Transcultural aesthetics of love mediated by romantic comedy television shows and their influence on the experience of long-term partner selection for Singaporean Chinese.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, *Transcultural aesthetics of love mediated by romantic comedy television shows and their influence on the experience of long-term partner selection for Singaporean Chinese* is the result of my work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

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Abstract

This project examines values of romantic love and mate selection through the production and consumption of romantic comedy television shows by young, English-speaking and heterosexual members of the Chinese community of Singapore. It is driven by three primary concerns amongst this local, as opposed to immigrant, Chinese population of Singapore: first, to identify their transcultural values of romantic love, marriage and sex between Eastern and Western value sets; second to analyse how these values are aestheticized in television series which are accessed through free-to-air TV, cable television, and internet downloads; and thirdly, to explore if the introduction of a design intervention, specifically a romantic comedy short film, can provide any influence in the experience of love.

Within the field of design anthropology, this research brings together the focus on cultural values from anthropology and the analysis of the design of media aesthetics in media studies. Content analysis, ethnographic interviews, participatory design and surveys were used to gather evidence regarding love, media consumption, and mate selection among the selected segment of the Chinese community of Singapore.

There were two stages to this research study: (1) an exploratory stage and, (2) an evaluative stage. During exploratory research, the study identified the dating culture, type and amount of television being consumed, values of love, aesthetics of romantic comedy television shows and the impact that television shows have on the experience of love. Based on the exploratory research, it was found that productions that were not of local origin had higher production budgets, which related to a higher overall quality but provided low levels of realism for viewers. This seemed to be related to the high expectations for relationships among Singaporean Chinese.

The second evaluative research stage focused on creating and testing a new design intervention and evaluating some of the findings from the exploratory stage. The design intervention was a romantic comedy short film. This study suggests that even locally produced content that does not have high budgets can also be seen as entertaining, of overall positive quality. The aim of this thesis was
to identify the levels of realism for viewers which could potentially impact the view of expectations of long term partner selection within the local Chinese community of Singapore.
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Introduction

The study of romantic relationships and media has been growing with research looking at the impact that media has on romantic relationships (Osborn, 2012). Mate selection, an aspect of long-term romantic relationships, is a process where selection of a mate is dependent on his/her qualities. This is also another area that has been studied by a number of scholars (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002). However, most of these studies on media influence and mate selection have been looking at this from an Anglo-American perspective with just a few studies that look at Asian culture (Chen & Jackson, 2012, Guo & Wu, 2009).

Therefore, in this thesis, I will be looking at this gap as identified in Figure A, which is specifically in the context of the young (i.e. marriageable age), English-speaking and heterosexual members of the Singaporean Chinese community and the impact that media has on their experiences with romantic relationships.
Singapore as a society is seeing more young people staying single with many putting their careers before marriage (Yong, 2016). As reported by the General Household Survey 2015, it was found that between 2010 and 2015, the proportion of singles among Singapore residents aged 25 – 29 years rose from 74.6% to 80.2% for males, and from 54.0% to 63.0% for females (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2016). As such, with a rise in the number of singles in Singapore and the discovery of this gap in the field of media studies, I identified this as be a significant topic to investigate.

When talking about Singaporean Chinese, the sample for this research does not mean the whole Singaporean Chinese population but a much smaller group. The selection of young, English-speaking and heterosexual members of the Singaporean Chinese community is driven by the intersections of personal interest, research feasibility, and the original government policy focus of the topic. Personally, I am of the same Chinese Singaporean peer group of my selected research participants. The targeting of my peer group by government messages to marry is what drove my original interest in the topic. The journey of thesis started while I was doing my Masters of Digital Media in 2012. I was a single person in Melbourne, Australia, who was looking at how design could be used to facilitate relationships between different cultures. The research and designs that were created spurred me to look into this area of romantic relationships. Personally I have always felt that romantic relationships are very complex and multi-faceted. I started with this research hoping that I would be able to inform my own decision for searching for that long-term partner.

The sample that was chosen was to enable a feasible plan in gathering sufficient data to build an argument for the thesis. If the researched was directed at the whole Chinese community, it would have resulted in the inference of the Chinese community as one monolithic group for this project. The diversity of the Chinese community includes different education levels, ages, languages and sexual orientation. The group chosen for this project is young: 20 to 34-year-old age group, which has a higher education level than the national average. Both socially and culturally, the discussion of long-term relationships and marriage is at its greatest intensity during these ages. The selection of English-language speaking
members of the community became an issue of research feasibility. Besides the languages of English and Mandarin, there are other dialects of the Chinese language including Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese that are being used on a daily basis by members of the Singaporean Chinese community. In preliminary research, my lack of fluency in Mandarin and other Chinese dialects proved a hindrance in recruiting members of the Chinese Singaporean community who were not primarily English-speaking, which meant most recent immigrants from Mainland China could not be included. When it comes to the older generation there are chances that not all of them are frequent users of the English language. Combine that with my inability to speak fluently in the other Chinese dialects like Hokkien or Cantonese meant that I would have had a problem in collecting data for the research. Even though there is a LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual) community in Singapore, the selection of heterosexual community members was based on my focus on the public access of media and how the Singaporean government's forbidding of same sex sexual activity and lack of recognition of same sex relationships would affect the ability to show media with same sex mate selection content as well as protect LGBT research participants during the project. Over the years the government has stated that the reason for its stance on gay marriage is the society of Singapore being conservative and not ready (Channel Newsasia, 2015). This is also echoed in the local media, where homosexual themes are not shown much. There are cross-dressing artiste in local media like Jack Neo and Kumar but they are comedic characters. The LGBT themes and stories are not commonly produced in Singapore. This is the reason that the thesis did not include the LGBT community. If anyone was exposed because of this research it would bring unnecessary trouble for the participants.

The chosen context of Singapore is an example of a transcultural hybrid of Asian values and Western influence (Jung, 2011, p. 87). The Asian values of Singapore Chinese are adopted heavily from Confucian and South-East-Asian ideologies while the Western influences discussed include American consumerism and British colonialism. Transculturation (Ortiz, 1995 [1945], p. 102) involves cultural changes made up of simultaneous processes of acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation of values. Values are often used by groups or individuals as criteria
to select people and make choices while also conveying meaning and importance through projection (Appadurai, 1994; Graeber, 2005; Kluckhohn, 1951). Ortiz’s transculturation, as a theoretical framework, helps to provide greater detail regarding the loss of traditional Chinese values in the context of both the Chinese Diaspora and Euro-American colonization, the gaining of Western and contemporary Pan-Asian values, and the creation of new values unique to the Singaporean Chinese context.

There were three main areas to be explored with this thesis. Firstly, to investigate the transcultural values of romantic love which are a reflection of Singapore’s hybridity of Asian values and Western influences. In parallel to the values of romantic love the study also looks at the experiences of romantic relationships. Secondly, to explore how these values are aestheticized in television series that are accessed through free-to-air TV, cable television, and internet downloads. Thirdly, to look at the connection between the consumption of these media and the experience of romantic relationships in Singapore. Thus I asked: How might transcultural values of love as mediated through television dramas influence the experience of romantic relationships for Singaporean Chinese?

When discussing the design aspect of this thesis, romantic comedy television shows fall under the definition of design rather than a performing art. Television shows are a form of media in the field of digital media design. Bill Moggridge (2010) tells us that mainstream media is responding to a digital media landscape where newspapers, books, television and radio are becoming online television shows, websites and digital books. On the Swinburne University of Technology website (http://www.swinburne.edu.au/study/course/bachelor-of-design/digital-media-design/), the Bachelor of Design (Major in Digital Media Design) is defined as a course that allows students to learn how to develop a variation of digital media applications that include: projects for web, digital film and television production, interactive digital media and handheld mobile devices. These media platforms are all part of digital media design, including television shows that are broadcasted both online and on television. What makes these media platforms similar is their ability to work as communication design tools. For this thesis, romantic comedy television shows are seen as designs that do not just
communicate messages but are also able to solve problems, like other forms of media design.

Media as an influence on social reality is produced and consumed by different cultures. This applies especially in Singapore where the local community draws from the cultural hybridity of media that is produced both internationally and locally, which thus results in transculturation. An example of transcultural media is the idea of masculinity. Looking at western films, it is easy to identify the heroic, action, muscular version of masculinity (Holt & Thompson, 2004). Now, turn the scope towards Korean pop-culture and you are presented with a new Pan-East Asian soft masculinity. Actors like Bae Yong Joon of ‘Winter Sonata’, are evolutions of the pretty boy image that has originated from Japanese manga (Jung, 2011, p. 30). With this concept of transcultural media in mind, I am bringing together the local context of Singapore and its young people getting married at a later age, in conjunction with the influence of media. However, I do not just stop there.

Part of this use of design anthropology is grounded upon a framework by Barnard (2000) which is used as an approach towards ethnographic studies. The framework made up of four elements: questions, assumption, methods, and evidence (QAME). These four elements are key to this thesis and how it fits with the methodological approach of design anthropology. QAME as a framework is useful for framing any research that utilises ethnographic methods. The use of QAME is further seen as necessary for this thesis as it is looking at the values of Chinese Singaporeans, which is echoed by Tunstall’s stance on the impact that anthropology can play when it comes to understanding humans (2008):

“In any introductory anthropology textbook, it states that the fundamental question of the anthropology is “What does it mean to be human?” Anthropology investigates this question from a variety of perspectives: from the distant past in archaeology to the near future in socio-cultural anthropology, and from human biological diversity in physical anthropology to the symbolic diversity of languages in linguistics. The meaning of that humanness evolves over time, but the field encompasses the breadth and depth of exploration of the human condition”
The design of television shows together with the need to have an exploration into the context of Chinese Singaporean experiences and values brings about the reason why design anthropology was used to drive the question for this research.

My theoretical approach integrates ways of understanding: values of love and mate selection, production and consumption of television series, and Chinese identities in the context of contemporary Singapore. These areas have stemmed from social anthropology, media studies, anthropology of media and Chinese diaspora studies. Design anthropology is used in this study as a methodological framework of understanding how design helps to define and translate human values into tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2013, p. 239). With this thesis, design anthropology methodology utilises the framework, “Values, Design and Experiences” in this breakdown:

Values: Values of Romantic Love

Design: Romantic Comedy Television Shows

Experiences: Romantic Relationship

This framework that is used for the research allows for a view on the topic as a whole, to uncover and understand how these three aspects play a part in affecting each other. A framework that potentially could have been used for this thesis was practice-led research or research-led practice in the creative arts (Smith & Dean, 2009). The synergy of creative arts practice and research is used in new media and music (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 8) to build knowledge in the field. This is usually done collaboratively between creative practitioners and researchers. Even though this project discusses the medium of romantic comedy television shows, which can be seen as a creative art, for this thesis we are looking at it as a design tool that does not just add knowledge to the field, but also tries to bring about an impact on the experience of the specific culture group. Another reason that design anthropology was used for this thesis was because it is a decolonizing methodology where it seeks to conduct research that has not been coded and framed into a Western system of knowledge.
This thesis is a two staged research project. The exploratory stage includes semi-structured interviews and observations in the local context of Singapore, as well as content analysis of romantic comedy television shows. The next is the evaluative stage where a survey is accompanied by a design outcome created that hinges on the data from the exploratory design stage. The design outcome that was created was a new media mockumentary that was based off the exploratory data collected from user research and content analysis of romantic comedy television shows.

As presented in Figure B, the methodology used here is a clear one. The methods from the staged research project allow for a directed approach to the research. Stage one is represented by the process of the arrows on the top: ethnographic research to conduct a content analysis of romantic comedy TV shows to evaluate people’s experiences of romantic relationships. Stage two is represented by the process of the arrows below: evaluating the gap in the people’s experiences to create a design intervention that leads to alternative thoughts about values of love as evaluated through a survey. Each method seeks to understand better the
three elements of the research topic. With the help of design anthropology, I aim to utilise design (romantic comedy television series) to translate the values (values of love) into tangible experiences (romantic relationships) through this thesis.

Although Singapore is a multicultural society, the scope of the thesis looks at a specific segment of the Chinese Singaporean community. The Singapore population mainly consists of ethnic Chinese, although there are fractions of the population made up of Malay, Indian and other ethnic and culture groups. By looking at Singaporean Chinese, I avoid generalising the other culture groups who will have different cultural practices and traditions. As a Singaporean of Chinese heritage, I have access to enough of the cultural context to discuss this topic in detail. To be clear, this thesis is describing a portion of the population rather than Singapore as a whole.

There are a total of six chapters that will entail the journey I have embarked on for this research project, starting from the initial conceptualisation of topic to the eventual communication of the research findings.

**Chapter 1**

This chapter is about introducing the Chinese Singaporean context, in particular the elements that make up the community. It highlights the problem that Singapore in facing where younger people are staying single in the pursuit of other goals such as careers. The culture of Singapore has changed and this chapter discusses that change in relation to gender roles as well as the expectations and lifestyle goals. The purpose of the chapter is to allow readers to get a better understanding of how Singapore is a transcultural society that is formed by different cultural forces from media to government.

**Chapter 2**

The second chapter looks at the power of media as an influence. The discussion with film media and genre is usually in the context of movies, but this chapter will instead highlight and discuss the importance of romantic comedy television shows for this research. It explores the impact media has on society and the
different theories that have been discussed in previous studies. Two key theories, cultivation theory and social comparison theory, are examined and presented with regard to their significance for this thesis. Since the Korean wave has had a big impact on a global scale, the chapter also looks at how this success was attained and explores whether the local Singaporean media can replicate and apply what is drawn from their Korean counterparts. The following chapter explores the current media landscape of Singapore, so this chapter grounds the idea of how romantic comedy television series are a medium for romantic relationships in the Chinese Singaporean context because of current exposure and the cultural productions from both international and local origins.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, the methodology, framework and methods for this thesis are discussed. As a design anthropology research project, this project follows the idea that design translates values into tangible experiences. The discussion of why design anthropology is more suitable for this thesis than traditional media studies or design research is elaborated in this chapter. Then the chapter discusses in detail the methods that were chosen (semi-structured interviews, observations, surveys and content analysis), as well as the logistics that were considered and carried out throughout this whole process. The two staged process of exploratory and evaluative research is also presented here.

Chapter 4

This chapter is the initial discussion of the findings. Through the collection and analysis of the data, chapters four to six present the themes and link them back to what was uncovered during the research stages. The focus in Chapter 4 is the values of love. It explores how values, as a form of identity that is drawn from both internal and external factors, are negotiated in romantic relationships. The chapter then discusses how these values are perceived by Singaporean Chinese. By understanding the way expectations are formulated around these values, this chapter breaks down the ideals into differences based on gender and culture. The additional section of this chapter also looks at the dating culture that is
specific to Singapore. With reference to the data collected from the interviews and survey, these values are discussed in detail as an important aspect of the romantic relationship for many Singaporean Chinese.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter explores how Singaporean Chinese are consuming romantic comedy television shows and the changes that have brought in more variety and options in terms of programmes. The chapter also presents the main findings from the content analysis. The romantic comedy television shows that were picked to be analysed were based on the findings from the exploratory research. This was done to ensure that design outcome of the short film would be linked back to what the context was exposed to in reality, instead of being founded on my personal assumptions. The two television shows that are analysed and presented are of Western and Eastern origin respectively, an American sitcom titled *How I Met Your Mother* and a Korean show called *My Love from the Star* (별에서 온 그대). Breakdowns of the shows include dialogue, storytelling, lighting and other technical details. Since the two shows are of different culture origins, they need to be examined from a perspective of culture as well.

**Chapter 6**

The chapter marks the design stage of this research study. This is a detailed look at how the design of the short film was created based on the findings from the exploratory research stage, as well as the impact that the design has on the Singaporean Chinese context. The short film, which is co-designed with actors and producers, is the design component of this projects that seeks to measure the response of Singaporean Chinese on the subject of locally produced romantic comedy television shows. The short film was part of the survey that was sent out to participants of the evaluative research component.

**Conclusions**

In this thesis, I have utilised an ethnographic approach to understand the context at a deep level through an extended period of time. As such, the chapters are meant to guide the reader through a detailed approach to this study. The goal of
this thesis is not to change the phenomenon of younger people in Singapore staying single. However, it is about bringing forward the discussion of romantic relationships in Singapore and how they are experienced. Since this thesis focuses on the expectations and values of romantic relationships, as the writer, I hope that there is more knowledge being shared around and more thought being placed on romantic relationships through the interaction with the participants. The outcome and limitations will also be further discussed in this concluding chapter.
Chapter 1: Singaporean Chinese Culture and Expectations of Love

Introduction

This chapter provides a contextual view of Singapore as a cultural site for this research study by looking at the identity of the nation as well as the social and cultural phenomena that have contributed to the Singaporean perspectives on love and romantic relationships. First, the chapter describes the geography, history and population of Singapore, and how that sets the scene for the cultural context of the country. Then in the later section of this chapter, I report on the different aspects of the local culture and identity of the Singapore community. The sample subjects for this thesis are young, English-speaking and heterosexual members the Singaporean Chinese community. The topic is their experiences of romance. In order to get a clearer understanding of their experiences, this chapter presents an overview of the culture and identity of Singaporean Chinese. As this thesis looks at the values of love for this community, it is important to examine the different schools of thought on the topic of love and romance. Lastly, this chapter looks at the local Singaporean media industry with focus on how it is used in the local culture of Singapore and the content that is being presented. This aids in the understanding of the changes and significances in media.

The Republic of Singapore

Singapore is a country that is located in South East Asia, situated between Malaysia and Indonesia. It is a small country in terms of land mass having a total land area of 714.3 square kilometres (sq km). The main island measures 50 km from east to west and 26 km from north to south. Singapore currently has a population of 5.46 million people and a population density of 7,615 per sq km (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2015).

Singapore was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819. Under the British colonial rule, Singapore became a prosperous trading port. From the period of
1819 to 1869, the population of Singapore rose from about a thousand people to a hundred thousand people, including many migrants of Chinese and Indian descent (Inglis, 2014, p.19). Significant changes happened during World War II. Between 1942 and 1945, Singapore was under the Japanese occupation. After a period of self-governance following the end of World War II, Singapore merged with the Federation of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965. On the 9th of August of every year, Singapore celebrates its national day that commemorates its independence from Malaysia since 1965.

Singapore’s population has been categorised into four main groups: firstly, the Chinese who make up about 76.2% of the population; secondly, the Malays who form approximately 15% of the population; thirdly, 7.4% of the population comprises Indians; lastly, the fourth group is constituted of population from a variety of hybrid or non-aligned identities (National Population and Talent Division, 2014, p.10). These four groups each bring their own elements to the cultural landscape. The nation prides itself on multiculturalism. Although there may be a larger Chinese population, the blend of cultural diversity among the various cultural groups maintains harmonious relationships. This diversity is prevalent in the different aspects of the country, including infrastructure, architecture, cuisine, fashion and language.

There are a number of reasons why this thesis focuses on the local Chinese community. It is the largest ethnic population in the country and also the cultural group I was brought up in [which as stated previously, provides me with access to the cultural context of the community]. Furthermore, there is great diversity within the local Chinese community. In Singapore, the Chinese community consists of nine main dialect groups, Hokkiens, Teochews, Cantonese, Hakkas, Hainanese, Foochows, Henghua, Shanghainese and Hockchia (Lee, 2001, p.3). Dialect groups within the local Chinese community provide another level of separation from other Singaporean groups, therefore in order to ensure that this thesis does not make general statements about the whole population of Singapore, it has been decided that focusing on the local Chinese community was the right thing to do.
Singapore’s Identity and the Chinese Diaspora

The identification of oneself or someone else as Singaporean entails many variables, ranging from the legal definition to the perspective of cultural identity such as Confucianism, diasporic Chineseness, British colonialism, and the ideas of modernity and tradition. On a national level based on the legal definition, a person can be considered as Singaporean either if they were born in Singapore, or if they attained citizenship in Singapore even though they were born in a different country. Another category of people in Singapore apart from the citizens are the permanent residents. In order to attain citizenship in Singapore, one has to give up any citizenship prior to that. As such, the permanent residents have acknowledged Singapore as their home without taking up the citizenship. While these legal categories and definitions play a part, it can be said that being Singaporean is more than just citizenship and visas but involves culture and identity. Stuart Hall (1990) describes a more expansive variable for cultural identity:

*Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, ‘cultural identity’, lays claim (p. 222).*

This definition of identity seems to be a more accurate representation of how locals define what it means to be Singaporean. Locals measure each other’s level of what it means to be Singaporean. Instead of where you were born, a person’s identity is something that is organic and ever changing. However, Foucault (2007) points out other factors that add to the definition of identity:

*...because it’s my hypothesis that the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces. There is much that could be said as well on the problems of regional identity and its conflicts with national identity (p. 180).*

This addition of external elements means that the definition of one’s identity cannot be based on a single variable. Hence, to be called and identified as
Singaporean entails more than just the colour of a person’s passport. What are some of these other variables that define the Singaporean Chinese community and how have these formed over the years? One of them is Confucianism.

Confucianism is intertwined closely with the philosophical and cultural history of East Asia, having been the foundation for social and political value systems for over a 1000 years. It was adopted by the Yi dynasty in Korea for 500 years, the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan for 250 years as well as many of the dynasties in China (Yum, 1988, p. 79). In modern day Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore and a person who many see as the founder of modern day independent Singapore, is known as an advocate for ‘Asian Values’, especially Confucianism (Patapan, 2013, p. 3).

It is assumed that East Asian countries adopt a heavy Confucian ideology within their social and emotional structures, but in the case of Singapore this is not accurate even though more than 70 percent of the population is of Chinese background (Chua, 2004, p. 202). Chua (2004) believes that in comparison to other East Asian locations, Singapore has one of the lowest subscription to the Confucian philosophy, and part of the reason may be due to English being the official language in Singapore. Since Confucian philosophy is commonly taught in Mandarin, the best way to impart Confucian teaching would be through Chinese lessons. Although it is compulsory for students who come from a Chinese ethnic background to learn Mandarin as the Mother Tongue, the use of the Chinese language ends at school officially after secondary education. English is still the main language that is used for the rest of the Singaporean culture beyond the classrooms. Furthermore, most Singaporeans below the age of 30 would not have any contact with Confucian text as there was a failure to institutionalise it into the curriculum of moral education for the Chinese students (Chua, 2004, p. 202). Meanwhile, the growth of American music, movies and television industries on the global stage has increased the popularity of American culture which in turn has brought about a sense of cultural liberalisation (Chua, 2004, p. 202).

The Singapore of today is one that is a transcultural blend of East and West. This coming together is a result of globalization. Globalization involves objects of this
world flowing in motion. These objects include, ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques (Appadurai, 2001, p. 5). Ritzer (2003, p. 189) tells us that globalization encompasses a number of transnational processes that might be seen global in reach, but are actually separate from each other. Hannerz (1996, p. 17) tells us that: “globalization is a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well.” These definitions of globalization describe the transcultural flows that make up Singapore, including the multiple transnational flows and the interconnectedness with other national states. To take this idea of transnational flows and globalization further, we need to look at Singapore with a contextual frame of transculturation.

Transculturation (Ortiz, 1995 [1945]) happens when multiple cultures come together and when that happens, three events could potentially occur: acculturation (the acquiring of another culture), deculturation (the loss of a previous culture) and neoculturation (the creation of a new culture). We understand from Ortiz (1995 [1945], p. 98) that Cuba has a history of intermeshed transculturations, from the paleolithic Indian to the neolithic, to the change in culture brought about by the Spaniards, and the unbroken flow of white immigrants. Cuban society is a mix of cultures including Ciboney, Taino, Spaniard, Jew, English, French, Anglo-American, Negro, Yucatec, Chinese, and Creole. Ortiz (1995 [1945]) utilises transculturation to better understand the complex processes of culture and history in Cuba. Singapore is similar to Cuba, considering the influences of British colonialisation, American media and consumerism, and the Confucian Asian values from its population. The complexity of these cultures is better framed with transculturation. In anthropology, transculturation deals with the balance of power and hybridity which Singapore is a prime example of. A previous colony of the British that is made up of a mostly Asian population that is a participant in modern consumerism there have been many examples where Singapore has had to identify the space it sits in when it comes to power. Singapore has to deal with countries that both near and far this includes, having a long standing water agreement with Malaysia (Tortajada & Pobre, 2011), discussions with Indonesia about clean air (Channel
NewsAsia, 2015), having nine armoured vehicles detained in Hong Kong, and international relations with other South-East Asian nations as well as China, United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Because of this balancing of power relations internationally the unique hybridity of Singapore is being impacted constantly in many ways. From what we can see here transculturation differs from transcultural flow in the discussion of power differentials and hybridity. This hybridity of Singapore adds to the idea that transculturation does not just identify what is created new but also on what is loss and gained by society, which includes language, religion, tradition and values. Lastly transculturation acknowledges that knowledge or what is loss, gained and created new might not be coded and framed into a Western or Asian centric system of knowledge. This component of Ortiz’s theory of transculturation reinforces the definition of Design Anthropology that is being used here (Tunstall, 2013) where it applies a decolonizing methodology. One that avoids stereotypical perceptions like orientalism through a defined view that is not specifically Western or Eastern.

Singapore cannot be consisted purely Asian because of its hybrid cultural space with a 150-year history as a British colony and since 1968 having English as the main language of instruction in the education system (Chua, 1999, p. 576). Furthermore, the ‘Asian Values’ concept does not solely originate from Confucius teachings. The Asian cultural landscape also includes influences from Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity and Islam (Langguth, 2003, p. 31). A school of thought argues that true ‘Asian Values’ is a convergence of all of these religions and philosophies (Hoon, 2004, p.158).

The study of Diasporas has been well addressed in the literature. Diasporas connect multiple communities of dispersed populations in addition to configurations of longing, memory and (dis)identification that are shared by a variety of minority and migrant communities (Clifford, 1994, p. 304). For the Chinese diaspora in the United States, it has been found that the members are in a limbo of not returning to their old ways and not fully integrating with the mainstream American culture. Their cultural practices are blurred between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ whereby each group has formed their own sense of identity (Shi, 2005, p. 69). In Singapore, the association with a Chinese identity is more
apparent due to the cultivation of a Chinese Singaporean sense through the teaching of Mandarin as the mother tongue language, in addition to the preservation and promotion of Chinese culture with the help of the different Chinese associations (Goda, 2007).

Singapore has a unique cultural background that involves a melting pot of Eastern and Western cultural influences. Singapore has three main ethnic groups, Chinese, Malay and Indian. Most of these groups are part of the Asian diaspora that have migrated over to Singapore since the 1800s. Since the majority of Singaporeans are Asian, this would mean that there is a strong sense of “Asian Values”. These “Asian values” have been defined as hard work, thrift, discipline, consensus over conflict, family orientation, society over the self (Leong, 2012, p.14). These values were used in the 1980s-1990s to promote the rise of the East Asian economies like Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore (Leong, 2012, p.14). From what we have seen since the 1990s, Lee Kwan Yew and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad have championed ‘Asian Values’ as the reason that Asia was able to grow exponentially over the past few decades. The so-called Asian discourse however started to rise in the 1980s alongside capitalism in the East and Southeast Asia (Chua, 1999, p.573). From Barr (2000), Chua (1999), Langguth (2003), Hoon (2004), we can see that the political party of People’s Action Party (PAP) has grounded their political stances utilizing the idea that ‘Asian Values’ are needed to fight against ‘Western Values’. This has been advocated since the 1990s:

...instead of falling prey to essentialist acceptance of the term Asian as a substantive identity, its reinvented character as a process of strategic identification is to be maintained for the purpose of contesting other formulations of Asian realities. Second, it is clear that the idea of collective interest is always at risk of being appropriated and transformed as a veil to justify authoritarianism. It has thus been used by dominating politicians to rationalize the political repression that they inflict on the society (Chua, 1999, p. 578).

The argument for ‘Asian Values’ is partially motivated by resentment against the West for its past colonialism. Hoon also tells us that the boom of Asia as an economy provides an enhanced self-confidence resisting the hegemony from the
West (Hoon, 2004, p. 161). According to Hoon (2004), within Asian values there are four claims:

First, human rights are not universal and neither can they be globalized. They emerge differently according to the context of particular social, economic, cultural and political conditions. Second, Asian societies are not centered on the individual but on the family. The nation is like a big family. It supposedly comes naturally for Asians to let the combined interests of the family and the nation go before the interests of each individual. Third, Asian societies rank social and economic rights over individual’s political rights. Finally, the right of a nation to self-determination includes a government’s domestic jurisdiction over human rights. This implies that other nations should not interfere with the internal affairs of a state, including its human rights policy (p. 155).

Based on the above description, the influence of ‘Asian Values’ is not limited within the boundaries of politics and economics. The societal influence of ‘Asian Values’ is a theme that is deeply embedded within the society of Singapore, and is considered to be the fundamental value in setting the scene of marriage in Singapore:

The family is also given a special place in the “Asian values” argument, both because it provides the prime conceptual basis of a relational view of society, and because it is a natural and self-sustaining mechanism for providing nurture, socialisation and social services to the population. The family is a person’s first community, and it is here that a child learns his or her place in the world, the lessons of hierarchy, and the nature of living in a society dominated by relationships. The family also provides the emotional and philosophical model for thinking of society as an organic unity, which provides the strongest rationale for communitarianism. (Barr, 2000, p. 312)

Moreover, in the National Day Rally of 1994, then Prime Minister Goh Cheok Tong in his speech also described Singapore as an Asian culture where being a member of society is above being an individual and having strong family and extended family ties are what matter (Goh, 1994). It seemed that political and economic necessities have moulded Singapore into a country that places strong emphasis on traditional collective values as advocated by the ‘Asian Values’. Yet, the modern influence from media and the westernised education system that Singaporeans have been receiving seems to be leaning towards individualism. In addition, the competitive consumerism introduced by ‘Western values’ is affecting
traditional 'Asian values. This clash is especially prominent in the social scene of Singapore, particularly in defining who we truly are as a nation and how it influences our way of viewing family and marriage. The Singapore government strongly advocates ‘Asian Values’ in family planning policies, but today we have to acknowledge the transcultural influences that come from around the world including American consumerism as well as reminisce of British colonisation.

Part of being a modern society includes debates on openness and sexuality. As an example, since 2009, Pink Dot, an annual event in Singapore that celebrates love, equality and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights, has been introduced into the conservative cultural setting. In June 2014, more than 26,000 people participated in the Pink Dot gathering, signalling a move away from the conservative values that are associated with Asian culture. However, in contrast there is an initiative set up by an Islamic educator openly and actively opposed to Pink Dot and homosexuality. Further, the Catholic church in Singapore and the Faith Community Baptist Church have also openly voiced their views against the Pink Dot event (Palatino, 2014). This divide shows that some parts of the Singaporean community are moving away from the conservative ideologies but there are still parts of the community that still adhere to conservative views and values.

This comment does not seek to question what is morally right or wrong. Instead, it seeks to present the idea that there are different values that people retain, which highlights the diversity within the Singaporean community. We have looked at different aspects that help define a culture or the identification of a culture, and the Chinese Singaporean identity is something that needs to be examined further. The transcultural aspect of East meets West, as well as the ideals of what is modern and traditional are areas for re-examination.

This thesis takes up these transcultural aspects to look at transcultural aesthetics as a mediator for media. Aesthetics, as illustrated by Pazstroy (2005), can comprise take up different forms and functions

Objects heretofore not considered works of art are in no way different—they can all be appreciated and classified by aesthetic criteria. Aesthetic criteria determine dress, the arrangements of homes, cities, highways, transport, and spacecraft. All these things are
mixtures of function and forms. As soon as there is form, there is message. It is impossible to dress in such a way as to convey no meaning. Every fabric, color, and cut has socially and perhaps even biologically determined meaning. The changing form of cars illustrates the power of meaning in nonfigurative form (p. 10).

This definition of aesthetics presents the idea that objects can be tangible and intangible while also being a communicator of messages and meaning. The quote below further frames this point:

Western thinking has been unable to relate functionality and aesthetics in a satisfying manner: it has to be either one or the other. But as ethnography after ethnography makes clear, aesthetics are the means of technology in archaic type societies. I would go so far as to suggest that aesthetics are the first technology of communication and control of humanity (Pazstory, 2005, p. 11).

Therefore, aesthetics is seen as a form of communication for messages and meaning through different forms and objects. Aesthetics also has application when it comes to political organisations. I argue that political organisations have four levels: Bands, Tribes, Chiefdoms and States, and aesthetics can work within these organisational levels as a social technology of social control (Pazstory, 2015). However, it is not always successful. Singapore as a state means that the government has a level of control that is higher than that of other political organisations, but when we look at some of the government interventions that have attempted to address the phenomenon of people marrying at a later age, they have not been effective.

By looking at media as an aesthetic that can communicate messages and meaning, this thesis will draw from the transcultural foundation that is Singapore to better understand the local context of romantic relationships in Singapore. This study applies media as an aesthetic to create a romantic comedy short film which serves both as a research method tool and an artefact. In order to do this, I direct the focus of the study towards ensuring that the narrative is represented appropriately and told accurately.

Singapore has a mass media industry that connect on various levels with their audiences. These audiences are exposed to a myriad of media cultures with Western pop culture and multiple Trans-Asian pop culture trends. This is why the
production and creation of a Transcultural Aesthetic has been chosen as a possible solution for bringing these two cultures together. Based on the current cultural influences on both groups, there will be influences from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the Western counterparts as well.

Another measure that is often associated with distinctions between Eastern and Western cultures is the idea of collectivistic and individualistic values respectively. To break out of the collectivistic norm may be seen as undesirable and individuals may be exposed to social rejection as a result. There have been studies that have investigated the presence of individualism and collectivism in the Singaporean context (Quek & Fitzgerald, 2013; Soh & Leong, 2002). A 2013 study conducted by Quek & Fitzgerald investigated the relationships between marital satisfaction and cultural orientation (collectivism-individualism), self-disclosure, and conflict tactics. This study highlighted varying levels of cultural orientation for husbands and wives, whereby wives valued collectivism more than husbands (Quek & Fitzgerald, 2013, p. 212). The point is not to argue that Singapore is an individualistic society, but to show that individualistic values have a presence in culturally these values are still evident in the local Singaporean society, and run parallel with another theme, “Asian Sexuality”. In Singapore (Leong, 2012, p. 15), the state authorities construct “Asian sexuality” as:

a) Characterised by a conservative tradition: Singaporeans as Asians are made out to be prudish in their sexual behaviour and attitudes.

b) Having a limited repertoire of sexual acts: the sex that Singaporeans as Asians engage in is seen to be procreative vaginal intercourse; anything other than this would be less than normative.

c) Framed by natural states: the procreative vaginal intercourse that married Singaporeans as Asians participate in is “natural” and “biological”.

d) Opposed to homosexuality: Singaporeans as Asians have no tradition of homosexuality, and do not condone or approve of homosexuality.
e) Object to media representations of sex: Singaporeans as Asians are thought to be easily offended by sexual materials.

