

**COMMITMENT TOWARDS CELEBRATING CHINESE FESTIVALS
AMONG MALAYSIAN CHINESE WORKING ADULTS**

HE TENG TENG

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

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FESTIVALS AMONG MALAYSIAN CHINESE WORKING
ADULTS**

HE TENG TENG

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Name of Candidate: HE TENG TENG

Registration/ Matric No: AGH120027

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ABSTRACT

This study explores a number of issues and events embedded in the phenomenon of showing commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals. Designed as a case study, the research questions aim to better understand firstly, the level of commitment of Malaysian Chinese towards celebrating ethnic festivals. Secondly, the personal impacts on respondents in relation to their commitment and thirdly, to what extent do Malaysian Chinese working adults experience triggering events that influence their perceived commitment? The informants consist of thirty Malaysian Chinese aged 20-34 years from different family and religious background, who have diverse work experience thus setting the framework for different perspectives. Data collected for this study were transcriptions from open-ended interviews. Characterized by the case and field method of research, combined data sources were used to compare the informants' views, perceptions, experiences and philosophies. The objective of this study is to examine personal impact and triggering events that lead to changes of commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals. The findings reveal that religion and family structure are the overarching construct, which laid the foundation for the level of commitment. It was evidenced that family values foster commitment towards Chinese festival and an appreciation of reunion and filial piety. Recommendations were made for future research.

Keywords: Malaysian Chinese, ethnic festival, commitment, personal impact, triggering events

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji pelbagai isu dan peristiwa berkenaan komitmen menyambut perayaan etnik. Tiga persoalan kajian telah dibentuk untuk memahami dengan lebih jelas fenomena dan tahap komitmen belia Malaysia berbangsa Cina terhadap sambutan perayaan etnik. Kajian ini juga meneliti impak yang dapat dikesan oleh responden terhadap komitmen yang diberikan. Persoalan yang ketiga mengupas sejauh mana belia berbangsa Cina mengalami kejadian ‘Triggering Events’ yang dapat mencetuskan kesan pada komitmen yang sedia ada. Responden terdiri daripada 30 orang pemuda Cina Malaysia yang berumur antara 20-34 tahun dan mempunyai latarbelakang keluarga and agama yang berbeza, serta pengalaman bekerja dan jangkamasa berkhidmat yang tidak sama. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini dapat menganalisis isu ini dari perspektif yang pelbagai. Data yang dikumpulkan melalui temuduga terbuka ditranskripkan. Berasaskan kajian kes dan kaedah penyelidikan tersebut, sumber data yang dikumpulkan itu digunakan untuk membandingkan pendapat, persepsi, pengalaman dan falsafah peribadi responden. Kajian ini bertujuan memeriksa impak ke atas diri responden serta kes-kes yang mencetuskan kesan, seterusnya membawa perubahan terhadap komitmen menyambut perayaan Cina. Kajian mendapati agama dan struktur keluarga muncul sebagai unsur yang berpengaruh dan menyeluruh, sehingga membentuk asas kepada tahap komitmen belia yang dikaji. Kajian ini turut menunjukkan bahawa nilai keluarga meningkatkan komitmen individu terhadap menyambut perayaan Cina. Selain itu, nilai-nilai kekeluargaan mempertingkatkan komitmen meraikan perayaan di samping menghargai perjumpaan sesama ahli-ahli keluarga serta ketaatan kepada ibubapa. Di akhir kajian, cadangan diberikan untuk pertimbangan kajian akan datang.

Kata Kunci: Komuniti Cina Malaysia, perayaan etnik, komitmen, impak peribadi, insiden mencetuskan perubahan (*triggering event*)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	6
1.3 Research Objectives	7
1.4 Research Questions	7
1.5 Research Methodology	8
1.5.1 Participants, Research Site and Duration of Interview	8
1.5.2 Instrument of Investigation	10
1.5.3 Data Collection	11
1.5.4 Data Analysis	12
1.6 Scope and Limitation	15
1.7 Significance of the Study	15
1.8 Definition of Terms	16
1.8.1 Chinese Festival	17
1.8.2 Malaysian Chinese	17
1.8.3 Commitment	18
1.8.4 Personal Impact	18
1.8.5 Triggering Events	19
1.9 Organization of the Thesis	19
1.10 Summary	19
CHAPTER 2	21
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	21
2.1 Literature Review	21
2.1.1 Elements of Festival	21
2.1.2 Chinese Festival Celebration	24

2.1.3 Commitment and Festival	43
2.1.4 Personal Impact and Festival	47
2.1.5 Triggering Events, Commitment, and Festival	50
2.2 Theoretical Framework	57
2.2.1 Festival-Individual-Practice (FIP) Commitment model.....	57
2.2.2 Theory of Dramaturgy	60
2.3 Summary	62
CHAPTER 3	64
ANALYSIS OF COMMITMENT: LEVEL AND AVAILABILITY	64
3.1 Demographic Information.....	64
3.2 Level of Commitment	68
3.3 Availability of Practicing Festival Elements.....	70
3.4 Discussion	91
3.5 Summary	94
CHAPTER 4	96
PERSONAL IMPACTS AND TRIGGERING EVENTS	96
4.1 Personal Impact.....	96
4.1.1 Reunion	97
4.1.2 Filial Piety	98
4.1.3 Sharing with Others	98
4.1.4 Respecting Ancestor	99
4.2 Triggering Events Influencing Commitment towards Celebrating Festivals.....	99
4.2.1 Major Triggering Events	100
4.2.2 Minor Triggering Events.....	102
4.3 Discussion	105
CHAPTER 5	111
CONCLUSION	111
5.1 Conclusion	111
5.2 Suggestions for Future Research.....	114
REFERENCES	115
APPENDICES	129
Appendix 1: Main Chinese Traditional Festivals in China	129
Appendix 2: Survey Questionnaire and Interview Questions (Chinese Version).....	131
Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaire and Interview Questions (English Version).....	133

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Lee's (2009) Conceptual Model Based on the Mehrabian-Russel Model and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory	58
Figure 2.2 Festival-Individual-Practice Commitment Model (FIP Commitment Model)	59
Figure 3.1 Distribution of Working Experience	67

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1 2015 National Public Holidays in Malaysia	4
Table 1.2 2015 National Holidays with Religion- and Ethnicity- Orientation	5
Table 2.1 Festival Rituals of Chinese New Year	27
Table 2.2 Festival Food of Chinese New Year	28
Table 2.3 Festival Entertainment of Chinese New Year	29
Table 2.4 Festival Atmospherics of Chinese New Year	30
Table 2.5 Festival Elements of Tomb-Sweeping Festival	31
Table 2.6 Festival Rituals of Dumpling Festival	34
Table 2.7 Festival Food of Dumpling Festival	35
Table 2.8 Festival Elements of Mid-Autumn Festival	37
Table 2.9 Festival Elements of Winter Solstice	40
Table 2.10 Factors and Item Description of Chinese Values	49
Table 2.11 Hagedorn's Conceptual Framework of Faculty Job Satisfaction	58
Table 3.1 Key Festival Rituals of Chinese New	71
Table 3.2 Key Festival Rituals in Tomb-Sweeping Festival	73
Table 3.3 Key Festival Food (and Drinks) for Chinese New Year Celebration	78
Table 3.4 Key Festival Food (and Drinks) in Mid-Autumn Festival	79
Table 3.5 Key Festival Food (and Drinks) in Winter Solstice	81
Table 3.6 Key Festival Entertainment in Chinese New Year	82
Table 3.7 Key Festival Entertainment in Mid-Autumn Festival	84
Table 3.8 Key Festival Atmospherics in Chinese New Year	86
Table 3.9 Key Festival Atmospherics in Mid-Autumn Festival	88

Table 3.10 Key Festival Atmospherics in Tomb-Sweeping Festival	89
Table 3.11 Availability of Elements for Each Festival	90
Table 3.12 Nominal Mean Values of respondents committed score for the five festivals	94
Table 3.13 The Level of Commitment and Availability	95
Table 4.1 People Who Influenced Respondents Most Regarding Festival Commitment	96
Table 4.2 Main Impacts of Chinese Festivals on Working Adults	97

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human beings have created both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Buildings, architecture and artefacts are part of tangible heritage, whilst tradition and folk festivals are intangible but meaningful cultural events passed down from one generation to another. Davis (2010) noted that in line with UNESCO's¹ policies on intangible cultural heritage, festival encourages cultural understanding and cultural transmission among 'tradition bearers' of different backgrounds to come together and explore the many aspects of particular traditions.

Therefore, when festival or festive event takes place at certain time and space, it represents a community's intangible cultural heritage, and showcases certain aspects of its worldview, custom, folk belief, value system, and history. In other words, festival provides an opportunity for the community to interact via dances, songs, variety of food, costumes, arts and other forms of culture (Davis, 2010).

Moreover, festival can serve to meet many specific purposes, particularly in regard to three main aspects:

- 1) To mark certain culture (Rabaneda, 2012; Esterik, 1982);
- 2) To reveal certain religion (Fam, Waller and Erdogan, 2004; Manus, 2007);
- 3) To commemorate a certain person (Galan, 2000) or historical event (Urkin and Naimer, 2015).

¹ UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

In countries where people follow traditional customs and culture, such as Japan and South Korea, festivals are commonly regarded as ‘markers’ of the prominent culture or religion (Hunter, 2009; Mehta, 2007; Schielke, 2007; Safran, 2006; Chau, 2005; Clarke-Ekong, 1997). This is particularly true for people who practice the same culture and/or primarily believe in one faith or religion. For instance, in some Christian countries in the West, people celebrate Christmas Day, Good Friday (Easter) and Halloween that are closely linked to their religious origins. Rituals and ceremonies are tied to religious activities in the church, or traditions in the family.

In West Asian Islamic countries, festivals are primarily linked to Islamic faith such as the eve of Ramadhan, Aidilfitri, Aidiladha and during the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (Wu and Cheng, 2013; Nakhleh, Sakurai, and Penn, 2008; Cummings, 2004). Besides cultural and religious festive seasons, many countries also commemorate special dates by celebrating New Year, National Day and Labour Day.

On the contrary, festivals in the East may be more culturally oriented due to its agricultural origins (Sparavigna, 2008; Wing, Grant, Green, and Stewart, 1996). For example, the Chinese festivals in China focus more on seasonal celebration according to the lunar calendar, e.g. Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Day, and Winter Solstice. Furthermore, Chinese traditional festivals are usually not based on religion, but have a tendency to return to nature, or building rapport in relationship among tradition bearers. Basically, the Chinese would regard three forms of festivals, namely, religion-orientation (Kataoka, 2012; Goh, 2009), season-orientation (Yang, 2008) and ethnicity-orientation (Hasmath, 2014; Lu, 2008).

In this modern era, we can hardly find any country that is still homogenous and monolithic in ethnic composition (Stratford, Farbotko, and Lazrus, 2013). As a result, when multi-ethnic groups create a nation-state, each group brings forth own cultural traits and artefacts, as means to differentiate them from the others. In fact, each group may be proud to present their own culture via celebration of festivals. For example, there are fifty-six ethnic groups in China and each ethnic group has its own festivals. The Han people celebrate the Chinese New Year to mark the arrival of spring and Mid-Autumn Festival to commemorate the autumn, while Mongol people celebrate Nadam fair to honor the memory of war victory, and Hui people celebrate Eid al-Fitr to commemorate the end of fasting month of Ramadhan.

Malaysia is no exception, as a young nation state comprising multi-ethnic groups with abundant festivals, each ethnic group tends to celebrate traditional, cultural and religious festivals (Zahari, Abdullah, and Sharif, 2015; Kawangit, Don, and Hamhjah, 2012; Khader, 2012; Shuhaimi, 2009). In view of the public holidays declared by the federal government, many of them are closely related to culture and religion of the three main ethnic groups, i.e. the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities.

When government declares an important festival as a gazetted national holiday, festival celebration will impact on productivity and leisure activities of the entire country (Tang, 2014; Janeczko, Mules, and Ritchie, 2002). Government as the centralized authority determines how long and how intensive festivals should be. This is reflected in the selection, duration and arrangement of gazetted public holidays based on people's need and consideration for productivity during these festivals.

Traditionally, the Chinese community used to celebrate several cultural festivals based on four seasons in China. However in Malaysia, this is no longer practical to follow, as most of these festivals are not declared as public holidays. The contemporary Chinese in Malaysia celebrate the major festivals such as Chinese New Year with family and friends, and tend to celebrate some other festivals moderately.

This study focuses on how the Chinese community, as an ethnic minority in Malaysia, find time and ways to celebrate ethnic festivals. Do the young tradition bearers still appreciate or treasure these traditions in festivals? Is festival celebration equally important to the participating individuals, and to the society at large? How do they feel when they miss out or choose not to celebrate some of these festivals? Can festivals bring tradition bearers together? These are target issues to be explored in this qualitative study.

Based on Malaysia's Public Holidays 2015, there are altogether sixteen days gazetted as national holidays (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 2015 National Public Holidays in Malaysia

Date	Holiday	Applicable to
1 Jan (Thu)	New Year	National
3 Jan (Sat)	Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Maulidur Rasul)	National
19 Feb (Thu)	Chinese New Year	National
20 Feb (Fri)	Chinese New Year (The second day)	National
1 May (Fri)	Labour Day	National
3 May (Sun)	Vesak Day	National
6 Jun (Sat)	Agong's Birthday	National
17 Jul (Fri)	Hari Raya Puasa	National
18 Jul (Sat)	Hari Raya Puasa	National
31 Aug (Mon)	National Day	National
16 Sep (Wed)	Malaysia Day	National

24 Sep (Thu)	Hari Raya Haji	National
14 Oct (Wed)	Awal Muharram (Maal Hijrah)	National
10 Nov (Tue)	Deepavali	National except Sarawak
24 Dec (Thu)	Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Maulidur Rasul)	National
25 Dec (Fri)	Christmas	National

(Retrieved 23 March 2015 from <http://www.onestopmalaysia.com/holidays-2015c.html>)

Further, the researcher divided them into two groups according to their different orientations as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 2015 National Holidays with Religion- and Ethnicity- Orientation²

Public Holiday	Orientation	Tradition Bearers (Ethnic Background)
Prophet Muhammad's Birthday	Religion (Islam)	Malay
Chinese New Year	Ethnicity	Chinese
Vesak Day	Religion (Buddhism)	Chinese and Indian
Hari Raya Puasa	Religion (Islam)	Malay
Hari Raya Haji	Religion (Islam)	Malay
Deepavali	Ethnicity	Indian
Awal Muharram	Religion (Islam)	Malay
Christmas	Religion (Christianity)	Christians consist of Chinese, Indian and indigenous people

In Malaysia, religious festivals play an important role in determining public holidays due to the people's multi-religious faiths. For example, the Muslims celebrate four public holidays i.e. Prophet Muhammad's Birthday, Hari Raya Puasa, Hari Raya Haji and Awal

² Labour Day, Agong's Birthday, National Day and Malaysia Day are excluded in this table, because their orientation are more inclined to politics.

Muharram. For the Indian community, they celebrate Deepavali as cultural festival; and Thaipusam, Vesak Day, and Christmas depending on their belief system. The Chinese community would celebrate religion-oriented festivals according to their respective religions. However, Chinese New Year, as the only ethnicity-orientation public holiday, is celebrated by all Malaysian Chinese in two consecutive public holidays.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to the ancient Chinese calendar used for generations entitled *Huang Li*, the book or calendar for divination and agricultural production, there are eight main traditional Chinese festivals, namely, Chinese New Year, Lantern Festival, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, Chinese Valentine's Day, Double Ninth Festival and the Winter Solstice (see Appendix 1).

However, from my observation for about one year in Malaysia, only Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival are still widely remembered and celebrated by most Malaysian Chinese with commercial promotion in shopping malls or big reports carried by local newspapers and other media. It is imperative to study why these two festivals remain significant whilst six other festivals are either neglected or losing popularity.

Attitude towards festive celebration seems to have experienced drastic changes between the old and young generations. Whenever we are faced with a choice, we express our preference. The older generation, I spoke to, expressed their concern about young generation's declining commitments toward attending the major traditional festival, Chinese New Year. At the same time, they observed a new trend emerged where adults find it difficult

to relate to cultural festivals that they were used to be celebrating since young age. What are the contexts influencing their decision-making of festival celebration? What personal impact do they perceive when they celebrate or neglect certain festivals? Do they consider family, society and other values when making such decisions during most festive seasons?

Juggling between the responsibilities of building a new family and looking after their elderly parents, the young Chinese working adults feel the pressure to comply with cultural norms and family demands. They have to constantly make a choice whether or not to celebrate their ethnic festivals, and to what extent they should commit themselves to those requirements imposed on them. In light of these concerns, the present study is designed to investigate Malaysian Chinese working adults' perception of commitment towards celebration of ethnic festivals and some events influencing their commitment.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis basically contains three main objectives:

- 1) To investigate the level of commitment of young Malaysian Chinese adults towards celebrating their ethnic festivals.
- 2) To identify the personal impact of celebrating ethnic festivals caused by commitment on Malaysian Chinese adults.
- 3) To examine events caused by personal experience entwined with commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals in a multi-cultural social context.

1.4 Research Questions

Correspondingly, three research questions are considered on the basis of objectives:

1) What is the level of commitment of young Malaysian Chinese adults towards celebrating their ethnic festivals?

2) What is the personal impact of celebrating ethnic festivals caused by commitment on Malaysian Chinese adults?

3) What kinds of challenges are caused by personal experience entwined with commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals among young Malaysian Chinese adults in a multi-cultural social context?

1.5 Research Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research design where semi-structured interview was the main data collection method. Details of such methodology is presented in the following sub-sections including sampling, instrument, data collection, and data analysis in sequence.

1.5.1 Participants, Research Site and Duration of Interview

The unit of analysis in this study is the young Malaysian Chinese adults who work in urban areas and have some experience of celebrating the Chinese traditional festivals. Chuan (2012) conducted a case study of the Malaysian Chinese reunion dinner on the Eve of Chinese New Year, the present study shares the same context of Chinese festival celebration as Chuan (2012) focusing on participants from the Klang Valley area.

In her research, she explained reasons of her sampling in this area as follows:

“The Lunar New Year is celebrated by the Chinese, the majority of Chinese Malaysians are concentrated on the West coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Historically as a result of the British settlement, the Chinese are living predominantly within the western states of Penang, Perak, Selangor, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Johor” (Hirschman, 1987).

According to Euro Monitor International (2009), urbanisation in Malaysia among these states have increased from 2.3 million in 1995 to 4.1 million in 2007 of which 75% are in Malaysia's major cities within the Klang Valley, mainly within the state of Selangor (the vicinity of Klang, Petaling Jaya and Shah Alam) (ibid: 114).

In consideration of validity and reliability of respondents, rapport, language, and expression are three significant features to select interviewees. The researcher chose thirty Chinese working adults who have had contacts with him more than once and they are able to communicate and exchange their ideas in Mandarin fluently. Some of the respondents are friends of the researcher, some are students whom he taught previously and others are working members. They engage in different professions and have different educational background. The survey was conducted in an anonymous way, which brings two advantages: protecting the respondent's privacy and obtaining their realistic view and suggestion for this study.

To collect primary data on the respondents' perception of commitment and festival celebration, investigation was primarily based on one key method, one-to-one interviews. Normally, coffee shops and quiet restaurants were preferred as interview sites. The interviews were rather intensive and were conducted after work or during weekends on account of convenience of the respondents. With respondents' consent, all interviews ranged from thirty minutes to ninety minutes. Their conversation was audio taped and transcribed to ensure accuracy of content and to facilitate conduct of data analysis.

