UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Integrated Marketing Communication in Chinese Business-to-Business Markets: A Case Study

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DECLARATION

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Human relations exist purely based on our ability to communicate, and more importantly successful relationships develop based on our ability to communicate effectively. Communication affects every facet of our lives and in today"s world „noise" is often referred to when discussing messages and communication in a marketing sense. Therefore to cut through the „noise" and to effectively communicate with your audience it is crucial to understand who your audience is and what influences them. Therefore in this study the aim was to assist marketers and business people alike in understanding the influence of culture on the interpretation of various communication efforts that make up a company"s integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy.

This was done using a South African company as a case study, and analysing their IMC efforts in their entry into the Chinese business market. In order to develop a better understanding of how Chinese culture influenced the interpretation of the marketing material used by the case study company, it was shared with the participants and qualitative and quantitative data collected. Participants" attitudes and opinions towards the material were investigated to achieve the purpose of the research. The key element of the analysis was to determine the impact of culture on the interpretation of the various forms of marketing communication in a business-to-business setting.

While research on China is increasing due to the important role played by China in the global arena, and Chinese culture has been researched in a variety of contexts, studies looking specifically at the role of Chinese culture in the interpretation of integrated marketing communication in a global, business-to business context, have not been conducted. However marketing communication that is misinterpreted can have major negative effects on the global companies. This research aims to fill this research gap.

Findings showed that Chinese culture does have a major impact on interpretation of this company"s IMC. The study reveals that the Chinese are still heavily influenced by traditional Chinese teachings in their interpretation and understanding of communication, specifically Confucius and Tao philosophies. Using these principles businesses can understand the basic underlying methods of Chinese communication. A key finding was that the most fundamental aspect of Chinese communication however was based on relationship-building explicitly through the means of „Guanxi" and the cultural customs that go with it such as drinking, the exchange of gifts and interpersonal meetings.

Although this research is limited to the specific case study, it can aid marketers and business people alike in developing an understanding of the influence of culture on interpretation of integrated marketing communication in a Chinese business-to-business setting and in developing an effect IMC strategy. Recommendations for integrated marketing communication in Chinese markets are provided.

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List of Acronyms

CCTV – China Central Television

IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication

B2B – Business-to-business

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Chinese civilisation has been in existence for the last 5000 years, making it one of the oldest known to man as well as one of the most unique to navigate (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 3). As Chinese culture is the antithesis of Western culture it is often misunderstood and undervalued by Western businesses, to their own detriment (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 4).

During the late 1970's China underwent major economic reform when it opened itself to the outside world and since then it has experienced the fasted growth rate globally of approximately 10% per year (Chuang, Donegan, Ganon, & Wei, 2011, p. 444; Wu, 2011, p. 18). China's economy has gone from a low productivity, agricultural economy to an industrial economy to a service economy with billions invested domestically as well as through foreign direct investment every year (Chuang et al., 2011, p. 446; Dahlman & Aubert, 2001, p. xxiii). As the Chinese government has made a concerted effort to make investing in China an attractive option for global businesses, it has also set up opportunities for joint ventures between the Chinese and other global corporations, therefore making effective cross-cultural communication important (Zhao, 2000, p. 227). This move has allowed for an exchange of knowledge as well as expertise in areas Chinese businesses have historically not been experienced in. For example the exchange of I.T. knowledge through global joint-ventures has contributed to the vast growth of China's economy and boosted its rising middle classes (Wilson & Brennan, 2003, p. 8). This has assisted China to emerge as an economic powerhouse with a population of approximately 1.3 billion it has become the world's largest spending power (Na, 2013, p. 1). These factors have made China an attractive and necessary market for global businesses to enter and therefore a key country and culture to research in a business-to-business context.

However in order to develop these crucial business-to-business relationships, successful communication is vital. The Mandarin language barrier can be a significant obstacle to entry into the Chinese market and even businesses with fluent Mandarin speaking employees struggle to understand cultural nuances, especially in the high context Chinese culture (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 155). For this reason any information that can benefit businesses in strengthening their communication with Chinese consumers and business customers and

which can contribute to business people developing reliable channels for communication, is imperative. Regardless of the industry, China can be difficult to operate in (Zhao, 2000, p. 210).

Therefore this study focused specifically on business-to-business (B2B) markets in China and aimed to research the role of Chinese culture in the interpretation of integrated marketing communication, using a South African businesses" communication with its Chinese agents to illustrate.

1.2 Background and motivation for the Study

As China has dominated as the global economic power house for over a decade without signs of slowing down, it is an increasingly relevant area of research. There is little information to be found specifically looking at business-to-business communication and culture in China despite it being necessary for businesses to have a firm understanding of this market and its traditional negotiating and communication practices, to be successful. These reasons have therefore provided motivation for this specific study.

By investigating the role of Chinese culture and business practices in the interpretation of integrated marketing communication, global businesses can have a clearer indication of initiation strategies that are needed before conducting business in Chinese markets. Chinese culture depends heavily on „Guanxi" or the network of relationships when conducting business and although not recognised as a tool of marketing communication, cultural practices play a pivotal role in marketing in China (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013, p. 168). „Guanxi" is a Chinese cultural practice based on personal connections and relationships with people and is roughly translated as gate „guan" connections „xi" (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 5; Gao, Knight, Yang & Ballantyne, 2013, p. 2). This cultural element is discussed throughout academic writing on Chinese business and is investigated further during this research as culture is a fundamental element for this study.

There are few research studies looking specifically at Chinese understanding and interpretation of communication (Fang & Faure, 2010, p. 2), therefore the limited literature and theory provides support for the necessity of this research study. Gao and Prime (2010, p. 150) support this statement by stating that there is "a lack of literature that synthesises a

systematic framework for effective Chinese-American communication". In this study the view was taken that South African business culture is more closely related to Western business culture than to Eastern business culture and therefore Western examples are used to provide context from a South African point of view due to the lack of literature and research available on South African business cultural communication with the East (Gamaroff, 2010, p. 1).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

As China"s market economy has grown and developed, its consumer base as well as purchasing power parity have made China the global export market of choice (Felipe, Kumar, Usui & Abdon , 2013, p. 810). Global businesses have actively pursued a focused approach to breaking into the Chinese market and gaining some of its immense market share (Gebauer, Wang, Beckenbauer & Krempl , 2007, p. 126). China relies on imports from other nations, specifically depending on minerals and other natural resources it does not have. This therefore presents opportunities for supplier companies, such as the case study company UCL, to cater to the Chinese demand. Therefore strong business-to-business relationships are crucial to secure these lucrative supplier partnerships in the highly competitive Chinese market.

However, the downfall of many global businesses has been in terms of their marketing communications strategy due to their misunderstanding of how to communicate with the Chinese as well as how to relate to their culture and perceptions and in order to develop these key relationships (Gao, Knight, & Ballantyne, 2012, p. 456). As these companies attempt to integrate their communication across various media and platforms this problem is exacerbated. Therefore this study is an attempt to bridge the gap between Western-type and Chinese B2B companies by investigating the way that the Chinese interpret integrated marketing communication and how their culture impacts this.

The case study company has used integrated marketing communication techniques, such as magazine adverts, corporate profiles, logos, product brochures and business cards which have been analysed for the purpose of this research. These are used to communicate with business agents in the Chinese market. Therefore this study focused specifically on business-to-business markets in China and aimed to research the role of Chinese culture in the

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interpretation of integrated marketing communication, using a South African businesses communication strategy with its Chinese agents to illustrate.

1.4 Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Chinese culture in the interpretation of integrated marketing communication in a business-to-business (B2B) setting using a South African business‟s integrated marketing communication.

The research objectives for the study were therefore to determine:

1. How Chinese businesses communicate

    - How Chinese businesses prefer to communicate with Westerners.
    - How Chinese business-to-business (B2B) customers respond to Western integrated marketing communication.
    - What the most effective methods of integrated marketing communication in Chinese B2B markets are.

2. How Chinese culture influences business communication

    - If agrarian traditions are still followed in respect to hierarchy, harmony and co-operation.
    - How the teachings of Confucius and Taoism influence communication.

3. What role culture plays in building relationships in B2B markets

    - To what extent morality and values play a role in decision making.
    - How important „Guanxi‟ is in building business relationships in China in the 21st century.
    -

1.5 Overview of the Constructs

The main construct in this research was integrated marketing communication (IMC). IMC is "the philosophy and practice of selecting and coordinating all of a brand‟s marketing communication elements" (Chitty, Barker and Shimp, 2010, p.402). IMC integrates all of the different elements of communication a company uses so as to achieve a consistent and coherent message to create a clear position in the minds of key audiences. It is rare that one tool is used on its own; the case company in this study uses multiple IMC methods including

face to face communication tools as well as various non-personal tools such as adverts and brochures. Integrating communication across tools and platforms is a challenge even in domestic markets where the cultures of the communicator and the audience may be similar, but in a cross-cultural setting the challenge of communication is far greater.

The focus of this study was on the global marketing situation where IMC is across cultures. In this case the researcher was interested in how, in the Chinese setting, culture influences the interpretation of the various IMC tools and what implications this has for marketers in China.China was chosen as the country of study because of the key role it plays in the global economy. Many western businesses are grappling with establishing successful strategies for the huge, but vastly different Chinese market

Further support for the decision to choose China as the country of study came as a unique opportunity was provided to the researcher by means of the case study company. The case study company had recently undergone an entire corporate rebranding and had independently entered the Chinese market for the first time. For this launch, marketing material was developed and specifically catered to the Chinese market. Therefore, the researcher was able to capitalise on this opportunity as the case company gave access to all of the resources, contacts and materials for the Chinese market.

Culture influences a society"s design for living.   It is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group of people from another" (Fan, 2000, pg.3). It influences how people interpret their surrounds and then act on those interpretations. Culture plays an important role in people"s perceptions which then influence their actions. This case study focused on how culture influences the Chinese agent"s interpretation of the various IMC tools. Chinese culture is particularly influential and thus a strong influencer of behaviours and thus a potential hurdle to western companies trying to effectively communicate with audiences in China. Culture was a key focus of the study as it varies so greatly from western civilisation to eastern civilisation. Studies looking specifically at culture as a key influencer of integrated marketing communication in China, are lacking.

This study also focused specifically on Business-to-Business (B2B) relationships because the researcher had access to B2B clientele through the case study company. Research on B2B

IMC, and particularly in the Chinese context is lacking and thus this research sought to fill this gap.

1.6 Benefits of research

In many global cultures, historical traditions and principles of business and communication have been antiquated by modern methods. For example Western business communication largely takes place electronically; transactions between businesses exist without key personnel ever meeting. In Chinese culture however, relationships precede business (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 16). It is for this reason that the research looks closely at Chinese culture and the importance of relationships within it.

It is hoped that this research will benefit marketers and business people alike as the information uncovered can be taken into consideration when wanting a smooth and efficient transition into the Chinese market. By understanding Chinese culture and communication practices marketers and businesses can benefit from first-hand knowledge of how to grow and nurture key relationships based on the cultural nuances and important elements discussed in the research dissertation.

1.7 Chapter Overview

The literature review focuses on the key constructs of the research, namely global marketing, integrated marketing communication, Chinese culture and overall business-to-business relations.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is extensively reviewed in terms of its role in global marketing. IMC is used to uniquely cater marketing strategy to local markets while simultaneously establishing a global brand (Eagle, Kitchen, & Bulmer, 2007, p. 595). Mediums such as advertising through radio, television and print media for example are a few of the channels that can be utilised in IMC.

This study looked at the business-to-business relationships in China and the means of establishing successful relationships. For example, Confucianism is still a widely practiced principle and guideline for many business managers (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 6). Philosophical teachings such as Confucius, Taoism and Buddhism as well as the relationship building medium of „Guanxi" were closely reviewed in the literature review.

The research methodology looks at the research philosophy which is based on idealist ontology and interpretivist epistemology as well as discussing the research design. The research used a mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative data through the means of questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups, field observations and notes.

The data was analysed using a phenomenological approach focusing on the phenomena uncovered by the research through deductive thematic analysis and therefore identifying themes from the findings.

In the Findings chapter the data uncovered from the various research methods is discussed in detail. The chapter firstly describes the sample, and then specifically focuses on the main themes and findings from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. The chapter then reviews the findings relating to the integrated marketing communication material used by the case study company.

The discussions chapter gives a thorough analysis of both the literature review and the findings from the data collection in order to give a detailed interpretation of the theoretical concepts in relation to the applied real world scenarios. The role of Chinese culture in interpretation of the various forms of communication is thus discussed.
Finally recommendations for Western –type businesses communicating with Chinese partners and customers are discussed as well as recommendations for future research. Limitations are acknowledged and a final conclusion drawn.

1.8 Conclusion

The introduction provides a brief overview of the research study in order to give a synopsis of the in-depth literature, research methodology, findings and discussions to come. This adds value by outlining how the researcher aimed to develop integrated marketing communication guidelines for businesses to use when entering the Chinese market. Core principles from the guidelines could be applied in similar scenarios, although the cultural findings are broad. The literature review to follow explains more explicitly the theories and research findings relevant in order to provide a platform for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: GLOBAL MARKETING, INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND THE INFLUENCE OF CHINESE CULTURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to understand the influence of culture on the interpretation of integrated marketing communication in a Chinese business-to-business (B2B) setting. This chapter specifically discusses and analyses available literature and similar research on the key constructs of this study by reviewing the theory and challenges faced in global communication and how Chinese culture affects the interpretation of the various communication efforts that make up an IMC strategy in a global business-to-businesses environment.

Firstly global marketing is explored in terms of its development and drivers over the last few decades and specifically how this has been amplified by developments in technology and its impact on business. This is reviewed in order to understand aspects of adaptation and standardisation and there challenges in marketing in China. An aspect of global strategy often needing adaptation is marketing communication. The next section in this literature review discusses marketing communication and specifically the need for IMC within global strategy. Next the review covers culture˝s influence on global marketing and communication in relation to how communication is interpreted in Chinese culture. Then more finitely, Chinese culture is explored in terms of its consequences for global marketing and communication. Throughout the chapter the discussions relate more generally to the topic in the section and then are related specifically to the B2B context which is the specific context of the study. As a historically communist country, China still has remnants of its closed-door approach toward the global community; this approach was originally in place to avoid external influences. Before China underwent economic reform in 1979, it operated as a command economy (, Chuang, Donegan, Ganon & Wei, 2011, p. 446). Foreign trade and investment were predominantly banned in China under the rule of Chairman Mao Zedong (McDonald, 2011, p. 634). State owned enterprises were the dominant business entity, meaning that banking systems, utilities companies, telecommunications and other businesses

were run inefficiently and not for profit. As there was no competition or incentives to perform and grow, the Chinese economy became inert (Morrison, 2013, p. 2).

However since the Cultural Revolution in the 1970‟s, China has opened up its boarders and its business to foreign interest, growing less sceptical and more trusting of the global business community (Chuang *et al.*, 2011, p. 444). Through advances in technology, joint ventures and research and development, China has rapidly expanded into one of the biggest trading countries in the world.

Through this growth and development China has become a desirable country for foreign companies to not only invest in but base their manufacturing operations and target retail sectors (Feldman, 2014, p. 13). Thus many Western businesses have included Chinese marketing in their global marketing strategies.

2.2 Global Marketing

Over the last few decades the concept of global marketing as a broad based marketing practice has grown in popularity and academic acclaim (Menon, 2014, p. 428). At the same time that global marketing has been comprehensively explored in academic literature, it too has been practiced in the corporate environment (Keegan & Green, 2011, p. 4; Menon, 2014, p. 427). Businesses have adapted and grown to compete at global levels, navigating local governments, economies, cultures, customs, politics and geographical landscapes (Awuah & Amal, 2011, p. 120; Hansen, 2008, p. 1159).

The key drivers of globalisation are the market, government, competition and cost. For example, trade agreements within the European Union have encouraged the growth of global marketing, as typical barriers to entry and operation have been withdrawn (Awuah & Amal, 2011, p. 122). This has allowed businesses to compete in more lucrative markets and expand their market share globally, reaching new customers and achieving economies of scale (Menon, 2014, p. 428). China also has seen significant growth through foreign direct investment and global joint ventures over the past few decades. As mentioned the country went through economic reform in the late 1970‟s, and since then trading has boomed, with many globally bought items manufactured in China as a result of global marketing (Fan, 2006, p. 365; Brandt & Zhu, 2000, p. 425; Lu, 2009, p. 451; Pang, Roberts, & Sutton, 1998, p. 273).

Doole & Lowe (2008, p. 6) explains that global marketing is when "the whole organisation focuses on the selection and exploitation of global marketing opportunities and marshals resources around the globe with the objective of achieving a global competitive advantage". With the investment of such resources it is therefore important that businesses understand the market they are entering on a global scale.

Global marketing's purpose is to cohesively support and facilitate sales by adapting one global strategy using the similarities within various markets of operation. The one strategy is used in multiple countries consecutively and flexibly moulded to adapt and embed market needs where necessary (Gillespie & Hennessey, 2011, p. 9).

The aim of global marketing, is to support an integrated approach when developing marketing opportunities, resources and skills globally (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2001, p. 17). Global marketing's purposes is to amalgamate a company's goals and objectives across global markets through the marketing mix and promotion strategy. This includes positioning of the brand, market segmentation and targeting as well as other marketing mix elements such as price, product, packaging, distribution, the product, promotion and advertising (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2001, p. 17).

As globalised business-to-business markets are specifically looked at, the most crucial strategic element to estabilish before conducting business on a global scale is what to standardise and what to adapt across these global markets. For example Chuang *et al.* (2011, p. 446) states that "standardisation, which may have been a critical success factor elsewhere, may fail because of host country regulations and laws and perhaps even more important cross cultural characteristics, such as Guanxi (using social capital to build business relationships) in China". This means that a straight forward standardisation approach may not be successful in complex global markets due to the different social environments and cultures.

Therefore global marketing is advantageous because it allows for this mix of standardisation as well as adaptation where necessary, meaning that companies can achieve greater economies of scale in production and distribution, leading to lower marketing costs as well as a consistent brand image, but still have flexibility in the local market and quick ability to adapt to market changes (Keegan & Green, 2011, p. 5). Increasingly companies are moving

to global marketing because of these advantages. Global markets offer new opportunities for growth, sales and increased margins (Keegan & Green, 2011, p. 22). Adaptation is beneficial in these circumstances as it allows for the penetration of the local market while exploiting a global costing model.

Global marketing strategy however, is surrounded by the continuous debate between standardisation and adaptation in heterogeneous markets, in order to achieve economies of scale. Standardisation creates efficiencies of scale by spreading fixed costs such as technology, research and development and production throughout various markets (Chirapanda, 2012, p. 1108). Adaptation on the other hand, is necessary in markets where cultural differences are vast and unique to the region in which the company is operating (Cateora, Gilly, & Graham, 2011, p. 96; Dow, 2006, p. 213).

In global marketing, one of the most pressing challenges can be what elements to standardise and what elements to adapt. In order to keep costs down and enhance profit margins, standardisation needs to take place in every possible aspect of the marketing mix, however in order to maximise sales into the market and satisfy customers, adaptation needs to be carried out across the marketing mix (Chirapanda, 2012, p. 1108). For example when operating in a foreign market, the local cultural environment is a critical aspect that should mould the marketing mix. All integrated marketing communication should be culturally sensitive, using ethnic languages and colloquialisms (Cateora et al., 2011, p. 96; Chuang et al., 2011, p. 445).

Walmart and Carrefour, two multinational corporations who entered into the Chinese retail market in the 1990"s for example have thrived using a standardisation and local adaptation model (Chuang *et al*., 2011, p. 445). However as they initially entered the market they did not understand the Chinese culture and the concept of „Guanxi" well enough in order for them to „localise" in the market (Chuang *et al*., 2011, p. 454). This is why this research study looks specifically at Chinese culture, in an attempt to understand it and apply it in global business-to-business marketing.

The areas that are frequently standardised in global marketing include the production decisions such as the product-platforms, branding, and packaging. Other elements that may be standardised are the place decisions specifically concerning franchising options for distribution, standardising systems for transportation, ordering, inventory management and

seeking global distribution partners. However there remains a strong need to continuously adapt elements of a business‟s global strategy where necessary. Although global marketing strives to standardise all aspects of the marketing strategy complete standardisation is rarely achievable because global markets are not standard. Marketing mix decisions require careful tailoring to each market based on politics, the operating environment, socio-economic circumstances, available technology and the legal environment. For example Mooij & Hofstede (2010, p. 93) discuss the consistencies in US multinational corporations campaigns and how this standardisation builds a uniform global brand. However it is not necessarily a pragmatic solution when trying to embed in other global markets as it does not allow for the catering of local nuances.

Therefore global marketing strategy in China is a task of mammoth proportions as marketers can face a multitude of challenges before they begin to promote a product and diffuse it into the market. Factors such as distribution channels, transportation, local media, local dialect, culture and customs and purchasing power complicate the ability of global organisations to gain entry into the Chinese markets (Chuang et al., 2011, p. 460).

Menon (2014, p. 428) argues that sustainable growth in foreign markets is unobtainable without gaining insight and integration of regional cultures and inclinations. Therefore it is pivotal to develop and combine a global strategy while using a local mind set and through this need the glocal concept was initiated. Glocalisation is where the benefits of both standardisation and adaptation are not compromised, yet combined to cater to the foreign market in the most economically efficient way, while at the same time remaining flexible enough to appeal to and attract the local market. Glocal marketing is founded on the principles of acting globally but thinking locally (Menon, 2014, p. 429). Disney for example, reduced prices, catered menus to local tastes and eating habits, adjusted décor and settings to local preferences, and gave local employees flexible working practices and policies when it expanded its business globally (Menon, 2014, p. 430). This all aided in Disney‟s success in international markets.

Adaptation often occurs in relation to the promotions „P‟ ofthe marketing mix. Without effectively communicating with target audiences and creating brand awareness through culturally transparent means, local consumers can be confused (Chuang *et al*., 2011, p. 460). When looking at culture specifically in the global-local debate Mooij and Hofstede (2010, p.

85) state that an adaptation strategy is more influential when appealing to local customs and consumer objectives. By adapting to the local market, businesses are able to build long lasting secure business relationships. Based on trust and mutual understanding as well as excellent service, customers that may have otherwise bought from your competitors should their prices be lower, can be retained (Lin, 2004, p. 35; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2001, p. 24). An illustration of this is when Panasonic entered the Chinese market using a glocalisation strategy. Panasonic gave their local Chinese office authority in order to integrate adaptation while still coordinating their global strategy. Panasonic ensured that local customer needs were met (Menon, 2014, p. 430).

Now more prevalently technology is facilitating globalisation (Awuah & Amal, 2011, p. 122; Haviland, Prins, Walrath, & McBride, 2008, p. 19). Technology has allowed people to share and evolve in interactive ways that were not conceivable 10 years ago, particularly by changing communication. Technology platforms such as social media, Skype and smart mobile devices, have facilitated and supported the growth of a global market over the years and have seen multinational corporates and small start-up businesses go from strength to strength even in a struggling domestic environment (Chirapanda, 2012, p. 1107).

As technology has changed when and how communication takes place, it has also made it cheaper, allowing for the transferal of knowledge and information to happen instantaneously. As Levitt (1984, p. 2) says technology "drives the world to a converging commonality and it helps determine human preference whereas globalisation aids the world in determining its economic realities". Technology has also evolved in its use among different cultures and their preferences. For example the majority of Western societies accept emails as a form of business communication whereas in China communication is done over text messages or instant chat services such as WeChat and Weibo (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 154).

Therefore as the need to grow, innovate and expand into using various forms of media communication tools is in increasing demand, so is the need to understand effective communication methods.

One of the main ways to adapt a business̈s global marketing strategy into different markets is through integrated marketing communication (IMC). IMC is the practice of integrating media across multiple communication channels in order to appeal to local consumer lifestyles. It has

been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960's.

Gao and Prime (2010, p. 150) state that through globalisation a requirement has developed to fully understand the business procedures of companies in international environments that have differing cultures. For these reasons a well-founded knowledge of local culture and diversity in markets of interest can aid in analysing opportunities and risks and developing strategies for them (Levitt, 1984, p. 18). The most flexible and important aspect of global marketing strategy is promotion or marketing communication. Unlike other marketing mix elements it provides many diverse opportunities to uniquely cater to the local markets needs and show cultural understanding through various channels. Global marketing uses the integration of various promotion and communication tools to effectively target both local and global markets (Keegan & Green, 2011, p. 5).

Thus in relation to the current study, companies engaging in global marketing, such as the South African company in this case, need to consider the aspects of their global strategy which may be standardised , but also adapt to the local environment. This particular study is focused on investigating how Chinese culture, as a local variable, might affect interpretation of a business‟ communication with its markets and thus necessitate adaptation of the promotional strategy.

2.3 Marketing Communication and IMC in Global Marketing

Marketing communication or promotion is one of the most strategically important elements of the marketing mix. Marketing communications can be defined as a;

> "management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. By understanding an audience‟s communications environment, organisations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, they encourage audiences to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses" (Fill & Jamieson, 2006 p. 10).

