

# Study of Love Market in China

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## Abstract

'Love is also an exchange' has become a more and more common saying in these few years. Humans, both males and females, demand love from their ideal partners. Whenever demand and supply exist, a market exists. In this research, it is found that mating, to a certain extent, could be seen as an exchange. The fact is that human share a common pattern in their mating behavior, i.e., basing on the other party's criteria.

Shenzhen is called a 'migration city' in the general public. This city is unique for its level of economic development and the huge percentage of immigrants. How young females' mate selection behavior is shaped in this unique city is therefore an interesting topic to study.

This research project has investigated three main aspects by choosing Luohu District, Shenzhen as a target place. Firstly, it is found that some marketing concepts could be applied into Luohu females' mating behavior to a certain extent. For example, results show that high quality men are more 'demanded' by Luohu females. Secondly, the degrees of importance of different mate selection criteria in affecting females' mating intention are investigated. It is found that instead of monetary aspects, men's health is the most important criterion affecting females' mating intention. The least important criterion is appearance. Thirdly, Luohu females generally think women's most important criteria are youthfulness and being kindhearted.

By studying the 'love market', it is hoped that the results could provide some directions or hints for men to enhance their competitiveness, i.e., their criteria, in finding a mate in the love market in Luohu District, Shenzhen.

**Keywords:** Love market; China; Shenzhen; Migration

## Introduction

### Background of the problem

For most people, it is commonly believed that the emergence of love depends on "feeling". We also often hear people saying that "love is irrational and unexplainable". However, it is discovered that love or mating is not as unexplainable as perceived by the general public. The reason they think love is unexplainable is simply they do not realize there is actually a mechanism behind it. From the economic perspective, a market exists when there is demand and supply, consumers and sellers. It is noticed that people have different mate selection criteria when choosing a mate, just like consumers consider different factors when making a consumption decision. Therefore, it is believed that market mechanism and marketing concepts could be applied to human's mate selection behavior to a certain extent. Mating according to "feeling" is believed to be a great misunderstanding and over-simplification of the matter [1].

### Objective of the study

There are two objectives in this study. The first objective is to investigate the importance of nine mate selection criteria that might affect the mating behavior of young female in this unique place, Luohu District, Shenzhen. The second objective is to know how Luohu females perceive their 'capital' in the love market. It is hoped that the results could provide some tips or recommendations for males on improving their 'capital', i.e., their criteria, for mating Luohu females.

## Literature Review and Model Building

### Literature review

As this is a marketing project, I would like to illustrate how marketing and economic concepts could be applied into human's mating behavior in the "love market".

Firstly, I would like to focus on the word "market". In economics, a market exist where there is demand and supply in which transactions or exchanges take place, no matter the market is visible or invisible. Suppliers sell their products and services to buyers at a mutually agreed price. When making a decision of buying a product or service, consumers will consider different factors such as price, quality, brand name, packaging, etc. As long as a consumer is satisfied by one or more than one of these factors, he or she will have intention to buy or will truly make the buying decision. This is our well known basic buying process of consumers.

Mating, i.e., finding ideal partners, is very much like buying and selling in the consumer goods market. Everyone has his or her own mating preference. Therefore, different people have different criteria for choosing a mate. This is like different buyers demand different kind of products in the consumer goods market, leading to the formation of many market segments. Applying economics into love, both men and women become each other's products and customers. The trading rule of market economy not only has penetrated into the economic and political life of our society, but also has started to penetrate into love and marriage lives. While marketing is making people accept your products, love is making your loved ones accept yourself. Competition exists everywhere, including the love market. More than one person chasing one person could be regarded as competition in the love

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market. How to choose among different “candidates” is related to how he or she considers the importance of different criteria a person possess, which is the focus of this study.

Social exchange theory points out that mating is also a behavior of exchange. Both parties exchange with the other party by using their own resources in order to obtain the maximum return. Social exchange theory has a great influence by economics. The prerequisite of this theory is that both parties are rational. They hope they could attain ‘mutual benefits’ through exchanging visible or invisible resources. In economic terms, marriage is an exchange which would happen only when it has ‘benefit’ to both parties. For example, some studies believe, males use their social and economic resources to exchange sex and housewife services of females.

Famous American economist Ben Stein also published an article on New York Times on the economics of love on July 13, 2008. He made eight concepts about love as an investment. His first point is that the returns in love situations are roughly proportional to the amount of time and devotion invested. Secondly, he used investing in high-quality bonds to illustrate the higher return of staying with high-quality human beings. He also pointed out that realistic expectations are everything. He said “If you think that you can go from nowhere to having someone wonderful in love with you, you are probably wrong.” In his opinion, people need to have realistic expectations in finding their love. Therefore, Ben Stein’s concepts on the economics of love could further provide me some support on the basic assumption of this research, love is in fact rational because people tend to find high-quality partners rather than the other way round. Mutual love is based on an exchange of each other’s favorable criteria.

The following is an illustration on how marketing could be applied into the mating process after some literature review.

Firstly, people have to identify their target market. In the love market, men and women become both buyers and sellers. They both want to “buy” their ideal targets and at the same time sell themselves to their ideal buyers. Therefore, the first step is to clearly identify their target market, i.e., what kind of partners they want. In other words, they have to identify what criteria they want their ideal partners have.

Secondly, people have to carry out positioning. Positioning here means judging one’s own position according to one’s own characteristics and situation. Once a person has identified his or her position, he or she could use his or her capital, i.e., the criteria that person possess, to attract his or her targets. Also, after positioning, a person could realize whether he or she has enough capital to “buy” his or her ideal “product”, therefore providing them a chance to assess whether their expectations are realistic or not.

After identification of target market and positioning of oneself, the third step is to promote oneself. Like the consumer goods market, marketers have to attract customers by promoting and informing customers the attractiveness of a product, for example, high quality and with good functions. Human also have to show their favorable characteristics to their ideal partners in order to make them feel interested. In short, “sellers” have to make themselves able to approach their “consumers” and make them know about the seller’s favorable characteristics, i.e., the value of oneself.

The final stage is a successful exchange. An exchange happens when a love relationship starts. When two people are satisfied with each other’s criteria, i.e., both parties are satisfied and agreed with each other’s “product characteristics”, people will have mating intention.

This stage need not be a marriage. As long as people devote time, money and emotion into a relationship, it is already an investment, the investment in love as proposed by Ben Stein [1].