1.5.2 Instrument of Investigation

According to Tesch (1990), language, description and interpretation, along with theory are the three core elements to compose a qualitative research question. This qualitative research aims to shed light on the perception of Malaysian Chinese towards a specific event. The outcome was described and interpreted using a qualitative research approach to data.

Interviews provides elaborate information pertaining to interviewees' viewpoints and experiences of a specific issue (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 2003). There are three important interview approaches used in this study.

Firstly, informal conversational interviews were conducted to eliminate feeling of tension and to ensure investigation is conducted in a relaxed situation. Secondly, general interview guide approach was indispensable to give a clear guide to respondents about this study and scope of questions. Lastly, standardized open-ended interview questionnaire was considered appropriate protocol for this study compared to structured interview.

Moreover, the trait of open-endedness not only allows the interviewees to offer whatever answers they yearn to share but also allows the interviewer to pose probing questions in order to carry out the follow-up discussion (Gall et al., 2003). Therefore, the researcher would conduct further interviews based on the respondents' initial responses or answers to standardized questions and made a detailed inquiry of their personal stories.

1.5.3 Data Collection

The procedure of data collection mainly depends on two approaches, a purposive snowball sampling (Esterberg, 2002) and secondary data collection through a search for relevant literature in libraries or online.

The first approach improves accuracy in identifying the respondents and provides convenience to contact the respondents. The respondents consist of the researcher's friends, ex-colleagues and their related social network. It is effective for the purpose of this study to choose thirty interviewees who have experienced Chinese festivals as research samples.

The second approach functions to supplement relative literature and contributes to explaining explanation of some conceptions in this study. For example, Lee's (2009) research examples the meaning of "commitment" in sociological context and involves commitment towards celebrating festivals in his conceptual framework.

Mandarin is one of the main language medium used in local Chinese communication every day. Therefore, the questionnaire and interviews are designed in Mandarin. Hence, the participants are mostly Mandarin-speaking young working adults in Klang Valley. Audio taping and note taking are applied as two main ways to ensure accuracy of data recordings and the process of transcription.

1.5.4 Data Analysis

Data is analysed following interview transcription. Codes are served as identifiers that enable the labelling and organizing of the data. The researcher utilized open coding to examine the data line by line. Interviewing continues until ideas are reiterated by participants and thoroughly explained.

In Chapter Three, two sections were presented regarding commitment towards celebrating festivals, personal impact, and triggering events. The first section analysed the festival commitment with the level scale and the personal impact on festival elements. As a start, all the thirty respondents' personal information were recorded by 11 demographic items in the first section of questionnaire (see Appendix 1), i.e. gender, age, place of origin, generation, place of birth, religion, marital status, main languages, educational background, job titles, and working experience.

Next, a table with a scale of 1 to 10 points corresponding with five main festivals (Chinese New Year, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Winter Solstice) and other festivals were evaluated respectively (see Appendix 2, Section 2). In this part, the respondents rated themselves pertaining to their commitment towards celebrating festivals. Besides, the researcher also requested for their descriptions of these five festivals they have celebrated.

Therefore, their rating results as well as their descriptions were conducted line by line. Nominal mean value and contrast were chosen to be two useful tools in this section of

analyses. Section 3.1 shows their perceived views of commitment towards celebration. The degree of commitment is reflected by the points.

In the third section of the questionnaire, the discourse of questioning were divided by three parts: Part 1 (points equal or greater than 8), Part 2 (below than 5), and put 6 questions were asking about triggering events.

In Part 1, corresponding questions are listed as below:

- Which festivals do you think you celebrate with higher level of commitment?
- Who is the person who has influenced you regarding commitment towards celebration?
- If you fail to celebrate on time due to busy schedule or work, what is your feeling?
- What is the reason that leads to your less commitment towards celebration of a particular festival?

In Part 2, related questions are designed as below:

- Which festivals do you think you celebrate with lower level of commitment?
- Do you think these festival(s) is/are still important to you and your family?
- What is the reason that leads to your low commitment towards celebration?
- What do you do if you miss out celebrating a particular festival? Why?

Lastly, some guided questions about triggering events are included as below. Case study method was also applied for some surprising questions focusing on specific

respondents and to analyse their stories with involvement in triggering events. Some examples of pointed questions are as follow:

1. Have you ever bought or eaten festival food before or during celebration?
2. Have you ever bought folk costumes (e.g. Tang suit, cheongsam, and Han Chinese clothing) and wore them during celebration?
3. Have you ever bought ethnic decorations before the festival(s) (i.e. lanterns) and helped to decorate the house?
4. Is there any conflict between your religious belief and traditional Malaysian-Chinese festival celebration? If there is, what is the conflicting value?
5. Will you encourage your child / children (if any) to commit towards traditional Malaysian-Chinese festivals?
6. Do you agree that “Celebrating traditional Malaysian-Chinese festivals is the core of the ethnic identity of Malaysian-Chinese”?

After each interview session, the researcher would code these responses and answers by four festival elements to find out which events or items produced impacts on respondents. Some narratives were quoted from respondents’ narratives or stories as triggering events, and to analyse how these cases influenced their commitment towards celebrating festivals. Besides, some questions involved group relationship and ethnic identity were designed to ask for further information to learn the characteristics of respondents.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

In general, this study refers to the knowledge and relevant research on sociology of culture. Basic introduction of Chinese cultural festivals, constructs and concepts of personal impact and commitment in different areas are also reviewed and adopted in this thesis.

However, the researcher has to acknowledge the limitation of this study in the following aspects. Firstly, the urban setting of research is confined to respondents who stay or work in the Klang Valley area. There is no representation from those in the rural areas. Secondly, the researcher set the range of respondents' age from twenty to thirty-five years old regardless of other age groups. Thirdly, the sample size of this research is small, thirty altogether. Fourthly, self-proclaimed commitment by respondents may result in bias. Lastly, the depth of interview probably is limited due to the lack of revisits and the short duration of interview. Lastly, the designed language is Mandarin and most participants come from Mandarin-speaking group, which eliminated the views of the non-Mandarin speaking Chinese.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study aims to enrich the literature on Malaysian Chinese, especially the younger generation of adults who are now working and/or raising their families. Specifically, through analysing personal impact of commitment towards ethnic festivals and possible challenges through their life experience, it is valuable for this research to narrow the knowledge gap of literature on ethnic festival celebration of Malaysian Chinese.

The pertinent issue of ethnic identity for Malaysian Chinese has been widely studied (DeBernardi, 1992, 2004, 2006; Ackerman, 2001; Tan, 2000, 2001a, 2005; Nonini, 1998). So far, the main literature on exploring Chinese Malaysian identity is with respect to the effect of language (Holst, 2012; Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Pakninrat, 2006; Hassan, 2005; Chiu, 2000), politics (Chin, 2009; Harff & Gurr, 2004; Chin, 2001; Loh, 2000; Heng, 1988) and education (Kua, 2014; Collins, 2006; Ku, 2003; Chiu, 2000). However, insufficient literature exists in the context of festival commitment and its role in promoting Chinese identity. On account of this, the forthcoming subject under study is commitment of Chinese young adults towards festival celebration.

Practically, most research pertaining to commitment focus on organisational behaviour and ethnic identity study such as the three-components of commitment towards organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991) and commitment in multi-group ethnic identity measure (Phinney, 1992). Nevertheless, there is an infant phase of literature related to involvement in commitment towards festival or festival commitment. Perhaps this qualitative study can offer modest contribution by gaining better understanding of the Malaysian Chinese culture, their views and commitment towards ethnic festivals, and the challenges that come with such commitment.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Referring to Chapter Two where the researcher would dwell on relevant literature, the following sub-sections will set the foreground of the review with four principal terms, namely, Chinese festival, Malaysian Chinese, commitment, and trigger.

1.8.1 Chinese Festival

According to Tang (2014: 53), festival itself is defined differently in China and in the West. While in the West, festivals are described as a combination of festival with special event, Chinese scholars prefer to define it as “a kind of social activity which satisfies people’s requirement for living custom” (Tang, 2014: 54). For a long time, festivals gradually established and were passed down from generation to generation. Combining the two meanings, festivals are defined irrespective if the date of the festival is fixed or otherwise in particular themes, and conventionally, passed down from generation to generation, the sum of all kinds of celebration activities (Tang, 2014: 54).

Chinese festivals are generally linked to the lunar calendar (Vinning and Crippen, 1999). The eight basic Chinese festivals are commonly referred to as “Chinese Festival” in China (Fan, 2011). However, not all of these festivals are popular or celebrated among the overseas Chinese community. In this study, the term “Chinese Festival” is limited to the context of the Malaysia Chinese referring to five main festivals celebrated by Malaysian Chinese group, i.e. Chinese New Year, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Winter Solstice.

1.8.2 Malaysian Chinese

A Malaysian Chinese is defined as an overseas Chinese who is either a citizen or a long-term resident of Malaysia (Miller, 2004). Although there is no exact definition of “Chineseness” compared with “Malayness”, Malaysian Chinese have a strong sense of their ethnic identity (Koon, 1996). Coming from peasant and coolie background, many of them still inherited

cultural identity underpinned by Confucian values and precepts. However, nowadays within Malaysia, they are simply referred to as Chinese.

This study regards Chinese as Malaysian citizens of Chinese descent, who have lived in Malaysia at least two or more generations and includes Chinese people living in Malaysia as permanent resident or Chinese people from other countries apart from China who live in Malaysia.

1.8.3 Commitment

This term refers to the act of binding an individual intellectually or emotionally to a course of action (McAvoy and Butler, 2009). In this thesis, festival commitment is not explained as psychological commitment towards festival, but generally represents a positive attitude to making a decision on celebrating a festival. Higher commitment indicated the higher possibility of taking action and active role to implement a procedure.

1.8.4 Personal Impact

Impact is normally associated with strong influence or a forceful consequence while it is felt at the level from micro to macro (i.e. personal, community, and national). Therefore, as a qualitative study on micro layer, personal impact in this thesis specifically refers to impact on individual from experience of celebrating ethnic festival. As Getz (2007: 12) mentioned, personal impact is interpreted as “effect of festival attendance at the personal level”.

1.8.5 Triggering Events

“Triggering events” is a terminology originally borrowed from computer programming jargon. “Triggering” refers to trigger defined by Hagedorn (2000) which means change or transfer in life, such as change in life stage, change in family-related or personal circumstances, and change in mood or emotional state. “Events” link to happenings at a specific point of life. In this thesis, the researcher uses triggering event as an operational concept that specifically indicates events that brought change and/or consequence to respondents’ level of commitment towards celebrating festivals.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is systematically organised into five chapters.

Chapter one presents the introduction and research methodology of the thesis. Chapter two elaborates the relevant literature concerning festival, commitment and triggering events, followed by the theoretical and conceptual framework. Chapter three and Chapter four analyses in-depth findings and discussions in the context of Malaysian Chinese festival commitment. Finally, Chapter five provides the summary of significant results with suggestions for future research.

1.10 Summary

This chapter discusses an overview of this study and the methodological approach in its entirety. This introduction consists of eight sub-sections ranging from the background to the organisation of this study. A systematic methodology was conducted for a qualitative analysis

of the participants (See Section 1.5). The sampling, instrument, data collection and analysis were carefully chosen after reviewing abundant literature which would be elaborated in the next chapter. The theoretical framework was also established after integrating relevant studies about commitment towards celebrating festivals, personal impact and triggering events.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Elements of Festival

Festival can be seen as an event ordinarily held by a community for celebrating some unique aspect of that community and its traditions. Festival often has a theme or purpose and is celebrated by public (Getz, 2005). There are numerous themes and purposes of festivals especially in regard to commemoration or thanksgiving. Meanwhile, festivals are also associated with celebration and may also provide entertainment. There is no wide-accepted definition of festival that stipulates which elements compose a festival. Through studying previous literature about festivals, the researcher considered that festival should be composed by four significant elements.

2.1.1.1 Festival Ritual

A ritual or ritualistic activity may be considered as the foundation of a festival. Pieper (1965) also affirmed that ritual and celebrations can serve as one of the significant essence of festival. Further, Grundlingh and Sapire (1989) proposed that festival develops from repetitive ritual. Schnell (1997) also mentioned the significance of communal ritual in festival procession. Recently, Boissevain (2015) examined that ritual is dynamic when festival exists in changing times. Inheritance and continuation of Chinese festivals depend on its ritual as well. For instance, family reunion dinner is a core ritual of Chinese New Year. Although the form of ritual changes over time, the function remains as before Sweeping tomb is also a necessary activity with ritualistic rules when Chinese people attend Tomb-Sweeping Festival.

According to Yuan (2006), festival rituals are indispensable in the most important Chinese festival, i.e. Chinese New Year. Almost one month before the Chinese New Year, people begin to involve in the spring-cleaning as the stage of preparation for festival celebrations. They wipe windows and paint the window panes or the wooden gates in order to provide a refreshing change to the home in the following year. Typically, “Ang Pow” red packets with an even number of money tucked inside are given as a symbol of good luck by the seniors to the children or adults who have not started their career. A substantial number of other rituals are also revealed such as decorating the doors with vertical scrolls of characters on red paper, firing fireworks, lighting colourful lanterns, and eating a famous Chinese snack (glutinous flour in sweetened soup), namely, “*Tang Yuan*”.

Malaysia is a land of multifarious ethnic groups where people who believe in different religions, speak different languages, and different practices coexist (Sakurada, 2014: 53). According to Tan (2000: 284), Chinese religions in Malaysia are very diverse among worshippers. They may worship different Chinese deities and visit a variety of types of temples, however, they all participate in the overarching complex of Chinese religion. In Malaysia, Chinese religion integrates Chinese folk religion with elements of Buddhist and Taoist traditions and Confucian ethics (Tan, 2000: 283).

Hungry Ghost Festival is celebrated in the Chinese communities of most Southeast Asian cities. It is the second most popular festival in Malaysia after Chinese New Year (Wong, 1967: 136). This ritual is believed to have its origins outside Buddhism and Taoism. The main focus of the Hungry Ghost Festival seems to be paying respects to deceased relatives and ancestors by preparing and offering a feast as though the spirits were still living

members of the family (Sakurada, 2014: 53). However, those rituals are full of superstition and religious colour, therefore why some festivals like Hungry Ghost Festival are not included among the five festivals selected in this study. Furthermore, mass celebration opportunities also exist in the community such as Taoist rituals, traditional Hokkien opera, concerts, and a charity dinner accompanied by an auction in Penang, Malaysia (Sakurada, 2014: 55). In conclusion, Malaysian Chinese still practise the festival rituals during special celebrations.

2.1.1.2 Festival Food

Food is counted as another key element of festival (Esterik, 1982). Regardless of festivals with religious focus or agricultural origin, food is usually used in ritual or activity of commemoration and celebration for good harvests. Some festivals that are held annually uses or produce food as core themes or purpose. According to Hall and Sharples's book (2008), there are many food and drink festivals around the world. For example, Wallington Food and Craft Festival, Qingdao City Beer Festival, Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival are held annually and demonstrate their diversity of ethnic food and regional identity. Similarly, food in Chinese festivals also have a significant position (Wang, Tang, Pang, and Duan, 2014). For instance, Moon cake is not only a traditional food in Mid-Autumn Festival, but also represents reunion and wonderfulness of life indicated through its round shape.

Both festival and ordinary foods differentiated Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese from other ethnic groups, i.e. Muslims and Hindus. DeBernardi (2010: 188) further categorized the symbolic meaning of Chinese foods into three aspects. First, foods often symbolize meanings on the basis of their physical qualities, or as defined as the primary

feature of the experiential feeling. For example, the shape, smell, taste, and making are main references of naming a food. Second, they symbolize meanings as the consequence of punning word plays. This means some names of food usually connect with specific events or memorable names. Finally, stories often endow festival events and their associated foods with meaning (Getz, 2010).

2.1.1.3 Festival Entertainment

Entertainment plays a vital role in festivals. Barnouw (1954) perceived entertainment as a primary function of festival intermixed with elements of ethnic culture. Dances, songs and traditional games as entertainment make festival integral and attractive to both the tradition-bearers and outsiders such as tourists (Kruger and Saayman, 2009; O'sullivan and Jackson, 2002; Coulon, 1999; Ashkenazi, 1987; Raz, 1985; Harper, 1970). Lion Dance, for instance, is not only perceived as a traditional entertainment event in Chinese festival, but also it stimulates tradition-bearers' enthusiasm to commit to their own tradition and culture.

2.1.1.4 Festival Atmospherics

Kotler (1973: 51) stated that sight, sound, scent and touch are four main sensory channels for atmospherics. In addition, Lee (2009) noted that people's perception towards specific location or events happening in specific location would be enhanced by atmospherics. Colour, music, smoke, stickiness of food and decoration are regarded as festival atmospherics. For example, red colour is classical for Chinese New Year while white and black colour correspond to Tomb-Sweeping Festival (Hutchings, 2003).

2.1.2 Chinese Festival Celebration

Research on Chinese festival celebration is driven by two streams, one is pertaining to the

descriptions and records of the traditions dating back thousands of years as well as the celebrations all around the world. The other one is regarding the changing or even decline in traditional celebration among the younger generation, the descendants of ethnic Chinese overseas and the reasons which cause these transformations. In the ensuing sub-section, related literature review in a descriptive style (see Section 2.1.2.1) rather than an argumentative style is provided. The researcher aims to highlight categorical differences in the celebrations of Chinese festivals among the Malaysian Chinese (see Section 2.1.2.2).

2.1.2.1 Elements of Five Traditional Festivals

Chinese culture and history have given birth to multifarious traditional festivals. According to the official identifications, seven of them are determined as the most popular and significant. Starting from Chinese New Year (or The Spring Festival, *Chun Jie*), others include Lantern Festival (or *Yuan Xiao Jie*), Tomb-Sweeping Festival (or *Qing Ming Jie*), Dumpling Festival, (or Dragon Boat Festival, *Duan Wu Jie*), Chinese Valentine's Day (or *Qi Xi Jie*), Mid-Autumn Festival (or *Zhong Qiu Jie*), and The Double Ninth Festival (or *Chong Yang Jie*) in chronological order.

Considering the context of Malaysian Chinese that is different from the China context, a pilot study was conducted. The researcher had obtained a general perception of local Malaysian Chinese via interviews, casual talks, surveys, and the Internet. As expected, the first-hand results indicate that there do exist some deviations of celebrating ethnic festivals between different Chinese societies in China and Malaysia. Therefore, the researcher accordingly adjusted the items for discussion by three points:

- Combining of Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival as one item,

- Crossing out Chinese Valentine's Day and The Double Ninth Festival, and
- Supplementing with Winter Solstice as one item.

This is to make a more appropriate reference for the celebration of Chinese traditional festivals among local Malaysian Chinese (see Appendix 1).

With the exception of Winter Solstice, all the other four festivals are set as public holidays by the Chinese government since the year of 2008. For years, China has witnessed the decline of celebrating these traditional festivals, especially among the younger generation (Wang et al., 2014; Yang, 2008). Nevertheless, this study will focus in the content of traditional festivals rather than the latest variant. In the following context, all the five traditional festivals are elaborated in the context of four festival elements as a prototype for the present study which aims to examine the situation of Malaysian Chinese celebrations (see Section 2.1).

Chinese New Year

The Spring Festival (also known as Chinese New Year, or *Chun Jie*) is the oldest and the most ceremonious festival in the sequence of Chinese festival. It usually begins on the first day of the first month in correspondence with the Chinese traditional lunar calendar and ends with the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth of the first month (Gao, 2012: 8). Apart from the ethnic majority and minority from China, Chinese New Year is also celebrated by China's neighbouring countries and places where Chinese diaspora reside in large numbers, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and in the Chinatowns worldwide.

