

## SHANGHAI LILONG RENEWAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONSUMER CULTURE

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### Abstract

*With the development of social economy, the renewal of traditional lane residential areas in Chinese cities is significantly affected by consumer culture. In the case of Shanghai, Lilong (the local name of lane residential area) renewal has always been combined with tourism and commercial strategies, and has created a new format of urban development since 2000. In this paper, 5 typical Shanghai Lilong areas are selected. To study the characteristics of consumer groups, motivation, behavior, the attraction of street space and cultural elements of these areas, a questionnaire survey is conducted, and the commercial structures of the 5 samples are also analyzed. The paper has discovered that the characteristics of the main consumer groups in Shanghai Lilong are represented by 3 Hs (high education, high income, and high social class) also by lower age, higher percentage of international population and distinct regional features (far higher percentage of native Shanghai people), etc. Through a statistical analysis, 4 representative consumer groups are identified: white-collar workers, college students, foreign tourists and business people, and natives of Shanghai, whose core motivation of consumption is considered to be the construction of social identity and self-identity, reflecting complex values and behavior characteristics. To better cater to its consumer group s motivations, the Lilong keeps on strengthening the significant characteristics of consumer culture like unique, historic and aesthetic features, as well as the middle to higher consumption tendency and the density of significance. The author argues that the renewal of traditional Lilong has really improved the image of the city and stimulated consumption, but also led to some potential problems, such as the social contradictions, the loss of the authentic culture represented by Lilong, and the superficial trend of cultural connotations in consumption. This research is intended to provide a case study for the renewal of traditional Lilong or lane residential areas in Chinese cities and some reflections on corresponding problems.*

**Key words:** *consumer culture, Shanghai Lilong, consumer motivation*

### 1 Introduction

As the development of social economy in Chinese metropolises produces abundant material products, the first-tier cities, represented by Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have entered consumer society. In a consumer society, consumer culture is featured by mass consumption which is more for symbolic significance rather than the real value of the purchased commodity

significance could be understood as a certain social position or some cultural residential areas, which carry the historic culture of a city with unique cultural connotations and architectural symbols, can bring special historical and cultural experience that ordinary residence areas can not offer to consumers, but creates in reality some scarcity in the historic culture of traditional lane residential areas (Steven Tiesdell, Taner Oc, Tim Heath, 1996). Once excavated, the scarcity will in return create great economic potentials. The universality of consumer culture pursuit of people and broader, deeper market needs, producing a new round of the traditional lanes renewal. As a matter of fact, the consumer culture has begun to affect the renewal of traditional lane residential areas in Chinese cities profoundly. Since 2000, the lane residential area renewal in Shanghai has been combined with tourism and business, shaping a new format of urban development, which, on one hand perceives great popularity and on the other, presents some potential problems.

In this paper, five representative lane residential areas: Xintiandi, Sinan Mansions, Tianzifang, Duolun Road, and Dongping Road are chosen as research targets. A questionnaire survey was conducted about consumer groups, consumer motivations, consumer evaluation of the cultural characteristics in the sample lane residential areas, so as to go deeper into the social contradiction and cultural matters of the renewal pattern combined with tourism and business. The causes of these problems are discussed in this paper, and hopefully it can provide some suggestions for the renewal of other similar traditional lane residential areas in Chinese cities.

## **2 Relevant researches and research questions**

### **2.1 Relevant researches**

#### **2.1.1 Research on consumer motivation**

Many scholars have introduced consumption theories related to social studies into the study of consumer culture in urban space. For example, there is the study of symbolic exchange by Shron Zukin. Based on Chinese consumers' behavior at McDonald's, American anthropologist Anthony M. Orum and Chen Xiangming put forward some consumer motivations as follows: 1. special experience; 2. social interactions; 3. social status (Anthony M. Orum, Xiangming Chen, 2002). The majority of Chinese scholars criticize the negative effects on urban space caused by consumer culture. For example, Bao Yaming, who specializes in social science, has studied the negative consumer psychology in bars, such as the emotional expression and self-identity verification (Yaming Bao, 2001). Ma Jiewei also carried out researches on bars, he pointed out that it is the simulation of the past time and present development, the connection of local features and multinational imagination that attract consumers (Jiewei, 2006).

