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**THE CULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL VALUES OF CHINESE RETAIL  
COMPLEXES DESIGNED IN TRADITIONAL VERNACULAR STYLES**

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield**

**in partial fulfilment of the requirements for**

**the degree of Master of research**

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# Abstract

In modern China, more and more buildings in imitation of traditional building style have sprung up. These structures not only have the appearance of historical buildings but also function as modern utilitarian buildings.

This paper aims to study such buildings in order to discover the cultural and commercial values of Chinese retail complexes which have been designed in these traditional vernacular styles using the buildings of Fashion Island in Yancheng City as a case study.

Firstly, by exploring the background of Fashion Island, the cultural connotations of this area are described which include the origin of Chinese city culture, Hui style architecture, aesthetics and style, and ancestor worship.

Furthermore, through the concept of experience consumption, the way in which the commercial building reflects its commercial value is explored.

Finally, according to questionnaire responses of both local residents and visitors, it is found that the buildings in Fashion Island inherit the traditional style of Yancheng City and reflect the culture and association of Fashion Island area with the city. Compared with normal commercial buildings, the function and connotation of the buildings that imitate traditional building style is richer, demonstrated by the integration of travel, recreation and shopping, and the connection between the buildings and their goods and services. According to field survey research and questionnaire, the cultural and commercial value of such commercial buildings in Fashion Island was determined. Finally, it was found how the cultural and commercial value of commercial buildings that imitate traditional styles can be expressed.

# Acknowledgements

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Secondly, I am greatly grateful to Yun Gao, my co-supervisor. She gave me much help on my learning and life aspects. In my opinion, she is not only a professional supervisor but also a kindly friend. Besides, I am also grateful to Dr Steve Andrews, who helped me to proof my written English. My thanks for his professional and detailed written suggestions.

Finally, I am also thankful for the support of my family. Due to the stress of study, I spent less time doing housework and caring for the family. My thanks to them for their understanding and support. Because of this and their encouragement, I could overcome the problems and difficulties that I met.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The imitation of traditional architectural styles in Chinese commercial buildings has witnessed a boom in recent years in the building industry. Due in part to the dull forms of many modern buildings, a growing nostalgia for traditional building forms has become pervasive in China today. This public sentiment has been partly exploited by commercial companies, with the support of government, as a good strategy for enhancing the retail environment for consumers in contemporary China. At one level, the provision of such pseudo-vernacular buildings in retail complexes addresses a perceived need of society, to serve as settings that are conducive to reconnecting with a past (whether real or imagined), and at the same time to create an improved 'shopping experience' that will bring commercial benefits to the area.

In addition, through the development of tourism, commercial buildings that consciously imitate traditional styles and their ornamental features bring economic benefits to both developers and the wider region. For example, one of the most famous tourist destinations in Shanghai, Yuyuan Garden, is famous as a shopping area largely due to its emulation of traditional building styles. According to recent statistics, the Yuyuan Garden business area receives 250 thousand tourists in a normal day (fig 1.1). The business sales of Yuyuan Garden reached 3 billion CNY and the net profit reached 125 million CNY in 2001 (Yuhong, 2009). Hence, successful commercial complexes, that adopt this strategy of the imitation of traditional buildings styles, can benefit significantly in terms of improved profits. A further example is the so-called 'Confucius Temple', a very famous retail building located in Nanjing (fig 1.2). The total business revenue of Confucius Temple in Nanjing City reached 2 billion CNY and the taxes reached 70 million CNY in 1999, an increase of 100% and 79.5% respectively compared with its opening time in 1994 (Yuhong, 2009). During the famous Lantern Show, to celebrate

the Chinese New Year holiday in 2014, the Confucius Temple business park received 1.85 million tourists and the income reached 335 million CNY in just a few days (News of Sina, 2014).



Fig 1.1: Nanjing Confucius Temple

Source: <http://www.wmgm.org/a/wenmingzixun/wenmingjingqu/2013/0225/12205.html>



Fig 1.2: Yuyuan Garden

Source: <http://www.quanjing.com/share/404-0446.html>

Although many large-scale retail projects have been designed in traditional styles, there is a growing debate about the long term value of such enterprises.

Yudong (2003) argues that these pseudo-historic building projects are fake and therefore have no cultural value at all; Huan, Zhihua and Huanian (2009) even argue that such commercial developments undermine the prevailing culture, and are unnecessarily costly and wasteful. A

counter argument from Wei and Yonghong (2008) is that these buildings positively contribute to the existing social and cultural environment and support the built heritage of cities even if they are reconstructions. This point of view even extends to claim that the imitation of traditional building styles contributes to the innovation of Chinese architecture (Zhongyi and Manfang, 2003 and Shun and Jiamin, 2009). So facing this intense debate about the value of such enterprises, this research will navigate the various contentious points of views in order to establish the deeper impact of these projects on the built environment in Chinese cities.

It is in the context of these recent developments in China that this research examines the value of the commercial retail development that consciously imitates past styles, taking as a case study the area of Fashion Island in Yancheng. This case study has been chosen for investigation because it provides an interesting example of how a historic site, once known for its trading activities, can be transformed into a large retail complex. Hence, the aim of the research is to consider how Fashion Island expresses its commercial and cultural value.

### **1.1.1 Theoretical background**

#### **Theoretical background on commercial building in imitation of traditional buildings styles**

This research topic draws upon a number of recent studies of commercial/retail complexes in China that consciously imitate traditional architectural styles. These typically address the following issues:

(1) The question of how traditional architectural elements are combined with modern commercial functions as discussed in Chaoshi's '*The combination of modern commercial building and imitated Tang dynasty culture - West Street Rongmin international business center design experience*' (2007). This study expounds on the dynamic integration of elements in architectural composition, and how this process adapts to changes in business strategy. This is examined in relation to the external appearance of the buildings at the Rongmin

International Business Center.

(2) Analysis of cultural connotations according to spatial form as highlighted in Fang and Xiaodan's *'Explore and Analyse Chendu Jinli Walking Street'* (2007). This example of a 'pseudo-vernacular' commercial development is considered in the context of its unique folk character and flexible composite street layout that utilizes local features.

(3) Research of a traditional commercial building environment (of a certain period) as indicated in Fang's *'The research on traditional commercial building environment'* (1999). This analyses the social backgrounds and characteristics of a traditional commercial building environment examining the political, economic and social culture aspects.

(4) Research of traditional commercial buildings of a certain area is demonstrated in Yitao's *'Traditional commercial block and traditional building out of QianSanMen in Beijing'* (1999). This considered the traditional commercial prototype and modernization path as impacted by western practices according to existing commercial building examples in this area.

(5) Focus on the conflict between modern civilization and traditional culture in famous historical and cultural cities. Rui's study *'Xian-intermediary space whole structure of commercial building in famous historical and cultural city'*(2005) cites the 'intermediary space' concept and theory, which include edge space, street space and three-dimensional walking space, to discuss the methods to solve the conflict between buildings and city, traditional culture and modern cultural development.

(6) Research into the development and change of commercial buildings in the historical context, such as Xiaochun's *'Theme Park of History: the Cultural Predicament of the City Temple and Yuyuan Garden in Shanghai'*. Xiaochun (2009) analyzes the space characteristics of the new Yu Yuan Garden shopping mall after regional large-scale reconstruction in the 1990's. He argues that due to the change of the space and life style (though the characteristics

of old City Temple and Yuyuan Garden were continued on building form and products) they already became a historical theme park rather than the former representative temple.

## **Theoretical background about experience theory**

Relative research theories of experience theory:

### (1) Rasmussen (1964): Spirit of Place

Among the modern researchers on architecture and experience, is the earlier research of Rasmussen. He wrote in his 'Experiencing Architecture' (1964) that experience is a very important factor in building design. In his view, the external characteristics of the building become the means for one person to pass on the emotions and attitudes to others.

### (2) Norberg-Schultz (1971): The Space of Existence

In the last century, the most profound architectural space theory which has the greatest impact on the 'spirit of place' is that of Norberg-Schultz. He provides a renewed perspective, by taking the architecture and spatial experience as a phenomenon. It is then possible to understand the cultural factors of the spaces which cannot be measured in any quantifiable way, namely the association of space with human dwelling and by implication social and cultural aspects. 'The space of existence' and 'spirit of place' of Norberg-Schultz (1971) is the experiential result of collective unconsciousness, focusing on the dimension of the space of existence from the perspective of users, and takes the elements of the spatial place, and the meanings hidden behind, and humanistic spirit as a whole to experience and consider.

### (3) Shaoming emphasizes spatial order and living space in building experience.

His book, 'Architecture experience—the plot in the space' (2007) uses a literary drama, choreographed, approach to conduct investigations taking the space and its carrying life as a whole. Shaoming focuses on studying the plot factor and strategy of space, rather than paying attention to measurable physical factors, such as form and scale in the space; the plot factor in the space is a kind of weighting factor which is beyond form and function but bundled with the formal function. This weighting factor is closely related to the sense of place of space, whose

purpose is to guide designers to find inspiration from life and create a symbiotic spatial order and an appealing place. The book draws some arguments on the theories of city and narrative landscape, to construct a spatial picture, thereby improving the quality and artistic appeal of overall space and improving the added value of participation, aesthetics and culture of inhabited space.

In summary, there are many theories on commercial buildings and architectural experience, but whilst previous studies focus on the architectural design or emphasize the continuation of traditional culture, this paper focuses on analyzing the cultural and commercial value of commercial retail buildings that consciously imitate traditional styles. The innovation of this investigation is that it uses the related theory of experience, focuses on the characteristics of new forms of consumption, and dialectically analyzes the cultural and commercial values of the commercial buildings in the vernacular style by ascertaining their relative levels of commercial success against the background of their perceived cultural value,

### **1.1.2 Culture background**

“Architecture culture is the sum total of created architecture material wealth and spiritual wealth in human social history practical process.” (Honglie, 1994, pp13). Honglie argues that architecture carries the information of the interaction between human, society and nature.

In China, the existence of pseudo-classic architectural styles is usually dependent on the local culture and traditions. Taking Wu town, Zhejiang, for example, it has the typical features of a water-side town, and completely preserves the original style and pattern of watery features of the late Qing dynasty and Republican period. It takes the river for the street, and people there build houses along the river banks and organize pavilions, ridges and stone lanes. Architectural elements, such as the former residence of Mao Dun, are full of the charms of such a town, and they reflect the humanism of Chinese classical residences. Based on the culture, new pseudo-classic architectures are copies of the old ones (fig 1.3 and 1.4).



Fig 1.3: Historic building in Wu town

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/38/5144395k35ff6b5f.html>



Fig 1.4: Pseudo-classic businesses architecture in Wu town

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/62/4142006kebf192c6.html>

Another example is the Old Town of Lijiang, built in the early Song Dynasty. It is located on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, and is a multi-ethnic settlement. Its architectural style absorbs the essence of the Han, Bai, Yi, and Tibetan peoples, and possesses the unique style of the Naxi nationality, reflecting the colorful ethnic culture. Therefore, the new pseudo-classic commercial architectures also combine the characteristics of multi-ethnic buildings (fig 1.5 and 1.6).



Fig 1.5: Historic building in Li Jiang

Source: [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_546fdbb001000clx.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_546fdbb001000clx.html)



Fig 1.6: Pseudo-classic businesses architecture in Li Jiang

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/49/5344355k945ae15c.html>

With a history of 900 years, Hong Village in Anhui Province was built in the Shaoxing years of the Song dynasty, and the village today preserves 140 folk houses of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The main features of Huizhou buildings are big yards, black tiles and high, white walls. Behind these phenomena, there is a deep cultural background: Huizhou men left to do

business, leaving women at home, and the women's virginity needed the protection of tall walls, and the purity of women should be expressed by white walls and black tiles. Therefore, under the impact of this culture, many paragons of chastity emerged, and there were arches to commemorate them. Today, much of pseudo-classic architecture is built like this, which is also a way to carry forward the ancient culture of Huizhou (fig 1.7 and 1.8).



Fig 1.7: Historic building in Hong Village

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/62/ae93cf232849fafc.html>



Fig1.8: Pseudo-classic businesses architecture in Hong Village

Source: <http://www.liulian.com/gonglve-39818/>

Located in Shanghai's Huangpu district, Shanghai Old Street was formerly known as Fang

Bang Middle Road. During the Republican period, this region had close cultural exchanges between China and other nations, thus architectural forms combining Chinese and foreign styles came into being. Now all buildings along this 825-meter street are in Chinese pseudo-classical styles. The architectural style and layout from west to east show the evolution of history and culture of the Old Shanghai in periods of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Republican period, and at the same time the influx of Western cultural influences. Commercial operations of the whole street focus on traditional industries, traditional folk culture, and Shanghai cultural atmosphere (fig 1.9 and fig 1.10).



Fig 1.9: The old Shanghai Street

Source:

[http://control.blog.sina.com.cn/myblog/htmlsource/blog\\_notopen.php?uid=1889942950&version=7&x](http://control.blog.sina.com.cn/myblog/htmlsource/blog_notopen.php?uid=1889942950&version=7&x)



Fig 1.10: The new Shanghai Street

Source: [http://bbs.zol.com.cn/dcbbs/d657\\_215810.html](http://bbs.zol.com.cn/dcbbs/d657_215810.html)

The Imperial Song Street in the northern part of Zhongshan Road, Kaifeng is a commercial street which reproduces the scene of the Imperial Song Street. Kaifeng was the cultural capital of the Song Dynasty. It is recorded that the most prosperous street in the East City was the Imperial Street, and this pseudo-classic commercial street was set up on the former site. Buildings here show the architectural styles and features of the Song Dynasty, and have become an important platform for the display of Song culture in Kaifeng (fig 1.11 and 1.12).



Fig 1.11: Pseudo-classic Street Market in Northern Song Dynasty: Imperial Song Street

Source: <http://www.jx216.com/jigou/InfoShow.asp?ID=12453>

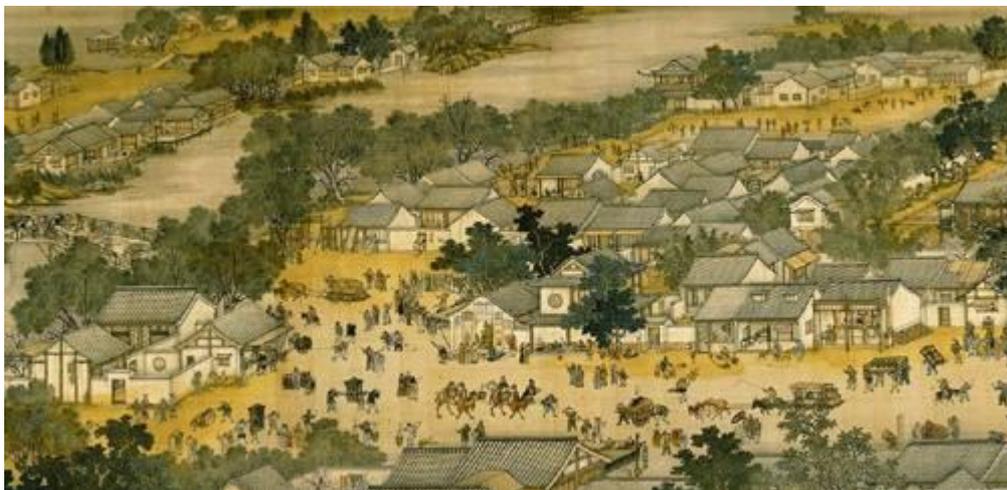


Fig 1.12: Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival to show street market life in Northern Song Dynasty

Source: [http://www.bdlrl.com/ship/private/01\\_wxys/011-flash-yq/019-qmsht.html](http://www.bdlrl.com/ship/private/01_wxys/011-flash-yq/019-qmsht.html)

Shanghai Yu Garden was a private garden during the Ming Dynasty. It fully embodies the architecture and design style of classical Chinese gardens. In the Ming and Qing dynasties of China, private gardens were experiencing the most prosperous period, and as one of the

representative works, Yu Garden was a full display of garden art form in Chinese natural landscape culture. A series of pseudo-classic architectures expanded outward, with the Yu Garden as their common center, and eventually formed a zone of pseudo-classic commercial architectures (fig 1.13 and 1.14).



Fig 1.13: Yu Garden in Shanghai

Source: <http://www.aisaw.com/?a=info.detail&id=21296>



Fig 1.14: Pseudo-classic businesses architecture around Yu Garden

Source: <http://www.earsgo.com/m/servview.jsp?id=8687>

## 1.2 Research Questions

The key questions emerging out of the research are as follows:

- a. What are the principal characteristics of these types of commercial buildings that consciously imitate vernacular building styles?
- b. What factors impact on the development of such retail complexes that justify the adoption of these traditional styles?
- c. Why are these commercial buildings so popular in China today?
- d. What are the cultural and commercial value of the commercial buildings in imitation of traditional building styles in Fashion Island show
- e. How commercial buildings in imitation of traditional building styles express their cultural and commercial value

## 1.3 Methodology

The research methodology was designed on the principle of the 'onion' model indicated below, in which each layer constitutes one stage of the research process (fig 1.15).

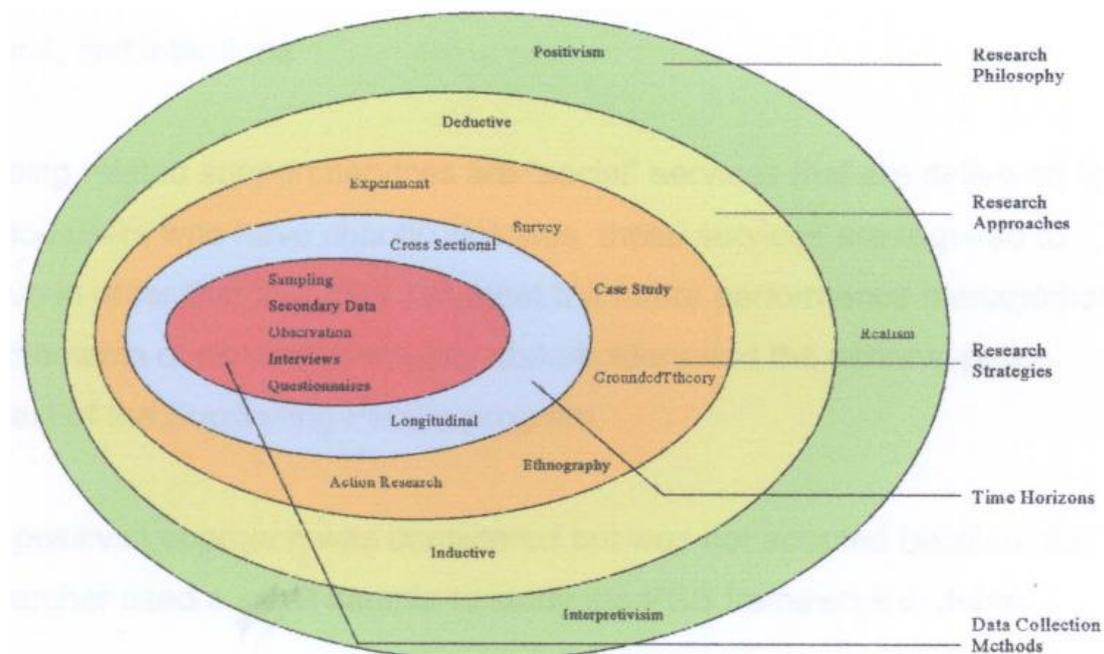


Fig 1.15: Research Process Onion

### **1.3.1 Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy considers how we should think about the development of knowledge. According to the so-called onion model (Fig 1.15), there are three research philosophies that lead to three approaches: positivism, realism, and interpretivism. These are different views about the way in which knowledge is developed and judged as being acceptable (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Positivist philosophy adopts the philosophical stance of natural science which assumes that everything can be proved and known (Fisher 2004). Interpretist philosophy, also regarded broadly in phenomenological terms, takes the position that reality is socially and culturally constructed (Fisher 2004). Finally realist philosophy is based on the belief that reality exists independent of human thoughts and beliefs (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

This dissertation adopts a combination of all three, with perhaps an emphasis on the interpretist approach. This strategy is appropriate given that the research entails a combination of analytical studies in regard to commercial viability and assessment, and an exploration of the cultural value of Fashion Island. The emphasis on the interpretist approach is regarded as a successful way to research such fields as sociology, political science, social work and cultural anthropology (Irvine and Gaffikin, 2006). Thus the interpretive research philosophy is useful to develop this research area. Besides, interpretivism can make researchers 'get close' to participants, to 'penetrate their internal logic and interpret their subjective understanding of reality' (Shaw, 1999), which is very helpful for the analysis of primary data.

### **1.3.2 Research approaches**

According to the onion model outlined above, there are two options which can be chosen as the research approach: inductive and deductive. The deductive approach requires the researcher to develop a theory and hypothesis and design a research strategy to test this hypothesis. In contrast, the inductive approach requires the researcher to collect data and develop theory as a result of data analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). In this

research, an inductive approach will be adopted since Fashion Island is used as a case study and the conclusions are then summarized about the cultural and commercial values of retail buildings that imitate traditional building styles.

### **1.3.3 Research strategies**

Research strategy is a general plan for explaining how the research questions will be answered (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). According to the 'research onion', there are six options which can be chosen as the research strategy: experiment, survey, case study, grounded theory, ethnography, and action research. This work will use case study as the research strategy. Robson (2002:178) defines the case study as 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'. There is intense debate about the relative value of commercial buildings that consciously imitate vernacular styles, not only in academic fields but also among residents. This research will take Fashion Island as a case study to ascertain the value of such commercial developments, drawing upon a combination of academic knowledge, professional know-how and public opinion.

### **1.3.4 Time horizons**

According to the model adopted for the research process, time horizons should include both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Cross-sectional research is the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular time. In contrast, longitudinal research has the capacity to study change and development (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). In brief, cross-sectional studies collect data at only at one point in time (synchronic), whilst longitudinal studies collect data at a number of time points (diachronic). According to the research content of this dissertation, cross-sectional research will be chosen since the key research question is to investigate the current situation and value of Fashion Island. Thus the research will look at one time point, i.e. the cross-sectional method.

### **1.3.5 Data collection method**

This dissertation will use questionnaires to collect primary data for quantitative analysis. Using a questionnaire to collect data is very beneficial because this method may be aimed at a specific group in order to accurately answer and address the research questions and objectives relevant to the local people of Yancheng (Kumar, 2005). The questionnaires will be designed around a series of key questions that offer the respondent a list of options as responses. This approach has some obvious advantages; it requires little time to complete, and it is easy to undertake quantitative analysis and test specific hypotheses (Oppenheim, 2005). The questionnaire will be sent to 50 local residents who lived in the former Fashion Island area and 50 visitors to Fashion Island in order to quantitatively analyse public attitude towards Fashion Island. This is to ascertain both cultural and commercial values of the new development in relation to its earlier history and identity as a venerated site for trade and religious worship.

## **1.4 Significance of Research**

Along with the development of social productivity, especially the promotion of commercialization and globalization, commercial industry plays an increasingly important role in people's lives and the development of economic prosperity. The substance of commercial industry is continuously updated and developed. Commercial building, as the place of commercial activities, is not only an important carrier of economic activities in cities but also an important expression of the urban landscape and cultural/historic continuity. Such commercial buildings can provide a rewarding consumer experience and thereby attract more shoppers and gain extra benefits. The author's reading of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* ('*Passagenwerk*'), written between 1927 and 1940, has revealed how such commercial buildings can in part be traced back to the development of street arcades in the 19th century (Yi, 2010). Different kinds of shops were displayed on both sides of arcades which were decorated by arched glass ceilings, inlaid painted walls, resplendent and magnificent lighting and relief, and dazzling shop windows. Such settings were full of the atmosphere of romance

and poetry – inducing a ‘dream state’ that finds a certain resonance in the historic reconstructions of Chinese pseudo-vernacular shopping complexes examined here. Kramer (2008) likens Benjamin’s Arcades Project to a quarry of various sources of thoughts. He argues that architecture, art and life were integrated in these street arcades essentially in line with Benjamin’s vision. In a similar fashion, Chinese retail buildings that imitate traditional building styles also aim to create a strong experiential space in order to increase the commercial benefit and income through enriched consumer experience. Accordingly, this research aims to find out how such commercial buildings are able to reconcile their underlying cultural value, as emblematic of older traditions, and their commercial function as retail complexes for the modern consumer.

Buildings that are related to commerce in the contemporary world, but which appear ‘retardataire’ in their appearance, have become the topic of controversy in recent years. On one hand, attention is given to the inheritance of the traditional architectural context. On the other, due to contradictions and conflicts between the traditional architectural culture and life characteristics of modern times, Yudong (2003), Huan, Zhihua and Huanian (2009) criticize such commercial buildings as ‘fake antique’. In contrast Wei and Yonghong (2008), Lei, Fanghui and Chang (2008) and Chunming (2007) argue that these commercial buildings are one way of visually ‘inheriting’ the traditional culture, even if there is a loss of authenticity. The research will cast important light on the value of commercial (retail) buildings today in the context of their pseudo-historic settings.

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

### **First chapter: Introduction**

In this chapter, firstly, the research background will be introduced. It includes theoretical background and culture background. Secondly, the research questions are listed. After that, the methodology is developed according to the ‘onion’ process. Finally, the significance of the research and the structure of the thesis are introduced.

### **Second chapter: Literature review**

This chapter introduces the different views and arguments of scholars and researchers on buildings of the imitation of traditional style. It includes the definition and classification of such buildings, the architectural culture and the value of emulating traditional architectural style in the retail sector in China. Then, the principles of commercial retail buildings are introduced, including definition and classification of commercial buildings, an outline of traditional Chinese retail buildings and the experience of consumption.

### **Third chapter: The background of commercial building of the imitation of traditional building styles**

This chapter outlines the origins of Chinese building that imitates traditional style, and then introduces the development of Chinese commercial building in this imitation style. This includes the process of development, the factors that impact the development and the problems in the development of commercial building of the imitation of traditional building styles. Subsequently, the characteristics of such commercial buildings are introduced which include the particularity of geographic location, the diversity of the style business forms, and design style. Finally, the theories are introduced of consumerist consumption, the Chinese background of consumerism which includes economic, social, political and cultural aspects, and the evolution of retail building under the influence of the experience consumption.

### **Fourth chapter: Case study**

In this chapter, an overview is provided of Fashion Island. In addition, the culture of Fashion Island is introduced which includes: Chinese city origin culture, Hui style architecture, aesthetics and style, and Ancestor worship of Fashion Island.

### **Fifth Chapter: Questionnaire Analysis**

In this chapter, the results of 100 questionnaires are analyzed and conclusions are drawn.

### **Sixth Chapter: Conclusion**

In this chapter, the above chapters are summarized and the overall conclusions of the research are drawn.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chinese commercial buildings that imitate traditional building styles**

#### **2.1.1 Definition and classification of retail buildings in the style of pseudo-vernacular buildings styles**

Qingzhong (1990) argues that construction in the imitation of traditional building styles is a modern form of architectural production which faithfully imitates aspects of architectural form. In this practice, the imitation of vernacular architectural styles basically reflects the primary characteristics of traditional building and its structure, material and construction techniques, reflecting at the same time the primary characteristics of modern building. Hence most retail buildings in this architectural style are in reinforced concrete which is concealed behind the visual effects of vernacular construction methods.

However, Lei, Fanghui and Chang (2008) argue for three stylistic parts as the primary characteristics of buildings that imitate traditional style as follows:

Firstly, the roof of the main building should be built as a traditional form.

Secondly, the size and scale of building elevation should be similar with historical buildings.

Thirdly, the facade appearance must reflect the structure and decorative style of traditional building on different levels.

They argue that when these three points are met at same time, the building can be regarded as an imitation of traditional vernacular styles. However, in the author's opinion, the definition appears parochial and extreme because it confines such buildings into a three parts style.

Biwen (2001) compares historical buildings with neo-vernacular buildings in order to define

buildings that imitate traditional styles. Biwen argues the differences between the two should be reflected the following three characteristics:

#### 1. The differences in manufacturing technique and construction period

Due to the limitation of wood and the different manufacturing technique of brick and tile, a historical building is different from an imitation in this construction period aspect. Steel and glass in historical buildings belong to modern manufactured products. Historical buildings are typically constructed using small handicraft methods and the construction process is long because of the limitation of technical conditions. However, due to the development of more modern construction techniques, including use of machinery and equipment, the construction phase is largely shortened for buildings in traditional vernacular styles.

#### 2. The differences of form

Buildings of the imitation styles are based on the development of historical buildings. The similarity is their facades which are usually three parts style or five parts style. However, the length and width of the building of the neo-traditional buildings became larger than historical buildings and the content of the floor plan and functionality became more varied to meet the progress of modern society and constantly changing use requirements of people.

#### 3. The differences of the stress system

The structural system of historical buildings usually adopts a timber frame, masonry and composite structure. However, the building of the imitation adopts a brick and concrete mixed structure, and latterly a reinforced concrete structure.

Kan (2009), Shun and Jiamin (2009) argue that the form of the neo-traditional building styles includes broad sense and narrow sense. Broad sense means a recreation which is in line with the traditional cultural characteristics of the historical building by using modern building materials or traditional materials. Narrow sense means recovery reproduction of a historical building in a certain range by using traditional materials, which strictly speaking belongs to the restoration of a cultural relic.

The famous American architect Venturi (2002) argues that the way to keep tradition is to use traditional components and appropriately introduce new parts to form a unique assembly or combination of traditional components with non-traditional methods. In many ways this argument is appropriate to describe the retail buildings under investigation here. However, this merely highlights the architectural aspect but lacks a cultural aspect to explain building in such styles. In the author's opinion, any building form (whatever its authenticity or historical association) owns its culture and belongs to a cultural category. Building is not only a simple architectural object, by the constitution of building material, but is also the carrier of human thoughts and feelings. Buildings of the imitation style express the traditional culture in appearance which is not only formed by the cultural level of traditional form and difference of period, but is also formed by cultural meanings and symbol significance.

## **2.1.2 The architectural culture**

Feng (2005. p.5) argues that architecture culture itself is a branch of a generalized culture, at the same time; architecture is the vessel of other cultures, and the integrating reflection of other cultures. Diversity, regionalism, epochal character, and hierarchy of culture will inevitably have a profound influence on the development of architecture.

Quoting from Alberto Pérez Gómez (2006, p214), Temple, in 'The Cultural Role of Architecture', identifies relationships between architectural representation and our cultural practices. Temple puts forward a twofold premise: 'firstly that architecture is an agent of cultural renewal and secondly that culture is architecture's sustenance; its legitimizing ingredient.' So he argues that 'through this interconnected relationship, the process of cultivating architecture entails both renewing what is already there – by recalling and reinterpreting traditions, customs etc - and at the same time establishing new relationships or horizons.'(Nicholas, 2012).

In the author's opinion, buildings not only passively witness the culture but also can revive the cultural tradition by reasonable and appropriate creation that, as the book argued, architecture

is an 'agent' of cultural renewal. For the commercial/retail buildings examined here, the 'agent' role of architecture in cultural renewal is more outstanding and obvious. As in Temple's argument of the relationship between culture and architecture, the commercial buildings in imitation of the traditional style, on one hand, renew the local culture by recalling and reinterpreting traditions, customs etc; on the other, it also establishes new cultural symbolic meaning and cultural environment.

Taking Fashion Island as an example of this concept of agency, the ancient site of Fashion Island as the origin of Yancheng City and the cradle of earliest commerce of the city has deep cultural roots. (Yancheng Local Chronicles Compilation Committee, 1998) Some Hui style residential buildings in this area already had a long history which can be regarded as the 'testimony' of Yancheng's culture and history on account of the enduring public presence of these buildings. However, due to long-term use and erosion/deterioration of the building fabric, as well as earlier unplanned construction, this area provided poor traffic conditions and a terrible environment that did not meet the requirements/expectations of a modern city. Therefore, the Fashion Island project was conceived to transform the built conditions and environmental qualities, and at same time take culture renewal into consideration. The imitation of Hui building styles was used in the project in order to recall and reinterpret traditions and customs and to establish new relationships and horizons.

### **2.1.3 The Value of Emulating Traditional Architectural Styles in the Retail Sector in China**

In recent years, the construction of commercial buildings in imitation of traditional styles has boomed in China. Almost every city in China has a retail complex that consciously imitates traditional vernacular styles and most are related to commerce and business. Inevitably questions are raised about this growing phenomenon: whether buildings of these styles are popular, whether there are good social and cultural reasons for their existence, and why many streets of these buildings have appeared in most cities of China? Consequently, there is much debate and discussion on the value of such commercial buildings not only among residents but

also in academic and architectural fields. Some people argue that building in imitation of traditional buildings styles is fake and has no cultural value at all; some even argue this demotes the culture and is a waste of time with significant financial costs to build. But on the other hand, others argue that construction of such buildings have value by inheriting the history and culture, improving the image of the city and showing the cultural roots of the city. Some even argue that these new buildings, which combine the Chinese traditional style with modern building, demonstrate the creativity and innovation of Chinese architecture.

Yudong (2003) criticized most buildings of the imitation style as being “fudging and shoddy”. Huan, Zhihua and Huanian (2009) criticize these buildings from three aspects: Firstly, they criticized the view that building in this style is not discordant with the integrated planning of a modern city. They argue that the newly-built or rebuilt parts should not be developed imitating the traditional style form because people had new requirements for the entity and space along with the demands of function and the development of technology. They further argue that building in the imitation of traditional styles is a “nondescript monster” which is a waste of material and has low efficiency. Secondly, they contend that such projects can destroy the cultural relics. They argued that building in the imitation style is fake antique which overly highlighted the similarity with historical buildings on a visual aspect and blindly following the historical form will be regarded as a kind of commercial rubbish to be left by this unsettled economic period. Thirdly, they suggest that building in this way can bring inconvenience to the citizens. They argued the some discordance of a building (in imitation of traditional buildings styles) for commercial use can be reluctantly accepted, but that the development of such buildings to be used as citizens’ residences will bring much inconvenience; even the living quality of residents is impacted by the requirements of a complex traditional building form.

On the other hand, Wei and Yonghong (2008) argued that we should not criticize building in imitation of traditional styles, although some could regard them as kitsch, even ‘fake antique’. They claim that this is an exploration for Chinese architects to pursue and develop the natural architectural culture in new age.

Lei, Fanghui and Chang (2008) also hold this view. They argued that we cannot entirely use the phrase 'fake antique' to criticize and fully reject such building. said the construction of these buildings is also authentic and valuable as long as we seriously research the suitability and attribution, and build in an appropriate time and location.

Chunming (2007) highly praised this form of building. He argued that architects, who grasped the historical and cultural contexts, used modern structural technology combined with the historical form and opened up a successful way of owning not only a cultural symbol but also modern functionality.

Both Zhongyi and Manfang (2003) and Shun and Jiamin (2009) advance a more positive viewpoint. They regard building in imitation of traditional styles, when combined with modern environment art, building materials and technology, and modern lighting, acoustics, and electronic technology, is one of most important ways to improve such buildings to fully show their characteristics of the time and to carry forward Chinese traditional building arts in the modern period.

Hegel (1817) said 'what is rational is real, what is real is rational'. In the context of this enquiry, one could argue that the existence of commercial buildings that consciously mimic the styles of the past should not be dismissed as valueless but rather be understood in rational terms, and thereby possess some intrinsic value. The American architect Eliel Saarinen (1948) argued that the authenticity of art is dependent upon a kind of thinking and attitude, rather than following established rules. Architecture belongs to art as well as having its own authenticity. So retail buildings designed in neo-vernacular styles, with the support of a clear cultural background, should possess their own distinct authenticity and value. In practice, facing this fierce controversy about the value of such buildings, this research will take Fashion Island as a typical example to discuss whether commercial buildings that imitate traditional styles do indeed have value.

## **2.2 The Retail Building**

### **2.2.1 Definition and Classification of Commercial Buildings**

Li (1999) mentions in his book *Commercial Building* that:

“Commerce is an economic behaviour that changes the ownership of property to gain profits.” Hence, commercial buildings constitute a location where commercial activity takes place and where visible goods are traded on site. The prototype of the commercial building is the marketplace over the last thousand years. In addition to the business of transaction, modern commercial buildings have other functions as well, like entertainment, catering and parking lots for shoppers. The first department store in the West appeared in Paris in 1852, bringing about two major changes in business environments: the first was the expansion of commercial space; the second was the appropriate partitioning of internal space.

In *Commercial Building*, Li (1999) divides commercial building into four categories:

According to the mode of operation: general store; specialty store; chain; department store; shopping mall and supermarket; mall; and other forms of retail outlets.

2. According to the location: business in downtown area; business near residential areas and in other urban districts; business near the transportation hub; suburb business; non-city business.

3. According to size: large business, mid-size business and small business.

4. By type of architectural space: single building; building complex; commercial street and pedestrian malls; underground commercial buildings; business district.

### **2.2.2 Chinese Traditional Commercial Buildings**

Yue (2007), in *Traditional Space Beauty of Chinese Traditional Architecture*, mentions that commercial buildings are physical space environments with local cultural characteristics. Their physical characteristics and form express certain distinct cultural connotations to the people.

Traditional commercial buildings not only refer to certain historical sites, but also include broader spatial and temporal factors.

## **1. The Market**

Guxi (2009) describes in his book *A History of Chinese Architecture* the situation that the ruling class, before the Sui and Tang dynasties, had always implemented a policy that emphasised agriculture and restricted business activities; in other words business was not allowed to overdevelop itself. So both construction form and business behaviour was restricted in a strict way. Instead a workshop system was adopted in the time before the Sui and Tang dynasties. It is the product of constraint by political factors, and characterized by concentration, introversion and closure. Yunsu (2005) mentions in the book *Chinese Artistic Conception: Analysis of Chinese Classical Architectural Design Principle* that, in terms of a market, people gather when you drum for 200 times at mid-day and after the Zheng is hit 300 times at around 7 pm, the market will be closed and the people will go. In the Tang dynasty, in addition to tall walls encircling the whole Changan city, the residential area and the business district were also separated by tall walls. The market should be established in a set place, and outside the market, trade is forbidden. Also, stores should be constructed according to a certain form, and form a square, in the central part of which a market building should be built to manage the market.

## **2. Street Market**

Guxi (2009) also describes in his book *Chinese Architectural History* the workshop system adopted in cities before the Song dynasty, and whether the construction form of commercial buildings or business behaviour is restricted. From the mid-Tang dynasty, the system began to decline, until it collapsed and led to the street market. Then, business behaviour was liberated completely and various marketing systems were developed, and the hall in civilian buildings was used to receive regular customers or to negotiate bulk business, thereby serving as the building for management. Along the street there were stores and booths, which were used for selling where they could hang signs to advertise themselves, and shops were places in which counters were placed and goods sold. Booths were much simpler than shops since they could

be constructed in front of shops, and customers could choose what they wanted in a very simple and straightforward way. In addition, peddling was a form of unofficial street selling, and sellers could deliver the goods to your door.

Fei (2009) mentions in 'The Combination of Commercial Street building Space and Traditional Context' that since the Song dynasty, the scale of business activities in commercial buildings has increased, its category is continuously being enriched, and its behaviour has evolved from being simply a complex of buildings, to encompassing almost all fields in the life of consumers. The function of the commercial building has shifted from being simply the trading of goods, such as food, towards entertainment/leisure activities, etc. Thus new functions such as restaurants, sporting venues, performance spaces (for plays), hotels and the traditional temple were added to the city's commercial life. But by then there were no new forms of building that could fit the new functions and instead, traditional building forms and styles were still prevalent. Indeed, the picture of stores, shops, booths constitute a lively street market, which was vivid and full of vitality.

### **3. The Square**

Heping (1998) states, in his book 'The Essential Characteristics and the Planning and Design of Modern Commercial Pedestrian Street, that the public square is the most important form of outside space characterized by sociability. It is not only a place for gatherings, festivals, celebrations, but also a place for trading goods. More typically in traditional China, however, the most important mode of public space was the street, or the hybrid form of street and adjacent field. Traditional commercial streets are mainly surrounded by commercial buildings and the underlying stores are semi-open, or even completely open. The combination of shop and homes are designed to serve others. Hence, street space is just an extension of stores on both sides, whether by in-store transaction, or street trading, and has played a role in the retention of pedestrians, which invariably results in blocking traffic.

### **4. Street Space**

In Fei's (2009), The Combination of Commercial Street: Building Space and Traditional

Context, we learn that there is an uncertain spatial relationship between buildings and roads in China's traditional commercial streets. Buildings in streets have mostly overhanging corridors or deep eaves, and their decoration is mostly dynamic and removable. The lower part of street buildings is closely linked to space activities, and they can also be understood as an integral whole. There is no clear definition of outer place and inner place in traditional Chinese architecture, and there is a circular relationship between the two since they attract each other. These characteristics and relationships constitute major features of the traditional commercial street pattern in China (Fig 2.1 and 2.2).



Fig 2.1: Eave

Source: [http://www.itravelqq.com/2009/0615/9435\\_5.html](http://www.itravelqq.com/2009/0615/9435_5.html)



Fig 2.2: Overhanging corridor

Source: [http://www.chinajsb.cn/gb/content/2001-10/09/content\\_46306.htm](http://www.chinajsb.cn/gb/content/2001-10/09/content_46306.htm)

## 5. Memorial Arch

The memorial arch originates from China's Fangmen in the Lifang system which divided the city into many 'Li' as residential areas. After the Lifang system collapsed in the Song Dynasty, walls were removed and Fangmen were left to symbolize the door. They can be seen in the Pingjiang Map of the Song Dynasty. In traditional China, memorial arches along streets is a familiar feature, and most of these memorial arches have some sort of commemorative significance. In our traditional business street space, memorial arches mainly exist as iconic thresholds; they catch people's attention, and with a strong recognition.

In his 'On the Characteristics and Style of Traditional Shop', Wei (2006) mentions that China's traditional commercial street arch mainly plays the role of organizing space. Because of the arch, the streets have a sense of closure and a cohesive effect, and become the inner place without a roof. They also signal an important landscape, through which the streets pass and become more flexible. Arches are usually set at the entrance to streets, or the beginning of streets, making people believe that doors are invitations and have an inward attraction. We see this, for example, at the entrance of Anhui Tunxi Street (Fig. 2.3) and the entrance of

Nanjing Confucius Temple (Fig. 2.4). If there are several arches organized together, the space would be more colourful. And if there are arches set along the street, the space would be enriched and the landscape would be more deep and flexible. The arch is one of the typical signs of the traditional commercial street; it enriches the street space. Hence in "China Towns" around the world arches are often used as street doors.

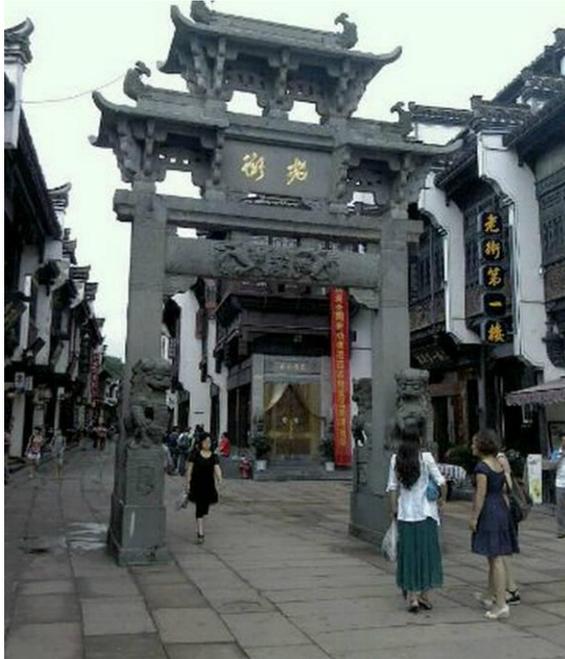


Fig 2.3: The entrance of Anhui Tunxi Street

Source: <http://www.yaoyouke.com/travel/140108/14407.html>



Fig 2.4: the entrance of Nanjing Confucius Temple

Source: <http://www.19lou.com/forum-464782-thread-5351374502005839-1-1.html>

## 6. Signboard

China's traditional business environment is very particular about the lively atmosphere. This is created by the sounds and the atmosphere which includes the conspicuous signage. This can enrich the business environment and increase commercial transactions. Market sounds constitute a special kind of local art with great charm. 'Dumen Zhuzhici' (1877) from the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty, writes:

"Preserved quince cake sound much, hanging furnace biscuits whisper, Fork fire was just bought, over and over again heard the call of cake. It says the food point in Beijing City Street, and peddling did bring a lot of convenience to people. These vendors work very hard, they need to connect the street by crying or singing as a guise or shop signs to attract buyers. Shi Xian wrote in his Old Beijing Stories that in the late Ming dynasty: Capital in May, vegetables famous fruits gather, and be sold as the song floats, the sound tells what items were being sold, and who were selling it!"

The signs and plaques add to the colorful scenery, serving as a major feature of traditional Chinese business operations. In his book 'History of Chinese Architecture' Liang Sicheng (2005) observes: "Maybe due to the lack of plastics, in ancient stores, goods were never advertised through windows, the only way to attract the customer's attention is to hang signboards."

Perhaps it is because of this that our traditional commercial buildings are, in a sense, so highly stylized and without the need for a shop window, as is typical of the West. Although they sell different goods, they are similar in terms of external image. The only way to distinguish one shop from its neighbour was through the use of signboards or pretenses, which can directly indicate their business content, and serve as a decorative function. Diyu (2011) argues, in his 'Space Based Street Culture', that as early as the Tang Dynasty street bars in Chang'an and Luoyang not only hung curtains but also coloured flags, and they made young females play the flute to attract diners. And afterwards, due to commercial competition, in the Ming dynasty,

shops made even larger and more conspicuous signs, as high as 3 feet or more. Bars are often identified with horizontal tablets, other shops hang a wooden vase or tin cup with the decoration of tassels. In the Song Dynasty, signboards and pretenses changed in more diversified ways; Riverside Scene at the Qingming Festival vividly depicts the scene of street signboards. (See Fig 2.5 and 2.6)



Fig 2.5 and Fig 2.6: The early signboards

Source: [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_a404f6dd0101b47z.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_a404f6dd0101b47z.html)

## 7. Fair

As a saying goes that people make the market, which means that a great many people can make trade easier, thus it is common that business can prosper from temples, in which there are various carnivals held regularly every year. Shichang (2000) mentions in the book 'Modern Architecture and National Culture' that in the Song dynasty, the largest and most famous market of Bianliang was Dongjing Great Temple, which opened 5 times every month with trading allowed. Many people came there, business there was increasingly prosperous, and so too was business outside the temple; people came there to eat, for recreation and to watch plays, etc, making the place full of vitality and businesses thrive. For Nanjing Confucius Temple, located in the Qinhuai River, its strategic location and the prevailing modes of transportation made this area become the centre of Nanjing, as it remains today. The Qing Dynasty set up examination halls for the provincial exam here, where perennial candidates gathered, and various industry personnel serving the candidates reached 50 to 60 thousand.

Furthermore, pilgrims gather at the Confucius Temple ceremonies and officials have built houses in the area along the river, which brings many specific business activities to the Confucius Temple area, and shops, clubhouses, hotels, teahouses, restaurants, etc., came into being. As a multi-functional temple, it is both interesting and elegant, and has won the hearts of many people.

### **2.2.3 Experience consumption**

Norris, as the first marketing scholar to research experience consumption, argued sometimes providing unforgettable consumption experience in appropriate place and time is more important than product itself. (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982)

American scholars Pine and Gilmore (1998) announced the coming of the experience economy and divided the consumer's experience into four realms: 'Entertainment, Educational, Esthetic and Escapist.'

Later, Fengling (2002) divided the experience consumption economy into eight types: culture demand, humanitarian dedication, return nature, traditional search source, illusory, chase high fashion, showing position and healthy sports.

According to the degree of demand and participation of the consumer, Long (2004) and Qiang (2008) also divided experience consumption into enthusiastic, following, embryonic and cultivating.

Long (2004) also argued that experience consumption may be regarded as the experience of consumption of goods. Consumers attempt to realize self-worth by consumption itself rather than by regarding the basic use value of a commodity used for consumption purposes.

Lixia (2004) defined experience consumption as enjoying the relationship between goods and service. Its core is to pay attention to living quality, in which the spirit material is more important

than material consumption, and quality is more important than consumption quantity.

Xugang (2005) defined experience consumption as activities creating an unforgettable memory for consumers by using services as a stage and products as a tool.

Xingsheng (2011) argued that experience consumption may be divided into broad and narrow senses. A broad sense of experience consumption includes culture, tours, physical education, entertainment and so on. The narrow sense of experience points to the consumption based on the experience and feeling in the shopping centre.

In the author's opinion, experience consumption is a process in which an experience or a feeling becomes consumption or improves consumption. In this research, a building built in traditional form can provide the cultural and historical experience to improve consumption through the memorial and emotional resonance of the consumers. So to understand experience consumption it is important to research buildings constructed in imitation of traditional styles.

### **3. The Background of the imitation of traditional buildings styles**

#### **3.1 The origin of Chinese building imitating traditional style**

Between the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the construction industry had a rapid development in China. In this period, the imitation of traditional building styles have also seen a substantial growth. Now, we can see many buildings of imitating traditional style using similar designs in different areas in China because most imitated the building styles of the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties. The origin of antique imitation building can be traced back to the Revolution of 1911 (Xuan, 2008) and was driven by three factors: the research and application to Chinese traditional building by western architects, the research and application to the national architecture by Chinese first generation architects, and the support for the form of traditional architecture by the government of that time.

After the first Opium War in China in 1840, some western architects came to China and had deep interest in the Chinese traditional building which is quite different from a western building. They researched and applied the form of Chinese tradition to construct many buildings which began the understanding and contribution of western architects to Chinese traditional building; examples such as FuRen University (see Fig 3.1) was designed and built by a Belgian architect in 1912. The western architects generally grasped the characteristic of the roof on Chinese traditional building and applied the 'three-part style' (Yinzhong, 2011). Consequently, at that time, many buildings were built in the style of three parts and covered by a Chinese traditional roof.



Fig 3.1 FuRen University

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/49/5770943k7afa26fb.html>

Reviewing modern Chinese architectural history, the focus of the field is the exploration of Chinese traditional building style (Xuan, 2008). Most of the first generation Chinese architecture masters studied in the US, Europe and Japan. At that time, they learned advanced theory and technology and on their return to China, they tried to develop the traditional architectural art and create a Chinese national form. These Chinese architects consciously researched and discussed the 'The form of my national architecture' (Bingde, 1991). In addition, they summarized the Chinese historic building ruins and improved the history of ancient Chinese architecture. One such was Sicheng Liang, a famous Chinese architecture master and architecture education master. He set up the China Construct Society and summarized the mark of the Chinese historic building, which has been helpful for later generations to grasp the essence of Chinese traditional building. Elsewhere, the first generation architects put the building of traditional form into practice (Zhongkong, 2009). The most representative buildings are Nanjing Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum (see Fig 3.2) and Guangzhou Sun Yatsen Memorial Hall (see Fig 3.3). The architect of both buildings was Lu Yen-chih who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. The most characteristic feature of both buildings is the use of Chinese traditional form typical of structures of the western country (Xiaodi, 2001). His work shows the idea of the combination of ancient with modern and the combination of Chinese style with western country style (Jiefeng, 2009). The achievements of the first generation architects may be summarized as an inheritance of the outstanding achievements of Chinese traditional form and an exploration of the form which combines ancient with modern and combines Chinese style with western country style.



Fig 3.2: Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum

Source:

<http://hk.crntt.com/crn-webapp/doc/docDetailCNML.jsp?coluid=115&docid=100655848>



Fig 3.3: Guangzhou Sun Yatsen Memorial Hall

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/49/f8b1d2db68522928.html>

In 1927, the Nanjing government was established in a turning point of the Chinese social revolution. The government advocated and supported the exploration and application of Chinese traditional building form (Bingde, 2005). For example, the government supported the Nanjing Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum and Guangzhou Sun Yatsen Memorial Hall and provided the funds and sites. In other words, this use of traditional building form by the Chinese first generation architects was mainly supported by the government.

In conclusion, the origin of building in imitation of traditional styles was driven by three factors:

The research and application to Chinese traditional building by western architects; the research and application to the national architecture by Chinese first generation architects; and the support to the form of traditional architecture by the government.

Jianping (2000) analysed the origin of the imitation of traditional building styles from a cultural and social aspect. Culturally, he researched the origin from the aesthetic standard of Chinese people to historical building. He argued that the overall appearance and components of traditional historical buildings showed many kinds of beauty, such as dynamic, symmetric, decorative, and so on. He argued that these were formed by the people's summary and abstraction over thousands of years. So building in such a style is in line with the Chinese people's aesthetic standards and is easy accepted by the people. Socially, along with the development of the tourist industry, communication of international culture enhanced the visitors' interest, appreciation and taste. This appreciation impacted positively on the value of tourist attractions (Jianping, 2002) and so such buildings were constructed to cater for visitors' interests and demands. For example, buildings imitating traditional style were built in a historical and cultural city in order to show the charm and cultural roots of the city, and some were built in protected historical areas to create the same or similar style to the protected historical buildings in order to form a scale effect.

## **3.2 The development of Chinese commercial building in imitation of traditional building styles**

### **3.2.1 The process of development of traditional imitation commercial buildings**

The historical wave of commercial buildings includes the following three stages:

The first wave appeared in the years between 1920 and 1930. The main characters are the first generation architects who wanted to express the national dignity for holding onto the traditional architectural culture movement (Lei, Fanghui and Chang, 2008). The main reason

why this wave of commercial buildings arose was the government support for national traditional style. When the Chinese Nationalist Party edited the 'Capital (Nanjing) Plan' in 1929, they put forward: 'The buildings for government should use Chinese traditional style and absorb the advantage of an ancient palace', 'the buildings for business should have the Chinese factor and the traditional ornament should be added around the wall.' and 'the building for residence should also apply the standard as for the business building (Jia, 2012).

The second wave of the traditional architectural culture movement appeared during the years between 1950 and 1960. The main creative body was the second generation who explored the national form and new forms to express national pride (Lu and Jian, 2006). The driving force also came from the government's culture strategy which accepted the content and national form of socialism from the architecture design idea of the Soviet Union. At that time, the people's regime was a revolutionary one; people's attitude to traditional culture was not conservative. Although supporting inheritance of the traditional culture, they also criticized the bad aspects of such culture in what may be called 'the inheritance of criticism' (Honghong, 1997).

The third wave of the traditional architectural culture movement has happened since 1980. Here, the main creative body is the third generation architects who engage in the exploration and creation of traditional architecture culture. In the exploration of new forms, an important aspect of this period is the application of the imitation of traditional building styles (Bo, Xingguo and Wenyong, 2010). After 1978, a nationwide tide of architecture theory study made Chinese architects research the traditional architecture style with a higher level of theory. What is more, the prosperity of Chinese economy construction not only laid a foundation for architecture development but also provided more opportunities for the architects to practice. Due to the preference for traditional architecture style by local governments and developers and the popularity of tourism, the traditional architecture style became a topical subject once more. Consequently most commercial buildings that imitate traditional style were built at this time. During this period, there were many opportunities to explore the inheritance of traditional architecture culture so that many forms and styles appeared, such as full imitation of ancient

buildings, the combination of ancient and modern buildings, and so on (Lei, Fanghui and Chang, 2008).

### **3.2.2 The factors impacting traditional imitation development**

#### **1. The development of tourism**

In recent years, consistent with the loosening of Chinese policy, the amount of legal holidays increased and travel became more convenient. Consequently tourism shopping became one of most popular way to spend a holiday. According to a survey of McCormick Marketing, tourists spend from 4 to 10 times more time shopping than local people. For them, shopping is one of the most important ways to spend their holiday during tours. The president Rosemary McCormick said: “a spending holiday can considerably improve the desire of shopping” (Yuhong, 2009). Buildings that imitate traditional styles with local culture characteristics conveyed the feeling of freshness and mystery and had an irresistible attraction for tourists from other cities.

#### **2. Emotional nostalgia and the renaissance of historical culture**

Along with the development of building technology and innovation in building materials, cities in China were full of modern culture and modern buildings. Most Chinese people were gradually bored by the dullness of such modernism and began to miss the decline of traditional culture. Thus the construction of commercial buildings imitating traditional styles were increasingly favoured and admired because they foster the memory of historical life and the traditional marketplace by the reappearance of traditional cultural artistic conception and distinct building styles. Psychologically, such buildings bring to people the feeling of the continuance of life and allow people find their roots during the consumption experience.

### **3. The following by Chinese architects of government guidance**

The Chinese government put forward the 'Capital (Nanjing) Plan' in 1929 and relative government's culture strategy between 1950 and 1960 to advocate Chinese architects to explore and apply Chinese traditional elements and the traditional ornament in buildings. Under the guidance of the government's policy and the appeal of the architects' cultural sense, China never stops exploring the inheritance of its traditional building culture. Even at the end of the 20th century, when western building ideology was widespread, exploration of the inheritance of traditional building culture was still a hot topic. So the tendency to build in imitation of traditional styles was the easiest way to present the inheritance of traditional building culture. This was especially so, when the project was built in or near historic and culture areas in the city, where the government usually asked for the tradition form.

#### **3.2.3 The problems of development of traditional imitation commercial buildings**

Commercial buildings imitating traditional style were very popular among the developers because of the huge commercial benefit. With this incentive, such commercial buildings appeared in most every city in China. At same time, these buildings emerge with only a short time from idea to construction, which caused many problems during the construction and usage.

##### **1. Overflow**

At first, commercial buildings imitating traditional style did indeed bring a huge economic benefit, such as the success of Yuyuan Garden and Confucius Temple. Under the driver of the commercial benefit, most developers in different cities followed this trend to construct buildings imitating traditional style leading to a sharp increase in such buildings. For example, in Chendu City alone, there were many commercial buildings imitating traditional style, such as

Qintai road, Jinli Ancient Street, Wensufang, Tianxiashuadu, Yipintianxia, Wide Lane and Narrow Lane, Jinsha historical cultural Street, Chengdu Swellfun Street, Qingyang Palace and so on. There is an old Chinese saying: "When a thing is rare, it becomes precious." So when buildings imitating traditional style became very common, their value will reduce.

## 2. Lack of management

Due to the lack of management, buildings imitating traditional style had examples of the following problems:

- (1) External electric wires, pipelines and air-conditioners (see Fig 3.4).
- (2) Traffic sign posts were not decorated in traditional form (see Fig 3.5).
- (3) Every store has a different decoration style, destroying the integrality.
- (4) Lack of parking spaces, leading to chaotic parking.



Fig 3.4: External electric wires and air-conditioners

Source:

<http://baike.sogou.com/v114009.htm?jsessionid=D7E02428144B7D4DEE785416FA0EEB87.n>

[2](#)



Fig 3.5: Traffic sign post not decorated in traditional form

Source: <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/59673/59673.htm>

### 3. Unexciting business practice

Many commercial buildings that imitate traditional styles pay excessive attention to traditional culture products. For example, most stores in Liulichang Culture Street sell only reproduction ancient books and antiques which are of limited attraction to visitors from other cities; most of their products are not authentic work and are not collectible. (See fig 3.6) Local people do not tend to go there to buy such products which are not useful for modern life. Consequently, this kind of business practice is one of the most important reasons why buildings that imitate traditional style become unappealing .



Fig 3.6: reproduction ancient books and antiques in Liulichang Culture Street  
Source: <http://home.babytree.com/u5967999810/journal/show/12557399>

## 4. Simple copy and imitation

With the ideas of developers and the influence of globalization, there is a phenomenon in which buildings that imitate traditional style in different cities become very similar. They usually use red lanterns, glazed roof tiles, the same style cornice and rake angle, even some products sold are the same, which consumers feel is boring. Chinese traditional buildings had their distinct individuality and characteristics from colour and materials from different periods and different areas. However, the contemporary imitation buildings tend to the similar style.

### 3.3 The characteristics of commercial building in imitation of traditional building styles

#### 3.3.1 The particularity of geographic location

The commercial buildings that imitate traditional style are usually in an area which has a long history and a very good culture resource advantage. The imitating style forms can be obviously different in different geographic locations (see Fig 3.7 and Fig 3.8).



Fig 3.7: Xinjiang International Grand Bazaar

Source: [http://www.ts.cn/special/2102network/2012-05/23/content\\_6861841.htm](http://www.ts.cn/special/2102network/2012-05/23/content_6861841.htm)



Fig 3.8: Chengdu JinLi

Source: <http://www.sc5757.com/cd/news/3614.htm>

### 3.3.2 The diversity of the style

The style of commercial buildings imitating traditional style can be divided into the imitation of time culture and the imitation of local culture.

Time culture: examples include imitation of the period of the Republic of China, the imitation of the Ming and Qing dynasties, sometimes as far as the Tang, Song and even Han dynasties.

The imitation of Tang dynasty style (see Fig 3.9): the buildings of the Tang dynasty always show the scale and form from the macroscopic point of view. For example, they have mullioned windows and boarded doors which are very simple in design. The characteristic of the building is a higher base, deep eaves, large brackets, flat roof and charcoal grey tiling (Yajun, 2011).



Fig 3.9: Xian Tang Paradise

Source: <http://www.mypsd.com.cn/detail/?2289448>

The imitation of Song dynasty style (see Fig 3.10): besides advances in structure, Song dynasty buildings paid more attention to the expression of architectural aesthetics than the

Tang dynasty. The coloured artwork became established and coloured glaze products were widely used in the waterproofing of the roof and architectural ornamentation. Generally speaking, Song dynasty building is an evolutionary development of Tang dynasty building. The structural aspect of Song dynasty building was more strict and mature; the form of the building became diversified and luxury and magnificence was the main characteristic of such buildings (Baoguo, Yan and Feng, 2007).



Fig 3.10: Kaifeng Imperial Song Street

Source: <http://www.jxlcp.com/kmyt/PicNew/product.php?proid=141370>

The imitation of Ming and Qing dynasty styles (see Fig 3.11): the Ming dynasty was the period when the Han nationality dominated. Due to the lack of building material, the wood structure is different without the big pillars and girders of Tang and Song dynasties, the entablature bracket set become smaller, and the bracket set replaced with a short pillar support. Ming dynasty style building was characterized by the colourful form (Xuan, 2009); Qing dynasty style building was not obviously different from the Ming dynasty style except in the increase of the ornamental component.



Fig 3.11: Nanjing Confucius Temple

Source: <http://www.nipic.com/show/1/62/4306015kc59d31f3.html>

The imitation of the Republic of China style (see Fig 3.12): the buildings of the Republic of China is the combination of Chinese with foreign building arts in the special history period. Such buildings are usually of a brick concrete structure which means that the wall of the vertical load-bearing structure and pilaster use brick and blocks while the pillar, the girder, the floor, the roof sheathing and the truss use concrete (Junjie, 2013). This structure has the advantage of extending the architectural usage space, a reduction of building cost, excellent performance and so on. However, due to the use of clay brick as the load-bearing materials in the brick concrete structure, the vitality is not as good as the Chinese traditional building of the Ming and Qing dynasty which built brick wood structures.



Fig 3.12: Nanjing 1912

Source: <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/p/2009-08-26/144218516243.shtml>

Local culture: local culture building combined places of interest with the local humanism and history. For example, Xinjiang international grand bazaar showed the Islam building style by the use of deep red brick, brief arch, dome and corridor and so on; Chengdu Jinli gathered many Sichuan western elements such as a screen wall facing the gate of a house, local style gate courtyard and so on, which showed a strong local characteristic.

### 3.3.3 Business forms

The business forms can be divided into three types. One type focuses on historical culture products. For example Liulichang Culture Street where culture products, such as ancient books, paintings and antiques, can be sold is the sole business form (see Fig 3.13). The second type mainly concentrates on modern products. For example, coffee bars, tea rooms and brand fashion shopping are dominant in the Shanghai New Field (see Fig 3.14). The third type is the mixture of historical culture and modern products such as Shanghai Yuyuan and Nanjing Confucian Temple (see Fig 3.15).



Fig 3.13: Ancient books, paintings and antiques in Liulichang Culture Street

Source: [http://www.showchina.org/zt/sys/00\\_35/03/200901/t252468.htm](http://www.showchina.org/zt/sys/00_35/03/200901/t252468.htm) and [http://blog.voc.com.cn/blog\\_showone\\_type\\_blog\\_id\\_129660\\_p\\_1.html](http://blog.voc.com.cn/blog_showone_type_blog_id_129660_p_1.html)



Fig 3.14: Coffee shop in Shanghai New Field

Source: [http://travel.gog.com.cn/system/2014/05/21/013526459\\_10.shtml](http://travel.gog.com.cn/system/2014/05/21/013526459_10.shtml) and <http://www.bbkz.com/forum/gallery/index.php?n=21667>



Fig 3.15: Starbucks in Yu Garden and Chinese Medical Centre in Yu Garden

Source: <http://qing.3shui.com/blog/7868.html> and <http://club.m.autohome.com.cn/bbs/threadowner-c-110-13960583-1.html>

### **3.3.4 Design style**

Chaoqin (2006) divided the Chinese modern antique building into four styles: to restore ancient ways, decoration, split difference and abstraction.

To restore the ancient way means architects use new material and new technology to completely imitate the Chinese historical building. However, if some special building can not be imitated, they also try their best to obey the proportion, the principles of construction of Chinese historical buildings and to use a decoration system to express the history of the building; this is the decoration way. The split difference approach is based on indifferentism: the architects absorbed all kinds of building elements and then integrated them into a new building style. The abstraction way is based on the principle of the similarity in spirit: architects try to use the new materials and technology to express the implied meaning of Chinese historical building, which is an interpretation of Chinese historical building by the modernist (Chaoqin, 2006).

## **3.4 Consumptive culture and commercial building in imitation of traditional building styles**

### **3.4.1 Experience consumption**

#### **3.4.1.1 The rise of experience economy**

In 1998, American scholars Pine and Gilmore published an article entitled 'Welcome to the experience economy' in 'Harvard Business Review'. They (1998) argued 'As services, like goods before them, increasingly become commoditized - think of long-distance telephone services sold solely on price - experiences have emerged as the next step in what we call the progression of economic value' and they argued that experience consumption was already coming after the product and service economies. They then published 'The Experience Economy: Work Is Theater & Every Business a Stage' (1999) in which they for the first time systematically expounded the theory of the experience economy and divided human economic development into four stages (agriculture, industry, service and experience) and pointed out the characteristics of the different stages (see Table 1). The experience economy is a new stage of economic development after the service economy. It highlights the open and interactive economic form and pays attention to the creation of a spatial atmosphere to touch the consumer's inner emotion and communicate with the consumer's soul. Its core is to build the emotional experience space (Meilian, 2004). From the success of Disneyland to the global entertainment reputation of Las Vegas, from The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace to business legend of the Irvine Spectrum Center, consumption is moving into the era of experience. Commercial building as the carrier of consumption also meets the experience change. Commercial building broke through the design patterns which regard the original constructions as the core and began to pay attention to interactive coordination among people, environment and production, and create a favorable experience atmosphere. Through the construction of external space and space form, driving the customer's emotional process brings an unforgettable consumer experience and stimulates consumption and potential consumption.

Economic Distinctions				
Economic Offering	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences
Economy	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience
Economic Function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of Offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key Attribute	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal
Method of Supply	Stored in bulk	Inventoried after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration
Seller	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	Market	User	Client	Guest
Factors of Demand	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

Table 1. Economic distinctions

Source from: *welcome to the experience economy*

### 3.4.1.2 The change of consumption patterns

Consumption patterns are the methods, ways and forms which are adopted by people to satisfy their diverse needs (Yang, 2013). This pattern is the direct embodiment of lifestyle, and a consumer's consumption content, psychology and behaviour are the important factors that affect such patterns, and ultimately affect the space design of commercial buildings (Yang, 2013).

The traditional pattern of consumption is purposeful shopping, namely the consumer has a specific purpose to shopping and the shopping is completed after purchasing the needed merchandise. However, experience consumption pays more attention to emotion and feeling during the shopping activity. Before consumers come to a shopping centre, they may have no special purpose to shopping. However, by giving consumption a joyful feel, emotion is induced by the space environment atmosphere, service facilities, leisure and entertainment, the experience of urban culture and so on, and the consumer's potential shopping desire is motivated, ultimately driving the generation of non-purpose consumption.

So, with the background of experience consumption, a new commercial building not only needs to provide merchandise to meet the physical functional requirements but also should

satisfy the people's spiritual and aesthetic high-level requirements.

### **3.4.2 Background of experience consumption in China**

#### **3.4.2.1 Economic background of experience consumption**

Along with the development of globalization, China, as the biggest developing country in the world, is undergoing the transition from primary industry and secondary industry to tertiary industry and promotes the policy of 'To expand consumption in order to boost domestic demand'. Most great, large and medium-sized cities are transforming from industrial and production centres to cultural and business centres. Some of their business and societal development has already reached the advanced level seen in other parts of the world. Along with the rapid development of both economy and society in the 21st century, the structure of Chinese home and social consumption generally transforms from subsistence and basic consumption to developmental and consumption enjoyment. In 2011, China's per capita GDP had already reached 5660 US dollar and the consumption level of urban residents reached 3017 US dollar (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2012). The development of the eastern area of China is more rapid and generally converges with the developed countries. For example, the per capita GDP of Guangdong province already reached 7787 US dollar in 2011 and reached the upper middle income level of other countries or regions (Statistics Bureau of Guangdong Province, 2012). Beijing's per capita GDP reached 12447 US dollar in 2012 and the comprehensive productivity level is close to rich countries (Chinanews, 2012). In 2012, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2012) for the first time declared that the population in cities and towns was already more than the population in villages and the level of urbanization reached 51%. These sets of data show that Chinese experience economics is coming.

#### **3.4.2.2 Social background of experience consumption**

The experience economy, which is different from the traditional economic form, is a new independent economic type. Experience economy highlights that the consumer is the main body of value creation and achieves the economics of the unity of production and consumption

(Huanwen, 2013). Under experience economics, consumer demand and consumer behaviour of Chinese residents have also changed. Along with an improvement in citizens' living standards, the Engel coefficient of Chinese city households reduced from the subsistence value of 50.1% in 1995 to one of wealth at 35.7% in 2010 and the living and consumption patterns changed from subsistence to experience enjoyment (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Compared with traditional consumption, the modern consumer pays more attention to spiritual needs rather than the quantity of the production, and so many newly rich households begin to exhibit the intense consumption desire for symbolic products, such as high-grade housing and luxury private cars and so on. At same time, along with the coming of network information age, information consumption expanded rapidly and recreational leisure consumption gradually became popular. The range of nonphysical and social consumption continues to rise, which demonstrates China's urban social consumption transformation and with it, experience consumption has become the focus of Chinese society.

### **3.4.2.3 Political background of experience consumption**

After the Chinese government initiated the reform and opening-up policy, the social system of China underwent great change from the former social system and the Chinese economy rapidly increased as a result of these policies. With the establishment of a market-directed economy, several important economic transitions and social changes created the fast development of Chinese society and economy. A well-established social system is the key factor to promote social advancement and is the foundation and safeguard of economic development, which not only regulates the production, but also contributes to consumption increase. In addition, consumption was also promoted by the following policies in China (Yuan, 2012):

- A. In 2001, the focus of the Central Economic Work Conference was 'expanding domestic demand and opening up to the outside world'.
- B. In 2008, the focus of the Central Economic Work Conference was 'ensuring economic growth, expansion of domestic demand and readjusting the industrial structure'.
- C. In 2011, the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee held the Central Economic Work

Conference and put forward 'the emphasis of economic work is to focus on expanding domestic demand, especially consumer demand, improve policies to spur consumption, with efforts to improve the residents' consumption ability, and increase low-earning residents' income'.

With the implementation of the positive policies of the Chinese government, the per capita disposable income of urban residents continually increased from 1978 to 2012 (see Fig 3.16) and the urban and village residents' Engel coefficient generally declined during the period 1992 to 2010 (see Fig3.17), which showed that the consumption had already changed from subsistence consumption to pleasure and development consumption.

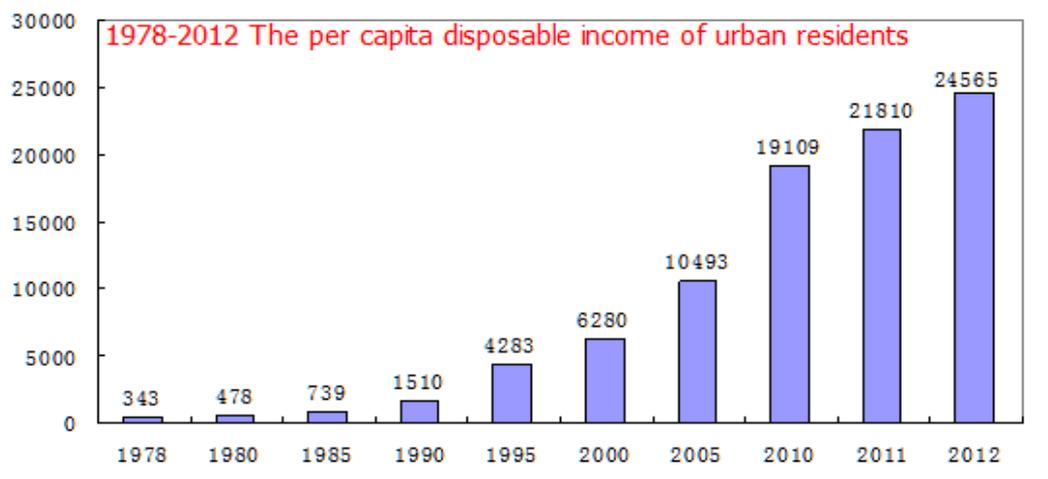


Fig 3.16: 1978-2012 The per capita disposable income of urban residents

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China

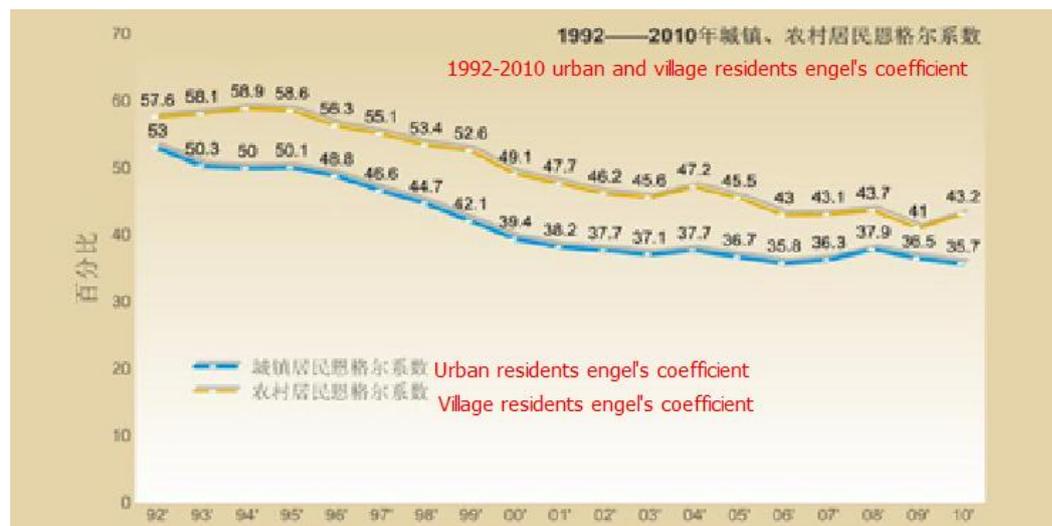


Fig 3.17: 1992-2010 urban and village residents Engels Coefficient

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China

#### **3.4.2.4 Cultural background of experience consumption**

China has a long history of several thousand years and a deep cultural store. The consumption view of Chinese people is always deeply influenced by Chinese culture. Along with the development of the Chinese economy, Chinese residents' income has seen an observable increase. The consumption of Chinese residents did not just focus on subsistence in most areas; due to the impact of 'face culture', the consumption style of Chinese people became one of flaunting wealth. However, such flaunting of wealth on material consumption usually displeases the public, especially poor people, and may even endanger the consumer.

Besides, Confucianism has influenced the Chinese people for thousands of years and the most common values for Chinese people came from Confucianism. Under this culture, Chinese people are used to implicit expression. So flaunting wealth on material consumption generally is regarded as 'Tuhao' or 'Baofahu' which suggests people who are rich but of low culture and low education. Thus in modern times, although many people have a high income, they try to seek other consumption styles.

Under the impact of 'face culture', they would prefer to choose experience consumption, and the process of experience consumption can be regarded as way for them to show their wealth or fashion experience and knowledge.

#### **3.4.3 The evolution of commercial buildings under experience consumption**

##### **3.4.3.1 Commercial culture under experience consumption**

a. In 1970, the professor of marketing at Northwestern University in the United States, Philip Kotler, observed that the experience of education and tourism will be emphasized and become economic characteristics. (Siguang, 2003)

b. The American futurologist Alvin Toffler (1984) argued that after the service economy, the next stage would be the experience economy in which commerce will win by providing the experience service.

c. In 1998, Pine and Gilmore (1998) argued after the product economy and the service economy, the experience economy age has arrived.

d. In 2004, Bryman (2004) published the 'The Disneyization of Society' which declared the rise of a new commercial pattern representing the future of business development. The characteristics of this commercial pattern were described as (Bryman, 2004):

- Experience: Disneyworld used excitement to replace boring homogeneous consumption. In the experience economy, the consumer is seeking a service provided in an entertaining way.
- Thematization: through providing a themed experience which weakens the feeling of economic trading.
- Hybrid consumption: Combining a variety of different ways of consumption to provide as many options for consumers as possible and let them stay at the location for as long as possible.

### **3.4.3.2 Commercial building under experience consumption**

The influence of commercial culture is directly reflected in the design of commercial buildings and an emphasis on experiential themed commercial design patterns has gradually spread:

In 1992, the famous Caesars Palace shopping centre opened on the Strip in Las Vegas. It took the Roman mart as the theme and showed this theme in every detail. The shopping centre with its marble floor, has white Roman columns, imitation open-air cafes, green trees, fountains, and the ceiling is an extensive screen which gives people a visual perception, such as a vivid

blue sky and white clouds or thunder and lightning to imitate the outside sky. At the gate of the Roman mart and at each entrance, actors represent Julius Caesar and other Roman soldiers marching through every hour, making people feel a return to ancient Rome. The Roman theme even extends to shops, such as a jewelry store with a curly pattern, Roman numeral decoration and hanging golden curtains to create a rich atmosphere.

In 2003, The China Trade Center international business district opened and launched a 160,000 square meter experiential shopping mall which uses water as the theme; a river walk.

The concept of the themed experience commercial design is summarized as: through planning, design, decoration and materials to embody unity of the commercial theme and, through researching the theme, to use symbols or metaphors on architecture, decoration, commodity combination, to create a relaxed and pleasant commercial environment and atmosphere.

Using traditional culture to highlight buildings imitating traditional style is generally found in the characteristics of experience commercial design patterns which use history and culture as the theme.

From Xiaochun (2009), 'the space combination of Yuyuan Tourist Mart, Yuyuan Garden and City Temple also clearly embodies efforts to allow visitors to experience the 'history' in the modern and the association of the 'historic' theme with tourism and spending.' Buildings that imitate traditional style form winding and linked alleys with each other, with small shops and stalls on both sides filled with all kinds of unique commodities. They are decorated with various signs, so that visitors have the sense of staying in downtown streets of an older age. They become the objects for tourists to view or to buy from.

In the paper '*Theme Park of History: the Cultural Predicament of The City Temple and Yu Yuan Garden in Shanghai*', Xiaochun (2009) points out that although the existing City Temple and Yuyuan Garden try to maintain the characteristics of the old Temple area in architectural forms, goods and so on, it has become a historic theme park, in which it is difficult to distinguish

between true and false, rather than once representing the centre of the field of a temple garden festival or marketplace life.

By considering such information, I think that Yuyuan Garden shopping mall has a certain representativeness; the domestic commercial buildings imitating traditional style gradually show similar characteristics according to the evolution of business and the influence of consumer culture. They are local 'hardware' and a 'combination' of architectural heritage. Although they reflect the traditional culture in material form, they cannot imitate 'the complete era of information accumulated through thousands of years of history'. They are not real history, but modern products manufactured according to collective memory by modern architects based on the memory of traditional culture.

## 4. Case study

### 4.1 The overview of Fashion Island

Fashion Island is the biggest shopping and leisure centre of Yancheng, located in the west of Yancheng City, and the whole area of the Island is approximately 178 thousand square meters. Fashion Island is surrounded by three rivers: it faces Chuanchang River to its west, Mangshe River to its North and Yue River to its southeast. Consequently it became an astonishing landscape in the downtown area (see Fig 4.1). Fashion Island is at the end of Jianjue Road which is the most prosperous high street and shopping centre in the area. The linking of Jianjue Road provided greater business opportunities and a higher visitor flow to Fashion Island.



Fig 4.1: Fashion Island

Source: Yancheng State-owned Assets Investment Group Company

Fashion Island has along history and a deep accumulation of culture. The area of Fashion Island defines the oldest quarter of Yancheng City and the earliest commerce of the city was born in this area through river transportation. The site of Taishan Temple has a long history

(see Fig 4.2), and there were many Hui-style residential buildings on the former site of Fashion Island. The 'reconstruction of the old city project' was launched by the Yancheng government because the former site of Fashion Island was full of old and dangerous of buildings, narrow and crowded roads and a poor environment, which could not meet the residence requirements of modern life. In consideration of its historical background and the significance for Yancheng, Fashion Island was built to imitate Hui-style in different forms. The Taishan Temple was repaired and close by, the former residential buildings were demolished and new commercial buildings (named Hou Street, see Fig 4.3), which imitated Hui-style architecture, were built. Next to Hou Street, Pioneer Square (see Fig 4.4), a big shopping mall, was built to combine traditional style with modern building. Thus Fashion Island is famous for commercial buildings that imitate traditional style.



Fig 4.2: Taishan Temple  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 4.3: Hou Street

Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 4.4: Pioneer Square

Source: photo by Zhuo Wang

## 4.2 Chinese City origin culture of Fashion Island

'Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization' (1990) is a book in which China was researched and explored systematically and comprehensively by western scholars. In his study, William T. Rowe discusses the origin of Chinese cities. He argues that many cities originated from spontaneous commerce rather than bureaucratic administration, 'such as the enormous chen of Ching-te in Kiangsi, centre of the national pottery industry, and

Hankow, hub of interregional domestic commerce situated at the confluence of China's two longest navigable rivers, the Yangtze and the Han. Founded in the fifteenth century, Hankow hosted a population of perhaps a million people by the end of the eighteenth century.' (pp245) He takes these examples to demonstrate that many cities were shaped by their commerce:

'In the increasingly commercialized "six prefectures" of the Yangtze delta, centering on Hangchow and Soochow, scores of important towns evolved out of the rural "grass markets" (ts'ao-shih) of the middle ages to link rural producers of cotton and silk with urban consumers and the interregional trade. Distributed in a dendritic hierarchy at key points along the latticework of natural and man-made waterways running through the delta area, these chen by early Ch'ing times lay within a day's round-trip travel of every villager in the region. Prior to the sixteenth century most chen constituted no more than a single line of shops paralleling the riverbank; they were places where peasants exchanged raw produce for daily necessities such as salt and vegetable oil.' (pp245-246)

Yancheng city is one of the important cities located in the Yangtze delta (see Fig 4.5). According to the Yancheng Record (Yancheng local Chronicles compilation committee, 1998), the ancient city originated in the area of Fashion Island since this place played a central role in the city's commercial trade. Due to the convenient transport conditions that the former site of Fashion Island possessed, being surrounded by three rivers, many businessmen would gather there to trade and hold related commercial activities (see Fig 4.6). Gradually, more and more people sought to do business in this part of Yancheng, by using the confluence of the three rivers as the location for conducting trade and business. It was this gathering point that probably formed the foundations of the city itself. Fashion Island is still at the central hub of Yancheng City so the recent commercial buildings on the Island, designed in vernacular styles, were built here to consciously emulate this historical and cultural background.



Fig 4.5: The location of Yancheng

Source: [http://tupian.baike.com/a1\\_51\\_65\\_01300000192401122100654676427\\_jpg.html](http://tupian.baike.com/a1_51_65_01300000192401122100654676427_jpg.html)



Fig 4.6: Former site of Fashion Island

Source: <http://www.hmting.com/>

### 4.3 Hui style architecture in Fashion Island

Architecture is a frozen history, which carries long-term historical meanings (Xiaobiao, 2014). Hui style architecture is an excellent historical and cultural heritage in China. Thus, protecting Hui style architecture, inheriting this architectural style, and inheriting the culture covered by Hui style architecture is a means to inherit and carry forward the excellent culture of the Chinese nation (Wenbin, 2008).

The formation of Hui style architecture experienced a long historical and cultural development. Huizhou was the settlement of the ancient Yue people, located in high mountains and hills and resulting in the name of "Mountain Yue" (Ruichao, 2007). The traditional dwellings are mainly Hui style architecture, which inherit the major external physical characteristics: memorial archway, black tiles and horse head walls (see Fig 4.7). Its decorative characteristics comprise

mainly of “tile carving, wood carving, and stone carving” (Yongchun, 2005) (see Fig 4.8). This reflects a certain continuity of Chinese traditional culture in the process of conceiving, developing and evolving a harmonious relationship with the surrounding natural and social environments.



Fig 4.7: Hui style architecture

Source: <http://www.hxcjh.com/Info/View.Asp?id=227>



Fig 4.8: ‘Tile carving, wood carving, and stone carving’ in Hui style architecture

Source: [http://www.hzwhcn.com/index.php?optionid=892&auto\\_id=474](http://www.hzwhcn.com/index.php?optionid=892&auto_id=474)

Seen in this context, the old settlement of Fashion Island of Yancheng had a deep historical and cultural accumulation that drew upon this background tradition. Before the development of the modern Fashion Island project, there were numerous Hui style buildings. However, due to the rapid development of the city, old style architecture and their matching settings had begun

to stand out against the modern urban constructions that surrounded them. Under the unified planning of the government, Fashion Island proceeded with reconstruction, kept and repaired the Taishan Temple and demolished the old residences. But in order to inherit original Hui style architecture and Hui style culture, the design of Fashion Island mainly took the Hui style, and Hou Street inherited the major external physical characteristic of Hui style architecture of memorial archway, black tiles and horse head walls (see Fig 4.9). Pioneer Square was built as a new type of pseudo-classic architecture of modern style with pseudo-classic black tile and imitated small black brick wall, to which was added Hui style architecture's major ornament characteristic of "tile carving, wood carving, and stone carving" (see Fig 4.10).



Fig 4.9: Hui-style building in Fashion Island  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 4.10: Hui-style architecture's elements in Fashion Island  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang

## 4.4 Aesthetics and Style of Fashion Island

David N. Keightley (1990, pp.38) examines Chinese aesthetics and style in his essay in 'Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization'. He argues that Chinese people possess an "epistemological optimism" to embrace ideas that were more dependent on social custom and general category than on rigorous analysis and precise description. According to this viewpoint:

'If one word had to be used to describe early Chinese aesthetic, and even philosophical, expression, I would suggest "ingrainedness." By ingrainedness I mean the willingness to concentrate on the symbolic meaning of an event, usually moral or emotional and frequently expressive of some normative order, rather than to express, or derive comfort or insight from, its existential qualities for their own sake.' (Ropp, 1990)

The argument about the Chinese people's aesthetics can suggest one way of analyzing commercial buildings that imitate traditional style in China. Indeed, Ropp's description generally catches the characteristics of Chinese people. Unless in academic or other specialized research, most Chinese people pay more attention to the symbolic meaning of things rather than their authenticity. For example, Chinese people like to paste couplets and the Chinese character "fortune" on doors during Chinese New Year celebrations in the Chinese tradition, in order to gain auspicious meanings (see Fig 4.11). Besides, for this research, this Chinese aesthetic can partly explain why the imitation of traditional building styles can be widely accepted in China. Although these buildings are not real historical structures, they can give an image of the historical past and be associated with some auspicious symbolic meaning. Accordingly, they can form successful developments in such locations as Fashion Island because they accord with Chinese aesthetic principles.



Fig 4.11: Chinese couplets and the Chinese character "fortune"

Source: [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_608f39d10102dywo.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_608f39d10102dywo.html)

## 4.5 Ancestor worship of Fashion Island

David N. Keightley (1990, pp.44) argues that ancestral worship is one of most important features of Chinese culture: 'Its pervasive ability to sanctify all other aspects of life and to legitimize and reinforce the lineage—it would seem to be ancestor worship and its social and political corollaries involving hierarchy, ritual, deference, obedience, and reciprocity.' (see Fig 4.12). Along with the development of globalization and a mixture of different cultures, western-worship, Japan and South Korea worship and movie and celebrity worship, even self-worship appears in contemporary China. However, ancestral worship is still the mainstream cultural practice in contemporary China because of the deep sense of 'loyalty' and 'filial piety' that Confucianism has given over thousands of years. (Yuzhi, 2006)



Fig 4.12: The place of ancestor worship—ancestral hall

Source:

<http://you.ctrip.com/sight/hongcun120496/133716.html?allianceid=3052&sid=133134>

Ancestral worship was not only reflected by these aspects as described by Keightley, but also it was reflected in the physical nature of the ancestral house. The ancestral house was regarded as a place in which emotion and worship to ancestors could be maintained and secured for future generations. Hence the Chinese hold a reverence and cherished feeling for their ancestral homes. However, due to the fact that many ancestral houses were built with ancient technical skills and know-how, most of them do not fulfil the needs of modern life. On Fashion Island where ancestral houses still exist, there are usually poor traffic conditions and unpleasant environments arising from encroaching industrialization (see Fig 4.13). So local governments have sought to reform these areas in order to enhance the living quality of the local people and to improve the city image. This often entails complete reconstruction of the traditional dwellings. Although local people feel pity and sadness of this loss they (in the main) accept such reconstruction because their living quality can be greatly improved by the large amount of money given as compensation by local governments. Local governments usually build the new dwellings by imitating the original building style, recognising the deep cultural and historical accumulation, and thereby preserve the former experience as best they can by raising a collective memory to their ancestors and ancestral houses.