Therefore, there are actually some patterns in human’s mate selection behavior. However, behavior is hard to measure. As mating is regarded as buying under the basic assumption of this research, I would like to study ‘mating intention’. This research project is to investigate the importance of nine mate selection criteria which might affect the mating intention of young females in Luhohu District, Shenzhen.

Apart from the numerous literature applying marketing and economic concepts into love, I also digested some literature about the impact of China’s economic reform on Chinese people’s mating preference. Due to the economic reform since early 1980s, China had been moving towards the market economy. The influence of capitalism is enormous in China, not only on social and economic aspects, but has also influenced people’s love and mating behavior. In many studies and literature, it is found that economic reform has led to an intensification of demand on materials. When talking about female’s mate selection criteria, financial strength in men is always found to be the most important mate selection criteria. Obviously, economic reform in China has caused substantial influence on Chinese female’s mate selection preference, with financial strength becoming increasingly important.

According to the evolutionary theory of psychology, males maximize their reproductive success by seeking more sexual partners with high reproductive potential [2]. They tend to look for youth and attractiveness in females. For females, they maximize reproductive success by seeking partners willing to invest material resources in their offspring. Therefore, females tend to look for income, status and ambition in partners. Based on this theory, I should regard financial strength, social status and career ambition as the 3 most important mate selection criteria of females in my investigation.

Regarding financial strength in males, a piece of news impressed me a lot. In Guangzhou, a party providing a platform for beautiful females and rich males to mate took place in January 2009. The party was called “Xiang Qin Hui” in Chinese. The party took place in a hotel. 30 rich single males and around 40 beautiful ladies attended the event. According to the news, almost every participated lady hoped to find a rich husband while the rich men hoped to find their future wives. Games were arranged in the party for participants to get involved. Many male participants actively approached their ideal partners to talk. Some helpers helped shy rich men to talk to their ideal females and told the females how rich the males are. This piece of news shows that those beautiful females consider financial strength a very important mate selection criterion. Obviously, they do not find partners randomly, but are following a rule or a pattern, i.e., whether the man is rich or not.

Apart from the three most important criteria, financial strength, social status and career ambition suggested by many past investigations, I would also like to study 5 mate selection criteria, namely, appearance, academic qualification, health, honesty and humor. These 5 mate selection criteria are chosen from one of the journal articles read which contains 29 criteria [3].

Mating according to criteria is from a one-sided perspective. However, starting a relationship requires mutual agreement. People could not simply consider the criteria of the potential partner, but will also consider some mutual factors, for example, whether there is a match of personality, match of interest or match of living style and habits before they join together. Actually, from some literature review,

match of personality, interest and living style and habits are included into mate selection criteria. But as it is a common sense that greater mutual match will very likely contribute to a better relationship, I think I should simply focus on these one-sided factors.

## Hypotheses

The research model is used to test the following hypotheses (Figure 1):

- H1: The mean score of 'Financial strength' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H2: The mean score of 'House' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H3: The mean score of 'Social status' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H4: The mean score of 'Appearance' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H5: The mean score of 'Academic qualification' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H6: The mean score of 'Career ambition' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H7: The mean score of 'Health' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H8: The mean score of 'Honesty' is greater than or equal to 5;
- H9: The mean score of 'Humor' is greater than or equal to 5.

It should be noted that the terms are defined as follows:

- Mating: Joining closely or paring [4];
- Intention: An act or instance of determining mentally upon some action or result [5];
- Financial strength: The power in monetary or economic terms [6];
- Social status: Position in a social hierarchy [7];
- Appearance: Outward look or aspect [8];
- Academic qualification: The accomplishment of or pertaining

to a college, academy, school, or other educational institution [9];

- Career ambition: An earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction in profession or occupation [10];
- Health: The general condition of the body or mind with reference to soundness and vigor [11];
- Honesty: Truthfulness, sincerity, or frankness [12];
- Humor [13]: A comic, absurd, or incongruous quality causing amusement.

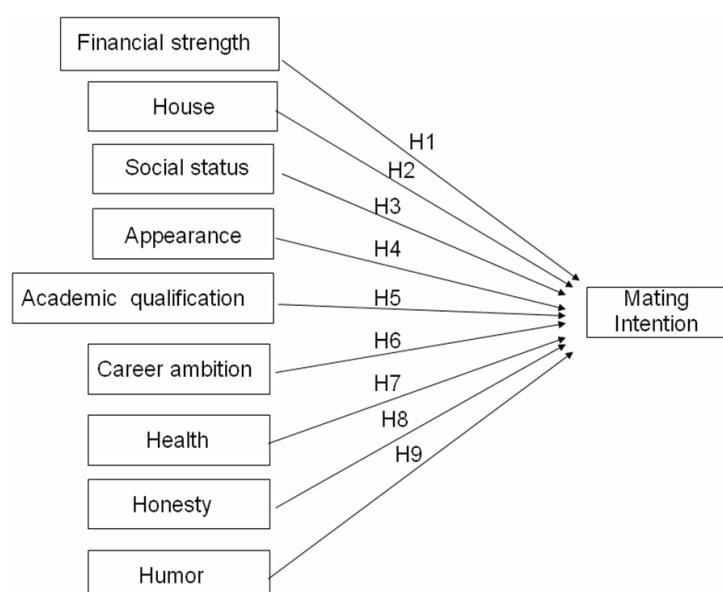
## Why Shenzhen is chosen

Shenzhen was designated as the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in China in 1980. Because of this reason, it has become one of the most developed cities in China, with a great degree of influence by economic development, capitalism and market economy. Today's Shenzhen has already undergone 30 years of rapid economic development. People there adopt modern living styles, which is totally different from the less developed areas in China. Since Shenzhen was established as a SEZ, a huge amount of people from all over China started to move to Shenzhen to seek jobs since 1980. The number increases at a rapid rate every year [14].

Regarding Shenzhen's average salary, according to the statistics provided by Zhongguowang (china.com.cn) in December 2006, the average monthly salary of Shenzhen people is 2748.8 yuan which is the highest among Chinese cities. Averagely speaking, Shenzhen people could be considered the people receiving the highest income in China.

According the latest figure released by Li-Ming, the vice mayor of Shenzhen, on the Conference of Shenzhen Flowing Population's Planned Birth Control held on Sep 21, 2007, the total population of Shenzhen had exceeded 14 million, in which 12 million are non-local residents [15]. In other words, over 85% of the people there are from places other than Shenzhen. In the general public, Shenzhen is sometimes called a 'migration city'.