According to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, consumer motivations are divided into low-level needs and high-level needs. Consumption needs influenced by consumer culture include consumption conceptions and behaviors based on identity, which are seen as the high-level needs for a sense of belonging, respect and self-actualization, while the basic needs are out of physiological needs and security concerns. Identity includes self-identity and social identity, the role some takes for us. It is an attribute given by others and the identity of the social group that one belongs to (Qing Wu, 2009). Self-identity is defined by oneself for his character, quality, temperament and appearance. It is the identity of self-attribute (Ning Wang, 2001). Through research and interview, the authors found that consumer motivations are somewhat closely related to social identity in Lilong space: status motivation, social motivation, and conformity motivation; consumer motivations are also closely related to self-identity: hedonic motivation, taste motivation and personalized motivation.

### 2.1.2 Research on evaluation of characteristics of Lilong

This part is to summarize the characteristics of consumer culture in Lilong based on theoretical studies and the pre-survey. The theoretical study tries to summarize some vocabulary to describe Lilong's characteristics from mass media and journal articles. To evaluate lane residential areas, Xintiandi and Tianzifang, the main concerns are focused on several aspects: 1. Historic significance, or the basic feature of lane residential areas, some representative words used in old Shanghai culture, and classic culture; 2. Uniqueness. Lane residential areas boast features that stand out to compare with other areas around. 3. Fashion. Fashionable culture, industries and environment are integrated in Lilong and will lead the cultural trend in future. 4. High-end consumption. Characteristic and the high-end service facilities and the assembled consumer groups demonstrate the high-end characteristic of these areas. 5. Unfairness. Traditional lane residential areas tend to become exclusive spaces for the strong social groups, where only the needs of social elites are satisfied. 6. Quality and nostalgic feelings. Nostalgic culture and romantic environment always attract people and make them eager to stay. 7. Artistic atmosphere. The Lilong area is full of artistic tastes, such as architectural space, studios of fine arts, photography and sculpture, street art, and artists. 8. Cultural integration. Lilong is the integration of the new and the old, the modernity and fashion, the Chinese tradition and western styles.

To avoid inconsistency of opinions between consumers and the authors, this paper uses the induction vocabulary mentioned above in the questionnaire survey for consumers to choose the most suitable ones. Then, the vocabularies with highest frequency will be selected for a classification analysis, to initially define the cultural characteristics of lane residential areas. Further research will be conducted in later formal investigation.

## 2.2 Research questions

Previous researches start with both social issues and consumer psychology, while in this section, the following questions will be studied from consumers' perspective:

(1) Who are the consumers in the traditional lane residential areas?

What are the characteristics of the consumers, including their age, education, and social class? Who are the mainstream consumer groups?

(2) What are the consumer motivations?

Why people like to consume here? What are their psychological needs? What are the different motivations among different consumer groups?

(3) How do consumers evaluate the cultural characteristics in traditional residential areas? What are the cultural characteristics of Shanghai Lilong?

(4) With the renewal pattern, what are the hidden problems of Lilong?

## 3 Research design

### 3.1 Sample selection and introduction

To answer these questions, five traditional lane residential areas are chosen as samples in this paper, they are Sinan Mansions, Xintiandi, Tianzifang, Duolun Road, and Dongping Road (see Figure 1). Of the five samples, Xintiandi, Tianzifang, and Sinan Mansions belong to Huangpu District. Duolun Road belongs to Hongkou District. Dongping Road belongs to Xuhui District. These samples are chosen in consideration of the following reasons: (1) great social influence; (2) representative renewal patterns; (3) different business models and consumer groups. The consumption mode of Xintiandi, where the consumer group mainly consists of foreign people, therefore is a foreign consumption-oriented place; Tianzifang, where consumers are mainly foreigners and younger people, it is tourism consumption-oriented; Sinan Mansions consumption mode is an upscale-club of high-level consumers make up the majority of its consumer group; Duolun Road, featured by cultural collection, has less consumers; Hengshan Road's consumption mode, built for consumer groups of Shanghai-style night-life culture, includes white-collar people and the native residents.



Figure 1. Map of the five samples

Through observation of the five samples, the business characteristics of traditional Shanghai lane residential areas are analyzed from the perspective of consumer culture. The reasons of success and failure of these areas in terms of business are also summarized to provide references to the renewal of traditional lane residential areas.

