants under the mode of relaxation attributed their singular leisure engagement to heavy workload. For example, Informant # 14, a first generation rich who made himself top ranking in China’s rich list at early 50s, went on to say his conflicts between leisure and work when the question of leisure engagement was asked:

*“To me I don’t really have time for leisure. Every day after working, I prefer to stay at office and have tea with my staff. Listening to the struggles from staff of different levels makes me understand more about my company...My wife recently urged me to join some family gatherings and family travels during kids’ summer holiday. Perhaps that can be called leisure for me...Additionally, we have annual incentive trips in my company, bringing my senior staff to watch World Cups and Olympics is also my leisure.”*

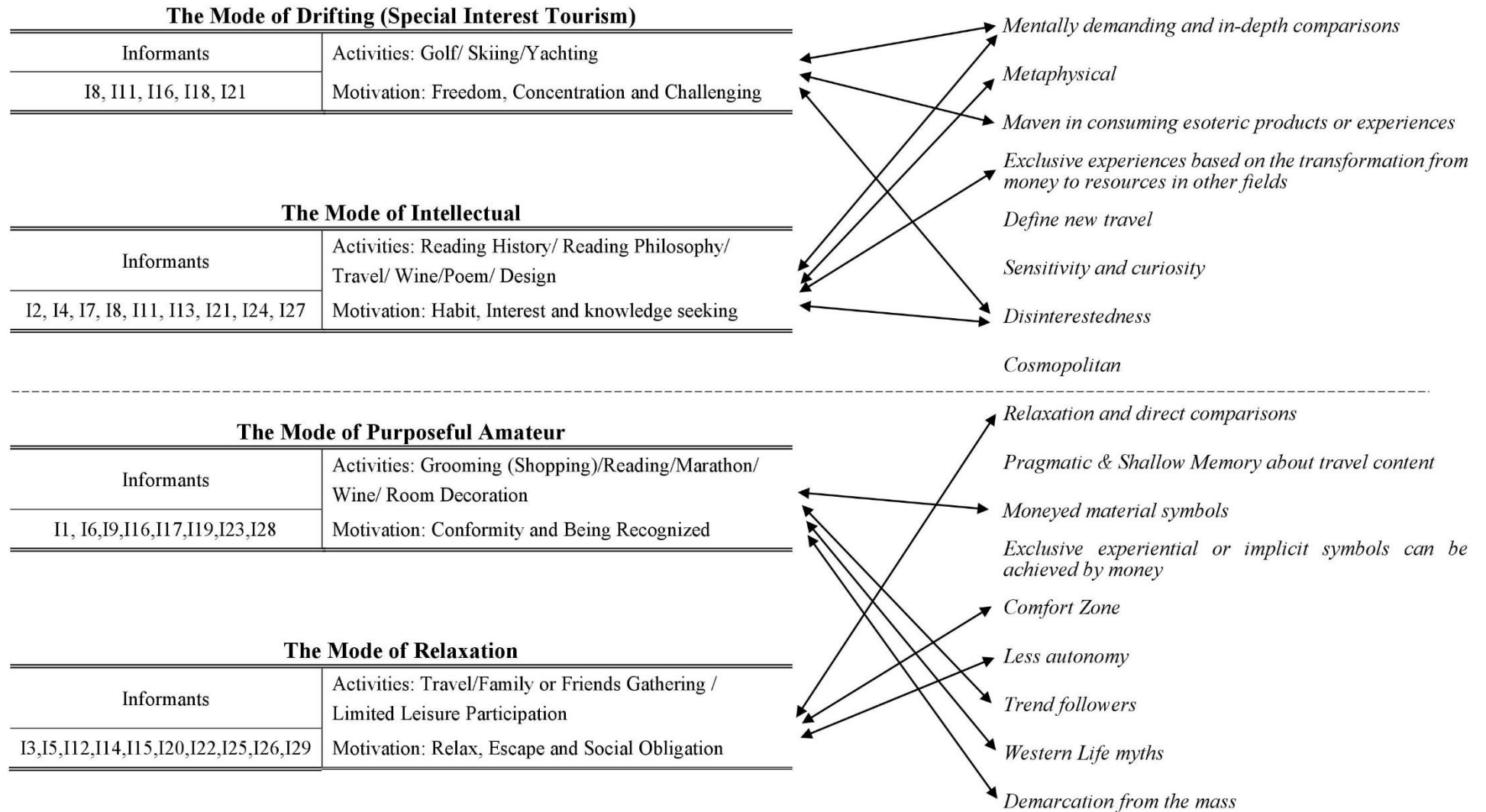
As shown in above narrative, instead of being self-motivated, leisure participation must be triggered by certain events including family gathering and company incentive travel. Similar case happened to another three participants who are also first generation rich and only regard leisure consumption as obligations. Additionally, there are only three female informants (Informant # 3, Informant # 5, Informant # 25) recruited in current research, all three fall into the category of relaxation mode at both leisure and travel sites. They have all taken important roles in parents' company and exhibited less autonomy in deciding leisure activities and travel plans. Facing with the same responsibility as male heirs in company and meanwhile fulfilling reproduction duty by giving birth at family, it is interesting to observe from data that all the recreational and travel plans of three female participants are made by their husbands rather than themselves. Informant # 3 shared her current life stage:

*“Being the biggest daughter in an entrepreneur family is not an easy thing...I was faced with the dilemma of working in my family business or working in other large enterprises upon graduation. My parents asked me back to help family business as my brother was still too young at that time. I have to work like a man so that nobody in company looks down on a female successor. Meanwhile, I got married and gave birth to a little boy as family expected...Thus my husband took more domestic responsibilities than me and he planned all the details for gatherings or travels. I don't really know what my hobby is as I have very limited time to focus on myself. Once it comes to travel such as honeymoon with my husband, the only criterion I have is to relax.”*

Seeking for relaxation and escape is not only related to above respondents who have limited leisure time, it is also relevant to Informant # 2 who engages in leisure consumption extensively and regards playful and pleasurable as predominant references for leisure consumption in the conversation expressed. He called himself as a social animal since his favorite pastime is partying and drinking with friends. In a same manner, he simply states that travel for him is to gather with friends in different parts of the world and his friends share the same belief that:

*“Visiting the famous local pub is a must-do for us when travel. I understand that many people think of socialization as an obligation. However, for me, it is my hobby and I go out with friends for fun. I mean in most of the case I drink with my best friends without any utilitarian purposes. I can easily offer a list of the best pubs in XX (Interviewee’s city) and also those top ones in certain destinations I have visited frequently such as London, Los Angeles and Tokyo.”*

**Table 5. Coding Frame of Homologies Between Tourism Consumption Field and Overall Leisure Field**





## **5.2 Mapping the Relations: From Leisure Patterns to Cultural Capital**

Inspecting the social bases behind leisure patterns of drifting and intellectual modes, it is found that a range of attributes, all of which are largely related to sources of cultural capital, account for the embodied practices of leisure and travel consumption. The following sections discuss the underlying cultural capital profiles of each mode of leisure consumption. The specific sources of cultural capital as well as factors beyond cultural capital that contribute to respondents' embodied leisure and travel consumption practices are pinpointed. The coding frame of respondents' cultural capital profile is outlined in Table 6.

### **5.2.1 Cultural capital profile – Drifting mode and intellectual mode**

The tendency of intellectual quest and confident drifting in leisure consumption is closely linked to a broader embrace of good upbringing and socialization, being well bred in a cultured family, being cross-cultural exposed and such alike (see Table 6). It is particularly notable from data that social upbringing is the most strongly related with constant quest for intellectual enhancement and knowledge seeking which some respondents exhibit in different spheres of social contexts. Looking into upbringing patterns of these respondents, majority are brought in a family having educated members affiliated with either cadre or intellectual class.

It is worth noting that all the respondents' parents went through the era of China's 1970s during when few people have the access to university education. Due to cultural revolution, national college entrance examination (NCEA) was suspended between 1966 to 1976. As a major channel enables an upward social mobility for grass root, the suspension of NCEA for one decade largely inhibited the change of social strata for a whole generation (Feng, 1999). However, for most of the participants under drifting and intellectual modes, their parents enjoy a certain level of higher education and a relative educated family remains a central factor in structuring participants' intellectual pursuits and life trajectories.

According to respondents' narratives, there are mainly three scenarios that their parents managed to receive higher education. Firstly, although some respondents' parents

ceased to study after high school, the respondents' grandparents who were China's earliest intellectuals and officials taught their kids at home and sent them to continued education after the resumption of NCEA (Informant # 4, Informant # 7, Informant # 8). Informant # 4 specifically emphasized his grandparents' role in shaping his own personal profile as well as his whole familial trajectory. His grandparents were Chinese famous architects and university professors who undertook several important architectural projects since the founding of new China. Informant # 4 recounted that:

*“I lived with my grandparents until high school. Because of them, I have a habit of reading, of course not reading architecture books like them, but I like reading history. My grandpa passed away last year and the last sentence he told me before his death was still the quote he always mentioned: read more books... Sometimes I do feel a bit lost in an entrepreneurs' world since you seldom find China's rich who keep reading as daily practice... Or in another way, there is an obvious absence of family education on most of China's rich... My dad left his position at government to business field several decades ago. I have to succeed him in managing our company now. Although both my dad and I have great ease in socializing with other rich, we still try to distance ourselves from pure rich friends in certain way... I mean at least for me, other than rich friends, I have multiple friend circles such as friends who used to live in my grandparents' neighborhood and grew up with me together”.*

Secondly, there are also respondents' (Informant # 18, Informant # 24, Informant # 27) grandparents who belong to early bourgeoisie class at the Republican period and immigrated overseas before the establishment of New China. Oversea immigration made their kids escape from domestic cultural revolution and receive continued education in foreign countries. For example, Informant # 27's parents received bachelor degree whilst Informant # 18 and Informant # 24's parents got diploma at foreign colleges. It is therefore no wonder that with significant Western exposure, all the three respondents had bachelor studies at world top university. Despite the early family immigration, these three families are still doing business with enterprise base in China

since from grandparents' generation. The three participants returned back to live in China and succeed companies developed by grandfathers. For example, Informant # 27, whose family immigrated to Singapore half century ago, revealed that:

