

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

Influence of Visual Complexity on Chinese Cultural Elements and Processing Fluency on Purchase Intention in Chinese Luxury Fashion Brands

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Influence of Visual Complexity on Chinese Cultural Elements and Processing Fluency on Purchase Intention in Chinese Luxury Fashion Brands

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



Signature

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ABSTRACT

The research examines the relationship between the degree of visual complexity and the purchase intention of Chinese consumer towards Chinese domestic luxury fashion brands. The study explores the shifting consumer preferences towards local luxury brands. The research aims to addresses a significant gap in the existing literature, specifically the limited study and understanding of how visual complexity impacts the purchase intentions of Chinese luxury fashion brands. It centres on a key element of brand identity, particularly the logomark—to investigate how the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements affects processing fluency and, in turn, influences consumer purchase intention. The study is grounded in processing fluency theory and examines how the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements impacts processing fluency (both perceptual and conceptual), the moderating role of prior exposure on this relationship, and the mediating effect of processing fluency on the purchase intention of Chinese luxury fashion items. Utilizing three quantitative surveys and overall, 545 participants for empirical investigation, as well as focus on the Chinese knot. The findings from the three studies indicate that visual complex elements have negative effect on processing fluency, and prior exposure has partial effect on visual complexity and processing fluency; the visual complexity both directly and indirectly impact on purchase intentions. These findings contribute theoretically to the processing fluency theory and the understanding of purchase intentions. The research significance offers practical guidance for practitioners such as brand managers and designers in handling the visual identity of Chinese luxury fashion brands.

Keywords: Visual complexity, processing fluency, purchase intentions, chinese cultural elements, luxury fashion brands

Visual Kompleksiti dan Kelancaran Pemprosesan dalam Elemen Budaya Cina: Pengaruh Terhadap Niat Pembelian Pengguna ke atas Jenama Mewah Tempatan di China

ABSTRAK

Kajiam ini menyiasat tentang hubungan kompleksiti visual dengan niat pembelian pengguna yang memfokuskan secara khusus pada jenama mewah tempatan di China. Berdasarkan warisan budaya China yang kaya, kajian ini meneroka perubahan pilihan pengguna terhadap jenama mewah tempatan. Penyelidikan ini menangani jurang yang ketara dalam literatur sedia ada, kajian terhad dan pemahaman tentang gelagat pengguna terhadap pembelian jenama mewah di China. Kajian ini menumpukan pada elemen utama identiti jenama yakni logo, terutamanya tanda logo untuk menyiasat cara kompleksiti visual unsur budaya Cina mempengaruhi kelancaran pemprosesan, seterusnya mempengaruhi gelagat pembelian pengguna. Kajian ini berasaskan teori kelancaran memproses dan mengkaji bagaimana kompleksiti visual unsur budaya Cina memberi kesan kepada kelancaran pemprosesan (kedua-dua persepsi dan konseptual), peranan penyederhana pendedahan terdahulu terhadap hubungan ini, dan kesan pengantara kelancaran pemprosesan ke atas niat pembelian barangan mewah di China. Menggunakan tiga tinjauan kuantitatif untuk penyiasatan empirikal. Dapatan daripada tiga kajian menunjukkan bahawa kompleksiti visual unsur budaya Cina mempunyai kesan negatif ke atas kelancaran pemprosesan, dan pendedahan terdahulu mempunyai kesan separa ke atas kompleksiti visual dan kelancaran pemprosesan; kompleksiti visual secara langsung dan tidak langsung memberi kesan kepada niat pembelian. Penemuan ini menyumbang secara teori kepada teori kelancaran pemprosesan dan pemahaman tentang niat pembelian. Kepentingan penyelidikan

menawarkan panduan praktikal untuk pengamal seperti pengurus jenama dan pereka dalam mengendalikan identiti visual jenama mewah tempatan di China.

Kata kunci: *Kekompleksan visual, kelancaran pemprosesan, pendedahan sebelumnya, niat pembelian pengguna, elemen budaya cina*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

This chapter is indented to give the introduction of the background of the subject that the researcher investigated into, with a particular emphasis on offering a cohesive overview of the contemporary usage of Chinese elements in the context of luxury brand that originated in China. Additionally, this chapter furnishes a detailed presentation of the research's contextual backdrop, articulating the problem statement. The progression of this chapter is methodically structured, encompassing key sections such as the rationale for the research, the contextual backdrop, formulation of problem statements, delineation of research objectives, articulation of research inquiries, elucidation of the research's significance, clarification of its scope and limitations, and a brief outline of the thesis structure.

China possesses an exceptionally rich cultural legacy, marked by its uniqueness and remarkable diversity. These cultural elements wield profound influence over Chinese consumers, a demographic significantly impacted by China's ascension on the global stage and the ongoing, profound evolution of its market landscape. This evolution has rendered the Western-style brand logos employed by local companies ill-suited to navigate the intense competition that characterizes the Chinese market (Laforet & Chen, 2012). Consequently, there has been a notable surge in attention directed towards integrating Chinese cultural elements into branding strategies. Particularly, consumers in ethnocentric cultures, such as China, display a proclivity for aligning their self-concept with these culturally-infused brand assets (He & Wang, 2017).

1.2 The Need for Research

In recent times, China has predominantly prioritized mass-market, low-end production, resulting in occasional quality-related controversies. Moreover, Chinese consumers have sometimes been viewed as acquiring luxury items to exhibit their social standing and prosperity within a hierarchical societal structure (Lu, 2008; Eckhardt et al., 2015). However, the label of “China made” has constantly been linked with mass manufacture as well as lower quality rather than representing high-quality craftsmanship. Nevertheless, a few Chinese domestic luxury brands have emerged in recent years, such as Shanghai Tang and ShangXia. Despite these developments, there leaves a noticeable research gap within the current literature concerning the examination of initiatives aimed at fostering Chinese luxury brands originating within the country itself (Chevalier & Lu, 2010).

Previous scholarly investigations have employed Shanghai Tang (Ko & Lee, 2011) Chow Tai Fook (Schroeder et al., 2015a) and ShangXia (Wu, 2022) as the brands researched within their studies. Furthermore, earlier research has investigates broader aspects like Chinese culture and its influence on consumer behaviour (Schroeder et al., 2015), luxury consumption trends in China (Guo & Liu, 2016; Walley & Li, 2015; Zhiyan et al., 2013), Chinese costumers' perceptions of well-known Western luxury brands for instance, Gucci and Louis Vuitton (Walley & Li, 2015), as well as Chinese consumers' attitudes (Lim et al., 2006) and purchase intentions (Aw el al., 2021 ; Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Kim et al., 2020). Certain prior studies have also adopted a more specialized approach, specifically exploring the role of visual elements and their connection to consumer behaviour. For example, investigations into Serif and Sans Serif in logo design (Zheng et al., 2022, Lee et al., 2018) have been conducted, and a recent study by Shi and Jiang (2022) investigates the utilizing

of Chinese elements in brand logos and its impact on the purchase intentions of Chinese products. This topic is expected to fulfil and enrich the current knowledge in this area.

This research builds upon and refines the knowledge established by Shi and Jiang (2022). While their study explored Chinese cultural elements, it was their suggestion to delve deeper into the complexity and compositional aspects of these Chinese elements that motivates this research. Additionally, there is a noticeable shortage of research attention and awareness concerning Chinese domestic brands, particularly within the luxury and hedonic sectors. Chinese domestic luxury products often adopt a more understated approach, resulting in them being generally characterized as inconspicuous brands when compared to international luxury fashion brands (Ko & Lee, 2011; Ying et al., 2011). Consequently, marketing scholars are increasingly directing their research focus toward the conceptualization of luxury consumption with inconspicuousness (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Ting et al., 2018), Ting et al. in 2018 also investigating the factors that drive inconspicuous luxury consumption, as well as defining the features of luxury customers with inconspicuousness (Berger & Ward, 2010; Ting et al., 2018; Han et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2017). This research interest underscores the growing significance of understanding and unravelling the complexities of inconspicuous luxury within the realm of visual complexity in logotype consumer behaviour and marketing research.

Moreover, this study contributes to an extended application of processing fluency theory, with a specific emphasis on both perceptual and conceptual fluency. Pervious researches have investigated the correlation between processing fluency and consumer behaviour, notably what is their intentions toward purchasing. As processing fluency constitutes a fundamental aspect of human perception and response (Miceli et al., 2014; Rolf Reber, 2006; Storme et al., 2015), previous studies have employed this theory across diverse

domains of marketing and advertising. These investigations have illuminated the role of visual elements, such as the interplay between colour and food perception (Mead & Richerson, 2018), the impact of simplicity on retail sales (Herrmann et al., 2013), the impact of typeface on evaluations of the brands (Kang & Choi, 2013), the relationship between complexity of brand logos, shape repetition, and spacing on brand judgments (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001), the effects of logo recolouring in marketing campaigns (Harmon-Kizer, 2019), and the connection between visual fluency and hedonic responses (Landwehr & Eckmann, 2020). Therefore, this study extends the application of processing fluency theory, providing a more nuanced discussion, particularly in the context of Chinese traditional elements.

1.3 Problem Statement

This study significantly enhances our comprehension of how Chinese cultural elements and their associated visual complexity impact consumer purchase intentions regarding Chinese Domestic Luxury Brands (CDLBs). The motivation for this research stems from the relatively limited attention given to CDLBs (Schroeder et al., 2015a; Shi & Jiang, 2022; Wu, 2022), despite an increasing number of domestic consumers showing interest in these brands. Consequently, this study investigates various underlying factors that influence visual complexity and, consequently, consumer purchasing behaviour.

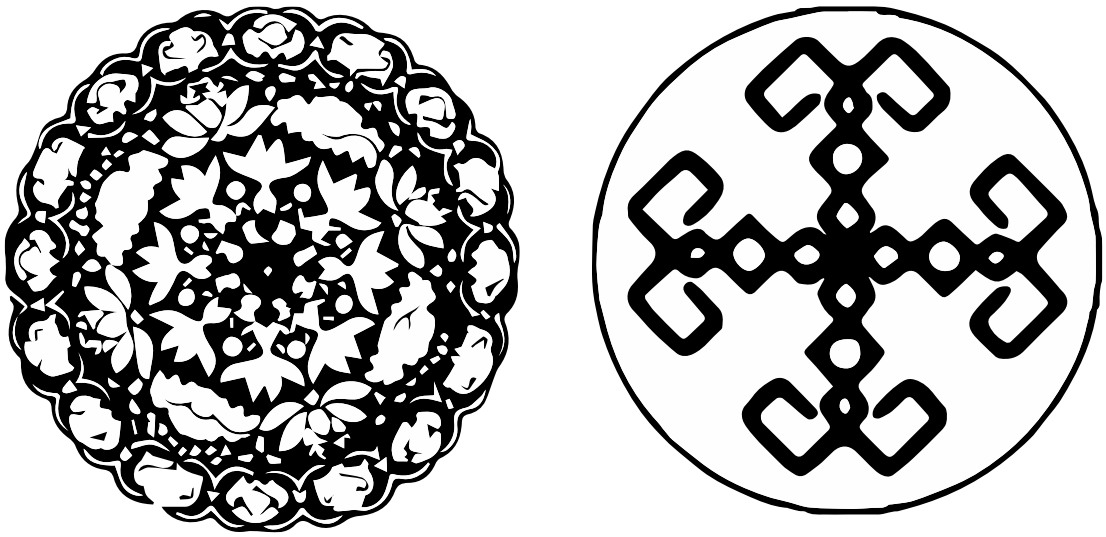
a. *The insufficient exploration and knowledge in visual complexity of Chinese Cultural Elements in Chinese domestic luxury sector.*

There is still a noticeable research gap of Chinese cultural element in general, especially from academic perspectives, the lack of theoretical and practical understanding of them been mentioned in various research previously. For many years, Chinese people and consumers have the reputation of worship the western culture and at the same time, despises Chinese cultural heritage. Not just limited at the individual level, but even to the governmental level, China been worshipping Western and disgrace their own culture for decade. For during the recent years, the Chinese consumers, especially the young generation start to pay attention and appreciation to their own cultural heritage, and more importantly, will to spend money on for those product (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Wu et al., 2017; Zhan & He, 2012). As more and more brands begin to collaborate with or integrate Chinese culture into their products (e.g., Shanghai Tang, Shang Xia), scholars have increasingly turned their attention to these elements due to their growing popularity. Previous researchers often investigate the semantic aspects of Chinese cultural elements (Schroeder et al., 2015). They typically treated these elements, examining their application in both domestic utilitarian and hedonic products (Shi & Jiang, 2022). Additionally, scholars explored how these cultural elements influence website design, particularly in the context of government websites (Lei et al., 2017), and their role in China's rural landscape reconstructions (Liu & Liang, 2020).

Moreover, several studies have researched on the influence of Chinese cultural elements in shaping customer behaviour and preferences. For instance, research by Li, Cui, Chen, and Zhou (2019) explored the influence of cultural symbols in Chinese advertisements on customers' attitudes and their intention to make purchase. They found that the use of culturally relevant symbols positively impacted consumers' emotional responses and increased their intention to purchase. Additionally, a study by Laroche, Li, Richard, and Shao (2021) Examines the impact of Chinese cultural aspects in product packaging on

consumer perceptions and purchasing choices. They found that products with culturally themed packaging were more likely to attract Chinese consumers and enhance their purchase intentions.

Although these pervious researchers have made critical contributions to the researcher's comprehension of the influence of Chinese cultural aspects on customers' behaviour, there is still a lack of research on the visual intricacy of these features and its potential application in the Chinese luxury industry. Since the visual complexity is one of the most critical components that will impact on customers' perception as well as the final decision.



(a) **(b)**

Figure 1.1: A Complexcity Comparation of Symbol (a) and (b)

b. The limitations in understanding how the processing fluency changed in consumer based visual complexity in Chinese cultural elements

Historically, extensive research in journals focusing on logo design and the visual perception of brand identity has predominantly cantered around Western design, particularly the use of alphabetical letters and Western elements. However, it's noteworthy that the Western-oriented world has a natural inclination towards Oriental Asian cultures, often regarding them as something unique, exotic, and hitherto uncharted (Ko & Lee, 2011). But the study conducted on this area is still critically lacking (Schroeder et al., 2015c).

The current body of literature primarily investigates the examination of various aspects of brand logos, including their shapes, images, sizes, typographies, and colours. Researchers have conducted comprehensive investigations into these facets to gain a deeper understanding of their roles in shaping brand perception and consumer behavior. Notable studies in this domain include the works of Jiang et al. (2016), Northey and Chan (2020), and Meiting and Hua (2021). These studies collectively contribute to the broader knowledge of how those visual components influence customer responses and decision-making processes in the environment of branding. The research conducted by Shi and Jiang (2022) sheds light on a crucial aspect that has received relatively limited attention in existing studies: the perception of Chinese cultural elements by Chinese consumers. Their study integrates multiple theoretical frameworks, such as the ethnocentrism theory (Varnum et al., 2010) and Bossel et al. in 2019 applied with processing fluency theories, to examine this domain. Notably, they utilize the processing fluency theory to elucidate how consumers perceive these cultural elements.

Though, it is imperative to note that in their study, the processing fluency theory is not dissected into its two constituent parts: perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. These two components serve distinct purposes and are processed differently by individuals, thus warranting separate analysis (Christensen et al., 2020). Particularly, processing fluency

relates to how visual perceptions are interpreted by consumers, making it a crucial factor to consider, especially when dealing with the visual presentation of Chinese cultural elements. Therefore, further exploration of perceptual fluency in this context is imperative for a comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions and preferences.

c. The lack of understanding the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and consumer purchasing behaviour though processing fluency

As supported by empirical research, consumer purchasing intention plays a pivotal role in the luxury industry. Studies like Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) research on brand luxury perceptions emphasize the psychological dimensions, highlighting how consumers associate hedonic motivations and symbolic values with luxury items. Research by Villanueva, Yoo, and Hanssens (2008) further validates the link between purchasing intention and long-term brand loyalty, emphasizing the importance of understanding and nurturing customer relationships. Pires, Stanton, and Eckford's study (2006) on luxury automobile markets underscores how pricing strategies, guided by purchasing intention insights, influence consumer behavior and revenue management. Additionally, Moore et al. (2011) provide insights into the need for understanding purchasing intention to combat counterfeiting, protecting brand reputation. In an era marked by ethical and sustainability concerns, research like Janssen and Stremersch's (2019) analysis on luxury goods market trends reinforces the importance of aligning with consumer values to remain competitive and relevant in the luxury sector.

Therefore, the brand logo that including the Chinese cultural elements or component can be a powerful tool when the company is trying to attract Chinese consumer as well as seeking for the competitive advantage in the Chinese market. Moreover, it is imperative to recognize that not every Chinese company can attain significant results by combining the Chinese indigenous cultural components into their brand logos. The mismanaged utilization of these elements and components might lead to customer rejection or reaction. This highlights the necessity for a sophisticated and knowledgeable strategy when integrating these components into branding strategies to guarantee their efficacy and congruity with customer preferences and sensitivities (Shi & Jiang, 2022).

Several noteworthy studies have investigated related aspects. For instance, the research conducted by Shi and Jiang (2022) has explored Chinese consumers' perceptions of cultural elements. They applied various theories, including ethnocentrism theory and processing fluency theories, to elucidate how consumers perceive these elements. However, their study did not dissect processing fluency into its constituent parts: perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. This distinction is crucial, as each part serves distinct purposes and is processed differently by consumers (Christensen et al., 2020). Notably, processing fluency is primarily concerned with how consumers interpret the visual aspects of Chinese cultural elements, making it particularly relevant when analysing the visual attributes of CDLBs (Jiang et al., 2016; Shi & Jiang 2022; Janssen, 2019; Northey & Chan, 2020; Meiting & Hua, 2021).

Nonetheless, it's crucial to emphasize that the research landscape concerning Chinese Domestic Luxury Brands (CDLBs) remains relatively underexplored within academic journals. The topics addressed within these studies have also been rather limited in scope. Formulating an appropriate conceptual framework is imperative to gain a comprehensive

understanding of how consumer interest translates into purchasing decisions. Such a framework is a foundational tool for unravelling the intricate motivations and perceptions that drive consumers toward CDLBs. A significant challenge that researchers face lies in establishing a robust link between consumers' perceptions of a brand and their actual purchasing behaviours. This link becomes even more critical when viewed through perceptual fluency. As a result, there is a palpable need for comprehensive research endeavours and theoretical advancements. These endeavours aim to bridge the gap between consumer brand perceptions and the tangible actions taken in CDLBs.

1.4 Objectives

i. To identify the empirical effect of the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements in logo mark and the processing fluency among Chinese consumers.

ii. To examine the moderating effects of prior exposure between visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements in logo mark and the processing fluency among Chinese consumers.

iii. To analyze the relationship between visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and consumer purchase intentions of Chinese luxury fashion brand and processing fluency.

1.5 Research Questions

i. What are the empirical effects of visual complexity in Chinese cultural elements within logo marks on processing fluency among Chinese consumers?

ii. How does prior exposure to Chinese cultural elements moderate the relationship between visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and the processing fluency among Chinese consumers?

iii. How does visual complexity of Chinese cultural element influences consumer purchase intentions of Chinese luxury fashion brands through the mechanism of processing fluency?

1.6 Hypothesis for the questions

H1a: *The increased perceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on perceptual fluency.*

H1b*: The increased conceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on conceptual fluency.*

H2a: *The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and perceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher perceptual fluency.*

H2b: *The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and conceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher conceptual fluency.*

H3a: *Between the visual complexity and customer purchase intention, the perceptual fluency will act as a mediator.*

H3b: *Between the visual complexity and customer purchase intention, the conceptual fluency will act as a mediator.*

The more detailed breakdown and the understanding behind these hypotheses please refer to the Chapter 3 in this thesis.

1.7 Significance of Research

This study represents a significant contribution by raising awareness and advancing knowledge in the realm of Chinese domestic luxury branding, particularly within the application of Chinese cultural element in its logo design domain.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the levels of visual complexity (low, and high) inherent in Chinese cultural l elements by less and more details in them. The research analyses and compares commonly employed Chinese cultural element: the Chinese knot, which previously studied and investigates the interplay between complexity level of Chinese cultural elements and consumers' ultimate decisions.

The study is expected to contribute by establishing a practical understanding for comprehending the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements. Such an understanding, rooted in processing fluency theory, has the potential to provide guidance to designers in the field and serve as an educational resource within academia. Furthermore, a primary contribution of this PhD thesis is its elucidation of the link between Chinese customers' perceptions of Chinese cultural element and their purchase intentions. It furnishes a new framework that addresses this gap in existing research, effectively bridging visual elements with consumers' perceptions of brands.

The exploration of processing fluency theory in this study is anticipated to address existing gaps and generate novel insights valuable for industry practitioners, including

designers, brand managers, advertisers, and educators. Moreover, it has the potential to stimulate and enhance public comprehension regarding how customers perceive the visual complexity of logos as well as how this perception ultimately influences their decision-making processes.

1.8 Limitation of the Research

This PhD thesis delves into the impact of visual stimuli on consumer behavior, focusing on the role of visual complexity and fluency in Chinese cultural elements, particularly within luxury fashion branding. The research reveals that visual cues, such as cultural symbols, significantly affect consumer perceptions and decision-making processes. However, the study highlights several limitations, including the use of only black-and-white designs and a narrow range of cultural elements like the Chinese knot. Future research could expand by incorporating more diverse symbols, product categories, and colors to explore how increased visual complexity affects processing fluency and purchase intentions. The study also suggests that other factors, such as brand familiarity and exposure to cultural symbols, could moderate the effects of visual complexity. Additionally, cross-cultural studies could examine whether these findings apply to consumers from different cultural backgrounds, offering valuable insights for international marketing strategies. While this research makes important contributions to understanding how visual stimuli drive consumer behavior, especially in luxury branding, it opens new avenues for exploring how gender, age, and cultural context influence these relationships. These insights are vital for developing effective and culturally nuanced marketing campaigns in a globalized luxury market.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2, **Literature Review**: The chapter focuses on doing a comprehensive analysis based on available existing research in the pertinent areas. It is methodically partitioned into multiple segments. The initial portion explores the scholarly inquiry into the implementation of a logo and its significance within the area, then it discusses how Chinese domestic luxury brands, and their consumer changed over time, and the usage of Chinese cultural elements in their brand system. The second segment addresses visual complexity, exploring its various dimensions and implications. The third segment is focused on the concept of fluency, discussing its role and significance in visual processing, as well as the prior exposure effect.

Chapter 3, Methodology: This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the methodological approach adopted for the research. Furthermore, this chapter also give the hypothesis development. The initial section of hypothesis development introduces hypotheses concerning the impact of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on fluency, which are subsequently tested in the first study. The middle section of the chapter formulates hypotheses that examine the correlation between prior exposure and processing fluency, with these hypotheses being the focus of the second study. The final section discusses hypotheses relating about the influences of visual complexity on processing fluency, as well as customers' intention to purchase the Chinese luxury item, which are examined in the third study. It covers a wide array of topics, including the research philosophical methods, how to approach, the design of the studies, strategy to analysis, and sampling methods. It also details the structure and design of the three experiments conducted.

Chapter 4, Analysis and Discussion: For this chapter, the primary focus is on presenting and analysing the findings from the conducted experiments, with the structure meticulously organized to encompass each experiment's comprehensive details. The chapter begins with an overview of the pilot studies that set the foundation for each main experiment, outlining the preliminary tests and methods used to refine the experimental design. Following this, there is a detailed description of the participants and the procedures employed in each experiment, providing insights into the demographic details, selection criteria, and the step-by-step processes undertaken.

Further, the chapter investigates the measures of reliability used in the experiments, discussing the tools, scales, and statistical tests that ensure the consistency and validity of the measures. The core of the chapter lies in the detailed presentation of the results from each experiment, where statistical analyses, data interpretations, and observed trends are elaborately discussed. This section is pivotal as it provides the empirical evidence supporting the research hypotheses. Finally, the chapter wraps up with a concise yet insightful discussion of the findings from each experiment. This discussion not only contextualizes the results within the broader field of study but also compares them with existing literature, highlighting their significance and implications.

Chapter 5, Conclusion and Limitations: In this chapter, a comprehensive discussion and conclusion of the key findings from the conducted experiments are presented, providing a thorough analysis of the results and their implications. This chapter is not only a culmination of the research but also a critical evaluation of its contributions and limitations. Firstly, the chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the significant findings from the experiments. This involves breaking down the results, interpreting their meanings, and understanding how they contribute to or challenge existing knowledge in the field. The

discussion aims to contextualize the findings within the broader landscape of research on processing fluency, consumer behaviour, and decision-making processes. Secondly, the chapter articulates both the practical and theoretical contributions of this study. On a theoretical level, it adds to the body of knowledge on how processing fluency, particularly perceptual fluency, influences consumer behaviour and purchase intentions.

Additionally, the chapter acknowledges the potential limitations of the study. This may include aspects such as the scope of the research, the methodologies used, or the generalizability of the findings. Recognizing these limitations is essential for maintaining the integrity of the research and for setting the stage for future studies.

Finally, the chapter outlines directions for future research. By highlighting the gaps and limitations, it suggests areas where further investigation is needed. This could involve exploring different contexts, using diverse methodologies, or examining other variables that may interact with processing fluency and consumer behaviour.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Visual System

A logo is a distinctive element of branding that consists of a name, symbol, or trademark specifically designed for easy and unmistakable identification. (Danesi, 2006)

2.1.1 Definition of Logo

Logos hold significant value as valuable assets for companies, and considerable resources are invested in their promotion (Rubel, 1994). The American Marketing Association (1960) identifies a brand logo is a composite of features such as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design. A brand logo plays a crucial role in building awareness and recognition for the brand (Singla & Aggarwal, 2020; Balmer & Gray 2003). Its primary function of the logo is to help the brand or a product to identify or differentiate themselves in the market and their competitors. The logo serves a crucial part in making a better brand equity, in which comprises these key dimensions: affection, cognitive, and semantic. It encompasses visual and textual marks utilized for brand and product identification, are prevalent elements associated with brands. Consequently, the choices made in logo (re)design hold significant importance as marketing decisions. Scholars such as Airey (2014) and Krishna (2013) emphasize the significance of these decisions in the marketing field.

In Henderson and Cote's research, an effective logo should possess the qualities of quick and easy recognition, evoke positive emotions, and convey consistent meaning to diverse consumers. Supporting this notion, Madden et al. (2000) conducted an extensive study and discovered that certain colour combinations have a substantial influence on a

company logo's capacity to communicate meaning in eight countries. According to Hynes (2009), the recognition and positioning of a brand are heavily impacted by sensory information, namely colour. Aside from colour, the choice of typography is also a critical factor in logo design and assessment. Multiple research also invetigated the influence of typography on customer perception and brand image. (Chitturi et al., 2008; Locher et al., 1999). The choice of typeface can contribute to the overall aesthetics, legibility, and alignment of the logo, ultimately shaping consumers' impression of the brand (Walsh et al., 2010). For instance, Taco Bell allocates a significantly larger budget to its permanent media, such as signage featuring the company's name and logo, compared to its advertising expenses (Shennan, 1986). The strategic placement of logos extends across various mediums, including television broadcasts to counter viewer distractions like channel surfing (Snyder, 1993)

Logos are also prominently featured on packaging, letterheads, business cards, signage, print advertisements, annual reports, and product designs, exemplified by well-known brands like Oreo cookies and Eagle brand pretzels. Their presence serves as a vital aid for in-store recognition, facilitating faster product selection by consumers (Berry, 1989; Morrow, 1992). Therefore, careful consideration and experimentation with typeface are essential to create a visually appealing and meaningful logo.

The affective aspect entails providing consumers with aesthetically pleasing quality, as highlighted by Goldman (2005). Cognitive functions involve reminding customers of the functional benefits associated with the brands, as discussed by Loken, Joiner, and Peck (2002). Lastly, the semantic dimension involves the logo serving as a visual repository of the associations of a brand and the meaning expressed by the brand as well, as explored by de Mooij (2005) and Park et al. (2013). To create an effective logo design, several factors

come into play. Firstly, the logo should accomplish a significant level both in recognition as well as familiarity. Secondly, it should convey a set of meanings from a brand consistently and distinctively. Lastly, the logo should evoke positive affect in consumers. These criteria for a good logo design have been emphasized by Cohen (1986), Henderson and Cote (1998), Peter (1989), and Robertson (1989).

Henderson and Cote in 1998 introduced a comprehensive typology for classifying as well as analysing the visual details in logos. This typology encompasses various themes like naturalness, harmony, complexity, parallelism, repetition, proportion, and shape. Further, the studies conducted a distinct study examining the utilization of colours in logos (Madden et al., 2000). They found that certain hues, such as blue and white, have comparable connotations in different countries. However, the meaning and the association of the object is changed drastically when the color is different, for example like black and red. In his study, Klink (2003) explores the correlation between brand names and logo design. The researcher discovered that the name of the brands containing the front vowels and fricatives (such as s, f, v, and c) are often associated with the logo design with sharp and angular shape, as well as in lighter colour. Henderson et al. (2003) conducted a cross-sectional survey to evaluate how the difference in the cultural background of a consumer will perceive the various logo feature. The findings revealed a preference among clients in China and Singapore for logo designs that are natural and harmonious. However, the consumer from Western shown the preference for logo designs that had abstract and asymmetric features. The research directed by Henderson et al. in 2004 further confirmed visual complexity plays a substantial role in influencing customers' impression of logos, followed by naturalness and harmony. The study delivers useful understandings into the visual elements of logos together with their significance in cross-cultural situations.

2.1.2 The Two Aspect of Brand Logos

The composition of a brand logo, encompassing both visual and verbal elements, plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, as indicated by Saikawa and Onisawa (2014). Historical investigations have investigated the distinct facets of brand insignias, specifically focusing on the logo mark (Figure 2-1), pertaining to the visual aspect, and the logotype, related to the verbal component (Figure 2-2). These examinations have primarily cantered on their impact on the perceptions of international consumers regarding brand identity, although predominantly within the context of Western brands, as documented by Henderson et al. (2003) and Schmitt (1996). Prior research, including studies conducted by Henderson et al. (2003) and Schmitt (1996), has emphasized the significance of visual design views, particularly in relation to the logomark, in effective brand communication. These visual elements are not mere aesthetic additions; they are integral to the brand's narrative and how it communicates its identity to consumers.

Alexander (2009) specifically discusses how design of the logomark contributes to of luxury fashion brand. He cites the example of Burberry; a British luxury fashion luxury fashion brands. The company incorporates the symbol of the Great War trench coat into its branding. This design feature is carefully employed to establish a connection with British history, so amplifying the cultural genuineness of the brand and its appeal to tradition. Similarly, the Italian fashion and leather goods business Gucci includes a red and green strap in its products, which is reminiscent of the mediaeval saddle builders (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). These examples demonstrate how the visual components of a brand emblem can be employed to invoke cultural and historical associations. By doing so, brands are able to communicate a sense of authenticity and historical depth, appealing to consumers'

desire for brands with a strong and authentic cultural identity. In this way, the visual design of a brand logo becomes a crucial tool in building and conveying cultural authenticity, distinguishing a brand in a competitive global market.

The brand logotype, defined by Doyle and Bottomley (2006) as a brand's name presented in a distinctive typeface without secondary embellishments, serves as another critical tool in conveying a cultural authenticity of a brand. Differing from the visual logomark, the logotype focuses on the presentation of the brand name itself, often forming the primary textual element of the brand's identity. The impact of culturally genuine language on global brand names is an extensively studied domain. With studies by delving into how the application of language influences consumer perception and brand identity. The choice of language and typeface in a brand logotype can significantly affect the brand's image and how consumers relate to it, especially in terms of cultural authenticity (Larsen et al., 2002; Marian & Neisser, 2000; Salciuviene et al., 2010). An illustrative example of this is found in the study by Magnini et al. (2011), the study examined the utilisation of foreign languages in the restaurant brand names across the United States. Their research revealed that using foreign languages in brand names had a dual effect on American consumers. It not only affected their sense of the restaurant's personality but also improved the culturally genuine social encounters provided by these enterprises.

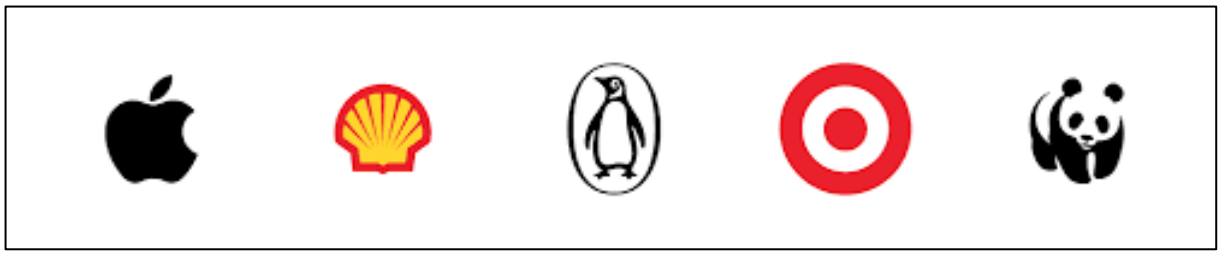


Figure 2.1: Examples of logomarks



Figure 2.2: Examples of wordmark

However, there is not much existing study on how the elements in the logo will effect on Chinese brands, especially Chinese domestic luxury brands (Shi & Jiang, 2022). Therefore, this PhD is focusing on investigating the logo of Chinese luxury brands, specifically the visual part, which is the logo mark, rather than the Chinese or English logotype (the semantic part) of Chinese luxury fashion brands logo.

2.1.3 Importance of Logo in Chinese Luxury Brands

The association between the logos of brands and the creation of desired brand impressions is well-supported both theoretically and empirically. The theoretical foundation stems from the classification theory in the marketing field, as described by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2011) and Berlyne (1971). This theory posits that customers are more likely to get conclusions about a brand based on its attributes, suggesting that the visual

elements of a brand, like especially like logos, serves a crucial part in forming customers' perceptions. Complementing this, in processing theory, proposed by Veryzer (1999), suggests that design elements are not just perceived superficially, but are actually broken down and compartmentalized into more complex components in the minds of the viewers. This theory reinforces the idea that the complexity of brand logo design are not only noticed but are also interpreted and integrated into the overall brand perception (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016).

Empirical support for these theoretical assertions is provided by the work of Orth and Malkewitz (2008). They demonstrated that different visual designs on brand elements lead to the creation of distinct brand impressions. Their research showed, for example, that natural-themed package designs tend to imbue brands with a sense of sincerity, while designs with high levels of visual contrast tend to create an impression of excitement. Building on these insights, the researcher summarized that the application of specific brand logos could improve consumers to identity, recognize and forming their judgmental behaviour to the brands (Veryzer, 1999). This conclusion highlights the power of brand logos not just as a marketing tool, but as a medium through which brands can communicate their identity, origin, and values, thereby shaping consumer perception, preference and purchasing intention in a significant way (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016, Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2011, Berlyne 1971).

2.2 Defining Luxury

An item or factor that enhances pleasure or comfort beyond what is considered essential for survival. Therefore, in current usage, something that is desired but not essential. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002).

To gain a thorough comprehension of luxury, it is important to scrutinize its definition. Based on the dictionary, the definition of luxury as "something that is not necessary but provides enjoyment and convenience," (The Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1969). However, the Free Dictionary (2015) characterizes luxury as "the thing that is desirable but comes with a significant expense or is challenging to acquire and achieve." These explanations emphasize the dispensable quality of luxury and its correlation with a higher cost. Luxury brands refer to items and services that possess outstanding quality, are priced at a high level, and are not essential for fulfilling basic needs. They are characterized by their perceived rarity, exclusivity, prestige, and authenticity, providing consumers with significant symbolic and emotional value (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2009). Luxury items today encompass diverse goods and services, from automobiles, jewelry, and watches to exclusive offerings like hospitality and concierge (Okonkwo, 2009a). Prominent luxury brands, for example, like Gucci, Rolex, and Versace exemplify sophistication and exclusivity (Reddy et al., 2009).

The term "luxury brands" was initially concluded by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and refined by Wiedman et al. (2007) in their study later on. According to their definitions, luxury brands represent the pinnacle of prestigious brands, offering a range of physical and psychological values that are highly esteemed. However, there is insufficient consensus on defining of luxury in the literature, partly due to the subjective and vague nature of the term (Beverland, 2004). Different scholars and disciplines have varying understandings and

interpretations of luxury, resulting in interchangeable usage of terms like luxury, the consumption of luxury, luxury items, and luxury goods (Han et al., 2010; Tynan, et al., 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). The multidisciplinary nature of luxury studies and the different perspectives applied by researchers contribute to the complexity and ambiguity of its definition (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Li et al., 2012; Han et al., 2010). In the realm of marketing, the term "luxury" is often used to persuade consumers to buy the items with over-priced tag (Tynan et al., 2009).

Lipovetsky and Roux (2003) assert that the concept of luxury did not originate solely from the manufacturing of expensive products or the display of opulence and extravagance. Instead, they argue that traces of an ethical dimension of luxury can be discerned even in prehistoric times. In this early context, luxury represented a cultural phenomenon and a mindset that emphasized the assertion of human beings as social entities rather than mere animals. Beyond its economic and materialistic facets, luxury also found expression in religious realms, adopting a sacred form infused with symbolism and proximity to divinities. During ancient times in civilizations such as ancient Egypt and Rome, luxury items held a special significance as offerings to the deities.

This perspective challenges conventional notions of luxury as a product of conspicuous consumption and opulence. It highlights the deeper cultural and ethical underpinnings of luxury, tracing its roots to humanity's social and spiritual dimensions. By recognizing these aspects, the researcher gets a more extensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of luxury throughout history.

Jackson (2004) provides insights into luxury fashion brands, defining them as exclusive, high-priced, and prestigious, offering desirability beyond mere functionality.

Consumers perceive luxury fashion brands to possess specific characteristics, such as recognized globally, core competence, very high quality, the ability in innovation, strong advertisement, impeccable in-store presentation, and excellent customer service. Research explores the motivations behind consumers' purchase of luxury fashion brands. This includes the inclination for seeking attention and involvement in social interaction (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Potts, 2007). Fashion functions as a means of altering specific elements of a customer's way of life (Potts, 2007). Luxury fashion brands are commodities that individuals can utilise to publicly display their affluence (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). In ancient Greece, the act of indulging in luxury was perceived as a societal menace because it had the potential to divert residents' attention away from the polis, or the city-state, and towards their personal lives (Brun & Castelli, 2013). These statistics and forecasts highlight the enduring appeal and economic significance of the luxury goods industry. The market's growth and the recognition of luxury brands as global powerhouses demonstrate the sustained demand and evolving consumer preferences within this sector, especially for Chinese market, as a one of fastest grow market in the world. These market dynamics in the Asia Pacific region create a fertile ground for luxury brands to expand their reach and capitalize on the rising consumer appetite for luxury products. More than years ago, it was noted that the luxury brand market was experiencing rapid growth, emerging as one of the fastest-increasing sectors within the marketing industry as a whole (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). As time progressed, the presence and significance of luxury brands became even more apparent. In fact, a decade later, seven luxurious brands including Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Tiffany, Cartier, Gucci, Armani, and Burberry made it onto the list of the top 100 global brands (Friedman, 2010). Various research institutions regularly provide insights into the substantial understanding of the luxurious brands and their products. For example, the research from Verdict claimed that

by 2012, the global luxury goods market would reach a worth of £225 billion (approximately $361 billion or €279 billion) (Clark, 2011).

