

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHINESE  
PHILOSOPHICAL RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS ON  
CHINESE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR:  
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF CHINESE  
FESTIVALS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

As firms across the world target China, it is important for marketers to understand the inherent and unique characteristics of the Chinese population in order to establish effective marketing strategies. Previous research has predominantly focused on Confucian luxury consumption behaviour and none have addressed the three principal philosophical religious traditions of China (namely Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism) in the context of consumers and their consumption behaviours. This study is exploratory in nature and employs multiple case studies of Chinese festivals to achieve an in-depth understanding of the influence of these three philosophical religious traditions on consumption behaviour in China today.

The multiple case study design comprises the Chinese festivals of the Qingming Festival (Confucianism), the Duanwu Festival (Taoism), the Laba Festival (Buddhism) and the Chinese Spring Festival (unifying all three philosophical religious traditions), and was conducted using three data collection techniques: accompanied shopping, participant observation and in-depth interviews with participants who self-identified with a given tradition. The research aim was to explore how the cultural values from these philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour in terms of the purchasing and consumption experience from the point of view of the participants. In combining the findings from the four case studies, this research provides an holistic understanding and analysis of the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour. The key contribution of the study is to offer an evidence-based framework of Chinese consumption behaviour across all three traditions, entitled an Empirical Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour. This framework helps close an existing gap in the marketing literature and provides a (relatively rare) non-Western perspective on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviours rooted in a very different cultural heritage. Ultimately, this will help firms outside of China to devise appropriate marketing strategies for the Chinese market as a comparative analysis of the differences between the three philosophical religious traditions has been conducted for international companies to take as a reference point for successful marketing in China.

## **DEDICATION**

To the people who encouraged me and helped me develop.

Thank you for all of your support along the way.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>B</b>	Buddhism
<b>BCE</b>	Before Common Era
<b>C</b>	Confucianism
<b>CE</b>	Common Era
<b>CNY</b>	Chinese Yuan
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>OBU</b>	Oxford Brookes University
<b>OXCSSA</b>	The Oxford Chinese Students and Scholars Association
<b>PPP</b>	Purchasing Power Parity
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UREC</b>	University Research Ethics Committee
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>RMB</b>	Ren Min Bi
<b>SF</b>	Spring Festival
<b>T</b>	Taoism

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter first explains the rationale for the research study, along with providing an overview of Chinese consumption behaviour in the Chinese cultural context. Next, it identifies the research aim and research objectives. This is followed by an examination of the significance of the study. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented.

### **1.1 Research Rationale**

China, an ancient country with a complex history and unique culture, has become the second-largest economic union in a world of increasing globalisation (World Bank, 2019). The country witnessed a real GDP growth of 6.86 percent in 2017 and has registered robust economic growth over the past three decades. In addition, its vast foreign exchange reserves grew to \$3.14 trillion at the end of 2017 from \$3.01 trillion in 2016 (Marketline, 2018; Reuters, 2019). Remarkably, China was the largest economy in the world in PPP (purchasing power parity) terms in 2018 and is expected to continue to attract considerable foreign direct investment (Passport, 2019). It has become one of the most attractive markets for luxury brands in the world and the primary location for expected corporate growth opportunities (Sun et al., 2017). This rapid change has taken place since Deng's open-door economic reform policy at the end of the 1970s, which welcomed foreign business investment into China (Gallagher, 2002; China Daily, 2018). From 1979 until 2010, China's average annual GDP growth was 9.91 percent, reaching an historical high of 15.2 percent in 1984 and a record low of 3.8 percent in 1990; it has experienced exponential growth over the past few decades, breaking the barriers of a centrally planned, closed economy to evolve into one of the most significant

manufacturing and export hubs in the world (Lin, 2011). China has achieved its economic performance through market-oriented reforms and opening itself up to trade. The rising per capita income has led to an increase in living standards including higher disposable income, more urban living and better education (Atsmon et al., 2012). As China is rapidly becoming an important market for consumer goods, more companies have entered, or plan to enter, China, in their desire to expand into the Chinese market. China has become one of the ‘must be’ countries for international luxury brands. Luxury brands are increasing their presence in China to take advantage of the ‘new rich’ class explosion (Rovai, 2016). As firms across the world target China, it is important for marketers to understand the inherent and unique characteristics of the Chinese population in order to establish effective marketing strategies.

In line with market trends, the existing academic literature focuses primarily on Chinese luxury consumers or on conspicuous consumption; for example, Confucian luxury consumption (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), Confucian cultural values and gift giving behaviour (Sun et al., 2011; Tynan et al., 2010) and Chinese luxury consumption behaviour (Atsmon et al., 2011; Chun and Yong, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Siu et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2014; Walley and Li, 2015; Zhang and Kim, 2013). Few studies have explored the Chinese consumers’ preference for non-luxury products. In addition, most of the cultural research conducted into Chinese consumer behaviour has approached it from a Western perspective (De Mooij, 2018; Jung and Kau, 2004; Kacen and Lee, 2002). However, as pointed out by Shukla and Purani (2012), these studies mainly discuss the difference between western and oriental consumer behaviour, and most researchers have overlooked the large cultural variance within Asia.

There has been a real shift over the past two years in consumer perceptions of what the right product to buy should be under the new Chinese government policy, as the Communist Party of China has given a tacit push to luxury consumption (Huang, 2017). Although there are many studies on the influence of Chinese cultural values on Chinese consumer behaviour, most of them consider only one philosophical religious tradition (Xiao and

Kim, 2009). Examples can be found, such as the influence of Confucianism or Buddhism on consumer satisfaction (Yau, 1988; Ho, 2001), Taoism's impact on environmental purchasing (Chang, 2011; Paracka Jr, 2012) and Confucian cultural values and gift giving behaviour (Sun et al., 2011; Tynan et al., 2010). However, China has three main philosophical religious traditions - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - so people are subject to a wide range of cultural value reference groups that ultimately affect their purchasing behaviour. These operate as cultural components of the person in terms of consumer attributes and processes, and as cultural components of behaviour in terms of consumer behavioural domains (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). Even though nowadays there are also religions originating from other countries, principal among them being Christianity, who account for around 5 percent of the Chinese population (Marketline, 2018). According to the Worldatlas (2018), the self-identifying adherents of Taoist or Confucian philosophies account for 26 percent of the total Chinese population, while the Buddhists represent 18.2 percent of the Chinese population (Marketline, 2018). Considering their percentage of the Chinese population, and also that Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are the traditional philosophies; this study therefore only focuses on the three major philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

To improve academic understanding of how and to what extent Chinese cultural values shape the Chinese consumption experience and provide marketers with better knowledge of how to differentiate their marketing strategies in China, this study seeks to explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have shaped the Chinese philosophical religious tradition. These three doctrines were important parts of daily life in old China and remain so in modern times (Ching, 1993; Fairbank and Goldman, 2006; Fang, 2014; Smith and Marranca, 2009; Yau, 1988). This study is believed to be the first study to conduct an empirical investigation of core elements within these three philosophical religious traditions and to show how these impact on consumption behaviour.

A multiple case study of Chinese festivals - the Qingming Festival (Confucianism), Duanwu Festival (Taoism), Laba Festival (Buddhism) and the Chinese Spring Festival (all philosophical religious traditions) - was conducted using three data collection techniques: accompanied shopping, participant observation and in-depth interviews. The aim was to explore how the cultural values from these philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved. The key contribution of this study lies in the development of a framework and its evidence-based conceptualisation of Chinese consumption behaviour across all three traditions. It will offer a (rare) non-Western perspective on contemporary consumption behaviours rooted in a very different cultural heritage and some of the importance of achieving this is demonstrated by the huge size and growth of Chinese markets and the attention paid to China by international companies and brands.

## **1.2 Research Aim and Objectives**

The overall aim of this research is to explore how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. The research specifically examines consumer behaviour at three selected Chinese religious festivals - the Qingming Festival (Confucianism), the Duanwu Festival (Taoism) and the Laba Festival (Buddhism). It contrasts these events with one universal festival case study - the Chinese Spring Festival - which is celebrated by all Chinese people. This research aims to provide academic understanding of how and to what extent Chinese cultural values shape the Chinese consumption experience. By doing so, it fills a significant gap in the marketing literature as there are no holistic studies including the influence of all three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour. Ultimately, this research aims to develop a new framework related to philosophical religious traditions that will further knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour. At the same time, this will

have practical relevance for marketing professionals engaging with Chinese markets.

To achieve the research aim, four research objectives were identified:

1. To critically review the literature on Chinese cultural values and consumer behaviour; on the three most influential philosophical religious traditions in China - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - and their role and influence on Chinese consumer behaviour today
2. To explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, focusing on three Chinese religious festivals - the Qingming Festival, the Duanwu Festival and the Laba Festival
3. To further examine and consolidate the study of the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on consumer behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival, as a universal example of consumption behaviour during a religious festival celebrated by all three philosophical religious traditions
4. To develop a framework related to philosophical religious traditions as a contribution to the deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese consumers, offering insights for global marketers who wish to differentiate consumer needs

### **1.3 Research Context**

This study examines the relationship between consumption values, purchasing and consumption behaviour in the Chinese consumer market because of the significance of the Chinese market. With a population of 1.386 billion, China is not only the world's second largest economy, but it is also the largest measured in purchasing power parity terms (World Bank, 2019).

The People's Republic of China, abbreviated to China, is located in eastern Asia. Its continental coastline extends for roughly 18,000 kilometres and it has a land area of about 9.6 million square kilometres (Luo, 2014). With extensive improvements in its bureaucracy and governance mechanisms having been undertaken since the early 1980s, China has enjoyed exceptional economic performance (Wilson, 2016). In recent years, China has emerged as a major global economic power. It is now the world's largest economy (on a purchasing power parity basis), manufacturer, merchandise trader and holder of foreign exchange reserves (Omoruyi, 2018). As multinational companies from all over the world target China, it is important for marketers to understand China's unique culture. China has more than 5,000 years of history and a rich culture which is full of mystery and novel for Western people. This culture has been passed down from generation to generation, such that it has a major influence on people's behaviour, including buying behaviour (Luo, 2009). With the effect of globalization, the whole world faces many contemporary social issues concerning politics, economics, culture and religion. The different cultures of various countries are interacting more; people are mixing the different cultures of each country, learning more and more from each other, and accepting more from each other as well (Boyd and Richerson, 2009). However, in order to adopt different cultures, the individual or organization needs to fully understand the local culture.

This research focuses on the Chinese cultural context, exploring Chinese consumption behaviour. The main reason for this choice is that culture has a significant influence on consumption behaviour, as it affects many aspects of business, such as management, leadership, decision making and marketing (Firat et al., 2013; Goodwin et al., 2008; Hofstede, 2011; Liu et al., 2013). Therefore, it is necessary for marketers to better understand the complexity of Chinese culture. This study focuses on Chinese philosophical religious traditions as the context in order to explore their influence on Chinese consumption behaviour. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism form the essence of Chinese traditional culture and still influence contemporary Chinese people.

Confucianism is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture. It is a complete ideological system created by Confucius, based on the traditional culture of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties (Tang, 2015). Taoism concentrates on individual life and tranquillity. While the character itself translates as 'way', 'path', or 'route', or sometimes more loosely as 'doctrine' or 'principle', it is used philosophically to signify the fundamental or true nature of the world (Suen et al., 2007). Buddhism originated in India in the 6th century BCE and then entered China in about the 1st century CE (Lopez Jr, 2015). It has had a long history in China and has been instrumental in shaping Chinese culture and traditions (Mishra, 2004). In ancient China, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism had a drastic struggle with one another. The experience of this long and complicated struggle offers Chinese people an important historical inspiration for today's interfaith dialogue (Wang, 2014).

Many previous studies (Husic and Cicic, 2009; Siu et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2014; Walley and Li, 2015; Zhang and Kim, 2013; Sun et al., 2011) exploring Chinese culture only focus on Confucianism. However, it is incomplete to understand Chinese consumption behaviour just from the point of view of Confucianism as this is only one dimension of Chinese culture. There is very little research which has explored the other two philosophical religious traditions and their impact on Chinese consumption behaviour. Relatively little is known about the differences among these three philosophical religious traditions in terms of their influence on consumer purchasing and the consumption patterns of Chinese consumers. Considering such limitations and the need to provide scholars and marketing professionals with a comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture, this study concentrates on all the three major philosophical religious traditions. A multiple case study of Chinese festivals was conducted to examine how cultural values from the three philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved, and to explore the different patterns of their cultural values, purchasing and consumption experiences. China has many traditional festivals, which are an important part of Chinese culture. The Qingming

Festival, the Duanwu Festival and the Laba Festival were chosen as case studies because these festivals are traditionally associated with a specific religion and are still popular among contemporary Chinese people (Adler, 2002). A universal case study on the Chinese Spring Festival which is celebrated by all Chinese people was also conducted. The multiple case study approach provides a rich and descriptive account of the relevant festivals as well as an in-depth analysis of purchasing intentions and the motivations behind the consumption process. Therefore, conducting the study in festival settings is also a way of exploring the culture as it is itself associated with cultural meaning.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter one presents an overall introduction, which identifies the research problem, the literature gap and how this research seeks to fill the gap. The research aim and objectives are then set out. Chapter two presents a critical review of the literature on culture, the cultural influence on consumption behaviour, the three Chinese philosophical religious traditions and how these religious traditions influence Chinese consumption behaviour. Chapter three explains the methodology of this research in detail, including how the primary data were collected and analysed as well as providing a justification for the data analysis techniques used. Chapter four presents the findings from the three philosophical religious tradition-related case studies respectively and Chapter five presents the findings from the universal case study. Chapter six discusses the key findings from the individual case studies and the universal case study to yield an empirical framework of Chinese consumption behaviour. Chapter seven is the conclusion chapter that highlights the research contribution, its limitations and implications and it contains a personal reflection on the research journey.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the literature and addresses the first objective of the research: to critically review the literature on Chinese cultural values and consumer behaviour. The chapter also reviews the literature on the three most influential philosophical religious traditions in China, namely Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and it reviews the associated knowledge about the influence of these religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour today. It starts by looking at the relationship between consumption and culture, followed by a critical discussion of the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘Chinese culture’. It then provides theoretical explanations as to how the three most influential philosophical religious traditions accurately capture Chinese culture and their influence on Chinese consumption behaviour. The chapter concludes by drawing together a conceptual framework founded on the key components from the review of the literature and its impact on Chinese consumption behaviour.

#### **2.1 Consumption and Culture**

Most scholars (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Hansen and Schrader, 1997; Jackson and Marks, 1999) define ‘consumption’ as satisfying needs in the most general sense. It is necessary to identify consumers’ needs because it is through this process that people ultimately select the goods and services that they use (Goodwin et al., 2008). However, people with different cultural backgrounds may have different demands in terms of, for example, goods, needs, wants, services and desires. As a result, people in different nations have certain behavioural patterns (Firat et al., 2013). Therefore, numerous scholars have turned their attention to consumers’ underlying cultural values and the influence of these values on consumer needs and behaviour.

From the late 1990s to the present, many researchers have studied consumer purchasing and consumption from a cultural perspective. Cultural values represent the unconscious behaviours and hidden motivators shared by all a society's members, which are deeply rooted in its cultural values and beliefs, and embedded in a particular context (Liu et al., 2013). Henry (1976) and Kim et al. (2002) explained that the values embedded in culture have an effect on consumption motivation and, in turn, how consumers decide the criteria they will use when purchasing a product. Nearly all cross-cultural psychologists as well as marketing researchers engaged in consumer behavioural research have reached agreement on the function of culture; they consider that culture has a profound influence on people's thoughts and this in turn affects their behaviour (Shyan Fam et al., 2004; Gilbert and Tsao, 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Liu, and Bao, 2013; Shweder and Sullivan 1990; Sun et al., 2011). Given the influence of culture on consumers and the globalization of the consumer market, some scholars (Hennigs et al., 2012; Li and Su, 2007) consider that there will be a great similarity in the values of consumers in different countries as there is a global acceptance of brands and products. Therefore, many researchers (Buzzell, 1968; Greene et al., 1994; Nasir and Altinbasak, 2009; Vrontis et al., 2009) have suggested that international marketing should be standardized and that multinational organizations might or even should follow a standardised or uniform marketing strategy across different countries.

However, this point has prompted a heated debate and some scholars believe that standardised marketing cannot apply to every country. As explained by Tsang (2011), cultural values differ from one country to another, shaping the beliefs and attitudes of people and guiding their behaviours. If an organisation lacks cultural awareness, this leads to miscommunication and, as a result, rejection by host-culture colleagues, clients, acquaintances and neighbours will follow. For example, the Ritz-Carlton hotel suffered a failure because they did not fully understand the Chinese cultural value of 'Guanxi' when they tried to introduce a western management style system in their Hong Kong hotel (Mohsin, 2006). Cultural differences influence many aspects of business, such as

management, leadership, decision making and marketing (Gilbert and Tsao, 2000). Therefore, managers should recognise cultural diversity and its influence. As stated by Deresky (2006), if managers have a good level of cultural awareness or sensitivity towards culture, they can develop suitable policies and gain a great deal from understanding how culture affects working and organizational processes, which will help them to implement strategies successfully. Having a sensitive awareness of culture can help people develop suitable strategies and determine how to plan, organize, lead and control in a specific international environment (Deresky, 2006). Baum et al. (2007) argued that awareness and sensitivity of cultural diversity plays a significant role in the hospitality, international tourism and multinational business sectors because the labour force in these industries tends to be multicultural. Ayoko (2007) supported this view, stating that awareness of culture diversity strengthens the availability of information and provides insights which will assist an organization to achieve their purpose. Many studies have indicated the advantages of multinational organisations having cultural awareness and sensitivity allowing them, for example, to offer better service to foreign customers by adjusting their style of service to meet foreign customers' needs.

In the marketing literature, culture is considered to underlie the behavioural dimension. As stated by Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), worldwide consumers may be similar in several ways, but there are still differences in attitudes or behaviours among different nations; these differences are crucial in determining customer satisfaction and may provide an opportunity for segmenting consumers in terms of cultural differences. Globalisation trends have generated the need to take cross-cultural differences into account when formulating and communicating marketing messages (Kotler et al., 2015).

McCort and Malhotra (1993, p.120) reviewed literature from anthropology and psychology and concluded that "culture impacts virtually every construct of concern to marketers". They explained that culture has an effect on individuals' perceptions and cognitive functioning. Usunier (1996) supported this view and argued that consumers' perceptions, motivations, changes of attitude, decision-making and group membership are influenced

by culture. Table 2.1 identifies the existing research on cultural influence on consumer behaviour.

**Table 2.1 Cultural Influences on Consumer Behaviour**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Cultural Influence on Consumer Behaviour</b>
Kacen and Lee (2002)	Cultural factors moderate many aspects of consumers' impulsive buying behaviour, including self-identity, normative influences, the suppression of emotion, and the postponement of instant gratification.
Jung and Kau (2004)	Culture may be one of the major factors that influence consumption behaviours.
Samuel Craig and Douglas (2006)	Culture is becoming increasingly deterritorialized and penetrated by elements from other cultures. This is resulting in cultural contamination, cultural pluralism and hybridization. It has become more difficult to study culture as it is becoming diffuse. At the same time, it is becoming more important to study it because of its pervasive influence on consumer behaviour.
Moon et al. (2008)	Results indicate that individualism is the only cultural dimension to have a significant effect on purchase intention.
Lee and Kacen (2008)	Consumers are influenced by others in planned and impulse purchase situations, even after controlling for price. These differential influences can be explained by culture. Compared to more individualist consumers, collectivist consumers are likely to be more satisfied with an impulse purchase when another person is present at the time of purchase.
De Mooij and Hofstede (2010)	Cultural relationships with the self, personality, and attitude are the basis of consumer behaviour models, branding and advertising strategies.
Askegaard and Linnet (2011)	The paper found that country of residence is a significant and stronger indicator in predicting loyalty tendency than dimensions of individualism and collectivism.
Durmaz et al. (2011)	Culture, sub-culture and social class influence consumers' buying behaviour.
Hennigs et al. (2012)	Provide evidence that consumers in various parts of the world purchase or wish to purchase luxury products for varied reasons but that such consumers generally possess similar cultural values.

Nayeem (2012)	Culture consists of a common set of behaviour patterns and is a powerful force in regulating human behaviour.
Healy and McDonagh (2013)	Research on virtual brand communities is required to clarify the culture and value of co-creative roles played by consumers as stakeholders.
Rani (2014)	Culture influences the individual decision making process, shopping habits, purchasing behaviour and the brands the individual buys or the retailers that the individual visits.
Ramya and Mohamed Ali (2016)	Culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behaviour. A consumer is led by his culture, his subculture, his social class, his membership groups and his family, etc.
Nguyen et al. (2017)	Cultural values are the key determinants of green purchase behaviour by enhancing consumers' environmental attitudes and subjective norms.
Arli and Pekerti (2017)	Religion (Culture) is a significant part of daily life that affects consumers' decisions and behaviours.
Abu-Alhaija et al. (2018)	Religion pervades every aspect of a society and is one of the most important social factors that influence customers' attitudes and behaviours.

*(Source: the researcher)*

The above table 2.1 captures key cultural elements explored in the literature which are thought to have impact on consumer behaviour. In the existing literature, as presented in Table 2.1, culture is generally accepted by marketing researchers as one of the most important underlying determinants of consumer behaviour. Previous studies include cultural influence on purchase intention (Moon et al., 2008), decision making process (Rani, 2014), impulse buying (Kacen & Lee, 2002) and consumer behaviour models (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Contributing further on the importance of culture, Ramya and Mohamed Ali (2016) explained that culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behaviour. Cultural values shape people's beliefs and guide their behaviour as shown in the table 2.1, however, most studies have approached the topic from a Western perspective (De Mooij, 2004; Jung and Kau, 2004; Kacen and Lee, 2002). Sun et al. (2011) argued that Asian consumers and Westerners shopping for the same products, might be doing so with different purposes and they might behave in different ways. Therefore, a full

explanation of Chinese consumer behaviour requires a consideration of what aspects influence, specifically, Chinese culture. In order to develop a full understanding of culture, this chapter will next discuss the definition, conceptualisation and operationalisation of this concept.

### **2.1.1 Definition, Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Culture**

Consumption choice cannot be understood without considering culture as discussed in the above section. Phillips (2003) explained that culture is the 'prism' through which people view products and try to make sense of their own and other people's consumer behaviour. The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between Chinese culture and its influence on Chinese consumer behaviour. Thus, it is necessary to clearly define what culture is. The question of what is culture has provoked discussion among anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists for decades, and at present there is no single universal answer which can be applied to all fields (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010; Hennigs et al., 2012; Hofstede, 1980; Liu et al., 2013). Atkinson (2004) regarded culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. According to Hofstede (1980), the culture of a society is composed of superordinate goals and understandings, which are taught by earlier generations and passed on to succeeding generations; as a result, this shared outlook becomes common values, standards of conduct, and expectations that direct and control certain norms of behaviour. This definition distinguishes the members of one human group from another. As time goes by, culture develops as societies adjust to changes in both internal and external environments. There are also two rather short but widely used definitions of culture: Sarma (2014) described culture as meaning 'the total social heredity of mankind' and Segall et al. (1966) posited that 'culture is the man-made part of the human environment.' In contrast to these concise and short definitions, there are also many lengthy listings of what is included in culture. During Harris and

Moran's (1993) experience of training executives from many companies and cultures across the world, they conducted some research with the participating managers about the definition of culture. They were surprised to find that the participants needed to take some time to think about it. Eventually, most participants used the following words to define culture: language, religion, customs, tradition, beliefs, art, food and properties. In separate work Doney et al. (1998) proposed that the essential core of culture includes a traditional life and there is an explicit acceptance that culture includes both concrete observable activities and artefacts, and underlying symbols, values and meanings. However, the definitional problem arises when people ask what is necessary to define culture; is it language, religion, customs, tradition, beliefs, art, food or properties? Cole and Scribner (1974) gave an example where people can speak of both a Spanish culture and a Peruvian culture even though a large number of people in both groups speak the same language. People can speak of a European culture although there are large variations in dress, language, and religious beliefs among the people on the continent. These kinds of considerations have led many researchers to de-emphasize the quest for a universally acceptable definition of 'what culture really is.' Furthermore, Reisinger and Crotts (2010) argued that it is difficult to define culture, due to the fact that culture is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon and there are many different kinds of definitions presented in the literature. The different anthropological definitions of culture indicate the difficulties which researchers encounter when they try to relate phenomena on a cultural level to those on an individual level. There is still a lack of an adequate definition or means of measuring culture and this continues to be one of the key challenges facing cross-cultural research. For positivist researchers, although many approaches have been used, there is only limited agreement regarding any definitive scale suitable for measuring cultural differences among nations (Johnson et al., 2006). Most scholars consider that culture is very complex to define and is a multidimensional phenomenon. Major definitions of culture proposed in the extant literature, especially from anthropology and sociology, are shown in the Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 Definitions of Culture**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Keesing (1974)	Culture is the heritage which people in a particular society share.
Hofstede (1980)	The culture of a society is composed of the superordinate goals and understanding, which are taught by earlier generations and passed on to succeeding generations; as a result, this shared outlook becomes common values, standards of conduct, and expectations that direct and control certain norms of behaviour.
Hofstede (1983)	Culture is the collective mental programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another.
Swidler (1986)	Culture is the publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning.
Harris and Moran (1993)	Language, religion, customs, tradition, art, beliefs, food and properties.
Bowker (1997)	Religions are the earliest cultural systems of which we have evidence for the protection of gene-replication and the nurture of children.
DiMaggio (1997)	Culture as values that suffuse other aspects of belief, intention, and collective life has succumbed to one of culture as complex rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use.
De Mooij and Hofstede (2010)	Hofstede found five dimensions of national culture entitled: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance index, and long-term orientation.
Heine (2010)	Culture is any kind of idea, belief, technology, habit, or practice that is acquired through learning from others; thus, humans are a cultural species, as they have a great deal of 'culture'.
Frías et al. (2012)	Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.
Reisinger and Turner (2012)	Culture is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon.
Namenwirth and Weber (2016)	Culture as a design for living is a conceptual or idea system.

De Mooij (2019)	Culture is the glue that binds groups together; it is what defines a human community, its individuals and social organisations.
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*(Source: the researcher)*

The above table 2.2 shows some major definitions of culture proposed in the extant literature. Evidently, definitions agree on the fact that culture is the heritage which people in a particular society share (Keesing, 1974), but the content of the culture varies in different definitions. For example, Hofstede (1983) defined culture as the collective mental programming of the mind, Harris and Moran (1993) regarded it as language, religion, customs, tradition, art, beliefs, food and properties, and Heine (2010) considered it as a kind of idea, belief, technology, habit, or practice. Some studies have looked at the cultural dimensions that reflect similarities and differences among cultures, for example, Hofstede five dimensions of national culture (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010). However, particular cultural definitions may not fit well in the Chinese context. While there exist great differences in terms of political, social and economic dimensions between China and other countries, it is important to use an appropriate definition of the concept that can fit in the Chinese context.

Soares et al. (2007) stated that having reliable dimensions to synthesize major distinguishing aspects of culture would contribute a great deal to cross-cultural research, given that they would provide an alternative to conceptualising and measuring culture as a complex, multidimensional structure rather than as a simple categorical variable. Many researchers have agreed that there is a need to choose the most suitable dimensions for conceptualizing and operationalizing culture (Schwartz, 1994). However, this idea has also provoked a great deal of criticism when using cultural dimensions to capture multidimensional cultural constructs (Soares et al., 2007). Other researchers such as Hofstede rely on values to explain cultural differences, which is their intuitive appeal. According to Bond (1997), values are broad constructs which help researchers develop a better understanding of the complexity of culture in familiar psychological territory. Generally, values have offered many ways to study cultural

difference, for example, to measure differences at an individual level, or to be used in geography as a proxy for culture (Gelfand et al., 2006). However, some researchers (Schwartz, 1994; Bond, 1997; Tinsley, 1998) have argued that cultural values are not sufficient to explain cultural differences in consumer behaviour.

Other researchers (Beugré, 2007; Gelfand, et al., 2006; Harrington and Gelfand, 2014) avoid using Hofstede's cultural dimension and have concentrated on a new cultural construct - cultural tightness-looseness. Cultural tightness-looseness can be summarised as the strength of social norms and the degree of sanctioning within societies (Gelfand et al., 2006). Gelfand (2011) regarded 'tight' cultures as those within which there are many strong social norms and a low tolerance of deviant behaviour, while 'loose' cultures have weak social norms and a high tolerance of deviant behaviour ('deviant' behaviour means behaviour which violates the norms or rules of the society). In tight cultures, there are many rules and norms that people must follow and any minor deviation from these norms is not tolerated. In loose cultures, there are few rules and deviations from the norm are relatively well tolerated (Beugré, 2007). Gelfand (2011) and Mrazek et al. (2013) stated that China has a tight culture which means Chinese people have strong norms and a low tolerance of deviant behaviour. However, although Gelfand's (2011) study presents the differences between tight and loose cultures, it does not capture the essence of Chinese culture. Applying the existing cultural theory to understanding Chinese culture, cultural tightness is insufficient to explain the meaning of Chinese culture, therefore, there is a necessity to understand Chinese cultural values from a new perspective.

Much research on cross-cultural consumer behaviour has used the Hofstede dimensional mode of national culture; the five cultural dimensions within this model have been both highly approved and acidly criticized (Drogendijk and Slangen, 2006; Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001; Soares et al., 2007). For example, McSweeney (2002) considered that the methodology underlying the Hofstede model is fundamentally flawed because there is doubt as to whether culture can

systematically cause differences in behaviour between people from different countries. In addition, Fang (2003) and Soares et al. (2007) pointed out that Hofstede avoided engaging in discussions about the fifth dimension (Long-versus Short-Term Orientation). Other researchers such as Redpath and Nielsen (1997, p.329) commented that: “this dimension is probably the least relevant to our analysis because distinctions between the two ends of the spectrum are unclear and often seem contradictory.” Similarly, Fang (2003) indicated that Hofstede’s fifth dimension is the most difficult to apply, because Fang considered Hofstede’s thoughts on Chinese ‘Confucian dynamism’, also referred to as ‘long-term orientation’, as dubious. In addition, from the purpose of this thesis, the researcher believed that there is a philosophical flaw inherent in this dimension due to Hofstede’s cultural values focusing too much on Confucianism; Buddhist and Taoist values are not considered in the design of the constructs leading to Hofstede’s fifth dimension. Although there are many studies on the influence of Chinese philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumer behaviour, most of them consider only one cultural dimension (Xiao and Kim, 2009). China has three philosophical religious traditions - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - so people are subject to a wide range of cultural value reference groups that ultimately affect their purchasing behaviour. These operate as cultural components of the person in terms of consumer attributes and processes, and as cultural components of behaviour in terms of consumer behaviour domains (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). This research aims to overcome such limitations and provide scholars and marketing practitioners with better knowledge of how to differentiate their marketing strategies in China. Thus, it seeks to explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by the trio of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

The multiple case study design comprises the Chinese festivals of the Qingming Festival (Confucianism), the Duanwu Festival (Taoism), the Laba Festival (Buddhism) and the Chinese Spring Festival (unifying all three philosophical religious traditions). China has many traditional festivals, which are an important part of the Chinese culture. Therefore, conducting

the study in festival settings is also a way of exploring the culture as it is itself associated with cultural meaning. In addition, it also adds to the existing Chinese festival consumption theory. To date, the festival consumption literature only focused on western festivals, for example, social meanings in Christmas consumption (McKechnie and Tynan, 2006), music festivals (Hudson et al., 2015; Matheson, 2008), Italian festival consumption (Grappi and Montanari, 2011), Halloween consumption (Levinson et al., 1992), Thanksgiving consumption (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). However, very little study has explored Chinese festival consumption and previous researches merely focus on the introduction of the festivals, such as a brief account of traditional Chinese festival customs (Zhang, 1993), the customs of the Dragon Boat festival (Duanwu festival) (Zheng, 2007); Chinese Spring Festival celebration (Han et al., 2014; Montgomery and Christie, 2011; Pan and Tang, 2004). This study is believed to be the first to qualitatively address religious philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in a festival-related context. The Qingming Festival, the Duanwu Festival and the Laba Festival were chosen as case studies because these festivals are traditionally associated with a specific religion and are still popular among contemporary Chinese people (Adler, 2002). For example, the Qingming Festival, which means 'clear and bright' in Chinese, is a Confucian festival that dates back to the Han Dynasty (Ames and Rosemont Jr, 2010). Laba Festival is to chant sutras and offer congee to the Buddha (Xing, 2012). The Duanwu Festival comes from Taoist ideas on medicine, health and customs and dates back to the Song dynasty (11th century) (Lin, 2014). A universal case study on the Chinese Spring Festival which is celebrated by all Chinese people was also conducted.

The multiple case study of festivals approach provides a rich and descriptive account of relevant festivals as well as an in-depth analysis of purchasing intentions and consumption motivations behind the consumption process. In addition, Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate traditions and selecting a festival as a case study also connected to the relative purity of consumption behaviour which is related to philosophical religious traditions.

The festivals related to each philosophy have been selected as another way of representing the philosophy, conducting the study in a festival setting is also a way to explore the culture as it is itself associated with cultural meaning. Therefore, this research based on Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies will contribute to explaining Chinese consumption behaviour and exploring the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Chinese philosophical religious traditions. By doing so, it adds to the existing Chinese consumption behaviour theory.

## **2.2 Chinese Philosophical Religious Traditions**

As can be concluded from Table 2.2, most scholars use the term ‘religion’ or ‘belief’ to define culture. Similarly, according to Minton et al. (2015), religion can be part of a strategy of engaging life; the function of religion lies in affecting consumers’ values and choices. This way of defining culture can also be applied to the Chinese context. Yau (1988), Adler (2002) and Yao and Zhao (2010) considered that Chinese religions can be regarded as the basis of the Chinese cultural system, which includes three philosophical religious traditions - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. All of these religions not only shape Chinese culture, but also impact on the neighbouring culture of Japan, Korea, and some other parts of Southeast Asia (Yau, 1988; Jung and Kau, 2004; Yao and Zhao, 2010; Paracka, 2012). In this sense, Chinese culture is made up of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, which can be defined as a cultural system that governs the annual festivals celebrated by Chinese people. Even though nowadays there are also religions originating from other countries, principal among them being Christianity, who account for around 5 percent of the Chinese population (Marketline, 2018). According to the Worldatlas (2018), the self-identifying adherents of Taoist or Confucian philosophies account for 26 percent of the total Chinese population, while Buddhists represent 18.2 percent of the Chinese population (Marketline, 2018). Considering their percentage of the Chinese population, and also that Confucianism, Taoism

and Buddhism are the traditional philosophies, this study therefore only focuses on these three major philosophical religious traditions. Yao and Zhao (2010) pointed out that, in modern times, religion in China has survived all attempts to usurp its pre-eminent, fundamental position at the roots of Chinese cultural and social life; and the features of Chinese religion are in this respect related intimately to Chinese culture and history. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have shaped the Chinese philosophical religious tradition. These three doctrines were important parts of daily life in old China and remain so in modern times (Ching, 2016; Fairbank and Goldman, 2006; Fang, 2014; Smith and Marranca, 2009; Yau, 1988). To reiterate, Confucianism focuses on interpersonal and social orientation and Confucians consume many luxury products in order to maintain face value and enhance their social prestige. The other two religious philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism show distinctive cultural values on their own terms and when compared to Confucianism.

### **2.2.1 Confucian Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the relationship between Confucian philosophy and Chinese luxury consumption behaviour from a Western perspective; for example, Confucian luxury consumption (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), Confucian cultural values and gift giving behaviour (Sun et al., 2011) and Chinese luxury consumption behaviour (Atsmon et al., 2011; Chun, and Yong, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Siu et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2014; Walley and Li, 2015; Zhang and Kim, 2013). As China is rapidly becoming an important market for consumer goods, the growth of the Chinese luxury market has generated significant worldwide academic research interest in the area of luxury consumption. Several previous studies (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Tynan et al., 2010; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) have identified an association between Confucian values and luxury consumption and the results have revealed the

Confucian notions of face saving and group orientation (Guanxi) have a pervasive influence on Confucian mind-sets for luxury consumption. Considering the distinct perceptions of the relevant terms in this research between Western and Chinese philosophical values, there is a necessity to provide clear and definitive explanations of the key concepts of Confucian philosophy - Guanxi and Face value - in advance of any further analysis and discussion. According to Hu (1944, p.45): “In the analysis of a culture different in emphasis and basic attitudes from our own it is important to keep in mind that that society may have formed different conceptions of even the most universal aspects of human life. Very often this difference in conception is reflected in the vocabulary, but a careful investigation of the situations in which such concepts figure is required to interpret their full meaning for the bearers of the culture.” Therefore, the next sections first define and characterize Guanxi and Face value in Chinese culture, then explore the role of Guanxi and Face value in determining the effect of Confucian philosophy on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour.

### 2.2.1.1 Guanxi

‘Guanxi’ can be a special relationship (Lu et al., 2007), social connections (Xin and Pearce, 1996), a valued resource (Tsang, 1998), social exchange (Warren et al., 2004), or a process (Davies et al., 1995). By definition, “Guanxi refers to a dyadic, particular, and sentimental tie that has the potential to facilitate favourable exchanges between the parties connected by the tie” (Bian, 2006, p.312). Of special relevance to China is the cultural ethos surrounding Guanxi, the Chinese expression of social connections (Bian and Zhang, 2015). Table 2.3 proceeds to describe the definitions of Guanxi in the existing literature.

**Table 2.3 Guanxi Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Osland (1990)	The special relationship between people: one needs something (power, influence, abilities, special possessions or wealth) and the other can offer

	something.
King (1991)	The kind of relationship established between individuals in the Confucian system.
Bian and Ang (1997)	Guanxi is a set of interpersonal connections which facilitate exchanging favours between people.
Dunfee and Warren (2001)	The relationship between individuals and exchange favours.
Jung and Kau (2004)	A special relationship which combines with reciprocity and connections; as a result, it regards personal loyalty as more important than organizational affiliation and legal standards.
Tung et al. (2008)	Compared to the West, Guanxi tends to be more personal and enduring.
Tan et al. (2009)	Guanxi is a kind of personal trust.
Liu et al. (2013)	The special relationships and trust transferable among friends, families, business associates.
Han and Han (2017)	A unique Chinese interpersonal relationship is forged during the process.
Lin et al.(2019)	Guanxi is an important element reflecting the interpersonal aspects in China's social commerce context.

*(Source: the researcher)*

In the existing literature, as presented in Table 2.3, researchers mostly defined Guanxi as a ‘relationship’, which is a common definition among scholars (Dong et al., 2017; Osland, 1990; Vanhonacker, 2004). Even though all these definitions are useful as they depict Guanxi as a system of special relationships, how does Guanxi distinguish itself from other relationships? This was questioned by Blair and Chareunsky (2017), who stated that Guanxi is a kind of relationship, but not all relationships necessarily produce Guanxi. In order to clarify the concept, it is vital to have a precise understanding of the nature of Guanxi. In addition, although numerous academic experts have given a definition of Guanxi, understanding and judging Guanxi in the context of traditional Chinese culture is critical, as Guanxi is more complicated than western social

networks and cannot be fully understood from the perspective of western social values. Since previous studies about Chinese Guanxi (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) have been conducted from Western perspectives or have focused on Guanxi according to western criteria, this research sheds new light on understanding the nature of Guanxi in Chinese traditional religious philosophy. According to Driskill (2018), if you wish to understand a culture, study its nurseries. There is a similar principle for understanding Guanxi: if you wish to understand the meaning of Guanxi in the Chinese context, study its nurseries, in this case, the original Guanxi.

Guanxi is rooted in Confucian culture (Dunning and Kim, 2007; Han and Han, 2017; Ip, 2009). Thus, in order to develop a better understanding of Guanxi, one must look to China's Confucian legacy. Since the Han dynasty (BCE206-CE220), Confucianism has played a significant role in Chinese society and its influence on Chinese interpersonal relationships has continued for two thousand years (Dunning and Kim, 2007). The morality of Confucian philosophy determines interpersonal relationships, also known as Guanxi, in China (Han and Han, 2017). Yum (1988) shared the same thought that Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature that considers proper human relationships as the basis of society. Chen and Chen (2004) expressed the view that connotations of Guanxi may change over time within a given society; however, the fundamental meaning of Guanxi in ancient Confucian philosophy can still be traced. According to Confucius, human relationships should be regulated by the Five Codes of Ethics - 'Wu Lun' - which are based on the five basic relationships: ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother, and between friends (Chen and Chung, 1994). The fundamental Confucian assumption of humankind is that individuals exist in relation to others since the meaning of 'Lun' pertains to the paramount importance of human relationships (Chen and Chen, 2004; Hwang, 2001; Hwang, 2015). As a social philosophy, Confucianism tries to establish a social hierarchy strong enough to harmonize large and complex groups of contentious human beings (Luo,

1997). Therefore, Guanxi has a clear definition that refers to personal connections as prescribed by Confucianism. However, the difference between Guanxi and Western style interpersonal relationships needs to be explored and explained to help Western people understand Chinese culture. This is because Chinese relationships (Guanxi) and Western relationships construct an equivalence of the two concepts which is misunderstood by many academics and practitioners (Shaan et al., 2013; Wong, 2007; Leung and Wong, 2001). Hence, this study provides a native perspective to develop the understanding of Guanxi.

A number of academics and practitioners have pointed out that the Chinese concept of Guanxi is much more complicated than western social networks (Han and Han, 2017; Wong, 2007). Han and Han (2017) explained that the difference between Guanxi and western interpersonal relationships is that Guanxi in China is difficult to calculate, it involves long-term interaction, and it is more humane or affectionate, while interpersonal relationships are more individualistic. In addition, compared to Western interpersonal relationships, Guanxi plays a more critical role in company and individual performance, and more participants are involved (Bian, 2013). Furthermore, because Chinese culture is very different from that of western countries, so the attitudes of the Chinese towards their family, friends, colleagues and boss, and their principles and ways of dealing with their interpersonal relationships differ (Hu and Tan, 2013). Unlike the western interpretation of relationships, people in Chinese Guanxi put themselves in the centre and they categorize as well as grade other people interactively in relation to the closeness of the relationship and they then apply different interactive rules for various people by categorization and grade (Fei, 1949). However, western culture perceives and explains relationships based on social exchange theory, which emphasizes a balanced model between giving and receiving (Shahsavariani et al., 2016). Guanxi also means personal trust in China; it sometimes plays a more salient role than legal contracts among Chinese businesspeople, which is a totally different concept from western trust. Guanxi in China can refer to integrity, credibility, trustworthiness, or the reputation and character of a person (Wiegel and Bamford, 2015). Table

2.4 summarises the traits of Chinese Guanxi for the purpose of developing a better understanding of its characteristics.

**Table 2.4 The Traits of Chinese Guanxi**

<b>Traits</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Favour</b> (Hwang, 1987)	Guanxi relationships are established or strengthened when one party does something in the other's favour.
<b>Reciprocal</b> (Dunning and Kim, 2007)	An individual's reputation is tied up with reciprocal obligations, When one individual receives a favour; he/she is expected to reciprocate the favour in the future.
<b>Intangible</b> (Park and Luo, 2001)	Guanxi is intangible and is maintained by an unspoken commitment.
<b>Long-term</b> (Lee and Dawes, 2005)	Guanxi is reinforced through long-term cultivation.
<b>Transferable</b> (Luo, 2007)	Guanxi can be transferable through a third party.
<b>Relational Particularism</b> (Bian, 2013)	Guanxi is purposefully driven by personal interests, ensures kin or pseudo-kin sentiments and is alive with sentimental interactions.

*(Source: the researcher)*

Above all, Guanxi - Chinese interpersonal relationships - has six unique aspects which are different from western relationships. The practice of Guanxi stems from Confucianism which fostered the broad cultural aspects of collectivism manifested in the importance of networks of interpersonal relations which have been the lifeblood of personal relationships and business conduct in Chinese society since the sixth century B.C. (Park and Luo, 2001; Zhang and Zhang, 2006). In the next section, the researcher discusses the role Guanxi plays in business and marketing.

### **2.2.1.1.1 Guanxi Value and Consumption Behaviour**

Guanxi is believed to be a striking feature that helps international organizations to enter a profitable and growing Chinese market (Wong, 2007). With regards to business opportunities, the stronger the Guanxi network that an enterprise has, the more opportunities it has or will have (Yang, 2011). According to Yang (2011), Guanxi can not only assist multinational companies to obtain sources of information and resources, such as business opportunities, but it can also be of great value to them in terms of building their corporate reputation and enlarging their market share. Relationships (Guanxi) and face value are the central principles of Confucianism and they permeate all aspects of Chinese society (Yao and Zhao, 2010). Guanxi, the dominant idea of a network of relationships, ties business partners into a cognitive model in which doing business is more effective and enjoyable as a joint personal exercise (Liu et al., 2010). Guanxi definitions and characteristics have been discussed in the previous section. This part will explain the mechanism of how Guanxi works, and how Confucian Guanxi values influence contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour. Guanxi plays a significant role in business. The importance of Guanxi lies in the following:

1. It is one of the most important keys to corporate success in China (Abramson and Ai, 1999; Luo, 2007; Yen and Abosag, 2016; Yeung and Tung, 1996).
2. It can be considered a source of sustainable competitive advantage in China (Fan, 2002; Geng et al., 2017; Tang and Cheng, 2012; Wiegel and Bamford, 2015).
3. It has been identified with a traditional form of relationship marketing in the Chinese market (Badi et al., 2017; Davies et al., 1995; Kriz and Keating, 2010; Millington et al., 2005; Tomás Gómez Arias, 1998; Yau, 1988).

Guanxi takes a paramount role in business relationships in China. Lee et al. (2001) concluded that Guanxi has a positive impact on business performance mediated by relationship quality and interdependence because

it influences decision-making, uncertainty, and opportunism. The application of Guanxi to firm-state relationships has been extensively analysed. However, to compete successfully in the Chinese market, multinational companies should not be satisfied only by knowing the market, but they must learn how to enter it, so they particularly need to fully understand Chinese consumers and their behaviour (Millington et al., 2005). As firms from all over the world target China, it is important for marketers to understand consumers' mind-sets and values in order to establish effective marketing strategies. In the next section, the researcher explains the relationship between Confucian Guanxi values and gift giving behaviour.

#### **2.2.1.1.2 Guanxi and Gift Giving Behaviour**

Guanxi is not only present in commercial environments, it also relates to social practices (Millington et al., 2005). Gift giving is a prevalent social custom in China in all areas of life: in family and in significant relationships (Guanxi) (Steidlmeier, 1999). Grounded in Confucian beliefs and traditions for thousands of years, Chinese people uphold the idea that courtesy requires reciprocity (Chen, 2012). Guanxi (interpersonal relationships) is in essence built upon friendship or intimacy oriented towards continued exchange of favours (Hwang, 1987; Su and Littlefield, 2001). The values of the gifts used to contribute to the Guanxi network stand as symbols of the gift-giver's status and the social distance or degree between the giver and the recipient (Chen and Kim, 2013). According to Steidlmeier (1999), in any society, reciprocity is a rule of life and is a foundational pillar of social intercourse in China. The practice of sustaining Guanxi includes gift giving which expresses deeper socially embraced behavioural ideals and norms of mutuality, that is to say, in a Guanxi relationship, both parties are required to observe carefully certain unspoken rules of reciprocity and equity (Luo, 1997). When building Guanxi networks, people believe that recognition is positively related to the price of gifts (Chen and Kim, 2013). Chen (2012)

demonstrated that donors' attitudes toward gift giving influence their intentions to purchase gifts, especially their intentions to purchase expensive gifts; that is, a high-price gift will lead to high recognition, and thus, build better Guanxi with the receiver (Luo, 2009). Consumers like to purchase high-end products as gifts because luxuries stand for high public recognition and high prices which, as a result, reflect the donor's social status, their respect for the receiver, and the extent to which they value the relationship (Guanxi) (Chen, 2012). Guanxi's impact on relationships influences business; the presentation of gifts is used as a way of maintaining good relations (Yau, 1988). As emphasized in building long-term relationships and cooperation, Chinese people also give luxury gifts to business partners to establish or maintain business Guanxi (Irwin, 2012). Wrong and Ahuvia (1998) explained that the culture of group orientation leads Chinese people to give designer labels or luxury brands because these gifts are given in public and are therefore visible. According to Le Monkhouse et al. (2012) and Tynan et al. (2010), luxury brands often integrate with a symbolic meaning whereby people can show their identity by selecting prestige brands to enhance their self-image. Liu et al.'s (2010) study results show that the traditional Chinese values of Confucianism have influenced the relationship between the donor's gift intentions and the receiver's image-consistency. In conclusion, gifting is a crucial and indispensable social behaviour in China, no matter whether it is for private connections or for business etiquette.

#### **2.2.1.2 Face Value**

Chinese businesspersons are extremely sensitive to saving face because of the emphasis placed on enduring relationships and social networks in China (Cardon and Scott, 2003). 'Face' is an important Chinese cultural concept that penetrates every aspect of Chinese life (Chan, 2006). Scholars have offered various definitions of face. According to Ho (1976), the concept of face is Chinese in origin and the term is a literal translation of the Chinese

‘Lien’ and ‘Mianzi’. Cardon and Scott (2003) demonstrated that face relates to a person’s image and status within a social structure. Brunner and Wang (1988) described face as Chinese business people’s most important possession. Table 2.5 shows various definitions of face from the existing literature. Face is defined as one’s ego’s moral character (Hu, 1944), social value (Goffman, 1955), self-worth (Li and Su, 2007) and public self-image (Brown and Levinson, 1987) by scholars. While most of the definitions here are straightforward, the definition of Ho (1976) best shows the complexity of the Chinese concept of face: the respectability and/or deference that a person can claim for him/herself from others. Face is an important Chinese cultural concept that has penetrated every aspect of the Chinese life, for example, it influences Chinese social interactions in various types of role relationships (Chen, 2011).

**Table 2.5 Face Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Hu (1944)	Face includes lien and mianzi. Lien represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego’s moral character, while mianzi stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized.
Goffman (1955)	Face is the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.
Ho (1976)	The respectability and/or deference that a person can claim for him/herself from others.
Brown and Levinson (1987)	Face refers to a person’s public self-image.
Earley (1997)	Face is an evaluation of a person regarding his or her status within a social structure.
Li and Su (2007)	Face refers to a claimed sense of favourable social self-worth.
Chen (2011)	Face influences Chinese social interactions in various types of role relationships

Podoshen et al. (2011)	Face is represented by symbols of prestige or reputation gained through the expectations of, and impression on others.
Shi et al.(2011)	Chinese 'face' is a complex social and psychological phenomenon.
Gao et al. (2017)	Face is an intangible cultural value and it has three layers: self-face concern, other face concern and mutual face concern.
Zhang (2019)	Face is a social thing that is gained from appropriate behaviour and social approval.

*(Source: the researcher)*

When reviewing the existing literature on face it can be seen that, as a complex social and psychological phenomenon, it has attracted much attention from academics and interest from business people. According to Yau (1988) and Li and Su (2007), the concept of face is an important value which plays a significant role in human behaviour. Kim and Nam (1998) explained that Mianzi represents social/positional face and in the Chinese context it extends beyond the meaning of the physical face. Whereas face is a universal phenomenon, how people shape its meaning differs from one culture to another (Li and Su, 2007). Although a great deal of research has been conducted into the meaning of face, western business people may not fully understand it in the context of Chinese culture (Dong and Lee, 2007). Even people in diverse cultures across Asia itself have many different experiences, customs, eating habits, languages and different religious influences (Heine, 2010). Therefore, an examination of underlying cultural values from their point of origin is paramount in understanding contemporary consumer behaviour.

The concept of 'face' is originally from China and it has its roots in Confucianism (Cardon and Scott, 2003; Dong and Lee, 2007; Lan, 2005; Zhang et al., 2019). Confucianism encourages Chinese people to value face for largely moral reasons (Cardon and Scott, 2003). According to Hwang (1987), contemporary people focus not only on the moral factors of face, but also on the instrumental factors; for example, to obtain prestige, favour and

influence in relationships. Many researchers (Hofstede, 2001; Huang and Gove, 2015; Wei and Li, 2013) believe Confucian philosophy influences how modern Chinese people interact and communicate with others and how they deal with relationships with other people. Face is an evaluation of status in these networks, and individuals can exert influence based on the amount of face granted by others in the group (Cardon and Scott, 2003; Hwang, 1987). Wang et al. (2005) pointed out that the concept of face can be applied universally; however, in the Chinese context, the degree of consideration given to face is much higher. Face is a cultural concept that has been affecting Chinese life for thousands of years and which has been recognized by an abundance of scholars as one of the midpoint symbols in Chinese culture (Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944; Hwang, 1987, Bao et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2005). Bao et al. (2003) explained that face is fundamentally a social-self construction issue. Under the influence of Confucianism, the Chinese attention given to relationships with others and face stand for the social-self face with respect to one's place in large group. Consequently, Chinese people tend to have strong face consciousness. This has been shown in the way of giving face and showing respect to one's social status or reputation. Giving face to others (showing respect) and avoiding losing one's own face (being humiliated) help maintain in-group harmony (Dong and Lee, 2007). As a consequence of Chinese Confucian influence, individuals in China, and especially Confucians, are often seen as part of a social organization, rather than as individuals per se (Matondo, 2012). Hofstede (1980) expressed the view that Chinese people favour collectivism over individualism, and they regard themselves as an integral part of an in-group such as their social networks and their family. In order to find out why face value plays such an important role in the Chinese context, one needs to understand face characteristics: face can be measured and the Chinese can track how much face each member of a social network has (Cardon and Scott, 2003; Hu, 1944). Face should be saved which means that the Chinese must maintain or save face because of its social meaning (Eriksson et al., 2017; Li and Su, 2007). Finally, face is mutual so it should involve receiving and giving back equally (Hwang, 1987). The above discussion on face value presents the origin and characteristics of face. In the next section, the researcher

investigates how this construct influences consumer behaviour, which the researcher has entitled ‘face value and consumption behaviour’.

#### **2.2.1.2.1 Face Value and Consumption Behaviour**

When discussing face and consumption, the existing academic literature focuses either on Chinese consumers of luxury products or on conspicuous consumption (Atsmon et al., 2011; Chun and Yong, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Siu et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2014; Walley and Li, 2015; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Zhang and Kim, 2013). Jiang and Cova (2012) demonstrated that, in a Confucian society context, Chinese consumers behave irrationally in relation to luxury purchases because luxury brands are a ‘must have’ for them to reinforce their social status. In this section, the researcher presents what Confucians believe about luxury and how their perceptions of Confucian face value affect buying behaviour in the context of China.