*“What I am working now is actually my grandpa's domestic inheritance. My uncle took care of the company for decades...After my startup failed, my grandpa asked me to come back to China for taking over family business. It turns out to be a smart choice since China highly encouraged investments from oversea Chinese with preferential treatment at that time...I studied IT in US and my previous startup was related to internet payment in Singapore. Retuning back to China with ever-opening market, I do feel that my background helps our family business to reach a new level over the past ten years.”*

Lastly, some respondents' (Informant # 5, Informant # 11, Informant # 13, Informant # 16, Informant # 21) parents are relatively younger and participated in NCEA right after its resumption. They tend to be China's first batch of modern intellectuals who are rising professional class with master or even PhD degrees. Although majority stepped down from professional positions into business world, they are the typical exemplars exhibiting China's upward social mobility. It is shown from statistics that the admission rate of NCEA was extremely low and most school graduates were still excluded from opportunities of ascending into higher class in 1980s. In 1977, only 5.7 million out of 20 million applicants were allowed to attend NCEA. Amongst the attendees, 0.3 million were finally admitted into universities (Smerling, 1978). Thus, being raised in a family with educated parents is not common for the participants, which in turn influences informants' preferences and embodied practices incrementally. When Informant # 5 explained why he loves reading and prefers visiting heritage and museum sites, he referred to his own upbringing:

*“My dad used to be a physicist working in a state-owned company before he resigned and went into business world. Although his major is physicist, he loves reading history. He was the first PhD of his hometown. I remember that when I was young, he didn't communicate with me very often, either he was working or he*

*was reading. At that time, our TV at home only stayed at channels broadcasting history programs or documentary series. I had no choice but watched some programs with him together. I mean I am kind of influenced by him. Probably that is also why I love reading history. Now when I travel, I prefer visiting the living history: museums or heritages.”*

Summarizing three types given above, majority participants to a large extent are raised in prestigious families which even can be dated back to grandparents' generation. The early intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, or government officials between China's 1930s to 1970s produced the first few batches of educated upper class in modern China. The earliest educated class in modern China in turn influences their offspring. Most of respondents' parents left their professional or governmental positions into business field facing tremendous opportunities brought by national economic reform. Education, politics and wealth are therefore intertwined for deciding class positions of early Chinese and reproducing a part of rich who displayed intellectual and drifting consumption mode in contemporary China. Although it is generally regarded that rich class in China belongs to new money compared with Western countries, class, especially a long-standing noble family developed from old money or party power, matters in structuring of contemporary taste dynamics in China.

Respondents' education profiles under drifting and intellectual modes further espouse above reproduction practice. Four out of eleven informants studied bachelor degrees in top universities from China and have kept close connections to overseas contexts for either further study or business needs since graduation. The rest informants received university education in overseas prestigious universities from North America or UK and majority of them studied abroad since high school. Respondents' majors vary from business-related subjects to literature, IT and architecture. Except Informant 16 who refused to take over parents' enterprise whilst established his own IT startup, other respondents under this category are all CEOs being responsible for their family companies, of which the business nature to a large extent is irrelevant to participants' own university backgrounds. It seems that their parents provide freedom for themselves

to select their own university majors. University education in turn contributes to the taste expressions of respondents under current category. That is, the participants are used to appreciating recreational and travel products via personal professional backgrounds although their current business is no longer related to university majors. For example, Informant # 24 pinpointed how university major influences his aesthetic tendency:

*“Indeed, architecture is very similar to art, but architecture has functionality that blends into human's life, one building can tell you the changes and social-context of the local city. That's why I am very keen on understanding local lifestyles and cultures...I am not doing designing anymore after graduation, but its concepts and logics penetrate into my travel behaviors. For example, when other people appreciate a museum, they may start viewing it from the collections inside an exhibition, but for me, I view it from the perspective of architecture first. British Museum is my favorite since I appreciate its design very much. The museum itself was renovated from an old building and it combines both old relics and modern concepts. When stepping into Great Court, the huge and transparent glass-and-steel roof shocked me. The stunning roof resonates the concept of original building which used to be a garden, and meanwhile reinvents the space into a state-of-the-art atrium connecting surrounding galleries.”*

### **5.2.2 Cultural capital profile – Purposeful mode and relaxation mode**

Socio-economic contours of participants under purposeful and relaxation modes are listed in Table 6. Except Informant # 12 who was raised up in a respectable family with three generations well-connecting to education and wealth, the rest participants share somehow similar socio-economic patterns. That is, leisure consumption of respondents under purposeful and relaxation modes accords with participants' social trajectory. Generally, for participants' social upbringing under current category, wealth is a recent phenomenon which is confined into maximum two generations and the education backgrounds of participants' parents remain preliminary ranging from no education to high school. In particular, there are two prominent social groupings: purposeful

respondents who are mainly first generation rich with significant others as catalyst for themselves to hone skills in exquisite hobbies; and relaxed respondents who strive hard to stabilize business with distinction needs primarily abide in work field instead of leisure and travel sites.

Majority purposeful respondents are first generation rich from rural households (Informant # 7, Informant # 9, Informant # 19, Informant # 23, Informant # 28). China's rapid economic development and sheer expansion of industries have enabled considerable numbers of individuals from lower echelons to move up to top social classes (Buckley, 1999). According to billionaire report by Wealth-X (2018), self-made rich predominates Chinese billionaires group and most of them stay at the stage of wealth creation instead of wealth preservation. Purposeful respondents in current study are also the major beneficiaries of country's enormous scale of wealth creation. Notably, "significant other" is frequently mentioned in their interview data. For example, both Informant # 7 and Informant # 23 talked about their wives as significant person in shaping their life trajectories. Informant # 7 grew up in a peasant family and started to work outside home after middle school. The first time he made a fortune happened on his early 20s and he met his wife after being rich for five years. Interestingly, he defined himself in those five years as *nouveau riche* lacking genteel manners:

*"My wife is a second generation rich and grew up in UK since middle school. She returned to hometown at a summer holiday and we met in friend gathering. Luckily we became couple and I learned a lot from her... Because of my wife, a remarkable change on me was that I started to have a social circle full of second generation rich who used to be my wife's contacts. It was not easy for me to fit in the circle initially. They have wide-ranging topics and experiences which I seldom heard about...In the past decade, I picked up some common hobbies among peers such as wine tasting, travel and grooming. Now many people comment that I look more like a second generation rich instead of a self-made rich from a farmer's family."*

Similarly, Informant # 23 grew up in a small village and was finally admitted to a top university in Beijing for master degree through his own efforts. He shared how he tried

hard to stay in Beijing and to become a citizen in country's capital city after graduation. With his wife from a well-educated family in Beijing, he realized that simply staying at state-owned company cannot guarantee a rise into higher class hierarchy. Hence, he gave up the stable position and established a media startup. As remarked by himself: *"since then, I tried to learn from others how to become a successful businessman. It turned out that I am a good learner."* Based on interviewer's observation memo, Informant # 23's intentional learning covers from office decoration, communication styles to leisure pursuits. There was a wall in his company covered by a collage of photos taken between him and other worldwide celebrities and politicians. He kept referring to his personal connections to those celebrities and well-known businessman during the interview. In the end of the interview, Informant # 23 sent his own book which is his autobiography as a gift to the interviewer and concluded that: *"I wrote a book about my successful stories, I hope more young generations can benefit from it."*

Different from above, Informant # 16 falls into both drifting and purposeful modes since he can appreciate some of his leisure engagement from critical and in-depth perspectives but meanwhile frequently partakes of golfing and partying to socialize with potential investors. Probably because of his business status as a CEO of an IT startup which is a field entirely different from his family business, enhancing relevant personal contacts becomes key to him. Putting Informant # 16 aside, the rest participants in purposeful mode all enrolled in some EMBA programs, but their formal schooling is less prestigious compared with respondents under drifting and intellectual modes. Only one informant (Informant # 6) received university education from top university, four participants (Informant # 7, Informant # 9, Informant # 19, Informant # 28) don't have university backgrounds and two participants (Informant # 1, Informant # 23) studied bachelors in second to third tier universities.

Looking into the social upbringing of respondents under relaxation mode, majority are second generation rich (Informant # 3, Informant # 5, Informant # 12, Informant # 15, Informant # 25, Informant # 26, Informant # 29) and five of them are first generation rich (Informant # 10, Informant # 14, Informant # 15, Informant # 20, Informant # 22).

Few parents had university education. Although several respondents studied in world top university as drifting and intellectual participants, the majors they chose followed their parents' willingness with business management as priority which is highly related to family business. For personal professions, more than half of relaxed respondents are undergoing a transition from less mature to mature in managing their business. A busy work schedule and a single-minded focus on stabilizing business don't evoke the needs for distinction on recreation and travel field. For example, as a second generation rich, Informant # 26 just took over the toy company from his father. Studying banking and working in international securities company for several years, he said he is trying to diversify his father's traditional business patterns. Facing some conflicts with his father in management, he devotes almost all the time in office and wants to prove his management approach via business performance. Therefore, the only leisure for Informant # 26 is an annual family trip with wife during Christmas.

