

# Research

four stages

of the **sign-order**

01

It is the reflection of a basic reality.

(the image is a good appearance - representation is of the sacramental order.)

02

It masks and perverts a basic reality.

(it is an evil appearance - it is of the order of maleficence.)

03

It masks the absence of a basic reality.

(it plays at being an appearance - it is of the order of sorcery.)

04

It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

(it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation.)



01

Ancient Chinese artifacts in museums & food imported from China in asian supermarkets...



02

Chinese-style decor in Chinatown like the gate or lanterns are **modified** to suit Western tastes, partially losing their original authenticity.



03

Food items with Chinese characters and pagoda motifs aim to **represent 'Chinese style'** but do not relate to authentic Chinese culture, existing only as visual symbols.



04

Chinese-themed booths or dragon motif in theme parks or shopping malls, which purely for creating an **exotic atmosphere**, without any authentic link to Chinese culture.

01



Photograph of Big Ben: A faithful copy directly reflecting the original.

02



Big Ben replica in a university campus: A symbol pretending to be real but lacking cultural or historical ties. aims at create a certain "international" atmosphere.

03



Big Ben photo hanging in a bathroom: A decorative image of Big Ben, detached from any real significance, just a quirky reminder of "London."

04



Big Ben refrigerator magnet: A purely symbolic item with no relation to Big Ben itself, only a playful reference to "London."

Do cultures increasingly become simulacra?



Authentic culture

Serve local communities

Copy of the original

Commodified symbol

Tourist sites

Pure Simulacrum

# Primary Research

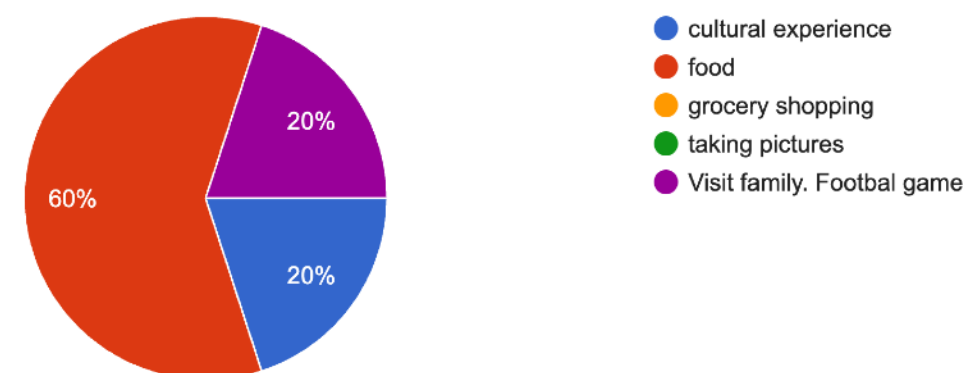
Do the cultural symbols you see here (such as architectural styles, decor, restaurant names) align with your impression of China?

Yes it feels like china when there

Yes

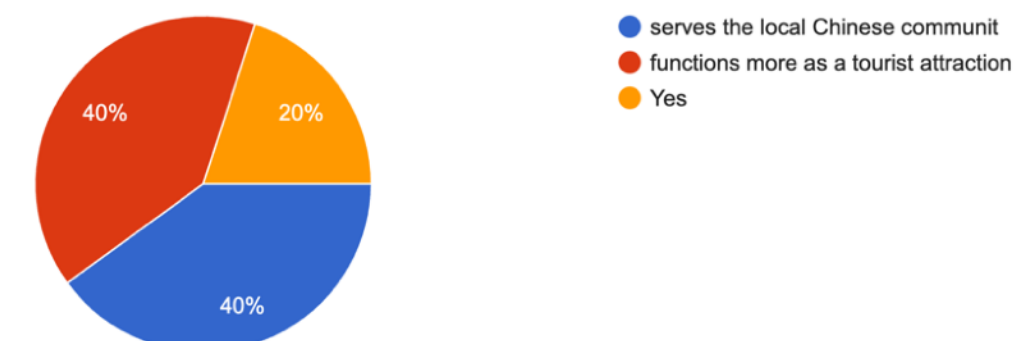
What motivated you to visit Chinatown?