2.2.1 Historic Perspective of Luxury Fashion

2.2.1.1 The “Old” Luxury Fashion

As in the previous section stated, defining "luxury" is a complex and context-dependent endeavour. This term assumes diverse forms and meanings, contingent upon the specific spatial and temporal context, as well as the perspective from which it is examined. Luxury possesses a nomadic quality, serving multiple purposes, and defies easy categorization into a singular, definitive concept (Cabigiosu, 2020). Over a period of time, the word "luxury" could have an undesirable connotation, frequently connected to ideas of extravagance as well as lack of restraint. This term has also been described as "old luxury," which encompasses notions of "exuberance, abundance, luxury," as well as "a lifestyle characterised by indulgence and sensuality" (Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003). During ancient Greek times, the notion of luxury was also associated to the Greek term "loxos" (Mattia, 2013), which signifies a diagonal or oblique kind of growth and can be interpreted as a deviation or divergence from the usual. Both of them imply that luxury has traditionally been associated with an extravagant lifestyle. Within certain religious contexts, the consumption of luxury items is interpreted as a expression of the vulnerability of the human spirit, whereas in other religions, it is considered as a visible indication of material success, which is believed to be linked to divine blessings (Cabigiosu, 2020).

2.2.1.2 The “New” Luxury

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the term "luxury" took on a fresh connotation associated with indulgence in that which is superb and costly, as well as the

delight derived from experiencing something comfortable that goes beyond strict necessity (Brun and Castelli, 2013). During that era, luxury was still influenced by the aristocratic and artisanal model, signifying high-quality products crafted by skilled artisans. It was based on rare, top-quality raw materials that could only be acquired in specific regions, such as local markets (Cabigiosu, 2020).

In the late nineteenth century, the conventional and sartorial stance in fashion underwent a significant transformation. Notably, during the 1920s, the fashion landscape saw a revolutionary shift led by designer Coco Chanel, heralding a paradigm of fashion that was distinctly modern and dynamically evolving (Cabigiosu, 2020). After industrialization movement, the realm of luxury has, in contemporary times, forsaken the erstwhile aura of sacredness and exclusivity that had long defined it. Instead, it has embraced the pursuit of innovation and the prospects of the future. The luxury started to turn from can only be accessed by elite to mass production, because of drastically increase in the production capacity. The rise of the "democratization of luxury" has not only attracted the affluent elite but also, progressively, a significant portion of the general population. This phenomenon has dismantled rigid social stratifications. The so called “Neo-Luxury” or “New-Luxury” emerged. Silverstein et al. (2008) states new Luxury offers the high-quality material and craftsmanship and shipping experience, but in the meanwhile, with more friendly price to the cover many of middle-class customers.

Based on the context, a product caters to intricate needs, bearing multiple layers of significance, thereby assuming a pivotal part in the brand's value of communication. The perception of luxury brand itself become more important than the product itself. Based on Danziger (2005), the branding of the new luxury shouldn't treat as exclusively tied to the democratization of luxury, which denotes increased accessibility. The genuine paradigm

shift lies in how consumers perceive this new luxury – as an experience or emotion. Unlike old luxury, which primarily encompasses tangible items, the new luxury encompasses the entirety of the consumer experience.

2.2.2 Chinese Luxury Market

Consumers often rely on the originality, like where the items and the brand from as a cue to assess the quality of an unfamiliar product. For example, Italy is renowned for its fashion, Germany for its engineering, and Japan for its electronics. The favorable connections established between a brand and the items originating from a particular country yield benefits rooted in the country of where it from. Furthermore, the brand name itself uses as a crucial part in transmitting cultural and social significance to the country of origin. This meaning not only reinforces consumer identity but also reflects social status through brand consumption (Río et al., 2001). Specifically, the name on the brand is serving as a powerful vehicle for transferring cultural, as well as social significance.

China has become one of the world's most significant economies due to its impressive and rapid economic growth in recent decades. Over the last ten years, one of the most important factors contributing to the expansion of the luxury fashion market segment has been China. Projections suggest that this prevailing influence is expected to endure until 2025. Notable instances like luxury brands attained exceptional success in China encompass LVMH, Gucci, and Lululemon. During the second quarter of 2019, the latter experienced a remarkable 68% increase in its revenues in China. It is important to highlight that physical retail continues to play an important part in this tale of success, compare to only 80% in 2017, 85% of consumers interact with the touchpoints of both online and offline. This growth is largely expected to be driven by Chinese consumers, particularly the burgeoning middle-class segment (Cabigiosu, 2020).

This significant achievement has positioned the country as a highly desirable market for luxury brands, given its vast population. Consequently, a multitude of brands have seized the opportunity to engage into this thriving market of 1.4 billion people. According to Bain and Company (2010), demand for high-end accessories like shoes and handbags has been steadily rising, especially in China. Despite recent recessions, the Asia Pacific region's solid and expanding demand for luxury products offers significant potential for future marketing. (Socha, 2008). This region is recognised as a major contributor, responsible for 50% of all worldwide luxury acquisitions. Projections suggest that the Greater China market, which includes Taiwan, will account for over half of these purchases and achieve a value of €169 billion (roughly $219 billion) by 2020. This is a substantial growth from its 15% share in 2010, based on the study from Bowman in 2008 and Sheng in 2011. China has become one of the most significant global economies due to its amazing and quick economic expansion in recent decades. This significant achievement has positioned the country as a highly desirable market for luxury brands, given its vast population. Consequently, a multitude of brands have seized the opportunity to tap into this thriving market of 1.4 billion people. The luxury consumption in mainland China reached a substantial amount of $9.83 billion in 2020, accounting for a considerable share of worldwide luxury consumption, specifically 80% (NPD.com, 2021). The remarkable data suggests a positive and encouraging protentional for the luxury brand industry in China.

Li et al. (2012) emphasizes the distinctive cultural background of China, which could account for the different behavior of Chinese consumers in comparison to customers from other countries (Zhan & He, 2012). Consequently, much of the current researches on luxury, majority of those are developed placed on the perspective from Western countries, may not be directly appropriate to China. Moreover, the recent growth in the Chinese luxury segment

is challenging to explain due to significant social, political, and economic changes in the country (Chadha & Husband, 2011). These factors are also contributed to the creation of a unique social milieu in China. Previous studies mostly from the western luxury brand perspectives, because China is a huge market in luxury consumption, but indeed lacking the its original luxury brands development. Furthermore, the luxury consumer in China are having the different consumption behaviour than Western consumers (Zhan & He, 2012).. This is also providing the gap for this research to fill in this area. Moverover, Berthon et al (2009, p. 47) argue luxury should be understood as a notion that cannot be reduced solely to material possessions, while it can be expressed through different material forms. According to Kapferer and Bastien (2009), genuine luxury brands are regarded as more akin to art rather than simply serving a practical purpose. The most previously research also conduct on daily commodity brands, whereas analysing luxury definitely different from daily products (Walley & Li, 2015).

2.2.3 Chinese Luxury Consumer

An economic perspective often emphasizes the high price and rarity of luxury goods, while considering their intangible and situational value (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). On the other hand, a more subjective viewpoint highlights the refined enjoyment, elegance, and desirability associated with luxury, distinguishing it from essential or everyday needs (Goody, 2006; Vickers & Renand, 2003). Ultimately, understanding luxury requires acknowledging its multifaceted nature and recognizing the diverse lenses through which it can be examined. By embracing the different dimensions of luxury and considering the interplay between material and symbolic aspects, a more comprehensive understanding of this complex concept can be achieved.

The study examined the behaviours of Chinese consumers during their stays at high-end hotels (Chen & Peng, 2014). They aimed to validate a model that accurately represents views towards premium value. In a separate investigation, Hwang and Han (2014) analysed strategies employed in the luxury cruise industry to maximize and leverage brand prestige. Their findings revealed that eight attributes significantly influenced the perception of prestige associated with luxury cruise brands.

The meta-analysis and focus group study conducted by Kam et al in 2018, they try to evaluate the attitudes from Chinese consumers towards luxury travel. The study (Fig.2-3) identified six key factors that drive Chinese consumers' purchase behavior in the luxury sector: social conformity, '*mianzi*' (i.e., social status), vanity and bragging, dream value, gift-giving, and Western influences. The incentives for luxury purchasing align with the self-concept framework and have also evolved depending on the range of symbolism connected with the genuine quest of product excellence (Tsai, 2005). The researcher did from Kem et al. (2018) investigate the incorporation of thrift among Chinese luxury buyers, by merging it with the concept proposed by Markus and Kitayama (1991) on the interdependent/independent self. This integration was used to characterise the six motivations of Chinese customers in their pursuit of luxury purchases. By understanding and acknowledging these motivations, marketers and luxury brands can better tailor their strategies to resonate with consumers' desires and aspirations.

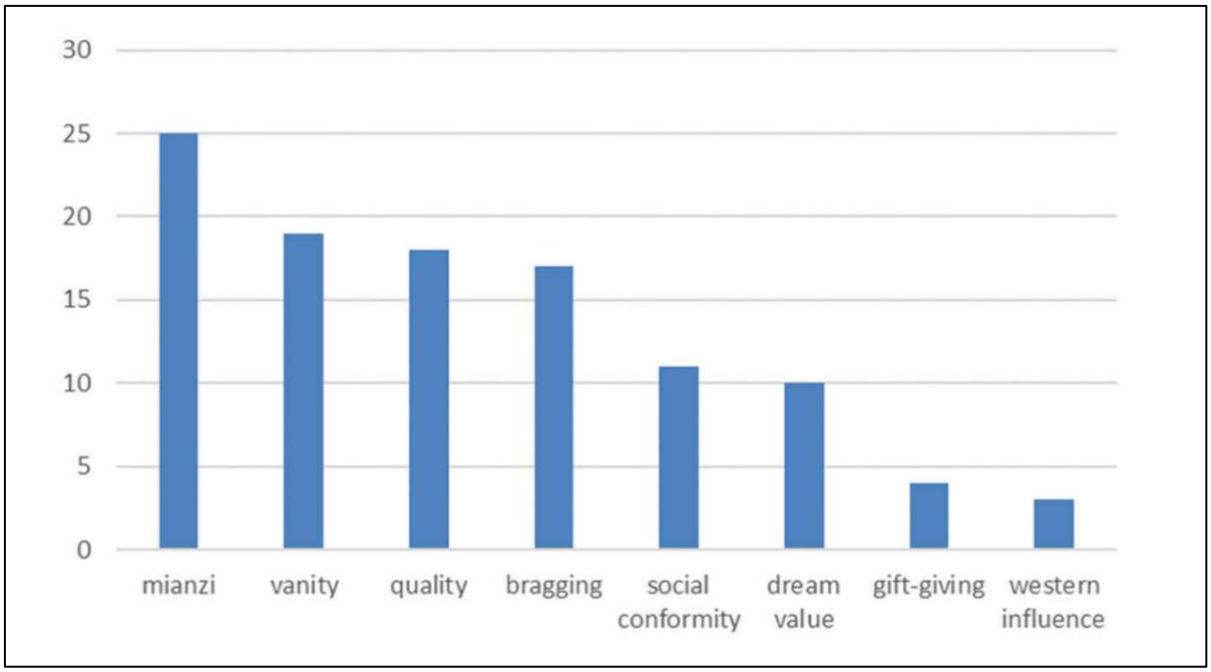


Figure 2.3: Motivations for luxury consumption, phrase count. Kam et al., (2018)

However, the changes are appearing in the new Chinese luxury consumers, especially for the Generation Y and Z, some of them are starting engaging the inconspicuous consumption, instead of cultural luxury purchasing (Wu et al., 2017). The changes within the Chinese consumers bring the shift in the market, and the foundation of the investigating of this study as well.

2.2.4 Status and Conspicuous consumption

The definition of status consumption pertains to the inclination of individuals to augment their social standing by engaging in conspicuous consuming behaviours. This concept has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Goldsmith and Clarke (2012), Zhan and He (2012), Shukla (2010), Heaney et al. (2005), Eastman et al. (1999). According to the finding, individuals who are motivated by a desire for status are inclined to get objects that represent prestige and acknowledgment, particularly in the eyes of others they deem

important (Heaney et al., 2005; O'Cass & Frost, 2002). Gradually, this type of consumption is frequently linked to materialism (Goldsmith et al., 2012; Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Tanner &Roberts, 2000; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

Prior research has suggested that the desire to acquire status through purchase is a significant driver of conspicuous expenditure. Piacentini and Mailer (2004) propose that adolescents from affluent households, who possess greater discretionary income, exhibit reduced propensity for engaging in status consumption. Conversely, teenagers from lower and middle socioeconomic origins are more likely to participate in status consumption to demonstrate their perceived wealth. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that this study predominantly concentrated on a cohort of white individuals of Caucasian descent who possessed elevated levels of education, money, and privileged family histories. Furthermore, similar effects have been observed in subsequent studies conducted in the Asian region (Zhan & He, 2012). These findings offer essential insights for selecting subjects for both qualitative and quantitative experiments and underscore the significance of considering status as a potentially influential factor in the model development process.

Conversely, the research did by Zheng et al. (2024) indicated that the behaviour of purchasing Chinese domestic luxury brands often time recognized as inconspicuous luxury behaviour. This phenomenon reflects a broader cultural shift among some Chinese consumers. After experiencing Western products, a segment of these consumers is increasingly drawn back to their cultural roots, seeking a lifestyle that aligns more closely with their heritage (Wu, 2022). This return to cultural origins manifests in a growing interest in products that incorporate Chinese cultural elements, with a particular emphasis on traditional aspects.

Schroeder et al. (2015) and Wu and Luo (2017) also found this trend represents a form of cultural renaissance, where traditional elements are not just preserved but are actively sought after in the modern context. These consumers find value in the subtlety and depth of products that embody the richness of Chinese culture. This inclination towards traditional cultural elements reflects a desire to reconnect with and celebrate their heritage, a contrast to the more overt western influences that have been predominant in recent times.

2.2.5 Chinese Domestic Luxury Brands

Several Chinese luxury brands have established collaborations with European companies, exemplifying their commitment to merging cultural Chinese elements with international influences. For instance, Hermès-owned Shang Xia (上下) (Figure 2.5) focuses on reviving and promoting Chinese craftsmanship and aesthetics, while Richemont-owned Shanghai Tang (上海滩) （Figure 2.4） combines Chinese design elements with modern fashion sensibilities. Qeelin (麒麟), a renowned Chinese jewellery company, recently joined forces with French luxury house Kering to enhance its global reach and leverage its cultural heritage. These collaborations demonstrate the integration of cultural, Chinese craftsmanship and design into the global luxury landscape. Furthermore, emerging Chinese luxury brands showcase China's rich heritage and cultural traditions. NE·Tiger (东北虎) draws inspiration from the country's clothing heritage, incorporating cultural patterns and techniques into contemporary fashion. Mao Tai (茅台) (Figure 2.6) represents Chinese culinary culture, offering premium spirits deeply rooted in Chinese traditions. Yunnan Pu-erh Tea (云南普洱) embodies China's tea heritage, offering high-quality teas highly valued by enthusiasts. Chow Tai Fook (周大福) (Figure 2.7) is renowned for its Chinese jewellery craftsmanship, and Xiangyunsha Silk (香云纱) showcases the elegance of Chinese silk.

These brands exemplify the fusion of Chinese traditions and contemporary luxury aesthetics, catering to a growing market seeking a harmonious blend of heritage and modernity.

Chinese luxury brand managers and CEOs have a distinct perspective, diverging from the Western luxury firms' focus on status branding (e.g., Dion &Borraz, 2017). They view status brands as fairly shallow and instead aim to develop luxury brands with deeper significance. It is noteworthy that Chinese luxury brands face specific challenges in establishing themselves as status brands. These challenges include lower brand recognition compared to Western brands and limited production capabilities for supporting status branding. However, Chinese luxury brands are motivated by a strong aspiration to cultivate more profound brand identities (Wu, 2022).



Figure 2.4： Shanghai Tang logo Design



Figure 2.5： Shangxia logo design



Figure 2.6： MouTai logo design



Figure 2.7： Chow Tai Fook old logo version



Figure 2.8： Hongqi logo design

2.2.6 The Current Situation of Chinese Domestic Luxury Brand

Several studies have been conducted on the present condition and growth of Chinese domestic luxury brands. One such study, conducted by Hsu (2014), focused on comparing luxury hotels from international brands to those from Chinese domestic brands. The research revealed that while international brands still dominate the market, there is a noticeable increase in the consumption of domestic brands. Based on the outcome of the research, it has a positive implication for hotel brands that operate within the country. Guest assessments of domestic hotels closely paralleled those of foreign rivals in various aspects of the performance from the brands, encompassing brand loyalty, brand quality, brand awareness, brand image, trust in management, and brand reliability. Even business travelers, who mainly stayed at local brand hotels, showed comparable levels of pleasure and intention to return as those who chose foreign brand hotels (Hsu, 2014).

The evolving preferences of Chinese consumers, especially those who have experienced Western products, exemplify a notable cultural and commercial phenomenon. As these consumers reconnect with their cultural roots, they increasingly gravitate towards products that embody traditional Chinese cultural elements. This shift has been instrumental in the rise of Chinese luxury brands, which blend contemporary sensibilities with deep-rooted cultural heritage. Brands like Shang Xia are at the forefront of this movement, offering products that pay homage to traditional Chinese design and craftsmanship. Similarly, Sand River stands out for its incorporation of traditional Chinese cashmere design techniques, showcasing a fusion of luxury and cultural heritage. Ne•Tiger brings traditional Chinese fur design into the modern luxury market, blending opulence with cultural motifs. Shiatzy Chen exemplifies the revival of traditional Chinese garment design and craftsmanship, while incorporating contemporary elements into timeless forms. Shanghai

Tang encapsulates the fundamental qualities of Chinese garment design and craftsmanship during the period spanning from the 1920s to the 1940s, a period rich in cultural transformation and aesthetic innovation. Lastly, Franz's focus on traditional Chinese porcelain design demonstrates how craftsmanship and cultural identity can be intertwined to create luxury products with a unique appeal （Wu & Luo, 2017).

The other study also further confirmed the same situation, because the change happened among the Chinese consumers, especially the Chinese Gen X and Gen Y, for instance, Shanghai Tang stands as a prime example, blending Chinese aesthetics into its designs and garnering a dedicated local following. Similarly, Shang Xia, launched under the Hermès group, emphasizes Chinese craftsmanship and heritage, attracting consumers seeking high-quality, locally-made luxury products. NEIWAI has tapped into the demand for premium, comfortable lingerie among Chinese consumers, offering a blend of Chinese culture and contemporary style. Maison HPMC, with its luxury bags, showcases Chinese artistry and appeals to those valuing both tradition and modernity in their accessories. Furthermore, Lan Yue, specializing in high-end jewelry, celebrates Chinese motifs and craftsmanship, offering consumers culturally rich, unique pieces. These brands exemplify the growing interest in Chinese domestic luxury brands, as consumers seek products that resonate with their cultural identity while upholding the quality and allure synonymous with luxury goods (Schroeder et al., 2015b).

The vast majority of articles focusing on the research of Chinese domestic luxury brands find it nearly impossible to avoid discussing Chinese cultural elements and their significance. Invariably, when researchers investigate the realm of these brands, they are compelled to explore the rich tapestry of Chinese culture, considering how it intertwines with and influences various aspects of these luxury brands. (Schroeder et al., 2015b).

2.3 Chinese Cultural Elements

China boasts a rich cultural legacy, deeply rooted in historical civilization and characterized by a multifaceted cultural heritage spanning various levels. Its earliest indigenous elements are manifested in the expansive landscapes adorned with lakes and islands. The second layer of cultural elements encompasses the intricate arts of calligraphy and Chinese painting, reflecting the nation's artistic prowess. Modern elements, such as the embodiment of the Olympic spirit, represent a dynamic fusion of tradition and contemporary values. The term "Chinese Cultural Elements" encapsulates the enduring aspects of the culture passed down through generations. This civilization has undergone continual evolution, adapting to changing times while integrating into the broader national culture. This integration not only reflects the distinctive characteristics and uniqueness of the nation but also serves as a canvas for the interplay of advanced ideas and traditional concepts (He & Wang, 2017). Within the context of contemporary design in the rural area, the combination of these exceptional cultural elements plays a pivotal role. This infusion serves as a continual enhancement of the artistic beauty of these landscapes, serving to accentuate national characteristics. In this dynamic process, the designs become a testament to the harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity, showcasing the evolving cultural tapestry of China (Liu & Liang, 2020).

The insights provided by Napoli et al. (2016) are crucial in understanding the authentic value of luxury brands, particularly those that are inconspicuous yet steeped in tradition. According to their research, the essence of authenticity in luxury brands is deeply rooted in heritage. This concept aligns seamlessly with the outcomes of the present study, which emphasizes the significance of traditional Chinese craftsmanship and cultural symbols in establishing the authentic value of Chinese luxury brands. Moreover, using Chinese

cultural elements can rise authenticity and inconspicuous attribute of Chinese luxury brands, which is these brand target consumers need (Wu, 2022) .

As China ascends on the global stage and undergoes a profound and ongoing metamorphosis in its market dynamics, the conventional Western-style brand logos employed by local firms are deemed inadequate to navigate the intense competition within the Chinese market (Laforet & Chen, 2012). Consequently, there is a notable shift toward incorporating Chinese cultural elements into brand representation. This strategic adjustment is propelled by the recognition that consumers in ethnocentric cultures, such as China, exhibit a predisposition to align their self-concept with softer cultural assets (He & Wang, 2017).

Amid the changing landscape of luxury branding, incorporating Chinese cultural element into identities in brand is crucial for businesses seeking to establish a stronger connection with the local consumer market. This departure from Western-centric branding signifies a nuanced understanding of the cultural underpinnings that shape consumer preferences in the Chinese market. By embracing these cultural elements, brands not only enhance their market relevance but also foster a deeper connection with consumers who identify strongly with their cultural heritage.

2.3.1 Chinese Cultural Element Category

The phrase "Chinese cultural elements" applied in this research does not have universally agreed-upon definitions in current academic field (He & Wang, 2015; Heine & Phan, 2013; Song, 2013; Wang & Lin, 2009; Wu, 2011). In this research, the phase of Chinese cultural element refers to the symbolic and spiritual meanings included in objects or products that signify exclusive aspects of traditional Chinese cultural history. To illustrate,

artifacts such as silk brocade, paper-cuttings, Peking Opera facial masks, embroidery, Chinese calligraphy and ink-wash painting, porcelain, Panda, and Dragon are widely acknowledged as quintessential Chinese elements, imbued with cultural pride by most of the Chinese populace. It is imperative to emphasize that the inclusion of Chinese features in global branding strategies is distinct from the implementation of localization techniques to modify marketing mix globally. China's rich tradition of graphic language draws inspiration from a diverse array of sources, encompassing the natural world, landscapes, flora and fauna, totemic reverence, religious convictions, philosophical ideologies, and more (Karin et al., 2018). The Chinese graphic language encompasses the entirety of China's historical and cultural development in a complex and detailed manner. The beginnings of this visual language can be traced back to the Stone Age, when painted pottery first emerged as an abstraction. Over time, the graphic expressions underwent changes, resulting in unique styles and forms that reflected the shifting social and cultural environment of China. Significantly, in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, graphic depictions adopted a solemn and refined appearance, frequently portraying bronze figures. The following Qin and Han dynasties introduced an age marked by charming and dignified individuals, prominently shown in portraits and bricks. various artistic representations offered valuable insights into the dominant beliefs and values of various time periods. The Sui and Tang Dynasties saw the rise of stunning cave paintings that fascinated viewers with their magnificence and unique allure. These artworks not only showcased the artistic prowess of the time but also served as a testament to the cultural richness of this era.

Moving forward to the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chinese graphic language continued to evolve, influenced in part by interactions with foreign cultures. The patterns and shapes from this period reflect the interplay between domestic traditions and external

influences, resulting in a distinctive visual identity. Each epoch in China's history has left an indelible mark on its graphic language. These graphics serve as more than just artistic expressions; they are windows into the sentiments, concepts, and notions of the individuals of that era, offering a glimpse into the cultural tapestry that is China (Stavropoulos et al., 2018).

Williams (1976) delivers a thorough examination of Chinese cultural components, establishing the foundation for a detailed investigation. Expanding on this basis, Yi (2005) classifies Chinese cultural aspects with nine specific classes: mythological figures, historical figures, organs, animals, plants, tools, structures, colors, and numbers. Furthermore, the researcher also provided a more detailed examination, suggesting that these cultural components consist of visual depictions and comprise factors such as imagery, creative expression, and ideological values (Zhang, 2007).

Due to the fact that in the realm of design research, there is a numerous verity of Chinese cultural elements in it. The study chooses Chinese knot, which is the most common one in Chinese fashion design (Huang et al., 2019). Chinese knot underscores the rich and multifaceted nature of Chinese cultural elements, acknowledging their pervasive presence in diverse aspects of life and design. This substantiates the appropriateness and representational value of the Chinese knot. (Williams, 1976; Yi, 2005; Zhang, 2007). In the study by Shi and Jiang (2022), they also applied Chinese knot to represent Chinese cultural elements.

2.3.2 Cultural Authenticity in Chinese Cultural Element

In the current global market, where consumers are increasingly looking for genuine experiences and products, the cultural authenticity of businesses has become a vital aspect. The notion of authenticity, as delineated by researchers (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010;

Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Ooi & Stober, 2008; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010), centers on the idea of anything possessing genuineness, reality, or truthfulness. In the context of branding, this refers to delivering ideas and experiences that are culturally authentic (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Ooi & Stober, 2008). Chinese firms can gain a huge advantage by utilizing cultural authenticity, providing consumers worldwide with really "Chinese" experiences. Implementing this approach, as analyzed by Beverland and Farrelly (2010), Grayson and Martinec (2004), and Rose and Wood (2005), enables them to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market. By presenting products and experiences that are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, these brands can connect with consumers on a more meaningful level. This connection is not just about the products themselves but also about sharing the rich heritage and story behind them (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). Therefore, for Chinese luxury brands aiming to make an impact on the global or domestic stage, focusing on cultural authenticity provides an opportunity to showcase their unique heritage and create a distinctive brand identity. This can result in enhanced brand loyalty, since customers frequently establish a more profound emotional bond with products that embody authentic cultural narratives and principles. (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016).

When consumers pursue cultural authenticity, they often rely on their own socially constructed interpretations of what they consider authentic, as pointed out by Beverland and Farrelly (2010). The subjective interpretation of individuals significantly influences the perception and importance placed on authenticity. Grayson and Martinec (2004) provide additional clarification by differentiating between two aspects of authenticity: indexical and iconic authenticity. based on their research, the indexical authenticity pertains to the perception of an object or entity as being the genuine or original version. This form of

authenticity is based on a direct connection to the original source or authentic origin. For instance, in the context of cultural products, indexical authenticity would mean that the product is made in the country of its origin, using traditional methods and materials.

Based on the concept by Grayson and Martinec (2004) and Rose and Wood (2005), highlights how consumers can perceive something as authentically representative of a culture, regardless of its direct connection to the 'real' or 'original' source. Therefore, in this context, the authenticity is not derived from historical accuracy or originality, but from how effectively an object or experience captures the essence or symbolism of the culture it represents. Consumers who value iconic authenticity are attracted to the way these objects or experiences represent cultural narratives or themes, even if they are creatively adapted or modernized (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016).

While prior research has emphasized the incorporation of Chinese traditional elements in the clothing and product designs of Chinese domestic luxury brands, many study underscores the significance of integrating these elements into logo design as well. A study conduct on Chinese luxury brands for aiming to connect with Western consumers, especially those in the U.S. who value culturally authentic experiences, the key lies in effectively leveraging visual marketing strategies (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). Research points to the significance of well-designed brand logos in achieving this goal. Henderson et al. (2003) and Schmitt (1996) emphasize the impact of logo design in conveying a brand's identity and cultural essence.

This holistic approach allows brands to bolster both brand trust and inconspicuousness, two pivotal factors that wield substantial influence over purchase intentions (Zheng et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2024). As the Chinese domestic luxury brands

aroused considerable academic curiosity, as well as the application of Chinese cultural elements in this field. Many pervious research found that the concept of cultural authenticity emerges as a defining factor influencing consumers' choices between local and Western luxury brands. Cultural authenticity, as elaborated by Kim in 2005, encompasses unique cultural elements characterized by integrity and aesthetic allure, stemming from a specific culture. It calls for the incorporation of distinctive cultural elements with origins tied to particular cultures, aligning seamlessly with the cultural values and aesthetic preferences of discerning consumers. In the hands of brand stewards, this concept assumes the role of a revered vessel, encapsulating brand authenticity (Beverland, 2005; Napoli et al., 2016).

Multiple findings have analyzed the effect of many aspects, such as size, shape, colour, as well as typography of brand logos. (Zheng et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2016; Northey and Chan, 2020; Meiting and Hua, 2021). Furthermore, the study directed by Zheng et al., (2024) discovered that the Chinese cultural authenticity in the visual aspects of Chinese domestic luxury brands' visual identity also influences how consumers perceive the logo. This influence is particularly significant as it affects their judgments and decision-making process.

The notion of cultural authenticity, in relation to visual intricacy and consumer behaviour, is intricate. It encompasses how participants perceive the genuineness and cultural integrity of the visual elements being studied. If participants perceive these elements as inauthentically representing Chinese culture, it could impact their cognitive processing and, subsequently, their behavioural responses (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). This perception might affect not only the ease with which they process these elements (processing fluency) but also their willingness or inclination to purchase products featuring these designs (purchase intention) (Zheng et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2024).

Hence, when examining and comprehending the research results, it is crucial to take into account the significance of cultural authenticity. This might involve examining how different perceptions of authenticity correlate with variations in processing fluency and purchase intentions. Additionally, the research methodology might need to include measures to assess participants' perceptions of cultural authenticity of the Chinese cultural elements sample, ensuring that these perceptions are not factored into the final analysis. The thesis aims to enhance the comprehension of the association among visual complexity and cultural authenticity in influencing consumer behaviour within the realm of Chinese cultural aspects, resulting in a more refined and precise understanding.

2.3.3 Integrating Chinese Cultural Element in Chinese Brands

Incorporating cultural history into a brand's identity goes beyond simple marketing tactics. It cultivates a profound and impactful bond with listeners. Asian brands, frequently categorized as price-oriented rivals in the international market, have the task of surpassing this limited impression. Ben-Ur and Wang (2008) and Birnik et al. (2010) have emphasized this matter, proposing a transition towards imbuing brand representations with human qualities. This transition is essential for allowing customers to comprehend these brands in a comprehensive way, valuing them for their intrinsic values and identities, rather than solely their product offers (Ben-Ur & Wang, 2008; Birnik et al., 2010; Roll, 2006). By integrating cultural elements into their branding, Chinese companies can showcase their unique heritage and values, distinguishing themselves in a crowded marketplace. This approach not only differentiates them from competitors but also enhances their appeal to consumers seeking authenticity and depth in brand narratives. Furthermore, it opens a window for these brands to play a pivotal function in determining and communicating national identity. As Ooi and Stober (2008) noted, brands have the power to construct and reinforce national images,

making them ambassadors of their country's culture and values on the global stage. This cultural integration also speaks to the growing trend of consumers seeking brands with a story, ones that reflect cultural richness and authenticity. In an increasingly globalized world, where customers are showing to a multitude of brands, those that successfully communicate their unique cultural heritage can create a more engaging and meaningful consumer experience. This not only fosters stronger consumer loyalty but also promotes cultural understanding and appreciation across borders. As brands become representatives of their countries, they carry the potential to influence international perceptions and relationships, adding a layer of diplomatic significance to their market presence. In conclusion, leveraging cultural heritage in branding is not just a marketing tactic; it is a strategic move that can redefine a brand's global image, foster deeper consumer connections, and contribute significantly to shaping the international perception of a nation.

Chinese brands like Herborist, a cosmetics brand, Shanghai Tang, a fashion chain based in Hong Kong, and Shang Xia, another Chinese fashion retailer, have centered their branding strategies on their rich cultural heritage. By integrating traditional cultural elements into their brand identity, these companies have successfully crafted a unique image in the marketplace (Zhou, 2011). This approach of embedding cultural heritage into branding strategies has been instrumental in establishing a distinct competitive edge for these brands, as observed by Ooi and Stober (2008). This strategy not only differentiates these brands from their global competitors but also resonates with consumers who seek authenticity and a deep connection with the cultural roots of the products they use (Siegel & Chu, 2010; Ben-Ur & Wang, 2008). It goes beyond mere aesthetic appeal, tapping into the narrative and essence of the culture, which adds depth and substance to the brand. In a world where consumers are

increasingly looking for meaning and story behind the products they purchase, such culturally enriched branding becomes a powerful tool.

Moreover, this approach has broader implications. It contributes to the preservation and international recognition of Chinese culture, showcasing its richness and diversity to a global audience. By exporting a piece of their heritage through their products, these brands play a crucial role in cultural exchange and understanding (Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). They not only represent China on the world stage but also help to redefine the perception of Chinese products from being merely value-driven to culturally rich and premium, thereby elevating China's image in the global economic and cultural landscape(Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016).

2.3.4 Chinese Cultural Elements Application in Chinese Luxury Brands

Even though the Chinese luxury customers have reputation of preferring foreign luxury brands over Chinese domestic, however based on the pervious review and past literature, the rise of Chinese domestic luxury brands is a noticeable changing (Wu, 2022). The reason behind it, might because the utilization of Chinese cultural element in these Chinese luxury brands can resonate to the target consumers, that appreciate Chinese culture (Walley & Li, 2015).

For example, Shanghai Tang applied Chinse cultural element in the perfume bottle (Fig 2-9), and ShangXia place its seal-shape symbol on its Paris stores, as well as using the various Chinese elements in its store and product design (Figure 2.10, 2.11). With the application of Chinese cultural elements in these brands visual system and design language (Figure 2.12), another phenomena is the gradually reduction in visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements used in their brand identity (Bossel, Geyskens, & Goukens, 2019, Wu,

2022). For example, Chou Tai Fook, the renowned Chinese jewellery and fashion brand based in Hong Kong (Figure 2.13), the logo was contained a Chinese cultural element. Based on the description from Chow Tai Fook website “The centre of the star shaped medallion deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and a represent hope and prosperity for the nation and its people”, however, the new logo drawing on minimal aesthetics, using rectangle shape and colour to indicate its Chinese cultural heritage. Furthermore, Shanghai Tang is taking it. Even more extreme, which almost taking out every Chinese cultural elements from their logo (Figure 2.14), but leave the Chinese character “上海滩 ” however, the logo with complex Chinese cultural element still using in its actual advertising and product page (Figure 2.15).

This observation aligns with the expanding research in the field of processing fluency. This research consistently demonstrates that stimuli processed fluently result in more favorable assessments. This has been substantiated by various studies, including those by Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman (2004), Schwarz (2004), Winkielman, Schwarz, Fazendeiro, and Reber (2003), and Zajonc (1968), the researcher will cover this part the later.



Figure 2.9: Shanghai Tang Perfume Bottle Design, Source: Shanghai Tang Website



Figure 2.10: Shangxia Paris, France, 2013



Figure 2.11: Shangxia Store Design, Source: Peak Magazine



Figure 2.12: Shangxia Furniture Design, Source: Bellavita Magazine



Figure 2.13: Chow Tai Fook Logo Evolution, (from left to right: old to new version), source: Chou Tai Fook website



Figure 2.14: Shanghai Tang Logo Evolution



Figure 2.15: The Logo with Complex Chinese Cultural Element on Social Media Page, Source: Shanghai Tang Instagram

2.4 Visual Complexity

Approximately 80% of human information and knowledge is obtained through the human visual system, underscoring the heightened significance of visual perception compared to other sensory modalities in developing the knowledge framework (Guo et al., 2018).

Palmer et al. (2013) defines aesthetics as the quality of being visually pleasing and its relationship with beauty. Berlyne's U-shape theory (1971) proposes that individuals form preferences for stimuli depending on their capacity to elicit arousal. This potential is determined by three primary factors: the physical features from the visual incentive (for instance like its strength and colour brightness), ecological properties (pertaining to the

stimulus's meaningfulness, like artwork), and collative properties (higher-order attributes like surprise and complexity). Berlyne's theory highlights the importance of complexity in predicting preferences, with people generally favoring moderate levels of it. Overly simple or excessively complex stimuli tend to be less aesthetically pleasing (Yoon & Choo, 2018). Excessively complex stimuli can overwhelm individuals with information, requiring more processing effort, while overly simple ones may be perceived as uninteresting, possibly due to increased uncertainty from insufficient information (Jang et al., 2013).

The notion of visual complexity is strongly influenced by aesthetics, caused the complexity is one of the basic elements to form an aesthetic piece, like painting, or a design. The principle of Gestalt psychology from the 20th century, it investigates the correlation among visual and physical input (stimulus), as well as the perceptual involvement (simple versus complex) as well as the cognitive processing of inputs in the human brain. Hochberg in 1957 promotes the "law of Prägnanz", is a fundamental concept in Gestalt psychology that highlights the importance of simplicity and coherence in perception, which also indicate the “principle of simplicity”. This principle has been extensively discussed and studied by several researchers such as Hochberg (1957), Boselie and Wouterlood (1989), Kanizsa (1979), and Koffka (1935). Prägnanz refers to a "favorable" form, indicating that psychological arrangement is as efficient as possible given the circumstances. Prägnanz includes various properties like regularity, simplicity, symmetry, continuity, nearness, clarity, and the amount of information, all important for perception and aesthetic pleasure (Moshagen & Thielsch, 2010; Hochberg, 1957). According to Gestalt principle, individuals tend to prefer simple and clear objects and stimuli for their ease of processing. They find such stimuli aesthetically appealing, while interpreting complex or ambiguous images in simpler forms. When processing complex stimuli, individuals perceive them holistically,

grouping different elements together, as described by Koffka (1935), who stated that "the whole" represents greater than the entirety of its parts, this is indicating the meaningful association between the whole and its constituent parts. To explain in the simple terms, when people facing the complex visual objects, for example like an advertising, people tend to perceive it as a “whole”, rather than interpreting its individual elements in it (Koffka, 1935). Visual complexity is a crucial part of both Gestalt principals of psychology, as well as in the field of aesthetics. This part is going to analyse the concept of visual complexity in the Chinese cultural element and summary the various kinds of visual complexity discovered in the dissertation.

The researchers' assessments of complexity were shaped by two main mechanisms: the sensory involvement of the visual incentives and the cognitive comprehension of the phrase 'visual complexity.' (Purchase et al., 2012) This research of consistency indicates that the latter concern may not warrant excessive attention, and further efforts should be directed toward understanding and refining the former process, which is more about the physical perceptions. Visual complexity refers to the degree of difficulty in verbally describing a visual stimulus. A study was conducted with 34 people to categorize indoor sceneries using hierarchical grouping. The findings suggested that visual complexity is a multifaceted notion including several attributes, including item quantity, clutter, level of openness, symmetry, order, and colour diversity. Pieters et al. (2010) conducted research to examining the visual complexity of advertising. They identified two separate categories, namely feature complexity and design complexity, and proposed objective measurements for each.

Prior investigation has consistently demonstrated a negative connection between the degree of visual complexity and the ease of perceiving information. Crossing different situations and ways of seeing (Palmer et al., 2013). Symmetry, for instance, has been a focal

point of investigation due to its impact on both visual complexity and the ease of stimulus processing. Scholars have posited that symmetrical visual stimuli tend to be more perceptually fluent compared to asymmetrical counterparts (Reber et al, 2004; Palmer et al., 2013; Pieters et al., 2010; Mayer & Landwehr, 2014). Mayer and Landwehr's (2014) study provides supporting evidence by illustrating that symmetrical stimuli are not only processed more effortlessly but also garner higher preferences than asymmetrical ones. In a similar vein, the study conducted by Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman (2004) investigated the influence of symmetry on the ease of understanding and found that symmetrical stimuli are inherently more effortless to perceive due to their tendency to include less information, resulting in heightened aesthetic enjoyment.