### 3.2 Questionnaire survey and problem evasion

#### 3.2.1 Questionnaire design and survey

The questionnaire survey is an important means for this research and the questionnaire is

designed mainly for consumers/tourists. The questions include the identity information of respondents, consumption conditions, psychological needs, motivations, perception and evaluation of the sample areas. Before the questionnaires were formally handed out, more than 50 questionnaires had been pre-surveyed and problems were checked out, then the formal questionnaire was re-designed for the research survey.

To collect authentic and effective questionnaires as much as possible, the questionnaires were handed out at random in the sample areas. The respondents were mainly the consumers of all kinds in the areas. In order to make sure that the sample areas are comparable, the survey time was kept consistent, most of which were conducted at weekends, and there was a certain ratio of questionnaires handed out on week days. The survey was conducted in 2014 from August to October and 948 questionnaire papers were collected. With 82 invalid questionnaire papers, there were 866 valid ones and the efficient rate was 91.4%. The number of papers differed according to different scales and the numbers of people in the sample areas.

### **3.2.2 Problem evasion**

Beyond any doubt, defects of this questionnaire survey are unavoidable. For example, it is more convenient to conduct a survey on tourists hanging outside the restaurants and shops in the sample areas; it is more convenient to collect questionnaires from Chinese than from foreigners; the elderly are more likely to refuse the participation in the survey. The following routes are designed to evade these problems:

(1) Proportional relation of respondents is determined through a general observation to ensure the comprehensiveness of respondents;

(2) According to the measuring method of sequencing, the basic attributes of crowd (gender, age, education, profession, place of residence) are separately surveyed. Then the crowd proportion is counted as a weighting basis to arrive at actual crowd relations;

(3) Besides, questionnaires are handed out at different street passageways and squares to ensure the randomness of handing out questionnaires and the authenticity of crowd proportion;

(4) Through interviews with working staff in the areas such as servants, shopkeepers and public securities, crowd proportion can be deeply understood in terms of sensibility and compared with research results. If the difference is small, the accuracy of the results is verified, but if there is a big difference, the causes need to be found and better research methods shall be discovered and applied.

Hopefully, the ultimate research results can faithfully reflect the structure of respondents.

## **4 Research findings**

### **4.1 Characteristics of consumers**

According to statistics, the mainstream consumers showed the following characteristics (see Figure 2-5):

(1) social characteristics: 3 Hs characteristic, that is to say, people higher income, and higher social class account for a very large proportion;

(2) age characteristics: low in age , that is to say, young and middle-mainstream consumers and among them, college students account for a larger proportion;

(3)nationality characteristics: foreign consumers occupy a fairly large proportion; the proportion of foreigners in five sample areas range from 30% to 60%, about 45% on the whole;

(4) regional characteristics: the number of local consumers is far beyond tourists from other parts of China.