How marketing communication is implemented and what strategy is used, can be the cause of success or failure for a product, service or business venture (Shimp, 2010, p. 7). In order for consumers to buy a business‟s products or use their service they first need to know the business exists, secondly they need to like and prefer that business more than its competitors who have a similar offering. Marketing communication is the tool that is used to generate brand awareness and create the bridge and appeal among consumers for a company‟s products and services.

Gao and Prime (2010, p. 150) state that when working "in the culturally divergent business environment of multinational companies, many factors impact their internal and external communication, including the employees‟ language, culture, mind-set, personal experience, philosophies of life, and ways of doing business". Therefore when operating within different cultures in a B2B environment the context of how the message is communicated is just as important as the medium through which it is communicated.

However, in the digital age interacting with target audiences has changed. Instead of sending one-dimensional direct marketing messages to a mass audience, communication tools can be catered to individual market segments based on what mediums they use and what messages would appeal to them the most. Marketing communication is influenced by and adapted to the environment in which it channels its message, for example when working in foreign markets an organisation will need to consider what their competitor‟s communication strategy is and differ from that in order to stand out and not get lost in the noise (Cateora *et al*., 2011, p. 81). Promotional tools such as product placements, brochures, advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, public relations, endorsements and sponsorships and point of purchase promotion are just some examples of what is typically used in the promotional mix in order to communicate with customers (Fill & Jamieson, 2006, p. 22; Shimp, 2010, p. 7).

In order to conduct effective marketing communication, multiple tools and channels are used as have been discussed. In business-to-business marketing, communication tools include relationship marketing which focuses on developing trust, loyalty and strong relationships with ones colleagues and business partners (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 5). This is a key aspect of the research as it has strong influence in Chinese culture and business communication (Chuang et al., 2011, p. 446).

When looking at the Chinese market in terms of relationship marketing, Harrison and Hedley (2010, p. 17) carried out surveys and found that in order to be successful in the Chinese business market, companies must focus on the core principles of marketing and adapt these to the indigenous surroundings. For example by companies having a stand at local Chinese exhibitions and industry fairs, it proves to the local businesses that the company shows a genuine invested commitment to the local market and this aids in building pivotal business relationships (Harrison & Hedley, 2010, p. 3). This act of commitment helps to reassure Chinese business partners and nurture the development of the working relationship. Business-to-business marketing is centrally focused on building long term relationships with clients rather than in typical consumer marketing which is focused more on once-off transactions (Coviello & Brodie, 2001, p. 384). Typically joint ventures have been the most common way for foreign businesses to enter China.

However culturally there are vast differences between a Western approach and an Eastern approach to business. For example the British feel that trust is a capital investment in a business relationship however the Chinese feel that trust is in fact a social norm and needs to be strongly established before business can take place (Wilson & Brennan, 2003, p. 8). Business-to-business marketing involves building a relationship with your client over time and in the West that may simply mean a courtesy visit or a business lunch or tickets to a sports event. However in China culturally, food and drink are an event and part of the entertainment and building relationships (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 6). It is not uncommon to have lavish banquets with multiple courses at a dinner with the Chinese, accompanied by strong alcohol throughout. These dinners can last long into the night and can also include the attendance of family members, which to Westerners can seem as blurring the lines between work and personal life (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 154; Kwock, James, & Tsui, 2013, p. 60). This is therefore another cultural understanding that needs to be fully grasped in order to fit in with Chinese culture and communication in a B2B environment.

When discussing relationship building, interaction marketing and network marketing need to be reviewed as they are two strategies developed in B2B marketing in order to enhance relationships with potential business partners and customers (Coviello & Brodie, 2001, p. 388).

Interaction marketing involves face-to-face time spent with clients at various events such as trade shows and exhibitions, which Harrison and Hedley (2010, p. 3) have stated is imperative to building business relationships.

Network marketing involves dedicating resources to position the company among a network of relationships for the benefit of working together (Coviello & Brodie, 2001, p. 388). Business-to-business marketing in China is highly competitive not only from the influx of global businesses taking advantage of the opportunities China has to offer and the high volume of potential customers and sales, but from local Chinese company‟s too. Therefore both interaction and network marketing are important to develop key relationships in this market.

When looking at cross-cultural B2B communication in the global sphere, Spinks and Wells (1997, p. 287) state that "physical distances make effective communication necessary and cultural differences make effective global communication essential". This therefore emphasises the motive for the study looking specifically at the Chinese market. Setlock, Fussell, and Neuwirth (2004, p. 2) add that "although there may be some moderation in the appearance of cultural traits when one communicates in a second language, research shows that people still adhere largely to the communication style and social norms of their own culture". Therefore it can be deduced from this that culture impacts and influences communication and understanding.

On the other hand Feldman‟s (2014, p. 7) research into American and Chinese business relationships provides useful insight for this study as it looks at culture, ethics, values and moral challenges faced when working in China. Feldman expresses the importance of a Chinese middleman in order to overcome the challenges when faced with communicating and initiating relationships in the Chinese market (Feldman, 2014, p. 8). Feldman discusses the biggest communication challenges between American and Chinese companies in China as language, culture and outsider status and therefore emphasises the need for „Guanxi‟ and interpersonal relationships (Feldman, 2014, p. 8).

In addition Harrison and Hedley (2010, p. 3) have looked at preferred methods of communication among Chinese businesses, specifically looking at face-to-face meetings as well as forms of online communications and the types of messages to emphasise when

marketing to the Chinese i.e. quality, longevity, reliability etc. (Harrison & Hedley, 2010, p. 3). Harrison and Hedley (2010, p. 3) found that a multitude of communication tools should be used when targeting Chinese audiences through different communication models. For example they found that the three most preferred methods of communication were in fact conferences and exhibitions, then emails and then websites. They noted that "Chinese buyers tend to react positively to a well-structured, personalised email as a prelude to a more detailed face-to-face discussion" (Harrison & Hedley, 2010, p. 4). This means that Western businesses should use an IMC approach by sending emails as a means to facilitate personal meetings with Chinese business people when communicating and initiating relationships.

When discussing communication Ock Yum, (1988, p. 374) states that it "is a fundamental social process, and that, as such, it is influenced by the philosophical foundations and value systems of the society in which it is found". Therefore understanding cultural perceptions of communication competence is crucial for intercultural communication (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 62). Xiao & Chen, (2009, p. 62) state that "cross-cultural misunderstanding occurs principally because different cultures have different expectations of what constitutes good, competent communication". Therefore it is important for this research to uncover what effective communication is and means to the Chinese and to understand examples of good, competent communication.

Communication in a global context is critical for any business wanting to expand and be successful in their efforts to gain market share. Global communication may go through standard channels, such as TV, radio or print media. Marketing communication can help rapidly increase new product diffusion by effectively targeting new niche and global markets.

As communication has gone from one-way and single-dimensional to interactive, through the help of social media, marketing formulas and principles have merged and integrated to take full advantage of multiple channels of communication (Groom, 2008, p. 3).Interactive media such as twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, have meant that organisations can communicate directly with niche markets across the globe, cheaply and more efficiently than using local print media or television and radio (Groom, 2008, p. 3). These new mass communication mediums require adaptation of the message, as new media makes it easier, quicker and more cost effective to adapt. They can however add to the challenge of keeping the message consistent. Therefore a skilled team of managers and marketers must effectively

and strategically develop a carefully tailored and consistent IMC strategy. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) can be defined as "the philosophy and practice of selecting and coordinating all of a brand''s marketing communication elements" (Chitty, Barker and Shimp, 2010, p.402).

An IMC approach is used by many businesses as a way to effectively reach and communicate with a wide target audience while seeing a positive return on investment. In order for this method to be truly successful businesses have to alter their communication strategy in order to cater to different market needs and appeal to various cultures. Some marketing communication can be standardised across a global audience however other elements of the communication will need to be adapted. For example similar graphics or imagery can be used in both North American and Asian society, however the language, slogan and expression used must be changed and adapted to suit the needs of the local market. Marketing communication must be adapted to fit into and appeal to the local culture of each market. Global marketing strategy needs to ensure that all communication efforts combine the use of promotional tools in order to have a focused and centralised message across all markets.

The importance of IMC is that despite the multitude of communications tools available, IMC ensures that they deliver a consistent message and position of the product. However what the emergence of so many different channels of communication does is reinforce the need for organisations to check the messages that are being interpreted by customers. Therefore ensuring that the message that has been carefully constructed is the same as what has been interpreted by the local audience. Nevertheless at the same time, marketing communication faces factors that encourage adaptation and different availability and usage of tools but also differences in markets e.g. cultural influences, language, interpretation, media used etc.

This is especially true as interacting with target audiences have changed through the digital age. Instead of sending one-dimensional direct marketing messages to a mass audience, communication tools can now be catered to individual market segments based on what mediums they use and what messages would appeal to them the most. Marketing communication is influenced by and adapted to the environment in which it channels its message, for example when working in foreign markets an organisation will need to consider what their competitor''s communication strategy is and differ from that in order to stand out and not get lost in the noise (Cateora et al., 2011, p. 81).

Corporate culture is another very important aspect to consider when working with business-to-business customers, especially in a global environment, because of the importance of understanding the local cultural environment to successfully work together. As the corporate world has grown and adapted to compete in a global environment, Pang, Roberts and Sutton (1998, p. 277) state that the work place is now far more dynamic and malleable. Corporate culture is embedded to unite the work force through a systemic identity and structure, homogenising employees from around the world under one organisation and one focused ideology (Pang et al., 1998, p. 277).

How a company communicates and behaves internally and what it then projects and practices externally are all part of the makeup of a company‟s corporate culture (Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 277). The corporate culture normally embodies the principles and work ethic of a company, for example working hours may be from 8am to 5pm but an employee accepts that working after hours and weekends is part of the corporate culture and expected. How employees respond to one another within their company‟s‟ corporate culture can also be a result of or impact on their own social culture. Challenges arise for example, when the Chinese work force have different cultural practices or social norms compared to that of the West (Li, 2011, p. 114). For example UPS used a very effective communication strategy when entering into the Chinese market. UPS standardised all communication and implemented „Pre-work Communication Meetings‟ with its Chinese staff in order to ensure that every employee had the same agenda (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 163).

The corporate culture of any organisation is ingrained throughout the employee hierarchy and communicated from the company to the public. In China however hierarchy is of significant importance because of its roots in Confucianism and its relation to „Guanxi‟ it is not only respected as a part of corporate culture but of traditional culture too (Feldman, 2014, p. 7). However when operating globally, corporate culture needs to be adapted and refined to the local culture in order to emphasise productivity and harmony. This helps to ensure that all global employees integrate and share the same organisational behaviour (Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 277). Pang *et al.* (1998, p.277) believe that the Chinese are reluctant to adopt the cultural norms of an organisation if they do not relate to their own. It is for this reason that Pang *et al.* (1998, p.277) states that the corporate culture needs to be adapted.

However Western corporate culture and Eastern corporate culture vary significantly. Eastern corporate culture is not only different in its characteristics and practices by gender, religion, and history and family but fundamentally in the way it communicates. For example a company may have started out small and grown gradually, expanding into global markets with offices overseas.

With a New York office, the company would have a Western corporate culture and identity ingrained into its business principles, interaction and communication with employees and customers. However the company"s global offices in Taiwan, Sao Paulo and London have their own societal, ethnic culture amalgamating with the Western corporate culture of the company they all collectively work for. If managing directors and employees from other offices cannot relate too, or understand the corporate culture of the head office, they will not receive buy in or support from these global offices (Wilson & Brennan, 2003, p. 12).

Consequently this makes business dealings with these organisations difficult and confusing for other companies who would like to work with them. An example of positive corporate cultural integration is when UPS expanded into China and they initiated a "Culture Day" strategy to overcome the previously mentioned issues (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 161). With approximately 2000 Chinese employees to begin with, UPS needed to incorporate their culture into that of their employees. UPS"s "Culture Day" involved training, mentoring and the projection of UPS values such as integrity, honesty and commitment as well as behaviour, history and tradition (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 161). Although UPS standardised the key aspects of its corporate culture in China, it adapted and localised to the Chinese market by focusing on growing and building relationships (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 162). This method proved to assist in the success of UPS in China and gain buy in and support from local employees and businesses.

Alternatively if a company"s global offices have not adopted the corporate culture of the company and do not understand or can"t interpret or relate to the head office communication method, they will not be able to effectively carry the company"s culture and communication methods into their local markets and with their local customers. This is why a clear understanding of societal cultures and effective methods of communication to garner understanding is so vital to the success of a business, internally and externally. The key is communication.

To communicate effectively it is important to appreciate the context, in which the language is used, taking into account the socio-economic and political environment, meaning can be lost in translation (Cateora *et al.*, 2011, p. 136). Therefore this research has been designed to evaluate the case study company‟s marketing communication and in particular, IMC efforts. This was done in order to gain an understanding of the importance of culture in communication relative to the B2B environment.

2.4 Chinese Culture and its influence in Marketing Communication

Understanding local cultural perceptions of communication is crucial for intercultural communication (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 62). This presents challenges in China as not only is the geographical landscape vast and largely rural, but each province has a different subculture, vernacular , ethnic majority, competition, religious and philosophical affiliations and level of economic development and infrastructure (Goa and Prime, 2010, p. 152). Therefore in this section a closer look is taken at the key elements of Chinese culture that run throughout society and have existed for thousands of years affecting and embedding in everyday Chinese life.

2.4.1 Theories on Cultural differences in China

Two key principle theories in relation to culture and communication are those of Hofstede and Hall. Hofstede defined culture "as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group of people from another" (Fan, 2000, pg.3). Hofstede (1980, cited in Lin, 2004 p. 39) explains that "national culture is reflected in the ways of reasoning, believing, and behaving within a society or national boundary". Hofstede then goes on to claim that "culture is a construct, it is not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviours and useful in predicting still other observables and measureable verbal and nonverbal behaviour" (Hofstede, 1993, p. 89). Hofstede‟s cultural model has been used as a basis for multiple business and academic references (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 88).

> "Geert Hofstede‟s dimensional model of national culture has been applied to various areas of global branding and advertising, and the underlying theories of consumer behaviour. The model has been used to explain differences of the concepts of self, personality and identity, which in turn explain variations in branding strategy and communications. Another area is information processing, including differences in

perception and categorisation that influence interpersonal and mass communication, and the working of advertising" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 85).

Therefore it is crucial to not only understand Hofstede"s model but to interpret and apply it when working in cross-cultural environments. The model is discussed further on in this section. However, Terpstra and David (1985) have a more definitive explanation of culture as a "learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of society" (Fan, 2000, p. 3). Cateora *et al.*, (2011, p.54) on the other hand, define culture simply as "society"s accepted basis for responding to external and internal events". Ultimately culture is the taught principles of how information is interpreted and communication is understood .

Hofstede, (1993, p.89) as a key thought leader in cultural and communication looks at cultural dimensions such as individual vs. collectivism, small vs. large power distance, masculine vs. feminine and which values are dominant as well as weak vs. strong uncertainty avoidance in his models. These dimensions relate to Chinese cultural practices and how they affect communication as the Chinese follow such formal rules and a fixed pattern of behaviour within all of their relationships (Hofstede, 1993, p. 89).

Mooij and Hofstede (2010, pg. 89) stated that "in collectivistic cultures, people are „we"-conscious. Their identity is based on the social system to which they belong, and avoiding loss of face is important". This is true of Chinese culture and their customs and integration of social networks and „face" or their reputation. In Chinese culture this „face work" is referred to as „Mian Zi"(Gao *et al*., 2013, p. 1). „Face" can be explained as the reputation or status of an individual in Chinese culture; it equates to respect and is at the centre of doing business in China (Feldman, 2014, p. 8; Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 59). In Gao and Primes" (2010, p.153) research they go on to discuss how American businesses must understand the concept of „face" in Chinese culture and try to „give face" as often as possible through the means of gifts, punctuality, respect as well as learning and understanding the Chinese culture and language. According to Zhao (2000, pg. 232) China has a collectivist culture because of how members "value relationships and the harmony, cooperation and the face work that nurtures them". It is the norm in collectivist cultures to "live up to the standards of one"s position, to save „face". Face motivates collectivists to act in accordance with one"s social position" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 93).

"Collectivistic cultures are high-context communication cultures, with an indirect style of communication. In the sales process in individualistic cultures, parties want to get to the point fast, whereas in collectivistic cultures it is necessary to first build a relationship and trust between parties. This difference is reflected in the different roles of advertising: persuasion versus creating trust" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 89).

This statement from Mooij and Hofstede is true in relation particularly to Chinese versus American or Western culture. Chinese collectivist culture focuses on building trust and relationships, whereas Western culture prefers to quickly close deals. Setlock *et al.* (2004, p.2) stated that "cross-cultural research has found sizeable differences between Western and Eastern cultures in terms of the extent to which people identify themselves as individuals or as members of a collective". The theoretical term of collectivist culture, is simply a definition of an individual's role or relationship within their society (Wang, Doss, Guo, & Li, 2010, p. 427). Societies can be defined as either collectivist or individualist (Wang *et al.*, 2010, p. 427). For example, China is said to be a highly collectivist culture due to the fact that individuals work, cohesively and collectively for the greater good of their community and society.

China is a clear example of a high context collectivistic culture, as they place more importance on feedback and social queues (Leung, 2014, p. 392; Setlock *et al.*, 2004, p. 2). This is worthy to note and important to consider when communicating with the Chinese. "In collectivistic cultures communication varies with roles and relationships, with concern for belonging and occupying one's proper place" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 98). This means that status and hierarchy play a role in Chinese communication and with whom and how communication happens is important.

"In collectivistic and/or high power distance cultures, people will acquire information more via implicit, interpersonal communication and base their buying decisions more on feelings and trust in the company. Cho *et al.* (1999) state that, in China, consumers rely on word-of-mouth communication because of the high contact rate among group members" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 97).

This means that for this research it is important to look at implicit communication, such as body language and relationships within the group communicating. In collectivist countries

such as China, members are heavily integrated into groups and family units. The benefits of this social construct are the unfailing loyalty and protection from the nuclear and extended family (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, p. 11).

Hofstede (1988, p. 11) goes on to explain power distance, stating that it is the measure of social hierarchy within a culture, and determines the level of authority a person experiences based on where they fit on the social scale (Wang *et al*., 2010, p. 425). Indicators of power distance are factors such as status, influence and wealth, which can all be important when determining how to show appropriate respect (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 89). This is especially important in the Chinese culture as respect in connection with status is highly revered. Mulder (1977, cited in Wang *et al*., 2010, p.425) states that in high-power distance cultures such as China, individuals are highly motivated to either maintain their level of power within the cultural structure or escalate it. Chinese are highly aspirational and are therefore driven by their ambition to improve their social circumstance within their culture and society. In high power distance and collectivist cultures, emotions are more submissive. In East Asian countries in particular, the expression and display of negative emotions for example is uncommon. "Chinese people are less able to identify expressions of fear and disgust" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 94) meaning that in a business environment they can be harder to read or understand and will not show responsive emotions, easily leaving them difficult to interpret.

When looking at uncertainty avoidance Hofstede defines it as "the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 90). Within a culture that has strong uncertainty avoidance, there are formalised rules and regulations that adhere to the structure of the society and remove any ambiguity in terms of what is expected. The people within this community are not susceptible to change (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 90). It is interesting to note that China and America for example score equally on the uncertainty avoidance index (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 156).

Hofstede also looks at long vs short term orientation, with long term orientation also referred to as the Confucian dynamism. Confucian dynamism is explained as how the Chinese plan their lives, for example the Chinese set long term goals in order to reach life objectives such as housing and the education of their child by scrupulously saving their money (Gao &

Prime, 2010, p. 153). The Chinese day to day activities seem unstructured from a Western perspective because as Gao and Prime (2010, p. 153) state the Chinese operate on polychromic time compared to the monochromic time of the West. This is again a cultural factor that can impact communication and understanding between the Western style communication and Chinese recipients. Long term orientation in comparison to short term orientation can be described simply as "the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-orientated perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 90). The Chinese are said to be long term orientated as they look ahead and have the foresight to plan in advance (Pang *et al*., 1998, p. 275). "Values included in long-term orientation are perseverance, ordering relationships by status, thrift, and having a sense of shame. Long term orientation implies investment in the future" (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 90). The Chinese do not see foreigners or outsiders as a part of their long term plans because they have not been there from the outset to establish them and therefore foreigners or outsiders are mistrusted for not forming a part of the collective (Feldman, 2014, p. 11; Pang *et al*., 1998, p. 275). This can therefore hinder communication and cultural integration for Western-style businesses trying to get into the Chinese market.

Hall (1960, p. 92) on the other hand looks at the silent languages of culture and the importance placed on time, space and friendships. Friendships are of particular cultural interest in this study due to the importance placed on „Guanxi"in Chinese culture. Gao and Prime (2010, p. 155) elaborate on Halls languages by stating that friendships or the distinction between the in-group and the out-group are a "structural phenomena of Chinese communication". For example conducting business in China is dependent on being an in-group member; this status is gained through „Guanxi" and befriending decision-makers in the upper echelons of the hierarchical system (Gao and Prime, 2010, p. 155). As foreigners are seen as „cultural strangers" they are outsiders in the out-group. However they can make inroads to develop relationships through middleman referrals, „benefit sharing" and „Guanxi cultivation" (Gao and Prime, 2010, p.155).

Hall discusses culture in terms of high context and low context cultures (Gao and Prime 2010 p. 151). High context culture can be simply explained as having cultural communication that is expressed and delivered in non-verbal ways (Wang, 2008, p. 151). In low context cultures, culture and meaning are conveyed directly through language (Wang, 2008, p. 151). High context cultures provide complications for marketing communication as there is meaning

channelled through various mediums, which marketers must understand. To place the communication in context it is important to appreciate the environment and circumstance in which the message is delivered. For example various factors such as the relationship of the communicators, the social situation, time, place, body language, facial expressions and „Guanxi" impact on how a message is perceived and understood specifically in Chinese culture (Leung, 2014, p. 392; Wang, 2008, p. 151). These theories provide vital insight into how cultures differ and how actions and communication can be interpreted based on various cultural contexts.

Fang & Faure (2010, p. 2) on the other hand have identified five idiosyncratic methods of Chinese communication, looking further in-depth at communication and Chinese culture (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 102). Fang and Faure (2010, p.2) interpreted these Chinese cultural communication theories by (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998 cited in Fang & Faure, 2010, pg. 2) and the first method is known as „hanxu" or implicit communication. „Hanxu" is based on both verbal and nonverbal communication, it is known as a communication style which is "contained, reserved, implicit, and indirect" (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998 cited in Fang & Faure, 2010, pg. 2). This means that what is said is not literally spelt out for the listener and there is often meaning in what is not said. In a business sense this adds complexity to both direct and perceived or non-verbal communication and interpretation of meaning from the Chinese and can add strain in trying to develop relationships between Western-styled and Chinese businesses.

The second method is listening-centred communication or „Tingha" which translated means „listen talks"(Fang & Faure, 2010, p. 3). In Chinese culture listening is revered far more than speaking. A spoken voice is attached to entitlement and is associated with "seniority, authority, age, experience, knowledge, and expertise. As a result, listening becomes a predominant mode of communication" (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998, cited in Fang & Faure, 2010, pg. 3). What this means in relation to this research is that when working in a business-to-business environment it is imperative to listen carefully and show respect for the hierarchy of the Chinese business people.

The third method includes polite communication or „Keqi" meaning guest or behaviour. This kind of communication is a natural element to normal Chinese communication and focuses on elements such as being "polite, courteous, modest, humble, understanding, considerate,

well-mannered" (Yao, 1983, cited in Fang & Faure, 2010, pg. 3). "Keqi also embodies the values of modesty and humbleness in Chinese culture" (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998, cited in Fang & Faure, 2010, pg. 3). This communication style can be observed among both inner social groups and outer social groups. This is an important aspect of Chinese culture and communication to note when engaging with the Chinese, especially in the context of doing business. Often the Western approach is distinctly noted in research as time is money.

Insider-communication or „Zijiren‟ meaning insider, highlights the difference between how the Chinese communicate with well-known associates or insiders versus strangers, foreigners or outsiders (Fang & Faure, 2010, p. 3). Again this shows that relationships are crucial in Chinese society. In a similar study Gao, Knight, Yang and Ballantyne (2013, p. 7) look at insider and outsider relationships at an inter-cultural level between New Zealand and China. Gao *et al.* (2013, p. 7) state that Chinese insiders can act as gatekeepers or middlemen between foreign businesses and Chinese businesses. This would then assist the relationship as well as insider communication in business-to-business settings and the understanding of what is interpreted.

