



# Integrating Chinese Five Elements philosophy into holistic multi-sensory experiences: Cultivating brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers in the luxury fragrance industry.

University of the Arts London, London College of Fashion, MA Fashion Design Management, Master's Project  
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## 01 Abstract and Introduction

The study explores how international luxury perfume brands in China utilize the Chinese philosophy of the Five Elements to engage Gen Z consumers. However, these efforts often lack depth and fail to fully incorporate multi-sensory experiences that align with this demographic's desire for cultural authenticity. Through semi-structured interviews with nine Chinese Gen Z consumers, it was found that they prefer personalized experiences involving the five senses, particularly immersive Five Elements-themed activities that foster emotional connections and brand trust. Additionally, the research expands Oliver's (1997) four-stage loyalty model, demonstrating that culturally rich multi-sensory experiences lead to a non-linear development of customer loyalty. This provides luxury perfume brands with insights into effectively integrating the Five Elements to enhance loyalty among Gen Z consumers.



Figure 1. The Five Elements (Author's own, 2025)

## Aim

Explore how global luxury fragrance brands incorporate the Chinese Five Elements philosophy into their holistic multi-sensory experiences, examining its role in fostering brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers.

## 02 Literature Review

The literature review finds that luxury fragrance brands often superficially apply the Chinese Five Elements philosophy, overlooking the dynamic relationships between these elements (Liu and Chang, 2013). There is also a lack of systematic integration with multi-sensory experiences, as research rarely integrates the Five Elements and lacks focus on Chinese Gen Z (Zha et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research on brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z does not adapt to their digital behaviors and cultural identity demands (Chen et al., 2023), as traditional linear loyalty models struggle

Chinese Five Elements Philosophy

Holistic Multi-Sensory Experiences

Brand loyalty in Chinese Gen Z

to explain the non-linear loyalty pathways driven by cultural experiences. Thus, leaving gaps in culturally rooted, multi-sensory loyalty strategies for this demographic.

## 03 Methodology

This study followed Saunders et al.'s (2023) research onion model to explore how luxury fragrance brands utilized the Chinese Five Elements philosophy to enhance multi-sensory experiences and build loyalty among Chinese Gen Z. It used a qualitative design, including semi-structured interviews with nine purposively sampled Chinese Gen Z females. Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, with triangulation and member checking to ensure trustworthiness.

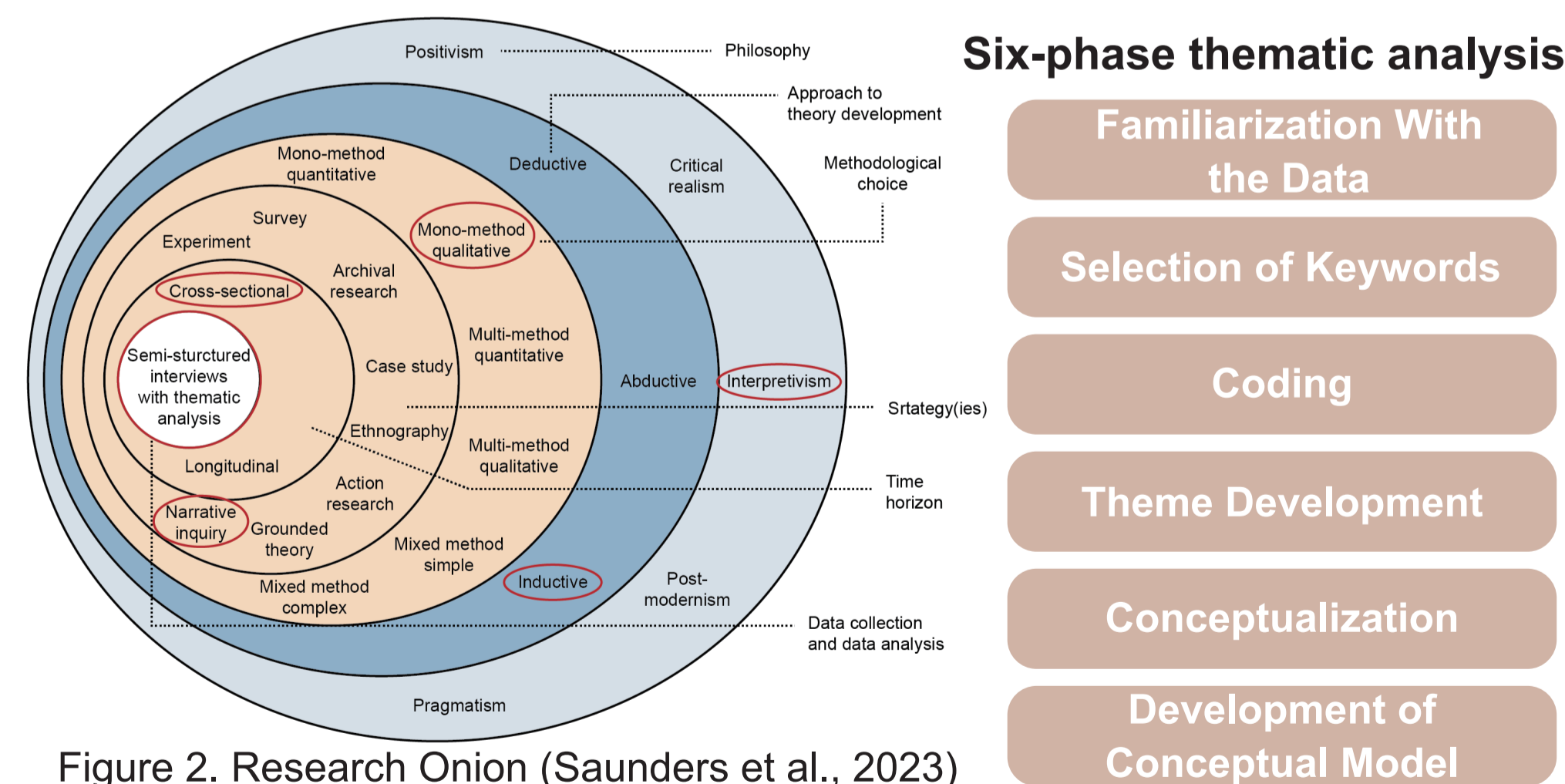


Figure 2. Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2023)