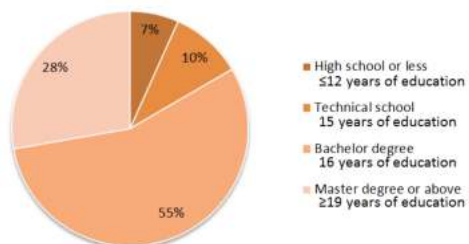


Figure 2. The structure of consumers education

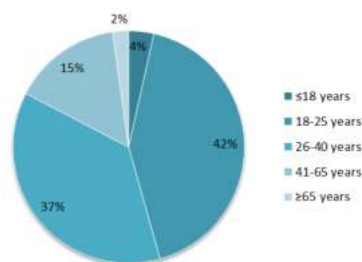


Figure 3. The

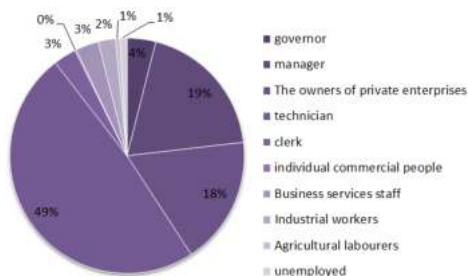


Figure 4. The proportion of ten occupations

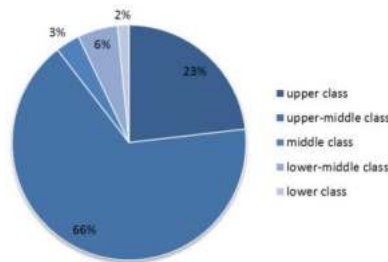


Figure 5. The proportion of social classes

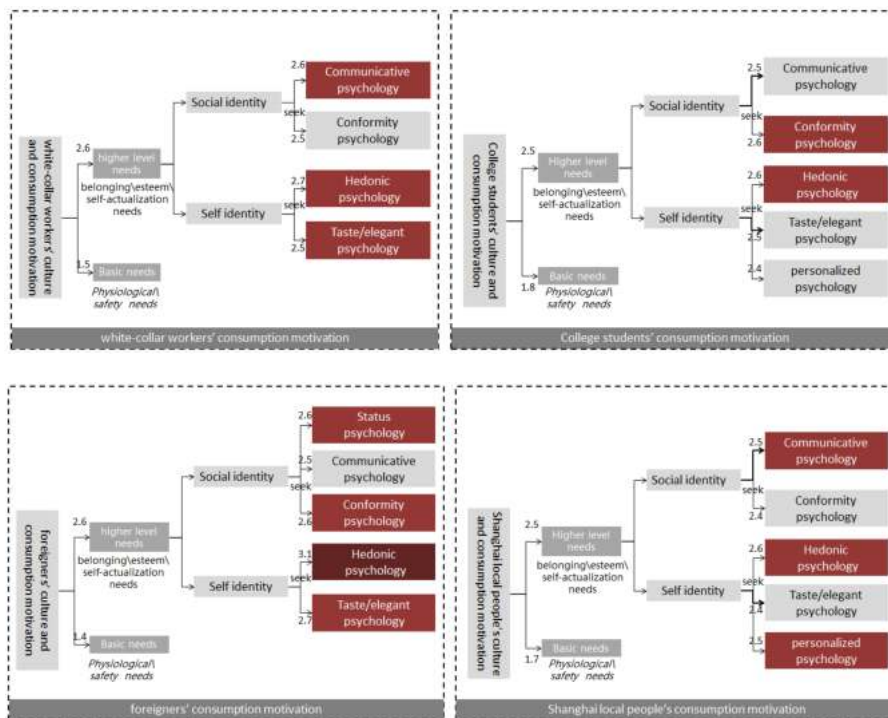
#### 4.2 Psychological needs and activity characteristics of representative crowd

Based on data analysis, this paper studies consumers psychological motivation characteristics of the four representative mainstream crowds: white-collar workers ( 3H s groups), college students (low age groups), international consumers and local tourists, and evaluates the cultural characteristics of traditional lane residential areas.

##### 4.2.1 A comparison of consumers psychology

Through a statistic analysis, it is found that there are both communality and difference in the consumer motivation structure of the four mainstream crowds, showing complex values and behavior characteristics. Based on standardized survey data of psychological needs, different scores are used to reflect consumer psychological needs. There are four categories of scores with x as the psychological needs. For example, x 2 2 x 2.5 2.5 x 3 and 3 x, mean that the corresponding psychological needs do not exist , with a certain tendency , with an obvious stand out (see Figure 6).

<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire of Psychological Needs is designed on 5point scale method. In data statistics every reply is given a score point. For convenient calculation, in this paper, never totally agree; don't agree; no opinion; agree; totally agree are assigned to 0 1 2 3 4 respectively. It can be seen that 2 stands for unclear attitude; smaller than 2 means disagreement. The smaller the score, the stronger disagreement. On the contrary, the bigger the score, the stronger the positive attitude. When the numerical value is 3 , it means the attitude toward the item is rather clear.(Refer to 24-45 questions in the Attachment A Questionnaire for specific problems)



**Figure 6.** A comparison of psychological demand motives of 4 groups

(1) Community: hedonic and communicative psychology stands out, while status psychology is not so strong.

The demand motive of consumers is clearly partial to higher-level needs, which is far above basic needs, while the needs for self-identity is far above social identity; hedonic consumer motivation (which belongs to self-identity), the communicative and conformity consumer motivation (which belong to social identity) are obvious.

Thus, it can be concluded that on one hand, consumers care about their own happy and comfortable feelings, so they demand a better environment of the areas, including the elegant style of shops and the delicacy of goods; on the other, they care about the interpersonal communication so they seek suitable places in order to make friends and cultivate social relations as well.