Same case happened to the only three females in current respondent pool. All three female participants are classified into relaxation mode (Informant # 3, Informant # 5, Informant # 25). Two of female respondents received education in top university and three of them started to work in family business right after graduation. They share common features such as limited personal time for leisure and travel, and once travel, their boyfriend or husband plan all the details. In addition to travel, their other half also help them in business to different extents. Informant # 25 commented that:

*"I don't really have leisure time. In Chinese culture, boy should be the one who inherits business from parents. For the cases like me that girl has to succeed family business, most executives in company may not really accept and adapt to it. I have been working extremely hard to build my personal authority amongst colleagues who are in same age as my parents. So I seldom have time to relax. Once there is a travel opportunity, the only criteria that I have is to relax, regardless of where I am going. Luckily, my boyfriend always takes all the responsibilities in planning the trips and parties... We met each other in university and indeed my parents are considering to recruit him into our company for helping me."*



Table 6. Coding Frame of Cultural Capital Profile<sup>1</sup>

Modes	Informant	Age	Social Upbringing			Education			Occupation	
			Grandparents Occupation	Parents Education	Parents Occupation	University	Bachelor Major	Growth Environment	Industry	Position
Drifting+ Intellectual Quest	I4*	37	Professor	Taught by parents; Continuing education to bachelor (Both)	From government official to entrepreneur (F); Government official (M)	Bachelor from top university in China; Gap-year study in London	Business Management	Mainland China + Gap year in London	Mineral products + Real estate + Sport industry	CEO (mature)
	I7	38	Senior government official	Taught by parents; Continuing education to bachelor (F)*; Bachelor (M)*	From soldier to entrepreneur based overseas (F); Doctor (M)	Bachelor from top university in US; EMBA at China agency	Banking	Oversea studies since middle school (Singapore + USA)	Real estate + Shopping Mall	CEO (mature)
	I11	34	Teacher	Master (F); Bachelor (M)	From journalist to entrepreneur (F); Employee (M)	Bachelor from top university in Canada	Business Management	High school in US, bachelor in Canada	Media	CEO (mature)
	I21	42	NA	Bachelor (Both)	Professor (Both)	Bachelor from top university in China; EMBA in China agency	Literature	Mainland + 5 years living experience in Singapore (half time in Singapore per year)	Clean Energy	CEO (mature)
	I13	34	Government official	Bachelor (F); High school(M)	From government official to entrepreneur (F); Worker (M)	Bachelor from top university in China	Marketing	Mainland China + 10 years business in US	Electrical industry	CEO (mature)
	I15	35	Farmer	PhD (F); Bachelor (M)	From government official to entrepreneur (F); From teacher to Entrepreneur (M)	Bachelor from top university in UK; EMBA at China agency	Business Management	Oversea studies since bachelor	Real estate + Hotel	Vice CEO
	I27	48	Entrepreneur	Oversea Bachelor (Both)	Entrepreneur based overseas (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in US; EMBA in China agency	IT	Grew up in Singapore and 4 year study in US	Real estate + Hotel	CEO (mature)
	I24	35	Private owners	Oversea continuing education (F); High school (M)	From private owner to entrepreneur based overseas (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in UK	Architecture	Grew up in HK and 4 year study in UK	Manufacturing industry + Hotel	CEO (mature)
	I18	42	NA	Oversea continuing education (Both)	Entrepreneur based overseas (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in Canada	IT	Canada since high school; born in Taiwan; manage family business in mainland since 20+ years old	Mechanical industry + Education	CEO (mature)
	I8	35	Teacher	Taught by parents; Continuing education to bachelor(F); High School (M)	From Teacher to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in China; EMBA in HK	Business Management	High school in Singapore, bachelor in mainland	Beverage industry	CEO (mature)
I16	28	NA	Bachelor (Both)	From government official to entrepreneur (F); Government official (M)	Bachelor and Master from top university in UK	IT	Bachelor + master in UK	Technology	Startup	
Purposeful Amateur	I1	39	Farmer	Primary school (F); No education (M)	From carpenter to entrepreneur (F); Housewife(M)	Bachelor and Master from second-tier university in UK; EMBA at China agency	Business Management	Oversea studies since high school (Singapore + UK)	Real estate + Hotel	CEO (mature)
	I6	33	Farmer	Primary school (F); No education (M)	From craftsman to entrepreneur (F); Housewife(M)	Bachelor from top university in China	Law	Mainland China	Shopping mall	CEO (in transition)
	I9	45	Farmer	No education (Both)	Worker (Both)	High school	NA	Mainland China	Fashion and clothes	CEO (mature)
	I16	28	NA	Bachelor (Both)	From government official to entrepreneur (F); Government official (M)	Bachelor and Master from top university in UK	IT	Bachelor and master in UK	Technology	Startup
	I7	38	Farmer	No education (Both)	Farmer (Both)	Middle school	NA	Mainland China	Property management + trading	CEO (mature)
	I19	43	Farmer	No education (Both)	Farmer (Both)	Middle school	NA	Mainland China	Media	CEO (mature)
	I23	52	Farmer	No education (Both)	Farmer (Both)	Bachelor and Master from top university in China	Journalism and Communication	Mainland China	Advertising	CEO (mature)
	I28	55	Farmer	No education	Farmer (Both)	Primary school	NA	Mainland China	Furniture	CEO (mature)
Relaxation	I12	29	Government official	Oversea bachelor and master (F); bachelor (M)	From official to entrepreneur (F); Employee (M)	Bachelor and Master from top university in UK; EMBA at China agency	Applied science	Boarding school in UK since 14, until finished master studies	Investment	CEO (in transition)
	I29	35	NA	High school (Both)	From carpenter to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in UK	Psychology	6 year study in UK	Education + Investment	CEO (mature)
	I14	48	Farmer	High school (Both)	Worker (Both)	Bachelor from second-tier university in China	Industrial management	Mainland China	Real estate	CEO (mature)
	I15	38	Farmer	Middle school (F); No education (M)	From craftsman to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from third-tier university in China	Business management	Mainland China	Real estate	Vice CEO
	I20	38	Farmer	No education (Both)	From fisherman to small business owners	Bachelor from second-tier university in China	Aquaculture	Mainland China	Real estate	CEO (mature)
	I22	40	Farmer	No education (Both)	Worker (Both)	Bachelor from second-tier university in China	physical education	Mainland China	Food industry	CEO (mature)
	I25	30	Private owners	High school (Both)	Entrepreneurs based overseas (Both)	Bachelor from top university in US	Business management	Grew up in Canada + HK, 4 year study in US	Real estate + hotel	Vice CEO
	I26	38	Farmer	High school (Both)	From carpenter to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top university in Canada	Banking	Grew up in HK and 7 year study in Canada since middle school	Toys industry	CEO (mature)
	I3	35	Farmer	High school (F); No education (M)	From carpenter to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from top-tier university in China	Finance	Mainland China	Real estate	Vice CEO
	I5	35	Farmer	High school (Both)	From private owner to entrepreneur (F); Housewife (M)	Bachelor from second-tier university in China	Business management	Mainland China+2 years study in France	Wine	Vice CEO
I10	45	Farmer	Bachelor (Both)	Teachers (Both)	Bachelor from second-tier university in China	Business management	Mainland + 3 years in Canada for immigration	Advertising	CEO (mature)	

F\* = Father; M\* = Mother; Both\* = Parents; I\* = Informant

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter discusses findings reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Situating such findings amid the relevant literature posited in Chapter 2, the following sections debate the extent to which theories of social distinction proposed from Western societies are applicable in later development of China, a more fundamentally different social and historical environment. These theoretical discussions are guided by main findings presented under each research question/objective. The ties of current results to extant literature as well as the newly emerged findings going beyond existing scholarship are stressed to add up to today's elite tourism consumption and overall social stratification in an emerging context. In the end of the chapter, an integrated theoretical framework of social distinction in tourism arena is tailored to explain the complexities of elite taste dynamics in an emerging market.

### **6.1 Efficacy of Money in China and its Relations to the Acquisitions of Symbolic Goods in Tourism Consumption**

*Research Question 1: Elaborate the objectified tourism products favored by the rich and identify the potential cleavages within the rich group.*

Research question 1 explores the objectified goods which are status-conferring in nature and consecrated by China's rich in tourism field. The results reveal that China's rich are travelling in varying degrees of materialistic styles. Sweet Rich are living in a mode of hyper-mobility enabled by frequent long-haul trips, multiple oversea residences, international company divisions, worldwide ultra-luxury hotels, private guesthouses and Michelin restaurants. Meanwhile, booking through private banks and travelling via private jets have been highly facilitating their enactment of transnational landscape in tourism consumption. Unlike Sweet Rich, Sour Rich and Bitter Rich consume in a comparatively modest manner and have less indulgence in travel experiences. Although they also consume luxury hotels and business class, cost-effective consumption value is manifested in their selective choice for business class (e.g., only choose business class for long-haul trips) and for hotels (e.g., only standardized five-star hotels other than super deluxe hotels as Sweet Rich purchase).

Sociocultural structures underlying such rich categories are clearly observed. Particularly, wealth level and wealth status are the central attributes in mapping out the rich's symbolic participation in tourism consumption. Informants with higher level of wealth are associated with greater frequencies and ease in consuming in a luxurious tourism milieu (Featherstone, 2013). Moreover, financial strength not only brings about greater affordability but also accessibility to insider information cues provided by professional secretaries, private bank and worldwide friends. Yet, wealth level alone is not sufficient to capture the rich's symbolic participation in tourism due to China's own domestic characteristics. Given the undergoing first-ever major handover of wealth from first generation rich to second generation rich (Ghorbani & Carney, 2016), the wealth status in China takes manifold forms. Namely, stages of wealth ownership and time of being rich determine the depth of appropriation of objectified products. It is found that the rich under wealth-accumulating and wealth-inheriting stages tend to view leisure travel and material indulgence in tourism arena as less important compared with those who have entered into a stage of stable wealth circulation. Rather, informants who have become rich for a long time and established mature business do seek for personal potential and enjoyment in recreational area.

The clear divisions of three segments of rich with various levels of materialism are somehow at odds with the extant literature regarding taste dynamics. In other established fields such as arts and generic consumption sites wherein the conceptualization of taste is commonplace, scholars tend to argue that objects no longer classify social distinction. Firstly, critical theorists from neo-Marxist perspectives argued that the late capitalist society is a world of mass consumption which obscures class boundaries. Digital and technology advancement has facilitated the dissemination of previously esoteric form of commodities or the so-called highbrow cultural products in Bourdieu's times to the mass classes (Friedman, 2011; Prieur & Savage, 2013). Consumers from different classes are trained by mass media to be indifferent to the brand differences and therefore tend to consume similar products (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). It is therefore not surprising to see that scholars challenge Bourdieu's

analysis by advocating the omnivore taste, suggesting that modern individuals have the attitude of embracing both highbrow and lowbrow genres of products (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Lizardo, 2005; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). Secondly, rather than inferring that mass production disguises social stratification, postmodern theorists argued that consumers are exposed to free-floating signs and they construct themselves by any commodities they find pleasurable regardless of class origins (Kelnler, 1989; Featherstone, 2007).