2.4.1 What is Visual Complexity

This thesis mainly about the sophisticated concept of visual complexity. Scholars have had difficulties in defining visual complexity due to its diverse character. Visual complexity, as defined by psychologists Snodgrass and Vanderwart (1980), refers to the quantity of items and the degree of detail or complexity inside a picture. Expanding on this, Heylighen (1997) concurs with Snodgrass and Vanderwart's concept to some extent, but further posits that visual complexity is correlated with the diversity of characters exhibited in the stimuli. In addition, Heylighen presents visual complexity and diversity in aspects: the initial aspect shows that complexity is directly correlated with both the number and variability in displayed components. The second dimension suggests that perceived complexity also grows with the variation of the arrangement of its elements, even when the quantity of objects remains the same. During their investigation of visual complexity. The researcher also undertook a series of experiments. Participants were first educated about the concept of visual complexity (Oliva et al., 2004). Subsequently, they classified 100 real-

world scene photographs (obtained from the internet and periodicals) into distinct 'complicated' and 'simple' categories. They then subdivided and labeled these categories into subgroups. Oliva et al. (2004) gave an analysis that found that the impression of a visual display as simple or complicated is influenced by features for instance like the number of elements, symmetrical arrangement, layout variations, diversity of colours, contrast of colours, as well as the general arrangement of the image. Moreover, Rayner (1998) also stated that the degree of visual complexity is commonly evaluated using many perceptual aspects. For example, an image that portrays a scene from the actual world generally incorporates multiple layers of diversity, such as different items and surface styles, which contribute to its overall complexity (Oliva et al., 2004). Furthermore, based on the example from how these Chinese luxury brands logo evolved, the clear indication in both reduction of number elements appeared (Quantity of the objective), as well as reduced the surface styles (Asymmetric to symmetric). This common evolution also gives the direction for how this PhD thesis manipulate the complexity of the Chinese cultural element (manipulating from two sides of complexity).

Leder and Carbon (2005) confirmed Heylighen's concept, asserting the assortment in colors as well as their differences apply a substantial impact on individuals' perception of the complexity of the visual stimulus. Put simply, a display that has a wide range of colors and minimal contrast between them is generally seen as more intricate. These criteria align with the law of Prägnanz from the Gestalt principle, which states the organization of a stimulus is influenced by the quantity of information it contains (Koffka, 1935). Under this principle, a stimulus that contains numerous complexities is classified as complex, whereas one that has fewer components is regarded as simple or "favorable". In addition, research by

Palmer et al. (2013) has shown that stimuli with fewer elements are often considered more visually pleasant than stimuli with higher complexity.

However, based on the finding from in their research, Wang et al. (2022) pointed that luxury brands, including Chinese luxury brands, frequently incorporate black and white in their visual system, such as logos and advertisements. This is because the use of black and white can enhance the perception of luxury and influence the recognition of the product category. Specifically, logos and brand identities presented in black and white are more likely to be recognized as representing hedonic brands rather than utilitarian brands. Additionally, the use of black and white is effective in communicating the luxury aspect of these brands (Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, the study limited the colour of two Chinese cultural sample in to black shape against white background (black Chinese cultural elements mocked on the white T-shirt) to maximize the effect of colour of perceived luxuriousness as well as other influences on the brands perceptions.

In contrast, a significant number of experts in the field, the definition of visual complexity to be relatively inadequate consider (Snodgrass & Vanderwart's, 1980). According to Reber et. al. (2004), They argue that the way individuals perceive visual complexity is influenced by both the quantity of elements and their symmetry and placement within the stimulus, and Mayer and Landwehr (2014) also found the same phenomenon. More precisely, stimuli that are symmetrical are typically viewed as uncomplicated because they are more easily processed. The researchers examined the impact of visual intricacy and balance on the ease of comprehension and preference for beauty by analysing abstract art images (Mayer & Landwehr, 2014). According to their research, symmetric stimuli are more easily processed and generally receive greater levels of consumer preference. Koffka (1935) asserts that symmetry aligns with the Gestalt principles of simplicity, the principle of

Prägnanz, and aesthetics, as symmetric stimuli are typically considered more visually appealing (Palmer et al., 2013).

In an effort to synthesize the various perspectives on visual complexity, researchers were given a detailed conclusion: not only were they to categorize images into 'complex' and 'simple' groups, but they were also required to further subdivide each of these groups (Oliva et al., 2004). This step involved labeling each division and subdivision, adding a layer of granularity to their categorization. The research yielded profound findings, demonstrating that the categorization of a visual presentation as either straightforward (simple) or intricate (complex) is impacted by a multitude of elements. The factors encompassed in this analysis comprise the quantity of elements present in the image, the degree of symmetry in their arrangement, the overall arrangement, the range of colours employed, the disparity between these colours, as well as the overall composition of the visual element. This comprehensive approach underscores the multifaceted nature of visual complexity, highlighting that it is not a singular attribute but rather a composite of various visual characteristics. Therefore, Oliva et al. (2004) states that visual complexity relies on various perceptual aspects. Moreover, based on the etymology of the term "complexus" from Latin, which denotes "twisted together," one can contend that a stimulus can be characterized as complex when it presents a challenge in discerning its individual pieces or in disentangling them from one another. The image or stimulus complexity is also dependent on the degree of subconscious categorization of elements that a viewer engages in, their familiarity with the environment, and their preexisting comprehension of the items portrayed.

Heaps and Hande (1999) provided an additional important interpretation of visual complexity, defining it as "the level of challenge in verbally describing an image". The participants in the study were instructed to categorize texture images according to different

perceptual criteria, including depth, direction, complexity, connectivity, and structure. The research findings propose that the degree of complexity of the background or the texture setting can also have significant impact on the degree of complexity (Heaps and Hande, 1999). Textures with disordered and uneven patterns are typically considered as complicated, while textures with repeated and evenly aligned patterns are frequently seen as simpler or less complex. Pieters et al. (2010) provide a contemporary viewpoint on visual complexity, specifically in relation to advertising. The authors suggest that visual complexity be able to separate into two distinct groups: Feature complexity refers to the degree of intricacy in an advertisement, which is determined by the number of features and the complexity of the design, which mentions to the perception of complexity resulting from the unique and creative design of commercials.

As indicated in prior studies (Rayner, 1998; Oliva et al., 2004), the notion of visual complexity incorporates various perceptual characteristics. The dimensions encompass various factors, for example like the quantity or number of objects depicted (Snodgrass and Vanderwart, 1980), the symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangement of these objects within the images (Reber et al., 2004; Oliva et al., 2004), the diverse range of objects involved (Reber et al., 2004; Heylighen, 1997), and the utilisation of colours and the distinction between them (Reber et al., 2004; Leder & Carbon, 2005). In this PhD thesis, complexity is defined in relation to the amount and level of detail of visual elements. Therefore, a complex visual stimulus can be described as an element that contains a greater amount of information and visual elements. A basic visual element has reduced complexity and abundance. This comprehension gives rise to a division that has ignited a longstanding dispute among professionals and scholars regarding the most efficient method for incorporating elements in a logo and impacting consumer buy intentions.

Based on the purpose of this thesis, the visual complexity is referring to the quantity of details with in a Chinese cultural element, as well as the regularity of element placement. Moreover, the study deliberately restricted the colour scheme of two Chinese cultural samples to black and white, aiming to neutralize the influence of colour on perceived luxuriousness and other brand perceptions (Wang et al., 2022). By limiting the visual presentation to a monochrome palette, the research sought to eliminate colour as a variable. Since a background or a setting with a lot texture can also interfere with the perception of the Chinese cultural elements (Heaps and Hande, 1999), in the study allowing for a more focused examination of how visual complexity from quantity of details and arrangement of Chinese cultural elements influencing on fluency and purchase intention of Chinese luxury brands.

2.4.2 The Impact of Visual Complexity

Base on the association of visual complexity and perceptual responses is intricately intertwined. Perceptual fluency refers to the ability to easily and accurately identify the physical characteristics of a stimuli. It represents how effortlessly individuals' development the perceptual features of the visual incentive (Oliva et al., 2004; Lee & Labroo, 2004). The perceptual dimensions that influence it arise based on perception itself (Alter and Oppenheimer, 2009).

Visual complexity, an essential factor in understanding visual stimuli (Oliva et al., 2004; Lee & Labroo, 2004; Ledder et al., 2004), differs from specific visual characteristics (Rayner, 1998; Oliva et al., 2004). These dimensions encompass various characteristics, such as the quantity of things, their symmetry and placement in the image, the diversity of elements, colour schemes, and the contrast between them. Additionally, they also take into

account the viewer's understanding with the part and their previous familiarity of the matters internally. If a product or visual stimuli has low complexity or background and the major emphasis on the object itself, the visual stimulus is termed modest and with fewer detailed. On the other hand, when an image or stimulus includes the result with additional visual aspects and details, it becomes more complicated, which makes it harder to understand and reduces perceptual fluency (Ledder et al., 2004; Maier & Dost, 2018).

Many investigations have thoroughly recognized the undesirable association of between visual complexity and perceptual fluency across many situations and visual attributes. Academics have emphasized the importance of symmetry; a perceptual aspect will impact both the level of visual intricacy and the affluence of perceptual processing. There is a debate suggesting that visual stimuli that are symmetrical are typically seen as more fluid compared to stimuli that are asymmetrical. (Ledder et al., 2004; Mayer & Landwehr, 2014). Mayer and Landwehr (2014) presented evidence supporting this concept, demonstrating that symmetrical stimuli are easily perceived and generate stronger preferences when compared to their asymmetric counterparts. Ledder et al. (2004) conducted a study to examine the impact of symmetry on fluency. Their proposition suggests that symmetrical stimuli are more easily processed due to their reduced information content, leading to enhanced fluency and heightened aesthetic pleasure. To elaborate on this study, presenting an item in an image with a background that mimics a real-life environment is unlikely to have a harmonious visual impact, resulting in a reduced ease of perception.

Furthermore, visual complexity is determined by distinctive features, for example like the quantity of details, the symmetry and arrangement of features, the diversity of elements, the coloration and contrast between colours, the familiarity with the setting and

the preexisting understanding of the objects present in the setting. The level of complexity in visual elements and the ease with which they are seen are both impacted by the contrast of colours. More precisely, reducing contrast increases the complexity of an image, whereas increasing contrast simplifies the way it is perceived. The results indicate that reducing the contrast between an object and its backdrop decreases the ease of perceiving it, while increasing contrast improves perceptual fluency. (Reber et al., 1998). The research that conducted to examine the visual complexity of the website design and user experience also evidence that lower level of visual complexity is defiantly impact on the favorable impression and judgmental behaviour (King et al., 2019). Several studies propose that any additional information incorporated into an image augments its complexity and diminishes perceptual fluency, compelling individuals to expend greater effort in processing (Heaps & Hande, 1999; Wu et al., 2016; Maier & Dost, 2018; Garner, 1974; Reber et al., 1998, 2004; Ledder et al., 2004; Larsen et al., 2004). In their investigation of complex images in sales information contexts, found that product presentations against white backgrounds with supplementary information reduce perceptual fluency (Wu et al., 2016). Conversely, the lack of contextual information during product presentations results in greater degree of fluency. Mahmood, Luffarelli, and Mukesh (2018) also found that the visual complexity of the logo will influence on the equity fund rising to the company as well. The study stated that visual cue such as the logo can impact on the investors' perception of the brand, and the complex logo, more likely to generate the disfluency in perception (Mahmood et al., 2018). For summary, complex stimuli frequently lead to decreased degree of perceptual fluency, while simple visual stimuli are related with increased degree of perceptual fluency (Ledder et al., 2004; Wu et al., 2016). Therefore, this dissertation argues that complicated visual stimuli are linked to decreased perceptual fluency. In keeping with the investigation of how visual

complexity affects the ease of understanding and the perception of consumers (Maier & Dost, 2018), their research employed two categories of images: the first is featuring the item with a simple advertising design (simple) and another displaying the a more complicated advertising design of the same product (elaborate). The results revealed that consumers detect advertising with simple design more easily. In essence, the occurrence of a higher level of visual complexity amplifies the intricacy of an image while diminishing its processing fluidity (Pieters et al., 2010; Purchase et al., 2012). The study conducted by Larsen et al. in 2004 supports this claim, as it explains that comprehending a complicated input requires a greater amount of effort to notice, understand, and process all of its individual components. It is important to acknowledge the level of visual complexity significantly influences how visual stimuli are perceived (Ledder et al., 2004). Furthermore, the study from Pieters, Wedel, and Batra in 2010 also suggest that the feature complexity (the numbers of element) hurts the processing and effectiveness of an advertising.

An alternate research approach on fluency proposes that complexity can enhance perceptual fluency in specific situations, especially when a complicated visual element showcasing a typical item is regularly presented. The study conducted by Landwehr et al. in 2013 suggests that customers develop aesthetic preferences for a standard product design, such as a car design, when they are exposed to it in a basic manner. This ultimately results in higher sales. The study further illustrates a connection between visual consistency and ease of perception in respect to unconventional product designs. Visual congruity, as previously noted, can impact fluency when a stimulus aligns with the viewers' imagination. Nonetheless, this dissertation does not canter on visual congruity.

For summary, the degree of visual complexity as well as perceptual ease is contingent upon several perceptual criteria, including symmetry, contrast, and the amount of information presented. Prior research repeatedly demonstrates that visual complexity has a tendency to diminish the ease of perception, mostly due to the heightened quantity of information that must be processed. Consequently, this necessitates a greater distribution of time and energy in the processing phase. (Ledder et al., 2004; Wu et al., 2016; Garner, 1974; Reber et al., 1998, 2004; Maier & Dost, 2018; Peracchio & Meyers-Levy, 1997). Conversely, simpler images tend to elicit heightened perceptual fluency. In keeping with previous findings, this dissertation asserts that a simple Chinse cultural elements with less quantity of elements and symmetrical arrangement is more perceptually and conceptual more fluently than a Chinese cultural element with more quantity of visual element and asymmetric arrangement.

2.4.3 Visual Complexity and Other Discipline

The field of complexity encompasses various academic fields, such as Tuch et al., in 2009 investigated the human-computer interactions, behaviour intentions, which have been the subject of research by Pelet, Durrieu, and Lick (2020), Shapiro (1999), and Yoo and Kim (2014), and aesthetic preferences as studied by Nadal et al. (2008), Reber et al. (2004), and Choi and Lee (2012). Notable researches have been carried out in the fields of marketing and advertising, such the studies undertaken by Morrison and Dianoff (1972) and Pieters et al. (2010). In their study conducted in 1972, they study the complexity of advertising as well as how customers respond to those factors. They find that advertisements with greater complexity have a tendency to engage consumers for longer durations.

The field of semiotics has extensively examined the degree of visual complexity, particularly within a realm of logos. This study shown that consumers typically perceive simple logos as more cognitively manageable compared to complicated ones (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001). Additional inquiries into visual complexity have been conducted in the field of package design, particularly through important research conducted by Orth and Malkewitz (2012). The study conducted by Orth and Crouch in 2014, the study explicitly observed the impact of visual complexity on an appeal as well as the cognitive effort required to process packaging. Their study revealed that packages placed in a low-complexity context saw a boost in processing fluency and appeal, in contrast to those in more complex surroundings.

The field of aesthetic preferences has seen extensive research on complexity, as evidenced by studies like those of Pelet, Durrieu, and Lick (2020). Based on their work, they investigated preferences for visual complexity in product presentation, particularly focusing on furniture. The researchers discovered that photographs featuring products in a contextual setting were perceived with to a lesser extent ease compared to images displaying a object alone. However, they also observed a trend where consumers showed a greater likelihood of preferring complex images over simpler ones. In a contrasting study, Pandir and Knight (2006) challenged the assumed correlation between complexity and pleasure. Their research utilized a collection of 12 website homepages, asking participants to evaluate these pages through a ranking method. Their findings revealed that complexity did not necessarily predict pleasure, irrespective of the stimulus's level of interestingness. In HCI, the work of Tuch and his college (2009) also emphasised on the intricacy of visuals and the enjoyment derived from aesthetics, utilizing 36 homepage screenshots in their study. They involved 28 participants and concluded that simpler stimuli were associated with higher levels of

pleasure, suggesting an inverse relationship between complexity and enjoyment. This perspective aligns with the findings of Reber et al. (2004) and Choi and Lee (2012), who conducted similar studies focusing on visual aesthetics in various contexts, including information design and smartphone complexity. Their key observation was a distinct preference for simplicity in aesthetic design.

The study that examines the domain of visual complexity and its impact on consumer attention (Pieters et al., 2010) also differentiated between feature complexity, which refers to the density of perceptual characteristics in an advertisement, and design complexity., which concerns the artistic elements of ad design. Using eye-tracking techniques, their research shown that although a brand's focus may be diminished by high feature complexity, customer attention to the campaign is actually enhanced by design complexity.

The relationship between the level of visual complexity and the likelihood of consumers intending to make a purchase has been a topic of considerable interest. The study specifically focused on wine label design is conduct by Pelet, Durrieu, and Lick (2020). Their research indicated that a decrease in visual complexity in label design was associated with an increase in pleasure and, thus, a higher likelihood of purchasing. Shapiro (1999) investigated the impact of intricate product photographs set against backgrounds that were contextually appropriate on purchase intentions, as contrasted to simpler photos that merely depicted the object. Lee et al. (2018) provided additional evidence to support these findings, emphasizing that the connection between visual complexity of the brand identity is influencing the luxury purchase behavioral by the processing fluency, and Pombo and Velasco (2021) found that the visual complexity is impact on perception as well, such as symmetry and the numbers of element of the a logo design will effect on the luxurious perception of the brand. Their findings indicated the importance of visual fluency needs for

additional research. The aim of this researchis to contribute to the ongoing discussion by conducting an empirical investigation into the influence from the complexity of Chinese cultural element (comparing simple versus complex Chinese cultural components) on consumer intents to make a purchase.

2.5 Fluency

Visual aesthetics, at its core, revolves around how individuals perceive and interpret visual stimuli. This world is intricately connected to an individual's cognitive and sensory processing of visual information, a concept emphasized by Palmer et al. (2013). This entails exploring the intricate network of cognitive and metacognitive processes and experiences that occur when individuals interact with visual material, as explained by Zhao and Meyer (2007). An essential element in this field is the processing fluency theory, which centres on the ease or difficulty of individuals in processing visual information, a concept further investigated by Schwartz (2004).

This section of the chapter is dedicated to a comprehensive exploration of the concept of fluency. It starts by examining the essence of fluency, revealing its deep connections to the cognitive mechanisms responsible for processing information. The narrative then shifts to an extensive survey of research on fluency, uncovering its multiple facets and far-reaching implications. This includes a discussion on how fluency affects emotional responses, decision-making, and the overall aesthetic appeal. Additionally, the impact of fluency on memory retention and recall, and its interplay with factors such as familiarity and novelty, are also explored. By dissecting fluency from various angles, this section aims to provide researchers with a detailed understanding of how fluency shapes human perception and enriches aesthetic experiences. This deep dive into fluency not only highlights its role in

visual aesthetics but also underscores its significance in the broader context of cognitive psychology and design principles.

2.5.1 Processing fluency

Bornstein and D'Agostino (1990, 1992) posited an intriguing hypothesis regarding the mere exposure effect. They suggested that this phenomenon unfolds through the intricate interplay of two distinct processes. Initially, as individuals are repeatedly exposed to a stimulus, their perceptual fluency with that stimulus increases. This heightened fluency results in the stimulus being processed more effortlessly. Subsequently, individuals attribute their enhanced perceptual fluency to their growing affinity for the stimulus. This attribution process is guided by subtle contextual cues artfully provided by the experimenter.

Processing fluency, an integral aspect of human cognitive processing, operates at the edges of conscious awareness and has the potential to significantly impact people's judgments and evaluations, whether overtly or covertly (Reber et al., 2004, p. 48). The examination of stimulus processing goes beyond its specific content and includes many factors such as the velocity and precision of this processing (as explored in Reber et al., 2004). The researcher also states that processing fluency is a widespread phenomenon that can be noticed in various stimuli, spanning from easily processed (fluent) to challenging to process (disfluent) (Schwarz, 2004). This metacognitive cue frequently accompanies cognitive processes, often without conscious awareness. For instance, Reber et al. (1998) conducted a study on the ease of processing information, showed that people found circles that were easy to understand and stood out against backgrounds with strong contrasts more visually appealing than circles that were identical but displayed against backgrounds with less contrast.

Processing fluency pertains to the effortless ability of consumers to identify and/or recognize a certain stimulus (Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Cornelis et al., 2014; Jacoby & Dallas, 1981; Northey & Chan, 2020; Schwarz, 2004; Stocchi et al., 2016). When something is more easily understood, it generates a positive emotional response that unconsciously influences the target, making it more attractive (Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Northey et al, 2020; Reber et al., 1998; Septianto et al., 2020a, 2020b). Marketers have several methods to improve processing fluency, which in turn increases liking. There are two primary approaches: perceptual and conceptual fluency (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001). To improve perceptual fluency, one can alter the architecture of the stimulus to decrease its complexity (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). An example of this phenomenon occurs when consumers are consistently exposed to a package design, leading to a positive influence on their choice for the products (Septianto et al., 2020a, 2020b).

Processing fluency is a common occurrence that can be observed across many stimuli, spanning from effortlessly comprehensible (coherent) to challenging to comprehend (incoherent). Schwarz (2004) discovered that this metacognitive cue frequently accompanies cognitive processes, often occurring without conscious awareness. For example, a significant study on the ease of processing conducted by Reber et al. (1998) found that people found circles that were easy to process, meaning they were presented against backgrounds with high contrast, more visually appealing compared to circles displayed against backgrounds with less contrast.

Processing fluency is also another aspect of the rational thinking and objective way to analysis the beauty and aesthetic (Rolf Reber, 2006). The objectivist perspective on beauty, rooted in the identification of critical contributors to aesthetic appeal, has served as a foundational concept in psychology. These contributors include balance and proportion (as

discussed by Arnheim, 1974; Birkhoff, 1933), symmetry (as elaborated by Arnheim, 1974; Birkhoff, 1933), informational content and complexity (as explored by Berlyne, 1971, 1974; Eysenck, 1941; Garner, 1974), as well as contrast and clarity (as noted in the works of Gombrich, 1984, 1995; St. Thomas of Aquinas, as elucidated by Maritain, 1966; Solso, 1997). The objectivist viewpoint on beauty had such a significant impact that in the 16th century, painters began publishing pattern books that included pictorial elements. These elements could be copied and combined by artists to produce visually appealing compositions (as detailed by Gombrich, 1995).

Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that individuals leverage the concept of fluency when making a wide array of judgments that extend beyond aesthetic considerations. These judgments encompass aspects such as loudness (Jacoby et al., 1988), clarity (Whittlesea et al., 1990), duration (Witherspoon & Allen, 1985), familiarity (Whittlesea, 1993), and even assessments of truth (Begg et al., 1992; R. Reber & Schwarz, 1999). This research adopts a rational and scientifically grounded approach to elucidate the manner in which consumers comprehend Chinese cultural elements and how their aesthetic attributes are internally processed. The processing fluency theory is particularly relevant in this context as it effectively bridges the visual aspects with information processing (Rolf Reber, 2006). Consequently, it provides a sound theoretical framework for understanding the cognitive processes underlying visual perception and comprehension.

2.5.2 Pervious research on fluency

Fluency has been a subject of extensive exploration across various domains (Winkielman et al., 2003; Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). One noteworthy aspect pertains to its influence on truth judgments (McGlone & Tofighbakhsh, 2000; Reber & Schwarz, 1999). When individuals find themselves in situations where they lack substantive knowledge on a

given subject, they often turn to the level of fluency they experience as a basis for rendering judgments about the truthfulness of statements. This is grounded in the intuitive connection that people tend to forge between fluency and truth, wherein fluency signifies veracity and disfluency signals falsehoods (Schwarz, 2004). As a compelling illustration of this, Reber and Schwarz (1999) conducted research that analyzed the influence of fluency on the assessment of truth by varying the contrast in colour between the text and backdrop of assertions. The finding illuminated those statements presented on a white background, enhancing ease of readability, were consistently perceived as truer. Moreover, Alter and Oppenheimer (2009) have underscored that stimuli processed fluently tend to be endorsed as true, irrespective of whether the facilitation arises from how easy to process visually (Reber & Schwarz, 1999), rhyming (McGlone & Tofighbakhsh, 2000), or semantic priming (Kelley & Lindsay, 1993). In contrast, stimuli that entail disfluency are more prone to being categorized as false.

Researchers have also directed their inquiries towards the ramifications of fluency on affective judgments. For instance, Reber et al. (1998) embarked on a study investigating the intricate relationship between visual information processing, often referred to as perceptual fluency, and preference. Their methodological repertoire encompassed experiments that manipulated fluency via visual priming, contrast modulations, and alterations in presentation duration. Across these experiments, the overarching finding was that visual priming and higher contrast levels substantially heightened perceptual fluency, a boost that, in turn, led to more favorable affective judgments. Furthermore, the lengthier exposure participants had to a stimulus, the more straightforwardly it was processed, thereby triggering an upswing in positive affective evaluations. In a similar vein, Winkielman and Cacioppo (2001) pursued research in this domain by inviting participants to scrutinize line

drawings of commonplace objects that were presented alongside contour primes in either congruent or incongruent pairings (experiment 1). This study's outcomes were primarily gauged by observing participants' facial expressions, where activations of "smiling muscles" were indicative of positive reactions, while "frowning muscles" activations signaled negativity. The results from this study indicated that stimuli perceived with fluency elicited positive affective responses, highlighting a proclivity among individuals for visual stimuli that are readily comprehensible (Reber et al., 1998; Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001).

It is indisputable that fluency is an element continually monitored through metacognitive processes, holding sway over numerous facets of human judgment (Schwartz, 2010). The impact of fluency extends to determining preferences for items considered more likeable (Reber et al., 1998; Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1992; Zajonic, 1968), for those deemed more frequent (Reber et al., 1998; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Schwarz et al., 1991), for items with greater fame (Jacoby, 1989), or for those possessing superior category membership (Whittlesea & Leboe, 2000). Additionally, fluency can sway the choices individuals make. An illustrative case in point stems from Alter and Oppenheimer's (2006) study on stock company names. It emerged that companies with names characterized by ease of pronunciation tended to enjoy more favorable success compared to those with more challenging names. Furthermore, stocks with names associated with higher fluency were often perceived as having greater intrinsic value, thereby influencing individuals' decisions regarding their purchase. Intriguingly, the influence of fluency isn't confined to just everyday contexts; it transcends into fields as diverse as medicine and law (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). In the realm of medicine, doctors may unwittingly lean towards diagnoses that are more fluent when faced with particularly complex cases. In a similar vein, Pennington and Hastie (1992) contended that in certain scenarios, courts or decision-makers may be inclined

to favor the narrative that flows more smoothly, irrespective of the strength of the underlying legal argument.

While a substantial body of research consistently corroborates the premise that fluently processed stimuli tend to yield more positive judgments, and conversely, disfluently processed stimuli yield more negative judgments (Reber et al., 2004; Schwartz et al., 1992; Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Winkielman et al., 2003; Schwarz, 2004), there are certain perplexing inconsistencies that arise in the literature on fluency. Some research suggest that disfluency can decrease individuals' assurance in their ability. (Kelley & Lindsay, 1993; Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Koriat, 1993), while others present arguments supporting the idea that disfluency actually bolsters confidence (Watkins, 1988). Furthermore, there are disparities in the literature concerning whether fluent or disfluent stimuli are perceived as more familiar (Monin, 2003), with contrasting studies indicating that disfluent stimuli garner higher ratings of familiarity (Guttentag & Dunn, 2003).

In sum, fluency casts a wide-reaching influence across various dimensions of human life and academic disciplines, rendering it a formidable force that often eludes preventive measures when it comes to shaping judgments and decision-making processes. This doctoral thesis is firmly rooted in the exploration of how individuals process visual stimuli, more precisely, this analysis focuses on the fluency of perception and understanding, including the interplay between complex and simple visuals as well as congruent and incongruent images. The ensuing section will take a more comprehensive look at these dimensions of fluency.

2.5.3 Processing fluency theory

Processing fluency relates to the degree of ease to process certain information. Cognitive fluency refers to the subjective perception of how easily information is processed. A topic that has been extensively studied in research (Reber et al., 2004). The analysis of every stimulus can be defined by several factors that are not specific to its content, such as the velocity, as well as precision of visual element analysis (Reber et al., 2004). These criteria typically result in a shared perception of ease in processing or "fluency" (Clore, 1992; Jacoby, Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991; Kelley, & Dywan, 1989; Whittlesea et al., 1990). Based on the standpoint from marketing, it is essential to comprehend the correlation within the stimulus attributes, repetition, processing fluency, and judgement in order to create impactful banner ads, logos, and other marketing communications that involve repeated exposure. By considering the interplay of these factors, marketers can enhance consumers' experiences and perceptions, ultimately leading to more impactful marketing strategies. The model's fundamental premise posits that with repeated exposure to a stimulus, the stimulus becomes ingrained in memory. The memory representation, which is created via previous experiences, has a vital function in aiding the encoding and processing of the visual stimulus when it is encountered again. As a consequence, the experience of processing becomes more fluent and efficient (Jacoby et al., 1989; Mandler et al., 1987). In other words, the more familiar that subjects are with a particular stimulus, the easier it becomes for our cognitive processes to handle and make sense of it. The previous studies also suggest that the processing fluency are greatly impact on peoples' judgements and action, such as such as trust, preference, acceptability and purchase intention on certain products and brands. When looking at marketing, it is crucial to take into account how stimulus features, repetition, processing fluency, and judgement all interact with one other.

This is more important than just concentrating on processing fluency and judgement alone. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of this correlation can offer significant perspectives for developing impactful banner advertising, logos, and other marketing messages that require high levels of exposure.

Fluency, as a cognitive phenomenon, is the result of various processes and manipulations taking place at different levels. (Winkielman et al., 2003). These processes encompass various aspects of stimulus perception and information processing, contributing to the subjective experience of ease or difficulty in cognitive tasks. Processing fluency can be observed in various ways, including perceptual fluency, which relates to the perceived ease of processing sensory input, and retrieval fluency, which relates to the subjective ease of recalling information from memory. It is a vital factor that influences how individuals perceive and interact with information or stimuli. When information is processed fluently, people tend to feel more comfortable, confident, and positively inclined toward the stimuli, leading to various cognitive and behavioral effects. Individuals experience fluent processing while performing a task, they tend to evaluate their performance more positively. This positive self-assessment can significantly influence their expectations regarding the task's outcome. Consequently, individuals are more likely to choose and persist in tasks that they believe they can perform well, contributing to enhanced motivation and engagement (Reber et al., 2006). In their research on perceptual tasks, Reber et al. (2004) Research has shown that the personal perception of how easily information is processed is affected by the actual speed at various stages of the job. The perceived cognitive effort during a task is influenced by several elements, such as the quantity of information recalled from memory, measured in terms of the number of letters in a sense of knowing task (Koriat, 1993) or the number of retrieved objects (Williams & Durso, 1986). Additional aspects that contribute to the ease of

subjective processing include the efficiency of performance over a given period of time (Morris, 1990) and the level of difficulty of the activity itself. (see Schwarz, 1998).

Subjective fluency, defined also by Reber et al. (2004), the term "subjective fluency" refers to the conscious experience of how easily or difficultly information is processed, the level of cognitive effort exerted, and the perceived speed of processing. When individuals perceive high subjective fluency, they experience a sense of ease during ongoing processing, with a reduced feeling of cognitive effort, and a perception of faster processing. The perception of fluency has a substantial impact on individuals' attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes, making it a crucial component to take into account in diverse domains like as marketing, psychology, and cognitive science. On the contrary, the term "objective fluency" pertains to the dimension of mental processes that encompasses speed, resource demands, and accuracy. When objective fluency is high, it indicates that the mental processes are efficient, with fast speed, low resource requirements, and high accuracy, among other indicators. Unlike subjective fluency, objective fluency focuses on the measurable and observable aspects of cognitive processing, without necessarily considering the conscious experience or subjective feelings of ease or difficulty. Objective fluency provides valuable insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of mental operations, which can have implications in various research fields, such as cognitive psychology, marketing, branding and advertising.

Perceptual fluency is about the difficulty of the basic visual processes related to the properties of a stimuli take place. Reber et al. (2002) stated the mechanisms encompass repetition, perceptual priming, clarity, the duration of presentation, and figure-to-ground contrast. Conceptual fluency pertains to the effortless occurrence of complex cognitive processes that involve the interpretation of a stimulus and its connection to other systems of

semantic information. Variables such as semantic priming or semantic predictability have an impact on conceptual fluency (Whittlesea, 1993; Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991;). Regardless of the variations in cognitive processing, different interventions can result in a comparable sense of overall "fluency" seen by individuals (Winkielman et al., 2003). Gaining knowledge of both perceptual and conceptual fluency, as well as its underlying determinants, can yield significant insights into how individuals perceive and react to various stimuli. This knowledge is crucial for designing impactful marketing materials and communication methods.

2.5.4 Perceptual Fluency

Perceptual fluency is referring to the level of ease in which perceptual features are processed (Lee & Labroo, 2004). The thesis focuses on visual perception, which is the cognitive process of absorbing and interpreting sensory data, founded in perception (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Visual perception entails the cognitive processing of visual information received through the eyes, which is then analyzed and interpreted by the brain using existing knowledge and previous experiences to comprehend and respond to stimuli. When we perceive something, we tend to associate it with familiar items or past experiences, which helps us in the process of perception. This study focuses on examining the cognitive processes associated with perceiving and evaluating both complicated and basic visual inputs, with a specific emphasis on perceptual fluency. Furthermore, perceptual fluency is a measure of how easily low-level, data-driven procedures, which mostly focus on the surface characteristics of stimuli, are performed (Winkielman et al., 2003; Brakus et al., 2014; Anand & Sternthal, 1991). Perceptual fluency can be affected by various elements, including repetition, form priming, contrast, and length of timing, which can ultimately impact the speed and how accurate and fast of an individual to identify the certain visual object.

Reber and his fellow researchers (2002) made significant contributions to studying processing fluency, and numerous articles guided how perceptual fluency impacts aesthetic perception. Based on their research from 2002, perceptual fluency pertains to the ease with which low-level processes related to stimulus form are carried out. These processes encompass elements such as repetition, perceptual priming, clarity, duration of display, and contrast between figure and ground (Reber et al., 2002). The perception and processing of visual aspects of stimuli affect the subjective sense of perceptual fluency. Perceptual fluency refers to the capacity to recognise alterations in surface attributes, such as changes in sensory mode and modifications in the way information is presented. Conversely, conceptual fluency remains resilient in the face of such variations.

Reber et al. (1998) found that enhancing perceptual fluency, for instance, by improving visual clarity, leads to stimuli being regarded as more pleasing in aesthetic perceptive. Furthermore, Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman (2004) emphasize the pleasurable experiences not only improve perceptual fluency, as well as also influences the visual assessment of a stimuli. Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman (2004) also shown that manipulating perceptual fluency, such as enhancing figure-ground contrast to improve visual clarity, repeating stimuli, creating symmetry, and using archetypal elements, has a beneficial impact on aesthetic judgements. The results highlight the importance of perceptual fluency in assessing stimuli and its influence on aesthetic preferences and judgements. For instance, Wadhwa and Zhang (2014) showed that using rounded pricing values creates a sensation of "feeling right," leading to favourable emotions based on how easily the information is processed. Lee et al. (2002) and Shapiro (1999) found that consumer perceptions are shaped by bottom-up processes, particularly the visual trigger's components of perceptual fluency.

Hagtvedt and Patrick (2008) found that including visual art on product packaging had a positive impact by conveying the idea of luxury from the artwork to the actual goods.

Empirical observations underscore the significance of perceptual attributes, such as colour and brand logos, in shaping the alignment between corporations and philanthropic causes. This alignment, often referred to as "firm-cause fit," has garnered notable attention in contemporary marketing related campaigns. A notable exemplar of this phenomenon unfolded in 2006 when the venerable Campbell's Soup Company embarked on a novel endeavor. In a bid to raise awareness for breast cancer during the corresponding awareness month, Campbell's Soup Company strategically reimagined its iconic red-and-white soup cans, adorning them with a fetching pink and white label. The outcome of this nuanced alteration was nothing short of remarkable. Sales figures for the company's flagship soup flavors, hitherto steady at 3.5 million units, surged exponentially to an astonishing 7.0 million units (Thompson, 2006). This compelling illustration illuminates the pivotal role that perceptual facets, like the visual aesthetics of a brand logo, can play in enhancing the resonance between a corporation and a cause. Such instances underscore the intricate interplay between sensory cues, consumer perceptions, and social responsibility endeavors, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics within the realm of contemporary marketing strategies.

In addition, the researcher also emphasized that perceptual fluency not only has a pleasurable meaning but also plays a part in the aesthetic enjoyment of perceptual trigger (Reber et al., 2004). Perceptual fluency therapies involve enhancing visual clarity by utilising techniques such as figure-ground contrast, stimulus repetition, symmetry, and prototypicality, have been demonstrated to positively influence aesthetic judgements.

According to Lee and Labroo (2004), the term "perceptual fluency" refers to the ease with which one can process the individual perceptual features of a stimulus. It arises from the wider phenomenon of perception, as described by Alter and Oppenheimer (2009), the cognitive ability to acquire, interpret, and comprehend sensory information, such as visual, auditory, haptic (touch), olfactory, or taste-related inputs, is included in this category. The researcher is going to specifically examines visual stimuli, with a particular emphasis on visual perception in this PhD thesis. The visual perception means to the capacity to perceive and understand visual stimulus. This understanding involves an assessment of sensory input against stored knowledge or past experiences, enabling individuals to engage in perceptual processing (Brown et al., 2007).

Researchers have investigated many visual manipulations to research on the aspects affect perceptual fluency, such as altering fonts (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Novemsky et al., 2007; Winkielman et al., 2003; Brakus et al., 2014; Simmons & Nelson, 2006; Reber & Schwarz, 1999). The researcher examined the influence of perceptual fluency on product evaluations by displaying product options in either legible or illegible typefaces (Novemsky et al., 2007). Within the context of product evaluations, their research highlights the positive impact that perceptual fluency can have on the certain products, demonstrating that consumers are capable to process the information on product more readily when it is appeared in a readable typeface, leading in a decrease in decision postponement.

Other characteristics affect perceptual fluency such as Reber et al. 1998 found that priming, figure-ground contrast, and time of exposure will also effect on perceptual fluency. They also discovered that when item is shown alongside visual primes that match them, they are often more favoured compared to when they are shown with primes that do not match, even when the object is neutral (Rebel et al., 1998). Furthermore, the duration of exposure

also plays a role in enhancing perceptual fluency, positively impacting product evaluation. Extending the duration of stimulus presentation results in a more positive evaluation, primarily due to improved perceptual fluency. In summary, easily processed stimuli tend to garner more favorable evaluations, underscoring the role of perceptual fluency in affective judgments (Rebel et al., 1998; Gomez & Werle, 2019).

Prior studies in the field of fluency have predominantly concentrated on particular perceptual aspects, for example like symmetry (Reber et al., 1998; Reber et al., 2004; Mayer & Landwehr, 2014; Gomez & Werle, 2019), the contrast in color (Reber et al., 1998; Mosteller et al., 2014), prior exposure, as well as priming (Rebel et al., 1998; Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004; Gomez & Werle, 2019). The existing body of research on fluency has not adequately studied the concept of visual complexity in connection to the visual complexity of logo design, especially about the Chinese cultural elements. This is despite the fact that it is generally accepted that a simple Chinese cultural element is normally easier to perceive in comparison to a complicated one. Complex Chinese cultural elements, particularly those featuring with more details and irregular arrangement, have been understudied in relation to perceptual fluency. As a result, the purpose of this PhD thesis is to investigate the impact of visual complexity in order to bring about a reduction in this difference, specifically in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of a visual complexity of the Chinese cultural elements, on perceived ease. Additionally, this research explores the correlation between prior exposure and perceptual fluency, shedding light on this unexplored relationship.