These constructs of “Asian Sexuality” are emphasised in the local media where censorship is considered to be of a higher level compared to the Western nations. The sale of pornographic material is non-existent. There are no programs on free-to-air television that present any form of nudity. Movies that do not align with the constructs of “Asian Sexuality” are also banned in Singaporean cinemas. The Media Development Authority (MDA), which is the governing body for media presentation in Singapore (as cited in Leong, 2012), states that:

*In Singapore, censorship plays a role in creating a balance between maintaining a morally wholesome society and becoming an economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant nation. It helps to protect the young against undesirable influences and safeguards central values such as the sanctity of marriage, the importance of the family, respect for one’s elders, filial piety, moral integrity, and respect for and tolerance towards different racial and religious groups… (p. 19)*

From this we can see how sexuality does not align with what is regarded as important values in Singaporean society. We should note, however, that the stringent sexual laws of banning what are considered unnatural sex acts like anal sex or oral sex and homosexual sex that have been enforced in modern Singapore were actually Western in origin, coming from the British colonisation of all its Straits settlement in 1871. In Singapore under section 377A of the penal code, consensual sex between men is a criminal offence. Even though the British government has decriminalized consenting sexual acts since 1967, Singapore still maintains these laws as a reflection of the “Asian values” (Leong, 2012, p. 21). In 2007, a bill was passed to legalize oral and anal sex between heterosexuals but the ban is still maintained on gay sex (Leong, 2012, p. 17). This is further reinforced when government officials have attributed the conservative nature of the country to a population and a society that are not ready for such open conversations about sexuality (Leong, 2012, p. 18).

History, however, has shown us that sexuality was embraced by different Asian cultures in the past, and not shadowed by guilt or sham. Indian culture produced the *Kama Sutra*, the Chinese had pillow books that illustrated sexuality, and the
Japanese had erotic engravings and prints. These were not taboos but aspects of their culture that were openly celebrated (Leong, 2012, p. 13). The Singaporean public and the Singaporean government may not be ready for an open conversation about sexuality but there have been aspects of Singapore media that have opened their doors to a looser sense of sexuality, specifically in the publishing sector.

With a topic that is as controversial in Singapore as homosexuality, it is often not discussed in the society. Nevertheless, in the wake of the advancement of the global media hub of Singapore, there has been an evolution in queer public culture, despite the illegality of homosexuality. The entertainment environment has evolved with new facets like state-funded gay films, subsidized theatre plays, Internet portals and nightclubs (Yue, 2011, p. 250). One example of the growth in this area is in theatre. In 2009, a presentation of Oscar Wilde’s “The Importance of Being Ernest” was done with an all-male cast. The Media Development Authority of Singapore issued a parental advisory status for those under 16 years old because it was seen to portray “gay undertones” which “may be inappropriate for a young audience” (Kolesnikov-Jessop, 2009). With the laws in Singapore criminalising homosexual activities between men, the all-male casting of Oscar Wilde’s play might not have been able to change perceptions or laws on the matter of homosexuality in Singapore but it did open discussion on the topic.

From this discussion, the cultural identity of Singapore can be identified to be transcultural in that it is a mix of Western and Eastern influences. Even though Singapore does not have a history that is as long as other nations like the U.S. or China, it is apparent from the previous examples that there has been enough development in its own culture to start defining it as a Singaporean culture. But to call the culture Singaporean merely because it contains Western and Eastern influences erases the strong cultural identity that is present in Singapore today. The Singaporean identity today is unique and is not just a binary merger of Western or Eastern influences. Singapore today has Singlish, a colloquial Singaporean English, Singaporean designed architectural buildings such as the Esplanade and Marina Bay Sands that are globally renowned, plus a multicultural society that emphasises civic harmony.
An Aging Population

The inspiration for this research was the aging population issue that Singapore is currently facing. The population is not being renewed because young people are either marrying late or not marrying at all, and are not producing children. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, and Hong Kong are countries which also have high numbers of late marriages and non-marriages (Jones, 2012, p.89). Like these countries, Singapore is facing issues stemming from an aging population, as well as declining birth rates due to a combination of factors such as the post-World War II baby boom, rising popularity of singlehood, later marriages and married couples having fewer children (National Population and Talent Division, 2013, p.9). A report titled, Population in Brief, which was released by the National Population and Talent Division, shows the strain on the local population caused by these issues, particularly in relation to the workforce. The number of citizens in the working age of 20 – 64 who are supporting one senior citizen aged 65 and above has dropped over the past 40 years. Currently the number is 4.9 citizens to one senior. In 2005, the number was 7.2. In 1990, it was 10.4 and in 1970, the number was 13.5. This report further shows that the percentage of Singaporeans who are aged 65 and older was 13.1% of the citizen population in June of 2015. This was an increase from 12.4% in June of 2014, and from 8.8% in 2005 (National Population and Talent Division, 2015).

The report found that the median age for Singaporean mothers at first birth was maintained at a stable number of 30.3 in 2014 compared to 30.2 in 2013 (National Population and Talent Division, 2015, p.24), and that the number of total births in Singapore increased from 39,720 in 2013 to 42,232 in 2014. Even though there was an increase in numbers of births in this period, married couples are having fewer children. Singapore is now facing a low total fertility rate (TFR), which is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime. The number has decreased drastically from 5.45 in 1965, to 3.09 in 1970, and now 1.29 in 2014. Consequently, the nation is predicted to have a decline in the Old-Age Support Ratio, the ratio of citizens older than 65 years compared to the citizens in the working age band of 20-64 years. As noted above, the ratio declined from 13.5 working citizens for every citizen aged 65 and older in 1970
to 5.9:1 in 2012. Assuming that current birth rates are maintained and there is no migration, the ratio will drop to 2.1:1 in 2030 (National Population and Talent Division, 2013, p. 13).

This phenomenon of an aging population started in 1966 when the Singapore government launched the National Family Planning Campaign and started a “Stop-At-Two” childbirth policy (Leong & Sriramesh, 2006, p. 246). This campaign was effective in bringing down the fertility rate from 5.45 in 1966 to 3.09 in 1970. Ever since then, the fertility rate has been steadily dropping, to 1.19 in 2013 (National Population and Talent Division, 2014, p.11). The nation did not expect that the campaign would be as effective as it was. In 2000, the Public Education Committee on Family, which was given a name change to Family Matters, was absorbed into the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Part of its initiative was to promote marriage and childbirth in a campaign called Romancing Singapore. This campaign focused on promoting romance to singles and marriage to those in courtship. In 2000, this was done through a PR agency that managed media coverage and publicity materials such as advertisements in newspapers, magazine and television, radio station contest and plugs, posters in public transportation and a website. However, as is evident from the falling fertility rate, such an approach was not effective.

Leong and Sriramesh (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with 14 males and 14 females working Singaporean residents aged between 25 and 35 years about the perceptions of Romancing Singapore and its campaign to promote marriage in Singapore. Accompanying these interviews was a survey of a convenience sample of 73 respondents. Based on the surveys, 84% of the respondents knew about the campaign but only 49% paid any attention to it. The interesting figure was that 92% of the respondents said that the campaign did not change their views on childbearing and 76% of singles did not feel that the campaign had convinced them about the importance in marriage. The campaign, which had a budget of $400,000, may have caused a big stir in the promotion and marketing of the campaign. However, its actual goal of bringing about change in the minds of the citizen was not met.
As the government looks to solve this issue with its population policies, [a White paper has been produced which argues that?] there are three key pillars that will maintain a sustainable population: (1) A strong and cohesive society of core Singaporeans; (2) a dynamic and vibrant economy that is able to create jobs and opportunities for Singaporeans; (3) and a high quality living environment that meets the needs of the population (National Population and Talent Division, 2013, p. 14). Before releasing the White Paper, a policy that strives towards a sustainable Singapore, in January 2013, the government gathered views and suggestions on how to encourage marriage and parenthood. The data identified concerns with housing, healthcare and other costs. Additionally, there was desire for a greater work life balance so that Singaporeans can spend time with family and friends. Some of these concerns have been addressed by government measures and benefits that encourage marriage and parenthood in Singapore, which include SGD$24,000 in Baby Bonus cash and co-savings, SGD$53,000 in infant care and childcare subsides, priority for housing, rental housing schemes and even a week of paid paternity leave for fathers. The Singapore government also supports locals with relationship education and counselling through the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), along with the use of publications and materials to support government agencies in promoting information on relationships (Huang, 2005, p. 165). These measures have been introduced to ensure that couples can move into their own home with greater ease and speed, to provide support for conception and raising of children, attainment of work-life balance, and for fathers to engage with families with greater facility. The government also provides concessions and bonuses designed to influence fertility.

Despite all government efforts, these measures have not achieved the desired outcome, as they have been viewed as inadequate to entice couples to bear children. Women are also worried that their jobs would be at risk if they were to have a child (Jones, 2012). Therefore, even though measures have been taken by the local government to try to promote marriage and childbirth, it is still a long journey in terms of getting locals to marry early and have children. This priority is showcased in many aspects of the government’s initiative. Even today, there are
campaigns that continue to remind locals to settle down and make babies. For example, in conjunction with the SG50 celebration of the country’s 50th anniversary of independence, the government had a website (http://heybaby.sg/) that shared the stories of couples and parents who have taken the step into marriage and parenthood. Children who were born in 2015 were called Jubilee babies and their parents were given a package that consisted of different gifts such as a diaper bag, books, clothes and even a commemorative medal.

As stated earlier, we know that the TFR for Singapore in 2013 was 1.19. However, a further break down of the TFR into the different ethnic groups shows an interesting finding in the population census. The Malays had the highest TFR of 1.66, with Indians next with 1.11, and the Chinese last with the lowest number of 1.05. However, when looking at the number of 39,720 births in Singapore in 2013, 60% of these live births were still made up of 23,890 births by the Chinese community. The statistic does not identify whether the births were contributed by local parents only or if it included non-local Chinese as well. Even if this statistic does include live-births of migrant Chinese parents, it still lowers the number of Chinese parents overall in Singapore. It would be safe to assume that the largest ethnic group in terms of number would provide a similar percentage in terms of live births. Nonetheless, these figures lead to the question of what it is that the local Chinese community in Singapore is doing with regards to marriage and childbirth. This is the reason why this thesis has identified the local Chinese community as its target sample: to understand the cultural and social factors that have brought about this phenomenon within the local Chinese community of Singapore.

Revised to this point 6/01/16

**Women’s Employment and Changing Attitudes towards Marriage**

Since the 1960s, Singapore has seen a rapid increase in the female labour group, a sign of the expanding employment opportunities in an expanding economy. Before the increase, housewives were critical of working women, considering them to be bad wives and mothers. Men also classified married women who were
working as individuals who were not dedicated in their work. In the political world, it was perceived that a woman in a political career would be absurd because women were “too emotional’ and that politics were “too dirty, too tough” and “too unfeminine” (Wong, 1976, p. 215). Today, women have moved up the ladder and have positioned themselves in highly sought after roles like politicians, professors, doctors and high-level officers in global organisations. Women remained in non-managerial roles until the late 1970s. Following this phenomenon, there has also been an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs (Lee, 1997, p. 93).

In 1976, majority of women in Singapore had marriage set as “the goal” (Wong, 1976, p. 214). Even then, the age for marriage was already starting to rise. Women of different socio-economic backgrounds felt that marriage was a necessary condition for personal fulfilment and viewed motherhood as a vital aspect of adulthood (Wong, 1976, p. 214). 82% of respondents were convinced that the more important female role was maternal and that success and happiness in marriage was the result of having children (Wong, 1976, p. 215).

Today’s working women, especially female entrepreneurs, have to balance their household chores, children and their businesses. This builds conflicts between job satisfaction, marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. One result of jobs bringing about difficulty with family commitment is a drop in job satisfaction (Kim & Ling, 2001). The modern working woman is highly motivated and strives for a higher quality of life based on a social norm of meritocracy. This brings out a desire for “the finer things in life” for most Singaporeans, not exclusively for women (Lee, 1997, p. 103). This pursuit for better quality of living is in turn reflected in the progress of education and job markets, which brings about an increased level of stress for Singaporeans, including long working hours and heightened housing prices (Jones, 2012, p. 90). In addition, we need to take into consideration the high level of media and advertisements that portrayed images of “femininity” through capitalistic representations such as fashion, cosmetics and durable consumer-product industries (Wong, 1976, p. 216). It is apparent that modern working woman is exposed to a larger set of responsibilities and distractions coupled with the liberation of being financially dependent on a man.
There is no doubt that the idea of marriage and child-bearing would descend down the pecking order.

Some solutions proposed include a clearer gender equity in the household which will help women juggle work life balance, less emphasis on the children’s educational performance and more family-friendly workplaces (Jones, 2012). These interventions are targeted at married couples that do not have children. However, the larger puzzle is in fact to get more people married before taking the step of making babies, or even promoting the idea of childbirth outside of marriage.

Singapore may have a collectivistic social landscape due to its Asian background but Singaporeans have a strong individualistic side as well, which influence their consumer behaviour. The globalisation of consumer markets also stimulates materialism in Singapore and the need for an increase in disposable income (Li, et al., 2010, p. 392). It may be perceived that the level of happiness for a person might be proportionately influenced by their quality of living and quantity of material goods, which in turn influences their desire for children. Therefore, with Singaporean women and their higher levels of materialism, this lowers their life satisfaction and in turn their determination for marriage and children (Li, et al., 2010, p. 400). This then also leads to stronger emphasis on finding a partner of higher economic standing.

A survey that was done in Singapore with 190 high school students’ aged 13 to 18, examined the influence that marketing communication and social influence factors had on adolescents’ endorsement on materialistic values. It was established that the respondents would be happier if they could buy more things and if they enjoyed a more luxurious life. On the contrary, they did not admire people who had expensive possessions. This brings about the indication that respondents have a fear of being socially rejected (La Ferle & Chan, 2008, p. 207), which brings about this blend of aspirational individualistic values internally while still maintaining a pseudo collectivistic exterior. The increase in technology also plays a part in our materialistic society. With more exposure to media and advertisements, this consequently increases the choices that we have as consumers. Leong (2011) provides a glimpse into the changes that have come
about with Chinese weddings in Singapore in terms of collectivism and individualism. Traditionally a wedding is a family oriented affair but it has become an individual and state affair displayed as a spectacle to fulfil desires of being public personalities and celebrities (Leong, 2011, p. 131). Such flamboyance of personal affairs could possibly be encouraged by the advancement in technologies and networks on the Internet that facilitated women to communicate, exchange information and thus bred comparison. Financially in Singapore, parents still provide a roof over the heads of many singles, thus enabling Singaporeans to spend their money on leisure and personal expenses. This freedom may be a financial one but the difference with a more Western society like Australia is the emotional and philosophical idea of freedom, where children leave home and explore world and find jobs in different cities. This provides the new generation of women with more knowledge and opens up options for creative influences when planning their weddings.

This is also evident in a study that has provided a perspective stating that Singapore women, as compared to their American counterparts, were found to have have higher materialistic standards, lower desire for children, and lower life satisfaction. From the study it was also found that Singaporean women placed a greater emphasis on their future partner’s earning capacity (Li, Patel, Balliet & Tov, 2010, p. 391). As mentioned before, Singapore, like its East-Asian neighbours, has an issue of citizens delaying their commencement in starting families because of the rise in gender equality with education and industry. It has been discovered that job-spouse conflict influences job, marital and life satisfaction to the greatest degree (Kim & Ling, 2001, p. 213). It is shown that married and older Singaporeans have a lower level of satisfaction with their lives. The more personal income one had indicated a higher level of life satisfaction (Tan, Tambyah & Kau, 2006, p. 49). However, Singaporeans who partake in leisure activities to impress others and express their status are actually less happy about their interpersonal relationships and their jobs (Tan, Tambyah & Kau, 2006, p. 51). Furthermore, Singaporeans are less satisfied with their relationships in general. Since gender plays a role in overall satisfaction, it is
shown that males are more likely to be satisfied in relationships (Tan, Tambyah & Kau, 2006, p. 49).

The increase in material desires, which could be affected by the increase in social standing, brings about a sense of satisfaction but only to a certain degree. It is possible that for real satisfaction and happiness, one must start looking for channels in the emotional connections. The search for these emotional channels of happiness and satisfaction is not that easy.

**Expectations of Love**

As we have explained above, the identity of the Singapore Chinese community is a blend of transcultural values and attitudes from the East and the West. Does that blend of identity apply in the way Singaporean Chinese behave when it comes to romance? Previous studies have looked into the different aspects of love, for instance a biological anthropology approach taken by Helen Fisher (2004). She describes how love is a natural process and that our behaviour and actions can also be found in other species.

Apart from Helen Fisher who is one of the leaders in the field of love, many studies have also been done with regards to this topic of love in different fields, including: anthropologists, clinical psychology, communication studies, developmental psychology, evolutionary psychologists, historians, neurobiologists, neuroscientists, primatologists, social psychologists, and sociologists. All of which have invented and used a vast arrays of different methods to measure into the emotion of love (Hatfield, Bensman & Rapson, 2012). This chapter will first look at the study of mate selection and its impact on changing values of love, transcultural values of love, and expectations of love specifics in Singapore.

Think about the times when you question what are the factors that we look out for in a long term partner, or when you are curious to understand what are the qualities that attract us to another person. Mate selection is the area of study that inquires to find the answers for those questions. Mate selection or mate choices is the process where selection of a mate is dependent on his/her qualities. Bolton (1961) describes the study of mate selection as:
...concentrated upon the statistical relating of demographic and personality variables presumed to characterize the marriageable individuals and to channel their selection of mate (p. 234).

The study of mate preferences today is not far from what Bolton describes. Multiple studies that investigate on the process of mate selection using statistical research method have gained insights and reported on the different influences and factors that affect the outcome of mate choices (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011; Furnham, 2009; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002; Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004; Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011; Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss, 2005). Most of these studies, even with different terminologies, seem to highlight that men place higher importance on “looks” and “physical attraction” while women place higher importance on factors such as “dependable” and “stability. A cross-cultural survey conducted by Shackelford, Schmitt and Buss (2005) with 4,499 men and 5,310 women from 37 cultures concluded that men provided a higher importance rating scale on Love vs. Status/Resources compared to women (Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss 2005, p. 455). On the other hand, women across the world value dependability, stability, education, and intelligence in long-term mates as compared to men (Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss 2005, p. 456). In China, men have higher desire than women to seek for partners who are younger, physically attractive and good looking, while women have similar value weightage with their global compatriots on the qualities of “good financial prospects” and “good earning capacity” (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011, p. 682). This reinforces the sex-role hypotheses that females often subscribe to the notion of “comparative structural powerlessness” which result in hypergamy or marrying up in socio-economic status, while men follow the idea of “exchange object” where physical attractiveness is the main criterion for measuring value in exchange commodity (Furnham, 2009, p. 262). Correspondingly, it provides a greater certainty that across different cultural backgrounds, men place importance on “good looks” while women place importance on resourcefulness. Nonetheless, it has been found that both sexes place higher value on physical attractiveness/looks when it comes to short-term mates (Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011, p. 291).
These traditional thoughts constructed the cultural background for mate preferences in China. Chinese men tend to choose wives based on their chastity, gentleness, thoughtfulness, femininity and submissiveness (Higgins et al., 2002; Zhao, 2002), all of which pertain to low social dominance.

When conversing about values, one way of looking at it in application to the cosmopolitan state of Singapore is to consider values as a commodity. If we perceive values to have some sort of material value like money, then these values will also be seen as some form of value exchange between couples. Money and the value of materials, can be applied here in the same structure. When looking at how marriages were carried out in the past, the male was the sole breadwinner, and a female would have to look for a partner who had a stable job in order to have a comfortable lifestyle. There is an exchange for what is perceived as “looks” and “physical attraction” is exchanged with “dependable” and “stability”.

Looking back at previous studies done (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011; Furnham, 2009; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002; Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004; Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011; Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss, 2005), this holds true even till today.

However, this framework of marriage whereby man is the sole breadwinner does not seem applicable in today’s context anymore. Females have now proved themselves to be more educated and capable in the workforce, and thus no longer need to rely on the male counterparts for “support” or “dependability”. This is evident in the current workforce that 50% of the females in the age group of 20 – 30 years old are graduates of local universities (Teo, 2013, p. 5), reflecting how the local society has progressed alike the growth of other nations. This growth then adds a potential to the idea of marriage in Singapore: Are relationships seen merely as an exchange of “looks” and “physical attractiveness” for “dependable” and “stability”? Or do females now look for different qualities? Based on literature, there is a greater exposure to the Western media and commercialisation that makes Singapore what it is today. This thesis hypothesizes that because of the influence from Western media, the values of romantic love for local Singaporean Chinese are not solely focused on Asian values but also include Western values. Relationships therefore need to be evaluated by the individuals in understanding what it is that each other is looking for and can provide.
We have established that the Singapore community is a mixture of Eastern and Western values. So, what are the range of values in relationship to love?

**Transcultural Values of Love in Singapore**

Eastern values of love include high academic qualifications, a good career and filial piety. Western values of love include highly romantic gestures, the idea of the one. This mixture in Singapore results in transcultural values. What does this thesis mean by values? In the anthropological literature, values have been defined in different ways. They are used by groups or individuals as criteria to select people and make choices (Kluckhohn, 1951). Love and mate selection depends on these different values: There are the values that people place in the criteria for their potential mates; also there are common values that people look to share with their potential mates. Appadurai (1994) defines value as a commodity that is used in exchanges of ordinary life that are founded by agreements on what is desirable. Graeber (2005, p. 451) takes that a step further into moral aesthetics and symbolic territory where value is the manner in which our actions convey meaning or importance through the incorporation into something larger than ourselves.

Majority of these studies (Furnham, 2009; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002; Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004; Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss, 2005) have been done in the Western world with a minority of studies done in China (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011) and Singapore (Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011). It has been identified that Singaporean women place greater value on social status compared to their American counterparts. Li et al. (2011, p. 293) have discovered that women in Singapore placed greater value on social status while American women placed higher on physical attraction. But for both sexes, they place higher value to physical attractiveness/looks when it comes to short-term mates. This elaborates the complexity of mate preference in the cultural context. We now know that there is a difference but what influenced these differences?

In China, a study has been done to compare the mate preferences between modern Chinese with those from a 25 years earlier (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011). By comparing the procedure results, it was discovered that there
has been significant cultural difference in the 25 years’ gap. “Religious” values have been placed with greater influence along with “good earning capacity”, whereas the importance placed on virginity has declined (Chang et al., 2011, p. 682). One possible reason for this change is how the mass media in China has changed from the Maoist era to the post Mao era (Yang, 1997, p. 293), where a change in the broadcasting of television programmes started to provide a greater deal of diversity from purely Chinese to a more global flavour of Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and American influences.

There have been other factors that have identified correlation to mate preference, whereby data from 198 males and female’s heterosexual college students uncovered that women ranked the scent of a partner to be of higher importance compared to “looks” or other social preferences like “pleasantness” (Herz & Inzlicht, 2002, p. 359). In addition, Koyama, McGain and Hill (2004) investigated variation in mate preference in relation to perceptions of equality and autonomy, with results finding that there was no sex difference in mate preferences or traits that were assigned with increasing endorsement of gender equality (Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004, p. 331).

Today the perceptions of marriage and romantic relationships is varied and diverse. In the modern world of dating and relationships there is not one defined form that everyone considers to be the norm. There are different definitions and labels, different activities that people engage in; hence the level of complexity is increased dramatically. For example, traditionally if a woman is not married, it would be assumed that she is not sexually active but today it is the opposite. The modern relationship has different emerging elements, with promiscuity a popular media message that is taken into account as well as the separation of love and sex. It is a representation of a woman who is sexually active, dispelling the notions of passivity and conservation however this woman has to portray herself as passive and conservative in order to attract partners (Goh, 2009, p. 61).

Another reason that relationships are complicated in Singapore is the idea of tradition in courtship. Intentions were clearer and there was not much ambiguity when it came to relationships. Today, relationship statuses are used as labels that add confusion to relationships, as different people seek different aspects of
a relationship which include; love, sex and/or romance. With these aspects, there are different notions and views on the construction of a relationship. The traditional courtship system where men are the initiators are still seen as the norm, women want to figure out the direction of the relationship without being forward. These factors build an idealised image of marriage, includes representations such as a great deal of romance, physical intimacy, passion, celebration, happiness, “love at first sight”, physical beauty, empathy and open communication. Apart from the presence of unrealistic positives it also includes the lack of negatives like conflict and mundane marital behaviours (Segrin & Nabi, 2002, p. 249).

The divorce rates in Asian countries are rising and some of the influences that have been identified to include (Huang, 2005, p. 164):

1. Rapid economic growth, urbanization, and the changing cultural norms in Asian societies
2. Enhanced choice through educational/employment opportunities for Asian women
3. The growing individualism
4. The loosening of social control over marriage
5. The divorce laws in most Asian countries have become more lenient
6. The rise of romantic love (Western-style concept of love that is feeling that brings happiness without hard work

The study above was looking at the East Asian region as a whole. However, these influences are currently also seen in the local context of Singapore. In Singapore these are actually a sign of transculturalism. In traditionally Asian cities like Singapore that hold strong ties to Confucianism, these influences that have been mentioned above by Huang (2005) are actually perceived to be generally Western in nature. Especially the growing of individualism and the rise of romantic love or the Western-style concept of love that is driven by the idea that love is all about happiness and not involving any hard work.

The National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) provides an annual report on Singapore’s population landscape which seeks to promote a greater
understanding of the factors that contribute to the local population. From this report one can start to identify the issues that are facing the subject of marriage in Singapore. We know that the singlehood rates have risen over the years with the proportion of singles rising from 2001 to 2011. One indicator that provides a perspective is the level of qualification among the citizens. The percentage of single males ages 35-39 years is higher for those who have a lower qualification, but for the females the higher the qualification results in a higher percentage for singlehood (Li, Patel, Balliet & Tov, 2010, p. 391; National Population and Talent Division, 2012, p. 12). Combining both sets of information, it is clear that one contributing factor in relation to the idea of the declining birth rate and late marriages, which is the enhanced level of qualifications for women in both careers and education. From this, we can see that what Huang is talking about is also taking effect in Singapore.

However, it does not stop there. The idea that love requires hard work, sacrifice and commitment generates a desire in women to seek for potential partners who do not just have stability, drive and the ability to provide for them, but also charm, romance and suave. As one participant describes, “I would hate to have to work too hard in a relationship. I hate fights, I hate confrontations. I just want to have a nice time. I want to be happy and feel loved” (Goh, 2009, p. 62). This increases the wait for women, the wait for the prince to come into her life and sweep her off her feet. Singles who are in their 20s have views that there is still plenty of time and the relationships can be achieved without marriage as the overriding goal. This is done while waiting for the right partner. As these singles reach their early 30s, the urgency for a partner starts to increase with the awareness that the right partner may not emerge (Jones, 2012, p. 94). Instead of the more traditional path of marriage and building a life with a partner, women have now been made to manage love as an extension of leisure. This leads women to adopt a perspective on love, sex and romance that is more romantic, casual and pleasurable (Goh, 2009, p. 62). This type of perception of love has further illustrated the context that the highly educated and ranked women of Singapore have standards for potential partners that are considered to be unrealistic.
One of the factors that could contribute to these standards for partners could be attributed to the rise of popularity from the world of Korean Drama (K-drama) protagonists (Chan & Wang, 2011, p. 295). The men portrayed from these K-dramas can be seen as ideal partners who resemble the Prince Charming archetype. However, the trouble with such idealistic thinking is that Singaporean men are seen to be neither ideal or Prince Charming when being compared with these K-drama male protagonists (Chan & Wang, 2011, p. 295). This view of being able to find a partner who is of magnanimous character is also accompanied by expectations of someone with a higher social-economical class (Chan & Wang, 2011, p. 300). Women also want to marry a man who is of equal or better socio-economic status in order to maintain their quality of life after marriage, without causing their partner to feel pressured and losing masculinity, and also to be able to keep their share of assets if a marriage fails (Jones, 2012, p. 93).

This may be possible in the K-drama and the country of Korea since the content of drama often takes into consideration to emulate the societal trends of the country, and thus may not be applicable in the egalitarian society of Singapore. The contradiction arises when women have desires for a more egalitarian relationship with current or future partners, yet still fantasise about their partners being magnanimous and Prince Charming like. This starts to build up an idea that the perfect man is out there, when it is a fragment of an illusion. These ideas that media affects the perception or notion of the ideal partner does not affect just the females since males are subjected to these forms of impression as well. An analysis of the local magazines and their full-page advertisements conducted by Pusgley (2010, p. 182) discovered that there was a disparity in terms of race and ethnicity presented in the magazine advertisements when compared to the local population. Even though it is established that the Chinese are the predominant race of the local population, the models appearing in these full-page advertisements are largely Caucasians, who are the smallest ethnic group in Singapore. The models that appear on the covers of the different editions of magazines were also found to be predominantly Caucasians or pale-skinned ethnic-Chinese. This reflects the transnational background of the magazine,
having originated in the Western region, but also reflects an aspirational feature in the Singaporean community (Pugsley, 2010).

The statistics presented have established that the number of marriages are not as high as it should be to help improve the situation of an aging population. This worrying situation seems to be exacerbated by the fact that local Singaporeans are not marrying at a younger age and are not bearing enough children. Consequently, if Singaporean singles are not getting together with each other, they will have to look at other options for partners, which could include migration marriage. In 2011, marriages between citizens and non-citizens made up 39.4% of all marriages involving a citizen (National Population and Talent Division, 2012, p. 14). This is indicated that many of the locals are looking out of the country to seek partners. However, 77% of these marriages are made up of citizen grooms and non-citizen brides with which 96.4% of these brides have originated from Asia. Based on these statistics, one can start to see the impact of popular cultures influence on the local population, where females have either a conscious or unconscious desire for the illusive prince. However, the reputation and image of migration marriage is typically bad due to stigmatisation by media and the accompanied derogatory terms such as gold diggers and prostitutes. It is a taboo that Singaporeans do not want to talk about as it will induce unpleasantness. Caution usually arises during the discussion of China brides; this even includes the husbands of these brides. China brides who have been engaged to participate in interviews might be willing to discuss the topic of international marriage and its processes but their husbands seem to be fearful and unwilling to talk about the topic (Zhou, 2010, p. 33), leading to China brides having to participate without approval from their husbands. Migration marriages, in the case of Singaporean grooms and China brides, are usually a result of local men not being able to find local women to marry due to non-marriage, late marriage and marrying-up trends that local Singaporean women buy into (Zhou, 2010, p. 136). One reason that husband of these China brides might feel uneasy could be attributed to the inability to find a local Chinese wife for themselves because of the ideologies mentioned above, coupled with the rising sense of desperation due to time
passing their loneliness and nagging from immediate and extended family members.

Women seek relationships that are simple yet thrilling, emotionally engaging yet physically satisfying. These dreams of a perfect knight in shining armour are still evident in the terms of potential partners who fit today’s archetype of tall, dark and handsome (Goh, 2009, p. 62). We have seen how the local context of Singapore has an ever-changing landscape where the idea of relationships is changing along with the culture of Singapore itself. The question then starts to shift. With these changes in culture and expectations of love, what are the reasons for this? How does exposure to media affect the way that the Singaporean Chinese community perceives the values of love? In the next chapter, I will look at how media is actually consumed in Singapore.

**Conclusion**

With this chapter, we were able to highlight and understand the different aspects that have played a part in the formation of Singapore as a society. By looking at the history of Singapore as a society, it paves the path to a clearer sense of how the Chinese community in Singapore identifies itself as a Chinese diaspora. From this, we can perceive that the community in Singapore is generally more of a traditional one, with sections that are starting to open up to what is considered to be Western values. The changing values in terms of marriage and greater focus on careers also moves away from the patriarchal values of the traditional ideals when it comes to roles for women. Similarly, the materialistic focus that Singaporeans have are starting to move their views from more of a collectivistic to individualistic attitudes. Even though the government has a hold on the types of media that Singaporeans are exposed to, Singaporeans are observed to start moving out from the origins of traditional conservative Asian mindsets to the more open-minded individualistic perspective.

This chapter also provided an overview of the current romantic relationship landscape in Singapore. The government is trying to increase the number for marriage and childbirth in order to help the aging population. The population of Singapore feels that the rising cost of living is a hindrance to that. In terms of
romantic relationships, most of the secondary research has shown that gender plays a part when it comes to qualities that people look for. Nevertheless, when looking at Singapore, it needs to be seen as to whether this applies especially with a transcultural landscape. From what we have seen, there are different factors that are raising the age for marriage and childbirth. However, the main area this thesis is looking at is specifically on whether or not romantic comedy television series play a part with this phenomenon in Singapore and how this is done. With this thesis, I will be looking at the interventions that have come from the state, like funding and “Romancing Singapore” and how the impact of these interventions on later marriages are not necessarily significant.
Chapter 2: Romantic Comedy Television Series’ and the Influence of Media

Introduction

Traditionally, mass media is often referred to as a mode of entertainment such as radio, television, film, recorded music and print media. Today, this definition has expanded to include the Internet and social media. At the same time, the concept of mass media has also extended to include more abstract ideas such as artefacts, experiences, practice and processes. Commonly associated with human life, mass media is approached anthropologically through different angles such as institutions, workplaces, communicative practices, cultural products, social activities, aesthetic forms, and historical developments (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 293).

This chapter looks at the theories that are associated with media, specifically, cultivation theory and social comparison theory and their relationship with media. This will be demonstrated through the analysis of various media studies that examine the correlations between the influence of media and different aspects of society. Then the chapter will define what exactly a romantic comedy television show is in the context of the Singaporean Chinese community. Traditionally, the romantic comedy or romcom is a genre that is associated with movies. However, we will look at how it is also applied in the context of the television series. Through this process of romantic comedy television series definition, we will look at hallyu, the “Korean Wave”, as a case study. The “Korean Wave” has taken the world by storm and the Korean Government has utilised it to successfully promote tourism to Korea. With the knowledge gained from the “Korean Wave”, I will then examine the local Singapore media landscape and how it can also utilise this knowledge.
to help promote marriage and childbirth in Singapore. Various methods have been utilised by the Singapore government to promote marriage and childbirth, which seem to have garnered some effect. However, these effects could be further amplified in relation to the local Chinese Singapore community.

**Cultivation Theory and Social Comparison Theory**

A review of the literature for the field of media studies has illustrated that Social comparison theory and Cultivation theory are the two prominent theories currently being discussed. Social comparison theory states that social influence processes and competitive behaviour stem from the drive of self-evaluation and the comparison of the self with other persons (Festinger, 1954). This is apparent when individuals draw from personal relationships and the media in order to give value to their own perspectives (Chan and Prendergast, 2008, p. 800). One example of social comparison theory being applied was a study done in Hong Kong where youths aged 15 to 24 were found to have positive predictions for materialism based on the imitation of celebrities and comparisons that were made from media and other individuals. On the other hand, cultivation theory stipulates that there is a relationship between television content and a viewer’s notion of social reality (Eggermont, 2004, p. 248). Cultivation theory emerged as a concept in the 1970s through the investigation of the presentation of violence in television compared to actual crime in the United States (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). One example of cultivation theory was a study looking at the impact of television viewing on marital satisfaction and commitment for married individuals (Osborn, 2012). Cultivation theory argues that media is an influence depending on levels of exposure and time. This is in contrast to social comparison theory which looks into the various aspects of the media that influence is drawn from, instead of just levels or time of media exposure.

Fundamentally, this thesis looks at the impact media has on romantic relationships, not just on a level of exposure but the different aspects of the impact. Therefore, the theory from media studies that this study is grounded in is social comparison theory. More of the theoretical framework will be explored in
Chapter 3. This section of the chapter discusses in depth the ways in which these theories have been applied in different studies.

Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969) was often the foundation for many media studies conducted in the past. It is the leading theory that investigates the existence of relationships between television content and notions of social reality (Eggermont, 2004, p. 248). One such study (Osborn, 2012) looked into the impact of television viewing on marital satisfaction and commitment. Osborn criticised how previous studies before his had different methodologies as well as inconsistencies in their studies, which resulted in the association between television viewing and relational variables being unclear. Osborn (2012, p. 740) also claimed that in order to collect data to paint a clearer picture, four variables need to be present: television viewing, belief in television’s portrayal of relationships, general expectations for relationships, and assessments of actual relationships. Likewise, I believe these variables need to be explored in my study as well. However, there are criticisms to the theory of media cultivation. John Condry (1989) tells us that viewers do not use the people seen on television as "social comparison". He argued that if that was true the heaviest viewers would have been concerned about appearance, health and weight because of the attractive, young and thin actors and actresses. However, the heaviest viewers were found to be least concerned about their health and weight. Another critique of cultivation theory is methodological problems. Potter (1993, p. 1) describes how the empirical work of early cultivation theory research is allowed to be exploratory and open to criticism, which allows for research to grow and mature. However, many cultivation researchers have been slow in responding to the criticism, while continuing with faulty practices and avoiding the need for justification (Potter, p. 1). Hirsch (1980, p. 449) conducted a reanalysis of previous findings on cultivation theory research. From the study he tells us:

“responses of nonviewers and extreme viewers are analyzed separately. When two or more controls were applied simultaneously, we found the “separate and independent” effect of television viewing to be nonexistent.”
Here Hirsh tells us that through the reanalysis he found that there was no effect of cultivation from media on both nonviewers and extreme viewers. These criticisms are present when discussing media cultivation theory. However, this study is not measuring the level of media influence on people but is more concerned with how cultivation theory offers understanding of how the Singaporean Chinese community utilises media in mediating their values and experiences with romantic relationships.

Another theory that this research can be built upon is “mediation”, the processes whereby a social dispensation produces and reproduces itself in and through a specific set of media (Mazzarella, 2004, p. 346). In order to redesign the aesthetics in media effectively, the social aspects of romantic love have to be produced and reproduced in themselves. At this point, it is assumed that the aesthetics that have been produced in media and consumed by viewers are volatile. Due to this volatility, the aesthetics in media have the potential to influence the values of love for individuals. Since the influence of media is transcultural, the aesthetics that are produced in different cultural media will thus have similar values and representations.

A phenomenon that aligns closely to cultivation theory and social comparison theory is trans-pop-consumerism. Jung (2011, p. 75) coined the term “trans-pop-consumerism” which refers to the transnational consumption of popular Asian culture using capitalistic power for entertainment and leisure on top of material goods and social services. This is applicable in Singapore because of its multicultural society and high level of technological advancement. With trans-pop-consumerism assigned to Singaporeans, the main facilitators are cultural hybridity resulting from East and West based on the social context of pragmatism, the pursuit of a newly emerging leisure and entertainment-oriented consumerist lifestyle, and high technology literacy (Jung, 2011, p. 87).

Trans-pop-consumerism runs as a parallel with the social integration of the Nation of Singapore as a State. Pasztory (2005, p. 30) proposed that there are four different levels of social integration, namely Band, Tribe, Chiefdom and State
which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s from the work of American anthropologists and archaeologists. On defining what a state is, Pasztory (2005, p. 33) also listed the four necessary conditions: having a ruler with economic resources and military power; a lower class of agricultural workers and a middle class of artisans and professionals; a technology of power through large building projects; various types of records of writing and keeping. In determining the level of social integration, Singapore naturally falls under the category of State as it satisfies the aforementioned conditions: a ruling party that has been in power since the independence of the nation, and a larger middle class that is constantly moulded by meritocracy towards elitism. Singapore prides itself on being the best in many aspects from education to technology (Ang, 2007). This brings about the characteristic of a trans-pop-consumer lifestyle that is prevalent in Singapore (Jung, 2011).

The result of a trans-pop-consumer state in the case of Singapore is a hybridity of transculturation that allows the nation to define its own cultural media identity. On the one hand, the rise of internationally produced media lowers the consumption of locally produced media. On the other hand, this will be a good starting point that the study will engage with, to draw from the existing aesthetics that engage the Chinese Singaporean community to start creating a local alternative.

**Media Influence**

Traditional forms of media such as television, film and music play a significant role in influencing various aspects of today’s society, including fashion, lifestyles and the ideologies of romance and love especially. Even in the Asian context of pop-cultures such as Japanese Pop (J-Pop) and Korean Pop (K-Pop), social perceptions have been observed to be altered in relation to the different pop-cultures. For a nation like Singapore, looking into perceptions of romance and love and their values to different genders and cultural groups will be essential in bridging the gap between the sub-cultures within the Chinese diaspora. Linking back to trans-pop-consumerism, this is where we see the local context of
Singapore engaging with international media as a form of entertainment. This thesis will attempt to build tangible outcomes for the values of love and romance by breaking down pop-culture and its many facets. These outcomes are defined as transcultural aesthetics, stuff or things that have a narrative or story that has elements or inspirations from different cultures. Therefore, my study will enquire with an anthropological foundation that will be informed through a design perspective, and in turn the designing of the outcomes will be constructed with an anthropological insight. These aesthetics will be discussed in detail in chapter five, which investigates the different factors that influence the relationship between media and real life practices.

Media, as a mechanism of intervention for this issue of mate preference, has been chosen because of its ubiquitous reach and correlation to social issues (Brown, 2002; Carper, Negy & Tantleff-Dunn, 2010; Chen & Jackson, 2012; Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Field, Camargo, Taylor, Berkey, Robert & Colditz, 2001; Roberts, 2000; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2004; Steele, 1999; Strasburger, 2004; Villani, 2001; Ward, 2003). Studies have shown how the impact of media can inform and influence adolescents and children on societal issues such as violence, sexuality and drugs (Brown, 2002; Strasburger, 2004). In 2000, a questionnaire regarding the consumption of media such as television, videotapes, movies, computers, video games, radio, compact discs, tape players, books, newspapers, and magazines was sent out to American adolescents aged 8 to 18 from different cultural backgrounds. The results showed that the consumption of media took up more time for American youths than any other activity in their waking moments (Roberts, 2000, p. 8). The study also revealed that 97% of the sample had televisions, VCR’s, and audio systems at home; 70% were video game players; and more than two thirds (2/3) had personal computers. In 1998, 75% of the world’s Internet users were from the U.S. but these numbers have decreased to less than 15% over the last ten years (Bell, 2010). Facebook, the social networking application that connects people from different countries and regions today, has over 1.11 billion users and 680 million mobile users (http://www.statisticbrain.com/facebook-statistics/). These
numbers represent the increase in ubiquity and ease of access of media for the world today.

Steele (1999, p. 332) looked to generate a broad understanding of teens’ media practices using a qualitative, multi-method investigation. Subsequently, he then studied to find out how teens drew sexual media content from major media into their identities. Feedback from this research reflected that teens responded to media from where they were from and what they knew of life, relating to programs in which they could see “people like them” or lives “like theirs” in the media (Steele, 1999, p. 340). Steele developed the Adolescents’ Media Practice Model, which represents the characterisation of human existence in teens based on interactions with media. This model was based on the idea that teens’ sense of who they are is moulded by their encounters with media, and that those encounters are at the same time shaped by teens’ sense of themselves (Steele, 1999, p. 334). This cyclic model consists of Selection, Interaction and Application. From the abovementioned studies, we know that teens have long been active users of media. However, instead of defining the cause of problems as the media itself, this North Carolina study argued that the influences are not just coming from the media but from the viewers themselves.

In terms of applying the interaction of media in one’s life, Owen (1997, p. 537), through an analysis of popular romantic fiction, explored ways in which women take ingredients from romantic plots and utilise them in their own lives as well as re-invent these romances. One interesting finding was that these romantic books contained representations of eroticism, which falls under the genre of sexual fantasy for women and this contradicts the idea that women are not interested in sex and that they are not overt about their sexuality (Owen, 1997, p. 544). According to Owen (1997, p. 544) these stories provide enjoyment for their readers yet women are able to distance themselves from the roles and characters depicted. Therefore, it is clear that the influences of characters in stories are present but because their consumers are mature enough to differentiate between reality and fiction, they are able to make the distinction between fiction and lessons for reality.
From previous studies (Brown, 2002; Ward, 2004; Strasburger, 2004) we see that media can be informative and provide answers about sexuality. However, mass media can also offer a portrayal of life that rarely depicts responsible sexual behaviour of commitment, contraception and consideration of consequences (Brown, 2002, p. 42). A study done in the U.S. made six findings in the area of sexuality and sexual relation in the media (Ward, 2003, p. 351): the dominance of verbal innuendos or less explicit physical acts of flirting; the bulk of sexual action and language that occurred outside of marriage; the lack of discussion and depiction of sexual planning and consequences; the prevalence of sexual content varying across genres; the difference of degree to which women's and men's bodies were sexualised; and the large increase in the frequency of sexual references over the past decades. The consistent evidence was that media exposure was associated with sexual attitudes, expectations and behaviours, but the associations differed among genres, soap operas and music videos. These representations of sexuality in the media can affect the perceptions of viewers, for example a greater sexual expectation that one’s peers are sexually active as well as a positive attitude to recreational sex (Strasburger, 2004, p. 69). Within the local Singaporean context, our Asian values that were discussed in the previous chapter start to become clear, especially here. The discussion of Asian values in Singapore enforces the idea that we should fight against Western values and influence, which includes topics such as sexuality. In Chapter 5, sexuality is discussed further to show that Asian romantic television shows do not have as much discussion and portrayal of sexual intimacy compared to Western media.

In a literature review of the 1990s, Villani (2001, p. 399) reiterated the idea that media has a tremendous capacity, be it directly or subtly, to teach and convey messages about nutrition and body image. This capacity is enhanced by the increased amount of time spent and the different forms of media that a young child’s mind is exposed to. The research that has gone into the area of mass media influences on a person’s perception of their own physical appearance and eating habits has been vast. These studies include samples of men and women of all ages (Carper, Negy & Tantleff-Dunn, 2010; Chen & Jackson, 2012;
Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Story & Perry, 2005; Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012; Field, Camargo, Taylor, Berkey, Robert & Colditz, 2001; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2004). More recently, some of these studies have revolved around development of young women. This is significant to this research because of the ideologies and perceptions of where women stand socio-economically on the scale. Do women have realistic ideals on their own body? Do these goals of what is considered unhealthy weight-control behaviours come from media? If they indeed come from media, then how much influence does media have in influencing what values we subscribe to, or to push it further, the way we shape our world in the context of marriage and love as demonstrated by social comparison theory?

Adolescent girls who have been associated with unhealthy weight-control behaviours have been found to be influenced by social perceptions of friends’ dieting and the presence of trying to lose weight in schools (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Story & Perry, 2005, p. 1170). This has led to a rise in girls of varying weights who suffer from unhealthy weight-control behaviours. The influence of parents also plays a role in the development of weight concerns and frequent dieting (Field, Camargo, Taylor, Berkey, Robert & Colditz, 2001). In a longitudinal study, girls and boys aged 9 to 14 were examined in 1996 and 1997 respectively. The results suggest that children who observe their mother constantly trying to lose weight were more likely to follow suit. This is not just a pandemic that is affecting girls but the increase in media presentations of males with carefully sculpted bodies may provide boys with ideals on weight loss as well.

Even as children grow older, it is found that media influences on body image are strong (Fernandez & Pritchard, 2012). In an online survey with graduate students, women were reported to place strong importance on body image and drive for thinness. How media provides this influence is in its representation of reality, where thin models grace countless advertisements and programs, but in reality not everyone looks like that, resulting in a rise in aspirational values. This reinforces the problem of a reality that is not depicted in media, which results in a vicious cycle of people striving for constant unrealistic notions of what is healthy
and good looking. The emphasis on body image is not just a female specific topic, as males play a big part in this as well. Males rank physical attractiveness generally as the highest quality when looking for a partner (Buss, 1985; Higgins et al., 2002; Hudson & Henze, 1969; Li et al., 2011; Townsend, 1989). This is could be part of the reason that media influences on body image for females are discussed more than males. The idea of a “good” body that is perpetuated by the media does not just impact females and their bodies, but males who are exposed to the same media also use this as a benchmark, which relates closely to social comparison theory.

Cross culturally, various studies have affirmed that media portrayal plays a part in influencing body dissatisfaction. In China, researchers investigated the gender and age group differences in media and interpersonal influences on body dissatisfaction (Chen & Jackson, 2012, p. 3). The connection between mass media and physical attractiveness in discussions with participants was found to affect the identity of Chinese females more than Chinese males. Looking at this from a different perspective, an American study on the role of race identified that there was no negative impact on body image for Black women, while for White women, TV viewing provided negative impacts on body image, even though both groups were exposed to the same mainstream programs (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2004). One possible answer was the viewing of programming with predominantly Black casts; this seemed to be the differentiating factor for this study. It is seen that a stronger sense of fellowship led Black women to see Black women in media as allies rather than competitors, so their sense of negative body images was not significant. This highlights to us that based on the culture of someone there might be different ways individuals consume media and also create perspectives. Extrapolating from this idea, when we look at Singapore as a society, we cannot generalise it as a whole because of its multicultural nature.

From the previous studies seen we can start to see the relationship that media has with themes such as body image and other social perceptions. This brings us back to the question of cultivation theory. Does a person watch a particular
program because they view it as a reflection of their own world, or do they see their own world as a reflection of the media being consumed? One perspective agrees with this proposition, telling us that viewers are drawn to particular programs because they offer a ‘complex metaphor for their own social world’ (Gillespie, 1995, p. 207).

Concerning this research topic, we have to start thinking of media as a metaphor for reality as well. Romantic ideals portrayed in movies and television series could be seen to take two forms in this metaphor. Firstly, as a form of escapism from reality. Secondly as a benchmark for people's own ideals. If it is the former it would mean that romantic comedy media is used simply as a tool to destress and move away from the challenges of life. However, if it is the latter, it would mean that these forms of media are used to form expectations that might not be feasible in reality.

Lipsitz (1986) discussed the history of television programming, noting that in the early years of television, it was a replacement of the radio. This change of media was driven by profit and the ability that television has in playing on the ideal of the nuclear family. The idea that the nuclear family was a goal to reach for was a significant stepping stone for consumerism. The power of television helped to promote consumption in the 1950s (Lipsitz, 1986, p. 361). This was done via advertising through direct and indirect ways and selling the idea that happiness could be bought, as a family, through purchasing. This was a message not just for individuals with spending power but for housewives who were women who had expectations for their families and not just themselves (Lipsitz, 1986, p. 364). This was the power that the television, a box in the living room, could have over society. It was used as a tool for consumerism. That ability to sell and promote values and ideals is still present today, with consumerism utilising more channels that are at its disposal. However, can media actually sell ideals to society, and also, is cultivation theory accurate in perceiving television media as a channel to promote ideals that might affect the way we perceive potential romantic partners? To answer these questions, we need to look at the way media has influenced romantic ideals and other aspects of romance specifically.
Previous studies have shown that there are correlations between television viewing and the expectations of romantic partners, dating role attitudes and behaviours, as well as marital satisfaction and commitment (Eggermont, 2004; Osborn, 2012; Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). These studies specifically looked at the associations that were linked with television viewing and romantic love in its different aspects. Eggermont (2004, p. 259) measured the hours spent watching television per day and found that heavier television viewing was significant to the importance of physical attractiveness. The study also found that the heavier the television viewing was for adolescents, the higher their demands in expectations for romantic partners. However, this particular study did have a few limitations, such as the study was done with 15 and 16 year-olds which might not be a clear age group for a serious topic such as romantic partners. In addition, this study was done with a general view on television programming and not specifically looking at romantically themed content, which might not have been a good marker for the study as the content would have been too general. In a similar study done by Rivadaneyra and Lebo (2008, p. 302), it was shown that increased viewing of romantic programming was linked to higher endorsement of traditional stereotypes in dating, while watching non-romantic programming increased egalitarian attitudes towards dating. In addition, Therefore the study concluded that those who perceived television as realistic held less traditional dating role attitudes (Rivadaneyra & Lebo, 2008, p. 301). The study also showed that there were some participants who were dating at an earlier stage. This could have been a result of viewing of soap operas at a younger age (Rivadaneyra & Lebo, 2008, p. 302)

This study of youths and adolescents has similarities with television viewing studies done with adults. In a social exchange analysis of the impact that television viewing had on marital satisfaction and commitment, Osborn (2012, p. 756) found that an increased belief in television portrayals showed correlations with higher expectations for relationships and marriages. According to the responses of 392 participants who were married individuals, higher levels of viewing and belief in television portrayals predicted lower levels of commitment, higher perceived cost in exchange for relationships and higher attractiveness
alternatives to current relationships. That is, the study found that the higher the levels of viewings and beliefs, the lower the levels of satisfaction in marriage. Osborn’s research forms the foundation of this research. With a higher belief in television portrayals having a relationship to higher television exposure, we can start to look at how these levels of belief play a part in how relationships are experienced in the local context of Singapore. Similar to this research study, university students are not used as a sample for data collection because the discussion on themes like marriage and long-term relationships might not have been considered yet. Long-term romantic relationships need a certain amount of understanding before decisions should be made.

**The Romantic Comedy Genre**

Romance comedy is a genre that presents two people falling in love while showing the light-hearted funny side of the relationship. It is a formula for entertainment that the film and television industry has been using for many years. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (n.d.), the definition of a romantic comedy or romcom is as follows:

> A general term for comedies that deal mainly with the follies and misunderstandings of young lovers, in a light-hearted and happily concluded manner which usually avoids serious satire. The best-known examples are Shakespeare’s comedies of the late 1590s, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It* being the most purely romantic, while *Much Ado About Nothing* approaches the comedy of manners and *The Merchant of Venice* is closer to tragicomedy. The romantic comedy has become a recognized genre of popular film, in which context it is now sometimes abbreviated as romcom.

The romantic comedy genre in recent years has expanded since the 1990s with films such as, ‘Sleepless in Seattle’ (1993) and ‘There’s Something About Mary’ (1998) to more recent films such as ‘Silver Linings Playbook’ (2012) and ‘The 40-Year-Old Virgin’ (2005) and not forgetting cult favourites like ‘(500) Days of Summer’ (2009). These movies are a big aspect of pop-culture for many around
the world including Singaporean Chinese. Neale (1992, p. 287) also tells us what a modern romantic story is about. With a change from the traditional rules:

New romance (interpreted as an assertion, within and against these facts and conditions, of the values (if not the 'rules') of 'traditional' heterosexual romance. These values are, as we shall see, often markedly - and knowingly - 'old-fashioned', and as such help mark a reaction to the nervous romance itself.

This is not just a move from sexuality but also to wider representations of race. A wider range of ethnic races and other sexual orientations are represented in today's romantic television shows. Even show like I Love You Man (2009), a movie about how two men get closer into a bromance, is a sign of the evolution of romantic comedies.

In terms of academia, many have looked into the definition of the genre (Galician, 2003; Henderson, 1978; Johnson, 2012; Mortimer, 2010; Neale, 1992) but these writings tend to refer to romantic comedies in the context of movies rather than television shows. Henderson (1978, p. 13) describes how it is hard to define an actual romantic comedy due to the genre's lack of consistency. Mortimer (2010, p. 5) has a clearer and more up to date definition for what a romantic comedy is:

The romcom can be regarded as a hybrid of the romance and comedy genres, featuring a narrative that centres on the progress of a relationship, and, being a comedy, resulting in a happy ending. The dynamic of the film rests on the central quest – the pursuit of love – and almost always leads to a successful resolution.

Even though this definition by Mortimer is often quoted to define the romantic comedy genre in relation to movies, it is also applicable to television shows as it presents a clear clarification of the characteristics of a romantic comedy in general. Specifically, in the context of the content that is consumed by the Singaporean Chinese community, this includes both media from Western and Asian origins like the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and local productions from Singapore too.
Another aspect that helps to tell a story is the narrative, which is defined by Neuman as frames that are “conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information” (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 60). Neuman tells us that there are five different frames; conflict, human interest, economic consequence, mortality and responsibility. These frames/narratives utilise a framework or category to send across a message to the viewers. Looking at these different categories, we can also start to look at the different narratives that are used in romantic comedies. Mortimer (2010, p. 5) tells us that there are four different romantic comedy narratives: initial separation; love at first sight but circumstance holds them apart; unrequited love; war with each other at start but realise their love after misunderstandings and complications. Romantic comedies use these different narratives as channels for their message and as a frame for the story to be conveyed to the viewers.

For this study, the definition of romantic comedy helps to filter the television series that are being watched. In this section we will look at defining romantic comedies. Different countries vary in their television series genre definitions. For example, popular U.S. productions such as *How I Met Your Mother* and *Friends* fall under the category of sitcoms because of the way television series and movies are categorised differently even though they might have the qualities that are required for a romantic comedy. For Korean productions, they have many types of categories that might overlap with romantic comedies. Therefore, the definition provided by Mortimer is used for this study, that is a romantic comedy television series needs to fulfil three requirements:

1. A narrative that shows the progression of a romantic between two people

2. Good amount of comedic elements and scenes

3. Usually ending with a positive ending or a successful resolution
These are essential in the definition of a romantic comedy television series. Using this definition helps to better label or categorise the television series into the appropriate genre. This works with content created by different countries, be it for an American sitcom or a Korean romantic drama. Firstly, by looking at the narrative structure. This means that the television show has to showcase and present a story that centres around two people advancing in a romantic relationship. This could be at the start or at the end of a relationship. Ultimately, there should be a romantic relationship at the spine of the story. Secondly, on the notion of comedic elements. This is can be a very subjective element but there are signs to pick up within the show. These signs could be the accompanying music or sound effects, presence of jokes made by characters, or the use of physical acts that are attempted to bring about laughter. Lastly, a romantic comedy should end positively or have a successful resolution. This usually means the couple in the story get together, they have a child together, or there is some other form of positive resolution to the story. A positive ending makes sure that viewers finish the show with a warm feeling in their hearts. For example, in the popular television sitcom Friends (1999) which aired for 10 seasons, there were many relationships being illustrated but the question of whether or not Ross and Rachel would get together remained as the core of the series. There was laughter along the journey but the positive ending for the series was Ross and Rachel being together at the finale. This as Mortimer (2010, p. 5) argues, is the reassurance of a happy ending where the couple gets together as viewers we can enjoy the journey towards this goal.

One thing that needs to be discussed when it comes to romantic television series is the topic of unrealistic expectations. Galician’s (2003, p. 5) reading of the research on this topic was that a higher usage of particular mass media was related to unrealistic expectations of relationships. These unrealistic expectations were also related to lower satisfaction in real life romantic relationships. This is a further reason why this thesis is looking at television shows rather than cinematic movies, since television series enable viewers to have a longer exposure to the content. This allows viewers to have a longer time to empathise with the
characters. Potentially these expectations might be higher if there is a greater exposure.

One aspect that needs to be established is the definition of unrealistic expectations. It is a subjective qualifier for what is perceived to be unrealistic. This thesis is looking at how romantic comedy television shows play a part in romantic relationships. Expectations and values that people have are also factors that need to be looked at with this research study. There needs to be a comparison of what is realistic compared to what is unrealistic. Throughout this thesis, there will be discussions on identifying and defining these values and expectations.

We will first look at the Korean wave (Hallyu) and the impact that the Hallyu has on the rest of the world. The reason that Hallyu is being studied is due to its global success in creating cultural dialogues across different regions (Rhee & Otmažgin, 2016, p. 2), as evident in the rise of Korean restaurants where global consumers do not just accept Korean culture but also embrace it. (Lee, Ham & Kim, 2015).

**The Korean Wave**

The following section highlights how a form of media like the K-drama, which falls under the umbrella of the Korean Wave (*Hallyu Effect*), can affect a society and change its perceptions. Korean wave came into existence in 1997 when the China Central Television Station (CCTV) broadcast the Korean drama ‘What is Love’ (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 20; Shim, 2006, p. 28). The Korean government has promoted the Korean industry and pop culture as an export industry since the mid 1990’s. The three media that have been used are cinema, TV dramas and pop music (Chua, 2010, p. 15).

The Korean wave is the growth of the international acknowledgement of the Korean culture which started in East Asia during the 1990s and since then has expanded to other areas like the United States, Latin America the Middle East and parts of Europe (Ravina, 2009, p. 3). The distribution of K-dramas (Korean
Dramas) in Singapore includes televised mandarin-dubbed versions on cable and free-to-air TV channels almost every day, DVD and VCD box sets sold in video retail stores, as well as Internet downloads (Chan & Wang, 2011, p. 294). Elements that attract people to K-dramas include, ‘touching storylines’, ‘beautiful scenery’, excellent cinematography’, ‘good-looking actors and actresses’, ‘trendy fashion’ and ‘nice music’. The popularity has also brought about the opening up of many Korean restaurants in Hong Kong and Singapore.

The Korean wave has reached across the world away from Asia to audiences in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and North America. For example, the popular TV drama ‘Jewel in the Palace’ (Dae Jang Geum) was sold and broadcast to 86 countries around the world as of May 2011 (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 18). The Korean Culture and Information Service, while somewhat non critical in its promotion of K-dramas, nevertheless offers some statistical information and insights into reasons for their popularity in non-western contexts. For example, Asian viewers were identified as having aspirational values towards trends and lifestyles presented in K-dramas that they wished to emulate, while Middle Eastern Muslim viewers found that, compared to American dramas, Korean dramas were less sexualised and sexually explicit without losing the emotional intensity of romantic passion (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 72). Interestingly, ‘Jewel in the Palace’ also appeared to change negative male attitudes towards the female fan base of Korean dramas and celebrities in Japan, China and Taiwan, as men started to join their female partners in watching the TV K-dramas (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 72).

However, the Korean wave is also one that is influenced by American culture. Koreans had taken a liking to the imported music genres of American folk, lush ballads and rock, as well as French chansons, Italian canzone, Latin and Cuban music, and Japanese enka. This import of music continued into the 1980s when South Koreans could afford leisure and entertainment. In the 1990s there was a
change in the radio waves, and Korean pop music was aired all day instead of foreign music. In stores, sales of Korean albums overtook foreign albums as well in term of sales. Korean TV dramas also started to take control of the local cable TV channels. South Korea had become a nation that consumed more locally produced cultural content than foreign content (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 19).

Apart from earning foreign currency, Korean pop culture has been able to contribute to the rebuilding of its nation's foreign relations with its Asian neighbours. During the Vietnam War, Koreans fought against the Vietnamese Liberation Army. In 1992, Korea severed ties with Taipei to build ties with Beijing. Today Korean pop culture has been able to help improve these foreign relations with its stars and their popularity in the Asian region (Shim, 2006, p. 30). In Iran, locals had grown in their positive attitudes to Koreans after the TV Drama ‘Jewel in the Palace’ (Dae Jang Geum) was shown on Iranian television (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 28).

The popularity of the Korean family drama ‘What is Love’ also drew wide Chinese viewing audiences who appeared to find the sophisticated lifestyles of the modern-day Koreans appealing. Since Korean dramas often consist of family centred Confucian values, this creates a strong resonance with the Chinese compared to Western dramas that tend to focus more on stronger individualistic values (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p.21).

Since 2004, Winter Sonata, a popular Korean Drama has infiltrated the Japanese market and positively influenced previously negative perceptions that the Japanese society had on their Korean neighbours. This included different elements of the drama series such as the location that it was set in and the main character played by Bae Yong Joon. The elements of the plotline and the “staging” (the characters and the symbolism of the places featured) of the drama also attracted audiences who were not just in Korea but other parts of Asia in an engaging manner (Creighton, 2009, p.19). There are evident differences and similarities between the Japanese dramas and Korean dramas. Japanese
dramas have been strongly influenced by American dramas in terms of techniques; in turn, Korean dramas have been heavily influenced by Japanese dramas (Creighton, 2009, p. 20). These influences allow for viewers who have been previously exposed to Japanese dramas to be more open and accepting of the Korean dramas. One major difference is the inclusion and depiction of the extended family when it comes to the presentation of the characters. This allows for viewers in places like Taiwan and Hong Kong and Singapore to respond to the dramas at a deeper level as they are familiar with the context of the extended family where respect and relationships are maintained (Creighton, 2009, p. 20).

The largest fan base for the Korean drama, Winter Sonata, is middle-aged women, but the new Korean dramas have expanded that fan base in terms of age and nationality. The Korean Wave has presented a way that popular culture can influence people and bring about social change or at least make steps to provide effective political or governmental influences. Today the Korean Wave has also sparked an increase in the learning of the Korean language in Japan (Creighton, 2009, p. 13). It is even implied that Bae Yong Joon, the main actor of the show, has done more to build positive relations between Japan and Korea than politicians (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 201). His popularity has also contributed to the economy in terms of sparking interest internationally, which affects the tourism industry (Creighton, 2009, p. 16). This shows us the power that the Korean wave has on governmental and political factors. With a power such as this, would it not be safe to assume that this power can be translated into the realm of romantic relationships when it comes to media?

The positive influence that the Korean Drama, Winter Sonata, has had on Japanese and Korean relations between its citizens provides the Singaporean community a perspective on how it could use the power of media to reform ideologies, specifically in terms of opening up the views that local Singaporeans have about their potential partners. This could help to educate the citizens of Singapore on their ideologies of romance and love, or even potentially expand their options and remove unrealistic ideals of marriage partners or marriage itself. The local government is strict in its media content laws, but even though it is strict
today, there are different channels that media can be consumed through, not just prescribed free-to-air television. Therefore, with the rise of the internet and platforms that allow streaming and downloading, there are cultural subtleties that new media in Singapore have to recognise.

Actors like Bae Yong Joon of ‘Winter Sonata’ fame was able to invoke girlish emotions out of middle-aged women, allowing them to escape from Japan’s etiquette-conscious and emotionally restrained social atmosphere. This was achieved through “romantic charisma” and their polite characters and ability to make a woman feel good (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 25). Through the analysis of nearly 500 fan mail letters and postcards, along with a questionnaire that was handed out during a ‘Winter Sonata Classic Concert’ in Tokyo that produced a sample of 830, there was a huge female response, which emphasised the popularity of the Korean pop-culture and its female audience (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 205). The larger female audience for Korean TV dramas has been a result of many key factors. Firstly, the trials and tribulations of ‘women’ in the East Asian context, where women are able to identify with the characters and their daily lives. Secondly, the Ethnic-Chinese population of Singapore is able to relate closely to the characters because of their Asian background and values of family hierarchy (Chua, 2010, p. 20). Korean TV dramas usually mix themes of family, romance, friendship, martial arts, war, and business. These dramas have a high level of emotional investment in human relations and social realities that have played a role in drawing in a larger female audience (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 72). Thirdly, the Korean TV drama has the ability to affect its viewers in a positive and motivational way, whereby women who watch TV dramas such as ‘Winter Sonata’ are able to relax and gain power for tomorrow (Hayashi & Lee, 2007, p. 201). This results in K-dramas being appealing as they serve as an escape from reality and its stressful aspects (Chan & Wang, 2011, p. 294). These are the transcultural aesthetics within the K-drama phenomenon.

A Neo-Korean Wave has started, and with the introduction of the Internet this wave has spread at a great speed to a larger audience with fewer resources, with
audiences in areas like Europe who have never bought a K-Pop album or seen a K-drama on the local television channels. With online channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube these Korean stars can reach millions in the space of a day (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 46). DramaFever.com and DramaCrazy.com are sites where American viewers can watch and view these shows. DramaFever.com has over 1 million subscribers of which 70% are non-Asians (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 54). In 2011 52% of the viewers were female and a surprising 48% were males. 39% were between the ages of 18 and 34; 25% were between 35 and 49; and 17% were between 13 and 17 (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 55). Another factor that has played a role in the popularity of the Korean Wave through the advancement of technology is the multi-sensory experience.

With the help of media channels like YouTube, Korean Pop is able to provide a multi-sensory experience of visual and audio (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 58). The reach of pop music is limited on its own but with the assistance of the music video pop music has been able to add a multi-sensory aspect to its arsenal (Chua, 2010, p. 16). As noted, another influential media form is the TV dramas, a number of which have reached viewers all around the world, in continents and countries that are not exposed to the Korean language.

Korean pop culture impacts the ethnic-Chinese population to the greatest extent. This is because of the programming in local television, where the local Chinese channels have been importing TV dramas from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and now Korea. As discussed previously one popular TV drama that has impacted Singapore in 2006 is the Korean period drama, ‘Jewel in the Palace’, ‘Dae Jang Geum’ (Chua, 2010, p. 18). Being dubbed in Mandarin allowed viewers to connect with greater ease. For a period TV drama like ‘Jewel in the Palace’ a major characteristic contributing to its popularity was the preservation and promotion of foreignness (Chua, 2010, p. 19). The foreignness that was presented in the TV drama came in many forms including the cuisine and the traditional costumes. This sense of ethnic costumes and traditional dishes was used as a vehicle to demonstrate differences between the cultures that were
expressed in the TV dramas. As a period drama with a huge popularity this show was a unique point that allowed ‘Jewel in the Palace’, ‘Dae Jang Geum’ to introduce the idea of period dramas as well as Korean cuisine (Chua, 2010, p. 19).

As we can see from the Korean Wave and its recent rise as a global phenomenon it is also wise to understand how it has evolved into its modern day manifestation. Chua (2004, p. 211) tells us that there are three possible audience/consumption positions in consuming popular culture programmes: local audience consuming a locally produced program; audience is diasporic subject consuming a program related to their homeland, this could be produced by the homeland or foreign institutions; audience watching an imported program.

Japanese urban TV dramas became popular for many in the East Asian region mainly because of their visual trendiness. Most of the TV dramas revolve around young professionals in an urban romantic setting. The visual trendiness comes from characters who are well dressed, the cosy interior spaces of apartments and the dining at expensive looking restaurants. The main visual aspect is the good looking actors and actresses who play the roles of these characters (Chua, 2004, p. 205).

For Singaporeans the urban narratives that are presented in popular Japanese TV dramas provide audiences with an accessible understanding and connection. The foreignness might be an issue that increases unfamiliarity but the beautiful landscapes and characters build upon the desire of aspiration. This is in effect visual tourism, dubbed in Mandarin. While Japanese TV drama had a high level of trendiness, what it lacked in comparison to its Korean competitors was its Confucian traditions. Korean TV dramas were able to emulate the trendiness and also integrate family oriented themes (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, p. 76). Apart from the lack of family orientated themes, the highly capitalistic values in Japanese dramas appeared as too Western. For many viewers in the Pan-Asian region they felt that the Korea TV dramas were relatable to in terms of Confucianism values. Another aspect that attracts Singapore viewership is
aspirational values. What was seen as different from our local scene was perceived to be attainable and desired, which led to the popularity of particular fashion styles, learning of a new language and planning holiday destinations to locations seen in TV dramas. Media consumption in Asia breeds greater contact with Asian neighbours (Iwabuchi, 2007, p. 31), with the popularity of ‘Winter Sonata’ showing how the Korean wave has diluted the impact of the Japanese position within the Asian market. The growth of the Korean media culture on their Asian neighbour is affirmed by the increase in the learning of the language and visiting of the country.

