

Ruth Yeung and Wallace M. S. Yee

# Retail event: A comparative study between local residents and tourists in spontaneous purchase

## Abstract

*Research on festivals and cultural events draw considerable attention among academics and practitioners. The relationships between marketing influence and spontaneous purchase have been studied in general retail settings; however, there is dearth knowledge of purchase patterns in a festive setting. This study aims to identify what factors motivate attendees to spontaneous purchase and to investigate how local residents and tourists respond in their spontaneous purchase when exposed to stimuli at a special event held infrequently for a short period of time. The flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival was chosen as the study context as it is one of the most popular events in Macau, in which spontaneous purchases are made. A quota sample of 150 local residents and 100 tourists was recruited in November, 2007. The results indicate that product quality, price, and variety are the top three priorities among both local residents and tourists when making purchasing decision at the flower market. Significant differences of free sample tasting and cultural tradition were found between the two segments in purchase intention. The findings allow marketing activities to be highly targeted according to the difference response of local residents and tourists. Future research is also recommended.*

## **Key words:**

*Chinese New Year Festival; flower market; cultural tradition; free sample tasting; purchase on impulse; Macao*

## Introduction

The rapid growth of event festivals receives a lot of attention from travel and tourism industry. Many academics have undertaken research on festivals and special events due to the current trend and its development. Most studies have examined the management of the event organisers, the economic and social impact of festivals and special events, organising and staging special events, motivation of the attendees and residents' attitude and perception towards a mega event (e.g. Crompton & McKay, 1997; Frisby & Getz, 1989; Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004; Koh & Jackson, 2006). Most have focussed on planning and organising an event from a host perspective. Little research has looked at the success or failure of a special event hosting a number of individual vendors, such as the flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival, yet the presence of individual vendors may be a factor giving attendees satisfaction and

**Ruth Yeung**, Ph.D., Institute For Tourism Studies, Macao, China;  
E-mail: ruth@ift.edu.mo

**Wallace M. S. Yee**, Ph.D., University of Macau, Macao, China;  
E-mail: wallacey@umac.mo

causing them to revisit (Koh & Jackson, 2006). Even less research has been conducted on the 'retail event' of individual vendors at the event/festival and how their marketing activities create a stimulus to attendees to purchase in a climate of a high level of competition in the restricted period of the event.

If only festivals or cultural events are carefully designed, it will not only attract local residents' and tourists' participation, but also produce high economic impact in the community. In particular, a special event which highlights a social experience in an infrequently occurring event where there are specific rituals, celebrations, performances or presentations, would add considerable benefit to the community tourist industry (Jago & Shaw, 1998). The increasing number of visitors attending the festivals will boost revenue from tourists as the festival atmosphere increases the level of excitement and anticipation that trigger intention to purchase (Spears, 2006). Spontaneous purchase is likely to be influenced by an unexpected stimulus especially when people are in the situation which is out of daily routine and feeling relaxed (Yeung & Yee, 2010). Understanding the key stimuli leading to spontaneous intention of purchase will provide strategic implication for festivals retailers. The relationship between marketing influence and spontaneous purchase has been studied in general retail setting, however, there is dearth knowledge of purchase patterns in a festive setting and therefore this study fills the gap.

Yeung (2008) states that marketing mix activities may create a stimulus to trigger consumer impulse to purchase under a festival atmosphere; as a result the level of spontaneous purchase is increased. Moreover, the impulse effect differs from one person to another, and is probably dependent on the motives of those attending a special event. A tourist may desire for cultural enrichment whereas a local may want to enjoy inter- or intra-group socialization (Crompton & McKaym, 1997). Identification of an attendee's response helps to develop marketing elements at a special event in an optimal level. As such, the impulse effect of the marketing mix strategies between local residents and tourists is also investigated. The underlying purpose of this study is two fold, first to identify what factors (including non-marketing controlled and marketing-controlled stimuli) motivate attendees to spontaneous purchase, and second to investigate the difference in spontaneous purchase between local residents and tourists when exposed to stimuli at a special event held infrequently for a short period of time.

The flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival was chosen for the study as the festival can be defined as a special event featuring specific ritual and traditional celebration, because of its long history back to the Han Dynasties (207 BC – 219 AD). The rationale of choosing this event is firstly due to its infrequent occurrence (i.e. held only once a year), which would be perceived by local residents or tourists as an opportunity for a cultural experience beyond everyday routine (Getz, 2005). Secondly this event is increasing in popularity which is reflected in the rising numbers of admitted and a new location added in recent years (Vakio, 2009). Thirdly, most products sold in the event contain cultural elements, such as peach blossom representing romance, tanger-

ine plants representing long-lasting relationships, kumquat representing prosperity and a variety of Chinese paintings and snacks for good fortune (Turner, 2009). Chinese traditional cakes were chosen to feature the cultural element and these included sticky rice cake, taro cake, and turnip cake etc; it is a tradition to eat these cakes at the Chinese New Year Festival to wish good luck at the beginning of the year (HKTB, 2007). Hence the festival celebration held in Macau is a unique opportunity to examine the influence of stimuli on attendees' spontaneous purchase.

### **Special events, spontaneous purchase and marketing mix**

Special events or festivals are events that mark a special occasion for celebrating a ritual and cultural ceremony such as national day (Goldblatt, 2008). Such events probably attract many residents and tourists because they are not only infrequently occurred, but also capture the unique moments. The popularity is due to the fact that they provide leisure, social and cultural experiences outside the normal range of choice. The situational environment link with the consumer's excitement of attending the event and can combine to form a unique retail environment so achieving a mutual satisfaction for both the organiser and attendee (Koh & Jackson, 2006). This situation results in increasing visitor spending due to joyous mood and relaxed feeling with the festival events, and growing number of retailers bidding for a market booth to take up business opportunities occurring during the special event.

Yeung and Yee (2010) argue that adopting an appropriate marketing mix strategy during the festival event help to create stimulus to spontaneous purchase that not only provides a short-term effect on revenue, but also long-term effect on the business. As the stimulus creates a relational difference in consumer's emotional state, it subsequently turn the change state into an intention to immediate purchase in particular the stimulus is unexpected (Piron, 1993). Agrawal and Schmidt (2003) suggest that purchase impulses can be created by a single stimulus or a mix of stimuli which is made up from a set of tactical marketing tools or outside the marketing control. Inevitably, the atmosphere of a market place is not under the control of individual retailers, but consumers are exposed to many stimuli which are largely marketing controlled, such as product characteristics, product position on the shelf, and so forth (Kotler, 1973). As such, stimuli may come from marketing controlled factors or otherwise.

### **SPONTANEOUS PURCHASE**

Spontaneous purchase is not necessarily unplanned, but is unlikely to be pre-planned to a large extent (McGoldrick, Betts & Kathleen, 1999). Rook and Hoch (1985) define spontaneous purchase as a sudden desire to act, being in a psychological disequilibrium state, and a decline of cognitive evaluation towards the product being offered. They suggest that the consumer's purchase desire is changing from stage to stage after receiving an unexpected stimulus that brings to the consumer a rapid change in psychological state driven by conscious and unconscious mental processes (Piron, 1991).

Previous studies noted that under the influence of the festival atmosphere and exposure to a marketing controlled stimulus enhances the consumers' desire to purchase on impulse (Applebaum, 1951; Yeung, 2008). In other words, not only does a change of retail environment alter a consumer's mental state from a rational to an emotional desire to purchase, but also the product display, price, packaging, and promotion, as well as cultural traditions specifically encourage spontaneous purchase (e.g. Crawford & Melewar, 2003; McGoldrick, Betts & Kathleen, 1999).

As a special festival event signifies a ritual celebration or cultural ceremony, the motive of local residents to visit probably differs from those of tourists. Though visitors engage in the same festival elements, they may derive different benefits from the experience due to their own particular motive. The locals desire to interact with friends and relatives or just enjoy being present at the event whereas the tourists may like to learn about the culture. The motive for visiting a special event or festival can be a factor in spontaneous purchase because motive is a desire to meet the need which in turn influences behaviour (Iso-Ahola, 1980). For instance, Crompton and McKay (1997) suggest that eating festival food at the event is a means of experiencing a cultural tradition. These individual differences play an important role in the impulse purchase process (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). The following hypothesis was generated:

H1. There are differences in response to the non-marketing / marketing mix elements between locals and tourists at the flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival.