Per above illustrations, objects and price of commodities seem to lose their symbolic power in classifying consumers. However, this study finds that in tourism area of emerging market, familiarity and frequency of consuming positional goods still have the efficacy in alluding participants' wealth level and wealth status (Sweet Rich, Sour Rich, Bitter Rich). In tourism literature, terms of "mass-tourism" (Cohen, 1972) and "post-tourism" (Feifer, 1985) are also coined in parallel with neo-Marxist and postmodern thinking happened earlier in other mainstream fields, which makes tourism a less distinctive realm for social differentiation. For instance, post-tourism highlighted pervasiveness of tourism that tourists can engage themselves in any sites that they find hedonic and aesthetically valuable (Urry, 1995). As a result, symbolic struggle is less and less a matter of objectified form such as flying a longer distance or purchasing deluxe travel product. This poses inconsistency with the findings of the current study. However, grounded on Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of new cultural intermediaries, Feifer (1985) specifically introduced that post-tourism is mainly a phenomenon depicting the ambition of mobile middle class who are lacking in economic resources to fully escape from mass tourism but using cultural capital to create new genres of tourism.

Comparing finding of current research with above Western middle class pertinent to objectified consumption, it is rather explicit that tourism arena for upper rich class, the mainstream tourists instead of cultural intermediaries, in an emerging context are still largely restricted to economic capital. This corroborates with Bourdieu's (1986, p. 252) inchoate work when he argued that cultural capital is premised on economic capital and

other capitals are in fact “transformed, disguised form of economic capital”. It is understandable that after Bourdieu, most Western studies largely concentrate on cultural capital considering that today’s social stratification is more complex and nuanced, going beyond the volume of economic capital, however, for a leisure-oriented field in an emerging context, symbolic competition stems from and gets back to the very initial conceptualization of Western theories, which is even true to the consumers who have already garnered much more sufficient economic resources than lower strata. Yet, this study extends Bourdieu’s writing of economic capital. While Bourdieu used data from 1960s France to analyze a historically constructed class system, economic capital often simply refers to the total amount of material assets that can be directly transformed into money or property rights (Bourdieu, 1986). In our findings, the forms of economic capital which influence the rich’s symbolic participation not only refer to the amount of material assets but as well as the wealth status. That is, although the rich under wealth-inheriting stages has higher level of material assets than the rich under stable wealth-circulating stage, their material indulgence in travel is still modest. As such, the original concept of economic capital does not adequately address the material participation presented in a recreational field and in a fundamentally different social/historical environment of modern China.

Nevertheless, the three segments (Sweet Rich, Sour Rich, Bitter Rich) concluded from the acquisitions of symbolic goods do not equate with high-low taste spectrum, as the ownership of materials does not tell the real relationship between human and objects. Per Veblen’s (1899) thesis, object signification is straightforward that social distinction is directly shown by a visible display of symbolic goods. However, for Bourdieu’s (1984) analysis, highbrow taste comes from the distinctive cultured practice to decode the purchased product although the product per se might just be a normal good. It is common to see from the findings that respondents from sour rich may show aesthetic sensibility towards places they are visiting whilst respondents from sweet rich might only flaunt the exclusiveness of the destination they have been. Therefore, this study echoes the call from other fields for investigating the embodied practices of social

agents to discern the taste dynamics. The embodied practices of China's rich in tourism realm are thus presented in subsequent discussions.

## **6.2 Boundary Drawing through Embodied Taste Oppositions**

*Research Question 2: Describe the embodied consumption practices displayed by the rich and identify the potential cleavages within the rich group;*

Examining embodied patterns of the rich's taste differences towards tourism consumption, this study finds that there is marked boundary between the rich's embodied practices. That is, there do exist China's rich who view travel as an arena in registering social distinction. Underpinning such claim are the four pair-wise taste spectrums representing the opposite sides of demeanor during travel: *aesthetic sensibilities VS surface skimming*; *sophisticated status markers VS moneyed status markers*; *proactive actor VS passive reactor*; and *disinterestedness VS trend followers*. Except two informants (Informant # 16, Informant # 25) appeared on both ends of taste spectrums, the rest informants fit neatly either left end or right end. As such, an investigation into the internal practices unveils that tourism field has the capacity to create social differentiation. Unlike other cultural fields (art, music and literature etc.) wherein several objectified items per se have already been legitimated and enjoyed the widely-agreed cultural prestige (e.g., Vivaldi's Four Seasons and French avant-garde poetry in Bourdieu's time) that labeling of highbrow marker is possible (Prieur et al., 2008), tourism practices as the subgenre of recreation are instead much more ordinary that exist in people's everyday life. Thus, a division of highbrow-lowbrow taste in common social sphere primarily hinges on the internal taste differences and practice differentiations. A rarer distinction is to find potent signals in the ways of consumption and "apply the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 40).

According to the findings of current thesis, the first taste spectrum (*aesthetic sensibilities VS surface skimming*) mainly depicts the boundary underlined by informants' different understandings towards what they are visiting. Aesthetic sensibility is supported by respondents' critical thinking and in-depth comparisons in

judging the manifold destinations they are exposed to. Besides, aesthetic sensibility is also underpinned by several informants' abstract and metaphysical way to summarize their inner feelings when travel. In contrast, a number of informants seem to use superficial evidences such as visual images and straightforward indicators to express their direct comparisons of the products. Respondents who offer direct comparisons are oftentimes the pragmatic thinkers with keen focus on utilitarian and practical ends when consuming tourism products. The second taste spectrum (*sophisticated status markers VS moneyed status markers*) is grounded on informants' explicit expressions on social prestige when travel. Unsurprisingly, money is still the prevailing status markers used by some informants to claim prestige, either accentuating the material scarcity or stressing the exclusive experiences that easily achieved by money. However, it is also interesting to find that there are China's rich who are able to transform money into sophisticated practices which go far beyond the reach of whoever only rich in financial resources. For instance, those informants act as tourism mavens or connoisseurs in knowing and consuming the products/experiences that other rich have little chance to access to; or reconfiguring the mass commodities that other rich are also enjoying but applying a nuanced approach in consuming them. Importantly, an emerging distinction practice valued by China's rich is that they distinguish themselves by emphasizing conversions from economic capital to other personal capital, especially political capital. An interplay of social and political capital in tourism consumption is therefore observed as unique sophisticated marker.

The third taste spectrum (*proactive actor VS passive reactor*) is analyzed from interviewees' attitudes and initiatives in taking up a trip. Whilst a few informants seek to define the new forms of travel which are ontologically challenging and pioneered, there are also a group of rich keep enlarging personal environmental bubble into different parts of the world. Those who consume inside personal comfort zones interpret their role in travel as passive audience, rather than active player with natural curiosity and enthusiasm to co-create experiences. The last taste spectrum (*disinterestedness VS trend followers*) outlines participants' disparate dislike inferences and benchmarking

groups. A few rich demarcate themselves by showing disdain for other rich's travel behaviors (distinction over group), whereas others asserted discrimination of mass tourists (distinction between groups). Compared with a cosmopolitan orientation held by certain rich, participants who draw symbolic line between themselves and mass tourists instead indicate an aesthetic admiration of two groups: Western long-standing families and other famous Chinese rich.

Four pair-wise taste spectrums reported in this study suggest an extension of the key empirical studies using Bourdieu's legacy in both cultural sociology and consumption areas. An overall look at the taste spectrums affirms the extant patterns of embodied HCC/LCC reported in other fields. In Bourdieu's theoretical vernacular of cultural capital, social agents in a given field all share an array of perceptual oppositions between the so-called highbrow and lowbrow adjectives. The patterns of HCC are usually linked with formal aesthetics, abstract, rarity brought by time, history and effort (Bourdieu, 1984; Prieur & Savage, 2011); whereas patterns of LCC centers on necessity, concrete and direct satisfaction of desires (Bourdieu, 1984; Holt, 1998; Prieur & Savage, 2011). In contemporary consumer scholarship, these taste patterns are further confirmed and meanwhile supplemented with new dimensions. Such examples of emerging taste patterns can be engagement versus disengagement in the consumption of citizen cultural facilities (Bennett et al., 2009); international versus local in fields of music, cuisine and TV (Prieur & Savage, 2011); defiance versus deference in the realm of comedy (Friedman, 2011). Although no study has specifically explored taste oppositions in tourism field considering its relatively long distance to the classical highbrow genres, every consumption locale is indeed subjected to taste investigation (Holt, 1998; Ustuner & Holt, 2010).

In current study of tourism field, forms of taste oppositions to a large extent buttress the above-mentioned patterns from both Bourdieu's traditional concepts and contemporary supplements. The first taste spectrum (*aesthetic sensibilities VS surface skimming*) mirrors the oft-stated characteristics by Bourdieu (1984) and his followers such as *formal aesthetics versus necessity* and *abstract versus concrete* (e.g., Holt, 1998;



Friedman, 2011). The aesthetic practices in tourism field are particularly manifested as the intellectual pursuits and abstract understandings when travel, which creates boundary with those who exhibit the pragmatic orientation and simply take relaxation as the purpose of tourism. Additionally, a corollary to contemporary pattern is the dimension of participation versus nonparticipation found by certain studies in art and leisure-related fields (e.g., Prieur & Savage, 2011). Such fundamental polarity is also uncovered in the present study (*proactive actor VS passive reactor*) wherein informants being initiative and curious tourists differentiate themselves from those who do not actively involve into tourism consumption nonetheless have strong willingness to seek novelty.

Besides the affirmations, several embodied spectrums detected from China's rich are not aligned with the existing literature but add to the new modes of distinction. Firstly, under the spectrum of *sophisticated status markers VS moneyed status markers*, one sophisticated status marker for China's elites is their conscious narratives of exclusive experiences brought by the affinity to political/social resources which are inaccessible to moneyed upstarts. For example, Informant # 13 defined a visit to an oversea National Bureau of Investigation as his unforgettable travel experience and took pride in sharing it. Meanwhile, Informant # 21 introduced his "secret garden" collecting worldwide travel souvenirs as a social hub patronized by high-level government officials. On one hand, it is reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1986) standpoint that the three types of capital, namely, cultural capital, social capital and economic capital are interchangeable. On the other hand, it is found that in China, one source of rarer distinction comes from the legitimate influence underpinned by pluralistic connections to political and social resources (Buckley, 1999). This is even applicable to tourism field. However, such distinction statements are expressed consciously rather than the unintended result of personal expression though tastes as what Bourdieu prescribed. Therefore, to certain extent, the conscious showing-off of personal orthodox power falls into Veblen's (1899) category, although the content of showing-off in Veblen's age is positional goods instead of political and social power. In this regard, whom fall into HCC (people with

sophisticated status markers) in this study of a developing economy turn out to be LCC in developed countries (e.g., the intentionally showing-off is classified into LCC in Holt's (1998) US context).