The success of the Korean Wave was attributed to the successful transformation of Korean pop culture in incorporating “new elements”. There was a surge of fresh talents who were moving from prestigious universities into the film industry in the mid-1990s, due to the availability of jobs that offered a decent pay and job security (Shim, 2006, p. 33). With this pool of talent, the results were an improvement in the quality of Korean Cinema, with Korean movies winning awards at world famous film festivals like Cannes Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival and Venice Film Festival (Shim, 2006, p. 34). Additionally, in the 1980s, the Korean pop music scene was dominated by Korean ballads, which were mellow sounds and amorous lyrics influenced by Western styles and easy listening American folk music. The 1990s saw Korean youth preferring American pop songs to local ones. This saw local companies innovating the hybridity of music, merging genres like rap, soul, rock and roll and techno. Some bands like Seo Taiji and Boys even sang about the systems in society that the people were unhappy about (Shim, 2006, p. 37). SM Entertainment was a company that industrialised the star-making process in K-pop. Having started in 1989, they were able to groom some of the biggest bands in K-pop today.

From what is seen in Korean media, compared to Western media there is definitely more of an Asian stance, which stems from Confucian teaching. These include less sexualisation and more conservative and patriarchal values.
However, in Korean dramas there seems to be a shift in gender issues from the traditional Confucian ideals to more Western ones. (Shim, 1995):

*Confucian ideal of the 'virtuous woman', whose behaviour is characterised by chastity, submissiveness, proper speech and appearance, Furthermore she must obey the authority of man - before marriage, her father, after marriage, her husband - and in the event of the husband's death, her son. Remarriage was not allowed (p. 23).*

The quote above from Shim (1995) shows us how the typical and traditional role of a woman was perceived by the Confucian ideal.

...achieve self- determination over freedom of love, marriage and divorce as well as the rejection of sexual violence. There has been remarkable growth in the way women characters regard themselves and assert their will and freedom.

The second quote shows what the change in the overall Korean culture has evolved into. These changes are portrayed in the Korean dramas and are seen as a desire to break away from the patriarchal rules that are applied in Korea. In the popular Korean drama, *Jewel in the Palace (대장금)* of which most of the fans are women (Lin, 2011, p. 93), there is a presentation of women that moves away from the “traditional” view. It moves to one that presents women as master chefs and medical practitioners. This portrayal of women to be more successful has brought about a sense of pride for the viewers (Lin, 2011, p.99). Lin (2011, p.110) tells us:

*the pleasure of watching television dramas lies not in what programs offer, but in how viewers make of their media consumption and mediate their social realities with the expectations and experiences they bring.*

From this we can see that the television shows work as a builder of perception onto the viewer’s social reality and their expectations. However, we cannot just take this at face value. Lin (2011) also tells us that there is a mediation that works together with the experiences and expectations that viewers have prior to watching these television shows. Therefore, the building of expectations when it
comes to romantic love is also built up of all the experiences and other factors that have come externally to the television show.

A participant in of Lin's study (2011) highlights another perspective of this:

\[
\text{Jang-geum was supposed to be a character who lived a long time ago in South Korea, when women like her were regarded as 'good women.' Maybe Korean society is still like this today. A 'good woman' is not always someone who is dutiful, obedient or filial. I am not against these values, but I am tired of hearing people say what women should or should not do. I really hope that people realize these values only turn women into slaves, as I have been one myself. It makes me shudder to watch in the drama how destructive it can be for many women.}
\]

From the work from Lin, we can start to see that these expectations are felt by the groups in question. In this case a woman who is feeling that there is an expectation for her to be a ‘good woman’ when she is exposed to the media.

When it comes to romance, this also would work in the same way whereby there is concern if someone is exposed to a higher amount of romantic themes in television shows there might be a higher expectation that is unfulfillable. This concern will be investigated in this research study to discover if this is true in the context of local Singapore. Before we proceed on, we need to first uncover how local media is being consumed in Singapore, while breaking down the romantic comedies and how Singaporean Chinese consume them.

**Media in Singapore**

Through what we have seen from the Korea wave, it is clear that media today can be used as a tool for communicating narratives and perspectives. Taking what has been learnt from the Korean wave, we see what can be used and applied in to the local Singaporean context. Firstly, there are a number of differences when it comes to Singapore and Korea that need to be addressed. Within South Korea there are three national networks, namely Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and
Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS). In Singapore there is only one major national broadcaster, Mediacorp, which is owned by Temasek Holdings, an investment company owned by the Singapore government. Mediacorp as a national broadcaster has a total of 7 television channels and 13 radio stations. All of these represent the four main languages in Singapore, English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. This lack of variety on Singaporean television broadcasters would mean that the options that viewers have are limited to what is prescribed by the local government.

The media industry in Singapore follows a liberalisation process allowing new media growth in different sectors (Ang, 2007, p. 1), but it does not buy into the libertarian model where the press is given unrestricted freedom. In the Singapore Constitution as highlighted by Ang (2007, p. 7):

“First, it guarantees freedom of speech and expression only to citizens of Singapore. Second, it gives the right only to convey expression, not the right to receive expression of any kind. Third, it does not expressly deal with the issue of prior restraint, implicitly allowing prior restraint. Fourth, the right is subject to Parliament’s power to legislate in the interest of national security, public interest and public morality and for the maintenance of foreign relations.”

There is a firm stance on what can be expressed in public that is done in order to maintain the public interest. Other acts that Ang (2007, p. 7) has highlighted include the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974, the Undesirable Publications Act, the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act, the Emergency Essential Powers) Act, the 1963 Internal Security Act, the Official Secrets Act and the Films Act. These acts have brought about fear and raised barriers for journalists and external media producers, which skews the production and circulation of media in Singapore. However, even though the laws may be strict, the local television production industry is growing constantly, with the Media Development Authority working to promote local productions as well as a plan for Singapore to be a regional broadcasting hub (Ang, 2007, p. 22). Many international media players are welcomed into field of Singapore’s society through cable and international movies and television programs. The stringent
regulation laws and future plans of growth as a media hub clash which forms a plateau in terms of creativity and liberalisation of local media.

When it comes to television corporations Singapore has a different landscape compared to other parts of the world. In large countries like Australia or America they have a range of television networks. However, in Singapore there is only one major television station, MediaCorp, which is state owned. In 2001, Singapore Press Holdings created a subsidiary television network called SPH MediaWorks to compete and provide healthy competition to MediaCorp. However, that was shortlived when in 2004 SPH MediaWorks was dissolved and part of that network was absorbed into the MediaCorp, who today runs the only mainstream free-to-air terrestrial television network. Having only one major television in Singapore means that there is no competition, and because it is state owned and used for political inclinations (Rao, 2014, p. 59), people cannot trust thoroughly what they see on television. With the expansion of technology and Singapore as a global media hub, the state has to increase its watchful eye over the nation and ensure that its values are maintained. The gay community like the straight community also has become a culture that is a cosmopolitan hybridisation of Western and Asian cultures (Yue, 2011, p. 259). In the lesbian community, there is an exposure to popular films and television series emerging into mainstream media. The stringent laws in Singapore as well as Asian familial lifestyles, which differ from the lives of the characters played in American TV series, increase this sense of aspiration for the community.

Another use of media to alter perceptions of sexuality within Singapore is the introduction of transnational “lad’s mags” like FHM and Maxim. Some of these have originated from the UK and typically follow a format of a monthly men’s lifestyle magazines that feature articles and pictures of girls, entertainment, technology and games. The introduction of Singapore FHM the first “lads mag” published in the country, this sparked other magazines to export their publishing to the area. But with Singapore these open doors came with rules that had to be followed, strict rules in terms of censorship.
The MDA had a guideline for imported publications in the category for ‘Adult-Interest Lifestyle Magazines’ (as cited by Pugsley, 2010, p. 177), of which one section H(2) states:

*Covers should be appropriate for public display and must not feature nudity, sexual positions or sexually-provocative text.*

*The following are not allowed:*

(i) *Models in sexually suggestive poses that are excessively revealing, e.g. appearing naked with breasts and/or genitals covered by hands*

(ii) *Models in see-through clothes which reveal pubic hair, genitalia or women’s nipples*

(iii) *Promotion of alternative lifestyles or deviant sexual practices.*

In terms of Adult-Interest Lifestyle Magazines, in comparison to other countries Singapore can be considered to be conservative and prudish but taking in to consideration the ideology of what the governing body of MDA is trying to achieve it will need a much longer time to open these doors. The value of conservatism in sexuality has value in society, to maintain socially wholesome community, but does this wholesomeness help in terms of promoting marriage and child bearing in the Singaporean context? At this point in time, it may be a good idea to maintain the sexuality status quo so as not to rattle any cages, but in order for society to start making the appropriate changes effectively these needs to be a more open dialogue.

With the issue of Singapore and its declining population, at its core it is about the impressions that media contribute to the ideologies of love and marriage. This can be a useful tool that fixes the issue, or a volatile situation that aggravates it. The creation of a media that is able to cross cultures within the Singapore culture will not just need to affect the ideologies that the target audience have but as mentioned earlier they have to tread carefully in a society that has a melting pot of cultural influences.
Even though the local Singaporean context might seem prudish and old fashioned, today there are topics and themes that are being discussed on local television that look at things, out of wedlock pregnancies and divorce. A local television drama called *Life – Fear Not* (*人生无所畏*) which airs over Channel 8, the local free-to-air Mandarin channel, in episode 68, which was aired on the 20th of January 2016, presented a character that was pregnant. The character Chu’er is a young lady who has discovered that she is pregnant with her boyfriend in the series. Chu’er’s mother, Jia Jia, asked her to have an abortion because she does not believe she can handle raising a child at a young age. At the end of the episode, Jia Jia supports Chu’er’s decision to have the child. This is one example where local television discusses a topic that moves away from what is usually perceived to be Confucian values. Based on this we can see that the local television productions are acknowledging that these activities are also happening in the local society and is evolving to these changes. The local television networks might not present homosexual characters in its programs but there seems to be some changes, even though slow ones that do not match the times. This change is also a result of transculturation, the transcultural landscape of Singapore that is presented on free-to-air network television programs.

In Singapore, the local entertainment industry is still growing, with the National Technological University offering the first Bachelors of Fine Arts at the School of Art, Design & Media. Even though there have been other institutions like Nanyang Polytechnic, where I graduated in 2006 with a Diploma of Digital Media Design (Animation), the industry is very small. Nevertheless, it is growing. Local Singaporean media companies understand the value and attraction of imported media forms, and make use of this attraction by engaging with companies from other East Asian locations to produce media that are more marketable. These media creations are able to overcome national boundaries (Chua, 2004, p. 203). The use of celebrities from a different location adds marketable value to media creations because compared to their Singaporean compatriots they have a higher level of popularity.
Looking at Singapore and its media hub, we need to enquire into the effect that media has had on perceptions and ideologies of love, romance, sex and marriage. Then by uncovering the depth of the effect, we can start to unpack the effects into transcultural aesthetics that can be used in the production of a new media.

We start by looking at the current television media landscape of Singapore. Most of the romantic comedy television media that the Singaporean Chinese community is exposed to is a mix of Western shows of U.S. and British origins, while the Asian shows are a mix of Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Japanese and Korean series. For the target group that is being looked at for this research the main local television network of Mediacorp has two main channels that present media consumed by Singaporean Chinese, Channel 5, an English channel, and Channel 8, a Mandarin channel. This mix of transcultural media reflects also the local cultural language landscape for the Singaporean Chinese, where most would be fluent at different levels of proficiency.

Language is one aspect of the Singaporean identity that is a result of transculturation. This research strives to be able to enquire into this dominance and breakdown the different elements that have been mentioned before, into transcultural aesthetics. By understanding the values that have been embedded into these transcultural aesthetics by users, we will be able to understand if we can replicate the popularity of these pop-cultures in different societies and cultures. The values of love and romance need to be uncovered in terms of their parallels with transcultural aesthetics that will hopefully be able to make an impact on the local landscape of romantic relationship experiences. By understanding these connections and comparing them, we will be able to use these transcultural aesthetics to build connections between different cultures, just as the Korean Wave has helped its country in political and social issues locally and internationally.

One attempt at using a transcultural aesthetic to connect with the trans-pop-consumerism lifestyle of Singapore regarding love and romance was through
Singapore’s first online dating show, ‘It’s a Date!’ aired online in June 2013. It was produced by clicknetwork.tv, an online video network that develops and creates content independently (www.clicknetwork.tv). The format for ‘It’s a Date!’ is an informal dating show which is placed in different locations and depending on these different locations, singles engage with each other on different types of dates which include playing video games at a local arcade or fixing a shelving unit at a furniture store. Three girls date three boys and each individual has the chance to engage with their potential partners for a stipulated amount of time, giving the singles enough time to interact and evaluate each other. After three episodes the singles pick a member of the opposite gender and only if two singles pick each other will they be paired off and win the show. The popularity of this online video was impressive with over 150,000 views and viewers providing feedback on their desire for a second season. This seems to provide local Singaporeans with a perspective on dating that involves real people. The ability for the public to critique the show and provide feedback is a form of user-testing for the show and brings about changes that the viewers want. This approach would be a good talking point for locals; they are able to discuss openly the idea of speed dating as well as online dating.

Another show that has recently started is a talk-show by the major network in Singapore called Mars vs. Venus: 金星火星大不同. It is an hour long program on the Mandarin television channel, Channel U (Mediacorp, 2015). It is a talk show where local celebrities interact and debate with each other about the personal values of different sexes. These programs, which are popular with the Singaporean Chinese community, are examples of how local media is another platform that is being used by the local government to promote marriage and relationships for its local community.

From what we have seen so far, the romantic relationship landscape in Singapore is one that is seeing people marrying and having children at an older age. In addition, the total fertility rate is lower than it was in the past. The government has attempted to improve this situation through grants and campaigns like
Romancing Singapore (Leong & Sriramesh, 2006). Apart from that, the Ministry of Social and Family Development has a department called the Social Development Network (SDN). On their website (https://app.sdn.sg/Default.aspx) the vision for the SDN is “…to promote marriages and nurture a culture where singles view marriage as one of their top life goals”. However, even with these initiatives, Singapore is still facing an aging population.

In order to achieve its goals, the Social Development Network (SDN) does a range of different things. One of these includes Duet, a quarterly publication since 2004, that features articles that discuss dating and relationships, tips and trends, as well as lists of dating events and activities for singles. One aspect of the publication Duet by the Social Development Network (SDN) is to help singles work out how to understand the complexities of dating and to provide a list of accredited agencies which include online dating services, one-to-one matching services and dating events. Some of these agencies that are promoted through by the Social Development Network (SDN) include Dance Date, an event agency that brings together people who have a passion for dance, and Lunch Actually, a company that matches people over lunch and drinks. With the quarterly publication being a tool that is useful for people who are single, it might be a double edged sword that actually acts as a quarterly reminder that they are single, which could potentially cause distress and bring about pressure for some individuals. As part of the local Singapore narrative, to be successful is to be married and have children. The government has put into place grants and benefits for those who do get married and have children. These social constructs are part of what makes a Singaporean and part of that is the pressure that comes from family and society.

Singapore as a society has been shown to be a transcultural society. It is an Asian society with a government that promotes Confucian values, coupled with its British colonial history and modern international media and consumeristic influences. How does this relate to media studies, or in this case romantic comedy television series? From the literature, we have seen a strong case for different forms of media having correlations with society and their behaviours. This
includes correlation to areas of romantic relationships and the selection of long-term partners. Because of the dialogue that has presented a relationship between romantic relationships, this thesis looks to build on that knowledge in the context of Singapore. If there is a relationship between media exposure, this research project looks to uncover how and why exposure of romantic comedy television series is an influence on the local Singaporean community.

Although the data collected in this study does not seek to bring about a change in the way people interact with romantic relationships, it does seek to provide an understanding of how Singaporean Chinese interact with romantic relationships and how romantic comedy television series are affecting the phenomenon of love and romance in Singapore. As we have seen in the local context of Singapore, the media landscape is one that is changing from the traditional media of television to one where the internet is being utilised on many levels. The idea here is to explore the different media and see how the Singaporean Chinese community engages with romantic comedy media on its different media platforms.

With this information, we are able to potentially utilise this form of media to promote a substantial message to promote a culture of romantic relationships, marriage and childbirth.

**Conclusions**

The definition of a romantic comedy television show was chosen as the media channel of this research study because of its popularity in recent times, as well as its romantic elements that are assumed to be connected to romantic relationships in general. Through this chapter, we were able to arrive at a clear framework for a romantic comedy television series with regards to this study. The elements include a television series that could be watched online or on a television; a series that has a good amount of comedic elements; a series that ends on a positive note; and has a romantic narrative between two or more people.
Based on a study of the literature, much has been explored in the areas of media influences and exposure, especially within cultivation theory and social comparison theory. These studies mainly show the different correlations between media exposure and the psychological aspects of the human species. In addition, the studies inform us what the influences are but have overlooked reasons why these influences are present in the first place. By studying South Korea as an example, there are lessons on how media can be an influence on different governmental and societal factors. From this, we can see how media can be used to transcend language and culture for national purposes like tourism.

Apart from the psychological aspects, there is a need to look at the social aspects as well. Few studies look at the connection between romantic comedies and their association with romantic relationships, and even fewer look at television series. Taking this knowledge and applying it in a local Singaporean context is the next thing that needs to be achieved. It is also not just about questioning whether or not romantic comedy television series affect Singaporean Chinese; we need to understand how and why this effect happens.

In the first chapter, I discussed the local context of a transcultural Singapore and how people are getting married at a later age while highlighting that the local government's initiatives in promoting marriage are not working. In this second chapter, I have discussed the media context and how that impacts social notions and perspectives. Over the course of these two chapters, there has been talk about Singapore as a transcultural nation that is a mix of East and West. Much like the discussion of media and its application to the topic, this research is grounding the local Singaporean community as not just a melting pot of East and West but it has its own notion that is a Singapore culture which has qualities that are found only in this context. From this chapter, we can see that drawing from popular culture from international channels has helped the Singaporean community to build their own identity, more of which will be discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 3: Methodology

With this thesis, I am looking within the cultural context of a specific slice of the Singaporean Chinese community and whether romantic comedy television programs affect their expectations of love. This chapter looks the theoretical frameworks that have guided this research project. The first section of this chapter is looking at the conceptual frameworks that have inspired this research project. This chapter will be used to present the methodological framework of design anthropology and define the need in adding to the current knowledge on romantic relationships in the local Singaporean context and media studies.

**Conceptual Framework**

This thesis is looking at how and why media influences Singaporean Chinese and their expectations of love. The goal of this study is not to change the perceptions that people have about expectations of love but to prompt Singaporean Chinese to reflect on their own expectations when it comes to love.

Conducting research involves the use of theoretical and empirical tools to increase humanity’s understanding of a phenomena or event (McGrath, 1994, p. 152). In the social and behavioural sciences, these phenomena and events involve states and actions of human systems and the consequences of these events (McGrath, 1994, p. 152). With different methods and their differentiating natures, there will be varying strengths and weaknesses. When speaking about understanding culture many will look at the work of Hofstede (1980, 1991) when talking about cultural differences. The framework proposed by Hofstede looks into outlining the differences between collectivism and individualism. When looking at a culture like Singapore, it is possible to apply such definitions, but to simplify it in such a way will not be an accurate description of Singaporean culture.

There are two key texts that commence this journey. Ortiz (1995 [1945]) tells us about how when two or more cultures merge or converge with each other there
is not just the transition from one culture to another. This means that it does not consist of merely the gaining of new culture (acculturation) or the loss or uprooting of previous culture (deculturation), but it also includes the creation of a new culture (neoculturation). This, as noted before is a phenomenon that does not just apply to the cultural context of Singapore but also to the media landscape that Singaporean Chinese are exposed to.

Pasztory (2005, p. 30) discusses levels of social integration: Band, Tribe, Chiefdom and State. The work done by Pasztory highlights that depth which anthropology plays in the understanding of aesthetics and the different levels of social interaction. For Singapore, the classification of state follows most closely. In the definition, a state is one where a ruler has economic resources and military power to back up executive decisions. The leaders are also seen as a managerial elite directing public work (Pasztory, 2005, p. 33). The classification of social integration levels with Pasztory works as a benchmark for how aesthetics plays a part within a group.

When we look at Singapore we need to bring in a theory discussed in the previous chapter, Social Comparison Theory. This theory is applicable in this thesis as it corresponds with the local context of Singapore being a society that is highly competitive in nature. Chan and Prendergast (2008) found in their study with Hong Kong young people aged 15-24 that social comparison and imitation of celebrities presented a positive prediction of materialism. Because Singapore and Hong Kong are similar in their past as British colonies and the influence of American consumerism, a comparison can be drawn when describing the two. Singapore, like Hong Kong, has been found to have a high level of materialism (La, Ferle & Chan, 2008; Li, et al, 2010). These findings are part of a bigger picture where Singaporeans and their competitive natures affect them in many ways, from materialism to even expectations of love.

When looking at the influence that media has on its viewers, many will speak about cultivation theory and the hypothesis that a steady exposure of television media over time will result in a shared sense of conceptions and expectations amongst viewers of shared media (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorelli, 1994). Based on the cultural context of Singapore and its society as a transcultural
hybrid, I believe that cultivation theory and social comparison theory are applicable in this context. It is postulated that the high stress levels that many Singaporeans are encountering is due to the presence of social comparisons that bring about high levels of competitiveness caused by the influence of cultivation through media.

**Media Studies: Communication and Anthropology**

This study is enquiring into the field of media studies and cultivation theory as a twofold pillar in understanding the expectations of love for Singaporean Chinese. In this section of the chapter, I will be examining previous works on media studies and anthropology of media. From this, it will be highlighted that just focusing on this field of study is not sufficient for the purpose of this research.

As noted above, media influence on viewers is often discussed in terms of cultivation theory and the idea that regular exposure to television media leads to shared concepts and expectations among viewers who share media (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorelli, 1994). Multiple studies that looked at the different concepts using different methods of enquiry. Throughout the previous chapter where we looked at media studies, many were qualitative studies done with a large sample. Osborn (2012) for example surveyed married people and looked at the expectations of marriage based on the type of television program they watched. Jackson (2012) used self-reports of over 2000 boys and girls to study the effect that media had on body dissatisfaction. One study (Field et al, 2001) used a questionnaire time based follow up study to enquire into the influence of peers, parents and media on the development of dieting and weight concerns. Most studies were conducted in the context of the Western world but there were some studies conducted in the East. Guo and Wu (2009) used surveys to look at the media consumption of 15 – 25 year olds as well as its relation to their global visions.

Even though most of the studies that look into media influence were using qualitative studies, a smaller portion analysed literature and used quantitative methods. Some through conducting qualitative multi-method investigations (Steele, 1999) looked into teens and their media practices, while others analysed
previous studies to give an overview on the landscape of media influence (Strasburger, 2004; Villani, 2001; Ward, 2003). There were others such as Hayashi and Lee (2007) that used content and report analysis to gather their data.

One limitation about current media studies to consider is that this area of research is still not at a stage where causation can be affirmed. The realm of television viewing has been seen to have relationships or correlations with the social reality we live in, however it cannot be ascertained as to whether television is in fact a reason for this phenomenon we see. One aspect in which the study of television viewing has been critiqued is the wide range of methodologies that have been used. They have been said to be inconsistent, which results in considerable difficulty when it comes to understanding this question as a whole. (Osborn, 2012, p. 740). Therefore, it was decided that for this thesis we need to ask questions that are relevant to this topic. Previously, many studies would ask if media or television viewing had any influence on society. Unlike cultivation theory, this study does not just ask this question but looks at whether or not there is a connection to media. This study asks why there is that connection and how that connection to media was made. It looks at it from an anthropological approach and tries to understand how media and romance are actually layered over each other and how they came to be.

As the literature shows, the research methods used in many media studies usually revolve around qualitative data research findings, content analysis or literature reviews. These are effective methods looking into media studies on multiple levels. However, when looking at a specific culture such as the Singaporean Chinese community, just using these methods will not be enough because for this study we are not just looking at whether there is an influence or not we are looking at how these influences can be altered in the future.

Another field within media studies that looks at the cultural aspect is media anthropology. Media anthropology falls under the umbrella of media studies. However, instead of looking at the level of influence media might have on people, it looks more at the how of media’s influence as well at the cultural and social effects that media has on modern society. Apart from a critical form of questioning, the methods of enquiry tend to be different as well, with media
anthropology utilising more of an ethnographic approach. As we have seen from many of the media studies on media influences, they would be using a quantitative research approach. On the other hand, these studies of media anthropology or the anthropology of media tend to take an approach that utilises content analysis and reviews of literature as well as history.

When discussing anthropology, it is first necessary to define the differences between ethnography and anthropology. Ethnography when mentioned in this thesis speaks about the method of study and data collection techniques, whereas anthropology is the scientific discipline that centres on the human species. Often, anthropology and ethnography are so synonymous with each other that it can lead to confusion since it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. Similar to media anthropology is visual anthropology. Visual anthropology has three approaches: visual anthropology as ethnographic film, as the cultural study of pictorial based media and as an inclusive anthropology of visual communication (Ruby, 2005, p. 159). Based on Ruby’s categorisation, the cultural study of pictorial based media fits closest to the literature discussed below. However, instead of classifying them as either media anthropology or visual anthropology, for the purpose of this thesis they will be generalised as studies that enquire into media and anthropology.

Peterson (2003) states that anthropology and mass communications must be able to deal with popular culture phenomena such as Pokémon and the way it transcends social, technological and economical transformations. As Pokémon engaged with the cultures of Asia, North America and Europe through four media forms (gaming, videos, cards and figures), it was a global sensation that is still popular today. Pokémon was used to illustrate the different types of pop culture phenomena that students of media, culture and society will be faced with in the twenty-first century. Today that prediction has come true. With social media websites like Facebook and Instagram, millions of people are interacting with each other today across continents. Hollywood blockbusters are screened across the globe grossing multi-million dollar figures at their releases. In order to understand the world, we live in better, we as researchers need to better understand popular culture. This is because cultural boundaries are permeable.
through globalized and transnational forms of pop culture (Mankekar, 2016, p. 531).

For this thesis, understanding how romantic comedy television programs are able to influence the expectations of love is the reason why it is drawing from anthropology as a method of enquiry. It is not enough to understand if there is an effect on local Singaporean Chinese, we need to understand the underlying values behind these expectations. Many researchers have looked at how anthropology is a useful tool in the understanding of media. However, media anthropology is not just about anthropology providing a helping hand to media. Anthropology finds media as a rich site for research into cultural practices as well as circulation (Ginsburg et al, 2002, p. 5).

Clifford Geertz (1973) talks about “thick description” and “thin description” and how as an ethnographer, it is not enough to provide a “thin description” of just stating the explicit of what is collected. However, with the “thick description” approach, ethnographers need to uncover conceptual structures that inform the actions and what is said. This approach of gathering “thick description” when it comes to research is what is needed with this thesis. A traditional media studies approach of gathering people’s opinions is sufficient when that aim is to measure the level of impact that media has on society. However, when it comes to understanding why, the need for anthropology in providing the cultural perspectives comes into play.

“How do mass media represent and shape cultural values within a given society?” Spitulnick (1993) uses this question to justify the need for understanding not just what the effect of media is on society but how these media forms are shaping and why. Globalisation has started to make traditionally rigid ideas of national and cultural boundaries flimsy and questionable. Today globalisation is complex, as it is going through a decentring process that causes transnational cultural flows and power relations to be more disjunctive and complex (Iwabuchi, 2010). Media, as a key factor in the forming of society, represents an ideological and cultural sphere where groups construct their lives as well as the values of other groups and classes (Hall, 1997, p. 320). In addition, media embeds into the lives of the consumer while at the same time overlapping the discoveries that consumers and
producers project and consume while interacting with media (Ginsburg et al, 2002, p. 2). This combined with the ethos of “thick description” defines the purpose of ethnography in media. In the early 90’s Spitilnick (1993) describes how the use of ethnography and anthropology was only in its early stages. However, ethnography is used today to get a clearer picture of asking the questions of why and how through a wide range of studies.

Schulze (2013) analysed online blogs and message boards in order to understand the “cultures” and “societies” that Korean drama fans build online. This method of using online blogs as a platform for data collection allows for the researcher to get the most honest opinions that consumers of these media have. A study was conducted in 2014 where the use of a visual ethnographic case study was employed to understand how second-generation Belgium girls of Turkish descent perform identities through the visualisation of and reflection on their ideal television programs (Adriaens, 2014). Through this study, Adriaens (2014) also showed that using visual ethnography with a traditional audience as a research technique was a useful approach, while looking at identity performance and the role of media.

Another approach that can be taken up is observations. Triwardani (2013) studied the viewing practices of Javanese families using an immersive observational approach. Triwardani conducted an in-depth investigation by participating actively in the lives of two Javanese families for three months each. Other than just observing the viewing patterns of the families, regular in-depth conversations (interviews) were conducted to complement the observations (Triwardani, 2013). An approach like this, where the use of fieldwork is a basis for data collection, allows researchers to understand in greater detail a community within their everyday lives, while allowing self-reflectivity and respect to be practiced and maintained (La Pastina, 2005).

As discussed in this section, media studies that look at media as influences on society tend to use quantitative approaches for their data collection. These ways are effective in answering the level of effect or correlation between media and society. When it comes to using anthropology in media, the approach of using ethnography in a qualitative manner provides the perspectives on why and how
media plays a part in society. To do this utilising the “thick description” approach (Geertz, 1973) will allow for a deeper understanding of conceptual structures that are informing the data that is collected. This ensures that the thesis looks at the effect of romantic comedy television shows on the expectations of love and the anthropology of these media forms.

**Design Research and Design Anthropology**

Being a study that is centred in the field of design, this research will have to define its place and contribution within the field as well as establish its relationship with design research and design anthropology. As we know, the fields of design anthropology and design research are relatively new. Since the 1980s ethnographers, anthropologists and other social scientists have been working and collaborating with designers, engineers and computer scientists (Bagger & Sperschneider, 2003). Firstly, design anthropology is the synthesis of academic anthropology and the professional practice of design. It also seeks to define what is human, through identifying the values that are deeply embedded within every human being design is then introduced into the mix and it translates these values into tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2011). With the information that is collected ethnographically design is able to inform the design of new products, services and systems for consumers and businesses (Gray, 2010).

Since design anthropology is a younger field compared to design research, let us first look at what some have defined and described as design research. Bayazit (2004, p. 16) describes the five possible design research outcomes that a study can fulfil which are as follows:

*A:* Design research is concerned with the physical embodiment of man-made things, how these things perform their jobs, and how they work.

*B:* Design research is concerned with construction as a human activity, how designers work, how they think, and how they carry out design activity.

*C:* Design research is concerned with what is achieved at the end of a purposeful design activity, how an artificial thing appears, and what it means.

*D:* Design research is concerned with the embodiment of configurations.
Design research is a systematic search and acquisition of knowledge related to design and design activity.

Bayazit (2004) also defines two sections of design research; first generation and second generation. First generation design methods evolved from systematic design methods, where the designer had to move away from the product as the core of design to the inclusion of human needs. This included the attempt to rationally implement scientific techniques and knowledge into the professional design processes. Although first generation design methods were targeted at the needs of humans, the processes were lacking in the actual user involvement. Therefore, improvements were made to the second generation design methods that included user participation, participatory design methods as well as cultural anthropology.

The generation of design knowledge as a field has to be clear, just as in other intellectual cultures such as the sciences and the arts. Cross (1999) argued that the values of science are rationality and objectivity, whereas the values for the arts are reflection and subjectivity, and that for design they are imagination and practicality. These values are not only just a representation of the respective fields but they also inform other disciplines of their relevance in relation to each other. From this, we can see the significant part that design plays in the broader picture, in having the ability to bridge the gap between the arts and the sciences. This is done through the reflection of possibilities combined with the use of rational calculations, which in turn brings about creative ideas that can be designed for a context that is usable.

In relation to designing for a context that is usable, Postma & Stappers (2006) conducted a case study of 18 school students aged 13 – 15 to identify the issue behind museums not connecting with students on an interactive level. Design research tools like cultural probes and a generative session were used effectively in understanding the systems of museums and their visitors. The main problem that was identified was that the museum was organised and centred on a selection of collections which were targeted at a well-educated adult audience. However, in reality well-educated adults are not the only group of visitors to the museum. A service such as a museum interacts with multiple groups and these
groups are made up of people from different backgrounds and cultures, which vary in age ethnicity and occupation. As noted above, design anthropology seeks to understand the values of the participants or target audience, and in this case study it was not the exhibits that the museums that had to change but the way they were presented, which had to connect with the social interactions and groups that were formed by the students.

This case study might not have directly resulted in the re-designing of the museum in question but it informs future designers of values that need to be considered when designing museums or exhibits. This expresses two of Bayazit’s (2004) design research outcomes:

*Design research is concerned with the physical embodiment of man-made things, how these things perform their jobs, and how they work. Design research is concerned with construction as a human activity, how designers work, how they think, and how they carry out design activity (p. 16).*

Even though the authors of this case study were not able to design and built a physical embodiment of a manmade thing, they were still able to create a purposeful design activity that will inform future designers through the creation of new knowledge.

Design research, as described by Bayazit (2004), allows design outcomes to be informed by research. One way of knowing if the design is effective through research is for the design to allow daily life to carry on or else the level of effectiveness and purpose is deemed redundant (Gunn & Donovan, 2012). This comparison of design anthropology with design research is in no way an intention to denigrate design research. It is just setting the scene for this particular research.

Today, design anthropology is the coming together of these values. As stated previously, Design Anthropology is the synthesis of academic anthropology and the professional practice of design. It also seeks to understand, through identifying the values that are deeply embedded within every human being. Design is then introduced into the mix and it translates these values into tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2014). The role of a design anthropologist is to define the agenda, identify the challenges and barriers as well as understand the obligations
that have to be undertaken with any project. To design in today’s context is to create and innovate by embracing the consumer and the market in their alternative forms of ethnographic research data. This is done by breaking down what is seen, heard and understood to their simplest form of emotions and values.

Design anthropology, as it is a fairly new field in both academia and industry, has many definitions and elements. In essence, design anthropology is the coming together of design practice and academic anthropology in solving problems. When solving problems, design anthropology is able to engage the thinker and the practitioner in a project and is applicable for both materials and non-materials (Clarke, 2011) without confining the result of the design outcome. Since the 1940s, anthropologists have successfully predicted purposes in marketing situations (Winick, 1961) and cultural anthropology was often compared to sociology and psychology. But what made cultural anthropology different was the understanding of technology, the ability to understand the connection between man and their artefacts. In one example Winick tells us that an anthropologist was able to draw from knowledge of folklore and symbolism of heat and fire to suggest new methods of marketing for a central heating equipment manufacturer. Because of the marketing methods suggested by the anthropologist the resistance to promoting central heating decreased substantially (Winick, 1961, p.56).

This also allows for interdisciplinary work to be done and for design outcomes to move beyond the material world and become involved with services, systems and even policies. Gunn and Løgstrup (2014) define design anthropology as design drawing upon ethnographic approaches to inform design practice. This definition is what separates design anthropology from design research. Design anthropology is about observing practices, gathering outspoken reflections and idea (Smith, 2014, p. 131). Since ethnography involves a researcher participating in people’s lives for an extended amount of time, it allows the designer or anthropologist to gain a perspective that has an increased level of engagement. Apart from using ethnographic approaches, part of design anthropology is to involve not just the end user but as many people as possible within the system (Bødker, Sjögren, & Sundblad, 2000). One example of this was a project done
between 2002 and 2003 by Intel Corporation, the world leader in silicon innovation and technology. This was a project that looked at building a ubiquitous computing system for a vineyard (Brooke & Burrell, 2003). Intel brought in a developer, a designer and an anthropologist to work together on this project. Using ethnographic research, they studied the system of the whole vineyard, interviewing and observing all aspects and personnel at the vineyard. Even though this was about building a computing system, Intel Corporation needed to understand how the system worked on every level before providing an outcome for the client.

Verbeek (2012) emphasises that things shape humans, and that humans shape things. This embodies the need for ethnographic research when it comes to design. Design is not just about creation but about providing change and being inspired to create based on what is already present, which ultimately means solving problems and challenging existing ways (Smith, 2014, p. 131). We draw and learn from what exists to create what does not exist yet. Another aspect that brings design anthropology into its own scope is the challenging of a corporation market-driven relationship of object culture (Clarke, 2011). This ideology is a move away from profit centric to other purposes for design. This is similar to the role of action anthropology, which Tax (1975) defines as one that supports social agencies not simply by observing, but by being willing to make things happen as the spark of change. These comparisons and evolutions of anthropology give a precedence to the future of design anthropology, in defining the context and identifying the benefits that anthropology, design and the understanding of technology bring together. In the past, the ideologies of anthropology were scattered into different fields and through those differences, the values were manifested in different forms.

Considering that this thesis is enquiring into Singaporean Chinese culture, these were the reasons that design anthropology was the methodological framework selected for the research. The ethnographic approach allowed a look at the cultural and social aspects of the Singaporean Chinese community. As a problem was identified, a design outcome was necessary. As a practitioner of design anthropology, one must be able to clearly define the methods and ensure that
each method is selected based on its relevance to the project and that a ‘cookie cutter’ approach, meaning one method suits all purposes, is not taken (Flynn, 2009). The design anthropology approach that I will be taking with this thesis is the one defined by Tunstall (2013). This approach ensures that design anthropology understands “human value systems, the processes and artifacts of designing in making value systems tangible, and the aligning of people’s experiences with the values they prefer—all under conditions of unequal power relations” (Tunstall, 2013, p. 239).

Tunstall’s methodology of Design Anthropology requires a two staged approach:

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**Figure 3.1: Tunstall’s Design Anthropology Framework Recreated and Applied to this Thesis**

In stage one is the process of the blue arrows: ethnographic research to conduct a content analysis of romantic comedy TV shows to evaluate people’s experiences of romantic relationships. Stage two is the process of the orange arrows: evaluating the gap in the people’s experiences to create a design intervention that would lead to alternative thoughts about values of love as evaluated through a survey.
Equally, important, Tunstall’s approach is explicitly a decolonizing approach. Under the code of a Western system of knowledge and represented in major design academic journals, few voices from Asian, African, Middle Eastern, or Latin American scholars have been included compared their Caucasian counterparts. This is also the case for design anthropology, whose history is tied to the use of ethnographic methods to help Western-based global companies better “penetrate” Asian, African, Middle Eastern, or Latin American markets. Therefore, Tunstall (2013) describes how design anthropology needs to be a decolonizing methodology. For this to happen when using design anthropology, seven principles need to be adhered to. Here I will be presenting the seven principles and how I have adapted each of them to the methodology of this research.

1. **Value systems and cultures have to be accepted as dynamic, not static. Each generation goes through the process of negotiating the elements that make up its value systems and culture:**

For this research I have identified and acknowledged that the Chinese Singaporean community is multifaceted and layered especially between the generations that place significance on different values when it comes to romantic relationships.

2. **One needs to recognize the mutual borrowing that happens among value systems and cultures and to seek to mitigate or eliminate the unequal circumstances in which that borrowing takes place:**

The Singaporean community and the topic of romantic relationships is not one that is purely based on instructions and rules. The value systems and cultures of romantic relationships are informed by sources including; family, media, friends and personal experiences.

3. **One must look simultaneously at what is expressed as that to be gained, lost, and created new in the recombination of value systems and cultures by a group of people:**
With this research I am identifying the various ways that romantic relationships and values of love are experienced and through the exploratory stages I can explore the various practices and perspectives that the community have built for themselves.

4. *One should seek to eliminate false distinctions between art, craft, and design in order to better recognize all culturally important forms of making as a way in which people make value systems tangible to themselves and others.*

The design of romantic comedy television shows is acknowledged as a possible medium for values of both Western and Eastern perspectives of romance. This research acknowledges the different cultural tangents that come from the media even if they are a hybridity of both.

5. *Researchers and designers ought to create processes that enable respectful dialogue and relational interactions such that everyone is able to contribute their expertise equally to the process of designing and those contributions are properly recognized and remunerated.*

Through a co-design approach the short film built itself upon the insights of the exploratory research as well as the fellow creators of the film itself.

6. *Projects should use design processes and artifacts to work with groups to shift hegemonic value systems that are detrimental to the holistic well-being of vulnerable groups, dominant groups, and their extended environments.*

The two staged research methodology was able to utilize data that was grounded in the Chinese Singaporean community to inform and accurately represent them in the design outcome of the short film.

7. *The ultimate criteria for success of any design anthropological engagements are the recognized creation of conditions of compassion among the participants in a project and in harmony with their wider environments.*
This thesis acknowledges the sensitivity of romantic relationships with its methods as well as defining in detail the specific group rather than describing the whole Chinese Singaporean community as a stereotype.

These principles hold great significance for the nation of Singapore because of its cultural inception. As an Asian country of post-colonial heritage, it has been heavily influenced by Western culture in terms of language and mass media. This breeds a culture that has a mixed bag of values in terms of Western and Eastern origins. Undeniably, because of immigration as well as a society that is constantly connected, this means that the elements that affect the cultural landscape of Singapore are constantly changing. The cultural group that will be studied is the Chinese diaspora, and this research will be reacting with members of the diaspora who are have been born in different countries and whose family has arrived in Singapore at different generations.

**Methods Chosen and Rationale**

Building upon the literature and theoretical approach of this thesis, there are a number of research questions that need to be answered. What romantic comedy television shows are the young, English-speaking, and heterosexual Singaporean Chinese watching? How does their watching of romantic comedy television show influence expectation of love among these Singaporean Chinese? How might the introduction of new media influence the expectations of love for these Singaporean Chinese?

Utilising a design anthropology approach, this research study seeks to first understand values of love for the sample chosen, then looks to discover how design plays a part in this equation, followed by the use of new design in an attempt to alter these values of love. In order to answer these questions four methods were chosen: media content analysis, semi-structured interviews, participant observations and a quantitative questionnaire. The first three methods of media content analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observations are part of the exploratory research stage, while the quantitative questionnaire was the evaluative stage of the research.
We have to explore why these methods were chosen before we can go into the details of each method. From what has been discussed so far within this chapter, when looking at media studies it is clear that this thesis needs more than just a quantitative approach because of the type of research question that is being asked. The media and anthropology approach looks at the questions but because this is a design thesis it needs to be able to create and try to solve a problem and not just gather information. As a design research thesis, this study will draw from previous design research studies. Because this thesis is enquiring into the behaviors of Singaporean Chinese and their expectations of love, the cultural aspect is of great importance, therefore a design anthropology methodology that utilizes an ethnographic field-work approach was chosen.

The framework that is used when practicing design anthropology is one where design translates values into tangible experiences. With this study the values that we are looking at are the values of love and the expectations of romantic love that Singaporean Chinese have. As for the design aspect, it is romantic comedy television shows. This research project will look at romantic comedies and how they have affected or impacted the views and values of the Singaporean Chinese community. Using their experiences, this thesis looks at the ways they engage with the themes of marriage and dating. These experiences are the things that play a part in how Singapore as a nation is facing an aging population, lower and later marriages as well as a low total fertility rate (TFR).

The goal of this research to utilize ethnographic methods to uncover the values that are discussed above, and also to understand the way design, in this case romantic comedy television series, are produced and consumed. The design aspect needs to be viewed on many levels, including technical aspects and storytelling. By understanding the values Singaporean Chinese have when it comes to romance, it is easier to break that information down and find if there are parallels with the design of romantic comedy television shows.

Since this is not just an ethnographic study but also a design anthropology one, there needs to be a design that brings about positive experiences for the community in context. The design might not provide a direct impact on the aging population of Singapore, but it will attempt to engage the Singaporean Chinese
community in a small way. The idea of the design will be discussed further in Chapter 6: Impact of romantic comedy television series alternative. Nonetheless, the whole purpose of creating a design is to utilize what is learnt from the initial data collection when looking at values of design. The creation of a design is to evaluate and ensure that the collected data are true within the context. When it comes to projects like this, there are usually multiple stages where ethnography can be used.

Each of these methods allows us to understand the different aspects of this topic on a different level. The methods here provide a layer of information into how people watch romantic comedy television shows, how they engage with the content and the romantic comedy themes, their engagement and experiences with romance.

**Method 1: Media Content Analysis**

The first method utilised was media content analysis (Head, 1954). This method looks into the analysis of television media and its different types of content. Head (1954) described four classifications for content that can be analysed in television programs:

> The content dimensions used may be roughly classified into four groups: (1) interaction dimensions, which encompass the dynamics of the play as a whole unit; (2) temporal-physical dimensions, which have to do with locale and period; (3) character dimensions, which have to do with character traits; and (4) behavioural dimensions, which have to do with specific actions of the characters (p. 179).

Based on these four classifications and the different ways of coding (Saldaña, 2012; Sicakkan & Tønnevold, 2008), romantic comedy television shows can be broken down into different aspects, which include technical components such as lighting, sound, music and shots to more creative dimensions such as storytelling, acting and scripting.

For this study, two shows representing the East and the West respectively were analysed. This first show was an American sitcom, *How I Met Your Mother*, while the second show was a Korean show called *My Love from the Star* (별에서 온
These shows were chosen as they were the top two most popular shows based on my interview data, and the most modern ones.

**Method 2: Semi-structured Interviews**

The second method that was utilised for this study was semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2006, p.212). A total of eight months was spent in Singapore on recruitment and data collection. Potential participants were targeted through a recruitment campaign involving the distribution of a designed poster on social media platforms like Facebook and online forums, in addition to snowball sampling. Upon recruitment, 51 participants were interviewed for roughly 45 minutes to an hour. There were more males (60.8%, \( N = 31 \)) than females (39.2%, \( N = 20 \)) interviewed and the mean participation age was 25.3 (\( SD = 2.24 \), Range = 20 – 30).

As part of the interviews, a participatory design method of card sorting (Spencer, 2009) was used to get a sense of what values or qualities played a part when looking for a partner. The interviews were conducted in locations that were convenient for the participants, such as homes or cafes that were near their place of work or home. The interviews collected opinions on romantic comedy television shows and expectations of love that participants had. Having a card sort activity as part of the interviews added variety to the interviews and made them less mundane. As the interviews were semi-structured interviews, new areas were explored. Participants provided insights that were previously unchartered. The interviews allowed for participants to connect with the interviewer on a personal and direct level. Participants were able to express their personal accounts because of the higher level of intimacy through the interviews.

Apart from the processes listed above, subsequent chapters will also be looking at the breakdown of the data collected and highlight the findings from the ethnographic fieldwork. The information collected from this part of the data later informed the design component of this research as well as an evaluative online survey.

Based on the data collected from the initial research of semi-structured interviews, four main themes were uncovered and are presented in this chapter:
the exposure to romantic comedy television programs; values of love; the experience of romantic relationships; and the effect that media on the Singaporean Chinese community. According to the responses of the participants, it was found that even though there was a higher present day exposure to Western media, the Singaporean Chinese community felt a stronger connection and identification with Asian values compared to Western values.

**Method 3: Observations**

The third method that was used in this research study was observations (Bernard, 2006, p.342). Bernard (2006, p. 344) speaks about participant observations as a method that provides a humanistic approach but at the same time incorporates a scientific approach. This mixed approach of participant observations puts researchers where the action is and allows the collection of data. This method is mainly a qualitative one whereby the field notes produced included what the researcher sees and hears; photographs; audio recordings; videotapes; transcriptions and so on.

For this research, the observational tool that was used was the observing of participants watching romantic comedy television programs. Out of the 13 observations, 12 were observations of individual participants watching a romantic comedy television program of their choice. If they could not decide on a show, one was provided for them. One observation was conducted with around 60 students of a media studies classroom at the Nanyang Technological University, where students were shown a Singaporean and American television program respectively.

The behaviours that participants had when watching the television shows were observed with the participant observations. While the shows were playing it was key to pick out the points that participants reacted to in the shows. These included them laughing or sighing. Depending on the shows the main thing was to identify the key moments that participants reacted to.

The purpose of this observation was to understand and find out if the sample of Singaporean Chinese were able to grasp any elements of romance or comedy that were being portrayed in the shows. It also allowed an attempt to discover
which points within the television shows people laughed at or reacted to. This was then compared to the shows themselves and checked to see if there were any common threads that the participants were reacting to.

**Method 4: Quantitative questionnaire**

The fourth and final method that was used was a quantitative survey. The sample consisted of 109 Singaporean Chinese recruited through an online recruitment campaign, which involved advertising of the web-link to the questionnaire on Facebook and snowball sampling. Participants were to complete the questionnaire administered online through SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. There were more females (55.1%, N = 60) than males (44.9%, N = 49) who completed the questionnaire. The age group of the participants was spread among the following three ranges: 15.6% (N = 17) of the participants were between the age of 20 to 24, 67.0% (N = 73) reported to be between the age of 25 to 29, and the remaining 17.4% (N = 19) were between the age of 30 to 34. Regarding relationship status, 37.6% (N = 41) of the participants reported to be single, 47.7% (N = 52) in a relationship, 12.8% (N = 14) married, and 1.8% (N = 2) divorced.

This survey sought to provide a qualifier as to whether a new media introduced to the viewers could change their expectations of love. The questionnaire is built upon the data collected from the exploratory research portion of this study. As part of the questionnaire, ‘new media’ was provided as stimuli to participants. The new media that was created was a mockumentary that highlighted the different portrayals of love in media and what would happen in reality. The reason for this is to test whether a stimuli being presented could change the expectations of love for viewers.

**Recruitment**

With the semi-structured interviews and observations, the snowball sampling method was used. Snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 141) yields a research study sample through referrals made by people who share or know of others who fit within the scope of the research interest. It was chosen because it is useful to gather participants when discussing a sensitive topic like romantic
love. Initially with the snowball sampling process, I avoided recruiting any of my friends for this research. This was to avoid any awkward situations. The recruitment was slow and thus eventually I had to include some of my friends in the study. Along with snowball sampling through friends and social media platforms like Facebook, advertisements for the study were also posted on a notice board in Nanyang Technological University of Singapore. The recruitment for the study was also conducted using online forums.

**Bias Avoidance**

Throughout the secondary research, most of the readings provided insights on the topic from the female perspective. The design of this study was to target more males, to give insights on what males had to say about the topic of love, romance and romantic comedy television shows. Chan and Wang (2011) conducted multiple focus groups with females on the topic. This possibly could have been because of the openness of discussion on the topic. Like the other studies, I have found that males were not as open as females in the discussion of love and romantic comedy television shows. Throughout the study, females were the ones who approached me to participate in the study while males were a little hesitant. However, through coaxing in multiple attempts and recruitment via the snowball method, I was able to find 31 male participants for the study.

As a Chinese Singaporean male who falls under the same category as my sample, it could be perceived that I have some bias in my findings. Even though more males were interviewed, I believe that I avoided sample bias mainly because of the fact that most of the secondary research studies were done with females as their main sample. Through the reading of the secondary research, I was able to get a clear perspective on what the female voice was saying and their viewpoint on the matter. Since I was able to interview 20 females, I am also using that to shed more light on the topic. I believe that the combination of the secondary research and the 20 female face-to-face interviews gave me an objective view on the matter.

**Timeline and processes**
There are two parts to this thesis. Firstly, the exploratory research stage which includes media content analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observations. These methods took up a total of 8 months from June 2014 to February 2015. Secondly, the stage of evaluative research using a quantitative questionnaire was conducted from July 2015 to August of 2015.

The design of the evaluative research protocol that includes a new media stimuli and a quantitative questionnaire is a result of the analysis that was done with the data from the exploratory research.

**Conclusions**

From the previous two chapters, we have found that Singapore as a society is one that is a mix of Eastern and Western transcultural aspects, and that media has shown signs of correlation to aspects of interpersonal relationships and romantic relationships in terms of expectations. However, not much has been looked into from the cultural context of Singapore.

The culture that is being studied is the Singaporean Chinese community, instead of a simple overview of how romantic comedy television series and media have an influence. This study enquires into the transcultural values that are embedded and absorbed by its target audience, as well as the social connections. This is why the design anthropology framework was used as a basis for this study. Even though this research study fits within the design research field as we have seen, the approach of design anthropology ensures that values, design and experiences are looked at in greater detail.

It was decided that by utilising ethnography as a philosophy, this research is able to answer the overarching question and utilise the information to create a design that could change the values and experiences for Singaporean Chinese. Using a framework of exploratory research, this study was able to conduct the fieldwork that provided a wide range of information for the research. After the analysis of the data, the second stage of an evaluative approach using an online survey helped to affirm the different themes and assumptions that originated from the exploratory stage of the research.
From the data collected, three major themes that emerged were values of love, romantic relationships, and exposure to romantic comedy television series.
Chapter 4: Values of Love and Romantic Relationships

Introduction

Previous studies in the field of mate selection have shown that when it comes to picking long-term romantic partners there are particular qualities that people look for. Apart from these qualities in a partner, another important aspect of romantic relationships that is discussed in this study is how Singaporean Chinese are behaving when it comes to love. This chapter presents the findings from the study within the scope of how Singaporean Chinese are interacting with the experiences of love and romantic relationships. In addition, findings from the interviews and survey data are also presented to facilitate the discussion of the two main themes of values of love and romantic relationships in Singapore. The survey questions were designed with reference to the themes and responses from the semi-structured interviews that were collected earlier. The interview had a sample size of 51 participants, while the survey had a total of 110 participants.

Values of love

This thesis looks at values as a measure for love. Regarding values, there are two definitions by Kluckhohn (1951) and Graeber (2005) which are helpful to look at in association with romantic love. The first definition of value comes from Kluckhohn (1951):

*A conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action (p. 395).*

When looking at the importance of values in relation to romantic relationships, this definition allows us to remember that they are not just entirely determined by an individual but through external influences as well. Next, we have the definition from Graeber (2005, p. 2):
1. “Values” in the sociological sense: conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life

2. “Value” in the economic sense: the degree to which objects are desired, particularly, as measured by how much others are willing to give up to get them

3. “Value” in the linguistic sense, which goes back to the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), and might be most simply glossed as difference

This definition sets out three notions of values: social, economic and linguistic. At this point, we can start to see the forms that values can take. When looking at the value of “romanticism”, this takes value in a sociological sense, while a value such as “financial stability” or “stable job” would then be perceived in an economic sense. These three definitions are used to ground this thesis when talking about values. Subsequently, if we are to consider that a society might play a part in the formation of these values, a construct starts to build that comes from people's own culture or social background.

For this study, values of love are often these commodities that are being perceived as desirable when it comes to looking for a long-term partner. This is similar to mate selection or mate choices, the process where selection of a mate is dependent on his/her qualities. Identification of these qualities is usually based on statistics from demographic and personality variables (Bolton, 1961, p. 234). Several studies have also looked into mate selection and its relations to other variables. These studies are usually reliant on quantitative surveys that report on different influences and factors (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011; Furnham, 2009; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002; Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004; Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011; Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss, 2005).

This study of values of love investigates the popularity of specific qualities, as in the study of mate selection. However, because of the ethnographic framework of this study, it also questions why these qualities are valuable in the search for a long-term partner. It seeks to understand how the local Singaporean culture perceives these qualities and their inspiration from an Eastern or Western cultural context. In order to understand what values people were looking for when it came to long term partners, it was decided that a card sorting (i.e. pile sorting) exercise was to be used. A list of fifty values was created from previous studies on mate
selection and online dating sites such as OkCupid and Oasis Active. Earlier works in the mate selection field focused on describing the qualities and how they differed based on gender (Buss, 1985; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Townsend, 1989). Later studies started looking at cultural differences (Higgins, et al., 2004; Li, et al., 2010). Studies focused on the Singaporean context have observed whether different factors such as age, length of partnership, cultural background and gender affected the qualities chosen when looking for a partner (Buss, 1985; Higgins et al., 2002; Hudson & Henze, 1969; Li et al., 2011; Townsend, 1989). These studies contributed to the list qualities or preferences that ranged from physical qualities such as height and age to emotional qualities such as kindness and understanding.

The chosen qualities were printed out onto white cards and given to participants of the semi-structured interviews as a participatory design exercise (Figure 4.1). Some cards were to be hand written instead of printed in order to maintain an open discussion for the participants. Blank cards were to ensure that, if there were qualities or values that were not represented on the cards, participants could add them to the set.
Through the card sorting exercise, participants were asked to sort the cards in different ways based on the types of partner and cultural differences. The specific sorting exercises included organizing based on:

- Local Chinese ethnic Singaporean culture
- Asian cultural values
- Western cultural values
- Both Asian and Western cultural values
- Ideal partner
- Current partner

The data gained from the qualitative sorts were then further validated by a survey which asked participants (N =110) to rate their selections quantitatively.

**Cultural Values**

Interview participants were asked to pick the cards that represented the good or bad qualities that represented their local cultures, Chinese ethnic culture or
Singaporean national culture. The cards that were picked could be values that were present or missing in the particular culture.

Interview participants were also prompted to select cards that represented Asian and Western culture when it came to romantic love. During this exercise, some participants shared their own experiences or what they had seen from different forms of media. In addition to Western and Asian cultures, some participants created a list of shared values (i.e. values that were represented by both cultures).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Values</th>
<th>Asian Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passionate/ Openness in Sexuality</td>
<td>Family oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Faithful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>Career Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charming</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally open</td>
<td>Capable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically attractive</td>
<td>Financial Stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting</td>
<td>High Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Top ten Western and Asian Values from card sorting exercise during semi-structured interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Western</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
<td>72 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>41 (38%)</td>
<td>50 (46%)</td>
<td>18 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>45 (41%)</td>
<td>45 (41%)</td>
<td>19 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>41 (38%)</td>
<td>50 (46%)</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td>67 (61%)</td>
<td>37 (34%)</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Oriented</td>
<td>80 (73%)</td>
<td>24 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>24 (22%)</td>
<td>69 (63%)</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
<td>36 (33%)</td>
<td>68 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally Strong</td>
<td>60 (55%)</td>
<td>37 (34%)</td>
<td>12 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well mannered</td>
<td>31 (29%)</td>
<td>50 (46%)</td>
<td>27 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>51 (47%)</td>
<td>48 (44%)</td>
<td>10 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>9 (8%)</td>
<td>26 (26%)</td>
<td>72 (66%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3 Cultural rating of values and qualities based on 110 survey respondents

From the card sorting activity done during the semi-structured interviews, there were a number of categories of data that were identified. Figures 4.2 and 4.3
illustrates responses on the perception of values of love and their cultural rating based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews (N = 51) and survey (N = 110) respectively. The top Western value from both sets of data is ‘Passion/Openness in Sexuality’, while ‘Family Oriented’, ‘Faithful’, and ‘Financial Stability’ were seen as strong Asian values. These were represented in both the interviews and survey. Other values like ‘Independence’, ‘Confident’ and ‘Sociable’ were also seen as values that Western cultures portray in romantic love, while the other Asian values that were seen as representations of romantic love were ‘Loyalty’, ‘Faithful’ and ‘Career Driven’. These values which are a mixture of perceptions and experiences of the participants represent a clear difference between what are considered to be Asian or Western values when it comes to love and romance. There are specific values that might be representative of Singaporean Chinese culture, but as of now with this study, the values have not been defined.

When defining values of love for the Singaporean Chinese context, it needs to be understood where these are drawn from. Even though this thesis is looking at the impact that the design of romantic comedy television shows has on the values and experiences, it is not the only factor as other aspects have also been found to be influential in the lives of the Singaporean Chinese community. From the data, different people have attributed their perceptions and values of love to a few aspects such as personal experiences, parents, friends, social media, as well as movies and television. Participants acknowledged that what they view from movies and television plays a part in their perceptions, but the effect is not clear. Effects on romantic perceptions and values of love will be elaborated further in the chapter. For now, we will be looking at the ideals that are seen and desired when building a perception of long-term romantic partners.

Even though there is a strong influence of Western values, participants still feel a stronger connection to Eastern values. An interesting finding is that the choices for expectations of love and values were not a question of either. So instead of people picking either Western values or Eastern values, values from both cultures were preferred. Below we will be looking at some of the values and the cultural categories that have been created based on the data from the participants.
For the Western values, Passion was the value that was picked as the most Western value from both the survey and the semi-structured interviews. Passion as a quality can be categorised into two forms. It can be a powerful or compelling emotion that comes with love of sexual desire. In another sense it is about being passionate, which can also be a strong feeling about a particular object or matter. These are the associations with the quality of passion, and are often perceived to be a Western quality. This could be because of the idea that Western shows have more sex portrayed, including sexual jokes.

*Like in Western countries, love involves sex. But it's different in conservative country like Korea and Japan. And India where there is arranged marriage. (Participant #31)*

*As I grow up there started to be more stuff and I started to get exposed to things like American comedy but I didn't watch when I was young as too many sexual jokes and my parents didn't want me to watch. (Participant #27)*

From what we can see there is a perception that the Western world is one where relationships revolve around sex, while the Asian culture is one that is more conservative. Participant #27 here discussed how his parents might not have wanted him to be exposed to the sexuality that is often associated with the Western world through their media. Apart from sexuality being discussed on television programs of Western origins, there are other themes that were raised when being compared to Asian television series.

*Like US shows introduce the idea of same sex relationship but is not present in local media. Generally they are more liberal while local shows tend to be more about home (and) understanding the relationship about building a family. Like Korea is a bit of culture and relationship between two people. (Participant #40)*

From the quote from Participant #40, the discussion about relationships also starts to include same sex relationships which are usually not presented in Asian media, including Singapore. This ties in with Singapore as part of the South-East Asian region very well, as it is considered to be a nation that is sexually repressed (Tan, 2003). However, much has changed in the society since 2003. There may be a sense that due to the increased exposure to Western consumerism in this transcultural society, there might be a slight change in the perception of sexuality and passion in Singapore. This showcases the perception where The Asian
narrative also discusses more about family compared to Western television series. This bring us to the next point of “family oriented”.

I think in general, Asian culture, Singaporeans, we are quite family-orientated like everyone stays with their family and we see our family quite often, because oversees you seldom see your parents and you see them once a year or something. (Participant #14)

From the interviews with the local Chinese community of Singapore, it is clear there is an overarching sense that we as a community know the representations of the Chinese community and its traditions, which have a strong focus on family.

See how your partner or other people treat their family members, their siblings, their elderly. And when they visit your parents, how they react to them. I think that’s important. I think it must be so traditionally Chinese, I think you also need to be able to actually connect with your old folks, like people who speak Chinese, because I definitely wouldn’t date a Caucasian guy if he can’t speak Chinese. It wouldn’t make sense especially to my grandparents and I’m very close to my grandparents from young, my mother’s side, especially my grandaunt who’s been with me all my life. So, filial piety it’s quite important; generosity to old folks, being able to…hold value in respecting the elderly, I think that’s very important. (Participant #20)

The family is a theme that has always been associated with Asian culture. From the interview with Participant #20, we can see that the idea of family is tied strongly to her culture. She feels that here Chinese culture is what links her with her parents and grandparents, which in her case means that her partner will need to converse with her parents and grandparents as well. This idea of family is connected strongly to filial piety. It shows us that the desire to be close to family comes not just from the pressures from parents or grandparents but from within as well. One aspect of family is staying at home. In Asian culture, it is normal for couples or individuals to live with their parents compared to Western culture.

I think there are more Asian families staying together with their parents, and even after they were married. Definitely more than Western families, maybe if I’m not wrong, but with my own vision is this. So I think in certain aspects they like to portray that, as in Asian families are one big family. One big like with so many parents, that sort of things. But Western family is really, once you get married you leave the nest, that sort of thing. (Participant #45)
One participant who picked “well-mannered” as an ideal quality for a partner chose it because of her parents. 

*This one is more for the parents because parents will like well mannered. (Participant #7)*

Another value that was seen to have a strong Asian cultural rating is faithfulness. We learn that being faithful is a quality that is usually considered to be ‘traditional’ or ‘Asian’ (Lin & Tong, 2008, p.107). From this study, faithfulness ranked highly with the participants of both the survey and the semi-structured interviews. During the semi-structured interviews, it was rated as the third value that was Asian. 68% of the participants felt it was an Asian value as indicated by the survey. With faithfulness, we know that this is a discourse that comes from Confucian teachings where a female is supposed to be chaste and faithful to her husband (Chan & Wang, 2011, p.299). From the participants of this study, we also learn that the idea of faithfulness can also be associated with being conservative, which differs from the Western stereotype that generally involves divorce and sexual intimacy.

*I cannot remember but perhaps Asian values can be more traditional, more conservative like a couple is more loyal to each other. Western they break up or divorce and get married again, they are more open to sexual intimacy. (Participant #43)*

Participant #25 defined love as a “faithful partnership”, and that it is a “decision to stay together”. The participant went on to elaborate that it is also about working out differences with each other. In addition, sticking with the decision is also part of faithfulness, not just about avoiding the act of cheating. Participant #49 talked about commitment in comparison to the Western world or television.

*I believe in commitment. The Western culture is very open so commitment is...divorce rate is very high. Not sure of the actual rate. Because they are open many deceive and other partner also willing to let go... I also believe in support. The current generation is quite exposed to different cultures around the world because of internet. So I believe in communication which is the support and the outgoing part of it, but I still support commitment. It is not being easy supporting both, I feel like I am sitting in the middle of the fence. (Participant #49)*

This emphasised the importance of faithfulness for the Singaporean Chinese community. Being faithful is perceived as an Asian value. This was not one of the
original list of values provided, but was one of the most popular choices, especially for the males in the interviews. A study done with respondents from Hong Kong and Singapore found that women, especially those in Singapore, responded strongly to affirming faithfulness and loyalty to love (Lin & Tong, 2008, p. 116). The results of this study match those of previous studies that have looked at faithfulness as a quality. For this research study, 39% of the participants who did the card sorting exercise felt that “faithfulness” was a quality that they would like in a long-term partner. Breaking down this information to gender differences, it was found that 48% of males and 25% of females who did the card sorting exercise felt that “faithfulness” was a quality that they would like in a long-term partner. When faithfulness was presented in the survey, out of 111 participants, 96% of them felt that “faithfulness” was an important quality. Nonetheless, it is second to “honesty” which 98% of the participants felt was most important.

We can see the different values that are categorised into the two different cultures and their significance for romantic relationships for the Singaporean Chinese community. However, looking back at these values, we also need to uncover how they are related to the design of television shows. From what we know about what is considered to be Western or Asian, there are perspectives that are presented in the different shows and their cultural origins. Within Singapore, there is a worry that the Western media and increased exposure to it by local Singaporeans might induce people to think differently. From Participants #44, #11 and #18, we can see that they built their perceptions on what is shown on television, from topics such as liberalism.

Over emphasis on freedom, liberties, and rights. Yeah, which I think they get from all these American TV shows, which I really, really don’t care for very much. (Participant #44)

This influence is also extended to themes like perception on comparisons between what is seen on television and real life, especially when it comes to perception of male partner choices.

Maybe in Asian shows they always show the lead is always very faithful, never think of other things that are not true in real life. Because guys also think of sex, about going out with friends and having fun. But in shows, these are good guys, very gentle one, open
the doors for you, or speak in a very, but that is not true. Maybe the character of the lead? (Participant #11)

This is in addition to television series on values that are looked for.

*Because we’re watching that show 天梯 (The Last Steep Ascent) again and I really, really like the guy in the show. He’s very faithful.* (Participant #18)

From this responses, we can observe how there is a comparison that is being made from what we see on our television screen. We either build upon prior knowledge or we build a perspective that is based on different sources, and this includes what we see on television. As television has a longer period of engagement with the viewer, there is more time to build perceptions and these perceptions can be projected into viewers’ daily lives, just as described by Participant #27.

*By the time we had grown up we were influenced by things in a way, like the dating culture. The lines became blurred. People when they become hooked to television, they start to project themselves onto the show, they start to live their life like in the movies. So that is where the difference drops. When I was young there was almost no similarity. That sort of lifestyle simply did not come into consciousness yet. I think the older I got I start to realize that people around me started to imitate the reality that is shown in television program is more and more.* (Participant #27)

With reference to cultivation theory, it could be assumed or hypothesised that the greater the exposure to Western media, the greater the importance of Western ideals to the viewer. However, the responses of the participants show otherwise. The exposure to Westerns shows is not greater than to Asian media. Responses from the survey showed that the current exposure to Western television programmes was slightly higher than to Asian programmes. When asked how often participants watched Asian and Western shows using a five-point scale from “Never” to “Always”, the responses showed that the cultural origin of television shows being consumed was shared between Asian and Western shows quite evenly, with the mean for consumption of Western shows being 3.12 and for Asian shows being 2.89.

Hence, we know that there is a fairly even exposure to the different types of media being consumed. Now looking at the values chosen when it comes to an ideal
partner, we can start to see the overall cultural preferences, especially in the choices of long-term partner. Chan & Wang (2011, p.299) in their research found that respondents preferred the subtle and conservative expressions of love that were presented in Korean TV dramas to overt portrayals of sex that were portrayed in Western dramas such as Sex and the City and Desperate Housewives.

The highly romantic portrayal of love that is generally assumed to be Western does not seem to attract the Singaporean Chinese community. From the views of the participants, some would prefer the practicalities of romantic relationships.

> Americans or Westerns are more individualistic cultures, and Asians are more communal. And in that line of thought, right, we appreciate more practical values in that sense. So we’ll go for things like financial stability, we’ll probably go for, you know, high academic qualifications, we’ll go for secure. We’ll go for, you know, things like physically strong, attractive. Where’s attractive? It’s somewhere. We’ll go for career-driven, you know. We go for things like that. (Participant #35)

Participant #35 highlighted the construct of Western culture being individualistic while it is more communal for Asian culture. This highlights her next point where she elaborated on why people might be more tuned to picking qualities that are more practical.

