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**Chinese consumer perception and  
purchase behavior: a case study in the  
confectionery industry in China**

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性相近，習相遠

*Human nature is similar at birth,  
habits make us seem remote.*

*- from the San Zi Jing*

## 引言

自1949年以来，中国发起了各种重大的政策变革，以发展经济，提高公民的生活水平。中国不仅成为世界上出口激增的主要贸易国之一，而且为了它的货物品种齐全和种类繁多的消费者还成为世界上受到各方投资的持续追捧。虽然大多数研究调查都集中在影响中国投资和商业决策的经济和行业条件上，但有很少研究关注中国消费行为。特别是，有很少研究探索中国消费者对外国产品的态度。

这篇论文通过调查中国消费者如何评估外国制造产品来进一步了解中国消费者的市场。具体来说，它试图找出属于意大利传统和食品行业的特定产品“阿玛雷纳法布芮” Amarena Fabbri 可能在中国消费者心目中产生什么样的图像，以及这些图像如何影响他们的产品评估和购买决策。这种研究可以非常有助于深入了解中国的消费者行为。

为了更深入研究，本文分为三部分：

第一部分旨在分析有关客户购买外国产品的旅程的现有文献。

首先，根据本主题对文化的正确定义进行研究，并分析文化对消费者行为的影响。我们提出了研究文化维度最重要的模型，例如：Hofstede 的五维和 Schwartz 人类价值理论。

其次，在此基础上，我们报告了最受欢迎的采用模型，Rogers 描述的创新决策过程以及他著名的采用者类别分类。此外，我们探讨了通过 Hoeffler 研究和 Carter 关于影响消费者认知和购买国外产品的关键决定因素的概念模型消费者接近新产品的基本步骤。

在第一部分最后的段落，我们想着重于在中国的情况中如何消费者的动机与文化密切相关，并如果文化对购买决策过程中有影响，以及哪一些中国特定文化和调节效应对行为仍有影响。

第二部分给出了市场研究的理论背景及其介绍它组成的部分。其次，我们加上了一个段落深入跨文化市场研究中等效论的重要性，其中包括概念的、功能的、翻译的、测量的、样本和数据收集等价交换的方面。此外，我们讨论了信息的重要性，消费者与专业市场研究的差异及其定性和定量数据之间的差异，并特别关注市场研究的工具和目标。

第一段解释了采用市场调查的原因，以及应该执行的原因和时间。市场研究在决策阶段中会给公司带来巨大的帮助，因为它调查关于新方法和策略的背景。进一步讨论市场研

究背景的理解，应该考虑到正式市场研究的主题是非常年轻的。在20世纪50年代和60年代，商业竞争愈演愈烈，市场研究人员在社会研究人员的经验基础上，通过问卷调查获取态度的数据。市场研究访谈被接受为收集信息的主要工具，调查公司蓬勃发展。这是第一次管理人员搜索的目标就是系统地收集数据，让他们了解人们怎么使用他们购买的产品还是在购买的过程中他们考虑什么特点。在20世纪70年代和80年代，态度研究转向了不同的水平，并开展了调查以跟踪客户满意度。在最近几年中，计算能力变得越来越便宜和强大，重点已经转向“挤压”数据以获得更多见解，使用诸如要素和聚类分析之类的建模进行细分，对定价策略进行联合分析和填图系统以找到零售或分销的最佳位置。简而言之，市场研究的主要目的是降低商业风险。这就是我们希望取得在上海进行消费市场研究的目标，本部分将对此进行进一步讨论。

最后来重点介绍定性研究的一种方法，就是焦点小组方法，因为这是我们在2019年4月至5月期间在上海进行法布芮研究选择的方法。事实上，焦点小组允许我们有机会跟中国消费者畅谈，了解他们的印象。其实，中国消费市场在不久的将来将体验阿玛雷纳法布芮的推出。

我们决定了组织三次焦点小组跟三个不同的目标人群：千禧一代、母亲和专业人士。他们被选为参加者的原因就是我们认为他们会最受阿玛雷纳法布芮吸引；由于千禧一代，他们是市场的领导者，总是好奇地在市场上购买新产品；母亲的目标可能对自己和自己的孩子的甜食而不是男性消费更感兴趣，并且专业人员（职业女性和职业男性）应该有可支配的收入来发现最新的产品。这个选择旨在获得围绕此类产品的完整反应。

第三部分展示我们通过三个焦点小组创造的经历并收集的结果。具体的说，讨论了市场研究项目并解释了怎么完成一个现场工作之后，第三部分旨在介绍数据的分析。

在定性研究中，样本小于定量调查，但数据更加微妙和复杂。这是因为问题主要是开放式的，获得完整答案需要更深层次的解释。事实上，采访或讨论是不可预测的，不同受访者之间的序列甚至主题范围各不相同。由于这些原因，报告过程可能非常耗时，需要使用特定的方法处理数据分析。

定性研究的一个常见做法是记录访谈和焦点小组以捕获所有信息并保证准确性。然后，有必要将它们转录成打字文本，并用收集的材料进行分析。此外，在记录采访时，另一种有效的做法是记录从讨论中脱颖而出的关键概念，这意味着已经注解好了一个要点的列表之后会在记录中搜索了。

最后一步，定性研究人员仍然必须通过彻底阅读成绩单并在突出点上做笔记，将自己沉浸在脚本中。这就是因为在这个研究领域进行实地考察的研究人员也应该深入参与数据的分析。同一的研究人员应该解释和报告数据，否则会丢失得很多。

其次，本部分介绍与每个焦点小组有关的研究结果。由于所使用问题的类型不同，我们分开出总计表的回答和频数表的回答。在总计表部分，将显示一些图像，这些图像是从受访者发送的，以突出阿玛雷纳包装和风味与一些中国美食传统的产品往往有惊人的相似之处。

然后有一段落特定讨论价值的维度，其中表达了 Schwartz 人类价值理论的原始含义和本论文研究的解释。根据我们的见解，十大人类价值观中有五个最能影响中国消费者的行为，因此需要单独讨论。

例如，安全性是糖食产品消费中最广提到的价值，在这项研究中参与者高度重视食品质量的方面，尤其是产品的成分和保质期。根据我们收集的答案，食品的特点可最有效地确保中国消费者关于食品安全包括：天然成分和较少的添加剂，新鲜和天然，无味，保质期短，较近生产日期，知名品牌和进口的。为了确保消费者对阿玛雷纳糖食的安全性，我们相信“零添加”可能是加包装上的适当交流方式，并可以在中国市场取得巨大成功。

关于糖食消费第二有影响力的价值是享乐主义。这意味着非常重视味觉和视觉。其实，中国消费者对口味的要求有越来越多鉴赏力的。即饮食不只是填饱空腹，而是整个饮食习惯中获得的满足感和愉悦感。

第三价值，自我指导，在中国市场正在变得越来越重要，从而对内在中国社会的集体主义本质产生了反对。特别是千禧一代定说会以最新产品为导向，并享受更多定制产品。关于食品消费的决定，他们希望物有所值。

第四价值，成就感，与自我导向有关，自我的发现有助于激发生活，工作，运动，个人事务中的成就感，并导致消费习惯的反映。中国消费者的购买决策过程以通过购买某些产品来展示个人成就为指导，从而显示出成功。

第五价值，普遍主义，普遍主义被解释为中国文化的一种内在价值，它使个人与人类其余部分完美地融为一体，并突出了与自然的结合。在最近几年中，这种价值在消费习惯中也越来越明显。消费者希望产品在制造过程中是安全的，并保留新鲜和天然的成分。因此，避免在食品加工阶段使用那些对动物使用杀虫剂或抗生素的食品制造商来增加产量，从而能够以较低的价格吸引消费者。

最后本部分的结论描述了每个目标群体最终的特征，并定义了哪些策略可能把它们转换最终消费者。

这篇论文的总体结论展示我们关于营销意义的假设，就是说我们认为如果一家公司的要求是在中国市场推出甜食产品就应该特别考虑这些假设。

根据推出甜食产品在中国消费市场的情况深入分析，我们得出了以下结论：

首先，我们认为进行完整的市场研究是非常重要的为了了解市场的环境，以及了解消费者的看法和影响其购买决定的基本因素。其次，在中国甜食产品销售量慢慢地提高，因为中国消费者的购买力增加，因为他们开始更看重自己和子女的健康和因为他们逐渐习惯西方口味。但是需要进行一些调整才能使产品适应中国的需求。

比如说，在中国品牌形象是影响消费者购买行为的主要决定因素之一，公司需要考虑品牌和徽标设计的分布和视觉表现，以便在中国市场取得更好的结果。关于原产国的明确规定是一个能够向消费者保证食品安全的特定方面，像“意大利老字号”这样的信息可以通过品牌和公司来增强安全感。其次，考虑到分销渠道，阿玛雷纳罐子的美观已经具有必要的特征来在进口商品商店吸引中国消费者的注意，而且我们建议不要完全依靠电子商务平台。在推广策略这个方面，我们认为，广告应强调中国消费者认为重要的价值观，还是广告中还可能包含产品的原产国和生产设施的图像，以使整个生产过程透明。食品公司应更多考虑影响大多数中国消费者注意的产品特性，例如在其沟通渠道中讨论产品成分或特性。

关于价格战略这个方面，自我指导价值的高分还会影响产品价格感知，影响食品消费决策，价格不再是中国优质食品的巨大障碍。因此，这意味着中国进口商品的定价策略可能会比当地食品价格高出10-30%，并且仍被当地消费者接受。

总而言之，食品公司应该了解中国人的需求，为了推出一种产品会吸引中国消费者的购买欲。

## *Abstract*

Several reasons lead to consider the Chinese market as a viable market only until quite recently. After remaining virtually closed to the rest of the world for 30 years since 1949, China initiated various significant policy changes in an effort to develop its economy and increase the standard of living of its citizens.

China has not only become one of the world's major trading nations with surging exports, it has also become one of the most sought after emerging markets in the world for a variety of consumer as well as industrial products. While most of the efforts have concentrated on the economic and industry conditions that influence investment and business decisions in China, little research has focused on the Chinese consumers. In particular, few research efforts have explored Chinese consumers' attitudes towards foreign-sourced products.

This thesis partly addresses this deficiency by investigating how Chinese consumers evaluate foreign made products. Specifically, it tries to find out what images a particular foreign product, Amarena Fabbri, that belongs to the Italian tradition and food industry, might raise in the minds of the Chinese consumers and how such images influence their product evaluation and purchase decisions. This case study research could be very helpful gaining insights into consumer behavior in China which may help Western businesses to better market their products in this increasingly crowded environment.

The first Chapter aims to analyze the existing literature about the customer journey in purchasing products of foreign origin. The Chapter starts with the research of a proper definition about culture according to this topic, and analyzes the influence of culture on consumer behavior. The most important models which studied cultural dimensions are presented and cited: Hofstede's Five Dimensions and Schwartz Human Values Theory. On this basis, we reported the most popular adoption model, the innovation-decision process described by Rogers, as well as his famous classification of adopter categories. In addition, we explored which are the fundamental steps for a consumer approaching to a new product through Hoeffler research and Carter's conceptual model of key determinants affecting consumer perception and purchase of foreign products.

The Chapter is concluded by a paragraph which focuses on the Chinese situation about culture-related consumer motives in the purchase decision process, and culture-specific and moderating effects which still have a strong influence on behavior.

The second Chapter gives a theoretical background of market research and the steps it is composed of. A specification is made for the importance of equivalence in cross-cultural market research, which includes different aspects as conceptual, functional, translation, measure, sample and data collection equivalence.

The differences between researching in consumer or professional markets and between qualitative and quantitative methods are also displayed.

The Chapter ends with an emphasis on focus groups method which is the one we selected to conduct the Fabbri research study in Shanghai between April and May 2019 about the Chinese consumer market that in the near future will experience the launch of Amarena Fabbri.

The third Chapter displays the findings collected from the experience of three focus groups and the suppositions about the marketing implication which should be considered for a launch of a confectionary product in the Chinese market.

The decision of organizing focus groups with three different target - millennials, mothers and professionals - aims to gain a whole response perception around this type of product. They were chosen as considered to be the most attracted to Amarena; as millennials are the leaders of the market and always curious about the latest offerings, a feminine target could be much more interested in the consumption of sweets, rather than a male one, for themselves and for their children, and professionals - career women and career men - are supposed to have a disposable income to discover the latest offerings.

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## **Chapter 1:** Customer journey in purchasing products of foreign origin

### 1.1 The meaning of culture

According to Guilford (1959) “Culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual”, and he defines personality as “the interactive aggregate of personal characteristics that influence the individual’s response to the environment”. This definition express that culture could be defined as the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to its environment. In this sense, it is important to specify that culture is no *king-sized* personality, but that cultures are formed through the interactions of different personalities, both conflicting and complementary, that create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

Hofstede<sup>1</sup> treats culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Through this definition, the Author reveal the greatest importance concealed in differences and on the base of his literature it is possible to de-structure culture in its core elements that are invisible until they become evident in the behavior of people.

Manifestation of culture in order of depth levels are: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The first three layers are subsumed under the term of *practices*; as such, they are visible to an outside observer; their cultural meanings, however, are invisible and lie precisely and only in the ways these practices are interpreted by insiders. More specifically, symbols includes words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture. Heroes are persons who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior. Rituals are collective activities that within a culture are considered as socially essential, keeping the individual bound within the norms of the collectivity.

Values constitute the most intrinsic layer and the core element of culture which could be understood only through a deep comprehension of a culture’s practices.

One well-known anthropological consensus definition about culture states: “Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.”<sup>2</sup>

Kroeber and Parson (1958) arrived at a cross-discipline definition of culture as “transmitted and created content and patterns values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artifacts produced through behavior”.

In line with this, people are dependent upon the control mechanism of culture for ordering their behavior; therefore, they are conditioned by their sociocultural environment to act in certain manners. Culture cannot be separated from the individual, neither from the historical context. Shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values found are all internalized in people at an unconscious level, they are

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<sup>1</sup> Hofstede G., “*Culture’s consequences*”, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Kluckhohn, C., “*Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification*”, 1951, Parsons.

speakers of a particular language who live during the same historical period in a specific geographic region. Language, time, and place are all pattern in the background that help define culture.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1.1 Consumer behavior and culture

Modernization theories of the 1960s raised the idea of an emergence of a unique world culture following the maturity of developed countries markets.<sup>4</sup> Consumer behavior theorists were supposing that consumers in all parts of the world were becoming more and more attached to Western goods as status symbols, and in the process, were also adopting Western consumption values.

Harvard professor Ted Levitt<sup>5</sup> argued in his article “The Globalization of the Markets” that new technology would lead to homogenization of consumer wants and needs because consumers would prefer standard products of high-quality at a low price to more customized high-priced products. This argument is, specifically, based on the classical microeconomic theory which imagines the consumer essentially taking two type of decisions: the type of product to purchase and the quantity to purchase, and the solution would be enough to maximize utility and satisfaction of needs<sup>6</sup>. However, this assumption limits the study of consumer’s behavior, assuming that people tend to spend their income in a rational way and with the mere intention to maximize profit. The concept of the rational consumer is increasingly regarded as unrealistic and places consumers outside a cultural context<sup>7</sup>.

The socioeconomic phenomena identified and assumed to be the cause of consumer behavior’ convergence are: modernization, urbanization, rising education levels, changing demographics, and convergence of national wealth.

Modern societies are characterized by rapid communication and transportation, urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratization; the term “modern” refers to anything that has, more or less, replaced something that was considered the traditional ways of doing things. Although modernization is an important force of change and development, it does not directly imply a convergence of value or the emergence of a global culture. For example, Asians view modernization as involving technology, behavior, or material progress, without cultural implications<sup>8</sup>. As Mooney stated in his article: “The expectations were that with increased openness and capitalism in China, the Chinese would turn to Western values. Instead, they are rediscovering the teachings of Confucius, which for centuries have been the moral guidance of Chinese people. China want to become modern while retaining its core values”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Hofstede G., “*Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*”, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson R., “*Globalization*”, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Levitt T., “*The Globalization of Markets*”, 1983, Harvard Business Review.

<sup>6</sup> The first significant contribution to the study of consumer behavior was provided by the economy. The object of the economic analysis is therefore the relationships that exist between demand, prices and income. According to microeconomic theory the consumer essentially takes two types of decisions: the type of product or service to be purchased and the quantity to be purchased. Formally the solution to both decision problems is given by the well-known equation “marginal utility X / price X = marginal utility Y / price Y = ... = marginal utility N / price N”. The individual must purchase for each good offered on the market the quantity that allows him or her to equal the marginal utility of the single assets weighted with respect to the unit prices (condition of the leveling of the marginal utilities).

<sup>7</sup> Suerdem A. “Social de(re)construction of mass culture: Making (non)sense of consumer behavior”. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*.

<sup>8</sup> Fu J.H.Y. & Chiu C.Y., “Local culture’s responses to globalization: Exemplary persons and their attendant values”, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Mooney P. “Learning the old ways” *Newsweek*, 2002.

With increased wealth people have no need to make either/or decisions; in post-scarcity society consumers have more choices that make them less rational and impulsive in their buying behavior, and the freedom to express themselves is based in part on their national value system.

With more discretionary income, expenditures on education and media are expected to increase among populations. Higher education makes people better-educated and more affluent, as a consequence, the taste will also turn sophisticated which means that populations are expected to become more and more aware of value preferences.

About the influence of education on consumer behavior, better-educated consumers are assumed to be better informed, but the *information process* is another aspect affected by culture; in fact the way consumers around the globe search for information is different in relation to individualism/collectivism and high/low power distance cultures. The idea of consciously searching for informations to make an informed buying decision is more valid in individualistic, low power distance and high uncertainty avoidance cultures, like Westerns. In opposition to more collectivist and high power distance culture whereas closest friends' opinion is still valued as one of the most important source of information, like Asians.<sup>10</sup> Cultural dimensions will be discussed later in this chapter.

According to the social phenomena just analyzed, it is possible to assume that convergence follows economic development, but at macro level, which means only dealing with aspects of consumption, health, social welfare, possession of communication means, education levels of countries, infrastructure, etc. Economic development, in this sense, allows global brands' entrance in developing countries; but the spread of global symbols does not imply the existence of a global consumer culture, at the opposite, what people possess does not converge with the usage of the same goods, as each consumer has his or her personal way of utilizing his belongings. It can be assumed that globalization is the reason for revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world, instead of causing homogenization.<sup>11</sup>

The emergence of middle-income society in developing countries can be an explanation of this economic phenomenon, as it tend to manifest cultural values of that country reflected in the different choices of products and brands. The interesting aspect to discover, in this historical moment, is what people do with their incremental income to live a comfortable life, and how they use new products in their daily life.

### 1.1.2 Dimensions of culture

Culture can be used as an explanatory variable depending upon the ability to “unpackage” the culture concept (Rohner, 1984; Whiting, 1976); it is therefore best to view culture as a “complex multidimensional structure rather than as a simple categorical variable” (Clark, 1987). Culture can be described according to specific characteristics, such as behavior patterns, norms, attitudes, and personality variables, or being categorized into values or dimensions. These characteristics are based on observations, and many of these are found in dimensional models derived from large surveys.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marieke de Mooij, “*Consumer behavior and culture: consequences for global marketing and advertising*”, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Giddens A., “*Runaway world*”, New York: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Marieke de Mooij, “*Consumer behavior and culture: consequences for global marketing and advertising*”, 2011.

The degree of economic evolution or modernity is one of the most common dimension used for ordering societies, and it has been followed by U.S. political scientist Ronald Inglehart<sup>13</sup>, who leads the World Value Survey, in his order of societies. Inglehart arranged world values in two broad categories: the first is *traditional* versus *secular-rational*, and the second looks at *quality of life* attributes ranging from *survival* to *well-being*; including in the latter the so called post-materialistic values.

Another orientation that gave birth to more complex models has been the idea of basic problems that are common to all societies, which have consequences for the functioning of groups and individuals.

Examples of analysis build around this pattern is the one of Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson<sup>14</sup> who identified three issues qualified as common basic problems worldwide: ration to authority, the conception of self, and primary dilemmas of conflict and dealing with them.

Also, anthropologist Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck<sup>15</sup> proposed five value orientations on the basis of their investigations of small communities in the south-western of the United States, and they have identified perception of human nature - good/evil; relationship of man to his environment - subjugation/mastery; time orientation - past/present; orientation toward environment - being and doing; orientation toward human relationships - hierarchical/individualistic. These five orientation have been recognized also in later studies, however, only a few became true dimensions in the sense of being statistically independent. Trompenaars<sup>16</sup>, for instance, applied the five orientations to countries and presented categories of work-related values but, these categories being not statistically independent, could not produce country scores, so his findings are not useful for analysis of consumption data.

The anthropologist Edward Hall<sup>17</sup> distinguished patterns of culture according to context, space, time, and information flow. Despite Hall did not develop country scores, his findings show a certain robustness for cross-cultural studies: the context concept is useful for understanding consumer behavior across cultures; differences between cultures with respect to the relationship between man and nature still are viewed as unique; and his important study of time as an expression of culture provides an explanation of differences in behavior and language.

The few dimensional models which provide country scores that can be used as independent variables for the analysis of consumption differences and other aspects of consumer behavior across cultures will be described in detail in the next section of this chapter. These are the models developed by Geert Hofstede, by Shalom Schwartz, and the more recent GLOBE study.

### 1.1.2.1 Edward Hall: Nature, Context and Time perceptions

Edward Twitchell Hall was an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher. He is remembered for developing the concept of proxemics, a description of how people behave and react in different types

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<sup>13</sup> Inglehart R., Basanez M., Moreno A., “*Human values and beliefs*”, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Inkeles A., “*Continuity and change in popular values on the Pacific Rim*”, 1997. CA: Stanford University

<sup>15</sup> Kluckhohn F. & Strodtbeck F., “*Variations in value orientations*”, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Trompenaars F., “*Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business*”, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Hall T. E., “*Beyond culture*”, 1976. “*The dance of life*”, 1984.

of culturally defined personal space.<sup>18</sup> For the study of consumer behavior, fundamentals among Hall's studies are: the human relationship with nature, the context orientation and the time concept.

According to Hall, there are three types of relationship between man and nature: *mastery-over-nature* (man is to conquer nature), *harmony-with-nature* (man is to live in harmony with nature), and *subjugation-to-nature* (man is dominated by nature). The first one describes the Western world, where the man is viewed as separate from nature, and in some cases, the human relationship to nature is the one it should be conquered and controlled for human convenience. The view of Western culture is that it is the person's responsibility to overcome obstacles that may stand in his or her way. The East Asian experience of nature is one of communion, of exchange, characterize by a subtle intimacy. The Asian reverence of nature could be explained as an intimate relationship, which involves living in harmony with the world and experiencing identification with nature. In Chinese, particularly, the word used to name *nature* is *daziran* 大自然 which literally means "great spontaneity, infinity of spontaneity", expressing something that human beings are not capable to control or dominate.

Other cultures, such as Africans, see people dominated by nature and supernatural forces that play dominant role in religion. This subjugation involves the belief that nothing can be done to control nature. The context orientation developed by Hall divides cultures in high-context and low-context communication cultures. In high-context communication or message, most of the information is either part of the context or internalized in the person; very little is made explicit as part of the message, and it could be defined as inaccessible to outsiders. At the opposite, the information of a low-context message is direct and unambiguous; Low-context communication cultures demonstrate positive attitudes toward words. Argumentation and rhetoric in society are more found in low-context cultures, whereas societies of high-context culture are characterized by symbolism or indirect verbal expression. Another characteristic of high-context culture is homogeneity, thus their members have more in common with respect to cultural heritage. It means that homogeneous cultures can rely on share symbols more than heterogeneous ones.

The context orientation is related to Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension. In fact, in collectivistic cultures, information flows more easily between members of groups, and there is less need for explicit communication than in individualistic cultures. Most Asian cultures are high-context (Japan and China as extremes), whereas most Western culture are low-context (Germany, Switzerland and United States).

Hall distinguish different concepts of time, a few aspects of time that are relevant to consumer behavior are: closure; linear versus circular time; and monochronic versus polychronic time.

The "closure" as time aspect implies the fulfillment of a task, from an individualistic point of view the task must be completed otherwise it is perceived as "wasted". Within the Western world social and business life are apt to be completely time-oriented; time determines and coordinates every activity, or relationship. For collectivistic cultures it is normal to deal with unfinished plans or businesses; they are more process oriented rather than result oriented. In the process of fulfillment of a task it is of fundamental importance to stress on the involvement of people and to keep on showing respect and honor between parties, enforcing *guanxi* and trust.

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<sup>18</sup> Hall T. E., "The Hidden Dimension", 1966.

Time can also be conceived as linear or circular. The linear time concept causes people to see time as linear and segmented like a road or a ribbon extending forward into the future or backward to the past. It is also tangible: people speak of time as “being saved, spent, wasted, lost, made up, accelerated, slowed down, crawling and running out.” These metaphors should be taken very seriously as they express the way in which time is used as a measuring instrument and a mean of controlling human behavior by setting deadlines or objectives.

The circular time concept emphasize cyclical and repetitive aspects of time: seasons and rhythms. In these cultures, the adaptation of humans to time is seen as a viable alternative, it is not perceived as racing to a linear future, but as coming around again in a circle where the same opportunities, risks and dangers will represent themselves in other life’s periods.

Another distinction by Hall is between monochronic and polychronic cultures. People from monochronic cultures tend to do one thing at a time: they are organized and methodical. Polychronic people tend to do many things simultaneously.

These time aspects are mainly grouped as: monochronic, linear and task oriented, as Western cultures; and at the opposite polychronic, cyclical and process oriented, as Asian cultures.

To analyze the Chinese case in particular about time concept, it should be considered that, even if not scheduled or result oriented, they also have a keen sense of the value of time. In fact, they frequently thank for other parties time and consider it precious; on the other hand, they expect liberal amount of time to be allocated for repeated consideration of details and to careful nurturing personal relationships. According to the Chinese point of view, the reason they require time is for attaining a degree of closeness high enough to build common trust and intent to better deal future relationships. The time concept is of fundamental importance and has to be carefully considered by all the foreign companies aiming to enter the Chinese market, with new or existing products.

#### 1.1.2.2 Geert Hofstede: Five dimensions of national culture<sup>19</sup>

Geert Hofstede developed a model of five dimensions of national culture for 75 countries that helps to explain basic value differences. Although the model was developed to explain differences in work-related values, over time it has been increasingly used for comparative cross cultural studies and provides useful explanations of cross cultural differences in consumer behavior.

Hofstede’s five dimensions are: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-/short-term orientation.

*Power distance* can be defined as “the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. It influences the way people accept and give authority. In high power distance culture, as Asians, everyone has his or her rightful place in a social hierarchy. In China, in particular, this is justified by a Confucius rule in society according to which there are strong dependency relationships between “ruler and subject, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife”, and even between friends.

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<sup>19</sup> Hofstede G., “*Culture’s consequences*”, 2001; and Hofstede G., Hofstede G. J. & Minkov M. “*Culture and organizations: Software of the mind*”, 2010.

As a result, in the Chinese society, it is completely natural to recognize hierarchy, moreover, one's social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect. In this sense, famous brands serve that purpose, they allow the owner to affirm his or her social status, otherwise to express respect and honor to a gift recipient.

On the opposite side, in low power distance societies authority can have a negative connotation; the focus is on equality in rights and opportunity and children are raised to be independent at a young age, avoiding to become dependent on anybody else.

This aspect is also related to the *Individualism/collectivism* dimension. In individualistic cultures, people want to differentiate themselves from others, they are "I" conscious and want to express private opinions. In collectivistic cultures, identity is based in the social network to which one belongs, people are "we" conscious and their identity is based on the social system. Asia, Africa and Latin America are more collectivistic; in Italy, according to data, people in the north appeared to be individualistic, but Italians as a whole are collectivistic.<sup>20</sup>

*Masculinity/femininity* dimension does not imply gender discrimination, but treats the dominant values in a masculine or in a feminine society. In masculine societies, performance and achievement are important, social status shows success and children learn to admire the strong, because being a "winner" is a positive instruction.

The dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life, people are service oriented and there is a tendency to strive for consensus. Masculine cultures consume for show; feminine cultures consume for use.

*Uncertainty avoidance* dimension relates to the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situation. In culture of strong uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life because people fears uncertainty and ambiguity, so they try to cope with it by making rules and prescribing behavior. There is more formal communication and higher level of anxiety and aggressiveness, showing emotions is accepted. Weak uncertainty avoidance cultures feel that there should be as few rules as possible. They are more process oriented than result oriented, ruled by common sense and there is less ritual behavior.

*Long-/short-term orientation* is the fifth dimension discovered through the cooperation between Geert Hofstede and Micheal Bond<sup>21</sup>, it is also called "Confucian Work Dynamism" because it sampled a domain of values formulated by Chinese scholars. The resulting dimension referred to a long-term versus a short-term orientation in life. Long-term oriented societies tend to focus on achieving long-term results. This type of cultures reflect elements of Confucian philosophy: a good person adapts to the circumstances and save and invest for the future. Perseverance, thrift, and pursuit of peace of mind are important goals. The opposite is a short-term orientation in which people focus more on the past or present, and are more concerned on results and immediate achievements, not tend to save for the future, they work through deadlines and are extremely scheduled.

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<sup>20</sup> Hofstede's IBM data were mainly collected in the north of Italy, where strong individualism was found. Later studies found contradictory informations about the level of individualism or collectivism in Italy, affirming that it is probably due to the fact that Italy is bicultural: the north is individualistic, but the rest of the country is collectivistic. Michael Hoppe "A comparative study of country elites: International differences in work-related values and learning and their implications for management training and development", 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Hofstede G. & Bond M. H., Organizational Dynamics, "The Confucius connection: from cultural roots to economic growth", 1988.



Initially, Hofstede's scores for this dimensions involved fewer countries because it was a later investigation, but Michael Minkov's classification of three dimensions<sup>22</sup> included the so-called "Monumentalism vs flexumility" which appeared to to share common values with the original Long-/short-term dimension. As a result, Hofstede extended his LTO database with Minkov's findings, as he calculated scores for a collection of 71 countries, which means for nearly all countries for which scores of the other Hofstede's dimensions were already available. In Hofstede's new Values Survey Module<sup>23</sup>, he changed the created word "Flexumility" with "Self Effacement". Monumentalism is related to pride in self, national pride, making parents proud, and believing religion to be important. The flexumility pole identifies societies valuing humility, with members seeing themselves as not having a stable, invariant self-concept and a flexible attitude toward truth.

### 1.1.2.3 Shalom Schwartz: basic human values' theory

Shalom Schwartz is an Israeli psychologist who presented an alternative approach for deriving cultural dimensions in a study of value priorities in a sample of teachers and students. The Author considers the theory as an essential extension of previous approaches to comparative intercultural research theories, such as the Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, and has been extensively applied in cross-cultural studies of individual values. Schwartz's theory identifies ten such motivationally distinct values and further describes the dynamic relations amongst them. These 10 individual-level value types are then organized in four higher-order groups, on two basic bipolar dimensions; each of the ten universal values has a central goal that is the underlying motivator. One dimension opposes Openness to change to Conservation (respectively: self-direction and stimulation versus conformity, tradition and security). The other opposes Self-transcendence to Self-enhancement (respectively: universalism and benevolence versus hedonism, achievement and power). 45 value questions have been used and seven value types were distinguished for use across cultures, called: conservatism (later embeddedness), autonomy, mastery, harmony, hierarchy, and egalitarianism.<sup>24</sup>

Schwartz's seven value types are treated as three dimensions with different polar locations. The first one is "autonomy versus embeddedness". Autonomy's core value is the pursuit of personal interest and related aspect are emphasis on self-direction, stimulation, openness to change and hedonism. Autonomy value type can be dividend in to *intellectual autonomy*, as autonomy of individual thought, curiosity, creativity and *affective autonomy*, as varied life, stimulating activity, exciting life. Embeddedness emphasizes on maintenance of the status quo and avoidance of actions of individuals that might disturb the traditional order. The self lacks autonomous significance but has meaning as part of the collectivity. The values are primarily concerned with security, conformity and tradition.

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<sup>22</sup> From factor analysis of country means of items in the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 1997; WVS, 2006), Micheal Minkov defined three dimensions: *exclusionism versus universalism* (similar to Hofstede's individualism/collectivism and GLOBE's in-group collectivism), *indulgence versus restraint* (indulgence defines a society that allows relatively free gratification of desires and feelings, especially those that have to do with leisure, spending, consumption, and sex. Its opposite pole, restraint, defines a society that restricts such gratification and where people feel less free and able to enjoy their lives. ) and *monumentalism versus flexumility*. The latter one is included in Hofstede's LTO database. Minkov's theories provide another thoroughly researched point of view, with his "indulgence versus restraint" dimension being apparently unique from most value dimension theories, perhaps resembling Schwartz's hedonism dimension. Minkov M., "What makes us different and similar: A new interpretation of the World Value Survey and other cross-cultural data", 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Hofstede G. "Announcing a new version of the Values Survey Module: The VSM 08", 2008.

<sup>24</sup> S. H. Schwartz, "Beyond Individualism-Collectivism: New Cultural Dimensions of Values", 1992.

The second dimension is “hierarchy versus egalitarianism”; hierarchy emphasizes the legitimacy of hierarchical roles and the values included are social power, authority and influential. Egalitarianism includes promoting the welfare of other people or transcendence of selfish interests. Values included are social justice, honest, equality, helpful, responsible.

The third dimension is “mastery versus harmony”; mastery values promote active efforts to modify one’s surroundings and get ahead of other people. Values included in this value type are daring, capable, success, ambition, social recognition, self-direction at the individual level. The harmony value type, at the opposite, emphasizes harmony with nature, which include values as social justice, world of beauty and peace.

The model by Schwartz is less used in quantitative cross-cultural studies than Hofstede’s one, but it is attractive to the marketing research because through value types it describes imaginary consumers in terms of abstract preferences like pleasure, sensuous gratification, excitement, novelty, challenge, or hedonism.

#### 1.1.2.4 The GLOBE Survey

The most recent large-scale dimensional model is GLOBE<sup>25</sup> (*Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness*), developed by Robert House of the Wharton School of Management and his associates. They initiated a cross-national project for the study of leadership and societal culture, and discovered nine cultural dimensions at the level of society: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, two types of collectivism (societal and in-group collectivism), gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. The GLOBE study measures the *desired* and the *desirable* of respondents probing them about organization and societies in which they live or work as it is and as it should be. Originally, it was concerned with leadership issues, although later the questions were meant to clarify Hofstede’s dimensions.

#### 1.1.3 Comparing dimensional models

Cultural dimensions are human constructs. Although they are based on objectively existing phenomena, they are not the phenomena themselves but ways of describing them. One and the same reality can be explained and presented in different ways, through different constructs.<sup>26</sup> The three models just presented overlap in some ways but they vary with the respect to sampling and type of questions used.

They are different with respect to the level of analysis - individual versus cultural level - and the dimension structure. However, they all gave predominant emphasis upon characterizing cultures in terms of shared values, shared beliefs, or shared sources of guidance.<sup>27</sup>

Hofstede’s scales are bipolar, including a positive and a negative pole for each dimension, it allows an easy interpretation of the results. The Schwartz scales are unipolar, which makes results often difficult to interpret. His survey is also based on people’s self-reports of the importance they attribute to values; it is

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<sup>25</sup> House R. J. & associates, “*Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*”, 2004. CA: Sage

<sup>26</sup> Minkov M., “*What makes us different and similar: A new interpretation of the World Value Survey and other cross-cultural data*”, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Smith P., “When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled: The GLOBE and Hofstede projects”, *Journal of international Business Studies*, 2006.

therefore critical sometimes to establish if self-reports of the values relate meaningfully to actual behavior. A problem that could be related to the value instrument employed by Schwartz is that it requires respondents to evaluate the importance of abstract values, which makes the question easier to answer by educated people than by less educated people; this is an aspect that has implications for the universality of the model.

A problem of Hofstede's model instead is that questions are asked about work-related behavior, which means they can only be answered by people who are in relevant work situations, otherwise results have to be translated to other situations.

The three models can therefore be applied for different purposes: Hofstede's model is considered to be more useful in predicting behavior, the Schwartz model is useful to study both individual-level values and culture-level values, and the GLOBE value dimensions could prove more usefulness in predicting the impact of cultural variables on leadership and organizational processes.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.2 Consumers adoption of new products

Consumers are frequently confronted with innovations that require them to adopt new behaviors and/or discontinue past behaviors. Consumer evaluations, and subsequent adoption, of innovations result in emotional responses that must be considered in the development of product launch strategies (Wood and Moreau 2006). Adoption of a new product is a future event with uncertain outcomes and the emotions associated with uncertainty, the negative emotions of anxiety and fear on the one hand and the positive emotions of hope and optimism on the other hand, are the likely emotional accompaniments of new product decisions.<sup>29</sup>

Consumers have greater uncertainty when predicting or estimating the benefits of a product that they have never used before or have no experience about. Indeed, perceived risk is a major determinant of resistance to innovation, in the literature it is also commonly cited as one of the factors affecting the speed of diffusion<sup>30</sup>, together with relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trainability, and observability<sup>31</sup>. There are three major types of perceived risk: aversive physical, social, or economic consequences; performance uncertainty; and perceived side effects associated with the innovation. Furthermore, both functional and psychological barriers are identified; functional barriers include product usage (compatibility with existing habits), product value (analogous to relative advantage concept), and risk. Psychological barriers are based on exiting norms and perception associated with a new product.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Lazarus R. S., "Progress on a Cognitive- Motivational-Relational Theory of Emotion," *American Psychologist*, 1991.

<sup>30</sup> Ostlund L. E., "Perceived Innovation Attributes as Predictors of Innovativeness", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Rogers defines five intrinsic characteristics of innovations that influence an individual's decision to adopt or reject them: how improved an innovation is over the previous generation, *relative advantage*; level of *compatibility* that an innovation has to be assimilated into an individual's life; *complexity or simplicity*, if the innovation is too difficult to use an individual will not likely adopt it; how easily an innovation may be experimented, *trialability*; the extent that an innovation is visible to others creating more positive or negative reactions in personal networks, *observability*. Rogers E., "*Diffusion of Innovations*", 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Sheth J. N., "Psychology of Innovation Resistance: The Less Developed Concept (LDC) in Diffusion Research." in *Research in Marketing*, 1981. Ram & Sheth, "Consumer Resistance to Innovations: marketing problems and its solutions", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 1989.

### 1.2.1 Rogers: Diffusion of Innovations & Adopter categories

The process of adopting new innovations has been studied for over 30 years, and one of the most popular adoption models is described by Rogers in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*. Rogers' theory has been defined as a widely used theoretical framework in the area of technology diffusion and adoption, however, it has been used also for researches from a broad variety of disciplines, as political science, public health, communications, history, economics, and education (Dooley, 1999 and Stuart, 2000).

The innovation-decision process, according to Rogers' definition, is "an information-seeking and information-processing activity, where an individual is motivated to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of an innovation"<sup>33</sup>. The innovation-decision process involves five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation; these stages typically follow each other in a time-ordered manner. (Fig. 1)

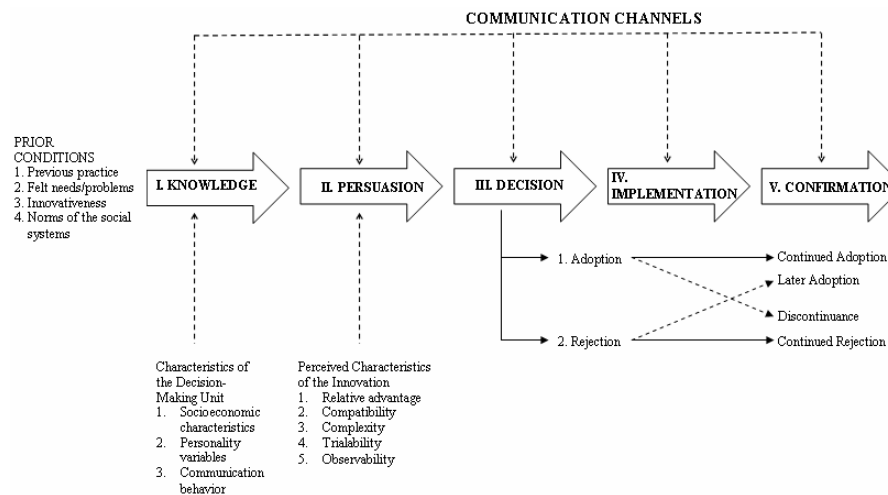


Fig 1: Model of Five Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process

In the knowledge stage Rogers outlined three different types of knowledge; he debates about awareness-knowledge, how-to-knowledge, and principles-knowledge.

*Awareness-knowledge* is defined to be the preliminary knowledge of the innovation's existence which can motivate the individual to learn more about the innovation and, eventually, to adopt it. The next step is *how-to-knowledge*, that contains information about how to use an innovation correctly. Rogers saw this knowledge as an essential variable in the innovation-decision process, as to increase the adoption chance of an innovation, an individual should have a sufficient level of how-to-knowledge prior to the trial of this innovation. Thus, this knowledge becomes more critical for relatively complex innovations or for complex products launched in a different context-market. The last type of knowledge is *principles-knowledge*, it includes the functioning principles describing how and why an innovation works. An innovation can be adopted without this last-step of knowledge, but the misuse of the innovation may cause its discontinuance and consequential failure.

<sup>33</sup> Rogers E., *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fifth Edition, 2003, Free Press.

To create new knowledge, how-to experience should be provided together with know-why experience, because an individual may have all the necessary knowledge, but this does not mean that he or she will adopt innovation, this is due to the fact that the individual's attitudes also shape the adoption or rejection of the innovation itself. (Seemann, 2003)

The second phase of innovation-decision process is *persuasion*. Rogers states that while the knowledge stage is more cognitive- (or knowing-) centered, the persuasion stage is more affective- (or feeling-) centered. Thus, the individual is involved more sensitively with the innovation at the persuasion stage. The degree of uncertainty about the innovation's functioning and the social reinforcement from others (colleagues, peers, etc.) affect the individual's opinions and beliefs about the innovation; in our case study we refer to closest peers opinions' influence as social norms.

At the decision stage, the individual chooses to adopt or reject the innovation. The trialability is well-known to be a relevant option which leads costumers to a quick act of adoption; about rejection instead, Rogers expressed two different situations that might occur: active rejection and passive rejection. In an *active rejection* situation, an individual tries an innovation and thinks about adopting it, but later he or she decides not to adopt it. In a *passive rejection* (or non-adoption) position, the individual does not think about adopting the innovation at all. According to Rogers these two types of rejection should receive greater attention, because they could be relevant in changing the order of the innovation-decision process. In some cases, especially in collectivistic culture, the order of the knowledge-persuasion-decision stages can turn in knowledge-decision-persuasion, whereas *group influence* on adoption of an innovation can transform the personal innovation decision into a collective innovation decision (Rogers, 2003).

The implementation stage is reached when the innovation is put into practice.

At the confirmation stage the innovation has already been adopted, but the individual looks for support and seeks supportive messages that confirm his or her decision. Thus, in this stage attitudes become more crucial: depending on the support for adoption of the innovation and on the attitude of the individual, later adoption or discontinuance will be confirmed.

Discontinuance may occur in two ways: *replacement* discontinuance and *disenchantment* discontinuance. The first sees the individual rejecting the innovation to adopt a better innovation replacing it. In the other type, the individual rejects the innovation because he or she is not satisfied with its performance, or it does not meet the needs of the individual.

Another famous classification developed by Rogers is the *Adopter categories*, a "classifications of members of a social system on the basis of innovativeness" (Fig. 2). It includes innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.<sup>34</sup>

Are defined as *Innovators* the members of a society who are willing to experience new ideas, even if a certain level of uncertainty is present. Rogers defines innovators as "gatekeepers bringing the innovation in from outside of the system". Their openness and venturesomeness is granted by a solid basis of technical knowledge.

Compared to innovators, *early adopters* are more limited within the boundaries of the social system, but their early adoption decreases uncertainty about the innovation-diffusion process. In society, they occupy a

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<sup>34</sup> ibid

role model status which means they hold leadership and a strong influential power among other members. Rogers definition about them is “early adopters put their stamp of approval on a new idea by adopting it”.

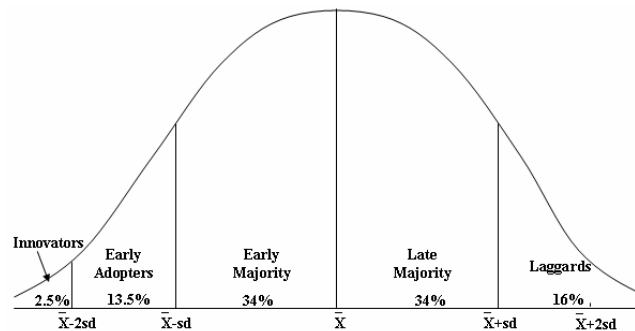


Fig. 2: Adopter Categorization on the Basis of Innovativeness

The *early majority* adopts the innovation just before the other half of their peers adopts it, the *late majority*. Thus, they do not have the leadership role of early adopters but their networks are still important in the innovation-diffusion process. It is therefore possible to define late majority as the members who wait for adoption until most part of society already engaged in the buying-decision. Late majority is described by Rogers as “it needs to feel that it is safe to adopt”; the reason for delay the adoption is that they are skeptical about the innovation and its outcomes, and need to feel assured.

Among all the categories, *laggards* have the traditional view and they are more skeptical about innovations and change. Because of the limited resources and the lack of awareness-knowledge of innovations, laggards tend to decide after looking at whether the innovation is successfully adopted by other members of the social system in the past. Thus, their innovation-decision period could be relatively long.

Analyzing the data quantitatively and qualitatively, through our research it was possible to study the attitudes and behaviors of Chinese consumers related to Amarena Fabbri product launch in the B2C market. Based on Roger’s *Adopter categories*, we can define millennials as potential *early adopters* target, because they hold the leadership role in the society; they should not be considered as innovators because they still seek to gain a certain awareness about new products before adoption to feel assured about their decision. Even if young mothers and professionals displayed different positions, on the basis of Rogers’ model they could both be classified as *late majority*, as they all confessed a need for safety about new adoptions. However, young mother could also be tending to *early majority*, as their network could influence them through adoption (such as restaurants and places of interest’ recipes, closest peers’ advises and children’ desire); and professionals if considered very traditionalistic about innovations, could be related as *laggards* who need their family and society to become accustomed before directly adopt innovations and change.