Veblen (1994) defined ‘conspicuous consumption’ as expenditure made not for comfort or use, but purely for reasons of vanity and to inflate the ego purposes to inflate the ego. It occurs primarily to offer an ostentatious display of wealth. Similarly, Podoshen et al. (2011) clarified conspicuous consumption as a behaviour involving displays of wealth by consuming luxury products or services. Face value drives Chinese people to consume luxury brands as a symbol of wealth and success and this results in conspicuous consumption; by doing so, they gain face value and enhance their social prestige (Sun et al., 2011). Li and Su (2007) demonstrated that the individual person represents the unit of analysis for social behaviour and prestige in a face context, which becomes individual self-face. However, in Chinese society, individual self-face not only stands for prestige for oneself but also for one’s family, relatives, friends and even colleagues (Nancy and Aaron, 1998). That is to say, face means social self-face for a broad group which is the fundamental social-self construct in China (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Gudykunst et al., 1996). Tsang (1998) argued that face is a social-self construct and a key element in the development and maintenance of Guanxi as face is regarded as an individual’s public image gained by performing

one or more specific social roles recognized by others. Therefore, Li and Su (2007, p.242) defined face consumption as “the motivational process by which individuals try to enhance, maintain or save self-face, as well as show respect to others’ face through the consumption of products.”

Face value in Chinese society stresses meeting the expectations of others instead of satisfying one’s own needs. Due to the society being relationship-oriented, the Chinese frequently use this strategy of ‘borrowing face’ or Guanxi to achieve mutual benefit (Sun et al., 2011). Those consumers with strong face value have a keen desire to use name brands or products to enhance their social prestige because, in their minds, these brand names symbolise wealth and success (Yau, 1988). However, this does not mean that all face value orientated consumption is for showing off; it may be to maintain or save face. As Eng and Bogaert (2010) and De Barnier et al. (2006) explained, consumer behaviour could affect luxury consumption; for example, individual identity, consumption habits and symbols associated with luxury possession. The behavioural motivations behind perceptions of luxury can be divided into personal and non-personal perceptions (Eng and Bogaert, 2010). Personal perceptions are based on feelings and emotions, while non-personal perceptions of luxury are based on opinions, influences and suggestions from others (Christodoulides et al., 2009; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Shukla, 2012). Therefore, face saving consumers willing to purchase conspicuous products may not be doing so just because they are willing to buy them, but because they have to in order to reduce the social distance between themselves and their social groups. This also provides a useful way of helping some researchers (Wang et al, 2011; Le Monkhouse et al, 2012; Chen and Kim, 2013) understand why some Chinese low-income consumers pursue luxury branded products. Dong and Zhong (2017) considered that conformity of consumption within groups helps to reduce the social distance between group members. As Yau (1988) pointed out, face may be lost when performance is below the minimum acceptable standard or some essential requirements related to one’s social expectations have not been met satisfactorily. Due to the standards and requirements held within groups, losing face does not come from one’s own behaviour, but from the group’s

expectations. Chinese people are always under strong constraints to meet the expectations of others and avoid losing face (Goffman, 2005). In terms of personal consumption, certain products and services carry an emotional value in addition to their functional utility, such as providing such intangible benefits as sensory pleasure, aesthetic beauty, and excitement (Lai, 1995; Wiedmann et al., 2009). As a result, personal consumption of a luxury brand arouses feelings and affective states received from personal rewards and fulfilment (Wiedmann et al., 2009). As concluded by Li and Su (2007), who considered the prevalent and heavy influence of face on consumption in China combined with Chinese Confucian philosophy, Chinese face consumption can be described as having three unique characteristics, namely obligation, distinctiveness and other-orientation (see Figure 2.1). As previously discussed, face is fundamentally a social-self construct issue, as it stresses people's social needs more than their private needs (Bao et al., 2003). Figure 2.1 presents the motivations behind trying to enhance, maintain or save self-face, as well as show respect to others' face through the consumption of products as a result of face consumption. As a social-self construct rooted solidly in Confucian philosophy, face differs from prestige and influences consumer behaviours. In addition, face consumption has the three unique characteristics mentioned above: obligation, distinctiveness and other-orientation (see Figure 2.1).

## **Figure 2.1 Three Unique Characteristics of Chinese Face Consumption**

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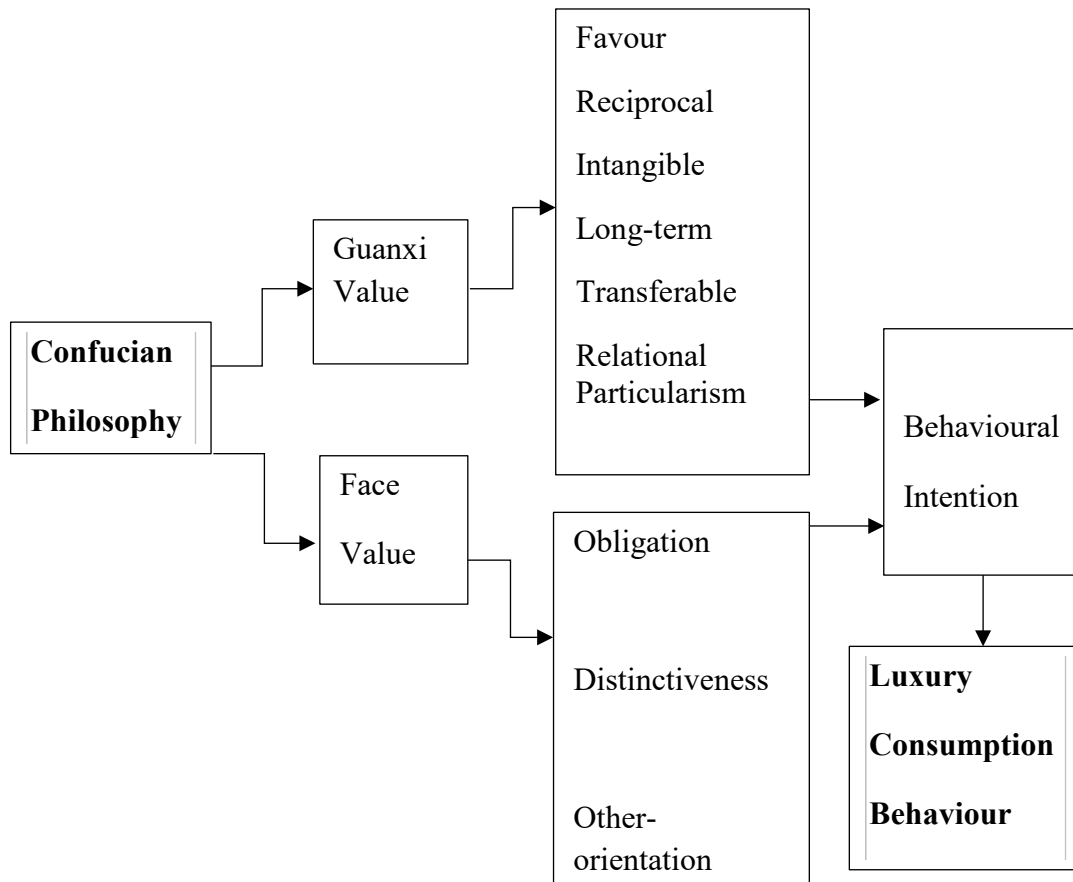
*Source: adopted from Li and Su (2007)*

### **2.2.1.2.2 Confucian Luxury Consumption Behaviour**

Previous studies (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) have identified an association between Confucian values and luxury consumption. The results have revealed that the Confucian notions of face saving and group orientation (Guanxi) can be considered to have a pervasive influence on Confucian mind-sets in relation to luxury consumption. The ‘face value’ in Chinese culture is real and is not an orientalist presumption. It places stress on meeting the expectations of others instead of satisfying one’s own needs (Sun et al., 2011). China is a ‘relationship-oriented’ society and the Chinese frequently use this strategy of ‘borrowing face’ or Guanxi to achieve mutual benefit (Yau, 1998). Social ties profoundly affect business exchange behaviour in the Chinese context,

where consumption is promoted to sustain Guanxi between Chinese people by way of gift-giving (Tynan et al., 2010). Chinese customers are reluctant to complain if they are dissatisfied in order to maintain their 'face'. They thus show more tolerance in unsatisfactory situations than other groups (Ho, 2001). The Guanxi culture and face value lead Chinese people to consume luxury brands as symbols of wealth and success; by doing so they gain face value and enhance their social prestige (Sun et al., 2011). Thus, the philosophical religious tradition of Confucianism provides the values of the national culture and its impact on Chinese luxury consumption behaviour (Yau, 1988; Jung and Kau, 2004; Yao and Zhao, 2010). Therefore, based on the traits of Chinese Guanxi (Table 2.4) and the three unique characteristics of Chinese face consumption (Figure 2.1), the author has designed a conceptual framework of Confucian consumption behaviour to show how the Confucian philosophies of Guanxi and face value impact on Confucians' consumption behaviour. However, people in diverse cultures across Asia have many different experiences, customs, eating habits, languages and different religious influences (Heine, 2012). In summary, an examination of Confucian philosophy alone is not sufficient to fully understand contemporary consumer behaviour; it is unclear whether the assumptions of the Confucian Consumption Behaviour Conceptual framework can apply equally well to other Chinese philosophies.

**Figure 2.2 Confucian Consumption Behaviour Conceptual Framework**



To reiterate, Confucianism focuses on interpersonal and social orientation, and Confucians consume many luxury products in order to maintain face value and enhance Guanxi. There is no current existing literature exploring Chinese consumption behaviour from the perspectives of the three main Chinese philosophies. However, there are a substantial number of cross-cultural studies on Chinese consumption behaviour; for example, a cross-cultural comparison of China and the USA in relation to materialism (Ger and Belk, 1996), consumer trust (Teo and Liu, 2007) and preference for consumption symbols (Aaker and Schmitt, 2001). However, as De Mooij (2015), Jung and Kau (2004) and Kacen and Lee (2002) explained, most studies have approached this issue from a Western perspective and only focus on Confucians' consumption behaviour. Therefore, there is a need to contribute to the body of literature on Chinese consumer behaviour from the perspective of the other two philosophies as well in order to more fully understand Chinese consumption behaviour. To fill a significant gap in the

marketing literature and to assist scholars and marketing practitioners with developing better knowledge on how to differentiate their marketing strategies in China, the next sections discuss the philosophy of Taoism and related consumption behaviour and the philosophy of Buddhism and related consumption behaviour respectively.

### **2.2.2 Taoist Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour**

Most scholars indicate that, apart from Confucian philosophy, Taoist philosophy has also strongly influenced not only contemporary Chinese thinking and behaviour, but also that of non-Chinese people who have encountered Chinese culture (Li, 2005; Lin et al., 2013; Yang and Sternberg, 1997). Bai and Roberts (2011) stated that Taoism is the central force in the ancient Chinese thinking system in Chinese civilization. The character Tao literally means 'dao', 'way', 'path', 'method', 'technique', 'road' or 'principle'. The principles of Taoism have been applied to nearly all aspects of ancient Chinese disciplines (Hansen, 2000). The word 'Tao' is used more broadly; people hear of a Tao of physics, and this refers to a universal Tao, the all-inclusive way (Ching, 1993). Generally speaking, Taoism as a philosophy emphasizes an holistic study of the universe and mankind, which is characterised by both a macro and a micro approach, and provides dialectic investigation in all the subjects covered (Li et al., 2011; Wright, 1969; Xiao-hui, 2015). Connecting to the origin of the universe, Taoism emphasizes the creativity of life and harmony with nature (Sebenius and Qian, 2008). As Dhiman and Kriger (2018) explained, absolute happiness comes with transcending the distinctions between one's self and the universe, by perfect union with the Tao. It involves a higher level of knowledge, that of wisdom which goes beyond the distinction of things, including that of life and death.

Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse (604-531 BCE) and is regarded as a combination of psychology and philosophy (Asira and Francis, 2012). Together with Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism became one of the three mainstream religious traditions in China. In contrast to Confucianism,

which considers that human beings are essentially social beings, Taoism stresses that human beings are beings from nature and that human fulfilment lies in harmonizing our thinking and behaviour with the ‘way’, which they conceive as the patterns and rhythms of nature (Clarke, 2002). According to Tucker (1993), Confucianism and Taoism also share some similarities. For example, they both stress the purpose of establishing a harmony of heaven, earth, and humanity. Adler (2002) holds the view that the ideal state is a harmony of heaven, earth, and humanity, so the collapse of the political order indicates that something is wrong in the cosmos as a whole. For Confucius, cosmic order can be restored by reviving the moral character of the ruling class, while Taoists consider that cosmic order comes from harmony between human society and the natural world. To the Taoist, human beings are natural beings and society is a corrupting influence: they argue against Confucius’s thoughts because they believe that people should model their behaviour on nature.

Bai and Roberts (2011) expressed the view that Taoists believe everything that is out of Tao follows the law of Yin and Yang and its associated five-element theories. Taoism explains the idea that Yin and Yang further generate five fundamental energies or the so-called five elements, which are: metal (justice), wood (benevolence), water (wisdom), fire (propriety) and earth (faith) (Bai and Roberts, 2011; Chan et al., 2002; Moss, 1999). Yin and Yang are regarded as the origin of the universe and the means of production and reproduction of the endless variety of life and the world (Chen, 2011; Fang, 2014; Wang and Zou, 2011).

According to Bai and Roberts’ (2011) abstract framework of the universe, the original energy consists of two forces: Yin (the black part) and Yang (the white part). The energy begins with Yang, grows to its maximum and then ceases to grow. Then, it starts from the smallest Yin until it grows to its maximum, where Yang starts to grow again. Therefore, the law of Yin and Yang is regarded as the fundamental law of the universe (Lu and Busemeyer, 2014).

### **Figure 2.3 Taoist Model of the Universe and Mankind**

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*Source: Bai and Roberts (2011, p727)*

It can be seen from Figure 2.3 that there are five elements which rule energy; metal, wood, water, fire and earth are viewed as subtle rules for all existing matters of the universe. Yin and Yang give birth to the five elements which determine the way in which the universe functions (Bai and Roberts, 2011; Chan et al., 2002; Moss, 1999). Wang and Zou (2011) stated that everything in the universe follows the dynamic circle of the five elements; otherwise, the universe would be in a state of chaos. Apart from its function as a way of exploring the universe, Taoism has also been used as a philosophy to analyse human behaviour. Wang and Stringer (2000) appraised this point and explained that the five elements provide the fundamental principles which guide Chinese people in how to behave in society. Lee et al. (2009, p.68) stated “According to Laozi, ‘The One’ which is produced by Tao (or the natural course) means the entire universe. ‘The Two’ means the yin-yang, and ‘The Three’ means heaven, earth, and humans which produce ‘All Things.’ ‘All Things’ also have Yin and Yang, whose influence brings ‘Harmony’.” Lee et al. (2009) and Ko (2018) further explained that, for Taoists, the natural world is a dynamic process and they commit to cosmic harmony, showing respect for continuity and diversity. This is also the reason why Taoists focus on these ideas regarding harmony in connection to

the yin-yang oneness in Laozi's framework of reference, and they follow the Tian Ren He Yi strategy which means that nature and mankind combine as one or nature-human harmony (Lee et al., 2009; Peng et al., 2016; Xiaogan, 2011). In the next section, the Tian Ren He Yi philosophy and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour are explained.

### **2.2.2.1 Tian Ren He Yi**

Tian Ren He Yi is the key notion in traditional Chinese Taoist philosophy and it emphasizes the unity of heaven, and human beings and human society in two related senses (Chan et al., 2009; Peng et al., 2006; Pohl, 2002). In a general metaphysical sense, human beings and human society are considered to be part of heaven as nature. According to Mou (2009, p.147) "In a moral sense, heaven has its moral mission to be implemented through the human being's moral virtue and moral conduct. In a unified metaphysical and moral sense, heaven as endowed human moral nature exists in all human beings." In the existing literature, as presented in Table 2.6, Tian Ren He Yi is generally defined by scholars as the harmony relationship between man and nature. Scholars focus on a particularly influential holism school of thought - Tian Ren He Yi, which means persons are an integral part of nature (Chen, 2002; Defoort, 1994) or nature and mankind combined as one (Lee et al., 2009; Li, 2015; Peng et al., 2016). The definition of Hou (1997) provided a more detailed explanation, as the meaning of 'Tian' and 'Ren' were explained respectively. According to Hou (1997), 'Tian' refers to nature or to a supernatural force, 'Ren' means man or humankind in Chinese, and the Tian Ren He Yi implies humans adapting actively to natural laws, and also humans following and respecting a supernatural will that they do not understand.

**Table 2.6 Tian Ren He Yi Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Defoort (1994)	Naturalism is committed to the notion of Tian Ren He Yi, meaning that humans are conceived of as part of nature and 'foundational' such that the natural order serves as an unnegotiable foundation or norm for the construction of the human order.
Hou (1997)	Ren means man or humankind in Chinese, and Tian refers to nature or to a supernatural force. Tian Ren He Yi implies humans adapting actively to natural laws, and also humans following and respecting a supernatural will that they do not understand.
Chen (2002)	Tian Ren He Yi is embedded in the doctrine that persons are an integral part of nature
Lee et al. (2009)	Tao is part of nature, follows nature, and produces almost everything in the universe. 'Tian Ren He Yi' means the human world and the external universe are united into one.
Li (2015)	Taoism is about achieving the unification of the cosmos (nature) and the body as a whole.
Peng et al. (2016)	Tian Ren He Yi means nature and mankind combined as one or nature-human harmony.
Li et al. (2016)	Tian Ren He Yi means the coordination of humanity and nature.
Zhang and Constantinovits (2016)	Tian Ren He Yi considers heaven and humanity to be two sides of an organic whole, but not as independent parts of an integrated whole.

*(Source: the researcher)*

Given the profound influence of Taoist Tian Ren He Yi philosophical religious traditions on the beliefs and behaviour of Chinese consumers, this section reviews the literature related to its influence on Chinese green purchasing behaviour. Chan (2001) stated that Chinese Taoist philosophy portrays man as only a part of nature and maintains that he should not try to

master it in order to achieve a man-nature unity. Having been influenced by this man-nature orientation, the Chinese believe that nature has the way or Tao, by which all things become what they are. Several studies show that the Taoist Tian Ren He Yi philosophy influences Chinese people's attitudes towards performing specific environmentally friendly behaviour (Black, 1996; Peng et al., 2016; Yang and Huang, 2018). However, there have been very few studies which have further or more deeply explored how Chinese Taoist Tian Ren He Yi philosophy influences Chinese consumption behaviour.

Having been oriented by Tian Ren He Yi, the Taoists believe nature has its way; everything will become what it is meant to be. Several studies have been conducted on the influence of Taoism on Chinese green purchasing behaviours (Chan, 2001; Jiang et al., 2019; Mainieri et al., 1997). Chan (2001) conducted a study to examine the influence of Taoism and psychological factors on Chinese green purchasing behaviours. The study confirms the significance of Taoism on ecological knowledge and attitudes towards green purchasing via the mediator of green purchasing intentions. This study's results have implications for the Chinese government and green markets with useful insights on improving the communications effectiveness of promotional campaigns. Moreover, the study also reveals Chinese consumers' low degree of actual commitment to green purchasing. Those people who have Taoist beliefs show their green (or ecological) consumer buying behaviour. People will not buy products which are harmful to the environment because the ideal Chinese Fengshui environmental model regards mankind as a part of nature, and so people believe man should not try to overcome or master nature, but he has to learn how to adapt to it so as to reach harmony (Chan, 1963). Paradoxically, a number of studies in the literature have shown that conducting research on green (or ecological) consumer buying behaviour is a difficult task. In fact, those consumer groups who agree with 'environmentally friendly' marketing concepts have shown significantly heterogeneous characteristics in relation to green needs, behavioural characteristics and consumer beliefs; they have little interest in 'collective action to protect the environment'

(Boztepe, 2012; Kianpour et al., 2014). Some even show positive environmental attitudes, but are quite price-sensitive when it comes to actual purchasing and environmentally-friendly products are more expensive than non-green products (Mainieri et al., 1997).

Khare (2015) stated in her work 'Antecedents to green buying behaviour: a study on consumers in an emerging economy' that Taoism has a significant impact on ecological attitudes and influences this traditional cultural value placed on green purchases in China. However, there are no evidence-based explanations of the relationship between the Taoist Tian Ren He Yi philosophy and Chinese green or environmental consumption behaviour, therefore, this represents a gap in the literature for further research to explore this consumption behaviour. As suggested by Akehurst et al. (2012) and Joshi and Rahman (2015), further research is required to provide a more detailed profile of the green consumer and this should be explored in order to facilitate the segmentation of consumers and develop green product offerings matching their real needs. In addition, it is suggested that a qualitative approach comprising in-depth interviews with consumers and experts would be useful to evaluate the influence of ecological consciousness at all stages of the buying process. Therefore, it is believed that the findings from the Taoist case study in this research, which is based on semi-structured interviews with consumers and experts, will increase understanding of the extent of the match between what Taoist consumers believe and their actual behaviour. This study also looks at how Taoists behave in their daily lives, how their beliefs are associated with the products they purchase and their real action on ecological preservation.

#### **2.2.2.2 Fengshui**

Tian Ren He Yi not only influences Chinese people's attitudes towards specific environmentally friendly behaviour, but it is also associated with design principles which can provide useful guidelines for this integration as

well as for the development of a sustainable landscape architecture. This is called Fengshui theory (Chen and Wu, 2009).

Taoism advocates living in harmony with the rhythms of nature, the flows and forces of life (Paracka Jr, 2012). Florenthal et al. (2009) stated that Fengshui, which means living in harmony with the environment, influences Chinese people's private and business decisions. For example, when people invest in real-estate for themselves or commercial use, they will seek the help and recommendations of Fengshui experts. Taoism influences the configuration of Fengshui, which especially shows in the location of buildings and the positioning of objects, and Fengshui impacts on the sustainable development of Chinese society today (Zhang, 2018). Fengshui emphasizes living in harmony with the environment and one's surroundings, which is still used as a tool for creating an ideal space in a modern building. Fengshui building types have similar considerations and are associated with scientific methods (Ziegler and Lawler, 2011). Table 2.7 shows various definitions of Fengshui from the existing literature. According to Perry Hobson (1994), Fengshui means literally 'wind and water' and is a type of geomancy or divination from nature. Wang (1991) indicated that Fengshui is an inherited cultural phenomenon, a method of pursuing good fortune and shunning the course of calamity. In other words, Fengshui considers wind directions, water streams and other topographical features in the surroundings of a house or a grave site in order to indicate the inhabitants' disaster or good fortune (Bruun, 2003). Thus, the goal of Fengshui is to be in harmony with the environment in order to maximize fortune, success, and happiness. Also, Fengshui emphasizes harmony, it is a belief that offers the ability to create a balance in people's dwelling or place of work (Montenegro, 2003). Fengshui specifies the relationship between people and their environment. It teaches people how to create a harmonious and balanced condition around them. As stated by Wang (2012), Fengshui serves as an instrument for landscape evaluation and improvement in the pursuit of an ideal landscape mode of living and eventually for harmony between nature and human beings.

**Table 2.7 Fengshui Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Wang (1991)	Fengshui is an inherited cultural phenomenon, a method of pursuing good fortune and shunning the course of calamity, a common and popular folk custom, a study of the relationship between the environment and humans.
Perry Hobson (1994)	Fengshui (pronounced ‘fung shui’) means literally ‘wind and water’ and is a type of geomancy or divination from nature.
Bourassa and Peng (1999)	Fengshui has its roots in the Tao, an ancient Chinese philosophy analysing the environment and interpreting the ‘way of nature’.
Bruun (2003)	Considers wind directions, water streams and other topographical features in the surroundings of a house or a grave site in order to indicate the inhabitants’ disaster or good fortune.
Montenegro (2003)	Fengshui is about balance, comfort and harmony; it is a belief that offers the ability to create a balance in your dwelling or place of work.
Adhikari (2006)	Fengshui is based on the Taoist philosophy of Yin and Yang, and it is used to decide the location, construction and other architectural features of buildings, the placement and style of furniture, interior/exterior decoration and even the location of plants so that Chee energy has free movement in and around the building.
Chen (2007)	Fengshui represents a traditional Chinese worldview regarding the relationship between human beings and nature.
Wang (2012)	Fengshui serves as an instrument for landscape evaluation and improvement in the pursuit of an ideal landscape mode of living and eventually for harmony between nature and human beings.
Erdogan and Erdogan (2014)	Fengshui is a tool that enables understanding of and the ability to shape the energy within a space; it is one of the design principles that aims to create habitable and sustainable spaces which are in harmony with nature by systematizing data within its own structure.

*(Source: the researcher)*

It can be seen from Table 2.7 that the influence of Taoist Fengshui especially materialises in the location of buildings and the positioning of objects, and that Fengshui impacts the sustainable development of modern Chinese society (Wei, 2006). According to Sofield and Li (2011), the ancient Chinese established a Fengshui environmental model which was used to help people find a suitable place to live. Chen (2007) indicated that Fengshui has been shown to have a great influence on almost every aspect of Chinese life, including the way Chinese people do business, the way they communicate, and the way they perceive and practice architecture. A good Fengshui house conforms to six basic conditions: falling back upon the Dragon (having mountains at the back); embraced by multiple layers of surrounding hills; a river or stream at the front with a lake or pond nearby; buildings facing southward; having a flourishing forest and abundant natural resources in the surrounding environment; and architectural symbols such as a pagoda, bridge, pavilion or memorial gate placed in varied positions such as at the entrance and exit of the village, the entrance and exit of a river and on top of the surrounding hills (Yuan and Liu, 2009).

According to Zhong and Ceranic (2007), Fengshui was used as a criterion by which to select the location of ancient settlements and modify social life in ancient China. In ancient China, people considered that humanity should always keep to Fengshui guidelines when choosing a place to live (Madeddu and Zhang, 2017; Gao and Handley-Schachler, 2003). The current literature presents Taoism in relation to design ethics and is mainly for an architectural audience. Some of the research highlights the relationship between Fengshui and its influence on the architecture and living environment, but it does not address 'why' Fengshui works and how it impacts on Chinese people's daily consumption. Thus, almost no studies have fully addressed the influence of Taoism on Chinese consumption behaviour.

### **2.2.2.3 Taoist Philosophy and Health**

According to Taoist philosophy, everything in the world consists of the paired Yin and Yang opposites (Lee et al., 2009). These two work together, which creates balance or harmonious oneness as a whole, such as harmony with nature, harmony with the living environment, harmony with other people and harmony within the body in order to stay healthy. This section presents the relationship between Taoist philosophy and health.

According to Huang (2013), an individual's mental or physical health can be strengthened and life could be prolonged if one's Yin and Yang are in a harmonious state. Some studies have uncovered Taoism and its impact on mental health (Vera et al., 2019; Yip, 2004), Taoism and food culture (Li, 2017) and Taoist herbal treatments and diet therapy (Chen, 2001). Taoists preserve and promote health and overall well-being in everyday life (Kwok and Sullivan, 2007); this is the foundation of traditional Chinese medicine (Low and Ang, 2010). What all the previously identified research studies have in common is that they explain that the Taoist Yin and Yang is the foundation of Chinese medicine and that people use this concept to keep healthy. However, no researcher has explored how the Chinese maintain a healthy lifestyle, nor their decision making process. Therefore, in order to address this gap in the literature, this research has explored what people consume and how they keep healthy in their daily lives from the Taoist perspective.

Overall, Taoists regard human beings as a part of nature and they believe people should not try to overcome or master nature, but they should learn how to adapt to it in order to achieve harmony. Taoists believe that nature has the 'way' (dao) by which all things become what they are. The existing literature shows that Taoists believe in harmony with nature, paying attention to Fengshui and being healthy. Although some studies have been conducted on the influence of Taoist philosophy on Chinese green purchasing behaviour (Chan, 2001; Mainieri et al., 1997; Xing and Starik, 2017), they merely present the relationship between the Taoist philosophy and green purchasing; they do not explore Taoist consumption motivations,

decision making processes or the consumption itself. Moreover, the previous research only focuses on the Tian Ren He Yi concept, and does not deeply investigate how other constructs of Taoism may affect Chinese consumption behaviour. In addition, most of the existing research has used a quantitative methodology.

It can also be seen that not many studies have been conducted into Chinese Taoist philosophy in modern academic literature and the consumer behaviour context. The existing literature mostly focuses on Taoism and Chinese food culture (Li, 2017), Taoism and Chinese ecology and the environment (Shaoyao et al., 2016) or Taoism and design ethics (Huang, 2017; Ma, 2016). Almost none has really addressed the influence of Taoism on Chinese consumption behaviour. This study partly addresses this gap in the literature by providing explanations of the components of Taoist philosophy, such as harmony with the environment, harmony with the earth's energy lines and harmony with the human body. As previously explained, most research has focused on one component rather than the combination. This study extends the literature and provides a more rounded picture of the impact of Taoist philosophy on Chinese consumption behaviour. In the next section, the existing literature on the Buddhist philosophical religious tradition will be explained.

### **2.2.3 Buddhist Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour**

Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni, 'the sage from the tribe of the Shakyas', was the founder of Buddhism and brought this philosophy to China from India (Zhang and Veenhoven, 2008). Buddhism entered China at roughly the turn of the first millennium, travelling primarily with merchants on the India branch of the Silk Road into central Asia and then eastward into China (Foltz, 1999). At first perceived by the Chinese as an alien, socially irresponsible religion, Buddhism took several hundred years of gradual assimilation to become a fully Chinese religious tradition (Wawrytko, 2018).

The Basic Teachings of Buddha, which are core to Buddhism, are: the three universal truths; the four noble truths; and the noble eightfold path and its three divisions (Ishii, 2009; Philip and Smith, 2004; Tsering, 2005). Unlike Confucianism which emphasizes relationships (Guanxi), family values and social ability and Taoism which focuses on the universe and mankind, Buddhism focuses on how ignorance, cravings and greed produce suffering in an independent world (Paracka Jr, 2012). According to Guang (2013), even though there have been conflicts among the three philosophical religious traditions, the integration of these three is mainstream in the development of Chinese cultural thought. Table 2.8 presents the existing contemporary research conducted into the core Buddhist teachings in order to develop a better understanding of Buddhism.

Table 2.8 examines Buddhist teachings and the precepts of traditional Buddhism. These teachings can be summarised as the three universal truths, the four noble truths and the noble eightfold path, which together are known as the 'Dharma' (Bullitt, 2005). According to Lee and Lai (1977), Buddhism is, strictly speaking, the 'Buddha-Dharma', meaning the law of the Buddha. The Dharma is regarded as the ethical teachings of Buddha and these are regarded as objectively true. In accordance with the nature of things, the Buddha was said to have 'turned the wheel of the Dharma' and given doctrinal expression to the truth about how things are in reality (Haybron, 2013). The Buddhist doctrine of karma is concerned with the ethical implications of the Dharma, in particular those relating to the consequences of moral (or immoral) behaviour (Keown, 2013). There has been very little research conducted into Chinese philosophy in the context of consumers and their consumption behaviours, and even less into how Chinese philosophy impacts Chinese consumption behaviour. The existing studies either focus on the history of Buddhism (Van Bragt, 1995) or an introduction to and explanation of the components of Buddhist philosophy (Edkins, 2012). Extant research has addressed the Buddhist doctrines of karma, ahimsa (non-violence) and the middle path. The next sections will discuss the conceptual meaning of these three components and their influence on consumption behaviour.

**Table 2.8 The Basic Teachings of Buddha and Key Authors**

<b>The Basic Teachings of Buddha</b>	<b>Key Definitions and Characteristics</b>	<b>Authors ( chronologically by date – oldest first)</b>
<b>Three Universal Truths</b>	1. Nothing is lost in the universe 2. Everything Changes 3. The Law of Cause and Effect	Gunaratna (1968)
<b>The Four Noble Truths</b>	1.Dukkha: All existence is suffering 2.Samudaya: Suffering is caused by craving 3.Nirodha: Suffering can have an end 4. Magga: The way to end suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path	Rāhula (1974) Philip and Smith (2004) Tsering (2005)
<b>The Noble Eightfold Path</b>	1. Right View 2. Right Resolve      } <b>Insight</b>  3. Right Speech 4. Right Action        } <b>Morality</b> 5. Right Livelihood  6. Right Effort 7. Right Mindfulness   } <b>Meditation</b> 8. Right Meditation	Huxter (2007) Ishii (2009) Bodhi (2010) Keown (2013) Haybron (2013) Huxter (2015) Van Gordon et al. (2015)

*(Source: the researcher)*

### 2.2.3.1 Karma

Buddhism accepts the traditional Chinese value of filial piety and ancestor worship (Hsieh, 2002; Poceski, 2004; Teiser, 2005). It calls for compassion and understanding in order to build up karma, which may result in an end to one's participation in the cycle of suffering and rebirth (Paracka Jr, 2012). Table 2.9 shows the various definitions and characteristic of karma contained in the existing literature. It can be seen from Table 2.9 that karma is the central feature of Buddhism and that its literal meaning is the correlation between moral acts and their consequences. Karma, literally means 'action' or 'deed' (Skorupski, 2016). Jayatilleke (1969) stated that karma teaches that there is a correlation between moral acts and their consequences. Karmic actions are moral actions, and the Buddha defined karma by reference to moral choices and the acts consequent upon them (Keown, 2013). Karma in Buddhism, is a mystical influence believed to be generated by a person's choice that determines the nature of his or her fortunes. As explained by Ghose (2007), karma is believed to be the only causal factor responsible for one's present condition, and thus, a person's unfortunate circumstances. Sometimes this notion leads to blaming a person for his or her misfortune.

**Table 2.9 Karma Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Jayatilleke (1969)	Karma teaches that there is a correlation between moral acts and their consequences.
Keown and Keown (1995)	Karma means that the hedonic tone of any given existence is conditioned by antecedent moral deeds.
Keown (1996)	Karma is a central feature of Buddhist ethics.
Wright (2005)	Karma defines the ethical dimension of culture and remains the key to understanding Buddhist morality. Karma is the teaching that tells practitioners that it matters what they do throughout their lives, and how they do it. It articulates a close relationship between what one chooses to do and who or what one becomes over time.

Ghose (2007)	Karma is believed to be the only causal factor responsible for one's present condition, and thus, a person's unfortunate circumstances. Sometimes this notion leads to blaming a person for his or her misfortune.
Keown (2013)	Karma is thought of simply as the good and bad things that happen to a person, a little like good and bad luck.
Burley (2014)	Karma is often explicitly understood to encompass the intention behind or volition with which an action is performed.
Skorupski (2016)	The term karma, literally 'action' or 'deed', as a technical concept, denotes the principle of ethical causation: there are no agents, but there are actions and their consequences.
Adam and Barborich (2017)	Karma functions as a denial of determinism and an affirmation of the efficacy of human action, even if it is limited by circumstances beyond one's control.

*(Source: the researcher)*

The existing research on karma merely focuses on introducing the concept; very few studies relate karma to its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour. The current literature only identifies the meaning of karma in Chinese and the relationship between karma and Chinese consumers' complaint behaviour (Cui et al., 2008; Yau, 1988). According to some scholars (Chang, 2002; Fang, 2012), karma, which means 'yuan' in Chinese, is deeply rooted in Chinese people's hearts. Karma allows some Chinese people to interpret the meaning of their interpersonal lives through in-depth philosophical thinking and emotion, by contemplating an interdependent existence, emphasizing the role of the individual, and endowing verbal utterances with moral implications. Chang (2002) argued that yuan is more than a matter of Buddhist religious and philosophical thinking. With its related linguistic expressions, yuan summarizes the Chinese psyche by appreciating and cherishing the chance for people to be associated with one another. Yau (1988) stated that yuan can be referred to as the predetermined web of social and experiential relationships with things or individuals that are far beyond one person's control.

Studies of Chinese consumers have a great tendency to attribute unpleasant purchasing experiences to yuan rather than to defects in the products/services themselves. However, the Chinese have a great tendency to attribute the failure of products/services to yuan rather than the producer (Tong and Hawley, 2009). Therefore, if certain products do not meet their expectations, they are reluctant to make complaints, as they just think they have no yuan with the products. Thus, it is not sufficient for a company to measure Chinese consumer dissatisfaction through such measures as frequency of complaints, nor is that a good way to measure marketing effectiveness (Yau, 1988). This is also in line with Ghose's (2007) definition of karma, which is that the notion leads to blaming a person for his or her own misfortune. This may also explain Yau's (1988) opinion that Chinese consumers tend to attribute the failure of products/services to misfortune or having no yuan. This is the only identified study conducted into the influence of the Buddhist notion of karma on Chinese consumption behaviour. Other studies have explored karma and its influence on consumption, but these have not focused on the Chinese context; for example, karma and sustainable consumption (Lamberton, 2005; Sraman, 2014). According to Siderits (2017) and Wright (2005), karma is the teaching which tells Buddhists what they should do throughout their lives and how they should do it. This is related to a study by Daniels (2011) which found that the Buddhist belief in karma can inform and enrich efforts to modify consumption into sustainable consumption in order to sustain a better quality of life and maintain well-being for humans and the living environment. Similarly, Sraman (2014) considered that human beings should act compassionately and lovingly towards all other species including by protecting biodiversity and avoiding harmful actions which damage a sustainable environment. The existing literature also discusses another tenet within Buddhism, that of ahimsa (non-violence) and its influence on sustainable consumption behaviour. The next section explains the meaning of ahimsa and details its influence on consumption behaviour.

### 2.2.3.2 Ahimsa (non-violence)

Ahimsa (non-violence) is a fundamental tenet in Buddhism. Ahimsa promotes an attitude of not wishing to cause harm to fellow human beings or the eco system (Sraman, 2014). There have been many studies conducted into the meaning of ahimsa and its relationship with Buddhism. Many scholars considered ahimsa (non-violence) is the act does not cause harm to the doer or the receivers. In the Table 2.10, it presents various definitions and characteristics of ahimsa from the existing literature.

**Table 2.10 Ahimsa (non-violence) Defined and Characterized**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Nakhre (1976)	Non-violence implies a system of values and meanings with a commitment to them as a way of life. To eliminate violence and conflict, Buddhists have to resolve the underlying causes and conditions.
Kraft (1992)	Buddhism has long been associated with peace and ahimsa (non-violence) to reach inner and outer harmony.
Weber (1999)	Ahimsa, usually translated as non-violence, is regarded as the fountain of the 'head of Truth', the ultimate goal of life.
Deegalle (2002)	Ahimsa plays a crucial role in a religious way of life. Buddhism suggests the relative merits of the use of mild forms of force in certain rare circumstances, by advocating a path of non-violence.
Yeh (2006)	Buddhism has long been celebrated as a religion of peace and non-violence.
Zsolnai (2007, 2009)	Ahimsa requires that an act does not cause harm to the doer or the receivers and is the main guiding principle of Buddhism for solving social problems.
Keown (2014)	Buddhism apparently teaches that the use of violent force is wrong and is a morally unacceptable strategy - non-violence for the avoidance of conflict.

*(Source: the researcher)*

Summarising the existing literature from the table helps define the meaning of ahimsa and its relationship with Buddhism. From Table 2.10, it can be seen that Buddhism promotes non-violent (ahimsa) behaviour. Nakhre (1976) defined ahimsa (non-violence) as a system of values and meanings with a commitment to them as a way of life. It requires that an act does not cause harm to the doer or the receivers (Zsolnai, 2009). According to Deegalle (2002), Buddhism suggests the relative merits of the use of mild forms of force in certain rare circumstances, by advocating a path of non-violence in most cases. Buddhism has long been associated with peace and ahimsa (non-violence) to reach inner and outer harmony (Kraft, 1992). As a result, this attitude of non-violence and causing no harm to fellow human beings and towards ecosystems results in sustainable consumption behaviour (Sraman, 2014). However, very little previous research has suggested how the Buddhist philosophy of ahimsa (non-violence) influences Buddhist consumption behaviour. Although there have been some very notable research studies which have explored Buddhist non-violence and sustainable consumption (Lamberton, 2005 and Sraman, 2014), but they have all been conducted from a Western perspective.

Recently, researchers have discovered that Buddhist ahimsa influences vegetarian consumption; for example, Western Buddhist motivations for vegetarianism (Kaza, 2005), Indian vegetarianism and diet in Pāli Buddhism (Stewart, 2010) and Mahayana Buddhists practising vegetarian diets (Tseng, 2017). These studies have in common the prohibition of animal sacrifices and non-violence towards animals, resulting in vegetarian consumption behaviour. However, similar to most other Buddhist consumption research, these studies have also been conducted from a non-Chinese perspective and they focus on non-Chinese consumption behaviour. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the influence of ahimsa on Chinese consumption behaviour instead of merely focusing on the non-Chinese context and Western perspective. The next section presents the Buddhist concept of the middle path and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour.

### **2.2.3.3 Middle Path**

The essence of Buddhist teachings is that the fourth noble truth is the path leading to the cessation of human suffering which is the middle path, and the noble eightfold path is known as the theory of the middle path (Mendis, 1993). Buddhists believe that spending too little will lead to defects that can endanger the physical and mental ideal of well-being, while excessive accumulation of material wealth will cause suffering (Prayukvong, 2010). For this reason, Buddhists focus on the middle path (Finnigan, 2011). The middle path is the thrust of Buddhist teachings for the livelihood of lay people in achieving both material happiness and eternal salvation (Mendis, 1993).

Pace (2013, p.26) defined 'materialism' as 'the personal tendency to attach a central role to possessions'. Other researchers such as Belk (1984, p.291) regard materialism as the 'importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions'. Pace (2013) explained that materialists view possessions and their acquisition as a critical aspect of their lives. Moreover, materialists consider that happiness is achieved by acquiring possessions and they tend to measure their success by comparing their possessions with those of other people. Materialism contains three sub traits: possessiveness, non-generosity and envy. Pace (2013) considered each trait of materialism to be anti-social and therefore negative. Due to the negative implications of materialism, at the individual level, there is an association between materialism and personal unhappiness in life. This is probably the reason why Buddhism espouses frugality and the middle path (moderation), meaning that one should consume as needed to follow the middle path, not excessively but not sparsely either. Also, one should not become attached to objects (Daniels, 2005).

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of eliminating the desire for material goods, and advocates non-attachment to material possessions. As a result, in China, Buddhists often express a sense of aloofness toward brands and materialistic experiences (Eckhardt and Zhao, 2012). They believe that too much accumulation of material wealth will bring pain as a result of craving

more (Puntasen, 2007). Most Buddhists like giving rather than taking possession, which can bring Buddhists happiness and merit. This is in line with Pongsakornrungsilp and Pusaksrikit (2011), Murgatroyd (2001) and Nath (2010) who state that spirituality is something that some Buddhists seek to gain from engagement in giving. However, very few studies have addressed the Chinese Buddhist non-materialistic culture, and the major encyclopaedias of Buddhism (Buswell Jr, 2004) do not include entries for material culture. In addition, most of the best general work on religion and material culture has been carried out by scholars looking into American religion (Kieschnick, 2003). However, even though Buddhists claim to be non-materialistic, recent research shows some evidence that Chinese Buddhist monks might be becoming more materialistic (Eckhardt and Zhao, 2012). This contradictory consumption behaviour needs to be further explored.

### **2.3 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework**

This section builds on the preceding literature review to identify gaps in the existing literature. Table 2.11 provides an overview of the existing body of research and identifies the gaps in the literature in order to frame the specific research questions to be addressed in this study. This section is divided into two parts: identification of the research gaps and the development of the conceptual framework.

#### **2.3.1 Identifying the Research Gaps**

The research gaps which underpin this study are, first, that most studies on Chinese culture and consumption behaviour only focus on Confucian philosophy and, second, that most studies have approached this topic from a Western perspective.

Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all have their own religious philosophy and these still influence contemporary Chinese consumers.

Fornara et al. (2016) noted that behaviour is directly influenced by intentions, which in turn are influenced by attitudes and beliefs about one's own values. Therefore, it can be argued that differences in philosophical religious traditions will result in different consumption behaviour among consumers. The basic beliefs and concepts of Confucianism are different to those of Taoism and of Buddhism. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and Yau (1988) defined the concept of the Value Orientation framework that demonstrates that Confucianism is relationship-orientated, while the other two philosophies - Taoism and Buddhism - are human-nature orientated. Beliefs and attitudes serve as key determinants of behavioural intentions; the more favourable the attitude of an individual towards the behaviour, the stronger the intention to perform the behaviour will be (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005). The fact that the existing literature has only focused on Confucianism to explain Chinese consumption behaviour is inappropriate in that it provides an incomplete explanation.

Although there are several studies on the influence of Chinese cultural values on Chinese consumer behaviour, the majority consider only one philosophical religious tradition. Existing studies have explored the Chinese religious tradition of Confucianism and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour, and most of these studies have either focused on Chinese luxury consumers or on conspicuous consumption. This study tries to fill this literature gap and aims to incorporate Chinese non-luxury consumption behaviour as well. From the review of the existing literature, there has been very little research conducted into Chinese Taoist and Buddhist philosophy in the context of consumers and their consumption behaviours, let alone into how Chinese Taoist and Buddhist philosophy influences Chinese consumption behaviour.

Existing studies either focus on the history of Buddhism (Guenther, 1972) or the spirituality of Buddhism (Van Bragt, 1995) and these studies are somewhat dated. Most new studies have been carried out by Westerners (D'Ambrosio et al., 2018; Nelson, 2017; Sharf, 2015). Similar to the lack of literature on Buddhist philosophy, not many studies have been conducted into Chinese Taoist philosophy. The existing literature mostly focuses on

Taoism and Chinese food culture (Li, 2017) or Taoism and Chinese ecology and the environment (Shaoyao et al., 2016) or Taoism and design ethics (Huang, 2017, Ma, 2016). Almost none has really addressed the influence of Taoism on Chinese consumption behaviour. This study has not only been conducted from a native perspective but it has also consulted experts from each philosophy in order to develop a deeper and better understanding of each philosophy. In addition, the festivals related to each philosophy have been selected as another way of representing the philosophy.

Therefore, this research based on Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies will contribute to explaining Chinese consumption behaviour and exploring the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Chinese philosophical religious traditions. Thus, it adds to the existing Chinese consumption behaviour theory. In addition, it extends the literature and provides a fully rounded explanation of the impact of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy on Chinese consumption behaviour. Hence, this study will help fill the literature gap in terms of the scarcity of research conducted in China and offer insights for marketing professionals to help them develop a better understanding of the intersection between Chinese culture and consumption behaviour.

**Table 2.11 Identification of the Literature Gaps in relation to Chinese Consumption Behaviour**

<b>Existing Literature</b>	<b>Current Area of Focus</b>	<b>Literature Gap</b>	<b>Research Question Design</b>
<b>Consumption and the Culture</b>	The relationship between culture and consumption behaviour	Although there is a considerable body of existing literature focused on culture and its influence on various aspects of consumer behaviour, among this body of work, there are limited examples of studies that incorporate the role of philosophical religious traditions as an element of culture within consumption behaviour.	How do the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism influence Chinese contemporary consumption behaviour?
	Hofstede's cultural dimension	This focuses primarily on Confucianism. Buddhist and Taoist values are not considered in the design of the constructs leading to Hofstede's fifth dimension.	
<b>Confucian Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour</b>	Guanxi	Most of these studies have been conducted from a Western perspective and only focus on the Confucian dimension.	How does Confucianism influence Chinese contemporary consumption behaviour?
	Face Confucian luxury consumption behaviour		
<b>Taoist Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour</b>	Tian Ren He Yi	There is no detailed characterization of green consumer profiling to evaluate the influence of ecological consciousness in green consumption processes.	How does Taoism influence Chinese contemporary consumption behaviour?
	Fengshui	The current research on Fengshui is mainly aimed at the architect audience, but why Fengshui works and how it influences Chinese daily consumption	

		behaviour has not been explored.	
	Taoist philosophy and health	The current research only explains Taoist consumption of Chinese medicine, but consumption motivations and what and how Taoists like to consume in relation to Chinese medicine on a daily basis has not been explored.	
<b>Buddhist Philosophy and Consumption Behaviour</b>	Karma	The current research on karma and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour only focuses on consumption behaviour in relation to consumer complaints.	How does Buddhism influence Chinese contemporary consumption behaviour?
	Ahimsa (non-violence)	There has been very little research conducted into the Buddhist philosophy of ahimsa and its influence on Chinese sustainable and vegetarian consumption behaviour. Most of this research has been conducted from a non-Chinese perspective and focuses on non-Chinese consumption behaviour.	
	Middle Path	Only a few research studies have been conducted into the influence of the Buddhist middle path on Chinese consumption behaviour. However, recent research shows some evidence that Chinese Buddhist monks might be becoming more materialistic. This contradictory consumption behaviour needs to be further explored.	

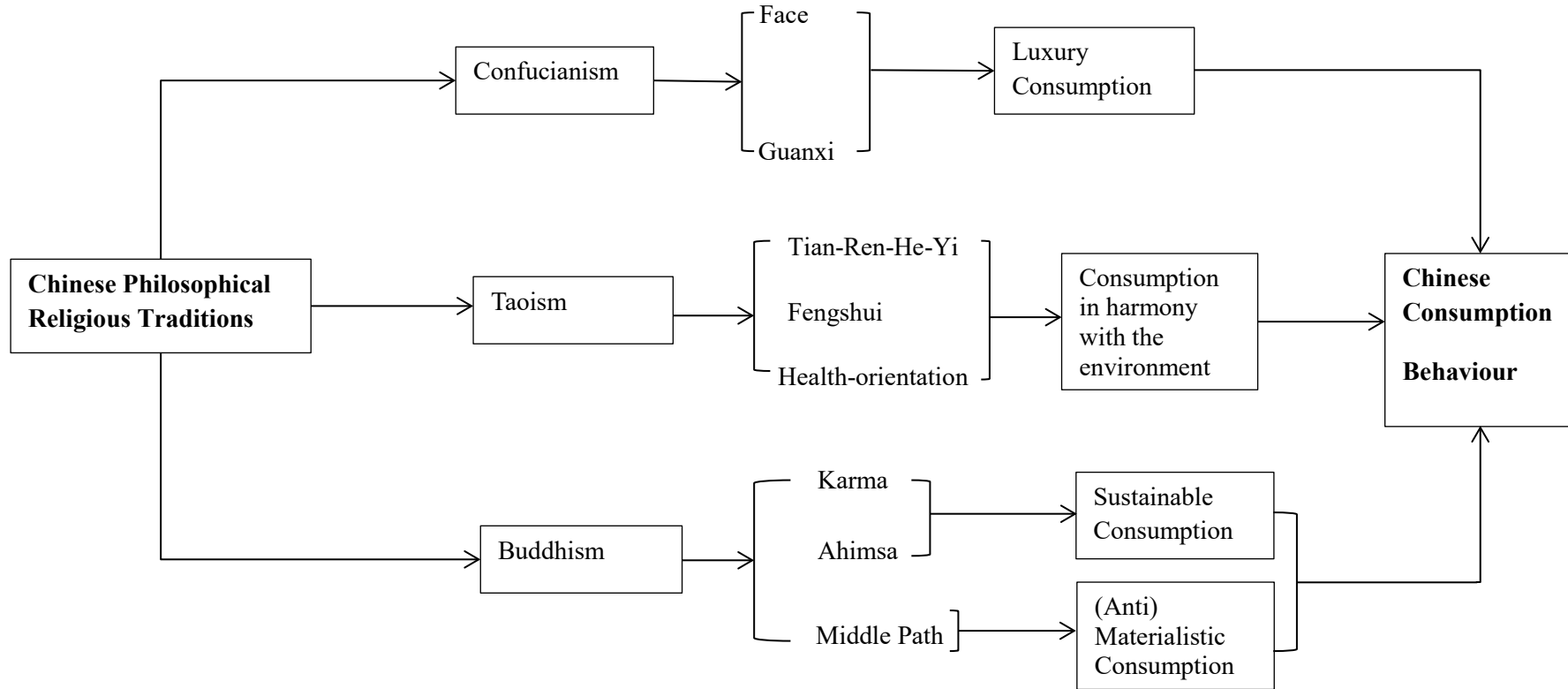
*(Source: the researcher)*

### **2.3.2 Developing the Conceptual Framework**

This research explores how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. Specifically, this research examines consumer behaviour at three selected Chinese religious festivals - the Qingming Festival (Confucianism), Duanwu Festival (Taoism) and Laba Festival (Buddhism). It contrasts these separate events with one universal festival case study: the Chinese Spring Festival which is celebrated by all Chinese people. This research aims to improve academic understanding of how and to what extent Chinese cultural values shape the Chinese consumption experience. By doing so, it partially fills a significant gap in the marketing literature.

Based on the existing theory on Confucianism and consumption and the Taoist and Buddhist philosophical religious traditions drawn from the literature, this conceptual framework is framed by three main propositions. It outlines the three philosophical religious traditions as a complete influence on Chinese consumption behaviour based on the literature reviewed for this study. It also contributes to reducing the knowledge gap identified in the literature, by conceptualising Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of all the three philosophical religious traditions and it is believed to be one of the first attempts to do so. Figure 2.4 illustrates the conceptual framework of how Chinese philosophical religious traditions impact on Chinese consumption behaviour as developed from the existing literature. As demonstrated in the literature review, many studies discuss how face and Guanxi in Confucianism result in luxury consumption; how the Taoist philosophies of Tian Ren He Yi, Fengshui and health-orientation lead to a tendency towards consumption which shows harmony with the environment; and how Buddhist beliefs related to karma and ahimsa lead to sustainable consumption, while the Buddhist concept of the middle path influences attitudes towards materialism. However, no single study has holistically approached the impact of the three religious philosophies on Chinese consumption behaviour.

**Figure 2.4 Conceptual Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour**



## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter critically reviews the extant literature on the three Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and Chinese consumption behaviour. It ends by offering a literature-based Conceptual Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour (see Figure 2.4). A considerable amount of literature has been published on Confucian luxury consumption behaviour from a Western perspective as reviewed in this chapter. Few studies have explored Chinese consumers' preferences in the area of non-luxury products, nor have many researchers explored the other two main religious philosophies in China, namely Buddhism and Taoism. This chapter has highlighted that there is a gap in the literature as there is a lack of research conducted into Chinese Taoist and Buddhist philosophies in the context of consumers and their consumption behaviours. In order to fill the literature gap and contribute to the knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour, this study employs a multiple case study strategy, as explained in the next chapter, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour from the perspective of the three philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research methodology adopted in this research. This study aims to contribute to the knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour from the perspective of three philosophical religious traditions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) by employing a comparative case study methodology. It begins with a clarification of the research philosophy which underpins the approach, then discusses the case study process in terms of the research design, data collection and data analysis technique. This chapter provides the evidence and rationale for choosing a multiple case study strategy and concludes with an examination of the quality of the research.

#### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

A research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data should be gathered, analysed and used (Blaxter et al., 2006; Finlay, 2002; Lehaney and Vinten, 1994). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), there are three reasons which explain why understanding the research philosophy is crucial. Firstly, it can help to clarify the overall research strategy design. Secondly, understanding the basis of the philosophy used can assist in designing a research project that works. Thirdly, it can help the researcher to avoid inappropriate methodologies or methods. Similarly, Bell et al. (2018), Creswell and Poth (2017) and Saunders et al. (2016) pointed out that it is very important for the researcher to clarify the philosophical position because it underpins their choice of methodology and data collection methods. Crotty (1998) indicated that a research philosophy includes the ontology, epistemological and axiological assumptions, all of which shape

the researcher's understanding of the research question, how they select suitable methods and how they interpret the findings.

Within the field of business and management research, the intrinsic elements of philosophy are: positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Antwi and Hamza, 2015; Goldkuhl, 2012). Interpretivism can be defined as a strategy of social research that helps interpret social phenomena in terms of meanings (Lee, 1991). Interpretivists believe that social reality is subjective because it is socially constructed (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Compared to positivism, interpretivism embraces an overall understanding of phenomena and a theory building approach to research, rather than deriving possible causal relationships between various measures (Krauss, 2005; Saunders et al., 2016). Table 3.1 presents the differences between the three research philosophies of positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism. It can be seen that each philosophy has its own advantages and limitations, so there is no right or wrong choice; the choice depends on the research questions to be answered.

For this study, the researcher has chosen the interpretivist research philosophy. As the literature review explains in detail, there is very little existing research on how the three main philosophical religious traditions in China impact on Chinese consumption behaviour. Therefore, in order to achieve the research aim, the researcher needs to explore Chinese consumption motivations and perceptions of the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions. The role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm is to understand, explain, and demystify social reality from different participants' points of view (Mack, 2010). According to Scotland (2012), the interpretivist paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation; to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and patterns. In addition, compared to positivism and pragmatism, interpretivism is more suitable for understanding and interpreting the meanings of human behaviour as well as building theory in under-researched areas, rather than generalizing and predicting cause and effect.

**Table 3.1 Differences between Positivism, Interpretivism and Pragmatism**

<b>Terms of Philosophy</b>		<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>	<b>Pragmatism</b>
<b>Ontology:</b> <i>the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being</i>		Objective	Subjective	Objective or subjective
<b>Axiology:</b> <i>the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge</i>		Value-free: <i>the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance</i>	Biased: <i>the researcher cannot be separated from the data and so will be subjective</i>	Value-free/biased: <i>the researcher adopts both objective and subjective points of view</i>
<b>Epistemology:</b> <i>the researcher's view of the role of values in research</i>		Detached, external observer Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Objective reality exists beyond the human mind: whatever cannot be measured does not exist	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience: there is so much information underlying the obvious material world	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective means can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Approach</b>	Deductive	Inductive	Abductive
	<b>Method</b>	Quantitative methods	Primarily qualitative	Multiple or mixed methods
	<b>Data Collection</b>	Experiments, quasi-experiments, tests, scales	Interviews, observations, document reviews, visual data analysis	May include tools from both positivist and interpretivist paradigms

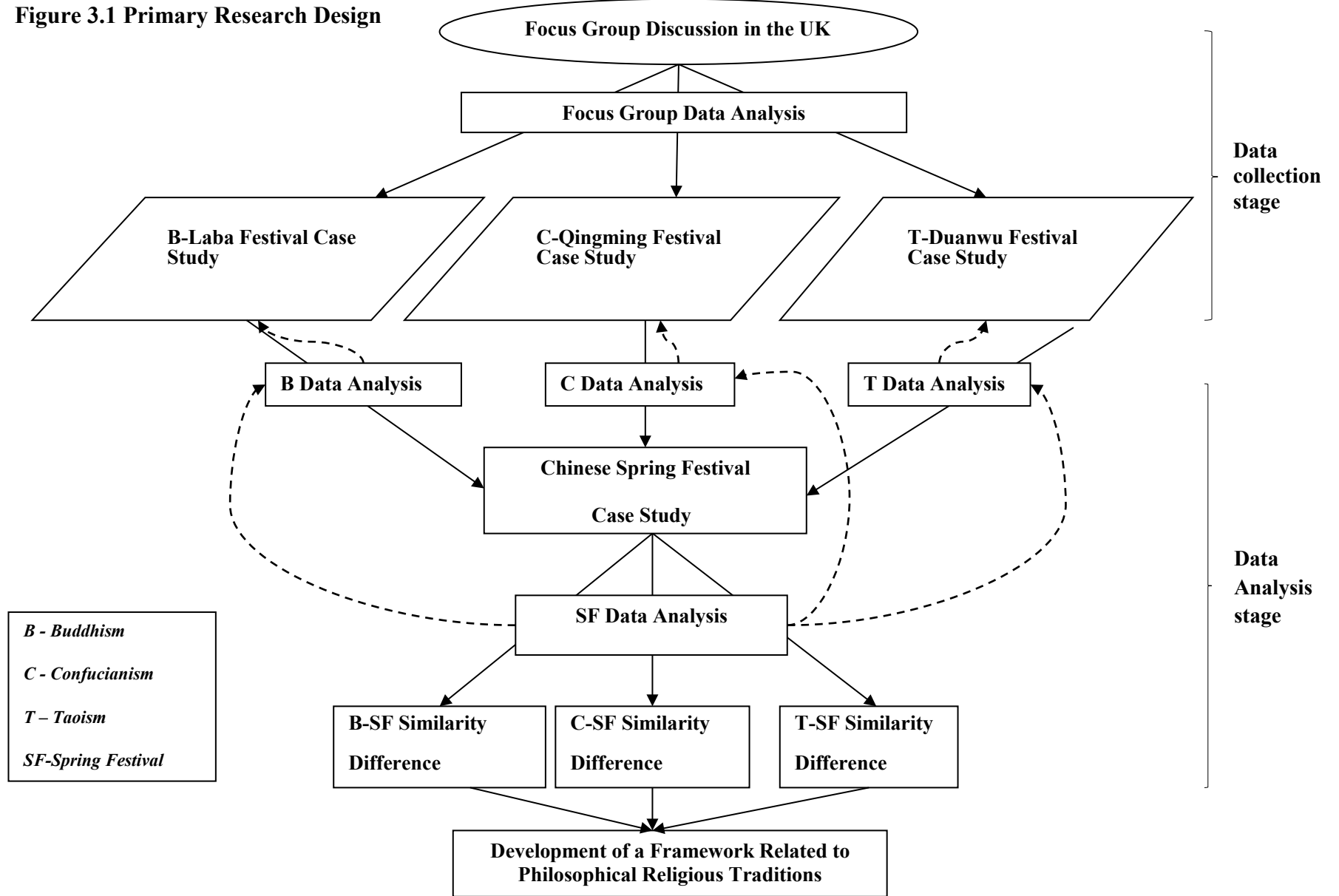
*Source: Adapted from Bell et al. (2018) Collis and Hussey (2013); Saunders et al. (2016) and Wilson (2010)*

Concerning the nature of the research question, the main research question for this study is ‘how do the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?’ This research question is exploratory, so it matches the interpretivist epistemology of seeking to understand a specific context. As stated by Thomas (2017), interpretivism concentrates on generating descriptions of people’s experiences and perspectives within their natural world, so it is believed that interpretivism is most suitable for this study in order to explore Chinese consumption and purchasing experience and perspectives under the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions.

### **3.3 Research Approach Adopted For This Study**

This study uses a qualitative case study research strategy which is in line with the conventions of interpretivism. Interpretivism is associated with a qualitative research approach which is characterized as inductive (Saunders et al., 2016). The rationale for adopting a case study strategy is that it fits well with exploratory studies which explore ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions (Yin, 2013). As there is limited existing knowledge on how and to what extent Chinese cultural values shape the Chinese consumption experience, a case study strategy would help to generate rich insights into the concept of the three philosophical religious traditions and the effects of various factors on Chinese purchasing and consumption behaviour. Therefore, for this research, a multiple case study of Chinese festivals was conducted to examine how cultural values from three philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved, paying attention to their different patterns of cultural values, purchasing and consumption experience. The need for a flexible qualitative research design also suggests the use of a case study strategy as it acts as a means for both exploring and building theories (Ravenswood, 2011; Yin, 2013).

**Figure 3.1 Primary Research Design**



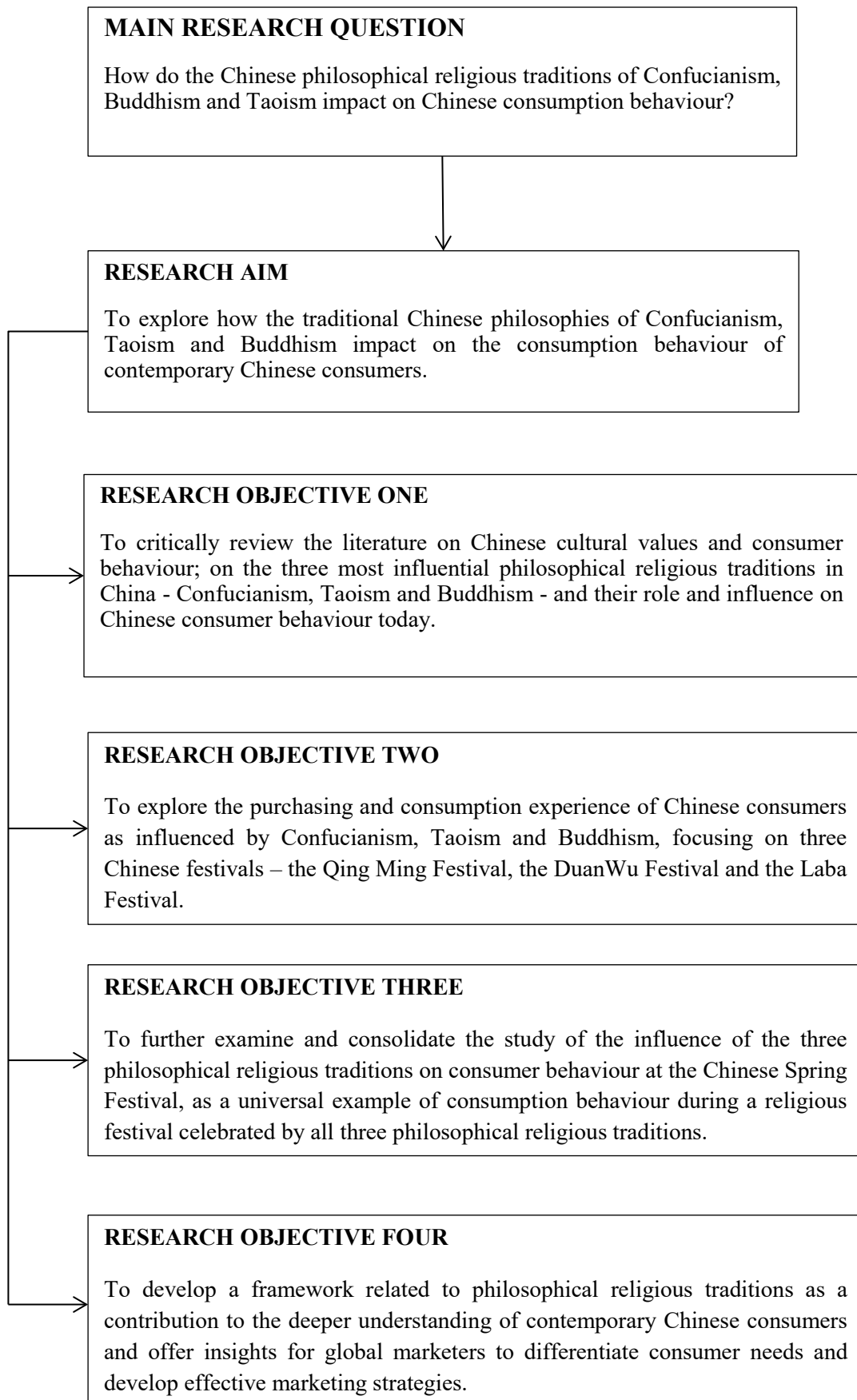
### **3.3.1 Research Design**

In Figure 3.1, the primary research design is presented as a general organising framework for conducting this research. The research design is explained in detail below and the rationale given. It starts with a presentation of the research aim and objectives, then moves on to a justification of the research strategy and the data collection methods.

### **3.3.2 Research Aim and Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to explore how the traditional Chinese philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. The research specifically examines consumer behaviour at three selected Chinese traditional festivals - the Qingming Festival (Confucian), the Duanwu Festival (Taoist) and the Laba Festival (Buddhist). It contrasts these separate events with one universal festival case study: the Chinese Spring Festival, which is celebrated by all Chinese people. This research aims to improve academic understanding of how and to what extent Chinese cultural values shape the Chinese consumption experience. By doing so, it fills a significant gap in the marketing literature. Ultimately, this research aims to develop a framework related to philosophical religious traditions that will further knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour and, at the same time, be of practical relevance for marketing professionals engaged in Chinese markets. Figure 3.2 below shows the formulation of the research questions, aim and objectives.

**Figure 3.2 Formulation of Research Question, Aim and Objectives**



### **3.3.3 Multiple Case Study Strategy**

This section discusses the research strategy undertaken in this study. It divides into three parts: firstly, the rationale for why a multiple case study strategy was chosen for this study is explained; secondly, the design of the multiple case study strategy is discussed; and finally, a justification of the selected case studies is provided.

For this research, a multiple case study of Chinese festivals has been conducted to examine how the cultural values of three philosophical religious traditions have impacted Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved, paying attention to their different cultural values, purchasing and consumption experience. The need for a flexible qualitative research design suggested the use of a case study strategy as it would act as a means for both exploring and building theories (Ravenswood, 2011; Yin, 2013). In order to explore how Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists behave as consumers, the research specifically examined consumer behaviour at three selected Chinese religious festivals: the Qingming Festival (Confucian), the Duanwu Festival (Taoist) and the Laba-Festival (Buddhist). Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate traditions and the festivals were selected as case studies connected to the relative purity of consumption behaviour related to the respective philosophical religious tradition. Finally, a universal case study was conducted, which was the Chinese Spring Festival, which is celebrated by all Chinese people. Yin (2013), Merriam (1988) and Stake (1995) stated that a multiple case study approach is most frequently used in qualitative research methodologies involving the analysis and synthesis of similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal. In order to explore how they influence Chinese consumption behaviour and build the theory on Chinese cultural consumption studies, a multiple case study strategy was considered appropriate for this study.

Based on the nature of the inquiry, the subject matter and the discussion of the research philosophy, the researcher has adopted an inductive strategy for this research. Creswell and Poth (2017) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001)

identified five inductive strategies: case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, content analysis, and phenomenological studies. These different strategies meet different research needs; the reason for choosing a case study strategy lies in the fact that case studies attempt to help one learn “more about a little known or poorly understood situation” (Leedy and Ormrod (2001, p.149). Thus, considering that there is a research gap and little is known about the influence of Taoist and Buddhist philosophy especially on Chinese consumption behaviour, a case study strategy is suitable for exploring a group that shares a common culture. Other research strategies such as ethnography can also research “an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data” (Creswell, 1998, p.14). However, this strategy requires the researcher to be highly engaged in the daily lives of the participants in order to observe their behaviour. Considering that the philosophy of certain religious traditions is a sensitive topic in China and given the timescale constraints of this research, it would seem difficult for the researcher to become a participant observer with an ongoing association with people in their daily lives. Grounded theory was not considered a suitable strategy for this research given some of its disadvantages; for example, most grounded theory studies are concluded at the ‘substantive’ level (context specific) rather than developed at the general level (Goulding, 2005). The disadvantage of the phenomenological strategy is researcher bias. As stated by Williams (2007), the difficulty of phenomenological studies is that the researcher usually has some connection, experience, or stake in the situation so bracketing (setting aside all prejudgments) is required. Given that researcher bias may influence the research findings, a phenomenological strategy was not chosen. A content analysis strategy requires the researcher to analyse materials which means it relies heavily on the researcher’s reading and interpretation, which may also lead to researcher bias. After comparing these five inductive strategies, a case study approach was chosen as the research strategy for this research for the reasons given earlier.

From a different perspective, comparing case studies with deductive strategies which are also used for exploratory and descriptive research, the

justification for choosing a case study approach is explained in Table 3.2. Surveys and experiments are usually associated with the deductive approach, so a comparison between case studies, surveys and experiments is presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Comparisons between a Case Study, Survey and Experiment Strategy**

<b>Basis For Comparison</b>	<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Experiment</b>
<b>Description</b>	Intensive investigation of the behaviour and mental processes associated with a specific person or situation	Involves obtaining large samples of abilities, beliefs, or behaviours at a specific time and place	Manipulation of an independent variable under controlled conditions and measurement of its effects on a dependent variable
<b>Samples</b>	Small number of units (sometimes one)	Large number of units	Relatively small number of units
<b>Form of Research Question</b>	Why, how?	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	Why, how?
<b>Advantages</b>	A case study is flexible; variations in terms of intrinsic, instrumental and collective approaches to case studies allow for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data	Surveys provide a high level of general capability in representing a large population	Experimental research designs are repeatable and therefore, results can be checked and verified, better results are often achieved

<b>Disadvantages</b>	Hard to generalize from a single case study  The selected case may not be representative or typical	Data may be superficial  The individual respondent is placed outside the social context and the collection of individuals cannot always be treated as a group	Experimental research can create artificial situations that do not always represent real-life situations
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*Sources: Adapted from Stake (1995), Rowley (2002), and Noor (2008)*

According to Rowley (2002), the type of research question is the most significant factor in determining the most appropriate research strategy. It can be seen from Table 3.2 that both case studies and experiments can answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions; however, considering that an experiment strategy depends on the researcher’s control over the variables, extraneous variables of which the researcher may not be aware may confound the results. In addition, in terms of the limitations of the research available on the philosophical religious traditions of Taoism and Buddhism, there are very limited ‘variables’ for the researcher to test using the experimental approach. When it comes to surveys, survey research is appropriate for collecting opinions, but not always appropriate for exploring behaviour, which is contrary to the aim of this research which is to explore Chinese consumption behaviour. In addition, surveys and experiments do not fit with the philosophy underpinning this research. Therefore, as discussed above, a case study strategy has been chosen for this study.

Eisenhardt (1989) stated that a case study strategy can be used to provide description, to test theories or to generate theories. According to Yin (2013), a case study is typically qualitative in nature with an emphasis on the importance of context in determining social realities. Flyvbjerg (2006) and Zainal (2007) considered that a case study strategy allows a researcher to explore and understand complex issues; it enables researchers to go beyond quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions

through the actor's perspective. Typically, as Yin (2013) noted, a case study seeks to determine 'how' or 'why' some social phenomena exist which is in accordance with this research. In addition, according to Patton (1990), a case study strategy is most applicable for the researcher who wishes to understand specific people or a particular problem by studying the phenomenon in great depth. The researcher has chosen a case study strategy to assist in understanding Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist contemporary consumption behaviour respectively. Therefore, individual case studies of Chinese festivals related to each of these three main philosophical religious traditions were conducted to examine how the cultural values from these religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved, paying attention to their different cultural values, purchasing and consumption experience. Finally, a universal case study was conducted on the Chinese Spring Festival, which is celebrated by all Chinese people, in order to make comparisons with the three individual case studies.

The logic that underlies the use of multiple case studies is that multiple case studies are often regarded as being more robust compared to a single case study (Yin, 2013). In addition, multiple case studies can be compared with real-life events that provide numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic (Zainal, 2007). A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The main drawback of a single case study, as criticized by many scholars, is that it lacks generalizability (Gomm et al., 2000; Eisenhardt, 1989; Myers, 2000). This is also the reason why many scholars (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989; Tellis, 1997) recommend a multiple case study strategy instead of a single case study because a multiple case study can produce more generalizable theoretical conclusions. The researcher believes that an embedded multiple case study design allows for replication with the aim of achieving analytical rather than statistical generalisation. Considering all these factors, a multiple case study strategy was used for this study, not only to explore each individual case in-depth, but also to facilitate comparison between the differences and similarities

across the different cases. It was felt that this would benefit the in-depth exploration of the impact of each philosophical religious tradition on consumption behaviour, as well as fully exploring the impact of all of these philosophical religious traditions as a whole. This is also in line with Yin's (2013) claim that multiple case studies are preferred over single case studies because the former offers robust analytical conclusions which improve external validity. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1985, p.151) considered that "by comparing cases, one can establish the generality of a finding and at the same time, pin down the conditions under which that finding will occur. Therefore, there is much potential for both greater explanatory power and greater generalisability".

#### **3.3.4 Case Selection**

As stated by Stake (2005), the most unique aspect of case study research lies in the selection of the particular cases to be studied. In order to explore how Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists behave as consumers, four cases were selected. Firstly, three Chinese religious festivals were selected - the Qingming Festival (Confucian), the Duanwu Festival (Taoist) and the Laba Festival (Buddhist). These festivals were selected as case studies because they are traditionally associated with a specific religion and are popular among contemporary Chinese people (Adler, 2002). Next, the researcher decided to conduct a universal case study on the Chinese Spring Festival, which is celebrated by all Chinese people (see Figure 3.1). The universal case study was selected to contrast with the three individual case studies that will further knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour. The festival cases selected are thought of as 'typical' (Flick, 2004; Yin, 2009), as these cases are rooted in Chinese philosophical traditions. Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate traditions and the festivals selected as case studies are rooted in the relative purity of consumption behaviour related to the respective philosophical religious traditions.

Due to the fact that Chinese people may find it difficult to categorise their own philosophical beliefs, these festivals can be seen as the first filter to select the right participants, as it ‘assumes’ those participants who attend these festivals belong to certain philosophical groups. Thus, these cases can help to access participants as well as increasing the possibility of finding potential participants because these festivals originally evolved from certain philosophical traditions. For example, the Qingming Festival, which means “clear and bright” in Chinese, is a Confucian festival that dates back to the Han Dynasty (Ames and Rosemont Jr, 2010). The Laba Festival is the Buddhist festival which is celebrated on the eighth day of the twelfth month of the Chinese calendar, to chant sutras and offer congee to the Buddha (Xing, 2012). The Duanwu Festival comes from Taoist ideas on medicine, health and customs and dates back to the Song dynasty (11th century); it is now full of traditions and superstitions (Lin, 2014).

Taking the amalgamation of cultural factors and the commercialization of each festival into account, people may attend a festival without thinking about its traditional religious meaning. Thus, the researcher paid close attention to the locations where these festivals take place. For example, for the Duanwu Festival, the researcher chose a place in Zhejiang Taoist Tiantai Mountain; this not only maximized the potential to recruit the correct participants, but also allowed the researcher to explore participants’ philosophical religious tradition-related consumption behaviour. Table 3.3 provides detailed explanations of the rationale for the selection of the case studies in this research.

**Table 3.3 Rationale for the Selection of Case Studies**

<b>Case Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Case Themes (Based on the literature)</b>	<b>Festival Activities</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Laba Festival</b>	Tianjin Xi’an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festival consumption behaviour</li> <li>• Daily consumption behaviour</li> </ul>	Exchanging gifts of Laba porridge with family or friends	People in the north have more interest in celebrating this festival compared to

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable consumption behaviour</li> <li>• Materialistic consumption behaviour</li> </ul>	with the expectation of good fortune and wishes	people from South China, thus, this case study was mainly conducted in the north
<b>Qingming Festival</b>	Anhui Zhejiang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festival Consumption Behaviour</li> <li>• Daily Consumption Behaviour</li> <li>• Luxury consumption behaviour</li> </ul>	Spiritual objects are purchased to worship the ancestors	<p>Access to data and permission because the festival is celebrated in private</p> <p>The researcher is familiar with the place and people there</p>
<b>Duanwu Festival</b>	Beijing Zhejiang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festival Consumption Behaviour</li> <li>• Daily Consumption Behaviour</li> <li>• Environmental Consumption Behaviour</li> </ul>	<p>Duanwu Festival is associated with dragon boat races</p> <p>Eating zongzi, drinking the realgar wine, and hanging mugwort and calamus</p>	<p>The biggest manufacturer of zongzi in China</p> <p>Zhejiang is one of the richest provinces which means the purchasing power is strong there</p>
<b>Spring Festival</b>	Beijing Zhejiang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festival Consumption Behaviour</li> <li>• Daily Consumption Behaviour</li> </ul>	Family reunions and thanksgiving religious ceremonies	This festival is very important in China as it is celebrated by everyone

### 3.3.5 Case Evaluation

Table 3.3 above discusses the rationale for the case study selection; optimizing understanding of each case requires meticulous attention to five requirements. Stake (2005) identified five issues by which to evaluate the case study approach: issues of choice, triangulation, experiential knowledge, contexts and activities.

The previous section discussed the reasons for choosing a case study strategy. As previously emphasised, most criticisms of the case study approach focus on the lack of generalisability. This research involves multiple case studies, where each individual case study will be explored in-depth, which can add to the generalisation of any theories which emerge. Also, multiple cases can provide numerous sources of evidence through replication. In addition, the main question of the research is ‘how do the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?’ and case studies are suitable for answering ‘how’ questions. Even though much cultural research has been conducted into Chinese consumer behaviour, most studies have approached the topic from a Western perspective. China has unique cultural characteristics which are not fully understood by Western nations. Therefore, a case study strategy is distinctly exploratory and useful to investigate phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research.

In terms of triangulation, Runeson and Höst (2009) pointed out that it plays an important role in qualitative research and that triangulation is used to ensure the validity of research. According to Flick (2004), Mathison (1988) and Stake (1995), there are four types of triangulation: data, investigator, methodological and theory. These four types of triangulation are discussed in detail in the following Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4 The Four Types of Triangulation**

<b>Triangulation Types</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<b>Data Triangulation</b>	<p>This involves gathering data through differing sampling strategies such as collecting data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At different times</li> <li>In different contexts</li> <li>From different people</li> </ul>	<p>This study collected data at different times at different festivals. Each festival theme was different, so this study collected data in different contexts. In total, 76 participants from different places and backgrounds were interviewed alongside experts in each of the three philosophical religious traditions (such as the Vice Chairman of the China Taoism Association) to ensure the richness of the data.</p>
<b>Investigator Triangulation</b>	<p>Investigator triangulation involves using several different investigators during the analysis process.</p>	<p>This was not practical considering this was an individual research project. In an effort to establish rapport and earn trust, the researcher goal was to conduct all the research in person.</p>
<b>Methodological Triangulation</b>	<p>Using explicitly different research methods</p>	<p>To ensure multiple sources of evidence, accompanied shopping, participant observations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data.</p>
<b>Theory Triangulation</b>	<p>Theory triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data.</p>	<p>Before conducting each case study, the researcher discussed the research topic with experts from different philosophies or positions who could bring different perspectives. Also, the researcher conducted member checking with participants to make sure of the accuracy of the data interpretation.</p>

Experiential knowledge means knowledge gained through experience. Råheim et al. (2016) noted that a researcher becomes knowledgeable about

the research area and subjects, the contexts, the activities and also the relationships during the course of a project. This research is about how three philosophical religious traditions impact on Chinese consumption behaviour from the native Chinese perspective. The researcher was born in China and has lived in China for more than twenty years; thus, the researcher has an understanding of the Chinese environment and Chinese participants. In the present research, the researcher and the participants are Chinese nationals and this research was conducted in the researcher's home country, which phenomenologically marks the sense of knowing and understanding the participants. As the researcher has a knowledge of Chinese culture and Chinese consumption behaviour, there is no barrier preventing the researcher from understanding the participants' culture or Chinese philosophies and their impact.

Stake (2005, p.449) indicated that the context of a case study is an important consideration, which goes a long way toward making relationships understandable. As suggested by Mortari (2015), the researcher should be 'ever-reflective' to dig into the meanings of the case study and work to relate to its context and experience. This study specifically examines consumer behaviour at four selected Chinese religious festivals as three of these festivals are associated with specific religious origins and are still popular among contemporary Chinese people. Therefore, understanding the case studies (festivals) is a way of learning and exploring the culture. In addition, the festivals promote consumption, so there is the potential to explore participants' purchasing and consumption behaviour in a real environment. Stake (2005) also pointed out that the activities involved in a case study context are very important, and it is significant for the researcher to learn what activities are associated with the selected case study. Each festival case study has its own celebration activities. Looking at the preparations made to celebrate these festivals is a way to help understand the culture and participants' purchasing and consumption motivations as they prepare for the festival activities. Considering the five issues raised by Stake (2005) for evaluating a case study approach, the researcher is confident that a case study strategy is appropriate.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

As many scholars (Patton, 1990; Mason, 2002; Yin, 2013) have suggested in relation to data collection for case studies, multiple data sources should be considered to ensure the validity and credibility of the results. In this study, to ensure that there were multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2013), focus groups (Gill et al., 2008), accompanied shopping (King and Dennis, 2006), participant observations (Jorgensen, 1989; Bowen, 2002) and semi-structured interviews (Chirban, 1996) were used to collect the data. The data collection for this study was divided into two stages. In stage one, two preliminary focus groups were conducted in the UK with eight Chinese participants in each group. Stage two employed multiple data sources (accompanied shopping, participant observations and semi-structured interviews) within the four selected case studies as discussed above. As Yin (2013) suggests, any use of multiple cases should follow a replication process; thus, the data collection for each case study replicated the design of the previous case studies to draw comparisons between them and to determine similarities and discrepancies in results. This section explains in detail how the data collection process was conducted within the two data collection stages.

#### **3.4.1 Focus Group Data Collection**

Two preliminary focus groups were conducted in the UK with eight Chinese participants in each. The participants were selected using purposive sampling from among Chinese people who were staying temporarily in the UK, such as international students, tourists and business travellers. The results were used to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to make preparations for the data collection of the case studies in China. Bell et al. (2018) argue that focus groups are particularly useful when helping the researcher to develop an understanding of why people feel the way they do. The interaction in focus groups also provides a broader picture of the research topic (Krueger and Casey, 2014; Morgan, 1996; Zikmund, 2000).

Focus groups have developed since the 1920s and they are widely used in many fields, such as marketing research, product research and development and organizational studies such as researching employee satisfaction (Kitzinger, 1995). They take the form of an informal discussion (or series of discussions) which involves engaging a group of selected individuals about a particular topic or set of issues (Wilkinson, 2004). Typically, as Nyumba et al. (2018) explained, focus groups bring together a small number of people for a face-to-face discussion centred around a particular topic. The function of the focus group discussion is to encourage a range of responses to provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behaviour, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues. It is expected that through the open-ended nature of the questions, the participants will express their views openly and spontaneously (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996). In addition, Gill (2008) pointed out that focus group discussions are useful for generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs. Therefore, in order to acquire the views, opinions, and the personal consumption experience of Chinese consumers, two focus groups were conducted as the first step in the data collection. Although focus group discussions are widely used to generate information on collective views, and the meanings that lie behind those views, they have also been subject to criticism. The advantages and disadvantages of the focus group method are summarised in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups**

Advantages	Disadvantages
✓ They generate the opportunity to collect data from group integration, which concentrates on the topic of the researcher's interest	✗ Participants may be reluctant to express their true feelings in front of others
✓ A free, open discussion and the interaction between participants may bring out some unexpected ideas	✗ The researcher may not be able to generalise the data easily due to the small sample sizes and heterogeneity of individuals

✓ Allows gathering of data from different subgroups having different perspectives	✗ Lack of representativeness
✓ Non-verbal communication can provide researchers with useful information	✗ Data are difficult to analyse
✓ A focus group is useful in research because emerging themes may be pursued with the group to share experiences	✗ The researcher has less control in a group interview as compared to an individual interview

*Source: Adapted from Gill et al., 2008; Kitzinger (1995); McLafferty (2004); Rabiee (2004)*

It can be seen that the focus group data collection method also has some disadvantages. As pointed out by Morgan (1996), focus groups are neither as strong as participant observation in their ability to observe phenomena in context, nor as strong as in-depth individual interviews in providing a rich understanding of participants' knowledge. Although some other research methods such as interviews can explore participants' thoughts and in-depth feelings, the focus group technique is more flexible and time-saving because more data can be collected at one time instead of arranging one-to-one interviews (Krueger and Casey, 2009). The reason why the researcher chose to conduct focus groups is because focus groups are suitable to use when the existing knowledge of the subject is inadequate (Powell and Single, 1996). Due to the limited amount of research available on the impact of Chinese culture on Chinese consumers, the researcher expected that focus groups would give some insights into this topic. As supported by Powell and Single (1996), focus groups can be employed to explore complex phenomena. According to McClelland (1994), human beings tend to discuss issues and ideas in a group as has been found in behavioural research. Culture-related research is sensitive because people may be reluctant to express their true feelings; thus, group discussions can let them find similar thoughts and can encourage them to talk more. Considering that focus groups are a good method of gathering information and exploring how people perceive particular issues or topics, they have been used as the first step in collecting

the data for this study. The next section explains how the focus groups were designed and how the data were collected.

Although the participants desired for focus groups depend on the complexity of the subject under investigation and the use of the data to be gathered (Powell and Single, 1996), most scholars suggest having 8-10 participants in each group discussion. For this study, the researcher selected two focus groups, each containing eight participants. The reason why more participants were not recruited for each group was that the researcher did not wish to have too many in the group as it then becomes difficult to control. Furthermore, this was a suitable size of focus group to ensure that everyone in the group would have the chance to voice their opinions (Vaughn et al., 1996). All participants were selected using purposive sampling from among Chinese people temporarily staying in the UK, such as international students, tourists and business travellers. Participants were selected via universities and a travel agency. The reason why these participants were selected was because the researcher wished to select people temporarily staying in the UK who would not be so affected by other cultural impacts. People who permanently live in another country may be influenced by foreign culture, thus it may be invalid to evaluate how Chinese culture affects their consumer behaviour.

In total, 16 participants were participated for the focus group discussion using purposive sampling, eight for each group. One group comprised students from Oxford Brookes University (OBU) and the other came from the Golden Tree travel agency which is based in the UK. The researcher joined a Freshers' Fair held by OXCSSA (The Oxford Chinese Students and Scholars Association) to recruit potential focus group members. The reason for doing this is that newly enrolled students at Oxford Brookes have just come to the UK so they are unlikely to have been influenced by the UK culture at this stage. So, this was the most suitable way to recruit potential participants. At the Freshers' Fair, the researcher introduced her research project to the new students in order to find out whether they would be interested in the project. For those who did show interest, the researcher exchanged her contact details with them and contacted them later. A formal

invitation and a participant information sheet were sent out to those who were interested (see Appendix A). The OBU focus group was carried out in the OBU library meeting room, a location with which participants were familiar. It is recommended that focus groups should be conducted in locations that are convenient and comfortable for participants, which are quiet and have some degree of privacy. The reason why the researcher selected the meeting room in the university's library was to make it easier for participants to find as they would be familiar with the location, but also because the researcher knows the facility well. Thus, the researcher felt confident conducting the focus group there. The researcher used the slide projector and began with words of welcome to thank the participants for sparing the time to take part in the focus group. Food and drink were provided to help the participants relax, so that they could express their opinions in a very natural environment.

For the other focus group with tourists who had just come from China, the researcher attached a permission letter from the manager of the travel agency (see Appendix B). The researcher joined a tour with the participants in the UK, and conducted the focus group discussion with them during the tour. The researcher did not want to disturb the participants' established travel plan and wanted to carry out the focus group discussion in a natural setting. Therefore, this focus group discussion was carried out in the coach during the journey to the airport before they flew back to China. The reason for not solely recruiting participants from OBU was that the researcher expected to gather richer data from Chinese visitors from a wider age range, occupation and income bracket than the students of the OBU focus group; in addition, these were people who were not studying in the UK, but visiting as tourists. The two focus group discussions were audio recorded, and notes were also taken by the researcher. The two focus groups and the main findings from the data generated by the focus group discussions are summarized below.

**Table 3.6 Summary of Focus Group Findings**

<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>OBU Focus Group</b>	<b>Travel Agency Focus Group</b>
<b>Number Of Participants</b>	8	8
<b>Location</b>	OBU library meeting room	In the coach during the journey on the way to the airport
<b>Demographic</b>	Age: 20-24 Gender: 6 females 2 males Hometown: Ha'erbin, Shenyang, Shenzhen, Shanghai Occupation: Students	Age: 25-55 Gender: 5 females 3 males Hometown: Beijing, Tianjin, Zhejiang, Jiangsu Occupation: Artist (2), Singer (1), Businessman (3), Housewife (2)
<b>Main Findings</b>	<b>Most Celebrated Festivals</b>	
	Spring Festival Qingming Festival Duanwu Festival Christmas Festival	Spring Festival Qingming Festival Duanwu Festival Middle Autumn Festival
	<b>Major Activities During Festival</b>	
	Shopping Dining out Meeting friends Watching movies	Shopping Meeting friends Travelling Parent-children activities
	<b>Most Frequently Purchased Items During Festival</b>	
	New clothes Gifts Food	Gifts Food New clothes
	<b>Factors in Shopping Decision</b>	
	People around me like it It makes me feel good It is a well-known brand Worth a lot of money	Worth a lot of money It is very practical It is environmentally friendly It is a well-known brand
	<b>Philosophical Religious Traditions</b>	
	Guanxi Face Renqing People's harmony with nature Fengshui Karma	Guanxi Face Renqing People's harmony with nature Fengshui YinYang Chinese medicine Karma

		Frugality
	<b>Self-Defined Consumption Behaviour</b>	
	Impulsive consumption Luxury consumption Practical consumption	Luxury consumption Practical consumption Environmental consumption

The focus group was focused on two main themes of discussion; one was focused on the festival, the other was focused on consumption. As Morgan (1996) stated, focus group data should be collected through the integration of a topic supplied by the researcher. As multiple festival case studies had been selected, it was useful for the researcher to explore participants' beliefs and views on the topic of festivals as well as exploring their consumption during the festival. This study applied a focus group method as the first stage of the investigation, which helped the researcher to sensitise herself to the research topic as well as providing guidelines for further investigation into the multiple festival case studies. The reasons why the researcher used focus groups as the preliminary step lies in four areas as follows: firstly, the nature of focus groups makes them a time-saving way to conduct research, and also for the researcher, conducting two focus groups in the UK saved time compared with travelling to China because the researcher is currently based in the UK. Secondly, the focus groups were used as a tool to develop questions for the semi-structured interviews which were to be one of the data collection methods in the case study research, so the focus groups helped the researcher to fully prepare for this further stage of in-depth exploration. Thirdly, focus groups can provide rich data and key information on the research topic. Considering the scarcity of existing literature on this topic, the focus groups were helpful in this exploratory stage of the study. Fourthly, there were a variety of perceptions and attitudes among the participants and some of the findings were unexpected, which guided the researcher to know where to put the emphasis for the further exploration. Overall, the results were used to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to make preparations for the second stage - data collection in China during the four Chinese festivals which were selected as case studies.

### **3.4.2 Case Study Data Collection**

This research used multiple methods for the collection of case study data: 1). Accompanied shopping with Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists before their festivals; 2). Participant observations during the festivals and 3). Semi-structured interviews in order to explore participants' consumption behaviours at the end of each festival. Each participant took part in the three methods above. The purpose of the accompanied shopping was to observe Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists during the actual purchasing process; this was carried out before their religious celebration day, when they were buying goods in preparation for the celebration of their festival. Finally, a universal case study was conducted on the Chinese Spring Festival, which is celebrated by all Chinese people. The people who were to be observed at the Festival took part in the accompanied shopping. The researcher observed what the respondents actually did and this information was then supplemented with a discussion of the observed behaviour. After the participant observation, they were asked to take part in the in-depth interview. This section firstly explains how the participants were selected for the multiple case studies, and then it presents the process for the accompanied shopping, participant observation and semi-structured interviews respectively.

#### **3.4.2.1 Participant Selection**

Due to the nature of the research question and the purpose of this study, the participants for stage two were recruited by word of mouth (WoM) using purposive sampling. Gentles et al. (2015) defined sampling in qualitative research as the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives. According to Merriam et al. (2015), determining the selection criteria is the first requirement of purposive sampling. In order to fulfil the research objective to explore the impact of each philosophical religious tradition on consumption behaviour in the festival context, the participants selected for each case study had to

fulfil two criteria. The first was they had to self-define as being influenced by one of the three philosophical religious groups, and the second was that they must have celebrated the selected festival every year for at least the previous five years.

Before the researcher conducted the purposive sampling for this study, the researcher discussed her research plan with friends, for the purpose of knowing how Chinese people in different regions celebrate the selected festivals. This involved identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a level of interest. Johl and Renganathan (2010) stated that gaining access to respondents is sometimes a problem when adopting a qualitative approach; in addition, the philosophy of religious traditions is a sensitive topic in China. In planning for this, the researcher utilised her social contacts and she also invited some philosophy experts to participate in this research. After being introduced by social contacts, the researcher found some potential participants for the accompanied shopping, participant observation and interviews. A formal invitation and a participant information sheet were sent out to those who were interested in this study (see Appendix C). However, these potential participants were not acquainted with the researcher who only knew them because of the festival celebrations. The two criteria were the deliberate choice of the researcher in order to narrow down the scope of the relevant participants to those who would be able to contribute properly to the research. This is in line with Tongco's (2007) view that it is best to focus on people with particular characteristics who will be better able to assist with the relevant research. Similarly, Etikan et al. (2016) stated that purposive sampling can help the researcher to clarify what needs to be known and help them set out to find people who can and who are willing to provide the necessary information by virtue of their knowledge or experience. Therefore, this study not only chose the participants who self-identified with a religious philosophical tradition influencing consumption behaviour, but also included 'experts' such as Monk, Priest and subjective expert (lecturers). The differentiation in this study would benefit for understanding the philosophical religious tradition influencing consumption behaviour broadly,

as it not only included normal consumers, but also some ‘special’ consumers like Monk, Priest and subjective expert. In addition, those ‘special consumers’ knowledge or experience is very helpful for the researcher to develop a better understanding of each philosophy during the data collection process as well as for the data interpretation.

In total, 60 participants were selected for the multiple case studies using purposive sampling: 10 from each philosophy-related festival and the remaining 30 were recruited for the Spring Festival case study. Together with the 16 participants selected for the focus groups, there are 76 participants in total for this study. Each participant needed to take part in three research methods: accompanied shopping, participant observation and an in-depth interview. The next section discusses the three techniques used to collect the data for the multiple case studies.

#### **3.4.2.2 Accompanied Shopping**

Accompanied shopping takes place in real-life surroundings which, in the marketing field, has proved to be effective in researching consumer behaviour in the actual environment where it has taken place (King and Dennis, 2006). Goldsmith (2016) defined shopping as a complex type of personal project, where motivations are highly constructed around the realities of lived experience. In order to observe the real purchasing process of Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists during festivals, accompanied shopping was chosen for this study as it is considered one of the most effective ways of understanding consumer purchasing behaviour (Thomas and Garland, 1993).

Shopping involves complex practices and the range of associated experiences means that it is more than the utilitarian act of buying (Light et al., 2010). Accompanied shopping with participants provides close observation of participants’ purchase and consumption behaviours; this is a valuable research procedure for understanding consumers’ shopping experiences *in situ* (Elms and Tinson, 2012). It also provides the researcher

with a rich experiential context to aid the interpretation of participants' shopping choices and the items they purchased.

The purpose of the accompanied shopping in this study was to observe Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists during the actual purchasing process; thus, it was carried out several days before the selected festivals, when participants purchased or consumed certain items to prepare for the festival celebrations. During the accompanied shopping trip, the researcher paid attention to participants' perceptions (what they looked for), actual purchases (what they bought), and later after participants finished shopping, they were asked to explain the choices they made as they shopped (why they shopped). After finishing all the accompanied shopping for one festival, emphasis was placed on participants' consumption similarities, as well as differences in their shopping motivations. This technique not only helped the researcher to understand participants' real consumption experiences, but also helped to develop the interview questions as actual events and behaviour took place, allowing for greater authenticity.

As previously explained, 10 people from each individual case study and 30 from the universal case study took part in the accompanied shopping. The accompanied shopping took place in real-life surroundings e.g. shops and supermarkets. The researcher expected to use this method to explore participants' real purchasing and consumption experience. Overall, the main advantages of conducting accompanied shopping in this study were that it identified in detail exactly what participants purchased during the festival period, and it also provided ample opportunities and reasons to ask follow-up questions and clarify the motivations and rationale behind the purchase of specific products.

### **3.4.2.3 Participant Observation**

Participant observation took place on the day when the participants celebrated their religious festival. Participant observation is a method that

involves living and/or working within particular communities in order to understand how they operate from the inside (Rock, 1979). Jackson (1983) stated that participant observation is a conscious and systematic sharing in life-activities. While participating in the same festival as the respondents, the researcher could observe what the respondents actually did and this information was then supplemented by a discussion of the observed behaviour in order to explore respondents' festival consumption behaviour. As suggested by Alder and Alder (1987), when studying a subculture, particularly a deviant group, researchers must assume social roles that fit into the worlds they are studying. Li (2008) explained that the more secretive and amorphous the activities of the researched, the more necessary it is for the researcher to participate in their activities to learn about their culture. The festival celebration itself is an expression of the culture; therefore, participant observation can help understand the festival culture and understand the participants' cultural values. Being able to observe participants at the festival not only enriched the data, but also mitigated many potential sources of bias. During the participant observation, fieldwork notes were written to record the activities, events, and other features of the observation. These field notes can not only help the researcher as evidence producing meanings and an understanding of the festival, but also as a supplement for interview questions. The researcher designed Table 3.7 to provide guidance when conducting the participant observation.

**Table 3.7 What to Observe During the Participant Observation**

Category	Includes	Researchers should note
<b>Appearance</b>	Clothing, age, gender, physical appearance	What kind of clothes do they wear?
<b>Physical Behaviour and Gestures</b>	What do people do? Who does what?	How do people communicate?
	How do they behave?	What does individuals' behaviour indicates about their feelings?

<b>Consumption Behaviour</b>	What they prepared for the festival	What products or services do participants display in relation to searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing?
	What they consume during the festival	
<b>People Who Stand Out</b>	Participants' decision making process	
	The motivations behind participants' consumption decisions	What's the product, how much does it cost and why do they buy it?
	Characteristics affecting consumer behaviour	
	Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others	The characteristics of these participants?  How do they behave differently compared to other groups?

*Adapted from Jorgense (1989); Bowen (2002); King and Dennis (2006)*

### 3.4.2.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Further, a semi-structured interview is a particularly efficient means of collecting data when the research design involves analysis of people's motivations and opinions (Keats, 1999). In comparison with other data collection methods such as surveys, interviews can provide more detailed information (Woods, 2011). Scholars such as McNamara (1999) have suggested this interview technique as they consider that an interview is a useful tool to 'get to the story behind' the participant's experience. Semi-structured interviews are preferable when using a case study strategy, as Stake (1995) noted that the principle of a case study is to obtain description and interpretations. Interviews make it possible to explore what a person knows, what a person likes or dislikes and what a person

thinks. The aim of semi-structured interviews is to obtain a more detailed, rich understanding of the topic of interest and they usually complement participant observation research methods (Jamshed, 2014). Therefore, semi-structured interviews are suitable for this study and this stage (after the participant observation) in order to explore participants' purchasing and consumption motivations and also differences between their festival consumption and their everyday consumption behaviour.

There are three fundamental types of interviews in qualitative research: unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews (see Table 3.8) (Corbin and Morse, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Jamshed, 2014). Comparing the three types of interviews, this study uses semi-structured interviews for three reasons. Firstly, as two other research methods (accompanied shopping and participant observation) had already been conducted with the participants, the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to seek understanding and interpretation of consumption motivations and the culturally influenced factors behind their behaviour. As some of the predetermined questions came from the accompanied shopping and participant observation, semi-structured interviews were considered suited to exploring attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives. Secondly, compared to a structured interview, a semi-structured interview has more flexibility, as the question order can be modified and questions can be added to follow up on issues raised by the participant. Lastly, this study uses a case study strategy to explore how the three main philosophical religious traditions in China impact on Chinese consumption behaviour. Due to the scarcity of existing research in this area, the semi-structured interviews explored the questions coming from the accompanied shopping and participant observation.

**Table 3.8 The Three Types of Interviews**

Types	Meaning	Advantages	Disadvantages
Structured	Predetermined questions with 'standardized' or an identical set of questions.	Measures, seeks facts, attitudes, knowledge, behaviours	Minimizes interaction  No flexibility
	Predetermined	Can potentially	Prejudices,

<b>Semi-structured</b>	questions, whose order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perceptions of what seems most appropriate.	increase response rates Well suited for exploring attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives	stereotypes, appearance and/or perceptions of the researcher may alter the response
<b>Unstructured</b>	Informal. The interviewer has a general area of interest and lets the conversation develop within this area.	Useful for researching sensitive groups and sensitive subjects  The respondent can develop answers and direct the interview to areas that interest them	Non-directive interviewing  Non-standardized interviewing

*Adapted from Gillham (2000); Jamshed (2014); Kvale (1996); Saunders et al. (2016)*

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy. All the interviews lasted for a minimum of 45 minutes, with the longest interview lasting nearly 4.5 hours. The researcher ensured the accuracy of the transcripts by double-checking the audio recordings and amending the transcripts in relation to inaccuracies with the transcription and to clarify inaudible responses (McLellan et al., 2003; Hagens et al., 2009). The interview data were transcribed and translated from Chinese into English by the researcher; two interviews from each case study were randomly chosen by a bilingual and bicultural (Chinese and English) person to check the accuracy of the words being discussed in translation. In addition, reflexive diary (see Appendix H) was written after each interview as the record of the research process and the reflections on the interviews or discussions.

To summarise the data collection for this research, accompanied shopping, participant observations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect multiple sources of evidence for the case study. Table 3.9 summarises the two-stage data collection process in this study.

**Table 3.9 Two Stages of Data Collection**

		<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>Stage 1: Focus Group</b>		OBU Focus Group	8	Focus Group Discussion	1.5 Hours
		Travel Agency Focus Group	8		1 Hour
<b>Stage 2: Multiple Case Studies</b>	Qingming Festival	Confucians: Con1-Con10	10	1) Accompanied shopping	28 Days
	Duanwu Festival	Taoists: Tao1- Tao10	10	2) Participant observations	30 Days
	Laba Festival	Buddhists: Bud1-Bud 10	10	3) Semi-structured interviews	29 Days
	Spring Festival	Confucians: Con11-Con17 Taoists: Tao11- Tao16 Buddhists: Bud11-Bud17 Hybrid <sup>1</sup> : Hyb1-Hyb10	30	<i>Each participant took part in all three methods above</i>	32 Days

<sup>1</sup> Hybrid means those participants who consider themselves to have been influenced by some of the elements of some or each of the three philosophies.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Methods**

As Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) stated, one of the most important steps in the qualitative research process is analysis of the data. This step in the qualitative research process typically involves assigning descriptive codes to data (Bell et al., 2018). Thomas (2017) stated that qualitative data analysis is descriptive and provides details about the assumptions and procedures used. An inductive approach condenses data into a summary format and establishes clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data. No matter what form the ‘raw’ qualitative data comes in, either transcripts of interviews or observational notes, the material is likely to be highly rich in detail but unwieldy and intertwined in terms of content. Therefore, “it is often at this first stage that several hundred pages of transcripts or field notes, hours of recordings, or piles of original documents can seem quite daunting. It is precisely for this reason that organised steps to ‘manage’ the data are essential” (Ritchie et al., 2013, p.221). This study used different methods to analyse different stages of data. Therefore, this section is divided into two parts: focus group data analysis and multiple case study data analysis.

#### **3.5.1 Focus Group Analysis**

For the focus groups, all the data relevant to each category were identified and examined using a process called constant comparison, in which each item is checked or compared with the rest of the data to establish analytical categories (Pope et al., 2000). The purpose of the focus group data in this study was to help the researcher to sensitise herself to the research topic as well as to provide guidelines for further investigation in relation to multiple festival case studies. According to Onwuegbuzie (2009), focus group data can be analysed via constant comparison analysis, especially when there are multiple focus groups within the same study, which allows the researcher to assess general saturation.

Lewis-Beck et al. (2003) described constant comparison as a data-analytical process whereby each interpretation and finding is compared with existing findings as it emerges from the data analysis. Kolb (2012) defined constant comparative analysis as a method to develop concepts from the data by coding and analysing them simultaneously. Three major stages characterize the constant comparison analysis method: comparing incidents applicable to each category; integrating categories and their properties; delimiting and writing the theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Neumark-Sztainer (1999) suggested that the constant comparative analysis method relies on comparing and contrasting data to assess the range of possibilities that emerge from the data. This method can be used to generate themes that can be further explored by other methods, which is in line with the researcher's objective for the focus group data analysis to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to prepare her for the data collection from the case studies in China.

The researcher followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion to analyse the focus group findings using three procedures: data reduction, display and conclusion drawing. At the beginning of the data analysis, the researcher engaged in 'open coding' so as to be open to any possible pattern or theme that may emerge from the data. Then the researcher followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion to discard all irrelevant information and draw conclusions from the mass of data to develop codes that emerge from the data. Predefined codes are categories and themes based on prior knowledge. As mentioned above, the constant comparison method is used to help find themes, patterns and relationships.

### **3.5.2 Multiple Case Study Analysis**

As previously mentioned, three data collection methods were used to collect the data from the multiple case studies. For the accompanied shopping and participant observation data, the researcher used constant comparison analysis. All the data relevant to each category were identified and

examined on the basis of checking or comparing each item with the rest of the data to establish analytical categories (Pope et al., 2000). The researcher listed all the items which participants purchased and consumed during each festival; this enabled a horizontal and vertical comparison between participants' consumption behaviour. That is to say, constant comparison not only helped the researcher to compare the items participants purchased and consumed within each case study, it also meant that she could compare consumption across different case studies.

A key aspect of the qualitative case study data analysis was the search for meaning through direct interpretation of what was observed by the researcher as well as what was experienced and reported by subjects (Ritchie et al., 2013). Data collected from the multiple case studies were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and is used to analyse classifications, as well as present themes (patterns) that relate to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). One purpose of using thematic analysis was to help limit researcher bias. According to Bryman (2008), the use of thematic analysis with no pre-determined themes lets the themes emerge from the data. Therefore, the researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases to carry out the thematic analysis: 1) formalising the data, 2) generating the initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing the themes, 5) defining and norming the themes and 6) writing the findings. For each case study, the researcher repeated the coding process above, and compared the new data to the prior findings to re-evaluate and revise the patterns, themes, and categories. Table 3.10 provides the summary of coding, sub-themes and themes from the data of each case study.

For the semi-structured interviews, all the recorded interviews were transcribed and double-checked by the researcher. Also, the researcher conducted member-checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) which involved going back to participants face to face for their review and approval of the content and accuracy.