> Let’s put it this way, if people would, I’d say most girls or not say most girls, but even some guys would think, would tell you that supportive, loyalty, patient, and understanding, how would these things fit you in the future, or look after your needs? It’s as one Chinese girl once said, it’s better to cry in a Ferrari (BMW) than to smile in a bicycle. So, I think that’s one quote that kind of summarizes the context in Singapore. (Participant #35)

Participant #35 was quoting from a television show in China called, “If You Are the One” (非诚勿扰). The quote from this dating show has a famous line from one of the female participants, Ma Nuo (nicknamed “BMW Lady” by bloggers). The statement made by Ma Nuo in the dating program received negative feedback, although in China, the pursuit of making money and building careers seems to be a phenomenon that is growing (Bergman, 2010).
Even though the Singaporean Chinese community might seem more practical in their pursuit of romantic love and relationships, we cannot ignore the romanticism that has been pushed and presented through the Western and sometimes Asian media when it is being portrayed through media characters and their actions. Or as Participant #44 tells us, it is not just the media but other factors.

\[ I \text{ think if what you say is the media effect, then I guess the Western media should take their fair share of the blame because they do promote values that are very un-Asian, I'd argue. But in a sense, the way that education policy, it's not just one factor that makes Singapore Western. It's a whole lot of other policies, it has become more like that. Like in our haste to become a bilingual, which I don't think we are anymore as well. In our haste to become the like, you know, promote English and everything, we kind of lost our Asian values along the way…} (Participant #44) \]

The pursuit to be like the Western world will result in the cultivation of Western values in the long run. The “Speak Good English” campaign, consumerism and use of Caucasian models in advertisements are some examples where Singapore has grown in terms of Western consumption. Overall when looking at the differences between what are Western or Asian values and qualities, we can see that there are clear differences when finding a romantic partner. The constructs of Western and Asian values are presented in Singapore. If we look at a following quote from Participant #47, we can note how the general view of Singapore has changed as well.

\[ \text{Maybe in the past it's more Asian, but nowadays I feel like it's becoming more and more westernised to a certain extent. I think it's evolved largely, no longer do you see, women as housewives but nowadays woman are also working, also trying to support. Maybe because in Singapore context, it's how you must have both parties to work, you can all survive in these such competitive environment. That's why I mentioned every time these are very important skills to have. Of course ultimately family-oriented will still be like more the deeply rooted values you see in the partner.} (Participant #47) \]

From this we can start to see how Singapore is actually more than just a cultural melting pot. There are influences from different cultures. As transculturation (Ortiz, 1995 [1945]) has allowed for multiple cultures to blend into the Singapore culture, it shows that in fact there might be different external influencers like television media, consumerism, social media, which all contribute to the construct of a Western/Asian narrative in the Singaporean context. However, we can start
to notice how relationships are transforming to become a unique Singaporean way of life.

We might see that there is a strong Western wave of romanticism that is affecting the traditional Confucian core, despite the fact that the participants are showing that they are actually grounded in their roots. This is evident in how participants showed significance in the qualities that they picked for ideal partners. By picking values from both cultures, the foundations for partner choices are increased. Instead of finding someone who has a good career to support the family or someone who is homely, the qualities that are necessary to be competitive are increased. In the next section, we will start to look into the specific values that are of significance to the Singaporean Chinese community.

**Values that define ideal partners**

Now that we have a sense of how the Singaporean Chinese community perceives values and their cultural connection, we can start to identify which of these values are perceived to be of higher preference. This is done by collating the data from the values that were the most popular from the interviews. These values are also described by the participants in terms of why they are significant in the local context of Singapore. As an ethnographic study, it is essential that we ask why these are important to the community. In the following sections, we will be utilising the data from the semi-structured interviews. As there were more male participants, there are naturally more entries from the male perspective (N = 31) compared to the female perspective (N = 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Interest</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Orientated</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Stability</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatible</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Orientated</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Attractive</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4: Most Popular Values for Males and Females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Only Values</th>
<th>Female only Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically Attractive</td>
<td>Career Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally opened</td>
<td>Good Height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>Fearless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>High Academic Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-travelled</td>
<td>Charismatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good temper</td>
<td>Environmentally Aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smells Good</td>
<td>Not too skinny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physically Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5: Values that were chosen only by males or females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Values</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Interest</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

119
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Orientated</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Mannered</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.6: The most popular values for Singaporean Chinese

The first set of data we will be looking at is the most popular values for males and females (Figure 4.4). This figure shows us the top ten values for males and females that participated in the semi-structured interviews. In previous studies that looked at mate selection, it was found that males placed higher importance on “looks” and physical attraction compared to women. On the other hand, women placed higher importance on qualities such as “dependable” and “stability” (Chang, Wang, Shackelford & Buss, 2011; Furnham, 2009; Herz & Inzlicht, 2002; Koyama, McGain & Hill, 2004; Li, Valentine & Patel, 2011; Shackelford, Schmitt & Buss, 2005). With this study, we have similar findings to the previous studies mentioned above. As listed in Figure 4.3 and 4.4, the value of being “physically attractive” is one of the most popular values for males, and it was a value that only males picked. From the semi-structured interviews, only males picked “physically attractive” as a value. But what was found to be interesting was that the value of “physically attractive” was not the most popular value for males. The values that were most popular for the males in the study were “intelligent”, “faithful” and “common interest”. If we are to look at these values specifically, we can start to understand how Singaporean Chinese perceive them. For example, the value or quality of “intelligent” is one that was popular for both the males and females of this research study. Participant #27 tells us his perspective on why intelligence is his top value when describing his ideal partner.
First one is intelligence, must be a certain level of intellect to talk about the various things that happen in the world or any subject matter. I would like someone I can converse with. She must be capable as well to hold her own. (Participant #27)

Other participants also spoke of intelligence as an important aspect. Participant #11 below tells us how intelligence has different aspects and not just what might be perceived as 'book smarts'.

Intelligent. It is the things I can learn from him. He doesn’t have to be very smart, can be street smart. Something I do not know that he can teach me about life. (Participant #11)

Some even think that “intelligence” is sexy.

I think intelligence is really sexy. I like to be able to hold a conversation with someone. Not have to like, you know, sometimes like certain people when you talk to them they don’t seem to be very self-aware? I guess intelligent people are very self-aware like they know what they are, they know what they want. Intelligence is very important to me. I need to be able to talk about anything like a well-read person would be able to carry a conversation rather than some who just sits there like you know gossip like cheap sake kind of thing, not really for me. (Participant #20)

Most of the participants who talked about “intelligence” felt that an ideal partner needs intelligence in order to facilitate communicate with each other that is considered meaningful.

Intelligence, a certain level of intelligence, so that we may be able to communicate a bit more meaningfully. (Participant #25)

I argue that the importance of having an intelligent partner in Singapore could be a result of a competitive spirit in Singapore. We know that the number of people with degrees is increasing in Singapore. In 1980, only 2.7% of the Singaporean population who were aged 25 and above had a university degree or higher, while in 2013, the number jumped to 27.3%. When looking at a specific age group, in 2004, the percentage of males and females with a university education was 28% and 30.5% respectively. Whereas in 2014, the percentage for male and females with a university education had risen to 34.4% and 32% respectively (National Population and Talent Division, 2015). Of the participants in the research study, 68% from those who took part in the semi-structured interviews were degree holders while 81% of the participants from the survey had a university degree or higher. This rise in the educational qualifications is a sign of how people in
Singapore are better educated than in the past. With more university institutions in Singapore and overseas options as well, it does not take much to find someone with a degree. This would be a key factor in why people would want someone who is intelligent. If there is the perception that a degree holder is the norm, it would be an essential quality when looking for a partner because it is seen as a benchmark for conversations on a wide range of topics, as stated by the participants in the semi-structured interviews.

Another value that was popular with both males and females was about having “common interest” with the ideal partner. This seems to be a factor that relates closely to intelligence. Participants from the semi-structured interviews highlighted that they would like to have things to talk about with their ideal partners.

>This is the most important for me, common interest. I think, yeah, without common interest there’s not much things that we can talk about and I’ll find her not interesting. (Participant #10)

This quote from Participant #10 shows us the perception that conversation is important in a relationship. In a relationship the spoken word holds significance for people. It is about understanding each other and communicating as well, or as Participant #12 puts it:

>I think we should have common interest to have something to talk about at least. I don’t want to be talking about one thing and he’s talking about another. (Participant #12)

However, for some it is not just about conversations. The quality of “common Interest” also covers values and perspectives on life, for example religion, as Participant #14 notes in explaining that she is a Christian and she feels that if there were conflicting values, it would make the relationship difficult. Having common interest also means that a couple could do activities that they both enjoy such as trekking or exercising.

From the survey, a list of the top values that were derived from the semi-structured interviews was selected. Instead of including all the values, the values that were the most popular and those that were culturally significant were chosen. This list was then used in the survey for two tasks. Firstly, to rank values in terms
of importance with a larger sample. Next, it was for verifying the cultural significance of these values. Once both these actions were completed, we could cross examine the data to see if the Singaporean Chinese community placed greater emphasis on particular values with different cultural stances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td><strong>52%</strong></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td><strong>59%</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td><strong>57%</strong></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td><strong>74%</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Oriented</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td><strong>59%</strong></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td><strong>54%</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Stability</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td><strong>59%</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td><strong>53%</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7: Qualities when looking for a potential partner

Figure 4.7 shows the values that have great importance to the participants. Out of the qualities, Honesty, Understanding, Supportive and Faithful were the most popular ones with 96% - 98% of participants indicating that these were important qualities when looking for a long-term partner. Similar to Buss' (1985) findings, both the female and male sample felt that Understanding was more important
than Intelligence as a quality, which in this survey resulted with a total of 89% of participants rating it as an important quality.

Looking at these four qualities of “Honesty”, “Understanding”, “Supportive” and “Faithful” with regards to Figure 4.3, we can see that apart from the quality of “Faithful”, the other three qualities were regarded as neutral qualities rather than as qualities that were culturally of Asian or Western categorisation. By looking at the top qualities, we can see that the Singaporean Chinese community does not have a clear stance when it comes to cultural influence and romantic relationships. There might be different influences in relation to romance but the values that were chosen as preferred by the Singaporean Chinese community are seen here as neutral as regards either Asian or Western culture.

**Gender Differences**

Another aspect that was also investigated was whether or not gender played a part in the qualities selected when looking for a long-term partner. The interviews showed that female participants were only interested in finding someone who was Career Driven, while only males were looking for physically attractive as a quality. Physical attraction as a major factor in mate selection for Singaporean Chinese males followed the findings from previous research studies on mate selection (Li et al., 2011; Townsend, 1989). Using the information from the semi-structured interviews, the list of chosen qualities was used in the survey. Findings from the survey are presented in Figure 4.6. The qualities that were given to participants for the survey and they were asked to rate them on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of the level of importance for each value. The options ranged from ‘very unimportant’ (1) to ‘very important’ (5) with ‘neutral’ (3) in the middle.
Figure 4.6: Survey results on Gender Differences in qualities looked for when looking for a partner

Figure 4.6 presents the mean for the ten qualities that participants would look for when selecting a partner. The values were narrowed down from the original list of values that was used during the semi-structured interviews conducted during the exploratory stages of the research. The results of the survey shown in Figure 4.6 tell us that most of the qualities chosen by males and females showed only a small difference. For males, only the quality of ‘passion’ was shown to be higher compared to females, while the other qualities were shown to have a higher significance for females. We can see that given a choice, the females showed that they have a greater desire for these qualities and values in potential partners, if possible. Based on this survey, we can see that most of the qualities were ones that were important to both genders, with an average score of 4.19 for all the qualities. When separating these qualities according to gender, the males had an average mean of 4.09 for all ten qualities, while a higher average mean of 4.28 was reported for the females. With these findings, we can deduce that both genders do desire a range of qualities. However, when breaking it down to the gender categories, we can see that the importance for these qualities was higher for the females than for the males.
From the data above, we can make some general statements about how the Singaporean Chinese community choose their potential long-term partners. Based on the cultural differences, we can see that the way culture is perceived with regard to the values and qualities that were preferred, the values either did not have significance culturally or were just seen as general Singaporean values rather than either Asian or Western values. When looking at the gender differences, we can see that the qualities chosen were all preferred by both genders, with females having a higher mean compared to males. While the most popular values chosen were “Honesty”, “Understanding”, “Supportive” and “Faithful”, the others were not far behind. This illustrates that, instead of defining the Singaporean Chinese community as a community that has high expectations, they have a wider range of values that are considered to be of importance to them, which includes qualities that are Asian, Western and neutral/Singaporean.

**Relationships and dating culture in Singapore**

In the next section, we will look at the way relationships are handled and the specific dating culture that is present in Singapore. We will look at this in two ways: firstly, the pickiness or wide range of expectations that are present in Singapore; secondly, the actual behaviour and activities that happen in Singapore.

**Pickiness within the Singaporean Chinese community**

The idea of 'pickiness' is derived from personal word of mouth experience in local Singapore. There have been many occasions where people have described their friends to be too picky when it comes to looking for a potential long-term partner. This study does not claim to generalise that Singaporean Chinese are picky, but from the data, we can infer that there is a perception that the Singaporean Chinese community is one that is picky when it comes to looking for a long-term partner. Apart from just my personal experiences with this topic of being picky, information gathered from the semi-structured interviews also reveals that participants have either been called picky when it comes to choosing romantic partners or they see that their friends are picky. Some even consider themselves to be picky, for example Participant #47.
So for me that’s the reason why I don’t get together with any girls. Sometimes I think I am too picky. Like really I always think that this is something like “this not suitable for me” I always think “this is not suitable for me”. I think maybe it is because I feel that maybe that is my reason of committing to nothing. Maybe I am scared a little if she don’t like me anymore. I feel that’s a major problem for me. So that’s the reason why I never got together with anybody. So I just only got to date around but I never got to establish a very strong relationship. (Participant #47)

As seen from the above quote from Participant #47, it is males who also feel that they are picky. Others like Participant #12 tell us about how her friends think that she is picky, which she feels is due rather to the fact that she is not going out enough, thus limiting her chances of meeting new people. Participant #11, when discussing television characters, tells us how what she terms these "ideals" can be absorbed by the viewer which might cause pickiness.

Too ideal. That is why some of my friends who are still single they always have a criteria in looking for guys. I have single friends and I ask them… I also don’t understand. Maybe they have too idealistic image in their mindset so that is why they are not willing to try out. (Participant #11)

As noted above, pickiness is also seen to be linked to a set of criteria that needs to be met by the potential long-term partner. When options are provided to singles there seem to be rejection of these options before any form of meeting. Although other studies on media influences and expectations define this as unrealistic expectations, I believe this to be a wider set of expectations rather than unrealistic expectations. This provides a more tangible method when looking at ways to measure expectations.

The data from the semi-structured interviews were then converted to a scaled question in the survey asking if Singaporean males and Singaporean females respectively are picky based on varying levels of how much they agree with the statements given. The possible answers ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).
Figure 4.7: Level of perceived pickiness for Singaporeans and gender differences

Based on the data collected from the survey, Figure 4.7 shows us the mean response for how the participants felt about Singaporeans and their level of pickiness. Looking at the table which compares the mean for each response and the breakdown of overall, male and female responses, we can infer that each gender feels that the other gender is slightly pickier when it comes to finding a long-term partner. Most people agreed that Singaporeans are picky when it comes to long-term partners, regardless of gender. The data also shows that females are pickier. When looking at the responses for pickiness for females, both genders responded evenly in percentages. Females responded with 70% agreeing that they were picky when looking for partners. However, when asked if males were picky, a smaller percentage of females (54%) agreed.

This provides an interesting perspective on the idea of being picky. We can see that both females and males feel that females are slightly pickier than males. This aligns with the semi-structured interviews where females were more often mentioned to be picker than males when it came to looking for long-term partners. However, even though we can construe that females are pickier than males, it does not show a large disparity. Males are seen to be picky as well, but females are slightly picker.
Expectations

A big part of how people engage with relationships is about the expectations they have. This also includes the pressure of satisfying expectations of alternative genders in romantic relationships. When doing the survey two questions were asked.

1: Males in Singapore feel pressured to satisfy females’ expectations when it comes to romantic relationships.

2: Females in Singapore feel pressured to satisfy males’ expectations when it comes to romantic relationships.

The data collected from these two questions is presented in Figure 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure to satisfy expectations in romantic relationships</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
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Figure 4.8: Pressure to satisfy expectations in romantic relationship and gender differences

Figure 4.8 presents the responses from the two questions that were asked about pressure to satisfy expectation in romantic relationships. From the data, we can see that a larger percentage of people felt that males felt more pressure when it came to satisfying expectations of romantic relationships. 62% of the participants agreed that males had pressure while only 36% felt that females had the pressure of satisfying expectations in romantic relationships. When breaking down to the responses from each gender, it was expected that the gender in question would respond in higher levels of agreement to the other question. Males (76%) responded higher than females (53%) when asked whether males felt pressure,
while females (42%) responded higher to males (37%) when asked whether females felt pressure. The interesting information that was drawn from this was that females responded with a higher level of agreement when it came to the question about males feeling pressure compared to females feeling pressure. This highlights the overall level of stress that is felt by males.

With the slightly higher level of pickiness when it comes to females, it could be a reason that males are feeling the pressure when it comes to dating. This could also be due to the competitive and comparative culture in Singapore, since the culture in Singapore often dictates that males have to make the first move.

*Singapore maybe girls are more passive. Guys will be the one to chase the girl. In some shows, the girls will chase the guy. So it is the other way round. But Singapore is a bit different. Also heard that the girls in china are more open so the trend is different. Maybe guys are more shy in China.* (Participant #29)

**Dating Culture**

After examining the values and what people look for in partners, as well as the expectations that are seen in the local Singaporean culture, we can look at the behaviours and actions that are done in the local Singaporean context to understand how the dating culture is in Singapore. From the semi-structured interviews, there were a few key points that were made by the participants when asked about the dating culture in Singapore. To begin with, there is a lack of work-life balance.

*Singapore as a country, not only in Asia, is a very stress in relation of all the things that we do every day. The work, the study, every people have a certain degree of temper. People are less tolerant at times especially if I have a bad day.* (Participant #15)

Participant #15 briefly describes how stressful it is in Singapore. This quote describes the level of stress from work or school that tends to reflect what happens in the local society. In the survey, when presented with the statement “Lack of work-life balance makes dating in Singapore hard”, 86% of survey participants agreed with it. This finding aligned with a national survey that was done in 2013, where 55 per cent of the respondents commented that their work would eat into their family time (Koh & Goy, 2015). Dr Mathews, a researcher in this survey, was quoted saying:
What is probably happening is that people’s aspirations for work-life harmony is increasing. I think the realisation is hitting more men... Perhaps this is because women too are expecting more from their partners. With that, more men are reporting this interference between work and family life.

Mathews (Koh & Goy, 2015) acknowledges that what contributes to the lack of work-life balance in Singapore is the aspirations that people have. Part of this, as we observed earlier, is also from the expectations that women have when it comes to romantic relationships.

We also can see that participants from the semi-structured interviews spoke about how in Singapore their career is a priority.

Say in terms of career, I would want to have a career that have better say at the prospects, in terms of say development-wise, skills and monetary wise. So this is one of my goals, and also to provide more comfortable life to my own and my family as well. (Participant #13)

A chase for a career is a subjective priority. Depending on the individual, a successful career can be defined from different levels. This desire for success is also a contributing factor in the lack of work-life balance. The desire for more means that people will be spending more time at work and building their careers. However, we need to look at why this is the case in Singapore. Participant #28 describes what an average Singaporean is chasing with the "rat race".

I am not a normal Singaporean, I am not average, I don’t feel the need to join the rat race. I just feel the need to be able to meet my goal which is self-sufficient and not to worry about day to day living and be able to meet my other goals, I am contented. Not the type of character to be driven to earn my first million by 30, which I have left 2 years to do so. I am not classified under that genre as normal Singaporean to work extra hours to make more money. (Participant #28)

There are different factors that play a part in the phenomenon of a lack of work-life balance in Singapore. From what we can discern, part of this could be attributable to the way Singaporeans are a competitive community. In a society that is conscious of issues such as social status, this often leads to a competitive culture that is always in comparison. Just as Participant #28 describes to us the rat race, we can start to see the presence of the competitive spirit in the local landscape. Other participants have also expressed scenarios whereby they look
upon others and what they do, and thus want to do better or be like them. This can be associated with daily activities such as places to eat, material objects or even the extravagance of proposals. Participant #18 tells us how she and her friends compare different things, including their boyfriends.

_We always compare with our friends. I think, I don’t know about it but I think it’s a girls’ thing, like we go with our very close girl friends, and then someone would tell about stories… and (we will) compare._ (Participant #18)

From the survey, when posed with the statement “Singaporeans are conscious of their social status, which breeds a sense of comparison”, 83% of the respondents agreed with it.

This form of comparison could potentially be a result of the education system that constantly pits its students against each other. Streaming students and ranking them into different schools and institutions at an early age via examinations breeds a sense of competition within both parents and students. When I was in secondary school, the ranking of the school that you went to actually affected the desirability of you as a candidate for dating. If I went to a “good” school, I would have been a better catch for the females of my age. Today, whenever we ask each other which schools we went to when we were younger, a perception or stereotype would have been subconsciously formed based on the answer given. I believe this is where the competitive spirit in Singapore really originated, especially for those in the 20 – 30-year-old age group.

Apart from the competitive spirit and lack of work-life balance in Singapore, there are other things that make Singapore a unique place when it comes to romantic relationships. Part of what makes relationships in Singapore unique is the way that long-term relationships are defined. In the local context, long-term relationships usually result in marriage. Marriage is an important component because of the way housing becomes available for Singaporeans. As noted earlier in the chapter, most locals who buy their own home will be purchasing Built-to-Order (BTO) flats with 99 year leases from the government. This is for the regular middle class citizen, who is getting married or those who are over the age of 35 and single. Participant #32 describes how in Singapore this is a radical difference to other countries.
When we go further down to courtship to engagement like that, that’s where I feel it becomes quite radically different. Here in Singapore the first step is get HDB first. So that’s one fundamental and very big difference because HDB is quite expensive. (Participant #32)

Unlike Australia or other countries, it is the norm for people to live with their parents until they get married. With this in mind, there were four aspects that were questioned in the survey in this research project:

1: Marriage is something that will happen eventually if you are in a long term relationship.

2: Buying a house together is something long-term couples plan for.

3: Long-term couples eventually will have children.

4: Children should be had after marriage.

The statements seek to quantify and question the way Singaporean Chinese define what it is to be in a long-term relationship. It also looks to see if these values regarding marriage and childbirth are seen as the general perspective in Singapore. From the survey data, Figure 4.9 was created to represent the findings.
As observed, most people agree that marriage is a result of a long-term relationships (61%) and that buying a house will come eventually (87%). However, when it comes to children, there is a sense that people do not feel that is an important aspect (34%), although more of the respondents (63%), agreed with the idea that having children after marriage is still a value. Based on the finding, it is as expected that the idea of moving out of the family home as a result of a long-term relationship then marriage is what most of the participants agreed with. However, when it came to the topic of childbirth, there was a drop in number of respondents who agreed. From this, we can see a connection with the problem of the aging population in Singapore. There seems to be less of a desire to have children. This could be owing to a set of priorities that are varying when it comes to the future. Even though participants of the survey placed a lower importance on having children, there was still a view that children should be conceived after marriage. This entailed the fairly Asian associated view that children should not be born out of wedlock.
As such, we can observe that the structure of a long-term relationship is not necessarily just a traditional goal of a nuclear family where couples have a home and two children. This could be caused by different priorities that people have in local Singapore. For example, Participants #29 and #13 felt that career and financial goals might be of higher importance than marriage or relationships.

In terms of romance, currently no plans yet when to get married. I guess career part and financial part will go first then I will think when to get married. (Participant #29)

I would want to have a career that have better say at the prospects, in terms of say development-wise, skills and monetary wise. So this is one of my goals, and also to provide more comfortable life to my own and my family as well. (Participant #13)

However, this was not the same for all, as there were participants of the study stating that they would like to get married and have children. It seems that the desirable age for marriage and children is around the 30-year-old mark. In essence, we can note a parallel between the perspectives of the participants on child birth and the general landscape of Singapore where locals are having children at a later age, which in turn affects the aging population of Singapore.

One reason for this fear of or hindrance to romantic relationships could be the buying of a home in Singapore. What makes Singapore unique might also be the hindrance in the marriage numbers being lower and later in Singapore. Relationships take longer to advance in Singapore as stated by Participant #31.

Like in the US, if they like someone, they will just go straight and ask the person for a date, get to know each other better. Whereas like Singapore, Japan, Eastern culture … we see how compatible we are first before jumping into a relationship. (Participant #31)

This could also be attributed to the idea that buying a house is an essential part of a relationship, as well as the logistics behind it. As stated by the participant below:

Singaporeans have much stronger tendency to plan far ahead. In general, most people here would take getting together very seriously. (Participant #30)

As it is established that buying a home is seen as a result of long-term relationships, many would look into buying Built-To-Order (BTO) homes as these are the ones that are provided by the government. However, these BTO flats generally take about three to four years to be built, so many couples actually buy
their homes years before they get married or engaged. This would often result in the wedding being set back by a few years as couples prefer to wait for the completion of their flat, then get married and move out of their respective family homes to create their own home.

Overhearing a conversation while I was in a café in Singapore, two females were having a discussion about marriage and life. In Singapore, you can buy a government BTO property if you are getting married or you have reached the age of 35. One of the women stated that she was of the age of 35, and she said “I can buy my own property, I don’t need him (a man)”. This is one sign of the way homes and relationships are viewed in Singapore. Because of the structure of how homes are built and sold, there is that transactional element which relationships have turned into. Unknowingly, a partner is sometimes seen as a means to an end which can be in terms of purchasing a property or holding a wedding.

Taking into consideration all that has been discussed here in this chapter, the complexity of the local Singaporean romantic relationship landscape is becoming more apparent. With the Singaporean Chinese community feeling that a work-life balance is not present because of the competitive nature of the culture, in addition to the housing situation, it is clear as to why the number of marriages are not as high as it was in the past. Taking into account of the wider range of expectations in romantic partners that Singaporeans have to deal with, it is not surprising that it is not easy for some to be able to find partners. With this chapter, it becomes clear that even though Singapore might be a nation that is a result of transculturation, it has become a society that is unique rather than just a melting pot of Eastern and Western influences.

Conclusions

This chapter utilised information from the exploratory research, as well as the survey to decipher what values of love and romantic relationships are as defined within the Singaporean Chinese context. Through previous research, there were many studies that looked at quality preferences or mate selection when looking
for a long term partner. However, with values of love, there is the aspect of how people behave and experience romantic relationships.

Through this research, when enquiring into the qualities that are preferred in a long-term partner, it was discovered that the local Singapore Chinese community held values that differed based on gender. Additionally, when it came to the cultural aspect of these qualities, it was revealed to include a wide range of both Western and Eastern values. This emphasised the point of Singapore being a transcultural society. The wide range of values that are seen as important by people also informs us that it is not that people are having high expectations when it comes to long term partner choices, but that there is a wider spectrum of qualities and values that are being held. From Figure 4.2, it can be inferred that of all the ten different qualities provided to the participants, all of the qualities were chosen to be of high importance with varying results. Figure 4.4 shows the qualities and the cultural categories of these qualities, which were either of Western or Asian qualities, that are seen to be of high importance. This is significant because for the Singaporean Chinese community, what was hypothesised to be a society that had high expectations is actually a society that has a wider range of expectations. This seems to be a result of the wider spread of cultural exposure from many different aspects of the transcultural society.

Lastly, from the exploratory research, the way Singaporean Chinese experienced romantic relationships was studied. One potential factor affecting romantic relationships is attributable to the competitive nature of Singapore, which as a society places importance on careers and academic qualification which thus makes the importance of romantic relationships less of a priority. Furthermore, the feedback of the participants seemed to suggest that even though currently there is a greater exposure to Western media, the values that are held tend to be seen as more Eastern on Asian.
Chapter 5: Exposure to Romantic Comedy Television Series

Introduction

This chapter presents the way the participants of this research responded with regards to their engagement with romantic comedy television series. This includes the data collated from the survey as well as semi-structured interviews. In addition to the engagement of romantic comedy television series for young, English-speaking, and heterosexual Singaporean Chinese, this chapter also provides an analysis of the media from both the West and East. The breakdown consists of a content analysis of two recent programs that are popular amongst this community. Based on the data, the analysis showed that the overall viewership of media from both the East and the West series was fairly even. With the romantic comedy television series content analysis, cultural and technical differences were found. In relation to the culture in question, the Singaporean Chinese community, there were similarities that could be found in both the Western and Eastern television series. Transcultural aesthetics of romantic comedy television is further defined here in this chapter. When we look at the different elements of these television shows we can break down the messages and design elements that were intended by the producers of the content.

The data collected through the interviews and observations during the fieldwork are also examined. From this exploratory research phase, three main themes were uncovered regarding romantic television series and romantic relationships. Firstly, the exposure that Singaporean Chinese had to romantic comedy television series. The data showed that people were watching more international productions than local productions. The reason for this was because of the lack of quality and options people had with local productions. This information aligns with the knowledge that Singapore as a society is transcultural with both Eastern and Western influences.
Secondly, the values of love or qualities that people looked for in a partner. The Singaporean Chinese community was found to hold similar values regarding values based on gender. From what we can see pertaining the values of love, there is a wide range of values that are important when looking for a long term partner. This again emphasises the point of Singapore being a transcultural society. The wide range of values also signifies that there is a wider spectrum of qualities and values that are held when it comes to long term partner choices rather than interpreting this spectrum as people having high and possibly unrealistic expectations.

Lastly, the exploratory research identified the way Singaporean Chinese experienced romantic relationships. One example was that due to the competitive nature of Singapore as a society, Singaporean Chinese tend to place importance on careers and academic qualification which then reduces the importance of romantic relationships. Additionally, feedback from the participants also revealed that even though there is currently a greater exposure to Western media, the values that are held tend to be seen as more Eastern or Asian.

These themes and findings show us that the Singaporean Chinese community has high aspirational values and this potentially could be a result of the wide range of international Western and Eastern programming. Another important point to take into consideration is the apparent lack of local productions within this genre of romantic comedy television series. If the local media is considered to be lacking in quality, can local productions then learn from these international shows to provide an alternative?

**Television Consumption in Singapore**

Over the years, there has been a progression, seemingly an evolution, when it comes to the consumption of television media including romantic comedy television series. Without going too far back to the era of black and white television, the participants for this study were of the ages between 20 and 34 who have grown up either in the 1990’s or early 2000’s. This would mean that they would have gone through the progression of experiencing television, which included free-to-air television, cable television, video compact disc (VCD) and
digital video disc (DVD). In Singapore, the watching of television programmes has moved through different stages over the years. As a member of the Singaporean Chinese community, I have experienced a similar progression of the user-experience of the television programme in Singapore.

The general progression for this group would have started with free-to-air television, which was lacking in variety even thought there was a mix of locally produced content as well as imported content from different countries. For the participants of the study and even myself, the journey for the average Singaporean Chinese and their connection to media would have been a progression that evolved over the years. It started out with watching free-to-air television, followed by the introduction of cable television in 1999 which saw a wider range of television shows at the disposal of the Singaporean community. Together with cable television came the technological advancement and popularity of the Video Compact Disc (VCD), which was later replaced by the Digital Video Disc (DVD). These different introductions of media were made possible as the advancement of technology made these form of media commercially available.

Poh Kim video is a company that sells DVD movies and series in Singapore (2011). With a total of 24 branches spread across the country, this company has been the main distributor of DVDs and VCDs. They have also acquired the copyright to Chinese, Cantonese, Japanese and Korean television shows. From the participants in this study, it can be seen how the introduction of DVD movies and series affected the way they engaged with television shows. For some, it was getting access to all of the show's at once so as to binge watch the show as soon as possible.

I don’t really watch TV shows, it’s only when we have this series, like we purchased a VCD, a DVD or something then we try to watch it, finish as soon as possible, because we wouldn’t have time to watch TV every day. (Participant #33)

Having the television show at hand ensured that viewers did not have to wait for the next episode to be aired on television. However, this also meant that there were fewer options in terms of television programming.
In the past when the options for television programs were limited, with only the Singapore television network being the only choice. I guess when you were younger, definitely much less options. I do remember local shows growing up. (Participant #30).

The quote illustrates the impact that local productions had on the participant. Even though there was a lack of variety, there was a greater level of impact and resonance. This started to change later over the years with the introduction of cable television, VCD and DVD.

Apart from that, the access to television shows was also about building communities. Often, Singaporeans tend to forge a sense of affinity with someone based on whether or not both of them have watched the same show. Therefore, by sharing the video disc or other forms of merchandise would mean that you had peers with common topics to talk about, such as sharing what you liked or disliked about the show.

Then when (in) secondary (school), drama there as the boom of DVD, friends started buying DVD so we borrow and watch them. That time still not much online until I was in JC when I started watching online. So in between we have Korean drama also. The one is the romantic one, Winter Sonata, if you die I die we die together kind of drama.

(Participant #9)

Participant #9 describes to us here how she and her friends interacted with the television series using DVD’s. The DVD buying phase was something that happened around 10 to 15 years ago in the early 2000’s before the internet age. This experience of how technology affected the way people consumed television, by the participants of this study, was something that matched the data collected by Chan and Wang (2011, p. 294). More than that it was really about the sharing of experiences. The shared experiences that viewers had with the shows allowed for common ground to be established.

Because back then it was really like, it’s not even selected, you know. Whatever your classmates are into and you just go crazy all together, and then you know it’s like: “Hey you know, I’ll bring this DVD and I’ll show it to you in class. Then you listen to the music and then let’s get together.” Before you know it, it’s all kind of like your friends and your common interest. So to us that time it was kind of like a crowd mentality thing.

(Participant #20)
These quotes show us not just the progression of technology but to the consumption of television media that came with it. But it also showcases the impact that pop culture can have on people. The idea that a community or a culture can be built upon pop culture is something that is interesting. In modern society culture is not just about national or ethnic culture. This aligns with what Stuart Hall (1990) and Foucault (2007) tell us about identity, that is it progressive and that identity is not something that is defined by the higher powers.

From what we can see, television series were not just able to bring friends together but also became a tool for families to bond with each other.

...like I enjoy with my grandaunt and my mom as well. Because you know free to air, we just stay around the TV and just watch. Or if there’s nothing worth watching we just pop the DVD and then we watch. So outside is the TV, it’s also like our main common area, so we just watch it. (Participant #20)

These acts of watching television with family members meant that there was increased proximity that was built upon television habits.

With regards to Korean television series, in 2014 there was a fan meeting session and a public event starring a Korean actor and musician So Ji Sub. There was a total of 400 people at the public event and roughly 90 percent of the seats for the 5000 capacity fans meet session were filled. So Ji Sub was the main lead in a popular television show in 2013 called The Master’s Sun (주군의 태양). He also acted as the main lead in the 2015 hit series Oh My Venus (오 마이 비너스). At both events the age range of the fans ranged from teens to older adults. Observing both the events it was clear that many of the supporters of So Ji Sub were female. Males who were at the event were usually following along for the journey with their female counterparts. One male that I spoke to told me that he liked So Ji Sub because of his acting, another male that I approached told me he did not want others to know he was here, potentially being shy about participating in the event. This aligns with what we have seen in Japan where most of the fans of Korean television dramas are women (Lin, 2011, p.93). Apart from the fans being women many of these fans were of different cultural backgrounds. From a report by the local newspaper in Singapore, there were people who came to
Singapore from Taiwan to participant in the event (Ng, 2014). This wide range of viewership and fandom for television shows presents to us the fluidity and cultural flow that television shows are able to have and bring together people of all cultures and age groups.