### 1.2.2 Hoeffler: Fundamental steps of approaching to new products

Another important research relevant to be considered for a review around consumers adoption of new products' topic, is the one discussed by Hoeffler<sup>35</sup>, which underlines the fundamental steps for consumers approaching to a new product, these are: learning about the product, understanding its benefits and estimating the personal usefulness of the new benefits.

There are products for which consumers could have a baseline knowledge or experience in the same or related domain that allow them to understand what the product is. Thus, simple identification of the category may be enough. For products consumers do not have any experience about, for example because of different culture, more learning is required and a firm has to decide how to describe a product.

There are many ways through which consumers learn about new products. Theories of learning most frequently cited in the marketing literature include category-based learning, analogies and mental simulation.

Research by Gregan-Paxton and John (1997) and Taylor et al. (1998) contend that categorical knowledge is used primarily to organize existing information, not to learn new knowledge. Instead, both analogies and mental simulation help people deal with uncertainty and knowledge development. Gregan-Paxton and John (1997) note that "relational analogies (or comparisons) represent a superior mechanism for facilitating consumer learning about new products". With relational mapping, the relationship between an attribute and a benefit is transferred from an existing product to a new product. Learning the link between attributes of the product and the benefits they provide should help consumers when learning about new benefits, and experience with the product favors this process. In case of lack of experience, new benefits may be learned through analogies to other products that provide similar benefits in another domain.

According to present marketing literature, the use of mental simulation as a cognitive tool for making product evaluations and product adoption decisions is also well established. Walker and Orson (1997) indicate that when consumers make product decisions, they often form "visual images of certain product-related behaviors and their consequences" and "vicariously experience the self-relevant consequences of product use". Imaginability of owning the product improves utility predictions. Mental simulation might be therefore helpful to reduce uncertainty associated with new product adoption by acting as a surrogate experience with a prospective product. In addition, this type of learning mechanism may help to calibrate the amount of behavioral change required to realize the magnitude of potential benefits.

A key aspect of approaching new products is that they enable consumers to obtain new benefits or to receive existing benefits in new ways. Thus, in evaluating new alternatives consumers need to gauge how the new product compares with the currently used products to accomplish their goals. In this sense, when estimating the usefulness of new benefits, it is important to ameliorate the impact of uncertainty (Hoeffler 2003). As previously discussed, consumers may reduce uncertainty by using analogies or mental simulation to prior new products that were adopted and provided analogous advantages (they have prior positive experience, and it helps them overcoming uncertainty).

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<sup>35</sup> Hoeffler S., "Measuring Preferences for Really New Products", *Journal of Marketing Research*, November 2003.

### 1.2.3 Carter: Key determinants affecting consumer perception and purchase of foreign products

The latest study considered important to recall is the one developed by Carter<sup>36</sup> who created a conceptual framework in which the Author identifies the potential variables influencing consumer perception and purchase of foreign goods. (Fig. 3) Specifically, the six determinants are: Price, Product attributes evaluated, Brand image, Consumer ethnocentrism, Country-of-origin image and Consumer animosity. Within the conceptual framework, Carter investigates the effects of the six main antecedents upon each of the four stages of the consumer decision-making process: evaluation, attitude formation, purchase intention and actual purchase of foreign products. The model has been the result of an intensive evaluation of existing literature which lead to the discovery that all the related articles were published starting from 1967, even if the majority of articles were published after 1999, indicating that the relevance of the research on this topic is viable and growing with the increase in business globalization.<sup>37</sup>

Country-of-origin is one of the earliest variables assessed within studies examining foreign product evaluation by consumers and has been the focus of various researches obtaining different interpretations since its inception. COO is typically considered as the country of creation or association with a product (Okechuku & Onyemah, 1999). Country-of-origin image is referred to as the consumers' overall perceptions of the country that they associate with the product (as defined by Roth & Romeo, 1992), and it is by far the most researched antecedent that is posited to affect consumers' perceptions and purchase of foreign products, providing strong support for four of the propositions into Carter's model, which state that COO image has a significant and positive effect upon all four stages of consumer evaluation and purchase of foreign products.

Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the consumer's belief that buying foreign products will potentially result in a domestic jobs reduction and economic damage; therefore domestic consumers consider the purchase of foreign goods as inappropriate, immoral, and unpatriotic (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Similarly to COO image, CET has been posited as a main effect upon all four stages of the consumer perception and purchase process for foreign products. But unlike COO image, CET negatively influences these stages, indicating that highly ethnocentric consumers prefer domestic products to foreign products.

Consumer animosity is another variable identified that negatively affects consumer's decision to buy foreign products. Animosity is defined as consumer anger that is potentially generated from military, political or economic events and is posited to negatively affect the consumer's purchase intention of foreign goods (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998)

The specific attributes of the foreign product have an influence upon the overall evaluation; for this reason, in Carter's model is present a dedicated product attributes evaluated variable, referring to the composite evaluation of the product's physical attributes that are salient to and perceived by the consumer.

According to disposal literature and Carter's model, brand image constitute one of the principal determinants impacting consumer purchasing behavior separated from the generic variable of product attributes, because products are associated with a brand name, which is most of the time utilized by

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<sup>36</sup> Carter L. L., "Antecedents of Consumer Perception and Purchase of Foreign Products", *Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference Proceedings*, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid



consumers to make product judgments and evaluations; for instance, inferring a perception of the product's quality from the brand's name and reputation.

As with brand image, there is significant evidence to dissociate also the price variable from the overall set of product attributes; in fact, both price and brand image directly impacts consumers' intention to purchase foreign product. The price of the product influences both the first and the last step of purchasing decision of consumers: the evaluation and purchase intention phase. Product price also serves as an extrinsic cue for consumers to deduce the perceived quality of the product: a higher product price relative to the competition signals higher quality than competitor's product.

The price variable can also be related to the concept about "time to adoption" of a new product.<sup>38</sup> When consumers perceive adoption as a distant goal, the hope associated with the uncertain benefits of adoption may be especially strong. However, as temporal distance to adoption decreases, people may move from feelings of optimism to feelings of anxiety associated with the uncertain costs of adoption - uncertainty is perceived in switching to unfamiliar products more than the expected performance gains. Intentions to adopt new products may also decline as time to adoption nears.

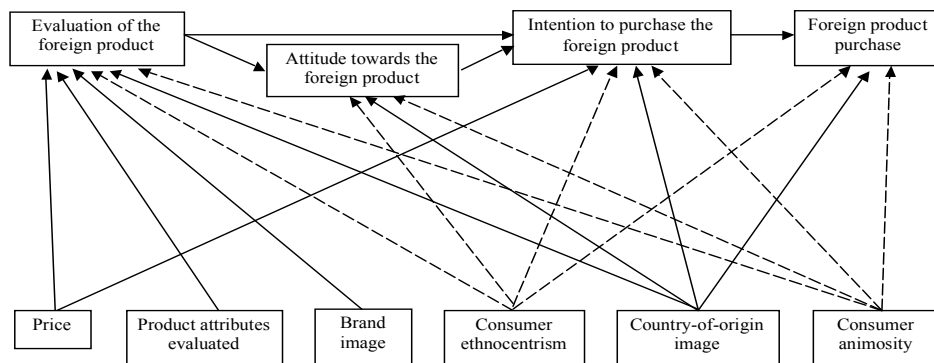


Fig. 3: Carter's conceptual model of key determinants affecting consumer perception and purchase of foreign products

### 1.3 The Chinese situation

Most of the researches about the perception of foreign products and the COO effect has been conducted in the Western countries and only a handful of studies examined the important topic in developing countries, like China. However, thanks to their growing income and purchasing power, Chinese consumers are becoming the most attractive targets of foreign products and services. It is not uncommon, for example, for a Chinese consumer to drive a Volkswagen to work, use Samsung computers in office and drink Starbucks coffee during breaks. Foreign brands have provided a greater diversity of choice, and many of them offer better quality, more attractive appearance and variety of designs, though at generally higher prices than domestic alternatives (Kinra, 2005). Nevertheless, how Chinese consumers evaluate and choose products and services originated from foreign countries remains quite understudied (Chao, 1998; Zhang, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> R. Castano et al., "Managing consumer uncertainty in the adoption of new products: temporal distance and mental simulation", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2008.

As Chinese consumers attain more opportunity and ability to purchase foreign products and services, a related question this thesis attempts to investigate is how an actual imported product well-established in the original context can be perceived, and which new usage it may raise, in a different context.

### 1.3.1 Culture-related consumer needs and motives

First of all, it is important to state that what motivates people in purchasing is important for explaining product choices and brand preferences. Other than the well-established Maslow's hierarchy of needs concept which drives consumers behavior<sup>39</sup>, it should be taken in stronger consideration that culture-related consumer needs and motives are also fundamental, as buying motives are strongly related to social environment and many global standard products are bought and used for different reasons across cultures. In the early years after the inception of the open-door policy, most PRC consumers generally associated foreign products with symbolic benefits, such as modernity, prestige, and associations with foreign lifestyles. Such concepts constitute one of the primary motivating forces of PRC consumers' purchases of products of nonlocal origin, including products that may not be commonly regarded as conspicuous. The foreign products represented a trend toward contemporary consumption and materialistic lifestyles.

Batra and colleagues<sup>40</sup> note that the desirability of foreign brands in developing countries is primarily driven by communicating social distinctions, particularly status. From a sociological standpoint, in fact, building one's social identity is especially relevant in societies that are characterized by income disparities and status mobility (Featherstone 1991). Consequently, when people in less affluent countries consume, the inspiration to buy is no longer whatever qualities these objects convey in the West, but rather is the constitution of an entirely different and more prestigious authentication (Friedman 1990).

There are, however, substantial differences in status needs across countries. Status motives vary in regards with power distance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity dimensions. For example, luxury articles can be used as manifestations of material success and they can serve as symbols to express success and achievement; this is why they are more attractive to members of masculine cultures than members of feminine cultures. Moreover, in high power distance cultures positions and social status are not fluid, and people want to demonstrate their position in society. Again, in collectivistic cultures a high price delivers status, because it is associated with quality, and high quality contains social meaning for consumers in collectivistic cultures more than in individualistic cultures.

The literature describe China also as interdependent culture, which emphasize conformity to group norms, social acceptance, and hierarchical interpersonal relationships. The strong tendency for Chinese to consume luxury products is because they believe they have to, in order to conform to social norms and convey meanings pertaining to social status and wealth.

A concept on the basis of the Chinese culture and society, related to social status, is *face* (Hofstede, 2001). In general, *face* describes the proper relationship with one's social environment, which is as essential to a person and to person's family, as the front part of his or her head. Avoiding loss of face is of overriding concern, as losing face is a damaging social event in which one's action is publicly and negatively judged by

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<sup>39</sup> A. Maslow, "Motivation and Personality", 1954

<sup>40</sup> Batra et al., "Effects of Brand Local and Nonlocal Origin on Consumer Attitudes in Developing Countries", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2000.

others, resulting in a loss of moral or social standing. The consumption of luxury goods is regarded as a behavior to maintain and enhance one's face.

### 1.3.2 Social and mental processes

Along with the culture-related consumer motives discussed, there are also several culture-specific and additional moderating effects which consistently affect consumers' behavior. The principles that this thesis wants to underline, according to the findings of our research, includes social and mental processes such as: emotion and expression of emotions, display rules, language, group processes, family and relationships, cognition, learning and memory, perception, and information processing.

Emotional experience and linguistic expression are culture specific; they are learned either by growing up in a culture or by later exposure to the culture. According to the emotion and language proper of a culture type it is important to have a deeper understanding because they express which new learning experiences and behaviors could be better accepted. When introducing innovation into a new market it is important to decode emotions and language of that specific market. On this purpose, it is important to take into consideration that members of individualistic cultures display a wider variety of emotional behaviors than do members in collectivistic cultures, who will also emphasize emotional displays that facilitate group cooperation, harmony, cohesion. For collectivistics, the specific emotions displayed depend on the context and target of the emotion. In a public context, in fact, it would be inappropriate to display a negative emotion because it would reflect negatively on the in-group. If the emotion is a reaction to an out-group member, it would be acceptable to express it because this would foster cohesion in the in-group. So, the group and the context influence the display of emotions.<sup>41</sup> This is an important aspect to be considered when doing market research in a collectivistic culture, the expression of real emotion could be subjected to bias due to the sense of belonging.

Other than individualistic/collectivistic dimension's correlation to how emotions are displayed, according to Hofstede's studies, there is significant connection also between uncertainty avoidance and the expression of embarrassment. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, people control their emotions, seek not to express embarrassment and guilt; whereas in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, display of these kind of emotions is normal and people commonly tolerated. Research made by Ye (2004)<sup>42</sup> provide information about how Chinese people are discouraged from the expression of emotions, especially from having very dramatic facial expressions. They try to display only positive emotions and tend to control negative ones.

The analysis on emotion effects anticipated the group processes effects. The group influences individual consumer behavior, in fact, norms concerning perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors frequently develop within a group. Groups that are distinguished as influencing consumer's behavior are formal (association) and informal groups (family and friends), reference group and aspirational group. Central assumption about the group concept is that in individualistic cultures people can choose group

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<sup>41</sup> Bond M. H. & Gudykunst W. B., "Intergroup relations across cultures", *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology*, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Ye Z., "The Chinese folk model of facial expression: a linguistic perspective", *Culture and psychology*, 2004.

membership, whereas in collectivistic cultures group membership is already embodied as a central aspect of identity.

It is important to make a prior distinction between in-group versus out-group for understanding group influences on consumer behavior. Triandis<sup>43</sup> defines in-groups as “groups of individuals about whose welfare a person is concerned, with whom that person is willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns, and separation from which leads to anxiety”. Members of collectivistic cultures are born as part of a group which is automatically accepted, there is interdependence and automatic warmth, love or dependency. There is a sharp distinction between in-group and out-group for collectivistic, they interact more frequently, more widely and more deeply with in-group members; out-groups members do not share the same “passive love”. For consumer behavior we are concerned about, it is important to underline that In-group in collectivistic cultures is characterized by processes of mutual influence, harmony enhancement, and in-group favoritism; aspect that doesn't exist - at least not with the same magnitude - in individualistic cultures. Individualistic cultures members spend equal time with in- and out-groups and have more freedom to decide which groups to belong to, they can also decide to belong to more groups at once. Because of this, in-groups have less influence than in-groups do in collectivistic cultures.

It is also possible to relate the variation of interaction with strangers with uncertainty avoidance. In high uncertainty avoidance culture people tend to refrain their behavior in front of strangers, they may be very polite, or strangers can be ignored as if they do not exist. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures there is more interaction with foreigners.

The group context is related to the family and relationships processes. In collectivistic cultures, economic development has led to the decrease of the extended family - more generations living together - with a weakening of material interdependence, but that has not lead to decreasing psychological interdependence. In fact, parents tend to foster a high level of dependence on their children, to socialize them to successfully adapt to an interdependent society: to some extent they allow autonomy which does not seek for separateness in the child. In this way, children get more freedom but to learn to conform and preserve harmony with their siblings. Another dimension that explains differences in parental control is long-/short-term orientation. Short-term oriented cultures are described to be more strict about rules to which people adhere in raising children; whereas long-term-oriented are more pragmatic and lenient.

According to the present literature this assessment is confirmed and reliable, however, in the economic development which China is experiencing nowadays, family processes and parental control seem also to be gradually changing. In fact, the findings developed through our research showed a young mother target with a very busy working life and sophisticated lifestyle, more and more concerned about the children attitudes and control over their duties or spare time. Children's free time is generally occupied by extra-classes (english, sports or music courses); the concept of long-term oriented culture where parents place few restrictions on their children life, is somehow still confirmed, but it is going to change more and more for the increasing middle-high class in China. Mothers look for high-range food offerings, even if they confirm they usually do not have enough time to go grocery shopping or to cook. Extreme importance is

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<sup>43</sup> Triandis H. C., “*Individualism and collectivism*”, 1995.

placed on food ingredients, if something is perceived as unhealthy, the product would never be accepted from this demographic.

Research on cognitive and affective components of attitudes have mainly been done in the Western societies, but this interaction varies across cultures and product categories and it is important to be analyzed. The discoveries about Asia mainly arise from studies conducted on Chinese immigrants in the West, as for instance, research conducted by Cervellon and Dubé<sup>44</sup> analyzed the cognitive and affective components of attitudes toward food which vary among countries as France, China, and Chinese immigrants in French-speaking Canada, presenting a model. (Fig. 4)

Relating to the population of our interest, it is important to underline how the results show that for the Chinese food attitudes do not reflect ambivalence between affective and cognitive components; health value and sensory pleasure are vied necessary to a person's equilibrium. Food intake reflects a balance in filling and nutritional proprieties to satisfy physiological and taste proprieties.

As in the case of Amarena; once the participants realized that the long expiring date was preserved by a natural element as sugar, they were ready to accept sugar as a natural ingredient and not as an unhealthy product to avoid in their daily life.

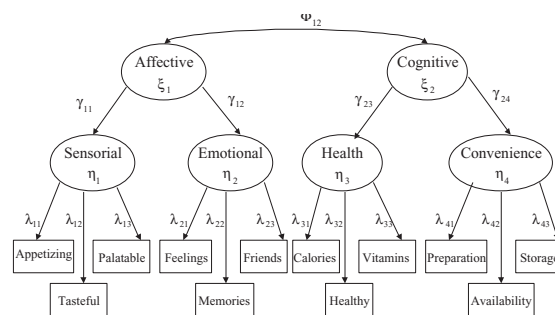


Fig 4: Model of Affective and Cognitive Components of Attitude Toward Food

For the Asian mindset and behavior two desirable alternatives can coexist and there is no need to searching for a solution, and this is also reflected in case of emotions: as they believe that behavior is driven by situational constraints, incongruity in emotions has no need to be solved; they can cope with two types of emotions simultaneously.<sup>45</sup> This aspect is expected and influenced by group and collectivistic processes. Individualistic cultures, at the opposite, are more driven by the need to classify their emotions and evaluate them as positive or negative.

In societies, language is the medium of communication and it is composed by a system of rules which create messages. Different nationality implies different language and the reflection of specific values and expression of culture (i.e. recognizable in the use of metaphors), but more deeply, each society develops a culture-specific communication style and even specific words; some languages have more words for a phenomenon than other languages have, or even some languages have words that do not exist or do not

<sup>44</sup> M. C. Cervellon, L. Dubé, "Assessing the cross-cultural applicability of Affective and Cognitive components of Attitude", 2002, *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*.

<sup>45</sup> Choi I., Nisbett R., & Norenzayan A., "Casual attribution across cultures: Variation and universality", *Psychological Bulletin*.

find a perfect correlation in others. This is a crucial matter particularly in the food industry, whereas food is an intrinsic characteristic of culture and translating names may sometimes be very difficult and lead to misunderstandings about the product.

During the focus groups, for example, we discovered that the translation of “Amarena Frutto e Sciroppo” in *Guojiang* 果酱 for “fruit and syrup” is completely confusing for Chinese consumers, because the use of the word *Jiang* 酱 in Chinese is related mainly to something spreadable. They were therefore expecting to see a cherry-marmalade-product in their first approach to Amarena, which is however completely different from a marmalade. This is one of the cases where it is difficult to find the right expression for describing a product that is rooted in an originary culinary history but is alien to a new market. In these situations, words cannot easily be translated into words of other cultures because they reflect the specific values of the original context.

To solve this kind of misunderstanding companies should previously decide how they want to describe and present a product in a new context, therefore considering which are the characteristics that the new market’s consumers take more into account when choosing a product in the same category; it could be a descriptive name, a name that describes the process of production, a name that focuses on colors or flavors, a name that focus on ingredients or on distinctive proprieties and so on.

In addition to this, it has been studied that Chinese consumers are more likely to recall information when the visual memory rather than phonological memory trace is accessed; due to the influence of their ideographic language, consumers tend to rely more on visual representation and meaning when evaluating brand names. A study by Schmitt et al.<sup>46</sup> found that Chinese consumers are more likely to recall brands when they could write them down, in opposition to alphabetic languages which rely more on verbal sounds (i.e. in Western countries the sound qualities of brand names are exploited by the use of jingles and onomatopoeic sounds: “if anyone can, Canon can”). The advise is therefore to translate foreign brand names in Chinese relying on visual representation and meaning, moreover, visually distinct brand name writings enforced by logo designs should be more effective in China.

One reason why the written language is so important in Chinese is that there are more variations in writing than sound and most of the times writing words is helpful to understand the intended meaning.

Perception gives to individuals knowledge about the surrounding world, but individuals are driven by selective and subjective perception which change among cultures. McArthur and Baron (1983) argue that perception is adaptive in function and it requires the *education of attention*, more specifically, this education will be directed toward sensitizing members of a given culture to adaptively relevant information. As concluded by the authors, “what people in one culture need to perceive may be different from what those in another culture need to perceive”<sup>47</sup>. Thus, most of the times failure to recognize a picture in a given context, and its meaning, might be related to a limited knowledge about the picture itself and its origins.

In perception studies the traditional concern is about *what* is perceived, i.e. how people see or recognize pictures and colors, or if people do like or dislike what they see. Our case study’s research studied the perception of Chinese consumers about Amarena Fabbri and it was based on these style in questions

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<sup>46</sup> Schmitt B. H., Pan Y., & Tavassoli N. “Language and consumer memory: The impact of linguistic differences between Chinese and English”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1994.

<sup>47</sup> McArthur L. Z. & Baron R. M., “Toward an ecological theory of social perception”, *Psychological Review*, 1983.

about the packaging and the taste dimension to analyze participants' perception, probing respondents about their first impressions about colors, flavors and first thought.

Related to perception there is the aesthetic experience, which refers to the experience of pleasure or displeasure raised by a stimuli. According to Schmidt and Pan (1994), they summarized East Asian aesthetic expression in three principles: first, Asians value complexity and decoration, they look for the display of multiple forms, shapes and colors; second, harmony in aesthetic expression is seen as one of the highest goals, as beauty means balance of various aesthetic elements; third, Asians aesthetic expression values naturalism.<sup>48</sup> In fact, in China symbols and displays of natural objects prevail in packagings and advertising.

It is therefore not surprising that Amarena packaging gained high scores results according the aesthetic experience. According to the respondents, it express natural values and reflect harmony of colors and shapes.

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<sup>48</sup> Schmitt B. H. & Pan Y., "Managing corporate and brand identities in the Asia-Pacific region", *California Management Review*, 1994.

## Chapter 2: Cross-cultural market research

### *Introduction*

In the second Chapter the market research process will be analyzed. The role of market research in decision making is vital for companies as it provides a context about new methods and strategies.

The importance of information and the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods are discussed, moreover, a specific focus is made on the tools and objectives of market research. In addition, because of the presence of cross-cultural variance in several factors of research market informations, it has been decided to highlight the importance of equivalence in cross-cultural market research, which includes conceptual, functional, translation, measure, sample and data collection equivalence.