In order to investigate the four elements during the celebration of Chinese New Year, the researcher consulted the relevant literature regarding festival ritual, festival food, festival entertainment, and festival atmospherics in sequence as shown in the following four tables respectively.

Table 2.1 Festival Rituals of Chinese New Year

No.	Ritual
1	Having reunion dinner (Chuan, 2012; Gao, 2012; Xu, 2012; Stafford, 2000)
2	Worshipping ancestors and gods of Chinese folk legends (Chai, 2013; Gao, 2012, Xu, 2007)
3	Spring-cleaning (also known as <i>Sao Chen</i>) (Xu, 2012; Yuan, 2006)
4	Giving and receiving red packets of money (Yuan, 2006)
5	Paper-cutting for window decoration (Xu, 2012)
6	Pasting spring couplets, New Year paintings, and hanging “happiness” (or the Chinese character, “ <i>Fu</i> ”) upside down (Gao, 2012; Xu, 2007)
7	Expressing good wishes and visiting relatives (also known as <i>Bai Nian</i>) (Gao, 2012)
8	Staying overnight on Lunar New Year’s Eve (also known as <i>Shou Sui</i>) (Xu, 2007)
9	Wearing new clothes (Xu, 2012; Xu, 2007)
10	Setting off fireworks and firecrackers (Zhao, Liu, and He, 2014; Xu, 2012; Xu, 2007)
11	Guessing lantern riddles (Yang, 2006)

Source: Adapted from various sources as mentioned above.

Asia is rich with traditional rituals, apart from Chinese New Year (Vinning and Crippen, 1999: vii). In this regard, Table 2.1 presents diverse types of rituals associated with Chinese New Year festival which have been circulated and inherited from the ancient times.

However, in contemporary society, people’s perceptions towards traditional ritual in festival celebration has shifted. Nowadays, people still celebrate the traditional festivals, but

mostly they are just superficial, with only a few cultural symbols like festival souvenir, festival food and festive entertainment which can produce economic benefits or obtain some attention in the social environment, whereas “the profound inherent spirits, emotions and cultural connotations are often intentionally or unintentionally ignored” (Wang et al., 2014).

Table 2.2 Festival Food of Chinese New Year

No.	Food
1	<i>Tang Yuan</i> (Yuan, 2006)
2	Dumplings (also known as <i>Jiao Zi</i>) (Gao 2012; Xu, 2007)
3	New Year cake (also known as <i>Nian Bing</i>) and rice cake (also known as <i>Nian Gao</i>)(Yuan, 2006)
4	Fish (Vinning and Crippen, 1999)
5	Tangerines and oranges (Vinning and Crippen, 1999)
6	Prosperity Toss (also known as <i>Yu Sheng</i> in Mandarin and <i>Lo Hei</i> in Cantonese) (Vinning and Crippen, 1999)
7	Longevity noodles (Vaughan, 1996)
8	Lotus seeds (Pan, 2003)
9	Lily buds (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2009)
10	Roasted meat (Muhammad, Zahari, Othman, Jamaluddin, and Rashdi, 2009).
11	Chinese bacon and sausage (Xu, 2012)
12	Chinese wine (Liu and Murphy, 2007; Pan, 2003)

Source: Compiled from various sources as mentioned above.

As shown in Table 2.2, *Tang Yuan* and Dumplings are the most popular festival food during the celebration of Chinese New Year with the former favoured by the South whilst the latter is adored by the North. In fact, the choice of festival food is not only about the taste but also about the implicit symbolism. The majority of food in Table 2.2 is considered as good-luck foods, such as sea moss (also known as *Yu Sheng*) for prosperity; noodles for

longevity; lily buds to “send one hundred years of harmonious union” (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2009); and lotus seeds for birth of new baby, and more.

Table 2.3 Festival Entertainment of Chinese New Year

No.	Entertainment
1	Watching lion dance and dragon dance (Xu, 2007)
2	Watching exterior decorations made of lanterns (Xu, 2007)
3	Going to temple fairs (Xu, 2007)
4	Watching CCTV Spring Festival Galas (Gao, 2012; Xie, 2012; Xu, 2007)
5	Playing <i>Mahjong</i> (Ohtsuka and Chan, 2014; Wong and Tse, 2003)
6	Walking on stilts (Xu, 2012)

Source: Adapted from many sources as mentioned above.

Special performances for celebrating Chinese New Year are oriented into two forms. One is spontaneous activity initiated by the public (i.e. lion dance, dragon dance, walking on stilts, etc.) which witnesses a long history, the other one is CCTV Spring Festival Gala starting from the year 1983. In the daytime, people wear bright-coloured festive costumes, gathering together to experience the auspicious blessing of the beginning of a new year via the traditional performances. In the evening, after chatting during the reunion dinner, all the Chinese people regardless of their birthplace or residence, invariably sit in front of the television, watch the annual gala broadcasted by CCTV and stay up all night to welcome the first day of New Year.

Moreover, some people play *Mahjong* or card games on the whole eve of Chinese New Year or a few days during the New Year week. Nevertheless, it is not about gambling or winning the money. Instead, it is a perfect moment for the big family to reunite and talk about everything that happened in the past year. Therefore, you can hear the sound from the

live broadcast of CCTV Spring Festival Gala as well as the laughter and yelling from the *Mahjong* table.

Table 2.4 Festival Atmospherics of Chinese New Year

No.	Atmospherics
1	Decorating the house (Zhao et al., 2014; Huang, Zhuang, Lin, Wang, Zhang, and Deng, 2012)
2	Special purchases for Chinese New Year (Huang et al., 2012)
3	Red colour (Yu, 2014; Hutchings, 2003)
4	Paper-cutting (Xu, 2007)
5	Spring couplets (Gao, 2012)
6	New Year paintings (Gao, 2012)
7	The character “fortune” (i.e. the Chinese character “ <i>Fu</i> ”) (Gao, 2012)
8	Speaking dialects (Offenhäuser, Zimmerli, and Albert, 2010)

Source: Adapted from many sources as mentioned above.

Chinese are known for their ingenuity in making handwork with countless precious handicrafts throughout every dynasty. Table 2.4 unfolds four typical artefact, namely, paper-cutting, spring couplets, New Year paintings, and the character “fortune”. All of them are red in colour owing to the fact that the colour red symbolises fortune and prosperity in Chinese culture. People decorate the house with those festive and traditional ornaments for a happier and wealthier life.

In 1956, Mandarin was established as the official language of China by the government. Even so, the authorities cherish and respect all the seven Chinese dialects as they are part of the unique intangible cultural heritage. People may have to learn and speak

Mandarin at school or at work, but they can speak their own dialects during the festival celebration.

Tomb-Sweeping Festival

The Tomb-Sweeping Festival is an occasion for Chinese people to pay homage to their past family members; whereas the Mid-Autumn Day and the Chinese New Year are important opportunities for people to strengthen their family ties (Siew, 2005).

The Tomb-Sweeping Festival comes 108 days after the Winter Solstice and is also the fifth one on the list of twenty-four solar terms³ with an alternative name, Pure Brightness, to represent the season when the rain is in abundance. Due to the reason that people are usually solemn and sorrowful when they come to the cemetery especially that the Chinese people get to sweep the tomb only on this particular day together with other family members, food and entertainment are not as salient as the other two elements Table 2.5 explains this.

Table 2.5 Festival Elements of Tomb-Sweeping Festival

Ritual	1. Ancestor worship (Wang et al., 2014; Chai, 2013)
	2. Sweeping the graves clean (Bell, 2006)
	3. Fasting (Wu and Yeh, 2014)
	4. Burning joss sticks, candle sticks and ritual papers around graves (Chau and Corlett, 1994)
	5. Praying at home (Chai, 2013; Staub, Geck, and Weckerle, 2011)
	6. Incensing (Staub et al., 2011)
	7. Placing flowers and candles at the grave (Yang, 2011)

³ The twenty-four solar terms are ancient Chinese terms used for about two thousand years. They describe twenty-four stages or timings associated with seasonal changes in phenology and agricultural activity throughout a year (Qian, Yan, and Fu, 2012).

Atmospherics	1. Tribute (Lens, 2012)
	2. Remains of the departed relatives (Lens, 2012)
	3. Kneeling down in front of the tombs and crying (Lens, 2012)
	4. Smoke of the burning (Staub et al., 2011; Chau and Corlett, 1994)
	5. Black colour (Hutchings, 2003)

Source: Adapted from many sources as mentioned above.

Burning paper can be traced back to the Tang dynasty from where it extended across nationalities, language stocks, and kingdoms in a contiguous culture area from Lanzhou to Taipei, from Harbin to Hanoi and beyond to settlements of Sinitic and sinicized people across Southeast Asia and around the world. Statistics has shown that people in China spend more than ¥6 billion for the paper and incense offerings. “Adding in expenses for transportation and meals, the cost is unimaginable” (Blake, 2011: 449-450).

On the day of Tomb-Sweeping Festival, some tradition-bearers feel connected with the departed spiritually when they are in front of the tombstone. They burn whatever things the departed might need which are made of paper and prepare fresh fruit, food, and flowers or other objects that the departed liked during his or her lifetime. When they are burning these paper-made products, they share their life stories with the deceased about the year and bow in respect to the departed for blessing. When all the rituals are completed, children can enjoy the fruit as the elders believe that consuming all the tributes (i.e. fruits or other food) can bring happiness and health to life.

Dumpling Festival

Dumpling Festival, also known as Dragon Boat Festival or *Duan Wu Jie*, has been declared a “world intangible heritage” by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in the year of 2009. It is the fifth day of the fifth lunar month with a long history and a meaningful story.

Based on the literal meaning of the names associated with this festival, ‘dragon boat’ and ‘dumpling’ are regarded as two symbols of power and culture respectively. As for the power, dragon boat racing has a history of 2000 years when the north tribes competed for power and fought against the monsters in the rivers (Harris, 2012). Regarding cultural meaning, rice dumpling is connected with the tragic tale of a patriotic poet and politician named *Qu Yuan* living in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.).

Qu Yuan was a versatile government official at that time who was highly esteemed for his wise counsel among the common people. He was also the creator of rice dumplings (or *Zong Zi*). However, the King of Chu State in Chunqiu Period (from 770BC to 400BC) did not like his straightforwardness, and some jealous officials were critical of him. Sentenced by slander, *Qu Yuan* was exiled by the King. After his banishment to the remote countryside, *Qu Yuan* helplessly watched the gradual downfall of Chu State and grieved that he could no longer serve his people. Out of despair, *Qu Yuan* plunged himself into the Mi-luo River to show his unfailing loyalty. Since then, people made rice dumplings (or *Zong Zi*), and threw them into the river to feed the monsters and other creatures under water. In this way, they hoped that the remains of *Qu Yuan* could be intactly preserved (Xiao, 2014).

What the two legends have in common is people's resolution to fight against nature. The monster in the river, to be more specific, means the dragon in many ancient stories. In ancient times, dragon was regarded as an ominous mythical beast as it is described by the West nowadays. Therefore, people established this festival to get rid of it and maintain harmony of their homeland. With the perception on the dragon changed, this festival is no longer a challenge to nature but a reunion with family members or a competitive race with different sports enthusiasts.

Table 2.6 Festival Rituals of Dumpling Festival

No.	Ritual
1	Cooking and eating rice dumplings (also known as <i>Zong Zi</i>) (Liu, 2015; Xiao, 2014)
2	Drinking realgar wine (Zhong, 2014; Chen and Huang, 2011)
3	Dragon-boat racing (Harris, 2012)
4	Hanging mugwort and calamus (Fruehauf, 2015)
5	Fuming angelica root (Fruehauf, 2015)

Source: Compiled from various sources.

As shown in Table 2.6, rice dumpling and dragon-boat racing are two traditional rituals conducted by people worldwide. Again, the types of rice dumpling are different in areas which even aroused a drastic debate about the diverse culture between the North and the South. In the North, people are fond of sweet dumplings. As such, they both fill the reed leaves with glutinous rice as well as glutinous rice and red dry or candied dates, brown sugar, sweet red bean paste. Another recipe is to stuff flavourless glutinous rice into the reed leaves and dip the boiled rice dumplings with little sugar. Quite the opposite, people in the South

are keen on saline taste. For this reason, they choose egg yolk, chopped fresh or preserved meat instead of any saccharine stuffing and eat without sugar.

In fact, this diversity is unusual because sweet food is the core of Southern cooking style while salty food is the traditional preference on the northern dining-table. Although all the supermarkets sell delicious rice dumpling which is very convenient to buy and eat, some aged seniors still wrap the rice dumplings by themselves which costs a lot of time and energy and send to their relatives and friends as gifts.

The Chinese government first launched dragon boat racing as a state official sports competition program in 1980. Since then, the Chinese government has held the competition called “Qu Yuan Cup” as a major event every year since then. In 1991, the first international dragon-boat racing was held in Yueyang, Hunan Province, which is considered as the hometown of *Qu Yuan*. Contemporaneously, Hong Kong hosted the first international dragon-boat festival in 1976, and, ten years later, the sport came to North America as part of Expo 86 in Vancouver, British Columbia. According to Barker (1996), hosting dragon boat races is thought to bring health, happiness and prosperity, as well as offer protection for the unfriendly spirits of the sea.

As Dumpling Festival arrives in the middle of summer, some skin diseases might affect the health of individual body. Hence, people select some Chinese herbs to keep off the insects by drinking and bathing with these herbs such as realgar wine, mugwort, and calamus.

Table 2.7 Festival Food of Dumpling Festival

No.	Food
1	Rice dumplings (Liu, 2015; Xiao, 2014)
2	Realgar wine ⁴ (Chen and Huang, 2011)

Source: Adapted from various sources as mentioned above.

Table 2.7 restates the typical food and drink consumed during Dumpling Festival. The entertainment and atmospherics are all about making or eating rice dumplings and dragon-boat racing, thus, no separate table is presented to illustrate further literature on the topic.

Mid-Autumn Festival

Being the second important Chinese traditional festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, which takes place on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, is related to worship, agriculture, and a painful story. Customarily, on this day, people worship the God of Moon for a good blessing and a reunion of a family. Meanwhile, since the farmers enjoyed a bumper harvest during that period of time, they celebrate this festival by worshipping the God of Land for the harvest and abundance in agricultural crops.

It is no doubt that the traditional festival is famous for its legend about The Goddess Chang's travel to the moon (Lee, Ching, Kam, and Yau, 2002). Around 2170 B.C., the earth was circled by ten suns, which took turns to illuminate the earth. One day, all ten

⁴ It is a Chinese alcoholic drink consisting of *Huangjiu* dosed with realgar. It's traditionally consumed as part of Dumpling Festival. Because children are too young to drink this kind of wine, their parents would rub it on their ears, nose, forehead and navel to protect them from snakes, ants and other insects. In some places, people would clean the house and spray realgar wine in each room to kill insects and bacteria on Dumpling Festival.

appeared simultaneously, scorching people and crops. A peerless hero, named *Hou Yi*, shot down nine of the ten suns, leaving the one we see today. As a reward, he was given a magic tablet of immortality. More and more people came to learn hunting skills from him and admired his heaven-made marriage with his beautiful wife, *Chang'e*.

However, some of the apprentices were ill-disposed and cunning who yearned for the tablet of immortality. One of them was absent from the hunting ground with *Hou Yi* and threatened *Chang'e* to hand over the magic tablet. In order to shatter the conspiracy, she swallowed the tablet which she thought might be the only way to keep it safe. However, her body was fluttered to the sky in the direction of the moon. *Hou Yi* was in deep sorrow and grief, and the only way for him to miss his wife was to watch the moon day and night. From then on, people tell the story of *Chang'e* while watching the full moon, hoping that she could live happily on the moon.

Table 2.8 Festival Elements of Mid-Autumn Festival

Ritual	1. Worship the God of Moon (Huang, Lee, and Kess, 2015)
	2. Watching the flood tide of the Qian-tang River (Ring, 2008)
	3. Worship the God of Land for harvest (Lei, 2015)
	4. Having mooncakes with family (Huang et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014)
	5. Appreciating the beauty of sweet osmanthus (Huang, 2014)
	6. Decorating the house with lantern (Lee et al., 2002)
	7. Drinking wine fermented with osmanthus flowers (Eijkhoff, 2000)
	8. Enjoying the glorious full moon with family (Huang et al., 2015)
Food	1. Mooncakes (Huang et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014)
	2. Osmanthus-flavoured wine (Eijkhoff, 2000)

Entertainment	1. Lantern Parade (Le, 2012; Yang, 2006)
	2. Watching full moon (Huang et al., 2015)
Atmospherics	1. The full moon (Huang et al., 2015)
	2. Family members (Liu and Zeng, 2011)

Source: Compiled from various sources.

Mooncake is the symbol of the shape of a full moon and the reunion of a harmonious, united family (Wang et al., 2014). Generally speaking, it is much more difficult to make a mooncake than other festival food, such as *Tang Yuan*, dumplings, or rice dumplings. Therefore, it is increasingly sold in the supermarkets nowadays. However, the methods of making mooncakes is still the same. Traditional fillings were dominated by the seeds of plants including walnut, almond, sesame, melon seeds, hawthorn, jujube paste, lotus paste and red bean which are good for health and is still palatable for the public until now.

Over a period of time, creative ideas emerged and new-style mooncakes are produced every day. For example, the incorporation of durian and coconut in mooncakes are found in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia by taking the availability of local ingredients into consideration (Vinning and Crippen, 1999: 1). Other innovative types incorporate snowy mooncakes, chocolate mooncakes, fruit mooncakes and ice-cream mooncakes, etc. (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2009).

In order to worship the God of Land for harvest, food offerings are placed on an altar set up in the courtyard. Apples, pears, peaches, grapes, pomegranates, melons, oranges and pomelos might be seen. Special food for the festival is the cooked taro. Some people insist

that cooked taro to be included because at the time of creation, taro was the first food discovered at night in the moonlight (Lei, 2015).

In Zhejiang Province, Eastern China, watching the flood tide of the Qian-tang River during the Mid-Autumn Festival is not only a must for local people, but also an attraction for those from other parts of the country. The ebb and flow of tides coincide with the waxing and waning of the moon as it exerts a strong gravitational pull. On Mid-Autumn Day, the sun, earth and moon send out strong gravitational forces upon the seas. The south of the Qian-tang River is flaring and shaped like trumpet. So the flood tide which forms at the narrow mouth is particularly impressive. Spectators crowd on the river bank, watching the roaring waves. At its peak, the tide rises as high as three and a half meters (Ring, 2008).

Winter Solstice

According to Abakelia (2008), people from around the world celebrate the Winter Solstice which represents the moment of the sun's return and the turning of the wintry tide. In China, the Winter Solstice stands on the third last in the twenty-four solar terms, just before Slight Cold and Great Cold⁵. It was also the first solar terms established on the list. From the astronomic perspective, it is the day when the daytime is the shortest and the night is the longest all the year around. With its own algorithm, the exact date of the Winter Solstice is not stable, but, it usually occurs on one day between the twenty-first and twenty-third day in December of the Western calendar. After the winter solstice, the days become incrementally longer, while the nights become progressively shorter (Qian, Yan, and Fu, 2012).

⁵ Slight Cold and Great Cold are last two of the Twenty-four Solar Terms in lunar calendar. (Qian, Yan, and Fu, 2012).

When winter arrived in ancient Chinese agricultural society, farmers had ended their yearly farm work and it was time to celebrate and enjoy their bountiful harvest, and have a happy family reunion. They merrily enjoy a feast and other festivities singing and dancing with family, relatives and friends. In addition, they gathered to worship and express their wholehearted gratitude to the Gods who bestowed them the abundant harvest. They fervently prayed to them for another good year of farming (Lau, 2014).