(2) Difference: each group has a different psychological demand structure

The difference of psychological motivation of each group is mainly demonstrated by different structures of six molecular groups. Hedonic consumer psychology can be clearly seen in each group, but that of the international group is relatively the strongest; personalized psychology of the white-collar group and the international group is relatively weak, while their conformity is relatively strong; conformity and personalized psychology of college students and local people in Shanghai are clearly seen, which demonstrates that all groups are influenced by both the reputation of the sample areas and their own complicated psychological needs for personal preference, uniqueness and distinctive things. The psychological needs of consumers are complex and contradictory.

#### 4.2.2 A comparison of typical activity characteristics of each group

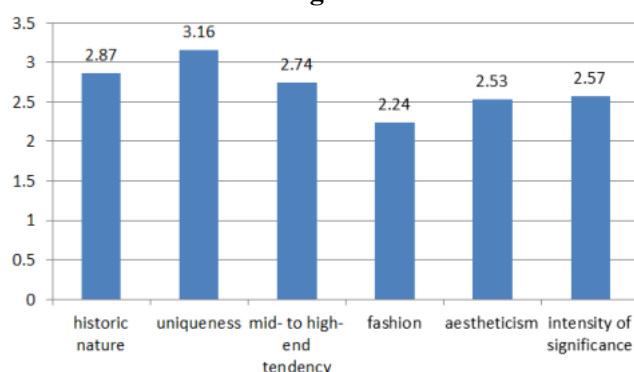
The main activities of the white-collar group include dinner party, business-related interview, working lunch and so on. Although these activities belong to catering and leisure services, what white-collar workers consume are actually the cultural atmosphere and petty bourgeois tone of Shanghai Lilong. Meanwhile, their requirements for space include a graceful environment, well-equipped facilities, private spaces and so on;

Young students are curious about society and history, and their major purpose of coming to Lilong is to experience more and know better about themselves. What they pursue is the culture and artistic atmosphere of the areas. In addition, the creative culture and the fashionable elements can satisfy their curiousness to pursue something new.

Activities of foreigners are mainly for social interaction, business and fun. On the one hand, they are attracted by bars of different kinds and styles; on the other, they are also attracted by the architectural space with local cultural characteristics. Their affection for history and culture is embodied in their experiences of enjoying the architectural space, rather than historical stories and soft culture.

The main activities of Shanghai local people are experiencing the culture of old Shanghai and enjoying trips on weekends. They are attracted by the cultural symbols of old Shanghai and the spatial features of traditional lane residential areas. They are also attracted by the original and creative cultural atmosphere, surreal romantic sentiment, literary and artistic scenes as well.

#### 4.3 Evaluation of cultural characteristics of Lilong areas



**Figure 7.** Evaluation on the characteristics of Lilong areas by consumers<sup>2</sup>

The questionnaire is designed based on scale design of every single characteristic. The score of 2 means a vague attitude of the respondents to the characteristic, that is, they do not agree and they do not deny either; 3 means they agree about this characteristic; 4 means degree of recognition, based on the scores, is divided into 3 limits: 2.0, 2.5, and 3.0. These are divided into 4 levels, represented by  $y$ . In case of  $y < 2$ , it means consumers do not evaluate the characteristic;  $2 \leq y < 2.5$  means that the characteristic gains certain recognition;  $2.5 \leq y < 3$  means the characteristic is quite obvious;  $3 \leq y < 4$  means the characteristic really stands out;  $y = 4$  means consumers highly evaluate the characteristic of uniqueness; then that of historic nature.

<sup>2</sup> *Questionnaire of Characteristic Evaluation* is the same as *Questionnaire of Psychological Needs*, designed on 5 point scale method. In data statistics every reply is given a score point. From never totally agree to totally agree, every reply is assigned to a number from 0 to 4. In the final statistics, 2 stands for unclear attitude, the smaller the score, the stronger disagreement. On the contrary, the bigger the score, the positive attitude is stronger. (Refer to 22-27 questions in the Attachment A Questionnaire for specific problems)

historic nature and uniqueness actually supplement each other because historic uniqueness and material space is the carrier for both uniqueness and historic tendency is also an obvious characteristic, showing an apparent social distinction. Aestheticism and intensity of significance also gain a score greater than 2. Lane residential areas not only conform to aesthetic requirements but also serve as something like a meaningful and cultural space. Mid-to high-end tendency and fashion have recognized to a certain degree, showing the whole consumption level and consumers in Lane residential areas are not so high-end and fashionable. (See Figure 7)

### 1 Prominent feature: uniqueness

Uniqueness is the most prominent feature of the traditional lane residential areas and it even exceeds the basic cultural characteristic of historic nature. That means historic nature characteristic is far more appealing to consumers and culture consumption for uniqueness is of greater significance in the consumer society. Uniqueness is the quality that all products possess. Therefore, Lane areas also need to show their unique features while being made into a tourist product, they are unique in both material space and cultural connotation. After renovation, the traditional Lane areas are emancipated from declining and backward environment facilities, shines with their uniqueness to attract a great number of consumers.