The first paragraph explains the reasons for adopting market research, as well as why and when it should be carried out. Providing a contextual understanding, it is important to remind that the subject of formal market research is very young. In the 1950s and 1960s business competition intensified and market researchers, building on the experience of social researchers, used sample surveys with questionnaires to obtain attitudinal data. The market research interview was then accepted as the main vehicle for collecting information, and survey companies blossomed.

For the first time, managers had objective and systematically collected data to help them understand what people were doing with or thinking about their products. In the 1970s and 1980s attitudinal research moved to a different level and surveys were developed to track customer satisfaction.<sup>49</sup>

In the last few years computing power has become cheaper and more powerful and the emphasis has turned to ‘squeezing’ data for more insights, using modeling such as factor and cluster analysis for segmentation, conjoint analysis for pricing decisions, data fusion to fill in gaps of missing data and geomapping to find the best locations for retailing or distribution.

It can be therefore stated that the main purpose of market research is to reduce business risk; and this was also the objective we aimed to reach through the study research based in Shanghai which is discussed in the second part of the Chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> Hague P., Cupman J., Harrison M., Truman O., “*Market research in practice*”, Kogan Page, 2016.



## 2.1 Market research

Searching for a definition of market research the most appropriate could be given as “the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information relevant to marketing decisions”<sup>50</sup>

To better understand the use of market research in business models and frameworks it is important to recall that market research is a vital component in many of the marketing paradigms. A few of the most important ones, as Ansoff’s matrix and Levitt’s life cycle, use market research on the basis of their models. In all the four business situations into the Igor Ansoff’s matrix<sup>51</sup>: depending on whether the market the company is addressing is new or is unknown, and whether the product or service to be sold is new or it is part of the existing portfolio, market research finds a determinant role. As it is shown in the Table 1.

	<i>Existing market</i>	<i>New market</i>
<i>New product</i>	Market research can show the likelihood of adoption of new products	Market research can show unmet needs and provide an understanding of unfamiliar markets
<i>Existing product</i>	Market research can measure customer satisfaction to find out how to maintain a competitive edge	Market research can find new territories for products or services

Table 1: Market research in Igor Ansoff’s matrix

In Theodore Levitt’s life cycle<sup>52</sup>, market research plays an important role at each of the stages. (*Fig. 1*)

In the *introduction phase*, market research could explore the unmet needs for the new product and helps estimate the likely demand. It could also be used to set prices and shape the specification of the product.

In the *growth phase*, market research might be helpful to show how to build a brand and a competitive edge, moreover, customer satisfaction studies point out the strengths that can be built upon and the weaknesses that can be rectified.

In the *stabilization phase*, market research can still be useful showing ways of rejuvenating the product, for instance by incorporating new features or finding new markets.

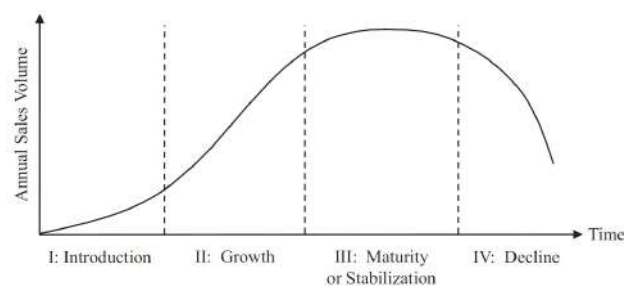


Fig 1: Product life cycle

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<sup>51</sup> H. I. Ansoff, “*Strategies for Diversification*”, 1957, Harvard Business Review.

<sup>52</sup> T. Levitt, “*Exploit the Product Life Cycle?*”, 1965, Harvard Business Review

The four Ps (*product, price, place and promotion*) are the pillars of marketing and each requires market research to help companies understanding which is the better strategy to implement to be successful in the market. About *Product*, for example, market research can be useful to test the attitudes to products by describing them or showing them in focus groups. In the distribution part of marketing equation, *Place*, market research is helpful to plan an effective route to market. Investigations about *Price* through market research can show the willingness to pay for the offerings and how much people value them, indicating an optimum price. It can also help in all aspects of *Promotion* from developing ideas for the adverts through to testing which advert is most effective.

As just discussed above, market research could be carried out as a one-off project to meet a specific requirement, or it can involve continuous or regular tracking such as the monitoring of the market share held by a product or brand.

However, market research in general needs in advance a proper structure to be effective; more specifically, it should be conducted according to a process which involves a few steps: definition of objectives, definitions of methods (qualitative or quantitative), collection of datas, analysis of datas and reporting.

The starting point of any market research is the definition of the problem and setting the objectives, knowing which are the informations required in order to make a decision might be considered as the easiest step to take but, if it is not done adequately, the efforts of the research hardly would find a definitive point of arrival. The *research proposal*, or research design, sets a punctual plan about how the research objectives are going to be met and how the information are going to be obtained. It should be prepared including also the methods that will be used, the details of the interviewees, and how they will be interviewed.

Data collection is the visible part of market research. It normally involves interviewing and completing a questionnaire for each individual or organization in the sample.

Once an analysis and aggregation of the data has been produced, they need to be interpreted and presented meaningfully so that useful results can be attained. This is the reporting stage of the process, and if the study produce outstanding insights, it can set the guidelines for further researches.

### 2.1.1 Cross-cultural equivalence in market research

Market researches are, at best, *photographs* of the market and not the market itself. For instance, images of reality are represented to us through the media, but large chunks of reality are left ignored, especially its experiential elements. Large parts of reality are beyond individual's limited perceptual apparatus.

On the other hand, it is important to not underestimate the power of the process of designing images of reality. Scientific market research provides marketing decision makers with an image of the actual or potential market, consumer behavior and the competition.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, it is important to consider that international market surveys should not be constructed by simply replicating domestic research, because of the presence of cross-cultural variance in several factors as the nature and scope of researched market information, the ways of collecting it, the accuracy of the

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<sup>53</sup> J.C. Usunier, J.A. Lee, "*Marketing across cultures*", 6th ed, 2013. Pearson.

data, as well as the criteria of reliability of the data. Beforehand searching for information, it is vital to search for *meaning* which relates to examine potential cultural influences at each step of the research process: questions, survey methods, interviews and questionnaires and informants.

More specifically, in conducting cross-cultural market research, the main difficulty is the one of establishing equivalence at the various stages of the research process. Craig and Douglas<sup>54</sup> individuated different types of cross-cultural equivalence which is vital considering for cross-cultural marketers, these are: conceptual equivalence, functional equivalence, translation equivalence, measure equivalence, sample equivalence and data collection equivalence.

#### 2.1.1.1 Conceptual equivalence

A basic issue in cross-cultural research is the determination of whether the concepts have similar meaning across the social units studied. In fact, the same construct may be relevant across cultures, but interpreted or expressed in different ways. Generally speaking, *conceptual equivalence* is an obstacle to the direct use of constructs that have been specifically designed for Western cultures.

As for example, the perceived-risk-construct could be broken down into several sub-dimensions, including financial, physical, performance, psychological, social and time or convenience risk; then the emphasis placed on these sub-dimensions is possible to vary across cultures. In some context, people may give more value to the social risk of buying a car because they are mostly status-oriented, whereas in other cultures people are more concerned with physical safety due to high rate of accidents. Further, there is a distinction between the perception of the risk and the attitude toward perceived risk which may vary.<sup>55</sup> For these kind of reasons, it is necessary to investigate the validity of the constructs in each target culture when cross-cultural consumer behavior is studied. Moreover, the construct's validity is affected by both construct bias and equivalency issues. Bias occurs when the definition of the construct differs across cultures influencing construct validity, and equivalency relates to the level of comparison or measurement of the construct.<sup>56</sup>

#### 2.1.1.2 Functional equivalence

Functional equivalence focuses on whether the concepts have the same role or function across groups. It means, even if similar activities exist they could perform different functions in different societies. Concepts which could be used in market surveys, such as preparing a meal, are not necessarily functionally equivalent across countries.

Functional equivalence problems can be illustrated taking the example of the consumption of *coffee* around cultures. Ordering a coffee includes a whole range of beverages that are enjoyed in very different

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<sup>54</sup> Craig C. Samuel and Susan P. Douglas, *International Marketing Research, Consumer Behavior*, 4th ed, 2001

<sup>55</sup> Weber, Elke U, Christopher Hsee, "Cross-cultural differences in Risk Perception, but Cross-cultural similarities in Attitudes towards Perceived Risk", *Management science*, 1998.

<sup>56</sup> Craig C. Samuel and Susan P. Douglas, "On improving the Conceptual Foundations of International Marketing Research", *Journal of International Marketing*, 2006.

social settings or in quite different forms.<sup>57</sup> The function of an Italian espresso, served in small cups of strong coffee drunk regularly in exchanges with colleagues and many times during the day, cannot be compared with that of the weaker American coffee, which is consumed in large cups and drunk mostly in transit or during leisure time.

One of the best ways to investigate functional equivalence, before engaging in market decisions, is to examine the social settings in which a product is consumed, and local observation methods or focus groups could be employed for this purpose.

#### 2.1.1.3 Translation equivalence

Translation equivalence focuses on whether the language is understood by respondents, as having the same meaning in different cultures. Culture sets many implications on language and communication that implies sophisticated translation techniques which not always achieve full comparability of data.

Translation equivalence can be divided into four subcategories: *lexical equivalence*, simply provided by dictionaries; *idiomatic equivalence*, whereas an idiom is a linguistic usage natural to native speakers and are most often non-equivalent even for regions within a country; *grammatical-syntactical equivalence*, refers to the order of words, the construction of sentences and the meaning that is expressed in language; *experiential equivalence*, it means that translated terms must refer to real items or experiences familiar to the target cultures, even if, some concepts have no real equivalent translation in other languages.

The back-translation technique is the most widely employed method for reaching translation equivalence in market research. It implies one translator which translate from the source language into a target language, and another translator, ignorant about the source-language text, who translates the first translator's text back into the source language. Then a comparison is made to prepare the final target language questionnaire.

Translation equivalence is fundamental to be investigated before the launch of a new product, because in case of misunderstanding or difference in perception it can lead to dangerous and wrong product evaluations.

#### 2.1.1.4 Measure equivalence

Measure equivalence takes into account the measurement reliability across cultures, which means the potential source of variations in the reliability of research instruments. For example, some types of questions are less likely to be plagued by measurement equivalence than others, as it should be easier to obtain measurement equivalence for demographic variables than for psychographic variables such as lifestyles. Measurement includes perceptual, metric, calibration and temporal equivalence.

About *perceptual equivalence*, as emphasized in the first Chapter, different cultural backgrounds influence individuals' behavior and perception. When conducting research about sensory products or elements (e.g. packaging) perceptive clues are important for product evaluation, therefore questions must be formulated

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<sup>57</sup> Weiss, Brad, "Coffee Breaks and Connections: the lived experience of a Commodity in Tanzanian and European World". *Cross-cultural Consumption*, Routledge, 1996.

to allow interviewees to express their perceptual view and their first impression on the sensorial parts of the object (colors, smell, touch, etc).

If the scores given by respondents do not have the same meaning, it means that *metric equivalence* is not accurate. In fact, scores may differ across cultures for a variety of reasons, which include differences in the interpretation of numerical or verbal anchors, the avoidance of extreme responses, humility or social desirability.<sup>58</sup> The validity of a rating scale in a cross-cultural context is affected by the equivalence of the scales and by the homogeneity of meanings. For example, the translation of scale terms in different languages can lead to misleading interpretations; it is not advisable to translate scales lexically (simply with dictionary-equivalent words), at the opposite they should be translated for equivalence of meaning. Reaching equivalence of meaning may require the original wording to be ‘decentred’ in order to obtain reliable and valid data for all the countries under survey. Metric equivalence of scale terms reveals that some languages have fewer terms to express gradation in evaluation, whereas others have a multitude. Therefore, the best solution is not to simply translate scale terms, but rather to start from local wordings based on scales used by local researchers. The meaning of numbers across cultures may be another factor influencing score results. For instance, the numbers 2, 8 and 9 are considered lucky in China and as such may be chosen more frequently.<sup>59</sup>

*Calibration equivalence* problems arise from the employment of units based on different computation systems. For instance, a typical problem relates to differences in monetary units, especially when comparing high-inflation context where daily prices over a year change constantly with those of low-inflation countries. Exchange rates and units of weight, distance and volume are other causes of calibration equivalence problems. Calibration equivalence mixes also with perceptual equivalence: for instance, according to the perception of a particular country different color classes are recognized, and this *inequivalence* might be of great influence in a product test or a packaging test.

*Temporal equivalence* is similar to calibration equivalence, in terms of calibrating dates and time periods. As for example, information spreads and ages at different speeds across countries, and it is therefore necessary to indicate on which date data were collected to make comparisons.

Temporal equivalence also deals with differences in development levels and technological advancement: certain contraries are “equivalent” to what others were 20 years ago. In this case, assessing time lags is necessary for making analogies.

#### 2.1.1.5 Sample equivalence

Sampling unit equivalence relates to the choice of respondents. Selecting a unit of analysis is a key issue in the conceptualization of comparative research design, as the role of respondents in the buying decision process - organizational buying, family buying, information and influence patterns - may vary across countries. As well as when researching industrial products, it is important to compare the position, the role and the responsibility of industrial buyers throughout different countries.

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<sup>58</sup> Van de Vijver, F. J. R. and Ype H. Poortinga, ‘Cross-cultural Generalization and Universality’, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1982

<sup>59</sup> Marchetti, Renato and Jean-Claude Usunier, ‘Les Problèmes De L’étude De Marché Dans Un Contexte Interculturel’, *Revue Française du Marketing*, 1990

The main problem in the cross-cultural sampling process is the selection of comparable samples across countries, as the characteristics of the whole population are inferred from a limited sample.

In cross-cultural research, there are often two levels of sampling to consider: the first level is a sample of countries or cultures and the second level is based on samples of individuals within the chosen countries or cultures. Reaching perfect comparability at either level is very difficult, which means that results might be considered this intrinsic limitation.

At the first level, samples are more often chosen to represent the *markets of interest*, or a selection of maximally different countries, in an attempt to compute the average influence of cultural values on certain consumption patterns. At this level country characteristics, such as socio-demographic, economic and cultural variables, national wealth, legal system, individualism and level of national identity may be related to the per capita consumption of a particular product or service. This type of information can guide strategic marketing decisions related to the selection of national target markets, including the identification of markets with low actual demand but high growth potential, and so on. Samples of cultures should not be confused with samples of individuals, as there is a risk of gross stereotyping when country characteristics are considered as individual characteristics.

If individuals are of interest, researchers must also carefully design the within country or culture sample. Often representative samples are chosen to reflect some characteristics of the *population of interest*, such as being representative of the primary purchasers of a product or users of a product category.

The sampling method must be selected so that each national sample is fully representative of the population of interest. As sampling frames or lists are usually unavailable at the individual consumer level across cultures, non-probability sampling is the solution adopted in many countries, as the *snowball sampling method* used in our case study. Screening criteria may also be necessary to ensure that the sample fits the characteristics of the population of interest. Different screening criteria might be used across countries to ensure the comparability among the samples: for example, a basic objective in China may be to sample respondents who had access to consumer markets, with screening criteria including an education level that would allow a literate information search and an income level that would allow consumption. Whereas in countries like North America the objective may be to sample mainstream consumers with screening criteria including being a native English speaker, born in North America to North American parents.<sup>60</sup>

Another problem is to secure equivalence in meaning. If the objective is to examine similarities and differences across cultures, cross-national comparability is important, and purposefully chosen non-probability samples may be better, as this allows the researchers to create homogeneous samples. Conversely, when the objective is to describe attitudes or behavior within specific countries, within-country representativeness is important, and probability samples should be used to enable the researcher to estimate the sampling error.

#### 2.1.1.6 Data collection equivalence

Overcome the initial procedures about finding equivalent national questions for a cross-cultural study, and searching for equivalent samples, it is still necessary to analyze response equivalence which includes

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<sup>60</sup> Doran, Kathleen Brewer, 'Lessons Learned from Cross-cultural Research of Chinese and North American Consumers', *Journal of Business Research*, 2002.

*respondents' cooperation equivalence, data-collection context equivalence and response-style equivalence.* These sources of error can create discrepancies between observed measurement and true measurement, but some basic precautions help to avoid the generation of data with a great deal of measurement error.

Respondents' cooperation equivalence refers to the secrecy or unwillingness of participants of answering to interviewer's questions. The reasons could relate to the disclosure of personal data and privacy; sometimes they simply do not want to be exposed justifying or explaining their actions. This may lead to differences in response rate, or biased responses. It means that different survey methods should be employed in different cultures, in order to avoid any kind of secrecy from the participants.

Contextual equivalence relates to elements in the context of the data-collection process that have an influence on responses. Questions are never culture-free: there is inevitably a social and cultural context built into them. Any question that deals, directly or indirectly, with social prescription needs to be worded so that people can elaborate a response without feeling too embarrassed. This may mean further questioning some well-disposed and open-minded interviewees to ascertain their true view on the question. Social desirability may also be a factor, where individuals answer questions in a way that presents themselves or their country in a more positive light. People from collectivist cultures tend to express culturally appropriate or normative responses to promote a desired social image more often than people in individualist cultures.<sup>61</sup>

Response-style equivalence is the final step. The four main concerns in relation to response-style equivalence are: yea-saying or nay-saying patterns (acquiescence/dis-acquiescence), extreme response style, non-contingent responding and item non-response pattern.

First, 'yea-saying' or acquiescence is the tendency to agree with items and 'nay-saying' or dis-acquiescence is the tendency to disagree with items regardless of content. Second, extreme response style is the tendency to choose the most extreme response regardless of content, even when a response range is studded to either use a narrow or wide range of categories around the mean. This could produce a bias in the standard deviation of data; it artificially increases in cultures where people tend to overreact to questions, compared to other cultures where people may tend to suppress their opinions, either positive or negative. Third, non-contingent responding is the tendency to respond carelessly, randomly or non-purposefully. This may happen if respondents are not very motivated to answer the questionnaire.

Fourth, item non-response is an other typical source of bias in cross-national surveys, whereas respondents may be unwilling to respond to some questions, such as those relating to income or age.

In order to achieve a consistent response equivalence in the collection of data, it is important considering to address only the relevant questions: those that can be understood in that specific context, as participants cannot respond to a barrage of questions alien to their knowledge and frame of reference. Therefore, the content of the research must somehow be strictly controlled and must focus on really significant issues.

Moreover, informants' competence as insiders of that market has to be considered much superior than the researchers as outsiders; but the interview should be focused only on those who have something to say, making use of selective criteria to be included. Multiple methods may be used to elicit feedback from

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<sup>61</sup> Lalwani A. K., S. Shavitt, T. Johnson, 'What is the Relation between Cultural Orientation and Socially Desirable Responding?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006.

respondents, including a preliminary study using in-depth interviews, focus groups to identify the appropriate product categories and help define the interview, and, after the main study, follow-up interviews to clarify unclear issues and investigate new issues.

### 2.1.2 Consumer market research

The most fundamental division of markets is between those involving the final consumers and those where members are buying on behalf of another organization such as a business.

In consumer markets, the number of potential buyers of a product is a significant proportion of a total population running into millions. Techniques used to research these markets include quantitative methods based on rigorous sampling as well as qualitative techniques that explore complex consumer perceptions and motivations.

Consumer markets can be further subdivided between FMCGs (*fast-moving consumer goods – food and similar frequent purchases*) and other markets – media, travel and leisure, financial, consumer durables and so on.

In these markets it is fundamental to know as much about what is happening in the shops as amongst final consumers, this is why FMCGs markets remains the area where most commercial market research is carried out.

Business-to-business market research employs the same techniques as in the consumer markets but in different ways. Many B2B markets are characterized by a much smaller population to survey and are frequently very variable, made up of companies in different industries and with huge differences in size.

In consumer and business-to-business markets, the decisions that research is guiding tend to be similar. Whether the type of product, research could cover subjects such as the product specification and its relation to consumer needs and requirements, branding, pricing, distribution methods, advertising support, market definition and segmentation, forecast sales levels and so on. Each of these decisions requires information from the market to reduce business risk. Although information is potentially a requirement in all markets, the characteristics of specific markets mean that there is considerable variation in the detailed coverage sought in each case.

Common information requirements met through market research could be exemplified by the use and attitude to products, which means awareness of suppliers, attitudes to suppliers and to products, volume and frequency of purchases. This specific situation could be investigated through focus groups and quantitative surveys.

An other example is the research on customer satisfaction and loyalty which could be assessed by quantitative surveys which show what customers think is important in influencing their buying decision and their grade of satisfaction.

Again, a generic context as product tests or concepts could be investigated through focus groups, quantitative research or hall tests, which can underline the attitudes to products or new concepts, identify the unmet needs and the likelihood of purchasing different products.



### 2.1.3 Research methods: qualitative and quantitative

One important classification of market research information, regardless of the type of market, is between quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research is concerned with the measurement of a market and can include calculation of the market size, the size of market segments, brand shares, purchase frequencies, awareness of brands or distribution levels. On the other hand, qualitative research is concerned with empathizing with the consumer and establishing the meanings that the individual attaches to products, brands and other marketing objects.

In short, qualitative information puts more emphasis on understanding the market, rather than searching mainly for measurements.

In consumer markets, quantitative information is most of the times based on extrapolating from a sample to the general population or market, and the research design and sampling method require a high level of accuracy. Qualitative research is mainly conducted amongst a small sample, since there is no attempt to extrapolate in a qualitative way the total population. In the case of attitudes to products, for example, qualitative research may determine that there is a specific view held about that product, whereas quantitative research would tell what proportion holds that view.

Quantitative and qualitative research are often complementary, and in a research design both may feature. The qualitative element frequently takes place at the front end of the study, exploring values that need to be measured in the subsequent quantitative phase.

The 'qual' research may offer a diagnostic understanding of the real situation, while the 'quant' research provides hard data across different respondent groups that can lead to specific recommendations with measures that can be used as controls to determine the effectiveness of actions.<sup>62</sup>

In a research project which explores a subject for the first time, a qualitative stage is necessary to build understanding, for instance a small number of interviews might set up the basis for the subject about the terminology to be used and the aspects to be tested. These informations are essentials for designing a subsequent quantitative stage.

However, qualitative research sometimes stands alone. It could constitute a program of depth interviews or focus groups to explore or test concepts such as new products or ideas for a new launch or an advertising campaign.

### 2.1.4 The uses and the tools of qualitative research

As introduced in the previous paragraph, the main uses of a qualitative research are disposed to understand attitudes. This will give the opportunity to delve into behavior and examine the overall hypotheses about the research' object. More specifically, it can be helpful for testing adverts, developing concepts and new products, or building a picture of a market.

To cope with such objectives, qualitative research dispose of three important tools: depth interviews, ethnography and focus groups.

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<sup>62</sup> Hague P., Cupman J., Harrison M., Truman O., "Market research in practice", 2016, Kogan Page.