Table 2.9 Festival Elements of Winter Solstice

Ritual	1. Ancestor worship (Lau, 2014; DeBernardi, 2010)
	2. Having dumplings, <i>Tang Yuan</i> , Glutinous rice cake or mutton soup (Lau, 2014)
Food	1. Dumplings (Lau, 2014)
	2. <i>Tang Yuan</i> (Lau, 2014)
	3. Mutton Soup (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2009)
	4. Glutinous rice cake (also known as <i>Nuo Mi Gao</i>) (Chen and Lim, 2012)
Entertainment	1. Family reunion (Lau, 2014)
Atmospherics	1. Winter (Lau, 2014)

Source: Compiled from various sources.

Food plays a significant part in all festivities among Chinese (Lau, 2014) and the Winter Solstice is no exception. North-South differences appear in the context of food preference. In the North, people choose to eat dumplings and drink mutton soup to fend off the chilliness. In the South, however, sweet food such as *Tang Yuan* and glutinous rice cakes are regarded as symbols of auspiciousness.

2.1.2.2 Generalization of Malaysian Chinese Festival Celebration

Tan (1988: 139) speculated that whether at a group level or an individual level, Malaysian Chinese seemingly observe certain cultural traditions, but details of their festival celebration differ from one group to another. Under the internal dynamics of Chinese society as well as economic and political power in larger society, Chinese as minority group in Malaysia are still defending their right to Chinese education and protecting Chinese culture. Celebrating Chinese festivals is not only an important part of their culture but also an expression of their ethnic identity (Tan, 2000).

However, due to modernization and city life style, the “content” of Chinese festivals is made simple and Chinese people seemingly fall into cultural “anomie” situation (Wang et al., 2014). In other words, as a whole, Chinese people are less committed to celebrating Chinese festivals. It is a declining trend. Wang et al. (2014) also summarized five factors leading to this situation such as the lack of contemporary values, loss of identity expression, failed transmissions of traditional folk arts, misuse of festival symbols and impact from Western values (Wang et al., 2014).

The Chinese in Malaysia form about 23% of the total 28 million population of Malaysia and most of them live or work in urban areas (Lin, 2002). Compared with two other main ethnic groups, namely the Malays and Indians, Malaysian Chinese’ expression and practice of religion is vague but instead have strong family attachment (Pye, 1985: 250). Therefore, their dietary habits are less restrictive, and tend to easily adapt into local food types. They have more food choices such as *Bak Kut Teh* (Chinese food), banana leaf rice (Indian food) and *Rendang* (Malay food). Chinese festival food is also generally available

and loved by Malaysian Chinese such as *Yu Sheng* (local platter served during Chinese New Year indicating prosperity), dumplings, *Tang Yuan*, etc.

DeBernardi (2006: 38) found Chinese in Penang took religious rituals and the performance seriously, especially those associated with the Nine Emperor Gods festival. In addition, they also celebrate traditional festivals based on the lunar calendar and perform ritual such as donation for Tomb-Sweeping festival, and restraint from cutting moon cake before Mid-Autumn Festival (Debernardi, 2009: 80, 134).

Although some traditions are regarded as superstitions, Chinese people prefer to believe and observe them. For instance, Malaysian Chinese celebrate Hungry Ghost festival and still float water lanterns as a symbolism for sending the ghost to hell. Therefore, these ritual items and Chinese food still have certain demands of consumption during festival season of praying or worship (Choo, 2011).

The previous research provides rich images and narratives about meaning of Chinese festivals in Malaysia from an anthropological perspective. To a certain extent, preparation of food, performing rituals and enjoyment of entertainment can indicate that Malaysian Chinese are very committed in practising festival celebration. However, no literature thus far provides a clear and illustrative explanation for the elements of festival. For a better understanding of the relationship between festival and commitment, it is necessary to explore the four elements of the five significant traditional festivals, namely, Chinese New Year, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Winter Solstice.

2.1.3 Commitment and Festival

The concept of commitment can be generalized to apply to any type of disposition, behaviour, or attribute. Commitment is a process that begins when an alternative is voluntarily decided upon by oneself or is selected and imposed by others. This process of attachment to the alternative is maintained with some degree of commitment through specific situations until that stable situation is terminated or replaced by another more stable situation (Wimberley, 1978; 1972).

Commitment to festivals was measured using the psychological commitment scale proposed by Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard (1999). Wordings from their original scale to test the relationship between commitment and loyalty in service contexts (e.g., airlines and hotels) were modified to reflect the festival context. Similar to the psychological commitment instrument, festival commitment as a multidimensional construct consisted of position involvement, volitional choice, information complexity, and resistance to change.

Position involvement, in Pritchard et al (1999)'s study included 5 items such as "This festival means a lot to me," "I am very attached to this festival," "I identify strongly with this festival," "I have a special connection to this festival and the people who visit this festival," and "This festival means more to me than any other festival I can think of", was used to assess the extent to which visitors were able to reflect their social representation and self-identity to their festival visit.

Volitional choice, representing visitors' perception of free choice from a set of alternatives, included 2 items: "The decision to visit this festival was not entirely my own"

and “The decision to go to this festival was primarily my own.” Items of the information complexity dimension were related to understanding festival visitors’ complex information processing as a mechanism for attitudinal stability of commitment.

Information complexity items include “I don’t really know much about this festival,” “I have a basic understanding of this festival,” “I consider myself an educated visitor regarding this festival,” and “I am knowledgeable about this festival”.

Resistance to change, which Pritchard et al. (1999) treated as a distinct variable that mediates the relationship between three other dimensions (i.e., position involvement, volitional choice, and information complexity) and loyalty, was measured as another dimension of festival commitment in this study. There are a total of four items in the resistance dimension included: “Even if close friends recommended another festival, I would not change my preference for this festival,” “To change my preference from going to this festival to another leisure alternative would require major rethinking,” “I wouldn’t substitute any other festival for recreation/entertainment that I enjoy here,” and “For me, lots of other festivals could substitute this festival.” All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

2.1.3.1 Commitment among Malaysian Chinese

According to Lin (2002), there are more Malaysian Chinese who live or work in urban areas. They are interested in earning money through trade and commerce and commit themselves to self-improvement. They also have strong sense of family attachment. Unlike the Malays who have intensive and unitive religious beliefs, Malaysian Chinese are more centred in a

“tightly structured” society around their home and community (Pye, 1985: 250).

Cogswell (2002) found that some Malaysian Chinese still keep strong bonding with their ancestral ties in China. For instance, he came across a wealthy Malaysian Chinese middle-age man who still made annual donation to his ancestors’ village in Mainland Chinese. Another Chinese executive director of an NGO (Non-Government Organization) concerning women’s issues indicated that her father, like the majority of Chinese businessmen she knows, donates substantial sums to Chinese hospitals for the insufficient room or resources in government-run hospitals. While Malays and Indians are permitted to be treated in those hospitals, they are primarily run by and for the Chinese group in Malaysia. More examples of preserving their ethnic identity are discovered in the area of education, health and welfare.

In view of how the previous research focused on commitment to ethnic identity, it is hoped that this research would fill the gap in the literature on commitment towards celebrating Chinese ethnic festival.

2.1.3.2 Research on Commitment in Chinese Festivals

In 2007, official statistics put the number of people who identified themselves as being of Chinese ethnicity living in England and Wales at 408,800 (Fu, Long, and Thomas, 2014). However, people of Chinese ethnicity in the UK (United Kingdom) speak different languages, and have different religious beliefs and ideologies, as well as other contrasting cultural and social characteristics. Therefore, ethnic Chinese groups in Britain may possess a relative “absence of community” in comparison with other ethnic minority groups in the UK (Benton and Gomez, 2011: 8).

However, where there is a significant ethnic Chinese community living within an English city, they typically come together to produce a CNY (Chinese New Year) festival, setting up committees to organize and produce local Chinese festivals annually such as the Chinese Festivity Group in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the Chinese New Year Celebration Joint Committee in Sheffield, and The Federation of Chinese Associations of Manchester (FCAM) (Benton and Gomez, 2011: 8).

Historically, overseas Chinese endured hardship when they did not commit themselves to celebrating their own ethnic festivals. For example, notwithstanding the fact that East Timor was colonized by Portuguese until 1975, the East Timorese Chinese who immigrated to Sydney are mostly Catholic and do not follow many Chinese traditions and customs except that they speak Hakka, a dialect of Fujian Province (Ang, 2003). Years ago, East Timorese Chinese community in Sydney intended to celebrate Chinese New Year in February together with some other Chinese groups (such as Vietnamese Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese) in the city. However, they abandoned the event only after one year because they felt uncomfortable when gathering with other Chinese ethnic groups (Ang, 2003).

Integrating with other ethnic groups in festival celebrations has been a norm among Malaysian Chinese. For example, during the first three weeks of January, which coincided with the season between Ramadan, Thaipusam, and the Chinese New Year, Malaysians fulfilled most publicly their charitable obligations and demonstrated their caring for all their countrymen and women regardless of religion or ethnic background. Although there exists

slight avoidance in the issue of dietary habit between different ethnic groups⁶, Malaysian Chinese are still doing their utmost to maintain their inalienable connection with their Chinese lineage (Cogswell, 2002).

2.1.4 Personal Impact and Festival

Personal impact is one of the significant and potentially exciting lines of research on festival which is increasingly being explored, and uses relative interdisciplinary approach. Moreover, festivals are being applied increasingly to implement a wide range of public-sector policies (i.e. being conceived instrumentally as social marketing tools), researching personal impact has to be given much more profile (Getz, 2007).

Gitelson, Kerstetter and Kiernan (1995) conducted a research on motives of public for attending university-based event at personal level and evaluated the educational objectives of a short-term event. Their findings showed that festival has educational outcomes for both individuals engaged in and those who were not. In other words, festival provides an opportunity of learning experience, especially for people who are committed. However, the foci of recent research were in film or sport festivals (e.g. Lee, Park and Park, 2011; Cela, Kowalski, and Lankford, 2006) rather than traditional festivals or long-term festivals.

From aspect of marketing, Gursoy, Spangenberg, and Rutherford (2006) examined the attendee's attitudes toward festivals via hedonic and utilitarian reasons through two-dimensional consumer attitude scale and Hedonic/Utilitarian Scale. Their findings

⁶ Privately, a professor of Chinese origin told the researcher that when her Chinese lineage association hosted its open house to provide holiday contributions to needy Chinese and Malay neighbors, the Malays didn't show up: "They don't like our food, you know."

highlighted that hedonic attitude were more utilitarian attitude in explaining motives. That indicated that people who attend a festival obtain emotional satisfaction compared to material satisfaction. Getz (2007) commented that their approach theoretically illuminated the nature of the experience and what people want to get from a festival. However, their research was mainly applied in festivals within Western countries instead of festivals in East or Asian countries.

As for sub-theme of personal impact, health and wellness were concerns of some researchers. Christensen and Dowrick (1983) observed the effects of an annual winter festival in Alaska on crisis rates for suicides, mental health admission (indicating no significant effect) etc. While Lea (2006) discovered wellness experiences and spaces associated with massage at a festival. However, their research is limited and may not be applicable for other areas because of specific context settings.

Tayler, Richer, and Brennan (2006) studied the impact of major festival of early childhood in Australia. An interesting conclusion of their research showed that festival is helpful to build engaging relationships between parents and children. Moreover, festival also enriches children's creative and cultural lives.

Yim, Lee, and Ebbeck (2011) reported that in Hong Kong, four selected Chinese traditional festivals including Chinese New Year, Dumpling Festival, Chung Yeung Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival had positive impact on transmission of Confucian values through traditional stories about festivals. Besides that, their research theoretically connected impact of traditional festivals with Chinese religious values.

In the belief system of Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism are still three main ethics influencing their family values (Tan, 2000). Except for effect of discrepancy of family beliefs, their traditions of celebrating Chinese festivals were also differentiated by dialect groups (Lee, 2009). Therefore, the impact of festival is reflected by different family values through the ways they celebrate.

According to The Chinese Culture Connection (1987), there are four factors in Chinese values survey (CVS), namely, Confucian work dynamism, Integration, Human kind heartedness, and moral discipline. The items' descriptions are shown as below (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10 Factors and Item Description of Chinese Values

Factor	Item Description
Confucian work dynamism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ordered relationships 2. Thrift 3. Protecting your reputation 4. Respect for tradition
Integration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tolerance for others 2. Harmony with others 3. Non-Competitiveness 4. Trustworthiness 5. Filial piety
Human kind heartedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kindness, forgiveness, compassion 2. Patience 3. Courtesy 4. Patriotism
Moral discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moderation following the middle way 2. Keeping oneself disinterested and pure 3. Having few desires 4. Adaptability

This table generally listed main Chinese values and corresponding items' descriptions. However, as Ward, Pearson, and Entekin (2002) suggested, these durable values might be

interpreted differently by Chinese populations at different times and in different circumstances. So far, there is no research mentioned Chinese values represented in celebrating festival by Malaysian Chinese. Accordingly, the present study used “personal impact” to link to some significant values which make positive effect in variation of commitment towards celebrating festival.

2.1.5 Triggering Events, Commitment, and Festival

In the medical sphere, stressful life events refer to situations or occurrences that entail a negative or positive change in personal circumstance indicative of or requiring significant change in the ongoing life pattern of the individual (Brown and Harris, 1978; Holmes and Rahe, 1967). Vulnerability-stress models of schizophrenia propose that stressful life events may act as triggers of onset or wrath of psychotic symptoms (Nuechterlein and Dawson, 1986). Apart from physiological research (Guiraud, Amor, Mas, and Touze, 2010; Dommerholt, Bron, and Franssen, 2006; Horan, Ventura, Nuechterlein, Subotnik, Hwang, and Mintz, 2005), the present study seeks to understand the triggers in life experience and how these affect individual commitment towards celebrating or experiencing festival.

2.1.5.1 Triggers in Life

Utilizing longitudinal individual- and family-level migration, human capital, and life course transition data from the 1996-1999 and 2001-2003 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation of the United States including 14,760 foreign-born individuals, Jong and Graefe's (2008) research suggests that the life course events of marriage, divorce/separation, and the birth of a(nother) child are key stimuli for interstate migration

decision-making excluding forced relocation of immigrants. That is, planful competence⁷ plays a key role in bringing immigrant families to places that better match their new family life situation and goals (Clausen, 1991).

Schmeiser (2010) conducted his research on 7500 households' responses to a variety of negative financial shocks experienced throughout the life course. Overall, job loss and divorce or widowhood are the events associated with the greatest vulnerability. Taking age and educational background for secondary analyses, the findings reveal that households with a college education better weather financial shocks than those without a college degree, while intelligence is more likely to predict greater resilience to shocks at higher levels of educational attainment. Furthermore, Schmeiser (2010) suggested that persons at different stages of the life course require different types of information in order to weather the same shocks.

Another study examines the relationship between habits and behaviours in virtue of perceived (i.e. context cues) and actual (i.e. goals) triggers (Neal, Wood, Labrecque, and Lally, 2012). It is manifested that the former serves as a linear function of habit strength while the latter is nonlinear. Meanwhile, goals trigger habits (given appropriate contexts) only when habits are moderately strong. Once habits are strong, goals have little influence, and performance is activated by context cues regardless of current goals.

⁷ According to Clausen (1991) planful competence refers to the thoughtful, assertive, and self-controlled processes that underlie one's choices about institutional involvements and interpersonal relationships. As applied to migration, Jong and Graefe (2008) suggested this process includes the capacity to select social settings, including geographic places, which best match the abilities, goals, values and strengths of individuals and families to help them negotiate their life course.

2.1.5.2 Major and Minor Triggering Events

It is inevitable that some events trigger the break or unsustainability of current life situation which changes personal routine, motivation or expectation, and consequently seek and establish a new maintainable balance. Rummel (1975) speculated that triggering events usually bring uncomfortableness and the need for a change. However, he does not mention that the triggering events not only provide opportunity to make decision but the direction of change.

The major triggering events provide a big power to alter routines, while the minor triggering events also exert an influence which maybe temporary or gradually turn into main triggering events through accumulation, integration. For instance, quarrelling with mates several times, misunderstanding without effective communication, or argument until fighting, which will lead to /trigger a break up of relationship or turn into major triggering events, especially among younger people (Raffaelli, 1997).

Major triggering events are salient and drastic to connect with sudden change or transfer in life, such as divorce/separation, decease of parents, birth of a(other) child and bankrupt in business. Conversely, minor triggering events are not strong but potential which will lead indirectly to changes or transfer little by little. For example, a quarrel with friend would break good mood temporarily (Schmeiser, 2010; Jong and Graefe, 2008).

2.1.5.3 Triggering events and Festival Commitment

By interviewing thirty-one divorced women, Kavas (2010) noticed that divorce affects women's commitment to festival only when her ex-husband brought his new partner to

family reunion party. However, as the majority of the participants agreed that the two people cannot be completely isolated if they have children, women in Kavas's (2010) study still committed themselves to the festival in order to be a better company for their children.

While in a family with mixed-faith marriage, people may deem that it is easier for the newlyweds to get along with each other if both of them do not have religious beliefs. On the contrary, Romain (1997) indicated that the non-religious partners would consider domestic rituals and family gatherings at festivals to be an intrusion and may resist any attempts to introduce them to or to 'indoctrinate' the children. Other family would be trapped in the festival decoration of the houses. For example, A Hindu-Christian couple stuck in the endless bargain agree that: he could have his mistletoe only if she could have her Diwali lamps (Romain, 1997). Worse still, some respondents stated that if the festival stimulates their unhappy reminiscences of ex-partners or spouses, they would retreat from the celebration no matter whether the festival is linked to their religions.

Research on Major Triggering Event to Festival Commitment

Converting to another religion (Acquah, 2011; Karsono, 2007), decease or birth of closest family members (Goldman, 2009), marriage or divorce (Stone, 2009; Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson, and Spicer, 2006), internal or external migration (Fu et al., 2014; Yang and Ebaugh, 2001) are regarded as some major triggering events towards festival commitment.

According to Karsono's (2007) research on ten Chinese Muslims who are now living in Surabaya, Indonesia, religious conversion has triggered the celebration of Chinese traditional ethnic festivals. All the ten participants were not born as a Muslim, instead, their

initial beliefs were in Buddhism or Taoism when they were born in China or Indonesia. In the aim of seeking justice and security in the Islamic community, they finally became a Muslim which can be seen as attempts to assimilate with the natives (The, 1993). Over a period of time, some Chinese Indonesians became Muslims following the Indonesian government policy of assimilation of minorities with the indigenous population.”

Being a Muslim, all the ten respondents still performed some Chinese tradition, but limited to the celebration only. The rituals were not performed due to their belief that it was prohibited by Islam. For example, during Chinese New Year, they only visited their relatives but never prayed at the Chinese New Year’s Eve ceremonies. They did not clean their ancestors’ graves on Tomb-Sweeping Festival but instead did it on another day. Regarding festival food, they only ate handmade food (i.e. mooncakes, and rice dumplings) made by themselves since the festival food in the supermarkets were non-halal. Therefore, Karsono (2007) concluded that the Chinese Muslims never stopped to make unremitting endeavour to keep balance between their ethnic identity and their religious beliefs without breaking the doctrines.

In Vietnam, elders who are the leaders in families, have the strongest influence (Goldman, 2009: 10). However, after their passing away, the family would only hold a reunion dinner on Chinese New Year’s Eve or other ethnic festivals. In other words, the younger generation prefer to spend these ethnic festivals more like a holiday rather than an obligatory tradition in Vietnam (ibid). Therefore, decease of closest relatives, especially the seniors, triggered the commitment towards ethnic festival celebration.

Research on Minor Triggering Events to Festival Commitment

Minor triggering events happen almost every day without one's notice or expectation. In the context of festival commitment, minor triggering events such as work issues (Acas, 2004), traffic jams (Cudny, 2013; Small, Edwards, and Sheridan, 2005), dietary habits (Ding and Shih, 2013; Venerable Master Hsing Yun, 2012), time and distance (Roth, 2012), and variety in entertainment (Xu, 2012; Yang, 2008) influenced the attitudes and behaviours when the ethnic festival take place.

According to Venerable Master Hsing Yun (2012), who became a vegetarian at the age of four, during his seventy plus years of being a vegetarian he still could not avoid eating some things that contained non-vegetarian ingredients. On one occasion, he was invited by a principal to stay at his home as a house guest during Chinese New Year in Taiwan. The hospitable house owner prepared a big plate of boiled dumplings for him. However, after taking his first bite, he clearly discovered that the fillings are made of leek, eggs, and chopped meat, which is a traditional recipe in China. In order to avoid any sense of discourtesy, he put up with it and said nothing. In the end, he ate the entire plate of dumplings. At this point, he explained that the doctrines of Buddhism taught the adherents that one should eat the food he or she has been offered with a sense of gratitude and nothing is more important than that.

Regarding time and distance, Roth (2012) compared the situation between modern China and the past. As China becomes a wealthy, modern society the celebration of the Chinese New Year reveals how people both connect and disconnect with the past. Some traditions are abandoned, while others are reinvented and new ones emerge. Just a generation ago, people anticipated the Chinese New Year as an occasion celebrated with new clothes,

special foods and visits with family. Today, preparation time is filled with new opportunities, obligations and stresses. Furthermore, when family members lived near each other, gathering for meals during the 15-day New Year period was easy. Today, large distances separate many families all year and reunions are more difficult with individuals, in pursuit of economic opportunity, dispersed across the country.

On December 21, 2006, ten Ph. D. students from China's top universities jointly publicized a petition on the Internet, calling on citizens, especially the youngsters, to be less excited about exotic holidays such as Christmas. That is the latest instance of public resistance to western cultures and lifestyles in China (Zhang and Li, 2010). According to Yang (2008: 250), family is a very important component of Chinese values. In order to explore the difference and similarity between the middle-aged and the young people regarding commitment to traditional festivals in China, she interviewed two groups of Shanghai natives - 10 aged between 17 and 25 years and 10 aged between 42 and 60 years. Not surprisingly, significant differences in commitment were observed from the two age groups.

During the festival, the middle-aged people's friends or colleagues all had their own family reunions and activities, so they had little time or chance to get together, while the young people had more freedom to get together with their peers. The middle-aged generation spent money mainly on necessary food and red packets, and the young generation spent money on their own entertainment and interests such as travelling abroad (Yang, 2008).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Festival-Individual-Practice (FIP) Commitment model

Theoretically, many studies of commitment use the symbolic interactionist perspective (Heimer and Matsueda, 1994), while many others use an exchange perspective (Kollock, 1994; Mottaz, 1988). Much of the research, however, focuses on applying the concept to such practical matters as commitment to organizations (Morrow, 1993; Mottaz, 1988), to family and work (Gerson, 1993), or to interpersonal friendships (Gaines, Reis, Summers, Rusbult, Cox, Wexler, Marelich, and Kurland, 1997).

In festival-related literature, Lee's (2009) conceptual model for investigating the effect of festival visitors' emotional experiences on satisfaction, psychological commitment, and loyalty contributes to the emotional responses to the setting in which leisure experiences are enjoyed (see Figure 2.1). His model provides the foundation for establishing the conceptual framework for this study.

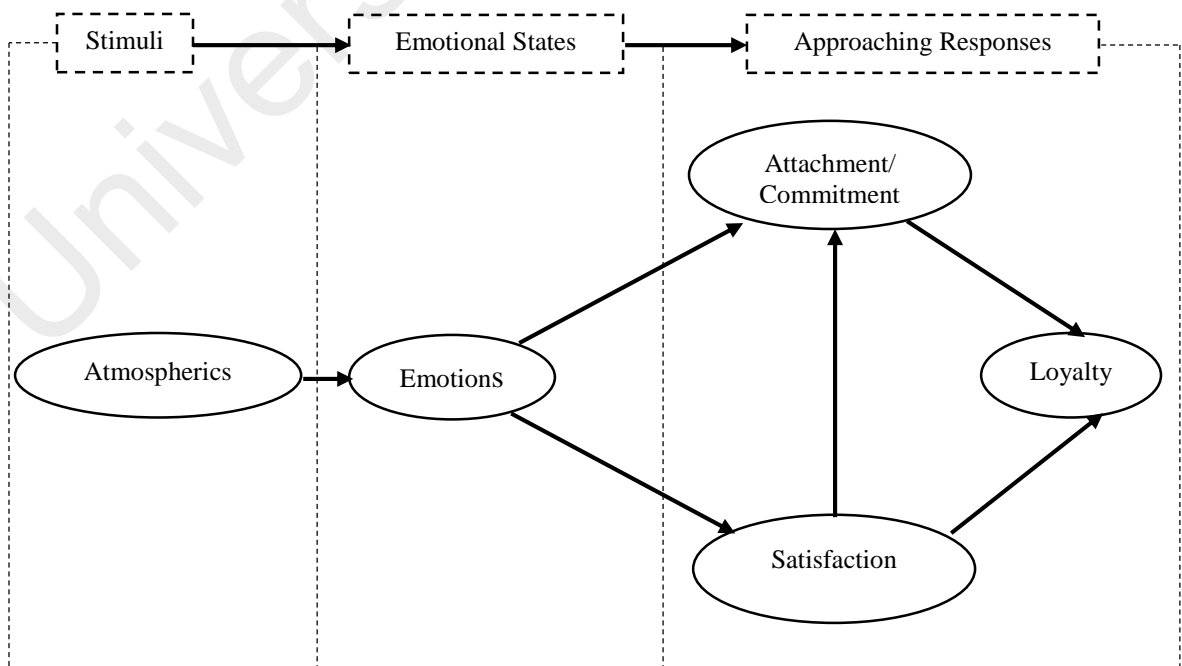


Figure 2.1 Lee's (2009) Conceptual Model Based on the Mehrabian-Russell Model and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory

For explaining contact among personal impact, commitment and celebration, this research introduces trigger as a variable which gives rise to change or transfer. Hagedorn's (2000) conceptual framework of faculty job satisfaction is adapted and applied in the framework of this study.

Table 2.11 Hagedorn's (2000) Conceptual Framework of Faculty Job Satisfaction

Mediators			Triggers
Motivators & Hygienes	Demographics	Environmental Conditions	Change or Transfer
Achievement	Gender	Collegial relationships	Change in life stage
Recognition	Ethnicity	Student relationships	Change in family-related or personal circumstances
Work itself	Institutional type	Administration	Change in rank or tenure
Responsibility	Academic discipline	Institutional climate or culture	Transfer to a new institution
Advancement			Change in perceived justice
Motivators & Hygienes	Demographics	Environmental Conditions	Change or Transfer
Salary			Change in mood or emotional state

Source: Cited from Hagedorn's (2000) research on Faculty Job Satisfaction

Apart from these two models, Meyer and Allen's (1991) Organization Commitment Model, commitment in Measure of Ethnic Identity (Phinney, 1992) and Commitment Framework to Marriage (Johnson, 1991) also offer ideas of stratification on commitment. Generally, there are three components—personal (affective), moral (Normative) and structural (Continuous) in these frameworks.

Drawing on this three models, the research framework for this study is designed as below, namely Festival-Individual-Practice commitment model (FIP commitment model).

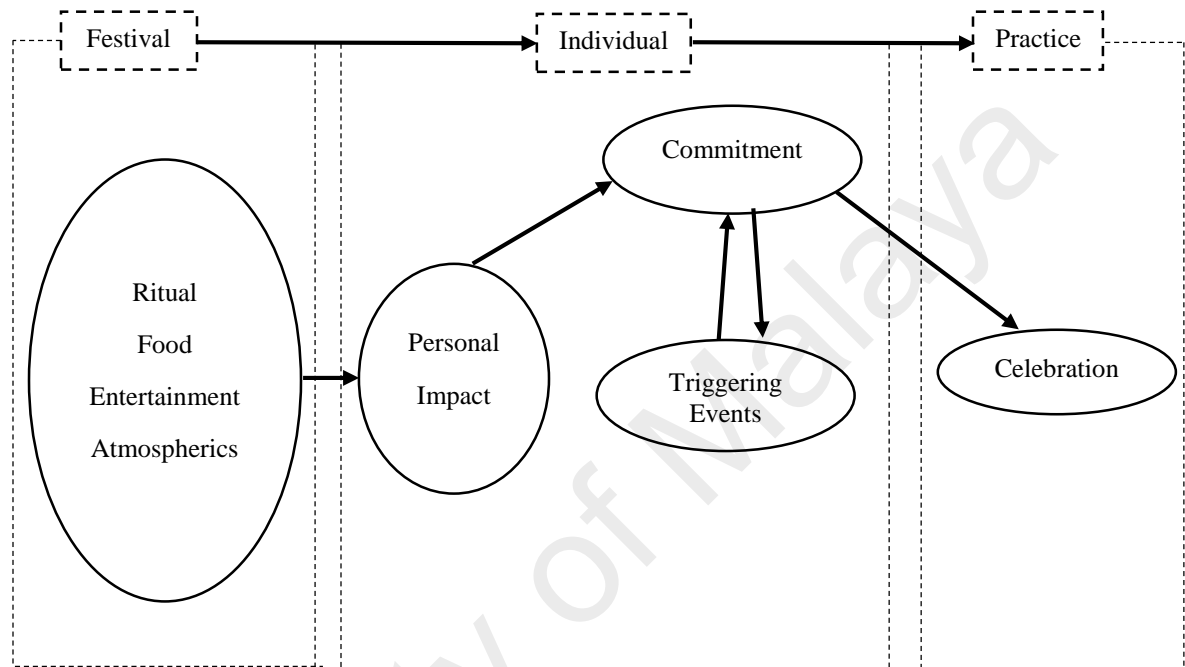


Figure 2.2 Festival-Individual-Practice Commitment Model (FIP Commitment Model)

In this framework, firstly festival aspect illustrates four elements reviewed from previous literature about ritual, food, entertainment and atmospherics. This aspect also provides the theoretical support for analysis the data obtained from the interviews and process of coding.

Secondly, individual aspect includes three important variables in this study, namely personal impact, commitment and triggering events. Commitment is reflected from two perspectives, respondents' perceived points rated by scale from 1 to 10 and their description of celebrating festivals. Personal impact is measured in this study from the narratives of the

respondents' higher perceived commitment, while triggering events refer to the stories of the respondents' lower perceived commitment.

Lastly, practice aspect associates with celebration, the outcome of commitment influenced by personal impact and triggering events.

2.2.2 Theory of Dramaturgy

Developed from the symbolic interactionism, Goffman (1959) revealed the theory of dramaturgy. There are three major points which are useful to understand human interactions are dependent upon time, place and audience.

Firstly, society and life is like a big stage. The social members as the performers on the big stage are very concerned about how their ideal images appear to different audiences (i.e., to participate in the interaction of others) can be accepted. Secondly, people would act as in script (pursue a simple and stable status) if no unexpected thing or complicated situation happened. However, people would adjust their action based on the changing situation. Thirdly, impression and behaviour of people are different at the front and back stage. At front stage, people try to build image comfortable and easily accepted by others and the society. Back stage is relative to the front stage where people prepare or rehearsal their performance for presenting at the front stage. While, back stage maybe conceal something that cannot perform at the front stage. In other words, people think that others and society find it difficult to accept their hidden impression at the back stage.

Moreover, Goffman (1959) also illustrated that one human being presents itself to another based on cultural values, norms, and beliefs. His theory is commonly applied in sociological accounts of social interaction in everyday life, such as community, group, and family. Therefore, his theory provided a key research approach when analysing people's attitude and behaviour through their stories as scripted as if they are acting in daily life or festival. For example, a Malaysian Chinese will not eat food in public during the month of Ramadan in Malaysia, which reflects that he respects Muslim in the public with that action as front stage but it does not mean whether he agrees or disagrees in private space (back stage). This research uses a dramaturgy theory for data analysis of Malaysian Chinese working adults' commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals gathered through their self-described stories.

Due to popularity of the Internet, the developing discourse of Dramaturgy Theory also emerged in virtual social interaction and online communication (Aspling, 2011; Tu and McIsaac, 2002). However, most researches are still conducted through Goffman's original method, namely face-to-face interaction. Correspondingly, in the present study, the interpersonal communication during festival does not happen in an online zone but in a context of real situation in one's life. Therefore, the researcher analysed the triggering events part based on this theory.

Saving face is another concept related to commitment towards celebrating festival and closely connects to dramaturgy. Despite various cultural backgrounds, people try to protect self-image or value and hope their self-image or value be appreciated and respected by other members of society (Hwang, 2006; Zhu, 2003; Ho, 1976; Goffman, 1972). From the

perspective of Western language system, the notion of “face” provide a version of “politeness” that make it fit for both strategic and social-norm behaviors in the east, especially in the Chinese culture circle.(Mao, 1994)

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher first reviewed the relevant literature related to festival, commitment, and triggering event. As for the festival part, the researcher introduced the concepts of festival and its four elements, namely, festival ritual, festival food, festival entertainment, and festival atmospherics. Then, a descriptive elaboration of Chinese festivals and their elements was presented as the core elements of the knowledge base with an overview of Malaysian Chinese celebrations. Afterwards, a new research area, i.e. festival commitment, was discussed in the context of Malaysian Chinese and Chinese festival. In order to analyse the difference in festival commitment, research pertaining to triggering event was unfolded in the content of life and festival commitment.

In the second section, the theoretical framework was explained with a conceptual framework of Festival-Individual-Practice Commitment Model (FIP Commitment Model) and Goffman’s (1959) theory of dramaturgy. The former was an integration of Lee’s (2009) conceptual model which was based on the Mehrabian-Russell Model and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory, and Hagedorn’s (2000) conceptual framework of faculty job satisfaction. The latter was an explanation of self-presentation in face-to-face communication.

Chapter Three would dwell on the findings and discussions of the present study. More results from the perspectives of Malaysian Chinese would fill the gap of previous research and enrich the literature of festival commitment among Malaysian Chinese.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF COMMITMENT: LEVEL AND AVAILABILITY

In this chapter, all the three research questions will be thoroughly investigated in three sections in sequence. In each section, findings are analysed and refined from relevant questions of the interview (see Appendix 3).

Level of commitment towards festival celebration may be observed by a rating scale. Self-evaluation is a great way to collect respondents' perspectives of their attitudes on some events or situations, such as burning paper money for ancestor worship, love or anger towards family members and participation in traditional entertainment. Malaysian Chinese celebrate ethnic festivals for various reasons and in many ways. This study employs a method that combines the self-evaluation table with 10 points Likert scale and the interpretation of narratives to explore the various determinant factors of Malaysian Chinese working adults' perceived commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals.

3.1 Demographic Information

From Section 1 of the interviews, all the demographic information of the participants were collected and is presented in the following parts.

Gender

There are thirty respondents who participated in the interview with twenty (20) male and ten (10) female working adults in the Klang Valley area.

Age

As young working adults, their ages range from 20 to 25 years old and the researcher divided them into three categories, i.e. five respondents are in their early twenties (20-24 years old), 13 respondents are in their late twenties (25-29 years old), and 12 the rest are their early thirties. (30-35 years old). The function of grouping is for the purpose of probing whether there exists slight differences between different age groups.

Place of Origin

The Chinese descendants in Malaysia originated principally from the Southern Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong (Chuan, 2012). Most respondents could clearly mention their family place of origin and some could even tell the names of specific villages or places from where they originated. In total, 14 people are from Guangdong Province, 12 people are from Fujian Province, and the remaining four persons did not state clearly or remember their ancestors' place of origin.

Generation

This refers to their status as descendants of immigrants. The first generation refers to the immigrants. The second generation refers to their children. The third generation refers to their grandchildren. According to the investigation, the third and fourth generations are the majority, comprising 25 respondents in total. There are three of the 30 respondents who claimed that they are descendants of the fifth generation, two respondents had no information about their generation belonging.

Place of Birth

About 50% of the respondents were born in Kuala Lumpur whereas others were from different states, such as Penang (4), Selangor (3), Perak (3), Negeri Sembilan (2), Sarawak (2), and Melaka (1). The majority of the respondents for this study originate from the city, namely Kuala Lumpur.

Religious Belief

Regarding the religious belief, 20 respondents are Buddhists, three are Taoists, one is an atheist and the other six respondents are Christian.

Marital Status

Most of the respondents are still single, 16 out of 30. Seven respondents claimed they are in a relationship (IR), whilst seven are married.

Main Language

Referring to Abdullah and Pedersen (2003), the major dialect groups of Malaysian Chinese are Hokkien and Cantonese, followed by Hakka, Teochew, Fuchow, and Hainanese. Pertaining to the main languages used, Mandarin (16), Cantonese (13), and English (13) were recorded as common language of the Malaysian Chinese interviewed, while fewer respondents used other languages such as Hokkien (4), Malay (3) and Hakka (1).

Educational Background

24 respondents received higher education, four have pre-university (STPM) qualification and two people have ordinary level (SPM) or equivalent qualifications.

Job

The participants' jobs cover many different sectors, such as education (7), sales marketing (6), management (5), finance & accounting (3), technical services (3), customer services (3), private business (2), and media communication (1).

Working Experience

Most of the respondents (25) had working experience of over three years. And two (2) persons had worked less than one year and remaining three (3) persons had worked for 1-2 years (Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1 Distribution of Working Experience

To sum up, among all the thirty respondents, most of them belong to the third generation and 66% stay in Kuala Lumpur or nearby states, such as Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. Buddhism and Taoism, the two traditional Chinese religions are still adhered by 80% of respondents in the present study. Mandarin, Cantonese, and English are the three most commonly used languages among the respondents.

Furthermore, a total of 80% of respondents started their career when they graduated from university as educated or skilled working adults. Most of the respondents (23) are unmarried but some (7) are in a relationship. The feature of profession indicated that these young Chinese working adults tended to work in tertiary industry in connection with business, service, and education. Their working experience is proportional to their age, in other words, the elders had longer working years.

3.2 Level of Commitment

From the score table in Section 2 of the interview, each participant provided information on their perceived self-evaluation of the commitment to the five traditional ethnic festivals. For further analysis, the researcher established a chart for the level of commitment. If the score of rating is eight to ten, it is considered as a high commitment. On the contrary, if the score is lower than five, then it is regarded as low commitment.

Celebration of Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year is ranked the highest where 80% of respondents agreed that they were very committed to this festival. They rated greater score or equal to eight on a scale of ten, and six of them gave full score on their commitment to celebrating CNY. The mean value was also the highest, i.e. 8.3. Most people did not only perceive more commitment towards celebrating Chinese New Year, but also provided more corresponding descriptions of activities, emotions and attitudes (Interviews, 2015).

Mid-Autumn Festival is ranked second highest with only two people considered to have low commitment. The mean value was 6.4, as 66.7% respondents rated scores from 5

to 7. Nobody gave a full score or low score. Most respondents mentioned that they would celebrate this festival more enthusiastically if it fell on weekend (Survey results).

Tomb-Sweeping Festival emerged third highest in commitment among the respondents. Only one person recorded high commitment towards this festival, conversely, eleven people rated lower than 5 points. The mean value was 4.9. Specifically, many respondents would take their time to pay their respects to their deceased relatives at the tomb and while they did some cleaning work at the tombstone. Conversely, other respondents commemorated the dead by praying at home or burning paper around their houses.