Secondly, a significant modified framework of Bourdieu's analysis in contemporary academia is to put tastes and status strategies in developing economy contexts for a scrutiny, such as Belk's (2000) study in Zimbabwe, Ustuner & Holt (2010)'s work in Turkey and Hedegard's (2015) research in Brazil. All studies observed an interesting global Veblen effect (tricking-down effect) that HCC consumers in developing country imitate the consumption practices of middle class in Western countries and those consumers tend to scorn indigenous consumption styles. On contrary, this study reveals a different pattern. In the spectrum of *disinterestedness VS trend followers*, there is a cleavage within group between informants who are attentive followers to both Western aristocratic class and certain famous Chinese rich; and informants who employ a cosmopolitan tendency to compare Western society with Chinese context from detailed cultural and social evidences. That is, although Western fetishism is also discovered in China, it is not as prevalent as what is observed in Brazil, Turkey and Zimbabwe (Zhang, 2017). Moreover, the reference groups of imitation in China are more diverse and of higher standard, which include not only the aristocratic families overseas but also the influential rich domestically. With a continued progress into the world economy, there do exist a group of super-elite or superclass in China who are confident and critical pioneers leading a Chinese-specific elite circle.

Although there is a dearth of writing examining taste patterns in tourism research, studies on tourist typologies serve to offer informative references on styles of appreciation and modes of tourism consumption. A fundamental study in tourist typologies from sociological approach is Cohen (1972)'s fivefold phenomenological spectrums rooted in individuals' spiritual center. Later studies further deepen such typologies by adding traveler versus tourist (Jacobsen, 2000); the sacred versus the profane (Wickens, 2002), explorers versus planners (Alvarez & Asugman, 2006) and etc. To a certain extent, the taste spectrums found in current thesis bear out these

meaningful and deeper tourist conceptualizations, such as surface skimming partly overlaps with Cohen's (1972) relaxation mode; and the dimension of define new travel corroborates with Cohen's (1972) existential mode. The parallelism uncovers that the embodied practices of tourists are somehow connected even though being a tourist from rich class. However, the difference is in which context are such fundamental typologies contested. That is, the foregoing typology-related studies provide useful insights in segmenting the whole tourists whilst overlook at which situations that certain typology has symbolic power to generate social distinction toward another typology. It is therefore a contribution of current thesis to offer the contested pairwise oppositions to describe the pattern of social differentiation among a hybrid group. As remarked by Friedman and Kuipers (2013, p.180): "each application of highbrow taste thus becomes an act of symbolic violence against dominated groups, who accept the authority of a cultural hierarchy defined and imposed by the dominant."

Furthermore, despite that most of the studies regarding tourist typologies are elicited based on embodied behaviors including tourist experiences, roles and meanings (McCabe, 2005), those studies tend to bypass the materiality or sociocultural structures underlying such constructions of who is a tourist. Whilst Cohen (1972) used "center" as a rhetorical parallel to material reality of a tourist, the abstract description of "center" seems to be ambiguous which disguises the structural reasons for a tourist falling into a typology. A recent paper in tourism research thereby calls for the applications of practice theory to tourism studies in that practice is an enduring confluence of social construction and material arrangements (Lamers, Van der Duim, & Spaargaren, 2017). As a response to this call, the present thesis follows practice theory conceptualized by Bourdieu (1984) who is one of the primary founders in the field. Therefore, following the four pairwise taste typologies are the discussions of their underlying social structures, namely, cultural capital profiles.

### **6.3 Translating Taste into Markers of the Rich's Cultural Capital**

*Research Question 3: Identify the underlying socioeconomic logics informing the organization of different patterns of tourism consumption;*

After the discussion of taste differences that China's rich have exhibited in the field of tourism consumption, next question is to uncover how the oppositions observed above can be related to one's cultural capital profile. To put this differently, are there structural forces underlying such observations about the patterning of tastes? Answering this question is a key step in conceptualizing taste since the classification of such oppositions into highbrow or lowbrow taste hinges on one's possession of field-dependent cultural capital. Whilst socio-economic factors underlying the appropriation of objectified goods are explicit (sweet/sour/bitter rich), sociocultural boundaries behind embodied practices are drawn rather implicitly. Instead of assuming that cultural capital profiles directly lead to embodied oppositions in tourism consumption field, this study views them as necessary yet indirect conditions for the creations of social distinction, since individuals do not exclusively generate social differences out of an isolated domain, but borrow from an isomorphic and more generic field which has closer ties with the overall cultural repertoires (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In present research, homologues of consumption patterns are also observed between the site of tourism consumption and the field of leisure consumption. As a subgenre placed in a wider recreational picture, tourism occupies one end of leisure continuum that certain tourists' behaviors, especially the motive of social prestige, are rooted in leisure practices of residual environments (Carr, 2002). Thus, the probe of informants' cultural capital profiles follows the flow as below: mapping the travel embodied practices (taste differences) to recreational practices, and then mapping the recreational practices to cultural capital profiles.

Based on informants' motivations, activities and experiences of leisure engagement, four leisure modes are identified in current findings: (a) the mode of drifting; (b) the mode of intellectual quest; (c) the mode of purposeful amateur; and (d) the mode of relaxation. Remarkably, homologues are found between fields, as participants from

different leisure modes exhibit similar embodied practices occurred in travel field. Firstly, driven by the quest for freedom and challenges, the drifting informants have developed special interests during leisure time and incorporated these special interests as major travel activities. They have demonstrated significant knowledge and offered engaged narratives on the leisure activity per se. Consistent embodied practices that connect travel site with drifting leisure mode include disinterestedness in other rich's practices and in-depth comparisons in leisure and travel products. Besides, with considerable time and efforts devoted to certain leisure activities, these drifting informants are specific mavens and even experts in the realm of interest. Secondly, slightly different from drifting mode which accentuates special interests such as yachting and skiing, the mode of intellectual quest rather highlights intellectual and learning enhancement in leisure consumption including reading, poem and calligraphy. Those informants clearly do use their intellectual interests to make connections to other social spheres such as travel consumption. It is found that metaphysical, in-depth comparisons and mentally demanding tendencies exhibited in travel field are also well manifested at leisure site for informants under intellectual mode.

The third and fourth leisure patterns revealed in current research involve the mode of purposeful amateur and the mode of relaxation, making sharp contrasts with the prior drifting mode and intellectual mode. The mode of purposeful amateur consists of functional participants who picked up certain leisure pursuits intentionally and evinced an orientation that echoes an upward mobility in social ladders. Chiming with travel practices, purposeful participants use moneyed symbols to intentionally mimic a more legitimate orientation established by other famous rich or western society. Disinterestedness towards the mass individuals (distinction between) is also prevalent since the informants under purposeful mode still lacks the confidence to comment within group. The last pattern of relaxation mode covers respondents who often associate leisure hobbies predominantly with playful and enjoyable senses without the overall display of in-depth knowledge and skills towards their leisure consumption. Instead of being self-motivated, passive and simple engagement in both leisure and

travel consumption is directly observed from data.

The findings also suggest the social-economic contours underlying those four leisure modes. Firstly, the mode of drifting and the mode of intellectual quest are closely linked to a broader embrace of good upbringing and socialization, being well bred in a cultured family, being cross-cultural exposed and such alike. Particularly, social upbringing, especially a relative educated family, remains a central factor in structuring participants' intellectual pursuits and drifting leisure practices. Although nearly all respondents' parents went through the era of China's cultural revolution during when few people have the access to university education (Feng, 1999), a trace back to the generation of grandfathers who fell into or had affiliations with early bourgeoisie class, intellectual class or cadre members entails an effective reproduction of China's elites. In contrast, for participants under purposeful mode and relaxation mode, wealth is a recent phenomenon which is confined into maximum two generations and the education backgrounds of participants' parents remain preliminary ranging from no education to high school. Most of the purposeful respondents are first generation rich with significant others as catalyst. Although majority respondents under relaxation mode are second generation rich and received prestigious university education overseas, a lack of genteel upbringing and wealth-inheriting status make them strive hard to stabilize business with distinction needs primarily abide in work field instead of leisure and travel sites. Beside the above, gender factor which is beyond Bourdieu's cultural capital also contributes to respondents' embodied leisure and travel consumption practices.

The above findings replenish the extant research in several senses. At first glance of the informants' cultural capital profiles, the basic markers of cultural capital accord with Bourdieu's (1984) three types of cultural capital sources. However, field-dependent capital assets related to leisure and travel consumption in China differ with what happened in developed countries such as French society by Bourdieu (1984) and US society by Holt (1998). Firstly, for contemporary China's rich, cultural capital garnered from social upbringing is a more status-conferring asset of distinction than that garnered from formal education or occupation. For example, although some

participants under purposeful and relaxation modes also work in similar industries and graduated from oversea well-known universities as drifting and intellectual participants do, these cultural capital assets, unlike class origin, are becoming less and less transferrable to signs which can construct symbolic boundaries. This point is supported by studies on China's social mobility. In the process of China's massification of university education, upward social mobility has slowed down compared with 1990s when the expansion of higher education has not been launched (Mok & Wu, 2016). Moreover, sending offspring overseas to secure a Western education has become a commonplace for Chinese who got rich between 1980s to 1990s (Xiang & Shen, 2009). In the findings of present thesis, the reason most of the informants were admitted by international prestigious universities is that they win at the starting line by paying expensive ticket to elite junior high school abroad, which devalues education as a primary cultural capital source to draw internal boundaries within the rich group.

Secondly, social upbringing in Bourdieu's (1984) account refers to individuals' class origin which is largely decided by parents' occupation and education. However, the findings suggest that the form of social upbringing in China should be dated back to the generation of grandparents, meaning that a three-generational pattern of class-formation matters. This deepens scholars' insights into how specific cultural capital is implicated in social stratification in an emerging country. In existing research and industry reports, a mention of rich in China is likely to evoke the portrait of flaunting recent wealth (Besser et al., 2015; Brennan, 2016), yet the interplay between old money and new money is seldom addressed when discuss the social distinction of the rising wealthy elites. Despite the non-existence of aristocratic class in China, this study reveals that the cleavage between highbrow versus lowbrow tastes largely abides in the shabby-genteel root of informants' forefathers' access to the earliest political, professional and bourgeois classes (Buckley 1999). Although China generates exceptional number of new rich on different rich lists (e.g., Hurun Research Institute, 2015; Forbes, 2016), the seemingly new fortune in the industry wealth reports is in fact the process of class rigidity in current study.