After looking at how television shows affect people and the way they interact, we will look at how exactly television programs are being used by Singaporean Chinese. In figure 5.1 we have a bar graph that shows the hours spent watching television programmes per week by the participants of the survey. From the data we can see that there is a trend where 39% of the participants were found to have an average weekly watching amount of 4-9 hours. The next highest range was 26% who watched 1-3 hours. This shows the participants of this age group do not spend many hours of their time watching television programmes. This matches what Singaporeans feel about the lack of work-life balance in Singapore, where they have so many hours of overtime and work that they are not able to really relax. In 2015 a long term study found that from 2009 to 2013 there was a rise in the perception where workers felt that their work demands were affecting the amount of time spent with family (Mathews & Straughan, 2015).

As there is a lack of time because of work, this could also be the reason to why Singaporean Chinese are not just utilising the internet for their viewing of television series on their computers at home at their own times, but also through their mobiles devices. This was an observation that was made on public transportation in Singapore. Many people were not just using their mobile phones for games or communication. It was clear that there were many people who were watching dramas and movies on their mobile phones. These programs were from both Western and Eastern origins.

This phenomenon matches what the research found about the working culture in Singapore. Even though a number of companies are offering some form of flexi-work arrangement, people still feel that their job keeps them busy. Because of longer working hours, working adults would have to utilise their travelling time to catch up on the television shows of their choice.
The survey was designed to enable us to understand the different ways that the local Singaporean community consumes television media. The survey findings showed how much television is being consumed (Figure 5.1), the amount of television viewing spent on romantic comedies (Figure 5.2), the level of consumption for Asian and Western Media (Figure 5.3), and the different elements that define the romantic comedy television shows (Figure 5.4). Using this collected data, we can start to see the amount of exposure the participants have when it comes to television viewing. Additionally, we can draw associations between these data and what we learned in the previous chapter as an attempt to uncover if the consumption of romantic comedy television shows play a part in the experience of love for the Singaporean Chinese community.

To begin, we will look at the average amount of time being spent watching television shows, shown in Figure 5.1. When asked how many hours a week were spent watching television programmes, the most popular answer was “4 to 9” hours provided by 38% of the respondents. A survey, *Media Consumer Experience Study 2014*, conducted by the Media Development Authority (2014) aimed to discover the average amount of time being spent watching Mediacorp television, the only major television network in Singapore. The data from this present research asked specifically about television programmes, whereas the survey findings from the research on Mediacorp television included other forms of media materials such as news and variety shows. This differentiation allowed us to ask more specific questions about the consumption of television programmes, and thus give rise to greater clarity to this research topic.
After discerning the hours spent watching television, participants were then asked how much of those programmes watched was romantic comedies. As reflected in the results shown in Figure 5.2, there was a spread in terms of the viewership. 51% of the participants reported 0 – 40% of their television shows were romantic comedies, while 34% of the participants had more than 60 – 100% of their viewing as romantic comedies. When looking at the different genders, there was a greater percentage of the females (42%) who had a higher consumption of their television viewing to be 60 – 100% romantic comedies, compared to the males (25%). This indicates that there was a higher percentage of females who had a greater exposure to television programmes that were romantic comedies compared to males.
After understanding the amount of romantic comedies that was being consumed, we also had to start understanding the cultural origins of the programmes that were being consumed. Based on the responses from the semi-structured interviews, we identified that there were two distinct categories of television programmes, Asian and Western origin, which people were consuming.

Figure 5.2 Percentage of television viewing spent on romantic comedies

Types of television programmes being watched

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>About Half the Time</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the semi-structured interviews, when participants were asked what they were watching in the past and in the present, shows of Western origins were mentioned a total of 103 times, while shows of Asian origin were mentioned a total of 77 times. Using this finding, we were able to gain a sense that there was a good spread of television programs that were being watched by the Singaporean Chinese community. From the survey data presented in Figure 5.4, we can see that the consumption of Western and Eastern television was fairly even spread.

Additionally, it was found via the semi-structured interviews that this current spread of Western television show viewing is a result of various changes. As noted earlier in the chapter, most of the television that was being watched in the past was from the local network television. As time passed, there were more options for viewers to choose from both with the cable-television and the internet. We have seen that the current spread of television viewing is moving away from just local productions to shows that come from other parts of Asia including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, while the Western shows come from the United States and the United Kingdom. Part of this change is due to the availability of choices. Since there are more options for selection, this naturally will result in comparison and generating critiques on what is preferred or not. As gathered from the semi-structured interviews, there were a number of critiques about local television programmes that were made by the participants. The general feedback was that due to the lack of quality in the local television programmes, many were turning to other Asian or Western television programmes for their entertainment.

One of these critiques described how the plots in television shows were too predictable. Another point that was made by the participants was about the acting, Participant #3 gave us a general overview on what he felt were some of the problems that the local productions were dealing with, which was why he felt that he had to explore the television shows from Western television programmes.

(For example) the plot in Singapore shows are very predictable already. Most of the time I watch I can see the good guys and the bad guys. I can easily predict what will
happen. I find them very dull and not very stimulating. The actors I find, the acting ability is not that good. In my opinion. The character in general, I don’t like the character, not the actor, but the character. I am a bit tired of seeing Singaporean character. I prefer to explore, like interested in other personality or other culture, western culture. (Participant #31)

Apart from critique of the plots and acting, another issues that was raised was about constantly looking at the same actors across the television shows.

But generally I feel like that local filming, like you know sometimes when you watch local films also it’s not just the storyline or the acting, you know, you always see the same actors. (Participant #26)

The participants also seemed to feel that the newer actors were not performing well. This is seen by Participant #33 as a critique on the new crop of actors and how they are were performing for the art but for the fame.

I would say the older generation of local actors and actresses are better than the new breed of actor and actress nowadays. In the past the people like Christopher Lee, Lina Ng, all these, they acted for the sake of bringing the people, the audience into the story; but nowadays those new breed just acting for the sake of showing themselves to the world kind of thing. So, I don’t really like that kind of… You don’t feel connected or you don’t feel absorbed into the storyline. (Participant #33)

Apart from the new crop of actors, it seems that in general Asian productions paled in comparison to the Western shows which were perceived by the participants to have better acting and plots that were not 'cheesy'.

Shows in general, I find Western shows plot a lot more interesting. And acting wise I find it a lot more compelling. Romantic television shows, I find a lot of non-Western shows a bit more cheesy for me. (Participant #30)

The critique about television shows having plots that were lacking seemed to include not just local productions but the general Asian television production scene. It appeared that there was generally a more positive view of productions by Western countries compared to the Asian productions. From Participant #20, we can see that one reason for this might be the higher budget that is spent on Western productions than on Asian productions.

Games of Thrones you know, a lot of money is spent in production, which I guess local TV shows will never have that kind of thing. But the local one has been pretty good so
far lately, the plotlines back when Mediacorp was TCS (Television Corporation of Singapore), like the plotlines always seem very contrived, very similar. Nowadays it has seem to kind of evolve a little bit. They don’t make viewers look so stupid, like storylines were developed more intelligently. (Participant #20)

When it comes to Asian productions, the participants of the study also highlighted how there were narratives that were over-used and repeated. This was seen in Korean and Taiwanese productions, according to participants #35 and #36.

It seems that Asian dramas or series have a certain structure that is seen as overused. And I realized Taiwanese and Korean dramas are all like that, they follow a kind of formula where you know. Ok, I can sum up to you Korean drama, ok. Usually boy and girl, a hot boy and a hot girl, they come together, there’s this tension between them, you know, initially they usually don’t get along. Then somewhere along the way there’s a kind of inciting incident where it gets them to get friendly with each other. And then sparks start to fly. And then usually something happens, tragedy happens, you know like, maybe he gets struck down by a car, you know. And then he finds out that he has a, you know, a long-lost sibling, and then yeah. It seems that every time they get around it, something else happens. And then, it’s... Honestly, I just felt that the narrative structure is just too… is very flat in that sense. (Participant #35)

They always follow the same flow. They always have the same start, and then finish on a high note, high end. The Korean dramas are very, very illogical sometimes, and very exaggerated. It’s very fake for me. So I don’t really watch them. (Participant #36)

Even though there seem to be differing appraisals of shows that have originated from different countries, this does not mean that Asian productions that are not from Singapore are of an inferior quality. From what we have seen, there are some other Asian programmes favoured over the Singapore productions, even though these are Asian productions. Participant #29 stated why he thinks Taiwanese dramas are popular.

They are funny, they must have jokes. They also have nice story lines. So they build up. At the end they made me anticipate the next episodes. I also watched Hong Kong shows, they are even more than Taiwan ones. Particularly the police stories. (Participant #29)

There is a level of enjoyment that is derived from watching these other Asian productions. This could be attributable to the jokes that are funny or the variety in
terms of the narratives and structures that these shows provide (i.e. police/detective stories).

From these findings, we have learnt that the respondents of our Singaporean Chinese sample do not watch many television programmes compared to the national average. Furthermore, we found that females consume more romantic comedies than males. When it came to the cultural origin of the media, we found that Singaporean Chinese watched an even amount of Western and Asian television shows. The move from just local productions being consumed was because of the increase in options from different media platforms and countries. In the next section, we will look at the differences of television portrayals compared to reality when discussing the topic of romance.

**Television’s Influence on Romantic Relationships**

With what we have learnt from the literature review, the field of television media and its influences on perceptions of social reality have shown different results. For example, there are studies revealing the relationship that television viewing has with regards to romantic relationships (Galician, 2003; Henderson, 1978; Johnson, 2012; Mortimer, 2010; Neale, 1992).

Even though studies are unable to show any causation within the field, we can still see that television shows actually have some impact on the perceptions that people have about different cultures. In Eat Your Kimchi, a Canadian couple, Simon and Martina, who moved to Seoul and produce YouTube videos and write articles on Korean life, produced a video titled Korean Dramas: Expectations vs Reality (Eat Your Kimchi, 2015). In this video, Simon and Martina describe the cross-cultural exchange that people have with movies and television shows. They discuss how people may have skewed perceptions about different countries based on the television shows they watch. This was for their Korean students who watch American shows and for anyone who is not from Korea but watches Korean shows. From this discussion, we can see that the perceptions which people have of different countries or cultures are affected by what is consumed through media, especially if that is the only channel that is available.
This section looks at the data and discusses the ways Singaporean Chinese might have actually built up perceptions or views depending on what is seen in television shows, which includes inspiration for actions or romance in general.

Mortimer (2010, p.9), tells us that romance portrayed in shows is a reflection of what the show wants to present, which includes the setting and location that is urban, high levels of desire, and people having fun. These are elements that romantic comedies tap into to attract viewers. Galician (2003, p. 14) in her book describes how mass media portrayals have the power to promote unrealistic expectations of sex, love, and romance. In terms of the local Singaporean context, this research looks to investigate if media play a part in romantic relationships. From what has been learnt from the literature, it seems difficult to define what unrealistic expectations are. Therefore, there are different ways in which we will explore how romantic television would differ compared to romantic relationships in reality.

Even though this thesis studies the relationship between television shows and romantic relationships, it acknowledges that there are other factors apart from television and media that play a part in the experience of romantic relationships. The interviews show how participants discuss the ways in which their own experiences, family and friends all play a part in influencing their experiences and decisions when it comes to romantic relationships.

To begin with, findings from the semi-structured interviews identified different factors that affect the way Singaporean Chinese perceive romantic relationships and potential partners. Some participants noted that media and what they see on television do play a part, but that is not the only factor. One of the other factors is family as a reference point. Relationships with their parents, whether positive or negative, affect the way individuals view relationships. In the semi-structured interviews participants highlighted how their parents were reference points for how they would like their potential partners to be.

*Sounds a bit disturbing but I do look for, I do like a lot of qualities through my dad because I see how my dad treats my mom.* (Participant #5)
From the quote, we can start to shed some light on how family has an influence on the way people view romantic relationships. Other factors that were identified as influencers include personal experiences and friends.

Looking back at media and what is seen on television, we can see from some of the responses that media is a factor that influences the way people pick potential partners and how they perceive romantic relationships. As evident from the quote below, we can see that these characters from the show Friends work as a point of reference to how this participant sees himself.

*Joey has taught me to be open minded in dating. Chandler in a way portrays I like the humorous quality that he brings into a relationship and what makes it very unique. Also he is so faithful in commitment but yet manages to work it out, it is a very human thing. Ross is like the empty side of it in the sense that he embraces confidence so much, in a way I relate to that also. (Participant #30)*

Based on the data indicating that media was an influence on the realities of romantic relationships, it was then decided that the survey would offer an effective data collection method for uncovering how people perceived the way they viewed media as an influence on their general perception of romantic relationships. The survey thus investigated and provided an overview of the overall perception of realism that romantic comedy television showed. In addition, the survey explored how people were inspired by television shows when it came to deciding on activities that were romantic., It then looked at gender and how romantic comedies influenced different genders when it came to picking potential partners.

Figure 5.4 presents the results from two main questions from the survey about the general perception of romantic comedies. Participants were asked how often the characters in romantic comedies were realistic and were the gestures or activities shown realistic. For these question, the options provided included “All the time”, “Sometimes” or “Never”.

For both questions, the majority of participants felt that these shows provided realistic characters (72%) and realistic activities or gestures (78%) sometimes, with the second most popular answer being “Never”, and the option “All of the time” being the lowest in percentage of responses.
From this data, we can establish that the participants of the survey are leaning closer to the idea that what is presented in these romantic comedy television programs provides some form of realism. The argument would be that if there is too much realism the shows would not be entertaining. From previous studies, we have come to an understanding that the act of viewing television media is sometimes a form of escapism for viewers (Ward, 2003; Chan & Wang, 2011). Participant #28 also acknowledged the use of media as a form of escapism from the daily drudgery of life. 

*Maybe people just look at media as a form of escapism and don’t want to be reminded by that, of the day to day drudgery.* (Participant #28)

From this quote, we can see that these programs are not about people consciously believing in everything that they watch, but the idea that media is a form of escapism still stands here. The similarities that are sometimes found between television shows and reality are the ways people engage with each other when it comes to initial stages of romantic relationships. 

*Yeah, there is a pattern like a movie. In Singapore if dare to go out on a date then you are mutually attracted. Not like other countries, ask for dates? You find her attractive and she finds you attractive then you go out and you do it again until eventually you get together. I think that is a pattern. Yeah something like that for us there is no real, ok go out, then ok we go out again, then start texting then it develops into calling and then holding hands and stuff like that, that is how you get together.* (Participant #27)

From the response of Participant #27, we see there is a certain way by which relationships progress that cannot be avoided. This is a progression that has
become the norm in today’s Chinese Singaporean society. Whether it is inspired by media or the other way around, we cannot be certain. Like the progression of relationships, we can then see that both reality and what is presented in media have common threads that work as pointers for viewers to empathise with, which draws them to the media that is being consumed.

Figure 5.5: Drawing inspiration from television shows for romantic activities

From Figure 5.5 we can see that there is a higher perception of females who are inspired by television shows with regard to romantic activities. When looking at the responses based on gender, it was not the males who were feeling this way. 73% of the females and 59% of males agreed that females were inspired by television shows with regard to romantic activities. Looking back at what we learned about expectations in the previous chapter, we can draw a link with the perspective where males feel more pressure when it comes to satisfying expectations. This finding about not being inspired could reflect expectations that the male is trying to meet. The greater the expectation, the greater the need to draw inspiration for romantic activities.
Figure 5.6: Romantic comedy television programmes of Asian or Western origin influencing the selection of a long-term partner.

Figure 5.7: Characters from Asian or Western television programmes portraying qualities of a partner.
The following statements were presented to the participants in the survey. The responses differed in levels of agreement from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”:

1. Romantic comedy television programmes of Western/Asian origin have influenced how I select a long-term partner.
2. Characters in Western/Asian television programmes portray qualities that I look for in a partner.

Both of these statements aimed to uncover whether or not respondents felt that there was any influence on their selection of a long-term partner from romantic television programmes and the characters portrayed in them. From Figure 5.7, when asked whether Asian or Western romantic comedy television programmes had an influence on the selection of a long-term partner, 42% of the participants disagreed that Asian programmes were influential, while 39% of the participants disagreed that Western shows were influential. For both Asian and Western programmes as an influence, both genders had 21% of the participants agreeing that there was an influence.

When presented with the statement that “characters in Western or Asian television programmes portrayed qualities that were looked for in a partner”, this also presented similar findings from the respondents. 31% of the respondents disagreed that Asian programmes had characters that portrayed qualities that were looked for in a partner, while 35% of respondents disagreed for the Western programmes characters. In the reverse, 34% of the respondents agreed that Asian programme characters portrayed qualities that were looked for in partners, while 28% of the respondents agreed for the Western programme. This was quite a balanced view on the subject, with respondents who agreed and disagreed with the statements. Fewer of the participants responded negatively to the question regarding the characters that were portrayed compared to the other question that looked at the television programmes in general. Therefore, there is little difference in terms of the overall influence or reference that these television programmes provide, whether or not they are Western or Asian programmes.
The data collected from the survey and the semi-structured interviews both show that the respondents have varying views on their consumption of television programmes and the impact of these shows on their perspectives on romance. This questions deliberately sought to look at their conscious views about the topic. There is acknowledgement from some respondents that media indeed plays a part in influencing the views that people might have with romantic relationships.

**Content Analysis of Romantic Comedies**

This chapter began by looking at the influence that media has on perceptions people have on romantic relationships. It continues by exploring romantic comedies as a design that can be used as a tool in further understanding romantic relationships, which will also be used to address the design aspect of the thesis. This research project utilises design anthropology as a philosophical framework, which seeks to identify deep values and how these values are translated by design to create tangible experiences (Tunstall, 2014). For this thesis, the design aspect is romantic comedy television shows. Therefore, to understand how this design is connected to values of love for local Singaporean Chinese, it is necessary to analyse the romantic comedy television shows that Singaporean Chinese are exposed to.

The following two television programs are analysed for this particular study. The first show, *How I Met Your Mother*, is an American television sitcom that was aired on the CBS network from 2005 to 2014 for a total of 9 seasons. The second show that is analysed is *My Love from the Star* (별에서 온 그대), a South Korean romantic comedy drama which aired on the SBS network from December 2013 to February 2014. These two shows were the recent shows mentioned most often in the semi-structured interviews conducted prior to the analysis. *How I Met Your Mother* ran for 22 minutes per episode with a total of 26 episodes being analysed for this study. *My Love from the Star* ran for 59 minutes per episode with a total of 21 episodes shown during its one and only season. For *How I Met Your Mother*, even though the series ran for 9 full seasons, only episodes from the first and the last of nine seasons were analysed for this study. Since *My Love from the Star* is
a South Korean production, English subtitles were included in order to overcome the language barrier and analyse the television series.

Due to the wide range of television shows that local Singaporeans are exposed to, it was important to select shows that were not only popular but also covered the wide range of cultural diversity. As such, one American show which represented the Western media landscape and a South Korean show that represented the Asian media landscape were chosen. There were other shows mentioned by participants, but for the following reasons these two shows were chosen. Firstly, these shows are recent shows which ended in 2014, which are thus modern day representation of what the general public is exposed to. Secondly, they fitted in with the three criteria that defined what a romantic comedy television program is for this study: (1) to have relationship as the main topic for the show; (2) to have a good amount of comedic aspects; (3) to end on a positive note.

The main purpose of the media content analysis is to understand what television shows Singaporean Chinese are being exposed to. The other reason is to break down these shows into their technical aspects. The knowledge from the content and technical analysis was then used to inform the design outcome, which is a short film. The following section compares the two shows on their similarities and differences from the topics of romance, comedy, culture and technical elements such as lighting and shots used.
How I Met Your Mother

How I Met Your Mother is a comedy series that follows the life of Ted Mosby (Josh Radnor) and his friends, while Ted tells the viewers how he meets the mother of his children. The friends include Marshall, Lily, Barney and Robin. Marshall (Jason Segel), Ted’s best friend, along with Lily (Alyson Hannigan) are the power couple of the show where they get married and have a child together through the course of the show. Barney (Neil Patrick Harris) is the well-dressed, successful corporate individual who is always helping Ted to find and pick up women. Ted has the desire and always expresses his want to be in a relationship but Barney is the player who picks up girls, sleeps with them and never calls. Robin (Colbie Smulders) is the girl that Ted has a constant “on and off” relationship with throughout the show. The series is narrated with the use of flashbacks by Ted in the year 2030, where he is telling stories to his children of how he met their mother.

The series presents the search for a romantic partner with Ted and the mother of his children, Tracy (Cristin Miloti). The show ends on a positive note where he finds his wife. Even though we find out that the mother dies in the series, it revolves on a positive note at the closing scene of the series, where Ted gets
together with Robin, the girl he fell in love with at the start of the series. This comedy series utilises dialogue as the main channel for its comedic elements. These elements are backed up with the sound of an audience laughing.

**My Love from the Star**

*Figure 5.9: Title shot of show, My Love from the Star*

*My Love from the Star* is a South Korean television series about an alien called Do Min-Joon (Kim Soo-Hyun) who came to Earth in the Joseon Era 400 years ago and his relationship with a modern actress Cheon Song-Yi (Jun Ji-Hyun). The series does not only portray the romantic relationship between the two main characters, it also includes a dramatic plot where an evil character is plotting and killing other characters in the series. This series at its core is a romantic story about the two main characters and how they fall in love with each other as time goes by. As this series falls under the genre of drama, there is a story element that includes a CEO of a company who is trying to cover his tracks of crimes by killing people for both personal and corporate gain. Many of the characters are intertwined with one another through either friendships or familial ties. Parallel to that narrative, the show also tells viewers the history of the main character Do Min-Joon and how he has spent the past 400 years on Earth.

With *My Love from the Star*, its comedic elements may not be as frequent as *How I Met Your Mother*. Nevertheless, comedic elements are still presented in every
episode even though there is no audio of an audience laughing to inform the viewer of a funny scene. At the end of the series in episode 21, the couple Do Min-Joon and Cheon Song-Yi end up together in a happy relationship, despite the fact that Do Min-Joon has to travel back and forth from his alien planet to earth through a wormhole.

Figure 5.10: Do Min-Joon stops a car with his bare hands

One aspect that sets this series apart from other television series is that the main character Do Min-Joon is an alien who has super powers, which include teleportation and telekinesis. One example of Do Min-Joon and his super powers is shown in Figure 5.10, a scene from episode seven which disguises an attempt on Cheon Song-Yi’s life to make it look like she is committing suicide by driving off a cliff. Do Min-Joon’s character hears her call for help from a far distance and teleports to stop the car with his bare hands.
In another scene, this time from episode nineteen, Cheon Song-Yi is in a hospital receiving treatment for removal of poison from her stomach as she was poisoned. When she awakens, she wants to be alone with Do Min-Joon. As shown is Figure 5.11, Do Min-Joon then teleports the two of them to a secluded island where they hide away for a while in the series.

As highlighted above, these two series may be classified as comedies (*How I Met Your Mother*) and dramas (*My Love from the Star*), as they have the qualities that make them romantic comedies. Both series present a heavy romantic narrative between two people, with a good amount of comedic elements, followed by an ending with a happy resolution.

**Culture in Media**

Apart from the fact that these two series have differences in length of airing times, languages and formats, there are other aspects in which the series differ including family, physical intimacy, levels of realism with lifestyle and technical elements. From this analysis, there are two areas that provide the greatest differences: physical intimacy and presentation of alcohol. These aspects tie in with what is generally associated with the openness of Western culture and the conservative nature of Asians culture.
Physical Intimacy

The level of physical intimacy presented in both shows was found to be different based on the following content analysis.

![Figure 5.12: Scene from How I Met Your Mother of Marshall and Lily after sex](image)

The Western series *How I Met Your Mother* had more scenes of physical intimacy than the South-Korean series *My Love from the Star*. In terms of more scenes, it can be broken down to two aspects. Firstly, the frequency of either talking about physical intimacy or the portrayal. Secondly, the level of intimacy, which ranges from kissing to sexual intercourse. In Figure 5.12, Marshall and Lily are in bed and this is happening when Marshall is supposed to be writing his essay that is due in a few days. Even though they do not show actual sexual intercourse, the scene with the couple in the bed snuggling with messy hair while smiling informs viewers that they just had sexual intercourse. This was presented in the second episode of the television series.

In contrast, *My Love from the Star* does not have much physical intimacy either in frequency or the level. The first kiss that was shared by the main couple only came at the end of episode four, as shown in Figure 5.13. This scene shows Cheon Song-Yi getting drunk at a party and Do Min-Joon is there to put her to bed. As he puts her to bed, she grabs his neck and pulls him in for a kiss. This is
noted as a big scene because of the way it was placed at the end of the episode, which is supposed to help in drawing the viewers’ interest for the next episode.

Figure 5.13: Scene from My Love from the Star, where Cheon Song-Yi who is drunk pulls Do Min-Joon in for a kiss.

In Figure 5.14, the two main characters from *My Love from the Star* are seen joking and wrestling with each other, which is seen as being fairly raunchy by Asian standards as Do Min-Joon’s father figure walks in soon after and they look embarrassed.

Figure 5.14: Main characters wrestling each other on the sofa
Actions such as these are not common when it comes to Asian television programmes. This is one example where television series and movies of different cultures have contrasting levels of portraying physical intimacy. These portrayals do not necessarily represent each cultures’ actual romantic landscapes but can be seen by others who are not familiar with each culture to use as markers or points of references.

**Levels of Realism with Lifestyle**

In the previous section, we looked at levels of realism that are presented in television programmes. The scenes portrayed in these two shows are analysed in comparison with the local Singaporean standards of reality. Since this research is looking at the cultural context of Singapore, it does not make comparisons with the realities of South Korea or the United States, the locations where these shows are set in. Since we have examined the dating culture as described in the previous chapter, relationships in Singapore are established on the foundation of friends or colleagues. In addition, with the current integration of online dating, we can also include online dating in the different ways that people meet in Singapore. However, in the show *How I Met Your Mother*, each episode presents to us different techniques or “plays” that are used to pick up women in a bar, Maclaren’s Bar.
This form of picking up and meeting new people every night is something that does not happen normally in Singapore. Starting from the first season of the show, we are constantly brought back to Maclaren’s Bar, as shown in Figure 5.15, where the characters are drinking. The presentation of alcohol is quite prominent in the show. In contrast, in *My Love from the Star*, the Korean production, there was only one scene where the lead male character was in what looked like a bar. There were only four occasions in the television show where a character was drunk (Episode, 2, 11, 17 and 18). The presentation of alcohol was therefore much less in the Korean production. When comparing to Singapore, even though there are bars, clubs and pubs, it would not be a normal practice for many of the locals to casually set out for a night of drinking on weekdays, especially when there is work on the next day. As noted in the previous chapter, one phenomenon about Singapore is the lack of a work-life balance, which thus results in the drinking culture not being very prominent in Singapore.

Another phenomenon that does not happen often in Singapore is very romantic expressions or acts of love. In the television show *How I Met Your Mother*, Ted Mosby goes to a restaurant and steals a blue French horn for Robin as a sign of his love for her (Season 1, Episode 1). While in *My Love from the Star*, character Hwi Kyung tries to impress Cheon Song-Yi and make an attempt to express his
love for her by booking out and decorating an entire theme park. These are expressions of love that are possible but not acts that will happen often in local Singapore. These shows work as a form of escapism for viewers (Ward, 2003; Chan & Wang, 2011). From the semi-structured interviews, we were able to identify a sense that local Singaporean males are not very romantic based on some of the statements made by the participants.

Figure 5.16: Cheon Song-Yi singing to herself in the washroom

Apart from romantic portrayals, the way comedy is presented in each programme is of a different style. For How I Met Your Mother, jokes are used most of the times to bring about comedy. Jokes are signalled to viewers through a laugh track. In contrast, in My Love from the Star there is a mixture of slap stick comedy and funny actions to portray the comedic element. One example is shown in Figure 5.16, whereby Cheon Song-Yi is singing to herself in her room with a very animated expression. There are strong differences in the way that comedy is utilised to entertain viewers.

**Family**

One aspect of cultural difference when it comes to the two shows is family. In My Love from the Star, the main characters are constantly in conversations and interaction with family members. Cheon Song-Yi has her mother and brother to be part of her journey with her. Even though her parents are separated, the show
uses that relationship to present Cheon Song-Yi. Even though Do Min-Joon is an alien, he also has a friend on earth, Lawyer Jang, who later turns into his father figure in the show. Lawyer Jang became friends with Do Min-Joon after the latter saves his life. In the show, Lawyer Jang acts as Do Min-Joon’s lawyer and father, helping and giving him advice on love and life. In contrast, *How I Met Your Mother* does not show much of family within its narrative. Through the analysis, only at the wedding of Robin and Barney was there significant mention or showing of family members.

Mortimer (2010) also notes how in Western films the family is absent and that the characters are usually far from their family, while telling a story of a character that moves from the country to the city to fulfill their dreams. Instead of actual family members, it is the friends of these characters that represent family for them. As depicted in *How I Met Your Mother*, the family is not an integral part of the romantic progression of its characters. They are not there to give much advice. The progression of romance is usually supported by the friends of the characters.

From the television shows, we can see how family is involved in romantic relationships or in each representation of the different cultures. The interviews demonstrated that the familial aspect was represented in looking at family members as an influence to romantic relationships.

*Like my own parents, they didn’t have a very good marriage, so I knew exactly what I didn’t want in a guy, in a partner. So I guess the influence came from there as well.*

( Participant #20)

As expressed by participants, family can offer a positive or negative model for mate selection.

*I think definitely it is family, how you are raised, what you are raised to value. And I think the context also is quite important like in Singapore especially where you need financial stability and high academic qualifications.* (Participant #26)

From the quote by Participant #26, we can see how the familial ties are strong in the local Singaporean context, together with other values like financial stability and academic qualifications that might be seen as traditional Asian values.
Family involvement is shown in Asian programmes through the contact that the main characters have with the supporting characters. For a Korean television series such as *My Love from the Star*, the female lead is constantly shown interacting in every episode with either her mother or her brother. Even her father who left the family when she was younger comes back to be part of the family at the later stages of the series. For the male lead who is an alien, even though he does not have an actual family in the series, this is compensated for by providing him with a father figure whom he met many years ago who becomes his best friend.

When we contrast that to the American television series *How I Met Your Mother*, the main characters are a group of friends, while their siblings or parents are shown only periodically. In the first season, there is hardly any interaction or mention of family members. In the last season, there is more mention and more appearances by the parents or siblings of the characters, mainly because it is an episodic portrayal of one wedding weekend where family and friends are invited to attend.

This contrast we see in Asian television shows is a reflection of the Singaporean Chinese landscape where family is close by and children tend to live with their families until they get married and buy their own home. In comparison, the Western shows present a lifestyle which some view as aspirational, one where many individuals leave their home to live alone and live a life that is far away from their parents, which is seen as a sign of independence.

**Technical elements**

The content analysis also shows that technical elements are used differently in each of the shows. A close examination of the shots utilised reveals that there are three typical shots being deployed in these shows: close up shots, medium shots and wide angle shots. These shots are used in different scenarios. Due to the structure of the television show, some particular shots are used more. The American television series *How I Met Your Mother* is a dialogue heavy show, therefore most of the shots that are used are medium or medium-wide shots to enable viewers to look at the characters who are talking to each other while still keeping within the frame the context of where the characters are. As presented
in Figure 5.18, characters Ted and Barney are having a conversation with each other. Both characters are visible and at the same time, and we can also tell that they are at a party.

*My Love from the Star* as a television series utilises action more than *How I Met Your Mother*. Since it is a drama, many close up shots are used in addition to wide angle shows to portray various emotions, for an instance in Figure 5.17, where Do-Min Joon is crying. In this scene, Do Min-Joon discusses his feelings for Cheon Song-Yi. This is one of the many scenes in the television series where emotion is displayed with the use of a close-up shot to illustrate details such as moments when the character is being emotional.

![Figure 5.17: Close up shot used in My Love from the Star](image)
Another type of shot that is used in *My Love from the Star* is a wide angle shot, which is usually used to display action. In Figure 5.19, we can see that Cheon Yoon-Jae and Do Min-Joon have teleported into a living room. The use of the wide-angle shot allows viewers to comprehend the location and the action while showing all of the characters together.
From this section of the content analysis, we come to an understanding of some of the different ways that these programmes portray romance and comedy. These are shows originating from two different countries and cultures but have large success globally. These shows also illustrate the various ways that media can be used to entertain an audience.

Conclusions

A romantic comedy television series as defined in this thesis connects with its viewers on many levels. In terms of level of exposure, it was found that people are watching more international productions than local productions. The reason for this is because of the lack of quality, as well as fewer options people had with local productions. This information aligns with the knowledge that Singapore as a society is transcultural with both Easton and Western influences.

Apart from level of exposure, another aspect to romantic comedy television series is the type of shows that are being produced. From this study, it can be inferred, that what was lacking in local productions was overall quality. With romantic comedy television series in general, especially those that are produced internationally, there is a discourse where viewers in Singapore do not feel that these shows are realistic in their portrayal of romance as well as the activities that are done. By cross analysing the themes from the interview data and the content analysis of popular shows like How I Met Your Mother and My Love from the Star, it was established that there are cultural differences in relation to shows from Eastern and Western origins, both in the production and consumption aspects. These elements and nuances that have been discussed are the various transcultural aesthetics of romantic comedy television shows that are created by the producers and consumed by the viewers. Both Eastern and Western produced content differed on various levels, including technical elements like shots, use of special effects, portrayal of physical intimacy and the network of characters. Apart from this, it was also found that romantic activities or gestures presented in the show could be potentially seen as aspirational because of the lavish and extravagance of the act. In addition, there was vernacular that was used for each show which would have been understood by the locals only.
Based on what was found in the exploratory research phase through the interviews with the Singaporean Chinese community, participants commented that it was the inferiority of content in terms of predictable storyline and repetitive faces that resulted in local viewers shifting their attention from local productions to international productions. The purpose of conducting the content analysis was to understand what the elements were that attracted people to these popular shows, *How I Met Your Mother* and *My Love from the Star*. The information collected then informed the design outcome of this research project, which is a short film that consists of content that looks to be entertaining while being localised.
Chapter 6: Impact of romantic comedy television series alternative

Introduction

In the previous chapters, the following arguments were made. First, that the genre of romantic comedy television shows that are viewed by Singaporean Chinese are not just a form of entertainment. Viewers utilise the shows as markers for their own lives. That is, there are some associations between the Singaporean Chinese and their viewing of television series. In addition, Singaporean Chinese are inspired by what they have watched on television, which contributes to the formation of perception of how romantic relationships could potentially be developed and maintained. The exaggerated gestures portrayed in the shows are sometimes not aligned to the local dating scene, which therefore results in young, English-speaking, heterosexual males and females in the Singaporean Chinese community feeling pressures to satisfy the expectations that the opposite gender are perceived to have. Hence, when we refer back to the original reason for this thesis, an aging population in Singapore, the question is can we then utilise this information to bring about positive experiences for these young Singaporean Chinese, such as promoting lower expectations for themselves as well as for their potential partners.

In addition, the research also found that the critique of local Singaporean television productions was that they were perceived to be of lower quality, including aspects of acting and storytelling. Now that we have a better understanding of the values, design and experience of the current media consumption, the final cycle of the design anthropology methodology (i.e. the redesign of alternative values and designs to support more positive experiences) will be applied. As part of this project, I have created a designed outcome in the form of a short film. Since Tunstall’s design anthropology framework is being utilised for this research project, it is necessary to use design to bring about positive experiences based on the values that were identified from the community.