**Table 3.10 Summary Themes, Sub-Themes and Coding from the Data**

Multiple Cases	Example of Transcription and Its Initial Code	Initial Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
<p><b>Confucianism (Qingming Festival)</b></p>	<p>“...I feel pressure to have one, because my clients and business partners all have one and I am willing to spend more to maintain my face value...”( Con4, p.132)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Maintain face value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain face value</li> <li>• Not losing face</li> <li>• Positive self-image</li> <li>• Fulfil self-image</li> <li>• Face giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face obligation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Face</b></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exert a mutually coercive power within a social work</li> <li>• Face saving in group</li> <li>• Face matters in the public relationship</li> <li>• Social status and wealth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face conformity</li> </ul>	
	<p>“...When presenting a gift, we always think that the equivalence return considerations are important...” (Con3, p.141)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Reciprocal favours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship</li> <li>• Private connections</li> <li>• Relatives orientation</li> <li>• Interdependent</li> <li>• Predetermined relationship (family, friends)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Group Guanxi</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guanxi</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reciprocal favours</li> <li>• Recipient orientation</li> <li>• Social interactions</li> <li>• Business relationships</li> <li>• Business etiquette</li> <li>• Social behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-Group Guanxi</li> </ul>		

<b>Buddhism (Laba Festival)</b>	<p>“... Everything is connected. We do good to the environment and society, and the society, and the society will provide a good return ...” ( Bud5, p.159)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> All living beings are interrelated and interdependent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All living beings are interrelated and interdependent</li> <li>• Love all living beings</li> <li>• Immoral for humans to exploit animals</li> <li>• Right of animals</li> <li>• Non-sentient nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent co-origination</li> </ul>	<b>Paticca-samuppada</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts and actions</li> <li>• Ecological way</li> <li>• Create sustainable society</li> <li>• Equal right reduce motivation for selfish material gain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chain of causation</li> </ul>	
	<p>“...When it causes a problem for the environment, the environment will take revenge on human beings, this is karma...”( Bud2, p.163)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> A punishment of bad thing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of interrelated things</li> <li>• Sharing</li> <li>• Cause</li> <li>• Consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause and effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destiny</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A punishment of bad thing</li> <li>• Moral standard of right and wrong</li> <li>• The production of life circle</li> <li>• A punishment of bad thing</li> <li>• Fate</li> </ul>			
	<p>“...I have never purchased fur clothing, or leather, or any products made out of animals. Animals also have the right to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value animal life</li> <li>• Compassion</li> <li>• Do not kill</li> <li>• Avoid inflicting suffering on animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-killing</li> </ul>	<b>Ahimsa</b>

	feel free from pain...”( Bud4, p.161)  <i>Initial Code: Value animal life</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-being of animals</li> <li>• Moral virtues of not killing</li> <li>• Vegetarianism</li> </ul>		
	“...I hate this over-consumption, it causes me suffering and reminds me that when I was young my family was so poor, I did not have enough to eat. I feel guilty seeing the waste...” (Bud9, p.165)  <i>Initial Code: Over consumption cause suffering</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over-consumption cause suffering</li> <li>• Moderation</li> <li>• Perform meritorious deeds</li> <li>• Frugality</li> <li>• Engagement by giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of aloofness towards brands</li> </ul>	<b>Middle path</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid material pleasures</li> <li>• Let go of the desire for things</li> <li>• Gain spiritually</li> <li>• True happiness</li> <li>• Utilitarian characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-attachment to possessions</li> </ul>	
<b>Taoism (Duanwu Festival)</b>	“...When I buy clothes I focus on the material of clothes. Natural materials, especially cotton, are always my first choice...”(Tao3, p.192)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural material</li> <li>• Green/organic food</li> <li>• Herb</li> <li>• Tea</li> <li>• Chinese medicine</li> <li>• Taoist philosophy and health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Body</li> </ul>	<b>Tian Ren He Yi</b>

	<i>Initial Code:</i> Natural material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fengshui</li> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Living environment</li> <li>• Luck/hope</li> <li>• Avoid bad things</li> <li>• Amulet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Earth's Energy Lines (Fengshui)</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental belief/concern</li> <li>• Protection</li> <li>• Natural ecological balance</li> <li>• Avoid cause pollution</li> <li>• Environmental friendly</li> <li>• Harmony with nature</li> <li>• Positive attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Environment</li> </ul>	
<b>Universal Case Study (Chinese Spring Festival)</b>	“...I need to present a positive image and maintain my networks. Networks must be maintained in order to succeed in business...” ( Con16, p.222)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic</li> <li>• Logo and brand</li> <li>• Luxury</li> <li>• Maintain face value</li> <li>• Not losing face</li> <li>• Face giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face obligation</li> </ul>	<b>Face</b>
	<i>Initial Code:</i> Self-image /social self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social circles</li> <li>• Status and social prestige</li> <li>• Social accomplishment</li> <li>• Social status and wealth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face conformity</li> </ul>	
	“...Everyone will present normal red envelopes. I do not want to be the same and the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-image /social self</li> <li>• Relationship</li> <li>• Social behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Group Guanxi</li> </ul>	<b>Guanxi</b>

	<p>recipient will not feel special as well...” (Con13, p.227)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Recipient orientation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predetermined relationship (family, friends)</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipient orientation</li> <li>• Reciprocal favours/ manner</li> <li>• Group orientation</li> <li>• Reciprocal favours</li> <li>• Social interactions</li> <li>• Business relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-Group Guanxi</li> </ul>	
	<p>“...Therefore, even though I do not eat fish or meat myself; I still shop for it together with my family members...” (Bud15, p.217)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Vegetarianism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetarianism</li> <li>• Value animal life</li> <li>• Compassion</li> <li>• Well-being of animals</li> <li>• Moral virtues of not killing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-killing</li> </ul>	<b>Ahimsa</b>
	<p>“...I bought lots of new clothes during the Spring Festival to give away to welfare house children. They are not expensive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing</li> <li>• Maintain the self</li> <li>• Cause</li> <li>• Consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause and effect</li> </ul>	<b>Karma</b>

	<p>at all, I feel happier to realise myself by sharing...” ( Bud13, p.223)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Sharing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement by giving</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Practicality</li> <li>• A punishment of bad thing</li> <li>• Moral standard of right and wrong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destiny</li> </ul>	
	<p>“... I only pay attention to the fabric and details of whether it is non-harmful or natural material...” (Tao12, p.224)</p> <p><i>Initial Code:</i> Natural material</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural material</li> <li>• Food safety</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Green/organic food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Body</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tian Ren He Yi</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Environmental belief/concern</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Environment</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good luck</li> <li>• Avoid bad things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony with the Earth’s Energy Lines (Fengshui)</li> </ul>			

All the data were analysed manually throughout the analysis, which helped to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic and to continually refine the researcher's interpretations instead of using software for the data analysis which, according to Blair (2015), might be more suited to those who ultimately wish to quantify their data. Thus, software analysis does not match the research philosophy of this study well. All the detailed analysis from the multiple case studies is presented in Chapters Four and Five.

### **3.6 Ensuring the Research Quality**

Reliability and validity are common concepts in quantitative research and now they are being reconsidered within the qualitative research paradigm (Golafshani, 2003; Healy and Perry, 2000; Morse et al., 2002; Tracy, 2010). Patton (2001) stated that validity and reliability are two factors that any qualitative researcher should be paying attention to when designing a study, analysing results or judging the quality of the study.

Stenbacka (2001, p.551) regarded reliability "as one of the quality concepts in qualitative research which needs to be solved in order to claim a study as part of proper research". Meanwhile, validity is established through consideration of three main aspects: content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity. The first of these largely depends on sampling and careful construction of the research instrument and refers to the degree to which the entirety of the phenomenon under investigation is addressed (Long and Johnson, 2000). Different scholars apply different criteria to ensure research quality; this study has adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notion of 'trustworthiness' to evaluate the study quality. Trustworthiness includes the concepts of credibility, transferability and dependability.

Healy and Perry (2000) proposed that validity and reliability rely on multiple perceptions of a single reality, so the triangulation of several data sources should be considered when designing research. In this study, there are multiple sources of evidence: accompanied shopping, participant

observations and semi-structured interviews. This has provided a full picture of participants' entire consumption process. Also, the data collection procedure has been repeated for every case study which has allowed for comparisons, reflections and discussions of the research topics. Using multiple sources of data collection has allowed the researcher to employ a more innovative methodology than the traditional interview or other single method; it has provided supplemental (and more accurate) information about respondents. In this research, rather than interviewing or asking people to describe their consumption experience, multiple methods have been applied to discovering participants' consumption motivations, real consumption items and how they selected certain items etc. - the potential is endless. Triangulation in multiple data collection also improves data quality as memory is not infallible and there is sometimes a difference between what participants say and what they do (this has been proven in this research) (see Table 3.4).

Golafshani (2003) pointed out that triangulation, including multiple methods of data collection and data analysis, can improve the credibility of research. This study not only uses triangulation across multiple sources of data, it also uses different data analysis methods; for example, constant comparison analysis for the focus groups, accompanied shopping and participant observation data, while using thematic analysis for the interview data. Using multiple sources of evidence and being able to actually observe the participants at the festivals (participant observation) has not only enriched the data types, but has also mitigated some potential sources of bias.

In addition, the time spent doing the fieldwork was an additional strength of this research. As an illustration, each case study took almost a month and the longest interview was nearly 4.5 hours. The researcher even lived in the mountains with the Taoists to observe their behaviour as there are very few existing studies on Taoist behaviour. This observation technique afforded the researcher the opportunity to be invited into the Taoist living and daily behaviour environment to eat with Taoists and learn from them. This prolonged engagement contributed to the reliability and credibility of the

study. Additionally, gathering the views of participants, especially the experts from each philosophy, increased the credibility of the data.

After all the data analysis was finished and reported, the researcher contacted the participants by WeChat and went back to China and conducted the member-checking with two participants from each case study to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data analysis. The researcher summarised the findings and discussed them with the participants to see whether a ‘true’ or authentic representation was made of what they conveyed in the previous data collection process. Birt et al. (2016) confirm that member-checking is a technique for exploring the credibility of results that ensures the trustworthiness of the findings and that it is the bedrock of high quality qualitative research.

### **3.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has focused on the methodology and research procedures and has justified their suitability for this particular research. This study has employed a qualitative multiple case study approach in the interpretive paradigm. This chapter has also explained the data collection and analysis methods and how the research quality has been evaluated. The next chapter presents the findings from the multiple case studies in line with the themes from the analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY FINDINGS

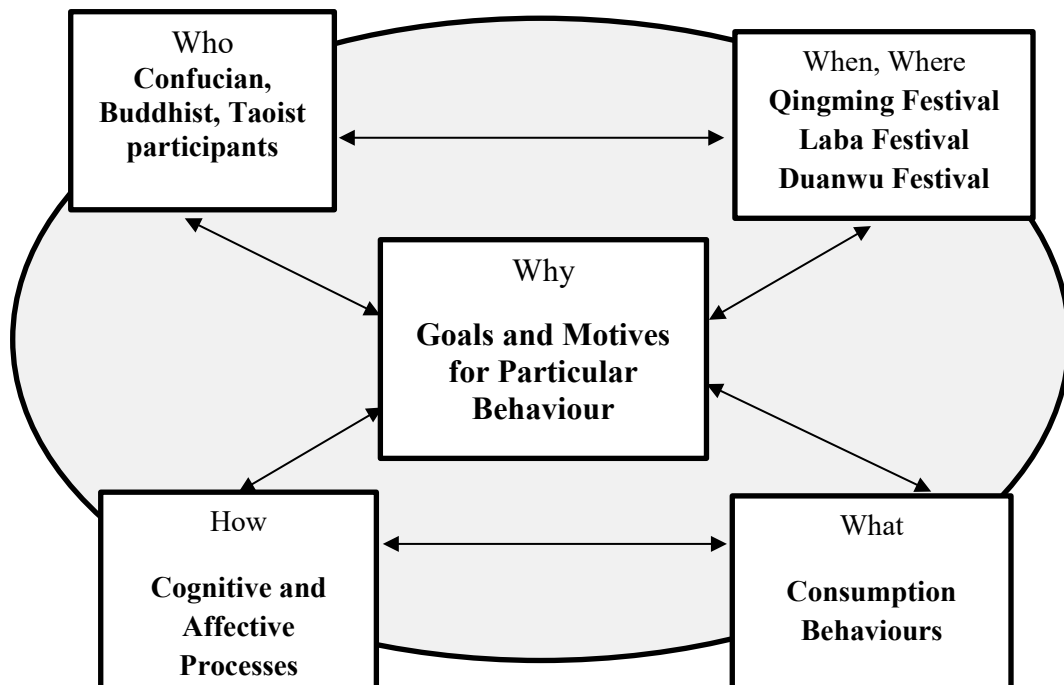
#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from three individual case studies and is structured into four main sections. Section 4.1 presents the findings from the Confucian case study. It identifies and explains two stages of Confucian participants' consumption behaviour. Firstly, the findings address their festival-related behaviour. The findings explain how the Confucian participants prepared for the Qingming Festival and the motives and goals behind their festival consumption behaviour. Then the findings identify Confucian participants' daily consumption behaviour. Section 4.2 presents the findings from the Buddhist case study while section 4.3 presents the findings from the Taoist case study. Each section follows the same structure to present the findings of each case study; finally, a summary of the individual case study findings is contained in section 4.4.

A general organizing framework for presenting the findings from each case study is shown in Figure 4.1. The central concern of all the sections in this chapter is the 'why' of consumption. Understanding consumption, to develop a coherent theoretical description of participants' consumption behaviour, is based on participants' perceptions and motivations. Therefore, for the participants from each philosophy, their motives and desires are employed to explain 'why'. The design of Figure 4.1 is underpinned by the idea that for the purpose of understanding consumption behaviour, one should understand consumption motives and desires. The findings of each individual case study addresses the linkage between the 'what', the 'why' and the 'how'. The accompanied shopping results present what participants consumed during the festivals, the participant observation explored 'how' participants celebrated specific festivals and the in-depth interview results analyse 'what' needs participants are seeking to meet and 'why' and 'how'

they choose to meet them in the way they do. In summary, the chapter presents purchasing and consumption experience in philosophical religious tradition-related festivals and the daily lives of Chinese consumers, as influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. This fulfils Research Objective 2: To explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, focusing on three Chinese traditional festivals - the Qing Ming Festival, the Laba Festival and the Duanwu Festival respectively.

**Figure 4.1 The Organizing Framework**



#### **4.1 Confucian Case Study Findings**

These findings explore the philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour in a particular philosophy-related festival context. A participant profile and brief context of the Qingming Festival is presented below, followed by a presentation of the findings from Confucian participants' festival and daily consumption.

#### 4.1.1 Context of The Qingming Festival (who, when, where)

Participants from different places and backgrounds were chosen alongside experts in Confucian philosophy, such as lecturers from Confucius Institutes or researchers in the philosophy of Confucianism, in order to have multiple sources and to assist in further understanding of the philosophy. Through the discussion and interaction with the experts from each philosophy, the researcher deepened their knowledge and understanding of each philosophical religious tradition, rethought the experts' views and reflected on them during the research process. In addition, having experts from each philosophy increased the credibility of the data as they are professionals in each field. The participants in the Qingming case study comprised ten people aged between 27 and 52 years old (see Table 4.1). Participants possessed a background in and knowledge of Confucianism and self-identified as being influenced by Confucian philosophy. Furthermore, the participants have celebrated the Qingming festival every year for at least five years. Therefore, ten participants who self-identified that they were influenced by Confucian philosophy were chosen by purposive sampling.

**Table 4.1 Profile of Confucian Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Educational Attainment</b>
<b>Con1</b>	Female	48	Lecturer	Master's Degree
<b>Con2</b>	Male	45	Businessman	Foundation Degree
<b>Con3</b>	Female	35	Sales Manager	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Con4</b>	Female	30	Fashion Industry	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Con5</b>	Female	42	Lecturer	Doctorate Degree

<b>Con6</b>	Female	26	Unemployed	Master's Degree
<b>Con7</b>	Male	39	Civil servant	Master's Degree
<b>Con8</b>	Male	52	Businessman	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Con9</b>	Male	27	Sole trader	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Con10</b>	Female	28	Designer	Bachelor's Degree

The participants above were selected for the Qingming Festival. In order to develop a full understanding of how Confucian participants behave during the Qingming Festival, the researcher conducted accompanied shopping trips with these participants to supermarkets, street vendors and department stores in Zhejiang and Anhui province in China. Participant observation was carried out to observe participants' festival consumption experience during the Qingming Festival period. This was followed by semi-structured interviews to explore participants' consumption motivations.

Qingming, which means 'clear and bright' in Chinese, is a Confucian festival that dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. to 221 C.E.), and is now a Chinese national holiday (Xu et al., 2018). The Qingming Festival is also called Tomb Sweeping Day or Pure Brightness in English, usually falling on the fourth or fifth of April (Yang, 2006). In traditional Chinese culture, the Qingming Festival is a day for paying respect to deceased friends and relatives, to cherish the memory of deceased parents, and to remember ancestors. Confucius had very strict ideas about how people should behave towards their parents: while they are alive, serve them according to ritual; when they die, bury them according to ritual and sacrifice to them according to ritual (Ames and Rosemont Jr 2010; Waley, 2012).

In the Confucian philosophy, Confucius believed people should obey their parents when young, care for them when they are old, mourn at length when they die and make sacrifices in their memory thereafter (Chen, 1908).

Mourning is considered a paramount expression of ‘filial piety’. This is the reason why participants treat the Qingming Festival seriously. The filial piety belief system is clearly manifested in the mourning and ancestral worship rituals. Understanding of the filial piety duty in Chinese Confucian culture is broader than that of Western Culture (Li et al., 2010). According to Canda (2013), filial duty is often understood as the practice of caring for ageing parents in Western cultures, while in Confucian culture, filial piety is more than about caring; it is about authority, power, the transmission of knowledge and values, and the continuity of the family lineage. Paying respect and showing filial duty to ancestors is a practice that connects individuals with their family histories, which ensures the younger generation remember their origins and the favours they have received from their ancestors (Ames and Rosemont Jr, 2010). For centuries, the Chinese people have commemorated this day by sweeping the graves of their forefathers and leaving symbolic tributes, an act reflecting Confucius’ teachings of loyalty towards family and tradition.

The Qingming Festival entails many rituals; chief among them is usually a day out spent visiting and tidying ancestors’ graves as well as placing food, chrysanthemums and sacrificing products at the graveside. A traditional staple dish to eat during the festival, especially in southern China, is sweet green rice balls made of glutinous rice, vegetables and stuffed with sweetened bean paste. In summary, the Qingming Festival is a day in Chinese culture to commemorate one’s family or ancestors.

#### **4.1.2 Confucian Participants’ Festival Consumption Behaviour**

This section discusses Confucian participants’ festival consumption behaviour. It places an emphasis on participants’ consumption similarities, as well as differences in their shopping motivation (why they shop) (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Westbrook and Black, 1985), participant perceptions (what they look for) and behavioural beliefs. These behavioural beliefs were defined based on Li and Su (2007)’s concept of three unique characteristics

- namely obligation, distinctiveness and other orientation - as discussed in the literature chapter. According to Ajzen (2015), behavioural beliefs refer to the perceived positive or negative consequences of performing the behaviour, and the subjective values or evaluations of these consequences. As different beliefs lead to different behaviour, by comparing and contrasting the general similarities and differences, the nature of the Confucian consumption experience can be identified. All items for consumption by individual participants have been checked and compared with the rest of the participants to establish analytical categories (See Table 4.2). To begin with, the items participants purchased during the Qingming Festival were listed in Table 4.2, then the shopping items were divided into two categories - food and offering products - to explain participants' desires and the motivation behind that consumption.

#### **4.1.2.1 Shopping Items**

Confucian participants purchased green rice balls, chrysanthemums and sacrificing products and paper-made imitations of famous brand-name luxuries for their preparation for the celebration of the Qingming festival (see Table 4.2). In addition, participants purchased wine, cigarettes and health care products as gifts for friends, family members and business partners during the Qingming Festival. In this section, the participants' consumption and usage of said products is presented and explained in detail in two categories: food and offering products. Additionally, the photographs displayed in this section were taken during the data collection process to visually capture the items participants bought at the Qingming Festival.

**Table 4.2 Findings from the Accompanied Shopping with Confucian Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Shopping Items</b>	<b>Participant Perceptions</b>	<b>Confucian Participants' Behavioural Beliefs</b>
<b>Con1</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Golden Ingot Tree Healthcare Product	“Apart from items commonly bought by everyone else, I prefer to differentiate myself from others, such as through modern offering products.”	Need for Distinctiveness
<b>Con2</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Incense Paper Money Healthcare Product Cigarettes and wine	“I prefer branded items because they provide security (Green rice balls) and face value, especially during gifting (Healthcare Product, Cigarettes and wine).”	Brand Attitude Face Orientation
<b>Con3</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Incense Paper Money Healthcare Product	“I believe having a better brand is better than having a better product as others would recognize their value, which avoids losing face value.”	Brand Attitude Face Orientation
<b>Con4</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Paper iPhone Healthcare Product	“I prefer imported food and health products. Thus, I buy health care products from Australia, which makes me feel special. I also bought paper made sacrificing supplies like “high class villa” and “International branded.”	Need for Distinctiveness
<b>Con5</b>	Green rice balls Incense Paper Money	“It seems weird if others are buying them and I am not.”	Group Conformity

<b>Con6</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Incense Paper Money	“People usually buy those items so I buy those items as well.”	Group Conformity
<b>Con7</b>	Green rice balls Incense Paper Money	“I bought those items because people buy those.”	Group Conformity
<b>Con8</b>	Green rice balls Cigarettes and wine	“I prefer purchasing products that are well known to others. Face value is very important to me.”	Brand Attitude Face Value
<b>Con9</b>	Green rice balls Incense Paper Money	“I buy those items every year during the Qingming Festival; this year was no exception. I believe others buy those as well.”	Group Conformity
<b>Con10</b>	Green rice balls Chrysanthemums Incense Paper Money Healthcare Product	“I bought these items because others buy them. If I do not have what the others have, I feel ashamed and do not want my family to lose face.”	Group Conformity Face Orientation

*(Source: the researcher)*

#### 4.1.2.1.1 Food Consumption

Food is the most essential element of celebrating festivals and plays an important role in a consumer's life and culture. Each festival has its own associated food; as a result, the study has generated different food preferences. Understanding participants' different food preferences helps to explain participants' food consumption behaviour.



**Figure 4. 2 Green Rice Balls**

During the Qingming Festival, people have the habit of eating cold food such as green rice balls. Green rice balls are made of a mixture of glutinous rice powder and green vegetable juice, stuffed with sweetened bean paste. The findings show there are many differences between how participants purchase, use, and dispose of the green rice balls. As an illustration, Con1 and Con5 focused on the green rice balls' natural content and product safety. Con2, Con3, Con4, Con6, Con8 and Con9 paid more attention to the food packaging, while Con6 and Con10, concentrated on its promotion. Before purchasing green rice balls, Con5 examined the product label carefully for its sugar content. Therefore, a manufacturer's claims on the label may influence consumer judgments. For example, Confucian participants' arguments provide evidence regarding the packaging and presentation of green rice balls.

“I prefer something nicely packaged for my family and friends. There are a large variety of green rice balls on the market; I believe most of them taste similar if not the same. Thus, I picked the one which I think looks the most delicate.”

[Con4]

Con4 is a good example of showing that how packaging influences consumer decisions on food consumption. This is in line with Silayoi and Speece (2007) view that packaging and design represents what the brand stands for as much as other elements of the brand visual identity do, and in certain cases, the packaging is almost as important as the product itself.

Apart from this, social and group pressure is another factor that influences consumer decisions on food consumption. Confucian participants feel the need to purchase certain items due to peer (group members, friends, colleagues) pressure. Participants such as Con5, Con6, Con9, and Con10 attribute their consumption behaviour related to purchasing green rice balls or offering products to social and group pressure. Confucian consumers are more likely to be influenced by their social circle, who tend to have similar consumption behaviours. Take Con10 as an example: “people must consume according to their social circle to avoid losing face for both themselves and the people around them.” Similar behaviour was observed for other some participants, an example being Con6, who considered group conformity to be a means of reducing social distance with their social circle.

“I bought green rice balls and sacrificing products because people usually buy those. My wife always calls me a copycat as I always follow what others buy and the brand they chose. You cannot go wrong if you purchase what most people buy, especially for certain important occasions, such as first meetings, dinner parties, weddings, and other important ceremonies. It saves me time by simply referring to others’ purchases, then making appropriate adjustments myself (i.e. not too simple, not to lose face).”

[Con6]

Group conformity is the underlying belief in consumer choices. People mostly consume what others have in order to seek conformity. This is also because Confucianism is manifested in the importance of networks of interpersonal relationships which are the lifeblood of personal relationships and business dealing in Chinese society (Park and Luo, 2001). Therefore, any discussion regarding group conformity should always take into account the participants’ concern for behaving properly within their group, so as to maintain ‘face’ with others in the group. Conversely, discussions about face value should consider group conformity and how group members perceive their face value. This is also the reason why the two concepts are closely correlated when discussing Chinese Confucian consumption behaviour (Huang et al., 2011; Hwang, 1987; Shou et al., 2011). When participants discussed group conformity, they naturally introduced the face value

concept. To demonstrate, participants explained that face is important in their lives, especially during festivals or important occasions. Below, Con10's statement is an example of the impact of face orientation:

“A person needs face like a tree needs bark (Chinese proverb). I bought green rice balls, chrysanthemums, and other offering products because those are the common products usually bought by others. If I do not have what others have, it would lead to a negative perception of my family and me. I would be considered not to understand ‘Li’ (rite). I do not want to lose my ‘face’ or that of my family.”

[Con10]

During the Qingming Festival, as well as green rice balls, participants also present healthcare products, cigarettes and wine as gifts to others. Gifts play a significant role in allowing them to not only show respect towards elders and superiors, but also to show their commitment and enthusiasm towards maintaining a close relationship with family and friends (Yang, 1994). Due to hectic work schedules and the long distances involved when working in other cities, some participants travel back to their hometown to celebrate the festival. According to participants, it is tradition to bear gifts for family and friends. Healthcare products are common gifts for the older generation, and cigarettes and wine are often given to business partners. For example, Con2 said:

“I bought cigarettes and alcohol because they are common gifts, especially for business partners. It would be wise to choose from a well-known brand with a more expensive price tag. The older generation, on the other hand, are more health conscious; therefore, traditional health supplements are welcomed. Thus, I bought foreign health products for my parents and the older members of my family.”

Concerning consumers' purchasing decisions, these are influenced by situation-specific motivational factors, such as gifting, the recipient's status and how close the relationship is. When purchasing gifts, social status and the relationship between the giver and the recipient comes into play. Con9 is a good example which explains how the recipient's status influences the gift giver's consumption behaviour.

“I purchased three different kinds of cigarettes as gifts for my business partners. I gave the well-known brand of cigarettes to higher status work partners, like the local official department. The middle range cigarettes were for friends and myself, while the less expensive one was for the cooperative factories who want to do business with me.”

Gifts of global or famous brands, which could obtain immediate positive attention, recognition, respect and prestige from the receivers, results in a maintaining of face value for both the gift giver and receiver. Therefore, there is a difference between personal articles and gifts. In addition, product selection differs depending on the receiver, or to whom the product is given. Confucius' face value and relationship orientation influence Chinese consumption behaviour in relation to the purchasing process and decision-making. This difference more obviously lies in the gift giving. Con9 is a good example of showing how gift selection differs depending on the receiver, as he presents different classifications of gifts to different people in the same festival. The culture of a society determines if a particular occasion merits gift-giving or gift-exchange (Goodwin et al., 1990). This sense of pride and gaining face value can be maximized through gifting to senior persons, like business partners, senior colleagues, or other stakeholders. It is explained by one participant as follows:

“Recipient orientation is crucial in gifting. The recipient's status, group and position have to be considered...When gifting a senior member of staff, more thought should be given to ensure it does not go wrong. Acquiring a gift equivalent to their status is key. Top brands represent high status. I want to make them happy and not lose face myself. Therefore, I always choose branded products, such as alcohol and cigarettes for my business partners.”

[Con8]

Culture specifies the rules in the gift-giving process in terms of motivation, selection, and brand-orientation. Face value affects the importance attached to gift giving, the choice of the brand, and the gift selection. In Confucian society, consumption is used as a tool to maintain or enhance face value as well as sustain a relationship. Confucian participants are pressured into consuming high value or branded products in order to save, maintain or

enhance face value, as well as to respect others' face. This consumer behaviour is especially shown in gift giving.

#### 4.1.2.1.2 Offering products

During the Qingming Festival, the observed participants and their family members went to the countryside to sweep, wash, repair, and paint their ancestors' graves. Sacrificing products included food, wine, incense, chrysanthemums, paper money or paper-made imitations of famous brand-name luxuries.



**Figure 4. 3 Chrysanthemums**

When shopping for offering products, the researcher was surprised to find them being sold in pricey packages. Instead of the sacrificing supplies they wanted, participants were required by the vendors to choose from a price range of CNY 200 (£22), 400 (£44), 600 (£67), or 800 (£89). Usually, the latest or rarest offering products were more expensive. The underlying perception was that the value of offering products was represented by the price itself rather than its characteristics or meaning. In other words, the value of products for public consumption relies on the implied face value gained by purchasers, rather than the actual cost or aesthetic value of the sacrificing supplies themselves.

Being 'expensive' is the first criterion used by participants to choose offering products. Most participants chose within a price range of 600 CNY-800 CNY. Price is perceived as a multidimensional stimulus to consumers in that it affects consumers' purchasing intentions (Zhou and Nakamoto, 2011). Con5 and Con6 equated a higher price with a higher perceived quality.

“When I am unsure about what to buy, or lack knowledge about the product, I always choose the higher price as I believe higher price equates to better quality.”

[Con6]

Prestige sensitivity is believed to be another factor influencing consumers' willingness to buy higher priced chrysanthemums. Con1, Con2, Con4, Con6 and Con9 purchased the most expensive option as it implied and provided them with both prestige and face value. Face consciousness makes participants maintain and enhance face value in social circles. Participants placed great importance on the Confucian social need for prestige and status.

“Higher prices present filial piety to my family, as the value of the gifts signifies the receiver's importance. It also expresses my prestige and status, an indication of my successful business, and my ability to afford high priced chrysanthemums...”

[Con9]

Apart from the traditional sacrificing product of chrysanthemums, some participants purchased some unique offering products as an extension of themselves, hoping to gain favourable judgements from others by enhancing both their self-image and their social image. Traditional sacrificing supplies for the Qingming Festival are paper-made money, mock coins, candles and flowers. However, some participants purchased paper-made imitations of famous brand-name luxuries such as a 'high class villa', 'iPhone' or 'luxury brand car' which are all made from paper. These items were burned in front of their ancestors' graves in the hope that the dead people could enjoy them. As told by Con4 who bought the paper iPhone:

“Even though my grandma died, I still believe that dead people's souls stay alive and are capable of blessing the living. In life, she did not have an iPhone. Thus, I want her to have one (a paper iPhone). I am willing to offer more to buy something special.”

Similar to Con4, Con1 was also interested in paper-made imitations of famous brand-name luxuries and bought a gold ingot tree (signifying a money tree) hoping that the deceased would have enough money in the afterlife, and that they would then bless the living with wealth and

prosperity. As the Con1 who is the lecturer from Confucius Institutes explained,

“This is a new sacrificing product and I wanted to buy it to distinguish myself from others. I do not mind the relatively higher price. The golden ingot tree represents a symbolic wish for the deceased to have enough money to spend in the afterlife. Moreover, another reason for the tree is my husband’s position as a businessperson. I hope for the blessing and protection of his deceased parents towards the business.”



Figure 4. 4 Golden Ingot Tree

[Con1]

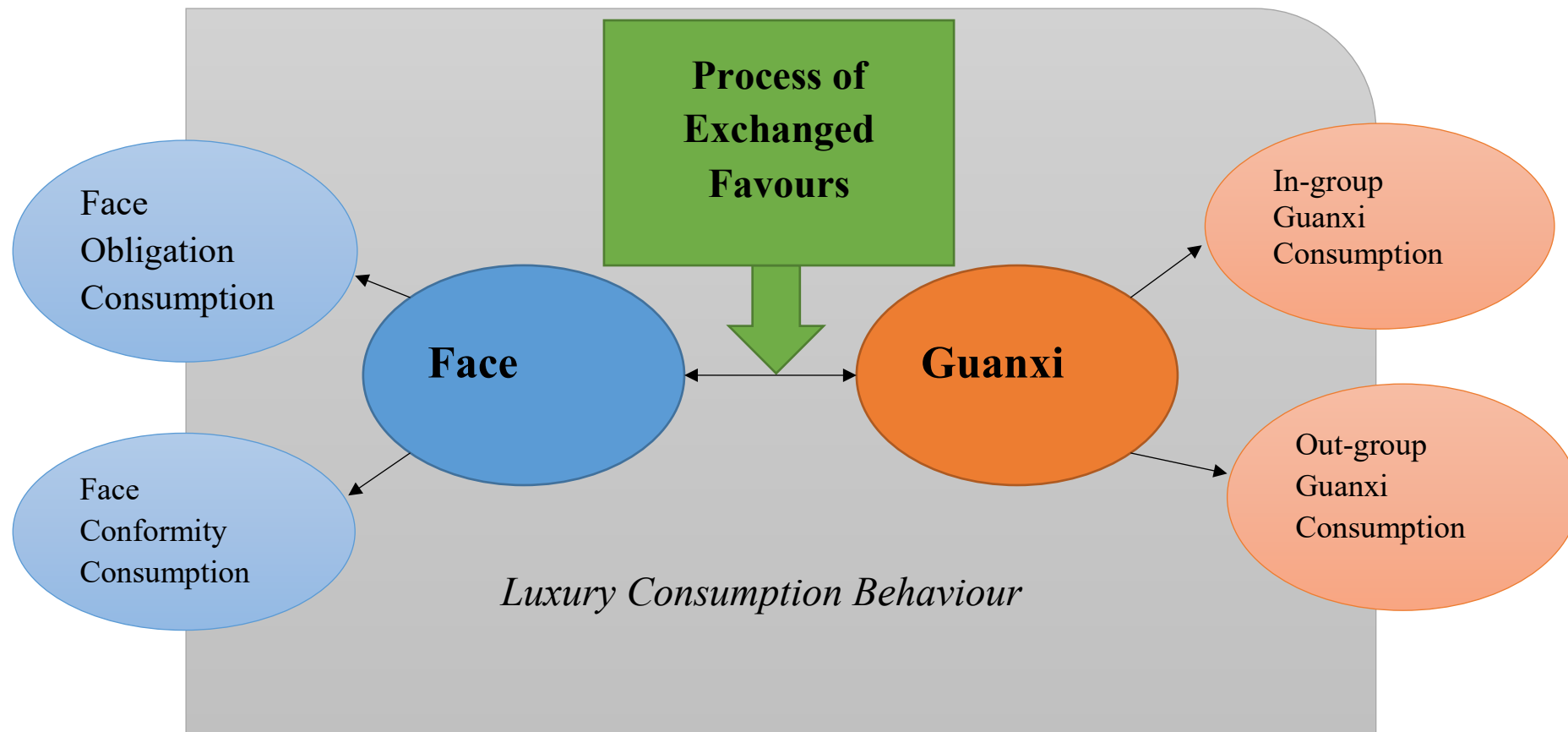
In Confucian culture, people believe that the deceased’s soul remains alive and is capable of blessing the living. Consumption of offering products at the Qingming Festival possesses a strong social influence over participants’ consumption behaviour. Participants are willing to spend lavishly in order to show both filial piety and the capability of affording high price value items. According to Goossaert and Palmer (2011, p.235-p.236) “Confucian philosophy calls for paying respect to one’s ancestors, and official propaganda exhorted people to treat the living lavishly and the dead perfunctorily, but many Chinese put the phrase on its head and considered that those who had been mistreated while alive must be treated lavishly now that they are dead”. The findings present participants’ Qingming Festival consumption and the influence exerted by the Chinese cultural values of Confucian philosophy on such behaviour. Specifically, the findings further our understanding that relationships and face value are the central principles of Confucianism and permeate all aspects of Confucian society.

#### 4.1.3 Confucian Participants’ Daily Consumption Behaviour

This section presents how the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism influences Chinese daily consumption behaviour. It indicates that the

Confucian notions of face saving and Guanxi are considered to have a pervasive influence on Confucian participants' mind-set with regards to luxury consumption. The findings of the Qingming Festival case study demonstrate that there is a consistency between Confucian participants' festival and daily consumption. In addition, the empirical framework for Confucian participants' consumption behaviour (Figure 4.5) was designed to help develop a better understanding of how the Confucian philosophy of face value and Guanxi influence Chinese consumption behaviour.

Figure 4.5 Empirical Framework of Confucian Participants' Consumption Behaviour



(Source: the researcher)

#### **4.1.3.1 Face Value Oriented Consumption**

In order to maintain or enhance their ‘face value’, Confucians consume expensive brand names and the findings show that people with strong face consciousness tend to purchase expensive goods and luxury brands to enhance their social reputation and recognition. All the Confucian participants clarified their belief that luxuries represent social status and wealth, and defined this as a great motivation for them to consume luxury products. Luxury brands and their popularity are key concerns in Confucian participants’ consumption process. ‘Consumption Face’ which means the desire for personal image to be maintained and enhanced by consumption is a phenomenon in China with Chinese influences of social behaviour. The Confucian philosophy of ‘Face’ refers to a positive self-image obtained through personal qualities, wealth, social networks and authority, a combination shown in this study to result in luxury consumption.

##### **4.1.3.1.1 Face Obligation Consumption**

There are many social and cultural factors influencing personal perceptions of obligation. Early on, Malinowski (1932, p.55) discussed mutual obligation by describing the principle of reciprocity as “mutual dependence and reciprocal service”. Liu and Bresnahan (2016) explained that people in tightly bound communities, for example in collectivist cultures, are willing to participate in obligation networks with in-group members as a part of their interpersonal relationships and resource sharing. In China, under pressure of the social relational network, an individual tends to be sensitive to his or her own social standing, whether that be of superior, inferior or equal position. As a result, face matters in the public relationship. Hence the proverb, “Men cannot live without face; trees cannot live without bark” (Con4, Con5). As Con9 demonstrated:

“At a young age, my family emphasized not losing face for the family in order to encourage and push me to study hard, with the hope that I could succeed in education.”

Some participants pointed out that they have to maintain the face value as they were under the pressure to meet other's expectations. Face value is consistently noted as an important consideration in professional interactions, and the fear of losing face forms the informal basis of contracts and agreements common in Chinese business settings (Li and Su, 2007). Participants involved in business or industrial work hold face value in business relationships as extremely important, thus having an obligation to maintain and enhance face value. As a result, most in China will have no choice but to mimic the consumption of his or her social group (Li and Su, 2007). Otherwise, that person will lose his or her face value among the group, which in turn causes the group to lose face to other groups. Con4 revealed that:

“Most of my clients have the most popular and latest edition of mobiles phones (iPhone). I bought the iPhone even though other phones can sufficiently satisfy my needs for basic functions. I feel pressure to have one, because my clients and business partners all have one and I am willing to spend more to maintain my face value.”

In this case, the premium pricing and service extend beyond the products' utilitarian value. People use products to signal meanings beyond their functional value due to the obligation to maintain face value. This obligation explains Westerners' concern regarding some Chinese people who, despite mere average financial capacity, still purchase luxury products. Face value has an impact on their purchasing process as well, such as choosing similar products to follow their networks. For example:

“It seems weird if others are buying them and I am not.” (Con5).  
“People usually buy those items so I buy them as well.” (Con6, Con7 and Con9).

In terms of daily consumption, a typical example given by participants is the purchase of electrical products or home appliances such as mobile phones, televisions and other electronic household appliances. Participants feel the need to buy these electronics because their friends, relatives, or even neighbours have one.

“Initially, I was using Nokia, as everyone around me was using a Nokia. When my friends started to use Motorola, I changed to Motorola. When iPhones rose in popularity, I followed. When I went to America, I found that many used Samsung, and I bought a Samsung. I always observe and follow what others say and do.”

[Con6]

Take Con9 as an illustration: despite having had the silver iPhone 6S since launch, he bought another iPhone 6S in gold, as the gold design became the most popular of the four colours (space grey, gold, rose gold or silver). Soon after the iPhone 6S in gold was launched, it sold out quickly everywhere; its price was higher than that of the other colours. When asked the reason why Con9 was willing to spend more money just for the colour, the answer was that the gold iPhone 6s brought more face value.

“I understood the only difference was the colour. However, I am willing to pay more to buy it. In China, the colour gold has a positive representation of wealth and luxury. It also separates myself from others, I feel that face value is maintained.”

On a behavioural level, this obligation is embedded in Chinese consumption characteristics. An individual has the obligation to behave accordingly to the group, because of the importance of in-group relationships in China; a person has strong obligations to the group. However, despite having an obligation to the social group, the obligation is different for everyone. It depends on the intensity and the intimacy of the relationships between group members. Each category of relationship is governed by different rules. To clarify, examples from participants have been used to explain how this works within a Guanxi context in following section, 4.1.3.2.

#### **4.1.3.1.2 Face Conformity Consumption**

The results of the semi-structured interviews indicate that Confucian participants in China, within the same social class or reference group, have an obligation to conform to their social group and behave accordingly.

Consequently, they consume appropriately to avoid losing face and subsequently the group's face. Therefore, Confucian participants tend to reduce the social distance within their own social class by having similar consumption behaviours. This is similar to the Western concept of the influence of the reference group that also emphasizes conformity to one's 'significant others' (Bearden and Etzel, 1982), which is one's social group(s). Therefore, the term 'face conformity consumption' is used, which refers to the influence of social and group pressure on consumption behaviour.

Normative social influence is more about conformity in that it refers mainly to the pressure to conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Deutsch and Gerard, 1955). The findings of this study suggest that Confucian participants acquire and consume certain products or brands to conform to the expectations of others in terms of purchasing decisions. Confucian participants tend to inquire about products and services by observing or seeking information from others.

"I always seek advice from friends or colleagues before travelling or shopping. For daily consumption, I usually ask the people around me who have previously purchased said product. I trust their choices and it gives me face value to own the same products as they do. Other people's opinions influence my purchase choices and decisions. I prefer brands that I know of or other ones that people have used before."

[Con10]

Most participants noted that they have a preference for owning the same products as others, or that they often sought opinions from others before purchasing. For example, the consumption behaviour of Con6 and Con7 was due to normative social influence during the Qingming Festival. They followed the consumption behaviour of several others around them.

"People usually buy those so I buy them as well. Either in special festivals or in their daily lives."

[Con6]

Similar to Con6, Con5 also showed a preference for consuming the same products as others.

“It seems weird if others are buying those and I am not.”

[Con5]

Confucian participants conform through the consumption of similar products and services to avoid social disapproval and losing face value. Normative social influence emphasizes the process of acquisition of new knowledge relevant to the purchase of target goods, including how one learns knowledge from others including direct advice and observation.

“If some of my friends started buying branded cosmetics or designer clothes, I would follow as I would like to have the same products as they have. I do not want to lose face.”

[Con3]

This behaviour is especially prominent in luxury consumption as it fulfils the desire to enhance one’s self-image by association. The findings revealed that participants consume certain products (especially luxury brands) for recognition, acceptance or respect from others in social interaction.

“My colleagues recently bought some branded cosmetics from Japan; hence I bought the same branded products to identify with people around me. I wish to be evaluated positively by my peers, to maintain face value.”

[Con10]

Confucianism is a deep rooted tradition in which consumers focus on the public meaning of luxury rather than the private meaning or hedonistic experience. The findings show that Confucian participants are under pressure to conform or live up to the expectations of others in order to preserve face. Therefore, the concern for face value exerts a mutually coercive power among the members within a social network (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Consequently, the Chinese use consumption as a means of gaining the social approval required to maintain and improve their social image, and hence improve their face, by impressing others through social

status and wealth. As material success becomes an essential standard for measuring one's performance and achievements, consumers are motivated to utilize luxury goods to communicate their social status and earn respect from others (Zhan and He, 2012). This is commonly seen among businesspeople as they turn toward luxury goods as a means of rewarding themselves for their success or as a token to advertise their wealth. Con2, Con8 and Con9 saw luxury brands as a means of demonstrating their status and success.

“In business, I pay special attention to the outfits, accessories, even the cars I use. In other words, I have to package myself. People around me will evaluate me positively and I also gain face value. More companies will associate with you when your company is perceived to have money and power.”

[Con2]

Luxury brands and high value products often integrate with symbolic meaning, when people show their identity by selecting prestige brands to enhance their self-image. This status value not only relates to economic status but also, by possessing certain items, the owner shows that he or she can afford these products. As illustrated by Con8,

“I think luxury brands can enhance my social status or prestige and increase my confidence as well. Others will also think I am doing well and I am successful in my business because I can afford those high end products.”

[Con8]

As people have social contacts and needs, Confucian participants agreed that luxury products represent personal taste and social status in some degree. Consequently, some people avoided purchasing low-end brands that might damage their personal image, and used high-end luxuries on certain occasions to display their taste and status. According to some participants, they often purchase luxuries and avoid low-end products in public, while consuming ordinary products in private. Take Con5 as an example,

“I like to dress nicely in public, I care how people think of me. When meeting important friends or people, I often wear high-end brands, even though I wear ordinary clothes in private. I feel it is necessary to look as good as you can in public.”

[Con5]

This is in line with Li et al. (2015) who stated that, in Confucian society, face consciousness was originally proposed as a social-self construct and was regarded as an important criterion for judging one’s social respectability. Thus, this section examined the findings for how face value affects luxury consumption behaviour.

#### **4.1.3.2 Guanxi Value Oriented Consumption**

The Confucian notion of face saving and group orientation (Guanxi) is considered to have a pervasive influence on Confucian mind-sets for luxury consumption. Confucianism places an emphasis on the importance of family and social harmony. It is a human-centred philosophy, in that man is defined as a social or interactive being who cannot exist alone; all actions must be in the form of interaction between men. Participants expressed the view that they are interdependent and they rely upon each other, and they were very conscious of social context. Based on these findings, Guanxi can be classified into two categories: in-group Guanxi and out-group Guanxi. In-group people (one’s ‘own people’) includes family, clan members and friends prescribed by residence and common experiences (such as studying or working together for a period). Separately, there are ‘out-group’ people. The out-group includes political authorities, social institutions and business contacts. The former is typical in Guanxi among family members, and the latter within business settings. Guanxi is often used to obtain self-interest and benefit, and therefore is equally instrumental in western interpersonal relationships.

#### 4.1.3.2.1 In-group Guanxi Consumption

Family Guanxi is rooted in Confucianism and it is emotionally driven. The exchange of Qinqing (affection) is an example of family Guanxi. According to Park and Luo (2001) that in a predetermined relationship, one's status and responsibilities within the relationship (e.g., family), dictates behavioural expectations and individual desires are heavily downplayed. In-group Guanxi is shaped by Confucian values. Qinqing (affection) is exchanged and reciprocity is not necessary although considered mutually beneficial (Fan, 2002). Guanxi is the product of contemporary socioeconomic systems, it is utility driven, where favours are granted and returned. In terms of quality, in-group Guanxi is stronger, more stable and lasts longer than out-group Guanxi which is less stable and temporary (Yeung and Tung, 1996).

Participants expressed the view that Guanxi is important in Chinese society; no one can live without Guanxi. According to Con9:

“Guanxi is the basis of Chinese society. It is extremely important. Since family members are of the utmost importance, individuals should give priority to family, then subsequently other groups of society. All these relationships build the circles of your life. Your first relationship is with your parents, then with your kindergarten tutors, school mates...When you grow up and start working, Guanxi progresses across all aspects of life.”

Confucian participants pay a great deal of attention to personal relationships from their early past to the present day. For example, Con5 was taught how to deal with Guanxi when she was young:

“My parents always taught me to show respect to elderly people, be modest and humble towards our peers, and to be kind and caring to the young.”

In daily life, participants put an emphasis on reciprocal favours and gift giving. As stated by Fan (2002) that a favour can be intangible such as advice, information, and counselling, or can be tangible such as gifts, offers of jobs, houses or any other products or services. Each Guanxi transaction (exchange of favours) will add or subtract the balance of favour.

There are many ways that participants sustain Guanxi in daily life, such as by eating out (Con1, Con6, and Con8), exchanging gifts (Con2, Con4, Con5 and Con9), attending activities or travelling with others (Con7, Con10).

“Meeting friends is a good way to sustain Guanxi, you also obtain information or advice from friends. I am always meeting or attending some activity with friends.”

[Con1]

Gift giving plays a significant role in Guanxi and helps to define relationships and strengthen bonds with family and friends. Participants gave gifts to family members or friends on various occasions. The motivation for gifting may stem from the self-gratifying objectives of the gift-giver (giver orientation) or from an urge to please the gift-recipient (recipient orientation). The findings showed that participants focus on recipient orientation rather than giver orientation, stressing altruism to maximize the recipient’s pleasure. For the older generation, participants often chose health care products; for female friends, their choices were branded cosmetics or scarves. Men were given alcohol and cigarettes, and children were given toys and books.

“I usually gift my parents healthcare or daily use products. As for my friends, I will choose products from popular brands and for children I would choose some products related to education.”

[Con5]

Gift giving exists everywhere in China as Chinese society emphasizes the necessity of social interactions in maintaining a harmonious relationship. Gift-giving activities are directly linked to the notion of propriety. Propriety - widely known for playing a central role in traditional Chinese culture - constitutes the basic concept of Confucianism. A good person will always interact with others in a reciprocal manner (Qian et al., 2007). For instance, it is unusual to visit someone without bringing gifts, and accepting a gift without reciprocating is considered morally unacceptable.

“One never loses anything by propriety. At every festival or important occasion, I prepare gifts for my family members. I prefer to choose some high valued products. The more expensive, the better; the higher value can show I take the recipient seriously.”

[Con4]

Findings depict individuals as part of a system of interdependent relationships, not as isolated entities. Confucianism emphasises the importance of an individual’s place in the in-group relationship.

#### **4.1.3.2.2 Out-group Guanxi Consumption**

Guanxi has an influential impact on business relationships, as gifts are used as a way of maintaining relationships. Chinese people like to give luxury gifts to business partners to establish or maintain business relationships to build long-term relationships and cooperation. This is in line with China’s relationship-based society (Liu et al., 2010), and gift giving is therefore an important component of Chinese luxury spending, accounting for more than 20 percent of luxury consumption (Chen and Kim, 2013). Consumers like to purchase high-end products as gifts given that luxuries fetch both high public recognition and high value, which as a result, reflect the giver’s status, their respect for the receiver, and the extent to which they value the relationship. This is especially embodied in out-group Guanxi consumption. Findings revealed that consumers who place more emphasis on business Guanxi would be more likely to purchase luxury fashion as gifts. Participants consider gifts in business to be more than physical objects. They are symbols used to express the donor’s perceptions of the recipient. Therefore, people pay close attention and put a great deal of effort into selecting gifts.

“My business partners gifted me a pair of branded shoes worth thousands of RMB. He is doing well in his business and dresses in branded clothing daily. Thus, when I give gifts to him, I always choose high value products to match his status and at the same time also maintain my face value.”

[Con9]

Chinese traditional values of Confucianism influence the relationship between the donor's gifting intention and the receiver's image-consistency. Gifting is a crucial and indispensable social behaviour in China regardless of private connections or business etiquette. When building Guanxi networks, participants considered recognition to be positively correlated to price, and they believe that a high-priced gift will lead to high recognition, and build a better Guanxi with the receiver.

"I always choose luxury products for my boss; I feel uncomfortable gifting cheaper items. He is my boss; therefore because of the hierarchy between me and him, there is the need to present luxury products."

[Con4]

The relationship between one's self and one's possessions is a fundamental aspect of face value, which influences consumer behaviour. The findings related to participants' gift giving behaviour is similar to their gift consumption behaviour during the Qingming festival. The consumer's purchasing decision is influenced by the recipient's status and how close the relationship is between the recipient and the consumer. Con3 is a good example illustrating the hierarchy of respect in gift giving behaviour.

"When presenting a gift, we always think that the equivalence return considerations are important, especially between the same hierarchical levels. However, when presenting gifts to those senior in rank, for example, like shared interests such as business partners or government officials, the monetary value of the gift becomes more important than anything else. The item gifted has to be either expensive and/or unique because it is indicative of the level of respect shown."

This explains why high-end products sold in China are often purchased not for the customer himself, but for someone else. Possessions play a significant role in reflecting one's identity. People make use of material symbols to construct and express their identity and personality. The relationship between one's possessions and one's self is decisive in consumer behaviour. While individuals are guided by their own preferences and personal values, they are also influenced by the

interdependent or collective-self which focuses on how they are viewed by others and they are thus guided by the norm of their social group. To conclude, gifting is a crucial and indispensable social behaviour in China, as a way of sustaining Guanxi whether it is for private connections or business etiquette.

In conclusion, this case study explained Confucian participants' philosophical related festival consumption behaviour and daily consumption behaviour. It contributes to the study of Chinese luxury consumption behaviour by focusing on the Chinese values of face and Guanxi through multiple sources of evidence. The findings also illustrate the need for marketers to understand the interpretations, attitudes and behaviours associated with gift giving in China as well as how face value influences Chinese luxury consumption. The next section presents the findings of the Buddhist case study.

## **4.2 Buddhist Case Study Findings**

These findings explore the philosophical religious traditions of Buddhism and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour in a particular philosophy-related festival context - the Laba Festival. A participant profile and brief context of the Laba Festival are presented below, followed by a presentation of the findings of Buddhist participants' festival and daily consumption.

### **4.2.1 Context of the Laba Festival (who, when, where)**

The participants consisted of ten adults who defined themselves as Buddhists. This purposive sample was selected from different occupations and included five females and five males with ages ranging between 18 to 62 years old (see Table 4.3). Participants from different places and backgrounds were selected alongside experts to ensure richness of data and

to help the researcher develop a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, two Buddhist monks were selected to help explore Buddhism in depth. Participants all had a background in Buddhist philosophy and they had celebrated the Laba Festival every year for at least five years. As mentioned earlier, they were either Buddhist monks or held strong Buddhist beliefs.

