

BACHELOR THESIS REVIEW

Type of review: *opponent*

Author: Kongyang Ji

Title: Invisible Poverty: Understanding of Consumption Strategies among Chinese Migrants in Europe

Supervisor: doc. Mgr. Martin Hájek, Ph.D.

Reviewer: Mgr. Kolomoiets Maksym

Please explain the reasons for your evaluation (especially reservations and criticisms) according to the criteria listed below.

1. Is the aim of the thesis (research question) clearly stated and do the conclusions correspond to it? Is the thesis appropriately structured?

Comments:

The stated aim in the Introduction is “to shed light on the “invisible poverty” experienced by individuals who migrated from China to European countries mainly, focusing specifically on the disguise consumption strategies they adopt or they observe from other members of the migrants surrounding”. Further in the text, there are 3 research questions presented – how do Chinese immigrants perceive poverty, how they consume and what is the role of life philosophy, culture and happiness in their consumption. In my opinion, the thesis fails to meet the stated aim due to reasons explained further but answers the research questions, which are, however, different from the research aim. The thesis has standard structure, albeit the analytical part should have been called either Results or Findings, having both words in title is excessive.

2. Is the thesis based on relevant research and literature and does it accurately summarize and integrate the information?

Comments:

The literature review is based on Bourdieu, Goffman and Veblen’s theories with regard to consumption and identity, as well as some more recent studies. This is a welcome development since the previous version. For the chosen topic of so-called camouflage consumption the overview is mostly adequate. However, it is decoupled from the results of the qualitative analysis, which have nothing on the conspicuous consumption! It is as if the literature review was done for another study. Other, less important errors, include absence of pages in the references of books, and the fact that there are presented implications about the results of the study already in the literature review, which should not belong there but to the Results part. The part about history of Chinese consumption is speculative to a big extent and hard to connect with the rest of the study where the objects are Chinese immigrants’ practices, not the inhabitants of China. Also, Inglehardt’s theory of

postmaterial values is still absent from the overview even though is relevant to materialism which author discusses.

3. What is the quality of the data or the other sources? Are the sample method, data collection and data analysis appropriate?

Comments:

The data were gathered in form of semi-structured interviews from 5 Chinese immigrants to Europe. Given the nature of the study the data collection method is adequate and the inferences taken directly from quotes seems appropriate, although often the question remains about whether other respondents supported opinions expressed in the chosen quotes.

4. Are the findings relevant to the research question? Are the conclusions of the thesis based on strong arguments?

Comments:

As I mentioned before, the findings elaborate on research questions but are basically irrelevant to the conspicuous consumption, which is a whole premise of the work as discussed in the theoretical part and conclusion. If anything, the strategy of thrift seems much more widespread among respondents but the author misses it. Apart from thrift, the findings describe the cultural identity of migrants. The scope of work is all too wide – it should choose one of phenomena mentioned and describe it in depth. Instead, author presents it in theory as a work about conspicuous consumption, in research questions – also about life philosophy and happiness, which barely have been addressed in the theory (to be fair there is some discussion on p.5); the quotes from data portray consumption as thrift and have nothing on conspicuous consumption, but the conclusion pretends that they do! It is like the shooter says “I’m going to shoot this target”, proceeds to shoot different couple of targets but then acts like he hit the original one. Just mind-boggling.

5. Are the author’s thoughts distinguished unambiguously from the borrowed ideas?

Comments:

I think so, although the whole concept of camouflage consumption seems to not be different from Veblen’s conspicuous consumption, although this time Veblen is properly presented in theoretical part.

6. What is the quality of style and other formal requirements?

Comments:

The text is mostly well-written and easy to read. Some in-text references, however, lack the entry in the References part.

7. Are there any other strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which are not included in the previous questions? Please list them if any.

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8. What topic do you suggest for the discussion in the thesis defence?

- If any of the interviews mention conspicuous consumption, why there's no single quote in the thesis to prove it?
- Why didn't you dedicate the research to thrift as a practice of consumption if your data are all about it?

9. I declare that I have checked the result of the originality check of the thesis:

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Comment on the result of the check:

Overall evaluation of the thesis:

(Please, state clearly whether the thesis is or is not recommended for a defence and write the main reasons for the recommendation).

This thesis has been developed since the last attempt, especially in regard to work with theory. Unfortunately, the theory does not fit the presented findings and the research does not meet the stated research aim, although it does answer the research questions. With the last point in mind, and also demonstrated knowledge of sociological theories by the author, I recommend the thesis for the defence and propose to grade it with E (sufficient).

Proposed grade: *E*

Date: 02.09.2024

Signature: