“ITS A CULTURAL THING.”
A COMPARISON OF CULTURAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation has not been published in any academic format and the information included is of my own independent research that was conducted by myself except where stated through referencing.

Signed: Kira Stokes (ST20037732)

Date: 20/04/2016
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Abstract

Due to the infiltration of western culture in the East, cultural norms are changing impacting consumers in emerging economies such as China. Assumptions about cultural variations have been challenged and it is evident that the motivations of consumers are influenced by a number of factors. Consumers are using fashion as a way of expressing themselves and global trends within the fashion industry seem to be emerging.

This study aims to establish the extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture. It aims to analyse whether culture has a significant impact on aspects of consumer behaviour in relation to the fashion industry. It will also investigate whether there are any other contributing factors affecting buying behaviour and will assess how fashion consumption differs across two contrasting cultural perspectives.

Both China and the UK are used as a case study for this research with Chinese and UK students taking part in focus groups to investigate the chosen topic area. This gives opportunity for comparison of consumers from the ‘East’ and the ‘West’.

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1.0. Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter is intended to introduce the research topic and identify the need for its exploration. It will give background to the research and explain the focus of the research highlighting the importance behind this. As a result, aims and objectives are determined to demonstrate the intended nature of the study.

1.1. Background to Research

“Consumer behaviour is the study of buying and disposing of goods and services, ideas and experiences by the individuals, groups and organisations in order to satisfy their needs and wants” (Kotler & Keller, 2011). Buying decisions are affected by an incredibly complex combination of external and internal influences (Armstrong & Kotler, 2015). This study looks to identify these influences and decipher whether there are any cultural variations between the two chosen fashion industry markets.

Recent years, have seen increased interest in the influence of culture on consumer behaviour (Mooj & Hofstede, 2011). Although consumer behaviour has strong universal components, its cultural variations cannot be ignored (Usunier & Lee, 2013). Culture has been a vital topic in the field of management since scholars began to realise what was considered universal may only be true to the Western world (Triandis, 2004 as cited by MA, 2011).

Understanding the impact culture has on consumer behaviour directs branding and advertising strategies. Reviewing the cultural relationships with components of consumer behaviour such as the self, personality and attitude form the basis of many consumer behaviour models (Mooj & Hofstede, 2011).

Where and how consumers buy fashion products is an important aspect of consumer behaviour (Rath et al, 2015). Apparel is considered a high-involvement shopping item
which consumers buy for a number of reasons (Kim et al, 2002). Consumers are increasingly interested in fashion and appearance due to the availability of media and magazines that cover fashion news, catwalk styles and celebrity looks (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010 as cited by Joung, 2014). Due to trendiness and cheap prices, consumers purchase more fashion items than ever before. This study looks to explore these reasons behind fashion consumption and the influences that shape these motivations.

A fashion refers to a style that is widely accepted by a group of consumers at a given time (Joung, 2014). All fashion items follow the same cycle of introduction, rise, peak, decline and rejection (Rath et al, 2015). The UK has one of the leading fashion industries in the world giving reason behind the researcher using this particular market in the comparison (Keynote, 2015b).

With the youth market in the UK valuing £14.05billion, young consumers are one of the main contributors towards the UK’s successful fashion industry (Keynote, 2015a). Using students in the research study will allow the researcher to explore this market further and establish the needs and wants of these consumers that can then be used to direct any future research for this particular demographic.

China is currently experiencing rapid changes in their emerging economy with its traditional cultural values being challenged by a number of factors including the infiltration of the West (Lin & Wang, 2010; Jin & Kang, 2011). It is predicted that by 2025, 46 of the world’s 200 largest cities will be in China due to its rapidly emerging and urbanising economy (Enriquez et al, 2015). The economic growth and the emerging trend of young consumers who are more brand and fashion conscious have made the market more attractive to US apparel retailers (Knight & Kim, 2007). This
highlights the importance of understanding culture’s impact on consumer behaviour within the Chinese market as marketers will have to adapt their marketing strategy in order to be successful in this emerging economy.

1.2. Research Focus

The focus of this research is placed upon making a comparison between the two chosen cultures to identify whether influences of consumer behaviour are universal or whether there are differences that should be taken into consideration.

The researcher is interested in the role and the importance that culture plays on the buying decisions of consumers and whether it alters the way in which they perceive factors such as media. Looking at two cultural perspectives will allow the researcher to clearly differentiate any cultural variations between the ‘East’ and ‘West’ giving the research topic more depth.

There is a wide range of academic literature which will be later discussed, that emphasises the importance of culture and consumer behaviour. However, there is little detail providing insight into the cultural variations affecting fashion consumption in the two chosen cultures. The motivations behind fashion consumption is also unclear to the researcher thus supporting the need for an investigation to be conducted on the influences behind these activities.
1.3. Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

The main aim of this research is…

‘To investigate the extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture.’

1.3.2. Objectives

Three objectives have been set in order to achieve this aim.

1. To critically analyse whether culture has a significant impact on aspects of consumer behaviour with relation to the fashion industry.
2. To investigate whether factors such as family and marketing campaigns affect buyer behaviour.
3. To assess how fashion consumption differs across the two different cultures; the UK and China.

1.4. Chapter Overview

The researcher plans to conduct two focus groups using both Chinese and UK students in order to investigate the impact of culture. This will allow the researcher to obtain qualitative data about the topic area through discussion and interaction with the participants. Thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data collected from the focus groups. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The following chapters will review the current academic literature surrounding the research aim identifying any gaps for future research. The methodological approach the researcher has chosen to take is outlined in the methodology section leading to research findings to be discussed in Chapter 4.0. The final chapter concludes the research project with the researcher discussing any limitations to the research,
implications for future research and whether the overall research aim and objectives have been achieved.
2.0. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The aim of the study as illustrated is to investigate the extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture.

There is a vast amount of literature that exists around the topic, with a lot of it covering areas of cultural consumer behaviour and the factors that influence buyer behaviour. This literature review aims to investigate the influence of culture on consumer behaviour and the fashion industry. It will focus on major themes identified as the literature was reviewed. These themes are culture, buyer behaviour and fashion consumption of consumers in both China and the UK.

This literature review will also give insight into the diverse meanings and concepts of culture and how it affects the individual. It will look into the different influences on consumer behaviour including collectivism-individualism and the ‘self’ and ‘body’ concepts.
2.2. Culture

2.2.1. Defining Culture

There is no one single universal definition for culture. Culture has been defined in many ways some more complex than others.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) attempted to propose a single inclusive definition by stating that the essential core of culture consists from traditional ideas and attached values and involves patterns, symbols and artefacts that all influence an individual’s behaviour. This definition seems very complex compared to other definitions proposed for culture.

A simpler definition by Hollensen (2007:217), states that culture is “the learned ways in which society understands, decides and communicates.” This is similar to a definition proposed by Linton (1945) as cited by Usunier and Lee (2013:5), “culture is the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society”.

Tylor (1881) as cited by Hollensen (2014) defined culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society. This is said to be the most widely accepted definition for culture.

Another definition that is also regularly used to understand the meaning of culture is Goodenough (1971). He stated that culture is “a set of beliefs or standards, shared by a group of people, which help the individual decide what is, what can be, how to feel, what to do and how to go about doing it” (as cited by Usunier & Lee, 2005:5). This can be linked to consumer behaviour because according to Doole & Lowe (2012), culture is the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct
consumer behaviour in a particular country market. Although, the definition by Doole and Lowe (2012) is more centred towards a marketing perspective, both of these definitions state that culture is linked to a set of beliefs that influence the individual.

2.2.2. Elements of Culture

According to Hollensen (2004), there are seven main elements that are usually associated with the concept of culture; language, social institutions, education, aesthetics, religion, technology and values and attitudes. These can be seen in the table below.

One of the most important elements of culture that is evident in most of the definitions is values and attitudes. This element helps determine what a person thinks is right, what is important and what is desirable (Hollensen, 2014). “A value is a centrally held, enduring belief that one end-states of existence is preferred to an opposing end of existence” (Rokeach, 1973). They are the beliefs concerning preferred ways of living and behaving.

According to Hofstede (2010), the way people in different countries perceive and interpret their world varies along five dimensions; power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism- collectivism, masculinity- femininity and long-term/short-term orientation. These cultural dimensions are summarised by Neelankavil & Rai (2014) in Figure 1.0 (see appendix 1).
2.3. Consumer Behaviour

Kotler and Keller (2011) state that consumer behaviour is the study of the ways of buying and disposing of goods, services, ideas or experiences by the individuals, groups and organisations in order to satisfy their needs and wants.

This definition is similar to one proposed by Solomon et al (2013:5) … “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” It is an ongoing process.

Kotler et al (2010:224), state that “the study of consumer behaviour can be divided into three interdependent dimensions; the study of culture, the study of social groups and the study of the individual.”

This is also supported by Armstrong and Kotler (2015) who regard cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics a strong influence on consumer purchases. These characteristics can be seen in Figure 1.1 (see appendix 2).

Koksal (2014), also stresses the importance of psychological characteristics upon consumer purchases; at the stage of purchasing or during wearing, new clothing attributes or product features can have a positive or negative impact of the mood of the consumer. This shows that the buyer decision process is influenced by a variety of characteristics.

According to Armstrong et al (2015), the buyer decision process consists of five stages…

- **Need Recognition:** Is where the buyer recognises a problem or a need which can be triggered by internal or external stimuli. Internal stimuli affect the individual when one of their normal needs (e.g. hunger) rises to a level high enough to
become a drive whereas external stimuli can be caused by an advert or a
discussion with a friend (Armstrong et al, 2015).

- **Information Search:** According to Armstrong et al (2015), an interested
  consumer may or may not search for more information before buying a certain
  product/service. The amount of searching is dependent on the strength of the
  consumer’s drive, the amount of information available, the ease of obtaining more
  information, the value a consumer places on additional information and the
  satisfaction a consumer gets from searching.

- **Evaluation of Alternatives:** How consumers go about evaluating purchase
  alternatives depends on the individual consumer and the specific buying decision.
  Some consumers will use careful calculations and logical thinking, others do little
  or no evaluating and buy on impulse relying on intuition (Armstrong et al, 2015).
  This is supported by previous research that states that today’s consumers often
  assess a product with multiple criteria and take time to evaluate alternatives

- **Purchase Decision:** There are two major factors that could change a consumer’s
  final purchase decision; the attitude of others and unexpected situational factors
  (Armstrong et al, 2015). Consumers may form a purchase intention based on
  factors such as expected income, price and product features but unexpected
  situational factors such as economic downturn could change their final purchase
  decision.

- **Post-Purchase Behaviour.**

  This buyer decision process may differentiate depending on other aspects influencing
  the consumer such as culture and the role of the family.
2.3.1 Cross-Cultural Consumer Behaviour

Kim et al (2002) state that the products and brands consumers buy and the benefits they desire from their purchases are all culturally based. There are several ways in which the various components of culture influence consumer perceptions, attitudes and the understanding of a given product or communication. All affecting the way a consumer behaves in the buying process (Doole & Lowe, 2012).

Many western buying behaviour models assume that buying decisions are focused on an individual’s decision-making process but in many Asian or Arabian cultures a family may be a complex structure and an individual would have to take into account all members of the family when making major purchase decisions making the decision-making more collectivist (Doole and Lowe, 2012).

Jeannet and Hennessey (2006) as cited by Doole and Lowe (2012) believe that there are three major processes through which culture influences consumer behaviour; cultural forces such as religion, family and history, cultural message such as symbols, morals and knowledge and consumer decision process which includes elements such as prioritising wants and decision making. This is supported by Usunier and Lee (2013) who state that cultural values and behaviours have an impact on consumer attitudes, decision making and buying behaviour.
2.3.2. Collectivism & Individualism

The concepts of collectivism and individualism relate to both culture and consumer behaviour. This concept is not only mentioned in Hofstede’s cultural dimension research but has also appeared in psychology research linking individualism and collectivism with specific personalities and traits.

To define these terms, Triandis (1995) states that “collectivists are closely linked individuals who view themselves primarily as part of a whole, be it a family, a network of co-workers, a tribe or a nation. Such people are mainly motivated by the norms and duties imposed by the collective entity. Individualists however, are motivated by their own preferences, needs and rights, giving priority to personal rather than to group goals.”

Usnier & Lee (2013:39) also state that collectivists usually see themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives or ingroups whereas individualists see themselves as autonomous and independent.

This relates to one of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions mentioned earlier on in this section. Individualism-collectivism is the extent to which the self or group constitutes the centre point and Hofstede (2010) states that countries linked to individualism are Australia, the US and the UK and the countries linked to collectivism are China, Columbia and Greece.

According to Johnston and Johal (1999), there is a tendency to relate individualism to the “West” and collectivism to the “East”. This is evident in the Hofstede dimension as it states that China is collectivist and the UK is linked to individualism. This is also expanded upon by Parker et al (2009), who state that “traditional views of this concept suggest that Eastern countries will exhibit collectivistic tendencies while Western
countries will exhibit individualistic tendencies”. Individuals with collectivistic tendencies view themselves as ‘dynamic entities’ who are continually defined by their social context and relationships whereas an individual with individualistic tendencies perceive themselves as stable entities who are autonomous from other people and their environment (Chiao et al, 2009).

Luo (2009) outlines the reason why the Chinese are considered to be more towards collectivism. China is hugely influenced by its long history and rich culture, meaning that they pay more attention to their relationship with others and what others think of them and are more family focused than compared with Western countries.

Although research suggests Asian countries such as China are considered to be more collectivistic, a number of research studies have challenged these assumptions. According to a study conducted by Kim et al (2002) the relationship or social affiliation values did not affect consumers’ purchase motivations for apparel.

Parker et al (2009) also uncovered a possible shift in collectivism and individualism with their research concluding that Chinese students were found to be less collectivistic and more individualistic than in the past.

This is also evident in research conducted by Jin and Kang (2011) who found that although China traditionally represents collectivism culture, these traditional views have been challenged and individualism and materialism have arisen as a consequence of affluence and modernisation. Consumers are now being influenced by two forces; one force seeking to hold the Chinese true to their cultural roots while the opposite is drawing them into the 21st century of Western dress, values, individuality and materialistic capitalism (Jin & Kang, 2011). This indicates that cultural norms are changing in China.
Whether an individual is collectivistic or individualistic is dependent on the culture of the country in which they live in. This then affects the consumer decision process and their buying habits.

### 2.3.3. The Self & Body Concept

Exploring both the self and body concept is important because it will give an insight into the personalities of consumers and shows how this affects their perceptions and buying behaviour. This concept follows on from the idea proposed by Armstrong and Kotler (2015) that regards psychological factors as having a strong influence on consumer purchases.

The self-concept refers to a person’s belief about themselves which includes the individual’s assessment of their physical characteristics and personality attributes (Carducci, 2009:458).

There are three forms of the self. The actual self refers to how a person perceives themselves, ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive themselves and social self refers to how a person presents themselves to others (Sirgy, 1982).

In consumer culture, the self is inextricably bound up with the body and can be described by Featherstone’s (1991) phrase which states that the body has become ‘the visible carrier of the self’ (Hancock et al, 2000).

Featherstone (2010) understands body image as a “mental image of the body as it appears to others” and is based on the view that the body, especially the face is a reflection of the self. A person’s inner character or personality will shine through the outer appearance.

The body is an important site for negotiating identity and consumption with clothing linking the body to the social world (Warlop & Beckmann, 2001).
A complex cultural ideology of the body is said to underlie consumers’ satisfaction with their appearance, their sense of ideal or more desirable body and the consumption activities that these self-perceptions motivate (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995).

Social media also plays a part in how an individual views their body. Research shows links between social media and body image concerns. People using social media sites tend to cultivate a persona (Roxby, 2014). This implies that people use social media to reinvent themselves or make themselves feel better about their body. It allows them to portray a different ‘social self’ and the content that they see may also impact how they view their ‘ideal self’. This is supported by a report by Keynote (2015a) which indicates that images of the ‘ideal’ female and male body in the media have to some extent left younger consumers pre-occupied with fashion and body image and aspiring to celebrities and their supposedly perfect image.

Cultural identity can be linked to both the self-concept and collectivism. It refers to the extent to which people in a given culture recognise and identify with a set of focal elements that set the culture apart from others (He & Wang, 2015). People in collective cultures like China often identify their self-concept or self-schema based on their connections with others resulting in the influence of cultural identity being more observable than that found in individualistic Western societies.
2.4. Consumer Behaviour & Fashion Consumption

Where and how consumers buy fashion products is an important aspect of consumer behaviour. Consumers are either fashion leaders or fashion followers depending on how they relate to products within the fashion life cycle. The majority of people adopt a look only after they are sure of a fashion trend (known as fashion followers). This can be due to many reasons; they may not have the time, money or interest to spend on fashion pursuits or they may be insecure about their own tastes so they look to others to determine what is acceptable and appropriate. This includes imitating people they admire (Rath et al., 2015).

Both intrinsic and extrinsic cues influence the consumers’ judgement of the clothing they buy (Koksal, 2014). Intrinsic cues are higher-level cues inherent to the physical composition of a product such as fabric, style and fit whereas extrinsic cues are lower-level cues that can be changed without changing the physical product. This includes factors such as price, brand name and country-of-origin (Rahman, 2011).

When purchasing clothing, consumers often take time to evaluate attributes of alternatives in terms of brand, style, design, colour, price and other dimensions (Koksal, 2014). This can be linked to the third stage of the buyer decision process mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to Rahman (2011), many consumers perceive comfort and fit as important factors in judging satisfaction with apparel products and also use price to infer quality.

Clothing is one of the most visible forms of consumption and performs a major role in the social construction of identity (Crane, 2000). Individuals are concerned about their personal attractiveness and how others might see them in public. They use different
means including fashion to enhance and elevate their overall image, appearance and identity (Rahman, 2011).

This is supported by Kembau and Mekel (2014) who state that fashion consumption is a means of self-realisation, it is not just to satisfy physiological needs but to create a ‘self’ and define one’s role in society.

According to Kim et al., (2002), apparel is considered a high involvement shopping item which consumers often buy for its symbolic meanings, image reinforcement or psychological satisfaction and is a product category that is known to reflect consumers’ social life, aspirations and their affiliation. This idea is also supported by Aagerup (2011), who regards fashion as one of the most expressive product categories in existence which is used to express the self through identification with brand traits.

Consumers interpret items of apparel such as jeans, athletic shoes, baseball caps, jewellery and watches as having a symbolic meaning and these items are said to symbolise membership in global culture (Craig and Douglas, 2006). Not only do individuals dress in symbols and language that communicates with others, they dress themselves depending on their existing or desired emotional state (Tombs, 2006 as cited by Koksal, 2014).

Crane (2000), stated that clothing choices provide an excellent field for how people interpret a specific form of culture in their own purposes, one that includes strong norms about appropriate appearances. Research carried out by Warlop and Beckmann (2001) showed that linkages between bodies and clothing imply clothing is used by consumers to express their thoughts and feelings about their bodies. Some consumers avoided certain brands due to perceptions that it would not fit their body size or shape.
The purchase intentions of fashion items can be built by a brand through the use of social media. Fashion brands such as Dolce and Gabbanna invite fashion bloggers to the front seats of its fashion shows where the bloggers then instantly upload feedback from the show onto social media enabling consumers to interact with one another and view the latest fashions in real time (Kim & Ko, 2012; Strategic Direction, 2012). This implies that social media has an influence on consumers’ perceptions and their buying behaviour.

2.5. Chinese and UK Consumers

In order to distinguish whether there are cultural variations between the two countries, the researcher reviewed academic literature surrounding how both Chinese and UK consumers shop for fashion items and the different influences that motivate this.

2.5.1. China

Three psychological traits are said to distinguish Chinese consumers from their global peers; value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence and the need for uniqueness. They are said to value functional benefits of any particular purchase more than their peers in other countries and save a larger portion of their growing incomes than their counterparts in the UK, America and Japan (Zhan & Ze, 2012).

Although, China has previously been considered as a collectivistic culture, new research is emerging suggesting that this is changing (Johnston & Johal, 1999; Parker et al, 2009; Jin & Kang, 2011). Chinese consumers are becoming more individualistic and selfish paying less attention to price and focusing on buying for themselves (Luo, 2009).
This is also supported by Lin and Wang (2010) who state that China is becoming a consumer society which has resulted in rapid changes in traditional cultural values and lifestyles. One major indicator of this is considered to be the growing hedonic consumption values that have had positive impacts on Chinese consumers’ choice and consumption patterns. This includes novelty seeking, responsiveness to promotion, brand consciousness and preference to foreign brands (Lin & Wang, 2010). These changes are said to be a result of the ‘Western’ cultural invasion impacting traditional Chinese culture. This indicates to the researcher that Western culture and its ideals have impacted the East to an extent which raises further questions about the effects of this on Chinese consumer behaviour in relation to the fashion industry.

2.5.2. UK

British consumers are constantly demanding the latest fashion trends and require different types of clothing for different occasions (Keynote, 2015b). Young people follow the latest trends and update their wardrobes regularly experimenting with new styles and identities through fashion (Keynote, 2015a). These young consumers are more fashion focused resulting in an increase in youth fashion spending. From recent studies examining the shopping behaviour of Asian youth, it is evident that style consciousness is also displayed in China’s young consumers and not only consumers in the UK (Yip et al, 2012).

Although, the current academic literature surrounding this topic was sparse, it allows the researcher to identify gaps in the research that can be addressed within the planned research outlined in the methodology (Section 3.0).
3.0. Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Chapter Overview

The methodology section will outline how the researcher will fulfil the research aim to investigate the extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture. The researcher will also investigate whether factors such as family and marketing campaigns affect buyer behaviour.

The researcher carried out primary qualitative research through the use of two focus groups; one for each cultural perspective being investigated. An inductive and interpretivist view was taken and participants were gathered using purposive and snowballing sampling methods.
3.2. Research Philosophy & Approach

The research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. The philosophical stance that research takes is influenced by not only practical considerations but the researcher’s view of what is acceptable knowledge and the process by which this is developed (Saunders et al, 2012).

According to Saunders et al (2016), there are five philosophical positions business research can take; positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism. The researcher has chosen to adopt an interpretivist philosophical stance to investigate culture’s effect on consumer behaviour. Interpretivism emphasises that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings and the purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders et al, 2016).

The researcher used an inductive approach for the research to collect data to explore how culture influences consumer behaviour and whether consumer perceptions of fashion differ across cultures. This approach allowed the researcher to identify themes and patterns (Saunders et al, 2016).

3.3. Type of Research & Research Design

The researcher chose to carry out qualitative primary research in order to investigate the chosen research topic. Due to the use of an interpretive philosophy, the researcher felt that a qualitative research design was most appropriate because it enabled researchers to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied (Saunders et al, 2016).
According to Saunders et al (2016:169), “qualitative research studies meanings and relationships between the data, using a variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures to develop a conceptual framework and theoretical contribution.” This enabled the researcher to effectively gather information about consumers’ motivations and buying habits from both cultural perspectives. Although, the researcher knew that there could be issues in regards to the generalisability and the objectivity of the findings, using a qualitative research design was most appropriate. It enabled the researcher to collect rich and detailed data about the research topic rather than collecting numerical data that would have not been appropriate to the particular phenomenon being studied (Denscombe, 2014).

3.4. Data Collection Method

Focus groups were used to collect the data needed to fulfil the research aim. The researcher chose to carry out two focus groups (one for both cultural perspectives), each containing six to eight participants. A focus group is ‘a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on the topic that is the subject of the research’ (Powell & Single, 1996 as cited by Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). It is a focused group discussion where participants interact with one another about the research topic.

Using this method enabled the researcher to focus upon a particular issue or topic by encouraging discussion amongst participants. It also enabled the sharing of perceptions in an open and tolerant environment (Saunders et al, 2012). Focus groups are commonly used to study consumer behaviour, including attitudes, needs, perceptions, preferences and choices due to the interaction amongst participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This made it an appropriate method
for the researcher to use to collect data on whether culture influences fashion consumption and consumers’ buying habits. The advantages to using this method was that focus group research encourages participation from those who are reluctant to being interviewed by themselves and encourages contributions from people who may feel they have nothing to say (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Another benefit is that from the discussion, interaction, questioning and reflecting, it reveals the reasoning and underlying logic of participants, which gave the researcher an insight into not only what people think but also why they hold those views (Denscombe, 2014).

Although, the researcher chose to conduct focus groups as a method of data collection, there were potential pitfalls the researcher had to be aware of. These included the risk of the researcher biasing any comments made by leading the discussion themselves and the potential tendency for participants to conform a middle view through fear of exposing a minority opinion (McMillan & Weyers, 2011). The success of the focus groups was also dependent on establishing a climate of trust within the group which meant that the researcher had to foster a situation in which people felt at ease and sufficiently comfortable in the company of the other group members in order to express themselves freely (Denscombe, 2014). The researcher found this difficult when conducting the Chinese focus group because they were very reserved and there was little interaction between the group members.
3.5. Sampling Methods

To recruit the participants for the focus groups, purposive sampling was used. This allowed the researcher to select participants that will best answer the research questions based on their known attributes (Denscombe, 2014). Whilst doing this, the researcher had to ensure that the participants fitted the research requirements without causing any offence. As the researcher was only looking for Chinese and UK students to take part in the research, offence could have been caused by making assumptions of a student’s nationality. Students could have felt singled out if the researcher had approached them based on assumptions about their cultural background.

To prevent this, the researcher chose to also use a snowballing sampling method to gather participants. This is where participants are volunteered to be part of the research rather than chosen (Saunders et al, 2016). The researcher used available resources such as university lecturers and students to find out whether they knew anyone who would be interested in taking part. Using this method prevented any assumptions being made by the researcher about the cultural backgrounds of potential participants.

3.6. Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data collected by transcribing the audio recordings and creating transcript summaries to aid analysis. Researchers using an inductive approach aim to search for and recognise meanings in the data and to understand the social context and perceptions of research participants (Saunders et al., 2016). The researcher originally planned to do this through the use of narrative and content analysis which would have allowed the researcher to look for hidden messages and depict constructions of personal identity and social worlds.
However, the researcher did not want to quantify the text or look at the social implications of the data so decided that thematic analysis was a more appropriate method.

Thematic analysis involves the researcher coding qualitative data collected to identify themes or patterns that occur. This is an appropriate method for the researcher to have used because it allowed participants’ perceptions and opinions about the research topic to be analysed systematically. It also allowed the researcher to produce thematic description from the data and draw and verify conclusions (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.7. Validity, Reliability & Ethics

3.7.1. Validity and Reliability

The quality of the research design is judged by measuring the validity and reliability. Validity refers to the extent to which researchers can demonstrate that their data is accurate and appropriate (Denscombe, 2014). There are three types of internal validity: content, construct and predictive.

Content validity refers to the extent to which the measurement device provides adequate coverage of the investigative questions (Saunders et al., 2016). In relation to the research, content validity was determined by assessing the reviewed literature and discussing focus group questions with others beforehand. Conducting a pilot study by asking peers to check the questions beforehand ensured that the questions were appropriate and covered all topics being investigated. This enabled the researcher to feel reassured that there would be no drawbacks to the research and revealed any improvements necessary in order for the research to be carried out smoothly (Denscombe, 2014). The pilot study concluded that the finalised questions (shown in
appendix 3) were relevant to the research aims and covered all areas of the phenomenon being studied.

Predictive validity is concerned with the ability of the measures to make accurate predictions (Saunders et al., 2016). As the researcher used a qualitative data collection method, it could be difficult to make predictions about the behaviours and opinions of the two cultures. The use of a small sample may also affect the predictive validity as generalisability could be difficult.

Construct validity refers to the extent to which a scale item actually measures the presence of the construct that the researcher intends to measure (Saunders et al., 2016). It would be related to how well the set of questions proposed to the focus group measured the influence of culture on consumer behaviour. The researcher measured this beforehand using the literature review to identify themes and patterns as well as any gaps in existing research. This then enabled the researcher to devise questions that were appropriate and allowed the researcher to find out the necessary information.

Reliability refers to replication and consistency of the research design (Saunders et al., 2016). There are two types that the researcher had to take into consideration; internal and external. Internal reliability refers to ensuring consistency during a research project whereas external refers to whether the data collection techniques and analytic procedures would produce consistent findings if repeated on another occasion or by another researcher (Saunders et al., 2016).

There are many threats to reliability which include participant error, participant bias, researcher error and researcher bias (Saunders et al., 2016). The researcher had to ensure that there were no factors that could alter interpretation and performance or
induce bias or a false response. To prevent this, the researcher had to avoid using leading questions during the focus groups and ensure an objective view was kept throughout. To obtain this objective view, the researcher treated the data in a fair and impartial manner, gave due consideration to competing theories and alternative views in relation to the data and approached the research with an ‘open mind’ (Denscombe, 2014). The researcher did this by not neglecting data that appeared to disconfirm the researcher’s analysis and by exploring alternative possible explanations.

3.7.2. Ethics

McMillan and Weyers (2011) state that the term ethics in research context refers to the principles, rules and standards of conduct that apply to investigations. The researcher had to be aware of all potential ethical issues before carrying out the research in order to ensure that the correct guidelines were followed.

Any research project involving human beings should be characterised by protection of the human rights, dignity, health and safety of participants and researcher which can be achieved by observing three fundamental tenets; the research should do no harm, consent should be voluntary and confidentiality should be respected throughout (McMillan & Weyers, 2011).

The avoidance of harm, ensuring the safety of the researcher, informed consent and privacy of those taking part, the right to withdraw, voluntary nature of participation and the integrity and objectivity of researcher are all ethical factors that had to be taken into account when planning the research design (Saunders et al., 2016).

An ethics approval application form was completed ahead of the research which outlined the potential risks of the research and how the researcher planned to protect the participants from these risks. This can be seen in Appendix 4 along with the
participant information sheet and completed consent forms. The use of participant
information sheets and consent forms allowed the participants to gain a full
understanding of the implications of participation and allow them to reach a fully
informed, considered and freely given decision about whether to do so or not
(Saunders et al., 2016). All participants were made aware that the researcher was the
only one that had access to the data which was kept securely and audio recordings of
interviews would be destroyed once they had fulfilled their purpose to the researcher.
This resulted in participants being aware of the purpose of the study as well as their
right to anonymity, right to withdraw and right to not be recorded at any point.

3.8. Conclusion

This section of the paper has addressed the research practices and methods used for
data collection. After evaluating all possibilities, the methodology has allowed the
researcher to come to an informed decision about the most effective method of data
collection and has explained the researcher’s rationale for adopting a qualitative
approach. This chapter has provided information about how the researcher plans to
fulfil the research aims and objectives; the following chapter discusses the results of
the primary research.
4.0. Chapter Four: Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter is the presentation of findings from the conducted focus groups and will therefore discuss the themes that arose from the two focus groups undertaken by the researcher. Themes will be discussed with relevance to the objectives of the study and the researcher will compare the data collected with the concepts originally introduced within the literature review (see Section 2.0). For ease of understanding, extracts and themes brought into the study from the transcripts found in Appendix 5. will be coded in the following manner; e.g. Focus Group One, Respondent 3= FG1-R3 in the structure presented.

4.2. Culture

Culture has a significant impact on how individuals think, feel and behave (Hollensen, 2014; Goodenough, 1971 as cited by Usunier & Lee, 2013). Cultural values and behaviours have an impact on consumer attitudes, decision making and buying behaviour (Usunier & Lee, 2013). In order to meet the first objective, the researcher interpreted data collected on culture by looking at whether any respondents displayed any individualistic or collectivistic tendencies as well as investigating cultural identity.

4.2.1. Individualism

Both individualism and collectivism are seen as one of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions relating to the extent to which the self or group constitutes the centre point (Hofstede, 2010 as cited by Neelankavil & Rai, 2014). Individualistic tendencies were evident in both focus groups.
**FG1-R6:** “No, not really. I don’t think I am influenced by anybody- I just see what I like and I will buy it.”

The lack of social influence displayed here shows individualistic tendencies. Individualists are motivated by their own preferences, needs and rights (Triandis, 1995). As this particular respondent, does not think that they are influenced by anybody it is clear that they are individualistic and their shopping habits are motivated more by self-preference than other factors.

When questioned about whether they would buy a fashion item just because their friend was wearing it, all of the respondents in both focus groups answered no.

**FG1-ALL:** “No.”

**FG2-ALL:** “No.”

By having no interest in copying their friends’ sense of style and purchases, the respondents are displaying independence from others. This is an individualistic tendency as individuals see themselves as autonomous (Usnier & Lee, 2013). They are able to make purchase decisions based on their own opinions and preferences.

**FG1-R2** “That is very true, I think some things as well when it is popular- it kind of makes me hate it.”

**FG1-R1:** “Yes I know what you mean. You don’t want to look like a sheep.”

In relation to buying something to fit into a fashion trend, these particular respondents do not want to follow the crowd. This can be interpreted as individualistic tendencies because these individuals see themselves as independent and autonomous from other people and their environment (Usnier & Lee, 2013; Chiao et al, 2009).

This is also shown below.
FG1-R3: “If there is a certain trend or brand being pushed all the time, it makes me not want to buy it because again it is that sheep sort of feeling like you have to.”

There is less preference to something that everyone else has. This implies that respondents like to be ‘individual’ in regards to what they decide to wear and are not socially influenced. They are ‘stable entities’ (Chiao et al, 2009).

Individualistic tendencies were also evident in Focus Group 2…

When asked if they felt that the way that they dress was influenced by the opinions of their families, respondents answered no.

FG2-R1: “No.”

The lack of family influence impacting on this particular respondent, implies individualistic tendencies are present. Unlike collectivists, individuals with individualistic tendencies see themselves independently from the group or collective (Usnier & Lee, 2013).

FG2-R1: “If the item is my style then yes but it depends.”

In relation to buying something seen on a celebrity, respondents seemed to compare the style to themselves rather than solely buying it based on the advertising element. This shows that there is no direct influence on the respondent and self-preference takes prevalence.
4.2.2. Collectivism

Collectivism is the opposite perspective to individualism. The researcher looked for displays of collectivistic tendencies by the individuals. This included the individuals seeing themselves as an integral part of the group and individuals who tend to be motivated by the norms and duties imposed by a collective entity such as family (Triandis, 1995; Usunier & Lee, 2013).

**FG1-R4:** “When my sister or mum has something on that I like then I tend to be influenced heavily by their wardrobe and what fits me.”

This shows that this particular respondent is influenced by their family when it comes to their wardrobe. This displays collectivistic tendencies due to the individual defining their choices based on social relationships with their mother and sister.

**FG1-R6:** “I think some people want to be more edgy as well but they are just too scared to.”

This comment shows collectivistic tendencies because the respondent is scared of being judged by others. This suggests that this particular respondent is continually defining themselves by their social context and relationships and fears what other people think in terms of their fashion choices (Chiao et al, 2009).

The judgement of others was also evident when respondents were talking about fake products in the UK…

**FG1-R6:** “It is cringe isn’t it- so embarrassing.”

The respondents were judging others by discussing how embarrassing it is to see people wearing fake items from the markets. This particular respondent’s perception on others who wear these items is defined as social context and what is seen as
appropriate. This is dependent on the norms and duties being imposed on the individual in the particular culture and environment in which they live (Triandis, 1995). Clothing choices provide an excellent field for an individual to interpret a specific form of culture in their own purposes, which includes the strong norms about appropriate appearances (Crane, 2000). This is a reasonable explanation for why respondent 6 judges other people in this manner because they do not see this particular clothing choice appropriate in the UK culture.

*FG1-R1*: “I think everyone does it unconsciously, I think people don’t realise things are nice until it gets into fashion.”

Although respondents may not realise, this comment implies that they are unconsciously conforming to the norms and duties imposed by a collective entity when it comes to fitting in with changing fashion trends (Triandis, 1995). These unconscious motivations influence consumer perceptions of fashion items as they do not realise that particular items are nice until they come into fashion.

The use of the pronoun ‘we’ in both of the comments made below imply to the researcher that these particular respondents view themselves as part of a group.

*FG2-R6*: “We pay more attention to the styles.”

*FG2-R1*: “We do have our own celebrities.”

Collectivists usually see themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives/ingroups (Usnier & Lee, 2013). Respondents within this particular focus group, tended to refer to themselves as a whole group demonstrating collectivistic tendencies. Throughout the duration of Focus Group 2, the researcher sensed a feeling of consensus among the respondents. This supports the idea that Eastern countries such as China will exhibit collectivistic tendencies (Parker et al, 2009).
4.2.3. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is also linked to collectivism and the ‘self’ concept. It refers to the extent to which people from a given culture recognise and identify with a set of focal elements that set the culture apart from others (He & Wang, 2015).

*FG1-R1:* “Westerners, yes.”

This particular respondent refers to people from the UK and the ‘West’ as ‘Westerners’. This shows that this individual identifies people from the West as having a set of elements that differentiates them from other cultures such as China.

*FG2-R1:* “In china, we have our own celebrities.”

*FG2-R1:* “China has its own fashion as well; we have traditional clothes.”

The use of the word ‘our’ by this respondent suggests to the researcher that the individual views themselves as part of a particular group or culture. According to He and Wang (2015), people in collective cultures like China often identify their self-concept based on their connections with others which is clearly evident with this particular respondent. The mention of China’s traditional clothes by the respondent also shows that the individual is aware of what differentiates their culture from others giving them a sense of cultural identity.
4.3. Buyer Behaviour

The second objective of the research was to investigate whether factors such as media and family affect buyer behaviour. From the focus groups, the researcher found that there were three common themes that arose. These were influences on buyer behaviour, the self and body concept and the thought process that occurs when making a purchase decision.

4.3.1. Influences on Buyer Behaviour

Both focus groups enabled the researcher to gain insight into the motivations of why individuals choose to buy certain items and follow certain fashion trends. Some of these motivations included fashion, purpose, the quality sought, and satisfaction gained.

Fashion and style was a major influence on how the respondents dressed and what they brought in terms of clothing and other fashion items.

*FG1-R1:* “Fashion.”

*FG1-R6:* “Fashion.”

*FG2-R1:* “Firstly style, then quality.”

Respondents in both focus groups were concerned about whether the style was suitable and dressed for fashion purposes.

*FG1-R1:* “It’ll be last season.”

Respondents are aware that fashion trends are constantly changing meaning that they need to update their wardrobes in order to keep up. As apparel is a product category that is known to reflect the consumer’s social life, aspirations and affiliation, keeping
up with the latest trends may be a way of these respondents expressing themselves (Kim et al, 2002; Aagerup, 2011).

Respondents from both focus groups stated that they not only dressed for fashion but for purpose. This means that they dress to suit the occasion or the weather.

**FG1-R3:** “I would say purpose.”

**FG1-R4:** “I would agree.”

**FG2-R1:** “Well today, we have a presentation so we are dressed formally.”

Consumer behaviour is all about the consumer satisfying their needs and wants through buying and disposing of goods, services, ideas or experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2011). This implies that these particular individuals shop for fashion items to satisfy their need to wear something specific to suit the occasion e.g. going on holiday would influence them to buy swimwear. This can be linked to the ‘need recognition’ stage of the buyer decision process (Armstrong et al, 2014). The British consumer requires different types of clothing for different occasions which may be the reason behind their need to dress for purpose (Keynote, 2015b).

The quality of the goods also seemed to play a huge role in the mind of the respondents with this factor being discussed on multiple occasions.

**FG1-R4:** “Of course.”

**FG1-R1:** “Yes definitely.”

**FG1-R3:** “It is relative though- some things I don’t really care about the quality.”

**FG2-R3:** “Of course.”
When asked whether quality was a factor that they looked for when buying a fashion item, respondents from both focus groups stated it was important. Although it was relative dependent on the item being brought, it is clear to the researcher that quality has a significant part to play in the purchase decision.

**FG1-R5:** “Wasn’t purely for the name reason, was purely because I wanted a bag that I could use for all purposes and its really good.”

This particular respondent stated that they were not just looking for the ‘brand name’ element of the item but wanted something that was fit for purpose and was going to last. This can be linked with durability which was mentioned throughout the duration of Focus Group 1.

**FG1-R3:** “Durability.”

**FG1-R1:** “Definitely.”

**FG1-R3:** “I guess it just comes back to durability again doesn’t it?”

The factor of comfort was also mentioned which implies to the researcher that respondents in both focus groups look for functional elements of particular fashion items when buying not just because they think the item looks nice.

**FG1-R3:** “Like the Chinese students, they dress really smart whereas we are all dressed for comfort I would say.”

Respondents in Focus Group 1 not only stated that they dressed for comfort but seemed to have a certain perception of Chinese students thinking that they dressed differently in comparison to them. Although, this view is challenged by the comments made by the respondents in Focus Group 2…

**FG2-R2:** “For comfort.”
FG2-R3: “Yeah, cosy and comfortable.”

This finding is supported by research from Rahman (2011) that states that many consumers expressed that comfort and fit were important in judging overall satisfaction with apparel products.

Although, functional factors such as quality and durability seem to be influencing respondents’ purchase decisions and buyer behaviour, the influence of money seems to also be having an impact.

FG1-R6: “No, only if I had been paid.”

The buying behaviour of this respondent is clearly influenced around when they get paid. Their willingness to buy branded fashion items is dependent on how much money they have at the time of purchase.

FG1-R1: “No, I haven’t got the budget.”

FG1-R3: “I am on a budget.”

This particular respondent is more concerned with what they can afford rather than the brand of the fashion item. It is therefore evident that consumers take into account the money element when making a purchase decision.

FG1-R2: “If I see something on TV or see someone wearing something and I think it looks nice, I will try and find a cheaper version of it.”

FG1-R3: “Yes, I agree.”

These respondents stated that they prefer to find cheaper alternatives to items they see on others or in advertising. This suggests that money plays a significant factor in
influencing buyer behaviour and consumers may actively seek a lower priced alternative.

The respondents seemed aware of their finances and will shop for fashion items based on what they can afford...

**FG1-R2:** “I like it but I can’t afford to buy it.”

The above comment suggests to the researcher that the amount of income a consumer has is a significant impact on what brands that consumer buys and how much they are willing to spend on a fashion item.

**FG1-R4:** “I would rather spend money on something that will last me a while rather than buying five of the same thing.”

**FG1-R4:** “I would understand you would spend a lot of money on something that you were going to use every day.”

The amount of money a consumer is willing to spend on a fashion item is dependent on how the item will be consumed and whether it will last the consumer a long time. This respondent states that they prefer to spend more money on a particular item if they know they are going to get good wear out of it and it is of good quality. Consumers use price to infer quality so this implies to the researcher that this particular respondent is willing to pay more money in order to receive higher quality goods (Rahman, 2011).

**FG1-R1:** “Yeah, I don’t think I would ever buy actual designer brands because I think it is just a waste of money.”

This respondent’s perception of designer brands is influenced by money. They do not seem willing to buy these brands because they believe that they are a waste of money.
and would prefer to get more for their money somewhere else. This shows the researcher how money influences the consumer’s decision making process.

This is a contrasting view to the previous focus group, this particular respondent would be willing to buy designer brands if they had the ability to afford them.

\textit{FG2-R1: “If I have the ability to afford, of course Chanel.”}

Another factor that was mentioned in the research study was the satisfaction gained from shopping for or obtaining a fashion item.

\textit{FG1-R1: “I love shopping.”}

\textit{FG1-R3: “It makes me so happy.”}

\textit{FG2-R1: “It is enjoyable.”}

It is evident that respondents have a positive experience when they purchase this type of shopping item. This could be linked to the psychological influences impacting on consumer behaviour and the purchase decision stage (Armstrong et al, 2014). Clothing can be used to manage or reflect positive or negative mood and research carried out by Koksal (2014) shows how certain attributes of clothing can impact the mood of the consumer.

\textit{FG1-R3: “Real life shopping because you physically have your things.”}

\textit{FG1-R1: “Day of delivery is good.”}

\textit{FG1-R6: “Exciting.”}

This implies to the researcher that respondents enjoy the shopping experience, whether it is acquiring fashion items online or physically going out shopping.
Consumers experience positivity through fashion consumption which may influence the frequency in which they buy these items.

In order to find out whether consumer behaviour was influenced by the media and advertising, the researcher asked the respondents a number of questions relating to influential marketing campaigns and celebrities.

**FG1-R2:** “If I see something on the TV.”

**FG2-R2:** “Maybe magazines or watching the TV.”

Both of these respondents stated the impact that television and media publications have on the way they dress. They see something they like in magazines or on the television and then actively seek to find a similar item. This shows how external stimuli is affecting the need recognition stage, the consumer recognises a need for a certain fashion item after seeing an advert (Armstrong et al, 2015).

The researcher also found that respondents were influenced by certain celebrities portrayed in the media and there were noticeable similarities and differences between the views of both cultural perspectives.

**FG1-R3:** “David Beckham for H&M, his menswear stuff. That was like iconic.”

**FG2-R1:** “Definitely Beckham.”

**FG1-R4:** “I think the West just dominates the world when it comes to media and that kind of thing. I don’t think you would find anywhere apart from the deepest darkest corners of the world that wouldn’t know who Beyoncé was if they saw a picture of her.”

Media and advertising clearly has an impact on the purchase intention and decision of the consumers in both cultures. The comment made by respondent 4, implies that
respondents perceive the ‘Western’ culture to be global. The fact that both cultures find David Beckham influential implies that the ‘West’ is infiltrating China which is causing a change in the aspirations and motivations of Chinese consumers. This can be supported by Parker et al (2009) who states that China is experiencing a shift from collectivism to a more individualistic culture drawing consumers into the 21st century of Western dress, values, individuality and materialistic capitalism (Jim & Kang, 2011).

**FG1-R3:** “Maybe the Kardashians. Also what about GiGi Hadid. Her and Kendall and celebs like that.”

**FG2-ALL:** “No, do not like.”

**FG2-R1:** “No she hasn’t got a very good reputation.”

Although, the Kardashians are popular with UK consumers and are a huge part of Western media, this is not the same for consumers in China who have a negative perception of them. This shows the researcher that the choice of celebrity in a marketing campaign will impact the consumer’s perception of the fashion item and the overall reputation of the brand. Marketers should do further market research to find out how particular celebrities are perceived by the consumers in the specific country that they are wishing to target before entering that market.

Another common theme was social media…

**FG1-R1:** “I feel like Instagram and stuff like that has a lot to do with it as well.”

**FG2-R1:** “We see pictures on social media and if I think it looks good, I will go for it.”
It is evident that respondents feel influenced by what they see on social media. This supports the idea proposed previously by Kim and Ko (2012) which shows how social media is used in the fashion industry to build purchase intentions in the minds of consumers. This implies to the researcher that external stimuli affecting consumers such as social networking sites can be classed as both psychological and social factors (Armstrong & Kotler, 2014).

There was one particular respondent that tended to not be influenced by others and acted on impulse when purchasing fashion items…

**FG1-R6:** “Only if I had been paid or just an impulse purchase.”

**FG1-R6:** “I am very impulsive, I will literally pick up anything and not even think about it.”

It is evident that in relation to the buyer decision process, this particular respondent does not do much evaluation of alternatives in stage three (Armstrong et al, 2015). Whilst others may carry out careful calculations and think logically about a purchase, this respondent buys on impulse trusting their intuition.
4.3.2. Self and Body Concept

The self and body concept plays a huge role in fashion consumption and how consumers perceive themselves.

When asked if they make their purchase decision based on their own body shape in comparison to the model advertising it, all respondents in Focus Group 1 answered yes.

*FG1-ALL*: “Yes.”

An individual’s assessment of their physical characteristics and personality attributes affects how they view themselves (Carducci, 2009). These perceptions and their body shape influences how they view certain fashion items impacting on their overall purchase decision. A complex ideology of the body is said to underlie consumers’ satisfaction with their appearance and their sense of ideal or more desirable body (Thompson & Hirchmann, 1995). This can be seen by the respondents comparing their bodies to others and basing their purchase decisions on how they think they will look in the item compared with the model. This implies to the researcher that there are social influences impacting the respondents and that advertising also plays a part in fashion consumption.

*FG1-R1*: “More likely to buy something if the model looks nice in it even though you don’t look like the model.”

Respondents perceive something to be nice based on how the model looks wearing the item. Clothing is used by consumers to express their thoughts and feelings about their bodies, so the respondents may feel that although the model looks nice in the item it may not look the same of their body (Warlop & Beckmann, 2001).

Respondents are aware that their bodies are not the same as others but still decide
whether to buy something based on how nice they perceive the model to look wearing it.

**FG1-R2:** “My issue is height.”

This particular respondent perceives that they have issues with their height which therefore influences the way they view their body in the social world. Consumers’ satisfaction with their appearance, their sense of ideal or more desirable body and the consumption activities these self-perceptions motivate are all based on a complex cultural ideology of the body (Thompson & Hirchmann, 1995). This implies to the researcher that the issues that this particular respondent perceives about themselves could be dependent on the cultural norms of their environment.

**FG1-R1:** “Picture perfect look.”

This implies that there are social pressures to look a certain way or that there is a particular style that everyone aspires to. Seeing others on social media may cause an individual to change their perception of how they would like to be and how they would like others to see them impacting their ideal and social forms of self (Sirgy, 1982). This is linked to research that shows how being bombarded with images of size-zero models along with singers and actors has led to consumers aspiring to look like the supposedly perfect image (Keynote, 2015a).

**FG1-R1:** “Yeah, I feel like Instagram and stuff like that has a lot to do with it as well.

**FG1-R6:** “People try and portray an image of themselves as well, try and sell a different image of them especially online.”

**FG1-R1:** “I agree, makes them feel better about themselves I think.”
The self-concept is also evident here because there is an indication that consumers’ try and reinvent themselves through the use of social media to make themselves feel better. This idea of individuals reinventing themselves is supported by Kim et al (2002) who states that apparel is a high involvement shopping item which consumers buy for image reinforcement. Sites such as Instagram influence consumer perceptions of what is acceptable and how the ‘body’ should look. It creates an ‘ideal self’ that consumers compare themselves to. This supports an article by Roxby (2014) who states that people who use social media sites tend to cultivate a persona. This also implies that consumers use social media and fashion to ‘reinvent’ themselves which stresses the significant impact this has on perceptions of the self.

There was a clear contrast between the UK students in Focus Group 1 to the Chinese students in Focus Group 2…

When asked whether their purchase decision is based on a comparison with the model advertising it, all respondents answered no. This differs from the respondents of Focus Group 1 who stated that they do compare what the item looks like on the model to themselves.

**FG2-ALL:** “No.”

This implies to the researcher that this certain group of individuals are not influenced by this particular factor which could suggest that they are aware that their ‘actual self’ is different in comparison to others.

**FG2-R1:** “Not really… I don’t think my body shape is the same as the model. They’ve got perfect bodies and I don’t so I just see if the clothes look good on me.”

This particular respondent tends to be motivated more by self-preference than the social pressures to look a certain way. The above comment could be interpreted by the
researcher that the respondent could have negative perceptions about their body. Although the respondent may not be directly influenced by the model used in advertising, it is evident that they perceive their body as not being ‘perfect’ which impacts what they choose to wear.

**FG2-R1:** “If the item is my style.”

**FG2-R1:** “If it is good and suitable with me.”

These comments made by this particular respondent imply to the researcher that they are satisfied with their body image and self and are not influenced by social factors. They are more concerned with how the fashion item looks on themselves rather than comparing themselves to others. Style seems to play a significant role in fashion consumption as not only is it one of the factors mentioned earlier in this chapter but can be seen as an intrinsic cue influencing the consumer’s judgement of fashion and clothing (Rahman, 2011; Koksal, 2014).
4.3.3. Thought Process

Another theme that the researcher identified in relation to buyer behaviour was the thought process that consumers experienced in the purchase decision stage. It was clear that a number of respondents (especially in Focus Group 1) thought a lot about their purchase before buying a fashion item.

**FG1-R2:** “I think of how many outfits I could wear with it as well, like I could see something that I really like and then I think about it.”

The way this particular respondent thinks about how they can use the item before deciding on whether to buy it, shows the researcher that extrinsic cues such as price and brand may be influencing the purchase decision (Koksal, 2014).

**FG1-R1:** “But if it is made out of normal material, what's the point?”

This respondent is clearly affected by intrinsic cues such as fabric and style when it comes to making a purchase decision (Rahman, 2011). They do not see the point in spending money on something that is branded if an alternative can be brought somewhere else for a cheaper price. This links back to the money influence that was mentioned above. This could also be due to personal influences impacting the buyer’s decision process as previously acknowledged by Armstrong and Kotler (2015).

**FG1-R3:** “I wear it a few times and then I am like I don’t want it anymore.”

This implies to the researcher that consumers are aware that fashions are always changing and they feel the need to keep up with trends. The change in seasons may lead to a change in how the consumer perceives a particular fashion item which then results in them buying new clothing in order to update their wardrobe. This could also be linked to the element of weather which respondents previously mentioned in relation to how they choose to dress. Implying that the thought process that goes into
the buying decision process is very advanced and influenced by a number of different factors.

**FG1-R4:** “I think it is just about being a bit more aware that influences the kind of things I buy, a little more than it used to.”

**FG1-R4:** “I think it’s a bit of a moral thing with Primark.”

This respondent thinks about certain ethical issues surrounding fashion consumption and tends to shop based on their particular perception of the brand or store’s reputation. This links to the second stage of the buyer decision process where an interested consumer searches for more information (Armstrong et al, 2015). In this case, the respondent seeks information about how ‘moral’ particular brands are and if they have the ability to afford will seek alternatives that meet these concerns. This supports the idea proposed by Rahman (2011) who says that today’s consumers often assess a product with multiple criteria showing the researcher that consumers’ perceptions affect their buying behaviour.

From the previous review of the literature, the researcher had the assumption that China was hugely influenced by Western culture. This was due to the rise of individualism and materialism in China challenging its traditional view, Chinese consumers are currently being influenced by two forces; tradition versus 21st century of Western dress, values and individuality (Jin & Kang, 2011).

These views are supported by the comments made below by respondents…

**FG1-R4:** “I think the West just dominates the world when it comes to media… You get your celebrities of different countries but Western celebrities are global.”

**FG2-ALL:** “Yes, popular” …when asked whether Western brands such as Zara were popular in China.

However, it is not always the case with the researcher finding that it was not necessarily the ‘West’ influencing China but other cultures such as Korea….

**FG2-R6:** “Many young girls follow Korean movie stars and singers and how they dress.”

These two conflicting views makes it hard for the researcher to decide what extent Western influences impact on Chinese culture. However, it is evident that respondents from both focus groups perceive the Western culture and the brands to be aspirational.

**FG1-R3:** “Yeah, I think people aspire to be connected and part of the Western culture and our fashion.”

**FG2-R1:** “Italy and France represent high quality and are highly desirable.”

This also links to the idea that Chinese consumers have a preference for foreign brands (Lin & Wang, 2010). The use of celebrities in the media could have an influence of this with young consumers occupied with fashion and body image aspiring to celebrities and their supposedly perfect image (Keynote, 2015a). This not only displays how psychological characteristics influences consumer perceptions but
also reiterates the impact on the self-perception of the body. Consumers imitate people they admire to determine what is acceptable and appropriate in relation to current fashion trends (Rath et al, 2015). This could be seen as a display of collectivistic tendencies (Chiao et al, 2009).

Another similarity between the two perspectives, is the way the groups are view brands...

**FG1-R1:** “I don’t think I would ever by actual designer brands because I think it is just a waste of money.”

**FG2-R1:** “Actually, I don’t care about brands. Just the item I wanted to buy. They may be luxury brands or cheap clothes.”

It is evident that there is a disregard for branded fashion items on behalf of both focus groups implying that their purchase decision is based on self-preference of style rather than the symbol that item represents. This challenges the notion proposed by Lin & Wang (2010) that states Chinese consumers are more brand conscious.

**FG1-R4:** “A lot of people do a lot of ‘oh I am going to buy it because it has a label on which makes it look nice’ but it doesn’t.”

**FG1-R1:** “I would prefer to buy something because I like it rather than because it is really expensive with the brand on.”

Although, it is clear that respondents are aware of certain brands being of higher quality, their purchase decision is based on more than the extrinsic cue of the brand name showing that there are a number of factors influencing the buyer decision process for both groups of respondents (Rahman, 2011).
4.5 Summary of Research Findings

To conclude, this section has presented the results of the primary research, comparing them to the literature review whilst highlighting similarities and differences between the two cultures. Following the themes displayed in the literature review throughout the analysis process, enabled the researcher to meet objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the research project.

The next section will use these research findings to draw conclusions and recommendations for brands within the fashion industry. This will also include limitations of the research and suggestions that could be made to improve future research around the study.
5.0. Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion of Overall Project

As outlined in Chapter 1, the main aim of this research was to investigate the extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture. This aim was to be achieved through the following objectives:

- To critically analyse whether culture has a significant impact on aspects of consumer behaviour with relation to the fashion industry.
- To investigate whether factors such as family and marketing campaigns affect buyer behaviour.
- To assess how fashion consumption differs across the two different cultures; the UK and China.

From the literature and research that has been carried out throughout this project, it is clear that all of these areas have been explored in great detail. The researcher followed a consistent framework throughout the process by ensuring each section outlined the three fundamental themes that formed the basis for the research objectives; culture, buyer behaviour and fashion consumption.

To answer the research question in hand, it is apparent that fashion consumption is influenced by a number of factors. It is difficult for the researcher to establish the exact extent to which fashion consumption is influenced by culture but it is clear that culture has a significant impact along with other contributing factors.
5.2. Recommendations

Following the research undertaken, the literature reviewed and primary research findings it is evident that cultural, personal, social and psychological characteristics have a strong influence on consumer purchases (Armstrong & Kotler, 2015). Exploring each of these categories gave an insight into the minds of the consumer and how cultural variations affect consumption patterns.

As mentioned in the literature review, many buyer behaviour models are based on ‘Western’ assumptions that are then considered as universal although this is not necessarily the case (Doole & Lowe, 2012). One recommendation to aid future research surrounding this topic would be to devise a new model for buyer behaviour that takes into account the cultural variations identified in this particular research study. This would then guide marketers and brands within the fashion industry about how to deal with cultural barriers upon entering an unfamiliar market.

Another recommendation to emerge from the research is that fashion brands and advertisers should continue to focus on the rapidly increasing youth market in both China and the UK. This demographic is currently the biggest contributor to the UK’s very successful fashion industry and new trends are emerging in China suggesting an increase in young fashion conscious consumers (Keynote, 2015a; Yip et al, 2012). Understanding this important demographic is vital to the success of any future marketing activities due to the significant impact young consumers have on fashion consumption.

The rapid changes currently occurring in the Chinese market indicates that there is potential for growth and success within the fashion industry (Enriquez et al, 2015; Knight & Kim, 2007) This means that fashion brands and marketers should seek to
attract Chinese consumers and the opportunities this emerging economy has to offer. Chinese consumers are now more fashion conscious with their main buying needs being for themselves due to individualism (Luo, 2009). In order to be successful in this market, the relationship between consumer behaviour and culture needs to be understood.

5.3. Limitations to Research

There were a number of limitations that researcher encountered throughout the research process. The first was the difficulty of obtaining information from the Chinese students whilst conducting the focus group. Even with a lot of persistence on the researcher’s behalf the respondents did not contribute much to the group discussion and relied on the researcher to direct the session. This was the first time that the researcher had carried out this type of research study so when this problem arose, the researcher felt unprepared to deal with this and struggled to encourage any further discussion amongst the focus group. The objectivity of the researcher may have been comprised due to this causing a negative impact on the reliability of the research study.

To overcome this limitation, the researcher recommends the use of a different researcher or the use of a translator who is able to communicate better with the Chinese students. This would avoid the questions being misinterpreted due to the language barrier resulting in the focus group being more successful.

Another limitation was the focus groups only lasting an average of twenty minutes. The researcher feels that this was not a sufficient amount of time to gain a true insight into the motivations impacting consumers’ consumption behaviours and although an
attempt to further the discussion was made, particular respondents were reluctant to contribute.

The researcher also encountered a problem conducting a comparison of the two cultural perspectives. Although, the focus groups enabled discussion amongst respondents, the data collected varied between the two different groups. This made it difficult for the researcher to relate both focus groups to one another in the findings and discussion chapter.

If the researcher were to carry out this type of research again, preparing a more concise and extensive list of questions would make the focus groups last longer and would prompt and encourage further discussion among the participants. This would then lead to a more substantial comparison between both the cultural perspectives being made resulting in higher validity for this particular research study.

5.4. Future Research

The research has given more insight into the attributes that consumers look for when shopping for fashion items. This could be used to gain an understanding on what motivates fashion consumption in both cultures in order to direct future branding and advertising strategies.

This research study can be used to identify a number of cultural, psychological and social factors that influence consumer behaviour. It places emphasis on how culture impacts fashion consumption which is an important aspect in the study of consumer behaviour.

Various concepts were discussed throughout the research that could be explored in greater detail and form the basis of future research into culture and consumer behaviour. The potential shift in the individualism-collectivism dimension should be
investigated further to establish whether cultural norms are changing in relation to consumer behaviour. Other concepts that need to be explored in more detail include how the self and body are portrayed through social media and the effects this has on consumers and the influence of culture in relation to the different stages of the buyer decision process (Armstrong et al, 2015). Although this study attempted to compare cultural differences, more insight is needed to fully understand elements of culture influencing consumers.

5.5. Conclusion

This section of the research paper has examined the relationship between the literature reviewed, the primary research conducted and the future research needed. This has then been used to provide recommendations to marketers and fashion brands about how to deal with cultural variations in fashion consumption and the current opportunities available in this particular market.

The aims and objectives have been answered through research and conclusion. There has also been an assessment of the research allowing suggestions to be made on how any future research surrounding cultural consumer behaviour should be conducted.
6.0. Reference List


Keynote (2015a) ‘Youth Fashionwear: Market Update 2015.’


7.0. Appendices

Appendix One

Summary of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism-collectivism</td>
<td>Extent to which the self or the group constitutes the center point</td>
<td>Interest of the individual versus the group</td>
<td>Individualistic: Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collectivist: China, Colombia, Greece, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power distance</td>
<td>Extent to which hierarchical differences are accepted, ranging from power respectability to power tolerance</td>
<td>Centralization versus decentralization</td>
<td>Power respect: Brazil, India, Mexico, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power tolerance: Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Extent to which uncertainty or ambiguity is tolerated, ranging from uncertainty avoidance to uncertainty acceptance</td>
<td>Structure versus less structure (more rules or fewer rules)</td>
<td>Structured: Japan, France, Greece, Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoidance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less structured: Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity-Femininity</td>
<td>Extent to which traditional masculine (aggressiveness and assertiveness) values are emphasized</td>
<td>How sex roles are defined and practiced</td>
<td>Masculine: Austria, Italy, Japan, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine: Denmark, Finland, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term-Short-term</td>
<td>Extent to which a society values thrift and respect of social obligations</td>
<td>Short-term view vs. long-term view</td>
<td>Long-term view: Brazil, China, India, South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short-term view: Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hofstede, 2010 as cited by Neelankavil & Rai, 2014)
Appendix Two

Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour:

Armstrong & Kotler (2015:162)
Appendix Three

Finalised questions for focus groups with pictures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask all interviewees to sign consent form and approval to use recording systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction/Fashion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you dress for fashion, for purpose, for religious reasons or any other reason?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you often buy luxury fashion brands? &amp; Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any preferences over which brands you would buy? Why would you buy these compared to alternatives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does anyone influence how you dress? E.g. family, celebrities etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you look for when you buy fashion items?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the most important factors you look for when purchasing fashion items?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you buy a fashion item just because you’re friend was wearing/owned it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you buy something to ‘fit in’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does purchasing fashion items make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you make your purchase decision based on your body shape &amp; compare how it would look on you compared to the model?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would the use of celebrities in advertising persuade you to buy a certain fashion brand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, which celebrities would you find the most influential? Are they from the West?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you think of any influential marketing campaigns that have persuaded you to buy a fashion item?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your opinions on Chinese &amp; UK fashion &amp; how it is marketed? Are there any noticeable differences? (Use pictures as stimuli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there any country where you perceive the quality of goods to be poor? Would you buy from there &amp; why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that the 'West' has created a 'Western culture' that influences other countries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think China has been influenced by Western culture? WHY?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you surprised with how many Western brands have infiltrated China?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Four

Approved Ethics Form including Participant Information Sheet & Completed Consent Forms:
CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

When undertaking a research or enterprise project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered.

If the project requires ethics approval from an external agency (e.g., NHS), you will not need to seek additional ethics approval from Cardiff Met. You should however complete Part One of this form and attach a copy of your ethics letter(s) of approval in order that your School has a record of the project.

The document Ethics application guidance notes will help you complete this form. It is available from the Cardiff Met website. The School or Unit in which you are based may also have produced some guidance documents, please consult your supervisor or School Ethics Coordinator.

Once you have completed the form, sign the declaration and forward to the appropriate person(s) in your School or Unit.

PLEASE NOTE:
Participant recruitment or data collection MUST NOT commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

PART ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of applicant:</th>
<th>Kira Stokes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (if student project):</td>
<td>Barbara Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / Unit:</td>
<td>Cardiff Metropolitan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student number (if applicable):</td>
<td>St20037732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme enrolled on (if applicable):</td>
<td>BA (Hons) Business &amp; Management Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>A Comparison of Cultural Consumer Behaviour in the Fashion Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected start date of data collection:</td>
<td>07/03/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate duration of data collection:</td>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Body (if applicable):</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other researcher(s) working on the project:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve NHS patients or staff?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve taking samples of human origin from participants?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**DECLARATION:**

I confirm that this project conforms with the Cardiff Met Research Governance Framework

I confirm that I will abide by the Cardiff Met requirements regarding confidentiality and anonymity when conducting this project.

STUDENTS: I confirm that I will not disclose any information about this project without the prior approval of my supervisor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of the applicant:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FOR STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of supervisor:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Signature of supervisor:
### PART TWO

#### A RESEARCH DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1 Will you be using an approved protocol in your project?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2 If yes, please state the name and code of the approved protocol to be used&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Describe the research design to be used in your project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus Groups/Group Interviews:**

- Two semi-structured group interviews will be held to collect qualitative information, with the same set of questions asked to both groups.
- The use of focus groups will enable the researcher to focus upon a particular issue or topic by encouraging discussion amongst participants. It will also enable the sharing of perceptions in an open and tolerant environment (Saunders et al., 2012).
- Focus groups are commonly used to study consumer behaviour, including attitudes, needs, perceptions, preferences and choices and work for these purposes because of the interaction among the participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).
- The semi-structured interview method will encourage freedom of response to gain opinions, insights and thoughts, and will facilitate further discussion of wider subjects.
- The researcher intends to use an interview technique using open questions and will use visual tools to aid the discussion.

---

<sup>1</sup> An Approved Protocol is one which has been approved by Cardiff Met to be used under supervision of designated members of staff; a list of approved protocols can be found on the Cardiff Met website here.
The researcher will ensure that each participant has the opportunity to offer his or her contribution to the discussion in order to receive a variety of responses.

Contact with the participants will begin as soon as the ethics application is completed and the group interviews are forecasted to take place in March.

Each interview will be audio recorded in order to make analysing the results easier. Each group interview will last around 45 minutes to 1 hour.

**Sample:**
- Each group interview will contain 6-8 participants who have declared themselves as having the necessary characteristics to the researcher.
- Purposive sampling will be used to allow the researcher to select participants that will best answer the research questions and meet the objectives (Saunders et al, 2012). In this case, the researcher is looking for participants from two specific cultural backgrounds; the UK, China.
- Snowballing sampling may also be using to gather participants. The researcher will ask around to see if anyone can recommend anyone that would be interested in taking part in the focus group making identification of participants easier.

**Participants:**
- All participants will be over the age of 18
- The types of samples chosen are to guarantee no discrimination against age, gender, race, sexuality, disability etc.
- Participants’ right to anonymity will be reiterated throughout the research process, and they may withdraw their data at any point
- The interviews will be audio-recorded without any identifying terms
- The researcher will refer to the interviewees as ‘respondent 1, 2’.

**Consent:**
- Participants will be given a paper consent form before the interview is started, which they will fill out to show they give their consent once they have read the participation information sheet.

**Analysis:**
- Questions asked to the participants will be based on any themes found in the literature review. The researcher will also identify any gaps in order to fully answer the research question and meet objectives.
- The researcher will analyse data using interpretivist approach due to the use of qualitative data.
- The researcher will draw together and compare the focus group discussions on various issues using content analysis. This will allow the researcher to identify any themes and patterns (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).
- Narrative research analysis will also be used by the researcher due to the nature of the research design.
**A4 Will the project involve deceptive or covert research?**  
No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A5 If yes, give a rationale for the use of deceptive or covert research</strong></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A6 Will the project have security sensitive implications?</strong></th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A7 If yes, please explain what they are and the measures that are proposed to address them</strong></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**B PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B1 What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project do you have?</strong></th>
<th>The researcher has previous experience involving human participants whilst on work placement with 20Twenty where she created surveys for the company that were then used by clients to evaluate the workshops. She also has experience of analysing data received from surveys but has no previous experience of conducting semi-structured group interviews.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| **B2 Student project only** | What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project does your supervisor have?  
My supervisor has experience in quantitative and qualitative research. |
|---|---|

**C POTENTIAL RISKS**

| **C1 What potential risks do you foresee?** | Semi-structured Interviews:  
- The participants may not co-operate or refuse to answer questions if they deem the information personal or confidential or if they do not understand the content up for discussion.  
- A group effect may occur whereby certain participants effectively try to dominate the interview while others feel inhibited which could cause some participants to publicly agree with the views of others even though they privately disagree. |
|---|---|

| **Gathering Participants:** |  
- The researcher may arrange interviews that may fall through, potentially jeopardising the research project.  
- Gathering participants to take part from both cultures may be difficult due to the researcher not wanting to offend or discriminate against anyone. |
|---|---|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C2 How will you deal with the potential risks?</strong></th>
<th>Semi-structured interviews:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
• Participant information sheet and consent form will be given to the interviewees to ensure they are aware of the topics that will be up for discussion.
• Participants will be informed of their right to anonymity, right to withdraw data and right not to be recorded at any point without penalty.
• The researcher will have to encourage discussion from all members of the group through the use of open and probing questions to ensure there is no conforming within the group and every participant has the opportunity to contribute.
• The use of separate focus groups for each culture will prevent risk of conformity.

Gathering Participants

• The researcher will ensure they maintain contact with each of the intended interviewees, and will ensure that other participants are available should they be needed.
• Participants will declare themselves to the researcher as being from a specific culture to ensure no offence is caused.

All participants will be made aware that the researcher will have sole access to the data, and audio recordings of interviews will be destroyed once they have fulfilled their purpose to the researcher.

When submitting your application you **MUST** attach a copy of the following:

• All information sheets
• Consent/assent form(s)

An exemplar information sheet and participant consent form are available from the Research section of the Cardiff Met website.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A Comparison of Cultural Consumer Behaviour in the Fashion Industry.

Project summary

The purpose of this study is to explore the variety of drivers, concepts and elements influencing consumer behaviour in the fashion industry, with particular focus on cultural influences and the different perceptions consumers have in relation to fashion. Your participation will enable the collection of data, which will form part of a study being undertaken at UWIC.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you fit the profile of the population being studied; that is, you are over the age of 18, and have declared yourself as being from one of the cultural backgrounds being compared in this study; British or Chinese. During the group interview you will be shown a set of pictures which you will then be asked questions on enabling you to provide extra thoughts, stories and insights on the topic under investigation. A guided group discussion will take place involving 6-8 participants.

Project risks

The research involves a 45-minute to 1 hour group interview, at your convenience, which will be recorded and stored for later analysis. The study is concerned with whether your particular cultural background affects your perceptions of fashion and how this differs to other cultures.

We do not think that there are any significant risks associated with this study. However, if you do feel that any of the questions are inappropriate then you can stop at any time. Furthermore, you can change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason.

How we protect your privacy

All the information you provide will be held in confidence. We have taken careful steps to ensure both yours and the researcher’s security. Your personal details (e.g. signature on the consent form) and your interview transcript and recording will be kept in secure locations by the research team. When we have finished the study and analysed all the information, all the documentation used to gather the data will be destroyed. The recordings of the interview will also be held in a secure and confidential environment during the study and destroyed when it is complete.

YOU WILL BE OFFERED A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET TO KEEP

If you require any further information about this project then please contact:

Kira Stokes, Cardiff Metropolitan University

CMU email: st20037732@cardiffmet.ac.uk
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Cardiff Metropolitan University ethics reference number:

Participant name or study ID number:

Title of project:

A comparison of cultural consumer behaviour in the fashion industry

Name of Researcher: Kira Stokes

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.
   I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had
   these answered satisfactorily. [ ]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to
   withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. [ ]

3. I agree to take part in the above study. [ ]

4. I agree to the group interview being audio recorded. [ ]

5. I agree to my quotes being attributed to me. [ ]

______________________________  ________________________________
Signature of Participant        Date

______________________________  ________________________________
Name of person taking consent  Date

______________________________
Signature of person taking consent
Appendix Six
Transcripts from focus groups.

Transcript- 15/03/2016 Focus Group with Chinese Students

Participant information sheets and consent forms completed at the start of focus group, before start of audio recording.

Researcher: Welcome and thank you for coming to my focus group for my dissertation. It’s about cultural consumer behaviour and how it differs between different cultures. As a case study I am looking at China and the UK which is why you are all here today.

The first question is why do you dress the way you do? Is it for purpose, religious reasons or just for fashion? Let’s go around the table and discuss.

Respondent 1: Well today we have a presentation so we have dressed formally.

Researcher: Oh so for purpose then?

Respondent 1: Yes

Researcher: But normally, what do you look for?

Respondent 2: For comfort.

Respondent 3: Yeah cosy and comfortable.

Researcher: Yes, ok, is that the same with everyone?

Respondent 4: It depends.

Respondent 5: On the weather.

Researcher: The weather?

Respondent 4: Yes.

Researcher: Yes, that’s fair enough I’m the same. So do you buy luxury fashion brands?... Or do you just buy whatever you find shopping?

Respondent 1: Yes we buy just one item or?

Researcher: Or just in general, so when you go shopping would you buy luxury fashion brands or would you just go for the cheaper option?

Respondent 1: Actually I don’t care about the brands, just the item I wanted to buy. They may be luxury brands or cheap clothes.

Researcher: Anyone else?

Respondent 6: We pay more attention to the styles.

Researcher: The styles? Not the brands?

Respondent 6: Yes.

Researcher: Well the next question is ‘do you have any preferences over brands?’ but you guys just said you didn’t really care about brands. But if you had the option would you buy certain brands over another one? So say you had the option to buy Gucci & Chanel or H & M which one would you buy?
**Respondent 1:** If I have the ability to afford, of course Chanel.

*All respondents laugh in agreement*

**Researcher:** Ok, does anyone influence how you dress? Let’s just go around the table so does anyone influence how you dress or is it just what you feel comfortable in?

**Respondent 2:** Maybe magazines or watching the TV.

**Researcher:** So like celebrities or something?

**Respondent 2:** Hmm yeah just for a couple

**Researcher:** Yeah, so you’re not influenced by what your family wear or anything? So if you’re family told you, you couldn’t wear something?

**Respondent 1:** No

**Researcher:** OK, there’s no influence there… any celebrities? If a particular celebrity was wearing a particular fashion item would you go out and buy it?

**Respondent 1:** It depends; I mean if the item is my style then yes but it depends.

**Researcher:** So what do you look for when you go out shopping? Obviously if the thing is your style and comfort…

**Respondent 1:** Yes, firstly style, then the quality.

**Researcher:** Quality?

All: Yes

**Researcher:** So do you look for high quality when you go shopping?

**Respondent 3:** Of course

All: Yes

**Respondent 4:** Maybe France, that’s good to buy.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, France

**Researcher:** Would you buy a fashion item, just because your friend was wearing it or owned it?

**Respondent 1:** If it is good and suitable with me then why not.

**Researcher:** Yes, exactly. So would you buy something just to fit in with someone else? So say if everyone had a pair of Gucci jeans would you feel like you had to go out and buy a pair of Gucci jeans or not?

**Respondent 5:** Not really

All: No

**Researcher:** So that isn’t something that bothers you?

All: No.

**Researcher:** So how does shopping make you feel? So when you purchase a top or a coat how does that make you feel?
**Respondent 1:** Its enjoyable.

**Researcher:** Would you make your purchase decision based on your body shape and then compare how it would look on you compared to the model that’s advertising it?

**All:** No…

**Respondent 1:** Not really... I don’t think my body shape is the same as the model. They’ve got perfect bodies and I don’t so I just see if the clothes look good on me.

**Researcher:** Yeah so whether it looks good on you or not. OK, would the use of celebrities in advertising persuade you to buy a certain fashion brand?

**Respondent 1:** Maybe...

**Respondent 3:** Sometimes.

**Respondent 1:** Like with fashion week there is different brands of shoe, we see pictures on social media and if I think one looks good I will go for it- Sometimes.

**Researcher:** If so, which celebrities would you find the most influential? So who do each of you look up to in regards to celebrities?

**All:** Umm…

**Researcher:** So there’s no one in particular?

**Respondent 1:** Not really.

**Researcher:** So celebrities from the US & the UK, are they influential in China? Or do you have your own local celebrities in the media?

*Respondents looked confused*

**Researcher:** So on the TV and in advertising, do you have celebrities from the US or do you have celebrities from China?

**Respondent 1:** Well currently we don’t have it on the TV but we have advertising on the computer with celebrities form the UK. In China, we do have our own celebrities.

**Researcher:** Can you think of any marketing campaigns that have persuaded you to buy a fashion item?

**Respondent 1:** Like some exclusive and limited edition products as that is a smart marketing strategy.

**Researcher:** Yes, OK if I give you these pictures to look at, you can discuss your opinions. Some are from China & the UK so I’ll just pass them around so you can discuss after. Not sure how accurate they are as they are just pictures I found online.

*Pause while respondents look at material*

**Researcher:** Do you recognise people in the pictures?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, many movie stars.

**Researcher:** So what are your opinions on Chinese & UK fashion? Obviously looking at the pictures, is there any differences do you think? With how they are marketed or what celebrities they use or anything?
**Respondent 6:** Maybe Chinese clothes and stuff is more special whereas UK clothes are more simple. Just like white tops and black.

**Respondent 2:** I think in China, we use famous people that look sweet but in the UK they look more sexy.

**Researcher:** Yes, I can see that.

**Respondent 1:** In China, items are more colourful and the UK style is more simple and classic.

**Researcher:** Ok thank you, I’ve noticed as well that brands such as H&M and Zara have popped up in China recently, have you noticed that or?

**Respondent 5:** You mean recently popular in China?

**Researcher:** Yes, recently popular brands in China or shops that have opened up in China. Would you say H&M and Zara are popular in China?

**All:** Yes, popular.

**Researcher:** OK that’s interesting, is there any country where you perceive the quality of goods to be poor? So is there any country where you wouldn’t buy clothes from?

*long pause*

**Researcher:** So say it was manufactured in India, would you perceive it to be of a less quality compared to it being manufactured in China?

**Respondent 2:** Vietnam.

**Researcher:** and why is that?

**Respondent 2:** The quality is not good.

**Researcher:** You wouldn’t buy from there at all then?

**Respondent 2:** No

**Researcher:** So do you think the West has created a ‘Western culture’ that has influenced other countries? So do you reckon that it has infiltrated China?

**Respondent 1:** Yeah it is. Obviously you’ve got London fashion week and Paris where Chinese stars attend.

**Researcher:** Ok, so there is quite a lot of Western brands in China?

**All:** Yes.

**Researcher:** What are your opinions on the Western brands?

**Respondent 1:** Some are really good, and luxurious like Italian brands. Italy and France represent high quality and are highly desirable.

**Researcher:** Are you surprised with how many western brands have infiltrated China recently or has it just been a gradual change? I guess with technology and stuff, it’s a lot easier to access everything. Anything else?

*Pause*
Researcher: So what are your opinions on the celebrities used for marketing in the UK and the US? So people like Kim Kardashian?

All: No, do not like.

Respondent 1: No she hasn’t got a very good reputation.

Researcher: Yes, everyone seems to love her at the moment. What about David Beckham & models such as Cara Delevingne?

*Respondents nod in agreement*

Researcher: If David Beckham was marketing for a Chinese brand would that make you want to buy that brand or would you prefer a Chinese celebrity?

Respondent 1: Definitely Beckham.

Researcher: Or any Western person in general? Does it depend who it is?

Respondent 1: Yes, it depends on who he/she is and how influential they are to us.

Researcher: Do any of you have any influential celebrities?

Respondent 1: Maybe the Victoria Secret models- the angels.

Researcher: Yes, I was going to include a picture of that earlier, that is in China as well isn’t it?

Respondent 5: Yes, we have it, but just in some of the bigger shopping centres.

Researcher: Yes, that is the same in the UK. Being students in the UK, do you see any differences in marketing or anything? Compared to home.

Respondent 1: Actually one of the differences in the UK is all of the shops are down streets (dotted around) whereas in China we put all the brands in a one-stop shopping centre (gathering them together).

Researcher: Any questions or anything you guys want to discuss? I have run out of questions, you all went through them so fast.

Respondent 6: Actually, recently there has been an increasing trend that Chinese fashion is influenced by the Korean culture. Many young girls follow Korean movie stars and singers and how they dress.

Researcher: Oh that’s interesting, so it’s not necessarily the US & the UK influencing China, its other cultures.

Respondent 1: Yes, besides China has its own fashion as well. We have traditional clothes as well.

Researcher: OK, I think we are finished, thank you.
Transcript- 16/03/2016 Focus Group with U.K Students

Participant information sheets and consent forms completed at the start of focus group, before start of audio recording.

**Researcher:** Welcome to my focus group for my dissertation. Thanks for coming. Let’s start off with ‘is there any reasons for the way you dress?’ So do you dress for fashion, for purpose, for religious reasons or any other?

**Respondent 1:** Fashion.

**Respondent 6:** Fashion.

**Respondent 3:** I would say purpose.

**Respondent 4:** I’d agree.

**Respondent 2:** Yes

**Respondent 1:** In what way?

**Respondent 3:** Like a combination. Like if it’s raining.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah obviously, I’m not going to wear a dress if it’s raining. A dress with a coat maybe.

**Respondent 3:** Yeah

**Respondent 2:** Well you said purpose I thought you meant like hiking or something.

**Researcher:** Yes, it could be taken like that. Do you often buy luxury fashion brands?

**Respondent 5:** When they are in the sale yes.

**Respondent 1:** I go to primark.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, Primark.

**Respondent 3:** I don’t buy brands.

**Respondent 1:** Same, I would prefer to buy something because I like it rather than because it’s really expensive with the brand on. You feel?

**Respondent 3:** Yeah not just for the symbol.

**Respondent 4:** I don’t just like it for the brand but if I like it and it happens to be branded then I will buy it.

**Respondent 6:** Only now and again, if I have just been paid than maybe.

**Researcher:** So you wouldn’t go out of your way to buy it?

**Respondent 6:** No, no, no only if I had been paid or just an impulsive purchase.

**Researcher:** Do you have any preferences over which brands you would buy?

**Respondent 3:** Things like Nike, I would still buy even though I don’t like brands, I don’t really know why.

**Respondent 1:** Yes. I like the high street brands like River Island and Topshop and things like that.
**Researcher:** But not Chanel or anything?

**Respondent 1:** No, I haven’t got the budget.

**Respondent 2:** I think with perfume and stuff then definitely. I suppose there’s not really much else but perfume and stuff I would definitely go for branded when I could afford it.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, same.

**Respondent 2:** But I wouldn’t just be like ‘I’m just going to go get a Chanel bag’.

**Researcher:** OK, so does anyone influence how you dress? So family or celebrities.

**Respondent 2:** Sometimes if I see something on TV or I see someone wearing something and I think it looks nice, I will try and find a cheap version of it.

**Respondent 3:** Yes, I agree with that if I see someone I know or a picture comes up of someone wearing something I like, I will try and find a cheaper alternative of it.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, same.

**Respondent 2:** I’m a bit obsessive, I’ll see something and I’m like I need to track it down.

**Respondent 4:** Like when my sister or my mum has something on that I like then I tend to be influenced heavily by their wardrobe and what fits me.

**Respondent 2:** What can I steal?

**Respondent 4:** Yeah

**Respondent 1:** Same

**Researcher:** Are you two the same?

**Respondent 6:** No not really, I don’t think I’m influenced by anybody I just see what I like and I will buy it.

**Researcher:** Ok, so what do you look for when you buy fashion items?

**Respondent 3:** Durability.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, definitely.

**Respondent 4:** Yes.

**Respondent 3:** Because I am on a budget.

**Respondent 2:** I think of how many outfits I could wear it with as well like I could see something that I really like and then I think about.

**Respondent 1:** Like will I have anything to wear it with

**Respondent 2:** I like it but I don’t really have anything else that goes with it and I can’t afford to buy anything so I have to leave it.

**Respondent 6:** See I am very impulsive. I am awful with shopping, I will literally just pick up anything and not even think about it, buy it, take it home and realise what have I done.

**Respondent 1:** Then have to take it back.

**Respondent 6:** No I don’t take it back, I feel guilty but its then just stuck in my wardrobe.
**Researcher:** With the tags on or just?

**Respondent 6:** Yeah with the tags on.

**Researcher:** Ok, what about the quality? Do you look for quality when you buy items?

**Respondent 4:** Of course.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, definitely.

**Respondent 4:** I would rather spend more money on something that will last me a while rather than buying five of the same thing.

**Respondent 6:** Yes, I agree.

**Respondent 4:** Rather than having to replace the same thing every month.

**Respondent 3:** Its relative though.

**Respondent 1 & 2:** Yes.

**Respondent 3:** Some things I don’t really care about the quality.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, like the basics and stuff.

**Respondent 3:** Like if you are buying something like a t-shirt or something from Primark then I’m not too bothered.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, but jeans and stuff like that I do.

**Respondent 2:** Jeans, definitely.

**Respondent 3:** Yes, jeans.

**Respondent 1:** Its worth getting more expensive.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, things like jeans, coats and shoes.

**Respondent 1:** Coats, definitely.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, everyday things (this top was like £4 from Primark) then I don’t really expect it to be of high quality.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, because you’re not going to be wearing it every day.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, I am just like I can replace it.

**Respondent 1:** Whereas with jeans and stuff you would.

**Researcher:** Ok, would you buy a fashion item just because your friend was wearing it or owned it?

**All:** No.

**Respondent 6:** I kind of have, it’s a bit cringe but my boyfriend had this jumper so I brought it and now we have matching jumpers.

**Researcher:** Would you buy something to fit in? To a fashion trend or just?

**Respondent 1:** I think everyone does it unconsciously, I think people don’t realise things are nice until it gets into fashion.
**All:** Yes.

**Respondent 6:** I think some people want to be more edgy as well but they are just too scared to do it. I would love to be more edgy but I don’t want to look stupid.

**All:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** That’s very true, I think some things as well when it’s really popular, it kind of makes me hate it.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, I know what you mean. You don’t want to look like a sheep.

**Respondent 2:** Like everyone has it on and if everyone is wearing the same thing it doesn’t look that nice.

**Respondent 1:** Because everyone else is wearing it.

**Respondent 4:** Yeah, I can’t stand it.

**Respondent 3:** I would only buy something that is in a trend if I actually genuinely liked it anyway, if everyone starts wearing weird tops or trousers or something, I wouldn’t just buy it because everyone else is.

**All:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Ok, how does shopping make you feel?

**Respondent 4:** I hate it.

**Researcher:** Oh do you?

**Respondent 1:** I love shopping.

**Respondent 3:** It makes me so happy.

**Researcher:** Yeah I love shopping; it makes me happy too.

**Respondent 3:** Makes my soul happy.

**Respondent 5:** I don’t do it unless I have to.

**Respondent 6:** I prefer to shop online personally.

**Respondent 4:** Yeah, I prefer online shopping.

**Respondent 3:** Any type.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, any type of shopping.

**Respondent 3:** Real life shopping because you physically have your things.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, you don’t have to wait for a delivery. Although that day of delivery is good.

**Respondent 6:** Exciting.

**Respondent 2:** I like going home and laying everything out and being like I now have this, and this and this.

**Respondent 3:** Yeah, I do that. Lie in all my new clothes.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.
**Researcher:** Would you make your purchase decision based on your body shape and then compare it to what it would look like on you compared to the model advertising it?

**All:** Yes.

**Respondent 1:** Absolutely.

**Respondent 5:** All the time.

**Respondent 1:** Although I do think you are more likely to buy something if the model looks nice in it even though you don’t look like the model.

**Respondent 3:** I’ve made that mistake a few times. I think you have to make that mistake a few times.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, before you learn.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah you do.

**Respondent 2:** My issue is height... tall Sian.

**Researcher:** Would the use of celebrities in advertising persuade you to buy a certain fashion brand?

*All unsure*

**Respondent 2:** Unless I really liked them. Say it was Beyonce but anyone else no.

**Researcher:** Just Beyonce.

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Respondent 6:** Not particularly.

**Respondent 3:** I think it’s a bit like you were saying, if there is a certain trend or brand that is being pushed all the time it makes me not want to buy it because again it’s that sheep sort of feeling, feeling like you have to buy it.

**Researcher:** If so, which celebrities would you find the most influential? Beyonce was obviously mentioned.

**Respondent 3:** The Kardashians.

**Respondent 1:** Kardashians, definitely.

**Respondent 2:** Especially at the moment, like everyone with the plaits.

**Respondent 4:** That upsets me a little bit that apparently that’s a Kardashian thing.

**Respondent 2:** I know.

**Respondent 4:** It makes me angry.

**Respondent 3:** Also what about Gigi Hadid. Her and Kendall and celebs like that.

**Respondent 5:** Well mine’s not necessarily like that but because I’m into wrestling I prefer the edgy style of Paige who is a bit more alternative in terms of style.

**Researcher:** So just models.
Respondent 2: Yeah, like I said to my friend the other day when we were going out that I liked her outfit and she said ‘yeah I’m going for the Kimmy K look’. It’s like a thing.

Respondent 1: Like a what?

Respondent 2: She was like oh yeah I’m doing the Kimmy K look and I was oh yes, I see.

Researcher: So they are mostly from the West? So like the celebrities are from places like the UK and the U.S? Are they the celebrities you would look up to rather than people from China?

Respondent 3: Yes.

Respondent 2: Yeah, I think that because it’s not in our media I don’t really think about it.

Respondent 1: I don’t really know any Chinese celebrities.

Researcher: Ok, can you think of any influential marketing campaigns that have persuaded you to buy something?

Respondent 6: Remember when Versace did H & M, do you remember that? That was massive and sold out in minutes. There was queues outside the door, it was crazy.


Respondent 1: Kylie Jenner’s lip kits, they sold out in like a minute because she obviously has these massive lips.

Respondent 3: David Beckham for H & M, his menswear stuff. That was like iconic.

Respondent 2: It’s not really the same but do you remember the Vaseline that you spray on?

Respondent 1: Oh my yes.

*everyone laughs*

Respondent 2: We went nuts for it. You know the spray on stuff? I really liked it.

Respondent 1: It was very good.

Researcher: Right I have some pictures here, so just have a look at those. That one is from the UK and these are Chinese ones. David Beckham is on there. Basically, what are your opinions on Chinese & UK fashion and how its marketed. Are there any noticeable differences?

Respondent 4: I wouldn’t really say this is UK fashion. It’s more the states.

Researcher: Yes, some of its more the U.S but it kind of comes together with the whole idea of the ‘Western culture’.

Respondent 4: I feel like when you get into high fashion, it’s quite a similar look so like Gucci and that kind of thing, I don’t feel there is that much difference.

Researcher: Yes, I agree, it’s just the models used that are different.

Respondent 4: Yeah but I feel maybe more high street fashion uses people that you are more likely to be aware of.

Respondent 1: Yes, definitely.
Respondent 3: Yeah like high fashion uses artier photos and maybe models you perhaps don’t know.

Respondent 1: Not celebrities.

Researcher: So what are your opinions on Chinese brands and products?

Respondent 6: Cheap.

Researcher: Cheap?

Respondent 1: Yeah, I agree. Things that you get off Ebay and stuff like that from China, they turn up and they’re not the same.

Respondent 6: No.

Respondent 3: They’re like mass produced and the pictures lie.

Respondent 2: Yes, I ordered a sleeveless jacket and it looked really nice and made from cotton then it came and it was like tent material which is probably why it was £6.

Respondent 1: Yes, remember the maxi skirt that I brought and said that it was a large which apparently is a size 10 (which I am very bitter about) and it got to the house and didn’t even go past one of my legs and didn’t even fit Sian who’s like a size 6. That was how small it was.

Respondent 6: Oh no.

Respondent 5: Oh I would need a triple XL if that was the case then.

*everyone laughs*

Respondent 1: It was not ok.

Researcher: Is there any other countries where you perceive the quality of goods to be poor? Or is it just China?

Respondent 3: I would probably say Asia in general.

Respondent 1: Yes, definitely.

Respondent 6: Yes.

Respondent 2: Yeah

Respondent 3: All the fakes in their markets and stuff, you can’t expect to get good quality… but then I don’t know they do hand made things.

Respondent 1: Yes, exactly.

Respondent 4: You can get tailored stuff, like the tailoring in the East of the world is really good, you can get suits made really well for quite cheap.

Respondent 1: I think you need to take into consideration, how much you are spending on what you’ve brought as well.

Respondent 3: Definitely.

Respondent 1: If you’re getting a dress for £3 off Ebay from China it’s probably not going to be made to the best quality.

*All in agreement*
**Researcher:** I see that. So do you think that the West has created a Western culture that influences other countries? So does our marketing and our celebrities influence other countries?

**Respondent 4:** I think the West just dominates the world when it comes to media and that kind of thing. I don’t think you would find anywhere apart from the deepest darkest corners of the world that wouldn’t know who Beyonce was if they saw a picture of her but it’s not a two-way street. So you get your celebrities of different countries but Western celebrities are global.

**Researcher:** Anything else?

**Respondent 3:** Yeah, I think people aspire to be connected and part of the Western culture and our fashion. I think all other cultures, obviously Westerners themselves some of them do but I think other cultures from around the world it’s something they want to buy into.

**Researcher:** Why do you think that is?

**Respondent 3:** Maybe because we dominate things as you said.

**Respondent 6:** We do bombard like all the media don’t we? So everyone looks at that and inspires to it.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, if you think about who owns the media as well.

**All:** Yes.

**Respondent 1:** Westerners, yes.

**Respondent 4:** Everything is owned by something which is owned by something, and it all comes down to about 6 guys who about 5 of them are probably middle aged white men and there’s like 1 chinese guy. So if the media is all controlled by the same person then they are all going to portray the same kind of image.

**Researcher:** Yes, there is the rise of China at the moment so it might be interesting to see if they start infiltrating us rather than the other way round. Retail brands like H & M and Zara are now in China, are you surprised by this?

**Respondent 4:** No.

**Respondent 3:** I thought they already were.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, I swear every place you go on holiday.

**Respondent 1:** There’s always a H & M.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, always.

**Researcher:** Yes, I guess so.

**Respondent 3:** Zara as well, they are very global.

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Right, well I have run out of questions again but has anyone else got anything they want to add and comment about in regards to the culture and fashion?

**Respondent 2:** I don’t know.
Researcher: If you had the money, regardless of how much something was would you buy fashion brands or would you stick to what you buy now?

Respondent 1: I’m not sure.

Respondent 3: I would buy high end high street.

Respondent 1: Yeah, I don’t think I ever would buy actual designer brands because I think it’s just a waste of money.

Respondent 3: Yeah I think, it’s so pointless.

Respondent 1: I think they are as well.

Respondent 6: I don’t like a lot of them.

Respondent 3: No.

Respondent 6: Like I have an Alexander McQueen scarf but I would never buy an Alexander McQueen shirt, because you can buy exactly the same white shirt in H & M.

Respondent 2: Yes, it’s crazy.

Respondent 1: Well exactly, I don’t understand that, when someone buys a plain top and they have just brought it because it’s got that brand when it looks exactly the same as something you would get from Primark or somewhere like that.

Respondent 4: Yes, I would do that for basics and stuff but if I had the money and I liked something I would buy it. If it was a designer I liked then I might buy it but if it was just a white top that cost £100 I wouldn’t buy it.

Respondent 3: No.

Respondent 4: Having money wouldn’t make me shop solely from designers but having money would maybe mean I would shop in designers a bit more. I do like some things from designers but not everything, a lot of people do a lot of ‘oh I am going to buy it because it has a label on it which makes it nice’ but it doesn’t.

Respondent 1: No it doesn’t.

Respondent 4: Not at all.

Respondent 1: A lot of people do it for the bragging rights as well, like oh look at me I’ve got a Gucci top and stuff, it’s just stupid. I just don’t understand.

Respondent 3: It’s like people buying Kanye West clothing- t-shirts that are £250 like I just want to punch them in the face.

Respondent 2: Aw yeah.

Respondent 1: Yeah, I feel like Instagram and stuff like that has a lot to do with it as well.

Respondent 3: Yes definitely.

Respondent 2: Definitely.

Respondent 1: Like you look on Instagram and there are so many people that are bragging about everything, have their picture perfect look.

Respondent 6: Hmm yeah.
**Respondent 3:** With all their bags, fancy designer bags.