Pervious researches have examined the impact of perceptual fluency on individuals' intentions to make a purchase (Bigoin-Gagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018; Im et al., 2010; Im & Ha, 2011; Gomez & Werle, 2019). These researchers also found that there is a direct

correlation between how easily information is perceived and the likelihood of making a purchase, especially when it comes to nutrition information. The study illustrates that during product labels are readily comprehensible and visually smooth, consumers' inclination to buy both nutritious and unhealthy products escalates. Furthermore, some participants with limited nutrition knowledge attributed their purchase intentions significantly to the ease of perceptual processing (Gomez & Werle, 2019). However, the existing body of research presents findings that are contradictory with regard to the direct and indirect connection between perceptual fluency and the desire to make a purchase. As a result, the fundamental purpose of this doctoral thesis is to improve the understanding of the association between perceptual fluency and the intents of consumers to make purchases. Within the scope of this study, an investigation into the connection between perceptual fluency and purchase intentions was executed, as examined by Bigoin-Gagnan and Lacoste-Badie (2018), Im, Lennon, and Stoel (2010), Im and Ha (2011), and Gomez and Werle (2019). Gomez and Werle (2019) propose a favourable correlation within the domain of nutritional data. The researchers discovered that when labels are simply comprehended and visually smooth, consumers' inclination to buy both nutritious and harmful products intensifies. Surprisingly, even individuals with poor understanding of nutrition were affected by how easily they could digest information through their senses while deciding whether or not to buy something.

On the other hand, there is a study that suggests that the influence of perceptual fluency on the desire to make a purchase is influenced by emotional experiences, for example like sensations of delight (Im & Ha, 2011) and pleasure (Im & Ha, 2011; Gomez & Werle, 2019; Bigoin-Gagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018). The outcomes of the research are contradictory and ambiguous with regard to the connection between perceptual fluency and the intentions of customers to make purchases. The purpose of the researchis to investigate

the correlation between perceptual fluency of Chinese cultural elements in logo mark and consumer purchase intentions in order to achieve the goal of enhancing the comprehension of the subject matter, especially in the context of Chinese luxury brands.

2.5.5 Conceptual fluency

Nevertheless, beyond perceptual fluency exclusively, the scope of processing fluency is conceptual fluency. Tversky and Kahneman (1973, p. 208) propose that individuals frequently form judgements based on the cognitive accessibility of instances or associations. A stimulus that is easily recalled is considered conceptually fluent. This notion aligns with the broader concept of cognitive fluency proposed by Alter and Oppenheimer (2006), which encompasses the ease of mental processing, including the retrieval of information and the formation of associations. Furthermore, it resonates with the work of Schwarz (2004), the individual emphasizes that having a high level of fluency is linked to making progress in accurately recognizing the stimuli and having the necessary knowledge structures to understand it, as the result, it contributes to happy emotions. Conceptual fluency is the measure of how easily a person can understand and comprehend the semantic meaning and content about a visual element (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Based on higher-level cognitive processes, it pertains with an individual's preexisting reservoir of knowledge (Lewis & Smith, 1993). The process of making a decision, analytical reasoning, analysis, logical deduction, and other intellectual approaches that are essential for addressing difficult topics and situations are all included in these cognitive processes (Lewis & Smith, 1993). Additionally, it includes the comprehension of the stimulus's implications. Such advanced cognitive operations, similar to basic cognitive tasks, depend on the functional capacity of working memory (Conway et al., 2007; Unsworth & Engle, 2007). The pervious scholar defined that working memory is a system with a limited capacity that is responsible for

actively maintaining, manipulating, and retrieving important information for ongoing cognitive activities (Unsworth et al., 2009), This kind of memory is characterized by its proactive and conscious nature, since it constantly processes incoming material. Its limited nature implies that unconsolidated information in working memory is eventually lost. It has a crucial function in temporarily storing and modifying cognitive images that are essential for carrying out tasks (Baddeley & Hitch, 1974). Both higher-order and lower-order cognitive processes are dependent on the resources that are available in working memory in order to function and function well, a concept supported by studies from Conway, Jarrold, Kane, Miyake, and Towse in 2007, as well as Unsworth and Engle in 2007. The definition of working memory, as succinctly described by Unsworth et al. in 2009, refers to it as a system of limited capacity that is crucial for the active upkeep, manipulation, and retrieval of information pertinent to current cognitive tasks. This sort of memory is characterized by its active and deliberate involvement in the processing of incoming information. Known commonly as short-term memory, working memory has a notably limited scope. Without adequate rehearsal, new information is at risk of rapidly dissipating from memory. The fundamental role of working memory is to temporarily hold and process mental representations, which are vital for the successful completion of cognitive tasks. This critical aspect of working memory was thoroughly explored and explained in the seminal work of Baddeley and Hitch in 1974. Their research highlights how working memory not only stores but also actively works on these mental representations, facilitating various cognitive functions necessary for task performance.

Lee and Labroo (2004) examined the conceptual fluency of visual elements by excluding the perceptual fluency. The finding from the studies suggests that conceptual fluency have the positive impact on the affective action. The conceptual fluency often used

to assess the semantic meaning behind those elements. Whittlesea (1993, Experiment 5) investigates the impact of conceptual fluency on various types of judgments, spanning assessments such as the duration of preceding events and the perception of events' recency. This study involved research participants exposed to a sequence of sentences displayed on a computer screen, with the words within each sentence appearing in rapid succession. These findings align with a body of research in the field (e.g., Alter & Oppenheimer, 2006; Winkielman et al., 2003), which collectively illustrates the intricate interplay between conceptual fluency and human judgment across diverse contexts and cognitive domains.

In Whittlesea's study (1993), sentences were meticulously designed to manipulate the contextual predictiveness of the final word. Some sentences concluded with a neutral context, while others provided a semantically predictive context. Participants were then tasked with evaluating the pleasantness of the final word in each sentence using a rating scale. The outcomes revealed a significant influence of contextual predictiveness, with participants consistently assigning higher pleasantness ratings to target words embedded within predictive contexts compared to those within neutral contexts. These findings echo the broader body of literature exploring the intricate relationship between context, cognitive fluency, and affective responses (e.g., Hassin et al., 2005; Topolinski & Strack, 2009). When individuals are confronted with a complex image laden with an abundance of information, it often gives rise to a multitude of potential interpretations, each laden with distinct messages and meanings (Gay, 1986). Consequently, navigating this intricate web of possibilities can pose a challenge when attempting to pinpoint the "correct" interpretation. Within this context, processing fluency emerges as a crucial indicator of error-free stimulus processing (Orth & Wiztz, 2014). In the face of complex visuals, perceptual fluency is compromised, potentially impeding the swift and accurate decoding of the intended message. This insight

underscores the intricate relationship between processing fluency and the interpretation of complex visual stimuli, shedding light on how the interaction of these aspects can influence our perception and apprehend the meaning of a visual content.

The modulation of conceptual fluency is influenced by several factors, including the repetition of a particular stimulus and its semantic predictability (Kelley & Jacoby, 1998; McGlone & Tofighbakhsh, 2000; Roediger, 1990; Gay, 1986; Whittlesea, 1993). Another study researched how conceptual fluency impacts product evaluations, finding that stimuli displayed in predictable settings (such as a beer bottle in a bar) or those preceded by related elements (like a ketchup image before a mayonnaise ad) tend to receive more favorable evaluations (Lee & Labroo, 2004). Similarly, Whittlesea (1993) A study was undertaken to demonstrate that words that followed statements that created expectations were frequently perceived with "pleasantness," conversely, terms that came after sentences with neutral meaning were interpreted as "neutral." This underscores the significance of power of semantic and context in determining conceptual fluency, which subsequently impacts favourable judgements.

Studies have demonstrated that when information is processed smoothly, it can positively influence consumer intentions to act (Im & Ha, 2011; Im et al., 2010; Gomez and Werle, 2019; Wu et al., 2016; Bigoin-Gagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018; Song and Schwarz, 2008). A study was carried out to investigate the influence that processing fluency has on the purchase intentions of consumers in advertising. Their findings indicate that advertisements that are processed easily result in more favourable customer attitudes and increased intentions to make a purchase (Storme et al., 2015). In their study, Coulter and Roggeveen (2014) found that when information was processed easily, it resulted in higher levels of preference and a greater likelihood of purchase. This researchaims to investigate

the precise impact of conceptual fluency on purchasing intentions, focusing on an area that has not been adequately covered in existing academic research. The varied perspectives from prior research, together with the primary emphasis on overall processing fluency, highlight the necessity for this doctoral thesis to examine the interaction between visual complexity and both forms of fluency. The objective of the study is to contrast simple (Chinese cultural elements with minimal complexity) and complex (Chinese cultural elements with more complexity and irregular arrangement) pictures in terms of their perceptual and conceptual fluency.

2.5.6 Visual Complexity and Fluency

As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to the processing fluency hypothesis. When it comes to fluency, there are two components that can be distinguished: perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. Perceptual fluency is the ability to quickly and accurately recognize the physical qualities of a stimuli. Based on Lee and Labroo (2004) the ease with which individuals can process the perceptual components of a stimuli is what it measures. This phenomenon originates from perception, which is influenced by a variety of distinct perceptual elements. Perception is the source of this phenomenon. (Lee & Labroo, 2004). Perceptual fluency is negatively impacted by visual complexity, as has been established on multiple occasions by previous studies. This is primarily due to the fact that complex pictures contain a greater amount of information, which necessitates a greater amount of time and mental effort to process. (Maier & Dost, 2018). Furthermore, there is a correlation between uncomplicated and direct visuals and increased degree of perceptual fluency. In particular, when individuals encounter a complex image brimming with an abundance of information, it often leads to a myriad of potential interpretations and meanings (Gay, 1986). Consist with the pervious researches and findings, this PhD thesis

also assume that the Chinese cultural element with less detail and more regular arrangement, will result better in perceptual fluency, on the contrary, the complex Chinese elements with more detail involve will do the opposite effect.

Hypothesis H1a: The increased perceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on perceptual fluency.

Furthermore, for conceptual fluency, discerning the "correct" interpretation can become a challenging endeavor. The ease with which individuals comprehend and convey the meaning of a stimulus is what is meant by the term "conceptual fluency." The Chinese cultural element that carries with different level of details, and arrangement will surely one of the aspects that can have an effect on the amount of conceptual fluency that a person possesses. The recognition of error-free processing of a signal relies on the concept of processing fluency. (Maier & Dost, 2018). Furthermore, this claim is backed by the biased competition hypothesis of attention, as found by Desimone and Duncan (1995). According to this theory, an individual's visual system operates within constraints of limited processing capacity. In line with this perspective, individuals are unable to simultaneously attend to and process every element presented to them in their visual field. Consist with the pervious researches and findings, this PhD thesis also assume that the Chinese cultural element with less detail and more regular arrangement, will result better in conceptual fluency, on the contrary, the complex Chinese elements with more detail involve will do the opposite effect.

Hypothesis H1b: The increased conceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on conceptual fluency.

2.6 Prior Exposure Effect

Studies utilizing various stimuli such as Chinese elements and ideographs, Turkish words, drawings, human faces, three-dimensional objects that are all possible and impossible, and melodies, along with a range of procedures including liking ratings, pleasantness ratings, behavioral measures of stimulus preference (Harrison, 1977). The researchers consistently demonstrated that individuals often exhibit a faster processing speed for stimuli they have previously encountered, as opposed to new stimuli (Bornstein, 1989). Based on the processing fluency theory, that when the subjects expose to a stimulus prior, can increase the processing speed and fluency, make the stimulus easier to perceive and understand (Bornstein & D'Agostino 1992, 1994). These factors primarily influence our responses by altering the speed and accuracy with which the individual can identify the stimulus. When our brains process something fluently, we are quicker and more accurate in recognizing it, which can have significant implications in various cognitive tasks and decision-making processes. Various factors affect perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. For instance, simply seeing something more than once (repetition) can make us process it more rapidly. Similarly, if we have recently encountered something similar (form priming), it becomes easier for us to identify it. Other factors like contrast (how distinct the stimulus is from its background) and duration (how long we see it) also play a role in determining the ease of recognition (Jacoby, 1983; Roediger, 1990; Tulving & Schachter, 1990).

One part of the factors that affect how subjects perceive and process information is the prior exposure to visual elements. In the realm of prior exposure research, it is evident that recent exposures to a target heighten its accessibility in memory. Several researchers suggested that enhanced processing fluency due to a previous encounter (Bornstein & DAgostino, 1994; Jacoby et al., 1989; Seamon et al., 1983a, Seamon et al., 1983b; Whittlesea, 1993; Whittlesea & Price, 2001). Consequently, this increased accessibility facilitates the ease with which consumers can identify and recognize the target, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "processing fluency" (Jacoby & Dallas, 1981). The prior exposure effect is a psychological phenomenon where individuals tend to develop more favourable attitudes toward a stimulus after repeated exposures, even when these exposures are subliminal or not consciously recognized (Zajonc, 1968). This effect has been observed across various stimuli, including images, words, and sounds. People rate stimuli they have seen multiple times as likable and pleasant than unfamiliar stimuli.

In the context of consumer behaviour, research has shown that this effect extends to products and brands. Exposure to a brand's logo, name, or related imagery, even if brief and incidental, can lead to more positive evaluations of the product (Janiszewski, 1993). The explanation for the prior exposure effect lies in processing fluency. According to the processing fluency model, when people encounter a stimulus, they have been exposed to before, they process it more easily. This ease of processing contributes to a sense of familiarity and comfort. It is as if the brain says, "I have seen this before; it is safe and known," which, in turn, leads to more favorable evaluations (Seamon et al., 1995).

Various studies have supported this model and have significant advertising and marketing implications. Marketers use this phenomenon to their advantage by strategically placing brand logos or messages in contexts where they will be incidentally exposed to the

target audience. Over time, this exposure can lead to more favorable brand perceptions and influence purchase decisions.

Nevertheless, the theory of processing fluency, which suggests that information is effortlessly processed when presented perceptually transparently, has yet to be thoroughly investigated within Chinese cultural elements. Substantial evidence has demonstrated that individuals tend to develop a favorable attitude toward an object after being exposed to it repeatedly, even when they are unaware of such exposure (Zajonc, 1968). This phenomenon, known as the prior exposure effect, has been consistently observed across various contexts (Bornstein, 1989).

Zajonc (1968) introduced the term "prior exposure effect" to explain the beneficial effects of repeated, unconditioned exposures on an individual's attitude towards a specific stimulus, as long as these exposures make the stimulus easily noticeable to the individual (Zajonc, 1968, p. 1). The phenomenon referred to as the mere exposure effect has been confirmed across a wide range of stimuli, including paintings, drawings, photographs, ideographs, and music (Bornstein, 1989a).

Take, for example, the influence of frequent exposure to a specific phrase on different cognitive activities. Studies have demonstrated that when people are exposed to a particular word multiple times, their ability to perform tasks such as determining if a word is real or not (lexical decision-making), recognizing words based on their appearance (perceptual identification), naming objects in pictures, solving anagrams, and completing word fragments and stems is (Roediger et al., 1992) significantly improves. It is fascinating that this improvement occurs without individuals consciously recalling or referencing their earlier exposure to the word. This phenomenon can be attributed to what psychologists refer

to as "perceptual fluency." Perceptual fluency is the ease with which a stimulus is perceived and processed by our cognitive system. In the context of the tasks mentioned, the earlier exposure to the word enhances perceptual fluency, making it easier and more efficient for individuals to perform these cognitive tasks.

This ease of processing due to prior exposure can sometimes lead to misattributions. Jacoby, Woloshyn, and Kelley (1989) experimented to demonstrate what is known as the "false fame effect." In this experiment, participants were initially presented with the names of individuals who were not famous. Later, they were presented with a new list containing famous people's names and some from the previous list. Their task was to judge whether these names represented famous individuals. The intriguing finding was that the names of non-famous individuals from the earlier list were sometimes considered famous in this context. This suggests that the fluency experienced in recognizing these non-famous names, due to their prior exposure, was misattributed to fame. This misattribution phenomenon extends beyond fame judgments. Research participants have misattributed enhanced fluency to different aspects of stimuli or tasks in various studies.

These findings highlight how our cognitive processes can sometimes lead to misattribution when we experience enhanced fluency due to prior exposure. Instead of recognizing the trustworthy source of this fluency, our brains may attribute it to other factors or characteristics of the stimuli, leading to potentially erroneous judgments and perceptions. Indeed, the influence of prior exposure on perceptual fluency and its impact on cognitive processes extends to various domains. An illustrative example of this phenomenon can be observed in a study investigating the effects of prior exposure on answers to general knowledge questions. As an illustration, consider the study conducted by Landwehr et al. (2013), which investigates how people develop aesthetic preferences for common product

designs, such as car designs, when exposed to them at a minimal level. Remarkably, this exposure not only shapes preferences but also contributes to increased sales figures. Furthermore, the research highlights the impact of mere exposure on enhancing perceptual fluency, even in cases involving unconventional product designs. This underscores the profound influence of mere exposure on fluency levels, a concept we explored in-depth in the preceding chapter. The recurring presentation of a stimulus to individuals consistently elevates their fluency levels.

In a separate investigation carried out by Kelley and Lindsay (1993), participants were presented with responses to general knowledge inquiries, regardless of their accuracy. This experience has a captivating impact on later cognitive processes. The ease of recall experienced by participants, which is indicative of fluency, enhanced their confidence in their responses during a subsequent general knowledge test.

2.6.1 H2: The Moderating Role of Prior Exposure

The prior exposure effect as a moderator been consistently study for the past decades, especially when the study involves with the fluency, understanding, as well as affection of certain products. For instance, in scenarios where a complex stimulus representing a typical product is repeatedly presented, individuals tend to form aesthetic preferences for it. (Landwehr et al., 2013). This ease of processing contributes to a sense of familiarity and comfort, which might come from the prior exposure to the objects before. It is as if the brain says, "I have seen this before; it is safe and known," which, in turn, leads to more favorable evaluations (Seamon et al., 1995). Pervious study also found that the respondents are having less reacting time when they encounter the TV advertising when they encounter in the pervious. Therefore, prior exposure is one of the factors that plays a role in determining the

ease of recognition (Jacoby, 1983; Roediger, 1990; Tulving & Schachter, 1990). According to these pervious findings, the researcher made the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H2a: The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and perceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher perceptual fluency.

Hypothesis H2b: The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and conceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher conceptual fluency.

2.6.2 Mediating effect of processing fluency (Perceptual & Conceptual)

Processing fluency is a cognitive and metacognitive activity, has a substantial impact on human behaviour, as highlighted by academics (Knijnenburg et al., 2012; Mosteller et al., 2014) found. It refers to the degree of ease or difficulty an individual experiences when performing a specific job. Dreisbach and Fischer (2011) argue that it can forecast the amount of effort needed to complete a task, which in turn significantly influences an individual's motivation to participate in that work. As the level of cognitive fluency improves, the probability of an individual successfully completing the task also increases. Moreover, the smooth and efficient processing of a stimulus or task is linked to a heightened emotional experience. The researchers shown that the ease with which information is processed can elicit positive emotional reactions (Winkielman, et al., 2003). According to Eagly and

Chaiken (1993), this has a favourable impact on attitudes and behavioural intentions. Enhanced processing efficiency can result in more positive attitudes towards the work and a greater probability of active participation. A notable application of this notion is seen in the research conducted by Song and Schwarz (2008), where they investigated the correlation between fluency and behavioural goals within the exercise domain. They specifically investigated the impact of the readability of exercise instructions on an individual's inclination to include certain exercises in their regular regimen. Their focus was on understanding whether simpler, easier-to-understand instructions would lead to a greater inclination to follow through with the exercises, thus integrating them into daily habits. This line of inquiry highlights the practical implications of processing fluency in everyday activities and decision-making processes, extending its relevance beyond academic theory to tangible, real-world applications.

The correlation among the perceptual fluency, conceptual fluency as well as behavioral intentions are not just about the ease of processing enhancing willingness; the difficulty in processing can actively discourage engagement. When individuals encounter tasks or stimuli that are hard to process, they are more possible to experience undesirable feelings or reactions. According to the findings of the study, decreased levels of processing fluency are also responsible for unpleasant emotional responses occurring. These negative emotions, in turn, can adversely affect behavioral intentions. This negative impact is significant because it highlights the broader implications of processing fluency in various contexts, from user experience design to instructional materials (Winkielman et al., 2003). For instance, if instructions for using a product or performing an exercise are overly complex and hard to understand, it could lead to frustration or confusion, thereby reducing the likelihood that the user will engage with the product or follow the exercise regimen.

Dreisbach and Fischer (2011) also found that decline in fluency acts as a discouraging indication, resulting in a lessened inclination to participate in an activity or complete a certain task.

The study undertaken by Coulter and Roggeveen (2014) offers a vital contribution to the comprehension of processing fluency, specifically in relation to customer behaviour as well as decision-making in retail environments. Their research explores the intricate connections between several pricing tactics, including regular price, sale price, absolute discount, and relative discount. In addition to this, it assesses the influence that these methods have on the fluency of processing, the liking of customers, and finally, their intents to make a purchase. Coulter and Roggeveen's set of four tests establish a definitive correlation between processing fluency and customer behaviour in the specific context of price and bargains. Their findings suggest that when consumers perceive deals and pricing structures fluently, meaning they find them easy to understand and process, there is an increase in their level of liking for these deals. This heightened level of liking, in turn, leads to increased purchase intentions. Conversely, when deals and prices are less fluently processed—perhaps due to complexity, ambiguity, or any form of cognitive burden—consumers tend to show lower levels of liking and, subsequently, reduced purchase intentions. This indicates that the ease with which consumers can comprehend and make sense of pricing information is critical in influencing their willingness to make a purchase.

The study done by Gomez and Werle (2019) provides additional support for the correlation between fluency, particularly processing fuency, and behavioural intentions. Perceptual fluency pertains to the effortless and effective processing and understanding of visual information. It is a component of processing fluency. Gomez and Werle conducted a study that specifically examined how fluency affects people's intentions to purchase food

products, with a particular emphasis on harmful ones. An essential component of their study focused on altering the ease of understanding by adjusting the transparency of nutritional information labels on both nutritious and unhealthy food products. The experimental design facilitated the observation of how alterations in the perceptual fluency of these labels influenced consumer behaviour. Their research suggests that when nutrition labels are easily understandable and visually appealing, leading to a high level of perceptual fluency, it results in a higher likelihood of consumers intending to make a purchase. Hence, the significant and extensively studied phenomenon of processing fluency (both perceptual and conceptual) is observed to have a mediating impact, as evidenced by previous scholarly works.

2.7 Hedonic Marking of Processing Fluency

Hedonic marking of processing fluency is a notion that has been proposed by researchers like Reber et al. (2006, 2004) and Winkielman et al. (2003), the ease with which we are able to process sensory or cognitive stimuli has a significant impact on the emotional responses that we have (or fluently) we process them. Essentially, when we effortlessly process a stimulus, a fluency signal that is marked with hedonic value generates a favourable emotional reaction. On the other hand, when faced with a stimulus that requires complex processing, it usually triggers a negative emotional response. This approach emphasises the complex interaction between cognitive processing and our emotional experiences. The hypothesis of hedonic marking of processing fluency has been utilised in different fields, showcasing its adaptability and significance. It has been instrumental in comprehending aesthetic preferences (Reber et al., 2004; Reber, 2002), determining the veracity of sentences (Reber and Schwarz, 1999), assessing the attractiveness of words (Whittlesea, 1993), and even forecasting immediate stock market fluctuations (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2006). Moreover, this theory has made substantial contributions to the domain of advertising

research. This research has played a crucial role in studying brand evaluation (Lee & Labroo, 2004), analysing the consequences of unintentional advertisement exposure (Shapiro, 1999), investigating the influence of repeated advertising (Nordhielm, 2002), and exploring preferences for the complexity of brand logos (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001). These applications highlight the theory's extensive applicability and its capacity to illuminate different aspects of human cognition and behaviour.

Numerous theoretical frameworks coalesce around the fundamental premise that high fluency carries a positive connotation. Within these theoretical constructs lies a shared notion that elevated fluency levels convey something inherently affirmative, either within the cognitive realm or in the external world (for a more comprehensive exposition, refer to Winkielman et al., 2003). High fluency is often linked to positive emotions because it indicates progress in recognising stimuli, processing without errors, and having the necessary cognitive structures to interpret the stimuli. This has been supported by various studies (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Derryberry & Tucker, 1994; Fernandez-Duque et al., 2000; Schwarz, 1990; Simon, 1967; Ramachandran & Hirstein, 1999; Vallacher & Nowak, 1999). Furthermore, high fluency may induce a sense of well-being by signaling the familiarity of an external stimulus, thus diminishing the likelihood of harm (Zajonc, 1968, 1998).

In line with the hedonic marking hypothesis (Winkelman et al., 2003), there are particular things, patterns, phrases or information that are capable of being processed in a highly fluent manner. For instance, patterns with distinct visibility or content featuring concise words can be swiftly and smoothly recognized, comprehended, assessed, and interpreted. This fluency experience tends to skew the evaluations of these items. More specifically, fluency tends to trigger positive emotional states. It is normal practice to identify these positive states with the objects themselves. Therefore, these things are capable

of evoking happy feelings, which subsequently impact how these objects are appraised. As a result, these objects may be viewed more favourably.

2.7.1 Fluency and affective judgement

Contemporary investigations into the consequences of processing fluency have consistently revealed a favourable valence associated with the experience (e.g., Reber et al., 1998; Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001). In the research by Winkielman and Cacioppo (2001), it has been established that increases in processing fluency, which is a term that describes the ease with which individuals receive information, were found to be associated with affective responses, a term used to describe emotional reactions. These affective responses were measured using facial electromyography (EMG), a technique that involves recording electrical activity in facial muscles. This research indicated that when individuals found information easier to process, it led to emotional reactions that could be detected through changes in their facial muscle activity. Historically, the connection between fluency and hedonic marking has been a subject of interest, particularly about the prior-exposure effect first proposed by Zajonc in 1968 (Zajonc, 1968). This effect, which involves people developing a preference for stimuli through repeated exposure, has drawn the attention of researchers exploring the interplay of perceptual fluency with evaluations. Recent studies have continued to investigate this area, building on this foundational concept. The idea that the prior exposure effect is inextricably tied to changes in perceptual fluency has been investigated by a number of scholars working in the modern period. This theory aligns well with the observation that repeated exposure expedites how quickly we recognize a stimulus and enhances our judgments concerning its clarity and duration. These observations are supported by more recent studies that further solidify this connection (Haber & Hershenson, 1965; Jacoby & Dallas, 1981; Witherspoon & Allan, 1985; Whittlesea et al., 1990).

Building on this idea, contemporary research in the field of psychology has sought to explore additional factors that may influence processing fluency, thereby impacting evaluations. Studies have examined variables such as context, presentation format, and cognitive load (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2006; Topolinski & Strack, 2015). These investigations have yielded a more nuanced understanding of how perceptual fluency can shape our evaluations in traditional and online contexts (Reber et al., 1998; Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz, 1998). In essence, recent research has not only reaffirmed the connection between perceptual fluency and favorable evaluations but has also expanded our comprehension of how various elements can enhance or diminish this fluency, impacting our overall judgments.

2.8 Purchase intention

The main aim of this PhD thesis is to examine how different levels of visual stimuli complexity affect customer purchase intentions. The study will specifically focus on the function of fluency, which includes perceptual fluency, conceptual fluency, and imagery fluency, as a mediator. Purchase intention, as delineated by Fandos and Flavian (2006), refers to a commitment or internal promise a consumer makes to themselves about making a purchase. This concept is widely recognized as one of the most reliable indicators for predicting consumer purchasing behavior, as supported by studies from Brown et al. (2003) and Schlosser (2003). Previous studies have noted that purchase intention is closely linked to attitudes and preferences toward the brand or product (DAM, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2012; Martín-Consuegra et al., 2018). By examining these relationships, the thesis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how visual complexity, through its influence on different types of fluency, can ultimately affect a consumer's decision-making process, particularly in terms of their willingness to purchase. This investigation is critical in advancing our knowledge of

consumer behavior, especially in how visual aspects of marketing and product presentation can sway purchase decisions. The hypotheses developed in this subsection will lay the groundwork for empirical research that could validate these theoretical propositions and contribute valuable insights into the field of consumer psychology and marketing.

Furthermore, purchase intention data can assist practitioners in making informed marketing decisions related to products (both new and existing), market segmentation, and promotional strategies (DAM, 2020; Tsiotsou, 2006). As a result, getting customers to purchase products has become a key focus for marketers, especially as consumers now have more choices in an increasingly competitive and dynamic business environment (Choi et al., 2020). Additionally, some scholars have suggested that purchase intention refers to the consumer's inclination to buy a product. The stronger the desire to purchase, the higher the purchase intention (Sanny et al., 2020; Afsar, 2014).

2.8.1 Purchase Intention and Fluency

Fluency, in its most fundamental sense, is a phase that use to explains the ease with which humans incorporate information (Schwartz, 2004). An evaluation of this metacognitive experience, which is typically based on a scale which is from fluent to disfluent, is considered to be subjective. The notion of perceptual fluency, which describes the ease with which individuals are able to identify, capture, and process the characteristics of a stimuli, is the focus of this particular research endeavor. In addition to this, it investigates conceptual fluency, which is use to explain how easy that an individual can understand the semantic meaning and message of a visual element. The dimensions that have been stated encompass the more general concept of processing fluency, which refers to the effortless manipulation of both the attributes and the meaning of inputs. Studies have shown that people tend to prefer stimuli that are easier to process, such as those with higher processing

fluency and lower visual complexity (Palmer et al., 2013; (Schwartz, 2004; Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Based on the research from Reber et al. (2004), visual stimuli that simple, symmetrical, high in contrast, as well as the clarity aid in processing and hence increase aesthetic pleasure (Landwehr et al., 2011). The clear evidence of the relationship between the level of complexity and the aesthetic preference. This finding is supported by advertising research, which have shown that complex advertisements have a greater impact on preference levels compared to simpler ones (Van Enschot & Van Mulken, 2014). Maier and Dost (2018) corroborated this finding, demonstrating that simple or straightforward images are seen as more easily comprehensible, while intricate images are frequently favored.

The literature on fluency presents a spectrum of diverse viewpoints. Processing fluency encompasses both perceptual and conceptual fluency, each reflecting distinct cognitive processing and evaluation aspects. This doctoral thesis is aims to investigating the influence of the visual complexity level (Chinese cultural element's presence in both simple and complex) on the processing fluency (perceptual and conceptual fluency). In addition to this, the thesis will fill a gap in the existing literature by addressing the individual consequences of processing fluency on the purchase intentions of consumers.

The fundamental objective of this researchis to conduct an in-depth investigation into the influence that visual stimuli (Chinese cultural element), which can range in terms of their level of complexity, have influence on the intents of customers to make a purchase. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to investigate the intermediary function of fluency, which includes both perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency, in this particular setting. Purchase intention is defined as the cognitive process in which a buyer forms a strong commitment or personal pledge to themselves regarding the acquisition of a specific goods or service.

This concept, as defined by Fandos and Flavian in 2006, is a critical predictor of consumer behavior and is widely acknowledged as one of the most reliable indicators for anticipating actual purchasing actions. This assertion is supported by the research of Brown et al. in 2003 and Schlosser in 2003, among others. Regarding this particular subchapter, the emphasis is placed on the formation of hypotheses that intertwine the many characteristics of visual complexity, the various forms of processing fluency, and the cumulative effect that these factors have on the intents of consumers to make purchases. These hypotheses are designed to dissect the intricate relationships between these variables and to provide a nuanced understanding of how visual complexity and fluency collectively sway consumer decision-making processes, particularly in the realm of purchasing behavior.

2.8.1.1 The mediating role of processing fluency

Numerous cognitive as well as metacognitive processes are known to impact human behavior, among which processing fluency plays a pivotal role. Processing fluency is instrumental in forecasting the effort needed to accomplish a particular task. Consequently, this aspect significantly influences an individual's readiness or inclination to undertake that task (Dreisbach & Fischer, 2011). This relationship underscores the importance of understanding how processing fluency not only affects task performance but also shapes the willingness to engage in various activities or tasks.

In relation to perceptual fluency, which is a separate component of processing fluency, the link between fluency and behavioral intentions is very strong. This is because perceptual fluency is a distinct component of fluency. Based on Gomez and Werle (2019), a study was carried out in this field to evaluate the impact that fluency has on the intentions of persons to make a purchase, with a specific focus on dangerous food products. Their

approach consisted of manipulating the level of clarity in nutrition information labels for both nutritious and unhealthy food products to improve the fluency of the information. According to the results of their research, labels that are more straightforward and simpler to comprehend, which in turn leads to a higher degree of perceptual fluency, are identified as being connected with higher levels of purchase intentions. This discovery emphasizes the substantial influence of perceived ease on customers' decision-making processes. To summaries, this PhD thesis expands on a solid base of previous research, which together suggests that the smooth processing of a stimulus plays a crucial role in influencing behavioral intentions. This conclusion is supported by a wide array of studies, including those by Storme, Myszkowski, Davila, and Bournois (2015), and Coulter and Roggeveen (2014). The thesis proposes, on the basis of this substantial body of research, that perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency, which are two distinct forms of processing fluency, will have a major impact on the consumer's desire to make a purchase. The significance of this prediction lies in the fact that it highlights the significance of knowing how the ease with which consumers receive visual cues might influence their decision-making processes, particularly in the context of purchasing behavior. Therefore, the researcher came up with the hypothesis that is shown here:

H3a: Between the visual complexity and customer purchase intention, the perceptual fluency will act as a mediator.

H3b: Between the visual complexity and customer purchase intention, the conceptual fluency will act as a mediator.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This thesis is to examine the impact that the visual complexity of element associated with Chinese culture and how it will impact on the processing fluency and the purchase intention of Chinese domestic luxury, and how the moderating effect of the prior exposure, as shown in Figure 2.16. However, it is necessary to realized that many global designer or luxury brands are getting more and more simple on their advertising or branding design. The previous research like Wang et al. (2022) found that Chinese luxury is also getting simplified in their visual images over the years. However, unlike the western luxury brands that mostly involve simple, bold typeface in their logo, Chinese domestic luxury brands, often time include the Chinese cultural elements in their visual brandings to signified their cultural heritage, as well as align with the rise of inconspicuousness luxury purchasing behaviour (Schroeder et al., 2015b; Shi & Jiang, 2022; Zheng et a., 2022).

This research chooses Chinese cultural elements, and how the visual complexity of these elements will impact on the processing fluency and on the purchase intention, in the same time, the researcher also examine the moderating effect from prior exposure. Interestingly, it's noteworthy that existing literature presents a diverse range of findings when it comes to visual complexity. On one hand, a set of studies advocates for the effectiveness of simplistic imagery in various contexts (BigoinGagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018; Kolesova & Singh, 2019). On the other hand, there exists a substantial body of work that favors the utilization of more complex images, highlighting their potential benefits (Shapiro, 1999; Yoo & Kim, 2014). This divergence in viewpoints might be a driving factor behind the continued interest and ongoing research in the area of visual complexity, as scholars strive to unravel the nuanced impacts of image complexity on various outcomes.

Visual complexity, in this study, is defined as the quantity of items in a sample (detail), as well as the organization of these elements (regular vs. irregular). The study employs two distinct levels of visual complexity: the first involves a simplified representation, displaying a basic Chinese culture aspect printed on a white shirt, while the second level has a more intricate design, presenting a complicated Chinese cultural element also printed on a white shirt. A crucial element of this experiment involves examining how the previous exposure, or absence thereof, to the logo before the test influences there is a connection between visual complexity and both types of fluency, both conceptual fluency and perceptual fluency. This comprehensive analysis seeks to elucidate the impact of different degrees of visual complexity, as well as prior familiarity, on the cognitive effort required for viewers to see and comprehend the visual data provided to them. Simultaneously, all the samples are studied for their cultural authenticity. This is because a previous study revealed that varying degrees of authenticity in Chinese cultural elements can impact how Chinese consumers perceive and process them, ultimately affecting their decision-making process. This PhD thesis focusses its inquiry on certain types of fluency connected with visual processing. The investigation focuses on two main domains: perceptual fluency, which refers to the efficiency with which individuals receive and comprehend visual information, and conceptual fluency, which relates to the ease of understanding the underlying meaning of a picture. Both types of fluency have been thoroughly studied in academic study, especially in relation to their combined effect, generally known as processing fluency. One of the main objectives of this thesis is to investigate and get the knowledge of various factors (quantity of the objects and arrangement) that influence on the visual complexity, which is the simplicity or complexity of a Chinese cultural element from the visual aspect, and how it will influence on the

processing fluency, both perceptual and conceptual, furthermore, how the processing fluency will impact on the final purchasing behaviour of the Chinese luxury brands. At the same time, the researcher also examines the moderating effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and processing fluency.

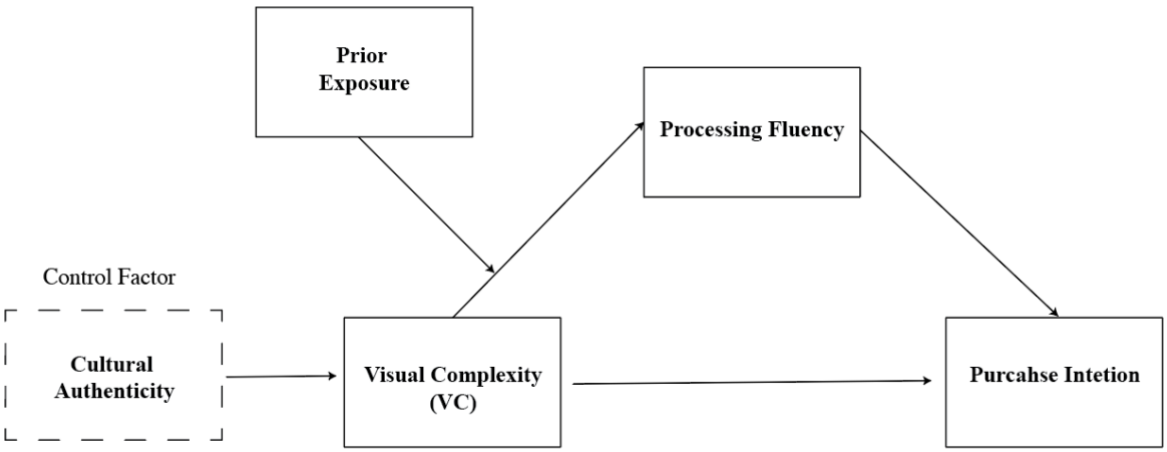


Figure 2.16: Conceptual Model for Study

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this PhD thesis is to investigate the impact that visual complexity has on the intention of consumers to make a purchase, specifically by comparing the influence of basic and complicated Chinese elements in the logo. Furthermore, this study aims to examine the intermediary function performed by fluency within this situation. Moreover, the study investigates how earlier exposure, specifically in the context of intricate Chinese elements, influences the connection of visual complexity and processing fluency.

This chapter aims to elucidate the approach utilized to examine the assumptions that were formulated in the previous chapter. This chapter provides an outline of the research philosophy, approach, design, strategy, and sample technique. Furthermore, this chapter includes information regarding the three conducted experiments, the selected methodology for data analysis, a summary of the study's constraints, and a discourse on the ethical issues that influenced the researcher's decisions throughout the study. This study aims to create a model that explains the visual complexity of Chinese cultural components in domestic luxury brands in China, using the processing fluency theory. It is an exploratory inquiry. The choice of data gathering methods and subsequent analysis will depend on the project's objectives, timing, and any financial limitations (Yin, 2015).

To fulfill the objectives of this study and address the research inquiries, the quantitative research methods by using online questionnaire survey employed for a comprehensive investigation and resolution of the research problem. By deploying three studies, that individually to test the hypothesis accordingly. Subsequently, the suitability of

the quantitative approach for this study is expounded upon. As depicted in Figure 3.1 as well as in Section 3.1 and 3.2, the research activities and workflow have been devised to systematically address the three main questions posed in this study. Section 3.3 and Section 3.4 address the ethical consideration as well as the sampling methods. Then the hypothesis presented in Section 3.5, finally, the Section 3.6 is addressing the methods used in three studies.