**Table 4.3 Profile of Buddhist Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Educational Attainment</b>
<b>Bud1</b>	Female	62	Buddhist Monk	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud2</b>	Male	50	Self-employed	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud3</b>	Male	18	Student	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud4</b>	Female	26	Self-employed	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud5</b>	Female	53	Buddhist Monk	Bachelor's
<b>Bud6</b>	Female	42	Self-employed	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud7</b>	Female	23	Student	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Bud8</b>	Male	27	Student	Master's Degree
<b>Bud9</b>	Male	31	Businessman	Foundation Degree
<b>Bud10</b>	Male	35	Service Industry	Foundation Degree

Those participants above were selected for the Laba Festival as showed in Table 4.3. The Laba Festival has a celebratory role, together with many cultural and social implications of ritual and festivity, which has long attracted the interest of sociologists as well as Buddhist followers. The Laba Festival is celebrated on the eighth day of the twelfth month of the Chinese

lunar calendar. At this time, Chinese people traditionally eat Laba rice congee and reflect on Buddha's enlightenment (Guang, 2013). The Laba Festival originally came from the ceremonies of sacrificing to the ancestors and celebrating the harvest. It is believed that Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, meditated under a Bodhi tree for six years. It is remembered that, during these six years, Shakyamuni only ate rice every day. Ever since, monks have prepared rice congee on the day before the event and they hold a ceremony during which they chant sutras and offer congee to the Buddha (Wei, 2011). Thus, the tradition of eating Laba rice congee was based on Buddhist religion. 'La', a Chinese character, is closely associated with the meaning of offering sacrifices to gods or ancestors, while 'Ba' means the number eight (Zhao et al., 2015). It is customary on this day to drink the special congee, usually stewed with at least eight ingredients. The festival always has a theme and, potentially, it has very diverse programmes and styles, all in pursuit of fostering a specific kind of experience. Through the participant observation in Tianjin Dabei Buddhist Monastery and Guajia Temple, on that day, surprisingly, other than traditional customs, Buddhist participants also went to a Buddhist temple to attend the event, which held Dharma assemblies and chanted prayers in honour of Shakyamuni Buddha to mark the day of Buddha's Enlightenment. Buddhist temples also prepare Laba rice congee and offer it to devotees and visitors on that day. The festival celebration at once embodies an intellectual, behavioural and emotional experience, with the emotional response potentially leading to unexpected and undesired outcomes in both behavioural and attitudinal terms. In order to develop a fuller understanding of how Buddhist participants behave during the Laba Festival, the researcher conducted the research with Buddhist participants in the Dabei Buddhist Monastery and Guajia Temple in Tianjin city. The Dabei Buddhist Monastery is the largest and oldest Buddhist temple in Tianjin city. It is now the largest, oldest and best-preserved temple in Tianjin.

#### **4.2.2 Buddhist Participants' Festival Consumption Behaviour**

According to the findings from the accompanied shopping, the items which were most frequently consumed by participants were Laba rice congee and Laba garlic. During the Laba Festival, participants went to the Dabei Buddhist Monastery and Guajia Temple, where the monks of the Monastery made the congee with fresh rice and sweet fruit (see Table 4.4).

##### **4.2.2.1 Shopping Items**

Participants consumed Laba rice congee and Laba garlic when preparing the celebration of the Laba Festival (see Table 4.4). At the Dabei Buddhist temple, participants also purchased burning incense, Buddha beads and other Buddhist items. In this section, the participants' consumption and usage of said products is presented in two categories - food and incense - and explained in detail.

**Table 4.4 Findings from the Accompanied Shopping with Buddhist Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Shopping Items</b>	<b>Participant Perceptions</b>	<b>Buddhist Behavioural Beliefs</b>
<b>Bud1</b>	Laba rice congee	“Consumption for me is only a means to an end. Let it be what it will be. All is following the heart.”	The Pursuit of Happiness
<b>Bud2</b>	Laba rice congee	“Sharing Laba rice congee means fulsome family love, family union for the Laba Festival and congee. Consumption for me is about bringing inner happiness.”	The Pursuit of Happiness
<b>Bud3</b>	Laba rice congee Laba garlic Burning incense	“For me, consumption is for the heart’s comfort, to bring inner happiness. I like to burn incense, and it always brings me a positive feeling.”	The Pursuit of Happiness
<b>Bud4</b>	Laba rice congee Buddha beads	“I believe in the middle way; consuming too much will cause suffering, consuming too little is inadequate. The middle path is the philosophy of consumption.”	Middle Path
<b>Bud5</b>	Laba rice congee	“The middle Path has a rational use of natural resources and a balanced consumption. Consuming too much will cause suffering, I advocate moderate consumption.”	Middle Path
<b>Bud6</b>	Laba rice congee Laba garlic Burning incense	“I would like to eat the Laba rice congee and share it with other people. Sharing is our Buddha’s wisdom. I only purchase what I need.”	Simplicity

<b>Bud7</b>	Laba rice congee Burning incense	“I prefer simple living because I do not want to consume much. I prefer simpler consumption. I would like to purchase something that can bring me spiritual happiness.”	Simplicity
<b>Bud8</b>	Laba rice congee Burning incense	“I like living simply, consuming simply. I like to buy practical and useful products. Even for gifting, I also present practical products that the receiver can use. I do not like non-practical stuff.”	Simplicity
<b>Bud9</b>	Laba rice congee Laba garlic Burning incense	“My goal of consumption is to bring me happiness, better health and mental power.”	Pursuit of Happiness
<b>Bud10</b>	Laba rice congee Laba garlic Burning incense	“I follow Buddhist principles when I consume. I do not want consumption to become a suffering; I only buy what I can afford to.”	Simplicity

*(Source: the researcher)*

#### 4.2.2.1.1 Food Consumption

In China, it is customary to eat Laba rice congee and Laba garlic during the Laba Festival. The most traditional custom throughout China is having Laba rice congee, which is a kind of rice congee made with glutinous rice, red beans, millet, Chinese sorghum, peas, dried lotus seeds, red beans and some other ingredients, such as dried dates, chestnuts, walnuts, almonds and peanuts. Even though in the different parts of China they have slightly different ways of making rice congee but red beans is necessary because Chinese people believe red is a symbol of joy and luck, and that it dispels evil. Buddhist participants bought the Laba rice congee ingredients and cooked the congee at home. During the participant observation, some shopping centres even put signs up for Laba rice congee to help customers and make it easy to find. The congee is simmered over a low heat overnight before the Laba Festival and is then enjoyed in the morning. It is not only to be shared with people, but it is also used to feed livestock and pets and to daub on trees, walls or doors for good luck. During the Laba Festival, participants also went to the Buddhist temple to have free congee. Many temples offer congee to the public to commemorate the Buddha and deliver his blessings. For the participants, Laba rice congee is not only a kind of food, it is a sacrificing offering, it is a gift to friends, and ultimately it is used to invoke peace and good fortune.

“I already boiled the Laba rice congee at home. However, I still want to come to the temple to get a bowl of Laba rice congee. As the saying goes: A bowl of Laba rice congee gives an old man health and longevity; a bowl of Laba rice congee brings a child happiness day after day... Therefore, it is very necessary to come to the temple and have a bowl of Laba rice congee.”

[Bud10]

For the participants, the most important activity during the Laba Festival was to come to the temple and eat free distributed congee, as Laba rice congee is infused with participants' expectations of a good fortune and happy life.

“You cannot miss the event at the Temple for the Laba rice congee. It is the result of all God’s blessings. It is a great feeling when people get together in the cold winter to share the Laba rice congee. Sharing is our Buddha’s wisdom. It is a common saying that, during the Laba Festival, the more congee you make, the better.”

[Bud6]

To some participants, sharing Laba rice congee with family is a Laba event not to be missed. Bud2 got up very early to go to the temple for their Laba rice congee. Bud2 also took some Laba rice congee and brought it to family members to share. Bud2 explained that:

“It becomes a custom in our family to have congee with our family members every year on the Laba Festival. I was born in a very poor family, there is not enough food in our family for everybody. Therefore, when I was a child, I am very looking forward to having Laba rice congee during the Laba Festival. My parents often bring us the congee during the Laba Festival, we eat up our congee. However, even though the life is getting better, eating rice congee this custom in our family has not stopped. Sharing Laba rice congee means fullsome family love which brings me happiness.”

In Chinese heart, the significance of sharing Laba rice congee lies in the joy of sharing. Participants who cooked the Laba rice congee offered it to ancestors first and then shared the Laba rice congee with family or friends. For the monks in the temple, as the Buddhist monk (Bud1) explained that they cook a large pot of Laba rice congee on the day of the Laba Festival every year to share with those people who visit the temple.

“Every year in the temple, our Buddhist monks prepare the Laba rice congee for the people for free. When you share congee to other people, actually, it is action for accumulating merit for oneself. Therefore, some people take one more congee to share with family, friends or neighbours. It is said that people who have this congee will be more blessed and will have a longer life span.”

[Bud1]

One of the participants, Bud6, who is a businessperson, also prepared a large pot of Laba rice congee and gave away free congee to people.

“I think this is a kind of social responsibility. Sharing means loving, I also feel happy to give Laba rice congee to people. I always keep in mind that one good turn deserves another. ”

Laba rice congee contains many meanings: participants sharing it with friends and family members sacrifice to their ancestors or the hope of bringing good fortune for the family.

Another tradition associated with the Laba Festival is the soaking of Laba garlic. This is when people put garlic in vinegar to pickle for more than 20 days before the Chinese New Year. The garlic turns emerald green and this Laba garlic will be eaten with dumplings on Chinese New Year’s Day. People always pickle garlic on 8<sup>th</sup> December of the lunar calendar, so it is called Laba garlic. However, garlic is one of the significant prohibitions in Buddhist eating custom as it is considered a ‘pungent’ vegetable. Therefore, there is a question around why some of the participants still make Laba garlic, given that garlic is taboo in Buddhism. Participants’ explanations provided reasons behind this contradictory consumption behaviour.

“Every year for the Laba Festival, I make Laba garlic for my family members. It is a custom and tradition of our people, especially in North China, to soak garlic in vinegar and put them in a big jar during the Laba Festival. I know our Buddhists have the food taboo on garlic, thus, I only eat a little, and most are prepared for my family members. ”

[Bud6]

Most of the participants who soaked Laba garlic said they did so because this has become the folk custom. Even though some of them do not consume or seldom consume the Laba garlic, they still make the garlic as it is the custom.

“Personally, I do not eat Laba garlic at all because of the Buddhist belief. However, I used to prepare the Laba garlic for the coming of the Spring Festival. Our northern people like to eat the Laba garlic alongside Chinese dumplings during the Chinese New Year festival.”

[Bud10]

Businessperson also attach a special meaning to Laba garlic, especially when they present Laba garlic as a gift to others. The pronunciation of ‘garlic’ is a homophone of ‘calculate’ in Chinese. Therefore, businesspeople usually count their financial income and expenditure for the previous year on the Laba Festival, and creditors collect debts on this day. This is because the Laba Festival is close to Chinese New Year, so companies will settle their accounts before the coming New Year. According to the businessperson Bud9:

“It is very impolite to ask for the payment of a debt directly from partners, and sometimes this will break up the relationship. Therefore, I sometimes present Laba garlic as a gift to the borrowing party as a hint to remind them to pay back the money.”

Eating garlic on Laba Day is symbolic of calculating the year’s income and expenses as the year-end approaches, because the words ‘garlic’ and ‘calculate’ have the same pronunciation in Chinese. To summarise, in the above section, Buddhist consumption of Laba rice congee and Laba garlic during the Laba Festival was presented.

#### **4.2.2.1.2 Burning Incense**

Burning incense is an ancient practice found in all schools of Buddhism which is steeped in symbolism. In Asian countries where Buddhism and Taoism are mainstream religions, incense burning is a daily practice (Lin et al., 2008). The burning of an incense stick resulting in fragrant smoke teaches the necessity to burn away negative qualities within oneself in order to reveal the pure self within. During the Laba Festival, it is not difficult to find people burning incense in the temple.

Participants explained that incense burning is a daily practice. When the Buddhist festivals such as Laba Festival, the Lunar New Year and other religious festivals come around, a huge amount of incense is burned in temples. The reasons behind the burning of incense are manifold. According to participants, burning incense has some psychological benefits (Bud3,

Bud6, Bud9 and Bud10) and it has its own spiritual significance (Bud7, Bud8). As told by Bud3:

“I come to the Buddhist temple every year during the Laba Festival. I feel a great deal of comfort in my heart. My heart is integrated with the scent; it provides me a positive association with the scent. My mind becomes quiet and I feel peaceful tranquility.”

The incense stick burns itself completely into ashes and yet fills the air with a pleasant smell. This is underlying the ritual basically denotes the human virtue of sacrificing oneself for society. Participants burn incense on top of their head to leave scars, and most fascinatingly, deliberately burn their finger as a sacrifice.

“I pray with incense sticks. The first step is you must first formally introduce yourself to the deity. You should mention your name, the address where you are currently sleeping every night, the lunar date of your birth, and time of birth. Then you start to pray for what you wish Buddha to bless.”

[Bud7]

As noted by Bud8, burning incense is about the Buddha’s blessing because it is believed that the Buddha will appear in the smoke produced by burning incense.

“Smoke is a soul link between worshippers and the Buddha. Therefore, burning incense is a way to have Buddha’s blessing. Burning incense is a way of requesting but also a way of giving. Incense burning reminds people to burn themselves, to give, and to sacrifice.”

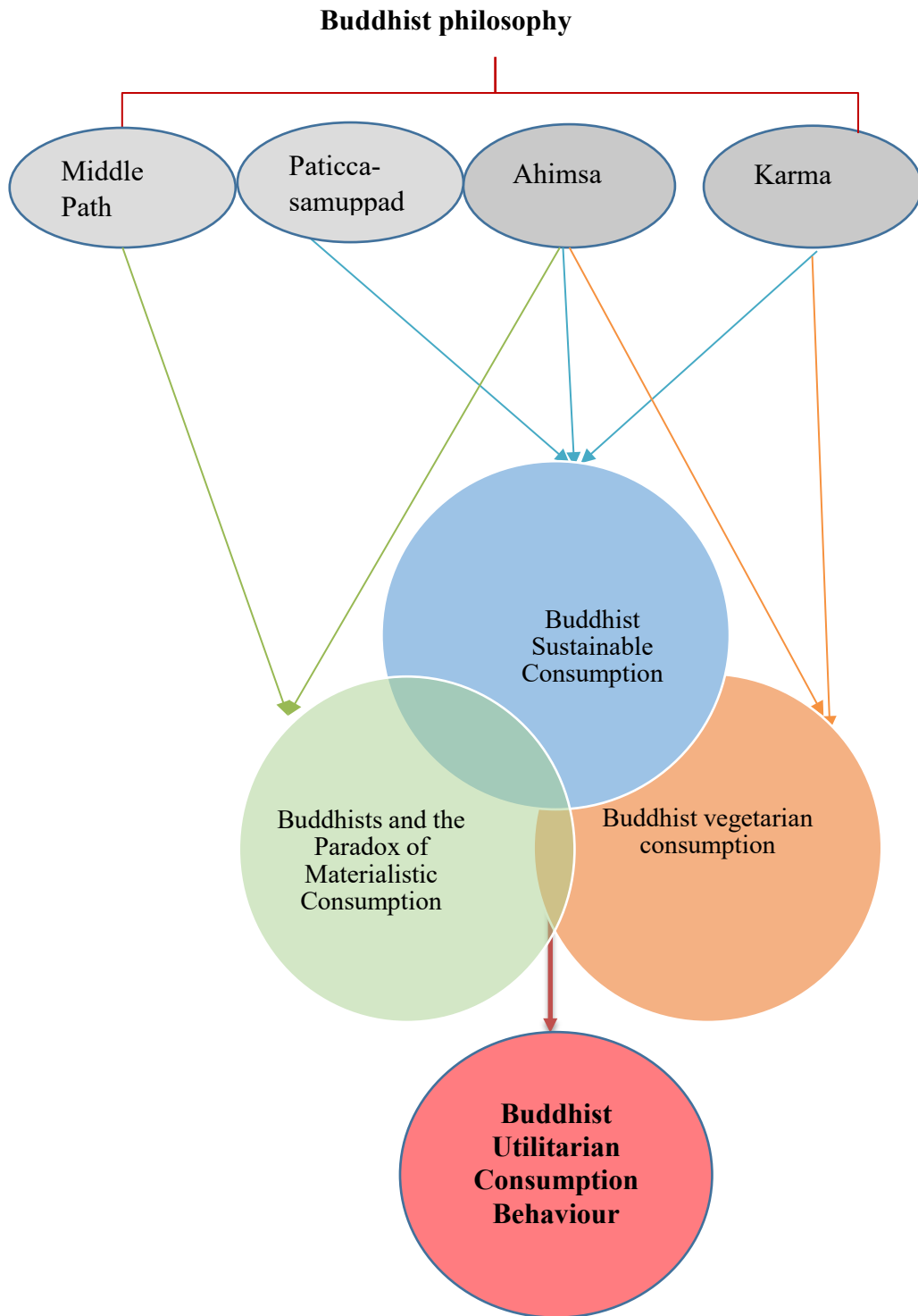
[Bud8]

As has been shown, Buddhist participants consumed congee, prepared Laba garlic and burned incense during the festival. These activities are associated with Buddhist philosophy and influenced participants’ consumption patterns during the festival.

### **4.2.3 Buddhist Participants' Daily Consumption Behaviour**

The findings on Buddhist daily consumption of food reveal the ethical, spiritual and doctrinal grounds for vegetarianism in the Buddhist tradition. The findings show that Buddhist participants' motivations and actions are consistent with Buddhist commitments and beliefs, resulting in four distinct consumption behaviours: vegetarian consumption, sustainable consumption, the paradox of materialistic consumption and utilitarian consumption. In Figure 4.6, the findings which especially relate to Buddhist philosophy and which impact on Buddhist participants' daily consumption behaviour were categorised into themes; these themes combined together as an empirical framework to analyse Buddhist utilitarian consumption behaviour.

**Figure 4.6 Empirical Framework of Buddhist Utilitarian Consumption Behaviour**



#### 4.2.3.1 Buddhism and Vegetarian Consumption

There are two prohibitions for Buddhists in relation to food: one is meat and the other is 'pungent' vegetables. Vegetarian food is the core content of

Chinese Buddhist culture, and is an important part of the Buddhist regimen. The commandments for food in traditional Buddhism explicitly forbid the consumption of five spicy vegetables: garlic (蒜), scallion (葱), leek (韭), xinqu (兴渠) and xie (薤). Meat and alcohol are believed to arouse people's desires, and the five spicy vegetables above are classified as 'small meats' which, like alcohol, are avoided by those observing a strict Buddhist diet (Kim et al., 2006). The reasons for not eating smelly vegetables are to clean the body and mind and also to avoid disturbing others due to the smell. The Buddhist doctrine of mercy says that not eating meat is the manifestation of caring for life. Arguments for meat avoidance and vegetarian consumption included: "I am vegetarian and happy to be a vegetarian, it is good for health" [Bud7]; "Buddhism emphasizes compassion and no killing of life" [Bud4]. "It is good for animals and 'protection of life'" [Bud3]. "Avoiding meat is a form of 'karmic retribution' and the protection of animal life" [Bud1].

To the participants, being vegetarian shows mercy towards other living creatures, especially animal life; killing animals is an act that incurs retribution due to the 'Buddha nature'. According to Xu and Xu (2007), this is also resides in and connects all living beings. Likewise, this also lets people's bodies and minds return to their natural state in line with the nature of life. Buddhist participants explained how they behave in their daily lives to achieve this philosophy of vegetarian life.

"In order to achieve this goal, we are committed to sharing health, kindness, environmental protection, a high-energy diet and experience. We are also committed to learning how to make delicious vegetarian dishes and to cooperate with the daily habits of vegetarian life. We try to provide mutual support to help overcome the transition to vegetarian life during difficulties, and ultimately to eat healthily."

[Bud7]

Participants claimed their interest had come about because of the nutritional value of vegetarian food. This interest was prompted by the participant observation that Buddhists were in good health. As the Buddhist monk explained,

“The Buddhist diet advocates vegetarianism. There are some data studies showing that a vegetarian diet is one of the most effective ways to promote good health and longevity, and it is also in line with the ancients’ scientific principle that ‘less food can nourish your stomach’.”

[Bud5]

These views indicate that Buddhist food is perceived as a healthy diet option in modern society. The Buddhist adherence to vegetarian eating habits embodies the Buddhist philosophy of health building. This is also in line with Buddha’s advocacy of compassion for all salient beings. It is a practical attitude, which strives to implement its objective, and is treated as synonymous with ‘non-cruelty’ or ‘harmlessness’. According to Bud4:

“Buddhism emphasizes compassion around life; no living animals can be killed by hand. Through the appreciation of the Buddha’s teachings, I came to realise it is very important to treat all beings equally, as well as realise the essence of universal compassion.”

Not killing or harming animals is a way to cultivate compassion. It is believed that one should be compassionate, so one should not kill or harm animals (Finnigan, 2017). Buddhist central philosophy is the principle of non-violence toward humankind, other species and the natural environment. If one desires to avoid karmic retribution, one should avoid wrongdoing. Killing and harming animals causes suffering. As Bud1 stated:

“Avoiding meat eating is a form of karmic retribution and also protecting the animal. If doing wrong, those who are cruel or violent will suffer similar treatment in a following life. This is karmic consequence.”

Karmic retribution serves a motivational rather than justificatory function. This is a comprehensive primer on Buddhist thought. An action is wrong if it produces negative karmic consequences. This is in line with the principle of Karma that ‘Good actions produce good results, bad actions produce bad results’.

#### **4.2.3.2 Buddhism and Sustainable Consumption**

In this section, the findings on how Buddhist philosophy and its principles and values influence sustainable consumption are illustrated. The findings demonstrate that the principle teachings of paticca-samuppada, Ahimsa, and karma have the potential to link to sustainable development at all levels - individual, national and global. Since sustainable development has become a contemporary movement among policy makers, citizens, academia and planners (De Vries and Petersen, 2009; Hamman, 2017; Turcu, 2013), the understanding of these three Buddhist teachings will contribute to a better understanding of Buddhist sustainable consumption behaviour.

##### **4.2.3.2.1 Paticca-samuppada**

‘Paticca-samuppada’ is the central philosophy and is regarded as the core concept of the whole of the Buddhist phonological theory system. It literally means, ‘arising on the ground of a preceding cause.’ (Kalupahana, 1974; Nauriyal et al., 2006; Qing, 2017).

Buddhist participants view paticca-samuppada as dependent co-origination (Bud1, Bud3, Bud7, and Bud8), the chain of causation (Bud2), the cycle of rebirth (Bud6, Bud9) and dependent co-arising (Bud4, Bud5, Bud10). A similar definition of paticca-samuppada coming from the participants is that all the elements in the world mutually interact and exist in a complex relationship of cause and effect. The principle of paticca-samuppada guides Buddhists in how to make choices to produce outcomes which are beneficial to life, to keep away from unbounded desires, and to create healthy religious values that celebrate sustainable consumption and sustainable development.

Buddhist participants provide the productive thinking on sustainable consumption and development by linking the fate of all life - human, animals and nature - based on paticca-samuppada. Buddhists are encouraged to love all living beings and not to restrict their love only to human beings due to the doctrine of paticca-samuppada, showing that humans, animals

and nature are fundamentally interrelated and interdependent in the ecosystem. Put simply, paticca-samuppada states that if humankind treats the environment negatively, that same negative effect will affect humans and animals in return.

“The relationship between humans and the environment is a dependent relationship which means that man cannot live separately from the environment. When humanity destroys the environment, the environment will be gone or become less. When the environment is less, it will impact other natural resources such as oil or water as a result, causing natural disasters directly or indirectly, such as global warming, environmental degradation...”

[Bud5]

As the Buddhist doctrine of paticca-samuppada shows that individual betterment and perfection on the one hand and social good on the other are fundamentally interrelated and interdependent, Buddhists sees all things and phenomena as interdependent, which is clearly consistent with sustainable development. Participants considered that all living beings in the universe have an equal right to life; therefore, it is immoral for humans to exploit animals. According to Bud6:

“All sentient beings desire to live. Paticca-samuppada has taught us Man and other living things are equal. Nevertheless, in contemporary society, people are killing animals, not just for food supplies, but also for the animal skin to make bags or other accessories. The businessperson kills many animals in order to sell animal parts for money. It is this greed and desire for luxury which leads to the destruction of nature, without any care for the value of life and nature. This behaviour is totally immoral.”

Exploitation of animals to meet market demands, and the extinction of species due to the continued expansion of humankind and its economy, are examples of human behaviour which are contrary to the non-violence principle and unjustifiable on (Buddhist) economic grounds. There is the need to reduce the motivation for craving and attachment to wealth for selfish material gain. As illustrated by the Buddhist monk:

“When I consume, I always ask myself whether my action will cause any consequence to other people or the environment. I only want to

bring good to our society, rather than cause any bad effect. I do not want to consume for self-benefit or personal possession. Man and other living things are equal, they have the equal right to live in society.”

[Bud1]

Recognition of the rights of animals and non-sentient nature requires a widespread change in human morality. It has also been defined as the relationship between people’s intent and the consequences of their thoughts and actions (Lamberton, 2005). One of the participants, Bud9, chooses to walk to work every day, although Bud9 has the financial capability to buy a nice brand of car, this participant still chooses an ecological way to commute. Minimal consumption of products of simple design enables the sustainable use of renewable resources within bounded population levels.

“Nowadays, in our society, environmental pollution is getting more serious. I want to contribute what I can to reduce pollution and protect the environment. I do not want to have a car to show off, I will only buy it if I need it. My company is not far from my home and now public transport is very convenient. Everyone should reduce their own personal carbon and ecological footprints, and practice sustainable consumption for the next generation.”

Bud9’s non-consumption behaviour - of not consuming anything that may damage the environment - embodies the sustainable development concept. According to Brundtland et al. (1987), Emas (2015) and Waas et al. (2010), sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Buddhist participants have shown the way to achieve this is to be environmental and create a sustainable society. Bud5 also explained the consequences of being sustainable.

“Everything is connected. We do good to the environment and society, and the society will provide a good return. The society will provide us with a safe and healthy environment. This is also good for our next generation. No other entity should be harmed such as the environment in the process of generating wealth; the wealth will be regarded as immoral. ”

The participant's opinion illustrates that humans and the environment are dependent on each other. Humans cannot live without the environment, the environment also depends on human beings, and they affect each other. Paticca-samuppada provides the guiding principles that keeps people far away from unbounded desires and violence, and ultimately creates a healthy cultural and religious value that celebrates a sustainable environment. Therefore, paticca-samuppada, as the main philosophy of Buddhism, focuses on the relationship between humans and the environment and the value of this relationship.

#### **4.2.3.2.2 Ahimsa**

Paticca-samuppada is the view that nature and other living things are equal and comparable. It embodies the ethical values and moral standards that enact a deep sense of compassion and loving-kindness towards all other beings and parts. According to Buddha that one should not kill a living being, nor cause it to be killed, nor should one incite another to kill (Keown, 2013; Lopez Jr, 2015). This may also explain why Buddhist participants are devout about non-killing and non-purchasing of animal-related products. Therefore, Buddhism promotes non-violent behaviour. Ahimsa (non-violence) promotes an attitude of not causing harm to fellow human beings or ecosystems. Ahimsa means non-violence embodying the values of 'do not kill' and 'compassion', and it applies to all living beings, including all animals (Sambhaji, 2016). Buddhist participants demonstrated ahimsa towards animals, other species and the natural environment.

“Buddhism has implicitly taught us to keep away from violence, as it may cause undesired consequences. Human and animals are equal; they have the same mental abilities. The unnecessary act of killing animals for either consumption or profit should be weighed against its consequences; among them the effects of meat production on the environment and also the unnecessary killing of a significant number of animals each year.”

[Bud2]

Buddhists value animal life and avoid inflicting suffering on animals and further consider the wellbeing of animals as a duty of care. As such, they are against using animals as food, ritual sacrifices, scientific experiments or luxury products. Contrary to the findings of the Confucian participants' consumption behaviours, Buddhist participants have a sense of aloofness toward higher value products and brands, such as crocodile skin or other high price bags. This point ties in well with previous studies (Mo and Roux, 2009) wherein Buddhism has a negative impact on luxury consumption. Nonviolence (Ahimsa) to animals is considered to be a fundamental tenet in Buddhism resulting in the non-consumption of luxuries.

“We protect the environment, respect the life of all of earth's living things. I have never purchased fur clothing, or leather, or any products made out of animals. Animals also have the right to feel free from pain. I do not want my consumption to cause other animals suffering. Not only do human beings have ethical values, all creatures have these as well.”

[Bud4]

Buddhist participants consider violence to animals as greedy and to be the root cause of human suffering. It is an irresponsible and violent act against nature, fuelled by short term greed with no consideration for the long term repercussions for future generations. Bud10's comment provides a good explanation of this:

“Man's violence towards animals is another expression of his uncontrolled greed. People are killing animals for food, for money. People are expending environments for convenience. However, they did not realise this is a greedy act and its consequence. People consume a large amount of natural resources and cause pollution. Did they consider the next generation or just the short time benefit?”

Participant Bud10's point provides an empowering catalyst for selflessness and also explains the phenomenon of ecological destruction. Buddhism identifies greed that causes human suffering. Besides this, Buddhist participants also praise non-violence as one of the most commendable moral virtues.

“No living being wants to be killed or hurt. Reverence for all forms of life is a crucial practical virtue and moral standard. As Buddha’s teaching told us, ‘violence cannot be ceased by violence’, I always believe that for a sustainable future we only can use non-violent ways. Everything is interrelated, if we were violent to them, they will pay us back. Therefore, non-violence is a crucial practical virtue.”

[Bud7]

The findings above present that Buddhists emphasized the need for a change to a non-violent and gentle attitude toward the environment, therefore becoming very much in tune with nature. This is in line with Lamberton (2005)’s view that Buddhism recognizes a deterioration in spiritual and mental health evidenced by greed, hatred and delusion manifesting as violence against the natural environment.

#### **4.2.3.2.3 Karma**

Karma indicates a number of interrelated things. Individuals and societies are the authors of their own (desirable and undesirable) circumstances or conditions. Karma articulates a close relationship between what one chooses to do and who or what one becomes over time, is the teaching that tells Buddhists that it matters what they do throughout their lives, and how they do it (Wright, 2005).

This behaviour is in line with the Buddhist philosophy of Karma. The law of Karma is one of the foundations of the Buddhist thinking system, which means cause and effect. The findings indicate that the consequence of participants being sustainable includes the recognition of ethical aspects of respect to the rights of future generations. Buddhist pursuits in life and the environment reflect and always consider the impact of consumption. It is clear that Buddhist philosophy, including Karma, decides whether something is morally right or wrong, not by directly judging wealth or objects, but rather by evaluating the process of production, usage of the product, and the underlying motives behind its consumption. Buddhism

focuses on the thoughts, motives and social consequences underlying sustainable consumption.

“People, nature and animals, we have to be kind to each other. In daily life, I always avoid unnecessary consumption. I try to make use of everything in life, rather than waste. For instance, I never waste food, I carefully plan my meals and only prepare what I need. Wasting food is immoral and will also have a negative effect on the environment. When it causes a problem for the environment, the environment will take revenge on human beings, this is karma.”

[Bud2]

Food waste, particularly when avoidable, incurs a loss of resources and considerable environmental impact due to the multiple processes involved in the production life cycle (Tonini et al., 2018). For Buddhist participants, Karma has commonly been considered a punishment for past bad actions, therefore, Karma provides a very meaningful tool for guiding human beings action. To be responsible for nature, other beings, as well as the universe as a whole.

“Nowadays, the environment has already started to take revenge on our people. See how serious the air pollution problem people are facing now. There has been a massive influx of natural disasters, global warming, air pollution...Now people have started to realise and become aware of the environmental problems our planet is facing. However, have they ever thought that all these consequences are because of human action, because humans cause these effects?”

[Bud8]

Karma implies progressive development toward Universalism and human unity. From the Buddhist perspective, an action undertaken for selfish or greedy motives will result in bad karma. Buddhists believe that an understanding of the teachings of Karma can improve everyday life and sustainability. Human beings and the environment interact mutually and are embedded in complex relationships of cause and effect. In conclusion, the principle Buddhist teachings of *paticca-samuppada*, non-violence, and Karma provide some helpful insights and practices that show how Buddhists promote sustainable development.

#### 4.2.3.3 Buddhism and the Paradox of Materialistic Consumption

Participants explained that Buddhism advocates non-attachment to possessions and attempts to cultivate non-attachment. According to Pace (2013) Buddhists stresses that a person must be generous and should periodically give away material possessions and one's possessions should not evoke pride or greed. Materialism is the personal tendency to attach a central role to possessions and to consider them to be the main source of happiness or, in situations in which the desired possessions are lacking, unhappiness (Eckhardt, 2011). However, for the Buddhist monk, materialism may not necessarily bring happiness.

“According strictly to Buddhist teachings, monks would not have any possessions except for their robes and a bowl. Excessive consumption is considered to be harmful. When I was young, at that time, I was not a Buddhist; I liked to purchase luxuries like other Chinese people. However, I did not feel very happy. Possession accumulation does not bring happiness. When I started to believe in Buddhism, even though I do not purchase as much as before, I feel happy inside. Maybe this is spirituality.”

[Bud1]

To Buddhists, excessive consumption is considered to be harmful. Human beings have desires, especially material desires. People want to own a house, a car or a nice watch. For example, like Confucian participants, they feel happy by having material possessions. However, for the Buddhist participants, consumption is taken to be a limited source of happiness and satisfaction, and happiness comes from letting go of the desire for things. Bud9 is a good example who illustrates how over-consumption can cause suffering.

“I came from a poor family background when I was born. I worked extremely hard. Then I had my own business in my younger years. I had money to purchase a big house, a branded car and a luxury watch; I could buy many things that other people could not afford at the same age. However, I did not have time to spend with my family, sometimes I felt lonely even though I was very busy with work. I started to realise that material possessions could not make me feel fulfilled. Sometimes, I have to order lots of food when I meet

business partners; even though we cannot finish all the food we have ordered, I still need to do so. I hate this over-consumption, it causes me suffering and reminds me that when I was young my family was so poor, I did not have enough to eat. I feel guilty seeing the waste.”

Buddhist participants consider that Buddhist consumption is the acquisition, usage and disposition of goods and services to satisfy the desire for true well-being. Bud9’s over-consumption of food does not bring psychological comfort. Consumers influenced by Buddhism often expressed a sense of aloofness toward brands and focused on consumption that can bring happiness. The key characteristics of Buddhist consumption are that one’s desires are controlled by moderation and the objective of well-being (Payutto, 1994). Bud9 has taken his business to outside professional managers because Bud9 wants to live a simple life. Bud9 is an example of someone who has abandoned a life of luxury to seek enlightenment and even when he attained it, he continued to live without many material possessions other than the minimal requisites. However, owning possessions or wealth is not regarded as an issue in and of itself for Buddhists, but it is seen as an issue that can cause suffering. For example, when it is the focus of greed, and is gained through exploitation. On the other hand, wealth is considered to be a great opportunity to be generous, to benefit the recipient, and to bring good karma. This is a very typical view of Buddhist consumption and refers to consuming as giving. Giving away material objects, avoiding material pleasures and performing meritorious deeds contribute to the important foundation of consumption and Buddhism. The findings of this study found that the more that Buddhist participants engaged in giving, the more they associated with the Buddhist philosophy.

“My parents took me to the Buddhist temple when I was young to pray and donate to the monks, hoping I will learn the merits of giving when I grow up. I come to the temple quite often to bring food to worship, to donate money for the temple maintenance. I believe this will bring me good fortune. ”

[Bud3]

Buddhists consider that practicing the ritual of giving in their daily lives is an ordinary experience, which brings them spiritual entitlement. The

following comments illustrate this: “I feel happy to give; giving means caring, caring means loving” [Bud8]; “Giving makes me feel comfortable and calm in my heart “[Bud7]; “I come to the temple every weekend, I give food, money or other products to the monks. I feel very happy and very satisfied in my heart” [Bud2].

Most Buddhists like giving, which can bring Buddhists happiness and merit. This is in line with Pongsakornrungsilp and Pusaksrikit, (2011), Murgatroyd (2001) and Nath (2010) who state that spirituality is something that some Buddhists seek to gain from engagement in giving. The term spirituality is often used to refer to the personal, subjective side of the religious experience, with religion being used to refer to an organized system of spiritual beliefs, rituals, and cumulative traditions associated with a group (Stillman et al., 2012). By accumulating merit, these givers/donors learn to give and distribute their wealth to others and they also gain spirituality in this life or the next. According to Pongsakornrungsilp and Pusaksrikit (2011), giving does not mean that Buddhists give away everything and do not have any desire to consume material objects to satisfy their own needs and wants. The right consumption concept, therefore, holds on to the middle path. According to Puntasen (2007) that too little consumption will lead to deficiencies that can be harmful to physical and mental well-being while too much accumulation of material wealth will bring more pain as a result of cravings.

“For a Buddhist, the middle path is the best way in consumption, to not consume too much or too little. Too much will cause suffering, like drunk people, who like to live from paycheck to paycheck, they all need to pay the price for their behaviour. ”

[Bud4]

Buddhism espouses frugality and moderation (Daniels 2005). One should consume as needed to follow the middle path (not excessive, but not sparse either), but should not become attached to objects. As illustrated by the Buddhist monk,

“For society, we should spend moderately, not over-spend, nor under-spend. People should not make decisions to do things that are far beyond what one can afford. Don’t do the things will harmful to the environment, to the society, to the next generation. The middle path guarantees sustainability.”

[Bud5]

Buddhists often talk about spirituality and anti-materialism. Spirituality and materialism are seen as two complete opposites, two irreconcilable extremes, and it is seen as impossible to be spiritual and materialistic at the same time. A further evolution of the connection between spirituality and materialism is currently being debated (Chowdhury and Fernando, 2013; Noy, 2009; Pace, 2013). However, a misunderstanding is that if one is a spiritual seeker one must abandon all material comfort because people cannot enjoy both together. With the Chinese economy growing at a significant rate, society as a whole has placed a great deal of emphasis on material objects, and on particular brands, as markers of social status (Shambaugh, 2016). Newspapers show that some monks have the newest iPhone or drive new sports cars. Although it is not a common phenomenon, it does show the paradox in materialistic consumption. While some Chinese monks are becoming more materialistic and keen to acquire the latest consumer goods, Chinese consumers are showing a renewed interest in spirituality. A similar conclusion has been reached by Eckhardt and Zhao (2012) who have indicated that some Chinese monks are becoming motorists and are keen to acquire the latest consumer goods. These findings show evidence of some Buddhist participants, especially younger Buddhists, moving from spirituality and condemning excessive consumption towards materialism.

“I declare myself as a Buddhist, I engage in most Buddhist practice. I have been told to do away with material possessions, I often follow. But things are different now, our living conditions getting better and better, in an age of material abundance. Too many young people like me start to obsess over the most popular products. So do I. I start to addict to contemporary popular stuff, such as high technology, like iPhones, iPads... and also some special designer items. I love the latest products and think it’s fashionable, this consumption makes me feel happy and also helps me to create my own style.” [Bud8]

Although it is commonly thought that Buddhist teachings direct Buddhist attention away from material possessions, some younger Buddhists devote themselves to symbolic consumption in an attempt to create their own selves. Recent studies (Eckhardt and Zhao, 2012) have also revealed that Chinese consumers have embarked on a new march toward religious, spiritual and local altars to pray for material gain. In order to attract more followers, Buddhist temples are building larger and larger Buddha statues to compete with each other. The Chinese economy has grown at a significant rate and people have more consumption capacity. Given the paradox of Buddhist materialistic consumption behaviour, there is a recommendation for further research to investigate how some Chinese Buddhists reconcile their non-materialist beliefs with their increasingly materialistic consumption.

#### **4.2.3.4 Buddhist Utilitarian Consumption**

A similar conclusion has been reached regarding Buddhist vegetarian consumption, the paradox of materialistic consumption and sustainable consumption, which are all underpinned by the notion of utilitarian consumption. Buddhist food consumption provides reasons why Buddhists are vegetarian and provides a philosophical overview of some of the central Buddhist positions on and arguments regarding animals. Buddhists are those who have a sensitive side towards animals, a strong conscience and the will to abdicating hypocrisy and to raise consumer awareness. As a result, Buddhist consumers are demanding transparency as they take an increasing interest in the ethical practices of what they purchase in terms of food choices. Their consumption is consistent with utilitarian philosophy which is generally held to be the view that morally right actions are those which produce good karma. In this section, the findings explain the influence of Buddhist philosophy on conditioning consumer attitudes and brand personality perceptions. Among the various dimensions of value, those most commonly utilized in recent marketing literature are hedonistic and utilitarian values (Babin et al., 1994; Overby and Lee, 2006, Ryu et al., 2010). Utilitarian consumer behaviour has been described as task-related

and rational (Arnold and Reynolds, 2009, Babin, et al., 1994, Hanzae and Rezaeyeh, 2013). Utilitarian evaluation is traditionally functional, instrumental and cognitive in nature. As mentioned in the previous section, Buddhist participants claim that they do not hurt animals, do not eat animals and do not buy animal-related products. Buddhists follow utilitarian philosophy when they purchase clothing. As explained by Bud6:

“When I buy clothing, I only consider if the cost of the clothing is reasonable or not. I cannot understand why some people buy animal fur clothing. For me, it is a matter of animals’ right to survival. In addition, it also costs too much for the fur clothing...”

Buddhist participants explained their reasons for minimising their consumption of animal products as respect for the living rights of animals. Participants showed the moral action to renounce or diminish the consumption of animals or non-utilitarian products. Bud4 demonstrated the same attitudes toward clothing consumption:

“Our society develops so fast and we have more material to enjoy. We have plenty of food and clothing options. Some people prefer to live a material life, and be spoiled by luxuries. I do not consume luxuries personally because I think it is not value for money. ”

Buddhist participants expressed the view that they would not spend as much on luxury products as Confucians; if they cannot afford it, they will not purchase it. Buddha commended frugality. The virtue of frugality is a goal for Buddhist orders, which emphasize living a simple life in a natural setting. In addition, a frugal life also resists excessive consumption in order to protect wildlife and nature.

“When I consume, I always choose better quality at a good price. I consider the practical reasons, whether I need it or not. I never consume for face value, but for practical values. Ever though now we have a better life, we never lose the virtue of frugality.” [Bud1]

Buddhist participants explained that, if they force themselves to buy what is beyond their financial capacity, they will suffer later to save money. As Finnigan (2011) explained, spending too little will lead to defects that can endanger the physical and mental ideal of well-being, while excessive accumulation of material wealth will cause suffering. Unlike Confucians,

Buddhist consumers pay attention to utilitarian goods and services rather than to materialistic experiences, so Buddhist participants state that their happiness depends less on consumption. Buddhist participants have a sense of aloofness toward brands as they consider it unnecessary to engage in luxury consumption and their teachings direct their attention away from material possessions.

“Money is the basic condition of material life; everyone has the desire for peace and wealth. The Buddha, of course, is not against the proper way to earn wealth, the so-called ‘money is blessing, money is wisdom’, as long as it is used for the right path, and the accumulation of good Karma. Therefore, Buddhism advocates the earning of legitimate wealth, but also living a reasonable economic life. Instead of blindly possessing, to consume, to let desire control the heart. Never spend too much and waste.”

[Bud9]

In terms of sustaining relationships, Buddhists have their own way of sharing, compared to Confucians who consume luxuries to expand their social relationships. Buddhists tend to share with others what they have and what they can afford, and what they believe is useful to others, such as Laba porridge for good luck or other utilitarian products:

“I give Laba porridge to my friends with the wish of bringing them good luck during the Laba Festival. In daily life, I prefer to give them utilitarian products that they can use. It is a good feeling because they will think of you when they use it. ”

[Bud3]

As this case demonstrates, Buddhist consumers pay attention to utilitarian goods as Buddhist participants state that their happiness depends on utilitarian consumption. To sum up, Buddhists show an obligation to attaining a particular sustainable state or development of the world. This implies that the Buddhist philosophy and environmental behaviour needs to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is in line with Fünfgelt and Baumgärtner (2014)’s concept of the utilitarian notion of responsibility for sustainability. Presently living persons are responsible for meeting the basic

needs of the present generation and not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their basic needs to the extent of presently living persons' possibility of compliance and to the point of marginal utility. Comparing utilitarian consumption with Buddhism and the paradox of materialistic consumption, Buddhist teachings direct Buddhist attention away from material possessions to focus onto utilitarian products. The next section presents the findings of the Taoist case study.

### **4.3 Taoist Case Study Findings**

The findings in the following sections explore the philosophical religious traditions of Taoism and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour as related to the Duanwu Festival context in two geographic areas - Beijing and Zhejiang province. This case study reveals that Taoist participants are influenced by the Taoist concepts of harmony and unity between man and nature, resulting in harmony with natural consumption both during festivals and in their daily lives.

#### **4.3.1 The Context of the Duanwu Festival (who, when, where)**

Ten participants from different places and backgrounds were chosen alongside experts in Taoism, such as the Vice Chairman of the China Taoism Association, to participate in this research. These participants identified themselves having a background in and knowledge of Taoist philosophy and all have celebrated the Duanwu Festival for at least the past five years. This purposive sample was selected from different occupations and included five females and five males with an age range between 24 and 63 years old (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5 Profile of Taoist Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Educational Attainment</b>
<b>Tao1</b>	Male	27	Self-employed	Doctorate Degree
<b>Tao2</b>	Male	32	Doctor Of Traditional Chinese Medicine	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao3</b>	Female	31	Self-employed	Foundation Degree
<b>Tao4</b>	Female	30	Self-employed	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao5</b>	Female	26	Self-employed	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao6</b>	Male	33	Taoist Priest	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao7</b>	Female	32	Taoist Priest	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao8</b>	Female	24	Taoist Priest	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao9</b>	Male	50	Taoist Priest	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Tao10</b>	Male	63	Vice chairman of China Taoism Association	Doctorate Degree

The Duanwu Festival is also known as the Dragon Boat festival or Double Fifth Day, as it falls on the 5th day of the 5th month of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is a traditional festival full of rituals and superstitions. Some of the most traditional customs include eating zongzi - rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves, drinking realgar wine, and hanging mugwort and calamus. Duanwu is also most popularly associated with dragon boat races (Liu et al., 2011). Historically, plagues have often broken out during the humid lunar May month. Many of the small rituals that are practiced during Duanwu clearly serve illness prevention and healing functions. One important health promoting practice is house cleaning. After the house is carefully swept and cleaned, water infused with flower of sulphur realgar is sprinkled inside and outside the house. Families also hang fresh or dry mugwort (Ai cao) and

Calamus (Chang Pu) bunches outside the door to keep illness, insects, demons and bad luck at bay (Jin et al., 2018).

People, especially young children, bathe in mugwort and other medicinal herb-infused baths on this day. Small embroidered pouches, which are stuffed with fragrant, insect-repelling herbs, are given to children to hang around their necks. Adults drink wine infused with flower of sulphur, which is also believed to protect the body from invasions of illness, demons and worms. During the Duanwu Festival period, Taoist participants go to the Taoist temple to purchase specific Taoist Fengshui products to bring luck. This is because in much of Asia, especially in the southern regions, the Duanwu Festival takes place at a time when the weather gets hotter and the rainy season starts, and when infectious diseases become more frequent. Therefore, the main theme of the practices associated with Duanwu is the driving away of illness, demons, social injustice and bad luck. This case study was conducted in Zhejiang province and Beijing due to Zhejiang producing the most popular brand of zongzi for the Duanwu Festival in China and being the founding place (Tongbai Taoist temple) of the Chinese Taoist Association. While Beijing is a metropolis in northern China and it has the largest Taoist Temple - Baiyun (White Cloud) Temple.

#### **4.3.2 Taoist Participants' Festival Consumption Behaviour**

The items consumed most frequently by Taoist participants during the Duanwu Festival were zongzi (sticky rice dumplings). In regards to gifting, the most common items were Taoist amulets and sachets (see Table 4.6). Taoist participants advocated an ecologically friendly lifestyle and harmony with nature and the environment. This environmental awareness can be broadly defined as their attitude regarding the environmental consequences of human behaviour.

**Table 4.6 Findings from the Accompanied Shopping with Taoist Participants**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Shopping Items</b>	<b>Participant Perceptions</b>	<b>Taoist Behavioural Beliefs</b>
<b>Tao1</b>	Zongzi Taoist Sachet	“I always think about reusing usable things before throwing them away. For example, I use old silk cloth to make sachets rather than just throwing it out.”	Harmony With the Environment
<b>Tao2</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“I prefer everything in nature; I grow the traditional Chinese medicine and make herb tea myself. I do not want to waste, I prefer to live in a natural way ”	Taoist Philosophy and Health
<b>Tao3</b>	Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“I believe a man should respect and protect nature and the environment. I do not want to do anything to damage the environment.”	Taoist Philosophy and Health
<b>Tao4</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“We grow our own, we plant our own food. We should protect the environment and consume food that's not harmful to the environment.”	Harmony With the Environment
<b>Tao5</b>	Zongzi Taoist Sachet	“I refuse to purchase environmentally harmful material; I always use natural material. I eat naturally, wear natural materials.”	Harmony With the Environment
<b>Tao6</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“I always purchase environmental products; I will not damage the environment. I always keep in mind that man should be in harmony with nature.”	Harmony With the Environment
<b>Tao7</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“I always choose eco-friendly materials, which can reduce the waste materials that are harmful to the environment.”	Harmony With the Environment

<b>Tao8</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“I obey Taoism’s basic concept -Tian Ren He Yi- that man should maintain a balanced relationship between himself and nature. I believe recycling helps to protect the environment, I collect the rain water from bamboo leaves. I feel so proud to plant the bamboo leaves and make the zongzi by myself.”	Tian Ren He Yi
<b>Tao9</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“Tao (Taoism) means the way, which is the reality beyond human perception, a reality that Taoists strongly associate with the natural world. Everything is connected in the world. If we destroy the environment, the environment will retaliate.”	Harmony With the Environment
<b>Tao10</b>	Zongzi Taoist Amulet Taoist Sachet	“Taoism proposes reasonable consumption, paying attention to the utility of man and heaven. Man should respect nature, not damage it. Man should protect it, cherish the resources, reduce energy consumption, and protect the environment.”	Tian Ren He Yi

*(Source: the researcher)*

### **4.3.2.1 Shopping Items**

Participants purchased zongzi and made Taoist amulets and sachets in preparation for the celebration of the Duanwu Festival (see Table 4.6). In this section, the perceptions and motivations behind why participants purchased particular items and their usage of said products are explained and presented in detail.

#### **4.3.2.1.1 Food Consumption**

Zongzi is the most popular food associated with this festival. It is a sticky rice dumpling, which is typically shaped as a triangle, wrapped inside bamboo leaves, and consumed during the Duanwu Festival. There are actually many different kinds of fillings which vary in flavour. In addition, the filling depends on the region of China. The most famous zongzi in China are those from the Zhejiang province, which has become the national standard. Usually for non-Taoists, zongzi has various fillings, such as sweet bean paste, fresh meat or egg yolk. However, in the Tongbai Taoist temple, instead of consuming meat or eggs like normal customers, Taoists choose to make zongzi in person and they eat it without any fillings.

During the Duanwu Festival, Taoists make zongzi and prepare some other food such as rice porridge, shredded radish and stewed bean curd with green vegetables. These vegetarian dishes are mainly served to Taoists themselves and those who visit the temples. Taoists consume natural food every day, and also during special festivals; most of what they eat is wheat and vegetables grown by themselves. Religion and customary beliefs exert a strong influence on food habits, particularly through food laws such as taboos, which are imposed on the consumption of certain food items (Kwon, 2015). Tao10 who is the vice chairman of China Taoism Association provides a clear explanation of Taoist food consumption principles and distinguishes how Taoist food consumption behaviour is different from that of others.

“The tradition of Taoism has had a significant impact on Chinese food consumption behaviour... Taoism is all about nature, and humans being part of nature. Our concept of food is to be simple and remain as part of nature. The famous Taoist philosopher Chuang-Tzu proposed simplicity and the natural form as the highest form...”

[Tao10]

Most Taoist participants clarified that they prefer natural food, which means avoiding consuming unnatural man made substances and staying away from all foods that contain chemical additives (artificial coloring, flavorings, preservatives and the like) that the body cannot process and which may contain unbalanced flavours. For example, Taoist participants consume natural zongzi without fillings. According to Tao8’s explanation:

“Eat only food and avoid unnatural man made substances is our principle on consume nature food. For example, zongzi; I do not like any fillings in it. According to the Taoist philosophy, no filling (no flavour) should impact on the Taoist aesthetic pursuit of “bland food consumption.”

Meyer-Rochow (2009) illustrated that religious beliefs play a significant role in food habits, especially the effect of food taboos on consumption. This argument explains why the Taoist philosophical religious tradition of harmony with nature influences Taoists to behave in a natural way and to avoid consuming unnatural food items. Tao1’s statement also explains why they consume naturally.

“You are what you eat. Being healthy in Taoist terms is synonymous with what you eat, what you metabolize, and how you balance your diet. The Taoist diet is based on eating naturally, avoiding food without natural content, or the artificial food that are difficult to digest and harmful to the health.”

[Tao1]

The findings around Taoist zongzi consumption behaviour are also associated with the Taoist philosophy thinking system. One of the most important philosophers from Taoism, Lao Tzu, extended the concept of flavour into the realm of aesthetics and thought that real delicacy appears in its original form rather than through food processing. According to Lao Tzu,

people should savour that which has no flavor. He regarded 'no flavour' as an aesthetic concept and elaborated on the Taoist aesthetic pursuit of 'bland-flavored'. Chuang-Tzu also regarded simplicity and the natural form as the highest form. From their perspective, Taoists hold that beauty lies in the state of being natural (Chang, 2011).

In general, Taoist participants presented their understanding of the relationship between man and nature, and its effect on food choices.

#### **4.3.2.1.2 Sachets**

Taoists have a set of principles and a study system for Chinese herbs. The early Taoists combined their study of nature and their scientific approach to the world in the study of herbalism. In today's society, herbs are often prescribed for a number of ailments in traditional Chinese medicine; they are used as medicine in whole or powdered form and taken in capsules or, more often, infused in water and drunk as tea. In the following part, an explanation is given of how the Taoist philosophy of harmony with nature influences Taoists' consumption behaviour in relation to herbs, and especially how Taoist participants used herbs to make sachets during the Duanwu Festival.

During the Duanwu Festival, Taoists picked some herbs that they planted in the mountains and used them to make sachets. Sachets are small cotton bags with a rich scent filled with aromatic herbs. Making sachets is a traditional custom during the Chinese Duanwu Festival and people have been making them for centuries. They are used for many reasons such as fighting insects, absorbing human sweat or even warding off evil spirits. In the Tiantai Tongbai Taoist temple, Taoists make sachets with some of the visitors. Tao9 explained that the reason why the Tongbai sachets are so popular among visitors is because they contain herbal ingredients which are good for the health.