Depth interviews require discussion guides which basically are unstructured list of topics which act as an *aide memoir*, these guides can otherwise be scripted into a questionnaire to be answered by the respondents. The interviewer plays a huge part in determining the success of qualitative projects as he or she has to take account of any interesting comments and experiences shared and interpreting insights during the analysis of data phase. This is another reason why it is difficult to carry out a large number of such interviews: the interpretation of the comments, the elaboration of questionnaires and the collection of data is very time consuming. However, it is important to note that the emphasis in qualitative research is always on the quality of the understanding rather than the precision of the result.

Ethnography borrows from anthropology, which is the study of humans in a specific environment. The ethnographer seeks to understand the behavior of a group by living close to it adopting just the actions of observing and listening. As direct questioning can sometimes elicit acquiescence or answers might be biased by the more socially desirable beliefs, behavior is expected to give more honest answers. However, this method might be also very time consuming, as ethnographers have to be prepared and able to observe the target in their home or workplace for some period of time waiting for the truth to emerge.

Moreover, a potential problem in ethnography research methods is that cameras and prying eyes can themselves bias behavior as people are self-conscious about being closely monitored. It means that, it might take time to an ethnographer to melt into the background and be forgotten allowing the target audience to act normal.

Focus groups are an in-between method which comprise from five to ten people who take part in a discussion led by a moderator. The respondents need to be carefully selected because they represent a target audience, which is the focus. The interaction of the members of the group creates a sharing experience which encourages people to mention things that would not otherwise surface. Respondents have the opportunity of listening to the answers of others which gives them time to reflect and make insightful comments by their own.

The potential problems in running focus groups can be introduced by the *bias*, as if some of the respondents are perceived as an authority by other group members or tend to comment and articulate on a specific subject, they could dominate the discussion while the others stay back and say little. This requires careful handling by the interviewers which might rely also on practical methods to deject this occurrence, i.e. through questionnaires.

If the research method is well-prepared and both collection and interpretation of data display useful insights, the organization of three or four focus groups can sometimes be enough to provide a clear response; avoiding in this way to proceed further with a quantitative study.

#### 2.1.4.1 Focus group

As the focus group was the main tool used during the on-site study research, in this paragraph a deepen description is discussed, underling the characteristics and the specific aspects and issues of this research method.

Four key focus groups' characteristics can be individuated: they actively involve people, the participants attending the group have an experience or interest in common, they provide in-depth qualitative data around a specific topic and the discussion is focused to help for a better understanding.

Focus groups usually take place in a face-to-face environment, with all participants brought together in one precise location for a given period of time to discuss a topic. The venue should respect a few criteria for creating the proper environment, it has to be appropriate to the proceedings while at the same time being easy and relaxed. It has to be chosen in order to match the participants and suit their expectations; for instance, specialist centers might give to researchers many advantages: they provide facilities for good-quality audio and video recording.

However, technological advances have made it possible to bring also groups together online. Online groups tend to adopt one of two styles: the 'live chat' forum or the 'bulletin board' group, which tends to remain open and live for several days but does not require participants to be logged in during the whole period. In this Chapter only the traditional face-to-face focus groups is going to be deepened and discussed.

The group needs to be small enough to allow every respondent the opportunity to share insights, and yet large enough to provide group interaction and diversity of experience. All the participants need to have a degree of homogeneity, and this similarity is important to create a basis for recruitment. It is therefore important in the first stages of the focus group organization to identify which are the *necessary criteria* for individuals to join the group discussion. Once the commitments to attend the focus group have been received, it is still advisable to solicit the participants closer to the day of the event to confirm attendance. It is also important to communicate enthusiasm for the event and to make the participants feel that the success of the group is dependent on their presence. For example, in our case, a chat group on WeChat has been effective on all these aspects.

It is usual to give an incentive to participants to encourage their attendance, it could be financial or it may vary according to the expectations of the decision makers.

The focus group is more than a group interview, the key is the interaction between the members which delivers qualitative data rich in words and descriptions to be further interpreted and analyzed.

The questions asked in a focus group are carefully designed to elicit their views, therefore, prior to the group meeting, the preparation of a questions-guide is helpful to facilitate the discussion and it could be used as a list of aspects that has to be covered. In fact, a guide carefully designed ensures a logical flow of conversation around the topic area and a clear focus for the discussion.

On the meeting's date, in order to create a relaxed environment, focus groups should start with an introduction explaining the purpose and what can be expected to happen. Participants might be asked to introduce themselves or perhaps say a few words about their experience with the subject in hand. This serves to get people talking and comfortable enough to speak about their opinions.

Questions are then tossed in by the moderator and the group members will be encouraged to comment, debate and adjust their views so that the subject gets covered from all angles.

Selecting the focus group as the main tool in a research project, the biggest potential problem that might occur is the bias that could be caused by the small number of people taking part, their interaction with each other or the subject of discussion. In order to reduce as much as possible this inconvenience, the areas of special consideration, beforehand the group discussion, have to be: culture, the possible sensitivity of the focus topic, the effect of the group hierarchy, the difficulties with disclosure and the match of the moderator.

Culture plays a relevant role because it is intrinsic in people's behavior and, as it has been discussed in the previous Chapter, in many cultures people have less difficulty sharing their views with others and engaging in debate, in other cultures, as in many Asian countries, it is considered rude and inappropriate to openly criticize products, services and suppliers. One of the natural responses to this situation is to be polite and to present a view that can be generally expected.

Food products are strictly related with culture and sometimes they can lead to sensitive and potentially personal topics aligned to traditional uses and habits. In this case, to convince people in flushing out ideas it is necessary to create an intimate environment of sharing experiences or either way waiting for the completion of the questionnaires and checking answers.

Moreover, in planning focus groups the effect of group hierarchy can influence the quality of the discussion. In general, if people feel equality between the group members and the group moderator, they are more likely to be at ease and share their views in lively debate.

Another key point is the match of the moderator, he or she needs to be accepted by the participants and must have the ability to create a 'safe' environment, where participants feel comfortable and confident to freely express their own viewpoints.

## 2.2 Case study Research: Fabbri 1905

In China's confectionery market, Fabbri 1905 established its market presence through a subsidiary company, and it has already gained an extensive experience with business professionals. The brand is widely distributed on B2B targets such as cocktail bars, coffee shops, gelato shops, bakeries, and restaurants.

The main purpose of our project was to further analyze Fabbri's potential in a B2C context, by examining the consumer's perception of a traditional Italian product and attempting to discover new potential consumers as well as new potential uses. During three months of research in China, the main focus has been to gain valuable insights into the behavior of Chinese costumers.

In collaboration with the company, we decided to develop the research by mainly focusing on the potential of one particular product, Amarena Fabbri. The choice of this item in particular stems from two main reasons: firstly, this product was developed more than a century ago for the Italian market, in which it is deeply rooted, and for this reason the company felt the need to analyze how it could be perceived by the Chinese consumers before the launch on such a different market; secondly, it is believed that Amarena has a potential market to be developed by marketing its use together with some popular and broadly used confectionary goods that are already present in the Chinese consumer's daily life, for example ice cream, yogurt, and pancakes.

### 2.2.1 Research design and methodology

As a first step, an analysis was carried out about the feedback online on third parties' platforms which are selling Fabbri's products. We found that the general perception about Amarena was extremely positive,

and consumers were particularly impressed by the long preservation period, the high percentage of fruit against a low quantity of additives, the large number of portions per package, and its intense fruit flavor.

Collected these basic information, we decided to use the focus group as the main tool for our research to analyze consumer perception and purchasing behavior in the confectionery market. It allowed us to have direct interaction with Chinese consumers and assured consistency through in-depth qualitative data, open discussions, and models which will help the company to better understand the launch of Amarena into the Chinese consumers market.

Between April and May 2019 the team composed by one moderator, Federica Bettati, one on-site supervisor, Francesca Hansstein, the Marketing Manager of Fabbri Shanghai, Edoardo Noce, under the overall coordination of the supervisor Tiziano Vescovi, conducted three focus groups in Shanghai.

To create a relaxed atmosphere, the focus groups were conducted in Mandarin and they began with an overall introduction about our research objectives and presentation of the team, less informations have been given about the product in order to avoid any kind of influence about the product itself and about the brand. In order to ensure continuity to the research, and to have a quiet and private environment, focus groups took place at Fabbri Headquarter in Shanghai.

With every target, we engaged in an open discussion on different dimensions, which will affect the traditional 4ps of the marketing strategy: product, price, promotion and place. In particular, the dimensions involved in this research are: packaging, taste, suggested use and target, as well as willingness to pay. The discussion of these dimensions helped us to determine the values that better encourage the potential client to purchase Amarena Fabbri.

In order to assure the accuracy to this research, we decided to film each session, asking to each participant to sign a privacy discloser that allowed for their data to be used for internal research purposes. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and a half. Upon completion of the focus groups, a gift has been given to each participant as reward (a jar of Amarena and a Fabbri agenda). The recorded videos and audios have been transcribed to identify the central matters which - according to our research - would influence consumers' purchasing decision the most.

Lastly, we created a WeChat group for each group participants where respondents shared with us images of Chinese or foreign products they thought were similar to Amarena and, in some cases, videos on later tasting experiences.

### 2.2.1.1 Participants

Three focus groups were organized according to three different target people: millennials, young mothers and professionals.

Each group had a maximum of seven participants similar in age, occupation, income, and education level. We selected young mothers as the primary target, this is because the confectionery industry in China is particularly successful among the women population. The second focus group has been conducted with a target focus on millennials, young people similar in age (20 - 26) who have a high educational background and in the process of approaching the working life for the first time. The third target group is comprised of settled down men and women that have already achieved their objective in life, in terms of working position, family and social status; they dispose of a medium-high income and are high-quality oriented.

The participants involved in the focus group had to match some inclusion criteria, like being urban citizens (*living in Shanghai*); have scarce direct exposure to Western lifestyles (*we excluded for example respondents with study or working experience in the West, or those with a foreign partner*); had a middle-high income (*deduced from WeChat moments*).

Gender was set as an inclusion criteria both for the focus group targeting millennials and for the one targeting professionals: the participants were in prevalence women, but with at least one or two men in order to obtain more balanced results.

As for the selection of participants, we turned to our professional and social network community and used a *snowball method sampling* (also known as chain-referral sampling method) to reach the desired number of participants. In fact, although Chinese consumer preferences are becoming more and more sophisticated, consumer behaviors are homogeneous within the same segment. In general, qualitative research, in the exploratory phase, can be very informative in the study of the Chinese consumers.

### 2.2.1.2 Questionnaire

A research questionnaire in Chinese was developed to collect the socio-economics data of respondents, the consent to the treatment of the data for internal research purposes and all the qualitative perceptions around five dimensions we decided to investigate about Amarena. (see Appendix)

In particular, for each dimension, respondents were first asked to complete the questionnaire and then to openly discuss their view. And the reason for this is that due to the *collectivistic nature* of Chinese culture and the bias that this might provoke in a group discussion (e.g. encouraging consensus decision making among group members rather than allowing for a diverse range of opinions to be voiced), obtaining a short personal comment helped to ensure that both participants' individual and collective views have been taken into consideration throughout the focus group discussion. If any bias was detected during the discussion (e.g. people agreeing without motivation), it was possible to check back the answers provided by participants in the initial questionnaire.

### 2.2.2 Questionnaire design

To achieve a successful questionnaire, firstly, the flow of questions need to be logical and make sense to the respondent, and secondly, it should be easy to complete; this means that whatever possible questions should have pre-coded answers that just require a box to be ticked or a number to be filled: they are time saving for both researchers and respondents. The golden rule of questionnaire design is to think of all the possible answers at the time of designing the question, as sometimes the failure of a project may simply derive by the fact that the questions were never formulated from the respondent's point of view.

Moreover, it is risky to ask complicated questions or leave the subject of discussion too vague otherwise the result can lead to a left-black fields or to a false and misleading interpretation of the given answer.

Open-ended questions have higher rate of "bad answers", as respondents have the opportunity to easily reply: "because it is good, it does its job, it is what we have always bought". And in this case, there is less chance to understand which is the intrinsic buying-reason, and a higher work of interpretation of results from the researchers.

However, it must be said that mixture of question types and styles, such as open-ended questions, closed questions and scales, gives texture to an interview and could help maintain a respondent's interest.

Regarding the appearance of the questionnaire, it is worth considering having it professionally typeset: an attractive layout and the interesting use of space will encourage the response. The use of color and graphics will brighten the questionnaire and it is more favorable catching the respondent's interest. It is also important considering the target respondents when creating format questionnaire: as it would surely change regarding different target institutions or target people.

Before the focus group project started, we probed the trainability of the questionnaire, assuring that the basic requirements for a successful questionnaire were all taken into account: <sup>63</sup>

- comprehension (do the questions make sense as they were intended?);
- language and phraseology (are there any words that are creating difficulty?);
- ease of answering (are the answers within the capability of respondents?);
- cooperation (will all the questions be answered?);
- flow (does the interview flow easily from one topic to another?);
- instructions (does the respondent know what to do next?);
- aesthetics (does it look attractive and is it easy to read?);
- practicality (is the formatting easy for the interviewers? - easy-to-read Chinese characters font);
- the length of the interview (does it take too long and overtax the respondent?)

#### 2.2.2.1 Amarena Fabbri questionnaire

In order to develop an appropriate investigation about Amarena Fabbri we decided to break the product down into its features and benefits, considering all its attributes separately which we call *dimensions*. The dimensions have been explored in the following order: packaging, taste, potential uses and target, and willingness to pay.

The five dimensions defined the starting point for the focus group discussions, where participants were probed to explain their perception of Fabbri's product and to discuss on the values that may affect their purchase behavior.

To focus on how participants perceive the value of Fabbri's iconic product, a set of closed-ended questions on personal values have been provided at the end of each focus group. Gathering data on consumers' values will be useful to create the core of product marketing strategies when targeting specific consumer segments. We chose Schwartz's theory of human value since it is regarded as a cross-culturally validated classification system of personal values experimented in more than 60 countries, including China.

We treated the packaging dimension through both open-ended and closed-ended questions; the first ones aimed at understanding the spontaneous perception the participants had of the product esthetics and what it could remind them of, and whether they were prone to associate it with anything. In order to

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<sup>63</sup> Hague P., Cupman J., Harrison M., Truman O., "Market research in practice", Kogan Page, 2016.

facilitate a discussion, the moderator exhorted participants to voice their opinion with questions such as “Is this packaging captivating for you?” “Would you be curious to taste the content?” “Would you show it to your friends?”

The final question asked our participants to rank in a table from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*) their personal perception about seven packaging’s features: color, shape, dimension, image, design, brand name and logo. The purpose of the analysis of the first dimension was to evaluate the attractiveness of the product considering only its external appearance and by discussing in detail the positive and negative comments of the participants.

The taste dimension started with a product tasting, in the questionnaire the participants were then asked to fill in a table ranking the flavor and its perceived enjoyment from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*) “: “Does this product taste as expected?” “Does it remind you of other flavors?” “Is it a flavor that you would like to add to your daily life?” “Does it satisfy yours expectations?” “Would you suggest this product to your friends?”. Secondly, with an open-ended question participants were asked to provide three attributes that came into their mind when tasting Amarena.

At first, participants were asked to taste Amarena cherry separately, and then in combination with other products. This method allowed us to record participants’ perception about the product itself, and to determine if the perception changed when enriching the tasting experience. In addition, participants were asked to suggest potential uses that might fit Chinese tastes.

In this dimension the potential of the product and its ability to evoke sensations in the participants was thoroughly analyzed and the positive and negative feedbacks that came up were discussed.

We prepared three open-ended questions for our participants about alternative uses of Amarena. In particular, respondents were asked: “How would you eat Amarena Fabbri?”, “Would you use it in combination with which other products?”, “Is there any flavors of the Chinese cuisine that you would associate to it? Which ones?”.

Initially, the participants were asked to provide their opinion on the usage of these products, for either simple recipes or combination with other products. Afterwards, the moderator described some of the most famous and commonly prepared recipes according to the Italian taste, partly already shown by the tasting experience in combination with ice-cream.

The last question asked the participants to describe any differences in perception between the original cherry flavor and the cherry flavor matched with other products.

As concerns the target dimension, we asked participants to indicate, besides their own, other potential targets for the product. We included this question to widen the spectrum of possible future investigations. More specifically, they were asked to fill in a table indicating if the product could be more suitable for: children, students (25 and below), young women or young men (25-35), middle-aged women or middle aged men (35-50) or population above 50. The raking allowed was from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly agree*), forcing an answer around a precise target.

To quantify the importance of the price variable in the consumer purchase decision, well known as one of the fundamental marketing levers, we decided not to reveal the real price of the package; instead,



participants were asked to guess it and to motivate their answer. Subsequently, they were requested to answer a close-ended question which had the purpose of investigating whether the price significantly affects consumers' purchasing behavior.

In order to record the personal values that could lead participants to buy Amarena Fabbri, they were also asked to rate the values that best represented their ideas. The value dimension in our questionnaire starts with an open-ended question about the description of a hypothetical purchase situation of Amarena. A second part is composed of ten close-ended questions where participants are asked to rank their level of engagement with the statement cited above each question.

The statements we used in this section are related to *Schwartz's Theory of Human Value* since it is regarded as a cross-culturally validated classification system of personal values experimented in more than 60 countries, including China. Schwartz's classification system includes ten values: security, hedonism, benevolence, self-direction, stimulation, universalism, tradition, conformity, achievement, and power<sup>64</sup>.

Collecting this kind of information will help us to understand which values could influence consumers to feel engaged in the purchasing of this kind of product.

The last part of this dimension included a table built to investigate participants' social norms, more specifically, the opinions of people in the social life cycle which influence the consumer's daily purchasing decision the most. The subjects included were: parents, partner, children, friends, colleagues/classmates, KOL and social celebrities.

A conclusive closed-ended question probed the respondents about their level of engagement with the product: "If it were already available in shops, would you buy it?". They had the chance to express a positive, a negative or a neutral feedback. This last question was statted to reach a definitive feedback around Amarena Fabbri and a final general description of the target groups.

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<sup>64</sup> S. H. Schwartz, "Beyond Individualism-Collectivism: New Cultural Dimensions of Values", 1992.

## Chapter 3: Data analysis

### *Introduction*

After the discussion about a market research project and the explanation of a completed fieldwork, the present Chapter aims to present the analysis of the data. An introduction about a few common practices for a proper collection and analysis of the data in qualitative research is carried out. Secondly, research findings related to each focus group is presented and discussed. A distinction is made between the findings obtained through the summary and the frequency tables for every dimension, due to the different type of question used. In the summary section, a few images appear which have been posted by the participants to highlight the resemblance of Amarena packaging and flavor to other sometimes very different products related to the Chinese culinary tradition.

The Chapter treats the Values dimension in a specific section, where the Schwartz original meaning of values and the research interpretations are voiced. According to our interpretation, five of the ten human values are affecting Chinese consumer behavior the most, and therefore are discussed separately.

The conclusive part of the Chapter describes definitively the characteristics of each target group and defines which are the strategies that, if implemented, could more favorably convert these demographics into final consumers; moreover, the marketing implications related to Amarena Fabbri are discussed.

### 3.1 Data analysis

As noted beforehand, in qualitative research, the samples are smaller than in quantitative surveys but data are more subtle and complex. This is because the questions are mainly open-ended and the access to full responses requires deeper levels of interpretations; also, an interview or discussion is unpredictable, with the sequence that even the range of topics varying between different respondents. For these reasons, the reporting process might be time consuming and data analysis needs to be treated with accurate methodology.<sup>65</sup>

A common practice in qualitative research is to record interviews or focus groups to capture all the informations and to assure accuracy. Then, it is necessary to transcribe them into typed-up text and carry out analysis with the material collected. Moreover, while recording interviews, another efficient practice is making notes about the key concepts that stands out from discussion, which means having a list of salient points to be searched later in the recordings. As latest step, qualitative researchers still have to rely on immersing themselves in the scripts by thoroughly reading the transcripts and making notes on the salient points. This is the reason why it is advisedly for this research area that the researcher who has carried out the fieldwork is the one also deeply involved in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the data, for otherwise much would be lost.<sup>66</sup>

In our case study research, data have been collected into an Excel spreadsheet where participants have been divided by their target group and listed by a number, each one was identified together with the personal statements and answers. This first sheet allowed us to have an electronic paper gathering all the informations gained through the questionnaires, it basically constituted an over-all research résumé.

Secondly, open-ended questions and close-ended questions have been divided into two different Excel sheets because they needed different approaches. The open-ended questions sheet has been divided for type of dimensions, so for each dimension the question was added and a comparison of the responses lead to a summary of all the relevant parts.

The close-ended questions sheet was also divided for type of dimensions and we relied on Excel pivot tables to obtain the exact count of responses for each answer. In case of left blank fields “N/A” has been added and any relevant comment has been taken into consideration; for example, in the Value dimension one of the respondents added: “*This value does not reflect at all my personality*” and we decided to keep this personal comment into the pivot tables results.

In order to verify the written answers gathered through the questionnaires, the recordings have been transcribed and translated from Chinese to English. The transcriptions were helpful for integrating the open-ended questions results and to have a double-check of the collected data.

The WeChat groups created for each focus group were useful to receive further information about subsequent experiences or to share images about Chinese products packagings similar to the Amarena jar.

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<sup>65</sup> Hague P., Cupman J., Harrison M., Truman O., “*Market research in practice*”, 2016, Kogan Page.

<sup>66</sup> Hague P., Cupman J., Harrison M., Truman O., “*Market research in practice*”, 2016, Kogan Page.

## 3.2 Research insights: summary tables findings

### 3.2.1 First focus group: Millennials target

The discussion with millennials' focus group provided interesting insights. As they stated, Amarena jar has a strong traditional valence because it resembles a traditional and classic product, and its aesthetic appearance was considered beautiful and attractive. Participants agreed on the fact that, due to its uniqueness, if positioned on the same shelf with other similar products, Amarena jar would definitely be the first one to attract their attention. Its packaging appears significantly different from that of other fruit jams Chinese consumers are already familiar with. This finding confirms that packaging could be an important factor to consider for the competitiveness of Amarena.

All the participants agreed that the jar respects the Chinese culture. More specifically, the flower motif, shape and colors have a clear connection to traditional Chinese blue and white vases.

However, while discussing the color of the jar in detail, we discovered that participants had a confused perception of the product itself; in fact, due to the colored covering of the jar, it is impossible to understand what the content looks like. This particular aspect should be taken in greater consideration when entering the Chinese market, as Chinese consumers pay particular attention to the quality and features of the products they are buying. If the product is not correctly presented, or is hidden into a completely covered packaging, it is even more difficult to convince them to buy imported goods because they would perceive the product as fake which is hiding the real content instead of being transparent and clear to final customers.

For example, at the beginning of the session, the participants were influenced by the blue and white color of the packaging and they thought it was a blueberries jam and could not tell if the product was sweet, like yogurt, or salty, like pickles. As our participants explained, Amarena has been related to pickles because the jars are similar both in color and shape. We discovered that, in China, traditional packaging for pickles are very similar to Amarena Fabbri jars', displaying a white and blue motif and being closed by a lid (*Fig. 1*). However, they stated that the smaller jar (230g), does not directly remind them of pickles, while the traditional Amarena Fabbri big jar would definitely raise this perception.

The small size of this packaging (230g) obtained considerable success. It gave participants the perception to be practical but also delicate and elegant, very suitable for gifts.