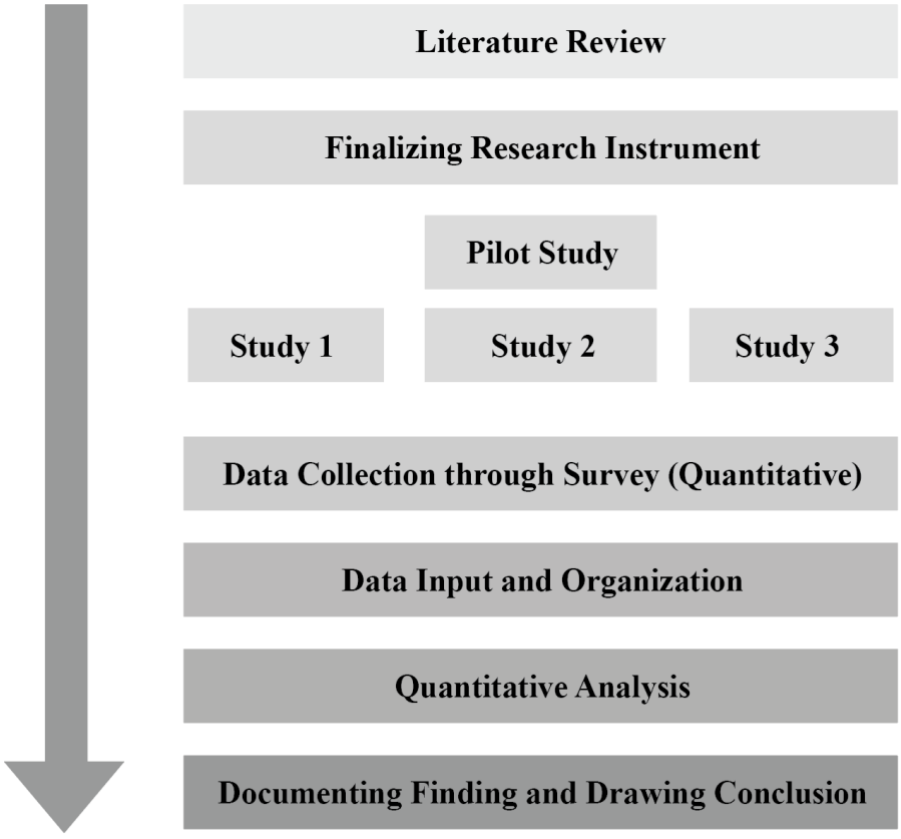


Figure 3.1: Research Activties and Workflow

3.1 Research Philosophy

Scientific research relies on a fundamental framework of philosophical assumptions that act as guiding principles throughout the research process. Based on Gill and Johnson (2010), these assumptions elucidate significant determinations made at various phases of the study. The philosophical underpinnings exert a significant influence on the methodology employed in scientific inquiries. According to Saunders et al. (2016), these qualities include ontology, which is the study of reality; epistemology, which is the process of knowledge formation; and axiology, which is concerned with the role that values and ethics play in research.

Ontology, which examines the fundamental nature of reality, is a crucial aspect of research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009). It might have either an objective or subjective nature. Objective ontology asserts that reality exists as a unified and unchanging thing, separate from human viewpoints. Saunders et al. (2012) found that subjective ontology posits that reality is inherently diverse and influenced by individual interpretations and perceptions.

According to Edgar and Sedgwick (2008), epistemology is the discipline that investigates the nature and scope of knowledge. Its primary objective is to ascertain the criteria for establishing valid information regarding the social realm. (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Epistemology investigates inquiries such as 'By what means do we acquire knowledge?' And 'What establishes the relationship between the knower and the known object?' The reference is from Antwi and Hamza's work published in 2015. Epistemology can be in accordance with objectivism, a philosophical perspective that posits knowledge as being objective and measurable (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Saunders et al. (2016) suggested an objective

epistemological approach maintains that knowledge is obtained through direct personal experiences and the observation of quantifiable facts. On the other hand, a subjective epistemology argues that knowledge is formed through interpretations, acknowledging various methods of gaining information (Walsham, 1993). This perspective aims to understand occurrences by examining the interpretations assigned to them by humans (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Business and management research study encompasses three main philosophical approaches: interpretivism, realism, and positivism (Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Saunders et al., 2016). Interpretivism seeks to understand the world by focusing on the subjective interpretations of individuals, giving significance to their experiences in forming social reality (Bryman, 2012). It is defined as a subjective understanding of existence, where reality is shaped by society and influenced by individual viewpoints (Mayers, 2008). Interpretivist epistemology is a subjective approach that centres on comprehending events by the meaning's individuals attribute to them (Bryman and Bell, 2015). From this point of view, knowledge is accomplished through the process of understanding. (Walsham, 1993). From an axiological standpoint, it recognises the researcher's active role in gathering data with the goal of comprehending the participants' interpretations, viewpoints, and the forces that shape them (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Interviews, case studies, focus groups, and ethnography are examples of qualitative research methodologies that are frequently used in interpretivist philosophy. These approaches are complemented by data analysis techniques include coding, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Realism, employs a scientific methodology for the advancement of knowledge, presupposing the presence of an external world that is apart from social individuals. Realism differentiates between direct and critical manifestations. Direct realism proposes the

existence of a consistent and unchanging universe, whereas critical realism argues that comprehending the social world necessitates taking into account the underlying structures that give rise to phenomena (Bhaskar, 1989). Realism acknowledges the axiological dimension of study, acknowledging that the researcher's personal opinions, experiences, and cultural background can exert an influence. (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Positivism, in contrast, promotes a scientific method for the advancement of knowledge that relies on actual observations and personal experience. The statement presupposes an ontological framework that posits an objective reality characterised by a singular and unchanging nature (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Positivism posits that social phenomena and their meanings exist independently from the individuals who participate in society (Bryman, 2012). From an epistemological standpoint, it is based on empiricism, which regards information obtained from human experience as both objective and measurable (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Quantitative research methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, are commonly favoured for the purpose of collecting and analysing data, typically employing sizable randomly chosen samples. The objective of researchers is to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between variables and employ hypotheses to validate or refute their findings (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Crowther and Lancaster in 2008 stated that positivist researchers in the field of axiology prioritise objectivity and neutrality. They concentrate on gathering observable facts and avoid interpreting the emotions, beliefs, and perceptions of participants.

This research examines the influence of the level of visual complexity on the consumers' intention to make a purchase, while also studying the moderating influence of prior exposure. Three hypotheses were developed (see Chapter 3: Methodology). The purpose of this study is to investigate the connections between variables like visual complexity, prior exposure, fluency, and the intents of customers to make a purchase. The

procedure for collecting the data was carried out in accordance with a quantitative experimental design, and the subsequent analysis was carried out in an appropriate manner. The study employed a research philosophy that aligns with the positivist paradigm (Gill & Johnson, 2010). A number of factors, including the qualities of the research subject, the hypotheses that were developed, and the method that was used to collect data, had a role in the decision. The positivist approach was deemed most suitable for this investigation, given its reliance on objective, measurable data and structured methodologies, which minimize researcher interference. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize that the choosing of the positivist philosophy does not in any way mean that there is no room for criticism.

One primary critique leveled against positivism is its perceived disregard for the "human factor" and individuals' subjective experiences, emotions, and meanings. Critics argue that it can dehumanize people by treating them as mere experimental subjects subject to manipulation and control (Howell, 2013). Furthermore, it's contended that human behavior is not always rational and cannot be easily generalized, as each individual possesses a unique set of experiences, perspectives, and understandings. This challenge undermines the assumption of generalizability and calls into question the accuracy of predictions based on generalization (Silverman, 1970).

Another criticism pertains to the role of the researcher in positivism. In this approach, researchers are typically considered independent and objective observers. However, some argue that this perspective may oversimplify the complexity of human behavior, and the subjective meanings individuals attach to their actions (Silverman, 1970). Despite these critiques, it's worth noting that much research in the field of fluency adopts a positivist approach. Researchers formulate hypotheses, carry out scientific experimentation, utilise

experimental methodologies, and depend on measuring scales and manipulation techniques. This researchutilized existing scales to assess theoretical connections, and employed a range of techniques, such as pre-tests, manipulation checks, and quantitative statistical analyses, to evaluate the hypotheses.

In order to account for potential biases and recognize the inherent limitations of positivism, this researchexplored the idea of adopting a postpositivist perspective. Postpositivism recognizes that, despite researchers' best efforts to adhere to scientific methods, research outcomes may not be entirely objective or unquestionably certain. Postpositivists contend that researchers, being fallible individuals, might be susceptible to diverse influences, such as theories and prior knowledge, which can potentially affect their observations and conclusions. While researchers strive for objectivity, they may inadvertently introduce biases (Crotty, 1998). Consequently, postpositivism acknowledges that achieving a completely objective epistemology may not be possible. Postpositivism, within the realm of ontology, posits that the researcher's limitations impose constraints on the study and comprehension of the universe and reality. Postpositivist argue that the exploration of reality is limited and that it is characterized as "probable" rather than certain. (Maxwell, 2012).

To summaries, this study embraced a positivist perspective, which aligns with the prevailing fluency research. However, it also acknowledged the presence of biases and constraints inherent in human research. Therefore, it considered a postpositivist perspective to address these issues and acknowledge the complexities of research in the field (Silverman, 1970; Crotty, 1998; Howell, 2013; Gill & Johnson, 2010).

3.2 Research Approach

Based on the findings of Saunders et al. (2012), the choice of a philosophical notion significantly influences the study process, which might be either deductive, inductive, or abductive. The deductive method entails the formulation of hypotheses that are founded on previously established theory, as well as the formulation of a research strategy to verify these predictions through experimental testing (Wilson, 2010). Deductive research involves the initial formulation of a theory, followed by the creation of hypotheses, which are then tested by empirical methods (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). The results of these tests either corroborate or reject the hypotheses (Snieder & Larner, 2009). Conclusions are derived from well-established premises that are firmly grounded in factual conditions. Gill and Johnson (2010) stated that deductive research primarily centers on the examination of causal interactions and applies precise procedures to test links. It frequently depends on quantitative research techniques and extensive samples to facilitate generalization.

Conversely, an inductive methodology is employed when the investigation aims to comprehend the significance and viewpoints of persons. Inductive research examines the contextual variables that surround the social phenomena under investigation, typically involves the collecting of qualitative data from small samples. It prioritizes specificity and provides greater adaptability in the design of research. In inductive research, the researcher's role is not considered separate from the study process (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010).

Although deductive and inductive procedures are theoretically separate, they can be merged in an abductive approach (Suddaby, 2006), as seen in Figure 3.2 Abductive research is to methodically observe, identify, and monitor patterns, and then establish correlations between these patterns and the frameworks from both conceptual and theoretical

perspectives. The development of new ideas or the modification of existing ones can be significantly aided by the utilization of this method at the foundational level (Saunders et al., 2012).

The primary objective of this study, which was conducted from a postpositivist philosophical point of view, was to test hypotheses regarding visual complexity, prior exposure, processing fluency, and customer intent to purchase. An analysis of the hypotheses was conducted to derive results. A deductive approach was determined to be the most appropriate research methodology for this PhD project, taking into consideration the foundation that was established.

Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
• Scientific principles • Moving from theory to data • The need to explain causal relationships between variables • The collection of quantitative data • The application of controls to ensure validity of data • The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition • A highly structured approach • Researcher independence of what is being researched • The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions	• Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events • A close understanding of the research context • The collection of qualitative data • A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses • A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process • Less concerned with the need to generalise

Figure 3.2： The deductive and inductive methodologies (Saunders et al., 2009)

3.3 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this doctoral research, which involved primary data collection, several ethical considerations were meticulously addressed. The research methodology employed

quantitative techniques with human participants. Each participant, prior to their involvement, was required to give informed consent (refer to Appendix 2). This consent ensured participants were voluntarily engaging in the study and were informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any point, as highlighted by Fontana and Frey (2000).

A key aspect of this thesis was the exploration of various metacognitive processes. In line with this, ensuring that the participants' mental health and overall well-being remained unaffected throughout the study was imperative. In accordance with the University's ethical rules, meticulous measures were implemented to guarantee that participants were not exposed to any kind of harm, discomfort, or shame throughout the entirety of the experimental procedure.

Due to the experimental research methodology, participants were not initially provided with information regarding the precise objectives of the study. This was to maintain the integrity of the experimental conditions. However, post-experiment, a thorough debriefing was provided to all participants. The debriefing included a comprehensive explanation of the true objective of the survey and the inherent characteristics of the experiment. Subsequently, participants were once again provided with the option to retract their data from the research if they desired.

In terms of data privacy and confidentiality, the research did not involve the collection of any personal data from the participants. The experiments were designed to be entirely anonymous, and the information gathered was used solely for academic purposes. For the purpose of upholding secrecy, solely the researcher and his two supervisors were granted access to the gathered data. If there are any problems or queries related to the experiment, participant involvement, or data usage, contact details of the researcher and her

supervisors were provided to the participants before the start of each experiment. This ensured transparency and allowed participants to feel secure and informed about all aspects of their participation in the study.

3.4 Sampling

Based on Saunders et al. (2009), sampling is an essential component in the field of research, serving as a crucial factor in gathering data from particular sections of a designated population. The subject can be categorized into two main methodologies: probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling, also referred to as random sampling, is characterized based its inherent randomness in the selection procedure. (Saunders et al., 2009). In essence, each individual in the community under investigation has an equitably likely chance of being chosen to participate in the researches. The finding obtained by probability sampling have the unique capacity to be extended to the larger population, making it a powerful tool for generalization. However, the use of probability sampling usually requires the creation of a well-defined "sampling frame." This framework represents a complete list that includes all persons in the population. It serves as the basis for inviting participants to participate in the research. However, it is important to acknowledge that this approach presents specific difficulties, especially in the field of business and marketing research, which is why it is not as commonly used by researchers in these areas (Saunders et al., 2009).

Non-probability sampling diverges from the principles of randomness, creating a sharp contrast. Sekaran and Bougie (2003) found that embodying a selection process bereft of definitive probability estimates, thus rendering differential segments of the population unequally likely to be participants in the study. Consequently, the outcomes derived through

non-probability sampling do not readily lend themselves to generalization. Non-probability sampling encompasses various subcategories, with two prominent ones being purposive and convenience sampling.

Purposive sampling entails the deliberate selection of participants predicated upon specified criteria or attributes, thereby ensuring that the chosen individuals align with particular characteristics or qualifications (Sekaran & Bougie, 2003). Within the purview of purposive sampling, judgment and quota sampling strategies come into play. Judgment sampling involves the researcher's discernment in handpicking participants who possess the requisite expertise or knowledge to address the research questions, typically germane when tackling subjects of specialized nature (Sekaran & Bougie, 2003). At the other end of the spectrum is quota sampling, which involves classifying the population into predetermined quotas based on particular factors, such as age, salary, or education. Subsequently, Sekaran and Bougie (2003) suggested that participants are selected to represent these established quotas. Importantly, quota sampling does facilitate generalization, unlike some other non-probability sampling techniques.

Convenience sampling, another variant of non-probability sampling, revolves around the expedient collection of data from conveniently available individuals (Saunders et al., 2009). Renowned for its time-efficiency and cost-effectiveness, convenience sampling does exhibit limitations about generalizability. In this methodology, researchers frequently opt for participants who are readily accessible, a practice often resorted to in social psychology research. However, an excessive reliance on a specific subset of the population, such as students, can curtail the broader applicability of research findings to other demographic groups (Fiske et al., 2010).

For the purpose of this study, which investigates the effects of visual complexity on customer purchase intentions and investigates how fluency mediates these effects in the context of Chinese luxury brands, it is important to note that the participants were not limited to individuals who had previously engaged in the consumption of Chinese luxury fashion brands. However, experience with general luxury purchasing can be helpful in understanding the population (Wu, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020a). The primary emphasis lay in scrutinizing how participants processed visual stimuli, encompassing dimensions of perceptual, conceptual and the subsequent ramifications on their behavioral intentions. To gather data, the investigator engaged with individuals Data collection was orchestrated through indirect interactions with individuals on the Questionnaire (refer to Appendix 03) platform "Questionnaire Star", the Chinese biggest and exclusive online survey platform, and adding the questionnaires to category "Luxury Fashion", which means it more engage the participants who interest in luxury industry. By employing a method known as convenience sampling based on Calder et al. (1982) assert, "An acceptable test of the theory is provided by a sample that is pertinent to the universe of the theory". Because of this method, the selection of a convenience sample is supported, despite it not being a random representation of the entire population, as a valid method for this study. Moreover, the intention to engage the people who interesting in luxury industry are more accurate than use the sample like students (Fiske et al., 2010).

3.5 Research Studies Overview

The central aim of the doctoral research is to forecast how different visual stimuli impact behavior, especially involve the Chinese cultural elements and in the Chinese luxury fashion field. Specifically, it investigates how visual complexity influences consumer buying intentions and examines fluency's role (perceptual and conceptual) as a mediator. The thesis

scrutinizes these variable interconnections through three experimental studies. Study 1 focused on visual complexity's impact on fluency. Study 2 probed into how prior exposure moderates the visual complexity-fluency relationship. The third study examined how fluency influences the relationship between visual complexity and Chinese consumers' inclination to purchase premium fashion items.

Each study was conducted as an online survey, manipulating visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements. Fiske et al. (2010) note the rising prominence of internet-based studies in psychological fields, especially in judgment-related experiments. They argue for the accuracy and reduced error margins in data collection offered by online methods. However, online surveys, like all research methods, encounter specific challenges. An essential consideration is the degree of focus that participants dedicate to the survey. Additionally, based on Fiske et al. (2010), surveys of this nature are limited in their ability to generalize, as they may not accurately represent the perspectives of the entire population.

3.6 Pilot Study

The study conducted previously to examined how visual complexity affects fluency (Maier and Dost, 2018). Participants were shown either simple or complex visual stimuli. This study employed a comparable methodology to control visual complexity. The cultural element from China that was incorporated in this project is the Chinese knot. Chinese knot represents the unique Chinese folk hand-knitting art and design element and has been wildly applied in the Chinese fashion industry. According to the findings of the literature review, semiotics, design, and historical literature are all indicated to provide characteristics that are distinctive of Chinese culture together with historical allusions and the significance of Chinese culture. Yi (2005) and Zhang (2007) also validates the suitability and symbolic significance of the Chinese knot. In the study by Shi and Jiang (2022), they also applied

Chinese knot to represent Chinese cultural elements. The researcher first searches the "Chinese Knot" in the online photo stock website like Shutterstock, and Adobe stock, to get the appropriate reference for the further manipulation. The researcher manipulates the complexity of the Chinese knot by adding details, creating asymmetrical effects, disposition of the elements, as well as changing the arrangement of the elements. The result is shown in the following figure 3-3



Figure 3.3： The simple and complex elements used in the Study 1.

In the study, the researcher employed a practical approach by mock-upping the two elements on T-shirts to simulate real-life scenarios (referenced in Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5). This method aimed to provide the respondents with a more realistic and relatable context for evaluation (Teng et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2022).

The use of T-shirts as a medium for showcasing these elements is a strategic choice, considering that clothing is of the luxury items with which most people are familiar. This familiarity allows respondents to better visualize and assess the visual complexity of the

designs in a context that they can easily understand and relate to (Teng et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2022; Shi & Jiang, 2022).



Figure 3.4: The mockup of simple element



Figure 3.5: The mockup of complex element

The manipulation of these images was performed meticulously using tools like Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. To validate the effectiveness of these manipulations, before beginning the primary research project, a preliminary test was carried out. About 34 participants from Wenzhou-Kean University were carefully selected for this preliminary phase. During the experiment, they were shown both images and asked to evaluate the simplicity and complexity of each. This assessment was conducted using a detailed 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The participants rated each image based on two key aspects: perceived simplicity and perceived complexity. The questions included "I think this element is simple" and "I think this element is complex." In addition to assessing visual complexity, the pilot study also focused on evaluating cultural authenticity, which is crucial in understanding the perceived heritage and authenticity of the images. For this, another set of questions was presented on the same 7-point scale. The questions were designed to gauge participants' perceptions of the Chinese cultural heritage and authenticity of the elements, with questions like “I think this element has Chinese heritage” and “I feel this element authentic Chinese to me.” This comprehensive approach in the pilot study ensured that both the visual complexity and the cultural authenticity of the images were appropriately tested, setting a robust foundation for the main study.

3.7 Study 1: Visual Complexity and Fluency

The Study 1 major purpose was to investigate the correlation between visual complexity and processing fluency, as suggested by hypotheses H1a and H1b. This was the primary objective of the study. In this study, a between-groups research method was utilized in order to investigate the impact of visual complexity (simple vs. complicated Chinese element) on several forms of fluency, such as perceptual and conceptual fluency. The characteristic being studied was fluency, which included both perceptual and conceptual

aspects. One of the most important independent variables that was taken into consideration was the level of visual complexity. With the help of a number of different rating scales, the independent variable was altered while the consumer's fluency experiences were being evaluated.

3.7.1 Procedure

The methodology for achieving this objective was meticulously designed, incorporating a structured set of queries using a Likert scale for nuanced responses. The questionnaire, carefully crafted to gauge perceptions of visual complexity, was set up in the "Questionnaire Star" platform. To ensure a diverse range of responses, the survey link was strategically disseminated in the luxury fashion sector, targeting a specific demographic. The distribution of the questionnaire featuring two levels of visual complexity was randomized among the respondents. This randomization was crucial to avoid bias and ensure that each participant had an equal chance of encountering either the simple or complex visual stimuli, thus maintaining the integrity of the experiment.

Participation in the survey was voluntarily offered by the individuals who took part in it, after highlighting the ethical importance of obtaining consent in research. The initial part of the experiment focused on gathering data about the participants' backgrounds and frequency of their luxury fashion purchasing behaviors to ensure they are interested in luxury industry. This information was vital in contextualizing their responses and understanding the potential influences on their perceptions. Once the background information was collected, participants were presented with either the simple or complex Chinese cultural element, depending on the random allocation. Additionally, participants were asked to provide feedback on their cognitive processing experience. This included assessing the ease or

difficulty with which they processed and visualized the image in their mind. This aspect of the experiment aimed to explore the cognitive dimensions of processing fluency – how effortlessly participants could understand and mentally interact with the visual stimuli. Such feedback is invaluable in understanding the psychological impact of visual complexity on consumers and offers deeper insights into how such complexity influences consumer behavior and perception, particularly in the context of Chinese luxury fashion.

3.7.2 Independent Variable

For the purpose of the study, the independent variable of visual complexity was varied. A subset of participants was presented with a basic Chinese symbol displayed on a white T-shirt prototype set against a neutral backdrop. On the other hand, other individuals were presented with a sophisticated Chinese component showcasing the identical object against a simple white backdrop.

3.7.3 Dependent Variable

The focal variable in this investigation was fluency, primarily pertaining to processing fluency, which is combination of perceptual and conceptual fluency. In order to evaluate perceptual fluency, a bipolar scale was employed, following the criteria established by Mosteller et al. (2014). Participants evaluated the perceptual encounter of the image they observed based on characteristics including as "Disorganized/Organized," "Disorderly/Tidy," "Congested/Spacious," "Difficult to perceive /Easy to perceive," and an additional criterion, "Difficult to discern/Easy to discern" Conceptual fluency was measured by asking participants to rate statements on a 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree"), which included "The concept of the element is easy to

comprehend," "The meaning of the element is easy to comprehend," and "The significance of the element is easy to comprehend" (Lee & Labroo, 2004).

3.7.4 Data Analysis.

The descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlations are calculated using the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) in order to determine and analyse the relationship between the variables. The gathered data was analyzed using SPSS 25 programmed in this study. Following the completion of the reliability analysis of the data, t-tests, as well as one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized in order to investigate the hypotheses. A significance level of 95% is set. The ensuing independent samples t-test will meticulously compare the means of these dimensions between visual complexity, discerning any significant disparities. Through this multifaceted analytical journey, the research seeks to identify variations in perceived complexity and uncover underlying associations within and between dimensions.

3.7.5 Reliability and Validity

The study emphasized consistency and stability in measurement, employing Cronbach's Alpha (with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.7$) to ensure reliability in measuring visual complexity dimensions (George & Mallery, 2003). By rigorously assessing the reliability of the measurements using Cronbach's Alpha, the study aimed to enhance the confidence in the accuracy and stability of its findings. This approach ensured that the data collected for visual complexity dimensions met a high standard of reliability, further strengthening the validity of the study's conclusions.

3.8 Study 2: The Moderating Effect of Prior Exposure on Fluency

Expanding upon the initial discoveries of Study 1, Study 2 investigates the impact of previous exposure on the correlation between visual complexity and two distinct forms of fluency (H2a and H2b). Furthermore, it reassesses the outcomes and impacts of H1a and H1b.

This study employed a factorial design, specifically a 2x2 between-groups framework, to classify visual stimuli according to their complexity (simple versus complicated) and prior exposure (with versus without). The main emphasis was on various aspects of fluency, including perceptual and intellectual dimensions. In this particular context, similar to the first study, visual complexity was considered as the independent variable, whereas past exposure functioned as a moderator. The study replicates the Chinese cultural aspects used in study 1 to confirm their complexity and the accuracy of their cultural representation. Hence, the political analysis is unnecessary in this particular setting.

3.8.1 Prior Exposure Manipulation

At the beginning of the survey, the participants were instructed to respond to questions regarding their demographic information as well as questions concerning their behavior with regard to luxury purchases.

To manipulate prior exposure effectively, the researchers introduced respondents to a set of Chinese cultural elements. These elements, sourced from a stock image website, were carefully chosen to enhance participants' perceptual exposure. The selection included a variety of Chinese cultural elements, both complex and simple, to ensure a comprehensive exposure that encompasses the full spectrum of visual complexity. This approach aligns with

the findings of Gerger, Forster and Leder (2017) and Lee (1977), highlighting the importance of varied visual exposure in influencing perceptual fluency.

In addition to the visual stimuli, the methodology incorporated a descriptive paragraph about Chinese cultural elements. This paragraph was designed to manipulate conceptual fluency by providing participants with contextual information, thereby increasing their exposure to the semantic aspects of the images. This strategy, based on the research of Winkielman, Schwarz, Fazendeiro and Reber (2018), aimed to deepen the participants' understanding and familiarity with the cultural significance of the elements, thereby influencing how they cognitively process these visual stimuli.

The images chosen for prior exposure played a crucial role in this experimental setup. These images were not randomly selected; instead, they were specifically chosen to represent a diverse range of Chinese cultural elements (Figure 3.6 to Figure 3.8). The elements are selected by the researcher by using “Chinese cultural elements” as keywords from stock image and approved the three brand designers to ensure their cultural authenticity. By doing so, the researchers ensured that participants were exposed to a broad spectrum of visual complexity levels, from minimalistic and simple designs to more intricate and complex patterns. This variety in visual stimuli was critical for examining the effects of visual complexity on processing fluency and the moderating role of prior exposure. The careful selection of these images was thus integral to the effectiveness and success of the study's methodology. The image for increase prior exposure are following:

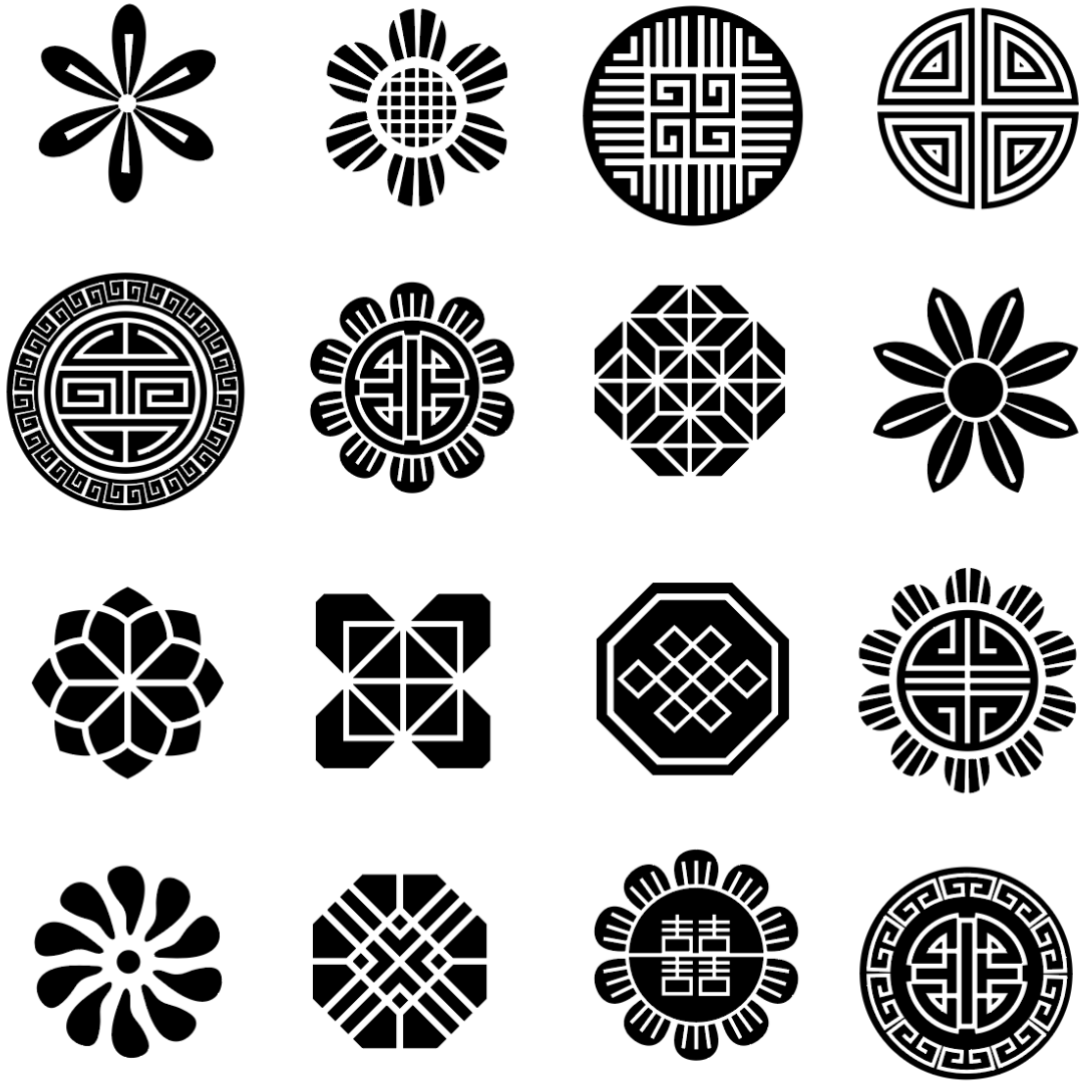


Figure 3.6: **Images of Chinese cultural elements for prior exposure (group A)**

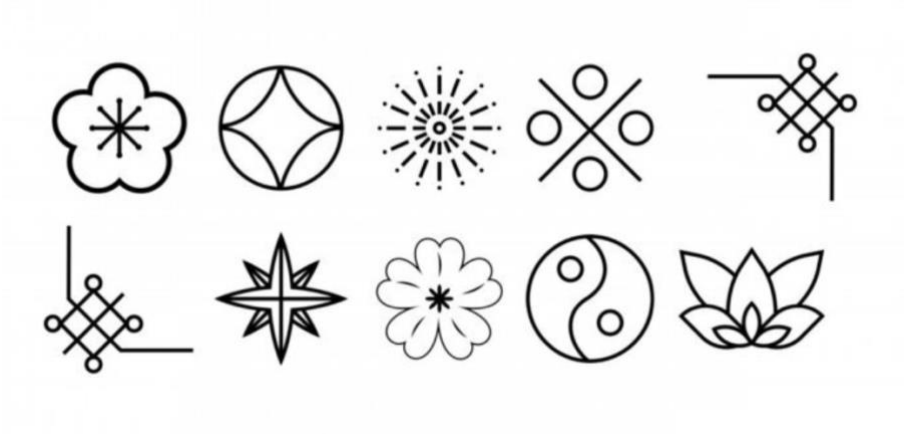
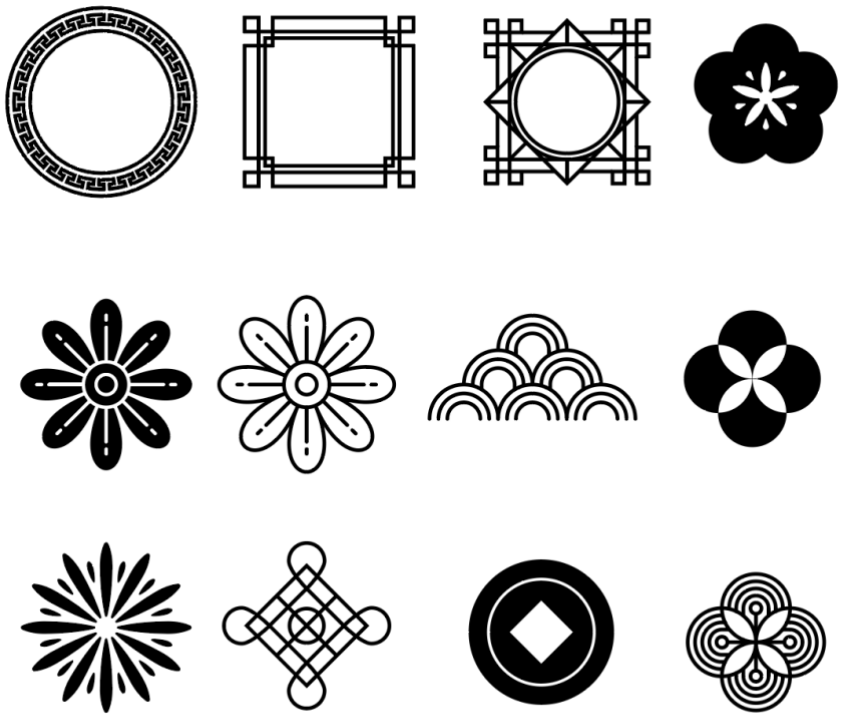


Figure 3.7: Images of Chiense cultural elements for prior exposure (group B)



e

Figure 3.8: Images of Chiense cultural elements for prior exposure (group C)

The paragraph for prior exposure of conceptual fluency:

China's diplomacy is a manifestation of the traditional Chinese cultural values of harmony, compassion, righteousness, civility, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety. These values are encapsulated in the notion of harmony, which is the most significant Chinese cultural value.

Due to the language difference, the original language is Chinese and translate into English for the purpose of this thesis.

3.8.2 Visual Complexity of Visual elements

In order to assess the moderating effect of prior exposure, the participants were specifically told to assess the degrees of visual complexity and simplicity in the Chinese cultural elements they were shown, using a scale that contained the following descriptions. To assess their perceptions of visual complexity, participants utilized a scale that included a range of descriptors, allowing for a nuanced evaluation of the complexity and simplicity. The descriptors on the scale encompassed the following dimensions: The simple Chinese cultural element been asked "I think this element is simple", for the complex Chinese cultural element been asked "I think this element is complex". Ranging from 1 -7, which 1 indicated strongly disagree while 7 indicated strongly agree.

3.8.3 Independent Variable and Moderator

In this study, the principal variable under investigation was visual complexity, while prior exposure was examined as a moderating factor. Both these elements were strategically manipulated to assess their effects. The questionnaire was divided into four versions: Simple element without prior exposure, Complex element without prior exposure, Simple element with prior exposure, Complex element without prior exposure. This approach was designed

to elucidate the nuanced interplay between visual complexity and prior exposure in shaping consumer perceptions and responses of Chinese cultural elements.

3.8.4 Dependent Variable

The study's approach to measuring fluency as a dependent variable was comprehensive, encompassing both perceptual and conceptual aspects. Perceptual fluency, relating to the ease with which visual information is processed, was assessed using a bipolar scale. This scale included pairs of descriptors such as 'This element is "Disorganized/Organized," "Disorderly/Tidy," "Congested/Spacious," "Difficult to perceive /Easy to perceive," and an additional criterion. This scale was a modified version of the one developed by Mosteller, Donthu, and Eroglu (2014), with an additional item 'Hard to perceive/Easy to perceive' to further capture the nuances of visual perception.

For the measurement of conceptual fluency, which pertains to the ease of understanding the meaning and ideas behind the visual elements, a 7-point Likert scale was employed. This scale ranged from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 7 ('Strongly Agree'). Participants responded to statements such "The concept of the element is easy to comprehend," "The meaning of the element is easy to comprehend," and "The significance of the element is easy to comprehend". These statements were designed drawing upon the frameworks established by Chang (2013) and Wu et al. (2016), ensuring a thorough assessment of the participants' cognitive processing related to the understanding of the visual elements. By utilizing these scales, the study aimed to capture a holistic view of fluency, encompassing both the perceptual ease of processing visual complexity and the cognitive ease of grasping the underlying concepts.

3.8.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was executed using SPSS 25 software. Initial steps involved assessing data reliability, followed by conducting one-way ANOVA and PROCESS regression to test hypotheses, with a significance level set at 95%. Implying that a p-value of less than 0.05 was required for the results to be considered statistically significant. This threshold established a rigorous standard for determining the reliability of the findings. The t-tests compared means across different levels of visual complexity. This analytical approach aimed to detect variations in perceived complexity and discern relationships across dimensions.

3.8.6 Reliability and Validity

The study emphasized consistency and stability in measurement, employing Cronbach's Alpha (with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.7$) to ensure reliability in measuring visual complexity dimensions (George & Mallery, 2003). By rigorously assessing the reliability of the measurements using Cronbach's Alpha, the study aimed to enhance the confidence in the accuracy and stability of its findings. This approach ensured that the data collected for visual complexity dimensions met a high standard of reliability, further strengthening the validity of the study's conclusions.

3.9 Study 3: Visual Complexity and Purchase Intention

The purpose of the third study was to investigate the influence that visual complexity has on the intentions of customers to make purchases, as well as the role that processing fluency plays as a mediator. Utilizing a between-groups approach, the study compared simple and complicated visual stimuli. The primary measured factor in the study was the consumers' intention to make a purchase, while fluency - encompassing perceptual and conceptual aspects - served as the mediator. Visual complexity was the independent variable.

The study 3 is applied with the same elements and mock up from study 1 and study 2, since it already verified with appropriate visual complexity (high vs. low), and appropriate cultural authenticity level within them.

3.9.1 Procedure

The experimental protocol meticulously adhered to the methodology employed in the preceding two studies, maintaining consistency in research procedures. The questionnaire was administered through the widely utilized Chinese online platform "Questionnaire Star," which is a reputable and commonly used online survey application for research purposes. This platform ensured the efficient distribution of the survey in luxury fashion sector to the target participants. Participants in the study were both volunteers and individuals who were invited to participate. They were presented with a survey that aimed to examine their demographic characteristics and their patterns of luxury purchasing behavior. Prior to engaging with the main components of the survey, participants provided informed consent, as detailed in Appendix 2.

The initial section of the survey was dedicated to gathering information on participants' demographic characteristics and their behaviors related to luxury purchasing. This segment provided valuable context for understanding the participants' backgrounds and preferences in luxury consumer behavior. Following this, participants were exposed to either a simplistic or intricate Chinese cultural element, which was a critical aspect of the experimental manipulation. Subsequently, they were tasked with responding to a set of questions designed to assess the perceived complexity of the presented image.

As the survey progressed, participants were prompted to evaluate their metacognitive experiences, encompassing both perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. This allowed

the researchers to gain insights into how participants processed the visual stimuli and comprehended the underlying concepts associated with them.

Towards the conclusion of the survey, participants were presented with a concise set of questions related to their intentions regarding the purchase of the depicted T-shirt and their inclination to share this product with their friends. These questions investigate the core aspects of consumer behavior and provided valuable data on the participants' responses to the visual stimuli. The study concluded with a debriefing statement, ensuring that participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and methodology. This ethical practice aimed to provide transparency and clarity to the participants, addressing any potential questions or concerns they may have had.

In summary, the study's experimental protocol followed a well-structured and systematic approach, with each section of the survey serving a specific purpose in examining the relationships between visual complexity, processing fluency, and purchase intentions in the context of luxury consumer behavior.

3.9.2 Visual Complexity of Visual elements

In order to assess the mediating effect of processing fluency, the participants were specifically told to assess the degrees of visual complexity in the Chinese cultural elements they were shown, using a scale that contained the following descriptions. To assess their perceptions of visual complexity, participants utilized a scale that included a range of descriptors, allowing for a nuanced evaluation of the complexity and simplicity. The descriptors on the scale encompassed the following dimensions: This Chinese element looks complex to me" and "The Chinese element looks simple to me" These ratings were provided on a 7-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." This

comprehensive set of descriptors allowed participants to provide detailed feedback on their perceptions of the visual complexity of the presented element.