Therefore, with two unique features of Shenzhen, there are actually



**Figure 1:** The research model is used to test the following hypotheses.

two objectives of choosing this place as the target place of investigation. First, I would like to investigate how young female's mate selection criteria are affected by the present economic level of this city despite the fact that many of them came from poor and less-developed areas. Second, the great proportion of flowing population enables a reflection of opinion from people coming from many different provinces of China.

Shenzhen is constituted by six districts, namely Luohu et al. Among the six districts, Baoan and Longgang are not included in the SEZ management line. Luohu is the first district of Shenzhen. It is also the closest district with Hong Kong [15]. It is the financial center of Shenzhen because it dominates the greatest percentage of financial institutes in the city. Therefore, it could be regarded as the concentration district of wealth. It is the most suitable district to investigate the influence of economic development. Also, with proximity to Hong Kong, it provides me a convenient location to conduct the data collection work [16].

## Methodology

As it is a quantitative research, a questionnaire survey was conducted among the young females Luohu District, Shenzhen. I used convenience sampling. Street intercept interview was adopted. At the beginning, I intended to conduct the survey by myself. However, I gave up this idea later on because of the following reasons. First, any issue related to love and mating are human's privacy. As I am, in Shenzhen young females' eyes, a stranger of an opposite sex from a different place, it is very likely that they are reluctant to answer me those questions. Second, some questions are very sensitive, such as the last question which asks how many people had expressed love towards the respondent. In order to avoid inaccurate responses and answers, I decided to ask one of my relative who is an 18 year-old female born in Shenzhen to help me conduct the survey. In my opinion, a mainland female is much more suitable to be the researcher than me, a Hong Kong male. There are also two reasons of choosing such female. First, she could handle sensitive questions better because she and the respondents are of the same sex. It is believed that respondents would be more straight and honest when answering questions. Second, mainland females will feel more comfortable when talking to a mainland female who share a similar background and culture and of similar age. In short, the core purpose of recruiting a young female researcher is to increase the accuracy and reliability of the data.

The subjects are any young females in Luohu [15]. However, I allowed a broader range of age in the questionnaire because some female may look very young but in fact their appearance does not reflect their real age. Therefore, when setting the questionnaire, I set the lowest limit as 18 and the oldest limit 41. Actually, in Chinese societies, people generally consider an age of thirty as 'old' already for females. Therefore, my target subjects are actually only around 18 to 29-year-old young females.

After getting back the questionnaires and counting the frequencies, 44.2% are within the range of 22-25 years old while 40.4% are from 18 to 21 years old. 6.7% are from 26-29 years old. Therefore, 91.3% of the respondents are over 18, but younger than 30 which is generally considered 'young' in Chinese societies. This proportion has also fit my target.

As the researcher is my relative, her trustworthiness is very high and the chance of cheating is extremely low. She has good social skills and communication skills. I promised to give her 3RMB per finished

questionnaire as a financial incentive. I asked her to finish slightly more than 200 sets of questionnaires. I gave her the blank questionnaires on March 21 and I asked her to finish them in one week's time. I trained her and provided her with a guideline of how to conduct street intercept survey. During that week, I went to supervise her twice. She conducted the survey in several locations. Two days were spent in the area around King Glory Plaza near Guo Mao MTR Station. Another two days were spent in Dong Men Zhong Lu near Dong Men Market. In the remaining 3 days, she went to some 'urban villages'. The overall response rate in the street was 1 out of 3. The whole process was smooth. She totally returned me 217 sets of questionnaires. Among these 217 sets, 9 sets are incomplete, leaving a total of 208 complete questionnaires for analysis.

According to the statistics given by the central government after a national census in 2005, in Nov 1, 2005, there are 859600 people in Luohu district. Among this population, 441300 are male while 445300 are female. This is the latest number showing the proportion of male and female in Luohu. It is believed that the current figure is much higher. The percentage of 208 over 445300 is 0.046%. Undoubtedly, it is a very small sample size compared with Luohu's female population. However, I would like to point out 1 thing, that is, the difference of doing 208 sets and 416 sets (0.09%) or even 624 sets (0.14%) are very small. Even if I finished 614 sets in 2005, it only constitutes around 0.14% of the total population of female there. Due to the increase of population every year, in today's Luohu, 614 sets would definitely mean less than 0.14%. Therefore, as a student, it is impossible for me to finish an unrealistic number of questionnaires [5].

After getting back the questionnaires, I used SPSS to analyze the data. I analyzed the frequencies of the answers of each question and got the mean score of each question.

I used One-Sample T-Test in the second part. I also use Chi-Square Test of Association to find out some associations between variables.

## Analysis and Findings

In the questionnaire, the questions could be classified into 4 main categories. The first category is the basic information and personal information of the respondent. The second category is about the 'love market' in general. The third category is the 9 criteria I chose to investigate. The fourth category is about women's 'capital' in the 'love market' [17].

At the beginning of the questionnaire, I asked the place where the respondent registered. Results show that out of the 208 respondents, 95.2% are not registered permanent residents of Shenzhen. Only 10 out of 208 are Shenzhen residents. Among all respondents, 21.2% are from Hunan Province while 19.2 % are from Guangdong. There are 12% from Guangxi. Hunan and Guangxi are very close to Guangdong. It is believed that geographical proximity of these provinces has contributed to the high rate of immigration to Shenzhen. These statistics again has verified the fact that over 85% Shenzhen people are immigrants. Here is a bar chart showing the frequencies of each place where the respondents came from (Figure 2).

After asking where the respondents are from, I asked how long they have been to Shenzhen. Results have shown that nearly half of them (47.1%) have been to Shenzhen for only 1 to 2 years. 21.6% have been to Shenzhen for 2 to 5 years (Figure 3).

There are 5 more questions asking respondents' personal information. However, because of privacy and sensitiveness, these 5 questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire. As these

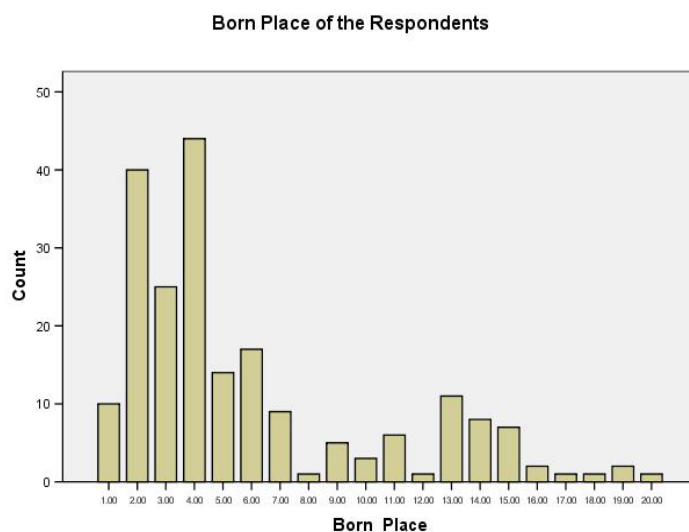


Figure 2: Basic information of the respondent.