*Fig. 1: Chinese traditional packagings for pickles*

Logo and brand were correctly recognized on the packaging; however, the country of origin, which is not specified, raised unclear perceptions, just as the ice cream image displayed for demonstration purposes. This once again confirms that the packaging could create a distorted perception for Chinese consumers about the real product.

Also, some participants mentioned that the jar reminds them of traditional Chinese culture, while others were reminded of Russian culture and said the jar seemed to be one of the components of a matryoshka. The design pattern could also remind of Middle East ceramic tiles. The most extreme perception stated that the jar has a mystic appearance: it reminds of a magical totem.

It is important to highlight that none of the connections the jar raised into participants' minds about the product's origin were directly related to European countries, at least not to Italy. This aspect should be taken into stronger consideration regarding the bias the packaging itself could lead to regarding its country of origin.

Moreover, the image displayed on the jar is mainly about ice cream. It gave the impression of an ice-cream-related product, therefore, participants could not find any connection to other possible uses.

The ice cream image does not allow them to feel a real connection with the product. This is caused by many cultural and traditional factors embedded into Chinese society, which does not allow a quick or relevant development of ice cream in the Chinese market.

Millennials confirmed that they would not buy a product whose main use is linked to ice cream because they would never have ice cream at home. A possible solution to this issue could be to specify Amarena's main uses on the packaging, as Chinese consumers are used to see on the majority of the products in shops or in supermarkets. Especially for imported products, it is common to find labeling with additional information about the possible combinations with other foods or recommended uses.

After showing to the participants all the alternatives of Amarena jar packaging dimensions, they expressed a clear preference for Opaline 600g. They stated Opaline has the most beautiful colors and shape, even if they admit they would not buy such a huge packaging as a first purchase.

“这个包装看起来跟俄罗斯的套娃一样。它是很美丽，很独特。货架上跟其他果酱一起一定富有竞争力。”

*“The packaging looks like a matryoshka. Placed together with other fruit jams products on the shelves, its unique shape and beautiful flower motif will surely assure competitiveness.”*

The tasting experience of Amarena was overall positive, even if the majority of them perceived the product as too sweet. When eaten separately, Amarena reminded them of a Chinese cough syrup medicine, *Pipagao* (Fig. 3). However, millennials were very satisfied with how it looked and described its color as beautiful and bright, perfect to be added to cakes and desserts, used as a decoration. Overall, Amarena was perceived as a product unlikely to be eaten by itself, to match with other foods in order to reduce the sweetness and intensity.



Fig. 3: Chinese “Pipagao” cough syrup

According to the data collected, millennials appear to be very influential among family members regarding purchasing decisions. They said they often cook at home - for example, they are used to preparing home-made yogurt, easy-to-cook cakes, or basic meals and apple vinegar.

One of the participants who enjoyed both the taste and texture of Amarena explained that she would use it as an ingredient of the cakes she often bakes at home. This potential use would have two favorable reasons: the combination would reduce the intense sweetness of the cherries, and the bright and beautiful color would enrich the cake. Moreover, millennials spontaneously perceived yogurt as a perfect match for Amarena, because it is a generally well-known product for Chinese consumers. To use in combination with Amarena, they would choose a yogurt without any added-sugar since - according to their taste - the cherries are already over-sweetened.

Some participants gave a negative feedback about the taste because according to their perception it does not have a natural flavor. One of them in particular, which is used to prepare home-made marmalade with seasonal fruits following Italian recipes, confessed that Amarena having *jam* as translation of “Fruit and Syrup” on the lid confused her reminding of a completely different flavor from the one she was expecting. The translation issue is another aspect that should be taken in consideration by the company and which is more specifically discussed later in this Chapter.

The second part of the tasting saw Amarena in combination with yogurt, vanilla flavor ice cream, sweet bread, and blueberry flavor smoothy. This second phase led to confirmation of many of the previous statements. For example, the combination with the sweetened yogurt made them realize that Amarena is a very easy-to-match product, but they confirmed they would rather pair it with unsweetened yogurt to mitigate the sweetness of the cherries. The vanilla flavor ice cream was perceived as a good combination, but also in this case a bitter flavor would have been preferred, for example, they suggested dark chocolate flavor. However, they still confirmed ice cream as a not appropriate food combination among Chinese consumers. They would never consider buying ice cream to combine it with Amarena Fabbri as a dessert to prepare at home; this is designated only as an Italian tradition.

According to our research, ice cream in China is therefore destined to be a product to be sold only in the B2B context.

Participants demonstrated a positive inclination for Amarena and suggested many different uses. They would be curious to use Amarena in some Chinese traditional recipes, as for example pork braised meat (*hongshaorou* 红烧肉) or any other dishes of Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou cuisine that are typically recognized for their sweet and sour mixed flavors. Due to its perfect combination with yogurt, participants would also consider milk or milk custard as a possible match. They related Amarena to Italian wine or cocktails, pancakes, smoothies, bitter flavor ice cream, bitter fruits, spirits and sparkling water, or it could be used as a decoration on cakes and bakery products.

An insight raised by our participants' feedback is the importance of the adding-quantity of Amarena with the combined product, they insist on adding a small number of cherries to avoid an over-sweetened flavor. Millennials perception before and after Amarena tasting in combination with other products changed considerably. They defined Amarena as a versatile product that generally tastes better when used in combination with other sour products rather than alone. However, it is also perceived as a product for a niche market, whose consumers want to keep up with the latest trends. This feedback confirms the idea of exclusiveness that Amarena Fabbri could reach in the consumer market's perception.

To reduce the sweetness of cherries, participants would prefer a combination with a cold product, and as ice cream would not be their first choice, millennials raised an easy recipe that is becoming more and more

popular among Chinese consumers, called *bingfen* 冰粉, which is a salad prepared only with ice cubes and flavorings like sauces, milk, or syrups.

There was not a broad price range for Millennials, for example, some of them guessed the price could be around 50-60 RMB, while others guessed it could also be around 70-80 RMB.

However, there are still many aspects they would investigate before being ready to engage in direct purchase of Amarena Fabbri. For example, they consider knowing the right economic value of a new product as a crucial factor; it means that price variable would influence their purchase decision. After a first approach with the product, they would search for more information about the brand and the product itself; the intention would be the one to improve the knowledge about a new product before engaging in purchase decision. To cite a few examples, before buying Amarena, they stated they would search in advance for many other recipes or combinations in order to be aware about this new product's uses. Participants expressed curiosity also about the distribution channels, they raised questions as: will the product be sold in online or offline distribution? If offline, in what kind of stores? As the most influential consumer in the family, it is important for millennials to know where and how to find a new product.

In conclusion, this demographic consider the information reported on the packaging as too scarce. They would add the main uses of Amarena in order to give a basic idea about which is the content as well as how they could use it.

### 3.2.2 Second focus group: young mothers

At first sight, young mothers associated immediately Amarena with dairy or sweet related products. Thanks to the strong connection of its appearance with Chinese culture, they stated it would easily attract the Chinese consumers' attention. In fact, this focus group's participants were reminded of Chinese traditional vases, as for the previous one, but they also considered this connection very strange and somewhat inappropriate for a *jam* jar. The resemblance with a porcelain vase, in fact, is not a characteristic which helps the consumer to understand which is the content of the package and the consumer's perception is therefore vague and unclear.

As they stated:

“我最喜欢的特点就是它看起来很干净，白色蓝色的包装很灿烂，让我想到中国文化。可是它跟水果酱有什么关系？我看一看这个包装而一直在想，它就是什么东西呢？很不明确。”

*“What I like the most about this packaging is that it looks clean, the white and blue are brilliant colors and they remind me of Chinese culture.*

*But I don't find any connection to a fruit jam: I see this product and I keep on thinking, what is it? It's not clear.”*

Even if the flower motif is beautiful, they think it may attract most of all adults' attention, rather than arousing children's interest. This could result in a double-edged sword, since the mothers buy sweets for their children, but most of the times are children who influence the mothers to buy specific sweet products. According to the mothers' suggestion, a solution would be to choose a more appealing color in order to attract mostly children's attention.

The image of the ice cream used for demonstration purposes of the product also represents a huge barrier in a potential purchase decision made by young mothers. It is extremely rare for Chinese mothers to give ice cream to their children, at least for the first three years of their life, and even when growing up,

mothers are very strict when it comes to give frozen and cold products to their children. This aspect stems from the Chinese culture and the tradition to prefer warm and hot products on cold ones, considered unhealthy. As in the case of young mothers and ice cream, they think children's body in the first stages of life is very delicate, and cold food and beverage products are mostly avoided. Having the perception that a product can only be used in combination with ice cream would lead most of the mothers to lose interest in buying it. Moreover, as previously discussed, the complete coverage of the packaging is a not much recommended feature when entering the Chinese market, and the mothers confirmed this theory. They would prefer having a clearer sight of the content and this would help them feeling more assured about the product.

After a first discussion about the esthetic of the packaging, mothers' attention immediately focused on the ingredients. Especially when buying sweets for their children, in fact, mothers are concerned about the sugar percentage, and most of the times if they perceive it as too high, they can easily refuse to buy. This is another important aspect to take into account when entering the Chinese market because if a product is considered too sweet or too fat, would be automatically unsuccessful for this demographic because of an unhealthy perception. One aspect that reassures mothers about product safety is the glass packaging, which is considered safer than plastic or any other materials. One of the participants admitted that she appreciated the glass packaging and its elegant shape; she would maybe consider recycling the jar after finishing its content for different uses (for example using it as a container).

The shape and the design of the packaging reminded also this demographic of pickles. The negative aspect of this perception is that pickles are considered as a processed, salty, and foster the idea of an unhealthy food product.

Discussing the color of the packaging, it emerged that mothers consider warm colors like orange, red, yellow or purple, as more appropriated for jam jars. Blue and white are cold colors that do not make the participants directly think about *jams*.

The brand name and the logo were also unclear to young mothers. For example, one of them, who does not speak English, perceived "Gluten Free" as the brand name of the company, since it is the only writing in red which stands out from the blue and white pattern design. Also the perception about its country-of-origin was obscure; they thought it could be a product from any European country indistinctly. One of the participants raised the example of a typical vase she saw in Germany while traveling around Europe, which colors and shape reminded her of the Amarena Fabbri jar, and she shared the following picture. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2: German style vase

The flavor of Amarena was perceived as too sweet also from young mothers, and it reminded them of a product containing alcohol due to the intense taste of cherries. They compared Amarena to the Ikea cherry jam and concluded that they are completely different in texture and intensity of flavor. The Ikea



jam contains small fruits and has a milder flavor; on the opposite, the entire cherry fruit of Amarena and the peel it preserves were very appreciated characteristics.

Young mothers related Amarena color to some marinated cherries they used to eat during their childhood; they used to find them on cakes (*Fig. 4*). The memories these marinated cherries raised are negative and unpleasant, because of the artificial red or green colors. Participants admitted, the color of Amarena Fabbri looks more natural, but the flavor alone reminded them of Chinese medicine cough syrup, *Pipagao*.



*Fig. 4: Chinese marinated cherries*

The second part of the tasting experience of Amarena combined with yogurt, sweet bread and vanilla ice cream also raised negative comments. They consider the product as unhealthy because the sweetness is too strong and difficult to accept. First, the vanilla flavor is too sweet to be considered as a right match, in addition, they do not consider Amarena as a spreadable product to use together with bread, and also the added-sugar yogurt is not a proper combination. They accepted yogurt most of all as a matchable product but it needs to be without any added-sugar or extra flavors.

Amarena is described as nor soft nor spreadable, and a bit crunchy; it is completely different from a fruit jam. Some of the participants appreciated Amarena for these characteristics, even if they considered it difficult to find any proper use in their daily life cuisine. Participants criticized the Chinese translation for *Guojiang* 果酱 “jam”, because the product’s content is entire pieces of cherry fruit and cherry syrup, which means that “jam” translation is not appropriate. The literal translation expressed by young mothers could be “水果和糖浆” *fruit and fruit syrup*, but it would still be considered as strange to find on a jar packaging and difficult to understand for the Chinese consumer market.

At the beginning of our research, we thought about a female group to be the most likely to enjoy the product. Our expectation has been denied by the fact that young mothers are the most concerned about the sweetness and healthiness of a product. As they considered the sugar percentage too high in Amarena, and they did not enjoy neither the taste nor the texture, because it is too greasy and soft, they were therefore quite doubtful that their children would have enjoyed the product. However, after the completion of the focus group, we gave a jar of Amarena as a reward to all participants, and young mothers conducted the same tasting experience at home with their children, sending us videos about the reactions. As a result, we discovered that children loved the product as a sweetener of white yogurt, considered as the most matchable product for mothers. Probably, it was just mothers’ negative perception about the intensity of the flavor that would not induce them in buying, but as we discovered during the focus group, children’s opinion could strongly influence young mothers’ purchase behavior.

Participants would not eat Amarena alone, but they would rather use it in combination with ice cream, drinks and cocktails, fruit wine, bread, and mashed potatoes (Chinese yam). According to young mothers,

yogurt is considered to be the most matchable combination to Amarena because it is fresher, in opposition to bread, and it helps to neutralize the sweetness of the cherries.

In relation to the Chinese cuisine, they would probably only use it in combination with fermented glutinous rice or yogurt. It is hard to suggest any other types of use because it is a product difficult to find in China and they would not easily accept it due to the high content of sugar.

Sugar, as one of the young mothers explains, is considered as an unhealthy ingredient, also linked to weight gain. Moreover, the Chinese cuisine does not include any dessert, so the population is not accustomed to enjoying this type of flavor. Respondents offered the example of French macarons in China; despite their popularity, the majority of people do not really enjoy their flavor. They are esthetically beautiful, but too sweet to eat. In bakeries, although it is easy to find macarons, respondents are more likely to ask for a toast or sandwiches.

There must be a special occasion for a Chinese young mother to search for sweets, it could be: children desire, birthdays, parties or break time after a stressful day work. Sweets are in this case considered as a reward, because it makes them perceive a sense of enjoyment and recharge of energy. However, they would be reluctant to indulge themselves and delay eating sweets as much as possible, as it is just considered to be a silly “caprice”.

The perception of the price for young mothers was aligned around 30-50 RMB.

### 3.2.3 Third focus group: Professionals

Professionals target perceived a package with a strong attractive potential for Chinese consumers, due to its connection to the traditional flower motif vases. The alternation of white and blue colors reflects harmony, the shape has an elegant curve, and the pattern design gives an artistic and classic impression; in general, it perfectly respects the Chinese culture and participants' taste.

Despite this, many other reasons lead participants to think that the packaging is quite confusing. For example, because of the colors and the flower motif, they were all certain it was a sweet product, but no one was sure about the real content of the jar. According to the image displayed, which has been discussed also during the previous focus groups, the product seems to be exclusively a topping for ice cream or yogurt. The image together with the colored motif and the list of ingredients translated into five different languages cover completely the package, and all these details contribute to giving a confused appearance of the jar. A list of ingredients in Chinese, English, and Italian would be enough for the Chinese market; the use of more languages could be overwhelming for a small packaging. (During our research, we used the European Amarena jar as packaging sample, with a Chinese translation label on the lid and the list of ingredients translated into five European languages)

The product's description translated in Chinese on the jar's lid seemed also to be very vague, participants explained that the font is difficult to read and the description of the ingredients is unclear. The brand is repeated circularly on the jar, whereas at the opposite, according to Chinese consumers perception, the brand should stand out from the packaging. That means, it should be in an eye-catching color and should occupy a proper and larger position, in order to be clear but most of all noticeable. The demonstrative image is also placed at the bottom of the packaging; it is not the best solution to attract consumers from a

new market. Professionals suggest therefore to consider a more prominent position for both the brand name, logo and demonstrative image.

A positive feedback raised by professionals is about the jar's consistent weight which gives validity to the product: participants would have the perception of buying something consistent and valuable for its price, not just an attractive and beautiful object. Even if this is just a particular aspect, it is considered to be very important for the Chinese professional consumers who always look for a fair relationship between quality and price when buying new products. Its heaviness increased their curiosity and interest. They also had the perception that packaging's size could be more attractive for a female public, rather than for men. When holding the jar in their hands, they thought it has a perfect shape and the small size looks elegant and raffinate. The adjectives used by participants to describe their impressions about the packaging demonstrate a clear interest and attraction for the product. This shows that the package could be a key point of success in the purchase decision for this target group.

Following the questions of our questionnaire, we asked if the packaging reminded them of any particular memory, either positive or negative, professionals stated that the shape of the jar resembles a bowl they used in their childhood for their meals. This deep and intimate connection could constitute another product's strength when considering similar age targets - consumers always feel a stronger engagement with products they link to pleasant memories. By analyzing the outcomes of this focus group and the comments of the participants, we discovered that the packaging per se might constitute a decisive factor in their purchase decisions.

Although professionals did not enjoy Amarena tasting, they admitted to being stupefied about its aroma and flavor: considered natural, rich and distinctive, because of the over-sweetened flavor turning into a sour aftertaste. According to their perception, they declared that the product seems to be well-crafted and to respect high-quality standards. Participants appreciated also the entire cherry fruit, because they tend to prefer a product which maintains the natural and genuine properties. Chinese consumers are even more concerned about food quality and the way food is processed, this aspect holds therefore particularly consideration in their evaluations.

One of the participants also stated that Amarena reminds of *Coca-cola*, because according to his perception *Coca-cola* also has a somehow cherry taste and a surprising combination of flavors.

Also with this target group we had an open discussion about the product's translation on the jar; in fact, when participants saw the product for the first time, they all stated the appearance did not match their expectations. Due to the wrong translation, their first approach to Amarena was therefore confused. As already noted, the word *Guojiang* 果酱 in Chinese means "jam", and according to the appearance of Amarena cherries, the participants believed it is not the right word to describe the product. They all considered the English version "Fruit and syrup" as very precise and accurate; a literal translation from English to Chinese would surely be more reliable about the jar's content and consumer's expectation would surely be respected, but it might also result less attractive for Chinese consumers who would not directly search for a "fruit and syrup product" during their grocery shopping. Therefore, we discussed also "*Yingtaojiang* 櫻桃醬" as potential translation that literally means "black cherry jam", but as for *Guojiang* 果酱, participants would consider it confusing to associate "jam" to a non-spreadable product.

The second part of Amarena tasting combined with other products confirmed the perception of an excessively sweet flavor. In general, they considered the taste of Amarena as too sweet for their eating habits, they accepted however the combination of the flavor in small quantities, it means that also for this demographic the quantity of Amarena to be added is very important. For example, they preferred the combination with yogurt, that has to be without any added-sugar to balance the sweetness of the cherries. The active carbon and vanilla flavor ice cream received a great appraisal and resulted really matchable with Amarena. The ice cream helped the participants to perceive a not too sweet nor too sour flavor, and this match convinced also the participants who were particularly reluctant to the sweetness of the product.

Discussing the best alternatives to combine Amarena, all the participants were therefore convinced about two particular characteristics that the product in combination should have to reach a good match with the cherries: it has to be cold and neutral in flavor. An iced or fresh product would reduce the intense flavor, and the neutral or natural flavor would mitigate the sweetness.

Being aware of this perception, the company should specify, for consumers still not accustomed to Amarena, that in the first tasting approach is advisable to use a product with a neutral flavor in combination with a small number of cherries. In this way, negative perceptions caused only by an initial misuse of Amarena cherries would be reduced. The main combinations they spontaneously raised are: yogurt (without added sugar), fruits, oatmeal or cereals, pancakes, bread, ice cream or snacks.

About the Chinese culinary tradition that could embrace the cherries flavor, professional stated a few examples which include both traditional savory and sweet recipes, such as: *dousha tangyuan* 豆沙汤圆, a special type of Chinese dumplings made of glutinous rice flour served in soup and filled with sweetened red bean paste, and *dousha zongzi* 豆沙粽子, a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo or red leaves, filled with sweetened red bean paste; participants think that both could be filled with Amarena cherry and syrup. Shanghainese cuisine is notably very sweet and tends to mix sweet and sour flavors, as: sweet and sour mandarin fish (deep-fried mandarin fish in sweet and sour sauce), double cooked pork slices, spareribs braised in brown sauce. All these plates, according to participants, could involve Amarena as part of their ingredients and becoming part of new creative combinations. In relation to sweet recipes they stated Chinese yam with blueberry sauce (smashed potatoes), whereas the topping of blueberry sauce could be replaced by the cherry sauce.

In Shanghai, the Chinese population is already accustomed to a sweet cuisine as part of their culture, but a product like Amarena, if not well-combined, could still be difficult to be accepted by the Shanghainese population. In other one-tier cities in China, participants think it could be even more difficult for this product to be accepted by final consumers.

The general perception about the price for the professionals is around 50 RMB. Due to the fact that Amarena is an imported product, they could accept a higher price around 70 RMB.

### 3.3 Research insights: Frequency tables findings

We made use of quantitative questions to probe our participants about features related to the five dimensions; this allowed us to collect specific data about the packaging, taste, suggested target, price, values and social norms.

#### 3.3.1 Packaging

To enter into details of packaging dimension, we asked our participants to rank in a table from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*) their personal opinion about seven packaging's features: color, shape, dimension, image, design, brand name and logo.

The specific questions and frequency tables are listed below:

- *How much do the following dimensions attract your attention?*

##### *Color*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Label				
Row Labels	A little	Very much	Yes	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	2		4		6
Mother	1		3		4
Professional	2	2	3	1	8
Grand Total	5	2	10	1	18

##### *Size*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	A little	No	Very much	Yes	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	2		1	3		6
Mother	1	1	1	1		4
Professional	1		2	4	1	8
Grand Total	4	1	4	8	1	18

##### *Shape*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels			
Row Labels	A little	Very much	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials	2	2	2	6
Mother	2		2	4
Professional		5	3	8
Grand Total	4	7	7	18

### Image

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	A little	No	Very much	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials		2		4	6
Mother	1		1	2	4
Professional	3		3	2	8
Grand Total	4	2	4	8	18

### Design

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	A little	No	Very much	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials	2	1	1	2	6
Mother	1			3	4
Professional			4	4	8
Grand Total	3	1	5	9	18

### Logo

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	A little	No	Yes	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials		4	2		6
Mother	3	1			4
Professional	2	2	2	2	8
Grand Total	5	7	4	2	18

### Brand name

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	A little	No	Very much	Yes	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	4	2				6
Mother	2			2		4
Professional	2	2	1	2	1	8
Grand Total	8	4	1	4	1	18

Table's results confirm that the esthetic of the product reflects the taste of our respondents; they accept the colors, the shape, the decoration of the design pattern and the size. In short, all the esthetic features that constitute the package are considered as attractive and competitive for the Chinese market. But results also show that the abstract features should be revised, as product's identity is still missing. Participants, in fact, find it difficult to understand which is the product's country-of-origin: the colors might suggest

Russian origins or they guessed Middle-East; moreover, the brand name is hidden by the beautiful flower motif which mainly reminds of Chinese cultural and artistic features; moreover, they do not have a clear perception neither about the logo.

Country-of-origin, brand name and logo are all abstract features of a packaging which build a product's identity. In the launch of a product in a new market it is necessary to preserve the nationality and the identity of the offering, to guarantee not only the product's success and but also its position in a new and unaccustomed market.