3.9.3 Independent Variable

The research 1 and study 2 systematically controlled the independent variable of visual complexity. More precisely, the individuals were segregated into two distinct groups: one group was subjected to a simple Chinese cultural element on a white T-shirt, while the other group was exposed to a complex Chinese cultural element on a white T-shirt. This manipulation allowed for a controlled examination of how variations in visual complexity influenced participants' responses and perceptions.

3.9.4 Mediator and Dependent Variables

Study 3 focused on the mediator of interest, which was fluency. This included both perceptual and conceptual fluency. In line with approach used in the previous two research, perceptual fluency was assessed using the scale developed by Mosteller, Donthu, and Eroglu (2014), which included the additional dimension of "Hard to perceive/Easy to perceive." The assessment of levels of conceptual fluency was conducted using a scale that was modified from the one developed by Lee and Labroo (2004).

The main focus of Study 3 revolved around the dependent variable, specifically related to the participants' intentions to make a purchase. The study employed Smith et al.'s (2007) scale to assess purchasing intentions. Participants were instructed to utilize a 7-point bipolar scale to indicate the likelihood of obtaining the item, considering specific criteria, like as "Unlikely/Likely," "Improbable/Probable," and "Impossible/Possible." This comprehensive approach allowed for a thorough examination of participants' intentions to engage in a purchase decision.

3.9.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was executed using SPSS 25 software. Initial steps involved assessing data reliability, followed by conducting one-way ANOVA and PROCESS regression to test hypotheses, with a significance level set at 95%. The t-tests compared means across different levels of visual complexity. This analytical approach aimed to detect variations in perceived complexity and discern relationships across dimensions.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

In this doctoral research, adherence to ethical guidelines was paramount, particularly due to the primary data collection involving human subjects. This procedural step ensured the research aligned with the university's ethical framework, especially considering the study's reliance on quantitative methodologies with human participation. The research's ethical rigor was further demonstrated by the requirement of informed consent from all participants (referenced in Appendix 2). This consent was not merely a formality; it was a declaration from each participant, acknowledging their voluntary engagement in the study, as emphasized by Fontana and Frey (2000). This consent process also included an assurance to participants about their right to withdraw at any point, underscoring the study's respect for participant autonomy.

Given that the thesis investigates the complexity of various metacognitive processes, a critical ethical aspect was ensuring that the participants' mental well-being remained unaffected. This consideration was in strict adherence to the university's ethics guidelines, which mandate the safeguarding of participants against any form of harm, discomfort, or embarrassment during the research process.

Another key ethical component was the study's experimental design, which initially kept participants unaware of the research's true objectives. This approach necessitated a comprehensive debriefing session post-experiment, where participants were fully informed about the study's aims and methodologies. The debriefing also offered an additional opportunity for participants to withdraw their data, should they choose to do so post-experiment. Data privacy and confidentiality were also pivotal in this research. Personal data collection was avoided, and all experiments were conducted anonymously. The confidentiality of the data collected was strictly maintained, and its use was limited to academic purposes only. Access to the data was restricted to the researcher and his two supervisors, ensuring a controlled and secure data environment.

Lastly, the research framework included provisions for addressing any concerns participants might have had regarding the experiments, their involvement, or data usage. Contact details of the researcher and supervisors were provided beforehand, establishing an open channel for communication and reassurance. This comprehensive approach to ethical considerations not only aligned with the university’s guidelines but also upheld the integrity and reliability of the research process.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter thoroughly establishes the methodological framework of the inquiry. The main objective of the researches is to examine the intricate relationship between visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and consumer Chinese luxury purchasing intentions. It emphasizes the role of processing fluency as a mediator and the impact of earlier exposure as a moderator. This research was conducted using a postpositivist philosophy, which was further enhanced by a deductive technique. The study primarily employed quantitative research methodologies for both data collecting and analysis. The

decision to conduct this study was motivated by the necessity to examine a set of hypotheses formulated to analyse the correlation among the variables being investigated.

The study employed an experimental methodology to examine and establish causal relationships between visual complexity, prior exposure, and processing fluency (including perceptual and conceptual aspects), and customer purchase intentions. The participants were recruited online through the largest online questionnaire platform in China, known as "Questionnaire Star". Prior to their participation in the experiment, all participants granted informed consent, as outlined in Appendix 2. The tests were done with complete anonymity and confidentiality, and the data collected were exclusively for scholarly purposes.

The study included three separate trials to examine the correlations between visual complexity, prior exposure, processing fluency and purchase intentions toward Chinese luxury brand. Study 1 examines the impact of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on processing fluency in its several manifestations. In addition to this, Study 2 investigated how prior exposure influences the connection between visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and processing fluency, specifically focusing on its moderating impact. Study 3 delved deeper into the results by examining the connection of visual complexity and Chinese customer purchase intentions. Furthermore, the study specifically focused on the role of fluency as a mediator. The study utilized extensive scale measurements to quantify the correlations between these variables. Data analysis involved the utilization of several statistical approaches such as descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression analysis. Statistical software such as SPSS was employed to facilitate the analysis.

Thus far, the thesis has thoroughly analyzed the current literature on definition of logo. In Chapter 2, the researcher discussed the Chinese luxury brand and the cultural

element usage in it, as well as visual complexity, prior exposure, and processing fluency theory. In Chapter 3, the researcher presented a detailed explanation of the research methodology and formulated a set of hypotheses to investigate the possible relationships between these variables. The researcher will undertake an analysis of the data obtained from each of the three experiments that were carried out as part of the research throughout the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In addition to delving into the role that fluency plays as a mediator, the primary objective of this doctoral thesis is to conduct an exhaustive investigation into the impact that visual complexity has on the intents of consumers to make a purchase. Moreover, the study examines how prior exposure influences the link in question. In this chapter, the researcher intends to show and explain the data obtained from three separate experiments. Each experiment was carefully planned and carried out to thoroughly examine and confirm the stated hypotheses.

In adherence to a structured format, this chapter has been meticulously divided into three discrete sections, with each section meticulously addressing one of the conducted experiments. This structured format serves to enhance the clarity and coherence of the presentation of findings, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes. To provide an overview of the content within each section, we delineate the structure of these parts as follows:

Pilot Study: In this preliminary phase, a pilot study was conducted to refine and fine-tune the research methodologies employed in the subsequent experiments. This phase aimed to identify potential challenges and rectify any methodological issues that could compromise the validity and reliability of the ensuing experiments.

Participants' Profile and Procedure: This section offers a detailed insight into the demographics and profiles of the participants involved in the respective experiment.

Additionally, it outlines the precise procedures and methodologies adopted in the data collection process. A clear elucidation of these aspects is fundamental to contextualizing the subsequent findings.

Reliability: The reliability of the data and research instruments is paramount. This part of the chapter meticulously assesses the reliability of the data gathered, offering insights into the consistency and dependability of the research outcomes.

Validity of Visual Element: To ensure the effectiveness of experimental manipulations, this section thoroughly examines manipulation checks conducted during the experiments. These checks serve to validate that the intended independent variables were indeed manipulated as planned.

Results: The core findings of each experiment are presented in this section. These results encompass a thorough analysis of the data collected, illuminating the statistical significance of observed effects and relationships. The results section is the empirical foundation upon which subsequent discussions and conclusions are predicated.

Brief Discussion: Lastly, this chapter offers a succinct yet insightful discussion of the findings obtained from each experiment. While the comprehensive discussion and synthesis of results will be presented in subsequent chapters, this section provides initial insights and context for the outcomes observed.

In sum, this chapter unfolds as a comprehensive exploration of the empirical evidence generated through a series of experiments. These experiments serve as the linchpin of the research endeavor, enabling us to meticulously test and validate the hypotheses developed within the context of this doctoral thesis. Each section within this chapter contributes a distinct facet of understanding, resulting in a strong and well-supported

explanation of how visual complexity affects Chinese consumer purchase intentions toward Chinese luxury brands, including the influence of processing fluency as a mediator and the moderating effects of prior exposure.

4.1 Polit Study

The researchers have altered the visual complexity of Chinese cultural element based on the different degree. Based on prior study from Maier and Dost (2018) as well as Shapiro, (1999) the presenting participants with two types of Chinese cultural elements: one featuring a less detailed and simple arrangement on a white T-shirt (considered a simple visual element) and another featuring a Chinese cultural element with more detail and disposition in arrangement (considered a complex visual element). Building upon this existing study, the study conduct currently is aimed to explore the impact of visual complexity on fluency.

In alignment with methodologies employed in prior studies, visual complexity is manipulated similarly approach in this study, with a unique focus on integrating a culturally significant element: the Chinese knot. The Chinese knot, a distinguished form of folk art and a design element deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, has been extensively used within the Chinese fashion industry. This choice is not only relevant but also strategically significant for the study.

The inclusion of the Chinese knot as a focal element in this research is particularly compelling given its cultural and historical richness. As highlighted in the literature review, which draws upon semiotics, design, and historical literature, the Chinese knot is not merely a decorative item. Instead, it encapsulates essential attributes of Chinese culture, imbued with historical depth and cultural symbolism. Authors such as Williams (1976), Yi (2005), and Zhang (2007) have emphasized the Chinese knot's representational value, illustrating its

profound cultural significance and its enduring presence in various aspects of Chinese life and art. The utilization of the Chinese knot in this study, therefore, serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it acts as a tangible embodiment of Chinese cultural heritage, allowing for an exploration of visual complexity within a culturally specific context. This is crucial for understanding how cultural familiarity and symbolism impact consumer perception and processing fluency. Secondly, the choice of the Chinese knot as a symbol enriches the study by grounding it in a deep cultural narrative, thereby enhancing the ecological validity of the research findings. It ensures that the insights gained are not just applicable in a broad sense but are deeply rooted in the specific cultural nuances of Chinese society and its artistic expressions, since the Chinese Knot is common element appears in the Chinese fashion design industry (Zhang, 2007).

In summary, the selection of the Chinese knot as the primary visual element in this research is a deliberate and strategic choice that serves multiple important purposes. It not only aligns seamlessly with the study's methodological approach but also introduces a layer of cultural richness and significance, as a result, the investigation into visual complexity and perceptual fluency within the context of Chinese cultural element is enhanced in terms of its depth. The Chinese knot, as a symbol deeply rooted in Chinese culture, carries a wealth of historical and cultural connotations. Its intricate design and symbolism make it a compelling visual element to study in the context of this research. By incorporating such a culturally significant symbol, the study goes beyond surface-level analysis and investigates the nuances of how visual complexity is perceived and processed within the broader tapestry of Chinese culture.

Furthermore, it's noteworthy that the study intentionally refrained from mentioning or displaying the brand's name. This decision was made to prevent any potential bias in

participant responses. By maintaining anonymity regarding the brand, the research aimed to ensure that participants' evaluations of the visual element were not influenced by preconceived notions or brand associations. This approach aligns with best practices in experimental design and data collection (Sokolova, 2022.), reinforcing the validity of the study's findings.



Figure 4.1: Simple Chinese Cultural Element



Figure 4.2: Complex Chinese Cultural Element

In order to ascertain the appropriateness of the chosen Chinese cultural element for the research, a preliminary trial was designed with the sample size of 34 students from Wenzhou-Kean University (Female: 75%, Mean age: 22.1). The degree of visual complexity and cultural authenticity of this preliminary study were examined by showing the different (Simple vs. Complex) Chinese cultural element to the participants. The preliminary study was utilizing 7-point scale, where 1 indicated “Strongly Disagree” and 7 indicated “Strongly Agree” The participants who participated in this study were given the opportunity to provide their feedback. "I think this Chinese cultural element is simple" and "I think this Chinese cultural element is complex" were the two statements that were utilized in the process of understanding the level of complexity. Table 4.1 displays the average ratings for the level of visual complexity that each picture received. As for cultural authenticity, two statements were used for evaluation: “Does this element looks Chinese to you?” and “Does this element

looks not Chinese to you?" The average ratings for visual complexity for each Chinese cultural element are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Findings from Pilot Study 1 regarding simplicity and complexity

Element	Simplicity	Complexity
Element 1 (Simple Element)	M = 5.79 SD = 1.03	M = 2.68 SD = 1.81
Element 2 (Complex Element)	M = 3.79 SD = 1.45	M = 5.03 SD = 1.68

The result indicated a notable disparity in the perceived levels of visual complexity between the two Chinese cultural aspects. Participants specifically ranked the complex element as much more complicated ($M_{complex}$ = 5.03, SD = 1.68, $p < .001$) compared to the s Chinese cultural element with simplicity (M_{simple} = 2.68, SD = 1.81). In contrast, the basic Chinese components were found to be substantially less complex (M_{simple} = 5.79, SD = 1.03, $p < .001$) compare to the more complicated Chinese element ($M_{complex}$ = 3.79, SD = 1.45).

Table 4.2: Cultural authenticity results of Pilot Study 1

Element	Authentic Chinese	Not Authentic Chinese
Element 1 (Simple Element)	M = 5.34 SD = 0.95	M = 3.44 SD = 1.33
Element 2 (Complex Element)	M = 5.02 SD = 1.12	M = 3.71 SD = 0.86

The result revealed no statistical significance in the levels of cultural authenticity between the two Chinese cultural elements (simple vs. complex) (Table 4.2). ($M_{\text{simple-authentic Chinese}}$ = 5.39, SD = 0.95; $M_{\text{complex-authentic Chinese}}$ = 5.02, SD = 1.12 $p > .05$), as well as in not authentic value ($M_{\text{simple-Not authentic Chinese}}$ = 3.44, SD = 1.33; $M_{\text{complex- Not authentic Chinese}}$ = 3.71, SD = 0.86 $p > .05$). The results of the authenticity evaluation are noteworthy. Both of the visual elements, despite their differences in complexity, received higher ratings for Chinese authenticity. This outcome indicates that the authenticity control implemented in the study was successful. Participants consistently perceived both elements as Chinese cultural elements, with no significant difference in their authenticity levels. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of the research design in ensuring that both the simplistic and intricate visual elements were recognized as representative of Chinese culture.

The absence of a significant difference in authenticity ratings between the two elements suggests that participants did not distinguish between them in terms of cultural authenticity. The fact that this outcome occurred increases the study's potential to isolate and investigate the impact of visual complexity on processing fluency and the purchase intentions, all while maintaining cultural authenticity as a controlled element.

4.2 Study 1: Visual Complexity and Fluency

Study 1 aimed to investigate the influence of visual complexity on fluency, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. In the Study 1, the researcher employed a between-groups experimental research to examine the impact of different levels of visual complexity of Chinese cultural aspects. (simple vs. complex visual stimuli) on various aspects of fluency, such as perceptual and conceptual fluency. The primary aim was to assess the participants' level of fluency, with the independent variable being the manipulation of visual complexity. It is imperative to highlight that the degree of visual complexity was intentionally modified. Additionally, each participant was assigned at random to view either a simple Chinese culture element shown on a plain white T-shirt, or an intricate Chinese cultural element also displayed on a plain white T-shirt. Pilot research was done before the main experiment to verify the efficacy of the manipulation of visual complexity and cultural authenticity.

This study aimed to investigate the complex relationship between the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and fluency, providing a fundamental analysis of this topic. The study utilized a carefully planned experimental design, precise control over variables, and explicit descriptions of the dependent and independent variables to yield significant findings regarding the research inquiries.

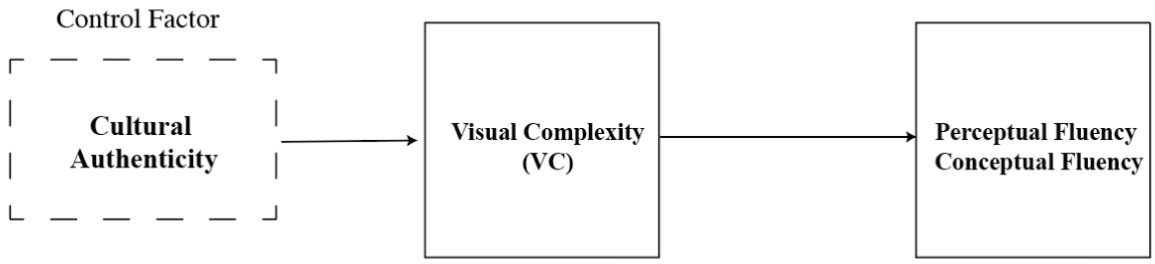


Figure 4.3: Model for the Study 1

4.2.1 Participants and Procedure

A total of 114 respondents participated in the study of the study 1. The demographics (Table 4.3) of the total respondents are as follows: 75.5% of the respondents are females (n = 86), and 24.5% are male respondents (n = 28). An analysis of the age demographics revealed a predominantly younger cohort, with most respondents falling within the 21–30 age bracket, accounting for 42.4% (n = 48) of the sample. This was closely followed by the 30–40 age group, representing 36.2% (n = 41) of the participants. The under-20 and over-40 age groups constituted 3.4% (n = 4) and 18% (n = 21) of the sample, respectively. The predominance of younger respondents in this survey reflects contemporary consumer trends, especially in the realm of Chinese luxury market.

Regarding luxury fashion purchasing behaviors, a significant portion of the respondents, 47.3% (n = 54), reported making such purchases once a year. This was followed by those purchasing one to three times a year (35.3%, n = 40), suggesting a moderate to high engagement with luxury fashion products. Respondents purchasing luxury fashion items less than once a year or more than three times a year were in the minority, at 9.6% (n = 11) and 7.6% (n = 9), respectively. In summation, the demographic profile skews towards a younger,

predominantly female, urban population particularly engaged in the luxury fashion sector. These characteristics bear implications for the interpretation of subsequent analyses and the contextualization of consumer behaviors and attitudes within this demographic milieu.

Afterwards, the participants were assigned at random to observe either a simple or complex Chinese cultural element. Participants were instructed to assess the level of processing fluency they experienced, while observing the Chinese cultural element.

Table 4.3: Study 1 Demographics

Variable	Category	n	Percent
Gender	Male	28	24.5%
	Female	86	75.5%
Age	< 20	4	3.4%
	21 - 30	48	42.4%
	30 - 40	41	36.2%
	> 40	21	18%
Luxury Consumption Frequency (per year)	< 1	11	9.6%
	1 - 3	94	82.6%
	> 3	9	7.6%

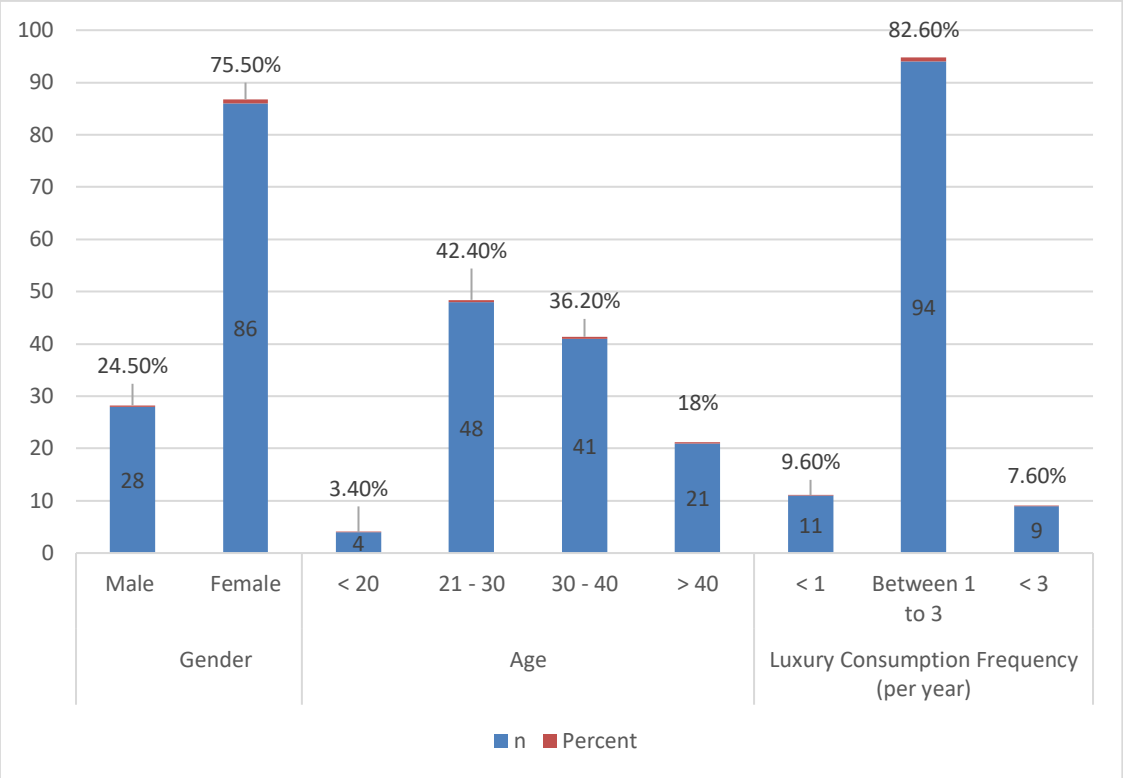


Figure 4.4: Study 1 demographics in chart

4.2.2 Reliability

Prior to hypothesis testing, an analysis is performed to assess the internal reliability of the questions was performed on all the scale in the study to assess perceptual, conceptual levels. As shown in Table 4.5, 4.6, all the scales exhibited reliability, with the level exceeding the threshold of .70 (DeVellis, 2012).

Table 4.4: Cronbach Alpha anf Factor Loading for Study 1

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Questions	Factor Loading
Perceptual Fluency	0.953	The element was Disorganized/Organized	0.781
		The element was Disorderly/Tidy	0.831
		The element was Congested/ Spacious	0.806
		The element was Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive	0.780
		The element was Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	0.734
Conceptual Fluency	0.932	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend	0.702
		The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend	0.841
		The significance of the element was easy to comprehend	0.722

Table 4.5: Scale reliability for study 1

Variable	Perceptual Fluency	Conceptual Fluency
Cronbach's Alpha	0.953	0.932
Number of Items (questions)	5	3
Scale Item (Questions)	The element was: Disorganized/Organized Disorderly/Tidy Congested/ Spacious Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend The significance of the element was easy to comprehend
Scale Type	7-points bipolar scale	7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)
Source	Mosteller et al. (2014)	Lee and Labroo (2004)

4.2.3 Results

Examining the impact of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on two separate aspects of processing fluency: perceptual and conceptual is the main objective of the Study 1. The variable being examined was visual complexity, which involved comparing basic and complicated visual stimuli. Meanwhile, the variable being studied was fluency, which was divided into perceptual and conceptual components. Given the intricate complexity of this investigation, this section is subdivided into three pieces. Each section is dedicated to examining the how the two dimensions of processing fluency (Perceptual and Conceptual fluency) is impacted by the visual complexity of Chinese cultural element. The initial segment investigates the impact of visual complexity on perception, while the subsequent section delves into the correlation between visual complexity and conceptual comprehension and fluency.

4.2.4 Visual Complexity and Perceptual Fluency

The study hypothesizes that individuals will experience more challenges in digesting and understanding the information offered in a visually intricate stimulus. The complexity arises from the inclusion of additional details, a greater number of pieces, and the non-uniform arrangement of these elements, which increases the cognitive work required for perceptual processing. Conversely, the study posits that processing the simple element featuring a minimum involvement of detail and elements will prove notably smoother. Consequently, a simple Chinese cultural element is expected to exhibit higher perceptual fluency levels than complex Chinese cultural elements. This hypothesis is explicitly outlined as follows:

H1a: The increased perceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on perceptual fluency.

The finding obtained from the ANOVA tests, detailed in Tables 4.6 and Table 4.7, provide compelling evidence on the impact of visual complexity on the ease of perception. It's evident that simple Chinese cultural elements (M_{simple} = 5.61, SD = 1.49) are processed more easily compared to complex ones ($M_{complex}$ = 3.97, SD = 1.32). This significant disparity in perceptual fluency levels (F (1,112) = 38.907, $p < .000$) highlights the detrimental effect of increased visual complexity on the ease of cognitive processing. In essence, the study confirms that the simplicity of visual stimuli enhances perceptual fluency, thus validating hypothesis H1a. These results are critical as they not only underscore the importance of visual simplicity in design but also illustrate how cultural elements, when simplified, can be more effectively processed and appreciated by viewers. This insight is particularly relevant in the context of brand design and marketing, where the clarity and comprehensibility of visual elements are paramount.

Table 4.6: Descriptives Result fot H1a

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	57	5.6140	1.6	7.00	5.2200	6.0081	1.48510
Complex	57	3.9719	1	6.80	3.6214	4.3224	1.32095
Total	114	4.7930	1.00	7.00	4.4916	5.0943	1.62414

Table 4.7: ANOVA results for H1a

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	76.851	1	76.851	38.907	.000
Within Groups	221.224	112	1.975		
Total	298.074	113			

The study's findings offer useful insights into the cognitive requirements imposed by intricate stimuli when faced by consumers. The finding from this study is aligned with the various pervious study in the field, which strengthens the agreement between the study's results and the current knowledge in the field of cognitive psychology and consumer behaviour. Multiple previous investigations have arrived at comparable findings about the

cognitive requirements linked to intricate stimuli. Researchers such as Maier and Dost (2018), Wu et al. (2019) and Peracchio and Meyers-Levy (1997) have all contributed to our understanding of how complex visual stimuli, including complex Chinese cultural elements, place higher cognitive demands on individuals. Complex stimuli, such as intricate Chinese cultural elements, necessitate a substantially greater level of cognitive effort for processing and comprehending their intricate physical attributes. This heightened cognitive effort results in a perceptual process that individuals subjectively perceive as more challenging and less fluent compared to the processing of simpler visual stimuli.

This heightened cognitive load is primarily attributed to Chinese cultural elements with intricate details and more different element palace arrangements typically found in complex visual stimuli, which require extensive cognitive resources for comprehensive processing for perceptual fluency.

In contrast, the higher levels of perceptual fluency of a simple Chinese cultural element characterized by a simple detail and a singular focal detail are observed, aligned with the previous outcome. (Garner, 1974; Reber et al., 1998, 2004; Larsen et al., 2004; Peracchio & Meyers-Levy, 1997; Maier & Dost, 2018). The reduced cognitive effort required for processing such stimuli enhances the ease and fluidity of perceptual experiences, and make the respondent easier to visually process the elements. Therefore, it is evident that visual complexity and perceptual fluency share an inversely proportional relationship, as supported by previous research in this domain.

This study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge by delving deeper into the nuanced effects of visual complexity on perceptual fluency, considering the complexity within the Chinese cultural elements. Doing so offers a comprehensive

understanding of how cognitive processing and contextual factors collectively shape individuals' perceptual responses to visual stimuli.

4.2.5 Visual Complexity and Conceptual Fluency

The conceptual fluency, and its relationship with visual complexity level of Chinese cultural element is also examined in the Study 1. Elaborate components incorporating intricate details and diverse arrangements can result in increased processing time for comprehending the semantic significance of the component. On the other hand, a counterargument can be presented. People often create cognitive frameworks using their previous experiences and knowledge, which causes them to perceive and understand the meanings of intricate aspects of Chinese culture element in various ways. They may recognize numerous levels of significance within a simple Chinese cultural element. Therefore, the process of understanding the underlying meaning of a complicated piece is expected to require additional time and mental exertion. Conversely, simple Chinese cultural element that showcase minimalistic features with less complexity have a more direct and easily understandable meaning. Hence, this study posits that simple Chinese cultural aspects have greater conceptual fluency in comparison to their visual complexity level. Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated and examined:

H1b: The increased conceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on conceptual fluency.

The study aimed to scrutinize whether visual complexity, as represented by simple and complex elements, has a discernible impact on conceptual fluency, which pertains to the ease with which individuals can grasp and understand the underlying conceptual meaning of visual stimuli.

The results of the one-way ANOVA, as shown in Table 4.8 and Table 4.9, suggest that simple images are linked to greater levels of conceptual fluency (M = 5.78, SD = 1.44) compared to complex Chinese cultural element (M = 3.29, SD = 1.50). The results demonstrate a significant disparity in the levels of conceptual fluency between the simple and complex Chinese cultural elements (F (1,112) = 82.03, p < .000). Essentially, the presence of visual complexity has a detrimental impact on the ease of understanding concepts. The simple Chinese cultural element enhances the ease of understanding concepts more significantly than their complicated equivalents. Consequently, the findings of Study 1 provide evidence to support of hypothesis H1b.

Table 4.8: Descriptives Result for H1b

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	57	5.7836	2.00	7.00	5.4012	6.1661	1.44130
Complex	57	3.2864	1.00	7.00	3.9622	4.9104	1.50190
Total	114	4.5350	1.00	7.00	4.5378	4.8782	1.92877

Table 4.9: ANOVA result for H1b

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	177.725	1	177.725	82.033	0.000
Within Groups	242.650	112	2.167		
Total	420.376	113			

The findings demonstrate that simple Chinese cultural element enhances conceptual fluency, whereas complicated Chinese cultural element diminish it. Put simply, Chinese individuals tend to better understand the underlying meaning of basic Chinese cultural elements that have less complexity and a more organized arrangement of pieces, as opposed to a visually complex stimulus that has more details. Increased visual complexity reduces intellectual fluency. This study explores the effects of Chinese cultural element that are characterized by visual complexity level, providing insight into the cognitive processes that are involved. The visual features of complicated Chinese cultural features can present difficulties in perceiving and interpreting complex inputs. As a result, the complexity nature of these Chinese cultural element might make it difficult to for participants to understand their intended semantic meaning and message, causing them to be conceptually difficult to comprehend.

This discovery is consistent with the finding of processing fluency theory, as suggested by Reber et al. (2006). According to their finding, individuals are more likely to experience enhanced fluency when interacting with visual elements that are perceived as easier in comparison to complicated ones. Conversely, a simple visual element showcasing

a solitary product against an unadorned backdrop might improve conceptual fluency as the observer's focus is directed solely onto that product itself. The study's findings indicate that the decreased conceptual fluency processing linked to less complex Chinese cultural element is consistent with the research conducted by Desimone and Duncan (1995). The Study 1 enhances our comprehension of the intricate interaction between visual complexity, perceptual ease, and conceptual ease within the framework of Chinese cultural aspects. This study presents novel perspectives that question established assumptions and open up avenues for future investigation into these dynamics.

4.3 Study 2: The Moderating Effect of Prior Exposure on Fluency

Based on the Figure 4-5, the aim of the Study 2 was designed to examine the relationship between visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on processing fluency, also the involvement of prior exposure effect as the moderator. This study employed an experimental approach to investigate the effects of simple versus complex Chinese cultural element and previous exposure compared to no previous exposure. The impacts of both visual complexity and prior exposure were manipulated to assess their impact. The correlation between processing fluency and visual complexity of Chinese cultural element is examined.

The moderator in this study was prior exposure. The study employed a 2x2 factorial design, resulting in the formation of four unique groups: simple element with prior exposure, simple element without prior exposure, complicated element with prior exposure, and complex element without prior exposure. The extensive design of this study allowed the researcher to examine the complicated correlation between visual complexity of Chinese

cultural element, processing fluency and prior exposure, providing vital insights into how these factors interact to affect cognitive processing of visual stimuli.

The findings of this study were expected to provide a substantial contribution to the comprehension of fluency in relation to visual complexity and past exposure, hence enriching the current body of knowledge in cognitive psychology and consumer behaviour research.

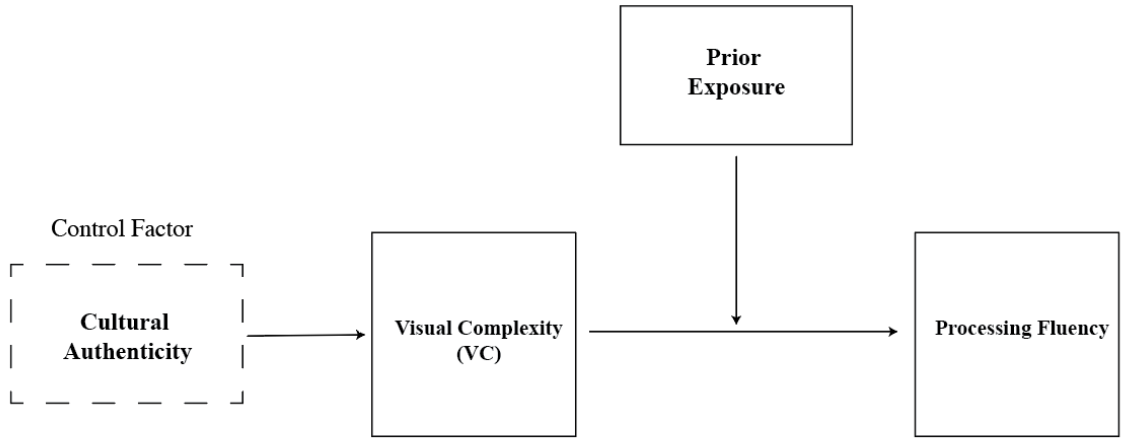


Figure 4.5: Study 2 Model

4.3.1 Participants and Procedure

In Study 2, a total of 278 respondents participated. The demographic (Table 4.11, Figure 4.6) breakdown of the participants is as follows: the majority, 65.5% (n = 182), were female, while 34.5% (n = 96) were male. Age-wise, most respondents were young adults,

with 44.6% (n = 124) in the 21–30 age range, followed by 30.7% (n = 85) in the 30–40 age bracket. The under-20 and over-40 age groups were less represented, making up 8.9% (n = 25) and 15.8% (n = 44) of the sample, respectively. This demographic composition, with a predominance of younger participants, mirrors current trends in the consumer market, especially in the context of luxury fashion.

Regarding luxury fashion purchasing habits, over half of the respondents, 62.9% (n = 175), reported making luxury purchases annually. A significant number, 22.4% (n = 62), made such purchases one to three times a year, indicating a moderate to high engagement with luxury fashion. A smaller segment of the sample, 4.2% (n = 12) and 10.5% (n = 29), reported purchasing luxury fashion items less than once a year or more than three times a year, respectively. Overall, the demographic profile leans towards a younger, predominantly female audience with a notable interest in luxury fashion. These demographics are crucial for understanding and interpreting the study's findings, particularly in relation to consumer behaviors and attitudes within the luxury fashion sector. The sample Chinese cultural elements for this study are the same as the Study 1, which the researcher shows in the following (Figure 4.7, Figure 4.8). The participants were asked to fill a number of series of manipulation-check questions for visual complexity examine, ranging from 1 -7. After the participants finished the visual complexity examine, they were asking to evaluate the level of processing fluency (perceptual and conceptual fluency) they encountered.

Table 4.10: Study 2 Demographics

Variable	Category	n	Percent
Gender	Male	96	34.5%
	Female	182	65.5%
Age	< 20	25	8.9%
	21 - 30	124	44.6%
	30 - 40	85	30.7%
	> 40	44	15.8%
Luxury Consumption Frequency (per year)	< 1	12	4.2%
	1 - 3	247	85.3%
	> 3	29	10.5%

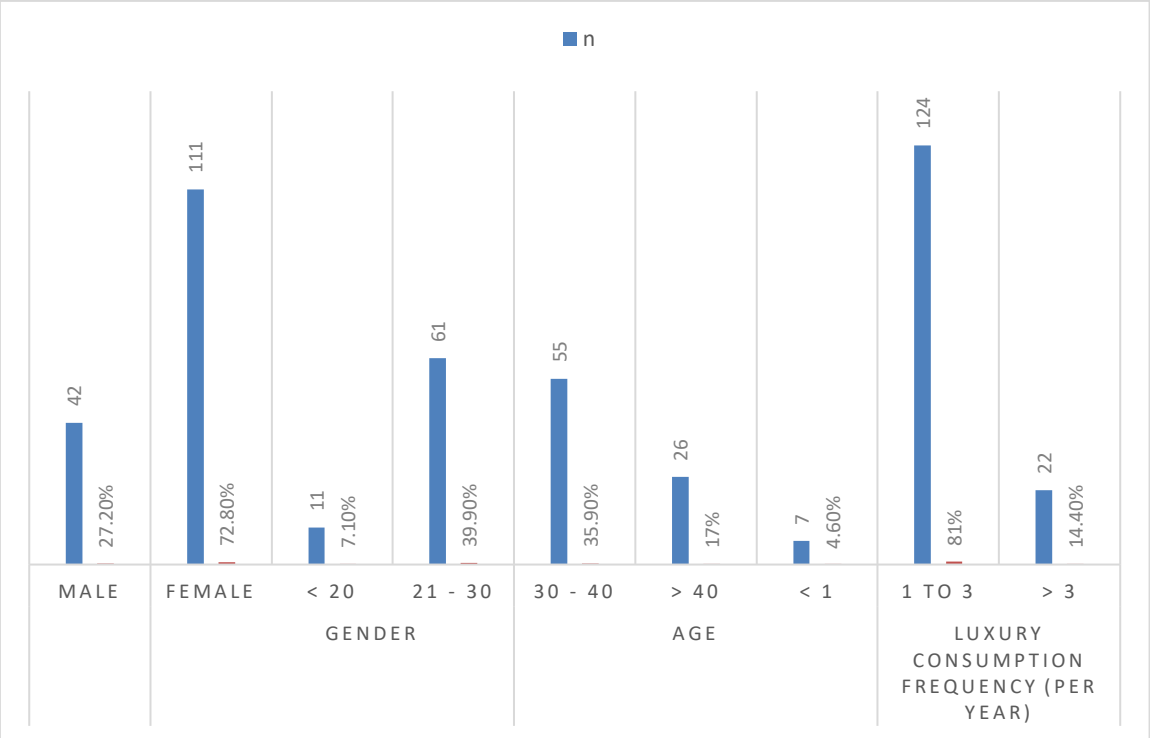


Figure 4.6: Study 2 Demographics in Chart



Figure 4.7： Simple Chinese Cultural Element



Figure 4.8： Complex Chinese Cultural Element

4.3.2 Reliability and Validity

A validity of the processing fluency scales adopted from previously published research applied to ensure the scale reliability used in the Study 2. Prior to the analysis of the study results, a crucial reliability test was conducted for the scale measurements to assess their consistency and dependability. The results of this test, as presented in Table 4.13 and Table 4.14, demonstrated that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the established minimum threshold of 0.70. This outcome affirms the high reliability of all scales employed in the study, as recommended by DeVellis (2012).

Table 4.11: Cronbach Alpha and Factoring Loading for Study 2

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Questions	Factor Loading
Perceptual Fluency	0.953	The element was Disorganized/Organized	0.811
		The element was Disorderly/Tidy	0.859
		The element was Congested/ Spacious	0.872
		The element was Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive	0.776
		The element was Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	0.729
Conceptual Fluency	0.932	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend	0.834
		The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend	0.850
		The significance of the element was easy to comprehend	0.871

Table 4.12: Scale (Cronbach's Alpha) reliability for Study 2

Variable	Perceptual Fluency	Conceptual Fluency
Cronbach's Alpha	0.95	0.894
Number of Items (questions)	5	3
Scale Item (Questions)	The element was: Disorganized/Organized Disorderly/Tidy Congested/ Spacious Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend The significance of the element was easy to comprehend
Scale Type	7-points bipolar scale	7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)
Source	Mosteller et al. (2014)	Lee and Labroo (2004)

As stated before, participants were randomly shown to either simple or complex Chinese cultural elements without prior exposure, or simple or complex Chinese cultural element with exposure.

4.3.3 Result

Based on the objective of the Study that the researcher previously mentioned, the prior exposure effect on the correlation between visual complexity and processing fluency is examined. Furthermore, the visual complexity is the independent variable of the Study 2, which was categorized into two groups: simple and complicated Chinese cultural elements. The moderating factor was the presence or absence of prior exposure to the Chinese cultural element, together with a brief introduction to the Chinese cultural aspects. Perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency, the two aspects of processing fluency are examined. Therefore, based on the specific aspect of fluency been examined in two different sections individually.