**Respondent 1:** All their bags, all their many trainers and things like that.

**Respondent 3:** It just makes me angry.

**Respondent 1:** It’s just ridiculous.

**Respondent 2:** It’s like the brand isn’t it? Like people uploading photos of what they have brought. You wouldn’t do that if you had just been to Primark.

**Respondent 1:** No, exactly.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah, like look at my Primark bag… no.

**Respondent 6:** People try and portray an image of themselves as well, try and sell a different image of them especially online.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, definitely.

**Respondent 1:** I agree. It makes them feel better about themselves I think.

**Researcher:** Would you perceive it be higher quality if it was branded or not?

**Respondent 4:** Not necessarily.

**Respondent 1:** Not necessarily, yes.

**Respondent 4:** Some places it’s definitely not the case, if you look at some of the mark ups on high street fashion it’s a joke. It shouldn’t be that way at all, you shouldn’t have to pay £150 for a jacket that cost £20 to make.

**Researcher:** Yes, just because its branded.

**Respondent 4:** It’s not branded though, its high street.

**Respondent 1:** It’s crazy, Urban Outfitters is a bit like that as well.

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, a bit like it in Urban Outfitters but some of the brands I get and the quality of them makes sense but.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, but if it is made out of normal material, what’s the point?

**Respondent 2:** I think brands when it comes to cosmetics, that probably means better quality (I know not always but generally) like my high street foundation compared to a branded foundation is a lot different- you can tell the difference.

**All:** Yes.

**Respondent 1:** A lot of a difference.

**Respondent 2:** Perfume as well, it’ll last longer and it’ll smell a bit nicer.

**Researcher:** Yes, I guess perfume has got that luxury thing behind it anyway.

**Respondent 3:** It’s like a treat, you don’t buy perfume often so when I buy it I buy a really expensive one.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah.
Respondent 2: Yes.

Researcher: Why not.

Respondent 5: I’m quite picky when it comes to jewellery and stuff, because you can’t really have an alternative option because a lot of it is branded. Unless you order them off Ebay and have the odd one that is not sterling silver you can have them for like fashion purposes but then…

Respondent 1: But then you’re going to have green fingers.

Respondent 3: That’s true.

Respondent 5: Yeah, I mean like my bag. I have a Michael Kors bag and I have had it over a year now and not one part of it has been scratched, it’s not been damaged and I have literally thrown it on the floor, it’s been scraped across walls, everything. But even though I didn’t pay it my mum paid nearly £300 for the bag, everything about that bag nothing has happened to it like whereas if I have the bag I have with me now from TK Maxx which cost me like £15 and now it’s about to fall apart. It wasn’t purely for the name reason, it was purely because I wanted a bag that I could use for all purposes and its really good.

Respondent 4: Yes, I got a bag for my 18th birthday, and 3 and a half years later it’s still in pretty much new condition. So I would understand you would spend a lot of money on something that you were going to use every day.

Respondent 3: I guess it comes back to durability again doesn’t it? And good quality. I have my bag under the table which is from Primark and the zip broke within like a week and I was really annoyed but it’s quite hard to gage it with quality. You have to be quite careful.

Researcher: It’s like shoes from Primark, they last about 10 minutes.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 1: Oh I don’t know.

Respondent 3: Yeah, I have had my Primark shoes for like two years and they have lasted.

Researcher: Well must just be my work shoes then. It depends I guess.

Respondent 2: I think going back to jewellery as well, I think with branded jewellery people will say ‘oh for my birthday I got this’.

Respondent 1: Pandora bracelet.

Respondent 2: Yeah, like when me and my friends were in New York, we were like ‘oh my god we have to get something from Tiffany’s.’ Not just any jewellery as a momentum but it had to be from Tiffany’s.

Respondent 4: Yeah, but that’s about having stuff to keep as well.

Respondent 1: It makes it feel more special yeah.

Respondent 4: You know you are going to have that for a while like if you buy fashion jewellery it’s not really meant to last. In like 20 years, you are not going to have the fashion jewellery you brought from Topshop in your jewellery box, you are going to have the stuff that was gifts or the stuff you treated yourself to.

Respondent 1: Yeah.
Respondent 4: So yes, I get spending money on jewellery and yeah the green thing doesn’t do it for me either.

Respondent 5: Yes, I was about to say as well when you mentioned about being in New York and going to Tiffany’s and stuff, it’s like being in London where you get tourists that go to Harrods and you can find something similar in like M&S or Debenhams. I mean I went to London not long ago and I am casually stood there looking around and a woman walks up and says ‘right I will have an 18 grand watch’ and I’m like you know, she looks normal and she literally just plants down 18 grand in cash down on the desk.

Respondent 1: In cash?

Respondent 5: Yeah.

Respondent 2: Some sort of dodgy criminal.

*everyone laughs*

Researcher: Definitely. I guess you just go to certain places to buy certain things though so you wouldn’t just go down the road, I am going to buy a watch today but if you are in Harrods you might be like well I might as well.

Respondent 3: Yeah, it’s like a lifestyle. It’s sort of like an experience, like a cultural thing. Like if you are going to go to London, you would go and do that because it’s really out of the ordinary, I mean unless you live in London all the time but if you were doing something special like New York or London I guess those brands are sort of associated with that.

Respondent 5: Going back to the culture thing, I don’t want to sound bad but like you know when you observe international students that come in from like China and Malaysia, or Japan and the Phillipines or wherever, you always see them in different types of brands as well. You mentioned that Zara and H&M are in China, a lot of them like Doc Martens and they have a lot of…

Respondent 1: Branded things.

Respondent 3: Brands.

Respondent 5: Yes, a lot of branded things.

Researcher: Well you say this but yesterday didn’t show that.

Respondent 3: I do notice it though.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 3: They are really expensively dressed like all the time.

Respondent 1: Yes, and have expensive cars and things like that as well.

Respondent 5: Yes.

Researcher: I must have just had the wrong people.

Respondent 2: Yes, I just sit there and from my bus stop observations I see the red on the bottom of their trainers, I can tell a girl’s bag is designer and there are a lot of brands.

Respondent 1: I agree.
Respondent 4: In China as well, my dad went a little while ago and you have different levels of knock off so you can buy a Celine bag that costs £50 but it’s not going to be great quality because you can get Celine bags up to about £1500 but they will do them in levels so you can get knock offs of different brands so it’s not necessarily that they have all the brands. I feel like if you look like the type of person who is going to have something genuine whether its genuine or not, people are going to assume its genuine.

Respondent 2: Yes, that’s true.

Respondent 1: I agree.

Respondent 2: And I think maybe because they have that access to it.

Respondent 4: More clued up about it.

Respondent 2: They are going to aspire to that whereas if we got a bag from down the market.

Respondent 1: Yes, exactly.

Respondent 2: You are going to tell that it’s fake just by looking at it.

Respondent 1: Yes, and it’s embarrassing as well then. You don’t want to walk around with a fake bag, I would just prefer to buy a bag from Primark and it be from Primark.

Respondent 3: Yeah.

Respondent 6: You see these guys that have fake Nike Air Maxx and you can just tell a mile off.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 6: It’s just so embarrassing.

Respondent 1: It’s horrible isn’t it?

Respondent 2: Someone on my facebook sells them.

Respondent 6: It’s cringe isn’t it?

Respondent 2: And I am like ‘WHY?’ they aren’t even the right colours that Air Maxx actually come in and you’re like come on.

Respondent 3: I used to have a fake Rolex.

*everyone laughs*

Respondent 3: and a really rich man asked me and he was like ‘aw we have the same watch’ and I just blurted out like ‘it’s from Thailand sorry’. That broke though because it was crap and fake.

Respondent 2: My friend had a Prada purse and the P fell off.

Respondent 4: I got one for my 21st, I didn’t want it and tried to get my Nan to take it back because it made me a bit upset but you can tell the quality. I had a Marc by Marc Jacobs purse before which I brought in the sale when it was like £40 or something like that so for Marc Jacobs that was pretty good. I kind of like his stuff so I got it and it lasted me about 2 years but the state of it is battered by the end so it’s just kind of like I can see the difference already
like just the quality of the leather. I can understand if you had the money why you would choose to go and buy something more expensive. Especially like a purse or a bag or shoes.

**Respondent 6:** Yeah.

**Respondent 4:** Or a coat, something that you are going to get a lot of use out of and jewellery and that kind of thing. Stuff that is supposed to last.

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Respondent 4:** If you had the disposable income then I can understand why you would.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, like I understand people who buy those things designer but when fashion is always changing and the seasons are always changing and things like that, I don’t know why you would buy clothes that are like £3,000 for something small and then you’re not even going to wear it.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** You’re not going to have your wear out of it because by the time next season comes around, it’s not going to be good anymore. It’ll be last season.

**Respondent 3:** Yes, I am so bad for that.

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Respondent 3:** There’s no point in me spending loads of money on clothes because well my mum will shrink them in the tumble dryer every time or… there is a few things I have actually kept but they are usually quite basic, adaptable things.

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Respondent 3:** But trends and stuff, I wear it a few times and then I am like I don’t want it anymore.

**Respondent 4:** I am not good at following trends.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah, you just get bored of it though don’t you?

**Respondent 4:** Yes.

**Respondents 2 & 3:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** I just get really bored and then just give it all away to charity shops.

**Respondent 2:** I think there is a difference, I know its off the subject but there is a difference in boys and girls as well. I am happy to go and get my bag from Primark or a purse or whatever.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, definitely.

**Respondent 2:** But if I go shopping with Callum, he won’t even go into the men’s section of Primark.

**Respondent 6:** See, I wouldn’t shop in Primark. I know that is really snobby but I just wouldn’t.

**Respondent 1:** No, all boys wouldn’t.
Respondent 6: It’s like, I don’t know. New Look’s mens clothes are awful, they are disgusting but I feel they don’t make as much effort.

Respondent 3: and H&M.

Respondent 6: Yes, exactly.

Respondent 3: H&M’s guy clothes have looked the same for ages,

Respondent 6: Exactly, they don’t change.

Respondent 2: Exactly the same. Yeah, he wouldn’t just get anything. He would have to have a nice one, a branded one.

Respondent 3: Yeah.

Respondent 1: I think that girls get things because they like it and boys get things because they like the brand instead.

Respondent 6: The thing is yes guys have more brand loyalty I would say than girls.

Respondent 2: Yes.

Respondent 1: Yes, definitely.

Respondent 3: Yes, like Sam buys like Ralph Lauren shirts, always.

Respondent 2: Yeah.

Respondent 3: Or like he will stretch to ASOS but that is as far as it goes.

Respondent 2: Yes, like Callum in regards to watches. My one is from ASOS whereas his is Michael Kors. He wouldn’t just be like ‘Oh I will get this because I like it’ he will go in the same shops. It’s always like Fred Perry and All Saints and the brands. He doesn’t do Primark.

Respondent 6: I’ve just got a hatred for Primark, I don’t know why,

Respondent 4: I think there is a bit of a moral thing with Primark.

Respondent 6: I know.

Respondent 4: I feel a bit immoral shopping there sometimes. I will if I don’t want to do my washing and I will go and buy underwear and I have done it more than once but I do sometimes feel a little bit immoral because there’s a reason it is so cheap.

Respondent 6: Yes, how they can afford to produce it.

Respondent 4: Like I consider myself quite lucky. I have a job, I have more disposable income than a lot of people. I mean I don’t have a lot of money at all but more than a lot of people in the world so like I am privileged enough to spend a bit extra.

Respondent 1: Yeah.

Respondent 4: Somewhere else, not even necessarily in brands but M&S or something instead and feel a bit more morally correct.

Respondent 1: I don’t even think of that.

Respondent 3: No, I don’t.

Respondent 1: Which sounds really terrible but I don’t.
**Respondent 2:** I think…

**Respondent 1:** I just think I want more clothes, quantity not quality.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Respondent 4:** Yeah, I get that completely and I understand it. It’s there, it’s convenient and its cheap, it serves a purpose but….

**Respondent 1:** You can get a whole wardrobe full of clothes for like £150.

**Respondent 4:** Yeah.

**Respondent 1:** You can’t get that many clothes from anywhere else for that price.

**Respondent 4:** My love hate with Primark.

**Respondent 3:** I don’t know how you can trust that even other places even if they are more expensive or they say they aren’t involved with sweat shops and things you don’t know that.

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Respondent 6:** It’s like even with huge brands, I know it’s not a fashion brand but Apple was the same and they were found out for apparently having slave workers.

**Researcher:** Like Nike.

**Respondent 4:** Even like GAP and stuff.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, and Topshop.

**Respondent 4:** I think it is just about being a bit more aware influences the kind of things I buy a little bit more than it used to.

**Researcher:** That’s interesting.

**Respondent 5:** This is going totally of topic but I was thinking before when I have seen videos or commercials or whatever of say Asia or China or that way, the working outfits are like something you would probably see off the runway. When they wear their work attire and since their cultural norms have changed; so women going to work probably not having babies anymore, they are very workaholics. They are wearing trousers that are tailored and a very tailored jacket, it’s very high end fashion and it looks like it has just come off a runway. They don’t dress, I think they don’t dress for purpose really, when I go to work I want to be comfortable as I will be stuck sat behind a desk all day. I don’t want to wear something that’s really restricted, do you know what I mean?

**Respondent 4:** I suppose it is what industry you work in as well.

**Respondent 5:** Yeah.

**Respondent 4:** Like I know that in my mum’s office most of it is quite smart casual but sometimes she will go to work and I am thinking like ‘christ where are you going?’ and why do you look so nice but then I kind of think well she works in an office and dealing with people so it is just upholding the standard of looking a bit professional.

**All:** Yes.

**Respondent 3:** Even students here, I have noticed it,

**Respondent 2:** Definitely.
Respondent 3: Like the Chinese students, they dress really smart whereas we are all dressed for comfort I would say.

Respondent 2: They always look really put together.

Respondent 1, 2 & 6: Yes.

Respondent 2: They look like they have put thought into their outfit.

Respondent 3: Like there is a lot of effort that goes into it. They never look half-arsed.

Respondent 2: No.

Respondent 3: Like me.

Researcher: Anything else?

All: No, not that we can think of.

Researcher: Ok, thank you.