Figure 3: Analysis of Period coming to Shenzhen.

questions are in the category of personal information, I would like to show the results here.

Among the respondents, 44.2% are within the range of 22-25 years old while 40.4% are from 18 to 21 years old. 6.7% are from 26-29 years old. Therefore, 91.3% of the respondents are over 18 but younger than 30 years old which is generally considered 'young' in Chinese societies (Figure 4).

I also asked the marital status of the respondents. Nearly 80% (78.8%) are single while the other 21.2% are married. That means most of them have much freedom in seeking their mate (Figure 5).

There is a question asking respondents' academic qualification. The majority, over a half (54.8%), were graduated after junior secondary school. 30.8% were graduated after senior secondary. Graduates of university and primary school are minorities. This shows that many mainland females decided to start working instead of continuing their

studies after finishing junior or senior secondary school (Figure 6).

One important question is about respondents' income. Results show that exactly half of the respondents earn a monthly income of 1000-2000RMB. About  $\frac{1}{4}$  (22.6%) earn 2000-3000RMB a month. 13.5% earn less than 1000RMB. The number of respondents decreases when the salary level increases (Figure 7).

The last question is about how many male(s) had expressed love towards the respondent since they were 16 years old. A majority (65.9%) said there are 1-3 males expressed love towards them. 26% said there were 4-6 (Figure 8).

The second part is some general questions about mating. In Q1, (Do you have any "Love Experience"?), if no, stop to go further. In Q2, how long have you been in Shenzhen? In Q3 (Have you ever heard of 'Love is also an exchange?'), 98.1% expressed 'Yes' while only 4 of them had never heard of the statement. This reveals that 'Love as an

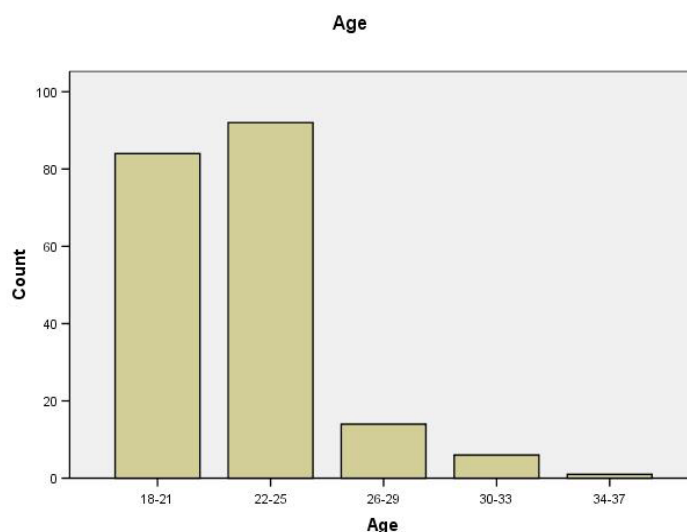


Figure 4: Personal information of the respondent in Age factor.

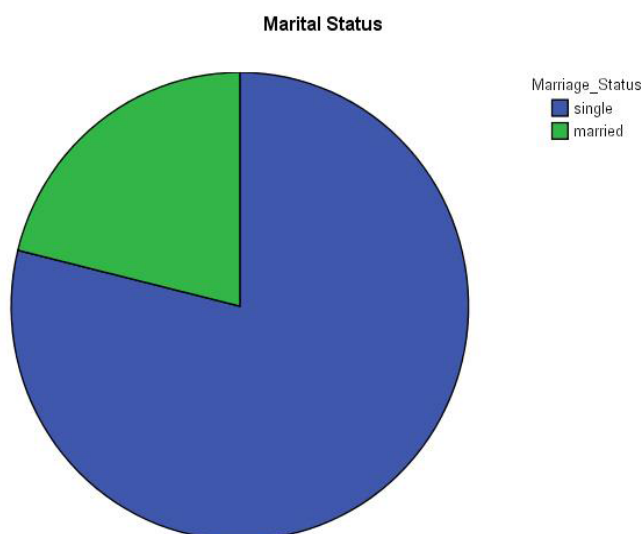


Figure 5: Marital status of the respondents.

exchange' is a very popular saying among young females in China. I felt a bit shocked because this figure is indeed higher than my expectation (Figure 9).

In Q4 (When you are selecting a mate, will you consider his personal criteria?), 94.2% expressed 'Yes'. This means almost all females would admit that mating is based on criteria. Love according to feeling is an over-simplification of love (Figure 10).

Q5 to Q10 are designed in a 7-point scale. Q5 to Q8 are asking about the concept of 'love market' while Q9 and 10 were designed to investigate some underlying thoughts about women mating with rich men.

Q5 is designed to know about how Luohu female demand high quality men in the love market. The question is 'Do you agree that men with favorable criteria would result in a situation that more women want to mate with them?' In this question, the mean score is 5.173.

Although 34.1% of respondents remained neutral, there are also 29.3% (not very much less than 34.1%) expressed 'very agree'. The total percentage of selecting 5, 6 and 7 is about 60% (59.1%). That means a majority of the respondents agreed with the statement, which supports the concept of demanding high-quality individuals stated by Ben Stein and some economists. It could be concluded that men with favorable criteria are scarce resources which women demand.

However, having 34.1% of respondents remaining neutral implies that there are factors other than criteria when choosing a mate. Mating is not entirely based on the personal criteria of the potential mate. For example, some mutual factors are also significant. Therefore, the 'love market' is not 100% operating according to market mechanism. Marketing concept could only be applied to a certain extent [18].

