Abstract

In the year of 2008, "*shanzhai*" (literally translated as mountain bandits) entered China's public discourse as one of the most popular terms. The term is closely related with the popularity of *shanzhai* mobile phones, a kind of low price, and no name-brand phones. The objective of this paper is to find the connection between the popularity of *shanzhai* mobile phones among young people and the construction of youth identity in contemporary China. That is, the aim is to explore how young people's choice and use of mobile phones, especially their attitudes towards *shanzhai* mobile phones express current youth's style/characteristics, i.e. the pursuit of a distinct personality and the resistance towards mainstream culture to construct a sort of anti-mainstream or anti-brand style.

Conceptualizing the *shanzhai* mobile phone use as an essential part of youth subculture within the theoretical paradigm of cultural studies, the thesis explores how young people's consumption pattern symbolizes their social characteristics and conveys through qualitative analysis of interviews and QQ group analysis, to certain degree, their resistance to the mainstream or the authorities. In exploring *shanzhai* mobile phones' popularity among the youth, we mainly argue that the *shanzhai* mobile phone with its anti-mainstream connotation and entertaining elements just caters to the construction of Chinese urban youth's resistant style.

Research findings indicate that Chinese young people's attitude towards *shanzhai* mobile phone is firstly grounded on economic consideration. They tend to be thrifty consumers. Entertainment-seeking and fashion-seeking are the second major motivation for the urban youth to purchase *shanzhai* mobile phones. Lastly, *shanzhai*

mobile phones are indeed regarded by some young people as an anti-mainstream tool to represent their resistant style, but this attitude is not prominent.

Key words: Mobile phones, *Shanzhai,* China, Youth identity, Resistance, Brand