#### **NON-MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI**

According to the theory of event marketing, an event provides a holistic experience that involves cognitive, emotional, sensory and relational values for attendee (Schmitt, 1999). It is particularly true for an event characterised of a gift-oriented holiday, such as Chinese New Year Festival in this study as the event demands for an abundance of festival foods and distinctive goods for ritual customs and gift exchange which driven consumption (Close & Zinkhan, 2009). The consumption attitude can be driven by psychological, societal and cultural factors rather than commercial factors (Zavestoski, 2002).

The non-marketing controlled stimuli may come from the festival itself as the atmosphere increases the level of excitement and anticipation which motivates consumer spontaneous purchase intention. Kotler (1973) comments that a carefully designed retail environment (well planned festival setting in this study) can produce specific emotional effects in the consumer that heighten his/her purchase probability. He further suggests that the atmosphere can be considered as part of the total product. An enjoyment of the retail atmosphere would affect the mood toward impulse buying. A good mood causes people to reward themselves more generously in order to maintain a positive mood state (Cunningham, 1979), which subsequently moves on to spontaneous purchase (Rook & Gardner, 1993). Under such conditions, many purchases are

likely to be made on impulse, because the consumer feels no time pressure at the festival as it is outside the everyday routine. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) found that the more time available, then the greater likelihood to impulse buy. The following hypothesis was generated:

H2. Non-marketing control element is important for spontaneous purchase at the flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival.

### **MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI**

Apparently, marketing controlled stimuli play a major role in consumer spontaneous purchase when the consumer is exposed to these stimuli from the product on the spot. Four key influential factors, namely promotion, product, place and price are identified (Yeung, 2008). Koh and Jackson (2006) investigated these four factors and their effects on the intention of attendees to visit or revisit a county fair in a study on special event marketing. Crawford and Melewar (2003) explain that the exclusive nature of the product at the site adds desire to the impulse purchase. The impact of stimuli may be different for those on holiday compared with those more used to the market. The custom of bringing home gifts from holiday makes the unique festival products attractive and stimulating. The normal buyer behaviour assessment process will give way to impulse due to a higher disposable income for spending on holiday.

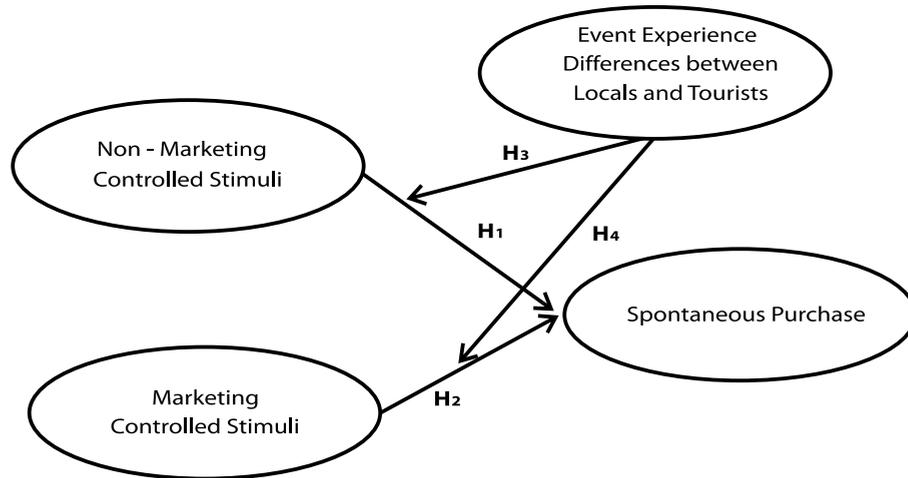
Consumer products that are considered to be impulse items in particular are those characterised by low price or a wide choice, and provide benefit to the consumer. Food products, such as snacks have a higher impulse influence on consumer purchase than non-food products comparatively (Rook & Hoch, 1985). Many academics have shown that promotional devices induce purchase (Appelbaum, 1951; Isoline & Macomber, 2002). These promotion items are grouped in categories like displays, pricing, sample tasting and sales talks. The shape, size and packaging of products all play their part in spontaneous purchase as they differentiate the product in a cluttered retail environment (Isoline & Macomber, 2002). A friendly smile from the sales person in the store contributes to the whole situation. The location or decoration, such as a brightly coloured market stall, can trigger impulse purchase (Rook, 1987). The design of the area can create good effects on the purchaser (Kotler, 1973). As such, the marketing controlled stimuli are not restricted to the traditional 4-Ps marketing mix. Packaging, product quality, product price, product variety, stall decoration, convenient location, healthiness, sales person in the stall, price discount, free sample tasting, and accompanying gift can serve as a stimulus to spontaneous purchase and are included in this study. The following hypothesis was developed.

H3. Marketing control element is important for spontaneous purchase at the flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival.

Figure 1 shows a schematic graphic of the process of marketing controlled and non-marketing controlled stimuli on spontaneous purchase in retail event setting. The 'event experience difference' represents different benefits from event experience due to the different motive of the locals and visitors that influences their response to stimuli on spontaneous purchase.

Figure 1

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EVENT EXPERIENCE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOCALS AND TOURISTS TO STIMULI IN SPONTANEOUS PURCHASE**



**Research design and methodology**

The study aims to achieve those three objectives which include a rating of stimuli on spontaneous purchase, and a test for the difference between locals and tourists towards stimuli that cause spontaneous purchase in the context of the flower market at the Chinese New Year Festival. Following a review of relevant literature, a questionnaire containing 13 statements which include two non-marketing controlled elements (festival atmosphere and cultural tradition) and 11 marketing controlled elements was developed. Each item was measured by a five-point Likert-like scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The questionnaire was refined, pre-tested and finalised after several revisions with 12 persons to improve its clarity, readability and the content validity. As no mechanism was available to record the profile of the people visiting the flower market since they could freely come and go at any time with no restriction for repeated visit, a quota sampling method with 150 local residents and 100 tourists was conducted to address the first objective. Each respondent was requested to complete a self-administered questionnaire, without the interviewer's interference, in order to avoid interview bias. The survey was carried out at the different locations for the flower market, such as Senado Square, Rua de Cunha and Fisherman's Wharf in Macau. Intercept technique was used; that is, visitors at the flower market was approached and asked to complete the questionnaire until the number of samples in each quota was met. The data were subjected to SPSS for analysis. The mean score for each stimulus was computed, ranked and tested for significant difference from the indifference threshold of three. The t-tests were conducted to identify any significant difference between the two quota groups, namely local residents and tourist.

## Results and discussion

A total of 247 useable questionnaires out of 250 were obtained with 3 unusable questionnaires being removed due to omissions in completion. Of the 247 respondents, 153 (61.9%) were female, 155 (62.8%) below the age of 35, 139 (56.3%) with an income over MOP5,000 per month. Similarly, for the residents, 100% (69%) were female, 94 (64.8%) were below the age of 35 and 88 (60.6%) were with an income over MOP 5,000 per month (Table 1).