“The specialty of the Tongbai Taoist Temple sachet is made up of patchouli, atractylodes, wormwood, evodia, cinnamon, leaves, borneol, camphor, realgar and other rare Chinese herbal medicine with fragrance. It can be used for many functions such as repelling insects, fighting plagues, disease prevention, fighting colds and wind, spleen and stomach and Qi-regulating analgesia and more.”

[Tao8]

**Figure 4.7 Photographs of the Taoist Made Sachets**



Sachets are not only good for the health, but the odour from the sachet can also prevent insect bites. Therefore, during the Duanwu Festival, parents dressed their children up with the sachets with the expectation of protecting and keeping their children safe.

“People, especially young children, bathe in mugwort and other medicinal herb-infused baths during the Duanwu Festival. Small sachets, which are stuffed with fragrant, insect-repelling herbs, are given to children to bring them good luck and keep them safe.”

[Tao6]

Nowadays, sachets are sold everywhere at the Duanwu Festival, customers buy them for the same reasons for which they were originally used long ago: to bless the owner with good luck and stop bad luck, in hope of peace and happiness. In addition, they are often exchanged as gifts.

“I often give sachets to my family and friends as gifts with the hope to bring them happiness. This year I made the sachet myself, I think this would let them feel my heart, I also think it is very meaningful.”

[Tao9]

In the Taoist temple, sachets were a popular product among visitors and were used as gifts for friends and family to share.

#### **4.3.2.1.3 Amulet**

The amulet is another popular item among Taoist participants during the Duanwu Festival. From the participants’ perspective, the purpose of using an amulet is to pursue good luck or avoid bad luck. This was illustrated by Taoist participants as follows: “it can bring good luck (Tao4)”, “it can keep people safe (Tao5)”, “it can add value (Tao7)”, and “it can keep harmony (Tao3)”. For example, Taoist participants came to the Taoist temple to request a Taoist amulet for good Fengshui and with the hope of bringing good luck.

“The amulet is a symbol of mystery which can communicate with the immortal; it has a magical effect. I cannot tell you exactly how it affects people’s Fengshui but I do believe it will bring good luck to people. It is accurate to say that it has some kind of psychological comfort and hope. I have met lots of people who came to the temple to request a Taoist amulet, as they believe it will bring them good luck”

[Tao5]

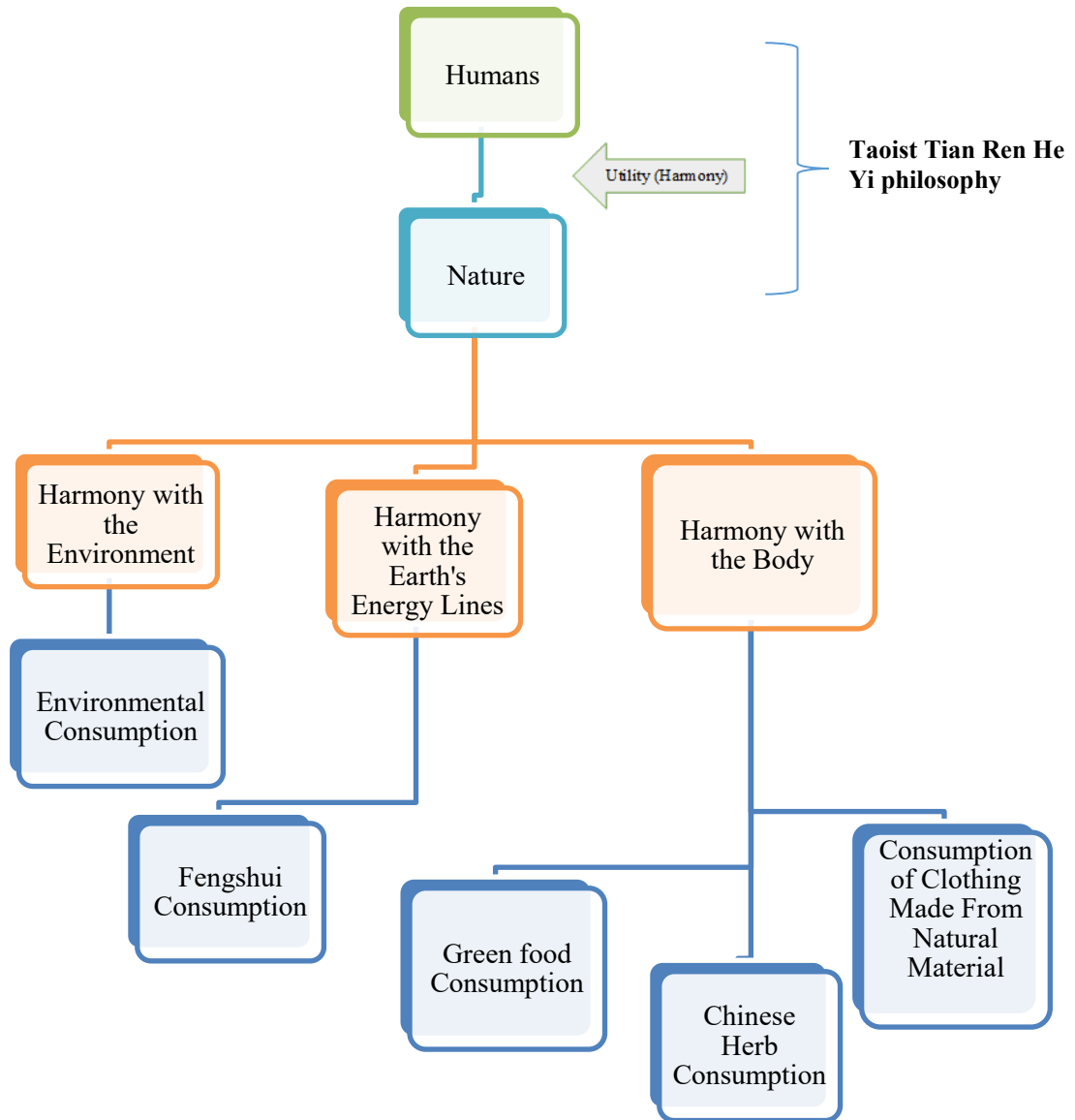
From the observation, many people came to the Taoist temple to purchase Taoist related products and request a Taoism amulet to bless their children, for example, to help them enrol at a good university or find a good job. This is especially true during the Duanwu Festival, as it appears many more people visited the temple then compared to normal days. This is because the Duanwu Festival takes place just before the Chinese university entrance exams.

Overall, the Duanwu Festival is a popular time to eat zongzi and it is associated with driving away illness and bad luck through the purchase of sachets and amulets. The findings reveal that Taoist participants show a high level of environmental awareness and consume natural food and Chinese herbs. In addition, participants also expressed their belief in Fengshui through the consumption of lucky charm products such as Taoist amulets and sachets.

### **4.3.3 Taoist Participants' Daily Consumption Behaviour**

The findings in relation to Taoist participants' daily consumption behaviour were categorized into themes (harmony with the environment, harmony with the earth's energy lines and harmony with the body) (See Figure 4.8). This empirical framework is based on the findings from the three methods of data collection. Taoists respect nature and follow the Tian Ren He Yi philosophy, which translates as human utility with nature (Tian Ren He Yi in Chinese) meaning humans and nature living in harmony. This philosophy is also regarded as the basis of the Chinese culture of harmonization.

**Figure 4.8 Empirical Framework of Taoist Green Consumption Behaviour**



#### 4.3.3.1 Taoist Consumption and Harmony with the Environment

In this section, findings of how Taoist philosophy influences current Chinese environmental consumption are presented. In Taoist philosophical teachings, man follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows Tao, and the Tao follows nature. Taoists' behaviour and philosophy are related to nature and the environment, which is derived from the principle of humans living in harmony with nature. The man-nature harmony relationship is the core point of Taoist natural philosophy and this is shown by peoples' pursuit of a lifestyle that respects the rights of nature. The founder of Taoism, Lao-Tzu, insisted that the unity of humanity and nature and the principle of ecological equality requires an individual's behaviour to be reasonable and orderly. Taoism's perspective on nature is compatible with an environmental view of the relationship between humans and nature.

“Tao means the way, which is the reality beyond human perception; a reality that Taoists strongly associate with the natural world. Everything is connected in the world, we should be in harmony with nature; if we destroy nature, nature will retaliate. Besides, the teachings of compassion and unity with nature in Taoism also make sense in a country that has pursued economic gain at the expense of charity and concern for the environment.”

[Tao8]

Taoism's orientation toward nature makes it compatible with Western notions of environmentalism. Taoist participants spoke of the over-arching concepts from which many Taoist principles flow, such as interconnectedness between Heaven, Earth, and humans, or the all-encompassing nature of the Tao.

“The Taoist philosophy of ‘Unity (Harmony) of Heaven and Man’ pursues the harmonious coexistence of people and society, man and nature, which is an inner harmony and unity. This is an orderly natural order, which requires us, not only to keep the order of society, but also to live in harmony with nature and keep nature in harmony and order.”

[Tao10]

Other Taoist participants also claimed that they are influenced by the Taoist philosophy of unity (harmony) of man and nature and that they advocate that people should be harmonious with the environment in their daily lives. For example:

“Taoism is not only strict on environmental protection, but it also advocates the unity of nature and man. The ecological view of Taoist thought emphasizes that people should live together with the ecological nature, emphasizing the natural ecological balance between heaven, earth and Man.”

[Tao7]

In their daily lives, Taoist participants follow Taoist philosophy and behave in an ecologically and environmentally-friendly manner. A case in point is Tao3. Even though Tao3 has the financial resources to purchase an expensive car, he insisted on taking public transport or walking. The rationale behind this action was to better protect the environment and avoid causing pollution:

“Even though, in contemporary life, automobiles bring a lot of convenience and people benefit a lot from them. However, now the fine particulate matter is very strong and environmental damage has been greatly affected by the exhaust emissions from automobiles. Therefore, Taoism has had an influence on the desire to buy. Taoism can contribute to that because Taoism always guides us as to what is the right consumer behaviour, and it impacts the control we have over our desire for unnecessary things or harmful things to the environment.”

[Tao3]

Taoist participants consider the effect of environmental awareness on polluting consumption, as well as the consumption decisions of individuals especially against polluting goods. The reason for this is quite straightforward: these individuals closely link environmental degradation with the production of goods. Therefore, participants are likely to consume fewer of these goods and choose more environmentally-friendly ones. For example:

“I choose vegetarian food in my life, which I think is very important. It will be good for the environment and good for health. In addition, for the home decoration and other aspects of daily life, I always select pollution-free products for the purpose of protecting the environment. When dining outside, I try not to use disposable tableware, but bring my own. ”

[Tao2]

Participants were also influenced by factors that motivate environmental behaviours including their feelings of guilt in relation to non-environmental consumption. Participants’ environmental beliefs engendered positive attitudes towards pro-environmental consumption.

“The harmonious development between man and nature is a kind of contradiction yet it is unified as a whole; there is an interaction and interdependence between them. With the destructive human activities in the natural environment, human society is also beginning to suffer from natural retaliation, such as global warming, sandstorms, air pollution and so on. These phenomena have led to the realization of the importance of the natural action of human beings. I feel guilty if I do something bad to the environment. Therefore, we should be in harmony with the environment, protect it everywhere in our daily lives.”

[Tao4]

Taoist participants are conscious of the environmental and social credentials of the goods and services they purchase. The findings regarding Taoist participants’ environmental awareness and consumption in general confirm they are influenced by the Taoist philosophy of harmony with nature. As explained by a Taoist philosophy tutor:

“I think we Taoists always pay attention to environmental protection and we are harmonious with the environment. Although now we live a better life and have more wealth than before, Taoism still controls our desire to not spend much on non-practical products. Generally, we are very concerned about the protection of the environment, we cherish goods, and we have the precepts to teach us to treasure goods.”

[Tao7]

The findings in this section show Taoist philosophical beliefs influence consumer environmental behaviour. This is also in line with Tanner and Kast (2003)'s argument that consumer knowledge of environmental issues has been linked to positive environmental behaviours as well as to Collins et al. (2007)'s view that the purchase of ecologically responsible products is more frequent amongst consumers who attribute high importance to environmental protection.

#### **4.3.3.2 Taoist Consumption and Harmony with the Body**

Traditional Chinese medicine practices and the philosophical and spiritual wisdom of the Tao. The ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism provides the basis for the development of Chinese medical theory and it has influenced Taoist behaviour in relation to healthy living. Taoist consumers believe that people need to pay attention to food quality and safety and eat organic food in order to stay healthy. The findings present Taoists' attitude toward food and clothing as a result of green food consumption and consumption of herbs and clothing made from natural materials.

##### **4.3.3.2.1 Green Food Consumption Behaviour**

Philosophical and customary beliefs exert a strong influence on food habits, particularly through the rules imposed on the consumption of certain food items. For example, participants in the Duanwu Festival consumed plain zongzi, vegetarian food and healthy food just as they do in their daily lives. Taoist eating habits provide an abundance of information on how to self-nurture and harmonise with natural food consumption.

The philosophy of being in harmony with nature has an impact on Taoist food consumption, not only during special festivals but also in their daily lives. Taoists adore nature, which leads to their green consumption behaviour. Consumers' personal values and attitudes are the prevailing

motivations for their behaviour as they wish to save natural resources and protect nature. Table 4.7 provides an overview of the reasons that Taoist participants gave for consuming organic foods.

**Table 4.7 Taoist Green Food Consumption and Motivation**

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Reasons For Taoist Buying Green Food</b>	<b>Quotations From Participants</b>
<b>Natural Content</b>	Contains No Additives	I prefer green food more than conventional food due to the fact it contains no additives, no artificial ingredients. (Tao5)
	Contains Natural Ingredients	Nature is beauty and nature is good. I believe everything in nature will be good, so I consume green food because of its natural ingredients.(Tao1)
<b>Healthiness Of Green Food</b>	Contains No Chemical Substances	I do not like chemical or hormone residues in food. I know some merchants put hormones in some products to let them grow quickly in order to make profit. I only consume food with natural ingredients. (Tao3)
	Healthy	Organic food contains many vitamins and minerals, it is more nutritious, and it can help me to stay healthy. I buy what I think is generally good for my health. I always tell my family and friends ‘Do not buy industrially produced food.’ For example, my friends like to eat Latiao (spicy meat floss). I advise them not to eat it because this thing is not good for the health. (Tao9)

<b>Environmental Concern</b>	General Environmental Value	Green food is environmental protection. For example, we plant our own food by ourselves which is grown locally to reduce transportation. (Tao7)
	Personal Environmental Value	Green food is prepared in an environmentally friendly way so it has not shaken the balance of nature. I think people should be in harmony with nature, starting with their daily food consumption. (Tao6)

*(Source: the researcher)*

The evidence presented shows that natural content, the healthiness of green food and environmental concerns guide participants to make greener purchasing decisions. Taoist participants are environmentally conscious people who tend to change their purchasing behaviour to improve the environment. This is line with Vermeir and Verbeke (2006)'s view that environmental behaviour entails environmental values, which affect personal norms and consumers' green food consumption. As a result, this guides consumers towards environmentally friendly behaviour. This study implies that Taoists' environmental beliefs shape their attitudes towards behaviour, including their consumption intentions.

#### **4.3.3.2.2 Chinese Herb Consumption Behaviour**

The findings explain contemporary Taoist participants' perspective on herb consumption which emphasises the maintenance of health by prioritising the use of diet above herbal medicines and above pharmaceuticals. This is in line with Kwak and Jukes' (2001) argument that the Chinese used foods for their functional properties long before the concept of functional food for its medicinal (preventative and therapeutic) qualities in addition to its sensory and nutritional properties. If you want to live, you must eat wisely. Eating wisely not only prevents people from becoming sick, it helps them to be healthy.

Proper eating enables the bones, tissues and organs of the body to remain strong and healthy, and so it ensures balance within the body, and ill health is foreign to it. Through sensible eating and drinking habits, and proper use of herbs, the majority of illnesses and diseases can be cured quite quickly and the deterioration of the body can be stopped. One of the participants, Tao2, who is a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine explained:

“People are born as a part of nature and nature herself grows and cures all things. When I am sick or my family gets sick, we never take western medicine, we always take Chinese medicine. In my daily life, I like reading Chinese medicine books and I find ways to do some daily care. I always drink some herbal teas to clean the body and keep healthy.”

Most participants pointed out that they like to consume Chinese herbs to keep healthy in their daily lives, such as traditional Chinese herb tea. In the Tiantai Tongbai Taoist temple, Taoists are very proud of their tea farming. They cultivate tea and herbs and produce their own branded tea in the temple - Tiantai Lindera aggregate tea (see Figure 4.9).

“The tea is made up of tea leaves and several kinds of herbs which are used to supplement the diet to prevent disease and aid health. Our tea leaves are planted on our own mountain which catches the energy flow. The energy of the TongBai Taoist temple is good for Fengshui and the reason why Tong Bai Taoist health protection is popular among customers is due to the belief that those tea leaves that are naturally grown and contain natural herbs can improve body function and longevity.”

[Tao8]

The function of the Tiantai Lindera aggregate tea is to play a role in immunoregulation and the relief of fatigue. Every herbal medicine has its function, either to make up for an inherent shortage or cure existing illness. Healthcare is one of the first priorities in terms of improving product standards and this has created a strong demand. This could be an explanation for why sachets and Tiantai Lindera aggregate tea are two of the most popular products within Taoist temples.

“For the Chinese people, health and longevity, consumption are very important. Chinese herbs are good for the health. For example, I started to drink Tiantai Lindera aggregate tea over the last half year because it is good for health. After I took this, I felt my body was full of power and I do not get tired as easily as before.”

[Tao7]

Figure 4.9 Tiantai Lindera Aggregate Tea



Taoist life promotes patriotism and a passion for Taoism, immortality, good health, kindness and harmony to benefit people. Taoist participants consume traditional Chinese herb tea to keep healthy in daily life. Apart from herb tea, Taoists like to add herbs when they cook foods such as healthy soup. As Tao4 explained:

“When I am drinking or boiling soup, I like to put in wolfberry. Wolfberry has many functions in Chinese medicine. We also use it in bubble water, boiled soup or porridge.”

Chinese medicine looks at the connection between the mind and body to determine the treatment for illness. Taoists use some herbs to keep away colds or cure some illnesses like coughs.

“In daily life, I take some food for enhanced resistance to strengthen the body’s resistance to illness, such as jujube, citrus and other herbs. In winter, I always drink some liquorice to keep the cold away, and liquorice is a good immune system enhancer.”

[Tao5]

The evidence presented here shows that herbs play an important role in Taoists’ daily lives. Therefore, it can be concluded that Taoism herb philosophy impacts Taoist daily herb consumption behaviour. According to Fan et al. (2012) that the Asian market for functional food such as herbs is established and continues to grow, especially in China. This could mean that any changes in the adoption of, or consumer resistance to, genetically modified foods may be decided in Asia. Therefore, it is important to understand contemporary Chinese herb consumption behaviour.

#### **4.3.3.2.3 Taoist Consumption of Clothing Made From Natural Materials**

Throughout the participant observation, Taoist participants always wore Daofu - usually consisting of a headband, hat, footgear and accessories. Taoists wear simple cotton clothes when they come down the mountain. In most cultures, clothing was introduced as a method of protecting the human body against extreme weather conditions such as strong winds, intense heat, cold and precipitation (Choudhury et al., 2011). However, clothing is important because it reflects an individual’s culture, personality and preferences (Moody et al., 2010). Taoist participants focus on the understanding of labels and symbols. Taoists always wear natural materials. For example, Taoist clothing is made from natural materials. The fabrics are not heavily chemically coloured; they are either black, dark blue or white as this helps maintain the durability of the fabric. To the Taoist mind, natural fabrics are bamboo, cotton, sheep’s wool, other wool and silk, and these materials are woven by hand (Allenby, 2006).

As explained by the Taoist participants, rather than being attracted to luxury brands, they are more concerned about environmental issues. Thus, they pay

attention to the material when they choose clothing. This is illustrated succinctly by Tao5:

“Nowadays, when people choose which products to buy, for example clothes, some people will choose what is advertised, or products associated with positive feelings or aspirations. For myself, I do not care about the brand or other materialist meanings; I only consider whether it is comfortable or good for my health. It should have no chemical ingredients and should not be harmful to the environment.”

The majority of the participants expressed the view that in their daily lives they will always choose natural products because in Taoism, nature is understood to be infinitely wise, infinitely complex, and rational. The nature of Taoism is shown in every aspect of Taoist life.

“When I buy clothes I focus on the material of clothes. Natural materials, especially cotton, are always my first choice. I feel there is a different feeling to other materials when I wear it on the body. As well as food, I also pay more attention to natural products, I think some of the food is over-processed, and has lost the original taste. Thus, I will choose some with the original taste. Food and clothes are the most important aspects I will choose close to nature.”

[Tao3]

Most Taoist participants noted the difference between natural and artificial materials. Tao6 stated:

“When I choose clothing, generally, I will pick cotton material. At the beginning, you do not see any difference with other synthetic clothing, but after a long time, I am sure you will notice it. Cotton clothes are more comfortable.”

Tao5 explained in detail the differences:

“I notice the difference between wearing sheer stockings and cotton ones. For example, there is a bad smell after you wear the sheer stockings for a long day, but with cotton, it will be much better. If you wear the cotton thread material, there is no smell at all, I consider this to be because the cotton is natural and it does not have any chemical addition. There is some hint from allergic patients. Some of them wear the chemical fibre clothes as well as

those who have come in contact with any chemicals. For instance, some people use beauty cosmetics that cause their own immune defects - allergies.”

Taoist participants not only expressed the difference between natural products and other products, but also explained the reason why they do not choose man-made products.

“I always believe that additives are damaging to the body, purely natural material is much better. I always choose what is good for my body - of course natural material. Most of the chemical additives, even though some products like beauty products sometimes can make people look more beautiful compared to natural products, the skin inside actually is damaged as well. Thus, when choosing cosmetics and skin care products, try to choose purely natural ones. When it comes to clothes, I only wear clothes made from natural content, like cotton.”

[Tao6]

Taoism is centred on nature and Taoists see themselves as part of nature. The findings in this section present Taoism participants’ attitude towards clothing consumption and confirms that these participants prefer to choose clothing made from natural material.

#### **4.3.3.3 Taoism and Harmony with the Earth’s Energy Lines**

Taoism named the earth’s energy lines ‘Fengshui’. Fengshui is the ancient Chinese study of the energy of a place, and the art of creating harmony and balance in both living and working environments (Chen, 2007). The Taoist philosophical foundation of Taoist Fengshui follows ‘the unity of Heaven and Man’. For this reason, according to Fengshui, humans should live in harmony with nature and human acts should be designed with nature in mind (Chen and Wu, 2009). According to Erdogan and Erdogan (2014), everything is made up of energy and Fengshui argues that positive energy in the environment channels human behaviour and psychology. This argument is supported by Taoist participants’ opinions that Fengshui components have

a strong relationship with nature and emphasize the importance of harmony with the universe.

Taoist participants claim they are influenced by the concept of Fengshui in their daily lives and they highlighted a range of attitudes and understandings of Fengshui. These findings can contribute to a better awareness of how people understand Fengshui and their motivations for Fengshui-oriented consumption, and provide a full explanation of how Fengshui-oriented consumption behaviour is linked to personal beliefs and the living environment. For example, participants claim that Fengshui can bring people hope and prevent bad things happening, such as ‘mercury retrograde’. This is a popular notion amongst the young Taoist participants; ‘mercury retrograde’ describes when something easily goes against one’s will or goes wrong, while good Fengshui can prevent things going wrong.

“I feel like I fall on hard times during the Mercury retrograde period. I feel that everything goes wrong. This is the reason why I came to the Taoist temple to request a Taoism amulet. I wish to get rid of the pressure and hope the Taoism amulet can help alleviate depression and bless me with good Fengshui.”

[Tao3]

In Taoists participants’ daily lives, they often purchase some good Fengshui products, such as red rope bracelets, lucky beads, or products that can keep away evil spirits. These products are considered to be a protection against bad things and they bring people hope. Most participants claimed that the reason why they believe in Fengshui was because it can bring good luck to people or help them avoid bad luck. Wang et al. (2013) also supported this view and explained that Fengshui rituals, as a cultural resource, sustain a sense of hope among Chinese people, with Fengshui masters serving as purveyors and co-producers of hope. When faced with doubt or fear, it is not inevitable that individuals will experience hopelessness or even helplessness because they have accumulated hope over time, which is a form of cultural capital. Moreover, such hope can be transferred and collectively shared within social groups, with meanings and functions that relate to the overall

group, all of whom operate within socially sanctioned moral rules (Wang et al., 2013).

When Taoists (Fengshui) feel something is uncontrolled in their lives, they will always seek the help of a Fengshui expert hoping that they will offer pre-emptive protection against forces beyond their control. To the participants, the Fengshui expert serves as a facilitator, enabling them to re-align with the forces of nature. The Fengshui expert performs sacred rituals and uses symbolic objects, while also catering to the Taoist (Fengshui) adherents' preferences in the profane world. Praying for luck and inducing 'luck' is a dynamic process within the interaction between experts and consumers. These findings address how the Taoist philosophy of Fengshui has impacted on Taoist consumption behaviour, as Taoist experts transmit and instil hope and luck by practicing rituals and ascribing meaning to symbols to satisfy consumer prayers for good luck.

“Fengshui is a highly ritualised practice of spatial alignment and orientation, and is believed to offer hope, which is regarded as a means of negotiation for people with an uncertain future.”

[Tao10]

Alongside Fengshui bringing good luck, the findings also revealed that participants believe in Fengshui and consider it as an important factor affecting their daily behaviour, such as purchasing houses and positioning their furniture in the house. Tao1, Tao2 and Tao4 demonstrated that Fengshui is very important to them when considering their living environment. Tao2 indicated that, when he purchased his house, he checked the Fengshui of every room using the knowledge he learned from Fengshui books. Tao2 conveyed that he put a strong focus on how to position the furniture in his new house without destroying the Fengshui.

“Personally, I consider Fengshui to be the research of people's living environment, house surroundings and structure. For example, people do not put beds under the window in China because people will easily catch cold because of the wind, and thus now people consider that it is not good Fengshui to position a bed like that. If people do not pay attention to Fengshui it will cause trouble, like in my personal experience. For example, you cannot put the stove in front

of the doorway. My sister did not have good knowledge of Fengshui when she built her house and the stove was in the doorway. When people opened the door, the wind blew directly on to the stove and blew out the gas. If nobody noticed this, it would be prone to gas leakage, even fire.”

[Tao2]

Most participants expressed the view that they always pay attention to Fengshui aspects in their daily lives, even though some of them live in modern cities and cannot necessarily find a priest who lives near a hill or river, but they try and do their best to make changes to the topography of the earth. Artificial obstacles, trees, driveways and even the entrance to buildings are becoming important factors in Fengshui. However, what and where to position obstacles needs to be carefully considered due to the different Fengshui meanings behind each obstacle. Placing a plant or a tree within a certain distance is regarded as a good protective factor, while obstacles such as walls, poles and pillars should be removed as they block the flow of Qi (in Fengshui, Qi is the breath of life, the life force, and the soul of everything) (Prasad, 2005). Tao2’s comment about not putting the stove in the doorway was an acknowledgement that Fengshui attaches great importance to the direction of the main entrance of the door and it advises that the entrance to a building must be easily accessible.

This is also in line with Erdogan and Erdogan (2014)’s explanation that the basic purpose of Fengshui is to establish balance and harmony between the forces of nature and the spaces where people live in order to obtain the greatest amount of peace, welfare and profit. This is also the reason why people pay special attention to their living environment. For example,

“The word Fengshui is composed of two parts, Feng means ‘wind’ in Chinese and Shui means ‘water’. Fengshui is play a significant role in how to position the objects in the room and maximize the wellbeing of individuals. This is the reason why we care about the location of the house and also the position of things within the home.”

[Tao7]

Tao10’s view confirms that Fengshui plays a significant role in the determination of a house’s price, which is regarded as an intangible attribute.

Fengshui exerts an impact on the decision making of real estate consumers, and this influence is reflected in the effect of Fengshui on property prices. For that reason, it is not difficult to explain why most people pay a visit to the Taoist temple to seek Fengshui advice from Taoist experts like the vice chairman of China Taoism Association before they purchase a house.

“A lot of business people come to the temple to seek Fengshui advice. Moreover, some of them, especially real estate developers, have invited me to check the Fengshui of a property. Some developers always invite a Fengshui expert to practice geomancy according to the geographic features if the house sales are bad. If a house has good Fengshui, the value is high and it sells very fast.”

[Tao10]

Fengshui is very important to business people. Businesspeople often invite Fengshui experts to check the Fengshui when they select premises for their business. They also pay attention to how to organise the space and to the furniture in the room. Workplaces, houses and environments make an impact on people's behaviour in the outside world and affect Yin and Yang. Workplaces, like other spaces, should have good outdoor Fengshui. Many companies pay more money for a good view and especially for places where water can be seen. Important major projects in Asia are assessed according to Fengshui before the initiation of the construction process (Erdogan and Erdogan, 2014). Almost all companies allocate some of their budget for Fengshui consultancy to determine the ideal direction of the rooms and the best room layout, the locations of doors and corridors, the best function for every area, the best place for every person and the ideal colours and furniture layout.

“For example, my original business was very good and then the company was demolished and moved to a new place. The business somehow became bad. I did not know the reason, but later, after the Fengshui division came to see, I found out that the original direction of the door was wrong and that it blocked the fortune. After I discussed it with the Fengshui expert, I knew that the door entrance must be easily accessible, and the exit must be in plain sight with a clear path that has no obstacles in it. My business got better after I removed the obstacles. ”

[Tao4]

Taoism advocates living in harmony with nature's rhythms, flows and the forces of life. Fengshui ideas posit an identity between the physical shape and location of activities, environments and outcomes and these ideas also influence participants' private and business decisions. When people invest in real estate for themselves or commercial use, they will seek the help of Fengshui experts' recommendations. Taoism influenced the configuration of Fengshui settlements, while Fengshui influences the development of Chinese society today.

The case study findings present how the Taoist philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi - the principle of humans living in harmony with nature - has an influence on Taoist consumption behaviour both during the Duanwu Festival and Taoists' daily lives.

#### **4. 4 Cross Comparison between Individual Case Studies**

This section presents cross comparison analysis of the Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist case studies in order to compare the differences and similarities in Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist participants' consumption behaviour. The findings from the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies explored the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, focusing on three Chinese traditional festivals - the Qingming Festival, the Laba Festival and the Duanwu Festival. The philosophical religious traditions exert a strong influence on people's festival and daily consumption behaviours. Findings show consistency between participants' festival consumption and their daily consumption behaviour, as those religious beliefs deeply shape participants' attitudes towards behaviour, including consumption intentions. Comparing findings for Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians, distinct consumption patterns emerge in their behaviour. Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism share similarities and differences in cultural patterns. For a long time, these three philosophies dominated the beliefs of Chinese people (Yau, 1988). The study revealed that, within purchasing and consumption behaviours,

Confucianism concentrates on inter-relationships, Buddhism is about pursuing one's true self and Taoism encourages people to seek harmony with nature. Distinct consumption behaviours are apparent. In particular, Confucianism cares about saving 'face' and Guanxi resulting in luxury consumption; Buddhism cares about paticca-samuppada, non-violence, Karma and the middle path resulting in utilitarian consumption, and Taoists care about man's relationship with nature resulting in greener or environmentally-led consumption (see Table 4.8).

**Table 4.8 Cross Comparison of Individual Case Study Findings**

<b>Philosophy</b>	<b>Philosophy related themes</b>	<b>Consumption</b>	<b>Consumption Pattern</b>
<b>Confucianism</b>	Face	Face obligation Consumption Face conformity Consumption	<b>Luxury Consumption</b>
	Guanxi	In-Group Guanxi Consumption Out-Group Guanxi Consumption	
<b>Buddhism</b>	Paticca-samuppada Ahimsa Karma	Sustainable Consumption	<b>Utilitarian Consumption</b>
	Ahimsa Karma	Vegetarian Consumption	
	Ahimsa Middle path	Buddhism and the Paradox of Materialistic Consumption	
<b>Taoism</b>	Harmony with the Environment	Environmental Consumption	<b>Harmony with nature (Green) Consumption</b>
	Harmony with the Body	Green Food Consumption	
		Chinese Herb Consumption	
		Consumption of Clothing Made From Natural Materials	
Harmony with the Earth's Energy Lines	Fengshui Consumption		

*(Source: the researcher)*

To sum up, findings from the individual case studies - related to Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism - present how each philosophy impacts on Chinese consumption behaviour. The comparison of findings for Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians shows that only Confucians exhibit a high tendency to luxury consumption as previously established by many researchers (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Buddhists can be seen as utilitarian consumers, while Taoists are seen as green consumers. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism constitute the essence of traditional Chinese culture and they are equally important in understanding traditional Chinese culture. Findings from the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies will contribute to the explanation of Chinese consumption behaviour and the exploration of the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Chinese philosophical religious traditions.

Confucian participants clarified their belief in luxuries representing social status and wealth, which acts as a great motivation for them to consume luxury products. Luxury brands and their logos are key concerns in Confucians' process of consumption and they expect to show their wealth and status through the luxury products they use. The findings showed that luxuries are popular as gifts in China, particularly among business people who present gifts to each other to achieve mutual social benefit. As people have social contacts and needs, participants agreed that luxuries represent personal taste and social status to some degree. Therefore, participants often used luxuries for important occasions, even if they dressed more casually in their daily lives. Buddhist participants believe in the 'middle path', that is to say, not too much and not too little. Buddhist participants expressed the view that they would not spend a great deal of money on luxury products like Confucians; if they cannot afford it, they will not purchase it. Buddhist participants explained that if they were to force themselves to buy what is beyond their financial capacity, they would suffer later by having to save money. As Finnigan (2011) explained, spending too little can endanger physical and mental well-being, while excessive accumulation of material

wealth will cause suffering. Unlike Confucians, Buddhist consumers pay attention to utilitarian goods and services rather than to materialistic experiences, so Buddhist participants stated that their happiness depends less on consumption. Buddhist participants have a sense of aloofness toward brands as they consider it unnecessary to engage in luxury consumption and their teachings direct their attention away from material possessions. In terms of sustaining relationships, Buddhists have their own way of sharing, compared to Confucians who consume luxuries to expand their social relationships. Buddhists tend to share what they have with others, what they can afford and what they believe is useful to others, for example, sharing Laba porridge for good luck. Therefore, they do not present material possessions to others as in a Confucian-dominated society, but benefits can be accumulated over time. Similarly to Buddhists, Taoists visit the Taoist temple to purchase Taoist amulets with the hope of bringing good luck to people or avoiding bad luck. The Taoist philosopher and Vice Chairman of the China Taoism Association explained that ‘Fengshui’- related products such as Taoist amulets are very popular among followers of Taoism. As it can be seen from the individual case findings that there are many similarities between Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. Taoists are not perceived to be luxury consumers, whether it is for personal consumption or when giving gifts to others. Taoists tend to consume green and healthy products. There is a strong association between Taoist beliefs and purchasing frequency and intention in the sense that more environmentally concerned individuals are more likely to buy green food with the perception that green products are healthier than conventional alternatives. Evidence from the accompanied shopping and participant observation shows that natural content, the healthiness of green food and environmental concerns guide Taoist people to make greener purchase decisions. Taoist participants, given that they are environmentally conscious people, tend to change their purchasing behaviour to improve the environment. Therefore, environmental behaviour entails environmental values, which affect Taoist green consumption of the Taoist necessities of life (including clothes, food and places of residence). Another contrast compared to Confucian consumers is in respect of clothes. As explained by the Taoist participants,

rather than being attracted to luxury brands like Confucians, they are more concerned about environmental issues, thus they pay attention to the material that clothes are made of in order to choose clothes made from natural materials.

The individual case findings provide an holistic understanding and analysis of the impact of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour. It contributes to the knowledge of the existing theory and practice of Chinese consumption behaviour. In addition, it also proposes explanations for contemporary Chinese non-luxury consumption behaviour which have not been fully explored by previous research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **UNIVERSAL CASE – THE CHINESE SPRING FESTIVAL FINDINGS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the universal case study on Chinese Spring Festival and is divided into two main sections. Section 5.1 presents the findings from the Spring Festival case study that address Spring Festival consumption behaviour. The findings explain how participants prepared for the Spring Festival and the motives and goals behind their festival consumption behaviour. Section 5.2 discusses the implications of the Spring Festival study for multinational companies to aim to target the Chinese market. The findings from the universal case study fulfil Research Objective 3 which is ‘to further examine and consolidate the study of the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on consumer behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival, as a universal example of consumption behaviour during a religious festival celebrated by all three philosophical religious traditions’.

#### **5.1 Universal Case Findings**

The findings explored the philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and their influence on Chinese consumption behaviour in the context of the Spring Festival. A universal case study on the Chinese Spring Festival which is celebrated by all Chinese members in order to further examine and consolidate the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour. A participant profile and brief context of the Spring Festival is given below, followed by a presentation of the findings related to Chinese Spring Festival consumption.

### **5.1.1 Context of the Universal Festival (who, when, where)**

The participants in the Chinese Spring Festival Case study comprised thirty people aged between 20 and 60 years old from Beijing and the Zhejiang province (see Table 5.1). The participants have celebrated the Chinese Spring Festival every year for at least five years. There were four categories of religious tradition from which participants self-identified as having been influenced by one specific philosophy: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and hybrid. Hybrid participants are those who consider themselves to have been influenced by some of the elements of some or each of the three philosophies. Therefore, there are four categories among the thirty participants: seven purist Confucianism participants (Con11-Con17), six purist Taoism participants (Tao11-Tao16), seven purist Buddhism participants (Bud11-Bud17) and ten hybrid participants (Hyb1-Hyb10).

In order to develop a full understanding of how Chinese people behave during the Spring Festival, the researcher conducted accompanied shopping trips with the thirty participants to supermarkets, street vendors and department stores in Beijing city or Zhejiang province in China. Beijing is a metropolis in northern China; it has been the magnificent centre of traditional Chinese culture and learning since the Ming dynasty and the residents are achieving higher incomes as the economy grows (Dreyer, 2010). Zhejiang is located on China's east coast and is regarded as one of the cradle lands of the ancient Chinese civilization. Overall Beijing and Zhejiang are both popular business locations and people there have more purchasing power compared to other cities in China (Démurger, 2002). Understanding the consumption patterns of consumers from these two places will help multinational companies understand their potential target markets and understand consumption behaviour in different areas.

The Spring Festival, also named Chinese New Year, falling on the Chinese lunar January 1<sup>st</sup>, is the most important festival for all Chinese people and it is an occasion when family members get together (Yeung and Yee, 2010). Chinese New Year is a 15-day long celebration, from New Year's Eve to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the New Year; it involves with reunion dinners, parties and

gatherings. People travel home and gather with their families to eat, drink, rejoice in one another's company and honour their ancestors, to leave behind the old and enter the new year wishing one another well (Bin, 1998).

The Festival signifies that the old year has come to an end, and spring is closer. Trees, flowers and vegetables are starting to come up through the soil after their winter sleep. This means a new round of planting followed by the harvest season is going to begin soon. People are full of joy, singing, dancing and eating tasty food, meeting families and good friends, and enjoying the endless flavours of Chinese cuisine (Zhang, 2017). According to Yeung and Yee (2010), a cultural festival is a unique retail setting for the psychological state and situational environment that are associated with the consumer's excitement about attending the festival. Therefore, it presents an excellent opportunity to understand Chinese purchase intentions and consumption patterns through the most important festival of all in China - the Chinese Spring Festival. The Chinese Spring Festival is also called the Lunar New Year because the dates of the celebration follow the phases of the moon. Therefore, the 12th month of the Chinese year is called La Yue. This is the month of preparation for the Chinese Spring Festival, during which people reflect on the past year, clean the house, offer sacrifices to the gods, and drive away evil spirits. The first important festival activity in the 'month of preparation' is cleaning the house from the 23rd of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. This contains the special meaning of 'sweeping out the old, and welcoming in the new.' People believe that such rites purify their houses from every concerns of the old year and attract fortune. Furthermore, people do a great deal of shopping before the Chinese New Year, either for personal use or gift giving during the Festival. According to Financial Times (2019) Chinese people spent \$149bn on shopping and restaurants over the over the Spring Festival in 2018. It is customary to buy new clothes, have one's hair done, and pay off debts and so on, in order to make every effort to enter the New Year renewed and purified from the biological energy of the old year. In addition, people also purchase many home decorations - lucky red items to add to the festival atmosphere.

The most classic ritual of the Spring Festival is a family reunion feast on New Year's Eve (NianYeFan 年夜饭). The whole family sits around a table and eats homemade dishes, in the celebration of sending off the old year and welcoming in the new one. The ritual highlight is the family reunion feast. When all the dishes are ready on the table, the whole family gathers in the living room to perform a ceremony in honour of heaven and earth, various house gods and the family ancestors (BaiShenJiZu 拜神祭祖). During the dinner, everybody repeatedly expresses good wishes for the New Year and no unpleasant words may be spoken. After the dinner, the elder members of the family give red envelopes (lucky money) to the children or next generation. The lucky money is believed to suppress evil and drive away demons, and with the money, children can grow up healthy (Qiang, 2011). In the first minute of the New Year, it has long been a Chinese tradition to set off firecrackers. However, in recent years, many urban areas have had a firecracker ban or set aside a special area or time period for fireworks to prevent accidents and threats to air quality. People, especially Taoists and Buddhists, always go to the temple to burn incense to bring fortune and good luck at the beginning of the New Year. On the second day of the New Year, people start to visit relatives and friends and exchange gifts.

The next section explains in detail how Chinese people celebrated the Spring Festival and what items they purchased and consumed in detail, as well as the purchasing and consumption motivations.

### **5.1.2 Chinese Spring Festival Consumption Behaviour**

This section presents the findings and discusses consumption behaviour during the Chinese Spring Festival. The findings of the Spring Festival case study show that participants with different philosophical religious traditions behaving differently at the Spring Festival. Even though participants celebrate the same festival and shop for the same products, they do so with different purposes and behave in different ways.

All items consumed by individual participants have been checked and compared with the rest of the participants in the universal case study to establish some analytical categories (See Table 5.1). To start with, the items participants purchased during the Spring Festival were listed in table 5.1. Then the shopping items consumed by participants were divided into four categories - food, red envelopes, new clothes and gift-giving - to help explain participants' desires and the motivation behind their consumption. The reason why food, red envelopes, new clothes and gift-giving consumption is explained in detail is because these four are mostly consumed by participants during the Spring Festival, but also because clothes and food are part of normal daily consumption (Spaargare, 2003) whereas red envelopes and gifts are typical of Spring Festival consumption. Therefore, analysing the consumption of clothes and food benefits understanding of participants' festival consumption and daily consumption, but also the differences and similarities between daily consumption and festival consumption. In contrast, analysing red envelopes and gifts, as dedicated to Spring Festival consumption, helps to understand the characteristics of Spring Festival consumption.

**Table 5.1 Accompanied Shopping Findings Related to the Spring Festival**

<b>Coding Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Philosophy</b>	<b>Shopping Items</b>	<b>Participant Perceptions</b>	<b>Behavioural Beliefs</b>
<b>Con11</b>	Male	42	Lecturer	Purist Confucianism (7)	Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Watch, Toys, Books	<i>"...choosing a high price product helps me to save face ..."</i>	<b>Luxury Consumption Behaviour</b>
<b>Con12</b>	Male	26	Civil Servant		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Bag, Gold Jewellery	<i>"The Spring Festival is a good way to sustain Guanxi ..."</i>	
<b>Con13</b>	Male	39	Businessman		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Outbound travel, Bags, Cosmetics, Scarf, Books, Toys, Tea-Leaves	<i>"...luxuries makes me feel special ..."</i>	
<b>Con14</b>	Female	52	Sole Trader		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Cosmetics, Gold Jewellery	<i>"...I like products that can bring me symbolic meaning, bringing me wealth and luck..."</i>	
<b>Con15</b>	Female	39	Civil Servant		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cosmetics, Books	<i>"Branded and fashion products are my favourite."</i>	
<b>Con16</b>	Female	38	Business		Red Envelopes, New	<i>"The product I buy need to</i>	

			Woman		Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Domestic travel	<i>present my positive image.</i>	
<b>Con17</b>	Male	22	Student		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Cosmetics, Gold Jewellery	<i>“Well-known brands can help to catch the eye and establish a distinctive image.”</i>	
<b>Bud11</b>	Male	52	Businessman	Purist Buddhism (7)	Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Food, Incense	<i>“We should control selfish desires and live on moderate consumption.”</i>	<b>Utilitarian Consumption Behaviour</b>
<b>Bud12</b>	Male	27	Self-Employed		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Food, Incense	<i>“I prefer something simple and useful...”</i>	
<b>Bud13</b>	Female	28	Designer		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Buddhism books, Incense, Books	<i>“I like to share good things or useful products with others...”</i>	
<b>Bud14</b>	Male	35	Lecturer		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Food, Books	<i>“I am always trying to be practical when I am purchasing the products.”</i>	
<b>Bud15</b>	Male	35	Self-Employed		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Air purifier, Incense, Toys	<i>“I believe every experience of consumption should bring true happiness.”</i>	
<b>Bud16</b>	Male	47	Buddhist Monk		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes,	<i>“I only buy something that is really useful, if I do not need it, I will not buy it.”</i>	

					Food, Incense, Books		
<b>Bud17</b>	Female	33	Self-Employed		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, New Clothes, Domestic travel	<i>"I only purchase what I can afford..."</i>	
<b>Tao11</b>	Female	52	Self-Employed	Purist Taoism (6)	Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Year Decorations, New Clothes, Fengshui Products, Pachira macrocarpa (tree)	<i>"I feel like that I am a contradictory consumer, in some aspect for example to give gifts to others, I am very generous, but for myself, I am very frugal and buy stuff that I need."</i>	<b>Green Consumption Behaviour</b>
<b>Tao12</b>	Male	20	Student		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes	<i>"Consumption should not harm the environment."</i>	
<b>Tao13</b>	Female	28	Student		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Tea-Leaves, Incense, Books, Toys	<i>"I like to buy environmentally friendly and good quality products."</i>	
<b>Tao14</b>	Male	39	Lecturer		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, New Clothes, Health Products	<i>"We should be rationale about our consumption and do not wasteful."</i>	
<b>Tao15</b>	Male	52	Businessman		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Tea-Leaves	<i>"Keeping healthy and in harmony with the environment is very important."</i>	
<b>Tao16</b>	Male	27	Service Industry		Red Envelopes, New Clothes, Food, Domestic travel, Health Products, Books	<i>"I always considered food safety and buy non-polluted products."</i>	
<b>Hyb1</b>	Female	28	Self-Employed		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations,	<i>"Even in my daily life I do not spend much on non-</i>	

				Hybrid (Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism) (10)	New Clothes, Flower, Food, Books, Toys	<i>practical things, but I do spend lots during the Spring Festival."</i>	<b>Mixed Consumption Behaviour</b>
<b>Hyb2</b>	Male	60	Retired		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health, Products, Books, Toys	<i>"Before I retired, I always purchased high value products to sustain Guanxi , but know I just enjoy my old age in peace, eat healthily and read the Buddhist scriptures on a daily basis."</i>	
<b>Hyb3</b>	Male	35	Businessman		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Scarf, Tea-Leaves	<i>"I like to purchase the brand name products; it is a symbol of wealth and success."</i>	
<b>Hyb4</b>	Female	26	Sales Manager		Red Envelopes, New Clothes, Food, Tea- Leaves, Toys, Cosmetics	<i>"I live thriftily in my daily lives and only spend on practical things, but I feel spending much on gifts is essential."</i>	
<b>Hyb5</b>	Female	53	Fashion Industry		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, New Clothes, Food, Flowers, Health Products, Cigarette, Wine	<i>"I gave utilitarian products to family members, high value products to colleagues."</i>	
<b>Hyb6</b>	Male	42	Lecturer		Outbound travel, New Year Decorations, Food, Bags, Clothes, Cosmetics, Books, Toys, Tea-Leaves	<i>"I do not spend much on dressing but I pay special attention on food, especially paying more for organic food."</i>	
<b>Hyb7</b>	Female	23	Unemployed		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes,	<i>"I would rather go hungry and keep up appearances than eating properly and wear last year's fashions."</i>	

					Wine, Cosmetics, Bags		
<b>Hyb8</b>	Female	27	Civil Servant		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Domestic travel, Books, Toys, Scarf, Tea-Leaves	<i>"I like to behave like a Taoist in my daily life, keep healthy and live in peace. However, because of the general mood of the society, I behave like a Confucian to sustain social networks."</i>	
<b>Hyb9</b>	Male	31	Businessman		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Cosmetics, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Books	<i>"I always give well-known brands to business partners, even though I do not like this form of sustaining Guanxi , but I have to."</i>	
<b>Hyb10</b>	Female	35	Sales Manager		Red Envelopes, New Year Decorations, Food, New Clothes, Health Products, Cigarettes, Wine, Cosmetics	<i>"I always follow my colleagues to buy something, to behave according to my colleagues preferences."</i>	

### **5.1.2.1 Shopping Items**

Participants purchased new clothes and food for the preparation of the Spring Festival celebration (see table 5.1). In addition, participants also shopped for health products, cigarettes, wine, toys and books as gifts for friends, family members and business partners. In this section, most participants' consumption and usage of said products are presented and explained in detail in four categories: foods, red envelopes, new clothes and gift-giving. Additionally, the photographs displayed in this section were taken during the data collection process to visually capture the items participants bought at the Spring Festival.

#### **5.1.2.1.1 Food Consumption**

According to Seo et al. (2015) food plays a significant role in consumer lives and cultures as it embeds symbolic richness. This section is focusing on the food consumption during Spring Festival and its representation in the context of Chinese consumers, markets, and culture. It examines food consumption for two characteristics: food symbolic meaning and food as a social accomplishment.

Given food is often used as a marker and metaphor of identity, Spring Festival food consumption provides focused understanding of the unique Chinese patterns of food consumption behaviour. Food purchasing is the symbol of welcoming new things and preparing for a new start for the Spring Festival. Through the participant observation, participants prepared a variety of foods for the Chinese Spring Festival: meat, fish, vegetables and fruits are considered essentials, while sweets, drinks and nuts are also popular items. The dishes and ingredients served over the Chinese Spring Festival carry symbolic meaning to bring wealth, health and happiness in the coming year.

There are many types of food that participants consumed that contain symbolic meanings. For example, all the purist Confucian participants and hybrid philosophical participants bought fish for its symbolic meaning of ‘every year there is a fish’, which means a continuity of surplus year after year. The Chinese pronunciation of fish is ‘Yu’, which means surplus and fortune. So there is a blessing speech known as ‘Nian Nian You Yu’ in Chinese which means ‘May you have surpluses and bountiful harvests every year.’ As Con15 said:

“I buy fish every year for the Spring Festival. The pronunciation of fish in Chinese is the same as surplus, it symbolizes happiness, wealth and harvest, so I believe that eating fish will bring an excess of wealth.”

[Con15]

Fish dishes is an essential part of the Chinese Spring Festival with the wish of having a surplus of food and money every year. In addition, the type of fish which should be chosen for the Spring Festival follows certain patterns. As explained by Hyb1:

“Usually people buy carp (ji yu 鲫鱼). That is because carp is pronounced like the Chinese word 吉 (ji) which means good luck, thus, eating carp is with the hope that it brings good luck in the coming year. Besides, people also buy another carp (long li yu 龙利鱼), it is pronounced like the Chinese word 利 (li) which means profit.”

[Hyb1]

In Chinese culture, foods have been associated with symbolic meanings on many occasions. Participants’ emotions are closely linked to their understanding of the symbolic meaning of fish, which consequently influences their consumption behaviour. However, the purist Buddhists and Taoists do not eat fish even during the Chinese Spring Festival. This is because they abstain from eating meat and fish at all times. From the participant observation, it seems that they maintain their eating habits all the

time. Even though some of the purist Buddhists bought fish, this was for the purpose of releasing the fish rather than eating it.

Fish is only one example of a symbolic food. There are many others. For example, kumquats are a very popular fruit during Spring Festival; one reason is because they are said to bring luck, the other reason is because they are plentiful at this time of the year. Business people are very interested in purchasing kumquat trees, as they are supposed to bring in wealth. Take Con14 as an illustration:

“Kumquat trees with round small orange fruit are said to resemble gold. This is also the reason why I bought kumquat trees, with the expectation of bringing in wealth and luck. I and my family will not eat the fruit on the tree; it’s just for putting the tree at home or in the lobbies of my business buildings.”



[Con14] **Figure 5.1 Kumquat trees**

There is an old Chinese adage, “Food is the most important thing to people.” Symbolic food is extremely important for the Spring Festival. Almost every Chinese festival is associated with a particular delicacy, such as green rice balls for the Qingming Festival, zongzi for the Duanwu Festival and Laba porridge for the Laba Festival. For the Spring Festival, the New Year’s Eve dinner is extra special with an eclectic mix of food, including fish, meat, chicken and dumplings. Even though the purist Buddhist and Taoist participants did not consume any meat or fish during the New Year’s Eve dinner themselves, most of them did not object to their family members consuming it. Therefore, some of them still prepared fish dishes with their family members on New Year’s Eve as fish is the most traditional food. Take Bud15 as an illustration:

“I am the only one in my family who believes in Buddhism. However, I never force or push my family members to believe in it.

I only taught myself to follow the Buddhist doctrine. For me, my belief in Buddhism brings me true happiness, and I also feel happy when my family feels happy. Therefore, even though I do not eat fish or meat myself; I still shop for it together with my family members, especially for our New Year's Eve dinner, the important reunion dinner. ”

[Bud15]

Buddhist teachings demonstrate that the best way to enjoy life is through making others happy, rather than focusing on personal desires (Wallace and Shapiro, 2006). Spiritual pleasure - genuine happiness - is central to Buddhism. Similarly, purist Taoists also respect their family members' eating habits; in return, their family members seek advice on healthy eating from Taoists.

“I do not mind my family members or friends having fish or meat on New Year's Eve. I also teach them what vegetables they should choose because I understand the knowledge of how to keep healthy through matching food.”

[Tao15]

Nowadays, people shop and eat more healthily during the Chinese Spring Festival, compared to traditional goodies which are packed with sugar and fat, they would like to choose organic food. In addition, participants also paid more attention to the food quality during the festival shopping as well as for the New Year's Eve dinner.

“Festivals mean food, food and more food. Having good health is not only a wish made on Chinese New Year but it's something that should be practiced every day. Eating healthily is very important; I bought lots of vegetables and all of them were organic.”