## 04 Finding and Discussion

Chinese Gen Z luxury fragrance consumers reject superficial references to the Five Elements, seeking instead their authentic integration into products. While scent remains the most important sensory factor, it must be harmoniously balanced with other senses. These consumers also value immersive experiences, such as TCM consultations and collaborative workshops. In terms of loyalty, scent preference and product quality foster cognitive loyalty, brand transparency and authenticity build conative loyalty, and immersive experiences enhance action loyalty. Oliver's loyalty model is non-linear in this context, and although AI/AR technologies support personalization, they cannot replace the value of human interaction.

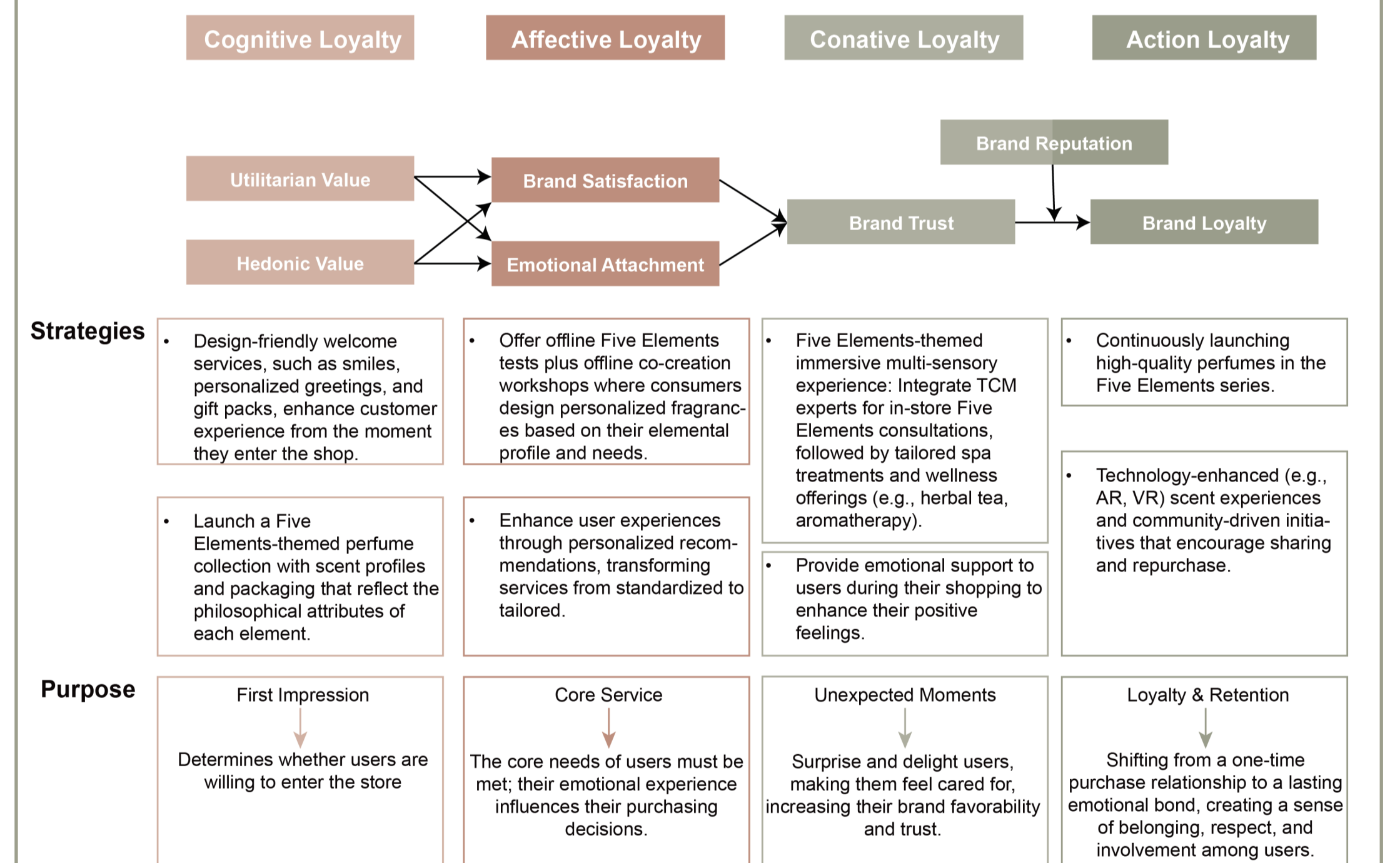


Figure 3. Brand loyalty strategies (Author's own, 2025)

## 05 Conclusion and Future Research

Brands should implement a four-stage strategy themed around the Five Elements. This includes launching themed perfume collections (cognitive), offering Five Elements tests and co-creation workshops (affective), providing immersive in-store experiences (conative), and releasing high-quality series that incorporate AR features (action). Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, including male participants, as well as cross-cultural studies. Additionally, it is important to explore the balance between technology and human interaction.



Figure 4. Five Elements fragrances (Author's own, 2025)

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