5 responses



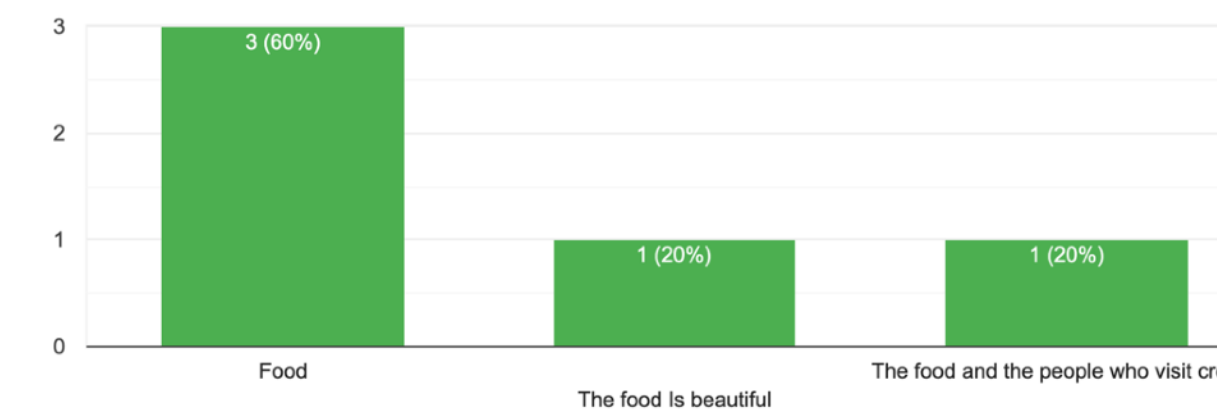
Do you think Chinatown primarily serves the local Chinese community or functions more as a tourist attraction?

5 responses



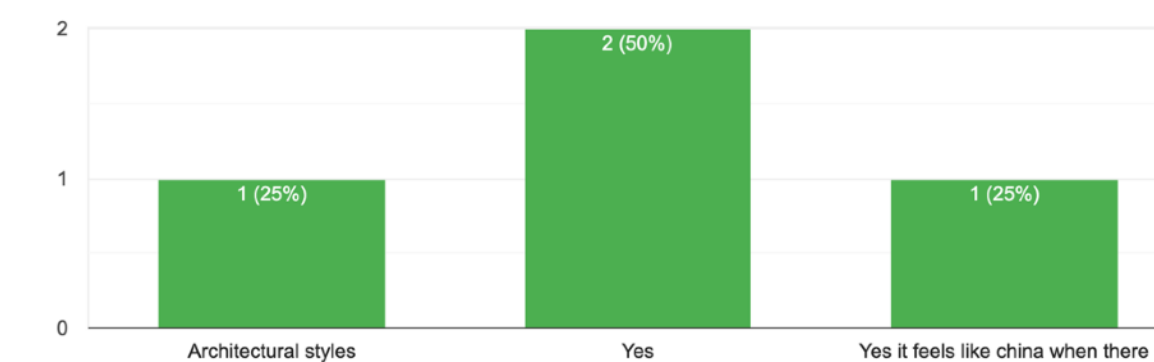
What aspects of Chinatown interest you the most (e.g., food, architecture, festivals)?

5 responses



Do the cultural symbols you see here (such as architectural styles, decor, restaurant names) align with your impression of China?

4 responses



两千年初，房地产兴起之时，中国风潮时兴  
引进国外建筑风格。

如今，中国经济快速发展，国民自信提升，  
建筑风格也不再流行西式风情。

After living in Shanghai for 16 years  
Thomas Town provides a nice taste of  
home. Its authentic architecture reminds  
of England everyday.

Simon

链接：王兵叔  
个人见解：泰晤士小镇由阿特金斯为  
总设计师打造五大新城之首地标性建筑  
体系，全套英伦风格元素，190栋建筑围园  
而建。泰晤士名称，由英国母亲河泰晤士河  
而来。小镇居住条件优美，全镇水系  
环绕，打卡流落圣地。度假散心以  
来之地。著名景点有“天主教堂”“钟书阁”  
“侏罗湖”“美术馆”等。自带商业衣食住行  
一体化！推荐欢迎来到泰晤士。

吸引。在中国将近一个世纪之前以捕鱼为主的  
村镇，在发展并引进欧洲建筑风的小镇，  
给人“新鲜”之感，夜晚来此镇散步，吃饭等都  
有别样的心意。了解到不同的文化，建筑风格  
新奇，见识到外国文化。

可以感受到不一样的文化风情。  
心情也会不一样

文化是多元的，在发展中华传统文化的同时，看到更  
为更丰富的文化色彩是一件很美好的事，我可以欣  
赏中华的对称美，也可以欣赏西方的独特性。美  
是单一的，世界是美好的。  
中国是美好的



Simon, Thames Town, Shanghai, 2024

After living in Shanghai for 16 years  
Thames Town provides a nice taste of  
home. Its authentic architecture reminds  
of England everyday.  
Simon

Simon, who is originally from Newcastle, described the architecture in Thames town, a simulated British town in Shanghai, as authentic and said it provides a taste of home. This highlights how people often struggle to distinguish between reality and simulation, aligning with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. This confusion is a key motivation behind my project.

Ethnically themed Chinatowns could be treated as what Baudrillard called a “third order of simulacra” that are found in the postmodern age. As opposed to representations that are a product of reality, these simulated representations are prior to, and therefore determine, what is “real” for the viewer. The postmodern observer’s inability to distinguish between reality and the simulacrum is the result of a number of forces, especially the powerful media culture that not only relays information but also interprets it for the receiver.