Moreover, it is believed that there is a cost of staying with a high quality man. As to a certain extent, high-quality man are more

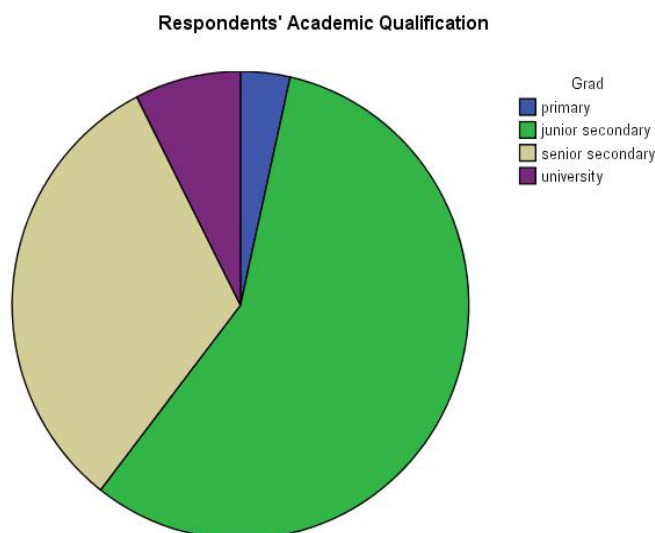


Figure 6: Academic qualification of respondents.

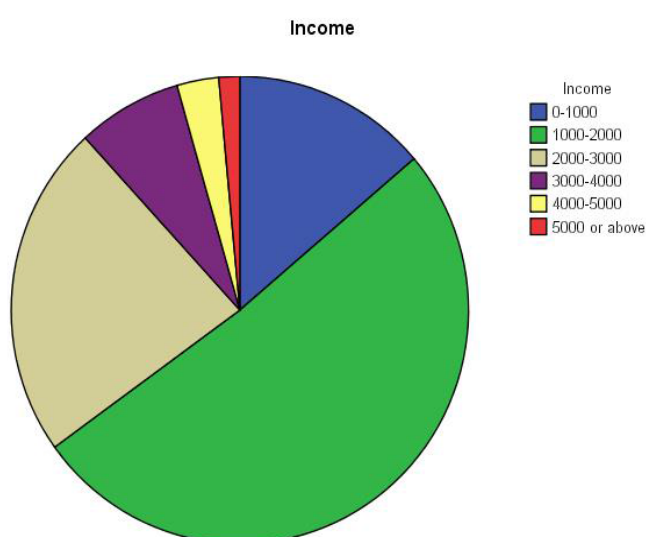


Figure 7: Monthly income of respondents.

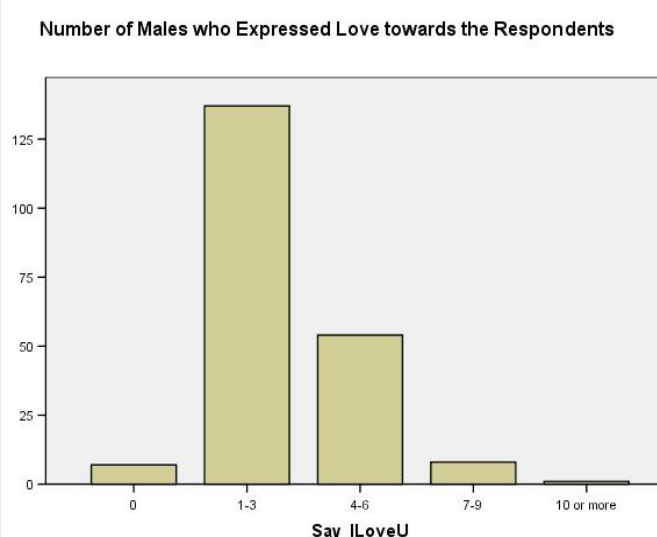


Figure 8: Number of males who expressed love towards the respondents.

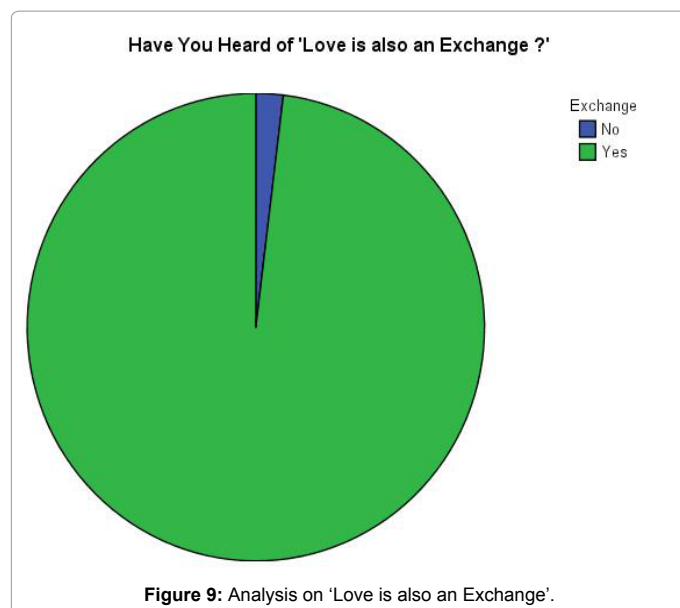
demand in the 'love market' because he possesses more favorable criteria, this kind of man will have higher bargaining power in the love market. Some women may feel insecure with these men; therefore, there may not be a positive relationship between men's criteria and their mating intention. For example, in Q10, it is found out that the richer a man is, the more worried women will be (worried that the man will mate a new partner). Therefore, there is actually a trade-off between staying with a high quality partner and security. The costs of staying with high quality men discourage some women from mating with them.

For Q6 (Do you agree that mating with men with favorable criteria would face competition of other women?), the answers are quite diversified. There are 33.2% choosing 5 and 25% choosing 4. There are also 12.5% choosing 1 and 11.1% choosing 6, which are very close in percentage. The intention of setting this question is to know how they agree with the existence of competition in the 'love market'. However,

as the results are so extremely distributed, I could hardly draw any conclusion from the statistics. This question is therefore deleted.

For Q7 (When you have met an ideal man, do you want to show off your favorable aspects in order to attract him?) The mean score of this question is 5.62. 29% of the respondents chose 7, which is the mode. Totally, there are over 83% of respondents choosing 5, 6, and 7. This shows that most respondents had admitted 2 things. First, they want to 'promote' themselves to their ideal partners very much. Second, they think that their favorable aspects are useful tools in attracting men. It is believed that promotion of own criteria is a crucial way to raise others' mating intention.

For Q8 (Do you agree that 'mutual love' is, in other words, both parties are very satisfied with the criteria of each other?) The mean score of this question is 5. Nearly 60% (58.1%) chose 5, 6, and 7. This means that a majority agrees that love is an exchange of criteria. This supports the proposition that a start of a love relationship requires a



Therefore, it is concluded that the concept of love market is generally agreed among them.