4.3.3.1 Prior Exposure and Perceptual Fluency

The influence of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on perceptual fluency is main objective of this section. Based upon the previous research conducted in Study 1, this investigation is aligned with the objectives indicated in H1a. The Study 2 is consistent maintained the hypothesis H1 that the deceasing perceptual fluency due to the high visual complexity of Chinese cultural element. It suggests that simple Chinese cultural element result in higher levels of perceptual fluency compared to complicated Chinese cultural element. Thus, the hypothesis was reassessed in the following manner:

H1a: The increased perceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on perceptual fluency.

The outcomes from the ANOVA tests, as detailed in Table 4.15 and Table 4.16, substantiate that a much higher degree of perceptual fluency from simple Chinese cultural element is exhibited (M_{simple} = 5.02, SD = 1.71) in comparison to the complicated Chinese cultural element ($M_{complex}$ = 3.86, SD = 1.11, F (1, 276) = 45.57, $p < .001$). Study 2 serves as a robust reaffirmation of the findings from the preceding experiment, once again highlighting a consistent pattern of results. In alignment with the earlier study, participants in Study 2 demonstrated a notable preference for processing simple Chinese cultural elements over their complex counterparts. This replicated observation reinforces the initial hypothesis (H1a) and provides additional empirical support for its validity.

The replicability of these findings across two separate experiments lends further credence to the notion that visual complexity plays a significant role in influencing how individuals perceive and process Chinese cultural elements. It underscores the consistency of the observed effects and strengthens the overall conclusion that simplicity tends to enhance perceptual fluency compared to complexity. This consistency in results enhances the robustness of the study's conclusions and contributes to a deeper understanding of the correlation between visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and perceptual fluency in Chinese luxury fashion field.

Table 4.13: Descriptives for H1a (Study 2)

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	140	5.0243	1.6	7.00	4.7385	5.3101	1.71048
Complex	138	3.8551	1.00	6.80	3.6683	4.0419	1.10968
Total	278	4.4439	1.00	7.00	4.2602	4.6276	1.55569

Table 4.14: ANOVA for for H1a (Study 2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	95.006	1	95.006	45.573	.000
Within Groups	575.379	276	2.085		
Total	670.385	277			

Delving deeper into these findings, it becomes evident that a simple Chinese cultural element featuring with less details are subject to more effortless perceptual capture and processing when contrasted with a complex element that portray the same cultural

authenticity level but with more details and irregularity in element placement. This alignment with earlier research such as Reber et al. (1998) and Larsen et al. (2004) substantiates the idea that when a visual object, or a product with additional information, the perceptual effort required to comprehend it increases significantly.

Based on those findings, the research further discovers the prior exposure on perceptual fluency. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, it primarily influences our responses by altering the speed and accuracy with which we can identify the stimulus (Roediger, 1990). In the domain of prior exposure research, it is clear that recent exposures to a target element enhance its accessibility in memory (Jacoby & Dallas, 1981). This phenomenon underscores the significance of prior exposure as a factor influencing how individuals perceive and process information (Zajonc, 1968). Simply explain: the pervious exposure of similar elements can increase the perceptual fluency and decision judgement. According to their assertions, the researcher makes the following hypothesis:

H2a: The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and perceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher perceptual fluency.

The regression analysis (Appendices 4) for simple Chinese cultural element shows that how the prior exposure impact on the perceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements. The perceptual fluency is not significantly influenced by the prior exposure. Furthermore, the findings indicate the degree of perceptual fluency in not having noticeable disparity and difference in the two scenarios ($\beta = 0.09$, SE = 0.19, $t = 0.49$, $p > 0.05$; 95%

CI = [-0.29 to 0.46]). Based on these findings, the researcher concluded prior exposure doesn't significantly impact the perceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements.

This intriguing finding warrants further elaboration as it deviates from the prevailing trends observed in prior research within the field of prior exposure. Typically, prior exposure has been associated with reduced reaction times or faster responses, attributed to the enhanced perceptual fluency resulting from repeated exposure (Bar & Ullman, 1996; Davenport & Potter, 2004; Palmer, 1975). However, the results of this study, particularly in the context of simple Chinese cultural elements, challenge this established pattern. Contrary to expectations, prior exposure to simple elements did not align with the anticipated increase in perceptual fluency and subsequent reduction in reaction times. This departure from conventional findings prompts a closer examination of the underlying mechanisms at play when individuals encounter and process simplified visual stimuli. This result can be explained by Bornstein (1989), which he proposed that the prior exposure has a more prominent influence on the stimuli that were more unfamiliar to the subjects. Notably, the visually simple Chinese cultural elements can be easier to encounter in the Chinese consumers' environment than the complexed one, especially in luxury fashion industry (Schroeder et al., 2015b; Zhang et al., 2020b). Furthermore, the researchers also suggest that prior exposure effect also affect more on complex, information rich stimuli (Bornstein et al., 1990; Cox & Cox, 1988, 2002), therefore, in this case, the perceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements observed a less significant influence from prior exposure effect.

By highlighting this unique aspect of the study's results, it underscores the nuanced nature of perceptual fluency and the potential influence of cultural elements on the established patterns of prior exposure. This insight adds depth to the understanding of how individuals respond to different levels of visual complexity in the context of Chinese cultural

elements. Furthermore, the regression analysis for the complex image (Appendices 4) reveals that prior exposure significantly influences the perceptual fluency of complex Chinese cultural elements ($\beta = 0.24$, SE = 0.104, $t = 2.303$, $p = 0.02$; 95% CI = [0.03 to 0.44]). The perceptual fluency is notably affected by prior exposure, with mean scores shifting from. Additionally, the results shown, the degree of perceptual fluency of complex Chinese cultural element in the two condition (with or without prior exposure) is having a noticeable difference. Therefore, it can be summarized that prior exposure has a substantial impact on the perception of complex Chinese cultural elements compared to simple ones.

The finding of the effect of prior exposure on perceptual fluency of a complex Chinese cultural element further supports the research outcome from the previous studies. Based on the processing fluency theory, that when the subjects expose to a stimulus prior, can increase the processing speed and fluency, make the stimulus easier to perceive and understand (Bornstein & D'Agostino 1992, 1994). For instance, Reber et al. (2006) found that the respondents being exposed to a similar visual element before they participated in the actual test can significantly increase the accuracy, as well as shorten the response time to the test visual sample. The prior exposure effect has also been corroborated by Lee and Labroo (2004), demonstrating that exposing consumers to a specific advertising design related to the test sample reduces processing time. In consumer behavior, it's been established that the prior exposure effect extends to products and brands as well. Even brief and incidental exposure to a brand's logo, name, or related imagery can lead to faster product evaluations (Janiszewski, 1993). This phenomenon can be attributed to processing fluency. According to the processing fluency model, when individuals encounter a stimulus they've been exposed to before, they process it more effortlessly. This heightened ease of processing contributes to a sense of familiarity and comfort. It's as if the brain acknowledges the

stimulus with a feeling of "I have seen this before; it is safe and known." This recognition, in turn, leads to more positive evaluations (Seamon et al., 1995).

In summary, the results of Study 2 partially support hypothesis H2a. First, the researcher revisited the notion of prior exposure and its influence on perceptual fluency. Contrary to much previous research, we found that when Chinese cultural elements were relatively simple, prior exposure didn't yield significant effects on perceptual fluency. This suggests that for easily discernible and less complex stimuli, such as simple Chinese cultural symbols, the prior exposure effect may not play a prominent role. Consumers might already process these elements with a high degree of fluency, regardless of prior exposure.

However, the plot thickened when the researcher examined the impact of prior exposure on perceptual fluency in the context of complex Chinese cultural elements. Here, the results were strikingly different. Prior exposure had a significant influence on perceptual fluency, enhancing it notably. Complex elements, rich in cultural details and contextual information, seemed to benefit greatly from prior exposure. This finding suggests that when dealing with intricate or multi-faceted cultural symbols, prior exposure can be a powerful factor, significantly improving consumers' ease of processing and recognition.These findings have the potential to influence and enrich the processing fluency theory and the prior exposure effect, especially within the context of Chinese cultural elements among Chinese consumers. A more detailed conclusion and explanation will be provided in the next chapter.

4.3.3.2 Prior Exposure and Conceptual Fluency

The researcher further examined the correlation between visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and conceptual fluency in the second stage of the Study 2. The

objective was to reassess the hypothesis (H1b) that visual complexity has an adverse effect on conceptual fluency. We anticipated that incorporating uncomplicated Chinese cultural aspects would augment conceptual fluency, whereas intricate features would lower it.

The results from one-way ANOVA tests, as meticulously detailed in Table 4-17 and Table 4-18, solidify our hypothesis. The result and findings indicated that the conceptual fluency is much higher in the simple Chinese cultural element (M_{simple} = 5,25, SD = 1.70), whereas the complicated Chinese cultural element is having low conceptual fluency image ($M_{complex}$ = 3.69, SD = 1.40, F (1, 276) = 70.148, $p < 0.001$). These findings, which replicate the outcomes of our earlier experiment, underscore the robustness of our conclusions.

Study 2 serves as a robust reaffirmation of our initial hypothesis, providing further evidence that individuals exhibit a preference for processing simple Chinese cultural elements over their complex counterparts. The findings from this study illuminate the cognitive dynamics at play when individuals engage with different levels of visual complexity within the context of Chinese cultural elements. These results hold significant implications as they bolster the credibility of H1b:

H1b: The increased conceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on conceptual fluency.

It posited that individuals would find it more effortless to process simple Chinese cultural elements. The consistency and reliability of these findings across different

experimental settings and contexts emphasize the robust nature of the observed effects. In essence, Study 2 strengthens our understanding of how visual complexity influences perceptual fluency in the realm of Chinese cultural elements, further contributing to the body of knowledge in this field.

Table 4.15: Descriptives for H1b (Study 2)

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	140	5.2524	2.0	7.00	4.9688	5.5360	1.69726
Complex	138	3.6883	1.0	7.00	3.4527	3.9240	1.39995
Total	278	4.4760	1.00	7.00	4.2705	4.6814	1.74029

Table 4.16: ANOVA for for H1b (Study 2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	170.010	1	170.010	70.148	0.000
Within Groups	668.916	276	2.424		
Total	838.926	277			

The investigation from the Study 2 also examined the realm of conceptual fluency by examining the influence of prior exposure effect. Guided by processing fluency theory (Reber et al., 2006), the researcher hypothesis centered on the notion that individuals would find it easier to comprehend the semantic meaning and message conveyed by the brief introduction of prior exposure to the similar elements. Conversely, we posited that when prior exposure is not available, the cognitive load increases as individuals grapple with resolving the Chinese cultural elements, rendering the image conceptually disfluent. Therefore, we put the following hypothesis to the test in this part of the study:

H2b: The moderation effect of prior exposure between visual complexity and conceptual fluency will be observed, for instance, both elements (simple vs. complex) will have significantly higher conceptual fluency.

The researcher conducted a series of analyses to scrutinize the outcomes, and the results are presented in following tables. These findings, as the researcher shall discuss in the following chapter, shed light on the intricate interplay between prior exposure and conceptual fluency, providing valuable insights into the cognitive processes underlying Chinese cultural element perception.

The analysis for the simple image (Appendices 4) reveals that prior exposure does not exert a significant impact on the conceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements. These results ($\beta = -0.17$, SE = 0.18, $t = -0.94$, $p > 0.05$; 95% CI = [-0.51 to 0.18]). illuminates the null relationship between prior exposure and the processing conceptually of simple Chinese cultural elements, underscoring the role of familiarity in shaping conceptual fluency

within this context. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the level of perceptual fluency in the two conditions (with and without prior exposure) is not significantly different to each other. The research be concluded that prior exposure doesn't significantly impact the conceptual of simple Chinese cultural elements.

This intriguing finding challenges the conventional expectations observed in prior exposure research. Traditionally, prior exposure has been associated with reduced reaction times or quicker cognitive responses, primarily attributed to the enhanced processing fluency resulting from repeated exposure (Bar & Ullman, 1996; Davenport & Potter, 2004; Palmer, 1975). However, the dynamics of prior exposure within the context of simple Chinese cultural elements, as unveiled in this study, deviate from these well-established patterns. In essence, while prior exposure typically leads to enhanced processing fluency and accelerated cognitive responses, this study indicates that such a phenomenon doesn't hold true for simple Chinese cultural elements. The absence of a significant impact of prior exposure on perceptual fluency in this context challenges conventional expectations and underscores the unique characteristics of this particular set of visual stimuli. Same as the prior exposure on perceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural element, the reason behind it might because the that the prior exposure has a more prominent influence on the stimuli that were more unfamiliar to the subjects (Bornstein, 1989). Notably, the visually simple Chinese cultural elements can be easier to encounter in the Chinese consumers' environment than the complexed one. Furthermore, the researchers also suggest that prior exposure effect also affect more on complex, information rich stimuli (Bornstein et al., 1990; Cox & Cox, 1988, 2002), therefore, in this case, the conceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements observed a less significant influence from prior exposure effect.

This insight further enriches our understanding of how individuals interact with visual stimuli in the context of cultural elements, emphasizing the need for nuanced consideration of prior exposure effects in different scenarios. Furthermore, the analysis (Appendices 4) indicates a significant effect of prior exposure on the conceptual fluency of complex Chinese cultural element. The statistical results reveal a noteworthy difference in perceptual fluency levels between the two studied conditions ($\beta = 0.30$, SE = 0.12, $t = 2.41$, $p < 0.05$; 95% CI = [0.05 to 0.54]). These findings lead to the conclusion that the familiarity with complex Chinese cultural elements concept is significantly alters their conceptual fluency, in contrast to simpler elements.

The partially support of H2a and H2b, and the findings of Study 2 shed new light on the relationship between prior exposure and visual complexity, specifically within the domain of Chinese cultural elements. Unlike conventional expectations, which posit that prior exposure generally leads to enhanced processing fluency and faster cognitive responses (Bornstein & DAgostino, 1994; Jacoby et al., 1989; Seamon et al., 1983a, Seamon et al., 1983b; Whittlesea, 1993; Whittlesea & Price, 2001), this study reveals a unique pattern of behavior when it comes to simple Chinese cultural elements, do not exhibit the typical effect of prior exposure, challenging the established norms in prior exposure research (Landwehr et al., 2013). This departure from the norm in prior exposure research highlights the nuanced nature of cognitive processing when individuals encounter culturally significant visual elements. It suggests that the impact of prior exposure on processing fluency is contingent upon the complexity of the Chinese cultural element. While prior exposure tends to facilitate fluency with familiar stimuli, it does not necessarily hold true for perceptually and conceptually simple Chinese elements.

In essence, Study 2 not only reaffirms the importance of visual complexity in influencing processing fluency but also introduces a novel perspective on how prior exposure interacts with visual stimuli within the context of Chinese culture. These findings contribute significantly to our understanding of consumer perception and behavior, particularly in the realm of cultural branding and visual marketing strategies and will be further explored and discussed in the subsequent chapter.

4.4 Study 3: Visual Complexity and Purchase Intention

In the study 3, the focus was on examining the link between the complexity of visual stimuli and the propensity of consumers to make purchases, with an additional emphasis on the mediating effects played by different fluency types, including perceptual and conceptual. Figure 4.7 in the accompanying documentation graphically portrays these complex interconnections. For this study, the methodology involved a comparative analysis between groups, distinctly categorized based on the simplicity or complexity of the Chinese cultural elements, the sample been test is same as the Study 1 and the Study 2 (Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9). The pivotal factor under scrutiny was the consumers' intent to purchase. Serving as a bridge in this study was the concept of fluency, which was dissected into two facets: perceptual, and conceptual. The study manipulated the variable of visual complexity by assigning participants to engage with either a minimalist or an elaborate Chinese cultural elements.

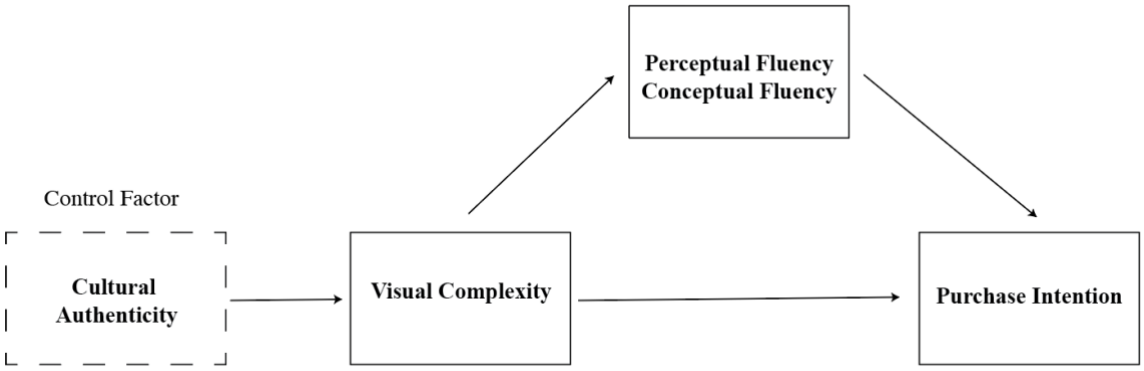


Figure 4.9: Study 3 Model



Figure 4.10: Simple Chinese Cultural Element for Study 3



Figure 4.11: Complex Chinese Cultural Element for Study 3

4.4.1 Participants and Procedure

The study included a cohort of 153 participants (72.8% female) with an average age of 30.27, and 83.5% of them have purchase the luxury item at least once a year, all of whom were living in China (Table 4.19,Figure 4-11). In both Study 1 and Study 2, individuals were recruited through random selection and encouraged to freely engage in a study investigating the influence of Chinese cultural elements on consumer behaviour. Prior to their involvement in the experiment, all individuals gave their informed consent.

Table 4.17: Study 3 Demographics

Variable	Category	n	Percent
Gender	Male	42	27.2%
	Female	111	72.8%
Age	< 20	11	7.1%
	21 - 30	61	39.9%
	30 - 40	55	35.9%
	> 40	26	17%
Luxury Consumption Frequency (per year)	< 1	7	4.6%
	1 - 3	124	81%
	> 3	22	14.4%

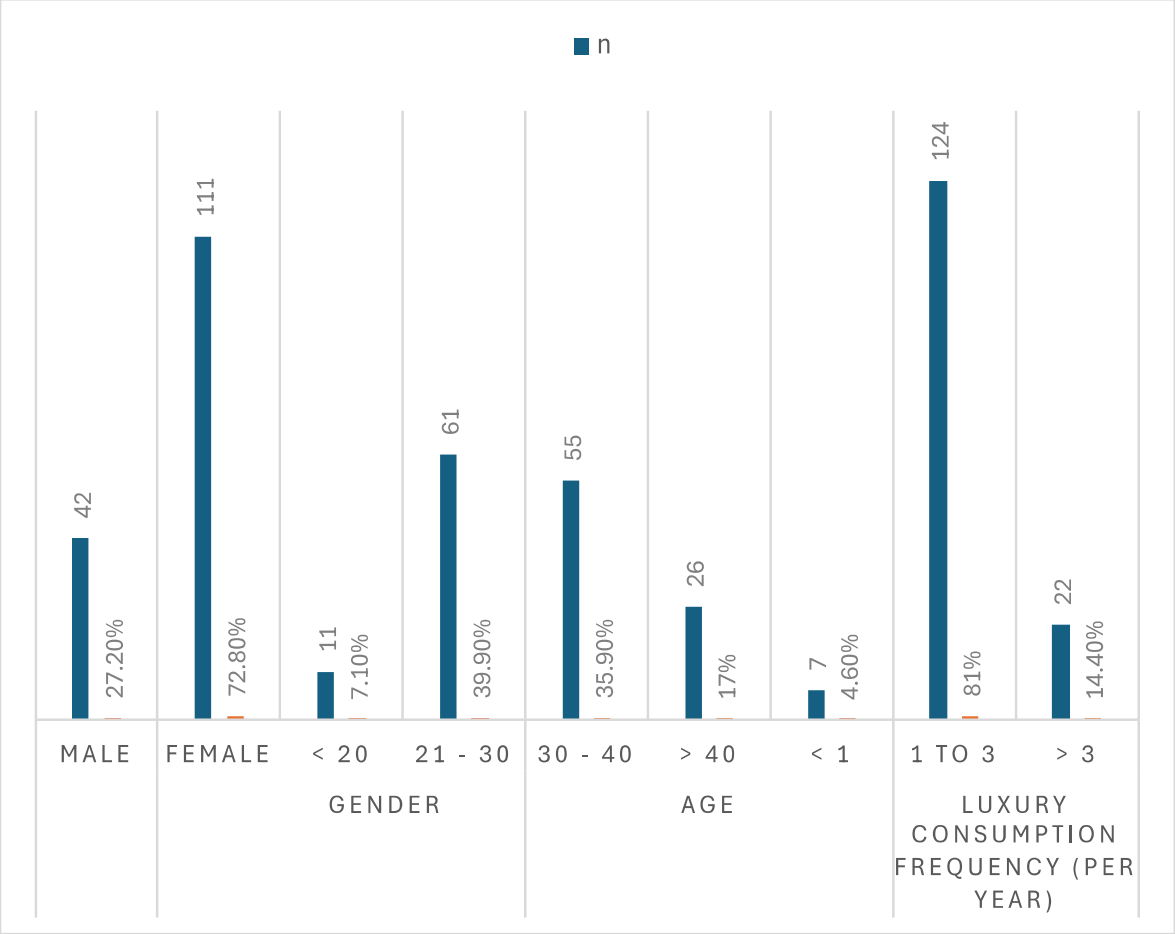


Figure 4.12: Study 3 Demographic in Chart

Consistently adhering to a technique used in the two previous studies, the survey in the Study 3 is started asking participants a number of demographic questions, and inquiries about their consumer actions related to luxury purchases. Furthermore, a simple or complexed Chinese cultural elements is assigned to the participants randomly. The participants were asked to fill a number of series of manipulation-check questions for visual complexity examine, ranging from 1 -7. After the participants finished the visual complexity examine, they were asking to evaluate the level of processing fluency (perceptual and conceptual fluency) they encountered. In addition, participants were requested to specify their desire to acquire the white T shirt portrayed in the Chinese cultural element.

4.4.2 Reliability

A validity of the processing fluency scales adopted from previously published research applied to ensure the scale reliability used in the Study 3. The findings, as shown in Table 4-21 and 4-22, demonstrate that all scales above the predetermined threshold of .70 (DeVellis, 2012), hence confirming the reliability of all measurement equipment employed in the study.

Table 4.18: Cronbach Alpha and Factor Loading for Study 3

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Questions	Factor Loading
Perceptual Fluency	0.953	The element was Disorganized/Organized	0.773
		The element was Disorderly/Tidy	0.782
		The element was Congested/ Spacious	0.803
		The element was Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive	0.721
		The element was Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	0.794
Conceptual Fluency	0.932	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend	0.851
		The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend	0.824
		The significance of the element was easy to comprehend	0.829
Purchase Intentions	0.916	What is the probability that you will purchase the product presented with this Chinese cultural element in the future? Unlikely/Likely	0.794
		What is the probability that you will purchase the product presented with this Chinese cultural element in the future? Improbable/ Probable	0.760
		What is the probability that you will purchase the product presented with this Chinese cultural element in the future? Improbable/ Probable	0.813

Table 4.19: Reliability test for study 3

Variable	Perceptual Fluency	Conceptual Fluency	Purchase Intentions
Cronbach's Alpha	0.946	0.926	0.916
Number of Items (questions)	5	3	3
Scale Item (Questions)	The element was: Disorganized/Organized Disorderly/Tidy Congested/ Spacious Difficult to perceive/Simple to perceive Difficult to discern/Simple to discern	The concept of the element was easy to comprehend The meaning of the element was easy to comprehend The significance of the element was easy to comprehend	What is the probability that you will purchase the product presented with this Chinese cultural element in the future? Unlikely/Likely Improbable/ Probable Impossible/ Possible
Scale Type	7-points bipolar scale	7-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)	7-point bipolar scale
Source	Mosteller et al. (2014)	Lee and Labroo (2004)	Smith (2007)

4.4.3 Result

The study aimed to experimentally assess various hypotheses regarding the potential mediating effect of processing fluency (perceptual and conceptual fluency) on visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and purchase intention towards the Chinese luxury items (H3a, H3b). The primary objective of the first phase of the Study 3 was to reassess and confirm the findings reported in Study 1 about the correlation between visual complexity and fluency (Hypotheses H1a, H1b). This was used to determine the strength and reliability of the experimental results. This study sought to investigate the mechanisms by which visual complexity can impact consumer decision-making processes, with a focus on the potential function of fluency as a mediator in this complicated relationship.

4.4.3.1 Visual Complexity and Fluency

The aim of Study 3 was twofold: firstly, to reassess and confirm the result from the Study 1, furthermore, to reassess the two aspects of processing fluency and how they been altered and changed due to the different level of visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements. This section of the Study 3 aimed to confirmed the impact of hypothesis H1a, which is stated in the following sentence:

H1a: The increased perceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on perceptual fluency.

The outcomes derived from the one-way ANOVA, as detailed in Table 4-23 and Table 4-24 found that the simple Chinese cultural element exhibit a greater level of fluency in perceptual (M_{simple} = 5.24, SD = 1.68) in comparison to complex Chinese cultural element ($M_{complex}$ = 3.79, SD = 1.16). These results reconfirmed a noticeable difference and disparity in perceptual fluency of the two Chinese cultural elements with different level of visual complexity (F (1,151) = 38.315, p < .001). Essentially, this suggests that visual complexity exerts a negative influence on perceptual fluency, with simple Chinese cultural elements fostering a more pronounced degree of perceptual fluency when contrasted with their complex counterparts. Consequently, the findings from Study 3 provide empirical support for H1a.

Table 4.20: Descriptives for H1a (Study 3)

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	77	5.2364	1.60	7.00	4.8556	5.6171	1.6776
Complex	76	3.7895	1.00	6.80	3.5234	4.0555	1.1643
Total	153	4.5176	1.00	7.00	4.2600	4.7753	1.6134

Table 4.21: ANOVA results for for H1a (Study 3)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	80.073	1	80.073	38.315	.000
Within Groups	315.570	151	2.090		
Total	395.642	152			

Subsequently, the study proceeded to explore the influence of visual complexity on conceptual fluency, based on H1b:

H1b: The increased conceptual fluency for simpler Chinese cultural element and decreased fluency for complex Chinese cultural element will be observed, based on the negative effect from visual complexity on conceptual fluency.

Based on the result from Table 4-25 and Table 4-26, the corresponding hypothesis under examination was as follows: the finding from one-way ANOVA reconfirmed that a greater degree of conceptual fluency is found in simple Chinese cultural element (M_{simple} = 5.50, SD = 1.59) in contrast to complicated Chinese cultural element ($M_{complex}$ = 3.38, SD = 1.44). The result from the first phase of the Study 3 given further confirmation of a noteworthy and statistically significant difference in the degree s of conceptual fluency between the simple and complex Chinese cultural elements. This difference was confirmed through statistical

analysis using a one-way ANOVA (F (1,151) = 74.739, p < .001). What this implies is that visual complexity, as manipulated by the type of Chinese cultural elements presented, exerts a discernible impact on participants' conceptual fluency. Participants found it notably easier to grasp and understand the concept conveyed by the simple Chinese cultural elements compared to their complex counterparts. In essence, the study's findings suggest that the degree of visual complexity influences how easily individuals can comprehend and make sense of the underlying ideas or concepts within these visual stimuli. This observation supports H1, which posited that visual complexity would affect conceptual fluency in the context of Chinese cultural elements.

Table 4.22: Descriptives for H1b (Study 3)

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	77	5.4978	2.00	7.00	5.1380	5.8577	1.5854
Complex	76	3.3771	1.00	7.00	3.0470	3.7072	1.4445
Total	153	4.4444	1.00	7.00	4.1491	4.7397	1.8488

Table 4.23: ANOVA result for H1b (Study 3)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	172.022	1	172.022	74.739	0.000
Within Groups	348.548	151	2.302		
Total	519.570	152			

4.4.3.2 The Mediating Role of Processing Fluency

The ANOVA analysis (Table 4-27 and Table 4-28) revealed that there is significant difference in purchase intentions between simple Chinese cultural elements (M_{simple} = 5.76, SD = 1.38) and complex Chinese cultural elements ($M_{complex}$ = 3.87, SD = 1.54), with ($F(1,151) = 63.54$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that visual complexity does have a significant direct impact on purchase intentions. Which this finding is contradicting to the study conducted by Sokolova (2022), in which the researcher found there is no direct impact from visual complexity on purchase intention.

Table 4.24: Descriptives for visual complexity and purchase intention

	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Std. Deviation
					Lower	Upper	
Simple	77	5.7576	3.00	7.00	5.4433	6.0718	1.3846
Complex	76	3.8684	1.00	7.00	3.5157	4.2211	1.5435
Total	153	4.8192	1.00	7.00	4.5410	5.0973	1.7413

Table 4.25: ANOVA for visual complexity and purchase intention

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	136.505	1	136.505	63.543	0.000
Within Groups	324.381	151	2.148		
Total	460.886	152			

The objective of study 3 was to investigate the relationship between the intricacy of visual stimuli and consumers' inclination to make purchases. The study also aimed to explore the mediating effects of various types of fluency, such as perceptual and conceptual fluency. The experiment was divided into two separate phases, each focused on examining the role of a particular form of processing fluency. The aim was to acquire a more profound comprehension of how these two aspects of fluency can act as mediators in impacting

consumers' inclinations to engage in a transaction. The study attempted to analyse the functions of perceptual and conceptual fluency in order to understand the mechanisms that influence the connection between visual complexity and consumer decision-making. These findings would provide useful insights into the intricate interplay between these variables and lead to a more thorough understanding of consumer purchase behavior in response to Chinese cultural visual cues.

4.4.3.3 Mediating Effect of Perceptual Fluency

In order to examine the connection between the degree of visual complexity in Chinese cultural element, the ease of perception fluency, as well as the likelihood of making a purchase, a mediation study was performed using Hayes' (2019) model 4. This analysis involved generating 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The analysis involved the use of visual complexity as the independent variable (IV), the mediator is perceptual fluency, as well as purchase intentions as the dependent variable (DV). This methodology facilitated a thorough investigation into how the ease of perception potentially influences the influence of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element on the desire to make a purchasing. As shown in the outcomes (refer to Appendices 5), the result showing how the three variables: visual complexity of Chinese cultural element, perceptual fluency, as well as the intention to make purchasing are interrelated with each other.

Notably, the researcher find that visual complexity exerts a significant and negative influence direct on perceptual fluency ($\beta = -0.36$, SE = 0.08, $t = -4.27$, $p < .001$; 95% CI = [-0.52 to -0.19]), indicating that as the visual complexity of stimuli increases, perceptual fluency decreases. Moreover, the result also suggests the link between Chinese customers' intention to purchase and the level of the perceptual fluency of Chinese cultural element is critical, as it demonstrates a significant and positive impact ($\beta = 0.61$, SE = 0.06, $t = 9.70$, p

< .001; 95% CI = [0.48 to 0.73]). Intriguingly, the noticeable statistic difference between visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and purchase intention of Chinese luxury item indicates the direct influence from the visual complexity as well (effect = -0.61, SE = 0.08, t = -7.48, p < .001; 95% CI = [-0.77 to -0.45]), implying that visual complexity directly affect purchase intentions. Instead, our mediation analysis reveals that perceptual fluency also plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between visual complexity and purchase intentions, with the indirect effects analysis confirming the significance of this mediation (95% CI = [-0.33 to -0.11]). In essence, this underscores the pivotal function of perceptual fluency in elucidating how visual complexity ultimately shapes consumers' intentions to make purchases. This result demonstrates the purchase intention not only affect by the visual complexity, more importantly, also thought the mediating effect from the perceptual fluency.

However, for the IV visual simplicity, the meditating result is showing the opposite effect to visual complexity, which visual simplicity has positive effect on perceptual fluency (β = 0.49, SE = 0.08, t = 6.12, p < .001; 95% CI = [0.33 to 0.65]), and perceptual fluency also have positive effect on purchasing intention in simple Chinese cultural element (β = 0.61, SE = 0.07, t = 8.74, p < .001; 95% CI = [0.47 to 0.74]) as well. Moreover, simplicity in visual also has direct effect on purchase intention as well (effect = 0.58, SE = 0.10, t = 6.88, p < .005; 95% CI = [0.41 to 0.75]), with the indirect effects analysis confirming the significance of this mediation (95% CI = [0.19 to 0.42]).

The results of this study convincingly show that the ease with which something is perceived has noticeable influence on consumers' intention to make a purchasing, when potential customers can assess the visual characteristic of an element, in this PhD thesis the Chinese cultural element, they are more likely to make a purchase on the Chinese luxury items or products. On the other hand, when people come across cues that are difficult to

understand, resulting in a condition of perceptual disfluency, their inclination to make purchases significantly decreases. This significant discovery highlights the crucial importance of perceptual fluency in effectively influencing customer purchase intentions. The study's findings are aligned with a substantial body of prior researches. Evidence that the ease or difficulty of perceptual fluency is positively associated to the consumers' intention to purchase is provided by a number of studies that were carried out by Bigoin-Gagnan and Lacoste-Badie in 2018, Im, Lennon, and Stoel in 2010, Im and Ha in 2011, and Gomez and Werle in 2019.The results of this study contribute to the expansion and development of previously held knowledge regarding the processing fluency and behavioral intentions. The findings of this study are based on research carried out by Dreisbach and Fischer in 2011, Song and Schwarz in 2008. The main focus of the investigation is on the specific influence that perceptual fluency does.

The research found and demonstrate a complicated and interconnected relationship between the degree of visual complexity of Chinese cultural element, the ease and difficulty of perceptual fluency, as well as the likelihood of consumers intending to make a purchase. Furthermore, the study reveals that the effect of visual complexity of the Chinese cultural element is not only direct and immediate on purchase intention, but also mediated by the perceptual fluency as well. In simpler terms, when individuals encounter visually simple stimuli that they can easily process and understand, their inclination to purchase the displayed product significantly increases. This discovery strongly supports hypothesis H3a and contributes significantly to the existing literature. To delve deeper into the implications of these findings, it's crucial to understand the role of perceptual fluency. It refers to how easily our brains process and make sense of visual information. When consumers find an image visually simple and easy to understand, it enhances their perceptual fluency (Kolesova

& Singh, 2019; Pelet et al., 2020). This heightened fluency, especially perceptual fluency is indeed positively influencing their intention to make purchase.

The findings from the Study 3 align with the prior researeches that suggest a simple visual element or stimulus can increases the consumers' purchase intention. However, the research went a further investigation and revealing that the perceptual fluency mediates the visual complexity of Chinese cultural element and purchase intention. More importantly, it challenges earlier assertions that visual complexity has no direct impact on purchase intentions (Sokolova, 2022.), emphasizing the importance of how consumers perceive and process visual stimuli in their decision-making processes. In essence, the ease of processing visually simple elements enhances consumers' likelihood of making a purchase, which has significant implications for marketers and advertisers aiming to create effective visual content.

4.4.3.4 Mediating Effect of Conceptual Fluency

In the following stage of our inquiry, we examine the complicated interconnection between visual complexity, conceptual fluency, and intents to make a purchase. In order to clarify these dynamics, the researcher utilized mediation analysis, by applying the model 4 with 5,000 bootstrapping sample from Hayes (2019). The result revealed intriguing and persuasive insights: the conceptual fluency is significantly altered by the degree of visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements ($\beta = -0.41$, SE = 0.10, $t = -4.24$, $p < .001$; 95% CI = [-0.60 to -0.22]), underscoring that heightened visual complexity corresponds to reduced conceptual fluency. Furthermore, the findings from the research revealed that conceptual fluency is a factor that significantly impact on the consumers' intention to make a purchase, as it demonstrates a substantial positive influence ($\beta = 0.41$, SE = 0.06, $t = 6.67$, $p < .001$; 95% CI = [0.28 to 0.53]). The statistical significance also indicated that the visual complexity

of Chinese cultural element and the purchase intentions is directed significance (effect = -0.61, SE = 0.08, t = -7.48, p < .001; 95% CI = [-0.77 to -0.45]). However, the researcher also observed that conceptual fluency mediates this relationship, a finding substantiated by the significant results of the indirect effects analysis (95% CI = [-0.26 to -0.08]). In essence, these results underscore the crucial role of conceptual fluency as a mediating mechanism, shedding light on how visual complexity ultimately influences consumers' intentions to make purchases.

Furthermore, the researcher also found that the conceptual fluency in positively related to the visual simplicity (β = 0.56, SE = 0.09, t = 6.16, p < .001; 95% CI = [0.38 to 0.75]), means with the increase of visual simplicity, the conceptual fluency is also increased. The level of conceptual fluency positively influences buying intention (β = 0.40, SE = 0.07, t = 5.87, p < .001; 95% CI = [0.26 to 0.53]). Finally, the direct effect from visual simplicity of Chinese cultural element on purchase intention is also found (effect = 0.58, SE = 0.09, t = 6.88, p < .001; 95% CI = [0.41 to 0.75]), with the indirect effects analysis confirming the significance of this mediation (95% CI = [0.13 to 0.33]).

This study's comprehensive research reveals that conceptual fluency has a beneficial influence on the potential for Chinese customers to make purchases of premium luxury brands. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that when individuals easily comprehend the intended meaning and hidden message of a stimulus, their tendency to make a purchase increase accordingly. In contrast, if the stimulus contains semantic complexities that make it conceptually disfluent, the probability of customer purchase significantly drops. In light of these findings, one could draw the conclusion that conceptual fluency exerts a significant influence on the consumers' intentions to make a purchase. This study aligns with and expands upon the current scholarly consensus, as established by Dreisbach and Discher

in 2011, Song and Schwarz in 2008, and Storme et al. in 2015. In their investigation, these researchers have discovered data that substantiates the existence of a favorable connection between processing fluency and behavioral goals. The influence of visual complexity and simplicity on conceptual fluency relates to the effect that perceptual fluency has on mediating the relationship between the two. When Chinese cultural elements are more complex, they would lower conceptual fluency. Moreover, it precisely outlines the distinct impacts of conceptual fluency on consumer buying behaviour.

Furthermore, this study reveals the complex connection between the level of visual complexity and the likelihood of making a purchase, which is influenced by the ease of understanding the notion. This illustrates that when customers can readily comprehend the concealed semantic connotations and messages inside a stimulus, they are more likely to buy the product shown in the visual. Put simply, when visual stimuli are less complicated, they increase the ease with which concepts are understood, therefore stimulating consumers' intents to make a purchase. Thus, the findings of Study 3 provide evidence that supports the H3b.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This PhD thesis aims to analyze the complex relationship between the amount of visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and the likelihood of customers purchasing Chinese luxury items. The researches specifically examined how the processing fluency influence this correlation, as well as how prior exposure can moderate the effects. In order to thoroughly examine these interconnections, the thesis carried out three separate studies. This chapter provides a perceptive summary of the experimental outcomes and engages in a concise analysis of each significant discovery.

In the first study, the thesis probed into how visual complexity influences various aspects of fluency, namely perceptual and conceptual. It juxtaposed simple visual stimuli (depicting a Chinese cultural element with less details and regular placement) against more complex ones (a Chinese cultural element with more details and irregular placement). After control the cultural authenticity of both elements, the findings revealed that simple Chinese cultural element are superior in terms of perceptual and conceptual compared to their complex counterparts. Specifically, simple Chinese cultural elements, with details, were found to be more perceptually fluent (thereby confirming Hypothesis H1a). Likewise, the straightforward nature of these images made it easier for viewers to comprehend their semantic meanings (confirming H1b).

Expanding on these observations, Study 2 examines how prior experience influences the connection between visual complexity and the two aspects of fluency. This investigation reaffirmed the findings of the initial study. Study 2 revealed that prior exposure does not have a substantial impact on the perceptual and conceptual fluency of simple Chinese cultural elements, due to the possibility that the participants are more familiar with the simple Chinese cultural elements, and prior exposure might not play a significant role in simple Chinese cultural elements as well. Nevertheless, previous exposure has a substantial influence on both the ease of perception and understanding of intricate components of Chinese culture. Consequently, H2 is only partially supported.