### 2 Obvious characteristic I: historic nature and mid-to high-end tendency

Historic nature is an important cultural resource both in consumer culture and in Lane residential areas to rival market which is centered on economic interest. Historic nature is reflected by the architectural space of the traditional residential areas such as brick walls, hipped roofs, and stone gates. They are different from modern architecture and carry the memories of old times, making it easier for people to experience the culture and the historic nature of the areas in old times. Besides, the art stores and creative industries related to the culture of old Shanghai help to increase the historic taste of the areas.

The characteristic of mid-to high-end tendency is also widely recognized, which is reflected by consumers' evaluation on consumer price of the areas. The price is considered reasonable and belongs to a mid to high level. On the other hand, it is because the consumption level is affordable to consumers they choose to come here. Compared with other industries, the consumer price here also belongs to a mid to high level. According to the questionnaire data, 45% respondents think of the consumer price here as ordinary, 16% as slightly cheap, and 34% as slightly expensive. The data show that consumption level of the areas is a mid to high one, so the mid-to high-end tendency is an obvious characteristic.

### 3 Obvious characteristic II: aestheticism and intensity of significance

The characteristics of aestheticism and intensity of significance are particularly important to cater to the needs of consumers for beauty and cultural significance in a high-end environment. It is more possible for consumers to use their imagination, receive a spiritual joy and realize self-value in a graceful environment of specific significance. On the one hand, the renovation of traditional lane residential areas restore the original pleasant scale, balanced proportion, exquisite building components and graceful greenery landscape; on the other hand, the new architectural elements, the reformation design of showcases and greening, all the increase of sculptures and decorative articles beautify the environment and manifest the characteristic of aestheticism.

The characteristic of intensity of significance is partly rooted in the history, traditional lane residential areas and partly influenced by consumer culture. The areas are created into places of significance, for example, some of the areas have been defined as creative area, and Shanghai culture brand. Many shops are labeled as Old Shanghai Culture, Fresh and Young Culture, etc. In such places of significance, consumers are able to relax, improve emotional communication and cultural identity among friends, thus to gain spiritual solace and joyful emotion.

#### 4 Tendentious characteristic: fashion

The characteristic of fashion is recognized by some people but it is not also not consistent with the comments of media. Fashion is usually connected with the opposite of history and tradition. The elements of fashion can more historic and traditional nature of Lilong areas. The traditional symbols of transformed by modern design philosophy and technology into tall and straight gates, transparent glass windows and well-organized streets, along with fashionable stores and creative articles of daily use, adding fashionable elements to the areas. Tradition and fashion could cause conflicts and intensities, so how to make a good integration of them is a real problem.

## 5 Problems of renewal

### 5.1 Social problems

#### 5.1.1 High-end consumption brings about issues of social equity

Nothing is wrong about high-end consumption itself, but if the renewal of residential areas is centered on high-end consumption, serious social equity issues and vicious competition problems will stand out. In the courtyard with green hedges and under the extravagant lights in the traditional lane residential areas, the general public still have to face economic, cultural and social pressures that are new to them.

This problem cannot be solved within Lane residential areas. It is often followed by problems of social stratum differentiation. If the traditional residential areas are transformed to be distinctly high-end, it indirectly reflects the serious problems of social stratum differentiation within Chinese urban society. But if we take social equity into consideration, we still hope for the emergence of a civilianized renewal to serve and appeal to the general public.