Q9 and Q10 are designed to investigate some underlying thoughts about women mating with rich men. In Q9 (Do you agree that having married to a rich man would make you feel proud in front of others?) This question is to investigate to what extent is proud a reason of mating a rich man. The mean score is 5.11. Over 70% (71.7%) of the respondents chose 5, 6 and 7. That means a vast majority agrees that proud is a reason of mating rich men [19].

In Q10 (If you have married to a 10 millionaire, will you worry that because he has too much money, he would mate a new partner at any time?) The mean score is 5.75. 86% chose a score of 5 or higher. Most people chose 7 (extremely worried) which shows that wealth is men's favorable criteria in mating. Q9 and Q10 have told us one thing. There are both benefit and cost in mating with a rich man. The benefit is proud in front of others while the cost is the insecure feeling.

### Cornbach's alpha

Concerning the reliability of Q5 to Q10, the Cornbach's alpha is 0.658 after deleting Q6. Generally speaking, a Cornbach's alpha of 0.7 is preferred to be considered reliable. However, according to the book <Dillman, D. 1978, The Total Design Method, NY: Wiley>, a Cornbach's alpha of higher than 0.6 is also considered acceptable.

### Mate selection criteria

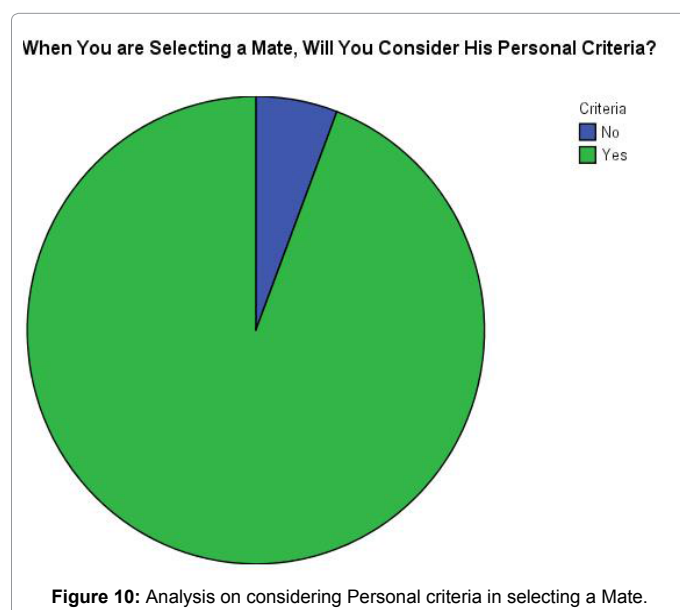
Q11 is the third part of my questionnaire. I gave the respondents 9 mate selection criteria and asked them to indicate the degree of importance of each one. The scale is again 1 to 7. The 9 mate selection criteria are financial strength, house, social status, appearance, academic qualification, health, honesty and humor respectively. Here are the mean scores of each mate selection criteria.

Financial strength: 5.25	(H1 supported)
House: 5.34	(H2 supported)
Social status: 5.07	(H3 supported)
Appearance: 4.57	(H4 <b>NOT</b> supported)
Academic qualification: 5.41	(H5 supported)
Career ambition: 5.95	(H6 supported)
Health: 6.81	(H7 supported)
Honesty: 4.92	(H8 <b>NOT</b> supported)
Humor: 5.12	(H9 supported).

As the model is to test whether the mean scores of each criterion is greater than or equal to five (5=slightly important). According to the results, all hypotheses are supported except H4 (Appearance) and H8 (Honesty).

The ranking according to mean scores:

1. Health
2. Career ambition
3. Academic qualification
4. House
5. Financial strength



mutual satisfaction of each other's criteria. However, there are also 40% (38.9%) remaining neutral. It is believed that, again, love is not 100% based on the mate's criteria. Mutual factors are also very important for a relationship to start. This is the limitation of this research which will be discussed later.

As Q5, Q7 and Q8 are important questions investigating the concept of 'love market', I further used One-Sample T-Test to analyze these 3 questions. As '4' means neutral in a 7-point scale, I used a Test-value of 4 in order to test whether the Luohu female on average significantly agree with these three questions. The null hypotheses and alternative hypotheses of these 3 tests are as follows:

$$H_0: \mu \leq 4$$

$$H_1: \mu > 4$$

Results show that the sig. of these three questions are 0.000. That means Luohu female on average give an answer of higher than 4.

6. Humor
7. Social status
8. Honesty
9. Appearance.

Surprisingly, the criterion with the highest mean score is not related to money. The score of 'Health' is 6.81 which is very close to 7. In this item, nearly 90% (87.5%) of the respondents expressed 'very important'. The result shows that Shenzhen young females place a great importance on man's health, both physical and mental health [20]. It is believed that the underlying reason behind this result is that women hope to find man who could take care of them and protect them, but not the other way round. This has to be attributed to women's psychology. This significantly affects modern females' mate selection behavior and makes the mean score surpass all other criteria. It could be predicted that this criteria is an essential mate selection criteria.

Career ambition is the criterion with the 2nd highest mean score, 5.95. Actually, only 2.4% remained neutral in this item while the other 97.6% chose 5 or above. This shows that women like to stay with males with high career ambition. The reason behind probably is that these males could let them foresee a bright future. Placing great importance on career ambition also implies that females care much about the career development and future income of their partner. This criterion is actually implicitly related to money. They tend to stay with males who could provide them with a bright future.

The criterion with the 3rd highest mean score is academic qualification. It scores 5.41. It is believed that male with higher academic qualification could have greater chance of promotion in career and in turn earn higher income. Instead of placing much importance on financial strength and house directly, Shenzhen females emphasize on some deeper criteria nowadays. It shows that generally, young females in Shenzhen are far-sighted because to a large extent, greater career ambition and higher academic qualification implies higher income in the future.

House is ranked fourth according to the mean score, 5.34. Actually, it is just slightly lower than academic qualification. A house is a symbol of security. Female place much importance on the sense of security. Therefore, it is believed that the need for security makes this criterion quite important, even a bit more important than 'Financial strength'.

Financial strength is ranked in the middle among the 9 criteria, having a mean score of 5.25. The result is actually a bit surprising for me. I expected a higher mean score or rank for this criterion because Shenzhen has a high degree of economic development which is reflected on its people's average salary. There are two possible reasons for this criterion not ranking at the top three. Firstly, modern females are more able to earn a living by themselves. This has reduced their reliance of financial support on males. Secondly, it is believed that the emphasis on financial strength is implicitly expressed in 'Career ambition' and 'Academic qualification', which are more long-term than mere 'Financial strength' [21].