[Hyb6]

Some participants also consumed vegetables that have other symbolic meanings, such as the lotus. As explained by Hyb2:

I bought lots of vegetables because I know we eat very oily food during the festival. For example, I bought lotus, which is a

homophone for 连 (lian) which means ‘continues one by one’. I wish my good luck will come one by one.

[Hyb2]

In general, most of the food prepared for the Spring Festival has symbolic meaning linked to the ushering in of good wishes and luck. The meaning and practice of food consumption are related to philosophic religious beliefs as well as the social-historical dynamics within China society. Foods consumed during the Spring Festival have been used as symbols of meaning. However, in addition, it is also regarded as a social accomplishment for consuming some certain expensive food or big table of food. The findings for social accomplishments are examined next.

The Chinese New Year’s Eve dinner is the most luxurious meal of the entire year (Xu, 2014). During the New Year Celebration, a vast amount of traditional food is prepared for family and friends as well as family ancestors in honour of both past and current generations. As a result, many foods were prepared by participants for the Spring Festival. There are many reasons to set up a big table, including showing financial capability as a part of social accomplishment, saving face and Guanxi so as to express that people value their relationship with those invited.

“The Spring Festival is the most important period of the year. We should offer the best to our friends and family members. We went to a very good seafood restaurant to enjoy a seafood feast. I always order more than what we can eat; this also shows off good financial capability.”

[Con14]

According to some participants, it is better to order more rather than less. It would certainly be considered inappropriate to prepare only a few dishes. Worse still, if dining outside the home for the New Year’s Eve dinner, ordering a reasonable amount is never enough.

“Everyone spends the Spring Festival time together with the most important people. Spring Festival is the time when people spend money and fulfil appetites. Also, it is the best time to sustain

Guanxi and visit friends, therefore, I ordered lots of delicious food and some are imported to serve my family or friends. If I ordered less, it is very un-polite behaviour; I feel I would lose face.”

[Con12]

In addition to setting up a big table, ordering some expensive dishes is essential for the New Year’s Eve dinner. Some people ordered lobster and abalone which they are reluctant to eat during daily life because they cost a lot. As a result, expensive food such as lobster and abalone has become priced on a value-basis to display the quality and cost of the dinner. People with high concern about Face and Guanxi or those who want to show their social accomplishment, often order that kind of expensive food to present their self-image. Using Hyb3 as an example,

“In Chinese society, people usually treat others with meals in order to make new friends and sustain Guanxi. For our business people, having a nice meal with business partners means we care about them. I often order expensive dishes, one aspect is to show the respect and the other aspect is to show my wealth and social accomplishment.”

[Hyb3]

However, some purist Buddhist participants are against this excessive consumption behaviour and suggest reasonable consumption.

“I do not quite understand why people order so much food or prepare lots of food if they cannot eat it all. We were all plagued by poverty in my generation; therefore, we should cherish our hard-won happy life. We should wipe out selfish desires and live on moderate consumption.”

[Bud11]

Similarly, purist Taoist participants also advocate ordering a reasonable amount of food and drink, to contribute to reach the purpose of saving the world.

“In an age of material wealth, it is reasonable that we spend much to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival, but we cannot lose consumption rationality. Some people order a lot of food that they

cannot finish, some food has to be thrown away because of spoilage, resulting in great waste. The green consumption idea should be incorporated into Spring Festival customs and people should not waste.”

[Tao14]

Excessive consumption and food waste indirectly exacerbates resource waste and pollution emissions. This is not in line with Taoist philosophy of harmony and unity between man and nature. Many Confucian participants arrange a fancy dinner at home or in a restaurant as a way of displaying their wealth and vying with each other. Such a luxurious atmosphere is obviously contrary to the concept of Taoist green environmental protection and Buddhist diligence and thrift.

To sum up, this section presents the universal case study findings for food consumption behaviour during the Chinese Spring Festival. Overall, the food consumption findings are in accordance with the findings of the previous individual case studies. For example, that Buddhists and Taoists are vegetarian and they do not change their eating habits even during special festivals. The findings show that Buddhists and Taoists are influenced by their beliefs and philosophy on food consumption. The findings have also addressed the fact that participants consumed some symbolic food, especially when celebrating the Spring Festival. The meaning of food is an exploration of culture through food (Stajcic, 2013); for this reason, understanding what Chinese people consume, how they prepare it and who's at the table will assist Westerners in understanding consumption behaviour during the Chinese Spring Festival as well as Chinese food culture more generally.

#### **5.1.2.1.2 The Consumption of New Clothes**

Participants purchased some new clothes according to the traditions of the Spring Festival where everyone shows off their new clothing when they

visit friends on New Year's Day. In addition, wearing colourful new clothing, particularly red clothes, represents joy and good fortune. However, there is a distinct difference between different groups' clothes consumption during the Chinese Spring Festival. This section explores differences among the four categories of consumers (seven purist Confucianism participants, six purist Taoism participants, seven purist Buddhism participants and ten hybrid participants) and the effects of cultural factors on their motivations. For those people who are purist Buddhists, the focus is on the clothes' functionality, purist Taoists care about the material of the clothes, while purist Confucian participants and most hybrid participants pay attention to the logo and brand.

Symbolic value could partly explain purist Confucian participants' desire for luxury fashion clothing. In addition, it also indicates that some of hybrid participants who have comparatively low average income also show a desire for expensive clothing. Those consumers are apt to focus more on external social needs rather than on internal individual needs, for instance Hyb10,

“I always follow my colleagues to buy something, this year I have been following them and bought the Burberry coat. Actually, I did not earn much this year and the coat is beyond my budget, however, I feel I still have to buy even I do not need a coat at all, but my colleagues they all have...”

[Hyb10]

Hyb10's behaviour is related to Zhang and Kim (2013)'s research that consuming for luxury clothing or goods as a token to become members of elite social circles. Confucian participants often used luxuries for important occasions; the Spring Festival is no exception. They considered possessing luxury fashion clothing useful in establishing a distinctive image.

“The Spring Festival is a very important occasion for our Chinese people to visit friends and relatives. I of course buy some nice clothes for myself, and I think the clothes I wear is for others to look at, so the brand and logo are very important. I like to buy some well-known brands such as Gucci... This can catch the eye and assist me in establishing a distinctive image.” [Con17]

Participant Con17's embodied those people who have self-expressive attitude drive them to purchase luxuries, and this attitude influences their decision-making style. They desire high status brands, which are publicly visible to reflect their personalities. In line with previous studies (O'Cass and Siahtiri, 2013; Kwan et al., 2003), this shows that Chinese consumers have altered their standards when choosing clothes and tend to choose clothes that reflect their personalities.

Luxury brands and logos are key concerns in Confucians' consumption process; the purpose of this consumption is to show their wealth and status through the luxury products they use (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Confucian participants purchased famous brand clothes because they consider that those specific famous brands affect their status. Their consumption tendencies relate to the level as status ascribed to a brand being evaluated. Specifically, one businessperson pays close attention to clothing brands and demonstrates the relationship between status consumption and brand status.

“I am a successful businessman; most of my friends are working partners. I always need to present the ideal social image in keeping with my status. My business partners and connections are important people; some are even government officials. I need to present a positive image and maintain my networks. Networks must be maintained in order to succeed in business. I dress nicely to meet them during the Chinese Spring Festival.”

[Con16]

Consumers with high 'face' and Guanxi consciousness tend to purchase high value products to maintain their status and social prestige. In line with the ideas of Li et al. (2015), Zhang and Kim (2013) and Zhou and Hui (2003), purchasing visible products such as clothes is often driven by social value because these products can convey prestige and social status. Luxury brands are considered a status symbol. The finding suggests that symbolic value is a significant motivation for Confucian consumers to purchase

luxury goods as a way to express and maintain themselves in modern Chinese societies.

However, purist Buddhist participants argued that they will not spend a great deal of money on luxury products like the Confucians; if they cannot afford it, they will not purchase it as they believe that material possession does not necessarily bring inner happiness. They will not consume only for the 'symbolic' meaning of the brand or logo, but for the true happiness that the product brings.

“Consumption is a meaningful activity and the meaning lies in sharing with others. Consumption also has a symbolic meaning that makes sense of our lives. The symbolic meaning does not come from the product itself, it comes from the meaning that the product delivers. I bought lots of new clothes during the Spring Festival to give away to welfare house children. They are not expensive at all, I feel happier to realise myself by sharing... and the children felt that the society cared about them.”

[Bud13]

According to Buddhism, the desire for consumption and the pleasure derived from the consumption experience is to create or maintain the self (Belk et al., 2003; Wattanasuwan, 2005; Watts and Loy, 1998). True happiness lies in 'to be' rather than 'to have'. For the Buddhists, consumption is taken to be a limited source of happiness and satisfaction, and excessive consumption is considered harmful. Buddhist participants explained that if they force themselves to buy what is beyond their financial capacity, they will suffer later to save money.

“I do not want to spend lots of money on famous clothes just for the brand; I do not care about the brand at all. I only buy what I can afford. I bought this winter jacket for the New Year because my old one is broken.”

[Bud17]

Buddhist participants place more value on the function of the product rather than its symbolic value.

“I also buy new clothes for the Spring Festival. For me, clothes are for keeping you warm, it is a kind of protection for your body. I prefer to focus on the comfort of the clothes; I do not care about the brand... For me, branded or not, it is the same.”

[Bud11]

Unlike Confucians, Buddhist consumers pay attention to the utilitarian characteristics of clothes. In a similar manner, purist Taoist participants, rather than being attracted to luxury brands like Confucians, are more concerned about environmental issues. As a consequence, they pay attention to buying natural material when they choose clothes during the Chinese Spring Festival.

“When I choose new clothes, I focus on natural material. I do not like animal fur nor do I focus on the clothes brand. I know that some expensive clothes are made from limited material crocodile skin or animal fur. I only pay attention to the fabric and details of whether it is non-harmful or natural material...”

[Tao12]

There is a significant difference among Confucians, Buddhists and Taoists in terms of their consumption of clothes. Most hybrid participants chose comparatively better clothes relative to the way they normally dress in their daily life. As far as they were concerned, Spring Festival is the most significant occasion of the year, so they feel it is necessary to purchase clothes that are relatively expensive.

“I would rather go hungry and keep up appearances than eat properly and wear last year’s fashions. I especially want to wear something nice during the Spring Festival. There is only one Spring Festival every year, so I am willing to spend and have something nice during the special day.”

[Hyb7]

All participants follow the tradition of buying and wearing new clothes during the Chinese Spring Festival. Although there is a difference among participants in terms of purchasing and using the clothing, they do however have one thing in common which is that they all choose colourful clothes to

wear, particularly red clothes. “I pick red because it is a traditional Chinese colour” [Bud11]; “I like to buy red clothes because I feel it will bring me good luck” [Tao12]; “Red is always my first choice for the New Year as I believe red will help with getting rid of evil spirits” [Hyb2]; “Red is the traditional colour to match the atmosphere of the festivals” [Con14].

As the findings on the consumption of new clothes for the universal case study have demonstrated, participants with different philosophical beliefs consume clothing differently. This consumption difference on the Chinese Spring Festival not only occurs in the clothes consumption but in red envelopes consumption. The next section participants’ consumption behaviour of red envelopes during the Chinese Spring Festival is discussed in detail.

#### **5.1.2.1.3 Consumption of Red Envelopes**

Red envelopes, also called ‘hongbao’ in Mandarin, are used to hold money as a gift in China (Behrens and Behrens, 2000). It is a common gift for older generations to give to the younger generations. The significance of the red envelopes is the red paper, not the money inside, as red is a symbol of energy, happiness and luck. Traditional red envelopes are often decorated with gold Chinese characters signifying, for example, happiness and wealth.

All the participants prepared envelopes in advance and some of them always carry extra envelopes with them in case they meet someone to whom they have to give an envelope. However, there is a distinct difference between participants when it comes to choosing red envelopes. The findings show that the purchasing decision is influenced by a consumer’s belief about the product. The findings illustrate the concept of psychosocial equilibrium and its psychodynamic effects on people’s wish to have face. For example, some participants are influenced by Confucian philosophy when they choose red envelopes; they consider how it affects every aspect of social interaction, in particular, how the recipient perceives the red envelope. This is because of

the need to ‘save face’. As Con11 explained, they are more concerned about how they are perceived by others.

“We are living in a society where every person is interdependent. The products I present to others represent the social self. Even with the red envelope, I feel I have to make it perfect when I present it to others, so I will choose a higher price one or the branded one. It not only shows I care about the recipients, it is also about saving face, how others will look at me.”

[Con11]

This finding ties in well with previous studies wherein the psychological construct related to brand consumption is ‘face’, which is interpersonal and represents the social self (Cardon and Scott, 2003; Dong and Lee, 2007; Zhang et al., 2019; Wong and Ahuvia 1998). As a result, people who are highly conscious about saving face regard it as supporting interpersonal relationships (Hwang, 1987), and they tend to pursue and purchase name-brand products or publicly display their wealth to others in relation to their consumption (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The findings indicate that some participants even chose special luxury branded red envelopes for Chinese New Year. As Con15 said:

“The special luxury branded red envelopes not only look pretty to present to others, but they also show my taste. Not everyone has those special luxury branded red envelopes; it makes me look so cool and special. It gives me ‘face’.”

[Con15]



**Figure 5.2 Luxury branded red envelopes**

‘Face’ has long been described as a complicated phenomenon in Confucian societies. ‘Saving face’ and ‘giving face’ comes from Confucian relationship ideals in which there is a constant aim for harmony. It is

important to save one's face, but it is even more important to give face to others. For example, Con13 purchased a branded bag just for getting this brand red envelopes, because Con13 considered that giving special luxury branded red envelopes means giving respect and face to others:

“Unique means special, special means care, and care means respect. Everyone will present normal red envelopes. I do not want to be the same and the recipient will not feel special as well.”

[Con13]

‘Face’ is one's self-image in relation to approved social attributes, and this is a universal concern of human beings (Goffman, 1955). However, the only difference between Chinese and Westerners is that saving face in China has greater social significance because Chinese people are always conscious of saving face in their social interactions (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000, Xiaohong and Qingyuan, 2013). As a social-self construct rooted solidly in Confucian philosophy, face influences people's consumption behaviours. In addition, this finding demonstrates that the motivation behind how Confucians choose red envelopes is that they pay attention to saving face both for themselves and for the recipients. This also explains the influence of ‘face’ and its interdependence with Guanxi on Confucian mind-sets, driving them to choose relatively higher value products. Confucian participants paid attention to the external presentation of the product, rather than focusing on the product itself. Contrary to Confucian participants, Buddhist participants considered that the function of the red envelopes is to hold money as a gift; however they did not focus on how the red envelope itself looks as Confucians did.

“I bought the red envelope because it is according to the tradition, but now people make it too complex, very expensive ones with gold print. For me, it is just used for putting in money. I do not need gimmickry. I prefer something very practical.”

[Bud11]

For the Confucian participants, consumption fulfils social needs such as the need for identification, status and social recognition, while for Buddhists, consumption is meant to meet basic needs. Buddhist participants address the meaning of giving the red envelopes rather than the red envelopes themselves. As Bud14 explained:

“The meaning of presenting envelopes is as a symbol of wishing the recipient to have happiness and good luck. Spending too much on the red envelope loses the meaning of giving the red envelope. The red envelope itself is considered lucky, not necessarily the look of the red envelope.”

[Bud14]

In terms of sustaining relationships, Buddhists have their own way of sharing, compared to Confucians who consume luxuries to expand their social relationships. Buddhists tend to share with others what they have, what they can afford and what they believe is useful to others. For example, during the Chinese Spring Festival, Buddhists went to the Buddha temple to burn incense and pray to bring good luck to their relatives and friends. Buddhists visit the temple to make wishes to bring them good things in life and protect themselves from suffering. Meanwhile, some of the Taoist participants chose to send electronic red envelopes via mobile applications such as ‘WeChat’. WeChat is a social app quite widely used in China (Hsiao et al., 2016). It is a sort of Chinese Facebook, yet it also has multiple functions like topping-up phone credit, paying credit card bills, renting e-bikes and sending red envelopes, all of which are frequently used. WeChat is the most popular app in China. It has also changed the traditional Chinese way of giving red envelopes. The person who sends out the gifts can attach words of blessing to the red envelope just as they would do when giving out red envelope in the real world. To some participants, WeChat red envelopes make the transmission of New-Year-blessings more convenient and faster.

“Sending a red envelope through WeChat is a very convenient way of reaching long distance acquaintances. Compared to the traditional red envelope, you do not need to wait to see someone in person; you can send the WeChat anywhere, anytime you want.” [Hyb4]

Red envelopes are the most frequent gifts during the Chinese Spring Festival used to send good wishes and luck. WeChat envelopes are not only a convenient way of gifting, but also an environmentally friendly way to save trees because the traditional red envelopes are made from trees.

“WeChat envelopes are very convenient and also good for the environment. The traditional red envelope is made from paper, while the electronic way saves paper, saves trees and saves the environment.”

[Tao12]

Given the rapid growth of technology, WeChat has attracted large numbers of consumers. All the hybrid participants and most of the Confucian and Buddhist participants explained that they have started to use WeChat red envelopes during the Chinese Spring Festival. In addition, instead of making phone calls or visiting friends, WeChat has also become a popular option for sending New Year greetings. Countless news sources reported the growth of using WeChat to send red envelopes on Chinese New Year: upwards of 768 million people exchanged red envelopes through WeChat in the year of 2017 (Jing Daily, 2018).

To summarise, this section presents the findings on participants' consumption of red envelopes during the universal case study of the Chinese Spring Festival. Besides the usual red envelopes with money inside, there is also a great deal of gift exchanging conducted. The red envelope is a traditional gift during Chinese New Year. The next section discusses other gifts which the participants exchanged during Chinese New Year.

#### **5.1.2.1.4 Gift-Giving Consumption Behaviour**

In this section, the findings related to gift giving behaviour during Chinese Spring Festival are addressed. The findings encompass participants' perceptions of the importance of gift-giving, their efforts in gift selection, their spending on gifts and their preference for brands of gifts given during

the Chinese Spring Festival. Firstly, it presents what participants gave to others during the festival, and then it explains the motivations and purchasing intentions behind their gift giving.

As stated by Qian et al. (2007) the culture of a society determines if a particular occasion merits for gift-giving or gift-exchange. Chinese New Year is an important occasion merits gift-giving in China but not in the West. Therefore, understanding Chinese gift-giving behaviour of consumers in China would benefit for understanding Chinese Spring Festival consumption and the influence exerted by Chinese cultural values on such behaviour. The Spring Festival celebration is the most important Chinese festival and it involves extensive gift-giving (Szto, 2015). It is a tradition to visit family and friends during the Chinese Spring Festival and gifts are prepared for the visit. Therefore, during this time, multiple visits and gifts are exchanged to convey blessings for the New Year. In this section, participant motivations are divided into two categories: hedonic and utilitarian as suggested by Othman et al. (2005). The findings indicate that Confucian participants and most hybrid participants show their motives are those that are based on emotional, experiential and subjective rewards while Buddhist and Taoist participants' motivation to achieve functional benefits. The findings show that the most frequent gifts among the participants are: cigarettes, wine and health products. Fruit, Chinese tea in tins, cosmetics, books and toys are also popular gifts among participants. Confucian participants and some hybrid participants tend to buy high-end brands for gift-giving. For example, participants chose traditional famous wine brands such as Maotai and WuLiangYe or imported wine brands. Brand consciousness has a significant effect on Chinese consumption patterns. Hyb3 provides a good example to explain why the Chinese are interested in choosing brand-name products that are well known to others or highly advertised.

“I am a businessman; I bought WuLiangYe wine and luxury Chinese ZhongHua brand cigarettes for my family and business partners. In my daily life, I also give these gifts as well as during the Spring Festival. Well-known brand-name products are a symbol of my wealth and my success in business.”



[Hyb3] **Figure 5.3 ZhongHua brand cigarettes**

Consumers often express personal characteristics and preferences through brands. Presenting gifts to others not only demonstrates one’s economic power but also increases ‘face’ for both the receiver and giver. As explained by Hyb9:

“The reason why I give high value gifts is because I respect the receiver. Also, expensive gifts also reflect what I can afford and my economic situation. Therefore, I bought well-known brands of cigarettes and wine as gifts for my business partners.”

[Hyb9]

The motivation for giving gifts may result either from some self-gratifying objective of the gift-giver (giver orientation) or from an urge to please the gift-recipient (recipient orientation) (Qian et al., 2007). Participants show both orientations towards gifting during the Spring Festival. For instance, Participants showed different motivations for presenting gifts in relation to pleasing the gift-recipient. For example, Hyb5’s recipient orientation is to maximize the recipient’s pleasure.

“Presenting gifts during the Spring Festival is very important. I prepared lots of gifts for different recipients, like family, friends, colleagues...this is the way to sustain Guanxi. I bought books for the children, useful products for my family members, such as health product, while I chose some relatively more valuable gifts for my colleagues, especially for senior members like the boss.”

[Hyb5]

In this case, the finding indicates that Chinese cultural values have significant effects on gift-buying intentions in accordance with the gift-receiver's image as well as the gift-giver's self-concept. Most scholars (Abel et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2010; Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987) consider that the term 'self-concept' should include two main components: actual self-concept and ideal self-concept. The findings have discovered that Chinese people focus on the ideal self-concept in order to build an ideal image, especially an ideal public image. This leads participants to focus on their social role and public perceptions.

“The Spring Festival is a special occasion. Everyone dresses nicely and presents their best. I think the image of gifts which I present is attached to my personal image. Therefore, I always choose the best, the perfect one, like the most famous or branded.”

[Con12]

In addition, Functional gifts also were given by participants in order to provide the receiver with practical assistance, and thus the motivation is primarily utilitarian. For instance, the Buddhist concepts of sharing and karma as well the Taoist 'Green' principles.

“I present my family and friends with some Buddhist books because I feel some doctrines in the book can help my friends feel released in such a society full of desire, in order to get inner peace and happiness.”

[Bud13]

To the purist Buddhist participants, the spirit of a gift is kept alive, to pass it on. As explained by Bud13, the reason why she gave Buddhist books as gifts to others is because:

“I really benefitted a lot when I read the book. I now feel I can really quieten down and get on with my work. What I gained is supposed to be given away, to help others and share good things with others.”

[Bud13]

Helping someone in need and not causing harm is to emphasise karma in gift giving.

“I do not want to give cigarettes and wine to others as gifts as others do. I believe those are harmful things and not good for health. Lots of accidents are caused by cigarettes and wine. To give something someone needs, give some practical things. I bought an air purifier for my family members because now air pollution is serious; I think it is a very practical gift. Bringing kind things to others will also bring you a good karma.”

[Bud15]

The practical function is the most important criteria for most purist Buddhist participants when they are selecting gifts.

“I always choose practical gifts for others because I think they are really useful and the receivers need them. I never buy something that just looks beautiful but has no value in use. [Bud16]”

“Be practical when selecting gifts, not only practical in terms of not going beyond your spending capability but also by purchasing practical stuff for others. [Bud14]”

It can be seen from purist Buddhist perceptions of gift consumption that, rather than paying attention to expensive or brand products, they focus on the practical function of the product. Purist Taoists, on the other hand, focus on the ‘green’ consumption of gifts rather than the symbolic meaning of the product. According to the purist Taoist participants, green gifts should not pollute the environment, they do not exploit resources or cause harm and they benefit the environment and people. Safety and health are the top factors when selecting gifts among many purist Taoists; take Tao16 as an example:

“Food safety is currently a big concern for people. I bought health products for my family members with the wish of blessing them to have good health. I also went to a country farm to buy some non-polluted vegetables for friends and family, such as green vegetables and sweet potatoes. Even though these gifts are not expensive, people like them. ”

[Tao16]

As well as safety and health, environmental friendliness and quality are also important factors driving purist Taoist participants' gift consumption behaviour.

“Lots of people choose nicely packaged products to give as gifts during Chinese New Year, however, for me, that fancy packaging is meaningless. I always choose foods packed in glass jars because I know food, which is high in additives, is always sold in plastic containers, and the glass jars can be reused to store food and reduce plastic waste. For example, I bought nuts in glass jars for my friends.”

[Tao14]

Most purist participants chose good quality products as gifts, for example, healthy types of tea. Compared to mass produced tea, participants Tao13 and Hyb8 bought the health tea which comes from plants in the mountains.

“I bought tea from the Wuyi Mountain of the northern Fujian Province which is famous for producing high quality tea in China. The sustainable tea there draws on ecology, body, mind and spirit as elements in its creation. I think it is good for the health and suitable for people of all ages.”

[Tao13]

Participants are motivated to spend based on quality and green issues; most hybrid participants have both motivations. They are not just motivated by pursuing a high quality life, but also by showing off their wealth and status when they present gifts. Take Hyb8 who also bought Wuyi Mountain tea as an example; Hyb8 bought tea in fancy packaging so that it would look good when presented it in front of others.

“Although I was being told by the seller that there was no difference between the normal packaged tea and the fancy packaged tea because the tea leaves are the same in both. However, I was still willing to spend more. I feel it will look good when I am giving it to others as gifts. And the receivers are all very important to me; I need to present the best, while for myself, I only drink the normal tea.”

[Hyb8]

This contradictory consumption behaviour is not a special case. Most of the hybrid participants showed the same contradictory consumption behaviour. Although they are very frugal in their daily lives, they were still willing to spend more during the Spring Festival, particularly when it came to purchasing gifts.

“I am a saver in my daily life; I do not spend much on useless things like other girls, to have a name brand bag or clothes. But I do spend lots of money on the Spring Festival, especially on gifts. I always buy famous brand products for my colleagues and older family members. I feel this is the ‘money’ I must spend, as everyone spends a lot during Chinese New Year.”

[Hyb1]

Another example is Hyb10 who claimed to be a frugal person but spends half of her annual salary on gifts during Chinese New Year.

“I followed my colleagues who bought a lot of foreign brand health care products as gifts to present to family members and older friends. I also bought famous brands of cosmetics for my business partners, even though I do not use cosmetics but it is a popular gift among woman. Also I spend a lot on cigarettes and wine as gifts... I spend a lot ...”

[Hyb10]

To conclude, this section presents the cultural phenomenon of Chinese gift exchanging during the Chinese Spring Festival. Purist Confucian participants, purist Taoist participants, purist Buddhists and hybrid participants show different motivations and behaviours towards gift consumption. Purist Confucian participants like choose high value or well-known brands as gifts to present to others during the Chinese Spring Festival compared to other three groups.

## **5.2 Implications of the Spring Festival Study**

The Spring Festival case study explored how participants prepared and celebrated the most important festival in China. The findings explained

participants' purchasing and consumption experience during the festival from two aspects: one was in relation to participants' most consumed products: food, red envelopes and new clothes; and the other focused on the most popular activity - gift giving during the festival.

Findings indicate that the food that participants consumed has many symbolic meanings. Indeed, it does not only represent the symbolic meaning, but also nurtures the relationship between people and what they believe. In fact, all the participants consumed certain foods that carry a symbolic meaning, but there was a difference in consumption motivation and consumption behaviour when they were choosing food. For example, the purist Confucian participants pay attention to the price and value of the food; the purist Taoist participants care about food safety and sustainability and the purist Buddhists stress the appropriate and reasonable consumption of food. On the whole, participants were influenced by their beliefs around food consumption. These findings capture overall explanations around Chinese Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist food consumption patterns. In addition, it fills the knowledge gap of how different philosophical religious traditions in China impact on festival food consumption.

Similarly, in relation to the consumption of red envelopes, participants showed different attitudes towards consumption. Purist Confucian participants like to purchase attractive looking products or specially designed red envelopes, purist Taoists prefer to use environmental ways of giving red envelopes, while Buddhist participants focus on the real meaning of giving red envelopes rather than how the red envelopes look on the surface. With regard to clothing consumption, the results are in line with previous individual cases where purist Confucian participants purchase luxury brands and logos are a key concern in their consumption process. In contrast, Taoist participants care about the material, while Buddhist participants look at the value for money and practicality.

The findings on gift giving during the Spring Festival highlight it as a value laden phenomenon where participants with different philosophical values

behave differently regarding giving gifts. Purist Confucian participants choose high value or well-known brands as gifts to present to others during the Spring Festival, which is in line with Confucian gift giving behaviour from the Confucian case study. In addition, in this universal case study, it also explored purist Taoist and Buddhist views as well as hybrid participants' gift giving consumption behaviour. These findings consolidate the influence of the Confucian philosophy as it impacts gift consumption behaviour and it further examines Taoist and Buddhist gift giving behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival.

Apart from the above, this universal case study also yields new findings on hybrid participants' consumption behaviour. Most participants do not have a single consumption pattern; their consumption changes in different situations. Most of the hybrid participants are influenced by more than one philosophical religious tradition and, to their mind; there are no clear boundaries between these intertwined religious systems. Thus, they were influenced by some of the elements of each philosophy. This may also explain why, when Chinese people are asked about their philosophical beliefs, some may not give a direct answer about what they believe because Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism constitute the essence of traditional Chinese culture and together they influence Chinese consumption behaviour today. What is more, hybrid participants show a trend of behaving like Confucians in terms of their consumption patterns during the Spring Festival, while they behave like Taoists and Buddhists on a daily basis. This is because the relationship between Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism has been marked by both contention and complementarity in history, with Confucianism playing a more dominant role (Covell, 2004; Li and Moreira, 2014; Tang, 1995). Also, Chinese New Year is the time of the year when participants spend most as they spend more than normal on food, gifts and travel. In addition, according to the participants, there is a demand for high quality goods and services such as healthy food and travel, so this would be a good opportunity for multinational companies to aim to target the Chinese market.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

Findings from the universal case study of the Chinese Spring Festival was presented in this Chapter. Participants food, red envelopes, new clothes and gift giving consumption during the Chines Spring Festival were discussed in this Chapter. The universal case study further examined and consolidated the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on consumer behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival as a universal example of religious festival consumption behaviour.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CROSS CASE COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This research aims to provide academic understanding of how and to what extent Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers.

After presenting the findings from the three individual case studies and the universal case study, this chapter presents the findings of the cross-case analysis in order to develop a solid and more comprehensive understanding of the influence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism on Chinese consumption behaviour. The cross-case comparison brings together key issues and insights from all four of the case studies.

This chapter consists of six sections including the introduction. Section 6.1 presents a discussion of the cross case comparison between the individual case studies and the universal case study. Section 6.2 introduces and explains the development of the empirical framework for Chinese consumption behaviour as presented in figure 6.1. Section 6.3 offers an overview of the research and key findings. Section 6.4 provides the summary of this chapter.

#### **6.1 Cross Case Comparison between the Individual Case Study and the Universal Case Study**

The themes related to the Chinese Philosophical traditions have been discussed in the findings and discussion chapters. Some of those themes are regarded as part of the Chinese cultural values which have been discussed

widely in marketing and international business literature (De Mooij, 2015; Leung and Morris, 2015; Sin et al., 2005).

From the findings and discussion of the themes of Chinese philosophical religious traditions, it can be seen that Chinese philosophical religious traditions can be described as a complex amalgamation of three different and contradictory value systems: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. As a consequence, these differences lead to different consumption behaviour (Ajzen, 2015; De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). A Chinese person can follow one of these (theme) value systems such as purist Confucian, Buddhist or Taoist; or they can even follow some or all three value systems at the same time while not believing too much in any of them such as the hybrid participants (Hyb1- Hyb10) in this research. This section compares the similarities and differences between the themes drawn from the individual case studies and the universal case study; Table 6.1 Synopsis of Case Study Findings was designed for this comparison. The cross case analysis retains the most important experiential knowledge, determining the presence of the themes across cases and forms the empirical framework for this study. What follows is a brief synopsis of the findings for each case study and a discussion of the themes that emerge from these case studies.

**Table 6.1 Synopsis of Case Study Findings**

	<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Synopsis</b>	<b>Philosophy Related Themes</b>	<b>Common Themes</b>
<b>Individual Case Study</b>	<b>Confucianism (Qingming Festival)</b>	How does a Confucian religious philosophical tradition impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?	The findings of the Confucianism case study explain how the Confucianism philosophy of Face and Guanxi influence Confucian participants' luxury consumption behaviour.	Face Guanxi	<b>Face</b> <b>Guanxi</b> <b>Ahimsa</b> <b>Karma</b> <b>Tian Ren He Yi</b>
	<b>Buddhism (Laba Festival)</b>	How does a Buddhist religious philosophical tradition impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?	The findings of the Buddhism case study explain how the Buddhist philosophy of Paticca-samuppada, Karma, Ahimsa and Middle path influence Buddhist participants' utilitarian consumption behaviour.	Paticca-samuppada Karma Ahimsa Middle path	
	<b>Taoism (Duanwu Festival)</b>	How does a Taoist religious philosophical tradition impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?	The findings of the Taoism case study explain how the Taoist philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi impact on Taoist green consumption on behaviour.	Tian Ren He Yi (Harmony with the Environment, Harmony with the Body, Harmony with the Earth's Energy Lines)	
<b>Universal Case Study</b>	<b>Universal Case Study (Chinese Spring Festival )</b>	How do the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism impact on Chinese consumption behaviour?	The findings of the universal case study further examines and consolidates how the three philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism influence Chinese consumer behaviour.	Face Guanxi Ahimsa Karma Tian Ren He Yi	

Having captured the core elements of the findings above, this section discusses and interprets them in relation to the literature. The discussion is framed by common themes drawn from the findings of the individual case studies and the universal case study.

### **6.1.1 Theme 1: Face**

The individual case studies and the universal case findings reveal that ‘face’ is an important factor that influences Confucians and some hybrid participants’ luxury consumption behaviour.

The Confucianism case study suggests that Confucians obtain their face value by building a positive self-image through personal quality, wealth, social networks, and authority, a combination shown in this study to result in luxury consumption. In line with earlier studies (Chen and Kim, 2013; Ho, 197; Li and Su, 2007; Jung and Kau, 2004; Yao and Zhao, 2010; Yau, 1988), luxury brands and their popularity are key concerns in Confucian participants’ consumption process. In this study, the researcher divided ‘face’ consumption into two categories. This categorisation of face consumption goes beyond Li and Su’s (2007) research and separates face consumption into two components: face obligation consumption and face conformity consumption. The first component of face obligation consumption suggests that Confucians have an obligation to maintain face to mimic the consumption of their social group. The second component, face conformity consumption, serves to fulfil Confucians’ self-image and exerts a mutually coercive power among members within a social network. By comparing this with previous studies (Liu and Murphy, 2007; Siu et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2011) who only focus on the face saving and affective attitude of luxury brand purchase intention, we can see that no one has researched in detail the components of face consumption and different types of luxury consumption. This research offers an explanation of the different types of face consumption.

In terms of face obligation, the study shows that participants involved in business or industrial work perceive face value as extremely important in business relationships, therefore having an obligation to maintain and enhance face value. In relation to face conformity consumption, participants' concern for face value exerts a mutually coercive power among the members within a social network, so that they use consumption as a means of gaining social prestige and face. This study is the first attempt to provide evidence-based qualitative research that categorises face consumption as defined by participants' consumption motivation and behaviours. Therefore, the conceptualisation of face consumption provides a useful way to understand why Confucians care about face, the motivations of face consumption and which products Confucian consumers prefer and why they favour them.

### **6.1.2 Theme 2: Guanxi**

Guanxi is another important theme that influences Confucian luxury consumption behaviour. This finding is in line with previous studies (Bao et al., 2003; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Lu, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Sun et al., 2011; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) which state that there is an association between Confucian Guanxi and luxury consumption. The findings reveal that the Confucian notion of group orientation (Guanxi) can be considered to have a pervasive influence on Confucian mind-sets for luxury consumption. The study found that Guanxi consumption divides into two components: in-group Guanxi consumption and out-group Guanxi consumption. This ties in well with previous studies by Chen et al. (2013), Farh et al. (1998) and Tsui and Farh (1997)'s conceptual specificity construct of Guanxi. Chen et al. (2013) conceptualized Guanxi with a focus on three aspects of the relationship: the bases, the quality and the dynamics of Guanxi. By comparison, in this study, using 'in-group' and 'out-group' to conceptualize Guanxi makes the boundaries of the different Guanxi concepts clearer. It also delineates more

clearly the different types of Guanxi oriented consumption and the difference between in-group Guanxi consumption and out-group Guanxi consumption.

This research discovered the relationship between gift-giving consumption and Guanxi. Gifting is a crucial and indispensable social behaviour in China, as a way of sustaining Guanxi whether it is for private connections or as business etiquette. Consuming expensive gifts reflects the social hierarchy as well as the maintenance of the balance between group needs and individual needs. This is consistent with the findings of previous research (Su and Littlefield, 2001; Tsetsura, 2015; Qian et al., 2007) which showed that gift-giving communicates information within and about particular relationships. In addition, this study also provides evidence and an explanation as to why some high-end products sold in China are purchased not for the customer himself, but for someone else based on their private connections or business etiquette. This is in line with Wang et al.'s (2011) views that gifting can be identified as another important motive for Chinese luxury product purchasing. The findings show that luxuries are popular as gifts in China, particularly among the richest people, but even for people who have much less discretionary income.

### **6.1.3 Theme 3: Ahimsa (non-violence)**

An extensive finding from the Buddhist individual case study and, as the universal case study findings show, ahimsa (non-violence) influences Buddhist thinking and consumption behaviour. These findings are directly in line with previous studies (Mo and Roux, 2009; Sambhaji, 2016; Tikhonov and Brekke, 2012) which indicate that ahimsa (non-violence) embodies 'not killing' and 'compassion' extending to all kinds of animals, to fellow human beings, and to ecosystems. However, very little previous research has suggested how the Buddhist philosophy of ahimsa (non-violence) influences Buddhist consumption behaviour. The findings in this

study go beyond previous research (Beardsworth and Keil, 1992; Kieschnick, 2005) wherein it is shown that Buddhists being against the consumption of animals as food results in vegetarianism. In addition, Buddhists are against the consumption of animal made products, such as crocodile skin and other high price bags using animal skin for luxury products. Therefore, they have a sense of aloofness toward animal made high value products. This finding is contradictory to many previous studies (Atsmon et al., 2011; Bu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2011) which argue that Chinese people have a desire for a luxury lifestyle. However, this study suggests that ahimsa (non-violence) to animals is regarded as the fundamental tenet in Buddhism and leads to their rejections of the consumption of luxuries made from animals. For example, “I do not want to satisfy my desire by causing other animals suffering” [Bud7] or “respect the environment and all earth’s living things, not to consume products made from animals” [Bud4]. In addition, ahimsa (non-violence) is one of the factors that influences sustainable consumption among Buddhists because Buddhists avoid consuming anything that may damage the environment or harm the ecosystem. Compare this with the research of Lamberton (2005), Theerapappisit (2003) and Zsolnai (2007) who either focus on Asia or the West to discuss the relationship between ahimsa (non-violence) and Buddhist sustainable consumption but not on Chinese Buddhist consumption. There are very few studies which focus on China specifically, so this research contributes to filling this gap in the literature.

#### **6.1.4 Theme 4: Karma**

This study indicates that Karma also influences sustainable consumption among Buddhists, as Karma tells Buddhists what they should do throughout their lives, and how they should do it. This is related to the study of Daniels (2011) which found that the Buddhist belief in Karma can inform and enrich efforts to modify consumption into sustainable consumption to sustain a better quality of life and maintain well-being for humans and the living

environment. Having compared the findings from other research (Daniels, 2007; Daniels, 2011; Ura and Galay, 2004) that focus on sustainable consumption in other regions, this research starts from a new place - China - to explore how the Buddhist concept of Karma impacts sustainable consumption. The findings show that Karma acts as a meaningful tool to guide Buddhists to be responsible with other beings and nature, as well as with the universe as a whole. This research also provides evidence that Karma is a factor that influences Buddhist vegetarian consumption, as they consider that avoiding meat is a means of karmic retribution and also leads to the protection of animals. In addition, this study found that Karma contributes to sustainable consumption, as Buddhist participants realise the ethical aspects of humankind's impact on the natural environment with respect to the rights of future generations. Buddhist participants focus on the thoughts, motives, and social consequences underlying sustainable consumption. Buddhist participants consider that an understanding of the teaching of Karma can improve everyday life and sustainability. As indicated by the behaviour in both the individual case study and the universal case study, Buddhists are against food waste especially when it is avoidable. This study draws many new findings on Karma's influence on sustainable consumption which was not explored by previous marketing related studies. Earlier research (Cui et al., 2008; Yau, 1988) only indicated that Karma informs the Chinese to accept reality and not to complain as things happen to people for reasons that are beyond their control. Early research by Yau (1988) indicated that Buddhists are reluctant to complain about products that do not meet with their expectations; however, on the contrary, this study found that, with the development of e-commerce, Buddhist participants use complaint platforms just like the other participants in order to make complaints about the failure of products or services. This point would be a recommendation for future research: to explore in what ways the Chinese technology revolution is changing Chinese culture and Chinese consumption behaviour, as technology and culture is a heated topic among many western scholars (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Leidner and Kayworth, 2006).

### 6.1.5 Theme 5: Tian Ren He Yi

This study indicates that Taoists' philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi influences Taoist green consumption behaviour. Taoists regard man as a part of nature and reaching harmony with nature results in green consumption (Bourdeau, 2004; Harris, 2004; Lee et al., 2009). From the perspective of environmental protection, this research shows that Taoists raise awareness of protecting the environment; that they avoid creating pollution in order to protect the environment; and that they select pollution-free products. However, as pointed out by Harris (2004), even though underlying Taoist values encourage people to live in harmony with nature, China has a longstanding record of environmental destruction. In this research, an unexpected finding is the increase in environmental awareness in China among people with different philosophical religious traditions. One of the factors behind this is that environmental education and government policy has led to a relatively harmonious transformation; for example the Chinese government released China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in 2016 (Dongxiao, 2017; Terama, 2016; Xue et al., 2018).

The other factor in this transformation is the general consensus among Chinese philosophical religious traditions that, for example, "we have to be aware of the environmental crisis and take responsibility step by step to protect the environment" [Con15], "eat green, purchase green and behave green" [Tao14], "less consumption, more contribution" [Bud16]. This transformation can also be seen in the universal case study of the Spring Festival, where some Chinese participants have given up using firecrackers for the sake of clean air even if it is the tradition to fend off evil spirits with firecrackers. Take [Hyb6] as an illustration,

"Fireworks bring air pollution, so I have stopped letting off the fireworks during the Spring Festival now. I do not want to be ashamed that, on the one hand, I complain about air quality and at the same time I produce pollution."

Therefore, this research found that individual Chinese people are stepping up and making an effort to protect the environment and live in a more sustainable way. For example, Taoists eat healthily in daily life, as their diet is based on natural content, the healthiness of green food and their environmental concerns. This finding adds to the knowledge of Taoists' food consumption behaviour as very few research studies have addressed this point. Most research only focuses on Taoist consumption behaviour in relation to medicine (Chew et al., 2011; Li et al., 2016; Piron et al., 2000). Looking at how this study compares to previous ones, this study not only focuses on how Taoists consume Chinese medicine, but also how Taoists purchase and consume Chinese medicine related products, such as sachets and Tiantai Linderag aggregate tea. Overall, Taoist values and beliefs promote green consumption behaviours.

#### **6.1.6 'Missing Themes'**

By comparing the themes drawn from the individual case studies and the universal case study, it can be noted that two themes did not appear in the universal case study findings: *paticca-samuppada* and middle path from the Buddhist case study. The reason why *paticca-samuppada* is missing was due to it being 'masked' by karma theme, as *paticca-samuppada* is the driving force behind karma (Macy, 1979). Buddhists understand the law of karma as another manifestation of dependent arising *paticca-samuppada*. For the second missing theme, middle path, this study found that the impact of middle path leads to the paradox of Buddhist materialist consumption, thus further research is recommended to explore how Chinese Buddhists incorporate their belief in the non-materialistic middle path with their apparent increasing materialism. This does not mean that those two themes are not important or they do not impact in some way on consumption behaviour during the Chinese Spring Festival. It is due to their being in a different case study context. In the context of the Buddhist festival (the Laba Festival), this is entirely celebrated within the Buddhist tradition. Therefore,

it shows Buddhist consumption behaviour more comprehensively, while the Spring Festival is celebrated by all Chinese people. Moreover, the participants in this study were not all purist Buddhists; as a result, it can only show the general consumption behaviour as Buddhists rather than capture every characteristic of Buddhist consumption. Therefore, the Laba Festival case study is the single case that creates high-quality Buddhist theory because it produces a deeper understanding of the influence of Buddhism. As stated by Yin (2013), it is better to carry out a single case study when the researcher wants to study a single person or a specific group of people. This research aim is to explore the influence of Chinese philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour; therefore, multiple cases studies of Chinese festivals are essential to research each of the three philosophical religious traditions. This is also the reason why the researcher has taken multiple case approaches to this study, so that every single case study related to the three Chinese philosophical traditions can represent how each philosophy impacts Chinese consumption behaviour while the multiple cases as a whole can show the influence of all three philosophical religious tradition influence on consumption behaviour.

#### **6.1.6.1 'Missing Theme' 1: Paticca-Samuppada**

For Buddhist participants, Paticca-Samuppada is the belief that all the elements in the world mutually interact and exist in a complex relationship of cause and effect, which is in line with the literal definition of Kalupahana (1974), Nauriyal et al. (2006) and Qing (2017). Looking at previous research, it is evident very few studies have explored the relationship between Paticca-Samuppada and sustainable consumption. This finding casts a new light on how the Buddhist philosophy of Paticca-Samuppada impacts sustainable consumption. Buddhist participants have a sense of environmental protection due to Paticca-Samuppada as they consider that if humans treat the environment negatively, that same negative effect will affect humans and animals in return. Buddhists see all things and

phenomena as interdependent, which is consistent with sustainable development thinking. As discussed before, the Buddhist philosophies of Ahimsa and Karma influence sustainable consumption as well which was also proved in the universal case findings.

#### **6.1.6.2 'Missing Theme' 2: Middle Path**

In the Laba Festival case study, the middle path was a factor that influenced the Buddhist paradox of materialism consumption. To the Buddhist mind, consumption is taken to be limited source of happiness and satisfaction, and excessive consumption is considered to be harmful. This study indicates that Buddhists advocate non-attachment to possessions, and they attempt to cultivate this non-attachment as has been shown in previous research (Dillon, 2008; Eckhardt and Zhao, 2012). However, this research has found that, with the Chinese economy growing at a significant rate, the society as a whole places a great deal of emphasis on material objects, and on particular brands as markers of social status. At the same time, some Chinese monks, especially younger monks, are becoming materialistic and show tendencies towards symbolic consumption. A similar finding has been raised in other recent studies (Eckhardt and Zhao, 2012; Deegalle, 2016). Given the paradox of Buddhist materialist consumption, it is recommended that further research should explore how Chinese Buddhists incorporate their belief in the non-materialistic middle path with their increasing materialism.

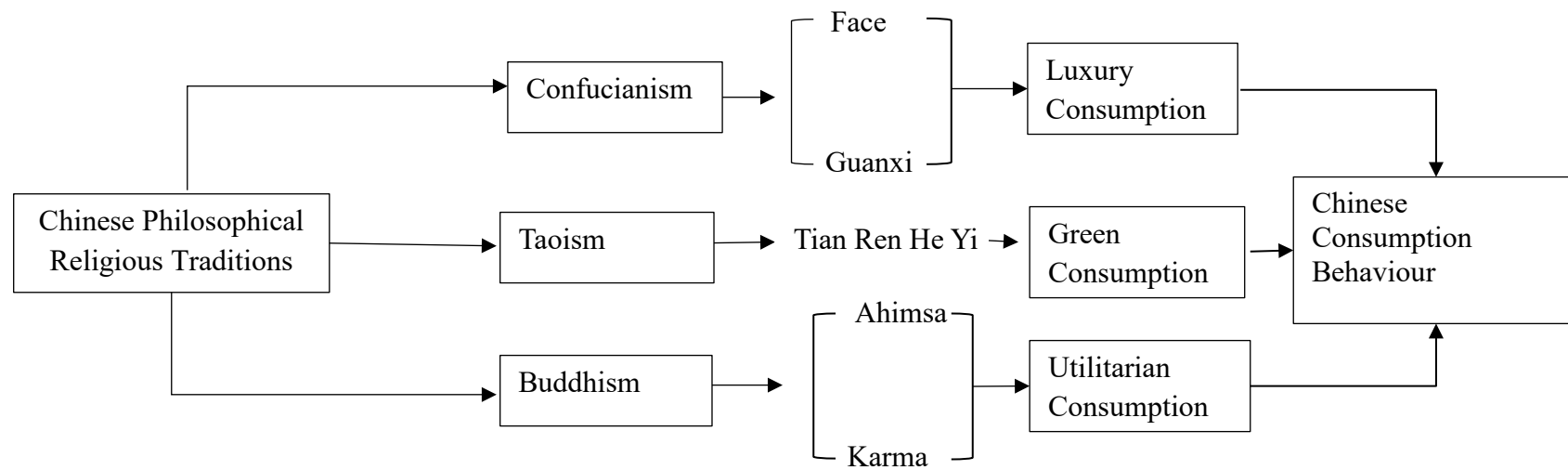
### **6.2 Development of an Empirical Framework**

The findings as presented above, show that five key themes, being aspects of the three philosophical religious traditions, influence Chinese people's values, habits and attitudes, and significantly affect their lifestyle, which in turn impacts consumer purchasing and decision behaviour. Different themes provide a source of meaning and purpose for people and make consumption

behaviour understandable and interpretable. However, as indicated before, very few studies have explored the differences among the three philosophical religious traditions, instead choosing to focus on Confucianism (Atsmon et al., 2011; Walley and Li, 2015). This study is the first to conduct an empirical investigation of themes within the three main philosophical religious traditions, and to show how these impact on consumption behaviour.

Therefore, based on the findings of the three individual case studies and the universal case study, as well as the themes discussed in section 6.1, an empirical framework of Chinese consumption behaviour is presented in Figure 6.1 below. The empirical framework is designed to explain how constructs from the three philosophical religious traditions as they emerged in the study influence Chinese consumer motivations in consumption decisions and behaviours. More specifically, data from the individual case studies and the universal case study show how the Confucian constructs of Guanxi and Face impact Chinese luxury consumption behaviour, how Taoism's main philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi influences Chinese green consumption behaviour and how the constructs of Karma and Ahimsa within Buddhism affect Chinese utilitarian consumption behaviour. Overall, one can conclude that the three Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact Chinese consumption behaviour (see Figure 6.1) in specific ways, as elucidated in the findings and discussion.

**Figure 6.1 Empirical Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour**



*(Source: the researcher)*

This empirical framework provides a more comprehensive understanding of the key factors which influence Chinese consumption behaviour from the perspective of three Chinese philosophical religious traditions compared to the empirical frameworks built for the individual case studies. Compared to other frameworks, such as the conceptual framework from the literature review, the empirical framework is evidence based from the actual experience rather than from the theory or belief (Barnier et al., 2008; Pearce, 2012). As shown in Figure 6.1, the framework suggests that Chinese Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all have their own religious philosophy and that these ancient systems of belief still impact contemporary Chinese consumers today. Different religious philosophies influence consumption behaviour in different ways. Beliefs and attitudes serve as key determinants of behavioural intentions; the more favourable the attitude of an individual towards the behaviour, the stronger his/her intention to perform the behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005). Therefore, compared with the conceptual frameworks designed for each philosophy in Chapter Four, this empirical framework provides an explanation of Chinese consumption behaviour in its totality and an overview of the purchasing and consumption experience of contemporary Chinese consumers. In addition, it also answers the research question of how Chinese philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour. This fulfils Research Objective 4: To develop a framework related to philosophical religious traditions as a contribution to the deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese consumers and to offer insights for global marketers to help them differentiate consumer needs.

### **6.3 Research Overview and Key Findings**

The purpose of this research was to provide a more holistic understanding and analysis of the impact of the three philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour. The following sections summarise the key findings within the preceding six chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introduction chapter to the research study. It offered a brief research background and defined the research problem. The chapter also outlined personal motivations for conducting this research and highlighted how this research fits into the culture and consumption area. This study seeks to explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Whilst previous research has acknowledged the impact of Confucianism on Chinese consumption behaviour, and has addressed the importance of understanding Chinese Confucian philosophy, what was less clear was how the other foremost influential philosophical religious traditions of Buddhism and Taoism influence Chinese consumption behaviour. To overcome such limitations and provide marketers with better knowledge of how to differentiate their marketing strategies in China, this study seeks to explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Chapter 1 also stated the aim and the objectives of the research, provided information on the research design undertaken, highlighted the research relevance and significance and offered an overview of the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 2 presented a critical review of the literature on the three Chinese philosophical religious traditions, Chinese consumption behaviour and a Chinese consumption framework (see Figure 2.4 Conceptual Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour). The existing literature either focused on how one of the three most influential philosophical religious traditions in China - Confucianism - impacts Chinese luxury consumers or on conspicuous consumption. For instance, Confucianism and luxury consumption, Confucian cultural values and gift giving behaviour or, Chinese luxury consumption behaviour. Few studies have explored Chinese consumers' preference for non-luxury products, nor have they explored the other two main religious philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism. In addition, there has been a real shift over the past two years in consumer perceptions of what the right products to buy should be under the new Chinese government policy (the Party is giving a tacit nod to luxury consumption)

(Huang, 2017; Tajaddini and Gholipour, 2018). Thus, the research need exists, but little attention has been paid to exploring the other two philosophies. According to the Worldatlas (2018), the self-identifying adherents of Taoist or Confucian philosophies account for 26 percent of the total Chinese population, while the Buddhists represent 18.2 percent of the Chinese population (Marketline, 2018). Stemming from this omission, a comprehensive framework to explain the influence of the three most important philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour was also lacking.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology and justified its suitability for this particular research as well as discussing the methods used for data gathering within the research procedure. This study employed a qualitative multiple case study approach in the interpretive paradigm. Using triangulation of data from accompanied shopping, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, evidence regarding Chinese consumption behaviour from the perspective of three religious traditions was obtained from four groups of participants (purist Confucians, purist Buddhists, purist Taoists and hybrid participants) with different levels of understanding, views, perceptions and consumption experiences. The main advantages of conducting accompanied shopping in this research was that it identified in detail exactly what participants purchased during the festival, and it also provided the researcher with ample opportunities to ask follow-up questions and clarify the motivations and reasons behind the purchase of specific products. Using multiple sources of evidence, and being able to observe the participants at the Festival (participant observation), not only enriched the data but also mitigated many potential sources of bias. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998) was the technique used to analyse the empirical data in this study.