#### 5.1.2 Disharmony with the surrounding communities

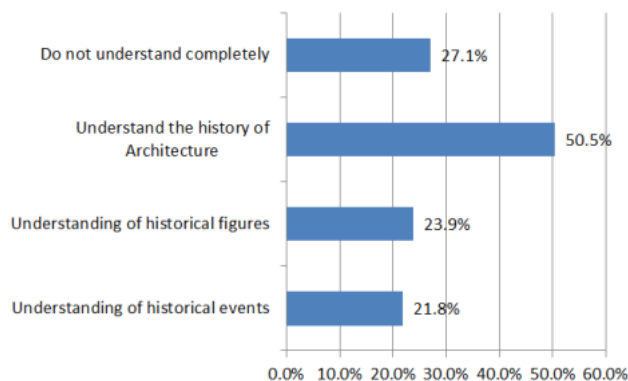
We can see clearly from five sample areas that they are not in harmony with their surrounding communities, especially in the case of Tianzifang and Duolun Road. Xintiandi is thoroughly renewed and the project has transformed the old Linong architectures and the indigenous people completely, who had dwelled in the area of Taiping Bridge around Xintiandi. The southern and northern parts retain an imprint of Lilong or the traditional residential area, while the other parts have been transformed into modern skyscrapers. After renewal, Xintiandi is, to some degree, in harmony with those high-end residential areas nearby, while the areas around Taiping Bridge are still mingled with the crowded, cluttered and old-fashioned Linong areas waiting for transformation. In Duolun Road area, only one block has been renewed, thus the indigenous communities on both sides are preserved. However, the renewed business functions on the road are totally far from the daily life of the

community residents and Duolun Road is only used as a roadway. As a result, Duolun Road area and the bilateral communities form a striking contrast. Tianzifang also has this problem. Tianzifang, on the one hand, has been used to develop economic interests by some indigenous people; on the other hand, it induces conflicts with other indigenous people. Noise, crowds and behavioral interference have resulted in much protest.

### 5.1.3 Over-Westernization tendency

Over-Westernization tendency refers in particular to the Westernization of consumers. Shanghai is an international city so it is understandable for some areas or blocks to be highly Westernized or internationalized. However, there is a matter of degree. If every area in the city is Westernized, then it is a real problem, particularly seen in Xintiandi, Sinan Mansions and Tianzifang. In these traditional lane residential areas, a great number of Western-styled coffee bars, restaurants and bars gather there<sup>3</sup> instead of Chinese traditional halls. More and more consumers gathering here are mostly Western tourists and white faces.

## 5.2 The loss of the authenticity of cultural matrix

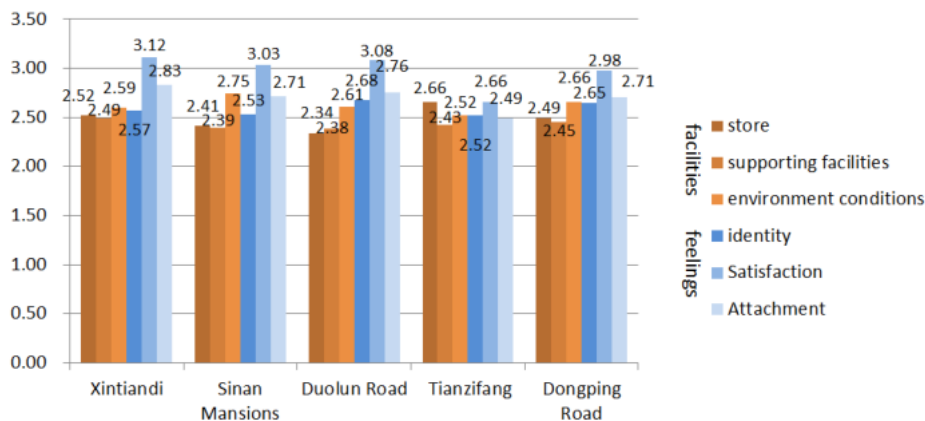


**Figure 8.** Research on consumers' knowledge about the history of the traditional Lilong areas

It can be seen from the results of questionnaire survey that the authenticity of the culture of the traditional lane residential areas is not closely related to satisfactory evaluation.<sup>4</sup> First, consumers do not know about the culture of traditional lane residential areas well. Data shows that nearly 30% of the consumers even do not know about the culture at all, among them, nearly a half do not know about the architectural history of the areas, and about 80% do not know about any historical figures or events (see Figure 8); second, consumers cannot tell if the authentic history of the areas has been reserved; even though they know the need to preserve their history, they do not know how to do it; third, in the five sample areas, consumers' satisfaction has no positive correlation to the authenticity. Xintiandi is a typical example, where much authentic information of history has been lost. However, consumers are most satisfied with Xintiandi. Duolun Road and Tianzifang do well in preserving the authenticity of history but consumers' evaluation is rather just (see Figure 9)

<sup>3</sup> Surely, there are problems like environment pollution and fire hazard caused by the lampblack of Chinese restaurant, but is there any solution?