Following 'Financial strength' is 'Humor' which has a mean score of 5.12. About 40% (37.5%) expressed 'slightly important'. Nearly 30% (29.3%) remained neutral. It shows that the majority think this criterion is not as important as the former criteria mentioned. It is believed that this criteria is just a 'bonus' for males, but not as essential as criteria like 'Physical and mental health' and 'Career ambition'.

For 'Social status', it has a mean score of 5.07 which is slightly lower than 'Humor'. Most respondents, about 40% (35.6%) remained neutral. Another 31.3% expressed 'slightly important' instead of 'important' or 'very important'. According to the evolutionary theory of psychology, females tend to look for income, status and ambition in partners. Results of this survey have indicated that social status is not as important as ambition and income in Luohu. Again, this criterion is a 'bonus' for males, but not essential when it comes to mating.

For 'Honesty', it has a mean score of only 4.92. It is the second lowest criterion. It is believed that being honest is just slightly important for males in the mating market. Although 32.2% expressed being honest is slightly important in affecting their mating intention, it is believed that this is not an important criteria when compared with other criteria. Having a little bit dishonesty for a man may not be a big problem for Luohu females.

The least important criterion is 'Appearance' which scores 4.57 only. Over a half (53.4%) remained neutral. Only about 15% expressed 'important' or 'very important'. Therefore, in Luohu young females' eyes, appearance of males is not a big concern. Probably women think that good appearance does not contribute to better living with the male. Although having a good appearance is always more attractive for both sexes, I could say 'Appearance' is an unimportant capital for males in the mating market. This is almost totally opposite to male's mate selection behavior according to many past studies.

In short, for the last three criteria, 'Social status', 'Honesty' and 'Appearance', they all share a similarity in the statistics. Most respondents remained neutral towards the importance of these three criteria. That means having these three criteria is not essential. However, the second popular opinions of these three item are all 'slightly important'. That means having these 3 criteria could still somewhat affect the mating intention of some Luohu females.

The Cornbach's alpha for the 9 criteria in Q11 is 0.8 which is quite reliable.

### Women's capital

In Q12, I tried to investigate how Luohu females perceive women's capital in the love market in general. The question is 'Among the following women's capital, generally speaking, which one is the most important and which one is least important?' I gave them 5 criteria to rank, namely, 'Youthfulness', 'Kindhearted', 'Beauty', 'Virtuous' and 'Read others' mind well'. '1' means 'most important' and '5' means 'least important'.

For 'Youthfulness', 38% of the respondents ranked No.1. The mean score of this item is lowest (2.34). That means it is the most important capital perceived by Luohu's female. This is consistent with many past findings.

For 'Kindhearted', 42.8% ranked No.1. Although the percentage is higher than 'Youthfulness', its mean score is 2.41 which is slightly higher than 'Youthfulness'. Therefore, it became the 2nd most important capital in Luohu female's eyes.

However, as 2.41 is very close to 2.34, it is believed that the importance is almost as great as No.1. For 'Beauty', surprisingly, only 12% ranked No.1. Instead of ranking No.1, 44.7% ranked it as No.2. The mean score is 2.63 which is higher than 'Kindhearted'. Higher mean score means less important. It is out of my expectation that 'Kindhearted' is generally more important than 'Beauty'. 'Beauty' becomes the 3<sup>rd</sup> important capital. That means in Luohu females'

opinion, internal beauty is slightly more important than external beauty [22].

For 'Read others' mind well', most respondents ranked it as No.4. The mean score become 3.58. Totally there are 60.6% ranking it as No.4 and No.5. Therefore, Luohu females generally think this criterion is quite unimportant in the love market.

For 'Virtuous', nearly a half (46.2%) ranked it as No.5. The mean score is 4.03. Therefore, this is the least important criteria. Probably this traditional value is no longer important in a modern city like Shenzhen. Even if the girls came from poor areas, their perspectives have changed already.

Concerning the mean scores of the five 'capitals', the differences between the first 3, 'Youthfulness', 'Kindhearted' and 'Beauty', are very small. However, the difference between 'Beauty' and 'Read others' mind well' is much bigger (0.95). The gap between the first 3 and the last two criteria means the last 2 criteria are generally much less important than the first 3.

According to evolutionary theory of psychology, men seek youthfulness and prettiness in female. However, this survey has told us something more. Firstly, among youthfulness and prettiness, youthfulness is generally more important than prettiness. Furthermore, Luohu females generally think 'Kindhearted' is more important than 'Beauty'. This actually implies that men sometimes place more emphasis on internal beauty than external beauty. Or else those interviewed females would not place such a great importance on it. Based on this result, I could provide some recommendation of for Luohu or Shenzhen females in their mating.

## Associations

By using Chi-square Test of Association, it is found that there is association between Q9 (Feeling proud of mating a rich man) and 'Financial strength'. That means the stronger of the woman's feeling of proud of mating a rich man, the higher importance she has put on men's financial strength. This further explains that proud is always a reason behind mating a rich man among Luohu females.

I also did some analysis on the associations between Q2, the period since coming to Shenzhen and the 9 criteria. It is found that there are association between period since coming to Shenzhen and social status and academic qualification. That means the longer a girl has been to Shenzhen, the more emphasis she would put on social status and academic qualification.

Moreover, I found that there are associations between respondents' income with all the 9 mate selection criteria except 'Appearance'. That means, overall, the higher the income a respondent is earning, the higher the degree of importance she expressed towards those 8 criteria. This also further explains outlook is an unimportant mate selection criterion among Luohu young females.

Finally, I try to look at the association between the number of males who expressed love towards the respondent since they were 16 years old and the mate selection criteria. The last question was set to know what criteria females will emphasize more if they face a larger 'demand' of love from males. Results show that 'Career ambition', 'Academic qualification', 'Honesty' and 'Appearance' are associated with it. 'Career ambition' and 'Academic qualification' are the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most important criteria according to the overall mean score. Associations with these two criteria are not surprising. However,

'Honesty' and 'Appearance' are generally unimportant mate selection criteria. A girl would tend to emphasize these 2 criteria more if she had encountered more lovers. It could be concluded that if a female is more 'demanded' by males, she would raise her mate selection requirements by emphasizing more on these 4 criteria. A male would have to improve on these 4 aspects if he wants to mate a girl who encountered a considerable number of males expressing love towards her. To some extent, this finding has provided some tips for males to improve their 'capital', i.e., their criteria, if they want to mate a highly demanded girl.

## Limitations

In this research, undoubtedly, it could be concluded that 'Love as an exchange' is supported to a certain extent. However, I could not deny that there are several limitations.

