

From Monotony to Diversity: Changes in Urban Chinese Ideas of Consumption

Tang Yuanxiong¹ and Grace F. Johnson²

¹ *School of Philosophy and Sociology, Lanzhou University, No. 222 Tianshui South Road,
Lanzhou, Gansu Province, China, 730000*

Office: 86-931-8913710 E-mail: jyxtang2004@163.com

² *Department of Business and Economics, Marietta College, 215 Fifth Street,
Marietta, Ohio, USA, 45750*

Telephone: 740-376-4631; Fax: 740-376-7501; E-mail: johnsong@marietta.edu

KEYWORDS Urban Residents. Consumption Ideas. Market Transition. Changes

ABSTRACT As Chinese urban residents have more possibilities of consumption selection, their consumption ideas have also changed over the last thirty years. This paper describes these changes and analyzes their characteristics. Based on available information, manifesting categories of consumption ideas have changed from monotony to diversity, the ways of consumption have shifted from being a “follower” to being assimilated and personalized, and the level of consumption has evolved from subsistence to self-development. These changes of urban residents’ consumption ideas are marked by epochal features as time progresses. Yet, consumption ideas themselves contain contradictions and the changes in consumption ideas differ among urban residents. Also, the changes are strongly influenced by policies and public opinion. The change of consumption ideas in urban China is one part of the country’s market transition and reflects changes in social values and ways of life across the last thirty years.