Table 1

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

	All respondents	Local residents	Visitors
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	94 (38.1%)	45 (31.0%)	49 (48.0%)
Female	153 (61.9%)	100 (69.0%)	53 (52.0%)
<b>Age</b>			
16 or below	13 (5.3%)	6 (4.1%)	7 (6.9%)
17-24	142 (57.5%)	88 (60.7%)	54 (52.9%)
25-34	57 (23.1%)	28 (19.3%)	29 (28.4%)
35-45	17 (6.9%)	10 (6.9%)	7 (6.9%)
46 or above	18 (7.3%)	13 (9.0%)	5 (4.9%)
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	180 (72.9%)	107 (73.8%)	73 (71.6%)
Married	55 (22.3%)	32 (22.1%)	23 (22.5%)
Divorce	5 (2.0%)	6 (4.1%)	5 (4.9%)
No comment	7 (2.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
<b>No. of children</b>			
0	197 (79.8%)	120 (48.6%)	77 (75.5%)
1	25 (10.1%)	13 (9.0%)	12 (11.8%)
2	20 (8.1%)	8 (5.5%)	12 (11.8%)
3 or above	5 (2.0%)	4 (2.8%)	1 (1.0%)
<b>Occupation</b>			
Student	106 (42.9%)	59 (40.7%)	47 (46.1%)
Housewife	45 (18.2%)	34 (23.4%)	11 (10.8%)
Employee	83 (33.6%)	47 (32.4%)	36 (35.3%)
Retired	2 (0.8%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Self-employed	9 (3.6%)	1 (0.7%)	8 (7.8%)
Others	2 (0.8%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)
<b>Av. monthly income</b>			
MOP5,000 or below	108 (43.7%)	57 (39.3%)	51 (50.0%)
MOP5,001-10,000	65 (26.3%)	47 (32.4%)	18 (17.6%)
MOP10,001-15,000	57 (23.1%)	34 (23.4%)	23 (22.5%)
MOP15,001 or above	17 (6.9%)	7 (4.8%)	10 (9.8%)

Note: Total number of respondents: 247

To achieve the first objective, assuming the two kinds of stimuli were independent, the mean score of the items was used to measure the influence of the non-marketing control and marketing control stimuli on spontaneous purchase at the flower market during the Chinese New Year Festival. The overall mean scores, the standard devia-

tions and the ranking for each item of scale from 1 to 5 for all respondents are shown in Table 2. H2 and H3 were supported as the mean scores of both types of non-marketing controlled and marketing controlled stimuli ranging from 3.36 to 4.19 were significantly above the indifference threshold of 3 which represents neutral at the 1 per cent significant level. The results indicate that the two types of stimuli have important influence on spontaneous purchase even the respondents considered that these elements exercise stimulation on them at a different degree. Overall, the rating of product quality was the highest ( $t$ -value = 21.024,  $p < 0.001$ ). Next in rank of importance was product price, followed by product variety, price discount, cultural tradition, stall decoration, convenient location, healthiness, sales person in the stall, festival atmosphere, free sample tasting, packaging, and accompanying gift. Comparatively, marketing control elements rank higher than non-marketing ones though all have a positive influence on consumer spontaneous purchase.

Table 2  
**MEAN SCORE OF NON-MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI  
 AND MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI ON SPONTANEOUS PURCHASE**

Stimuli	Mean score	Std. deviation	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Product Quality†	4.19 (1)	0.887	21.024	0.000
Product Price†	4.11 (2)	0.992	17.576	0.000
Product Variety†	3.98 (3)	0.855	18.079	0.000
Price Discount†	3.74 (4)	1.063	10.896	0.000
Cultural Traditions*	3.67 (5)	1.090	9.687	0.000
Stall Decoration†	3.66 (6)	0.979	11.108	0.000
Convenient Location†	3.66 (7)	0.939	10.530	0.000
Healthiness†	3.62 (8)	1.048	9.289	0.000
Sales Person at the stall†	3.55 (9)	1.034	8.430	0.000
Festival Atmosphere*	3.53 (10)	0.966	8.562	0.000
Free Sample Tasting†	3.46 (11)	1.143	6.291	0.000
Packaging†	3.45 (12)	1.014	6.901	0.000
Accompanied Gift†	3.36 (13)	1.083	5.169	0.000

Notes:

\* non-marketing controlled stimuli

† marketing controlled stimuli

Total number of 247 respondents. The rankings are in parentheses.

All the mean difference is significant at 0.01 level, one-tailed with test value of

The results in this study are in line with the findings from previous research which identify a positive relationship between marketing mixes and consumer impulse purchase intention. For example, decoration of the stall can create an image or feeling about the store, product and price (Willen, 1995) and is a visual stimulus to spontaneous purchase due to the sensory aspects of the retail environment (Zacharias, 1997; Wakefield & Baker, 1998); a gift with the purchase offer works very well in triggering consumer purchase (Handford, 2005; Yeung & Yee, 2009); convenient packaging for general purchase choice (Vermeir, van Kenhove & Hendrickx, 2002); and salesperson – interaction is important to outweigh the importance of physical environment on purchase (Hightower, Brady & Baker, 2002). These indicate that the marketing mix stimuli are effective in the event retailing as much as in general retailing.