First, it should be noted that the concept of exchange is a basic and general assumption, but not a full application to love. Although when it comes to mating, people will consider the other party's criteria, love is always a mutual issue which requires mutual integration. Mutual factors are also very significant in affecting people's mating behavior. For example, match of personality, match of interest, match of living style and habits could affect the development of relationship between two parties significantly. In reality, mutual factors could never be ignored.

Secondly, mating is not as direct and straight as a business exchange in our daily life. Again, the concept of exchange could only be applied to a certain extent, but not as a whole. In a business exchange, both parties could bargain with each other consciously. However, this could never happen in an exchange of love. It is impossible for a couple to 'bargain' the terms of exchange face to face before they start their relationship. People tend to be more indirect when it comes to love.

Thirdly, this research does not include individual value judgement. There is no standard for judging the invisible resources. It is believed that people have their own standard for judging each criterion. A question could help elaborate this point, i.e. "How should a person be like in order to regard him as 'Physically and mentally healthy'?" Another example is that the perception of humor is different for different people. Therefore, the individual value judgement for each mate selection criterion is one of the limitations in this research. After all, it is hard to include such specific and subjective element in this research as well.

## Recommendations

In recent years, there has been increasing conflicts between Hong Kong males and females. A new term, 'Kong girl Phenomenon' has emerged. There are many websites and online forums criticizing Hong Kong males and females. Both sexes expressed discontent towards the opposite sex by listing their dark sides. According to many statistics, the number of Hong Kong males marrying mainland females has been increasing year by year. Shenzhen has long been a popular target place for them. It is hoped that my research could help enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong males in the love market in mainland by providing them some recommendations about mating mainland females. However, it doesn't mean that my recommendations are for Hong Kong males only.

According to the findings, the most important mate selection criterion of Luohu females is 'Health'. Therefore, it is recommended that males should pay attention to their daily life and keep themselves both physically and mentally healthy. Males should never sacrifice their health for money because health is an essential mate selection criterion

in females' eyes. Mere financial strength is only ranked in the middle among the nine criteria.

After paying enough attention in maintaining a healthy body, males should have strong career ambition. At least they should show females that they have ambition in long-term career development because this is the second most important criterion in general. Career ambition could make females feel that there is a bright future and considerable future income. This could increase their intention to choose to mate with that male.

Apart from health and career ambition, having a higher academic qualification could probably have an advantage in the love market in Luohu. Instead of joining the workforce too early, males should consider continuing their studies to a higher level. A higher academic qualification not only allows a greater potential in future career development, but also could give females confidence when it comes to mating. It should always be remembered that generally speaking, Luohu females emphasize more on two long-term elements, career ambition and academic qualification, than mere financial strength. They look for males' potential of creating wealth rather than their current amount of money.

I also recommend males to buy a house once they have enough money because a house is generally more important than mere financial strength. Although it is only generally speaking, it is believed that a house is a symbol of safety and security which are always emphasized by females. Also, I would like to point out that honesty is just a trivial criterion in Luohu females' eyes. Honesty does not significantly help them mate females there. Even being a bit dishonest would not be a big problem as long as the male possesses the other competitive criteria mentioned earlier on.

Finally, I would like to give some recommendations for males who have an ordinary or unpleasant appearance. As result has shown that 'Appearance' is the least important criterion, generally speaking, males could pay least attention in improving their outlook. There is no need for ugly males lose confidence because they could still increase their competitiveness by improving those criteria emphasized by females. However, if they want to mate 'high demanded' girls, those who encountered a considerable number of lovers, having a more pleasant appearance would be more advantaged.

Apart from males, I also have some recommendations for females. Results indicated that generally speaking, 'Kindhearted' is slightly more important than 'Beauty'. For females who does not have external beauty, they could improve or develop their internal beauty, i.e., to be more kindhearted because it is regarded almost as important as 'Youthfulness', the top-ranked criteria. Probably females' opinion had reflected the fact that males not just emphasize on external beauty but demand internal beauty as well. It is believed that being 'Kindhearted' could compensate the lack of external beauty to a certain extent and thus increase their competitiveness in the love market.

By the way, as 'Youthfulness' is ranked No.1, I recommend females to maximize their benefits in the love market as soon as possible when they are still young. Probably their competitive advantage would decrease year by year.

## Conclusion

In this research, result shows that the statement 'Love is also an exchange' is heard by almost all of the respondents. Undoubtedly, this statement is a very popular saying. It is believed that the astonishing

high percentage of respondents having heard of this is due to the undeniable fact that mating is in fact rational which has to base on criteria. If it is an unreasonable or absurd concept, probably it won't be so popular among a group of people coming from all over the country.

The concept is further verified by the fact that almost all respondents would consider others' criteria when it comes to mating. It is consistent with what social exchange theory states.

We could always conclude that the love market is similar to the consumer goods market to a certain extent. Firstly, it is found that in general, Luohu young females have a demand for high-quality men. High-quality men become scarce resources to be allocated. Whenever demand and supply exist, a market exists. Moreover, females wish to show off their advantages in order to attract their ideal mates. This is similar to the promotion of products in the consumer goods market. Sellers promote their products in order to attract more customers to purchase the products. In the love market, people themselves 'become' products. They wish to promote themselves in front of their ideal partners, hoping to exchange their own criteria with theirs. Moreover, to a certain extent, it is true to say that 'mutual love' is in other words 'both parties feel satisfied about the criteria of the other party'.

Among the nine mate selection criteria investigated, results are quite unexpected. Although Shenzhen has a great influence by economic development, females didn't expressed great importance towards financial strength. Health is the most important criterion which is followed by career ambition and academic qualification. The importance of economic strength is believed to have been replaced by career ambition and academic qualification. This shows there is a long-term vision among females in this modern city. The results have provided a general guideline for males from anywhere to improve their mating competitiveness by working harder on the most important criteria.

The ranking of the five female's capital could also provide some implications for females on how to maximize their benefit by using their capital. For example, they should maximize their benefits in the love market as soon as possible when they are still young. Also, they should note that internal beauty is sometimes more important than external beauty.

However, due to some limitations such as the exclusion of mutual factors, partial application of marketing concept and subjective, individual value judgement, this research is only a general investigation. Love is definitely much more complicated if all other factors are considered at the same time.

It is true that we could not observe verbal negotiation of criteria between males and females because mating is not a business negotiation. Indirectness in love has made things complicated. But it should be noted that mating behavior is in fact rational. Love is also an exchange which has to base on criteria.

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