It is true that a special requirement for a product to succeed in China is to have a beautiful appearance and to be contained in an appealing packaging to meet the pretentious Chinese standards in terms of colors, size, harmony, shape and decorations; but, in a fierce competitive market awash in infinite different offerings, if a product is appealing but its brand remains unknown, its life cycle will be indeed shorter than the one of an affirmed brand. In a country like China, as also our participants stated, brand concept have always had an incomparable value, it assures recognition and guarantees an extension in a product life cycle.

### 3.3.2 Taste

Regarding the taste dimension, a product-test has been carried out with the tasting of Amarena separately and after in combination with other products such as: ice cream, sweet bread, smoothie and yogurt. According to the tasting of Amarena fruit and syrup the participants were probed to answer from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*) the questions below:

*Do you like it?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Not at all	No	A little	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials		2	3	1	6
Mother	2	1	1		4
Professional		1	3	4	8
Grand Total	2	4	7	5	18

*Does the product taste as expected?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Not at all	No	A little	Yes	Very much	Grand Total
Millennials		4	2			6
Mother	2	1	1			4
Professional		3	3	1	1	8
Grand Total	2	8	6	1	1	18

*Do you think it is a unique flavor?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labe					
Row of Labels	A little	No	Not at all	Very much	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials		1		1	4	6
Mother	1	1	1		1	4
Professional				4	4	8
Grand Total	1	2	1	5	9	18

*Is it a flavor that you would like to add to your daily life?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row of Labels	No	Not at all	A little	Yes	Grand Total	
Millennials	2	1	2	1	6	
Mother	1	3			4	
Professional	3		3	2	8	
Grand Total	6	4	5	3	18	

*Do you like the texture?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Not at all	No	A little	Yes	Grand Total	
Millennials	1	1	1	3	6	
Mother	2	1	1		4	
Professional		2	3	3	8	
Grand Total	3	4	5	6	18	

*Would you suggest it to friends?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Not at all	No	Yes	Very much	Grand Total	
Millennials		5	1		6	
Mother	3	1			4	
Professional		3	4	1	8	
Grand Total	3	9	5	1	18	

A strong difference in perception is evident among the different target groups regarding the enjoyment of Amarena tasting experience. The young mothers group did not enjoy Amarena; millennials showed their curiosity through mostly positive answers; and among professionals participants, there is only one respondent who gave a negative feedback.



The perception of young mothers could be justified by the fact that they want to pursue a healthy life style and firmly believe that sugar is harmful; they influence each other in this conviction and accordingly decide to avoid this kind of products. Chinese mothers purchase sweets mainly for their children, and about themselves they tend to procrastinate or directly to avoid eating sweets.

Millennials and professionals, in our opinion, show different motivations. Millennials are the engine of the market, they show a proactive attitude in exploring new offerings; this is reflected by their decision of ranking Amarena in between the two extremes, but the taste would not be the only factor influencing their perception about the product. Professionals showed a more flexible attitude, as all our respondents are resident in Shanghai, they are already accustomed to sweet flavors, therefore, they tend to not like nor dislike the product.

However, the answers collected from the frequency tables also confirm that the majority of our participants was not expecting this kind of taste or texture; their expectations were more related to a jam product.

A discrepancy among participants' answers is also shown about the suggestions to friends; in fact, according to the frequency tables, the majority of respondents would not suggest the product. However, focusing on professionals target answers, they are divided between two extremes: one half of respondents would in fact suggest the product, the other half would not. This contradiction could be explained by the fact that professionals might more preferably give this sort of product as a gift rather than buy it for themselves. Amarena Fabbri enters into the gifting perception of Chinese consumer for various reasons: it is an imported product, it has a very captivating packaging, and because of imported, Chinese clientele feel more assured about food quality, and because it is a new offering it would let them appear to be aware of latest trends.

According to these results, millennials participants seem to be convinced in not suggesting the product, but we do not think this feedback wants to express negativity or passive behavior in their word-of-mouth attitude. At the opposite, we believe that millennials probably need to reach a deeper *how-to-knowledge* about a new offer, to feel more assured about its characteristics, before suggesting it to family or friends.

3.3.3 Suggested target

The frequency tables about the suggested target dimension have been added to clarify who could be the most favorable consumer of Amarena Fabbri, according to our respondents, the product is more suitable for...

*Children*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Grand Total
Millennials	4		2		6
Mother	1			3	4
Professional	4	2	2		8
Grand Total	9	2	4	3	18

*Students*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Grand Total
Millennials	3		3		6
Mother	1	1		2	4
Professional	5	1	2		8
Grand Total	9	2	5	2	18

*Young women*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Grand Total
Millennials	1		5		6
Mother	2	1		1	4
Professional	5		3		8
Grand Total	8	1	8	1	18

*Young men*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	3	1	2			6
Mother	2	1		1		4
Professional	4	2	1		2	8
Grand Total	9	4	3	1	2	18

*Middle-aged women*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	3	2	1			6
Mother		2		1	1	4
Professional	3	2	2		1	8
Grand Total	6	6	3	1	2	18

*Middle-aged men*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	5	1				6

Mother	1	2		1		4
Professional	2	3	2		1	8
Grand Total	8	6	2	1	1	18

*Population above 50*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	1	4	1		6
Mother		1	3		4
Professional	1	5	1	1	8
Grand Total	2	10	5	1	18

Millennials' perception about Amarena is overall positive, this means that they could be a potential target for the product. They suggested also 25-35 year old women as another potential target, because according to millennials' opinion, mothers are influential in the purchasing behavior of the entire family and are more accustomed to buy sweet products for their children, or for themselves.

During the focus group, one of the participants added:

“阿玛雷纳有各种各样的使用，我就会购买。我会在家里使用阿玛雷纳做创意菜，找到新的使用、新的食谱。”

*“The numerous amount of possible combinations with Amarena would convince me to buy, I would like to have one Amarena jar in my house and mix it anytime with other products to find new matches. It could be a new ingredient for a creative cuisine.”*

Although young mothers are always very concerned about the sugar intake of their kids, some of them also think Amarena could be an alternative product to be consumed for breakfast. Some of the participants explained that in their families they are used to eating only Chinese-style breakfasts, but others admit that they are already accustomed to a Western-style breakfast. For example, they prepare yogurt, eggs, bread (sandwich or bread with marmalade). Amarena could then enter their houses as a new product for breakfast, they probably would not use it as a jam on the bread or on pancakes, but they would better accept it in combination with yogurt.

Professionals think that young people could be the most appropriate target for Amarena and it could maybe receive a higher appraisal from young women and, perhaps, their children.

All the target participants generally agreed the product is not suitable for elderly people. Professionals particularly explained that, as consumers, they generally prefer original and authentic flavors, even if sometimes original flavors might be too strong or “too natural”, they would rather adjust the taste by their own. One respondent reported the example of olives, another non-typical product in China, that is however perceived as natural and healthy. They prefer eating olives with a preservation of the original taste, natural and pure, without any added salt, because any other additional ingredient would alter the taste, which means it would be perceived as unhealthy for this demographic.

### 3.3.4 Price

Discussing the ability and the willingness to pay for the product, the participants were requested to answer a close-ended question which had the purpose of investigating whether the price significantly affects consumers' purchasing behavior.

*How much important is the price in your purchasing decision for this type of product?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	A little important	Moderately important	Very important	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials		4	1	1	6
Mother	3	1			4
Professional	1	4	3		8
Grand Total	4	9	4	1	18

The results show that for millennials the price is a variable of moderate importance in their purchase decision making. For young mothers, instead, the price is a somewhat important variable in the purchasing decision making; in fact, they explained that when buying food and beverage products, they first rely on quality, and secondly on taste and texture. They confirm that when spending a certain amount of money, the product should perfectly match their taste, otherwise, consumers would just shift their choice towards the other numerous alternatives available on the market.

Even if the price does not affect directly mothers purchasing behavior, they are used to comparing prices among product of the same category. In particular, they compared Amarena's price with imported honey's price: even if they are both imported goods, they believe that imported honey could be more expensive than Amarena. In addition to this, they stated they could accept a difference in price between 20-30%; if above this price range, they might opt for other alternatives.

One of the participants stated about price dimension:

“价格一般不会影响我的购买决定，而折扣会影响”； *The price does not affect my purchase decision, discounts do.*

Generally speaking, price is an important variable for the professionals purchase decision and it could definitely influence their choices. This can be explained by the fact that the economic value of a product is oftentimes used as a prove of the social status which is particularly relevant for this demographic.

### 3.4 The Value dimension: summary and frequency tables in detail

Chinese consumers may desire similar product features to Western consumers but the value that consumers attach to the same product may differ cross-nationally. To our knowledge, there is no published scientific researches that investigates how personal values influence Chinese consumer's food consumption decisions. The first part of the paragraph presents a few insights gained during the focus

groups through open discussions with participants and in the second part are presented the findings we collected through the closed-ended questions related to the *Schwartz' ten human values*.

### 3.4.1 Summary table

The Value dimension started with an open-ended question about the description of a hypothetical purchase situation of Amarena. Our intention here was to discover under which conditions Chinese consumers would feel more engaged in purchasing Amarena Fabbri. As well as, how they imagine finding the product, the people they imagine buying the product with, the store they would enter to search for it, the reasons that convinced them in purchasing.

Collecting this kind of information helped us understanding the main factors in their social sphere which influence their purchase behavior the most.

	Millennails	Young mothers	Professionals
<i>After this experience, can you please describe a typical situation where you imagine yourself consuming this product?</i>	I could buy it to consume it together with my friends; or I could buy it as a gift for fiends or my parents. If I could buy this product as a gift I would chose the middle size packaging. (Opaline)	I don't think I would consume this product. I wouldn't buy it, I'd prefer to consume it in a restaurant.	I could buy it to give as a present or I could consume it together with my family. In buying this product, I would feel assured about food quality.

For millennials group a hypothetical purchase decision could raise from the esthetic of the packaging. Some of our participants think that the product could be more suitable for a present, rather than being a personal purchase. It would surely constitute a high-value gift for the Chinese clientele because of the elegance and Chinese taste displayed by the shape and design of the packaging, the unique flavor, and the preservation ensured by natural additives. These are the main valuable attributes according to which participants think their friends and families would feel convinced and assured about tasting Amarena.

Millennials described a profile target for their Amarena gift. According to their perception and to the Chinese culture, this kind of product requires a close friendship or at least a certain kind of engagement between people; otherwise, for common or non-intimate friends they would just rely on usual gifts, citing the example of high-range fresh fruits. Moreover, they imagine to buy Amarena Fabbri for a female friend, without a specific reason for this gender preference, it is just a common belief among participants that the product could be more appreciated from a female public.

Amarena is represented as a proper gift to bring to dinner parties for a twofold reason: the packaging itself is beautiful, but more in depth, it leaves to the owner the final decision of opening it immediately or not. This could be interpreted as an intrinsic sign of politeness for the Chinese culture, which gives expression of respect and gratitude for the invitation. In fact, even if the product would not be opened immediately, the image that the gift bestows is the one of a fancy and elegant object.

For young mothers, when buying a new product, it is important to consider the versatility of uses, the higher it is the more likely they would feel satisfied with its purchase. For Amarena, however, they need more information about how to use it, otherwise the lack of understanding would be a disincentive to buy.

imported goods shop because the packaging owns the right criteria to attract consumers attention and maybe induce them in buying decision, or in bakeries where Amarena could be used as an ingredient on cakes. The concept of time is crucial for young mothers when considering the purchase of food and beverage new products, in fact, they should not require a long preparation and should be easy-to-use. At the opposite, however, Amarena requires new learning and know-how, therefore, at the moment, they feel having not enough time to cook at home or to discover new recipes, confirming that they are still not convinced in engaging in direct purchase.

Professionals group think they could buy Amarena, in supermarkets or stores, but it probably would not be a repetitive purchase. The main reason stems from their perception about its consumption rate: they believe that one jar needs a long time period to be finished, and they probably would not become attached enough to the product to engage in later purchases.

### 3.4.2 Schwarz's Theory of Human Values

A second part is composed of ten closed-questions where participants are asked to rank their level of engagement with the statement cited above each question. The statements we used in this dimension are related to Schwartz' values classification system, which includes: security, hedonism, benevolence, self-direction, stimulation, universalism, tradition, conformity, achievement, and power (Schwartz, 1992). Collecting this kind of information will help us to understand which values could influence consumers to feel engaged in the purchasing of this kind of product.

#### 3.4.2.1 Legenda: Values interpretation

Values	Schwartz value type	Research interpretation
Security	Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of the self	<i>This product makes me feel secure about my health, it's a food safe to eat</i>
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself	<i>I perceive a sense of pleasure and gratification when eating this product</i>
Benevolence	Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact	<i>When buying this kind of product, I think if it will benefit not just me, but also my family</i>
Self-direction	Independent thought and action: choosing, creating, exploring	<i>I'm curious about the latest products, consuming this product is an expression of my independent thought</i>
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty and challenge in life	<i>I like having a varied life; this is why I search for products that express novelty</i>
Universalism	Understanding and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature	<i>I'm concerned about the protection of the environment and equality</i>
Tradition	Respect of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self	<i>I devote myself to traditional consumption habits; I respect my culture and tradition</i>

Conformity	Restrain of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others	<i>I restrain the impulses that could upset or harm others; I honor the elders</i>
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	<i>I like to demonstrate competence through personal success; I am ambitious and influential</i>
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources	<i>I like to be recognized by others and to confirm my social status</i>

### 3.4.2.2 Frequency tables

*This product makes me feel secure about my health*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	4	1	1		6
Mother	1		3		4
Professional	4	2	1	1	8
Grand Total	9	3	5	1	18

*I think this product is a food safe to eat<sup>67</sup>*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	N/A	Grand Total
Millennials	5		1		6
Mother	1		3		4
Professional	3	1	3	1	8
Grand Total	9	1	7	1	18

*I perceive a sense of pleasure and gratification when eating this product*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree		Grand Total
Millennials	4	1	1		6
Mother	1		3		4
Professional	5	2	1		8
Grand Total	10	3	5		18

<sup>67</sup> This statement is related to the “security” value, so both the first and the second statements should be considered for the perception of *security* in the purchase behavior.

*When buying this kind of product, I think if it will benefit not just me, but also my family*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels			
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Grand Total
Millennials	4	2		6
Mother	2		2	4
Professional	6	2		8
Grand Total	12	4	2	18

*I'm curious about the latest products, consuming this product is an expression of my independent thought*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	3		3		6
Mother		1	2	1	4
Professional	7		1		8
Grand Total	10	1	6	1	18

*I like having a varied life; this is why I search for products that express novelty*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	3	1	2		6
Mother	1	1	1	1	4
Professional	6	1	1		8
Grand Total	10	3	4	1	18

*I'm concerned about the protection of the environment and equality*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Diagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	3	1	2		6
Mother	1	1	1	1	4
Professional	6	1	1		8
Grand Total	10	3	4	1	18



*I devote myself to traditional consumption habits; I respect my culture and tradition*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	4	2			6
Mother	2	1		1	4
Professional	3	4	1		8
Grand Total	9	7	1	1	18

*I restrain the impulses that could upset or harm others; I honor the elders*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels			
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	2	4		6
Mother	2	1	1	4
Professional	7	1		8
Grand Total	11	6	1	18

*I like to demonstrate competence through personal success; I am ambitious and influential*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	6				6
Mother	2		1	1	4
Professional	4	2	2		8
Grand Total	12	2	3	1	18

*I like to be recognized by others and to confirm my social status*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	This value doesn't reflect at all my personality	Grand Total
Millennials	5			1	6
Mother	2	1		1	4
Professional	4	2	2		8
Grand Total	11	3	2	2	18

### 3.4.2.3 Values Discussion

Overall, *Security*, *Hedonism*, *Self-direction*, *Achievement*, *Universalism* result to be the most influential values for Chinese consumers when making confectionary products decisions. In this section the five dominant values driving their consumption are presented and discussed.

#### *Security*

According to Schwartz, the defining goal of the values security is “safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of the self”. In the context of this research, security is interpreted as *feeling secure about health and food safety*.

Security was the most widely mentioned value for confectionary products consumption, and in the study, participants placed the largest importance on food quality aspects and mainly on the product’s ingredients and shelf life.

A series of food contamination scandals in China (e.g. fake chicken eggs, plastic tapioca pearls, and melanine in infant formula) have fueled demand for safe processed foods and beverages.

Chinese consumers who held a strong value of security perceive well-known brand and large manufacturers with long history, even better if of imported products, as a means to guarantee food safety. According to the answers we collected, the product’s attributes regarding food consumption influencing Chinese consumers decision the most are: containing natural ingredients and fewer additives, fresh and natural, non-flavored, short shelf life, closest to the manufacturing date, well-known brand and imported. *Non-flavored* is an important attribute and closely related to *natural ingredients*, *fresh* and *natural*. According to respondents perception, the difference between *flavored* and *non-flavored* could also be referred to as single flavored and multi-flavored products, respectively. The sugar added-quantity in Amarena has been perceived as unnatural element and an excessively covering of the original cherries flavor, especially for professionals target group.

One aspect in particular that was creating concerns about Amarena is the long lasting expiring date; for Chinese consumers such a long expiring date gives the impression of a food product full of preservatives and additives, harmful for health. Since they discovered that the long period of time was guaranteed only by natural additives, like sugar, they felt much more assured about the product and convinced about this aspect could be a key point for Amarena’s success in China. A statement from a focus group participant demonstrates this: “有健康的因素，零添加特级符合食品安全，如果公司会突出这个方面一定会让它保证更吸引力 - *The company should stress the fact that Amarena is an additive-free product; for Chinese consumers it is an extremely important factor that would definitely assure competitiveness among other imported products*”.

As a result, we believe that such information should be properly stated on the packaging because it would assure Chinese consumers not only about the product itself, but also about the sugar percentage. It is possible that, with the right reference, the sugar could be perceived as a natural ingredient and, in the right doses, not harmful for health.

We believe that *Lingtianjia* 零添加 *zero additives* could be a proper communication to add on the packaging and could achieve great success in the Chinese market.

Participants overall consider Amarena as a real competitive product for the Chinese market and tasting expositions or focus group activities as interesting and successful opportunities capable to facilitate an initial approach between Chinese consumers and new imported products.

### *Hedonism*

The second most influential value with regards to confectionary products consumption is hedonism. The value type for hedonism is defined by Schwartz “as pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself”. In the context of this research, it is interpreted to mean *perceiving a sense of pleasure and gratification when eating this kind of product*.

Consumers for whom hedonism is important may care a great deal about taste and visual appearance.<sup>68</sup> For instance, during the second focus group, young mothers affirmed that food quality is the first aspect they care about in the purchase decision of a new product, and then taste and pleasure are the second factors to be considered for later purchases. Millennials target group was the most enthusiast about the taste of Amarena, they perceived the sweetness as a sensation of enjoyment and gratification.

This can be interpreted as Chinese consumers are becoming more and more sophisticated about tastes and emphasize strongly on the value hedonism where eating is not just filing an empty stomach, it is the satisfaction and pleasure gained throughout the process of eating.

### *Self-direction*

Self-direction is defined as “independent thought and action: choosing, creating, exploring”. In the context of this research, it is interpreted as *being curious about the latest products, consuming this kind of product is an expression of independent thought*.

Individuals who held self-direction as a value might place priority on following their own path, rather than merely accepting the status quo.<sup>69</sup> This value type is becoming even more decisive in the Chinese market, creating an opposition to the collectivists nature embedded into the Chinese society. Millennials target group in particular affirm to be opened and curious about latest products and enjoy even more customized offerings.

Chinese consumers who perceive self-direction as an important value in relation to food consumption decisions want the product to be worth-the-money by having greater quality and safety despite a premium price. Food scandals in China made clear that it is not possible to get quality food products at cheap prices, consumers are therefore changing their consumption habits. Professional participants, on the other hand, perceived Amarena as a product to be worth-the-money for its heaviness and packaging appeal.

Overall, during the focus groups price was not the most important attribute determining the consumption decisions of confectionary products, it was the benefit from the product that participants in this study valued the most (imported product, captivating packaging, versatility of uses).

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<sup>68</sup> Schwartz S. H., “*Beyond Individualism-Collectivism: New Cultural Dimensions of Values*”, 1992.

<sup>69</sup> Bardi A., Schwartz S.H., “Values and Behavior: Strength and Structure of Relations”, 2003, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*

### *Achievement*

Achievement is defined as “personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards”. In the context of this research, it is interpreted as *demonstrating competence through personal success, being ambitious and influential*.

This type of value is related to Self-direction, the discovery of the self helps the stimulation of the sense of achievement in life, at work, in sports, in personal affairs and it leads to a reflection in the consumption habits. The purchase decision process of Chinese consumers is led by the idea of exposing personal achievements through the purchase of certain products, demonstrating to be successful and to have an unconventional way of thinking.

In this value, all the participants of the millennial target group gave a positive feedback, confirming their purchase behavior to be ambitious and influential. Also young mothers and professionals agreed in different measures.

### *Universalism*

Universalism is defined as “understanding and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature”. In the context of this research, it is interpreted as *being concerned about the protection of the environment and equality*.

Universalism can be interpreted as an intrinsic value of Chinese culture, related to Confucianism, which sees the individual in perfect harmony with the rest of the human beings and highlights the union with nature. In the latest years this value is becoming more and more evident also in consumption habits. Chinese consumers who perceive universalism as an important value in relation to food consumption decisions want the product to be safe in the manufacturing process, preserving fresh and natural ingredients. This value type expresses attachment for equality in the social environment but also protection for the nature and planet. Therefore, avoiding those food manufacturers which make use of pesticides or antibiotics for animals in the food processing phase to increase the production and hence are able to sell at lower prices to attract consumers.

#### 3.4.2.4 Social norms

The last part of this section included a table built to investigate participants’ social norms, more specifically, the opinions of people in the social life cycle which influence the consumer’s daily purchasing decision the most. The subjects we included are: parents, partner, children, friends, colleagues/classmates, KOL and social celebrities.

*In your daily purchasing decision, how much important is the opinion of your...*

*Parents*<sup>70</sup>

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels
------------------------	---------------

<sup>70</sup> Parents’ opinion is still important as we can notice from table’s results, it confirms that Chinese moral values such as *filial piety* are still emphasized. But some negative or neutral (*somewhat important*) feedback about parent’s opinions in personal purchases also reflects the increasing behavioral attitude to express independent thought.

Row Labels	Not at all important	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Grand Total
Millennials		1	2	3	1	6
Mother	1	1	1	1		4
Professional		1	3	2	1	8
Grand Total	1	3	6	6	2	18

#### *Partner*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Grand Total
Millennials		1	2	3	6
Mother	1		2	1	4
Professional		2	4	2	8
Grand Total	1	3	8	6	18

#### *Children<sup>71</sup>*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	No children	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Grand Total
Millennials	1	1		3	1	6
Mother		1		1	2	4
Professional	1		2	5		8
Grand Total	2	2	2	9	3	18

#### *Friends*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Not at all important	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Grand Total
Millennials			1	4	1	6
Mother	1	1		1	1	4
Professional		2	5	1		8
Grand Total	1	3	6	6	2	18

<sup>71</sup> According to our research, children's opinion could encourage mothers target in changing their purchase decisions.