Fang and Faure (2010, p.2) discuss Chinese communication as being "only understood in indigenous Chinese culture". Chinese culture focuses on selflessness, symbiotic relationships and communal needs and wellbeing (Fang, 2010, pg.2). Fang (2010, p.2) goes onto say however, that studies providing an insightful indication and interpretive understanding of Chinese communication characteristics are rare. This presents challenges again for communicating with Chinese customers, therefore emphasising the need to understand and interpret Chinese culture and its influence on Chinese business-to-business operations in order to be successful in this market. Kwock *et al.* (2013, p. 58) adds that "to the Chinese, maintaining relations is a deeply embedded social value and paramount to the law," meaning that Westerners should adopt this attitude too when working with Chinese B2B companies in order to make inroads with them.

Zhao (2000, pg. 217) researched key cultural values that are reflected in the Chinese practices of global business negotiation. From this study he found that "nurturing mutual trust and long-term relationships, working cooperatively, and expanding mutual benefit" are promoted throughout Chinese business texts. This is also recommended in China‟s Basic Policies for Global Trade and Economic Cooperation (Zhao, 2000, p. 230).

Graham and Lam (2003, p. 5) on the other hand, have investigated culture and its historical roots in China with regards to business. They have provided insight into both Western and Chinese processes of negotiation and cultural values while drawing a comparison between the two. They discuss China's basic cultural values as "collectivist, hierarchical, relationship oriented and circular" whereas American cultural values are deemed "individualist, egalitarian, information oriented and sequential" (Chuang & Chen, 2003, p. 73; Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 4; H & P, 2010, p. 152).

Similarly, Kwock et al. (2013, p. 58) highlight the differences between Chinese culture and Western culture as follows; the Chinese are deemed to have group orientation, be relationship driven and conflict averse, seek harmony, avoid confrontation, have top down communication, use "No" to terminate negotiations and "Yes" to enable negotiations to continue. Western culture is said to have an individual orientation and be goal driven, be inclined to address points of conflict and to seek immediate resolution of issues, have multi-directional communication and use "No" to mean "make me another offer" and "Yes" as an agreement to close the deal. These factors are also discussed in Gao and Prime's (2010, p.151) case study of UPS entering the Chinese market:

> "China's high-context culture creates an indirect and subtle communication style in which only a third of the message is spoken while two-thirds is embedded in the context, including codes in nonverbal behaviour, social status and the solidarity of relationship between the speaker and listener. The ability to decode the contextual message is critical to success in correctly understanding a Chinese business partner. Americans who use the direct communication style will very possibly miss much of the contextual message sent from the Chinese partner, while a subtle-minded Chinese person will second guess his/her American partner and misunderstand the American".

Based on these differential factors it is clear to see how communication can be strenuous between the two cultures and may be expensive and frustrating for both parties if cultural differences are misunderstood (Leung, 2014, p. 394).

Therefore this research attempts to look at Chinese culture to determine its influence on the communication preferences and interpretation of the various communication platforms from a

foreign company‟s perspective. These theories help to understand Chinese culture and its influence over the communication interpretation in Chinese society.

2.4.2 Further aspects of Chinese Culture that may affect communication

In order to understand the cultural context of a country and its people, the history and factors that have shaped and moulded the traditions, beliefs and value systems firstly need to be understood. For a country such as China, that has the oldest civilisation known to man, its rich and complex history has etched out the modern market economy China is known as today (Chuang et al., 2011, p. 446).

Plagued by civil wars and foreign invasions, China was a fractured state, governed by philosophers and ancient teachings, which still largely remain, with many different people, languages, cultures and principles. Fundamentally China is a country built on deeply ingrained beliefs and spirituality. Despite the sprawling landscape and population much of Chinas‟ hierarchical systems remain closely controlled and censored under authoritarian rule (Feldman, 2014, p. 7).

Although China is deeply rooted in the philosophies of the past it has been slowly emerging into a modern and more adaptable economic, political and social country. As China has moved into a market economy, values and principles have adopted a more Western approach to business development, through growing interaction with the Western business world and investment (Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 164). Fan (2000, p.4) explains Chinese culture as consisting of "three major elements: traditional culture, communist ideology and, more recently, Western values. The traditional Chinese culture encompasses diverse and sometimes competing schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, etc., and a host of regional cultures" (Fan, 2000, p. 4).

In order to understand, interact and communicate within Chinese culture, it is important to explore these schools of thought further. As understanding culture is critical to intercultural communication (Ock Yum, 1988, p. 374; Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 64), this review looks closer at key elements impacting and embedded in Chinese culture. These elements include Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and „Guanxi‟.

Taoism

Taoism emerged during the Tang dynasty. It has rooted itself in Chinese philosophy and religion for over two thousand years. Tao translated means „the way" and Taoist belief focuse"s on a lifestyle of health, longevity and immortality (Ye, 2014, p. 4). Taoism affects the fundamental mind set, behaviour and communication of the Chinese people (Zhang et al., 2002, p. 117).

According to Pang et al. (1998, pg. 276) Chinese communication is adapted from the Taoist teaching of Tai-chi. In this martial art one uses the opponent"s strength against them in order to overcome them. In this way Chinese communication is said to use similar techniques containing "double or hidden meaning" (Pang *et al*., 1998, p. 276). This means that it is often difficult and confusing for Westerners to understand the dialog and direction of the conversation. Chinese communication style is described as "non-confrontational, non-provoking, non-threatening, polite and graceful, but still carrying the full meaning and force of the message" (Pang et al., 1998, p. 276).

As well as Taoism, there are many other cultural nuisances and concepts integrated in Chinese business cultural, for example Confucianism is still a widely practiced principle and guideline for many business managers (Chunxia, 2010, p. 118).

Confucianism

Confucius has been a dominating influence on Chinese cultural for the last 3000 years, lasting up to 1912. It is hugely integrated into Chinese society and lifestyle and was used by the Han Emperor (202BC – AD220) to govern and control the Chinese people, during the spring autumn dynasty (Pang *et al*., 1998, p. 273). As the cornerstone of Chinese life, Confucianism is "the behavioural or moral doctrines that are based on the teaching of Confucius regarding human relationships, social structures, virtuous behaviour and work ethics" (Fan, 2000, p. 4).

Confucianism is the most influential ideology in Chinese culture (Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 57). It is the "foundation of Chinese culture and tradition and still provides the basis for the norms of Chinese interpersonal behaviour" (Fan, 2000, p. 4). It is for this reason that it needed to be reviewed specifically in this research study as it is the common cultural thread that runs throughout Chinese society and emphasises collectivism and cooperative interpersonal

relationships (Chunxia, 2010, p. 117). This is again is a key factor needing consideration and understanding in the Chinese B2B environment.

"Guanxi is a Confucian heritage passed on from generation to generation, and remains in the soul of the Chinese. Confucius emphasises moral standards over formal law" (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 58) meaning that in China Confucian principles are adopted as a guideline and way of life more prevalently than the government-enforced law. Confucianism covers five basic teachings which are ingrained at the very epicentre of the belief system: humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness. The Chinese follow these teachings wholeheartedly.

In Confucianism, rules are spelled out for the social behaviour of every individual, governing the entire range of human interactions in society. The Confucian values represent the building blocks of Chinese morality and has moulded a committed, hardworking and intellectual society which upholds its values and teachings which include hierarchy, harmony and co-operation.

As Confucianism is deeply ingrained in relationships, according to Ock Yum (1988, p.381) it has heavily channelled how the Chinese communicate. Confucianism has therefore developed solid communication methods and in turn improved social relationships, emphasising the need for this before business and the urgency to finalise deals promptly (Ock Yum, 1988, p.381). (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 69) state that over the eras Confucianism has helped to develop and outline specific regulations in order to manage individuals" methods of ethical and genuine communication.

One of the most important codes of conduct to be followed with regard to Confucians position on communication is that of Li, meaning „œremony". This system ensures the execution of effective and sincere communication among Confucian China (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 67). Confucian principles discuss that communication should be studied and carefully trained in as it is an integral part of "moral cultivation" (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 71).

Buddhism
There are two distinguishable sects of Buddhism and they are Mahayana and Theravada, both of which are found extensively throughout South and East Asia (Ye, 2014, p. 2). Buddhism is

fundamentally a belief system that is viewed as a religion by many (Ye, 2014, p. 2). Buddhist central manifest is around cause and effect or „Karma" meaning that an individual's actions impact their future wellbeing (Ye, 2014, p. 2).

Buddhism has many principles regarding communication and the methods and pathways that guide the right conduct to communicate (Chuang & Chen, 2003, p. 73). Konsky, Kapoor, Blue, and Kapoor (2000, cited in Chuang & Chen, 2003, p.73) stated that Buddhism's core principals are based on the "ethical concepts of tolerance, non-violence, respect for the individual, love of animals and nature and a belief in the fundamental spiritual equality of all human beings". Buddhist teaching also discusses the right speech, right action and right livelihood as integral parts of communication ethics (Chuang & Chen, 2003, p. 72).

There are five main ethical recommendations when it comes to communication from the Buddhist perspective. These include:

1. Being silent and resisting urges of explicit speech.
2. Reject language that builds ego and self-importance or entitlement, use language that "promotes accurate knowledge of the empirical ego".
3. Use language that highlights a position of modesty, and is used without yearning. Language should not be used that stirs affliction within an individual or others.
4. Speech should always be honest and follow the opinions and practices of individuals beliefs
5. Language should be spoken that uplifts oneself and praises others.
   (Chuang & Chen, 2003, pp. 223-225)

The Buddhist principles of communication are based on "mutuality, open-mindedness, honesty and respect," Chen & Starosta, (1998) cited in Chuang & Chen, 2003, p.73). Kwock *et al.* (2013, p. 58) stated that the religion highlights social harmony and disagrees with any abrupt confrontation, therefore Chinese people circumvent direct conflict. Buddhism therefore essentially focuses on silence as a form of non-verbal communication; however Western culture determines silence as criticism (Chuang & Chen, 2003, p. 74).

'Guanxi'

„Guanxi" as previously discussed, is a strong relationship based on mutual trust and respect that loyally binds the members of the relationship (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 58). Historically the

Chinese used „Guanxi" as a way of doing business as there were few laws and an ineffective means of governing them (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 59). In Chinese business culture „Guanxi" relationships will traditionally supersede any formal business contract (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 60). This again emphasises the importance of having „Guanxi" with Chinese business partners when operating in the Chinese market. It is the foundation of initiating any working relationship.

„Guanxi" is described as a "personal connection to which the parties are bounded by an implicit psychological contract to maintain a long term relationship, mutual commitment, loyalty, and obligation beyond the bounds of a written contract," Kwock *et al.* (2013, p. 57). In other words, „Guanxi" is a social construct based on mutually beneficial relationships between one party to another with the sole purpose of developing trust and giving and receiving favours to improve social and corporate status (Chuang *et al.*, 2011, p. 457; Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 276). When discussing Walmart's entry into China, Chuang *et al.* (2011, p. 457) state that had Walmart executives engaged in „Guanxi" and had a solid understanding of the importance of social relationships when first entering the country they would have "greatly benefited in developing long-term, mutually successful dealings with local governments and suppliers" .

The benefits of „Guanxi" are extensive, especially in a business relationship, as it aids in securing resources, data, information, access, improves reputations by receiving reliable recommendations and amplifies competitive advantage (Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 276). „Guanxi" is intertwined in the very inner workings of Chinese society (Chen *et al.*, 2013, p. 192). This social system is said to be a vital tool to connect with other members of society, especially with a population of over a billion people (Matthews, 2000, p. 118). It is frequently said that it is not what you know but who you know that is important and gets you ahead. This sentiment is especially true in China. However this friendship system comes with its own commitments and obligations, a favour granted is a favour owed and members are expected and trusted to reciprocate (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 59). If an individual is assisted by a member of their „Guanxi" network that member will need to pay back the favour at some stage and in some way (Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 276).

Previous studies such as Feng and Zolkiewski's (2012, p. 16),„relationship portfolios and „Guanxi" in Chinese business strategy" have looked at the role of culture in aid of negotiation tactics in China. Their findings showed that "emphasis on a network perspective is needed".

It was said that „Guanxi" is a key element in developing these networks through relationship building and transferal of trust among members in the network as Chinese businessmen prefer to communicate and conduct business face-to-face (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 24). Thus establishing a „Guanxi" network in China should be done predominantly in person, requiring the Western business to spend a lot of time and effort in the local Chinese market.

Graham and Lam (2003, p. 5) refer to „Guanxi" as "individuals" social capital within their group of friends, relatives and close associates". However Zolkiewski and Feng (2012, pg.17) add that „Guanxi" can also include the relationships with one"s enemies or foes, providing a juxtaposition to the concept as both positive and negative relationships can exist within a „Guanxi" network, thus making it harder for Westerners to comprehend as positive and negative associations are classed in the same network.

As competition intensifies in China it is becoming difficult to differentiate between products using only quality, price and service levels. Just as in the West, a good personal relationship with customers is considered to be an added value that is difficult for competitors to imitate (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 17). Therefore it is imperative to the success of businesses that they achieve this relationship and use effective communication. As China"s economy has grown from an agrarian society into a manufacturing society these traditional teachings have remained and in order to negotiate business with the Chinese one need"s to have a firm understanding of their customary principles and cultural imperatives (Chuang et al., 2011, p. 446).

The typical model for Western business practices is first to do business then over time to develop a relationship, however Chinese culture is the opposite, and business thrives on building an initial relationship based on trust and mutual respect first (Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 59; Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 24). This can be a long process often involving many lavish meals, copious amounts of alcohol and expensive gifts (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 160; Gao *et al*., 2013, p. 5). Westerners can find this tedious and frustrating as their attitude is „time is money" however without first building „Guanxi" and „Renquing" (the giving of gifts, help or favours) a relationship of harmony and understanding cannot be established (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 24). Most importantly however is the development of trust through these traditional techniques of relationship building. The Chinese prefer to build trust and social

capital before any business transactions take place, they want to work with people they "know, like and respect" (Kwock et al., 2013, p. 59).

These Chinese philosophies are important to review for this study because of the deeply ingrained impact they have had on Chinese culture. This historical aspect of Chinese culture can be difficult for Western civilisation and particularly businesses, to understand. By reviewing this research the case study company can evaluate cross-cultural differences and interpret Chinese communication from a traditional perspective that has philosophical meaning.

2.5 Conclusion

From the analysed literature and theories, it is evident that the challenges facing marketing communication in China are extensive and methods to overcome these obstacles are rarely documented. Not only does the marketer need a firm understanding of Chinese culture in order to understand how to effectively communicate, but they to need be able to navigate the communication tools and methods that are most effectively understood and dispersed among the Chinese for rapid diffusion into the market place. China in particular is difficult to understand from a Western corporate cultural perspective, making business-to-business dealings and negotiations between Western-styled business and Chinese business customers challenging.

It is therefore imperative that culture and communication are thoroughly understood for the successful integration of a marketing communication plan in a business-to-business context. Once global businesses can understand the corporate culture as well as the impact of the national Chinese culture, they can begin to implement their integrated marketing communication strategy in order to effectively communicate with their targeted customers both internally and externally.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Despite China's large population, ever growing consumer market, business opportunities and investors, it still remains difficult for Western businesses to succeed in the Chinese market (Chuang *et al*., 2011, p. 444). China has a historic and notoriously complex culture as well as deep rooted communication and relationship building practices. This research methodology discusses the blueprint of the investigation into the research problem, and how the research attempted to overcome these challenges. This chapter breaks down each research step undergone in the process of uncovering the depth of information needed in order to achieve the objectives.

Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri (2008, p. 708) state that the globalisation of markets and industry has created an increased emphasis on empirical research methodologies. To conduct this research and achieve the objectives set out, the researcher used a mixed methods approach. The researcher was able to gather data first hand when investigating the research objectives, by recording direct observations and experiences when conducting the one-on-one in-depth interviews in China. Therefore a combination of field notes, observations, questionnaires and interviews were used to gain a richness of information that proved valuable in interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions.

The chapter is structured as follows, the problem statement and research objectives are covered in more depth, further elaborating on what the research aims to achieve. The research philosophy covers the framework that shaped the research methodology. Then the research design goes on to look at the sample design, interview and questionnaire design, data collection and data analysis of the research. Finally the end of the chapter discusses the quality of the data, including its credibility, validity and ethical approach.

3.2 Problem Statement

As China's market economy has grown and developed, its consumer base as well as purchasing power parity have made China the global export market of choice (Felipe *et al*., 2013, p. 810). Global businesses have actively pursued a focused approach to breaking into the Chinese market and gaining some of its immense market share (Gebauer *et al*., 2007, p.

126). China relies on imports from other nations, specifically depending on minerals and other natural resources it does not have. This therefore presents opportunities for supplier companies, such as the case study company UCL, to cater to the Chinese demand. Therefore strong business-to-business relationships are crucial to secure these lucrative supplier partnerships in the highly competitive Chinese market.

However, the downfall of many businesses has been their misunderstanding of how to communicate with the Chinese as well as how to relate to their culture and perceptions and develop these key relationships (Gao *et al*. 2012, p. 456). As these company"s attempt to integrate their communication across various media and platforms this problem is exacerbated. Therefore the relevance of this study is to attempt to bridge the gap between Western-type and Chinese B2B company"s by investigating the way that the Chinese interpret communication and how their culture impacts this.

It is particularly difficult for Western companies to relate to and interpret Chinese culture through their colloquial means of communication and what they prioritise and value in business. Therefore the research looks at means of integrated marketing communication when entering the Chinese B2B market and how this method can be effective. The case study company has used integrated marketing communication techniques, such as magazine adverts, corporate profiles, logos, product brochures and business cards which have been analysed for the purpose of this research. This marketing material is crucial in the interpretation of cross cultural communication in a business-to-business setting and has been used in the data collection.

Therefore this study focuses specifically on business-to-business markets in China and aims to research the role of Chinese culture in the interpretation of integrated marketing communication, using a South African businesses communication strategy with its Chinese agents to illustrate.

3.3 Research Objectives

In order to achieve this purpose, the research objectives were to determine from the Chinese agents of the business:

1. How Chinese businesses communicate

- How Chinese businesses prefer to communicate with Westerners.
- How Chinese business-to-business (B2B) customers respond to Western marketing communication.
- What the most effective methods of communication in Chinese B2B markets are.

Research has shown that there are many deep rooted and intricate principles to communication in China and these have exacerbated relationships with Western businesses (Feldman, 2014, p. 7; Gao & Prime, 2010, p. 144; Chuang *et al*., 2011, p. 446). Much of the data available on Chinese culture, communication and business has a Western bias. For example Law (2012, p. 2) states that there is a lack of available research and frameworks on business and leadership from different cultural perspectives. Therefore this research interprets the data and looks at the findings from a Chinese perspective. Finding out first-hand how Chinese business-to-business people want to be communicated with, what the most effective means of communication in their culture is and how they understand business communication from the West? Is it applicable or not and can it be done better?

2. How Chinese culture influences business communication.

- If agrarian traditions are still followed in respect to hierarchy, harmony and co-operation.
- How the teachings of Confucius and Taoism influence communication.

The above research objective contributes to the purpose of this research as it determines how culture in Chinese society influences communication. It probes deeper into the psychographics of the Participants by asking more emotive questions about what culture means to them and where it comes from and how it affects their lives and their behaviour. This looks more closely into a business-to-business context and how culture influences professional communication.

3. The role culture plays in building relationships in B2B markets

- The extent morality and values play a role in decision making
- How important „Guanxi" is in building business relationships in China in the 21st century.

Preliminary research and literature has shown that relationship building in China is crucial (Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 57). Therefore this research study investigated the impact of culture in relationship building and the integrated nature of the two (Chen *et al*., 2013, p. 168). Again literature confirms that „Guanxi" plays a crucial role in Chinese culture, particularly when it comes to business (Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 58). Therefore investigating the role of culture and „Guanxi" in relationship building in business markets is fundamental to achieving the purpose of this research. It is of interest to note how culture moulds and helps to develop relationships in China as well as the morals and values of the Chinese people that stem from their culture.

By using the integrated marketing communication material from the case study company the research looked at how the various aspects of the case company"s communication are interpreted.

3.4 Research Philosophy

The philosophical framework that shaped the research methodology was idealist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. "Ontological questions are about the nature of reality while epistemological questions deal with the nature of the discussion"(Mohaghar, Jafarnejad, Ghodsipoor, & Maleki, 2013, p. 1835).

By using an idealist ontology the research benefits from looking at the objectives from the point of view of the researcher who is immersed in the study and gaining respondents" perspective on the phenomena, rather than assuming a prescribed position. The idealist ontology "assumes that the external world is not dependent of our mind and it relies more on the researcher's subjective opinion"(Mohaghar et al., 2013, p. 1835).

Approaching research with interpretivist epistemology means that the research is aimed at interpreting and understanding a particular phenomenon rather than attempting to generalise it to a population"s behaviour (Tuli, 2010, p. 100). This philosophical approach adds value because it is based on recording natural events as they unfold; "it is unobtrusive, non-controlling and non-manipulative"(Tuli, 2010, p. 100). Therefore the analyses of the researchers own field notes and observations became a crucial part of understanding the phenomena.

This research philosophy enabled the researcher to explore the phenomenon and attempt to explain and evaluate the behaviour and influences of how Chinese culture affects the interpretation of communication.

3.5 Research Design

This research is primarily qualitative exploratory research however the researcher used a mixed method, triangulation approach where a small element of quantitative data was collected to add value to the qualitative analysis. The research is also case based research in that it focuses on a specific company"s IMC in China.

Qualitative research allows for the context of the phenomena to be witnessed first-hand and up close, in the case of this study, observations and field notes allowed the researcher to find deeper, richer interpretations to the quantitative findings (Doz, 2011, p. 584). This is of especially significant importance in cross-cultural or cross-national research as the findings can be better put into context (Doz, 2011, p. 584). Qualitative research cannot be looked at through only one lens, instead it calls for a multi-focused approach garnering richer, thicker more descriptive information that a single theoretical lens cannot provide as it only gives limited light to the phenomena (Doz, 2011, p. 583).

The use of qualitative research is of significant value in this study because of the problems facing cross-cultural research as well as the language barrier. Therefore triangulation was used in order to provide a fuller picture and look at the data through multiple lenses, in an attempt to get rich, thick textured descriptive data to interpret.

Mixed methods research is highly valuable in qualitative data capture because it allows the interviewer to draw conclusions across multiple sources of data and interpret the findings based on the themes or commonalities that are found. Triangulation or a mixed methods approach is the combination of multiple data collection methods in order to optimise the most beneficial elements of each method and therefore counter act the weaknesses in each method and emphasise validity by giving a fuller, more succinct and holistic view of behaviour (Torrance, 2012, p. 111).

This paradigm was used in the research study by combining and integrating phenomenological qualitative data and quantitative data through means of focus groups, open ended interview questions, observations, field notes and a questionnaire.

Case based research was also chosen for this study as it was the most effective means of gaining access to local Chinese participants, who would trust the researcher and be happy to co-operate. The benefits of using a case study or cased based research, is that is allows the researcher to develop a framework from the study based on an actual in-depth context, aiding the researcher to understand the phenomena (Barth & Thomas, 2012, p. 754). Gao and Prime (2010, p.150) conducted similar research using UPS and its entry into China as a case study. They too used interviews and focus groups in their research.

A qualitative research design was used to gather data through the means of in-depth interviews and a focus group. As qualitative research can be adaptable it allows for greater manoeuvrability when exploring subject matters (Andriopoulos & Slater, 2013, p. 386). This can mean that findings from research open up new avenues of discovery and information, leading to knowledge, ideas and objectives that may have not been uncovered or thought of otherwise (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998, p. 8; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2005, p. 10; Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 18). Sinkovics *et al.* (2008, p.690) state that exploratory research and qualitative methodologies provide "meaning behind the numbers as they highlight multi-dimensional layers of information, with a holistic view of the context and without requiring large samples". This research method is particularly suited to this study then as the number of participants interviewed and questioned was fifteen.

As part of the mixed methods approach, the researcher also collected quantitative data, however with the small sample this was used merely to quickly identify topics that could be further probed in the interviews and developed upon in the focus groups. Therefore the questionnaires supported the interview questions by assisting in the line of questioning. The quantitative data was not analysed because the sample was too small.

The researcher then looked at emic and etic research approaches in order to evaluate the best method to use for this study. An emic research focus is the "the insiders" perspective on culture (from within a specific culture), which provides insight into cultural nuances and complexities"(Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013, p. 381). Emic refers to the research as being

culture-bound meaning that it looks at one culture and the behaviour and distinctions of that culture. An emic approach was used in the research design because the study aims to research the "phenomena which occur in a particular culture by using only concepts employed in that culture" (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008, p. 692). By using an emic research approach it is believed that the study reveals a true-to-life insight into Chinese culture in relation to business as well as information highlighted that does not have a Western bias. For this study it means that the research was conducted in China, with local Chinese participants in their local environment. Therefore this method was chosen as opposed to an etic approach as etic looks at a specific culture and tries to analysis and explain it by comparing it with another culture (Rogers, Peterson, & Albaum, 2013, p. 2). In a similar ethnographic study by Fei (1986) focusing on Guanxi and conducted in a small Chinese village, an emic approach was also used in the field research as it looks at the perspective of the Participants (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013, p. 381).

As this has been an exploratory study the researcher has been able to develop a better understanding and awareness from the research particularly as it was through the researcher"s direct observation and experience.

3.5.1 Sample Design

In order to research Chinese culture and communication at grass roots level the researcher has followed the Chinese principle of using personal networks and relationships to gather data from direct agents. The researcher had the opportunity to meet with the principle Chinese agent and two sub agents in Hong Kong prior to the agent"s forum where all of the agents gathered and were interviewed. This initial meeting helped to build and nurture a relationship as well as strengthened communication channels and aid in the exchange of information and the assistance and co-operation of the Chinese. Traditionally the Chinese are wary of questionnaires or surveys (Graham & Lam, 2003, p. 4), there is a general feeling of anxiety and hesitation to participate, "and they are reluctant to disclose their thoughts and opinions" (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2010, p. 36). Therefore the researcher used her „Guanxi Wang" network in order to conduct interviews and gather data. In this case, as previously stated, a similar study was done by Zolkiweski and Feng (2012, p.18) looking at „Guanxi" and relationships in a Chinese context. Zolkiweski and Feng used their „Guanxi Wang", or relationship network, in order to gather data for their research (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 18). Furthermore Tuli (2010, p. 100) adds that the value in this approach means that

"building partnerships can lead to deeper insight into the context under study, adding richness and depth to the data".

The population of interest was local Chinese tanning agents, in the leather industry that traded and sold the case study company"s product, wattle extract. Therefore the researcher used a convenience sampling method and did not specifically choose the agents who participated but was rather presented with the opportunity to interview the Chinese agents as they were available. The research took place in Guizhou province, China as well as in Zhejiang, in Wenzhou Province, China. The researcher conducted the interviews in the Guizhou province personally, whereas the interviews conducted in Wenzhou Province were done on the researcher"s behalf by the interpreter.

Sample Size

As discussed a convenience sample was used, made up of indigenous Chinese leather agents who had vast experience in the local market and who were happy to participate in the research study. The sample was not predefined by demographics such as age, gender and education. However it was fundamental to interview local Chinese people with experience in the business environment, in order to gauge their thoughts and opinions based around the research objectives.

The research was conducted with 15 extract agents out of a total of 24 who represent the Chinese market. Although the industry is globally extensive, there are only a few competing companies in the market due to the nature of the business and its raw material supply. The interviewed agents each represented one of China"s leather producing provinces and their local extract market. The researcher chose to focus on the wattle bark extract market and interview agents and sub agents who sell the product into the local Chinese market. The researcher had access to the agents and the case study company had recently launched its extensive integrated marketing communication strategy into the Chinese market with the local Chinese specifically in mind. As the majority of research into China is collected from foreign respondents and not locals, the true antics of Chinese business and culture are muted (Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 18). Therefore it was important for this research to be collected from local Chinese participants in order to get a true sense of their understanding and interpretation of communication. According to Feng (2012, p.18) "well-informed respondents can be seen as key informants and are critical to the success of such in-depth research". Thus

the opportunity to interview the Chinese agents who knew the industry personally provides validity to the research by interviewing native Chinese respondents and recording their first hand experiences.

The smaller size of 15 people is justified by the fact that it is a qualitative study and "in the search for in-depth insight into the subjects, it is not the power of the numbers that is important but the power of words and images. Representativeness of the results in accordance with the subject of investigation, not the research population, is what counts" (Ruyter & Scholl, 1998, p. 8).

3.5.2   Interview and Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires were first used with all of the respondents and administered at the start of each interview. Based on the findings from these questions the semi-structured interview questions were adapted and expanded to accommodate new or important information that needed more explanation. Please refer to Appendix A for the questionnaire and Appendix F & G for interview questions used.

Questionnaire design

Firstly respondents were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Please refer to Appendix A. Questions covered the main cultural philosophies in China as well as their emphasis in the business environment. Respondents were asked to rate their feelings towards various Chinese cultural aspects based on the importance they feel it plays in business. Questions used were as follows:

Circle your answer on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree

1   „Guanxi"is very important in business.

3.   Taoism principles are important in business.

4.   Hierarchy is very important in business.

6.   Co-operation is key in business

7.   Chinese cultural values affect how I do business

8.   Western businesses must respect Chinese business culture

In a similar study focusing on Chinese culture, Ying Fan (2000, p. 5) divided cultural values into eight groups based on the Chinese value survey by the Chinese cultural connection . In an attempt to draw similar understanding, the values table was used in this research to draw on as an example in preparation for the questionnaires and interviews.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance each value has in their life. For example:

Circle your answer on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree

2.   Confucian principles are important in business.5.   Harmony is very important in business

9.   Chinese business people rely on „Guanxi‟ to do business

10.   I don‟t do business outside of my „ Guanxi‟ network

Respondents were asked what their preferred communication method was and if they felt that it was a cultural norm. They were asked how they respond to various forms of communication such as print, online, phone calls, one-to-one meetings and exhibitions and trade shows. Respondents were then asked if they had experience with Western business communication. These questions were developed in order to determine an initial understanding of the level of exposure to various media communication elements and what methods and messages were relatable and preferential for Chinese business, communication and clear cultural understanding.

- *Traditionally how have you built business relationships?*
- *Do you think your culture affects your business relationships?*
- *Do you think Western businesses understand your culture?*
- *What are the most important cultural business principles to use when conducting business?*
- *Do you think „ Guanxi‟ is still important in Chinese culture for business? Why?*

The above mentioned questions were all asked in relation to the objectives, focusing on culture in business practices.

Respondents were then shown four full page full colour adverts in English, with business contact details in Mandarin. Please refer to Appendix A. Respondents were asked to discuss

the likability of the adverts as well as their cultural transcendence. Questions related to the adverts were probing in order to solicit deeper understanding during the in-depth interviews as the advert is a central communication method. Questions included investigating the respondent‟s perceptions of the images, wording, colour and meaning derived from the adverts, including how it „speaks‟ to them about the products, brand and company and what associations they felt with the advert.

Respondents were also asked to view other company marketing material such as the product spec sheets, corporate profile and product brochure as well as the business cards and company logo. Please refer to Appendix B to E. As the company had recently undergone an entire corporate rebranding as well as newly entering the Chinese market, it was important to gauge an understanding of the perceptions and interpretation the new company look and corporate message had among its clientele. This marketing material was collectively used in the Chinese market as part of the case study company‟s integrated marketing communication strategy. Integrated marketing communication is designed to add value to the marketing plan or strategy by communicating and engaging both internally and externally with a number of consumers over a multitude of platforms (Groom, 2008, p. 3). The purpose of this is to create a consistent image of the company while highlighting its benefits, contributions, service and best practices for example.

Ultimately these questions were used to form an understanding of what elements were best responded to and relatable as well as what elements were not.

- *What do these adverts tell you about the company that placed them and their brand?*

This question was asked to provide an insight into a Chinese level of brand awareness and their understanding of corporate identity.

Basic demographic information was then asked at the end of the questionnaire in order to provide a deeper understanding to the level of exposure of the respondent geographically, economically and in terms of their education, as these factors impacted on their cultural perceptions. The demographic questions were as follows:

- *What is your age?*

- *What is your gender?*
- *What is your position in your company?*
- *What is your level of education?*
- *Where were you educated?*
- *What ethic group do you belong to?*

In-depth interview design

Qu and Dumay (2011, p. 255) state that "the benefit of the research interview lies in its unique ability to uncover the private and sometimes incommunicable social world of the interviewee, to gain insight into alternative assumptions and ways of seeing". Therefore the use of in-depth interviews in this research can be justified based on the qualitative nature of the study and the need for understanding and interpretation in order to gain insight into culture"s influence on communication in a Chinese context. This is especially significant as the Chinese communicate largely through body language, gestures and facial expressions.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted because they are "flexible, accessible and intelligible …..disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behaviour" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). A semi-structured interview uses a prepared questioning guide to ensure that relevant topics are discussed and important research questions are addressed (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). The research therefore implemented this tool for the open-ended interviews as it uses a wide range of themes to channel the interview onto relevant areas that need to be uncovered (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). The semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they are conducted in a "consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses" which is imperative in qualitative exploratory research (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). The use of a semi-structured research approach as opposed to an unstructured approach means that the same thematic methodology is used in all interviews (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). This allowed participants the freedom to respond in their own words, expressing their own understanding by use of their own language. This is needed when trying to gain insight into the social world of the local Chinese participants (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 255).

The interview design followed a funnelled schedule; the broader questions were asked first and then narrowed down to explore the key objectives of the research. As one-on-one in-depth interviews allow the flexibility to investigate information and feedback further, they

can also however occasionally run the risk of veering off topic (Andriopoulos & Slater, 2013, p. 386). Therefore the schedule acted as a guide for the interview to ensure that the main goals of the data collection where achieved as the interview remained focused on the objectives of the guideline. Please refer to Appendix F & G. The schedule was as follows:

- *What is the background and level of exposure to Western communication and media?*
- *How do Chinese businesses prefer Westerners to communicate with them?*
- *How does Chinese culture influence business communication?*
- *What role does culture play in building relationships in B2B Markets?*
- *What demographic information could influence interpretation?*

Qu and Dumay (2011, p.249) discuss qualitative interview guides to be used when conducting semi-structured interviews. The below example was used by the researcher to develop and structure an interview guide for the research.

Table 1. Interview example

Question Type	Purpose of questions	Example
Introductory questions	To open the conversation and ease into the interview	"What province are you from?"
Follow up questions	Asked in response to physical gestures such as nodding or for more information around key themes.	"You are nodding does that mean that you agree that you do feel „Guanxi"is important in business?"
Probing questions	To draw out more information	"Could you please tell me more about your feelings on Chinese culture?"
Direct questions	To get a straight response	"How many years" experience do you have in the extract market?"
Throw away questions:	General questions to build a rapport with the interviewee and make them feel at ease.	"Have you visited Guiyang before?"

(Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 249)

The in-depth interviews had semi-structured open-ended questions in order to allow as much freedom of information as possible. This provided much richer depth of information and

allowed for added explanations surrounding the questions asked or the use of examples to help emphasise the point or convey the meaning of the question.

Questions presented in the interview were based on achieving a positive outcome in terms of satisfying the research objectives. For example emphasize was placed on the importance of traditional cultural business practices and relationships and how that affects business-to-business communication in China. Respondents were asked what personal importance they place on social, cultural and business communication and most importantly what mediums or channels they engage with to send and receive communication.

Firstly a basic understanding of the respondent‟s background and level of general media communication exposure was investigated by asking the following questions:

1. *What province are you from?*
2. *What city are you from?*

A vastly expansive country such as China can have varying customs, dialects, economies and cultures from province to province. Knowing where a respondent comes from can provide further insight into their background and cultural perceptions.

3. *What media are you exposed to?*

As China has a vast rural population, there are varying degrees of what media and what messages locals are exposed to. Narrowing down the participants level of media exposure gives an idea of the mediums and level of communication they are used to.

4. *Do you get any businesses news?*
   - *If yes, how so? What kind of businesses news?*
5. *Do you have a business relationship with other businesses?*
6. *Do you have a business relationship with any other Western businesses?*

   If yes:

   - *How do they communicate with you?*
   - *Do you feel this communication method is effective?*
   - *Can you give examples of good and bad communication? What made it good, and bad?*

- *How do you as a business person prefer to be communicated with?*

These questions were asked primarily because the objectives focus on business-to-business marketing and Chinese awareness of their business environment is crucial to understand in order to realise what they think and feel in relation to their working world. Follow up questions such as in questions four and six provoked the respondent to think more thoroughly and think deeper into their response, rather than simply providing yes or no answers, by having to provide examples and elaborate on their answers. This in-depth information again assists with understanding cultural perceptions pertaining to communication and business in Chinese society.

7. *What were your first impressions of UCL?*

   - *How are their communication methods different to that of local Chinese businesses?*

This question was asked because it provided a basis of understanding as each participant was aware of UCL Company as they were subagents for the business and acted as Chinese representatives. This question provided valuable insight in determining how the company"s various communications methods and corporate branding are perceived by local Chinese industry members.

8. *Are you exposed to Western marketing communication methods?*
   If yes:

   - *How do you feel when you see adverts or communication from Western businesses?*
   - *What appeals to you? What don"t you like?*
   - *Do you think that Western businesses know how to communicate effectively in Chinese markets? What could they improve on?*

9. *How do you feel Western business communication differs to Chinese business communication?*

10. *How do you prefer to communicate with Western businesses?*

Questions eight to ten focused on the impact and impression of Western businesses; these questions were asked in order to get an understanding of participants" perceptions of Western communication and determine how transferable and relatable Western communication is to the participants.

11. *What do you feel are the most effective means of communication for business-to-business markets?*

This question was asked to uncover the participants feeling towards communication in a Chinese business environment.

12. *Do you feel influenced by Chinese culture?*
    - *Why? How does it influence you?*
13. *Does Chinese culture play a role in your businesses? E.g. your relationships with your colleagues and clients, how you communicate, the principles your business follows.*
14. *Does your culture influence how you communicate in business?*
15. *Does it influence how you interpret communication?*

The above questions, twelve to fifteen, focus more narrowly on Chinese culture and its effects on the participants in terms of how they communicate culturally and in their business.

16. *Do you feel that Confucius or Tao principles play a role in your life?*
17. *Does the teachings of Confucius or Taoism influence your understanding and interpretation of communication? Can you give examples?*
18. *Does Confucianism and Taoism influence your relationships with your business partners?*
    - *Why?*

Questions sixteen to eighteen looked specifically at the effects of Chinese philosophy and looked to unveil a richer understanding of the role the philosophy plays in Chinese day to day lives.

19. *Do you have relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds?*
    - *Which cultures?*
20. *How does culture affect your business relationships?*
21. *Traditionally how have you built business relationships?*
22. *Do you think your culture affects your business relationships?*

A focus on relationships was directed to participants in questions nineteen through to twenty two.

23. *Do you think Western businesses understand your culture?*

24. *What are the most important cultural business principles to use when conducting business?*

25. *Do you think „Guanxi" is still important in Chinese culture for business? Why?*

26. *Have your morals and values developed from your cultural background?*

27. *How do your morals and values affect your decision making?*

28. *How important is „Guanxi" in building business relationships to you?*

    - *Why?*

29. *How could Western businesses overcome cultural differences when doing business in China?*

Chinese generation X, born between 1965 and 1984, grew up during the economic boom of the Chinese new market economy and the Cultural Revolution (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006, p. 103). They have had more access to education and more growth opportunities than any other generation before them and more of them have received a tertiary education. This generation, according to Dou *et al.* (2006, p.103) is widely familiar with Western popular culture, through various media channels such as magazines, movies, music and television. This is therefore of relevance because of the varying level of exposure to other cultures and individual's education and how it affects their own culture and interpretation of communication.

3.5.3 Data Collection

The advantage of using in-depth interviews is that it is able to provides a wealth of knowledge and insight in order to achieve the research objectives, allowing the researcher to use a three dimensional approach and gain multi-layered insight into behaviour. In-depth interviews allow for the expansion of information around research areas, by allowing information to evolve from the interviewee.

Data was collected and reviewed and four months later six more interviews were conducted in China by a third party and interpreter within the „Guanxi" network. These six interviews were done one-on-one and conducted in Mandarin and then translated into English. For the second round of interviews the questionnaire and interview design was amended to promote a more effective data collection. The second round of six interviews was completed by the interpreter in Wenzhou in order to interview the remaining agents who the researcher was unable to interview during the data collection trip to China. The additional interviews were

more succinct as the interpreter did not probe or discuss questions as in-depth as the researcher had done in person. Although the second round of interviews did not uncover ground breaking new data, they did add value by allowing the researcher to reach a wider range of participants. Please refer to Appendix G. By refining and restructuring the interview the responses were more focused. Questions in the interview process had been repetitive, purposely looking to see if there was continuity in response to the same question asked in different ways or if there were discrepancies among respondents answers, possibly indicating a lack of understanding or misinterpretation. This was deemed necessary in order to gauge a level of the participants" understanding to the questions as the language and cultural barrier proved difficult to overcome at times and could have been a barrier to valid research.

With the principle agent"s support and assistance, the researcher was able to meet with all 15 agents and subagents, representing the company, at the agent"s forum in Guizhou Province, South West China in June 2013. Nine of fifteen agents were interviewed during the 5 days of the forum. The Chinese agents were happy to participate and offer their opinions as they felt that as business partners and members of the company"s „family" participating in the research study was not only for the good of themselves but more collectively for the good of the business. One-on-one in-depth interviews including the questionnaires were conducted by the researcher with four of the agents. Here individual responses to the adverts were assessed and provided a good indication of uninfluenced responses. However in addition to these, a focus group discussion was held with five participants to discuss only the questionnaire questions. This focus group not only provided additional quantitative data but allowed for a group perspective on the ads and the impact of culture on their perceptions. Group discussions add value as respondents can become uninhibited in a group structure, talking freely and sharing openly as well as evolving the conversation from each other"s ideas and comments (Padel & Foster, 2005, p. 612). The added value of using both interviews and focus groups meant that the research was gathered using different techniques in order to overcome draw backs associated by using only one particular technique.

Interviews were conducted at hotel conference rooms and on bus journeys over the five days of the visit. Interview times ranged from one hour to several hours as respondents were given time to discuss their thoughts and opinions freely. Additionally the assistance of the interpreter drew out the length of the interviews as information had to be passed between the interpreter in both English and Mandarin in order to communicate questions and responses.

Interviews were recorded, using a handheld electronic voice recorder, as well as noted in order to recall the audio with the notes and aid in the development of the transcripts and data collection. This helped improve the accuracy of recalled information as the language barrier, respondent‟s accents and sound quality of the recordings hindered the interpretation of information at times. The researcher developed the interview and focus group transcripts by personally typing up the audio recordings word for word per interview. Although this was time consuming it allowed for identification, review and analysis of emerging themes from early on as participants tended to use stories or metaphors when responding to questions in order to explain themselves.

All interviews were audio recorded in order to capture interviewee‟s immediate responses to questions as well as the IMC material. According to Eckhardt & Bengtsson (2010, p. 38), cultural differences create challenges when trying to "generate rich discussions in an interview setting in China, where communication often times can be as implicit as it is explicit, picking up on non-verbal cues becomes paramount". Therefore documenting the interviews was important in interpreting all of the information. For this reason the researcher took field notes and observed participants. The researcher took notes of how the participants responded and their actions, gestures and behaviour while being interviewed as well as how they behaved towards each other. This was particularly important during the focus groups as the interaction among the participants during their discussions added depth of understanding. This is discussed in detail in the findings chapter.

Due to the need for translations between English and Mandarin and back to English, the researcher faced the added challenge of the language barrier and information which is „lost in translation‟. To overcome this, questions were asked in simple English and were as short and concise as possible. Each question was repeated and responses gone over thoroughly to ensure adequate understanding. Special care was taken however, to not influence the respondents answer or lead participants in any way thus avoiding interviewer bias. The audio recorded interviews were back translated by a Chinese translator to ensure that what was asked and relayed by the third party interpreter during the interviews was as accurate as possible. This method again attempts to ensure the validity of the research as analysing bilingual data can present numerous challenges, (Halai, 2007, p. 345).

3.5.4 Data Analysis

The researcher has used a mixed methods approach, focusing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to garner the best results from the research. This mixed methods approach assists in the understanding of the deeper holistic phenomena of culture (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p. 15).

The researcher used a phenomenological approach to the data and as discussed, this was done using an idealist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. This approach was used as it is specifically designed to discover the phenomenon within the research. Phenomenology is focused on finding the "embodied, experiential meanings aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay, 2009, p. 6). In order to achieve this, the researcher used field notes and observations; through the researchers own personal experience of the phenomena.

The qualitative data was analysed according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 15) by using deductive thematic analysis when drawing on data to allow for the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes within the data and provide rich detail of information. This data analysis involved scrutinizing the interview responses and coding relevant themes that reoccur throughout the interview scripts in order to draw conclusions on the findings and identify patterns (Fereday, 2006, p. 83).

The quantitative data was analysed by adding the frequencies of positive and negative answers respectively according to the Likert scale used in the questionnaire and taking average scores to further develop the interpretative data. Full quantitative analysis was not conducted due to the small sample size. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to quickly identify topics that could be further probed in the interviews and developed upon in the focus groups. Therefore the questionnaires supported the interview questions by assisting in the line of questioning.

3.6 Data Quality

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is the term used and associated with reliable constructive research. Without credibility research is not deemed trustworthy or able to hold any academic value. Therefore it is imperative to prove credibility in qualitative research.

To ensure the credibility of the qualitative research a back translation was conducted to certify effective communication of the intended research questions during the interview. Back translation, in this case, is the translation of the audio recorded interviews from Mandarin back into English, this ensures that what the interpreter said the interviewees response was and what the back translator heard their response to be, is the same thing (Harkness & Schoua-Glusberg, 1998, p. 98). The back translation was conducted by one of the agents in the „Guanxi Wang", the agent listened to the audio recordings of the interview and translated the Mandarin that was heard on the audio recording into English to compare what was written by the researcher. Back translation minimise the possibility of misinterpretation of information during translation of the questions.

As mentioned before, the researcher went to Hong Kong in March 2013, to meet with the principle agents in order to establish a relationship and discuss the research and data collection process. This visit and continuous contact via email and Skype assisted in both parties having a shared understanding and goal to achieve valuable data from the study. This initial meeting helped to develop trust and a strong relationship, important to the Chinese culture (Feldman, 2014, p.11).

Participants were told that there was no correct answer and they should respond using their own honest thoughts and opinions and that if they did not feel they knew how to respond to a question they could respond that they do not know. This aids in honesty and integrity of information from interviewees (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 322; Shenton, 2004, p. 67).

3.6.2 Validity

The researcher used transactional validity in order to provide credibility to the research study. This form of validity was used as it is an "interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences and values or beliefs collected and interpreted"(Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 321). To ensure this type of validity and the credibility of the research the researcher used an interpretive and descriptive approach to the research data, developing trust between the researcher and the respondents and using a „naturalistic inquiry" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 322). This form of validity was used as it allows for feedback and therefore the improvement of accurate data. Patton (2002, cited

in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.82) stated that "if participants reflections are conveyed in their own words, this strengths the face validity and credibility of the research".

Validity of the study is also supported by the direct data collection from native Chinese respondents in Guizhou Province, China. An alternative method of validity in this study is the extensive literature referenced on the related subject as well as the similarities in approach with other studies.

Social hierarchy could be a factor affecting the validity of the research as culturally the role of the group supersedes that of the individual and respondents could feel that participation would cause internal-social disharmony by putting the goals of the individual before the goals of the group (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2010, p. 36). However as a relationship of mutual trust and respect has already been developed by the extract company and the Chinese agents, this has made access as well as co-operation guaranteed.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations of the research were evaluated by the ethical clearance committee of UKZN. The informed consent document indicated the purpose of the research and was translated into Mandarin to explain the participant‟s right to privacy and confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the research. See Appendix H. Ethical clearance was expedited under special permission granted by the ethical clearance committee and chair. This was due to the time frames in which the researcher had to conduct the research.

Once ethical clearance had been obtained, a copy was provided to the interviewees and their signature stating their understanding and agreement to proceed was received. Please see Appendix I for the ethical clearance document. The ethical clearance document was translated into Mandarin in order for the Chinese‟s interviewees to understand it. Before the interviews were conducted the interviewees were given the opportunity to decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and it was explained to them that they did not have to answer questions should they not wish to do so.

Another ethical issue is disclosure of the research intent. Information given prior to the interview could help create context as the discourse progresses, however too much information could alter responses and create demand characteristics (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p.

249). Therefore the researcher provided enough background information at the start of each interview to reassure participants that the intentions of the study were to get their opinion on the case study company's marketing material but they were not told the aim of the research, in order to avoid leading or influencing their responses.

3.8 Conclusion

The above research methodology was developed in order to identify the most beneficial methods of uncovering insight into how culture affects the interpretation of communication in specifically business-to-business markets. The research philosophy and design was specifically structured in order to gather the best most transparent data in order to achieve the research objectives and purpose of the research.

This research methodology has been reviewed here in order to outline the steps involved in collecting and analysing the data and the rationale for these decisions. This adds value as other research studies may be adapted from this one and fellow researchers or interested parties could draw comparisons from the research methodology and how the research was gathered and conducted. As there is little data on the subject of culture's impact on communication in China it is useful to have a study of this nature as reference. This research design has been constructed in order to obtain the most depth of information regarding the problem statement, in the most efficient manner. When looking at integrated marketing communication, culture and business-to-business marketing in China, this research methodology uncovers insightful information that has not been captured before.

The data that developed from this research methodology is explored in depth in the findings chapter to follow.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings chapter provides an analysis of the data collected from the mixed methods used to conduct the research. The findings chapter starts with a discussion of the sample profile. It then presents the key themes which emerged in the interviews, supported where relevant by data from the questionnaires. It should be noted however, that full analysis was not conducted on the questionnaires as the sample size was small and their main purpose was to identify topics that could be further probed in the interviews and developed upon in the focus groups. Therefore the questionnaires supported the interview questions by assisting in the line of questioning.

The chapter then goes on to cover the results related to the perceptions regarding the integrated marketing communication material, such as the company adverts, brochures, specification sheets, business cards and logo. The findings chapter then discusses the researcher‟s observations from interpreting the participants behaviour while spending concentrated amounts of time traveling and interacting with the research participants. Finally the chapter presents the information from the field notes drafted by the researcher when observing the participants. The mixed methods approach allows for a fuller, more multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon, therefore questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, field notes and observations were used to add depth to this study (Torrance, 2012, p. 112).

The findings of the research provide unique insight into a difficult subject area, namely Chinese culture and communication. This study however looks closely at the behaviours, culture and communication of a small group of native Chinese in order to gain an understanding of this phenomenon. Direct quotes from participants are shown in italics and the main themes identified in the research are shown in bold or bullet format.

4.2 Sample Profile

There were 15 participants in the study. Table 4.1 presents the demographic details of the participants. As participants were not forced to answer all questions, some declined to answer certain demographic questions. Of those who shared their demographic details,

participants were found to be between the ages of twenty and sixty five and consisted of eight males and seven females. The average age of the participants interviewed who gave their age was 33 years old. All participants were Han majority, meaning that they belonged to the Han ethnic group native to East Asia and they generally had a Chinese tertiary qualification. These factors were deemed important in helping to provide some insight and understanding into the cultural background of the participants and the level of communication they were potentially exposed to in a business setting. The last column of the graph below shows the data collection tools that were specifically used and who carried out the interview.

Table 2 Research Participant table

Participant	Age	Gender	Culture	Level of Education	Data Collection Tool
Participant 1	34	Male	Han	Diploma	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 2	28	Male	Han	BA	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 3	24	Female	Han	BA	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 4	25	Female	Han	BA	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 5	26	Female	Han	BA	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 6	27	Female	Han	BA	Interview and Questionnaire done by Agent
Participant 7	51	Female	Han	College	Interview and Questionnaire done by researcher
Participant 8	31	Male	Han	University, MA	Interview and Questionnaire done by researcher
Participant 9	37	Male	Han	-	Interview and Questionnaire done by researcher
Participant 10	-	Female	Han	University	Focus Group and Interview done by researcher
Participant 11	48	Female	Han	College	Interview and Questionnaire done by researcher

Participant 12	-	Male	Han	-	Focus Group conducted by researcher
Participant 13	-	Male	Han	-	Focus Group conducted by researcher
Participant 14	-	Male	Han	-	Focus Group conducted by researcher
Participant 15	-	Male	Han	-	Focus Group conducted by researcher

4.3 Key Findings and themes from the Interviews and Questionnaires

The key findings and discussions from the interviews, questionnaires and focus groups are expanded on in this section. These findings discuss both the interview and questionnaire data interchangeably as the questions overlap. The researcher started the data collection with the face-to-face interviews, initiating them with the questionnaire. The researcher then moved onto the focus groups as this required the most time for discussion.

This section is structured around the main research questions and in each discussion, the main themes which emerged from the qualitative information gained from the interviews and focus groups are discussed. The section is structured according to the main questions covered by the interview schedule. Some of the questions expand on the topic area with follow up questions to try to gain more data.

4.3.1 How Chinese businesses communicate

The majority of participants had very limited exposure to Western communication. However participants did comment that the Western communication they were exposed to was often far more creative and professional than that of the local media.

When asked what media participants were exposed to, the majority stated that they were exposed to the internet, television and mobile phones. The internet was the most common media channel used by participants as Participant 3 indicates *news from TV is very little;* [the] *internet* [news] *is very big.* Participants also stated that they used American channels or websites such as CNN, the Washington Post, the New York Times or National Geographic.

When discussing Western media, participants drew comparisons with Chinese media and discussed the restrictions on them. According to Participant 11 for example, China Central Television (CCTV, China‟s main television broadcaster) does show some *English channels with English news and information about other countries*. A number of participants stated that they received their news through CCTV. However the government regulates the media and *cuts some things, they only show us a part of it, not the whole thing* said Participant 11, Participant 8 stated that *China sometimes blocks the information so I check the internet.* Participant 3 said that:

> *sometimes I don‟t believe the news, for this reason I will try to find [it] on the internet, because the government sometimes only says what‟s on thesurface and the good things and no bad things that they want to encourage. For example the Chinese economic growth,* [it] *doesn‟t really tell us the whole thing and there are many many problems. So I try to find things on the internet.*

Chinese economic growth is not negatively discussed in Chinese media and therefore participants felt that they could not always trust the information they were being given and what they were being told by the government-controlled media. Therefore participants mentioned using the internet as a source of more reliable information despite many Western websites being banned or blocked in China. Other uses for the internet were online shopping and using English websites to improve the Chinese English language capabilities.

Other media channels that were mentioned on a smaller scale by participants included newspapers, outdoor advertisements and magazines. Participant 6 and 4 stated that they were exposed to outdoor advertising. Participant 7 stated however that she "looks at magazines like China leather and Hanan leather" for business news. Participant 10 stated that they got there news from the local city newspaper and the provincial newspaper.

It is worth noting that radio advertisements were not mentioned at all. The majority of participants received business news through multiple mobile channels namely websites, WeChat, Weibo, QQ, Skype [these sites or applications allow for interactive instant communication online through websites and mobile devices] and exhibitions.

When asked if participants received business news, the majority stated that they did get business news and it was focused on following the global economy and markets to get business information.

4.3.2   How Chinese businesses prefer to communicate with Westerners

Before participants were asked how Chinese businesses prefer Westerners to communicate with them, it first needed to be established whether or not participants had relationships, dealings or exposure to Westerners and or Western communication.

When participants were asked if they work with other foreign businesses they predominantly responded that they did not. However, when asked if they had relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds, the majority said *yes*. These included Germany, Taiwan, the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, North and South America, South Korea, Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Italy, France, Japan and Hui minority Muslims.

This question was asked in two ways in order to ensure proper understanding, although participants said they generally didn"t work with foreign businesses, they did have relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. Thus participants did have exposure to cultures other than their own. This was an important fact to establish as it assisted the researcher in determining their level of understanding when exposed to Western communication particularly that of the case study company.

Half of the participants had business relationships with other businesses including local Chinese, and less than a quarter had relationships with any other Western businesses besides the case study company. These business relationships consisted of advising foreign businesses on technical applications of the product and receiving training or information on product research.

It was established through the interviews that direct communication with these businesses was done through email, conference calling, Skype, face-to-face meetings or attendance at exhibitions. Participant 5 stated in particular that *exhibitions may be the most important as China is so huge the agents are spread in different provinces and when its* [an] *exhibition in China it"s very professional.* Some participants felt that the most effective methods of

communication were face-to-face meetings and WeChat. *Face-to-face is the best one, it"s more important to see the image and here the voice*, said Participant 4. However as it was also stated by Participant 2 that *traveling to exhibitions is expensive* participants used WeChat as a primary means of communicating with businesses locally as it was an instant and cost effective method.

When asked what the most effective means of communication to use is, Participant 13 stated that:

> *this question is on two different levels, one is from* [a] *macro side, and one is from* [a] *micro side. In the macro the exhibition and the print of the advert is very very important to spread the information all over the country and when it comes to the agents in different provinces they need a face-to-face meeting and phone calls to keep the connection with customers.* [Neither] *one is more important. They are both very important. All are important. All must be used on different levels.*

This statement is evidence of the need and importance of integrated marketing communication in China, telling us to value and use multiple methods of communication in order to target the Chinese market effectively.

When asked what the preferential method of communication is among the Chinese, findings showed that the participants preferred methods of communication with Western businesses that were centrally focused on the Chinese way of communication. Evidence of this is Participants 1"s statement saying that they

> *prefer* [the] *Chinese way of communication because we have a saying that do in Rome as the* [Romans] *do. This way we… build up… relationships with…more efficiently. From my personal experience I would say Western company"ssometimes* [have a] *slow response.*

This view shows the importance of understanding the cultural impact on Chinese communication and effectively using it to relate to the Chinese. This is crucial in order to develop strong business relationships.

However when looking at the most effective means of communication, participants stated that exhibitions, trade shows and face-to-face meetings were the best to use. A respondent stated that these communication tools are:

> *the most effective way for us to enhance the relationships, because all of the people within the industry come together and we may share the technical information with the other people. They can see each other"s bodylanguages and it may be a good way to understand some hidden messages.*

This was particularly beneficially when working with foreign businesses such as the case study company who frequently visit China and attend exhibitions as well as conduct customer visits. This again is a crucial part of integrated marketing communication and cultural understanding and interpretation. Participants frequently mentioned noting the facial expressions and body language of those they encountered in order to understand them better. This fits in with the fact that China is a high context culture and society, meaning that they are expressly adverse to what is not said as much as they are to what is said.

Some participants prefer the vaguer, indirect communication style that is integrated around the drinking culture as well as the exchange of gifts however others prefer the more creative direct approach of communication used by Western businesses. Based on the evidence provided above another key them identified was **relationship building**.
When asked the key themes to emerge were:

- good preparation,
- emailed communication support,
- technical support,
- instant chat tools,
- invitation"s to meals, business dinners and parties,
- follow-up service and product demonstration,
- technology and knowledge exchange,
- direct, to-the-point communication and
- the exchange of business cards

These communication tools all aid in building strong business relationships or „Guanxi", according to participants. **'Guanxi'** was identified by the participants as the most crucial element and main theme in initiating and having successful communication in China. The

quantitative data showed that when asked "I don‟t do business outside of my "Guanxi" network" 5 out of 9 of those who responded, agreed with this statement. 8 out of 9 agreed to the statement that "Guanxi‟ is very important in business" and 8 out of 9 agreed that Chinese people rely on „Guanxi‟ to do business.

When asked how Western businesses could improve on their communication with Chinese markets, participants stated that Western business communication was not always effective because Chinese business relies heavily on „Guanxi‟ therefore Western businesses need to learn how to build strong and effective „Guanxi‟ networks. This echoes earlier sentiments made by all participants who stated that fundamentally building relationships is the most crucial cultural aspect of Chinese communication.

Methods highlighted as poor communication included a;
- lack of feedback,
- expensive communication that does not achieve results and
- the inability to connect.

4.3.3 How Chinese culture influence business communication

The purpose of the research is to fundamentally understand and answer this question. Therefore the researcher probed respondents in depth on this topic, in order to develop a holistic understanding of what impact Chinese culture has on business communication. Key themes are discussed in detail with examples and analysis below.

The questionnaire presented the statement "Chinese cultural values affect how I do business" from this, 4 out of 6 responses were "agree." The first key theme that emerged from the open-ended interview question was the importance of socialising in order to develop business relationships in China. The specific social event participants referred to was the **Chinese drinking culture**, which it seems would be known as an ice-breaker in Western culture. Evidence of this was mentioned by Participant 4 who stated that Chinese drinking culture is an important tool for building relationships and communicating because as Participant 6 said *it is a way to establish relationships, some business relationships are built at the dining table.* Participant 3 confirmed this point of view stating that:

Yes the most famous one [aspect of culture] *is the drinking culture (the table culture).*
This is an essential way for the Chinese people to establish relationships with each
other. A lot of business relationships are built at the table.

This again emphasises the importance of social interaction in Chinese culture and the need
for relationship building which stems from the drinking culture. Participant 5 discussed this
by stating that:

Western business communication pays more attention towards [the] *company"s whole*
image, company culture and the aspects related to the company"s reputation. Chinese
business communication… [pays] *more attentions to* [building] *up relationships with*
customers.

This again supports the need for relationship building, socialising and trust as cultural
requirements for Chinese business people in order to successfully conduct business in this
market. Participant 6 supported this statement by commenting that *the focus in Chinese*
culture is dealing with interpersonal relationships, whereas the focus in Western
communication is public relations and technological support.

Participant 3 however noted a negative effect of Chinese culture on communication when
s/he said that:

Chinese business communication… may be vague… and this…causes communication
confusions. Western communication [is] *more direct, expressing their meaning*
compared to [the] *Chinese.*

Some participants believed that the impact of Chinese culture on communication was
becoming less evident. For example, Participant 7 stated that in the past, differences between
Western and eastern communication were significant, however *due to the development of*
globalisation, [these] *kind of differences are disappearing, especially the company"s in Tier 1*
cities. They have more chance to get in touch with the Westerners and they are very familiar
with the Western way of communication. This tells us that communication in China may be
evolving to an extent as the Chinese become more exposed to international cultures and
communication techniques reducing the impact of culture on business communication.

Another factor affecting the influence of Chinese culture on communication is where the Chinese business is situated. For example, Participant 1 indicates that the influence maybe stronger in less developed areas:

> *It depends… if it is in Tier One or some of the Tier Two cities, it* [Western communication] *may work efficiently, because the people living there have more chance to communicate with the foreigners and foreign company"s. For some inner land provinces, it may be very difficult for them to understand. For the case like this, I would suggest to use the local people to support your communication or learn something about the Chinese way of communication.*

Tier one and two cities include major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, were it seems Western cultural influence may have exposed Chinese business people to an „international" way of communicating and conducting business and thus the effect of Chinese culture on communication may be reduced.

Similarly Participant 7 stated that the *northern region are more forthright. People from the coastal areas are more smart because people from this region* [have] *more chance to get in touch with the Western culture and commercial life. People from the Midwestern region are* [simpler] *because some regions* [are] *still undeveloped.*

When asked specifically how the case study company"s communication methods differed to that of local Chinese businesses, Participant 6 responded as follows; *From my observations… they* [the case company] *pay great attention towards both ways* [of] *communication. This way is essential because both sides can share information we have collected. This kind of communication may be quite rare in China. In China it is more* [likely] *to be one direction communication.* The Chinese Participants felt that the South African company differed in its communication methods compared to local Chinese company"s by paying attention to two-way communication and focusing on an exchange of information through frequent face-to-face visits. Therefore a multi-faceted approach to communication is more feasible in this market and in some instances preferred.

Participant 7 pointed out that in China:

> *for initial contact of the people we always try to keep distance and caution. If we have the chance to get to know each other better, the Chinese people always try to establish Guanxi with each other especially if they have mutual benefits during the business.*

This re-emphasises the importance of relationship building in Chinese culture and the reluctance from the Chinese to engage with people from outside of their „Guanxi" network.

With reference to the case study company"s communication methods vs. that of local Chinese businesses, Participant 8 stated that:

> *in China most of the people would prefer to make phone calls, QQ, or WeChat (Weixin), Skype or windows messenger,* [and these] *may not be very popular among* [Western] *business communication. This way may be quite different from the Western way of communication.*

The only communication tool that the case study company used amongst those that Participant 8 listed was phone calls and Skype. Therefore this provides an opportunity for the case study company to expand its communication efforts into more Chinese-friendly and appropriate methods.

When asked what they thought of the South African company they work with, one respondent stated that it *had a strong sense of communication and teamwork, having a focus on innovation and paying great attention to establish relationships with other people.* Over all the first impressions of doing business with a this company were positive, stating that everyone works hard, is efficient, friendly, passionate and contributes to the development of the relationship and the business. With a long history of quality-guaranteed products it is a professional company with a strong support team, impressive website and good face-to-face visits to the market. The South African company is said to be more enthusiastic and friendly. They are efficient and listen to their customers" needs and suggestions paying attention to the market, unlike Chinese companies. However information exchanges and technology service need to take place through demonstrations of the product and trial tests.

Participants were then asked how and why they feel influenced by Chinese culture in order to understand the level of culture"s impact on Chinese individuals. The majority of participants stated that it was through how they socialised. For example Participant 1 stated that:

there are two aspects, family education and school education. When I was young I was educated that I must obey traditional filial piety, respect our teachers and our elders". Participant 2 stated however that *"it is quite difficult to express how it influences me, because this kind of influence naturally exists there.*

Thus the participants were alluding to the fact that culture underlies all aspects of life; it is ingrained in society and social life, and thus it was difficult at times for participants to articulate how culture influenced them and provide meaningful examples. Participants all felt heavily influenced by Chinese culture, explaining that there are two major ways that Chinese culture has influenced them, through family and through education. Participant 4 stated that it is *part of our daily life. Quite often, unconsciously we are influenced by both of them.* This was supported by a statement from Participant 2 who said *because of my education at home and at school, when I start to work, I also obey these* [cultural] *principles when I communicate with other people.*

4.3.4 What role culture plays in building relationships in B2B Markets

By trying to understand the role of culture in Chinese business in a B2B context Participants were first asked how culture influences them in business. Participant 4 stated that:

Chinese culture depends first on the business dinner [especially] *in* [the] *north of China. First they would like to welcome you warmly, would like a drink with you, eat more; drink more, that means they welcome you warmly. If you refuse a drink they cannot accept us. Maybe they think we are too proud and look down on them. We first should respect their culture.*

This again reiterates one of the key themes identified earlier of the Chinese drinking culture and the importance it plays in relationship building. Following cultural customs such as eating and drinking together is what constitutes part of building „Guanxi" in China. *Business is done at dinner* stated Participant 3 *if the dinner goes well the business will prosper.* Eating, drinking and „Guanxi" are key themes in building relationships. Participant 5 states that *China is very strong in its culture and Western businesses must adapt to do business in China.* The strength and significance of Chinese culture on building relationships is evident throughout the findings of the research.

While exploring this topic the participants were asked to discuss specific cultural elements that influence how they do business. In light of this Participant 7 stated that:

„Guanxi" and the relationship with government officials is very important because they have got power and China was controlled by [the] *communist party. If you"ve got relationship with government which means you"ve got business there, especially for some people who are in charge of areas we would like to enter.*

Participant 5 supported this comment by saying that:

„Guanxi" with Government officials may be the most crucial type for the Chinese companies to deal with. If you do not have a strong background with the officials in China, the business may be difficult for you.

Therefore it is necessary for foreign businesses to develop strong business relationships with local Chinese and support healthy „Guanxi" networks with government decision makers in order to initiate business in China.

Participants stated that due to an influx of foreign products entering the Chinese market, competition was high. *„Guanxi"* is helpful when the quality may all be of the same standard because *with good relationships and good „Guanxi", you are more likely to be successful. Without relationships we won"t be accepted.* Participants strongly agreed that *„Guanxi"* is very important in businesses.

Participants stated that if they do not know the business well, they make their acquaintance and make friends, they get to know each other very well and learn if they can trust them, then once they have seen that they are good people they will work with them.

When Participants were probed further on the importance of *„Guanxi"* in Chinese culture and business, Participants stated that it *is very essential when we try to establish relationships with the customers* however in some cases it is mandatory to pay a „commission" to the procurement manager in order to get the company to buy their products. This „commission" is an important part of *„Guanxi". If we do not pay commission to the technicians it is impossible for our products to enter into the market, without „Guanxi", it may be difficult to get the issues to be solved.* Another respondent stated that

> there is a saying in China: If you have „Guanxi", you will "mei" Guanxi" "(if you have the relationship there, you will have no problem at all, and if you have the relationship there, everything shall be smooth.) It is part of Chinese classical culture.

> *„Guanxi" is important to understand the potential customers well and understand the meaning of the cooperation.*

„Guanxi" develops your business network. Another respondent stated that *„Guanxi" is the most important, more important than quality, there is so much competition in the market.* Another respondent stated that *if the person believes the man, he believes the man"s product.*

Thus as can be seen all participants agreed that *„Guanxi"* was very important in China. They felt that not only was *„Guanxi" important but so was quality and "you can"t have one without the other.* Participants felt that *„Guanxi"* and the relationship were very important and that without *„Guanxi"* "there was no sale". Participants felt that *„Guanxi"* was important because if you are good friends and you see that the product is good quality, you will take the product. If you have good *„Guanxi"* then it makes the product easy to sell. *In the Chinese market the supply is much greater than the requirement* [demand] *so maybe ten supply the goods for one tannery....in this way „Guanxi" is very important.*

Another prominent theme emerging from the findings in relation to the impact of culture is the importance of **exchanging gifts**. As evidence of this, Participant 4 stated that in building relationships it is crucial to

> *give gifts and exchange them. In China sometimes if I gave you a gift you would give a gift back to me. In this way we can improve the relationship. Send gifts many times to build a good relationship. One time isn"t enough. We should be honest that is very important, kind, whole heart this is very important.*

The exchange of gifts is a specific Chinese cultural nuance and as this statement shows it holds high relationship value when doing business in China.

When discussing cultures role in business relationships further Participant 5 said that *it"s still more about „Guanxi" or relation build up, [and] commission of course.* The case study company had given knives as gifts to the Chinese and Participant 5 said *knives are very useful to the technician, especially for tannery technicians they need to use them every day.* It was noted that a symbol of good fortune and a prosperous future is to give gifts when a friend starts a new business or opens a shop for the first time. Participants explained that every present is different and the perspective of recipients may be different. Participant 4 explained that *to choose a gift we see his hobbies and we send the gift.*

Participant 9 however stated that the importance of „Guanxi" and of gift giving to build „Guanxi" means that

> Guanxi is very essential when we try to establish relationships with the customers. If we do not pay commissions it is impossible for our product to enter into the market. Guanxi may be essential to build business relationships, however currently for Chinese society Guanxi is maintained by money. I have to contribute great effort to build up „Guanxi" with the government officials, friends and customers.

This statement is evidence of the complexities around Chinese business culture. Participant 12 said that

> for instance we pay the money but now if we give them a gift this is the easier way to build up the relation but for instance some technicians from some tanneries they would prefer some commission but not gift, they like gift but sometimes they prefer money not gifts.

Western businesses have to carefully navigate the elements of „Guanxi" and balance the fine line between what is seen as gifts and commission for the purpose of developing a long term business relationship and what could be seen as bribing Chinese businesses and officials in order to get businesses. However in contrast to this Participant 8 stated that businesses

> didn"t just want gifts they wanted an exchange of information and technology in order for them to do their jobs better and to sell more". Participant 1 explained that you must "put great effort into „Guanxi", and good interpersonal relationships, sending gifts, having dinners and drinking. The Chinese do this because they believe that relationships speak louder than quality and price.

When asked how morals and values have influence participants in terms of their culture Participant 1 stated that it is important to have the following qualities *honestly, merciful, politeness, have a good character and morals, don"t cheat, don"t lie*. Participant 3 stated that it was important to *treat elders and higher ranking people with respect and authority. They [are] greatly influenced by the patriarchy governance mode. General managers/bosses [have] the absolute power to make decisions.* Therefore based on these statements as well as supporting feedback from other participants, **hierarchy** was identified as important in business as well as **harmony** and these too were developed as themes. The values and morals that fit with respecting elders and authority all support hierarchy as a theme and the values

and morals discussed around peace support harmony as a theme. These values fall within the Confucian beliefs. For example Participant 6 states that *our culture is combined with Confucius and there is harmony with differences,* explaining with a metaphor that

> *just like a mixed pot with many vegetables and meat inside, they are different but they are harmonious. Like a river they have many branch but all connected by ports. We have the same goal for the mutual benefit so we can ignore the differences. It is ok. We have one goal but we can have the different process to make the goal right.*

Participant 3 said *I always treasure harmonious relationships and pay great attention to good hospitality to my guests.*

Participant 2 said that *also I always believe in justice and equality. „Guanxi"is very important for me to build business relationship. However, I have some other principles to obey, including integrity, faith, and pay great attention of the Chinese traditional culture.*

Participant 3 added that, *as China is a country of politeness, we do things for politeness, we treat people politely.* Participants struggled to provide examples of the culture as a whole when asked to sum up Chinese business culture, but suggested that *every company has its spirit, so they will do things along this spirit.*

The questionnaire stated in two separate questions "Hierarchy/Harmony is very important in business" and 6 out of 7 responses agreed.

When conducting business the most important principles to use mentioned by the Chinese participants was, respect, interpersonal relationships, *„Guanxi",* drinking culture, taking work seriously, integrity, sincerity and good faith.
Participants were then asked how cultural elements such as Confucius and Taoism have influenced their way of life. Participant 6 stated that

> *Taoism and Buddhism is a religion. Confucius is a culture. They are different. There are many different cultures in the Confucius Tang dynasty, many. Although they are different when the Buddhist came into China it is used for a guide and becomes like Taoism, they are mixture.*

Looking first at the theme of **Confucian principles**, Participant 1 stated that *Confucius influenced Chinese culture very greatly; we may do everything according to the discipline, although it may not follow in the professional* [way]. Participant 8 commented that Confucius

has taught them that *when they* [communicate for the sake of the relationship] *we should show the mutual respect we should use common sense with others, politeness and gifts apply to life.* Participant 1 added that

> *even though we aren"t taughtit we apply it. Older generations* [are] *not taught it* [but] *it affects us greatly. In the older generations education may not include Confucius but our culture is influenced by Confucius very greatly, although they have not learned the words or the sentence.*

Thus Confucius is highly regarded and ingrained in Chinese culture, was and is thus identified as a main theme found during the data collection.

Participant 3 added that *although China now is a communism country, Confucianism and Taoism greatly influence the Chinese society from the personal life and the business life because through 5000 years* [of] *Chinese history, these principles are routed in our mind.* Participants stated that both Confucius and Taoism affect their understanding and interpretation of communication influencing their behaviour and relationships with their business partners. Therefore **Taoism** was also identified as a main theme in the findings. Participant 3 added that *China has a long history and Confucius and Taoism has a long history in China. Both of them are part of the Chinese culture and part of our daily life. Quite often, unconsciously we are influenced by both of them,* thus making both Confucius and Taoism fundamental cultural aspects to understand in Chinese culture and communication. Participant 8 supported this statement by adding to that

> *both* [Toa and Confucius] *are important parts of Chinese culture. The feudal society used these two principles and the Buddhism as the tools to control their ruling people. Although now we are ruled by the communist party, these two principles have been* [a] *continuing influence* [on] *Chinese people. Both influence my understanding and interpretation of communication deeply about our behaviour and the way we talk".* Participant 1 explained that *"as the Buddhist is entering China from the Tang Dynasty over one thousand years ago and when the Buddhist come to China they adopt the Chinese culture, different from the India Buddhist. It is mixture culture with Taoism, Confucius and Buddhist. Buddha teaches us all don"t bea liar. The Buddhist is from Tang dynasty maybe 1000 years ago and Confucius is from 3000 years ago. Tao is much earlier than Buddhist.*

Participant 4 stated *Toa* [has] *also taught us respect for nature and to respect all those that live - life, plant, animals, respect, so peaceful.* Two Participants specifically stated that *with the Taoism if we wanted to make a deal or do the business we must choose the proper time, the proper place and with the proper people. It is in Taoism*

Thus Tao and Confucius principles appear to have been deeply influential in the participants" lives as it is so ingrained in the history and culture of China. When asked specifically if Confucianism and Taoism influence participants" relationships with their business partners they resoundingly stated *yes.* Evidence of this was provided by Participant 3 who said that *when I communicate with my business partners I always try to treat him sincerely and faithfully.* Participant 4 stated that *when I try to build business relationships, I always follow the principle of sincerity and faith to the counterpart. Also I will always keep good and frank communication with them.* However Participant 9 added that the *Cultural Revolution has brought some damages to Taoism and Confucius but now the people are trying to pick up this stuff and it"sgetting more important in our lives. Confucius and Taoism theme only influences a person"s character not directly by communication.* This is in contrast to findings from other participants who felt strongly that Confucius influenced communication and relationships.

Participant 2 specified in their explanation of Confucius" influence on their communication that they *always think about how to communicate appropriately, and this is greatly influenced by the Confucius, because it has a strong emphasis about good behaviour, also, when I deal with my business in the market.*

Participants who responded to the questionnaire largely agreed that Confucian and Taoism principles were important in business at a ratio of 6 out of 9. 2 participants strongly agreed that these Chinese philosophies were important.

Two participants stated that they were not influenced by traditional Chinese beliefs and religion because one of them was Christian and the other worked in a predominately Muslim environment. *In Henan province Muslim is more influential. They are about 90% of the business they are Muslim, the Hui [are in the] minority.*

Participant 5 stated that their way in business is *not to be fat with one bite, step by step, do everything slowly, step by step, maybe sometimes if you do something quickly the results won"t begood. Many businessmen use the Taoism and Buddhism in their business, most of their thinking. It is very essential to use the Chinese way of communication with them, including relation build-up.*

When asked how culture affects business relationships, Participant 6 provided evidence of this by stating that *this kind of influence is deep in our blood, China has a long history and our ancestors spent a lot of time to do „research"about how to deal with the interpersonal relationship within the Confucius and Taoism principles properly and ideally.*
Participants stated that when it comes to making decisions in business, their morals and values guide their principles, specifically mentioned by some participants was that *of not harming the others when I make the decisions, which may be a part of Confucius.* However one respondent who was Christian stated that their religion dictated their morals and values. Another respondent was educated abroad and said that the Western way of decision making influences him at times.

Participants stated that Chinese culture impacts them personally, in business and in how they communicate and in turn how they understand communication. Chinese culture is ancient and has a long history *talk about what you sow you harvest, when we do business first we pay a lot then maybe we should get something, is deep in our blood. China has a long history; our ancestors spent a lot of time to do „research"about how to deal with the interpersonal relationship within the Confucius and Taoism principles properly and ideally.*
However participant 3 stated that

> *I would say the culture plays quite limited influences to my business relationship with the Western countries, because when we run business with them we normally adopt the Western way of communication. However, when we deal with the business relationship with the Chinese people, I would say „Guanxi"and the Chinese bureaucratic tones may be a proper way to deal with the business relationships.*

Participants stated that traditionally they built business relationships based on their principles of co-operation, equality, mutual benefits, sincerity, honesty, good faith, parties, family social events, shared meals, drinking culture, the exchange of gifts. Participants do this in order to

build relationships as they say *if you want someone to believe* [in] *your product they must first believe you. It's a Chinese saying.*

Participants felt that is was difficult for Western business to understand Chinese culture as Chinese culture is very different to any other culture in the world and complicated. Unless you have been involved in the Chinese market for many years it is difficult to understand but people are aware of it because of its long history. For example Participant 3 elaborated by saying that *China is very huge and we can accept their different way, we accept their different customs. We will not expect this of foreigners we will not push the foreigners out. It is ok to have differences, as China is so huge and there are so many minority groups that have different customs.*

When participants were asked how Western businesses can overcome cultural differences when doing business in China their focus was resoundingly on communication.

> *More communication with each other is a very good way. Close observation may be the most efficient way to understand the Chinese culture. Frequent communication shall be essential to tackle this problem. Faith and respect the Chinese traditional culture. Try their best to fit into the Chinese culture. Respect and mutual communication to make both sides win. They need to get in touch with Chinese people. I think maybe that foreign are more concerned about quality and price and cost of production. In China we are very concerned about the relationship between the manager and the boss and between us.*

Participant 7 stated that they could *try their best to fit into the Chinese culture. More communication is a very good way* However Participant 4 stated that they *don''t think communication is very important, I respect you and you respect me, like equals, basis of relationship and business.*

Participants were then asked how they have traditionally built business relationships and evidence of this was provided by Participant 8 who said that *I follow the traditional Chinese culture when I try to build business relationships. During work I get to know our customer and build good relationships with them, from the introduction of friends in the industry, I build up relationships at the exhibitions and the internet.* Participant 3 stated that *Chinese*

culture is quite different from other countries, for the Westerners they may have some idea about the Chinese culture, but they do not fully understand the Chinese culture. Therefore the research was able to extrapolate that business principles are highly revered in China and a key element to those business principles is respect and interpersonal relationships.

It is evident from these findings that culture is an intricate part of doing business in China and understanding and successfully executing all of the cultural customs and aspects is crucial for Western businesses to be successful in the Chinese market.

Participants were then asked to review the IMC material that the company had produced in order to promote itself in the Chinese market. The findings and key themes identified can be found in the following section.

4.4 Key Findings and Themes related to the Integrated Marketing Communication Material

As previously discussed the researcher elected to use a South African wattle extract company as a case study for the purpose of this research. A motivation for this was most importantly because they provided access to agents working across the Chinese market. However they had also undergone extensive marketing campaigns in China using various IMC tools. These exact methods are discussed further in this section and the findings on the application, understanding and relatability of the marketing material in the Chinese market are uncovered in order to address the overall research purpose. The findings below show how successful the company was in their attempts to effectively communicate with their target audience. These findings are crucial in trying to achieve the objectives and purpose of the research as all of the IMC tools were developed to communicate directly to Chinese businesses and selected to appeal to their culture.

Overall the marketing material presented to the Participants was received well. Participants reacted positively and stated that they liked the marketing material. However there were mixed feelings regarding the transferability of Western advertising into the Chinese market. As evidence of this Participant 4 stated that they *can see the great efforts achieved to cope with the Chinese culture.* Thus it was evident to the respondent that the case company had gone to great lengths and effort in order to relate and appeal to the Chinese market.

Participants generally felt that the advertising was creative overall and it did appeal to them. Evidence of this was mentioned by Participant 9 who said *the creativity differentiates this advertisement from others.* Although they did not always understand the meaning of the advert, they did like the images used. Participant 8 said *I would prefer the Western adverts; actually I enjoy them because it may bring a lot of new ideas to me.* They felt the adverts were very different to those used in China as they were far more explicit and creative.

When asked what participants first impressions of the case company were based on the IMC material, Participant 11 stated that *the first impression to me* [is] *this company is very professional because they"ve got* [a] *very good design about their advertisements. For some domestic companies in China they do produce similar products but their advertisements* [are] *very horrible.* The adverts were placed in industrial magazines that circulated throughout China. The adverts were shown to participants in the order that they had been published in the industrial magazine. The findings and key themes identified from the data collection are reviewed below.

4.4.1 Advert A

Advert A can be found in Appendix A. This advert shows a cow with a red boxing cap on its head with the caption „taking the knock out of tanning". This caption is a play on words as the term „knock out" is colloquially used in boxing to defeat ones opponent and has been used in this case in the leather industry to take the hassle or work out of tanning. The South African case study company felt this image was strong because of its link to boxing and that it appealed to a wide audience. It was also seen as a humorous image as the cow was wearing sports gear therefore giving it anthropomorphic qualities.

The advert was found to be appealing albeit unclear in terms of its focus, as indicated by this response from Participant 6 who said *from this advertisement, it is quite vague to clarify,* participants made reference to the cow in the advert and how they interpreted its placement and its meaning. For example Participant 3 said *I think it"s quite nice because it give me a very good impression about the design. I never thought the cow* [would] *wear* [a] *hat so this gives a very fresh impression about the advertisement.* The boxing cap the cow wears in this advert was described by Participant 8 to be *like American Football, showing our product is strong.* The cow was also interpreted as *showing strength and protection of the company"s product.* Participant 6 however remarked that in Chinese culture the cow or ox was a symbol

for loyalty and diligence *because the cows help to build* [the] *farm they are obedient. China is an ancient farm nation.* [This] *shows our product is trustworthy.* This statement is evidence of the long tradition of farming and agrarian culture that China was built on. These traditions are still relevant today as many of the historical cultural teachings in China stem from this agrarian way of life.

The cow was seen as significant because of its importance and use in the leather industry. However some participants felt that *for the non-professional man he cannot understand it. He cannot imagine the leather. Only a professional can understand.* The adverts are only circulated at industry events and exhibitions and only published in industry magazines, therefore the adverts would not need to appeal to non-professional people as they are only targeted at industrial business users.

During the focus group discussions participants felt that this advert would not work well as an introduction into the Chinese market because *there are no words to show the property* [of the product] *only the picture and a non-professional cannot understand it.* They did feel however that like the cow, *even though you are powerful you need to protect yourself and this hat protects the animal for environmental friendly purposes, like the product protects the environment.* Participant 3 stated that *our product is environmentally friendly and in China there are many products that are* [pollutants]. *We should be* [promoting] *our property of environmentally friendly. The environmental friendly is unique. The characteristic is unique.* The importance of an **environmentally friendly** status and product was highlighted continuously throughout the interviews and group discussions and this became a recurring theme from the data. In this advert the participants seemed to have drawn their own conclusion for the meaning of the advert as the advert did not specifically state that it was environmentally friendly. The advert states that the product is „a naturally derived product" however Participant 9 felt that the writing *is so small, the image must show environmentally friendly not just say environmentally friendly.* Participant 6 suggested that *green trees show it is from* [a] *tree, all the ground should be green, all the forestry should be green, to show the environmentally friendly* [and] *the natural.* This information is helpful in developing future advertising and IMC material.

A number of participants were concerned about the layout of the advert, believing that the product and company name did not stand out enough. It was not explicit or eye catching and

the company and product name should have been bigger and more prominent. The focus group Participants explained that there were *different steps to catch the eye, the eye follows down to the address from the product, to the company address, the logo and address should be separate.* This information is again useful to consider when developing advertising and IMC for the Chinese market in future.

4.4.2   Advert B

Advert B uses the same template as all of the other adverts in terms of the company details logo and product logo, however it has a close up image of a cow hoof wearing a laced up boxing shoe. This advert was developed by the case study company in conjunction with the cow advert in Appendix A. Again this advert was believed by the company to be humorous and able to appeal to a wide audience across various markets because of its anthropomorphic qualities. The caption reads „Just mimosa it‟ a take on the Nike slogan used in their infamous shoe advertising „Just do it‟. Mimosa is the name of the product being marketed in the Chinese market.

Participants felt that Advert B was very impressive and related well to the leather industry they work in. Much of the leather used in China is for the manufacturing of shoes. They believed that this advert showed the *product is good to make shoes.*

The focus group participants felt that the advert could have had a more environmentally friendly message. *In China* [when] *you do an advert firstly you should show environmentally friendly, second you should keep it very simple. Just like* [I] *see the tea here and I know that it is tea right?* [participant points to a cup of tea in front of him] *No* [imagination] *or creative thinking. The words can be humorous but the picture and image should be more direct.* Some participants felt that humorous advertising would not work in China because they did not understand it. It was suggested by participants that a natural look is used in the advertising such as *pastures as the background, farm land, green will make the advert stand out with the red logo.* This information is valuable in the development of future IMC campaigns and was therefore noted as participants in the focus group clearly preferred the Chinese method of advertising being that it was simple, straight forward and easy to understand.

4.4.3 Advert C

The third advert shown to participants was Advert C, which can be found in Appendix A. This advert specifically targeted the Chinese market by using a traditional Chinese paper cutting image. The image is in all red and was an adaptation of the case company's Unicorn logo. These are three culturally significant elements; paper cutting has been a popular art form in China for decades, red is traditionally the colour of luck and happiness and widely used at festivals and worn at celebrations, and the unicorn is in a style similar to common Chinese paper cut dragon images.

Participant 3 said that this advert shows *Chinese factors, Chinese tradition hand craft to cut paper to make the picture, it"s a paper sculpture.* According to Participant 4 the picture resembles the *Chinese unicorn, the body is Chinese, it"s from a fairy tale like a dragon,* [and] *it looks like a horse"s head. It"s a Chinese mythical animal called a Qilin. The dragon is combined of the dear"s feet and the snake"s body and the lion"s tail. The dragon is like four different animals. And its head will not turn, it is always forward very proudly. The Chinese dragon is very ancient and shows history,* according to Participant 7 and therefore shows the history of the company.

However instead of responding positively to a specifically Chinese cultural advert, Participant 1 stated [it] *looks like Chinese culture,* [the company is] *from South Africa* [so] *must respect South African culture and show South African culture. Even in China you can show your personal opinion.* Therefore this respondent felt that it was better to advertise as a South African company in China rather than a South African company trying to advertise itself like a Chinese company. Participants mentioned that China is a big country with many people and many cultures and everyone accepts each other. Therefore the Chinese can accept other businesses from around the world and do not expect them to advertise and market as if they were Chinese but rather they should be themselves in a way that the Chinese can understand. This is a completely different perspective from other participants who recognised and appreciated the Chinese styled advertising done by the case study company in this advert.

Participant 3 stated that *the unicorn one may be quite abstract to understand what it is really about.* This statement provides a different opinion to the majority who either felt the advert

was too close to home for a foreign company, or those who appreciated its cultural relevance and appeal.

Some participants felt that the adverts should be shown in both English and Mandarin so that more people can understand the advert. Participant 4 said that *the most important thing in the advert was the product rather than the company because, the product is more well known, therefore that should stand out because* [its] *very important to build our brand* [and it] *should be outstanding also.* Thus the participant felt that when communicating the product should be emphasised rather than the company.

4.4.4 Advert D

Advert D was the latest advert to be launched in the Chinese market. It shows an image of an Asian women, one half of her face is old, tired, worn out and dishevelled while the other half of the women‟s face is beautiful, young, fresh and wearing make-up.

Advert D, shown under Appendix A, was reviewed by participants and their sentiments towards it were as follows, *she is impressive, eye catching. New packaging looks like* [a] *young lady* [the] *old packaging looks like* [an] *old lady. New packaging* [is] *like a beautiful lady, very necessary to use new packaging to enter [the] market it looks beautiful, old packaging* [is] *like* [the] *old lady.* However without an explanation some participants could not understand what the advert meant, *without an introduction they cannot see the image is for the change of the package* said Participant 5. It was suggested by some participants that there should be greater contrast between the two ladies. *It should be possible for this one to be much older with more wrinkles to be more greatly impressive.* This tells us that although the advert may have been visually affective, it was not straight forward in its meaning and interpretation for all Participants. Therefore this information helps to guide communication going forward as these comments can be taken into consideration for future IMC strategies. Participant 6 reiterated this by stating that *the advertisement design is very impressive, however it may be essential to pay more attention towards what we want to emphasise* i.e. the product and the brand.

4.4.5 Corporate Profile and Wattle Brochure

Participants stated that they mostly liked the brochures and appreciated the layout, style and quality of the paper. Participant 9 said *this page means you"ve got a long history I would like to get some more information about the product.* This participant interpreted the marketing material as portraying a long corporate history, which it has, and associating that history with credibility and being established.

However participants did add that they felt the corporate profile and brochure were very long and complicated for the Chinese market especially seeing as it was all in English. They said that it needed a shorter summarised Mandarin version. For example Participant 11 said *some up about your company, is it possible for you to shorten this to one or two pages.* Participant 8 added that the company needed to

> *cut down on pages, this is very important to because I pay a lot of attention to environmental aspects. Environmental protection comes to mind from staying in the UK. It is important to show that products are environmentally friendly. The government now is paying more attention and the pollution here is very very bad.*

Therefore not only does advertising need to reflect more environmentally friendly communication, but the paper and the marketing communication itself needs to reflect a more sustainable image.

Participants also remarked that it was important to include sales agent details in the brochures in order to contact the various markets. This was indicated specifically by Participant 12 who said *some people if they are interested in your products they will call your agent for more information.* They suggested that agents are shown by country and region in the brochure, and recommended to *see which area you"ve got agents* and advise customers on the brochures.

Feedback on the corporate profile and brochure was important to the study as it is the only in-depth material that gives a fuller picture of the company and its products and tells the story of its heritage, history and culture. It was important to use this material in the study to gauge its influence on the Chinese agent"s interpretation of the company, image and feasibility of the material itself, to identify if it was an effective method of business-to-business

communication. This therefore links back to our purpose of understanding IMC in a business-to-business environment.

4.4.6 Spec Sheets

Specification sheets or product profiles are what the case study company uses to show the properties of the various products and the products" applications. An example of the spec sheet can be found in Appendix D. The spec sheets function the same way as specs would be used to advertise, promote or educate consumers on a car; the spec shows product ingredients, performance levels and quality. Although the researcher took all 16 product specification sheets to show the participants they were happy to look at one or two to form an opinion.

The spec sheets were shown to all participants in order to gauge their opinion on the practicality and effectiveness of them. Participant 7 stated that the spec sheets were *very useful at* [a] *leather fair*. Participant 2 stated that the *I think* [the] *design is ok,* [the] *colour is suitable/ like product, display is* [good]. Participant 12 added that *we don"t know* [how to] *make the product, so we need the information* when asked about the relevance and importance of the spec sheets. Overall the spec sheets proved to be a useful tool in relaying information and communicating the product benefits to customers.

When asked specifically what impression the spec sheets gave of the company and the brand Participant 7 stated that it"s a *very good company,* [a] *serious company,* [it] *pays attention to [the] market in the right way,* [it] *pays attention to customers,* [and it] *spends a lot.* Participant 8 responded that the spec sheet *design is easy to understand and simple,* [with] *no unnecessary decorations.* Simplicity of advertising and communication seemed key to the likability of the marketing material; participants felt that complex over-done spec sheets or adverts detracted from the message and the product. Some participants added however that the spec sheets needed to be in both English and Mandarin so that more people could understand.

The spec sheets were an important part of the IMC as they were the only form of marketing material that provided clear information outlining the make-up of the product and its benefits and acted as a sales tool. Therefore the researcher included the spec sheets in the interview

process to uncover the direct understanding and applicability of the spec sheet as it is an integral part of the business-to-business communication. As Participant 12 stated previously they do not make the product and therefore need the supporting information to implement sales and promote the product to their direct consumers.

4.4.7 Business Cards

An example of the business cards can be found in Appendix E. The business cards were shown to the participants to get their input on the design and appeal as well as the cultural implications of business card exchange in Chinese business culture, as Participant 1 stated *it is culturally significant to give business cards*. Participants found the card that the business card was printed on appealing because they said it was good quality and was *eco-friendly paper* [and] *in China some business cards are laminated. It will cause some pollution to the environment.* Again this reiterates the fact that the Chinese are in strong support of environmentally friendly products and favour the good image that sustainable materials give. This is important as the exchange of business cards is done at the initial phase of the relationship when business people meet and therefore an environmentally friendly business card presents a good image and first impression.

The business cards elicited a positive response from the participants; with respondent 6 saying that *you have made the "UCL" outstanding. It"s good, and to exchange the business card in China is very important too.* This point was emphasised by Participant 3 who stated that the business card *shows you have put good efforts into the Chinese market.* [You] *have shown the efforts and shown* [you are] *serious.* This is an important factor in business-to-business marketing according to the Chinese as it shows commitment to the local market and support of Chinese business partners.

Participant 5 stated that *in* [China] *they just put the name and the telephone number and its ok, the information is ok* [and] *the design is not so important.* Participant 3 said that *the information here is quite detailed* [and that] *it looks* [like it has a] *very ancient history and then it seems authentic. All the information we need is in it and the design is very comfortable. It looks very comfortable.* Therefore the detail on the card, layout and design were all positively received with these Chinese participants, who focused on the authentic, environmental and detailed aspects of the business card.

In addition, Participant 7 suggested using a skype address on business cards in order to keep in touch with the global customers. However it was noted that QQ is a more popular communication or social chat platform in China than Skype and this should be considered to. This is important to note as it again discusses the mediums of communication that the Chinese are most comfortable with internationally and locally.

4.4.8 Logo

The logo can be found in Appendix E with the business card. Participants stated that the logo was eye-catching; in particular Participant 8 stated that *it"s impressive, the horn is very strong and cute, red is a Chinese colour,* [we] *use it in festivals, red means happiness,* [and] *we wear it at weddings.* From the interviews it was evident that some participants felt that the logo should have been bigger and stand out more. Participants also commented that the unicorn logo showed *authenticity of the brand* and *it"s also from a myth story in Western culture.* Participant 6 stated that the unicorn symbol *means powerful, fly freely, overcome difficulties, high energy strong, more powerful. It"s like a South African horse, wildebeest, gnu, like a buck.* They therefore felt that the Unicorn also related culturally and significantly to South Africa as they interpreted the logo to represent indigenous South African buck.

4.4.9 Exhibitions, websites, emails and phone calls

The case study company exhibits and visits global industry fairs annually. They attend and exhibit at a fair in Hong Kong and Shanghai every year. As Chinese culture places great emphasis on building personal relationships, exhibitions are a key marketing event on the calendar. When participants were probed on their thoughts and preferences towards exhibitions, they responded as follows:

Participant 4 said that exhibitions

> *are a very good channel to get in touch with the customers. Compared with the method listed, I would prefer exhibitions and trade shows, because they may provide a good platform to bring all the people involved in the industry together and communicate face-to-face, and share all the essential information with both sides.* Participant 4 supported the importance of exhibitions by saying *I prefer exhibitions and trade shows especially* [industry focused] *exhibitions and trade shows because people involved in the relevant industry will come to follow the market trend.*

> *Potential customers visit your booth,* [exchange] *business cards to establish initial contact, have a thorough discussion about the products, all the people can sit down face-to-face, and see a lot of aspects including the facial expression etc., may be observed during the meeting and more importantly a large number of* [cooperative] *relationships are built during the exhibitions and the shows.*

Participant 5 felt that exhibitions and trade shows were a *very efficient way of communication and also cost saving.* Participants stated this was an efficient way to get in-touch have meetings and communicate with customers.

The website and emails on the other hand, provided more detailed information and understanding of the company and products said participants, and were a good form of communication. Phone calls were said to be a cheaper alternative to deal with urgent matters and were efficient for communication and follow-ups. One-to-one meetings were said to be the best way to have deep discussions with customers.

In conclusion, the findings from the marketing material tells us that all-though the researcher used a small research sample to collect data, that sample had vastly differing opinions on what they thought of the advertising and how it should or should not be interpreted.

4.5 Observations and Field Notes

The researcher took extensive field notes and made close observations of the research participants and their behaviour and interactions with one another as well as their families, colleagues and associates. The most relevant and significant findings from these observations and field notes are detailed below.

Control of the Media

The most evident point to note initially was the wide network and availability of internet access in China, despite being in even the most rural of locations there was always full internet availability. This was a key point to note in China as the same cannot be said for South Africa. From a business perspective it is important to establish as a lack of internet access was never a hindrance to communication in China.

The Chinese government's control over the media however was evident as many Western websites such as Gmail, Google and Facebook etc. could not be accessed from China. Again this is important to note when identifying the most effective channels of communication in China. Despite this control Participant 8 discussed in detail how many Chinese people find ways and means of getting passed the government blocks and bans on websites and therefore access them anyway. Participant 8 said that the Chinese bypass the blocks on these sites or share ways and means of unblocking banned websites in order to get information. The researcher was not able to access any of these sites while in China and only had access to approved government content. This emphasised the point made by Participant 8 who stated that relationships and business in China is very much influenced by government and its agencies and you have to know the right people and have the right connections in order to conduct business.

Chinese behaviour and Interaction

During the research trip there was a strong sense of community and collectivism among the group attending the week long agent's forum. There were approximately 70 people in their respective family units with their only child and both of their parents on the business trip. The researcher was told that this was typical of business trips and forums in China. Although the agents and associates had come from provinces and cities from all across China to meet for the forum they all cared for one another and looked out for one another collectively. This same hospitality and generosity of spirit was extended to the researcher.

The researcher was concerned that participants may be biased toward the case study company as they indirectly worked for them in China, however the opposite was true. Based on the researchers observations and interactions with participants they boldly responded to questions and were very frank about their feelings, what they liked what they didn't like and what they unapologetically thought could be done better.

Local Chinese Advertising

The researcher reviewed a multitude of various media material and researched Chinese advertising and marketing material both locally in South Africa and while collecting data in China and Hong Kong.

From the analysis of local Chinese adverts, especially in the industry magazine that the case study company published in, it was apparent that there was a stark difference between the two types of Adverts. Chinese advertising is simplified and discreet, with very little detail and no interpretation involved. Advertising reviewed largely consisted of simple images of the product on promotion, a maximum of one or two monotone colours, a company name, contact details and a description of the product.

Therefore as this is what the Chinese market is familiar with and accepted and understood, Western advertising should be done in the same direct manner of communication and advertising. Western businesses can adopt the same minimalistic principles in their advertising in order to more effectively communicate with businesses in China.

„Guanxi‟

The experience and element of „Guanxi‟ was an overwhelming part of the researcher data collection experience in China. The researcher was lavished with gifts, food and drink throughout the duration of the trip. Dinners were an extravagant affair with multiple dishes to choose from and a never ending supply of drinks. At each table a respected and revered member of the Agents was seated with lower level agents and associates, the head of the agents ordered the food for everyone and the heads of the table often dished the food and served it to the other members seated at the table.

Agents who were in higher positions in the hierarchy were referred to by their title and Mr was always used in front of their name. They were never casually addressed. For example the head agent was addressed as Mr Henry.

Participants tended to explain themselves using metaphors or stories in order to make their point, rather than typically answering specific questions. Their vague and indirect way of responding was well noted throughout the data collection.

4.6 Conclusion

Many of the findings from the data collection are overlapping, intertwined and connected. This shows the complexity of not only what the purpose of the research is trying to understand but the rich depth to Chinese culture and the challenges involved in exploring it through qualitative and quantitative research. It is evident that the opaque and embedded nature of Chinese culture offers multiple challenges in terms of understanding and behaviour, however as China is more exposed to modern 21st century more Westernised culture, it is beginning to become more fluid as a society because of this influence.

Individual responses were overall a lot more positive than the responses from the group discussion; however the focus groups presented much richer in-depth information with the participants even offering suggestions on what can be done to appeal to the Chinese market in terms of specific phrases, images and adverts to use.

This marketing material is a relatively new concept in the Chinese market, especially in the leather industry which has existed with the same techniques and methods for decades. Therefore as the Chinese participants have said they are unfamiliar with creative Western advertising it was difficult for them to understand the message in the adverts, although it was clear to see that culturally this creative form of advertising is not always as appealing and transparent to this audience. The reasons surrounding the Chinese participant‟s cultural understanding and methods of communication will be analysed in the discussions chapter to follow which is a detailed and analytical discussion on the research findings in relation to the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on interpreting the findings from the various data collection methods and analysing the information in relation to the aforementioned literature. This is done in order to gain deeper insight into the topic based on the objectives that the research set out to achieve and finally to draw conclusions from the discussion. The research objectives provide the structure of the headings for this chapter.

5.2 Objective One: How Chinese businesses communicate

In order to understand the influence of culture on communication in a Chinese business-to-business setting, the researcher analysed methods and channels of communication used by the Chinese. The researcher found that Chinese communication is deeply intricate, multi-layered and largely influenced by Chinese traditional culture. Through a study of the available literature, theory, other research and the findings the researcher deduced the following with regard to Chinese business communication.

It was evident from both the literature and findings that the most effective and preferred method of communication with the Chinese was an integrated marketing approach. Gao and Prime (2010, p. 143) discuss, in their study comparing the entrance of UPS into China by initiating an effective standardised communication approach while adapting to the necessary Chinese cultural nuances.

It was determined that the majority of participants were exposed to media channels such as the internet, television and mobile phones. Participants emphasised the internet as being a main medium for communication. Other media channels that were used on a smaller scale included newspapers, outdoor advertisements and magazines. This is similar to Gao and Prime's (2010, p.154) study where the majority of participants received business news through multiple channels, but with an emphasis on internet based channels such as websites, Wechat, Weibo, QQ, Skype and exhibitions. This shows that a predominant use of communication in China is internet-based chat tools. As Groom (2008, p.3) stated, communication has developed and changed dramatically, as new channels such as social

media have emerged, our methods and frequencies of communication have expanded. Communication has become integrated across the globe, allowing for quicker, cheaper and more effective communication (Awuah & Amal, 2011, p. 122; Haviland *et al*., 2008, p. 19). This too has affected marketing communication, which in China can be facilitated by these integrated methods.

When trying to determine what the most effective methods of communication in Chinese business-to-business markets are, participants were asked a series of questions to uncover this. The most preferential method of direct communication was face-to-face meetings and more specifically, face-to-face meetings facilitated at exhibitions and fairs. This method was said to be ideal for initial meetings. Harrison & Hedley (2010, p. 3) supported this finding through their own research on marketing and selling to Chinese businesses. They stated that a multitude of methods should be used when communicating with the Chinese and they included in order of preference in person meetings at conferences and exhibition, emails and websites. Findings from participants reiterated the literature by stating that conferences and face-to-face meetings were of great importance and the most effective means of communicating in a Chinese business-to-business context. Exhibitions allowed for the Chinese to enhance their business relationships through reading one another‟s body language in order to understand hidden meaning or messages. Additionally the findings showed that good communication, according to the participants, is supported by good preparation, emailed and technical support, instant chat tools invitations to social events, follow up service and demonstrations, technology and knowledge exchange, direct communication and business cards. These are all important supporting elements in an integrated marketing approach to communication.

Participants were asked to discuss any exposure and experience they had with Western marketing communication. It was found that on average, participants had very little exposure to Western marketing communication. Participants stated that Chinese magazines had little foreign advertising in them and one participant gave an example of how he did not understand the adverts for the iPhone, as the iPhone adverts did not make sense and therefore they did not like them. However other participants commented that the Western communication they were exposed to was often far more creative and professional than that of the local producers.

It is interesting to note that there appears to be a direct correlation between participants who stated that they had relationships with or worked with people from a different cultural background and the level of understanding of the communication in the marketing materials of the case study company. For example participants who were familiar with other foreign advertising could understand the case study company"s advertising better and interpret the meaning better; however participants who were not exposed to Western communication struggled to understand the adverts. It is therefore imperative to take cultural exposure into consideration when launching a marketing campaign in China.

In terms of the responses to the case company"s adverts and marketing material the participants preferred advertising and marketing communication that was direct. The Chinese preferred that advertisements explicitly showed the product being advertised and the company and contact details. Evidence of this was particularly stated by participants who said that adverts should be kept simple and direct; they do not like them to be to detailed and overdone. This is interesting when previous research suggests that Chinese communication was indirect and implicit due to their high-context collectivist culture (Mooij & Hofstede, 2010, p. 89). However this could mean that these Chinese participants prefer direct explicit advertising but communicate in person culturally through implicit, unspoken methods.

Furthermore Fang and Faure (2010, p.2) discuss Chinese communication as being "only understood in indigenous Chinese culture". Participants elaborated on this statement in relation to the findings by explaining that Chinese communication can only be fully understood in its local context. For example, participants explained that from region to region cultural understanding and communication can differ depending on the exposure of the local people to outside influence and other forms of communication. Participants explained that the typical agrarian Midwest region of China is underdeveloped and the people lead simpler lives and are not familiar with Western culture and commercial life. However those living in the coastal regions of China have a better understanding of Western communication. Another participant elaborated further by explaining that cultural communication and understanding even differed from Tier 1 to Tier 2 or Tier 3 cities.

Bearing this in mind, businesses can get a sense of how to channel their marketing efforts in order to see the biggest return on investment by reaching the largest group of their target audience. They need to package their communication and marketing efforts and apply it by

province, region and even tier cities in the Chinese market. Participants suggested learning about the Chinese audience the businesses is targeting in order to support its communication strategy and learning more about Chinese communication. Therefore it is necessary for businesses to know the market they are trying to enter as it affects how transferable the marketing communication will be and how easy it will be to integrate into the business environment.

When asked how Western businesses could improve on their communication in Chinese markets, participants stated that Western business communication was not always effective because Chinese business relies heavily on „Guanxi". Therefore Western businesses need to learn how to build strong and effective „Guanxi" networks. This is discussed further under culture"s influence on communication in China.

Participants also recommend the sponsorship of degrees or funding for students going into the industry. For example some foreign company"s set up offices in China, according to participants and this assisted them with service and information. According to Li (2011, p. 114) this kind of collaboration can enhance working relationships through collectively improving overall efficiency.

However a serious issue faced when trying to communicate in the Chinese market is the potential manipulation of information and the mistrust of sources of information by the Chinese people. Participants said that they did not always believe the news and the information given to them by government controlled publications and media outlets. Zolkiewski and Feng (2012, p.17) state that "official market information is usually uncertain and out-of-date in the Chinese environment". These factors again contribute to the challenges faced when navigating the Chinese business environment. For this reason participants relied more on international news and information sources and received the majority of their news online. As noted in the researcher"s observations, internet access was widely available in China and free in all of the hotels. This showed that the Chinese have ample access to the internet as a means of communication and alternative information sources. This means that online marketing and digital media can be used as a tool for integrated marketing communication in China.

From these discussions it can be concluded that the Chinese communicate verbally and physically preferably in face-to-face communication, as well as implicitly. The Chinese prefer to communicate in person in order to read and get an understanding of facial expression and body language. Their communication can be vague and obscure at times but when it comes to their understanding of Western advertising they prefer direct, succinct messages that can be clearly understood and do not allow for misinterpretation. The Chinese also like to communicate through digital platforms such as QQ, Weibo and WeChat as this is the norm.

Therefore communication with the Chinese must be done in the way that appeals to them, that is simple, straight forward and in a manner that they can culturally understand. Western business people must learn to interpret body language and facial expressions as Chinese communication is implicit as well as interpersonal.

5.3 Objective Two: How Chinese culture influences business communication

The natural cultural approach to business-to-business marketing in China is an integrated one, not in the traditional marketing sense by use of marketing material and different channels, but through phone calls, emails, WeChat, meeting in person, dinners, lunches, exhibitions, invitations to family events and gifts. These social interactions are all integrated into cultivating a strong and positive business relationship which is at the very heart of effective Chinese business communication.

For example participants all felt heavily influenced by Chinese culture, explaining that there are two indoctrinating ways that Chinese culture has influenced them, through family and through education. Cultural principals are part of daily life and communication, as the Chinese are unconsciously influenced by it. Confucianism is viewed as the most influential ideology and the foundation of Chinese culture and tradition (Fan, 2000, p. 4; Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 57). The Confucian philosophy of filial piety is discussed in the findings as it shows respect for your patriarch, father, elders and ancestors and these were values said to be important to consider when communicating. As the findings showed, participants felt very strongly regarding their link to Confucius, stating that they do everything according to the discipline and it affects their way of communicating in the sense that they must show respect, have manners, give gifts and build relationships. Participants stated that they built business

relationships based on their principles of co-operation, equality, mutual benefits, sincerity, honesty, good faith, parties, family social events, shared meals, drinking culture and the exchange of gifts. These are all typical Chinese cultural methods of building strong relationships and participants agreed that culture affects all their relationships and therefore these methods are carried over into their business relationships too.

Taoism is another major philosophy impacting and influencing the lives of the Chinese, affecting their mind set, behaviour and communication (Zhang *et al*., 2002, p. 117). Participants had said that Taoism had taught them to respect nature and all those that live life, whether it is plant, animal or human. With regards to business, participants had said that Taoism guides the right time, place and people to make deals with. These actions are therefore taken into consideration with Taoist principles in mind.

Participants interestingly added that although older generations are not taught Confucius and Taoism through their education, they still apply these principles to everyday life. Chinese culture is greatly influenced by Confucius and Taoism, even when the Chinese have not learnt the literature. Participants stated that both Confucius and Taoism affect their understanding and interpretation of communication. As it influenced their behaviour and relationships with their business partners, they therefore attempted to up hold relationships according to these traditional teachings by treasuring harmonious relationships and dedicating themselves to being hospitable. A participant specified in their explanation of Confucius" influence on them that they are very conscious of how to communicate appropriately and how Confucius emphasises communication. An example of this was moral standards of communication outlined by Confucius and Tao philosophy that communication should be euphemistic or indirect. Participants stated that Confucius and Tao philosophy is so ingrained in Chinese culture because it has been a part of personal and business life in Chinese society throughout its 5000 year history and therefore the principles are deeply rooted in the minds of the Chinese.

The research also aimed to understand the effects of agrarian traditions and if they were still followed in respect to hierarchy, harmony and co-operation. The most direct reference to agrarian tradition in the findings were the references made in the Cow advert in Appendix A. Participants made the connection between the cow advert and the ox used traditionally in Chinese agriculture. The ox is of significance as an agrarian symbol because it has helped to

build and feed China on the farms. Participants said that as China is an ancient farming nation, the ox represents loyalty and diligence as they are obedient. The findings showed that China‟s historically feudal society still has remnants in modern Chinese society.

The strongest example was discussed as the fact that Confucius and Taoism as well as Buddhism were used in ancient China to control and rule the people. Even though a Chinese communist government is in power, these ancient teachings remain ingrained in Chinese life today. Hierarchy, harmony and co-operation are all key elements in Confucius, Tao and Buddhist teachings and are traditional agrarian principles.

Hierarchy and harmony were found to be two key themes that developed from the findings. Participants stated that it was important to treat elders and higher ranking members of society and in business with respect, as general managers and bosses had the absolute power to make decisions. In support of this Gao and Prime‟s (2010, p. 155) discuss the importance of being a part of the hierarchical systems in Chinese business in order to befriend decision makers and conduct business successfully. Harmony on the other hand, is a vital part of Confucius teaching and is promoted throughout Chinese culture. Participants stated that harmony is a way of life and harmonious relationships are crucial to build. The literature supports this finding by stating that as China has a collectivist culture the Chinese seek social harmony (Kwock *et al*., 2013, p. 58; Zolkiewski & Feng, 2012, p. 24).

It can therefore be difficult to navigate the Chinese market and conduct business, as outsiders do not understand the details or the background of Chinese cultural behaviour. Furthermore, in Chinese culture, outsiders are viewed with caution. Pang *et al.*. (1998, pg. 275) discussed the distrust of foreigners by the Chinese as due to the fact that they are outsiders and are not seen as part of the collective. Specifically Fang and Faure (2010, p. 3) discuss insider-communication or "Zijiren" as this principle is what is used when communicating with colleagues in the inside group. Similarly participants stated that when they initially contact people they are cautious of them and keep their distance. They need to get to know them and see that they are good people and build a relationship of trust and mutual respect through „Guanxi‟ in order to get to know them better before business relations can be established.

Lastly when participants were interpreting the red dragon advert in Appendix A they clearly and explicitly related this advert image to that of a cultural folk tale of a Chinese mythical

animal named the Qilin. This provides evidence that the Chinese do use their culture to interpret communication. What this means for the research study is that when communicating in a business-to-business environment; company"s must take into consideration cultural influences on communication in China, reviewing the communications possible impact and interpretation.

In conclusion the findings and literature that cover the discussion on the objective of how Chinese culture influences business communication, indicate a strong link between historic cultural teachings such as the agrarian principles of harmony, hierarchy and co-operation as well as predominately Confucius and Taoism as well as Buddhism principles. Therefore it is necessary to understand these influences and adopt a respect and appreciation for these elements of culture in order to successfully integrate communication in the Chinese market.

5.4 Objective Three: What role culture plays in building relationships in B2B markets

When discussing culture"s role in building relationships in business-to-business markets it is strongly evident that the most crucial aspect of relationship building is „Guanxi". The findings and literature both vehemently support this.

Firstly the most crucial cultural aspect of Chinese communication is building relationships and the fundamental principle to building strong interpersonal relationships is „Guanxi". Therefore this was identified as a key theme in the findings and its importance is supported by the literature. For example Chuang *et al..* (2011, p. 457) states that „Guanxi" can benefit business dealings in China and aid in long-term, fruitful relationships with key stakeholders.

Like the ancient philosophies of Confucius and Taoism, „Guanxi" predominantly influences behaviour and affects communication and relationship building; this is for the mutual benefit of both business parties (Kwock *et al.*, 2013, p. 57). As stated previously the most predominant means of initiating a „Guanxi" relationship is through face-to-face meetings. However another key finding from the research was the importance of the drinking culture in forming „Guanxi" relationships. For example, participants stated that business was done at the dinner table in China and it is considered rude or disrespectful to refuse offers of food and alcohol. If the dinner goes well then business will prosper. Participants expanded on this by

explaining that in order to put effort in to „Guanxi" relationships, business people must develop the interpersonal relationship through means of drinking, dinners and gift giving. They added that as relationships speak louder than quality and price in China, it is vital to develop healthy relationships. Participants felt that due to the high level of competition in China, what gives businesses preference over others is their „Guanxi" relationship with their clients.

While investigating the effectiveness of „Guanxi" in building business relationships in China in the 21st century participants stated that „Guanxi" can also be dependent on paying commission. „In some cases it is even seen as mandatory to pay a „commission" or the procurement manager will not buy your products. This „commission" is an important part of building „Guanxi" as a participant explained that „Guanxi" is largely maintained by money, specifically to government officials and friends. In Western business, this commission can be seen as bribery; however some Chinese prefer to accept money rather than gifts in order to develop „Guanxi". The exchange of gifts was also identified in the findings as a key theme to come out of the data collection. Feng and Zolkiweski"s (2012, p. 24) study into Chinese relationships, „Guanxi" and business strategy supports the findings on the exchange of gifts by stating that it aids in developing understanding, harmonious relationships.

When asked why Western businesses are successful in China, participants explained that it is because of mutually beneficial opportunities. They explained that Chinese need the West"s advanced technologies and management skills, while the West needs access to one of the biggest consumer and industrial markets in the world. However from this the Chinese still expect to be treated with respect and to be treated as an equal as they strongly believe in a culture of co-operation (Xiao & Chen, 2009, p. 69).

When participants were asked how Western businesses can improve their positions in the Chinese market, Participants reiterated the fact that Western businesses must learn and understand Chinese culture, as „Guanxi" is crucial in developing relationships it must be respected and practiced by foreign businesses. This is especially significant when dealing with government officials who are heavily involved and control business developments and dealings in China. Participants clearly stated that without a strong relationship with officials business will be difficult for Westerners trying to operate in China.

Participants felt that is was difficult for Western businesses to understand Chinese culture as Chinese culture is very different to any other culture in the world and is more complicated. Unless you have been involved in the Chinese market for many years it is difficult to understand but people are aware of it because of its long history.

The West may view „Guanxi" as a tool for bribery, nepotism and possible corruption, especially as it seems that regardless of whether you have the best service, price or product, the best relationship is awarded the deal at the end of the day. However it is culturally ingrained in not only Chinese society but Chinese business, therefore it is imperative that „Guanxi" is carefully traversed and understood in order to be successful in the Chinese market.

5.5 Conclusion

This research study has touched on a broad spectrum of culture, religion and ideologies in China in order to meet the research objectives and discover the effects on integrated marketing communication in Chinese business-to-business communication. Therefore based on this discussion it can be determined that there are various means that can be applied in order to counter act the challenges that have been discussed. These can be found in the next chapter which focuses on recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS COMPANY‟S OPERATING IN CHINA AND FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

Although attempts to enter and establish a position and market share in China by Western businesses has been successful in some cases, there have also been failures as outside businesses continue to face barriers to entry. Therefore, based on the findings and discussions from this research the following recommendations are proposed.

6.2 Understanding Chinese Culture and Communication

Based on the data uncovered from the research it is strongly recommended that foreign business managers have a clear understanding and conceptualisation of what is culturally relevant and relatable in terms of communication in China.

The literature and findings both emphasise the high context collectivist culture that China exists in. For example Chinese philosophies have guided and shaped millions of Chinese lives for centuries. Philosphies such as Tao, Confucius and Buddhist remain an integral part of daily interaction in China.

This means that B2B companies and managers must understand the implications of each of these teachings on Chinese society. For example, Taoism discusses the hidden or double meaning that can exist in Chinese communication. This is something that foreign business people must be aware of and learn to skilfully interpret. There is often meaning in what is not said. Findings showed that participants preferred to meet face-to-face, when elaborating on this, they explained that they can observe body language and facial expression. This is necessary in understanding your Chinese counterpart. Taoism also discusses using non-threatening and non-confrontational communication. Similarly this links in with the concept of „face‟ discussed in the literature, poor or aggressive communication could lead to a loss of „face‟ and therefore a person‟s reputation among their peers. This could be detrimental in a business setting and, therefore, something that managers and businesses must be aware of.

Confucius teachings have had the biggest impact on Chinese interpersonal relationships. Confucius promotes a collectivist culture, emphasises co-operation, social harmony and importantly hierarchy. This means that B2B companies must be aware of how they communicate with the Chinese. It is important that they go through the correct channels of hierarchy and respect the decision makers. Confucius is also the biggest advocate for „Guanxi" and relationship building and is, therefore, worthy of close study.

Buddhism teaches respectful, ethical communication and focuses on equality. Buddhist teaching also looks at silence as a form of non-verbal communication. Foreign businesses must be made aware of this as they could be offended by this technique. B2B companies must understand the cultural implications of Buddhist style communication.

Based on the findings and discussions it is imperative that foreign B2B companies are able to implement basic cultural acts in order to have the respect of their Chinese colleagues. For example, as building „Guanxi" is imperative in order to conduct business in China, foreigners must invest in this practice in order to gain the trust of their Chinese counterparts and build a strong foundation for their relationship in order to do business in the long term. Examples of these methods have been mentioned as the exchange of gifts, dinners and engaging in their drinking culture and even paying commission. To reemphasise this point, Kwock *et al.* (2013, p. 62) state that "in modern day China, „Guanxi" maintains its importance as a social force through an institutional structure that reinforces its culture".

When respondents were asked how Western businesses can overcome cultural differences when doing business in China their focus was resoundingly on communication. *"More communication with each other is a very good way. Close observation may be the most efficient way to understand the Chinese culture. Frequent communication shall be essential to tackle this problem. Faith and respect the Chinese traditional culture. Try their best to fit into the Chinese culture, respect and mutual communication to make both sides win.* [I] *think they need to get in touch with Chinese people. In China we are very concerned about the relationship between the manager and the boss and between us"*.

6.3 Integrated Marketing Communication

Establishing „Guanxi" and relationship building were identified as the most crucial aspects of communication. This is the very first step that must be initiated before engaging in IMC.

Findings developed from the Chinese participants' responses to the IMC material used during the data collection show that participants prefer advertising that is similar to that which is used locally. They suggested format and layout guidelines such as a simple, minimal advert, emphasising the product and brand. The Participants preferred adverts that did not need any additional understanding or interpretation, that didn't contain humour or derived meaning. It was found that the participants preferred straight forward, clear advertising showing the product and the company, while emphasising any environmentally friendly aspects of the product, company or advertising material as this is very popular in the Chinese market. Participants also suggested the use of the colour red and liked the environmentally friendly aspects of the business cards as the look, quality and feel gave an authentic impression of the company. It is therefore recommended that businesses use these aspects as guidelines when going into the Chinese market and take into account how the Chinese interpret advertising, the importance of being environmentally friendly and sustainable and highlighting those aspects.

It is recommended that businesses strategically develop integrated marketing communication campaigns based specifically on the demographics and cultural aspects of their target market, and therefore adapt to the local needs of the Chinese market. As was found, the Tier of city the customer is in determines their level of exposure to Western communication and therefore their ability to understand Western advertising messages and themes. This must be taken into consideration when developing effective IMC material.