In Chapter 4, Figure 4.1 The Organizing Framework for presenting the findings from the individual cases and the universal case was presented. Then the findings from the three philosophical religious traditions case studies were presented respectively, following a similar structure. The

findings of each individual case study examined in detail the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism respectively. The chapter not only explained participants' philosophical related festival consumption behaviour but also presented participants' daily consumption behaviour. The empirical framework for each case was established in this chapter; it provided the opportunity to gain a direct and fuller understanding of the influence of each religious philosophical tradition on Chinese consumption behaviour. In addition, this chapter showed the similarities and differences between the three different case studies and laid the foundations for the cross case comparison.

Chapter 5 presented the findings from the universal case study. The universal case study further examined and consolidated the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on consumer behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival as a universal example of religious festival consumption behaviour. Findings from the universal case study of the Chinese Spring Festival were contrasted with the individual festival case studies to look for common patterns, and thus draw a more holistic overview of contemporary Chinese consumption behaviour. This chapter also discussed the key findings from the individual case studies and the universal case study to produce an empirical framework of Chinese consumption behaviour (see Figure 6.1 Empirical Framework of Chinese Consumption Behaviour). This empirical framework related to the philosophical religious traditions makes a key contribution to the deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese consumers.

#### **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a discussion of the research presented in this thesis. A cross case comparison between the individual case studies and the universal case study was presented. This exploratory, qualitative study identified how the three main philosophical religious traditions of

Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in China impact on Chinese consumption behaviour, and proposed an ‘empirical framework of Chinese consumption behaviour’ (see Figure 6.1).

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude the study. It discusses out how the research aim and research objectives have been achieved and summarised the original contribution of the study and how this addresses the gaps identified in the literature. The strengths and limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are then summarised. The chapter concludes with a brief personal reflection on the research journey.

#### **7.1 Research Aim and Objectives**

As stated in the Introduction chapter (chapter one), this study aims to explore how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers.

The first objective of the study was to critically review the literature on Chinese cultural values and consumer behaviour; on the three most influential philosophical religious traditions in China - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - and their role and influence on Chinese consumer behaviour today. This objective was accomplished in Chapter Two (Literature Review). Chapter Two draws on the existing literature to identify the three philosophical religious traditions, and it reviews the associated knowledge about the influence of these religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour. The chapter highlighted that there is a gap in the literature as there is a lack of research conducted into Chinese Taoist and Buddhist philosophies.

The second objective of the study was to explore the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, focusing on three Chinese religious festivals - the Qing Ming Festival, the Duanwu Festival and the Laba Festival - and this was accomplished in Chapters Three (Methodology), and Four (Individual Case Study Findings). Three individual case studies of the Qing Ming Festival, the Duanwu Festival and the Laba Festival were carried out using three data collection methods (accompanied shopping, participant observation and semi-structured interviews). For each philosophical religious tradition, an empirical framework was designed to explain how it impacts on Chinese purchasing and consumption behaviour.

The third objective was to further examine and consolidate the study of the influence of the three philosophical religious traditions on consumer behaviour at the Chinese Spring Festival, as a universal example of consumption behaviour during a religious festival celebrated by all three philosophical religious traditions. This objective was achieved in Chapter Five (Universal Case Study Findings). To achieve this objective, a universal case study of the Chinese Spring Festival was conducted using the same three data collection methods as the individual case studies for the purposes of replication. Chapter Five contains the data analysis of the Chinese Spring Festival case study, and a comparison of the consumption behaviour under different philosophical religious traditions.

The final objective was to develop an empirical framework related to philosophical religious traditions as a contribution to the deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese consumers, offering insights for global marketers who wish to differentiate consumer needs. This was accomplished in Chapter Six (Cross Case Study Comparison and Discussion). An 'empirical framework of Chinese consumption behaviour' was proposed (see Figure 6.1) are discussed, which is the study's key theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge.

## **7.2 Contribution and Limitations of the Study**

This research contributes to existing knowledge of the theory and practice of Chinese consumption behaviour. The next sub-sections present and address the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of this study.

### **7.2.1 Contributions to Theory**

This research provides important contributions and novel insights into Chinese consumption behaviour under the influence of the three philosophical religions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The major theoretical contribution of this study is the development of an original and holistic empirical framework related to the influence of the Chinese religious philosophical traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and their impact on Chinese consumption behaviour. As discussed in the literature chapter, there are very few studies that have focused on the philosophy of all three religious traditions in the context of consumers and their consumption behaviours. The key contribution of the three philosophical religions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism offers an evidence-based conceptualisation of Chinese consumption behaviour across all three traditions. This framework fills an existing gap in the marketing literature and in doing so, provides a (relatively rare) non-Western perspective on contemporary Chinese consumption behaviours rooted in a very different cultural heritage.

Existing studies have explored how the Chinese religious tradition of Confucianism influences Chinese consumption behaviour, and most of these studies either focus on Chinese luxury consumers or on conspicuous consumption. However, this study not only contributes to an understanding of the impact of two other Chinese philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism, it also proposes explanations for contemporary Chinese non-luxury consumption behaviour. Therefore, it augments existing Chinese cultural theory as well as Chinese consumption behaviour theory. There is a

considerable body of extant literature focused on culture and its influence on various aspects of consumer behaviours (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Kacen and Lee, 2002; Shavitt and Cho, 2016). However, among this body of work, there are limited examples of studies that incorporate the role of religious philosophical traditions as an element of culture within consumption behaviour. Among these cultural studies, arguably the most popular is Hofstede's cultural dimensions, for example: Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the customer-brand relationship in China (Hur et al., 2015); Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Chinese online shoppers (Yoon, 2009) and Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Chinese planned behaviour (Pavlou and Chai, 2002). However, many studies critique Hofstede's fifth dimension, which divides some Confucian values into the 'positive' pole and some into the 'negative' pole, as suffering from a serious philosophical flaw (Fang, 2003). These values focus too much on Confucianism; Buddhist and Taoist values are not considered in the design of the constructs leading to Hofstede's fifth dimension. This research complements the work of Fang (2003) by focusing on Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist values instead of exploring Chinese cultural values solely in a one-sided way. Therefore, this research bridges the literature gap on Buddhist and Taoist philosophy through recognition and expression of their respective influences. The next section explains the contribution of the philosophical religions of Buddhism and Taoism in detail.

There has been very little research conducted into Chinese Buddhist philosophy, let alone into how Chinese Buddhist philosophy impacts Chinese consumption behaviour. The existing studies either focus on the history of Buddhism (Guenther, 1972) or the spirituality of Buddhism (Van Bragt, 1995) and these studies were conducted a long time ago. Most new studies have been carried out by Westerners (D'Ambrosio et al., 2018; Nelson, 2017; Sharf, 2015). This study has not only been conducted from a native perspective but it has also consulted experts from each philosophy in order to develop a deeper understanding of each philosophy. In addition, the festivals related to each philosophy have been selected as another way of

explaining the philosophy. The Buddhist case study builds knowledge of what items Buddhists like to purchase, how they use these items, and the motivation behind this consumption behaviour. In addition, it addresses Buddhist daily consumption behaviour. For example, the findings reveal Buddhist participants' commitments and beliefs, resulting in four distinct consumption behaviours: Buddhism and vegetarianism, Buddhism and sustainable consumption, Buddhism and paradoxical materialistic consumption, and Buddhism and utilitarian consumption. This moves beyond other research that only focuses on one particular consumption behaviour, and most of these only focus on vegetarian consumption (Kaza, 2005; Schmidt, 2018; Tseng, 2017). Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of Buddhism and its influence on Chinese consumption behaviour compared to the existing literature explored in relation to Chinese luxury consumption behaviour. However, this study also provides a theoretical comprehension of how Buddhist consumers pay attention to utilitarian goods and services rather than materialistic experiences. In addition, Buddhists show indifference towards, and their teachings direct their attention away from, material consumption. Also, Figure 4.6 shows the Buddhist utilitarian consumption empirical framework in light of an evidence-based conceptualisation of Chinese consumption behaviour.

Similar to the lack of literature on Buddhist philosophy, there are not many studies conducted into Chinese Taoist philosophy. The existing literature mostly focuses on Taoism and Chinese food culture (Li, 2017) or Taoism and Chinese ecology and the environment (Shaoyao et al., 2016) or Taoism and design ethics (Ma, 2016). Almost none have really addressed the influence of Taoism on Chinese consumption behaviour. This study fills this gap in the literature, by providing explanations of the components of Taoist philosophy, such as harmony with the environment, harmony with the earth's energy lines and harmony with the human body. However, most research has only focused on one component, rather than paying attention to all of them. This study extends the literature and provides a fully rounded

explanation of the impact of Taoist philosophy on Chinese consumption behaviour. In addition, Figure 4.8 which is an empirical framework of Taoist green consumption behaviour is another theoretical contribution to understanding the influence of Taoist philosophy on Chinese consumption behaviour. Also, in contradiction to the existing literature on Chinese luxury consumers, Taoists are not members of this group. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all have their own religious philosophies and these still impact contemporary Chinese consumers. Therefore, comparisons of Taoism and Buddhism to Confucian luxury consumption behaviour will contribute to explaining Chinese consumption behaviour and provide an overview of the purchasing and consumption experience of contemporary Chinese consumers. The other two philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism show distinctive cultural values when compared to Confucianism. Hence, the fact that the extant literature has only focused on Confucianism to explain Chinese consumption behaviour is inappropriate.

Therefore, the findings from the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies also contribute to the explanation of Chinese consumption behaviour and the exploration of the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Chinese philosophical religious traditions. This study helps to fill the gap in terms of the scarcity of consumer research in China from a native perspective and to assist scholars in developing a better understanding of the intersection between Chinese culture and consumer behaviour.

### **7.2.2 Contributions to Methodology**

This study is one of only a few have employing a multiple case study qualitative approach to explore Chinese consumption behaviour, and it is believed to be the first to qualitatively address religious philosophical traditions in a festival-related context. Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate traditions and selecting a festival as a case study also connected to the relative purity of consumption behaviour which is related to

philosophical religious traditions. A multiple case study of Chinese festivals was conducted to examine how cultural values from three philosophical religious traditions impact Chinese consumption behaviour from the point of view of the individuals involved, and paying attention to the different patterns of their cultural values, purchasing and consumption experiences. The multiple case study approach provides a rich and descriptive account of relevant festivals as well as an in-depth analysis of purchasing intentions and consumption motivations behind the consumption process. Therefore, conducting the study in the festival setting is also a way to explore the culture as it is itself associated with cultural meaning.

As explained in chapter 3 (Research Methodology), this study aims to contribute to the knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour from a cultural perspective by employing a comparative case study methodology. This approach represents a flexible strategy as it acts as a means for both exploring and building theory. As suggested by Yin (2013), Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995), comparative case studies are most frequently used in qualitative research methodologies involving the analysis and synthesis of similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal. This approach not only helps to understand the influence of each single philosophical tradition in detail, it also provides an overall picture of how all the Chinese philosophical religious traditions together influence and impact Chinese consumption. Ridder (2017) indicated that case study research is diverse with distinct contributions to theory. In this research, there is very little or even no current research exploring the impact of the three main Chinese philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour. Although the phenomenon as it exists is not new; it has been overlooked. Therefore, this multiple case study research design's contribution to the theory is building concrete, context-dependent knowledge with regard to the identification of new phenomena and trends.

As an explanation, the study has to demonstrate why the influence of three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour is new

and of interest, why there is no previous theory which explains the influence of three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption; how and why detailed descriptions may enhance the influence of three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption; and how and why new concepts (constructs) and new relationships will enhance the influence of three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption. Correspondingly, it has to be demonstrated that the research strategy is in sync with an investigation of the phenomenon.

In addition, the data collection methods used mean that this is the only study which has collected multiple sources of evidence: accompanied shopping, participant observations and semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the researcher conducted accompanied shopping with Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists before their respective festivals, participant observations during the festivals, and semi-structured interviews in order to explore their consumption behaviours at the end of the festivals. This provided a comprehensive picture of participants' entire consumption process. Also, the data collection followed the same procedure in every case study which allowed for comparisons, reflections and discussions on the research topics. This multiple-source data collection allowed the researcher to use a more innovative methodology than the traditional interview or other single method; it provided supplemental (and more accurate) information about participants. In this research, rather than interviewing or asking people to describe their consumption experience, this multiple method was applied to uncover participant consumption motivation, actual consumption items, how they selected certain items and so on - the potential was extensive. Multiple data collection also improves data quality; memory is not infallible and there is a difference between what participants say and what they do sometimes (as was proven in this research) (Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Therefore, the three data collection methods which were used to track participants' consumption experience from its beginning until the end enabled the researcher to get the whole picture and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic, as well as clarify terms and ideas.

According to Johl and Renganathan (2010), gaining access for field work sometimes is a problem in adopting a qualitative study approach. In addition, the philosophy of religious traditions is a sensitive topic in China. In planning for this, the researcher utilised her social contacts and she also invited some philosophy experts to participate in this research. This helped to increase the likelihood of gaining accurate, honest, deep and thorough responses. The time spent on the fieldwork was an additional strength of this research; as an illustration, each case study took almost one month and the longest interview was nearly 4.5 hours. The researcher even lived in the mountains with the Taoists to observe their behaviour as there are very few existing studies on Taoist behaviour. These observation techniques afforded the researcher the opportunity to be invited into the Taoists' living environment, to eat with and learn from them. This prolonged engagement contributed to the reliability and credibility of the study.

In this study, thematic analysis (see Table 3.10) was undertaken due to this being a useful method to examine the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006). All the data were analysed manually throughout the analysis, which helped to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic and to continually refine the researcher's interpretations instead of using software for the data analysis which, according to Blair (2015) might be more suited to those who ultimately wish to quantify their data. In addition, member checking was conducted for the participants to make judgements on the 'outcomes', as a way of exploring and strengthening the credibility of the results.

### **7.2.3 Contribution to Practice**

The research will help business people to understand more about Chinese consumption behaviour and better segment the market based on consumers' personal values, cultural values and the motivation behind their consumption. Ultimately, this will help business people to devise

appropriate marketing strategies for the Chinese market. Furthermore, this research will offer insights across different academic fields, such as behavioural marketing, economics, and applied religious studies.

China has become one of the most attractive markets for luxury brands in the world and the primary location for expected corporate growth opportunities (Sun et al., 2017). As firms from all over the world target China, it is important for marketers to understand consumers' mind-sets and values in order to establish effective marketing strategies. China has unique cultural characteristics which are not fully understood by Western nations. According to Morck et al. (2008), many foreign corporations fail and withdraw from China within two years of starting operations due to their failure to comprehend Chinese cultural values. Therefore, in order to create and sustain competitive advantage, as suggested by Pun et al. (2000), an organisation should not only create products and processes that meet customer needs, but also stimulate a corporate culture that is committed to continuous performance improvement. This research provides a comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture from the perspective of three philosophical religious traditions. It helps business people to understand Chinese cultural roots and identify the characteristics of Chinese cultural values and consumption behaviour. A comparative analysis of the differences between three religious traditions has been made for international companies to take as a reference point for marketing in China. As Franke (1991) stated, cultural value is a dominant factor in economic performance, so foreign firms must learn how to penetrate it, to establish a corporate culture that commits to continuous improvement in company performance.

This study also gives a hint to international companies that are currently are focusing on the Chinese luxury market. However, the comparison of findings for Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians showed that only the Confucians exhibit a high tendency to luxury consumption. Buddhists can be seen as utilitarian consumers, while Taoists are green consumers. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism constitute the essence of the

traditional Chinese culture and are equally important in understanding traditional Chinese culture. The findings from the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist festival case studies will contribute to an explanation of Chinese consumption behaviour and an exploration of the purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Chinese philosophical religious traditions. The study helps fill the gap in terms of consumer research scarcity in China from a native perspective and to assist marketing professionals in developing a better understanding of the intersection between Chinese culture and consumer behaviour. The associated design of appropriate marketing strategies for the Chinese market suggests the accepted focus on luxury consumption for the Chinese market is insufficiently accurate and that strategies that focus on the delivery of utilitarian products or on green and environmental products also have their place. Therefore, there is a need for marketers to engage in different approaches when dealing with Chinese consumers with different value orientations and to consider the importance of different consumer motivations in segmentation, advertising and product brand orientation. As indicated by Yau (1988), Chinese cultural values can also be used as an effective basis for market segmentation and can help in understanding Chinese consumer behaviour.

In addition, each theme drawn from the three philosophical religious traditions has its own marketing implications. Taking one theme from each philosophy as an example, Confucian Guanxi is recognised as a key difference between the Chinese and Westerners when doing business. Business transactions with Chinese individuals and organisations need to be approached with the knowledge that the Chinese will place them in the context of their own Guanxi network. Guanxi is also central in conflict avoidance to maintain harmony in society at large and in business. Managerially, it is encouraged for leaders and workers to put each other at ease in social situations. Confucian Guanxi emphasizes on the orderliness, reliability and conflict avoidance that is necessary to maintain harmony and agreement within the society and corporate hierarchies, so that individuals

who embrace and practice Confucian management would attain team spirit, harmony, trustworthiness and transparency in their daily business activities and dealings. Gift giving is a way to build Guanxi in this relationship. Differing from Western societies, there are certain norms that the Chinese obey when giving gifts. This research has listed many examples of presenting gifts from different classifications of givers and recipients. In addition, the research suggests that the consumer's purchasing decision is influenced by the recipient's status in the Guanxi circle, meaning how close the relationship is between recipient and consumer. The relationship between one's possessions and one's self is decisive in consumer behaviour. Gifting is a crucial and indispensable social behaviour in China, as a way to sustain Guanxi whether it is for private connections or to maintain business etiquette. In this case, consumers often choose an experience brand or well-known foreign brands as gifts; therefore, the symbolic image of expensive/foreign brands and the nationalistic 'parochial' appeal of local products should also be considered when developing strategies as it appears to influence status and face amongst consumers.

In relation to Taoism, the philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi has a significant bearing on Chinese consumers' attitudes toward green purchases, which in turn affects their green purchasing intentions and ultimately, their green consumption behaviour. Taoist participants, and more and more Chinese consumers in general, show a trend towards environmental consumption, as they consume a great deal of green food or present healthy food as gifts, thus, there is a potential for China's green market. In recent years, the Chinese government has put in place many policies to protect the environment and to promote green consumption; therefore, if businesses are trying hard to capitalize on green opportunities in developed countries, they should also watch closely for similar opportunities that may emerge in China (Ma, 2016). Moreover, companies should particularly pay attention to the design and content of their environmental claims if they further cultivate China's green market. In addition, it has also been suggested to the Chinese government that they should follow the Taoist philosophy of teaching

harmony with the environment to better equip citizens to discern between genuine and false environmental claims (Li et al., 2016). Considering Taoists are also vegetarian, there is an opportunity to develop local chains for vegan and vegetarian niche markets. This may also be the reason why some vegetarian restaurants are now flourishing in mainland Chinese cities.

The relationship between the physical and the spiritual nature of a human being has been widely discussed within many faith traditions. This study shows that the Buddhist philosophies of Ahimsa and Karma influence Buddhist vegetarian consumption. From a Buddhist perspective, every action has an influence. This influences Buddhist food choices not to eat animals and show mercy for society. In addition, considering religion and philosophy play a significant role in the development of human values and behaviour which has a great impact on business and corporate management (Muniapan and Satpathy, 2013). There is a managerial implication for Karma as it focuses on the cause and effect, so it is highly associated with corporate social responsibility as it is expected to motivate the businesspeople to take responsibility and serve humanity. The ‘business leaders’ role in the organisation is crucial in ensuring good ‘karma’ (good conduct) is being accumulated by business for long term benefits. With every action the manager takes, they should consider whether it has an influence on another person’s wellbeing or on the wellbeing of an animal. Therefore, managers should take responsibility and be aware of the accumulation of good karma, to ensure the welfare of the employees as well as think of the consequences of product development or marketing management. This study suggests that businesspeople that take religious principles into account in business, such as Karma, can benefit from increased corporate and business performance. In addition, Buddhism’s thought as the master virtue allows individuals, organizations, and society to cultivate purpose for a sustainable life, by not only doing good, but also by being good. It gives hints to companies on how to do business today; the goal is not only to provide good products, good services, good prospects,

and good profits, but also to do something meaningful for employees, customers, the environment and the society.

This research has been conducted in four Chinese festival settings and it presents a detailed explanation of how Chinese people prepare for and celebrate festivals, what they buy and how they use the products, as well as the motivation behind their consumption. So this provides a full picture and explanation of consumption behaviour related to four Chinese festivals. Marketers can take as insights which products are appropriate to target consumers with during each festival and how the products relate to the celebration and rituals of those festivals. The festival itself contains cultural meanings. Several researchers even include 'culture' in the definition of "festival", given that festivals can be utilized as a tool for the cultural development of local societies. In addition, festivals also contribute to tourism. The concept of 'event tourism' includes 'festival tourism' (Cudny, 2013; Getz, 2008; Quinn, 2006). As a result, festivals can be used as tools to construct (or reconstruct) the image of a destination and to establish destination branding (or re-branding) on the national and global tourism map (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2010). In the long term, a recurring and successful festival can become part of the local (or national) tourism product in order to attract visitor interest and to increase the number of tourists to a destination (Skoultzos, 2010). According to Wei (2018) the effect of public holidays on tourism expenditure is increasing, for example Duanwu Festival, Qingming Festival and Spring Festival etc. means that the holidays can lead to significant tourism development in the China. In particular, the hospitality or tourism industry can offer more engaging and meaningful holidays within the festival celebration themes or food themes. This study provides a detailed list of the foods that participants consumed during the festivals. It is to the benefit of the hospitality industry to understand consumer behaviour, product innovation and the marketing of food.

### **7.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

Despite the fact that this research provides novel and new important insights from three philosophical religious traditions to explore Chinese consumption behaviour, the limitations of the study should also be considered in order to open up fruitful avenues for future research. In this section, the research limitations and recommendations for further research are presented.

First, the major limitation of this research is the relatively small sample size used within the multiple case study strategy, which limits its generalisability. Although this research included a total of 76 participants, compared with the total Chinese population of 1.4 billion, it can be considered a small number. Nevertheless, the aim of this study is to explore and gain deep insight into the influence of three philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour. The researcher used triangulation and combined multiple sources of evidence as suggested by Tracy (2010) for this research to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. For further empirical research, it is recommended to draw on a more extensive sample of each philosophical religious tradition in China in order to enhance the generalisability of the findings from the study.

Secondly, the sample in this study was restricted geographically, even though the researcher already considered this factor and conducted the research in the northern of Chinese in Beijing and Tianjin and in the is an eastern province of Zhejiang and Anhui. However, the research did not include southern and western areas of China. Every area has its own local culture, people eat different food or have different customs especially between the eastern and northern areas, and these may affect a person's consumption behaviour. Although China is so large that one city is almost equal to a country in Europe, it is a little difficult to conduct research across all four areas of China, but it is suggested for future consumption behaviour research to consider covering all four areas of the country.

Thirdly, this research only explored how three Chinese philosophical religious traditions impact offline consumption behaviour, but it has not addressed their influence on online consumption behaviour. This would take into consideration the fact that the Chinese government now pays close attention to the development of technology and it is the government mantra. China has now become the permanent host of the World Internet Conference and it can be seen that China is striving to create a digital world for mutual trust and collective governance. In addition, with the wide adoption of mobile payment, purchasing behaviour in China has changed dramatically in the direction of more convenience and efficiency. Nowadays, consumers in China are increasingly opting for smart and quality products online and they consider that it is simple to buy everything over the internet. Mobile payment has become prevalent in almost every part of China. With the wide adoption of mobile payment, purchasing behaviour in China has dramatically changed in the direction of more convenience and efficiency. Therefore, the internet has major potential to change traditional consumption behaviour. Consumer habits continue to evolve every day and examining generations of consumers can reveal certain shopping trends. So future research is recommended here, which should not only focus on offline consumption behaviour, but also consider online consumption behaviour in China (for example, WeChat red envelopes help drive online payments use in China) in order to keep pace with changing Chinese consumers.

Fourthly, In the Buddhist case study, this research discovered that there is the paradox of Buddhist materialistic consumption behaviour, even though Buddhists claimed that they advocate non attachment to possessions and that they attempt to cultivate non-attachment. However, this research has found that some Chinese Buddhists are becoming materialistic and keen to acquire the latest consumer goods. This study did not further explore this paradox. Therefore, given this; there is a recommendation for further research to explore how Chinese Buddhists reconcile their belief in anti-materialism with their increasing desire for consumer goods.

Lastly, this study has not addressed other philosophical religious traditions, such as Christianity, which account for around 5 percent of the Chinese population. Therefore, further research into how Christianity influences Chinese consumption behaviour is recommended.

#### **7.4 Reflections on the Research Journey**

Becoming a research student has been a fantastic opportunity to research a topic which fascinates me. It has offered me the opportunity to explore my research topic in detail with a new perspective, to discover and learn something new, to improve myself and my life, and ultimately to achieve something significant. I enjoy the process of doing research; I believe it is an effective way to develop your learning management and critical thinking skills. During this research process, I understood how the researcher can influence the data collection and analysis process, and ultimately influence research decisions. I believe a reflexive diary (see Appendix H) is really helpful, as not only can it keep a record of the reflections on the research process, but also help reflect on the interviews or discussions conducted. Being reflexive in research helps understand how the researcher may influence the research (researcher's bias), the relationship with participants, the data collection and the interpreting process. For me, the research is not merely finishing a 100,000-word thesis; it is a personal development journey. As an international student, I deeply understand the impact of cultural differences, which is also my personal reason for selecting this topic with the aim of helping more people to understand Chinese culture. In addition, this topic has helped me to become a kind and empathetic person and to embrace differences as I understand there is cultural diversity and differences among different people. Now looking back, I realize that this experience has been valuable in my life, even though the research journey has been very challenging, given that cultural differences and language barriers (English) presented personal and professional challenges in my studies; the language limitations indirectly increased the workload, burden

and pressure. I am so grateful for the fact that both of my supervisors have been very supportive at all stages of the PhD programme and have provided me with many strategies to help improve my academic English, such as encouraging me to do presentations, attend conferences, deliver lectures, and write papers. I feel that I am progressing thanks to this; I presented papers to the Academy of Marketing conference, presented research and won the 2018 graduate college research student exhibition in Oxford Brookes University. All of this has helped me to brush up on the skills required for academic research as well as increasing my self-confidence. It has contributed to my personal development and, in particular, to my becoming a braver and more confident person.

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## APPENDICIES

### Appendix A Focus Group Information Sheet

Haiping ZHU  
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### **The Influence of Chinese Philosophical Religious Traditions on Chinese Consumption Behaviour: A Multiple Case Study of Chinese Festivals**

You are being invited to take part in a Focus Group. Before you decide whether or not you want to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this research is to explore how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. The reason why these particular traditions been selected for study is because Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism constitute the essence of the traditional Chinese culture. The focus group discussion will be used to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to make preparations for the data collection from case studies in China.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in the focus group discussion as you have been identified as those people who are Chinese but temporarily staying in the UK such as international students, tourists, or business travellers. You are invited because you are identified as international students.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, giving your permission and taking part is entirely voluntary and will not have any impact on your working relationships. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form when we meet for the focus group but you remain free to withdraw any unprocessed data at any point. Consent is given voluntarily, whilst as a participant you may withdraw from the focus group at any time, please be aware that any data supplied during the focus group cannot be withdrawn. This information sheet is for you to keep.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be joining the Focus group to discuss your purchasing experiences in daily life and for traditional holidays. The focus group is expected to last between 1 hour and 1 ½ hours and will be audio-recorded. It will be held at Oxford Brookes University- Gipsy Lane Campus -The John Henry Brookes Building at Friday 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 18:00 PM. The exact Venue will be confirmed one week ahead of the focus group by email due to the requirement of university library booking conditions.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There are not any direct benefits to taking part however the research will contribute to fill a significant gap in the marketing literature. Moreover, it will further knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour and at the same time be of practical relevance for marketing professionals engaged in Chinese markets. However some indirect benefits such as the focus group discussion may help participants to realise their consumption behaviour motivation and culture factors behind it. The summary of focus group discussion also will be available to those participants who are interested. If you are interested in the summary of the focus group discussion please contact the researcher who will send it to you by email.

**Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

All data will be de-identified by the researcher and the participant name will be replaced by a pseudonym. All transcripts of the focus group will be stored only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data, which will be stored in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Computer files and digital recordings will be password protected and backup in the cloud storage. And the data will be stored either in electronic and or paper form for ten years in a secure environment.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you would like to take part, please contact the researcher by phone or email using the details above to take part in the focus group discussion. The

email address [haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk)

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The focus group discussion will be used to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to make preparations for the data collection from case studies in China and written up for my dissertation as part of my PhD degree at Oxford Brookes University. If you wish to be sent a summary of the findings, please let me know by email [haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk)

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is being conducted in part fulfilment of a PhD degree in Business at Oxford Brookes University.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted, please contact the Chair of UREC by email [ethics@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@brookes.ac.uk)

**Contact for Further Information**

For further information regarding this study please contact the researcher.  
Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Haiping Zhu  
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Department of Marketing  
Wheatley Campus  
OX33 1HX

## Appendix B Focus Group Permission Letter from Travel Agency

# Golden Tree



23th Oct 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to confirm that Mrs Haiping Zhu has the access to do her PhD project with our clients during November 2014.

I hope that this letter is suitable for your needs.



Mr. X YAO  
Golden Tree Ltd  
Director

**Golden Tree Ltd:** 81 Brookwood Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 4HE, England  
Tel: 0044- 7951138299 Fax: 0044- 20 85726998 Email: [goldentreetour@hotmail.com](mailto:goldentreetour@hotmail.com)  
Company House No: 07843774

## **Appendix C Main Study Information Sheet**

Haiping ZHU  
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### **The Influence of Chinese Philosophical Religious Traditions on Chinese Consumption Behaviour: A Multiple Case Study of Chinese Festivals**

You are being invited to take part in the accompanied shopping. Before you decide whether or not you want to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this research is to explore how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. The reason why these particular traditions been selected for study is because Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism constitute the essence of the traditional Chinese culture. In order to explore how Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists behave and their consumption motivation, a case of study of each religious celebration event – i.e. Laba Festival (Buddhism), Qingming Festival (Confucianism) and Duanwu Festival (Taoism) will be conducted in China. China has many traditional festivals, which are an important part of Chinese culture. Qingming Festival, Duanwu Festival and Laba Festival were chosen as case studies because these festivals are associated with religion and are still popular among contemporary Chinese people.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in one of the case studies of Laba Festival (Buddhism), Qingming Festival (Confucianism), Duanwu Festival (Taoism) and to participate in the Chinese Spring Festival. You are invited because you are a Chinese and volunteered to take part in attending Laba, Duanwu, or Qingming and Spring Festival celebration.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

This research will use multiple methods for the collection of case study

data: 1). accompanied shopping with Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists before their Festival; 2). participant observations during their Festival and 3).in-depth interviews in order to explore their consumption behaviours at the end of the Festival. Each participant will need to go through the three methods above. You will be take part in the selected Festival for the accompanied shopping, being observed during the one of the festival you attended, being interviewed around 45 minutes to 1 and half an hour after the festival. The purpose of accompanied shopping is to observe Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists during the actual purchasing process; this will be carried out before their religious celebration day, when they have to consume goods in preparation for the celebration of their festival. Finally, a universal case study on the Chinese Spring Festival which is celebrated by all Chinese members will be conducted.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, giving your permission and taking part is entirely voluntary and will not have any impact on your working relationships. You are volunteered to take part in this research. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form when we meet for the accompanied shopping and interview. Consent is given voluntarily, whilst as a participant you may withdraw from the accompanied shopping and interview at any time, please be aware that any data supplied during the accompanied shopping cannot be withdrawn. This information sheet is for you to keep.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There are not any direct benefits to taking part however the research will contribute to fill a significant gap in the marketing literature. Moreover, it will further knowledge of Chinese consumption behaviour and at the same time be of practical relevance for marketing professionals engaged in Chinese markets. However some indirect benefits such as the accompanied shopping or interview may help participants to realise their consumption behaviour motivation and culture factors behind it. The summary of accompanied shopping and interview also will be available to those participants who are interested. If you are interested in the summary of accompanied shopping and interview please contact the researcher who will send it to you by email.

**Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

All data will be de-identified by the researcher and the participant name will be replaced by a pseudonym. All transcripts of the accompanied shopping and interview will be stored only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data, which will be stored in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Computer files and digital recordings will be password protected and backup in the cloud storage. And the data will be stored either in electronic and or paper form for ten years in a secure environment.

**What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you would like to take part, please contact the researcher by phone or email using the details above to take part in the accompanied shopping and interview. The email address [haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk)

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The accompanied shopping and interview will be used to sensitise the researcher to the topic and to make preparations for the data collection from case studies in China and written up for my dissertation as part of my PhD degree at Oxford Brookes University. If you wish to be sent a summary of the findings, please let me know by email [haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:haiping.zhu@hotmail.co.uk)

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is being conducted in part fulfilment of a PhD degree in Business at Oxford Brookes University.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted, please contact the Chair of UREC by email [ethics@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@brookes.ac.uk)

**Contact for Further Information**

For further information regarding this study please contact the researcher. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

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## Appendix D Sample of Main Study-Interview Schedule

Topics	Content
<b>Festival Consumption Question</b>	
<b>1. Festival Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festival?</li> <li>• Can you tell me the reason why you celebrate Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festival?</li> <li>• Did you celebrate it last year or last three years? Will you continue to celebrate it in the future?</li> <li>• What did you do during the Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festival? How did you celebrate it?</li> <li>• What other Chinese traditional festival you celebrate every year? How do you celebrate? Why? With whom and where?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Consumption Behaviour In The Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festival</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you purchase for Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festival?</li> <li>• Can you tell me why you purchase these for Laba/Duanwu/Qingming /Spring Festivals? Do you consume these in your daily life as well?</li> <li>• <i>More question will be added in this section after finishing accompanied shopping</i></li> </ul>
<b>Daily Life Consumption Question</b>	
<b>3. Consumption Behaviour In The Daily Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you usually buy in your daily lives?</li> <li>• What do you consider when your purchase sth? (Will you consider the price, brand or quality when you are purchasing sth?) (Why you think it important?)</li> <li>• What do you usually shopping for?</li> <li>• How many days in a week do purchase for yourself needs or for others as a gift? What do you buy? Why?</li> <li>• Do you prefer to go shopping alone or with friends? Do you always seek opinions from others during your shopping process?</li> <li>• What value will the products you bought bring to you in your daily life?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you purchase those items? (For practical use, or because others also have? Or showing your ability that can afford it or because you like it?)</li> </ul>
<b>Festival Consumption Vs Daily Life Consumption Question</b>	
<b>4. Festival Consumption Behaviour vs Daily Consumption Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me the difference between your consumption behaviour in the daily lives and in particular traditional festivals? (What do you usually buy in your everyday life?) (What do you usually buy in the festival? Anything special for the festival?) (Is there any difference between what you buy in the life and at the festival?)</li> <li>• Is your motivation or purpose the same for purchasing between daily lives and traditional festivals? (Is it same or different? Why?)</li> <li>• When do you purchase more? In your daily lives or in the festivals/holidays? (Do you spend more in the festivals? Does the promotion promote you to buy more? Do you spend more for travelling in festivals?)</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Themes (Philosophical Traditions) Identification</b>	
<b>5. Chinese Culture Recognition – Buddhism Philosophy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you talk about your understanding of Buddhism philosophy? Do you consider yourself as a Buddhist?</li> <li>• What does Buddhism mean for you as a consumer?</li> <li>• Do you have high expectations towards the product (cloth, food, bags, car) you are going to purchase or consume? Why?</li> <li>• Will you complain when you are dissatisfied with products buy online /buy on the market? How? And why?</li> <li>• Do you often make careless purchases you later wish you had not?</li> <li>• How do you view materialism and desire?</li> <li>• What kind of shopping or products will bring you some happiness? Are you always feeling happy with what you are buying?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Chinese Culture Theme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you talk about your understanding of Confucianism philosophy? Does</li> </ul>

<p><b>Elevation –Confucianism Philosophy</b></p>	<p>Confucianism have some effect on you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does Confucianism mean for you as a consumer?</li> <li>• Can you tell me whether the person around you such as family/friends/colleagues/or others influence you consumer behaviour?</li> <li>• How do you determine what is distinctive about different groups? What distinguishes one group from other groups?</li> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Guanxi Value? (Does Guanxi important to you?) (Does the member in the circle influence your purchasing decision? How and Why?)</li> <li>• Do you think the Guanxi Value influence your consumer behaviour?</li> <li>• Do you think the approval of your environment or friend is the most important thing for you with the goods and services that you will take?</li> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Face Value? (Does the face value important to you? Do you always give face to others?)</li> <li>• How do you think the face value influence your consumer behaviour?</li> <li>• Have you ever bought sth just because of gaining face value? Why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Chinese Culture Theme Elevation –Daoism Philosophy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me how you understand of Daoism? Do you think Daoism philosophy has some effect on you?</li> <li>• What does Daoism mean for you as a consumer?</li> <li>• Tell me how you consider the relationship between people and nature?</li> <li>• How would you describe the environmental products?</li> <li>• Can you give me an example about the environmental products you have bought recently?</li> <li>• Does the ‘people harmony with nature’ concept influence your consumer behaviour?</li> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Fengshui?</li> <li>• Does Fengshui impact on your consumer behaviour? How? Can you give me an example?</li> <li>• Do you think that Suitability to your culture, belief, tradition and custom is the</li> </ul>

	most important factor on the goods and services that you will take?
<b>Cultural Themes (Philosophy Traditions) Influence Consumption Behaviour</b>	
<b>8. Luxury Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you view luxury products? Do you buy it? What for?</li> <li>• When we talk about luxury products, what image does it bring to you?</li> <li>• Do you pay attention to possessions (products) which are public or visible?</li> <li>• Are you shopping for social orientation or personal orientation? When you buy (product name) is for your identity or recognition of others?</li> <li>• Do you prefer luxury consumption rather than the functional ones?</li> </ul>
<b>9. Harmony With Environment Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me how you consider the relationship between people and nature?</li> <li>• Do you think it is important to protect the environment? What will you do to protect the environment?</li> <li>• How would you describe the environmental products? Have you ever bought environmental products?</li> <li>• Can you give an example about the environmental products you have bought recently? How often do you buy environmental products?</li> <li>• Does the 'people harmony with nature' concept influence your consumer behaviour?</li> <li>• Does Fengshui impact on your consumer behaviour? How? Can you give me an example? Will you consider Fengshui factor as a consumer?</li> </ul>
<b>10. Sustainable Consumption / Materialism Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Sustainable consumption?</li> <li>• How do you make your purchasing decisions?</li> <li>• Can you tell me your understanding of Materialism consumption?</li> <li>• How does materialism and desire impact on your consumer behaviour?</li> </ul>
<b>Philosophical Religious Traditions Self-Reflection</b>	
<b>11. Philosophy Religious Traditions Self-Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism do you believe in?</li> <li>• What influence do you think that philosophical religious tradition brings to you?</li> <li>• Do you think that other philosophical religious traditions also have influence on you?</li> </ul>

### Appendix E Sample of Main Study- Participant Observation Schedule

Participant observation took place on the day when the participants celebrated the festival. The researcher will be openly state her identity and purpose, yet open enough that the people being observed and interact with do not feel that the researcher presence compromises their privacy. The purpose of this research and the participant observation will be explained to the participants by the participant information sheet. The schedule of participant observations is as follows:

Case Name	Location	Festival Activities	Time
<b>Laba Festival</b>	Tianjin	Exchanging gifts of Laba porridge with family or friends with the expectation of good fortune and wishes	27 <sup>th</sup> January 2015
<b>Qingming Festival</b>	Anhui	Spiritual objects will be purchased to worship the ancestors	5 <sup>th</sup> April 2015
<b>Duanwu Festival</b>	Zhejiang	Duanwu Festival is associated with dragon boat races Eating zongzi, drinking the realgar wine, and hanging mugwort and calumus	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2015
<b>Spring Festival</b>	Beijing Zhejiang	Family reunion and thanks giving Religious ceremonies	1 <sup>st</sup> February - 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2016

<b>What to Observe During the Participant Observation</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Includes</b>	<b>Researchers should note</b>
<b>Appearance</b>	Clothing, age, gender, physical appearance	What kind of clothes do they wear?
<b>Physical Behaviour and Gestures</b>	What people do  Who does what  How they behave	How people communicate?  What individuals' behaviour indicates about their feelings?
<b>Consumption Behaviour</b>	What they prepared for the festival What they consume during the festival Participants' decision making process The motivations behind participants' consumption decisions Characteristics affecting consumer behaviour	What products or services that participants display in relation to searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing  What's the product, how much does it cost and why do they buy it?
<b>People Who Stand Out</b>	Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others	The characteristics of these participants?  What they behave differently compare to other groups?

*When finished participant observation, questions for follow-up will be identified for the in-depth interview.*

## Appendix F Sample of Main Study- Accompanied shopping Schedule

The purpose of the accompanied shopping in this study was to observe Confucians, Taoists and Buddhists during the actual purchasing process; thus, it was carried out several days before the selected festivals, when participants purchased or consumed certain items to prepare for the festival celebrations. During the accompanied shopping trip, the researcher paid attention to participants' perceptions (what they looked for), actual purchases (what they bought), and later after participants finished shopping, participants were asked to explain the choices they made as they shopped (why they shopped). After finishing all the accompanied shopping for one festival, emphasis was placed on participants' consumption similarities, as well as differences in their shopping motivations.

Case Name	Location		What to Explore	Time
Laba Festival	Tianjin	Supermarkets Street Vendors Department Stores	Shopping Items Price of the shopping items Brand of the items Participant Perceptions: What they looked for? Why they shopped?	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2015 - 27 <sup>th</sup> January 2015
Qingming Festival	Xi'an			20 <sup>th</sup> March -5 <sup>th</sup> April 2015
Duanwu Festival	Anhui			10 <sup>th</sup> June -20 <sup>th</sup> June 2015
Spring Festival	Zhejiang			18 <sup>th</sup> January - 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2016

## Appendix G Interview Transcript Example

FESTIVAL CONSUMPTION QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p><b>Can you tell me your understanding of Qingming Festival?</b></p>	<p>Since ancient times, Confucius has taught us filial piety. Qingming Festival is to remember the deceased relatives and friends, to cherish the memory with deceased relatives and friends, to remember our ancestors, to thank the ancestors to give us the life.</p>
<p><b>Can you tell me the reason why you celebrate Qingming Festival?</b></p>	<p>This is the Chinese tradition. When I was young, no matter where my parent was, they take me to their hometown to mourn the ancestors during the Qingming Festival. My parents told me this is the way of expressing the filial piety. Now I am growing up, I will keep this tradition, I believe in the Confucian society, everyone does that.</p>
<p><b>Did you celebrate it last year or last three years? Will you continue to celebrate it in the future?</b></p>	<p>Yes, every year. As I mentioned before, when I was young, I celebrated this festival with my parents, to go my hometown to memorise my ancestors. Nowadays, it also before a family reunion day, because no matter where the other family members in the world, they will come back to make the tomb sweeping, it has also become a day that family members can reunion together.</p>
<p><b>What other Chinese traditional festival you celebrate every year? How do you celebrate? Why? With whom and where?</b></p>	<p>Chinese Spring Festival, this is also the festival for family members join together. We celebrated with gift exchange, have meals together. We spend the most time with family members at home, buy lots of food and cook with family members; we also visit friends and relatives quite often during this period. Children are excited about the festival, they can get the red envelope and lots of gifts.</p>
<p><b>As you mentioned the way you celebrated the Spring Festival, can you tell me how you celebrated the Qingming Festival?</b></p>	<p>During this Qingming period that I have three days off for the Qingming Festival and it is a tradition to be accompanied by husband and daughter to sweep my family tomb on this day, as well as honouring the custom of taking some flowers and delicious food. My family members and I weed graves, touch up headstone inscriptions, make offerings of food and burn paper iPhone. We finished tomb sweeping with making a kowtow to the tomb and make wishes. In addition, I also hang out with my friends for the remaining two days.</p>

<p><b>From accompanied shopping, I saw you bought green rice balls, chrysanthemums, paper iPhone and healthy products, am I right? Can you explain why you bought this and why you chose them?</b></p>	<p>Yes, I did. As you know, I picked the most nicely packaged green rice ball even though they are more expensive than others. I prefer something nicely packaged for my family and friends. There are a large variety of green rice balls on the market; I believe most of them taste similar if not the same. Thus, I picked the one which I think looks the most delicate.</p> <p>For the chrysanthemums because other people also bought it and I also buy it every year. This is the tradition. The paper iPhone is very interesting, I bought this one because this is unique, and you know, in the past, there is no iPhone, I want my ancestor and dead family to see what the iPhone is like. In addition, people they all bought the paper money, I do not like to be the same as others. And for the healthy products, I bought for my family members, as you come back to the hometown, you should bring the gifts, this is the Chinese etiquette.</p>
<p><b>I saw your reaction when you purchased the chrysanthemums, as the price is much higher when it's approaching the festival, why you still buy it?</b></p>	<p>Yes, I was a bit surprised about the price, because I remember it was not that expensive compared to the last year. Anyway, it is a normal phenomenon of raising the price, but people still willing and have to buy it. Everyone is swept into the graves with chrysanthemums, if you don't have it, kind of losing face value. This is an old Chinese saying that "Men cannot live without face; trees cannot live without bark". Even though, the price is expensive, but I still need to buy, for the tradition, for the custom, for the face.</p>
<p><b>When you saw the paper iPhone, I saw you were laughing, can I ask the reason why the laugh at the iPhone and why you bought it?</b></p>	<p>I feel the paper iPhone quite funny, I never saw this paper offering product before, it is so special. I like special things. I bought this for burning to my grandma, Even though my grandma died, I still believe that dead people's souls stay alive and are capable of blessing the living. In life, she did not have an iPhone. Thus, I want her to have one (a paper iPhone). I am willing to offer more to buy something special. I also bought paper made sacrificing supplies like "high class villa" and "International branded", those are so special.</p>
<p><b>During the accompanied shopping, I saw you bought some health care products, why you bought those?</b></p>	<p>I always buy the health care products as gifts for friends or family members; I prefer imported food and health products. Thus, I buy health care products from Australia, which makes me feel special. I am feeling good to present different things to others.</p>

<b>Daily Life Consumption question</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Can you tell me if there any differences between your daily consumption behaviour and this Qingming Festival?</b>	Yes, it is. For the Qingming Festival, because it is the festival, I will purchase some specific things for the celebration of this festival. Like green rice balls, chrysanthemums and offering products, those things are specifically for the celebration of the festivals. However, I seldom consume those for the daily lives.
<b>Can you tell me if there any similarities between your daily consumption behaviour and this Qingming Festival?</b>	Yes, it is. For example, I bought the health care products, in the daily lives or other festivals, I also buy the health care products for my family and friends. Health care products are often used as gifts for friends and relatives, and I often choose the imported brand or famous foreign brand, this is never changed.
<b>As you mentioned that you gave health care products as gifts, so in your daily life do you often give gifts to others? Why?</b>	Yes, I do. Exchange gifts are the Chinese hospitality. Xunzi as the Confucian master of the late Warring States period, emphasis on the spirit and meaning of ancient ritual. Guanxi rituals evolved out of the nesting of groups on the basis of shared responsibilities and relationships, and under Confucian teachings which reinforce kin interest through ritualised interpersonal favours and gift-giving. Guanxi combined with the ritualistic traditions of Confucianism and result in gift-giving and favours. Gift giving is the most important embodiment. Therefore, in the daily life, I often present gifts to others to sustain Guanxi.
<b>You just mentioned Guanxi, can you talk more about your understanding of Guanxi?</b>	Guanxi is so important in China, you will find it is difficult for you to move a single step if you do not understand Guanxi. Chinese Guanxi is very complex, useful, and necessary in the life.
<b>How do you maintain Guanxi in your daily life?</b>	There are many ways that participants sustain Guanxi in daily life, such exchanging gifts. Usually I present gifts as a way to express my affection and as a way to sustain Guanxi. One never loses anything by propriety. At every festival or important occasion, I prepare gifts for my family members. In addition, dining out with friends or business partners is also another way to maintain Guanxi.
<b>So what kind of gifts do you give to others?</b>	I prefer to choose some high valued products. The more expensive, the better; the higher value can show I take the recipient seriously. In addition, I believe that a high-priced gift will lead to high recognition, and build a better Guanxi with the receiver.

<b>What are the criteria when you choose the gift?</b>	I think the price, I prefer high-priced gift. Also, I consider the brand name of the product.
<b>Will they gift-recipients status influence your gift giving behaviour?</b>	Yes, there are lots of differences. It is very complex to consider to the appropriate gifts to different person. You do not want to go wrong for the gift giving. For my family members because we are relatives, I do not consider much on the 'Guanxi ', I often what I think would benefit for them. But for others, especially colleagues and business partners, The gift shows the respect to the receiver and to let them have face. I will judge the value of the products to enable others feel of having face. Therefore, I always choose luxury products for my boss; I feel uncomfortable gifting cheaper items. He is my boss; therefore because of the hierarchy between me and him, there is the need to present luxury products. The exchange gifts create an ongoing obligation to reciprocate, it being regarded as a way of obtaining or continuing a friendship or business partnership.
<b>How do you think Guanxi influence your consumption behaviour?</b>	Guanxi influence my consumption behaviour in many ways. For example, different Guanxi influence my gift giving behaviour, as I also mentioned before. I give some different gifts according to closeness of relationships, and also choose different products according to different groups. In addition, Guanxi also influence my consumption behaviour, like, you are in certain relationship circles, if you want to sustain Guanxi, you will purchase what they have to conform that you are in this circle.
<b>Can you talk more how the member in the circle influences your purchasing decision? How and Why?</b>	The most direct example, when your member in the circle has some level of thing, you also to have one to match the circle. Sometimes, I feel I have no choice but to mimic the consumption of my social group. For example, most of my clients have the most popular and latest edition of mobiles phones (iPhone). I bought the iPhone even though other phones can sufficiently satisfy my needs for basic functions. I feel pressure to have one, because my clients and business partners all have one and I am willing to spend more to maintain my face value.
<b>You just mentioned Face value; can you tell me your understanding of Face value?</b>	Face value usually regarded as mianzi is an essential element in Chinese culture. It is very important in Chinese culture. In China, people often avoid losing face in front of others and

	behave nicely to have mianzi.
<b>How do you think Face value influence your consumption behaviour?</b>	I think that Chinese people are all concerned about face saving, I am no exception. After all, I am a lady, thin-skinned, especially pay attention on how people around me look at me. It is such a shame to lose face in front of others, therefore, I try my utmost to show the best of me to others, usually by the most direct means of buying brand things and wearing. For me, Face value kind of represents your taste, status, and wealth. Also, in the daily life, like clothing or bag, I often purchase some unique stuff, from some foreign designers, to show my unique taste.
<b>Where/ What do you usually shopping for?</b>	I usually shopping in the shopping mall, they have many brands for me to choose. Nowadays, I also shopping online as sometimes I am very busy with my work, online shopping is more time convenience. I think among my shopping, half is for gifts, half is for myself. Nowadays, I more addicted to online shopping as I can buy some unique designer items, as I told you, I like unique, special stuff.
<b>What value do the products you consumed can bring for you?</b>	It depends. For example, the gifts I give to my family members, this can bring me pleasure and fulfilment. For the products I buy for myself, it brings value of sense of self-identity, as I can afford this which means I have certain of economic base. They gifts I present for boss and business partners, because of the high price, which brings me the face value.
<b>As you mentioned many times about the ‘high price’ and ‘high value’ in terms of the products selection, are you define yourself as one of the luxury consumers?</b>	Yes, I believe so. I have to say, I got lots of branded clothes and bags, this is also necessary for my work, as I doing fashion industry. Branded clothes and bags make me feel that I am a fashionable person. It is due to that those clothing and bags enhances my lifestyle.
<b>How do you view luxury products?</b>	For me luxury products, means something unique, because I really like some of the design of the luxury products. What’s more, the higher quality higher price, you get what you pay. Luxury goods that are perceived as luxurious by the public simply because they play a role of status symbols as such goods tend to signify the purchasing power of those who acquire them.
<b>What symbols that the luxury products bring to you?</b>	I think it brings me a sense of achievement, a symbol of wealth and status. Because I need to work hard to make money, to become good.

<b>Philosophical Religious Traditions Self-Reflection Question</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Which philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism do you believe in?</b>	Confucian philosophy. When I was young, my grandparents taught me ‘the Four Books and the Five Classics’ from Confucius. And also in the school I learned many stories about Confucian philosophy.
<b>What influence do you think that Confucianism brings on you?</b>	As Confucian society concern on the relationship, with family, friends and people around you. It influences my attitude how to treat them. Also, as we discussed that Guanxi and Face value they all belong to the Confucian society, as you can see, they are influence my life in many ways.
<b>Do you think that other philosophical religious traditions of Taoism and Buddhism also have influence on you?</b>	No, I do not think so. Actually, I do not really know much about the Taoism and Buddhism...

## Appendix H Sample of Reflexive Diary

今天去了佛堂采访了佛弘大师,她对佛家思想的理解和阐述,以及佛家思想对她的消费行为影响,让我受益匪浅。佛堂里的感觉还是挺不一样的,让人能感觉到内心的平静。佛弘大师点了一炷香,香味很好闻,伴随着佛家的酥酪,感觉整个人的内心很平静。我在佛堂中静坐下来感受宁静。通过和佛弘大师的交流,我明白了佛教音乐有‘供养’颂佛作用。通过和佛弘大师的聊天的深入,加深了我对佛教的理解,她讲述了自己个人经历,从刚开始的时候不信佛到最终成为佛家大师,这种人生经历是非常有趣的而且她针对信佛以后个人的消费行为的变化进行了阐述,她说信佛以后她自己也不会像以前一样因为面子去购买一些东西而是更多的从实用性角度去考虑...

Today, I went to the Buddhist temple to interview the Buddhist Monk FoHong. I enjoyed the great benefit of her instructions regarding Buddhism and her explanations of the Buddhism impact on her consumption behaviour. The feeling in the Buddhist temple is very special; it makes me feel peaceful in my heart. The Buddha Monk FoHong lit a stick of incense, which smelled very nice, and along with the Buddhism music it made for a calm and relaxing environment. I sat down in the Buddhist temple and could feel the peace. Through my conversations with the Buddhist Monk FoHong, I understood that Buddhist music has a role of “supporting” and “celebrating Buddha”. Our discussion has greatly deepened my understanding of Buddhism. She shared her personal experience and stories, and I was very surprised to find out that FoHong did not believe in Buddhism at the beginning first, but she eventually became a Buddhist master. Her life experience is quite unique and very interesting. She also described her changes in consumption patterns after becoming a Buddhist. Indeed she noticed that since becoming a Buddhist, she stopped consuming for face value like before, but instead, her consumption behaviour was for practical values...