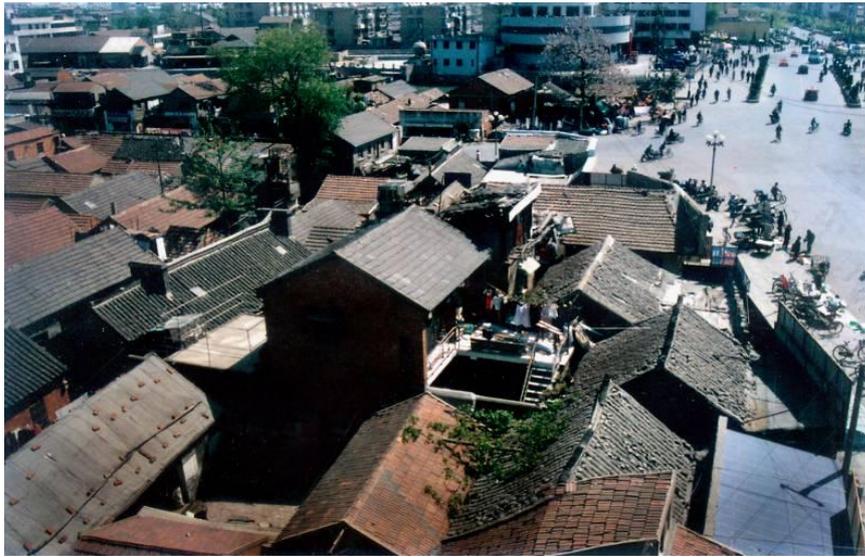


Fig 4.13: Ancestral houses in former sites of Fashion Island

Source: Photo by Caoqun

## 5. Questionnaire Analysis

### 5.1 Basic Information

Date of survey: October 2014

Objective of survey: Through asking residents previously living in the place where the Fashion Island City Complex is located, and people visiting the Complex, about the effects of renovation work on the commercial buildings in the area, we can assess their level of acceptance of commercial buildings that imitate traditional building and get an in-depth understanding of the minds of residents and visitors, whether such buildings are valuable, and also under what conditions could such buildings realize their value.

Target people of survey: Original inhabitants of, and current visitors to, the Fashion Island area.

Selected for the survey are 100 people, of which 50 are previous inhabitants of the area, and 50 are local visitors to the area. Altogether 100 questionnaires were given out, and 89 recovered. All the recovered responses were valid. Of the 89 valid questionnaires, 50 were from original local inhabitants, and 39 local visitors.

For the 89 valid questionnaires, male respondents accounted for 32, and female 57. The classification by age distribution is as follows: respondents of age below 20 are one in number; those in the age bracket of 20 to 30 are 21 in number; those in the bracket of 30 to 40 are 21 in number; and those aged over 40 are 33 in number. Of the respondents of valid questionnaires, 38 hold a bachelor's degree or above, 12 have a degree of senior high or above, but below bachelor level, 29 have a degree of junior high or above, but below senior high and 10 have an educational degree below junior high. We find that among the respondents of this survey's

questionnaire, the original inhabitants are mostly elderly and thus have generally received little formal education, since the Fashion Island area belongs to the old district of Yancheng City. Visitors, however, have generally received greater formal education. Therefore, in the questionnaire appearing at the end of this paper, the narratives of visitors have a greater reference value, compared to those of inhabitants in this respect. On the other hand, the inhabitants, usually having experienced more years, have a better understanding of the culture and history of the area, which assumes a greater weight in data concerning culture values.

Among the 39 tourists, 12 had come to Fashion Island for the first time, and 27 visited rather often. Only 8 of them were coming merely to visit, and the remainder came for shopping at mall, spending time and dining at restaurants. This illustrates that, for the majority of tourists, the features of the imitation traditional buildings is not a large factor in attracting them to come, but rather it is the modern commercial content within the buildings that is the principal factor in attracting the better part of them.

While being interviewed, most of the 50 former local inhabitants were quite talkative, fully reflecting their enduring affection for the houses they lived in for decades previously. Of the 50 former inhabitants, 42 have settled in the new rooms which were arranged by the local government to locate in their former residence site, while 8 have moved to other places, such as homes of their offspring or another estate of their own. Of the 50 inhabitants, 33 have revisited the area more than once because of their yearning for the original homes; 17 came purely for shopping and dining. Based on this data, we can say that Fashion Island has a greater cultural value than its commercial value in the eyes of the former residents at the area.

## **5.2 Cultural Value**

During the interview of the 50 former local residents, 41 said that they could feel the air of history, while 9 did not agree with this. Regarding which specific dynasty they refer to, none of them could be specific, and only 6 residents believed that the buildings resemble those of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Among the 39 visitors, only 3 experienced such a historical

atmosphere, and they also identified the buildings as modelled on the buildings in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In the survey, it was found that all respondents said they would return for another trip, but the reasons they suggested on the questionnaire were different. Only 3 believed that it is the imitation traditional building style that appeals to them. 52 said it is the convenience of the site and the good shopping environment and 34 argued that it is the distinctive restaurants.

Among the 89 respondents, 60 consider themselves to have either an erroneous or a scanty knowledge of the culture and history in Yancheng; 29 admitted that they fall short on such knowledge. Among those who have such a sense, though in varying degrees, the largest part of them knew the culture of living along rivers and that of staggered waterways; those acknowledging the Red Culture of the New Fourth Army and the Buddhist Culture of Taishan Temple ranked second in number, and the remaining respondents know something about of the Hui-style buildings, the abundance of sea salt and the wetland ecological culture. As can be seen from the data, in the minds of Yancheng people, Yancheng first and foremost is a city closely connected with rivers, and then the Red Culture and Buddhist Culture also feature strongly in their thoughts. As for the building styles, they are nearly impossible to distinguish for people without a background knowledge of architectural education, constituting the majority of all the respondents.

Among the 60 respondents who have some knowledge of Yancheng culture, 22 thought that one or more cultural features are embodied by the building design on Fashion Island, and 17 of them at the same time expressed their affinity for those reflections of cultural features. The other 38 respondents, however, objected to this opinion, arguing that they have no such feeling that the local culture has been embodied by the buildings at Fashion Island in any way.

At the end of the questionnaire survey on the historical and cultural value embodiment of Fashion Island, respecting the cultural values of Fashion Island's business brand, we asked which brand is their favourite within Fashion Island, whether they are cognizant of its cultural

implications, and whether it has a common thread with cultural implications of Fashion Island. Altogether 61 respondents gave complete answers to the questions, and of them, 39 believed there exists a common thread, and listed tea houses and restaurants with local characteristics and time-honoured merchandise brands.

From the above data for Fashion Island, we can see that the majority of respondents believe that the traditional buildings style can enhance the cultural value of Fashion Island. While most of the people are from the original inhabitants, the majority of the tourists place more emphasis on its commercial value, and less to the cultural values of the commercial buildings that imitate the traditional style in Fashion Island.

### **5.3 Commercial Value**

During the interview of the 89 respondents, 82 of them thought that the buildings with a traditional building style at Fashion Island are attractive; most respondents believed that its attraction derives from its environment, location and product and food varieties, with the building appearance and interior decoration as the second reason for the appeal. All the respondents were willing to enter it on a tour during which, 86 respondents felt it was quite attractive, which stemmed from the appearance of classical-looking buildings, suitable shopping environment, superior geographical location, beautiful surrounding environment, and user-friendly public facilities.

During the interview, it was found that 72 considered that Fashion Island is distinct from ordinary shopping centres. And most of them believe such a difference results from its unique building appearance and a greater choice of goods.

In addition, during the survey of this questionnaire, we also interviewed the 50 former inhabitants, of which 41 gave assent to the changing of Fashion Island into what it is now. The reasons they give include: the area's sanitation had aged badly, houses and buildings were dilapidated for years without renovation, the living standards remained low, and most people

craved a new house or apartment. Only 9 thought they liked the old place and original homes more, and the average age for these 9 people is 61. All the former residents interviewed were in favour of changing Fashion Island's buildings to traditional ones, because some building features, similar to the old buildings, can be reminiscent of their imagined past; more specifically, such features include building appearance, interior decoration, environment, location, public facilities and types of goods, for example.

From the data above, we can conclude that in the survey into the reflected value of buildings imitating traditional style at Fashion Island, such a value is embodied at two levels: the commercial value and cultural value. Among the interviewed people, the former inhabitants are more inclined to affirm the cultural value introduced by the traditional architectural forms into Fashion Island, whereas visitors are more sensitive to the increase in cultural value brought about by product variety and brand culture. With regard to the commercial value, those interviewed generally believe that the architectural type, when combined with the local culture and history, is more likely to increase Fashion Island's appeal and traffic, promoting merchandise sales and enhancing business value.

## 5.4. Analysis table

The questionnaire answer and questionnaire analysis were listed. Please see table 2.

Questionnaire Question	Questionnaire Answer	Analysis of Answer
How many times have you come to Fashion Island?	Once More than once	The majority of respondents come here for the first time.
What is the status quo of former inhabitants?	Move to back-moving houses arranged by government; move to other places	The current living environment of most of the former inhabitants is comparable to their original living environment.
To what degree do former inhabitants cherish their memory here?	Come here cherishing memory; Come here purely shopping and consuming.	Former inhabitants have a deep affection for the Fashion Island area.
Can former inhabitants feel the historical atmosphere?	Yes/No	The antique design of Fashion Island can make some of former inhabitants feel the original appearance .

What are the reasons for their coming here again?	The features of buildings imitating traditional building style; a convenient shopping site and perfect shopping environment; distinctive restaurants	The outward appearance of buildings are not the main contributing factor to people's visits to Fashion Island.
How well do you know the history and culture of Yancheng?	Culture of living by riverside and staggered waterways; Red culture of the New Fourth Army; Buddhist culture of Taishan Temple; Hui-style buildings; Abundance of sea salt and wetland ecological culture	Most respondents have some knowledge of Yancheng's culture and history, which means that the building type of the imitation of traditional building style can be deciphered and accepted by more people.
Do you feel the cultural features embodied by the traditional building style at Fashion Island?	Yes/No	
How well do you know the brand culture of Fashion Island's buildings that imitate traditional building style?	Having a common thread with the building types of traditional building style there; Not having such a common thread	The building type in imitation of traditional building style is conducive to the sales of the brand, and a commercial brand with traditional culture implications will also increase those within such buildings.
What is the main appeal of Fashion Island?	The classical building appearance; The pleasant shopping environment; The advantageous geographical location; The beautiful surroundings; The human-oriented public facilities.	The antique look that some buildings take on is also an attraction for many visitors.
As for the relationship between the buildings that imitate traditional building style and other modern commercial buildings at Fashion Island, is there any difference between them?	Yes/No	The appearance of buildings that imitate traditional building style gives common modern buildings a more special and landmark touch.
Do former inhabitants give assent to the renovation of	Yes/No	The renovation of Fashion Island is a project that is

Fashion Island?		consistent with the intentions of majority of people.
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Table 2: questionnaire answer and questionnaire analysis

## 6. Conclusion

Commercial buildings that imitate traditional style are a kind of exploration in which architects pursue and develop their architectural culture in a new era. Among those that have already been built, there are some with outdated scales, some still remain that directly imitate the form of buildings from the past, and there are also some with modern lifestyle contents that conflict with traditional architectural forms, but it is known that the development is not a straight line type, but occurs with repetition. Thus, we should understand the errors that occur in the process of exploration and innovation.

For commercial buildings that imitate traditional style, architects are the subject of much controversy. Nevertheless, these buildings have been attracting the attention of real estate agents, for the reason that developers see the commercial value brought about by their antique forms. Not only that, they are also a kind of exploration for architects pursuing and developing Chinese architectural culture, and so they exhibit both commercial and cultural value.

Through field research and a questionnaire survey of buildings on Fashion Island, the author summarizes the design of the commercial buildings that imitate traditional style and how they can better enhance their cultural and commercial value.

### 6.1 Cultural Value

#### **Historical Value Reflection - Retention and Renovation of Buildings that imitate traditional style**

Most of these commercial buildings are built in the historic traditional commercial district, and the main reason for this is that the area itself usually has a long cultural history , such as the Nanjing Confucius Temple. The building groups are made up of the Confucius Temple,

Academy and Jiangnan Examination House, which were built in the Song Dynasty and located in the roadside of Examination House Street in the North Shore of Qinhuai River. On the Qinhuai River in front of the Confucius Temple is Panchi, and the stone brick wall on the south bank is the Screen Wall with a length of 110 meters, the highest screen wall in the country. From the first day to the eighth day of the lunar month every year, the lively Confucius Temple Lantern Festival is held here. There, culture and merchants gather, which is known as “the place of beauty in the south of Yangzi”. Here is the most famous commercial pedestrian street in Nanjing, as well as the place with the greatest old Nanjing style.



Fig 6.1: Nanjing Confucius Temple

Source: [http://www.cnr.cn/wcm/zhuanti/njmhj/tpbd/t20050224\\_166250.html](http://www.cnr.cn/wcm/zhuanti/njmhj/tpbd/t20050224_166250.html)

Taken Suzhou Guanqian Street as another example, this magnificent Taoist building with a history of 1300 years, contains the main shrine of the Temple of Three Immortals with a gabled skirt-roof of nine bays, there are more than a dozen palaces, and the Long Street before the mountain door on the south is Temple Front Street. Shop signs are everywhere, and hundreds of traders, acrobats and smells are bloated the old landscape of Xuanmiao Temple. East from the Vinegar Workshop Bridge, west to Chayuan Field, along with the small park nearby, are hundreds of various shops and night market stalls.

Historic culture exists as a commercial and tourist focus, and has a significant function. How can we make tourists feel that this is a historic region? It is the retention and renovation of the buildings that imitate traditional styles in this region.



Fig 6.2: Suzhou Xuanmiao Temple

Source: [http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0316/21/5701732\\_101780929.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0316/21/5701732_101780929.shtml)

In the case study, the Taishan Temple on Fashion Island exists, as the oldest temple in Yan City, on one side of commercial centre where buildings imitate traditional style together with the old site of the New Fourth Army reconstruction. Over time, these ancient buildings with a strong historic culture have decayed, and the architectural functions cannot meet the needs of people for modern shopping and tourism. In order to fully integrate the buildings into the entire commercial street that imitates traditional street style on Fashion Island, we must transform its use/function, so that it can meet the needs of people participating in the public places. In the case study of this paper, we find that Taishan Temple is the hardest to transform, as well as being the slowest part of the project progress. The difficulty is that it not only meets the needs of modern people for leisure, but that it also retains the maximum historical and cultural relics. The reason for the delay is not only renovation and improvement of Taishan Temple, but also the construction of architectural street in imitation of the traditional street style similar to its own style, in order to reach a certain scale, increase popularity and form a landmark (Fig 6.3).



Fig 6.3: Taishan Temple in Yan City and the street beside Taishan Temple

Source: photo by Zhuo Wang

Meanwhile, the survey data shows that the majority of local respondents in Yan City understand the original history and culture on Fashion Island to a greater or lesser extent, and because of these historical and cultural legacies, they become more interested in the commercial centre, which increases the attractiveness and sense of antiquity of the commercial centre on Fashion Island.

