

Chapter 4

Study on Cultural Commercialization and Public Consumption: The Case of China

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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates the commercializing trend and phenomenon of the contemporary culture, arguing that as an intangible commodity, culture has special and limited commercialization that it's only a superficial homogeneity brought by cultural commercialization. Cultural commercialization is the release of cultural intensity and connotation. This paper illustrates the industrialization process of Chinese culture, probes into the cultural consumption demand and structure in contemporary China, and analyzes the cultural consumption phenomenon of the Chinese public. This paper draws a conclusion on the destined cultural commercialization and the development trend of cultural consumption in China.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many concepts of cultural economy mainly defined by experts, scholars, international authorities, and the governments that promote cultural economy. This is a consensus held by

international organizations as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), because to the concept of culture there are different understandings of extensive social ideologies and

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spiritual fields when viewed from the development of society and history.

From culture a lot of economic forms, including “creative industry”, “content industry”, “copyright industry”, “leisure industry”, “experience industry”, “economy of attention”, and “cultural trade” etc., are arising. This shows the dominant position of cultural economy in the future’s economic development and marks the coming of cultural economy age. In this new age the traditional economics is challenged and people are re-defining various economic factors and their interactive forms, re-establishing the forms of economic organization and production organization, re-allocating resources, re-constructing value system and assessment criteria, and re-organizing industrial chain. The development of cultural economy wants the theoretical and practical thinking in a systematic way, such as the relationship between culture/creativity and commodity/commerce, the degree of cultural industrialization, the risks challenging cultural economy, and the realistic problems brought by the global culture and economy (Hartley, 2007).

Both agricultural economy and industrial economy are based on the occupancy and consumption of natural resources. However, countries of today’s world are gradually separating from the economic growth mode with land and machine as the carrier and the consumption of natural resources and low labor pay as the cost. The economic mode dominated by culture, with an intellectual basis of creativity, innovation, and originality, has released more powerful energy than mechanical production and more fortune than tangible resources. Culture is now creating a new economic structure and mode (Li & Lu, 2007). The financial crisis that exploded in 2007 and lasted to today is rightly the puzzle and problem of new economic form that makes finance, IT, education, and cultural creativity as the new economic growth points. Although there are increasing doubts upon the intangible industry that causes economic bubbles, a fact that cannot be

denied is that human economy is now progressing toward the age of operating culture and wisdom.

Industrial society brings us economic prosperity, and makes people absorb great satisfaction in the supply of sufficient materials, till such materials become overmany. Technical progress and improved production efficiency lowered the price of tangible commodities. In 1950s, the major developed countries have realized that they have stepped into the post-industrial time. They became aware of the knowledge economy brought by rapidly developing computer and network technology. In 1980s, some countries chose to adjust and transform economy actively, for example America reformed the traditional industries of clothes and household appliance, and named the smokeless industries including computer, software, network, education, finance, and video publication as “rising industry”. The United Kingdom (UK) and Australia in sequence positioned cultural industries or creative industries as the core industries to be developed by the governments. During this period cultural contents and value began to penetrate into all the industries of the society. By adjusting and changing economic structure, the consumption and production supply of these countries have had essential changes. The desire of people to get satisfied in the consumption of food and clothes for “survival” is gradually becoming lower than their desire to get satisfied in the consumption of education, culture, entertainment, and sport for “development”. “Every day the world’s creative economy creates 22-billion dollars, which is still increasing by a ratio of 5%.” In some countries, the increase is faster. America has a speed of 14%, while UK has a speed of 12% (Li, 2008).

Viewing the whole world, the infinite cultural products, marketing, and service of developed countries have drawn the focus of the world’s people, and prevailed in the world in the form of a huge tide of intellectual economy. The developed countries’ cultural industries have by their unique orientation, field, and style been rapidly developing and produced huge economic benefits. As the

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