Thirdly, social boundary drawing in China's rich group is gendered. This is not only applicable to studies in the fields of generic consumption (e.g., Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2012), sport (Bennett et al., 2009) and education (Sullivan, 2001), but also in tourism and leisure consumption of current research. Bourdieu has long been blamed for his reluctance to recognize gendered disposition as key structure affecting social stratification process (Skeggs, 2004). This may explain why female informants in present study seems to have higher levels of education but less engagement in the recreational and tourism field. Due to the distinctive masculine culture among Chinese rich men (Osburg, 2013), all of the three female informants are working hard to strive for being successful heir recognized by stakeholders in family business. Thus, cultural capital for them is not readily convertible into the aesthetic sensibilities in a less important site, namely, recreational and tourism field.

#### **6.4 Toward a Theoretical Framework for the Taste Dynamics**

*Research Question 4: Summarize the distinction practices used by the rich and discuss the extent to which Bourdieu's traditions apply in the arena of tourism consumption.*

By foregoing discussions, this study has developed a theory in specific to taste dynamics and social distinction practices among the rich group in a developing country (see Figure 6). The research has uncovered the intragroup variations in boundary work in the field of tourism consumption. Whilst most studies are represented within Bourdieu's analytical procedures from documenting cultural capital to habitus and to the classification of highbrow/lowbrow tastes, the present study takes a reverse direction. First, this study identified the objectified resources (Area A in Figure 6) and opposing embodied practices (Area B in Figure 6) occupied by the rich in the field of tourism consumption; then this particular field of practices is remapped to the broader field of consumption, namely recreational field (Area B in Figure 6); and finally the forms of cultural capital and economic capital are identified to explain the objective structures that are specific to the leisure and travel site (Area C in Figure 6). This whole analytical loop enables the conceptualization of taste dynamics possible in a field wherein the forms of highbrow/lowbrow taste are not yet systematically investigated.



In so doing, this study advances the Western theories of social distinction by revising several key constructs: habitus, cultural capital, taste and consumption field. Firstly, objectified resources implicated in social distinction at tourism site is oftentimes structured by economic capital composed by wealth level and wealth status (Area A in Figure 6). As such, for a leisure-oriented field in an emerging context, symbolic participation of objectified goods stems from and gets back to the very initial conceptualization of Western theories, which is even true to the consumers who have already garnered much more sufficient economic resources. Secondly, unlike objectified resources, embodied practices of China's rich are still largely affected by cultural capital, though the form of cultural capital remains somewhat different from Western contexts (Area C in Figure 6). In China, informants from gentility class exhibited distinct practices from those who are recent rich. Gentility class herein refers to the three-generational pattern with grandparents' access to the earliest political, professional and bourgeois classes. As such, the form of cultural capital in China scores higher on social upbringing (primary habitus) rather than education and occupation (development of second habitus).

Different cultural capital in turn results into four-pairwise taste oppositions (Area B in Figure 6). Out of these embodied taste oppositions, new modes of distinction of China's rich have emerged. First, informants with high cultural capital in China tend to consciously express social differences of tourism experiences by showing personal affinity to political/social resources which are inaccessible to moneyed upstarts. Therefore, to certain extent, the conscious showing-off of personal orthodox power falling into category of LCC in developed country becomes the category of HCC in developing country. Secondly, although Western fetishism is also discovered in China, it is not as prevalent as what is observed in other emerging countries. The reference groups of imitation in China are more diverse and of higher standard, which include not only the aristocratic families overseas but also the influential rich domestically. As such, in tourism domain, consumption patterns of China's rich are therefore not only influenced by Western culture but as well as national cultural repertoire.

The taste oppositions reported in current findings not only add up to the new modes of distinction in an emerging country but also renew the knowledge of social distinction

in tourism field. How the embodied practices are contested as the sources for tourists to distinguish themselves and what are the materiality underlying such embodied practices comprise the framework we offered to tourism academia. This framework therefore captures the nuanced and accurate interpretation of social distinction practices of China's rich.

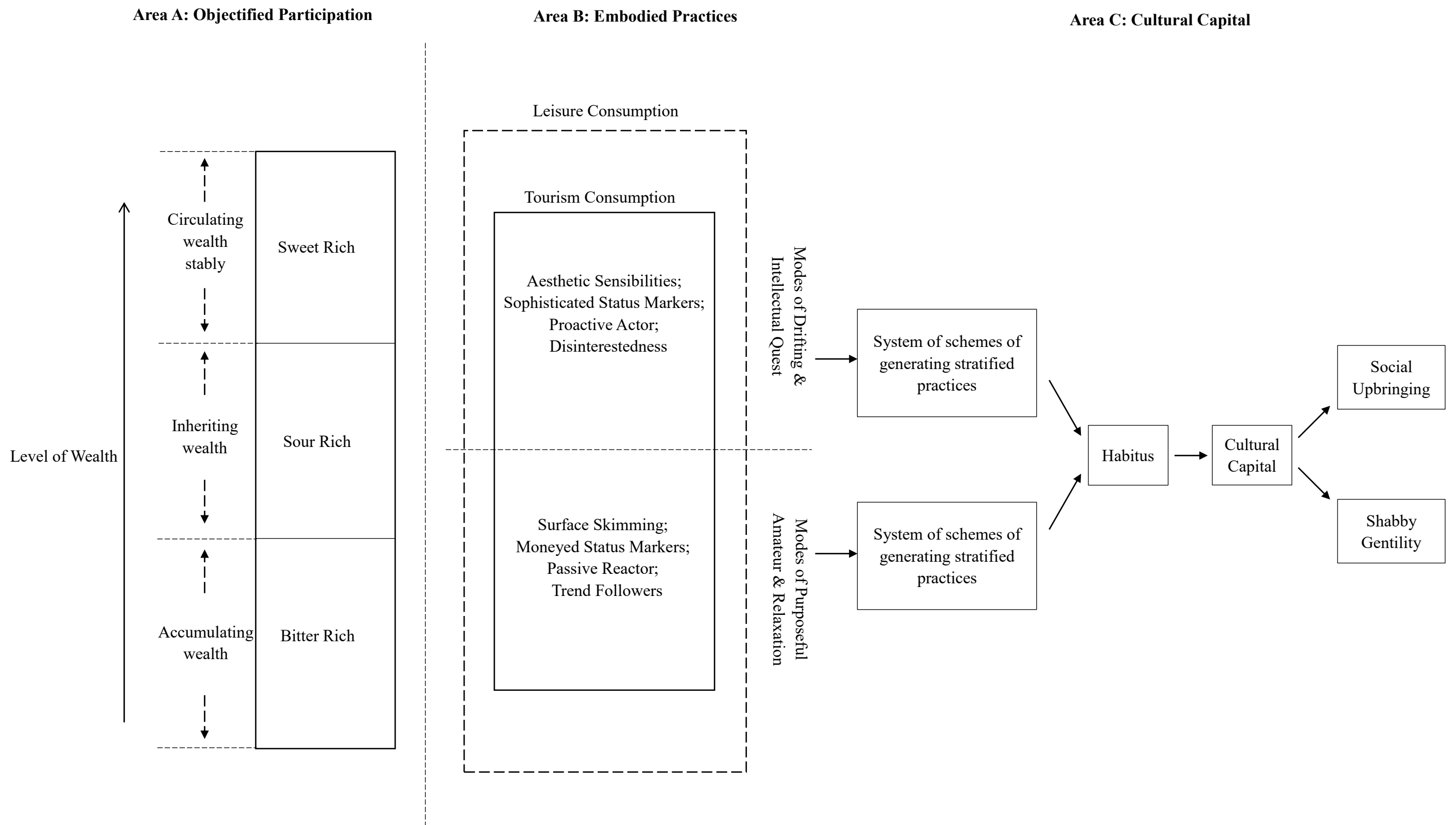


Figure 6. Theoretical Framework

## **CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This chapter summarizes the thesis by introducing the whole research flows and reporting the main findings. Based on the findings, theoretical and practical implications of the thesis are explained. Lastly, limitations of current research are identified and recommendations for future studies are suggested.

### **7.1 Thesis Summary**

The overall purpose of this study is to explore social distinction practices of China's rich. To answer this question, firstly, background information about China's rich and research significance of studying the topic have been presented in Chapter 1-- Introduction. Following the introduction, specific Western theories in relation to social distinction in consumption domain are reviewed at the beginning of Chapter 2 - Literature review. The overall review further directs the attention to theories tailored specifically to elite distinction: Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption and Bourdieu's framework revolving around habitus, cultural capital and taste. Whilst the review of those theories enhance the apprehension of social distinction in generic consumption field, a field-analytic approach argues for a close investigation of structural relationship in a particular field. As such, a review of tourism consumption and China's national context are conducted.

Literature review suggests that while Veblen's tradition has been widely used in tourism field, the operationalization of Bourdieu's concepts tends to be limited. Extant research has largely used only part of Bourdieu's findings to account for different themes in tourism field, yet overpassed Bourdieu's holistic framework in understanding tourists' field-specific position taking, giving heed to both objectified resources and embodied resources occupied by social agents. Secondly, there is a dearth of research in tourism arena investigating the embodied oppositions used by individuals amongst group to identify self and meanwhile distance others, thereby displaying that embodied oppositions can be one source of matching individuals' relational positions in a particular field. As what Douglass (1996) remarked about the meaning of applying Bourdieu's tradition to contemporary research is "to get at some underlying principle

of discrimination” (p.62). Thirdly, literature review advises that extant conceptualizations of the relationship between social class and consumption pattern have been developed and focused on Western countries. It therefore poses challenges and difficulties to capture the specificities of taste dynamics in emerging markets. As China is still evolving with the fastest speed to generate the relatively younger ultra-rich, it is worthwhile to ask to what extent are Western theories potent and applicable to an emerging context.