When examining the mean score with ranking for the two quota groups of local residents and tourists, the local residents have a wider variance of scores ranging from 3.32 to 4.20 whereas the score for tourists ranged from 3.33 to 4.17 (Table 3). Both groups scored high on product quality, product price and product variety and ranked them as the top three in priority, and this was the same order as a whole and among all marketing controlled stimuli. As anticipated, product quality was the most important factor; quality is often considered to be one of the key attributes representing a product. The high rating of price and variety is also in line with other research, namely that a wide variety of low-priced products captivate consumers upon first sight (Bohen, 2006). By comparison, these three items appear to be more important for locals (with scores of 4.20, 4.16 and 4.05 respectively) than tourists (with score of 4.17, 4.04 and 3.89 respectively) when making purchasing decision at the flower market. One of the explanations is that the Chinese New Year cake is relatively new to tourists so that they may not know which is the best quality, how many varieties of the cake and the normal price, though these three are attractive compared with other stimuli.

The result of price discount is of interest as it was ranked fifth by both groups, but it came to the fourth place after combining the two groups to form a single set of respondents. The discrepancy is due to the different ranking of other stimuli for the two groups. The locals ranked stall decoration higher (the fourth place), while the visitors ranked it lower (the eighth place). On the other hand, "cultural traditions" is ranked fourth for visitors, but ranked in the bottom half (the tenth place) for the locals. The interesting finding explains the effect of different ranking on the stimulus.

Table 3

**MEAN SCORE OF NON-MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI AND MARKETING CONTROLLED STIMULI ON SPONTANEOUS PURCHASE BY LOCAL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS**

Stimuli	All respondents	Local residents	Visitors	t-value	p-value
Product Quality†	4.19 (1)	4.2 (1)	4.17 (1)	0.290	0.772
Product Price†	4.11 (2)	4.16 (2)	4.04 (2)	0.931	0.353
Product Variety†	3.98 (3)	4.05 (3)	3.89 (3)	1.415	0.158
Price Discount†	3.74 (4)	3.68 (5)	3.81 (5)	-0.953	0.341
Cultural Traditions*	3.67 (5)	3.53 (10)	3.87 (4)	-2.583 #	0.010 #
Stall Decoration†	3.66 (6)	3.7 (4)	3.62 (8)	0.649	0.517
Convenient Location†	3.66 (7)	3.67 (6)	3.64 (7)	0.250	0.803
Healthiness†	3.62 (8)	3.63 (7)	3.60 (9)	0.269	0.788
Sales Person at the Stall†	3.55 (9)	3.57 (8)	3.54 (10)	0.196	0.844
Festival Atmosphere*	3.53 (10)	3.55 (9)	3.49 (12)	0.513	0.609
Free Sample Tasting†	3.46 (11)	3.32 (13)	3.66 (6)	-2.394 #	0.017 #
Packaging†	3.45 (12)	3.4 (11)	3.51 (11)	-0.837	0.403
Accompanied Gift†	3.36 (13)	3.37 (12)	3.33 (13)	0.279	0.781

Note:

\* non-marketing controlled stimuli

† marketing controlled stimuli

# Significant at 5% level

Rank is shown in the parenthesis

It is of interest that the two non-marketing controlled stimuli, namely cultural traditions and festival atmosphere are ranked in the bottom half for the locals and is the same for the tourists regarding the festival atmosphere. The findings indicate that consumers are more attracted by the marketing mix stimuli than by the non-marketing controlled stimuli. A possible explanation is that the competition between event retailers is as high as the other retailing environment, given that the influence of festival atmosphere is constant. The results confirm the other research that purchase desire is motivated by the excitement of attending a special event or festival, but indicate that the spontaneous purchase is largely triggered by marketing controlled stimuli comparatively (Kotler, 1973).