Winter Solstice Festival and Dumpling Festival jointly stood at the last place in the ranking of festival commitment with a same mean value, 4.4. Nevertheless, more than five of the respondents felt that only the festival food might attract them a little but no atmosphere in the city was observed to celebrate these two festivals.

There was an unexpected finding regarding commonality and diversity of respondents' commitment towards different festivals. As for generality, the present study showed that the majority of respondents' commitment towards celebrating Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival were higher whereas Dumpling Festival, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, and Winter Solstice were lower.

However, the order of commitment towards the last three festivals reflected diversity depending on respondents' different background and experience. For example, owing to the fact that Malaysia is a country without winter or snow, some respondents gave lower points

on their commitment towards celebrating Winter Solstice. Conversely, other respondents treated this festival as the last day of a year and was worth celebrating with commitment. The level of commitment varies and among respondents. Usually, the reasons for this variety are given to support their opinions on this matter. Therefore, a festival might get a full mark from a respondent but a low score from another. In this respect, it is interesting to probe into their life stories and experiences.

3.3 Availability of Practicing Festival Elements

As mentioned above, Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival are festivals with higher commitment than the other three ethnic festivals. This is also in accordance with the answer from the first question in Section 2 of the interview when the respondent was asked which festival he or she celebrated with the highest commitment.

Why do most Malaysian Chinese working adults commit towards Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival? Some may have experiences that influenced their commitment towards these two typical festivals. Apart from this, what are the different personal impacts influencing their decisions towards celebration? Referring to the literature in Chapter Two, the researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of participants' personal impact of different festival elements, namely, festival ritual, festival food, festival entertainment, and festival atmospherics with the initial data from the answers to description part of Section 2 in the interview.

Festival Ritual

Although Cultural Revolution in China removed many recreations and traditional rituals, not many of these influences impacted the community of Chinese overseas (Chang, 2008). Chinese descendants continue to practice their own culture and keep their customs and tradition, as an ethnic marker in Southeast Asian countries. As one of the important festival elements, various rituals are held by most Chinese families in Malaysia (Sakurada, 2014; Chai, 2013; Shuhaimi, 2009; Chao and Tseng, 2002). In the present study, ritual played a significant role in celebration since different rituals were referred to in all the five festivals.

1) Chinese New Year

Table 3.1 Key Festival Ritual of Chinese New Year

No.	Ritual	Occurrence	Respondents
1	Having reunion dinner	28	Except S7, and S29
2	Cleaning before reunion	9	S1, S3, S10, S14, S15, S16, S18, S21, S28
3	Setting off fireworks and firecrackers	7	S3, S8, S15, S16, S18, S19, S22
4	Going to the temple	1	S9
5	Ancestor worship	1	S16
6	Staying overnight on Lunar New Year's Eve	1	S19

Source: Data adapted from interview, 2014-2015

Having reunion with family and dining together during New Year's Eve were mentioned in the description of celebrating Chinese New Year due to the reason that it is an invariable tradition which marks the start of the New Year celebration (Chuan, 2012; Gao, 2012; Xu, 2012; Stafford, 2000). Altogether, 95% of the thirty participants told their stories involving these two significant rituals of Chinese New Year. Meanwhile, nine participants cleaned their house before they enjoyed the reunion dinner which is in accordance with previous studies (Xu, 2012; Yuan, 2006).

The family reunion dinner is very important. In the past, it has various meanings, namely harvest, reunion, and removal of diseases. After the feast, one family or all of the relatives watch TV, talk, play chess, poker or *mahjong*, drink wine, and have refreshments. At the start of the New Year, adults and children wear new clothes, stay at home entertaining guests, or visit their relatives or friends. Relatives, friends and neighbours wish each other Happy New Year when they meet (Yang, 2008: 252).

However, two respondents (S7, S29) did not mention having reunion with family nor having New Year's Eve dinner. It seemed they had some particular reasons. They are both females who are more willing to visit their friends or relatives during Chinese New Year celebration. Although religion has influenced the views of celebration [traditional festivals] in their family, they still keep close relationship with other relatives and commit themselves into other forms of sharing enjoyment with relatives.

“I would rather visit my friends when they invite me during Chinese New Year celebrations. I would buy gifts for them when I visited my friends' house.”

-Female, Buddhist

“Usually on the second day of Chinese New Year, I would visit my friends or relatives celebrating Chinese New Year.”

-Female, Christian

Besides, there are other rituals stated by different participants such as going to temple for praying (S15), and ancestor worship (S16) which are all traditional ritual for Chinese New Year celebration based on religious background (Chai, 2013; Gao, 2012; Xu, 2007).

Furthermore, some participants made references to two other traditional rituals, namely, setting off fireworks and firecrackers along with staying overnight on Lunar New

Year's Eve, which correspond with existing literature as well (Zhao et al., 2014; Xu, 2012; Xu, 2007).

2) Mid-Autumn Festival

Sharing mooncakes with family members or friends are mentioned by 95% respondents. it reiterates the importance of this particular food on this day since it symbolises a “perfect union” for the Chinese (Huang et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014). Most of the respondents would buy mooncakes from shops with only one male respondent (S11) who said that his family would make it on their own. Having reunion dinner was also mentioned by 35% respondents when they celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival. Beyond that, another female respondent (S18) would also gather with family in the evening of the festival day and share life stories with each other, as illustrated in other study (Huang et al., 2015).

3) Tomb-Sweeping Festival

Commemoration of the deceased relatives brings many different rituals for this festival. Being a serious and solemn day, Chinese people normally visit ancestors' tombs and clean the tomb stone and its surroundings. As such, many specific activities were mentioned by respondents to express their mourning and missing of the departed during this festival celebration (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Key Festival Ritual in Tomb-Sweeping Festival

No.	Ritual	Occurrence	Example
1	Cleaning tombstone	14	S3, S4, S5, S12, S13, S15, S17, S21, S22, S23, S25, S26, S27, S28, S30

2	Ancestor worship	10	S2, S4, S8, S11, S13, S14, S16, S19, S24, S30
3	Placing flowers	3	S1, S12, S25
4	Praying at home	2	S10, S20
5	Weeding	1	S1
6	Offering incense	1	S18
7	Fasting	1	S3
8	Chanting	1	S9
9	Burning paper money	1	S11
10	Placing offerings	1	S26

Source: Data adapted from Interview, 2014-2015

Generally speaking, 50% of respondents referred to cleaning tombstone as the main event for this festival when they visited the cemetery. Actually, it is a tradition for all the Chinese people to show their gratitude and respect to the departed relatives or friends (Liu, 2011; Blake, 2011; Bell, 2006; Diamant, 2006).

Secondly, ancestor worship was mentioned by ten respondents. Ancestor worship involves two layers of meaning, namely, praying for protection of ancestors and blessing their ancestors for peace in “another world” which are in accordance with Chai’s (2013) research. Moreover, some specific customs were also conducted by respondents consisting weeding (S1), placing flowers (S1, S12, and S25), and placing offerings (S26) which all correspond with correlative literature on Chinese people and festivals (Staub et al., 2011; Yang, 2011).

In addition, due to different sites of commemoration, some respondents observed the festival in various ways. Setting their deceased relatives’ photos and small shrine at home, two respondents (S9, S19) ordinarily prayed at home which is in accordance with previous studies (Chai, 2013; Staub et al., 2011). Beyond that, ancestor hall or temple for big family

were also mentioned as praying place by two respondents (S3, S11). Moreover, they would offer incense or burn joss sticks when they went to visit their ancestors as other researchers discovered (Staub et al., 2011; Chau and Corlett, 1994).

From religious aspect, there are also some special customs followed by respondents. As vegetarian and Buddhist, the respondent (S9) chose fasting and chanting as her way to mark their departed grandfather which is the same as Wu and Yeh (2014) indicated. But for Christians, two respondents (S10, S20) preferred praying for their relatives in peace wherever they were on that day. And another respondent (S29) followed parents to cemetery, but stood aside during prayers and did not participate in cleaning work.

Moreover, the rituals of Tomb-Sweeping Festival are also held as a collective activity. One respondent (S30) would visit *Kwong Tong* Cemetery (Guangdong Yi Shan) in Kuala Lumpur where the *Ching Ming* (tomb sweeping) ceremony is held every year.

“It is really shocking when many Chinese people visit their ancestors in the cemetery at the same time. We know their hardship [of our ancestor] and there is no reason to be lazy or busy without visiting our ancestor. Without their endurance here, none of us can live happily today.”

-Female, Buddhist

Two respondents (S6, S7) explained that they were too busy to attend this ceremony and their family members usually replaced them to fulfil the rituals of this festival. If time permitted, they could attend during the weekend.

4) Dumpling Festival

In the present study, making and eating dumplings were the one and only common acknowledged ritual in this festival, and this is verified by relevant research (Liu, 2015; Xiao, 2014). However, most respondents said that they were not good at making rice dumpling compared to their older generation, family members. They usually bought rice dumplings from markets or shopping malls. Only four (4) female respondents admitted that they could make rice dumplings (S13, S16, S18, and S30). One of these respondents (S16) has experience making rice dumplings with her students.

Making rice dumpling is a good way to practise Chinese tradition and foster spirit of cooperation, it is another kind of symbolic reunion. Meanwhile, it is helpful to encourage the spirit of inclusion and avoid from wasting food. However, in the conversation, only one expression or reference to togetherness was made by a respondent (S18).

“I enjoy making rice dumplings with my grandmother. For her, this is a kind of joy. I just want to help her and make her happy.”

-Female, high school Chinese Language Teacher

5) Winter Solstice

Similar to the Dumpling Festival, making festival food is the main festival ritual on Winter Solstice. *Tang Yuan* is the classical food of Winter Solstice Festival (Lau, 2014). However, some respondents said that they did not celebrate this festival. Furthermore, only three respondents (S10, S16, and S24) thought that they attached importance to celebrating it and made *Tang Yuan* at home occasionally. In the meantime, having a reunion (S2, S19, S24, and S25) and worshiping ancestors (S11, S18) were two other rituals which were mentioned in this present research as well as related literature (Lau, 2014; DeBernardi, 2010).

“We celebrate Winter Solstice Festival at the end of the year. My parents take celebration of this festival seriously since my childhood. So I follow them.”

-Female, Married

This festival was not so strongly oriented by personal impact of ritual but was driven by family background instead. The children who have experience celebrating this festival every year in their family tend to be committed in later years.

Festival Food

According to previous research, food is “an ideal symbolic marker of ethnicity and festivity” (Esterik, 1982: 207). It is also a significant part of tradition and symbol for Chinese festival celebration (Wang et al., 2014). And there are different festival food and drinks on account of regional variation. In Malaysia, most Chinese are descendants of people from the provinces of Southern China, such as Guangdong, Fujian, Hainan, and Guangxi. At the same time, their food habits are also under the influence of Taiwan and Hong Kong cuisine promoted through TV Programmes or internet media. Therefore, the festival foods consumed by Malaysian Chinese are different from cuisine in southern provinces in China as well as Taiwan and Hong Kong.

1) Chinese New Year

As the most important Malaysian Chinese festival, Chinese New Year incorporates abundant types of food. Most respondents gave an ambiguous answer when asked if the reunion dinner or hometown delicacy was their representative food of the festival. Specifically, some respondents provided a few names of festival food which were only served during the celebration of Chinese New Year. Table 3.3 is a list of those food mentioned by the respondents in this study.

Table 3.3 Key Festival Food (and Drinks) for Chinese New Year Celebration

No.	Food and drinks	Occurrence	Respondents
1	Chinese wine	3	S4, S18, S22
2	Prosperity Toss (or <i>Yu Sheng</i>)	2	S3, S8
3	New Year cake (or <i>Nian Bing</i>)	2	S25, S26
5	Basin cuisine (or <i>Poon Choi</i>)	1	S13
6	Oranges	1	S3
7	Soup	1	S19
7	Rice cake (or <i>Nian Gao</i>)	1	S22
8	Roasted meat	1	S22

Source: Data adapted from interviews, 2014-2015

Festival food is a very crucial element in Chinese New Year celebrations, starting with the family reunion dinner on New Year's Eve (Xu, 2007). Concerning the specific food and drinks on the table, three respondents (S4, S18, and S22) stated that Chinese wine was the most important drink when they celebrate this festival which Liu and Murphy (2007) also observed in their study.

Furthermore, two participants (S3, S8) mentioned a Teochew-style raw fish salad, namely, *Yu Sheng*, a very famous and typical food with the hope for good luck in the new year among Malaysian Chinese (Vinning and Crippen, 1999). In addition, one participant (S13) made reference to *Poon Choi*, which is a traditional main course derived from walled villages in Hong Kong. It represents unity, equality and family lineages as well as to show gratitude to ancestors. Other menu consists of rice cake (S26), New Year cake (S25, S26), roasted meat (S22), oranges (S3) and soup (S19) among which were all consistent with previous studies (Muhammad et al., 2009; Yuan, 2006; Vinning and Crippen, 1999).

Most festival food has a fortune name or good message. For example, pronunciation of *Nian Gao* (i.e. rice cake) can be translated as having an auspicious meaning namely, promotion in progressive career. Fish is one of the main ingredients for cooking festival food because its pronunciation “*Yu*” can also be understood as meaning luck for surplus of wealth while Chinese oranges are served to symbolize happiness, good luck, and health. These festival food for Chinese New Year provide a happy and comfortable feeling when people have reunion dinner together. Moreover, it mirrors a kind of politeness or table manners among Chinese people when they celebrate Chinese New Year, i.e. respecting the old and cherishing the young.

“Hometown food is the most delicious food during Chinese New Year and we bless others when we have dinner together.”

-Male, his family in Ipoh

“The elder always start to eat first, and we [the younger] can only eat later. This is a rule.”

-Female, high school Chinese language teacher

2) Mid-Autumn Festival

Table 3.4 Key Festival Food (and Drinks) in Mid-Autumn Festival

No.	Food and drinks	Occurrence	Example
1	Mooncake	25	Except S2, S7, S9, S12, S29
2	Chinese wine	2	S5, S11
3	Chinese tea	2	S5, S12

Source: Data extracted from interviews, 2014-2015

Mooncake is a traditional and crucial food related to Mid-Autumn Festival (Wang et al., 2014). In the present study, 85% respondents ate mooncakes during the celebration (Table 3.4). Although another five respondents (S2, S7, S9, S12, and S29) did not mention whether they ate mooncakes, they signified sending mooncakes as festival gifts during the season of celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival. As for drinks, two respondents (S5, S11) drank Chinese

wine with family members while two another respondents (S5, S12) drank Chinese tea both of which belonged to Chinese tradition (Eijkhoff, 2000).

The shape of mooncake is round, like full moon and stands for reunion and satisfaction. When Chinese see or eat mooncake, they spontaneously associate the food with their family and relatives.

“I do not like eating mooncake so much. They are so sweet and expensive. However, I usually buy and share with friends when I cannot go back to my hometown.”

-Primary school teacher, his family was in Perak

3) Tomb-Sweeping Festival

Food is not a salient element of Tomb-Sweeping Festival compared with other festivals in the present study. No one mentioned specific food associated with this festival and one respondent (S9) observed fasting for the day.

“It is a good way to feel your ancestor’s spirit when they were in hardships when they explored their new homeland. This serves as an encouragement to myself.”

-Female, Buddhist

4) Dumpling Festival

Being the unique food of the Dumpling Festival, rice dumpling is of greatest popularity during the celebration (Wang et al., 2014). 90% of participants in this study also revealed the same point. However, three respondents stated that they disliked eating rice dumplings. Despite that, most respondents mentioned rice dumpling and understand eating rice dumplings as one convention. Some of them actually did not eat rice dumpling due to some reasons.

“I usually eat rice dumpling at home but not here [Klang Valley].”

-Male, his family was in Ipoh

“Most rice dumplings are meat-made here. It limits my choice...”

-Female, vegetarian

“For me, I take a chance on buying and eating rice dumpling. If on the way home, I meet vendor, I buy some. Otherwise, I do not have to eat it.”

-Chinese newspaper editor

5) Winter Solstice

Being the thematic food for Winter Solstice, *Tang Yuan* is adored by a large group of people (Lau, 2014; Staub et al., 2011; Vinning and Crippen, 1999: 109). 70% respondents would eat *Tang Yuan* for Winter Solstice celebration. Three respondents (S10, S16, and S24) would make *Tang Yuan* by hand whereas others usually bought from supermarket or bazaar. Other people were in favour of a variety of food, namely, longevity noodle (S5), glutinous rice ball (S11), bean curd soup (S14), and rice noodles (S18) as shown in Table 3.5. Some of these are part of Chinese tradition (Chen and Lim, 2012). However, none of the participants mentioned any drinks.

Table 3.5 Key Festival Food in Winter Solstice

No.	Food and drinks	Occurrence	Example
1	<i>Tang Yuan</i> (stuffed)	21	Except S1, S3, S7, S9, S11, S12, S28, S29, S30
2	Longevity noodles	1	S5
3	Glutinous rice balls (without fillings)	1	S11
4	Bean curd soup	1	S14
5	Rice noodles	1	S18

Source: Data from interview, 2014-2015

Festival Entertainment

Entertainment is also an indispensable activity when family and friends celebrate Chinese festivals (Wang et al., 2014). It keeps pace with the times (Yang, 2008) and facilitates the prosperity of festival tourism (Ma and Lew, 2012).

1) Chinese New Year

The most significant entertainment is, *setting of fireworks*, a tradition to celebrate Chinese New Year (Randau and Medinskaya, 2015; Zhao et al., 2014; Xu, 2012; Xu, 2007). Therefore, this aspect in the present study is in accordance with tradition as seven respondents still claimed fireworks to be the traditional entertainment for CNY.

Table 3.6 Key Festival Entertainment in Chinese New Year

No.	Activity	Occurrence	Example
1	Setting off fireworks	7	S3, S8, S15, S16, S18, S19, S22
2	Travelling	7	S2, S8, S13, S17, S20, S25, S27
3	Watching festival gala	4	S3, S15, S17, S19
4	Playing <i>Mahjong</i>	3	S1, S11, S19
5	Watching lion dance	2	S13, S22
6	Going to temple fair	1	S16
7	Making lantern and paper cutting	1	S22
8	Count down to New Year	1	S19
9	Cosplay drama	1	S13
10	Singing New Year Song	1	S16
11	Going to karaoke	1	S18
12	Having party with friends	1	S18
13	BBQ	1	S11
14	Playing electronic games	1	S4

Source: Data extracted from interview, 2014-2015

Table 3.6 also shows that four (4) male respondents would watch festival gala at home with family. The Spring Festival Gala is held by CCTV since 1983 and it shows the close-

knit bond between overseas Chinese and Chinese of China (motherland) (Gao, 2012; Xie, 2012; Xu, 2007). This programmes would broadcast different greetings of Chinese from all over the world and provide an online platform of communication between overseas Chinese and Chinese of China.

According to Ohtsuka and Chan (2014), *Mahjong* is a traditional gambling game invented by ancient Chinese during the Han Dynasty. The game is usually played by four people with a set of tiles based on Chinese characters and symbols. It is a tradition for immigrants to get together and celebrate ethnical festivals (Wong and Tse, 2003). However, it has become one important entertainment in Chinese family or community with a slight gambling nature and for fun. In the present study three (3) male participants (S1, S11, and S19) would play *Mahjong* with family during celebration. Two participants (S13, S22) would still enjoy the lion dance which is a tradition during the celebration of Chinese New Year (Xu, 2007). Another tradition, namely going to temple fair, was mentioned by a female participant (S16) whose family would go to the fair in Dong Zen Temple, Fo Guang Shan, in Jenjarum, Selangor.