Based on the findings, the preferred Chinese communication medium was the internet. Therefore, it is recommended to businesses to explore this area of communication within the regulations and guidelines of the Chinese government. As discussed, certain sites and information can be blocked on the internet by the Chinese government, therefore, B2B companies should ensure that all communication should adhere to regulations or risk being banned. Alternatively mobile phones and social sites such as WeChat, Weibo, QQ and Skype were popular means of communicating among the Chinese. Therefore, it is recommended that

B2B companies look at Pay Per Click advertising, e-banners and google adwords to advertise and communicate with audiences.

As the findings showed, the Chinese appreciate doing business face-to-face, in order to interpret body language and facial expression. It is therefore recommended that B2B companies attend and exhibit at relevant conferences and exhibitions in China in order to communicate effectively with the target audience.

Examples of good communication tactics were discussed by respondents as having;

- Good preparation
- Emailed communication support
- Instant chat tools
- Invitations to meals
- Business dinners and parties
- Follow-up service and product demonstration
- Technology and knowledge exchange
- Direct to-the-point communication
- Exchange of business cards

These communication tactics all support and facilitate the building of strong business relationships or „Guanxi" according to respondents. Therefore, a combination of communication tools is the most effective approach to achieve an integrated marketing communications presence in the Chinese market.

6.4 Joint Ventures

Many foreign businesses have taken the approach of entering into a joint venture in the Chinese market in order to utilise the local company's knowledge, cultural understanding and business network or „Guanxi"(Lin, 2004, p. 36). This method has proved effective in some instances as they utilise establish channels and tap into the market directly. It is recommended that this approach be consider as a means of entry into the Chinese market. Local Chinese contacts can be valuable assets as they guide business counterparts through Chinese legislation and business regulations. They can also introduce foreign businesses to a wider customer base using their local network.

In order to find potential businesses to enter into partnerships or joint ventures with, managers and businesses must understand the social etiquette and cultural climate of Chinese business people. When conducting business the most important principles to use mentioned by the Chinese respondents were, respect, interpersonal relationships, „Guanxi", drinking culture, taking work seriously, integrity, sincerity and good faith. By entering into a joint venture or making use of agents or middlemen, businesses can be guided and supported to develop relationships in China based on these important principles.

6.5 Managerial Implications

Based on the findings of the research the managerial implications are rather complex. As China is such a large, diverse and powerful country, it is imperative that the proper research and planning into developing a communication and marketing strategy has been conducted before entering the Chinese market. A fully committed IMC plan can be very costly, and therefore, B2B companies must be sure of what message they want to communicate and who they want to communicate to.

It is highly recommended that managers partner up with agencies, consultants, or strategic business partners before engaging in a global communication strategy. If the IMC plan fails, it will be costly, not only in monetary terms but to the company"s reputation, in China „face" is crucial. Businesses must present themselves as trust worthy, ethical and respectful. Business partners could be built on using a „Guanxi" network, local Chinese can be great assets in identifying and understanding the target audience. With local guidance and support the risk of entry into this market is substantially lower. It is vital to listen to inside advice given by local Chinese. They expect companies to be themselves, but in a way that can be understood within Chinese culture.

However, as this is a case based study, recommendations have been made with managers and Business-to-Business companies in mind. Consideration must be taken when utilising the information as it is relevant to this particular case study. There will be wider implications for businesses depending on the region, sector and product they will be marketing in China. This should be considered before entering the market and developing the communications strategy.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

This study has touched on the surface of so many other fascinating and valuable research issues when looking into culture, communication, businesses-to-businesses relationships and China. Therefore the other key areas of relevant research that would significantly assist business-to-business relations in China are as follows.

6.6.1 The psychographics and demographics of generation Y in China and their relationship to Western Culture and Brand communication.

As the Chinese middle classes are rapidly expanding and younger consumers have more spending power it would be worthwhile to investigate the differences in generational consumers and to see how they view tradition and culture and its impact on their understanding, interpretation and preferences for integrated marketing communication. Generation Y has been far more exposed to Western communication and modern China.

6.6.2 The impact of education on cultural understanding and relationships with the West in China

A recommendation for future research would be a more succinct and defined look at how education has affected cultural understanding and relationships across generations. The biggest contributing factor to this would be the Cultural Revolution in the 1970's. This has been discussed at large, however how does this affect consumers from older generations? As the aging Chinese population is bigger than the generation Y and X populous due to the one child per family rule. This research would add value as this group of people including generations born before the 1970's are Chinese biggest consumer market.

6.6.3 The impact of environmentally friendly marketing campaigns in China

As there is growing global scrutiny and government pressure on Chinese businesses to become more environmentally friendly and adopt sustainable business practices, it would be of value to analyse the impact of an environmentally friendly marketing campaign.

The benefits of this research would be to identify the key elements in marketing that garner the most return on investment and be the most relatable with the Chinese. Even if the business was not necessarily manufacturing an environmentally friendly product, businesses

could use their marketing material to promote an environmentally sustainable image for example by using recycled paper or bio-degradable materials and sponsorships of sustainable initiatives. Participants gave positive feedback on the environmentally friendly image of the case study company, commenting particularly on the importance of an environmentally friendly theme being the main promotional theme.

6.6.4   A Study of body language in Chinese communication

A reoccurring and fascinating aspect of communication that came up throughout the research was that of body language. The Chinese prefer to communicate and build relationships through face-to-face meetings. This is partially due to the fact that when meeting in person they can read and understand one another"s body language which may convey other messages or meaning.

As a high context society, the Chinese communicate through implicit interpersonal means, therefore an analysis of how this information is interpreted and understood could prove vital when working in these societies.

6.7 Conclusion

As there is very little research and few case studies that cover specifically the impact of cultural on communication in Chinese business-to-business markets, these recommendations act as a guideline into possible further research and could assist marketers who would like to gain insight into this complex market.

However research into the Chinese market does come with its own obstacles and challenges that need to be considered, some of the limitations to the research are discussed in the chapter to follow.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LIMITATIONS

7.1 Introduction

There are limitations to all research studies especially in an exploratory qualitative study. This research was initially limited by the fact that it focused on a particular case study. Although the researcher anticipated a number of the limitations some of them could not be overcome and were a natural part of the research process.

7.2 The language barrier

One of the main limitations of the data collection was using a translator and having information relayed via a secondary source. Often the researcher would have to explain the question to the translator in order for them to understand the question and be able to ask the same question to the Participant. However the researcher had to use examples in some instances in order to explain what the question was asking. These examples could have been relayed to the Participant and influence their answer. However back translations were done on the transcripts to check for possible biases and none were found. Questions were asked repeatedly in different ways in order to see if they would elicit the same response. This repetition proved to gather deeper information although sometimes confused the translator.

7.3 Schedule, timing and access

Unavoidable limitations encountered during the data collection in China included the schedule, timing and access. The Chinese agents hosted and co-ordinated the week of data collection for the researcher and they did not relay or discuss the schedule as it would unfold. The researcher was unaware of the amount of travel and activities planned for this week as it was just as much a cultural exchange as it was a data collection exercise. Therefore some interviews had to be carried out on buses and in hotel lobbies as and when the Participants were free for the researcher to interview them. The translator and interviewees had their cell phones on and with them while interviews were conducted; feedback from the cell phone signal interfered with the recordings and caused distortion of the sound at times. Extensive field notes were taken by the research in order to combat this problem.

However there still may be gaps for further research and analysis in this study and other possible research tools that may benefit and aid in the data collection. For example more

focus groups could have been conducted and these interactions could have been video recorded in order to get evidence of unspoken communication and the non-verbal interaction.

7.4 Limited literature and previous research

Available literature on business-to-business marketing and cultural communication in China was limited and had a very Western bias, largely being focused on American research. It was difficult to find similar research studies that had been done in the same area of interest and therefore relatable or corresponding data was not easily available for the researcher to draw comparison from. This made it more challenging for the researcher to find applicable and relevant research in relation to the topic area. Often the research found was out dated. This proved to be a limitation to the research study at times.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion while limitations in this study existed, the researcher did the utmost to anticipate them and or minimise their impact and thus it is believed that they did not severely affect the value of the research. Although a study such as this may be complicated to replicate exactly, it is possible to repeat this research with different Chinese Participants and render similar results. Chinese culture and their way of communication is so deeply ingrained into their society and behaviour that it is believed that the same findings would surface if a similar line of questioning was used. However this research has been interpretive and therefore allows for greater flexibility to overcome limitations.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINAL CONCLUSION

As China‟s population continues to grow from over 1 billion people, its importance in the global market increases as does China‟s consumer spending power. For these reasons it is imperative that global businesses are able to understand this market, its people, culture and most importantly how to effectively communicate particularly in a B2B environment. This research serves to provide an insight into patterns of behaviour among the Chinese people, in terms of their preferred methods of communication and cultural intricacies in B2B integrated marketing communication that help to form their understanding and perceptions.

Potential elements of behaviour that have been identified in this research are centred on deeply embedded beliefs and values from China‟s over five thousand year old history and civilisation. Therefore understanding the deeply ingrained culture and communication style of the Chinese is imperative, as this is how they develop their relationships which they depend on in order to develop their social and business networks. The research data uncovered in this study supports the overall purpose in achieving an understanding of how culture impacts communication and how it is interpreted and understood by the Chinese in a business-to-business IMC setting.

In conclusion it is important that foreign businesses take the time to fully understand this unique, intricate and vast market and all that it has to offer. Despite this research having a limited focus on one case study, it still shows evidence that Western businesses can thrive in the Chinese market. They can be successful by building culturally significant relationships, exchanging gifts, taking part in the drinking culture, respecting tradition and customs, taking on an environmentally friendly strategy where possible and communicating using locally adopted methods such as WeChat and QQ, if face-to-face meetings cannot be held as a first priority.

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10. Appendices

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Section A

Questionnaire

Circle your answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

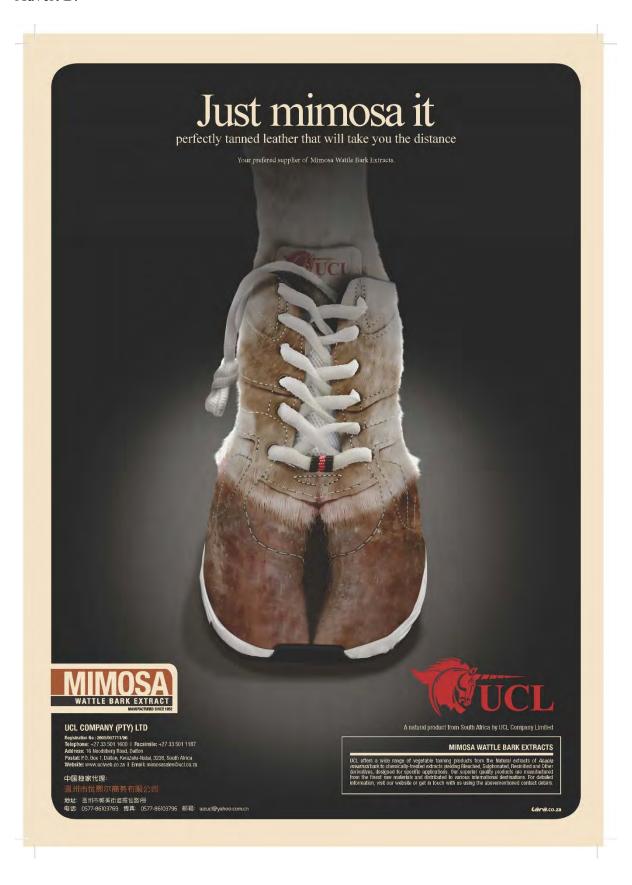|	1	2	3	4	5
1. „Guanxi" is very important in business.					
2. Confucian principles are important in business.					
3. Taoism principles are important in business.					
4. Hierarchy is very important in business.					
5. Harmony is very important in business					
6. Co-operation is key in business					
7. Chinese cultural values affect how I do business					
8. Western businesses must respect Chinese business culture					
9. Chinese business people rely on „Guanxi" to do business					
10. I don"t do business outside of my „Guanxi" network					

Section B

Advert responses:

Looking at adverts A to D

- Do you find these adverts appealing?
- Do they have any cultural relevance for you?
- What makes them different to other adverts placed by Western businesses?
- Please tell me how you feel about the logo, images, colours, wording and meaning you get from these adverts
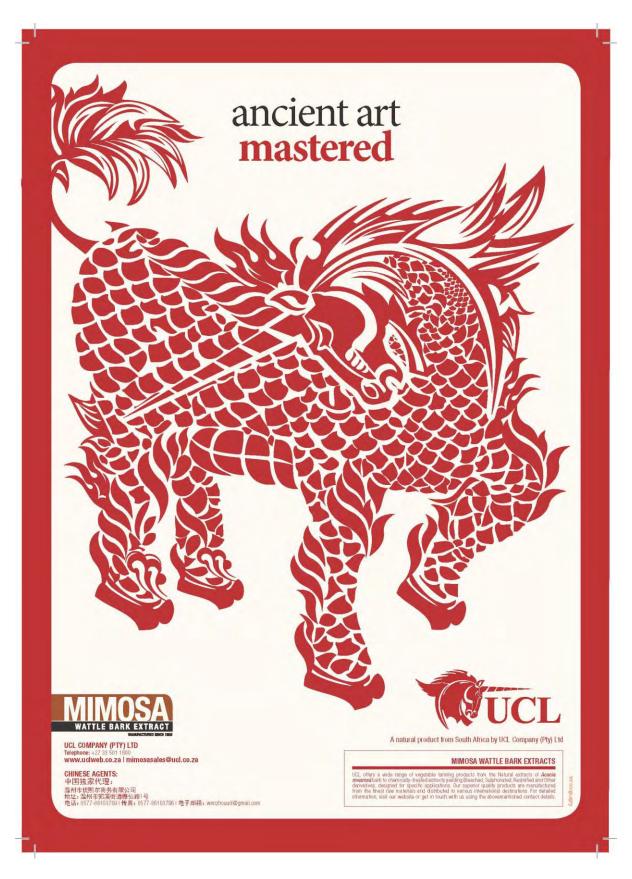- What do these adverts tell you about the company that placed them and their brand?
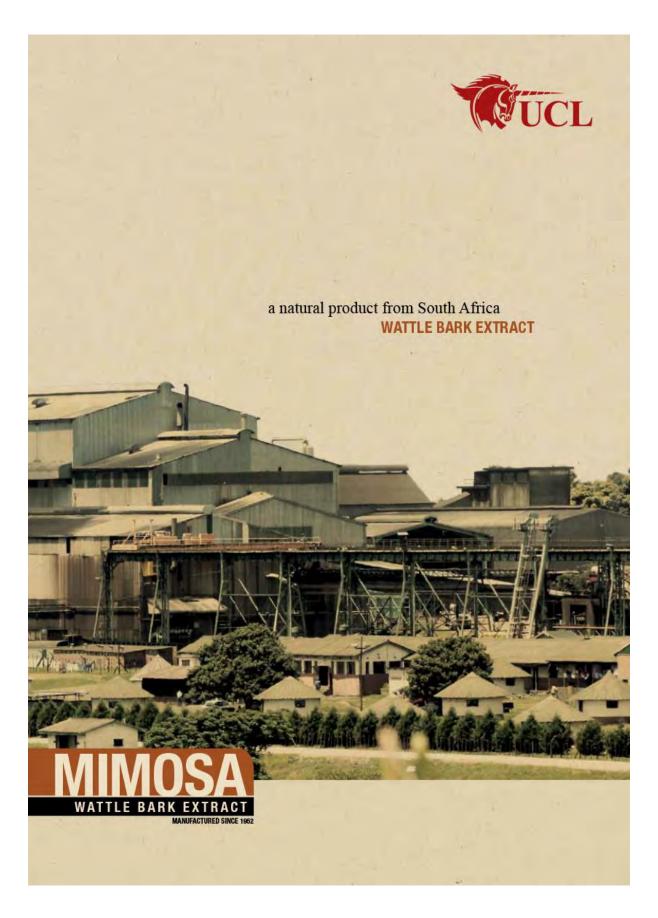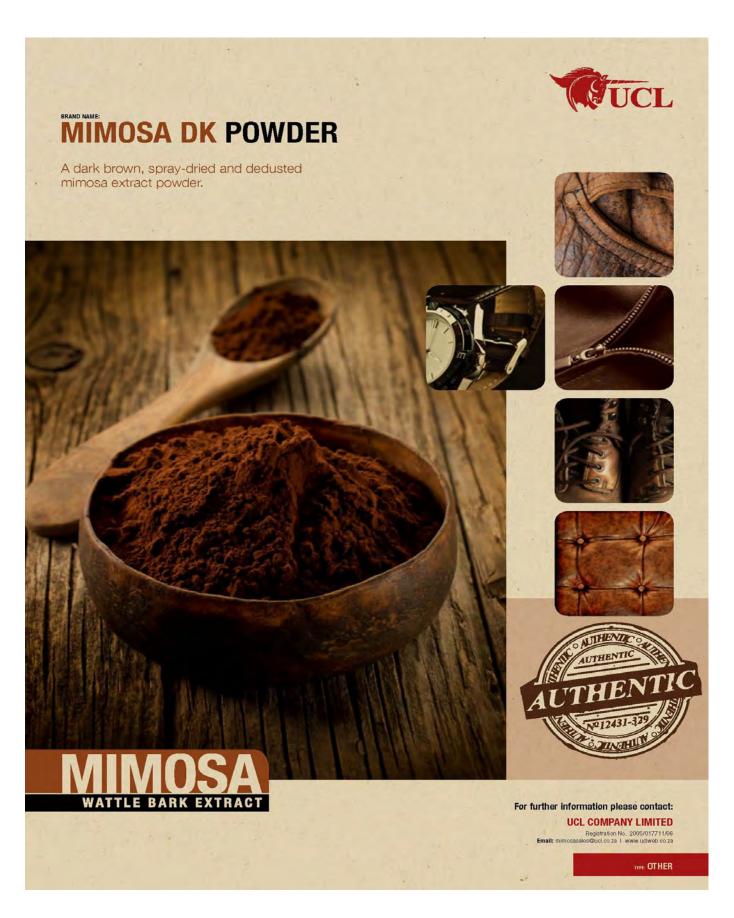
Advert A:

Advert B:

Advert C:

Advert D:

Appendix B - Corporate Profile:

Appendix C - Wattle Brochure

Appendix D - Spec Sheet:

Appendix E - Front of Business Card and Company Logo

Appendix F - Original Interview guide

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What is the background and level of exposure to Western communication and media?

How do Chinese businesses prefer Westerners to communicate with them?

How does Chinese culture influence business communication?

What role does culture play in building relationships in B2B Markets?

What demographic information could influence interpretation?

PROPOSED ORDER OF QUESTIONS:

1. What province are you from?
2. What city are you from?
3. What media are you exposed to?
4. Do you get any businesses news?
   - If yes, how so? What kind of businesses news?
5. Do you have a business relationship with other businesses?
6. Do you have a business relationship with any other Western businesses?

If yes:

- How do they communicate with you?
- Do you feel this communication method is effective?
- Can you give examples of good and bad communication? What made it good, and bad?

- How do you as a business person prefer to be communicated with?

If no:

- What were your first impressions of UCL?
- How are their communication methods different to that of local Chinese businesses?

7. Are you exposed to Western marketing communication methods?
   If yes:
   - How do you feel when you see adverts or communication from Western businesses?
   - What appeals to you? What don"t you like?
   - Do you think that Western businesses know how to communicate effectively in Chinese markets? What could they improve on?
8. How do you feel Western business communication differs to Chinese business communication?
9. What do you feel are the most effective means of communication for business-to-business markets?
10. Do you feel influenced by Chinese culture?
    - Why? How does it influence you?
11. Does Chinese culture play a role in your businesses? E.g. your relationships with your colleagues and clients, how you communicate, the principles your business follows?
12. Does your culture influence how you communicate in business?
13. Does it influence how you interpret communication?
14. Do you feel that Confucius or Tao principles play a role in your life?
15. Does the teachings of Confucius or Taoism influence your understanding and interpretation of communication? Can you give examples?
16. Does Confucianism us and Taoism influence your relationships with your business partners?
    - Why?
17. Do you have relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds?
    - Which cultures?

18. How does culture affect your business relationships?

19. Have your morals and values developed from your cultural background?

20. How do your morals and values affect your decision making?

21. How important is *„Guanxi"* in building business relationships to you?

  - Why?

22. How could Western businesses overcome cultural differences when doing business in China?

23. What is your age?

24. Gender?

25. Position in your company?

26. What is your level of education?

27. Where were you educated?

28. Which ethnic group do you belong to?

Appendix G - Amended Interview guide

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What is the background and level of exposure to Western communication and media?

How do Chinese businesses prefer Westerners to communicate with them?

How does Chinese culture influence business communication?

What role does culture play in building relationships in B2B Markets?

What demographic information could influence interpretation?

PROPOSED ORDER OF QUESTIONS:

What province are you from?

1. What city are you from?
2. What media are you exposed to?
3. Do you get any businesses news?
   - If yes, how so? What kind of businesses news?
4. Do you have a business relationship with other businesses?
5. Do you have a business relationship with any other Western businesses?

If yes:

- How do they communicate with you?
- Do you feel this communication method is effective?

- Can you give examples of good and bad communication? What made it good, and bad?
- How do you as a business person prefer to be communicated with?

6. What were your first impressions of UCL?
    - How are their communication methods different to that of local Chinese businesses?

7. Are you exposed to Western marketing communication methods?
   If yes:
    - How do you feel when you see adverts or communication from Western businesses?
    - What appeals to you? What don‟t you like?
    - Do you think that Western businesses know how to communicate effectively in Chinese markets? What could they improve on?

8. How do you feel Western business communication differs to Chinese business communication?

9. How do you prefer to communicate with Western businesses?

10. What do you feel are the most effective means of communication for business-to-business markets?

11. Do you feel influenced by Chinese culture?
    - Why? How does it influence you?

12. Does Chinese culture play a role in your businesses? E.g. your relationships with your colleagues and clients, how you communicate, the principles your business follows.

13. Does your culture influence how you communicate in business?

14. Does it influence how you interpret communication?

15. Do you feel that Confucius or Tao principles play a role in your life?

16. Does the teachings of Confucius or Taoism influence your understanding and interpretation of communication? Can you give examples?

17. Does Confucianism and Taoism influence your relationships with your business partners?
    - Why?

18. Do you have relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds?
    - Which cultures?

19. How does culture affect your business relationships?

20. Traditionally how have you built business relationships?

21. Do you think your culture affects your business relationships?

22. Do you think Western businesses understand your culture?

23. What are the most important cultural business principles to use when conducting business?

24. Do you think „*Guanxi*"is still important in Chinese culture for business? Why?

25. Have your morals and values developed from your cultural background?

26. How do your morals and values affect your decision making?

27. How important is „*Guanxi*"in building business relationships to you?

- Why?

28. How could Western businesses overcome cultural differences when doing business in China?

29. What is your age?

30. Gender?

31. Position in your company?

32. What is your level of education?

33. Where were you educated?

34. Which ethnic group do you belong to?

Section B

Interview Guide:

2.1.1 How do you respond to the following forms of communication?

- print adverts
- exhibitions, trade shows
- website, emails,
- phone calls,
- one-to-one meeting

2.1.2 Which method do you prefer and why?

2.1.3 Do you think your preferred method of communication is a cultural norm?

Advert responses:

Looking at the adverts:

- Do you find these adverts appealing?

- Do they have any cultural relevance for you?

- What makes them different to other adverts placed by Western businesses?

- Please tell me how you feel about the logo, images, colours, wording and meaning you get from these adverts

- What do these adverts tell you about the company that placed them and their brand?

University of KwaZulu-Natal

School of Management

Informed Consent Document

I, Lyndsey Scott, am a student currently registered for the Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management, M. Commerce on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). A requirement for the degree is a dissertation and I have chosen the following topic:

Integrated marketing communication in Chinese business-to-business markets.

Please note that that this investigation is being conducted in my personal capacity. I can be reached on Lyndz.scott@gmail or 082 85 82 648

My academic supervisor is Professor Debbie Vigar-Ellis, based in the School of Management on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She can be contacted on Vigard@ukzn.ac.za or 033 2605899.

The purpose of this research is to understand the influence of culture on the interpretation of integrated marketing communication in a Chinese business-to-business (B2B) setting. Information gathered in this study will include data retrieved from the questionnaire that I request you to answer. Please note that your name will not be included in the report as only summary data will be included. Your anonymity and confidentiality is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Your participation in completing the questionnaire is completely voluntary and you are in no way forced to complete the questionnaire. You have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

I appreciate the time and effort it would take to participate in this study. I would be very grateful for your participation, as it would enable me to complete my dissertation and degree.

You may retain this page

Please turn over

Please complete the section below:

I …………………………………………………………….. (Full names of Participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant………………………….….………

Date………………………………………………….……..

Appendix I - Ethical Clearance Document

31 August 2015

Ms Lyndsey Scott (208517464)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Scott,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0967/013M
New project title: Integrated Marketing Communication in Chinese Business-to-Business Markets: A case study

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 31 August 2015 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Professor Debbie Vigar-Ellis
cc Academic leader Research: Professor Brian McArthur
cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Cunynghame