Grounded on the literature review, a qualitative approach presented in Chapter 3-- Methodology is introduced to fill the academic void mentioned above. Aligned with Bourdieu, the paradigm of the research takes structuralist-constructivism to establish a dialectical dualism between social agency and structure. Under the umbrella of this paradigm, method of constructivist grounded theory was conducted as principles and guidelines for data collection and analysis. A total of 29 Chinese informants satisfying the minimum wealth threshold were finally interviewed. Data analysis follows two stages from open coding to focused coding prescribed by constructivist grounded theory. Writings of field notes and memo as well as the intimate engagement with informants on social media after the interviews are the main approaches for this study to assure data credibility.

Both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 report findings of current research. Chapter 4 reveals the boundaries drawn by China’s rich in tourism consumption field. It documents the symbolic boundaries for objectified tourism goods and in embodied practices for travel. The symbolic boundaries lead to intragroup variations. Specifically, intragroup differences for objectified goods are reflected in the segmentation of three categories of rich: Sweet Rich, Sour Rich and Bitter Rich, largely influence by economic capital. In addition, intragroup variations for embodied practices are manifested in the four pairwise taste oppositions: aesthetic sensibilities VS surface skimming; sophisticated status markers VS moneyed status markers; proactive actor VS passive reactor; and disinterestedness VS trend followers. To conceptualize these four pairwise oppositions into highbrow/lowbrow tastes, a mapping of taste differences into informants’ cultural

capital profile is presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 covers the homologies between tourism site and leisure field, and further relate these homologies with the underlying cultural capital profile. Based on the results, Chapter 6 compares findings of present research with extant literature. The revisiting of Western theories on social distinction and the implications for tourism academia are critically debated.

## **7.2 Theoretical Implications**

This thesis contributes to the extant scholarship on social distinction in general consumption field as a whole and in tourism consumption site in particular. The theoretical advancements are mainly reflected in three major points listed as below:

*Revisiting Bourdieu* Through a systematic investigation into the consumption patterns of China's rich, this thesis supplements and revises Bourdieu's distinction framework in a developing country. First, this study extends Bourdieu's writing of economic capital. Although stepping into a mass- and post-consumption area, economic capital is still central to purchase symbolic goods, which is even true to rich individuals in developing country. Economic capital in Bourdieu's study simply refers to the total amount of material assets that can be directly transformed into money or property rights (Bourdieu, 1986). In current study, the forms of economic capital which influence the rich's symbolic participation not only refer to the amount of material assets but as well as the wealth status. Given the undergoing first-ever major handover of wealth from first generation rich to second generation rich (Ghorbani & Carney, 2016), the wealth status in China takes manifold forms. Namely, stages of wealth ownership and time of being rich determine the depth of appropriation of objectified products.

Secondly, new modes of embodied distinction emerge beyond Bourdieu's thesis. Supplementing Bourdieu, proactive actor VS passive reactor is the contemporary taste spectrum in parallel with the dimension of participation versus nonparticipation found by certain studies in art and leisure-related fields (e.g., Prieur & Savage, 2011). Revising Bourdieu, several new spectrums are further detected and add to the new modes of distinction in Eastern context. For example, one sophisticated status marker for China's HCC elites is their conscious narratives of exclusive experiences brought

by the affinity to political/social resources (Buckley, 1999). In this regard, whom fall into HCC in a developing economy turn out to be LCC in developed countries (Ustuner & Holt, 2010). Furthermore, different from other emerging contexts such as Turkey and Zimbabwe where Western fetishism overrides traditional culture as main distinction source, the reference groups of imitation in China are more diverse and of higher standard, which include not only the aristocratic families overseas but also the influential rich domestically (Zhang, 2017).

Additionally, for contemporary China's rich, cultural capital garnered from social upbringing is a more status-conferring asset of distinction than that garnered from formal education or occupation (Mok & Wu, 2016). Social upbringing in Bourdieu's (1984) account refers to individuals' class origin which is largely decided by parents' occupation and education. However, findings of current thesis suggest that the form of social upbringing in China should be dated back to the generation of grandparents, meaning that a three-generational pattern of class-formation matters. Lastly, social boundary drawing in China's rich group is gendered. Due to the distinctive masculine culture among Chinese rich men (Osburg, 2013), cultural capital for female rich in China is not readily convertible into the aesthetic sensibilities in a recreational field.

*Logics of Symbolic Boundaries in Tourism Consumption* This thesis is first of its kind to conceptualize taste in tourism field. Even though no study has specifically explored taste oppositions in tourism field considering its relatively long distance to the classical highbrow genres, every consumption locale is indeed subjected to taste investigation (Holt, 1998; Ustuner & Holt, 2010). This study finds that in tourism area of emerging market, familiarity and frequency of consuming positional goods still have the efficacy in alluding participants' wealth level and wealth status. Comparing with Western middle class pertinent to objectified consumption, upper rich class in an emerging context are still largely restricted to economic capital in tourism arena. However, objectified boundaries do not equate with high-low taste spectrum, as the ownership of materials does not tell the real relationship between human and objects. Therefore, the investigation of the embodied practices of social agents to discern the taste dynamics

is also a must in the realm of tourism.

There are four pair-wise embodied taste spectrums observed from the study which in certain extent overlap with existing studies on tourist typologies. The parallelism uncovers that the embodied practices of tourists are somehow connected even though being a tourist from rich class. However, a close look at some fundamental studies in tourist typologies (Cohen, 1972; Jacobsen, 2000; Wickerns, 2002; Alvarez & Asugman, 2006) reveals that they tend to overlook at which situations that certain typology has symbolic power to generate social distinction toward another typology. It is therefore a contribution of current thesis to offer the contested pairwise oppositions to describe the pattern of social differentiation among a hybrid group. Such opposition binaries are indeed in a constant change and implicate the symbolic boundaries in certain field. This thesis therefor serves as the first attempt to learn about the embodied symbolic binaries in tourism studies. The overturn of one binary is the start of another. Such a dynamic process can capture the nuances and complexities inherent in a contested field and within a particular community. This thesis is the first theoretical step for future studies to investigate the process of social distinction and the domination system. As commented by Pieur and Savage (2011): “the most privileged preferences should enjoy a wider recognition as particularly valuable, thereby making them into signs of domination and symbolic violence.”

Furthermore, despite that most of the studies regarding tourist typologies are elicited based on embodied behaviors including tourist experiences, roles and meanings (McCabe, 2005), those studies tend to bypass the materiality or sociocultural structures underlying such constructions of who is a tourist. Whilst Cohen (1972) used “center” as a rhetorical parallel to material reality of a tourist, the abstract description of “center” seems to be ambiguous which disguises the structural reasons for a tourist falling into a typology. The present thesis offers a new perspective to materialize the underlying social structures of tourists’ embodied practices by connecting tourism behaviors with the overall recreational consumption pattern, and further inferring to informants’ cultural capital profiles.



*China's "Shabby Gentility"* The cleavages among the rich group in this thesis is mainly based on the differences of their social upbringing or class origins. In contrast, other cultural capital assets such as education and occupation are becoming less and less transferrable to signs which can construct symbolic boundaries. Moreover, social upbringing in this thesis dates back to the generation of grandparents, meaning that a three-generational pattern of class-formation matters. Despite the non-existence of aristocratic class in China, this study reveals that the cleavage between highbrow versus lowbrow tastes largely abides in the shabby-genteel root of informants' forefathers' access to the earliest political, professional and bourgeois classes (Buckley 1999). Although China generates exceptional number of new rich on different rich lists (e.g., Hurun Research Institute, 2015; Forbes, 2016), the seemingly new fortune in the industry wealth reports is in fact the process of class rigidity in current study. Lastly, social boundary drawing in China's rich group is gendered. Due to the distinctive masculine culture among Chinese rich men (Osburg, 2013), all of the three female informants are working hard to strive for being successful heir recognized by stakeholders in family business. Thus, cultural capital for them is not readily convertible into the aesthetic sensibilities in a less important site, namely, recreational and tourism field.

### **7.3 Practical Implications**

Apart from theoretical contributions, this thesis also provides manifold practical implications for tourism industry. Firstly, the valuable data offered by current thesis supplements extant luxury travel reports in the market such as *The Chinese Luxury Traveler 2018* (Hurun, 2018), of which the content only focuses on the objectified goods in tourism market whilst overlooking the embodied behaviors that rich customers have exhibited. By offering the insights of not only what rich individuals consume, but also how they consume, this thesis opens up the opportunity for luxury tourism service providers to further segment their high-end customers based on customers' embodied practices. For example, although both high cultural capital and low cultural capital travelers emphasize the status markers embedded in the trip, some required over-the-

top luxury experiences which can be simply achieved by money whilst some asked for more sophisticated markers such as the exclusive experiences acquired based on personal expertise or the transformation from economic strength to other resources. In this regard, designing different products with different status expressions should be employed by luxury travel business to cater to the distinct niche needs brought by group variations. Second, a trickling-down effect is observed in the group wherein rich who have showed lowbrow taste tend to follow other famous rich with highbrow taste domestically and mimic the Western aristocratic class internationally. This also sheds light on the prediction of future mass tourism in China. With increasing people becoming affluent, what rich people are consuming today may become the normal tourism products for mass tourists to purchase tomorrow. That is, staying in European vineyard instead of normalized hotels; visiting private collection club of Western business family rather than typical attractions; traveling to space and climbing the Everest which occurred in current thesis can be the future trend of mass tourism.

Thirdly, the embodied distinguished practices uncovered in the present thesis offer the strategic framework for tourism product designers about taste development. In our study, taste, specifically legitimate taste, alludes class differences through cluster effect that individuals with highbrow taste prefer friends and colleagues who possess the same taste (Holt, 1998). Same to the relationship between product and customers, customers will be attracted to the products which implicitly or explicitly share part of their own tastes. As such, it is a timely topic for product designers to establish congruent product personality and for destination to build appropriate social tone which matches the taste of target customer segments. Moreover, a discovery of customers' taste would also help tourism business to gain extra revenue of surrounding parties. As shown in current findings, certain individuals would only choose to travel with a stable group of friends who have similar taste, and would only flock to the destinations that people with similar tastes have been. Therefore, this study suggests that taste should become an effective marketing weapon for future product designs.