A male participant (S22) said making lantern (i.e. *Deng Long* in Mandarin) and paper cutting were also part of the festival entertainment. The two tradition emerged from ancient times to display the blessing of the New Year (Xu, 2012; Wong, et al., 2014; Lin, 2005). Other tradition comprises the count down to the New Year (S19), cosplay drama about Chinese festival stories (S13), and singing New Year song (S16).

Furthermore, with the development of society over time, a variety of festival entertainment is practiced (Yang, 2008). In the present study, apart from the traditional entertainment, seven respondents mentioned travelling. One respondent (S18) would go to karaoke and have party with friends at night. Another respondent (S11) would enjoy BBQ with family.

A male participant's answer (S4) said he was only interested in playing electronic games. It seems that traditional and new forms of entertainment are competing for attraction from the younger generation. They have more choices for Chinese New Year entertainment. Those new forms are helpful to establish or keep close family relationship as mentioned by some respondents.

“I want to travel abroad with my family members instead of staying at home and watching TV. My parents also support my idea.”

-Buddhist, Single

“Going to Karaoke is a good way to relax. I am happy to organise my parents and their friends together for a singing party.”

-Buddhist, Female

2) Mid-Autumn Festival

Table 3.7 Key Festival Entertainment in Mid-Autumn Festival

No.	Activity	Occurrence	Example
1	Lantern Parade	4	S3, S18, S19, S28
2	Watching full moon	1	S22
3	Guessing lantern riddles	1	S28
4	Watching float	1	S19
5	Playing with kids	1	S29
6	Group or activities	1	S13

Source: Data from interview, 2014-2015

Table 3.7 demonstrates that four participants (S3, S18, S19, and S28) in the present study were of the opinion that they would take part in the Lantern Parade. It is in line with

Le's (2012) and Yang's (2006) research that Lantern Parade is a traditional and representative entertainment when celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival. The rest of choices included watching full moon (S22), guessing lantern riddles (S28), and watching float (S19) as reflected in previous literature (Huang et al., 2015; Wong, et al., 2014; Yang, 2006).

Albeit unmarried, a female participant (S29) would like to play with kids and have a lot of fun. Another single lady (S13) would join in some festival activities for celebration organized by groups or clubs.

3) Tomb-Sweeping Festival

Due to serious and solemn environment, it is not suitable to be joyous during this festival. Therefore, no respondents narrated stories about entertainment for this festival. However, they expressed their easy mood after they visited the cemeteries.

4) Dumpling Festival

Regarding the entertainment on Dumpling Festival, two female participants (S13, S21) would go hiking with family or friends. This is in accordance with Oakes's (1999) statement that hiking to an open place such as mountain or river side, which create a feeling to recall memories for missing close family members and beloved friends who are not around or close by anymore.

5) Winter Solstice

Not many specific entertainment was discovered in the celebration of Winter Solstice. Only one male participant (S12) claiming that he would play with friends while another female participant (S13) said she would join community activities for singing and dancing together.

Festival Atmospherics

Atmospherics may link to environment or place that provide a context influencing emotion or decision-making of participants. Four senses in atmospherics such as light, music, aroma, and touch would enhance people's perception towards a place or event. Lee (2009) indicated that festival atmospherics had a positive effect directly on commitment towards celebrating festival. Moreover, this study put more emphasis on points of festival atmospherics outside the family.

1) Chinese New Year

Table 3.8 Key Festival Atmospherics in Chinese New Year

No.	Items	Occurrence	Respondents
1	House decoration	20	S2, S3, S6, S10, S12-S15, S17, S19-S30
2	Slogan (Street)	16	S3, S9, S10, S14-S19, S22-S24, S26-S30
3	Red colour	13	S1, S5, S8, S10, S15-S19, S21, S23, S26, S30
4	Sound of firecrackers	8	S2, S3, S4, S12, S15, S16, S19, S22
5	New year songs	4	S1, S8, S18, S30
6	Speaking dialect	4	S4, S6, S11, S25
7	Shopping mall/community decoration	3	S1, S9 /S11
8	Festival/traditional performance	3	S13, S22 /S30
9	Handicraft works	2	S5, S14
10	Festival video	1	S28
11	Hamper	1	S8
12	Festive goods	1	S9
13	Hug with relatives	1	S28
14	Festive costume	1	S13

Source: Data collected from interview, 2014-2015

House decoration and Slogan (Street) were frequently mentioned when respondents described festival atmospherics in Chinese New Year celebration which are in line with tradition (Zhao et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2012). Next is red colour, visually depicted as warm and joyful colour in Chinese people's mind as uncovered in previous studies (Yu, 2014; Hutchings, 2003). Moreover, decoration in shopping mall or community also played significant role in reminding respondents that it is time to celebrate festivals.

Setting off firecrackers is essential entertainment for some Chinese family and the sound of firecrackers could create lively and warm environment around Chinese people with the smoke of firecrackers (S2, S3, S4, S12, S15, S16, S19, and S22) In addition, New Year songs played in public area would remind Chinese people that the Chinese New Year celebration has come and it is a time to make festival preparation and adjust the mood to welcome the New Year in the lunar calendar for Chinese community (S1, S8, S18, and S30).

Speaking dialect could serve to reduce the distance between specific Chinese groups for some respondents. (S4, S6, S11, and S25) On the contrary, most Chinese people celebrating festivals did not mention the language they used when they visited others. In fact, the dialect spoken reflects the immigrants' culture for that region. This distinction of dialect among the Chinese is critical to this study because there are many variants in the perception of how this celebration of the Chinese New Year differs across these dialect speaking groups (Tan, 2001b). Specific dialect can provide a comfortable familiar environment for respondents when they celebrate Chinese New Year.

“I understand most Chinese dialects here, but chatting with family members and friends in our special accent mixed with some local words make me feel like going back to childhood when we shared some stories that happened during the festival season long ago.”

-Male, his hometown was in Ipoh

In general, main festival elements with involvement of atmospherics just focus on the season of celebrating Chinese New Year but not in other festivals. Festival/traditional performance, handicraft works, festival video, hamper, festive goods were welcomed by some respondents, which attracted them into participating in Chinese festival celebration. Only one female respondent emphasized the importance of festival costume for her (S13).

Lastly, as the most salient theme of Chinese New Year, reunion ran through the whole celebration. Giving hugs to relatives is a special way of greeting for one respondent. She said that would bring blessing for them.

“Every Chinese New Year, I would feel so excited when I can meet my siblings from different places. Give them a big hug and find the feeling of reunion. That is really comfortable for me.”

-Married female, Christian

2) Mid-Autumn Festival

Table 3.9 Key Festival Atmospherics in Mid-Autumn Festival

No.	Items	Occurrence	Example
1	Full moon	15	S1, S3, S6, S9, S11, S15-S18, S21,S23,S24, S26, S28, S30
2	Gift packages of Mooncakes	15	S1, S5, S8, S9, S11-S14, S16, S20, S22, S23, S25, S26, S28
3	Slogan	7	S6, S11,S13, S15,S17, S25, S26
4	Festive song	1	S8
5	Children	1	S29

Source: Data collected from interview, 2014-2015

Full moon is a symbol of Mid-Autumn Festival for Chinese people (Huang et al., 2015). As a result, half of the respondents mentioned full moon could bring special emotion

when this festival was celebrated. Meanwhile, half of the respondents considered that it was the gift packages of mooncakes in shopping mall or supermarket that encouraged them to celebrate this festival.

Due to the commercial promotion, slogan printed festival information and images of mooncakes also made some respondents become consumers, enjoying a festive feeling (S6, S11, S13, S15, S17, S25, and S26). This quite contradicted with the Chinese tradition as the mooncake was initially made for family or friends without an attribute of buying and selling.

Specifically, only one female respondent highlighted a well-known classical festive song (i.e. *Ming Yue Ji Shi You*) which would always ring around her ears when she was enjoying this festival (S8). The lyrics of the song stemmed from a well-known poem written in the Song Dynasty which indicated the poet's strong desire for reunion during the festival celebration. On the other hand, another female respondent sensed getting together with children and playing with them stimulated her enthusiasm to commit (S29).

3) Tomb-Sweeping Festival

Table 3.10 Key Festival Atmospherics in Tomb-Sweeping Festival

No.	Activity	Occurrence	Example
1	Smoke of Burning paper money or incense	8	S6, S11, S13, S14, S15, S18, S19, S22
2	Offerings	6	S4, S13, S15, S17, S19, S30
3	Remains of Departed Relatives	4	S5, S10, S12, S16
4	Tombstone	2	S12, S19
5	Crying	1	S11

Source: Data adapted from interview, 2014-2015

Burning paper money or incense in front of tombstone or memorial tablet is still popular in some areas where many Chinese bury their departed relatives in cemetery or temple. Eight of the 30 respondents who mentioned that smoke of burning paper money or incense would create a situation to communicate or connect with ancestor which followed the Chinese tradition (Staub et al., 2011; Chau and Corlett, 1994). Meanwhile, offerings were also emphasized by six respondents as a way to express their longing and gratitude for past generation, as Lens manifested in 2012.

Moreover, the remains of departed relatives would recall Chinese people's sentiment of yearning and consequently became committed to observing tomb-sweeping festival (S5, S10, S12, and S16) (Lens, 2012). However, the place for worshipping was not limited to cemeteries or temples, sometimes prayers were offered on the street sides or even under trees. Two respondents stated that tombstone or their ancestor's name gave this festival a solemn and silent affection (S12, S19). Besides, one female respondent (S11) regarded crying as a reasonable behaviour which produced a sorrow mood but release a real love and missing towards departed relatives (Lens, 2012).

4) Dumpling Festival

Due to the fact that not much commercial promotion and public activities are held in Malaysia during this festival, no respondent related any concerned items or events about atmospherics of this festival.

5) Winter Solstice

Although no participant mentioned positive points of atmospherics, there were two respondents who gave negative reason to illustrate their minimal motivation to attend this festival, namely, there is no winter with snow or feeling cold within the physical body (S2, S12).

3.4 Discussion

Table 3.11 Availability of Elements for Each Festival

Festival	Ritual	Food	Entertainment	Atmospherics
Chinese New Year	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tomb-Sweeping Festival	✓	×	×	×
Dumpling Festival	×	✓	×	×
Mid-Autumn Festival	×	✓	×	✓
Winter Solstice	×	✓	×	×

Table 3.11 manifested the availability of the four elements for each festival. Although all the thirty participants provided evaluation of festival commitment, they did not have the knowledge of festival's elements, let alone the correlation between the level of commitment and the elements of festival. Therefore, the researcher predicted the possibility of individual deviation. That is, the respondent might give a high score to his or her commitment to one festival, however, not too much narration were coded into the elements of festival (i.e. ritual, food, entertainment, and atmospherics) and vice versa.

In this section, the researcher scrutinized every value and its corresponding story so as to present an in-depth analysis sequenced by the five Chinese festivals, namely, Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, and Winter Solstice. Following the algorithm in Section 3.1.2, a score from eight to ten points was

regarded as high commitment whilst a rank from zero to four points was regarded as low commitment.

Chinese New Year

In the present study, twenty-five of the participants involved themselves in the festival with high commitment while two female participants (S7, S29) were with low commitment. As a whole, most of the participants with high commitment told their stories with the coverage of the four elements integrally except that ten of them (S5, S6, S10, S14, S21, S23, S24, S26, S28, and S30) who failed to state clearly about the entertainment part. Meanwhile, both of the two low-committed participants offered insufficient description regarding those elements with only one exception that a female participant (S7) referred to *decoration* under the category of atmospherics.

Mid-Autumn Festival

There were six high-committed and two low-committed participants altogether regarding this festival. Not surprisingly, all the six high-committed participants made references to food and ritual with only one male participant (S3) who talked about Lantern Parade as entertainment whereas another male participant (S10) did not refer to atmospherics.

Quite the opposite, the female participant (S28) mentioned mooncake as festival food and eating mooncakes as festival ritual though she graded the lowest score (three points) to her commitment toward this festival. At the same time, she talked about gift packages and full moon as festival atmospherics. The other female participant (S7) did not emphasize the

importance of mooncake but she would eat it if other family members shared with her as usual.

Tomb-Sweeping Festival

To begin with, a female participant (S30) offered a distinctive highest level of commitment (ten points) whilst rating for other festival is low, no more than seven points. In her case, she did not mention food or entertainment because Tomb-Sweeping Festival is a ritual, a solemn affair rather than a festive event.

Based on the results from rating scales, eleven (11) people assessed their commitment into lower level. No clues are traced in the content of entertainment which is as expected. However, five of them (S6, S12, S14, S16, S17) made references of atmospherics and one female participant (S9) referred to fasting as her festival food. As for ritual, only two of them did not mention it while the others referred to sweeping tomb, ancestor worship, etc.

Dumpling Festival

It is impossible to find a highly committed participant who celebrates this festival. All the thirty (30) participants with low-commitment perceived that it is difficult to speak of ritual or atmospherics. An interesting finding lies in the context of entertainment where a female participant (S21) chose to *go hiking* on that day. Moreover, eleven of the thirteen low-committed participants still treated rice dumpling as a festival food whilst two female participants (S7, S9) did not talk about any specific food.

Winter Solstice

In the aggregate, three high-committed participants only elaborated on festival food and ritual related to *Tang Yuan* and reunion dinner and ignored the content of entertainment and atmospherics.

Despite that, sixteen participants were in the group of low-committed participants which is also the largest proportion in that group, they left no blank in the four elements. Specifically, nine of them referred to food and eight referred to ritual. A male participant (S12) preferred to play with friends (entertainment) whilst two other males (S1, S20) supplemented no snow in the description of atmospherics.

3.5 Summary

A general survey of demographic information was conducted to fully understand the participants' background and their experience in celebrating Chinese festivals and their urban life style. Next, the mean value of these five festivals, i.e. Chinese New Year, Tomb-Sweeping Festival, Dumpling Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Winter Solstice showed the different level of commitment towards celebrating festivals perceived by 30 Chinese working adults from high to low in Table 3.12, mirrored as integral situation.

Table 3.12 Mean Values of respondents committed score for five festivals

Mean Value ≥ 8	$8 > \text{Mean Value} > 5$	Mean Value ≤ 5
Chinese New Year	Mid-Autumn Festival	Tomb-Sweeping Festival Dumpling Festival Winter Solstice

Source: Data from analysis of Section 3.2

Data analysis was conducted by coding festival elements from four aspects (ritual, food, entertainment, and atmospherics) to understand how these respondents celebrated

festivals and which activities or events they emphasized. The results of coding illustrated that level of commitment is influenced by the availability of festival elements. The more elements were employed, the higher the commitment was perceived by respondents. For example, most respondents would rate a festival as high commitment when they mentioned all four elements observed or practiced during Chinese New Year (Table 3.13).

Table 3.13 The Level of commitment and Availability

Festival Variables	Level of Commitment (Average perceived score)	Availability (included elements)
Chinese New Year	8.3	4
Mid-Autumn Festival	6.4	2
Tomb-Sweeping Festival	4.9	1
Winter Solstice	4.4	1
Dumpling Festival	4.4	1

However, the level and availability could not explain some special cases when some respondents gave very low commitment scores for Chinese New Year or very high commitment scores for Winter Solstice. Thus, it is necessary to explore these special cases or contrast by an analysis of these respondents' experience celebrating festivals. In the next Chapter, personal impact and triggering events would be highlighted to provide a more complete perspective on this topic at a more micro level.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL IMPACTS AND TRIGGERING EVENTS

4.1 Personal Impact

Chinese festivals are mostly family orientated and are celebrated as an in-group event. The results were based on the answers to the third question in Section Two of the interview (see Appendix 3). Twenty-nine (29) respondents acknowledged that their parents or family members were the people who most influenced them and played a significant role in facilitating their commitment and celebration. Only one respondent highlighted “self” as key factor of commitment.

Table 4.1 People Who Influenced Respondents Most Regarding Festival Commitment

People	Respondents
Parents or family members	Except for S29
Friends	S1, S9, S13, S18, S21
Business partners	S3
Elder	S6, S12, S19, S30
Self	S27, S29

Source: Data from interview, 2014-2015

From Table 4.1, the result of investigation indicated that respondents' commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals were basically influenced by their family. Moreover, their personal impact should be more connected with Chinese family norms and values.

Accordingly, the researcher coded some key words about family values from responses to the fourth and fifth question when respondents gave high perceived commitment points (points \geq 8). Afterward, this study found that reunion, filial piety, sharing with others, respect for traditions, and honouring ancestors are five main impacts on respondents.

Table 4.2 Main Impacts of Chinese festivals on working adults

Festival	Impacts	Occurrences	Respondents
Chinese New Year	Reunion	25	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S10, S11, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, and S30
	Filial piety	9	S3, S8, S10, S11, S13, S14, S15, S18, and S30
	Relaxing	10	S4, S8, S11, S14, S16, S17, S18, S24, S27, S28, and S30
	Respect for traditions	13	S1, S2, S5, S6, S8, S13, S15, S16, S18, S19, S23, S24, and S30
	Honouring ancestors	4	S2, S13, S17, and S30
	Chinese virtues	1	S13
Tomb-Sweeping Festival	Honouring ancestors	1	S30
	Filial piety	1	S30
Dumpling Festival	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mid-Autumn Festival	Reunion	6	S3, S10, S18, S22, S25, and S26
Winter Solstice	Reunion	3	S24 S25 and S26
	Relaxing	1	S24
	Respect for traditions	1	S24

Source: Data extracted from interview, 2014-2015.

4.1.1 Reunion

Reunion is one of the key family values in celebrating the season of Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival and Winter Solstice (Foo, 2014; Roth, 2012; Yang, 2008; Stafford, 2000).

In conversation with respondents, they emphasized that reunion was like one kind of belief which appealed to their urgent desire to finish the work in advance and go home earlier.

Reunion does not only mean to gather with family but also reflect Chinese close kinship and love passed on from generation to generation. For instance, when S2 and S13 answered Q3, they underlined this point clearly (See Appendix 3).

“I cherish every time of reunion and having dinner with my parents and sisters. Because of work, I always go to China and miss [accompanying] my family at weekend. So reunion as a tradition [of Chinese New Year] to observe, is very important to me. My parents are getting older and I feel my obligation [of taking care of them] is not enough. I love them and I must go home during celebration season [of Chinese New Year].”

-Male, management consultant

“Even my parents always complain that I am an old girl during the celebration of Chinese New Year, but I am still happy and smile I enjoy the time of reunion and caring [for them]. Everyone knows how important getting together with family members when Chinese New Year comes.”

-Female, single

4.1.2 Filial Piety

Through responses of Q2 of Section 3.1, it is indicated that 95% of respondents regarded their parents or family members as the ones who most influenced their commitment towards celebrating festivals, especially parents. Some respondents stressed that filial piety is a major family value which obligated them to celebrate festivals (S2, S14), as correlative research also revealed this point (Li, 2013; Xie, 2013; Li, 2011; Waston, 2004).

“Sitting with parents from busy work and accompanying them when seasons of celebrating festival come, for me, are something I should do as an expression of filial piety. This is a Chinese tradition.”

-Male, who highlights Chinese traditions in life

“Since young, as children, our (he and his sister), parents gave us the best food, clothing and allowed to play freely during celebrating of festivals. How can we not in return do our part when we have ability to let our parents enjoy festivals with us? Filial Piety is basic principle for me and [is] important.”

-Male, successor of family business

4.1.3 Sharing with Others

One salient value in celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival is sharing with family members or friends, mooncakes or other food, as noted in Lei's (2015) study.

“It is important to share your mooncakes, emotion and experience with others when I celebrate it. I worked in China for several years before, once I felt so homesick when everyone went to celebrate [as public holiday in China] but I was alone. One of my colleagues invited me and shared food with me. I felt better and thanked her for sharing.”