<sup>4</sup> In the questionnaire, whether consumers understand the culture of the sample Lilong areas, and whether they deny these Lilong areas have preserved well the original history are investigated (Refer to 20-21 questions in the Attachment A Questionnaire for specific problems); at the same time, the satisfaction of consumers for Lilong areas are evaluated from two aspects: satisfaction on the environment and facilities of Lilong areas; the emotional satisfaction. (Refer to 49-54 questions in the Attachment A Questionnaire for specific problems)



**Figure 9.** A comparison of consumer satisfaction in the sample areas

It suggests that consumers are blindly interested in the traditional lane residential areas, it is also the main reason why so many false historical symbols are used and historical symbols misused. For instance, the pattern of the gate of Shikumen (the stone gate house) is ubiquitous, while the real logic in the application of those historical symbols is neglected. It is because consumers do not look into the truth of history and instead, they often show their affection for this kind of misusage. In this way, the culture of the traditional lane residential areas is gradually divorced from the real connotation of the culture of traditional Shanghai lane residential areas.

### 5.3 The problem of excessive symbolization

The most important characteristic of consumer society is being full of various cultural symbols (Celia Lury, 2003). The intensity of significance, which is mentioned as a cultural characteristic of Shanghai's traditional lane residential areas before, is the intensity of symbols. A culture, information symbols and meaningful space, high intensity of symbols should be controlled within a reasonable range. Once the degree is exceeded and there is excessive cultural information, negative effects will be caused. Excessive-symbolization in Shanghai traditional Lilong areas can be explained from the perspective of quantity and quality.

#### (1) Excessive quantity

Excessive quantity is mainly reflected in the symbol information provided forms. Linong space and architectural size are both small but their commercial value is increasing gradually as the cultural value of Linong space is demonstrated. Besides, commercial interests are everywhere. With shop rent increasing and more detailed division of stores, the traditional lane residential areas are invaded by more and more commercial stores, countless commercial advertisements and store logos crowd the street with a non-stopping trend, which all lead to excessive commercial information per unit area of the areas. Wandering in the narrow and small street, you can find that various logos, conceptual meanings and symbol information are coming from straight ahead, and even historical culture is covered by them, thus leading to a sharp conflict between commercial culture and historical culture. Of the 5 sample areas, Tianzifang is the most typical example, where tourists are easy get the impression of being vulgar and chaotic. ( see Figure10)



**Figure 10.** Commercial symbols are flooding Tianzifang

(2) Excessive quality

Excessive quality of symbols mainly refers to impractical exaggeration a places even make vulgar, distorted and forced-associated cultural statements to cater to tourists. Such cases can be commonly seen in commercial advertisements and happen not only in cultural descriptions of tourist spots, but also in traditional lane residential areas. For example, lots of goods are connected with Shanghai traditional culture for irrelevant reasons, works of art are becoming vulgar, while some simple products are labeled gadgets of creative culture and so on.

**6 Conclusion**

After an investigation into 5 sample areas of Shanghai s traditional Lilong that the characteristics of main consumer groups in the areas are 3 Hs (high education, high income, high social class) low age, higher percentage of international population and distinct regional features (far higher percentage of native Shanghai people), etc.

Through a statistical analysis, 4 representative consumer groups are identified: white-collar workers, college students, foreign tourists and business people, and natives of Shanghai, whose core motivation of consumption is considered to be the construction of social identity and self-identity, reflecting complex values and behavior characteristics. To better cater to motivations, the Lilong areas keep on strengthening the significant characteristics of their consumer culture like uniqueness, historical value, aesthetic views and mid- to high-end consumption tendency. The authors argue that the renewal of traditional Lilong areas in Shanghai has really improved the image of the city and stimulated consumption, but it has also led to some potential problems, such as social contradiction, the loss of the authentic culture represented by traditional lane residential areas, and the superficial trend of cultural connotations in consumption. This research intends to provide some reflections and serve as a reference for the renewal of traditional lane residential area in Chinese cities.

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