#### **7.4 Limitations and Future Research**

This thesis is not free from limitations as subjective bias is typical in qualitative research. Specifically, as an inductive method and analysis, grounded theory is facing critics from its positivist epistemology and its claim on generating theory (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017). Contested versions of grounded theory are available but lacking detailed clarification and application. Considering the exploratory nature of current research, limitations are inevitable given limited time and author's inexperience. Therefore, based on the framework concluded from the present qualitative study, future research is suggested to empirically examine the relationships by using other research methods.

Despite the limitations of qualitative method, current findings have shed light on several meaningful topics for future research to explore. Firstly, this study solely focuses on intragroup differences of rich informants who have occupied relatively higher ranking in social strata. It would be intriguing for future studies to involve intergroup comparisons in taste dynamics, that is, comparing taste dynamics among working class, middle class and rich class. This will strongly enhance scholars' understanding on social distinction of a particular society in a specific field. Secondly, this study also sets foundations for further studies on the horizontal comparisons of the rich from different cultures. For instance, current thesis unearths that there are rich from China mimicking the taste patterns of Western aristocratic class. As such, focusing on upper class, cross-cultural studies on the global taste patterns to explore the underlying signs of domination internationally would be a timely and need topic. Thirdly, because of the inaccessibility to the rich group, luxury consumption in tourism field remains under-explored in this key target segment. The present thesis offers valuable insights about the travel patterns of ultra-rich group and serves as a starting point for future endeavor to get all-round understandings about luxury tourism.

Due to the sensitivity of the researched subjects, another limitation of current thesis is that the exact amount of wealth for each informant is unknown by the researcher although all informants have confirmed that they have fulfilled the minimum threshold required by current research. Therefore, the division of wealth levels shown in

demographic section relies on several sources: online background information search, on-site observations of informants' company/home during interviews and informants' membership affiliations. For example, some of the informants are active members in a certain association in China. There are several wealth criteria which are necessary conditions for being a member in such association. These criteria therefore become one indirect hint for researchers to reckon informants' wealth level. In this regard, inaccuracy regarding wealth levels may possibly happen. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in Chinese, translated and transcribed by the author of current thesis. According to the confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the participants, interview text is not allowed to be scrutinized by any third party. As such, the translation in current thesis was not put for a back-to-back translation by the other researchers. This may pose potential inaccuracy in the presentation of findings. Lastly, the rich informants shortlisted in current thesis cannot be generalized to the whole rich group in China. Considering China's national specificities, invisible rich who are party members or in close relationship with government do exist in contemporary society. Such category of the hidden wealthy or senior politician are not included in this thesis. Moreover, almost half of the informants were recruited from a Chinese private association. This poses another limitation of generating the results to the whole population.

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## APPENDIX I

### Summary of criteria classifying ultra-high-net-worth-individuals (UHNWIs) and high-net-worth-individuals (HNWIs)

Report	Organization	Baseline of a Net Worth for UHNWIs	Baseline of a Net Worth for HNWIs	Year
Asia Pacific Wealth Report	Capgemini & RBC Wealth Management	US\$ 30 Million	US\$ 1 Million	2015
World Wealth Report	Capgemini	US\$ 30 Million	US\$ 1 Million	2016
Global Wealth Report	Credit Suisse	US\$ 50 Million	US\$ 1 Million	2014
Global Wealth Report	Credit Suisse	US\$ 50 Million	US\$ 1 Million	2016
Global Wealth Databook	Credit Suisse	US\$ 50 Million	US\$ 1 Million	2015
The Evolution of China's Private Wealth Market	Bain Company	Null	US\$ 1.6 Million	2015
World Ultra Wealth Report	Wealth-X	US\$ 30 Million	Null	2015-2016
World Ultra Wealth Report	Wealth-X & UBS	US\$ 30 Million	Null	2014
Driving Global Wealth—Mapping Ultra High Net Worth Individuals Around the Globe	Forbes Insight	US\$ 425 Million	Null	2011
Assets Investment Report of China's HNWI	Hurun & Haiyin Wealth	Null	US\$ 1.6 Million	2015
China Ultra High Net Wealth Report	Hurun & China Minsheng Banking	US\$ 30 Million	US\$1.6 Million	2014-2015
The Chinese Luxury Traveler	Hurun & ILTM Asia	Null	US\$1.6 Million	2015
The Wealth Report	Knight Frank	US\$ 30 Million (excluding primary residence)	Null	2016
Billionaire Report	UBS & PwC	Null	Null	2016

APPENDIX II

Interview Guideline

Category	Research Objectives	Interview Questions
Personal overall recreational consumption and background	Personal overall recreational consumption and background	What do you normally do at your leisure time?
		What are your favorite recreational activities?
		Could please share with me your milestones in your career? When did you start to do the current work? What are the challenges for you?
		Who have influenced you the most?
		How do you perceive the influence that your family brings to you? May I know your parents and grandpa's background?
		How do you define success? What do you want to achieve in the future ten years?
General travel behaviors	To explore tourism consumption behaviors of China's new rich	How often are you engaged in travel?
		What are the purposes for majority of your trips?
		How much do you normally spend on tourism annually and which sector do you spend the most?
		How do you usually plan for your trip?
		What does tourism mean to you?
		Are there any changes in your travel history?
Objectified and embodied resources in destination favored by the informants	To elaborate the objectified tourism products as well as embodied consumption practices exhibited by the rich in tourism destination	May I know your preferences for destinations?
		<i>Probing: How many destinations or countries have you been?</i>
		<i>Which one do you like the most? Why?</i>
		Could you share some experiences in your favorite destinations?
		<i>Probing: What are the most impressive thing in those destinations?</i>
		What will you do if you want to experience more in a destination?
		<i>Probing: Which ways do you think are effective in helping you enjoy the destination?</i>
		Which destinations do you want to go in the future?
		<i>Probing: Why? What will you do there?</i>
		What are the dislikes regarding the destinations?
		<i>Probing: What types of destination you don't like?</i>
		<i>What kind of tourist behaviors you don't like within a destination? Why?</i>
		Can any destinations or behaviors make you different from others?
<i>Probing: What kind of different?</i>		

		<i>How can it make you different?</i>
Objectified and embodied resources in accommodation favored by the informants	To elaborate the objectified tourism products as well as embodied consumption practices exhibited by the rich in tourism accommodation	What are your preferences for accommodation?
		<i>Probing: What types do you like? Why?</i>
		Could you share some experiences in accommodations?
		<i>Probing: What activities do you usually do? Why?</i>
		<i>How do you do that?</i>
		What will you do if you want to experience more in an accommodation?
		<i>Probing: Which ways do you think are effective in helping you enjoy the accommodation?</i>
		What accommodation do you want to book in the future?
		<i>Probing: Why? What will you do there?</i>
		What are the dislikes regarding the accommodations?
		<i>Probing: What types of accommodations you don't like?</i>
		<i>What kind of guest behaviors you don't like within an accommodation? Why?</i>
		Can any accommodations or guest behaviors make you different from others?
		<i>Probing: What kind of different?</i>
<i>How can it make you different?</i>		
Objectified and embodied resources during the trips favored by the informants	To elaborate the objectified tourism products as well as embodied consumption practices exhibited by the rich during the trips	What are your preferences for travel?
		<i>Probing: Do you like independent or package travel? Why?</i>
		Could you share some experiences in your travel?
		<i>Probing: What activities do you usually do? Why?</i>
		<i>How do you do that?</i>
		Who will be responsible for planning your trip?
		<i>Probing: How can the responsible person understand your travel needs?</i>
		What type of travel do you want to experience in the future?
		<i>Probing: Why? What will you do?</i>
		What are the dislikes regarding travel?
		<i>Probing: What types of travel you don't like?</i>
		<i>What kind of travel behaviors you don't like? Why?</i>
		Can any types of travel or travel behaviors make you different from others?
		<i>Probing: What kind of different?</i>
<i>How can it make you different?</i>		

APPENDIX III

Informants' Profile

Participants	Occupation/Industry	Education	Age	Gender	Current Residence
Interviewee 1	Hospitality	Bachelor & Master from UK	39	Male	South China
Interviewee 2	Real estate	Bachelor from UK	28	Male	South China
Interviewee 3	Shopping mall	Bachelor from Mainland	35	Female	South China
Interviewee 4	Real estate & Mineral resources	Bachelor from Mainland, Gap-year study in UK	37	Male	South China
Interviewee 5	Wine	Bachelor from Mainland	35	Female	South China
Interviewee 6	Shopping mall	Bachelor from Mainland	33	Male	South China
Interviewee 7	Shopping mall & Real estate	Bachelor from USA	38	Male	South China
Interviewee 8	Beverage industry	Bachelor from Mainland	35	Male	South China
Interviewee 9	Clothing and fashion	Junior College from Mainland	45	Male	South China
Interviewee 10	Advertising & Event	Bachelor from Mainland	45	Male	North China
Interviewee 11	Media	Bachelor from Canada	34	Male	North China
Interviewee 12	Investment	Bachelor & Master from UK	29	Male	North China
Interviewee 13	Manufacture	Bachelor from Mainland	34	Male	East China
Interviewee 14	Real estate	Bachelor from Mainland	48	Male	South China
Interviewee 15	Construction	Bachelor from Mainland	38	Male	South China
Interviewee 16	IT startup	Bachelor & Master from UK	28	Male	South China
Interviewee 17	Property management & Trading	Middle school	34	Male	South China
Interviewee 18	Manufacture & Education	Bachelor from Canada	42	Male	South China
Interviewee 19	Media	Primary school	43	Male	South China
Interviewee 20	Real estate	Bachelor from Mainland	38	Male	South China
Interviewee 21	New energy	Bachelor & Master from Mainland	42	Male	North China
Interviewee 22	Food industry & Trading	Bachelor from Mainland	40	Male	South China
Interviewee 23	Advertising	Bachelor & Master from Mainland	52	Male	North China
Interviewee 24	Hospitality & Manufacture	Bachelor from UK	35	Male	South China
Interviewee 25	Real estate	Bachelor from USA	30	Female	South China
Interviewee 26	Manufacture	Bachelor from Canada	38	Male	South China
Interviewee 27	Real estate	Bachelor from USA	48	Male	South China
Interviewee 28	Furniture industry	Primary school	55	Male	South China
Interviewee 29	Energy trade	Bachelor from UK	35	Male	South China