-Female, who has experience working in Beijing, China

4.1.4 Respecting Ancestor

Respect and gratitude to ancestors are other core values of these traditional festivals. Some respondents also expressed that as younger generation, they must learn the spirit of elder generation, bear hardships and endure hard work (Cohen, 1992). This view was especially stressed by two respondents (S3 and S30).

“We must respect our ancestor and thank them for bearing hardship since they came to Malaysia. They did not originate from this land and live here, but brought Chinese spirit here and we should inherit and pass from them to next generation.”

-Male, married female from Mainland China

“I am very positive to attend [this festival], because my grandmother loved me very much and taught me a lot about life. My family is not rich but we work hard that we learn from my grandmother. She always did temporary work to support her family. That is unforgettable. I really miss her.”

-Female

4.2 Triggering Events Influencing Commitment towards Celebrating Festivals

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Hagedorn (2000) theoretically explains triggers. Associating them with events that change or transform in life, such as changes in life stages, change in family-related or personal circumstances, and change in mood or emotional state. However, in the context of celebrating festivals, this term should be explained particularly under some events influencing celebration.

In this thesis, this term is firstly adapted as two terms, major triggering event and minor triggering events following Hagedorn’s definition, namely major life events - such as

divorce and other family occurrences, life and career level changes, and a person's sense of festival - that alter the person's commitment to festival celebration. And minor life events was mentioned such as quarrelling, some small cases which has limited effected towards making decision or alter the person's commitment to festival celebration.

4.2.1 Major Triggering Events

Major triggering events in this thesis refer to specific events which make great influence on personal commitment towards celebrating festivals. Through coding and the general descriptions of respondents, major triggering events involve two specific aspects in this research, namely religious conversion, and increase or decrease in the numbers of family members.

Conversion to Christianity

Religious conversion from traditional Chinese beliefs to Christianity reflected in two respondents' narratives (S1 and S29) illustrates that religion could be a great impact in commitment towards celebrating festivals.

“I have experienced religious conversion twice. Lately, I became a Christian. I like thinking. Since I converted, I rethink about meaning and function of ritual in ethnic festival celebration. Therefore, I have to adjust my view on ancestor worship and corresponding behaviours in celebrating Tomb-sweeping festival. I never prayed for blessing from ancestors or give blessing to ancestors as before. I also do not burn paper money or joss sticks. In my opinion, maybe placing flowers and pray in the name of God, Jesus is the best way to commemorate ancestors' hardship with grateful emotion. ”

-Chinese Christian, actively participates in church service

“I converted to Christianity at 14 years of age, when I lived with my grandmother all the time. She is Christian and always gave me some stories in Bible in an interesting way. She prefer celebrating Christian festivals with explanation that they provide more time and space to connect with more people under the call of God. I gradually

accept her viewpoint. I also think that Chinese New Year and other ethnic festivals are too confined in small scope, family or specific location.”

-Chinese Christian, seldom went back to her hometown

From the above, it is clear that conversion to Christianity is a major triggering event in respondents' festival commitment. Rituals that are part of Chinese festivals no longer are practiced by Chinese who converted to Christianity. In addition, some slight conflicts within the family also have connection with concepts of practising rituals under different religious backgrounds.

Increase or Decrease in the numbers of Family Members

Death of relatives is grieved by most Chinese people, especially during the celebration or some reunion-themed festival, such as Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival. Two respondents, S7 and S16's narratives highlight the significant influence of deceased family members on commitment towards celebrating festivals.

“Since my mother passed away, I have no mood to celebrate. I hope others do not know I have an imperfect family. I feel inferior and jealous at the beginning when other family celebrate Chinese New Year in happiness. In addition, my father is Thai, non-Chinese. He has not participated in ethnic festivals since my mother left us. I followed his suggestion to avoid celebrating Chinese festivals but have devoted ourselves to Buddhist festivals.”

-Female, Buddhist

“My grandfather passed away during Chinese New Year, at that time I had just been married, less than a year. According to the traditional Chinese rules of marriage and funeral, my uncles and aunties did not allow me to attend my grandfather's funeral. This memory gave me a negative mood to celebrate Chinese New Year.”

- Buddhist, respect traditional customs

Birth of children brings a change in family structure. In Chinese view, children add young vitality and hope for the future of Chinese family and perpetuate lifeline of the family.

At the same time, parents' responsibility and pressure increased due to financial issues or

additional duty of caring. S28's narratives highlight the significant influence of birth of children on commitment towards celebrating festivals.

"I have two children, one is 4 years old and another is 2 years old. Taking care of them led me to give up working for a period of time. I have felt very happy when I brought my child to attend family party or celebration especially Chinese New Year. Although current pressure still exists on financial issues, I am working hard to support my family. Wearing beautiful clothes, eating healthy food and playing and having fun with my cute children brings me satisfaction especially when they are celebrating festivals. That increases my willingness to be more committed towards celebrating festivals."

-Married, Christian

4.2.2 Minor Triggering Events

In the aggregate, five minor triggering events occurred in participants' lives, namely, traffic jam, financial pressure, boredom or dislike of festival food, diversification of entertainment, and time and distance. The researcher provided the correlative extracts of participants and analysed the five minor triggers respectively.

Traffic Jam

Traffic jam is an annoying thing at rush hour, especially if it happens before Chinese New Year' Eve. S4's narratives also indicate this point that traffic jam slightly influenced the commitment towards celebrating festivals when he remembered his experience that happened on the way home before the eve of Chinese New Year.

"Traffic jam is a terrible thing on my way back to hometown several hours before Chinese New Year's Eve. I feel worried and tired when there is nothing to do but sit in the car and listen to the radio. But when I start to think of wonderful moment of celebrating Chinese New Year, this is worth waiting for several hours for the reunion."

-Always on the road for business, his family was in Ipoh

Financial Pressure

Financial pressure to a certain degree confines discretionary spending or purchasing power during celebrating festivals. Celebration as an individual, Chinese person will consider whether he or she can afford much expenditure on festival spending and consumption, such as giving money for red envelopes and sending gifts for relatives. S27's narratives indicate financial pressure slightly influenced commitment towards celebrating festivals.

"I dislike wasting my money for buying firecrackers or spending a lot money for reunion dinner, but for matter of *saving face*, sometimes I have to pay and attend. That really made me feel pressured and uncomfortable because I am repaying my housing loan. However, I have to pretend to express my happiness to meet the other person"

-Male, bank clerk

Boredom or Dislike of Festival Food

Preference for food or specific flavours depends on personal living environment and emotions. Affection and aversion of festival food has an impact on commitment towards celebrating festivals as reflected by S3, S7, and S11. Affection of festival food brings positive impact, while aversion leads to negative impact to some degree.

"Hometown delicacies are always attractive to me. I really enjoy the process of making food with family members. That improves my sense of achievement."

- Female, food lover

"Familiar taste of festival food let me feel good and comfortable. I cherish the value of family reunion and opportunity of sharing delicious food with my family members. I like whatever my mom cooked and want to learn mom's cooking skills. I also enjoy the situation of getting family together for eating and chatting."

- Male, restaurant manager

"I am not fond of eating *Tang Yuan* because I think it is not tasty. However, I never refuse to eat them if my family members and friends invite me to eat. I will eat one or two."

-Male, family originated from Fujian

Diversification of Entertainment

Nowadays, modernization enriches choices of entertainment with no exception of celebrating festival celebration. For instance, some people are not attracted by traditional festival entertainment, but are keener on travelling, playing online games or others. S8 and S25 narrated that new entertainment gradually has become a new routine in their festival celebration. This supported Hsu's (1985) comments that in the traditional Chinese family, family leisure and recreation were common, but the contemporary Chinese do not share the same view. Furthermore, Isralowitz and Ong (1990) commented that the younger adults have more autonomy now in deciding their own leisure activities.

"I prefer playing online games with friends at home. It saves money and kills time easily. Festival is also holiday. Why not spend it for relaxation and celebrate in your own way? By the way, I try to teach my parents to play games, too."

-Male, telecom company officer

"I like travelling very much. If compared with traditional games, I would go hiking or visiting some places outside of my house with my parents. That is better than staying at home watching boring TV programmes and playing card games or *Mah-jong*. As young man, we should do something in fashion and different."

-Male, shop assistant

Time and Distance

An interpretation of ethnographic data collected in this study revealed that the tradition of returning to home of the ancestors or where the eldest surviving kin resides (e.g. parents or grandparents from the paternal side) was compromised. This appears to happen largely because some of the younger generations left their place of birth and moved away from their home in the rural countryside to the urban centres in search of jobs and a better life (Chuan, 2012: 136).

There are fifteen respondents who do not live in KL and ten of their families do not stay around cities in the Klang Valley area. For better life and career, they left their hometown

and sacrificed time to accompany family members everyday as well. Some festivals were also given up due to time and distance. As some respondents mentioned, their regretful mood and some methods of compensation for their family members were shown as below.

“I am really busy and just pray for free time at weekend. Thus, I can drive back to celebrate some festival earlier or later.”

-Family in Melaka, working overtime once every two Saturdays

“I will feel a little disappointed if I miss some important moment with my family. However, [I have] no choice. No work, no life support. If I can take leave or annual leave, I will buy some gifts or nourishment for them to make up the time I cannot stay with them.”

-Family in Penang, usually takes flight back to hometown to save time

“My parents always understand me, even when I cannot go back to celebrate some festival. I have to give in because of time and distance, which do not mean I neglect to celebrate it completely. Usually, I will make a call and express my happiness even though I cannot enjoy the celebration with my family members. In another way as my compensation, I happily stay with my students and share photos with my parents when I come back. That is why I always organize extra-curricular activities for students during weekends.”

-His family was in Perak, teacher

4.3 Discussion

Goffman's dramaturgy theory, face saving theory (Ting and Kurogi, 1998) politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and a series of relative theories are applicable in the analysis of many fields of research, especially in sociology. In the context of Chinese culture, face saving theory (Qi, 2011) and theory of politeness (Mao, 1994) are used to explain why people believe and behave differently in public and private space. For example, when a Chinese family eats out in a restaurant, usually the older will eat first and the younger will follow. However, when they eat at home, it is not a serious tradition to follow the order of who starts eating, sometimes the younger eats without waiting for the older.

In this study, through reading respondents' narratives, their beliefs and behaviours seem to have a certain relation to the concept of saving face in public space which is related to the explanation of the theory of dramaturgy. The respondents' different background, their personal perceived impacts caused by festivals and triggering events by commitment towards celebrating festivals can be linked to Goffman's theory and relative theories about saving face.

Furthermore, conversion to Christianity is a major triggering event in this study. As a Chinese born in a traditional family, respondent S3 claims that his major argument with family happened during the ritual of celebrating Tomb-sweeping festival. However, being sensitive to the feelings of parents, he still attended the ritual but never burned paper and worshiped ancestors again since he converted. This situation of being in attendance during a ritual can be read as a pattern to maintain the "face" of the whole family, i.e. when they appear in cemetery and meet other acquaintance.

Another case of conversion to Christianity is seemingly a little different. This female respondent (S29) thinks it is not necessary to go back home for celebrating CNY due to work. However, she expressed she will take leave for celebrating Christmas and Easter. This illustrated that her impression presented to public is that she prefers demonstrating that she is a Christian to being a Chinese. For her, keeping her religious identity is more important than Chinese culture. Of course, her grandmother's Christian influence cannot be neglected, which may be the key factor to build her identity, namely her committed portrayal at the front stage and back stage.

Change of family structure is considered as another main triggering event, namely the increase or decrease in the number of family members. In the case of a female respondent (S7), her mother's passing became a direct factor reducing her commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals. Under this situation, we can see she has to focus on being a Buddhist to avoid memories of her experience of celebrating family-oriented festival with her mother when she was a child. It is a strategy to saving face and avoiding uncomfortable feelings when some relatives or friends visit during celebration and inevitably or unintentionally have a family themed talk especially one that mentions parents.

Another female respondent (S16) expressed her regret about not being allowed to attend her grandfather's funeral as a newly married woman when he passed away during the festival of Chinese New Year. However, she chose to follow advice from her elders in order to save face of her family in respecting traditions and filial obedience.

On the contrary, increasing numbers of family members is a happy thing such as having a baby. As a mother to two children, respondent (S28) said that bringing her children to visit relatives or friends makes her more committed to celebrate Chinese festivals. A traditional Chinese concept is, the more children, the more blessings. She is willing to show the happiness of her family with two children at public space. At the same time, she does not ignore her expression of financial pressure in private. However, in comparison, in this case, the positive influencing power of having a baby is stronger than the negative one.

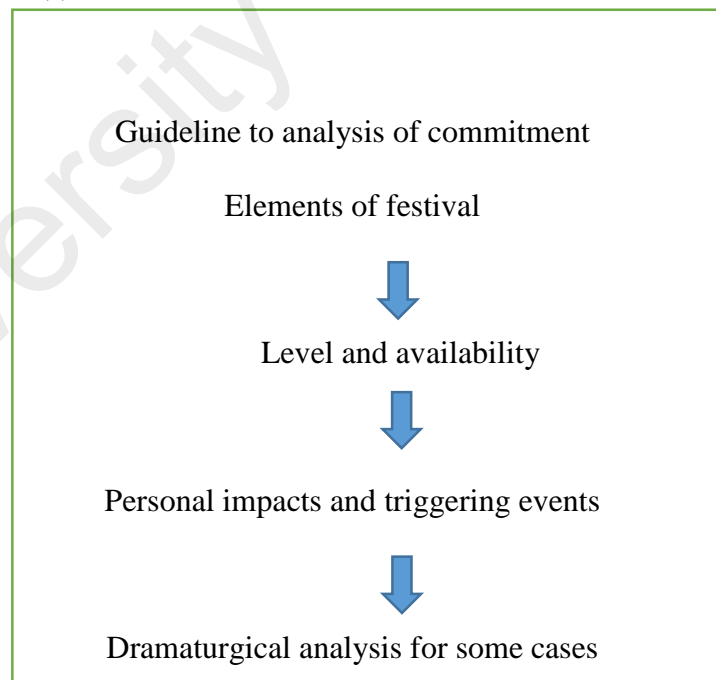
As minor triggering events, these do not strongly influence commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals. However, some cases were worthy of note that new ways of young working adults in appreciating celebrations reflected their different understanding of celebrating Chinese festivals compared to their older generation. With the abundance of food and constant entertainment, young working adults seem to break away from traditions. Some cases indicate traditional food and entertainment are no longer as attractive to some respondents, as the result of the interviews indicate.

For the Hokkien people in Malaysia, their images should normally link to a commitment to celebrating Winter Solstice and eating Tang yuan (rice dumpling). However, one male respondent (S11) voiced that he disliked eating it but if his friend or family members invited him to eat, he will. His case tells us that he desires to commit to gathering with friends and family members as part of saving face in public space and conceal his dislike at the back stage.

Another case is about a respondent's new idea for festival entertainment. He (S8) likes playing online games which may lead to a lack of communication between family members. Similarly, another respondent (S25) would like to travel abroad with family during Chinese New Year. Their viewpoints are accepted by more and more young working adults as a male respondent (S2) mentioned: "these festivals should be like a holiday or a program to enrich our life". From this, the study found that young Chinese working adults just retain the function of festival entertainment but adopt new forms of entertainment patterns that move with the times.

Lastly in the case of financial pressure, a bank clerk, mentioned his objection to wasting money for gift giving and setting off fireworks. However, although he was reluctant to fulfil some of the costly traditions, he still spent money for the festival gifts and paying the bill for reunion meals with relatives and friends. This showed that his behaviour in the front stage and back stage are different because the necessary expenditure he incurred according to him, has a function to keep close relationship with members of a Chinese group and protect his image or face-saving in expressing an image of a person who has a reasonable income as a working adult.

The discussion above shows the application of the dramaturgy theory and utility in the analysis of some triggering events that support the theoretical explanation here. Therefore, this present study provides a guideline to the analysis of commitment towards celebrating a certain ethnic festival(s) as demonstrated as below.



Source: Adopted from the analysis of Chapter 4.

In addition, this study also reveals that the application of the dramaturgy theory as well as face saving theory and theory of politeness are appropriate to studying commitment to celebrating traditional or ethnic festivals by young Chinese working adults in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This research focuses on commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals among young Chinese working adults. The thirty (30) respondents interviewed in this study provide rich narratives for analysis of their level of commitment, personal impact and related triggering events.

For the level of commitment, this present study used mean and contrast values as tools to estimate their commitment scale and categorised respondents into different groups, namely higher than 8 or lower than 5. Generally, commitment towards festival celebration of young Chinese working adults is highest in celebrating Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival, their mean values are 8.3 and 6.4. And other three festivals' mean values are all lower than 5. And contrast was reflected by two situation, one is that most respondents gave high points but this single respondent gave a very low point, and another is that most respondents gave low points but one respondent gave a very high point. For example, one respondent gave a 3 point score for Chinese New year but most respondents gave 8. This result indicates most young Chinese working adults still celebrate Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival as the two main important festivals in their mind, but the other three festivals are generally not so popular compared to those two.

After coding respondents' narratives, this study found that the level of commitment is closely associated with the availability of festival elements, namely practising ritual,

making or consuming food, participating or organizing entertainment, and creating atmospheres of festivals. Although public holiday is a key factor to provide time for celebrating, this research highlighted importance of the four main categories of festival elements. To reiterate these elements, the more elements are practiced, the higher the level of commitment scores.

For personal impact, this research linked the impacts at personal level to the traditional Chinese family values, and there are four main perspectives involved. Ranking them from the most to the least mentioned by respondents, i.e. reunion, filial piety, sharing with others, and respecting ancestors are recorded as important impacts for these Chinese working adults. Through analysis of their narratives, this research also found that parents were the people who played a key role in building their commitment towards celebrating Chinese festivals.

Next, this study extracted some events and labelled them into two groups based on the degree they influenced respondents' commitment, namely major triggering events and minor triggering events. Conversion to Christianity, change of family structure are two important events which brought big effect on respondents' commitment. Meanwhile, traffic jam, financial pressure, boredom or dislike of festival food, and diversification of entertainment are four minor triggering events. For further exploration of these events, this study also applied dramaturgy theory and relative theory for analysing different respondents' beliefs and behaviours at public and private space.

Through dramaturgical analysis, this study found that Chinese working adults would consider appreciated or expected behaviours with family, friends and social network for saving face. However, they concealed the other side which expressed their dissatisfaction or reluctance to attend some festivals. At the same time, this study also verified the use of the dramaturgy theory as very appropriate for probing into some deep layers of certain events.

Finally, a guideline for researching on commitment towards traditional or ethnic festivals are generalised through four steps in this study. Firstly, coding the festival elements is the basis of research. Secondly, the level of commitment is scaled by points to find out the availability of festival elements. Thirdly, personal impact and triggering events are extracted from different groups depending on respondents' narratives. Lastly, utilising dramaturgical analysis for triggering events is purposeful as an effective way to clearly explain some points behind the events.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

As a study focusing on Malaysian Chinese, this research provides a general discussion on the Chinese festivals celebrated in Malaysia. This study, however, does not involve other ethnic festivals, such as that of the Malays, Indians, and other minorities in Malaysia. Moreover, whether the research method used in this study is also applicable for Chinese working adults in other areas in Malaysia or countries outside Malaysia needs further investigation.

As a researcher of the present study, I suggest that adding more samples for coding more specific triggering events will provide an improved pattern for enriching the database of this type of study. In addition, annual research on the same group of respondents is another

perspective to observe their changing commitment towards celebrating ethnic festivals. This provides the possibility to explore if the effects of triggering events are different or remain with changing times.

Lastly, further study under this topic is suggested to probe further different elements based on festivals of different ethnic groups.

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