Therefore, the historical value of commercial buildings that imitate traditional building style is often reflected in the renovation and improvements of the original ancient buildings. These improvements allow ancient buildings which do not meet the conditions of today's visitors to do so.

As the management office director of Taishan Temple says, all the columns in Taishan Temple are finished with Black Country paint, most of wooden rafters on the beams are also updated, and the small tiles on roofs are also changed considerably. In addition, the roofs are waterproofed, the house is moth- and insect-proofed, and is equipped with toilets, etc. However, due to the requirements of the repairs to match the old, "Most of the work is invisible."

Why should we renovate the old? It is because an antique commercial building centre must have its history and culture as a support. Fashion Island, even if it is a modern shopping centre, has this old building, the Taishan Temple, still in place, which constantly tells people the

historical and cultural story of this region.



修缮前的泰山庙



修缮后的泰山庙

Fig 6.4: Former Taishan Temple before repair

Fig6.5: Taishan Temple after repair

Source:

<http://www.jscin.gov.cn/web/zhuanti/cszszshowinfo.aspx?infoid=5f3d419f-1432-4672-85ea-d48beecebeca&categoryNum=106006&siteid=1>

### Local Cultural Value Reflection - Retention of Local School Building Type Hui Style Architecture

Commercial buildings that imitate traditional building style not only have a commercial function, but also function as cultural transmission. Therefore, such buildings in an area are usually constructed by following the form of the ancient buildings in the area. For example, most of the buildings in the Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions use small bricks, and the colour is white and blue (See Fig 6.6 and 6.7), while the colour of analogous buildings in most northern regions is brighter and use colour painting and glazed tiles as decoration (See Fig 6.8).



Fig 6.6: Yangzhou Golden Eagle Shopping Mall

Source: <http://www.chinadiyi.cn/Simplified/ProductView.asp?ID=76&SortID=139>

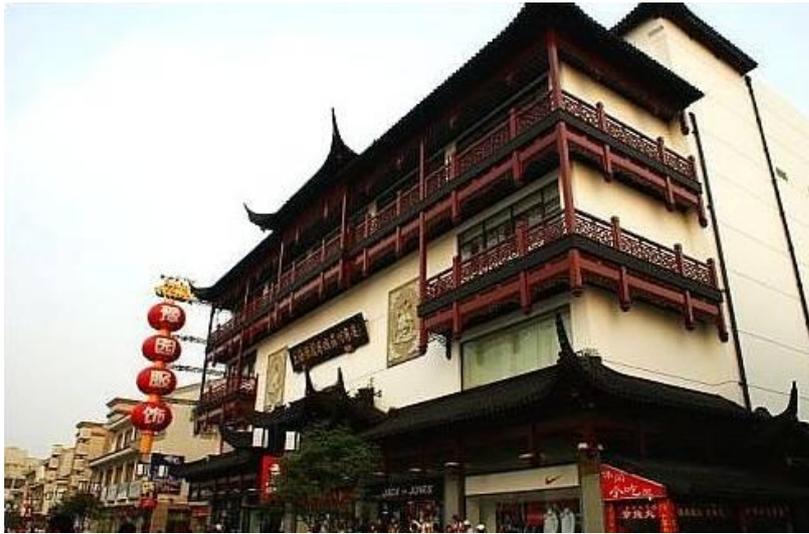


Fig 6.7: Suzhou Yu Garden Shopping Mall

Source: [http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0316/21/5701732\\_101780929.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0316/21/5701732_101780929.shtml)



Fig 6.8: Beijing Qianjude

Source:

<http://50496.com/image/aHR0cDovL3BpYzI0Lm5pcGljLmNvbS8yMDEyMTAxMy82NjQ3Nzc2XzE0MDcwODM4NjExN18yLmpwZw==.html>

In the case study in this paper, the form of ancient buildings in Yan City belongs to Hui style architecture system. Therefore, the later commercial buildings on Fashion Island are also modelled on Hui style architecture, The Wharf Wall was originally the important characteristic of Han Gan style and Hui style architecture (Huizhou architecture) of the Han traditional residential architecture school (See Fig6.9). In particular, it refers to the wall higher than the two gable roofs, that is, the wall crown of the gable, because its shape resembles a horse head, it is called “the Wharf Wall”. The reason for the wall taking this form is mainly because among the clans and villages, the density of residential buildings is high, so that the needs of

firefighting are more prominent. When fire breaks out, the fire will easily spread along the house. The Wharf Wall constructed higher than the top of the two gables of residential houses to meet the needs of firefighting and wind-proofing of dense villages and houses. Over time, it has formed a special style. In the backstreet part of Fashion Island, there are many Wharf Wall designs. The firefighting function of this design is no longer needed, but is still used as a symbol of Hui style architecture.



Fig 6.9: The Wharf Wall

Source: Photo by Zhuo Wang and <http://gj.yuanlin.com/Html/Detail/2011-10/12731.html>

Among Hui style architectures, the memorial archway is ancient architecture device co-existing with houses and ancestral temples, and they constitute a unique human landscape of Hui style, which is known as one of the “three best features of ancient architecture” of Hui style. The Hui style memorial archway is a remnant of Neo-Confucianism, which is used for expressing merit and marking glory. The memorial archway in Water Street imitates the form of a Hui style memorial archway, and its true meaning is to commemorate Fashion Island and highlight the excellent history and rich culture here (see Fig 6.10).



Fig 6.10: Memorial Archway

Source: photo by Zhuo Wang and Source: <http://www.hxcjh.com/Info/View.Asp?id=227>

The decoration of the main commercial buildings on Fashion Island uses the technique of combining stone carvings with wood carvings, which is interlinked with the decorative technique of Hui style architecture. Hui style three carvings refer to the abbreviation of three kinds of Han Chinese traditional carving techniques of Hui style: brick carvings, stone carvings and wood carvings. Hui style three carvings take She, Yi and Wuyuan Counties as the most typical, and had survived. They are mainly used for decorating houses, ancestral temples, temples, gardens and other buildings, as well as handicrafts, such as antique furniture, screens, containers, etc. Massive decoration with Hui style features should be carried out on the main buildings on Fashion Island, so that people can feel the antique source of this building at a glance and add intimacy. (see Fig 6.11)



Fig 6.11: Wood Carvings and Stone Carvings

Source: photo by Zhuo Wang and

[http://www.hzwhcn.com/index.php?optionid=892&auto\\_id=474](http://www.hzwhcn.com/index.php?optionid=892&auto_id=474)

It can be seen from the questionnaire that most respondents do not understand the function of architecture. However, as a city landmark building, the school building is the window that shows urban culture and development. Therefore, the buildings that imitate traditional building style with local characteristics can not only become a local landmark building, which attract more foreign tourists, but are also more able to become a good carrier of local cultural propaganda.

### **Nostalgic Feeling Value Reflection – Site Selection in situ, and Imitation of Original Appearance**

Different people have different feelings when looking at the same commercial buildings that imitate traditional style. Taking the Fashion Island example, the original residents can see that the buildings on Fashion Island still retain the form of old houses (See Fig 6.12 and 6.13). For example, the buildings use similar materials and the position of the river is fixed, etc. However, most of tourists just think it is an antique building commercial centre. Therefore, integrating the original architectural features from this region into the commercial buildings is very attractive for the original inhabitants, and it is very easy to get recognition from the indigenous inhabitants or the tourists allowing an understanding of the region, which is fully in line with people's nostalgic feelings, as well as the cultural heritage of the area.



Fig 6.12: The river before and after Fashion Island was built

Source:

<http://www.jscin.gov.cn/web/zhuanti/cszzshowinfo.aspx?infoId=5f3d419f-1432-4672-85ea-d48beecebeca&categoryNum=106006&siteid=1>



Fig 6.13: The houses before and after Fashion Island was built

Source:

<http://www.jscin.gov.cn/web/zhuanti/cszzshowinfo.aspx?infoId=5f3d419f-1432-4672-85ea-d48beecebeca&categoryNum=106006&siteid=1>

## 6.2 Commercial Value

### Comprehensive Value Reflection – Integration of Travel, Recreation and Shopping

Today's modern commercial buildings are mostly defined by entertainment, community centralization, gigantism and progress. Their development is fast and colourful, but their popularity and depth of entertainment are always confined to the establishment of indoor amusement and leisure projects. For such monotonous modern commercial buildings, their entertainment and culture values are not strong.

For example, internal recreational facilities in many commercial buildings are quite new and different, but their external surfaces and interior decorations are strikingly similar (see Fig 6.14). However, as a landmark building of architectural history and culture in Yan City, Fashion Island is very different from the large glass curtain wall of modern architecture in appearance. It can be seen from the questionnaire data that many respondents are attracted by the antique appearance of the buildings on the Fashion Island and so visit them. This also proves that the pseudo-classic architectural forms can attract more tourists and enrich the original function of commercial buildings, which integrate travel, recreation and shopping into one.

Therefore, the commercial buildings that imitate traditional building style add elements of

ancient buildings to ordinary commercial buildings, so that people are able to understand the historical and cultural background in different regions and periods when they visit for shopping or leisure. It should be used as a local traditional culture communication centre or local cultural tourist attraction.



Fig 6.14: Chengdu Ito-Yokado shopping mall and Yan City Golden Eagle shopping mall  
Source: <http://bj.house.sina.com.cn/overseas/japan/2009-04-13/1510308005.html> and <http://www.cnhywy.com/6/100654323.htm>

## **Brand Cultural Value Reflection – The Connection between Commodity and Buildings**

Pseudo-classic architectural forms of commercial buildings not only become a local traditional cultural communication centre or local cultural tourist attraction, but also drive sales of certain brands. It can be seen from the questionnaire that there are two types of brands, popular with the respondents, in the commercial buildings on Fashion Island. One is the fashion brand, and brands of this type usually appear in some commercial centre due to their popularity, and publicity and popularity is used to take precedence in commercial centres. This leads to the popularity of shopping malls, via brands such as the global large supermarket chain, RT-Mart, and the global fast food chain, KFC. These have basically become commercial brands which any shopping centre must have.

The other is the traditional commercial brand. Traditional commercial brands of this type usually embody one or more element of traditional Chinese culture, such as traditional Chinese medicine (see Fig 6.15), Chinese tea culture (Old Zhou Teahouse see Fig 6.16), local traditional food culture in Yan City (Youmingtang) (see Fig 6.17 and 6.18), etc. These brands

that integrate traditional culture with commerce are usually fond of positioning themselves in the commercial centres with pseudo-classic forms, which also happens on Fashion Island. The reason why they appear in the pseudo-classic commercial centre is that it can display the brand culture of their products and rich cultural roots.



Fig 6.15: Traditional Chinese Medicine Pavilion  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 6.16: Old Zhou Teahouse  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 6.17: Architectural Appearance of Youmingtang  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang



Fig 6.18: Internal Decoration of Youmingtang  
Source: photo by Zhuo Wang

Therefore, the pseudo-classic form of commercial buildings can also drive brand development and sales, and places the goods and buildings with the same Chinese traditional culture in an environment that renders mutual and enhanced cultural connotations of each other, which not only makes buildings that imitate traditional building style more persuasive, but also creates a quaint environment for selling traditional commercial brands.

# Appendix

## Visitors' questionnaire

### 1. Basic information

- 1) Gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
- 2) How old are you?
  - a. Under 20
  - b. 20-30
  - c. 30-40
  - d. 40-50
  - e. above 50 years old
- 3) What is your education background?
  - a. Bachelor's degree or above
  - b. Senior high school degree
  - c. Junior high school degree
  - d. Below junior high school
- 4) Is this your first visit to Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5) What is the purpose of your visit to Fashion Island?
  - a. Visit only
  - b. shopping at mall, spending time and dining

### 2. Cultural value

- 1) Do you feel the historical atmosphere at Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. b. No
- 2) Which dynasty?
  - a. Tang Dynasty
  - b. Song Dynasty
  - c. Yuan Dynasty
  - d. Ming and Qing Dynasty
- 3) Does this encourage you to visit Fashion Island again?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No Why\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Do you understand the local culture of the area of Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5) How much do you understand about the following culture?

- a. Hui-style building
  - b. Living along rivers
  - c. Abundance of sea salt
  - d. Staggered waterways
  - e. Red Culture of the New Fourth Army
  - f. The Buddhist Culture of Taishan Temple
  - g. The wetland ecological culture
- 6) Do you perceive these cultures from Fashion Island?
- a. Yes, of course
  - b. Yes, partly
  - c. No
- 7) Which brand do you like best in Fashion Island?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Do you know the cultural content of the brand?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 9) Do you think is there some common thread between brand culture and the design of Fashion Island?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 10) What common thread do you think exists between brand culture and the design of Fashion Island?
- \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. Commercial value:**

- 1) Do you think that Fashion Island has an attraction?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 2) Which aspect attracts you?
- a. Building appearance
  - b. Interior decoration
  - c. Environment and location
  - d. Public facilities
- 3) Do you think there are differences between Fashion Island and normal commercial streets?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 4) Which differences?
- a. Building appearance
  - b. Interior decoration
  - c. Environment and location
  - d. Public facilities
  - e. Type of merchandise
  - f. Others

# The questionnaire to Local residents of the former Fashion Island

## Island

### 1、 Basic information

- 1) Gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
- 2) How old are you?
  - a. Under 20
  - b. 20-30
  - c. 30-40
  - d. 40-50
  - e. above 50 years old
- 3) What is your education background?
  - a. Bachelor's degree or above
  - b. Senior high school degree
  - c. Junior high school degree
  - d. Below junior high school
- 4) Is this your first visit to Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5) Where do you live since Fashion Island was built?
  - a. Settled in the back-moving rooms arranged by the local government
  - b. Moved to other places, such as homes of offspring or another estate of your own.
- 6) Did you visit Fashion Island because of your yearning for the original homes
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

### 2. Cultural value

- 1) Do you feel the historical atmosphere at Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 2) Which dynasty?
  - a. Tang Dynasty
  - b. Song Dynasty
  - c. Yuan Dynasty
  - d. Ming and Qing Dynasty
- 3) Does this encourage you to visit Fashion Island again?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No Why\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Do you understand the local culture of the area of Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

- 5) How much do you understand about the following culture?
  - a. Hui-style building
  - b. Living along rivers
  - c. Abundance of sea salt
  - d. Staggered waterways
  - e. Red Culture of the New Fourth Army
  - f. The Buddhist Culture of Taishan Temple
  - g. The wetland ecological culture
- 6) Do you perceive these cultures from Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes, of course
  - b. Yes, partly
  - c. No
- 7) Which brand do you like best in Fashion Island?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Do you know the cultural content of the brand?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 9) Do you think is there some common thread between brand culture and the design of Fashion Island?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 10) What common thread do you think exists between brand culture and the design of Fashion Island?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Commercial value:

- 1) Do you think that Fashion Island has an attraction?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 2) Which aspect attracts you?
  - a. Building appearance
  - b. Interior decoration
  - c. Environment and location
  - d. Public facilities
- 3) Do you think there are differences between Fashion Island and normal commercial streets?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 4) Which differences?
  - a. Building appearance
  - b. Interior decoration
  - c. Environment and location
  - d. Public facilities
  - e. Type of merchandise
  - f. Others

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