*Colleagues/Classmates<sup>72</sup>*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Not at all important	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Grand Total
Millennials			2	4		6
Mother	1	1		1	1	4
Professional		3	5			8
Grand Total	1	4	7	5	1	18

*Social celebrities/KOL*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Not at all important	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Grand Total
Millennials	2	1	1	2	6
Mother	1	2	1		4
Professional	1	4	3		8
Grand Total	4	7	5	2	18

Discussing about social norms, we discovered that millennials are more influenced by same age people in their purchasing behavior, like friends or colleagues and would not follow the suggestions of their parents; on the contrary, more often are the parents asking for their advise about the latest products on the market. In young mothers purchase decision, friends' opinion are considered more important than online feedback, and advise from colleagues or other mothers even more important than friends opinions. In short, the people they are more intimate with and are part of their inner circle are the most reliable. However, children's opinion is the most influential, and the one that could affect their entire purchasing decision process. Young mothers explain that usually they have very limited time to go grocery shopping; for this reason, they purchase the most part of their groceries online (TaoBao and T-Mall). However, the main part of their online purchases are made for products they have knowledge about. They would consider buying a new product online only if they perceive a specific need, and in this case they would mainly rely on votes and feedback of other consumers, which must be above 50% of agreements. When a new product shows a high selling rate, even if the knowledge and experience about its uses might be low, they could be curious about trying it.

Professional participants consider word-of-mouth as the fundamental tool to share information. They usually follow relatives and friends' suggestions about food and travels. Professionals target participant seem to be more influenced by family members opinions rather than marketing communication.

<sup>72</sup> Colleagues/Classmates' opinions, as for friends' opinions, confirm the importance of word-of-mouth as one of the main tools for sharing informations in a collectivist society.

## *Conclusions and marketing implications*

As conclusive question participants have been probed to express their purchasing intention about Amarena Fabbri.

*If this product were already available in shops, would you buy it?*

Count of Respondent n°	Column Labels			
Row Labels	I am not sure	No	Yes	Grand Total
Millennials	5	1		6
Mother	1	3		4
Professional	5		3	8
Grand Total	11	4	3	18

Answers show a negative inclination for the request. It means that participants are still not ready to engage in a direct purchase. As the table indicates, only professionals or millennials would consider adding this product to their daily life (*I am not sure*), mothers would mainly refuse the product (*No*) and only a few professionals would add the product in their routine life (*Yes*).

This discrepancy probably reflects the habits of our participants; the ones who expressed a neutral or positive inclination are probably the most inclined to cook in their home and would be curious to have a new ingredient to add in their recipes. In this sense, it is not strange to collect positive results only from millennials and professionals target, because young mothers confessed to having limited time to cook or to go to grocery shopping; so they mainly rely on their traditional recipes and do not give much interest to creative combinations, especially if it means indulging in sweets.

Millennials would consume the product together with friends to share opinions and ideas about how to use it. They would investigate Amarena Fabbri most popular Italian recipes and techniques as well as the brand history. After the first investigation about the traditional features and uses, they would look for innovative methods to combine it, in harmony with the latest trends of the Chinese culinary attitudes.

Even when Millennials are not accustomed to a product or marketing efforts have not influenced their decision from the beginning, if they discover something new that may attract their interest (*like in this case: baking, preparing yogurt at home, a captivating packaging, or natural preservatives*), they would feel curious to investigate more. In general, they consider Amarena as a real competitive product for the Chinese market.

Young mothers affirm they need to have a higher level of knowledge about the product before buying, it means that a stronger marketing effort needs to be done to reach the pretentious mothers' target about food quality and healthiness. This knowledge could also derive from the trend of their social environment: they could follow favorite restaurants or bakeries' suggestions for the choice of Amarena to elaborate new recipes; in this way, they would gain familiarity with new products and probably engage in direct purchase after a while. The main reason why they would feel engaged in buying Amarena Fabbri is the attractiveness of the packaging. In the case of buying it for themselves, after the first purchase, the quality and taste would be considered as the next critical factors to be evaluated for later purchases. Otherwise, in the case of buying it for a gift, they think it could be a suitable product for a present to give to close friends; as

young mothers are also keen on demonstrating they are quality-oriented and have an eye for fancy products, a beautiful packaging of an imported good would therefore allow them to transmit a message of self-confidence and alignment to the latest trends.

Professionals target group is aware of the huge amount of imported goods that in the recent years is entering the Chinese market, but they would not feel engaged enough in exploring this amount of choices because they are already satisfied with their habitual diet and routine life. It does not mean that they would not try or accept new products, but they would preferably follow family member's decisions, or relate to the most popular product to give as a present for most intimate friends.

As shown by the sample of Chinese consumers considered, even if it emerges that Western confectionery products are somehow entering the Chinese consumption habits, at the same time, there are differences in terms of taste perception that give companies of confectionery products operating in the Chinese market important issues such as product adaptation in terms of ingredients, as well as packaging and communication methods, which must be adapted to the characteristics of Chinese demand to make the product more acceptable and attractive. Moreover, considering the Chinese shopping behavior, their searching attitudes - comparing shops, price and thoroughly inspecting products - requires foreign companies to set new strategies and adapt to new behaviors.

The energetic properties of confectionery products containing fruits could represent a strong push to purchase, but when the taste acts as a brake, partial adaptations of the product ingredients should be evaluated or at least it is advisable to find a proper communication in order to justify in a cognitive-accepted-way the necessary presence of the ingredient in object; as for example the presence of a high percentage of sugar in Amarena for preservative purposes.

The Italian confectionery firm Fabbri 1905 has been able to achieve great results in exporting its products to China, a country where the consumption of confectionaries and sweets is not rooted in the local traditions. But at present, for the launch of Amarena Fabbri in the Chinese consumer market, a stronger effort needs to be done because the product does not belong to the Chinese culinary tradition and it is hard to find other products belonging to the same category which could create analogies into the Chinese consumer's mind to reduce the perceived risk and sense of uncertainty in the purchasing decision process. It is therefore vital to cross the cultural gaps as well as to educate the final consumer. A fierce promotion is of great advantage for an increase in consumption and activities as exhibitions and events, focus groups and tasting classes, are confirmed to be attractive and effective by our focus groups respondents.

In order to increase the adoption chance of a new product in a different context market, firms in the food industry should transmit enough knowledge to the new market's consumers in order to develop sufficient *know-how* to use the new product (or ingredient), in this way the product's launch and the diffusion could be certainly facilitated.

In this sense, Fabbri 1905 made already great leaps forward: taking part in local exhibitions in the Chinese territory by promoting the knowledge and the interest into the Italian culinary tradition. The firm undertakes also the organization of Master Class courses for anyone who desire to become professional patissier or gelato artisan and is interested in approaching the firm's products and techniques. In this way,



the methods and recipes originally created by Fabbri 1905 are widespread in the new market along with their products.

Lady Amarena competition is also becoming well-known into the Chinese market, it debuted in 2015 for the first time to celebrate the first centenary of Amarena Fabbri and it consists in a global bartending contest challenging professional female bartenders to craft the ultimate Amarena cocktail and competing for the title of *Lady Amarena*. Along with the original Italian title, the competition gained different national titles, including also Lady Amarena China which highlights the close relationship Fabbri has with the market and local partners.

Even if these activities are organized mainly for the B2B context, they allow Ho.Re.Ca. channel to be informed about Fabbri's latest offerings and consequently, bakeries, bars or restaurants act as first influence for their clients' purchase decision when finding Amarena jars in the supermarkets.

In order to discuss the marketing implications related to the findings of the present study, it is important to consider which are the predominant factors that, according to our suppositions, in the confectionary products' purchase decision are influencing the Chinese consumer behavior the most; the great majority is related to the moral guidance of Confucius' teaches.

Confucianism influence is evident in many attitudes highlighted by the focus groups respondents, these include the preservation of harmonic relationships and the strong group orientation reflected in a centralized planning concept information. As the opinion of the group wins on the opinion of the individual, it is therefore important to find a balance in the promotional communication of an imported product relating to product's attributes that can be generally accepted and captivating for the majority of the population.

The long-term orientation also influence the Chinese consumption habits, for instance, they are more savings-oriented and tend to focus on achieving long-term results: this means that in a purchasing decision of a new product they are highly skeptical and need reassurance about its features.

In their buying decisions, Chinese consumers strongly emphasize the importance of the social acceptance and hierarchical interpersonal relationships. It means that to conform to social and group norms they will more favorably purchase goods which convey meanings pertaining to social status and wealth, carefully maintaining and enhancing *face* and social standing.

According to the findings of the present case study and our suppositions, in the next section marketing implications based on the 4P's framework which should be considered before the launch of Amarena in the Chinese consumer market will be summarized and presented.

### *Product*

Even if the attractiveness of the packaging scored high and positive feedbacks, a few considerations about the abstract aspects should be reviewed, including: the brand, the country-of-origin and the illustrative image.

The brand image in China constitute one of the principal determinants impacting consumer purchasing behavior, as all the products are associated with a brand name. In addition to this, due to their ideographic

language Chinese consumers tend to rely more on visual representation and meaning when evaluating brand names. The advise is therefore to reconsider the distribution and the visual representation of the brand and logo designs to achieve better results in the Chinese market.

A clear specification about the country-of-origin is a particular aspect able to assure consumers about food safety, a message like 意大利老字号 *Italian long-standing firm* could enforce the sense of security through the brand and the company. This sort of local communication is recognized to have a strong potential to express a message of reassurance and trustability. Moreover, it has been studied that the perception of Italian origin associated to food industry has a positive image of wellness and high-quality also for Chinese consumers, therefore Italian firms exploiting this basic information have concrete opportunities to reach the market.

About the package, a clearer list of ingredients seems to be necessary, and three translations: in Chinese, English and Italian, would be enough for a right comprehension of this market and would reduce the amount of information which covers the packaging and leads to a chaotic representation of the product. The illustrative image is also to reconsider as ice cream does not belong to the Chinese culinary tradition and discouraged most of our respondents; it is therefore supposed to have a wrong impact on the consumer market in general. An image that could display several uses of Amarena would probably be the most effective, or at least it is advisable to select a product in combination that Chinese consumers might be more accustomed to.

According to the human values proper of the Chinese culture and to the findings of the present case study it is possible to state that for the majority of the Chinese consumers sampled, security and hedonism are deemed to be highly important values in influencing food consumption decisions.

We consider therefore important to specify on the packaging the low presence of additives in Amarena in favor of sugar as a natural preservative, and 零添加 *Lingtianjia* (*zero additives*) could be an effective communication to display. Relating to hedonism value, instead, it is found to be of relevance for the Chinese consumers as it appears they appreciate products that can bring them pleasure and gratification other than being safer and healthier. In order to satisfy this type of value, it is advised the use of 美味生活 *delicious life* or 健康和谐 *harmonious and healthy* as a local communication which is supposed to be more effective.

### *Place*

The credibility of the retail outlet is of extreme importance in the sense of security perceived by Chinese consumers; it has the power to confirm the authenticity and the premium quality of products. Considering the esthetic of the Amarena jar, it possesses already all the necessary characteristics for attracting Chinese consumers' interest in imported good shops. According to the findings, we advise against relying exclusively on online platform, as final consumers prefer to have a physical initial approach to new products before engaging in online purchases. In addition, the Chinese concept of 热闹 *renao* - meaning lively, bustling with noise and excitement, opposite to a negative state of being alone - explains the preference for crowded and noisy shopping places like supermarkets or imported goods shops where Amarena Fabbri could be found.

Reminding the shopping behaviors, the small packaging supposed to be launched is in favor of many aspects of Chinese consumption habits, as the means of transport mostly used in China are bicycles, e-bikes or scooters, which allow the transport of less and small products comparing to cars. Moreover, Chinese consumers are not much accustomed to go to supermarkets for grocery shopping, as in China food delivery is in widespread use, therefore, when by chance they move to stores it is highly probable it would be for a specific need or want in the food selection; their shopping carts will mostly be empty or with only a few products that are more likely to be found in-store than online.

About the testing behavior, supermarkets in China are equipped with open-access containers for products that can be touched, smelled and purchased by weight, it happens for example for spices, flour, rice and frozen food. It is also not surprising to find several product testing, which could constitute a good chance for Amarena as well to have a direct approach with final consumers and probably engage them in direct purchase.

### *Promotion*

In order to achieve success exporting food products in a new market, it is important to analyze and understand which could be the most suitable action to undertake in the promotion process in order to attract the attention of that specific population. Introducing products that are really far from the local gastronomical culture is very difficult and the firms need to analyze meticulously how to describe e present a product for a new context before committing great funds and energies.

In our opinion, food companies should take in greater consideration the product's characteristics which affect the most Chinese consumer's attention and exploiting them in their communication channels, like product ingredients or properties.

Promotion should also emphasize the values that Chinese consumers consider important, according to our findings security and hedonism prevail, and a proper communication of a delightful taste or a healthy list of ingredients could attract Chinese consumer's interest. Advertisements could also include images of the product's country of origin and the production facilities in order to make the whole production process transparent, therefore gaining Chinese consumers' confidence in quality and safety of food products. Moreover, other advertisements could promote the product as preserved only through natural additives but guaranteeing a unique and intense flavor, in this way it can provide assurance for healthiness but also fulfill the sense of pleasure and gratification.

Another important aspect that Western food companies should take in greater consideration is not to concentrate their communication solely on the emotional aspects of their products, as it mostly happens in the Italian market accustomed to the consumption of sweets, but on the opposite to clearly highlight the functional aspects about the benefits of their products, which could be still partly unknown to the Chinese consumer. Marketing communication in fact cannot be globally transmitted using the same voice impact, it needs to be adapted to every local context.

Another way to cross this cultural gap is to use the typical Chinese promotional methods, such as advertisements on the main Chinese online platforms WeChat, Weibo and T-Mall with the use of slogans and other promoting methods commonly used by local firms. In this way, it will be possible for Italian food products to find a place in the big and ancient Chinese gastronomical culture.

## *Price*

The increasing disposable income and the increasing concern for food safety have appeared to change many Chinese consumers' minds and they are now turning to more expensive but safer, healthier food products that they consider good value for money. An other important aspect is represented by the extrinsic cue of a product price, as it serves for Chinese consumers to deduce the perceived quality of the product: a higher price relative to the competition signals a higher quality.

The high score of the self-direction value affects also the product price perception, influencing food consumption decisions, price is no longer a huge obstacle for premium quality food products in China.

This means therefore that the pricing strategy for imported goods in China can potentially be set 10-30% higher than the local food prices and still being accepted by local consumers.

As regards to Amarena jar price, this consideration is still confirmed. But more specifically, even if price is not of first influence for the focus groups participants, they usually may accept a 20-30% higher price from their expectations, otherwise they would just rely on other offerings. Moreover, they compared Amarena to imported honey, participants perceive the price of honey should be higher than the one of Amarena. As setting the right price is of extreme importance when entering a new market, in the specific case of Amarena these two feedbacks could be of great value for the price strategy.

## *Appendix*

- English Questionnaire:

# *Focus group: Amarena Fabbri*

*Moderator: Federica Bettati*

*Supervisor: Francesca Hansstein*

## **Introduction**

First of all, we would like to thank you for deciding to take part in this focus group.

The goal of this research is to analyze the perception of a traditional Italian product (*Amarena Fabbri*) in the Chinese market. To assure the accuracy of this research, we kindly ask you to answer in the most truthful way possible.

All the information collected through this questionnaire will be treated as anonymous.

Before starting, do you agree to proceed? Yes  No

## **Packaging**

1. At first sight, what do you like most and what you like least about the packaging?

2. From an esthetical point of view, does the packaging reflect your taste?

In particular, do you think it respects the Chinese culture? Please elaborate.

3. Does it remind you of sad or pleasant memories or situations? Please elaborate

*(Discussion: what does it remind you? Do you associate it to some other objects?)*

4. How much do the following dimensions attract your attention?

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Very much</i>
<i>colors</i>					
<i>shape</i>					
<i>size</i>					
<i>logo</i>					
<i>size</i>					
<i>brand name</i>					
<i>images</i>					
<i>design</i>					

## Taste

*A tasting experience of the product based on the texture alone will follow.*

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Very much</i>
<i>Do you like it?</i>					
<i>Does the product taste as expected?</i>					
<i>Do you think it is a unique flavor?</i>					
<i>Is it a flavor that you would like to add to your daily life?</i>					
<i>Do you like the texture?</i>					
<i>Would you suggest it to friends?</i>					

1. Can you please the first three attributes that come up into your mind when tasting Amarena? Feel free to use positive and negative attributes according to your tasting experience.

## Suggested use

1. How would you eat Amarena Fabbri? For example, would you use it in combination with other products?

2. Is there any flavors of the Chinese cuisine that you would associate to it? If so, which ones?

*A tasting experience combining Amarena Fabbri with yoghurt and/or pancake will follow.*

3. Did your perception change after the tasting experience? If so, please explain how.

## Suggested target

1. Do you think this product is suitable for:

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
<i>Children</i>				
<i>Students (25 and below)</i>				
<i>Young women (25 - 35)</i>				
<i>Young men (25 - 35)</i>				
<i>Middle-aged women (35 - 50)</i>				
<i>Middle-aged men (35-50)</i>				
<i>Population above 50</i>				

*Open discussion on why participants think the product is or is not appropriate for the indicated targets.*

## Price

1. How much do you think is the price of a jar of Amarena Fabbri?

*Real price revealed*

2. How much important is the price in your purchasing decision for this type of product?

- Very important
- Moderately important
- A little important

## Values

1. After this experience, can you please describe a typical situation where you imagine yourself consuming this product? (*for example: at home with your children, with your friends, for a gift, and so on*). Please describe this ideal situation in detail:

2. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

Amarena Fabbri makes me feel secure about my health

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
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I think Amarena Fabbri is a food safe to eat

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I perceive a sense of pleasure and gratification when eating Amarena Fabbri

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I think Amarena Fabbri will benefit not just to me, but also to my family

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I'm always curious about the latest products, and consuming this product is an expression of my independent thought

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I like having a varied life; this is why I search for products that express novelty

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I'm concerned about the protection of the environment and equality

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I devote myself to traditional consumption habits; I respect my culture and traditions

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I restrain the impulses that could upset or harm others; I honor the elders

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I like to demonstrate competence through personal success; I am ambitious and influential

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

I like to be recognized by others and to confirm my social status

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------

3. In your daily purchasing decision, how much important is the opinion of your...?

	<i>Not at all important</i>	<i>Not important</i>	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
<i>Parents</i>					
<i>Partner</i>					
<i>Children</i>					
<i>Friends</i>					



<i>Colleges/Classmates</i>					
<i>Social celebrities KOLs</i>					

**Conclusions**

1. If this product were already available in shops, would you buy it?

- Yes
- I am not sure
- No

2. If you wouldn't buy it, please justify your answer:

- I don't need a product like this
- I don't want a product like this
- I'm already satisfied with similar products that I find already on the market
- I wouldn't pay for this product
- I can't afford this product
- Other

Gender: F  M

Age:

Occupation:

Children: Yes  No  (if yes, how many: )

**THANK YOU!**

# 焦点访谈：法布芮阿玛蕾娜野樱桃果酱果

( 焦点小组 )

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## • 简介

首先我想感谢大家来参加今天的访谈。你们的意见会给我们很多帮助。

今天我想问你们一些关于意大利一种有名的食品的问题。我希望你们可以具体介绍你对该产品的印象、并提出建议。

这是一个调查研究，答案不分对错，所以请大家提供诚实作答。

您同意参加这次访谈，并回答这些问题吗？ 同意  不同意

## • 包装

1. 从看到第一眼起，您觉得该产品最吸引你的是哪个方面？
2. 从审美角度来说，这个包装符合您的要求吗？  
具体来说，您认为它的外观设计具有中国特色吗（中国元素）？  
请您具体介绍一下。
3. 这个包装给您什么印象，它会让您联想到什么？为什么会让您这么想？
4. 按照下列产品的特点给出吸引度的评分：

	一点也不吸引人	不吸引人	有点吸引人	很吸引人	非常吸引人
颜色					
形状					
商标					
大小					
品牌					
图像					
设计					

## • 口味

	一点也不喜欢	不喜欢	一般	喜欢	很喜欢
你喜欢这个口味吗？					

该产品的口味是否符合你的预期？					
您觉得该产品的口味独特吗？					
请问你在日常生活中是否会购买该产品？					
这个产品的口感，您喜欢不喜欢？					
你是否会推荐给朋友？					

6. 请您用三个形容词（方面）来形容这个产品的口味？  
按照您的经验，正面、反面的意见都可以。

### • 推荐使用

1. 您会怎么吃该产品？比如说，您会和其他什么食物一起搭配食用该产品？
2. 这个产品让您联想到哪些中国美食？
3. 您品尝之后，对此产品的印象有没有改变？  
如果有的话，请您介绍一下。

### • 建议购买人群

1. 您觉得这个产品适应这些对象吗？

	非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
儿童				
学生 (<25周岁)				
年轻女士 (25-35周岁)				
年轻男士 (25-35周岁)				
中年女士 (35-50周岁)				
中年男士 (35-50周岁)				
50周岁以上				

## • 价格

1. 你愿意花多少钱购买此产品？为什么？

该产品的价格是：

2. 你购买这类产品的时候，价格是否会影响你的购买欲望？

- 购买食品时，一定会考虑价格
- 购买食品时，价格会影响我购买与否
- 购买食品时，价格不是我考虑的最重要的因素

## • 消费观

1. 品尝过这一产品后，您能想象一个会购买这个产品的场景吗？

(例如：您会跟父亲一起去购买、跟您子女、朋友一起品尝，或者作为礼物馈赠他人等等)

2. 请您针对一下方面给出评分：

这种食品对健康有益

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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这个食品符合食品安全的标准

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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品尝这种食品让我感觉特别愉快、很享受

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我觉得该产品不仅会有益于我，而会有助于我家庭成员的身心健康

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我对新上市的产品非常感兴趣。购买时，我尊重自己的个人喜好

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我喜欢新鲜事物，这是因为我一直想找新颖的产品

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我重视保护环境、社会平等

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我的消费方式比较传统，这是因为我遵守我的传统、我的文化

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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为了避免让他们生气，我一定会克制自己冲动。我尊敬我的长辈

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我喜欢通过个人成就来展示自己的竞争力

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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我希望得到他人对我社会地位的认可

非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
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3. 在日常生活的购物中，当您决定购买某个产品时，他人的看法重要不重要？

	非常不重要	不重要	一般	重要	非常重要
父母					
对象					
子女					
朋友					
同事 / 同学					
名人 / KOLs					

## • 结论

1. 如果您在超市看到这个食品，您会不会购买？

- 一定会购买
- 我不知道
- 不会购买

2. 如果您的选择是“不会购买”，您的理由是？

- 我不需要这种食品
- 我不想购买这种食品
- 我在市面上已经买到了类似的产品
- 我对这个产品不感兴趣
- 我认为我买不起这种食品
- 其它：

性别： 女  男

年龄：

职业：

有无子女： 有  无（如果有的话，有几个？）

谢谢大家！

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