Regarding the first hypothesis, the t-test revealed a significant difference of one non-marketing controlled stimulus, namely cultural tradition (t-value = -2.583,  $p = 0.010$ ) and one marketing controlled stimulus, namely free sample tasting (t-value = -2.394,  $p = 0.017$ ) at the 5% significance level between the two quota groups as shown in Table 3. The different responses of the local residents and the tourists toward the free sample tasting can be explained by the fact that the former are familiar with the Chinese New Year cake which would reduce the excitement comparatively. Trying a festival product would create a feeling of learning about other cultures, and the experience would be like a personal reward for the latter (Iso-Ahola, 1982). As cultural traditions refer to 'must eat the Chinese New Year Festival cake' in this study, an explanation for the difference is similar to that for free sample tasting. Eating the Chinese New Year Festival cake can fulfil the desire of a cultural enrichment experience as the Chinese New Year Festival cake represents a very important ingredient of the cultural tradition which is attractive to the tourist (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Tikkanen, 2007; Yeung & Yee, 2009).

Apart from free sample tasting and cultural traditions, all other marketing controlled stimuli and one non-marketing controlled stimulus gave no significant difference between two quota groups. The non-marketing controlled stimulus of the festival atmosphere has no significant difference on impulse purchase between the local resident and tourist. A possible explanation is that attending the festival is out of normal routine for both groups. As such, time availability would be similar for the local Chinese and tourists as the former would enjoy three days holiday at the Chinese New Year Festival, and the tourists are also on holiday during this time (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). The level of excitement and anticipation would be more or less the same, as the motives for all are to enjoy themselves together at this occasion and to be enriched by the cultural traditions. The issue warrants further investigation.

## Conclusions and implications

This study confirms that the existing measurement scale of marketing controlled stimuli can be applied in the setting of retail event. The respondents are able to distinguish the non-marketing controlled and marketing controlled stimuli. Different response towards some of the stimuli between the locals and the visitors were identified by this

study. The study reveals that this retail event of the flower market during the Chinese New Year Festival can be a high impulse purchasing distribution channel. Though the marketing controlled and non-marketing controlled stimuli have a positive influence on spontaneous purchase, the non-marketing controlled stimuli have relatively less influence on the attendees. As such, retailers cannot depend only on the festival atmosphere, but must differentiate their product from high competition by implementing appropriate marketing mix stimuli to take up business opportunities within the restricted period of the festival.

From a theoretical perspective, the empirical framework provides a better understanding of stimuli types on spontaneous purchase at retail event setting. It also offers a basis for event planners and the retailing industry to formulate and evaluate strategic plan within or outside the marketing control. The findings show that marketing activities can be highly targeted, and they generate a positive economic impact on the community according to the different responses of the two segments, namely local residents and tourists toward the free sample tasting and cultural tradition. The highlight of the cultural tradition is the product together with a free trial which markedly encourages the tourists' impulse purchase. The results require careful interpretation due to the small sample size and non-random sampling method; however, the findings provide an insight into the way of maximising the potential market in the retail event environment. As the festival atmosphere may be different for an infrequently and a frequently occurring event, the effect of each stimulus is probably dependent on the duration of the event and /or the travel plans of the tourists. A further study to include these issues is recommended. As the study tends to discover what factors affect spontaneous purchase, the study did not include the size of purchasers and non-purchasers among locals and tourists. The differences between purchasers and non-purchasers is outside the scope of this study, however, the differences might provide industrial implication which warrants future study.

## Appendix

Statements to measuring the marketing controlled and non-marketing controlled stimuli. (Anchors: Strongly disagree/Strongly agree)

1. Stall decoration will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
2. Price of the product will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
3. Quality of the product will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
4. Discount offered will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
5. Accompanied gift will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
6. Atmosphere of the environment will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
7. Product Variety will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.

8. Salesperson's attitude of the stall will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
9. Convenient location will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
10. Packaging of the product will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
11. Healthiness of the product will affect my purchase in certain stall in the Flower Market.
12. The tradition "It is a must to eat Chinese Cakes during Lunar New Year" will affect my purchase in the Flower Market.
13. The belief "A free tasting is necessary before buying at the Flower Market" will affect my purchase in the Flower Market.

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