The findings of the Study 3 presented a significant discovery by identifying direct effects of visual complexity on buy intentions, contradicting the traditional belief that visual complexity does not directly influence customer purchase decisions. These findings question established paradigms and emphasize the intricate connection between visual complexity,

fluency, and purchase intentions. They offer useful insights that are especially pertinent to marketers and advertising working with Chinese domestic luxury products.

In addition, the Study 3 constituted a significant shift in emphasis, with the objective of investigating the direct influence of visual complexity on customer purchase intentions and gaining an understanding of the role that fluency plays as an intermediate in this association. The findings of the study provide strong support for the concept that fluency plays a significant role in the intricate link that exists between visual complexity and consumer purchase intentions, particularly in the case of Chinese domestic luxury products. Within this particular framework, visual stimuli that were simplified, meaning they were made less complex and easier to understand, were found to be linked to increased levels of both perceptual and conceptual fluency. The increased levels of fluency had a significant impact on consumers' intentions to make a purchase. This study demonstrated that visual complexity indirectly affects purchasing intentions through perceptual and conceptual fluency.

Up to this point, this thesis has undertaken an extensive journey through the literature, meticulously examining visual complexity, prior exposure, and fluency theory in Chapter 2. Subsequently, Chapter 3 presented a comprehensive exposition of the research methodology employed, and the formulation of hypotheses that aimed to unravel the intricate interplay among these variables. Chapter 4 investigates a detailed analysis of the outcomes derived from each of the three studies. With this foundation laid, the forthcoming chapter will engage in a comprehensive and insightful discussion that synthesizes the cumulative results obtained from all three studies. This discussion will provide a holistic perspective on the research findings, their implications, and their contributions to the field, the culmination of which is a more profound comprehension of the interrelations that exist between visual

complexity, processing fluency, prior exposure, as well as purchase intentions in the context of Chinese domestic luxury brand.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This thesis has undertaken a comprehensive exploration of the intricate connections among visual complexity (involving simple and complex Chinese cultural element), prior exposure (exposure to the Chinese cultural element prior or not), fluency (including perceptual and conceptual fluency), as well as their influence on the consumers' inclinations to make purchases. The research journey commenced with a thorough examination of pertinent theories in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). Subsequently, the research design and methodology were detailed, and the formulation of a set of hypotheses to empirically test these relationships in Chapter 3 (Methodology) and the results of the experiments were presented and discussed in Chapter 4 (Analysis and Discussion). Finally, Chapter 5 (Conclusion and recommendations) provided a comprehensive discussion of the research findings. In this concluding chapter, the primary objective is to encapsulate the key findings and the contribution to both theoretical and practical field of this PhD thesis. It begins by delineating the theoretical contributions made by this research, followed by an exploration of the managerial implications stemming from the findings. In addition, the chapter provides an impartial assessment of the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for potential directions for future research.

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

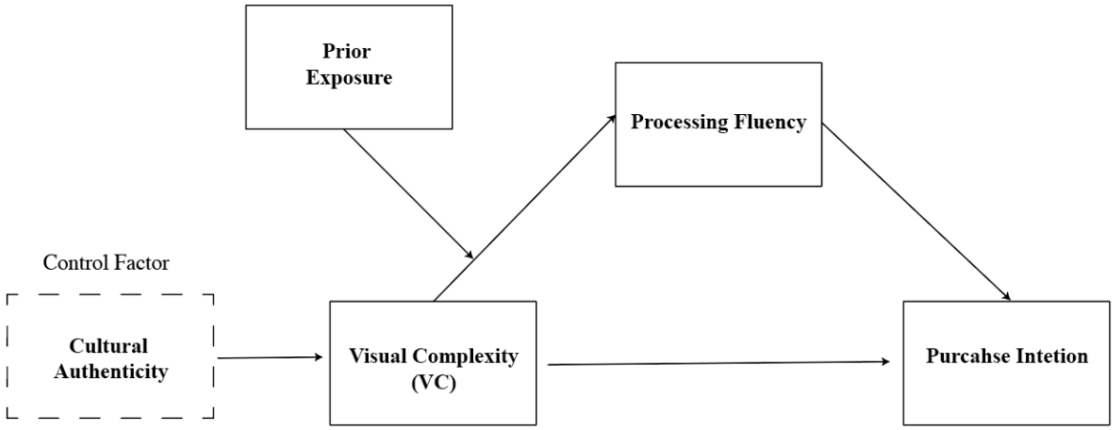


Figure 5.1: Conceptual Framework

Aesthetics, as conceived of by Palmer et al. (2013), and processing fluency theory, as developed by Lee and Labroo (2004) and Reber et al. (2004), are brought together in this PhD thesis (Figure 5.1), which represents a remarkable intersection of the two fields. This fusion has culminated in a nuanced framework for understanding consumer responses to visual stimuli, with a particular focus on Chinese cultural elements in luxury brand logo design. The research delves deep into the complexities of visual aesthetics and cognitive processing, unveiling new insights into how consumers perceive and engage with culturally rich visual elements. The study's findings extend beyond traditional boundaries, offering a fresh perspective on the role of visual complexity in consumer psychology. It explores how intricate designs, especially those embedded with cultural significance, are processed and perceived by consumers, thereby enriching our understanding of aesthetic appeal in branding. The thesis also provides a detailed examination of perceptual and conceptual

fluency, demonstrating that prior exposure to cultural symbols can significantly enhance consumer processing efficiency and positively influence brand evaluations.

Furthermore, this research underscores the strategic significance of incorporating cultural elements into branding strategies, especially for luxury brands targeting the Chinese market. It emphasizes the immense potential of utilizing cultural symbolism to establish profound and meaningful connections with consumers. Through a meticulous examination of how prior exposure to specific visual elements influences consumer behavior, this thesis provides invaluable insights for brand strategists seeking to craft brand identities that resonate and captivate their target audience. The interplay between visual complexity, processing fluency, prior exposure and purchase intentions of Chinese domestic luxury products has been thoroughly explored in this thesis. By doing so, it contributes not only to academic knowledge but also offers practical implications for marketers and advertisers looking to thrive in the dynamic landscape of luxury branding in China.

5.1.1 Visual Complexity and Processing Fluency

Within the realm of cognitive processes governing the perception of visual stimuli, this researchmakes a substantial and nuanced contribution to the burgeoning field of fluency research. The study undertakes an exhaustive exploration of the intricate interplay between visual complexity and perceptual fluency, with a specific focus on Chinese cultural elements. This investigation provides empirical evidence that reinforces the prevailing wisdom, demonstrating that heightened visual complexity exerts a deleterious influence on perceptual fluency. It unveils a compelling dichotomy: simple Chinese cultural elements, characterized by a parsimonious deployment of intricate details and a consistent spatial arrangement, engender perceptual experiences characterized by heightened fluency. In contrast, complex Chinese cultural elements, marked by intricate detailing and a haphazard spatial

arrangement, elicit perceptual encounters characterized by reduced fluency. While previous research in the broader domain of visual complexity has largely scrutinized specific perceptual dimensions, such as symmetry, colour contrasts, and information quantity. this study pioneers a nuanced extension into the intricate terrain of Chinese cultural elements. It endeavors to elucidate the ramifications of visual complexity on the process fluency intrinsic to the discerning Chinese consumer. It is worth noting that previous research by Shi and Jiang (2022) has underscored the significance of visual congruity in enhancing processing fluency among Chinese consumers. However, their exploration did not investigate the complexity of visual complexity within Chinese cultural elements.

Furthermore, a critical departure from precedent arises from our meticulous parsing of processing fluency into its constituent facets: perceptual and conceptual fluency. While prior investigations have frequently treated processing fluency as a singular construct, we rigorously disentangle these two dimensions to shed light on their nuanced relationship with visual complexity. This dissertation contributes novel empirical insights by unraveling the intricate interplay of visual complexity, quantity of detail, and element placement in the context of perceptual fluency, with the controlled cultural authenticity level of both of the Chinese cultural elements. These revelations reverberate with the overarching paradigm in the field, affirming the established understanding that heightened visual complexity invariably undermines perceptual fluency, and on the contrary, lower visual complexity Chinese cultural element is having the higher perceptual fluency. This finding is not only consisting of and reevaluate the previous research outcomes, but more importantly, it is the first study that extend it into the Chinese luxury branding, especially in investigating the Chinse cultural elements. In so doing, the present study introduces a comprehensive and

nuanced perspective on the consequences of visual complexity on perceptual fluency, offering fresh theoretical insights and empirical evidence.

Transitioning to the domain of conceptual fluency, our study posits that visual complexity represents a formidable impediment. It suggests that simple Chinese cultural elements inherently facilitate a more semantically accessible experience compared to their complex counterparts, even when the authenticity of the cultural elements remains constant. These findings echo established scholarship suggesting that simplicity in visual objects enhances the comprehensibility of the image's underlying meaning and messaging. Thus, this dissertation extends our comprehension of the multifaceted relationship between visual complexity and conceptual fluency, enriching the scholarly discourse in this domain.

In conclusion, the purpose of this PhD thesis is to conduct an in-depth investigation into the intricate link that exists between visual complexity and perceptual fluency in the setting of Chinese culture elements. Through the examination of the two facets of processing fluency and the explanation of the varied effects associated with visual complexity, this study provides a comprehensive investigation into a field that had been overlooked in the past. Additionally, it opens up potential for future academic work to expand on its findings and investigate further the complex features of perceptual and conceptual fluency within the context of visual complexity. As a result, it makes an important contribution to the expanding field of fluency research, which opens up opportunities for future academic work.

5.1.2 Prior Exposure and Processing Fluency

The current doctoral thesis significantly advances our understanding of the intricate relationship between prior exposure, visual complexity, and processing fluency, particularly in the context of Chinese cultural elements among Chinese consumers. Building upon the

foundational work of Reber et al. (2006) and Lee and Labroo (2004), this research investigates the nuanced ways in which prior exposure to specific visual elements can enhance cognitive processing efficiency. This is especially relevant when considering the cultural specificity of the stimuli, such as Chinese cultural symbols, which have not been extensively studied in this light before. The concept of processing fluency, as explained by Janiszewski (1993) and further elaborated by Seamon et al. (1995), is central to understanding the impact of prior exposure. This phenomenon posits that stimuli previously encountered are processed more easily, leading to a sense of familiarity and comfort. This ease of processing, or fluency, can significantly influence consumer behavior and perception, particularly in the context of brand recognition and evaluation. The current study extends this concept to the realm of cultural symbolism, examining how familiarity with Chinese cultural elements affects consumer responses.

A unique aspect of this research is its exploration of the differential effects of prior exposure on simple versus complex Chinese cultural elements. Traditional studies in the field have largely focused on the general effects of prior exposure on reaction times and perceptual fluency, as demonstrated in the previous studies. However, this thesis reveals that the influence of prior exposure on simple Chinese cultural elements does not align with these established patterns. This deviation suggests that the complexity of the visual elements plays a critical role in how prior exposure influences processing fluency. The researcher explains this finding with the familiarity (Bornstein,1989) of simple Chinese cultural elements, as well as that prior exposure effect is also not significant on simple visual stimulus (Bornstein, Kale, & Cornell, 1990; Cox & Cox, 1988, 2002). In contrast, the study found that complex Chinese cultural elements, characterized by their intricate detailing and irregular element placement, were significantly impacted by prior exposure in terms of both perceptual and

conceptual fluency. This suggests that the cognitive processing of more complex visual stimuli is more profoundly affected by prior exposure, aligning with previous research in the field. These findings highlight the importance of considering visual complexity when examining the effects of prior exposure in cognitive processing.

This doctoral thesis stands as a significant addition to the field of cognitive psychology, particularly in its examination of the nuanced relationship between cultural familiarity and visual complexity, and their combined impact on perceptual and conceptual fluency. The study is essential in highlighting the role of cultural specificity in understanding consumer behavior and cognitive processing, bridging a crucial gap in both academic research and practical realms such as marketing and design. By focusing on how prior exposure to Chinese cultural elements influences cognitive processing, the research offers an in-depth look into the dynamics of prior exposure and processing fluency. It reveals intricate details about how people with different levels of exposure to Chinese culture perceive, interpret, and engage with visual stimuli embedded with cultural significance. Furthermore, the thesis investigates the complexities of visual design in the context of Chinese culture, investigating how different levels of visual complexity impact cognitive engagement and processing. The specific impact of prior exposure on the processing of Chinese cultural elements, the differential effects of visual complexity in this context, and the broader implications for understanding cognitive processing in a culturally specific framework.

5.1.3 The Mediating Role of Processing Fluency

This study contributes to the current discussion on the direct and interaction impacts of visual cues on purchase intentions, a subject that has generated controversies among scholars. There is a debate over the impact of simple versus complex images or visual

stimuli. Some researchers suggest that simple images or visual stimuli have a major effect (BigoinGagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018; Kolesova & Singh, 2019), while others maintain that complex images or visual stimuli are more influential (Lee et al., 2018). Both components of processing fluency significantly influence customer purchasing intentions. However, none of the work is focused on researching or understanding how it might be applied to Chinese cultural features. This study adds to the ongoing discussion by showing that the impact of visual complexity on customer purchase intentions is influenced by three important aspects of ease: perceptual fluency and mental fluency. Put simply, consumers find it easier to understand and relate to simple Chinese cultural aspects, both in terms of perception (perceptually fluent) and meaning (conceptually fluent), as opposed to complicated Chinese cultural elements. The improved efficiency in processing has a notable impact on consumers' inclination to buy Chinese luxury goods. Moreover, this researchpresents an original addition by suggesting that these two aspects of fluency jointly influence the connection between visual stimuli and consumer aspirations to purchase Chinese luxury brands. These findings expand on prior research that has indicated a favorable correlation between processing fluency and behavioral intentions (Dreisbach & Discher, 2011) by particularly emphasizing the separate effects of conceptual fluency and perceptual fluency. This thesis contributes to our comprehension of the influence of conceptual fluency on purchase intentions, an aspect that has not been investigated in previous studies.

This study presents a significant finding regarding the direct impact of visual complexity on the purchase intentions of Chinese luxury items, as highlighted in Study 3. This result is particularly intriguing as it contrasts with previous research suggesting that visual complexity does not directly influence purchase intentions. For instance, Lee, Hur and

Watkins (2018) and Sokolova (n.d.) have posited that visual complexity doesn't play a direct role in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase. However, this stance is not universally accepted, and arguing that visual complexity can affect purchase intentions indirectly through factors like affect and processing fluency, especially when in the context Chinese luxury brands employed with Chinese cultural elements in their logo. The lack of a consensus in previous research on how visual complexity influences purchase intentions underscores the novelty and importance of this study's contribution. By focusing specifically on the context of Chinese cultural elements and domestic luxury items, this research adds a new dimension to our understanding of the subject. It suggests that in certain cultural and product contexts, such as the Chinese luxury market, visual complexity might indeed play a more direct role in influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions than previously thought. This insight not only challenges existing theories but also opens up new avenues for further research, especially in understanding the unique dynamics of visual perception and consumer behavior in different cultural contexts.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The current research offers practical implications for brand managers, designers, and practitioners in the field of design, particularly when working with Chinese domestic luxury brands and their visual identity systems, such as logos and symbols. This area holds particular significance given the growing consumption of Chinese domestic luxury brands (Li et al., 2021). However, it has often been neglected in the research domain, leaving practitioners without clear guidance. Prior research has highlighted the importance of utilizing Chinese cultural elements in to the Chinese luxury brands, for example like cultural authenticity in the logo design of Chinese domestic luxury brands, emphasizing its impact on consumer purchase intentions, brand reputation, and sales (Zheng et al., 2024).

Additionally, studies have explored the effects of uppercase vs. lowercase and Serif vs. Sans Serif typefaces in Chinese domestic luxury logotypes on consumer perceptions (Zheng et al., 2022). This study, focusing on the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and processing fluency, with prior exposure as a moderator, provides practical suggestions for designers and brand managers:

Simplicity in Chinese cultural element design: When dealing with Chinese cultural elements that are integral to Chinese domestic luxury branding and ensuring cultural authenticity, designers should pay attention to the complexity of these elements. The research indicates that simpler visual and conceptual processing occurs with simpler designs, leading to more fluent processing. As a result, consumers are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards the brand or products. This finding suggests that Chinese domestic luxury brands may benefit from reducing the complexity of their logos and incorporating simpler Chinese cultural elements, aligning with the hedonic marking theory and processing fluency theory.

Prior Exposure: When designers or brand managers choose to incorporate complex Chinese cultural elements into their brand identity, they should consider maintaining consistency in visual complexity across other branding and advertising materials. Additionally, increasing brand exposure on various platforms, such as online advertising, can help mitigate the challenges associated with processing complex elements. The prior exposure effect can aid in reducing the difficulty of processing complex visual elements, enhancing consumer engagement.

Complexity and Purchase Intention: The study's findings suggest that simple Chinese cultural elements are associated with higher purchase intentions compared to complex ones.

This discrepancy may be attributed to consumers' limited processing time for complex elements, leading to decreased processing fluency, which, in turn, diminishes purchase intention. However, on the contrary, the simplicity of Chinese cultural element is both directly and indirectly increase the purchase intention of Chinese luxury brands. Therefore, designers and brand managers should exercise caution when introducing highly visually complex Chinese cultural elements in their branding efforts.

In summary, this research offers practical guidance for brand managers, designers, and practitioners in the realm of Chinese domestic luxury brands, emphasizing the significance of visual complexity and processing fluency in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. It underscores the importance of cultural authenticity and simplicity in design choices, while also highlighting the potential of prior exposure to mitigate the challenges posed by complex visual elements.

It's worth noting that the field of Chinese domestic luxury brands has witnessed significant growth and transformation in recent years, driven by a combination of factors including shifting consumer preferences, increasing disposable income, and a desire for culturally authentic experiences. As Chinese luxury brands strive to establish their unique identities and compete on a global stage, visual branding becomes a critical component of their success.

Furthermore, the role of simplicity in design cannot be overstated. In a cluttered marketplace where consumers are bombarded with information and choices, a visually simple and easily digestible brand identity can stand out and resonate with consumers. This is particularly true in the context of luxury brands, where conveying elegance, sophistication, and exclusivity is paramount. As the study suggests, prior exposure to complex visual

elements can enhance processing fluency and improve consumer engagement. Therefore, brand managers should consider multi-platform strategies to ensure consistent exposure to their brand's visual elements. This might include a well-coordinated presence across social media, advertising campaigns, and retail spaces. In conclusion, the implications of this research extend beyond the academic sphere, offering actionable insights for practitioners in the field of Chinese domestic luxury brands. By leveraging the findings on visual complexity, processing fluency, and prior exposure, brand managers and designers can make informed decisions to enhance brand perception, drive consumer engagement, and ultimately, increase purchase intentions.

5.3 Limitation and Future Works

The PhD thesis presented here conducts a thorough exploration into the complex mechanisms of how visual stimuli are perceived and how this perception influences behavioral intentions. This comprehensive study has led to the discovery of various theoretical insights and practical implications, beneficial for both academic research and business practices. Key findings from this research have elucidated the nuanced ways in which visual cues impact consumer decision-making processes, offering a deeper understanding of consumer behavior. Theoretical frameworks developed through this study contribute significantly to academic literature, particularly in fields related to marketing, psychology, and visual communication. These frameworks help in deciphering the subtle complexity involved in the consumer's cognitive processing of visual information. In the realm of practical application, the study's outcomes provide valuable guidance for businesses, especially in marketing and advertising strategies. By understanding the influence of visual stimuli on consumer behavior, companies can better design their visual

communication strategies to align with consumer preferences and expectations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns.

However, the research acknowledges certain limitations in its scope and methodology. These limitations open avenues for future research opportunities. For instance, the study might have focused on specific types of visual stimuli or consumer segments, suggesting the need for broader investigation to generalize the findings. Additionally, the interplay between visual stimuli and other sensory inputs in influencing consumer behavior remains an area ripe for exploration. Future investigations could expand on these limitations, exploring how different types of visual stimuli interact with various demographic factors or how they integrate with multi-sensory marketing strategies. Such research would not only extend the academic discourse but also offer more nuanced insights for practitioners seeking to optimize their consumer engagement strategies.

The first and foremost is the limitation in the complexity management of Chinese cultural element, in this study, the complexity level is mostly directed by the details and the regularity of placement, and the colour is only black and white. However, the complexity can be in various forms such as with the involvement of different colours, making the shape more irregular, or the introduce the asymmetry. However, this also give the room and direction for the future study to discover how the visual complexity changed due to the other factors, and how it will impact on the processing fluency. Furthermore, the study only use low and high complexity level in Chinese cultural elements, however, some studies suggest that the affection or impact on fluency from visual complexity is not linearly related (Gerger, Forster, & Leder, 2017; McDougall, Reppa, Kulik, & Taylor, 2016; Orth & Crouch, 2014). Therefore, the future study can also introduce with more complexity level to examine.

This limitation in sample diversity significantly narrows the study's scope. While the Chinese knot is a notable cultural symbol, it represents just a fraction of the rich tapestry of Chinese cultural elements. Incorporating a wider array of symbols, such as seals, bamboo, tigers, or dragons, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of cultural aesthetics (Laroche et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2017; Schroeder et al., 2015a). Additionally, limiting the application to white T-shirts may not fully capture the nuances of how different contexts influence perception (Shi & Jiang, 2022). Future research could explore these cultural elements in varied scenarios, like traditional Chinese garments, modern fashion, home décor, or digital media platforms (Laroche et al., 2021; Schroeder et al., 2015a). This expansion would not only enrich the understanding of cultural elements in diverse contexts but also provide insights into how these symbols are interpreted and valued in different environments, potentially opening new avenues for cultural expression and appreciation.

Moreover, this PhD study only examine the processing fluency encompassed with perceptual fluency and conceptual fluency. However, some researchers suggested that the imagery fluency might also be impacted by the visual complexity, therefore, influence on the final decision making (Wundt, 1912). Moreover, Previous research has shed light on the influence of fluency on various cognitive judgments, yet there remains a need for more in-depth exploration of how fluency impacts different cognitive processes and experiences (Palmer et al., 2013). To advance our understanding, future research endeavors could investigate the intricate relationship between fluency and cognition, exploring domains such as attention, perception, and the depth of processing. Therefore, the future study can add the different fluency such as imagery fluency as the additional fluency to examine the relationship between the visual complexity, as well as the purchase intention from the Chinese cultural elements. Moreover, the study only examines the moderating effect of prior

exposure of the Chinese cultural elements, however, there some studies suggest other moderator might have effect on the perceptual and conceptual fluency. For instance, the brand familiarity and the familiarity to the Chinese cultural element might have effect on brand perception and brand purchasing intention (Maheswaran et al., 1992; Schmitt 2012; Sheng Goh et al., 2013, Lee et al., 2018).

This research has introduced a predictive framework shedding light on consumer behavior and elucidating the mechanisms that underlie consumer purchase intentions. Nevertheless, it's important to note that the experiments conducted in this study exclusively employed images of typical products within the context of Chinese luxury fashion. Future research offers the opportunity to extend and validate these findings by diversifying the range of products under investigation. Exploring how the proposed framework applies to these distinct product types may uncover valuable nuances in consumer behavior and the role of visual complexity and fluency. Additionally, extending the research scope to encompass various domains beyond fashion could yield valuable insights. For instance, investigating the framework's applicability in contexts such as food packaging or car advertisements could provide a broader understanding of how visual complexity and fluency impact consumer decisions across diverse industries.

The study provided in this context provides a substantial contribution to our comprehension of customer behaviour in the domain of communication by Chinese luxury fashion brands. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge a significant constraint: the study largely concentrates on the consumer's engagement with visual stimuli, without extensively exploring the various phases of the customer's progression. This is especially pertinent in the context of Chinese culture, where the impact of cultural factors can significantly fluctuate at each stage of this process. The study provides insights into how consumers generally receive

visual information from luxury fashion businesses. However, it does not investigate how the diverse aspects of Chinese culture, whether basic or complicated, may affect customers at different stages of their trip. For instance, the initial stage of attraction and awareness might be influenced more by straightforward, easily recognizable cultural symbols. In contrast, the deeper stages of engagement and purchase decision might be influenced by more nuanced and complex cultural elements. Future research could enrich this area by investigating how these varying degrees of cultural influence affect consumer behavior at each specific stage of the customer journey. Such research could examine the effectiveness of different types of visual stimuli - from the simple to the complex - in engaging consumers at each critical point, from initial awareness to the final decision to purchase. This approach would not only provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the context of Chinese luxury fashion but also offer valuable insights for brand communication strategies that are culturally nuanced and stage-specific.

Another promising avenue for future research lies in exploring the cultural context further. This study predominantly engaged participants familiar with Chinese culture and cultural elements, which might influence their responses differently compared to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural research could extend the investigation to determine whether the observed findings remain consistent in various cultures and countries (Laroche et al., 2021; Southworth, 2019).By conducting cross-cultural studies, researchers can gain insights into potential cultural variations in how the visual complexity of Chinese cultural elements and fluency impact consumer behavior (Southworth, 2019). This approach would shed light on whether the relationships identified in this study are culture-specific or if they transcend cultural boundaries. Such research can be instrumental in guiding

international branding strategies for luxury products incorporating Chinese cultural elements.

Future study in this field should explore how gender and age affect the complicated connection between visual complexity, fluency, and consumer behavioral intentions. Examining potential disparities in answers between male and female participants, as well as across other age groups, has the potential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact and impact decision-making processes. This field of research could uncover useful insights into the complexity of consumer behavior, particularly in the context of visual marketing and luxury branding. Comprehending the complexity of the Chinese luxury business is becoming more crucial for brand strategists and marketers as it undergoes constant evolution and adjusts to shifting consumer tastes and market circumstances. Future study might enhance the development of customized and efficient branding strategies in the luxury sector by considering and analysing the possible variations in gender and age.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This PhD thesis bridges aesthetics and processing fluency theory, providing a nuanced understanding of Chinese consumer responses to visual stimuli, especially within Chinese cultural elements in luxury fashion brand logos. It explores how visual complexity affects both perceptual and conceptual fluency, demonstrating that simpler designs enhance processing fluency while complex designs reduce it. The research introduces a fresh perspective on the impact of cultural symbolism in branding strategies, particularly for luxury brands targeting Chinese consumers. It reveals that prior exposure to culturally significant symbols improves cognitive processing efficiency and positively influences brand evaluation. Additionally, the thesis emphasizes the strategic importance of

incorporating cultural elements into branding to establish deeper connections with consumers. The study offers key insights into how visual complexity, prior exposure, and processing fluency interact to shape purchase intentions, challenging previous assumptions by showing that complex designs can impact consumer behavior when embedded with cultural significance. By examining both perceptual and conceptual fluency, the research expands existing fluency theories and provides practical implications for marketers seeking to craft effective luxury branding strategies in China.

This PhD thesis explores how visual stimuli influence consumer behavior, especially within Chinese cultural contexts in luxury branding. The research uncovers key insights into the role of visual complexity and processing fluency in shaping consumer decision-making. While simpler designs enhance processing fluency, complex designs can also positively impact behavior when culturally significant symbols are incorporated. The study acknowledges limitations, such as focusing on a narrow set of cultural elements and sample diversity. Future research is encouraged to explore broader cultural symbols, multi-sensory marketing, and the role of additional moderators like brand familiarity. Moreover, expanding the investigation to different product categories and cross-cultural contexts would provide deeper insights into the consumer journey and how various demographic factors—such as gender, age, and cultural background—influence perception. The thesis significantly contributes to academic discourse in marketing, psychology, and visual communication while offering practical guidance for businesses to develop culturally resonant and effective visual communication strategies. It also highlights the potential for further studies on how Chinese cultural aesthetics impact consumer behavior at different stages of the buying process, paving the way for more refined and targeted marketing strategies within the global luxury industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Journal Publication

Zheng Wang, Shanat, M. Bin, & Kanyan, L. R. (2022). The Effect of Serif and San Serif Typeface of Luxury Fashion Logotype on Chinese Consumers' Brand Perception. *Journal of Business Administration Research*, *11*(2), 9. (Scopus Indexed).

Zheng Wang, Kanyan, L. R. & Shanat, M. Bin. (2024). A Study to Chinese Domestic Luxury Visual Brand Logo: From Domestic To Global. (*Accept in Journal of Graphic Engineering and Design ans will be publiahed in next issue).* ISSN 2217-379X EISSN 2217-9860 (Scopus Indexed).

Zheng Wang, Kanyan, L. R. & Shanat, M. Bin. (2024). Cultural Authenticity and Purchase Intention of Chinese Luxury Brand Logo. (*Accept in Journal of Graphic Engineering and Design ans will be publiahed in next issue).* ISSN 2217-379X EISSN 2217-9860 (Scopus Indexed).

Appendix 2 Consent Form

（Chinese Version）

尊敬的参与者，

感谢您考虑参与我们的问卷调查，本问卷旨在了解消费者对中国国内奢侈品牌的消费意图。请您注意，本研究中您的隐私和保密性是我们最为重视的。因此，在本次调查中，您无需提供任何个人信息，如姓名、电子邮箱、电话号码或其他识别信息。

从这份问卷中收集的数据将仅用于研究目的。我们将对数据进行汇总处理，以确保您的回答不会在任何研究报告或出版物中与您个人联系起来。我们承诺维持最高级别的数据安全性，所有收集的信息都将被安全存储。对这些数据的访问将仅限于我自己及我的指导团队。

您的参与完全是自愿的，您有权在任何时候无后果地撤回。如果您同意参与这项研究，请选择“我同意”以继续。

再次感谢您的考虑，期待您对本研究的宝贵贡献。

感谢您的参与和宝贵的时间，

王铮

(English Version）

Dear Participant,

Thank you for considering participation in our questionnaire, which is focused on understanding consumer purchase intention toward Chinese luxury brands. It's important to note that your privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance in this study. As such, you will not be required to provide any personal information such as your name, email, phone number, or other identifying details.

The data collected from this questionnaire will be used solely for research purposes. It will be aggregated, ensuring that your responses cannot be linked back to you individually in any resulting reports or publications. We are committed to maintaining the highest level of data security, and all information collected will be stored securely. Access to this data will be limited exclusively to myself and my supervisory team.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequence. If you agree to participate in this study, please select "I agree" to proceed.

Thanks for your participating,

Wang Zheng

Appendix 3 Questionnaire for Consumer Demographic and Luxury Behaviour

(Chinese version)

Q1 您的性别是?

○ 男性

○ 女性

Q2 请问您的年龄是属于哪一个范围?

○ 20 岁以下

○ 21-30 岁

○ 31-40 岁

○ 40 岁以上

Q3 请问您大概一年买多少次奢侈品？

○ 1 次以下

○ 1 -3 次

○ 3 次以上

（English Version）

Q1 What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

Q2 What is your age range

○ Below 20

○ 21-30

○ 31-40

○ Over 40

Q3 How often do you purchase luxury items yearly ?

○ Less once a year

○ One to three times a year

○ More than three times a year

Appendix 4: Moderating Outcome for Study 2

Moderating 1

Run MATRIX procedure:

***************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 ******************

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****
*

Model : 1

Y : Perceptu

X : simple

W : priorexp

Sample

Size: 140

****

*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Perceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.3240	0.1050	2.6763	5.3177	3.0000	136.0000	0.0017

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.0292	0.1387	36.2648	0.0000	4.7550	5.3035
simple	0.3496	0.0935	3.7390	0.0003	0.1647	0.5346
priorexp	-0.2721	0.2781	-0.9783	0.3297	-0.8220	0.2779
Int_1	0.0861	0.1880	0.4580	0.6477	-0.2857	0.4580

Product terms key:

Int_1 : simple x priorexp

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	0.0014	0.2098	1.0000	136.0000	0.6477

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

NOTE: The following variables were mean centered prior to analysis:

priorexp simple

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

*

Model : 1

Y : Conceptu

X : simple

W : priorexp

Sample

Size: 140

****

*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Conceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4486	0.2013	2.3517	11.4232	3.0000	136.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.2429	0.1300	40.3315	0.0000	4.9859	5.5000
simple	0.5084	0.0877	5.8002	0.0000	0.3351	0.6818
priorexp	0.0258	0.2607	0.0991	0.9212	-0.4897	0.5414
Int_1	-0.1652	0.1763	-0.9375	0.3502	-0.5138	0.1833

Product terms key:

Int_1 : simple x priorexp

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	0.0052	0.8789	1.0000	136.0000	0.3502

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

NOTE: The following variables were mean centered prior to analysis:

priorexp simple

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Moderating 3

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

*

Model : 1

Y : Perceptu

X : complex

W : priorexp

Sample

Size: 138

****
*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Perceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4861	0.2363	0.9615	13.8208	3.0000	134.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.8149	0.0853	44.7366	0.0000	3.6462	3.9835
complex	-0.2975	0.0502	-5.9246	0.0000	-0.3968	-0.1982
priorexp	-0.1435	0.1724	-0.8320	0.4069	-0.4845	0.1976
Int_1	0.2389	0.1037	2.3035	0.0228	0.0338	0.4441

Product terms key:

Int_1 : complex x priorexp

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	0.0302	5.3059	1.0000	134.0000	0.0228

Focal predict: complex (X)

Mod var: priorexp (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):

priorexp	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-0.5652	-0.4325	0.0838	-5.1617	0.0000	-0.5983	-0.2668
0.4348	-0.1936	0.0611	-3.1671	0.0019	-0.3145	-0.0727

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

NOTE: The following variables were mean centered prior to analysis:

priorexp complex

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Moderating 4

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

*

Model : 1

Y : Conceptu

X : complex

W : priorexp

Sample

Size: 138

****

*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Conceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.5720	0.3272	1.3481	21.7233	3.0000	134.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI

constant 3.6385 0.1010 36.0336 0.0000 3.4387 3.8382

complex -0.3540 0.0595 -5.9538 0.0000 -0.4716 -0.2364

priorexp -0.7838 0.2042 -3.8389 0.0002 -1.1877 -0.3800

Int_1 0.2963 0.1228 2.4125 0.0172 0.0534 0.5392

Product terms key:

Int_1 : complex x priorexp

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

R2-chng F df1 df2 p

X*W 0.0292 5.8203 1.0000 134.0000 0.0172

Focal predict: complex (X)

Mod var: priorexp (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):

priorexp Effect se t p LLCI ULCI

-0.5652 -0.5215 0.0992 -5.2555 0.0000 -0.7177 -0.3252

0.4348 -0.2252 0.0724 -3.1105 0.0023 -0.3683 -0.0820

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

NOTE: The following variables were mean centered prior to analysis:

priorexp complex

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Appendix 5: Mediating Result for Study 3

Mediating 1

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

Model : 4

Y : Purchase

X : complex

M : Perceptu

Sample

Size: 153

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Perceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.3280	0.1076	2.3383	18.2006	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.5547	0.2727	20.3676	0.0000	5.0159	6.0936
complex	-0.3566	0.0836	-4.2662	0.0000	-0.5217	-0.1914

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.7427	0.5516	1.3776	92.2791	2.0000	150.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.2272	0.4052	7.9641	0.0000	2.4266	4.0279
complex	-0.3940	0.0679	-5.8013	0.0000	-0.5281	-0.2598
Perceptu	0.6060	0.0625	9.7021	0.0000	0.4826	0.7294

********** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **********

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.5199	0.2703	2.2272	55.9316	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	6.5935	0.2662	24.7719	0.0000	6.0676	7.1194
complex	-0.6101	0.0816	-7.4787	0.0000	-0.7712	-0.4489

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
-0.6101	0.0816	-7.4787	0.0000	-0.7712	-0.4489	-0.3503	-0.5199

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs

-0.3940 0.0679 -5.8013 0.0000 -0.5281 -0.2598 -0.2262 -0.3357

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	-0.2161	0.0544	-0.3278	-0.1121

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	-0.1241	0.0302	-0.1867	-0.0666

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	-0.1842	0.0467	-0.2792	-0.0947

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Mediating 2

Run MATRIX procedure:

*************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 ******************

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****
****

Model : 4

Y : Purchase

X : simple

M : Perceptu

Sample

Size: 153

****
****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Perceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4461	0.1990	2.0988	37.5103	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.6043	0.3336	7.8059	0.0000	1.9451	3.2635
simple	0.4912	0.0802	6.1246	0.0000	0.3327	0.6496

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.7040	0.4956	1.5498	73.6908	2.0000	150.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0.9657	0.3397	2.8431	0.0051	0.2946	1.6368

simple 0.2803 0.0770 3.6397 0.0004 0.1281 0.4324

Perceptu 0.6113 0.0699 8.7420 0.0000 0.4732 0.7495

********** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **********

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R R-sq MSE F df1 df2 p

0.4885 0.2386 2.3239 47.3228 1.0000 151.0000 0.0000

Model

coeff se t p LLCI ULCI

constant 2.5578 0.3511 7.2856 0.0000 1.8641 3.2514

simple 0.5805 0.0844 6.8792 0.0000 0.4138 0.7473

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y

Effect se t p LLCI ULCI c_ps c_cs

0.5805 0.0844 6.8792 0.0000 0.4138 0.7473 0.3334 0.4885

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
0.2803	0.0770	3.6397	0.0004	0.1281	0.4324	0.1609	0.2358

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	0.3003	0.0598	0.1864	0.4202

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	0.1724	0.0325	0.1110	0.2377

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Perceptu	0.2527	0.0527	0.1535	0.3598

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Mediating 3

Run MATRIX procedure:

********** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 **********

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

Model : 4

Y : Purchase

X : complex

M : Conceptu

Sample

Size: 153

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Conceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.3264	0.1065	3.0743	18.0057	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.6272	0.3127	17.9947	0.0000	5.0093	6.2450
complex	-0.4067	0.0958	-4.2433	0.0000	-0.5960	-0.2173

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p

0.6612	0.4371	1.7295	58.2458	2.0000	150.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.3033	0.4159	10.3467	0.0000	3.4815	5.1251
complex	-0.4445	0.0760	-5.8458	0.0000	-0.5948	-0.2943
Conceptu	0.4070	0.0610	6.6679	0.0000	0.2864	0.5276

********** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **********

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.5199	0.2703	2.2272	55.9316	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	6.5935	0.2662	24.7719	0.0000	6.0676	7.1194
complex	-0.6101	0.0816	-7.4787	0.0000	-0.7712	-0.4489

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
-0.6101	0.0816	-7.4787	0.0000	-0.7712	-0.4489	-0.3503	-0.5199

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
-0.4445	0.0760	-5.8458	0.0000	-0.5948	-0.2943	-0.2553	-0.3788

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	-0.1655	0.0463	-0.2615	-0.0818

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	-0.0950	0.0257	-0.1484	-0.0487

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	-0.1410	0.0395	-0.2222	-0.0686

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----

Mediating 4

Run MATRIX procedure:

**************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2 ******************

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com

Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

****

Model : 4

Y : Purchase

X : simple

M : Conceptu

Sample

Size: 153

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Conceptu

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4479	0.2007	2.7504	37.9043	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.2426	0.3819	5.8718	0.0000	1.4880	2.9972
simple	0.5652	0.0918	6.1566	0.0000	0.3838	0.7466

****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.6170	0.3807	1.9029	46.0984	2.0000	150.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.6674	0.3521	4.7356	0.0000	0.9717	2.3631
simple	0.3561	0.0854	4.1693	0.0001	0.1873	0.5249
Conceptu	0.3970	0.0677	5.8656	0.0000	0.2633	0.5308

********** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **********

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Purchase

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4885	0.2386	2.3239	47.3228	1.0000	151.0000	0.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.5578	0.3511	7.2856	0.0000	1.8641	3.2514

simple 0.5805 0.0844 6.8792 0.0000 0.4138 0.7473

********** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **********

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
0.5805	0.0844	6.8792	0.0000	0.4138	0.7473	0.3334	0.4885

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
0.3561	0.0854	4.1693	0.0001	0.1873	0.5249	0.2045	0.2996

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	0.2244	0.0520	0.1268	0.3305

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	0.1289	0.0287	0.0751	0.1871

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Conceptu	0.1888	0.0443	0.1059	0.2790

********** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

NOTE: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output.

Shorter variable names are recommended.

------ END MATRIX -----