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(Tunstall, 2014), which in this case is the transcultural values of love that are impacted by romantic comedy television series.

**Choice of Design Outcome**

Throughout the design process, many considerations were made based on the analysis of findings from semi-structured interviews and survey to determine the appropriate design for this study. The goal was to ensure that it was a design outcome that allowed the Singaporean Chinese community to relate to and agree with it. If the values that were presented through the design were not true to the community, it would fail as a design. Additionally, the design would have to be able to allow for some form of feedback to be made so that it could be monitored. Below are some of the designs that were considered during the course of this research project.

1. A website showcasing the different values and themes that were identified through the research data. The website would have been able to present the values of love, as well as tips on how expectations affected romantic relationships. This was a reasonably feasible design but for this outcome to engage with the user, it had to be of a high level of interactivity.

2. An exhibition to present snippets of the different romantic comedy television series that were popular amongst the Singaporean Chinese community. The exhibition would have utilised a multisensory design structure that allowed for visitors to be fully engaged with the exhibition. Apart from the snippets and different media presented, the exhibition would also use some of the quotes that came from the interviews but keep them anonymous.

3. Finally, shooting a short film was the last of the options that was examined. The film would have to showcase the values of love that were presented in both Asian and Western romantic comedy television shows. It also had to engage the viewer in terms of being entertaining.

It was decided in the end that the short film would have been able to achieve the most in terms of presenting the findings from the research, and at the same time
align itself with the themes of television programmes closely due to the nature of the medium.

This short film had a clear objective which was to answer two questions:

1: Can locally produced television media content be produced to a quality that is satisfactory to the Singaporean Chinese community?

2: Can a local romantic comedy television show, which features the traditional aspects of a regular romantic comedy television show, present a realistic portrayal of love and romance that reflects the local culture accurately?

It might be perceived that the use of online platforms that stray away from traditional media would be inferior because of a smaller budget or the lack of a full-fledged production studio. However, there have been multiple successful examples online that have been able to use online mediums such as YouTube to garner a large number of viewers and followers. Butterworks, a local Singaporean group, produced a short parody titled: “我的偶像時代” (Butterworks, 2015), reminiscent of Taiwanese dramas and movies that were popular, such as Meteor Garden “流星花園” (2001) and Our Times “我的少女時代” (2015). This short film provided a glimpse of what a local online based production could achieve even if it did not have the big budgets that the local network had. Just two weeks after the video was posted online on the 10 November 2015, it had garnered a total of 154,000 views. Apart from Butterworks, there are other local Singaporeans who produce their own videos and upload them to YouTube with a fair amount of exposure. Tree Potatoes, another local Singaporean group, hosts a channel that has more than 300,000 subscribers. This is starting to present a trend of shifting the traditional viewing of television to the online media. With that in mind, it was decided that a short film, which allowed for greater accessibility and also presentation of local values, would be the design for this research project. Compared to the other two design outcomes, the short film was chosen because if its potential ability to reach a huge number people in a short amount of time.
In addition to the popularity that the online media has been getting in recent times, another reason for this choice was the feasibility of the project. Since this is a PhD thesis, there is a budget that it has to adhere to. With a limited budget, a fully functioning website would have been difficult to design and create. An exhibition would also require a bigger budget because of the printing costs and the renting of the location. This led to the eventual decision to produce a short film as the design outcome.

**Design Outcome Processes**

With the short film, the whole process from pre-production to production to post-production lasted a total of five months, from April of 2015 to August of 2015. At the pre-production stage, a few components were involved, which included casting, scriptwriting and organisation of logistics and crew. After that was the production stage, which was a full day of shooting with the cast and crew. Finally, post production which consisted of editing.

The first task of the design process was to plan out the script and story structure. The story was based on the data that was collected from the semi-structured interviews. There were a number of themes derived from the initial interview data using the program Nvivo. Some of these themes aligned with previous research that was done with regards to romantic partner choices as well as media consumption. However, there were some themes that were specific to the Singaporean Chinese community and are listed as below:

1. Singaporean Chinese are stressed about their work. This stress means more focus on their work and less on relationships.
2. People are using online dating as a platform to meet potential partners. However, there is a fear that others will find out and that might cause embarrassment.
3. There are qualities that people look for in potential long-term partners, which range from physical attractiveness to independence.
4. There is an importance being placed on social status, salary and job success compared to other qualities
5. Even though there is a rise in the consumption of general Western media presenting Western values, Singaporean Chinese still place a stronger emphasis on Asian values.

The themes that are listed here were worked into the script and the story in a way which attempted to engage Singaporean Chinese on a closer level than media from other countries. This was done by taking the feedback from the participants in the semi-structured interviews.

A design anthropology framework was used whereby we had to look back at the data and uncover the elements that would help to ensure these conditions were met by the short film. Some of the points that were made by the Singaporean Chinese participants in the semi-structured interviews with regards to the quality of local productions included critiques of the acting, the scriptwriting, the production quality and the varying accents when it came to dialogue. Therefore, time was spent to ensure that with a small production budget, these points were addressed.

Part of ensuring that the short film was a realistic representation of Singaporean Chinese culture meant that the language used had to be accurate. This meant the use of the spoken language of Singaporean Chinese, known as Singlish. Yeo describes what Singlish is below:

_Singlish is an informal, colloquial form of English that is used in Singapore. Linguists refer to it as Singapore Colloquial English or Colloquial Singapore English. The use of Singlish has been the subject of much debate since the 1970s, when it first became an observable phenomenon. The government actively discourages the use of Singlish among the population, citing the need for Singaporeans to be able to communicate effectively with the wider English-speaking population in the world (2010)._ 

The movie industry in Singapore experienced a revival in the early 1990s. Even though these local movies did well in Singapore, not many were able to achieve similar success overseas. One reason for this failure was attributed to the presence of local Singapore slang (Khoo, 2006, p. 82). With the local film industry, there were two types of films. The first type was identified as highly localized content films, which were too colloquial and were usually comedies. The second type was films that appeared to be local but were successful overseas,
and were usually dramas presented in the style of documentary. Nevertheless, Khoo (2006) described how slang could be utilized to market films both locally and internationally:

*Across the two types of films to be found during the revival period, it is possible to identify slang images characterized by two major impulses: authenticity production and self-consciousness. Because slang images are a way of regarding the aesthetic choices made by local filmmakers forced to negotiate competing pressures upon them – to be ‘local’ and yet enticingly ‘foreign’ and therefore exportable – these two impulses work in tandem to produce images that address the local while at the same time keeping an eye cast further afield* (p. 87).

Today, local television in Singapore promotes the proper use of English and Mandarin language in its productions, which often results in the local flavour of Singlish being removed. In the past, local television productions and films like *Phua Chu Kang* and *Army Daze* produced during the 1990s had Singlish as a strong presence. However, in the year 2000, the government launched the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), a campaign that promoted to Singaporeans the importance of grammatically correct English (Yeo, 2010). This campaign was introduced to ensure that the local Singaporean community could remain relevant in a global community. However, the use of Singlish is seen by some as a bridge between cultures in the multi-cultural society of Singapore because of its mixture of languages such as English, Malay, Chinese dialects and Indian.

The use of Singlish is a cultural nuance that is relatable to the Singaporean community. When Singaporeans are overseas, the use of Singlish is a trigger that alerts fellow Singaporeans to each other. This was the reason why, for the short film, it was decided that the actors for the film should speak as naturally in Singlish as possible. This was to ensure that the viewers of the short film could relate to the short film and not be confused by multiple accents.

**Co-Design Processes**

A participatory, co-design process was used in the production of the short film. Such co-design processes have been used in different countries and in a wide range of projects between organisations and governments. For example, a participatory rapid co-designing approach used by institutions in the Gulf of
Guinea was able to achieve transformative resource governance. The result was an approach that allowed for engagement between the government and local communities (Chigbu et al., 2016). Co-design has also been seen to be effective in community-based natural resource management in African rangelands as the different stakeholders had a diverse range of knowledge systems that were able to inform solutions to the problem (Galvin et al., 2016). Another context that co-design has been used is in education with mountaineering and cycling groups and design students of Gazi University in Turkey. They worked on co-creating cycling and hiking equipment (Yalman & Yavuzcan 2016).

Part of the processes that were involved during the different stages of production were suggestions made by external personnel who worked on the video production. This co-design included Winston Teo, a local video producer in Singapore, as well as the actors. Winston, because of his experience with video shoots in Singapore, suggested different techniques for the video. Some of these included the use of pre-production planning processes such as a script and shot-list which we worked on together. These were also inspected by the production crew and actors as well, which was an iterative process. Casting was also another process that was assisted by the local crew in Singapore. Winston suggested a few local websites and Facebook pages that were used for the casting of the actors.

During the production itself, it was suggested that the audio was recorded separately. This was done and it resulted in better quality audio. During post-production, there was discussion of how some of the editing could be done. This included the section where the characters were texting, where text boxes were used instead of voice-overs.

Throughout this process, some of these different processes were done during the production of the video.

**Scriptwriting and Conceptualisation**

The concept for the short film was about a male and a female who were about to go on a date. They had met online and were planning to meet up in real life by going on this date. The short film shows the male and the female speaking to
their respective good friends separately about their concerns for the date. The idea of having them voice their concerns with their friends was based on the ideals and questions that emerged from the research data. The concept of a dialogue heavy script meant that more topics could be discussed.

The script went through multiple iterations with the actors and local producers to ensure that the dialogue and the script were representative of the local Singaporean culture. The acting would be more natural only if the script was accurate since the content of the film was dependent on the dialogue. A co-designing approach was taken in order for this to happen during both the pre-production and production itself. During filming, actors and crew made suggestions for the script to ensure a natural flow that was also representative of Singaporean Chinese culture. This process of finalising the script took between one to two months. The script was designed with the concept of back and forth dialogue that played with the characters and their responses. Even though the character were not in the same setting, they were in fact answering the same questions.

**Logistics and Organisation**

The short film needed locations for the shoot. One for the female and her friend and another for the male pair of friends. It was decided that the females would be filmed in a café, while the shoot was planned to be at a home for the males. Next, was to find the cast. The cast went through auditions and were found through social media. A Facebook group called Singapore Actors Database was used to find the actors. A poster was created to describe what the short film was about (Figure 6.1) and to also find the characters for the short film.
A total of four characters needed to be cast. After auditions with multiple people, the cast was decided as follows. The character of Huiying, a shy PhD student was played by Celine Lee, while Sabrina, the carefree friend was played by Loren Xue. Bryan, the cool and confident player was played by James Chan, and lastly Daniel, the easy going banker was played by Daren Kim. The cast had a number of qualities that needed to be fulfilled. They all had to be Chinese to fit within the target audience of the research. They also had to look like they were between the ages of 20 to 34 too so as to match the target audience of the research. The process of casting took roughly three weeks.

The next step in preparation was to do a shot list. The creation of a shot list would assist in planning out exactly the shots that were needed for the shoot. After the script, logistics, shot list and casting were done, it was down to the day of the shoot.
Filming
The video shoot was done in a day. All the shots of the café were done first, followed by the shoot at the home. An assistant director was engaged for the shoot. Winston Teo was in charge of recording the audio which would be edited into the video during post-production. His responsibilities were also to provide suggestions when it came to the shots and the directing of the film. The crew and cast also gave their inputs during both the pre-production and the production itself. These inputs came in the form of suggestions for the dialogue or the videography itself. This was a process that was necessary in the co-designing framework of the project. Engaging Singaporean Chinese to assist in the project worked as a way of affirmation for the short film.

Post Production
To some, post production might be perceived to be the easiest section of the short film. However, this process took a long time. Getting feedback from the assistant director and the crew, the video went through different iterations. There were a number of elements that the editing had to achieve. Firstly, the audio had to match the video. Secondly, timing was a necessary element that had to be acknowledged. Thirdly, the short film needed enough comedic and romantic elements in it for viewers to watch and understand since it was a local production in the genre of romantic comedy. By learning from the content analysis of the television shows, How I Met Your Mother and My Love from the Star, there were technical elements included in the editing of the short film.

One example of this was to utilise a reverse of rewinding soundtrack. This was used in television shows to signify the stopping of a dream or a flashback. In the short film when the character Hui Ying talks about how she wishes her romance can be like what she sees in television shows, the scenes of popular romantic comedies pop up on screen, followed by the insertion of the rewinding track that comes up and brings her fantasy to a stop.

Another element that had to be looked at, which was inspired from the television shows, was the portrayal of emotions. In Korean television shows, there are scenes which project a sense of emotion. This is usually achieved by pairing the particular scene with a soundtrack or songs with a vocalist. The idea is that with
a vocalist and lyrics, the song can enhance the emotion of the scene. However, with American television shows like *How I Met Your Mother*, the music used is usually instrumental music instead of a song that features a vocalist and lyrics. Nevertheless, both American and Korean television series use music effectively. When scenes are light-hearted, the music that is played matches the scenes well. For this short film, the choice of music was meticulous, thus reaffirming the knowledge that music was a key factor in the editing process. Due to the limited budget, music was taken from the royalty free website, Purple Planet Music ([http://www.purple-planet.com/](http://www.purple-planet.com/)). All of the music posted on this website was composed, performed and produced by Geoff Harvey and Chris Martyn.

The website provides many tracks that are sorted into different categories which can be searched to find the tracks that are suitable for different projects. For the short film, I used an approach whereby I played the clips from filming and different tracks at the same time to see if they matched. The tracks that were picked were brought into the editing process to be shortlisted. Most of the tracks that were used in the short film fell under the category of light or ambient because of the overall light-hearted feeling of the short film. The final tracks had to ensure that they matched the different scenes of the short film in the way presented in the American and Korean television series. To align with the framework of design anthropology, a co-design approach was also taken with the editing. At different iterations, the short film was shown to Singaporean Chinese to evaluate its effectiveness.

As highlighted throughout the different stages of this research project, the design was not just created for the sake of producing a design. It was an attempt to see if a new design could be used as a tool for potential changes in the perceptions that people might have of romantic love. That is why the approach of getting constant feedback from the audience was taken. The goal of this design was to align itself with the values that were found through the ethnographic study. After the short film was produced, it was paired with a survey and sent out to Singaporean Chinese participants between the ages of 20-34.

**Breakdown of Short Film**
Elements of the short film were decided based on the content analysis and the interview data. In this section, I will elaborate on the breakdown of the different elements in order to provide a clearer understanding of the short film. To watch the short film, follow this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFozds--Mg4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFozds--Mg4).

Figure 6.2: Establishing Shot of Café

The film starts with an establishing shot of a café where two of the main characters, Hui Ying and Sabrina are meeting for an afternoon coffee (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.3: Hui Ying and Daniel messaging

Next, we see Hui Ying messaging Daniel through instant messaging (Figure 6.3). For this section, the text messaging conversation between Hui Ying and Daniel was presented through message bubbles, which was inspired by a critical analysis of texting in film (Zhou, 2014). The original concept with texting was to get the actors to do a voice-over of their text messages. However, during
the editing process, the problem of confusion arose, which thus led to the decision to use messaging bubbles instead. As seen in the film, each text bubble is designed with a time stamp, a specific colour and the name of the sender to further establish the origin of each text, helping to remove any form of confusion.

Figure 6.4: Medium-Wide Shot of Characters conversing

The film then introduces Sabrina and Bryan, the best friends of Hui Ying and Daniel respectively. Many short films utilise intercuts in the script, which is a process where it cuts from scene to scene to present multiple narratives. This has been used in different types of films and documentaries (Rosenstone, 2013; Chen, 2013). For the editing process, this is called parallel editing.

*Parallel editing (cross cutting) is the technique of alternating two or more scenes that often happen simultaneously but in different locations. If the scenes are simultaneous, they occasionally culminate in a single place, where the relevant parties confront each other* (Moura, 2014).

This process of parallel editing (cross cutting) is used in the short film to show the discussion of the upcoming date that Hui Ying and Daniel will be having in the near future. This short film is dialogue heavy and it intercuts between two scenes, but design considerations are made to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the narrative being presented. Medium shots are also used in the film to show the location where both conversations take place (Figure 6.4). Additionally, as seen in Figure 6.4, the character that is going on the date is on the right while the character on the left is the supporting best friend. This is done to remind the viewers of the purpose of the characters, the main character and the supporting friend. When the conversation intercuts, it is presented in a way that some of the dialogue is between the characters from different scenes.
This plays into the parallel editing of the film that links both conversations even though they are in separate scenes.

Over the course of the short film, a range of shots is used. These include medium shots (Figure 6.5), medium-wide shots (Figure 6.4), wide angle shots (Figure 6.2) and close up shots (Figure 6.6). The range of shots being used is based on the information collected from the content analysis.
The short film drew from the content analysis and interviews in a number of other ways. One aspect of this was the level of realism that was portrayed. In the analysis of the data, which will be discussed later in this chapter, there was a positive response to the design decisions that were made. The reason for this consideration was because of the way participants felt that there was a disparity in the level of realism when romance was portrayed. Therefore, with this short film, the dialogue was based on themes that came from the participant interviews and observations that were made in the local context.

To drive the point further, two shots were created in the film to act as a parody on the romantic relationships that were portrayed in the existing television shows. The topic discussed was the date, where Bryan asked Daniel about the plans and offered some suggestions.

**BRYAN**

*Anyway enough about work ah. Where is the date going to be? Anywhere romantic? A boat ride along the river? Or maybe a nice café under the moonlight. I know a place in the city that has an open garden concept which is very nice.*

Daniel then responded to Bryan.

** DANIEL **
Singapore so small. Most romantic is the Singapore Flyer. If we don’t go for a movie, then we will be going out to eat. Can’t be super romantic like the TV shows la. You think you are Barney Stinson is it?

Then in the scene, we cut to Bryan and there is a static screen and a collage of Barney Stinson appearing on the screen (Figure 6.7). A parallel cut is then done to Hui Ying where she envisages the outcome of the date.

HUI YING

I hope he brings me to nice place. Wonder if I will ever get to go to a nice romantic place for a first date like in the Korean TV shows?

After her line, a collage and romantic Korean music is then played to parody her idea of the date being referenced from Korean television series (Figure 6.8), which is then halted abruptly to signify that the ideal is one that is not real. The next shot shows her friend Sabrina telling her to be more realistic with her expectations.

There were some limitations in the process of creating the short film, such as the size of the cast and crew. In addition, the whole production was done in a month, which did not allow for enough creative and design implementations to be made.
However, given the time and research topic as scoping limitations, this was seen to be fairly successful.

**Design Effectiveness**

In order to test out whether this design was effective in bringing about positive experiences for Singaporean Chinese, a survey was created. The questions that were asked affirmed the assumptions and findings of the exploratory research. It is acknowledged that a video is not able to immediately change people’s values on love, which have been imperceptibly affected by other influences over the years. But by providing a new alternative, it was able to show that even a localised series format could hold the audience’s attention, and also be of quality.

The survey collected data from a total of 105 people over the duration of 2 months, and provided some answers to the research question. In terms of competition in Singapore, most people who responded felt that Singaporeans placed more importance on their careers and social status than on romantic relationships. This is further exacerbated by the lack of work life balance, which makes dating hard in Singapore. These statistics provided confirmation that the pressure and competitive spirit hinder the pursuit of romantic relationships in Singapore.

With regards to media influence on romantic relationships, responses showed that males, felt more pressure to satisfy expectations when it came to romantic relationships than females did, while females tended to draw more inspiration from what was seen on television shows. Similar to findings from previous studies, this result shows that there is some correlation between the expectations that people have about romantic relationships and the inspirations drawn from television shows.

Based on the responses gathered from the survey, it was evident that the design outcome was able to achieve what it set out to do. The design outcome was able to fulfil the qualities that a romantic comedy television series usually provided, but at the same time portrayed romance and local culture realistically. The data collected from the survey of the Singaporean Chinese community also provided positive responses in relation to the short film and its evaluation, such as the film
successfully fitted into the genre of romantic comedy, its overall quality was good, and the realistic portrayal of love and romance reflected the Singaporean Chinese community.

Based on the definition of a romantic comedy as stated in the previous section, there are categories to be examined, such as a romantic relationship between two people, a good amount of comedic elements and scenes, and lastly a positive ending. With the short film, First Date, the data from the survey show that these three categories have been fulfilled. As shown in Figure 6.9 when asked if the short film portrayed a romantic relationship between two people, more respondents agreed than disagreed, with 37% agreeing, 35% neutral and 29% disagreeing. When asked if the short film had a good amount of comedic elements and scenes, the response was similar with 37% agreeing, 40% neutral and 23% disagreeing. As for the positive endings, this was more significant as 54% agreed, 40% neutral and 6% disagreed. This is not as significant a result as was hoped for, but these numbers do show that more people agreed that this short film would have fallen under the category of a romantic comedy television show. When it comes to genre studies, there have been different views on what is considered to be a romantic comedy and what is not. The survey data has shown that for the short film, there are aspects that can be improved to ensure that it fits in more with a romantic comedy such as the use of more comedy, or the couple actually meeting and engaging with each other rather than through messaging systems.

The next few questions about the evaluation of the short film were more positive. When asked about the quality of the production, the idea was to compare it to the overall responses from the semi-structured interviews on the general quality of locally produced content in Singapore. From the exploratory research done initially with participants, many spoke about how they used to watch local productions in the past. However, because of a wider variety of television shows at their disposal from a global palette, choice became easy and they elected to watch other shows. The reasons for not watching local productions in Singapore were wide and many topics were found to be critiques of local Singaporean productions. From the production of this short film, First Date, and the data from
the semi-structured interviews, it was decided that three categories such as acting, video editing and storytelling could be specifically questioned in the survey.

![Figure 6.9: Effectiveness of Design Outcome](image)

In Figure 6.9, the data collected from the survey shows that for the three categories, the overall production quality for each question was ranked from ‘Excellent’ to ‘Bad’. When asked about the overall quality of the video, 52% of the respondents stated that the video was ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’, 37% were ‘Neutral’, while 11% felt that the video was either ‘Poor’ or ‘Bad’. The next question asked about the overall acting of the short film. 46% of the respondents reacted positively to the acting quality in the video, while 43% responded neutrally and 11% felt that the acting was ‘Poor’ or ‘Bad’. On the editing quality of the video,
the response was slightly more positive with 58% of participants responding positively, while 37% responded neutrally and 5% negatively. Lastly, for the storytelling quality of the video, 50% of the respondents felt that it was either ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’, while 39% responded ‘Fair’ and 11% felt that it was ‘Poor’ or ‘Bad’.

The overall response on the quality of the short film was positive. This was a sign that the short film managed to integrate the lessons learnt from the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The number of positive responses for the production quality of the video reflected that this locally produced short film was able to garner a positive response from its viewers, even though there were limitations like time and budget.

The question then was whether a locally produced short film which is considered fairly enjoyable, could present values and portrayals of romantic love to be realistic as well as representative of Singaporean Chinese culture. The data tell us that this is possible. When asked about whether the characters presented in the short film were realistic, 64% of the respondents agreed, 26% were neutral and 9% disagreed. Looking at whether there were realistic levels of romantic gestures or activities portrayed in the short film, 66% of the respondents agreed, 23% responded neutrally and 11% disagreed. Lastly, when asked if the short film portrayed local Singaporean culture accurately, 69% of the respondents agreed, 25% responded neutrally while 6% disagreed. From the data shown in Figure 6.9, in response to the design itself, it shows us that the research question of whether a local production can be enjoyed by local Singaporeans while at the same time providing a realistic portrayal of romance, is fairly true.
Figure 6.10: Overall rating of the video, First Date

In general, participants responded positively when asked about the quality of the video, but even more participants responded positively when asked about the level of realism for the short film. This emphasised the goal of the short film which was to portray a scenario that is realistic and accurate to the local Singaporean culture. The overall quality of the video in terms of acting, editing and storytelling was seen as positive, but an average of 40% of the participants felt neutral to it. This does indicate the limitations of the short film. As a result of budget and time constraints, there were overall limitations that could have been improved. Some of the improvements that could have been added for the short film include original music, different location shoots, lighting equipment and a more professional script writer. As a designer with a multimedia background, I have been able to gather a wide range of skills to produce quality videos. However, there is a larger crew in usual productions. This would have been achievable if the video production had a bigger budget.

Conclusions
The short film is a design outcome that utilises the information collected from prior ethnographic findings to produce local content that looks to be entertaining while being localised. It is also important to take into consideration the apparent lack of local productions within this genre of romantic comedy television series. If the local media is considered to be lacking in quality, can local productions learn from international shows to provide an alternative?

Since a design anthropology approach was taken with this study, it needed to provide a design solution that was able to bring about positive experiences for people, in this case Singaporean Chinese. This design was able to utilise the information from the exploratory research findings and the content analysis to help in its creation. Utilising a co-design approach, this allowed the short film to be checked by people who specialise in the field of filming. Feedback was taken throughout the initial pre-production stage to the post-production stage of the short film. The short film was made to tie in with the survey. Based on the previous data collected, the question that needed to be asked was whether a locally produced romantic television series (short film version) could attract people to watch it while maintaining the elements that make it a romantic comedy.

In order to test out whether this design was effective in bringing about positive experiences for Singaporean Chinese, a survey was created. The questions that were asked confirmed the assumptions and findings of the exploratory research. The short film was not able to change people’s values on love that had been formed over a long term by other influences. However, by providing a new alternative, it was able to show that even a localised series format could be of good quality without compromising on the realistic portrayal of the romance and local culture. The responses collated from the survey have also affirmed that the design outcome was able to fulfil the qualities that a romantic comedy was able to provide and also appeal to the viewers.

Bringing this back to the intent of this research project as a whole, the short film as a design intervention was not about trying to engage Singaporean Chinese in getting married at a younger age. However, it was to understand the impact that romantic comedy television has on the experiences of romantic relationships. From this study it was found that that an identity of romance was drawn from both
international Asian and Western influences but not from the local productions because of the overall quality. The design, though lacking in budget, showed a sign that if storytelling and realism are enforced there could be a local romantic narrative that could be an alternative to the international counterparts. The short film and survey also showed us that there is a level of unrealism in romantic relationships that is used as a tool for entertainment with viewers. This, though it is obvious to some, might not be obvious to others on a sub-conscious level. With that in mind, a society like Singapore that has more young people staying single because of the pressure to perform (Yong, 2016) needs to engage with the idea of romance at an earlier level actively rather than through a screen and its characters.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

This research project has attempted to define the values of love that are mediated by romantic comedy television series and the influence on the experience of romantic relationships for Singaporean Chinese. A design anthropology framework was used in the research process to facilitate this investigation. This thesis has addressed three areas uncovered during this research process; the values of love that are defined by the Singaporean Chinese community; the influence that romantic comedy television series have on Singaporean Chinese; and the experiences of the romantic relationships for Singaporean Chinese. Through an extended period of exposure to the community chosen, this thesis has been able to draw out the thick data from the participants and better understand the romantic landscape of Singapore.

Contribution to research

The thesis started by defining the local context of Singapore and its Chinese community. Through reviews of literature, this process helped to define how the idea of “Asian Values” was used as a political tool for the government to differentiate itself from other nations and culture (Barr, 2000; Chua, 1999; Hoon, 2004; Langguth, 2003). The review also informed us of a change in gender roles for Singapore. This saw the change in roles especially for women who were home makers into degree holders working in industry. This, in tandem with a growing economy, could be the reason why careers are being placed above marriage, which thus has led to a growing population of young singles (Yong, 2016). The government has made attempts to promote marriage for young singles but the response does not seem to be positive (Leong & Sriramesh, 2006). Chapter 1 allowed for a clearer understanding of how Singapore is framed, as well as a sense of its identity which is steering away from just being a melting pot of Eastern and Western values.

Chapter 2 provided a chance to look at the media as a whole, understanding the theoretical frameworks that have been associated with media, as well as the
definition and ideals that romantic comedies have. This chapter discussed the significance of looking at television rather than cinematic movies, mainly because of the journey the viewer is taking when being exposed to a particular character and narrative for an extended amount of time. Therefore, cultivation theory and social comparison theory were the theories that were seen to be relevant for this thesis. The impact that media has on different social contexts was identified to be on different levels. In addition, looking at the way Korean pop culture works as a tool to solve different social issues and promote tourism offers a sign that media has the potential for change in our society. The first two chapters were able to confirm the assumptions that existed prior to the thesis. There was a clear problem that was identified and a potential area where a solution could potentially be found.

The first two chapters also worked to define the scope of the thesis, so as to facilitate the transition to Chapter 3 that was used as a platform to define the methodology and framework for the collection of data for the thesis. A design anthropology framework was chosen over a media studies framework due to the type of question that was being asked. Instead of just looking at whether or not there was any connection between media and the society, this thesis sought to understand the reasons for that influence. Therefore, the idea of “Values-Design-Experience” was chosen as a framework for the thesis. From this chapter, the methods that were chosen were all tools that accompanied the ethnographic approach that was necessary to understand the topic as a whole, as well as consider all the aspects that might have played a part.

In Chapter 4, two themes were identified: values of love and the local Singaporean dating culture. With values, it was found that the values that were of higher significance for Singaporean Chinese were Honesty, Understanding, Supportive and Faithful. Of these four higher ranked values, only the value of “Faithful” was categorised as an Asian Value while the rest were seen to be neutral in a cultural sense. For the theme of local Singaporean dating culture, the level of pickiness was found to be the key insight. Overall, both genders were seen as picky when it came to looking for partners, with females scoring slightly higher. However, males were perceived to experience higher levels of pressure.
when trying to satisfy expectations of relationships in comparison to females. Taking these two sets of information, we can see the pressure that males might have because of the slightly higher level of pickiness shown by females. An interesting insight was when participants were asked about the definition of a long-term relationship. Out of four factors, having children was the lowest scoring factor. Together with the data from the General Household Survey 2015 report, which showed a rise in the number of singles in Singapore (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2016), we can start to see confirmation that locals are shifting their focus away from children and marriage. A deeper look into the survey responses also revealed that out of 60 females who participated in the survey, 33% did not agree that long-term couples would eventually have children, while only 27% of females agreed. This further highlighted the changing roles of a man and women in Singaporean society today. Gone were the days of housewives who would be waiting at home for their husbands to come back after a day of work.

In Chapter 5, we looked in more depth at the aspects of how romantic comedy television series play a part in the idea of romantic relationships. It was found that there was a change in the consumption of media. The move from just free-to-air local television or cable television came with the different technological changes. In the future, with virtual reality and augmented reality starting to become a regular part of households, it would not take long to see them being part of the television viewing experience. These changes in technology over the years have brought about more variety in viewing. This variety could be the reason why participants felt that the top values chosen when looking for a partner were ones that were not culturally specific but neutral and could be seen in television series from different cultures. Like previous studies that looked at the field of media, this study is not able to confirm the effect of media on social reality. However, participants in this research have drawn inspiration from the television series that they have been exposed to. Females were seen to draw more inspiration from romantic comedy television series when thinking about activities than males. This thesis also found that there was a conscious acknowledgement of using television series as a reference point for qualities for long-term partners. This does not fit in
with cultivation theory, but it shows signs of social comparison theory where there is a selective aspect to the media that is consumed.

The design outcome of a short film was able to respond to two different challenges. From the data analysis, it was found that there was a lack of realism in the television shows that were being consumed. Hence, the short film was an attempt to present a more realistic portrayal of romance for the Singaporean Chinese community. This level of realism is also an intervention for what was found in the data, where there are levels of pickiness that have been rated as high for both genders. The short film was able to entertain in a format that was similar to romantic comedy television series. Looking back at the design anthropology framework of Values, Design and Experience, this short film was a design that represented the values of love that were uncovered during the research, and the attempt was to create an experience of realignment for Singaporean Chinese. The realignment noted here is not the ability to realign the expectations that people have, which is not possible within a short amount of time especially through a ten-minute video only. This was instead to prompt thoughts about the current local romantic landscape that has seen higher levels of pickiness, and also to get individuals who are not engaging in romantic relationships to start thinking about the process rather than delaying it.

This research study has observed the Singaporean Chinese community in its values and experiences with romantic relationships as well as romantic comedies. As noted in the discussion, there are correlations between romantic comedy media and the experience of romantic relationships. However, like other similar studies, this thesis is not able to be certain whether there is causation. Culturally, Singapore has a wide range of factors that have been seen to provide a reason for its aging population, and the pushing back of importance of romantic relationships is one of them. If media is to bring about a greater priority for romantic relationships in Singapore, a longer study needs to be done with the local media industry to create more diverse and higher quality content.

**Limitations**
The methods that were used in this thesis each had their own biases and limitations. Being a qualitative researcher, the use of a quantitative survey might have caused me to miss out on particular theories that might have come with the method. Another aspect was the time spent in Singapore as a local who has biases. Being a local male who is also in the age group studied, I had to deal with removing my own biases with this topic. I had to constantly remind myself and question whether or not the statements were of a biased nature or were assumptions based on my own experiences, rather than actual data collected from participants. The time spent and sample size was not as extensive as would have been preferred. Finding people to participate in a study such as this and taking up their time with a long interview was also a challenge. This was due to the budget that was available to me and the project. As highlighted, this study has other limitations too. Singapore is not just made up of the Chinese community but there are other ethnic groups as well. The short film that was made did not have a bigger budget which meant that the production quality was not as high as it could have been. As for the online survey and the semi-structured interviews, the final sample size was smaller than initially hoped for. When embarking on this thesis, the plan was to look at the transcultural values between the local and migrant Chinese community in Singapore. During the exploratory stage of semi-structured interviews, it became clear to me as the main researcher that my fluency in the Mandarin language was not at the level required to communicate with the migrant Chinese community in Singapore, therefore it was necessary to change the scope of the thesis.

Further Research

The research question and thesis may have been answered to a certain extent, but the social issue of a population that sees a growing number of younger singles who might not see the need for child bearing is still a big area that can be looked at. After collecting the data, there were instances where I was approached to create a networking session for singles. This shows a demand regarding romantic relationships, but there seem to be factors that are preventing these relationships from happening. As romantic relationships are a complex area to be studying, there is a need for further research from multiple perspectives and not just design
anthropology. The evidence from this study confirms many assumptions that the regular Singaporeans might hold about romance and mate selection. The next step is to further that research scope. As seen from this study, new media can be entertaining for Singaporean Chinese and still be localised. With a bigger budget, there can be more opportunities for more positives in the local media industry. One alternative is to create a full television series of the romantic comedy genre, and with that series conduct an in-depth study over time to uncover the nuances of each episode. If the belief that media is a true influence on the expectations that people have on romantic relationships, there is more to be done to see that realistic yet entertaining media needs to be produced.

Looking at this from a wider perspective, the knowledge collected from this research can be taken further. I would like to see this research being done with a longitudinal study to measure the longer term impact on romantic relationships for a similar sample group. This would be looking at different people who are exposed to a variety of television shows and measuring their perspectives on romantic relationship and long-term partner choices. Another area that can be looked at is the variation in cultural context, potentially looking at other South-East Asian countries or cultural groups that are not Chinese. Another group that could be considered further in the future is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. The traditional relationship structures in Singapore are changing and these have to be acknowledged, as they play a part in the way Singaporeans engage in mate selection. However, because of the government's stance on non-heterosexual relations, this could bring about complications when it comes to identifying individuals who are part of the LGBT community.

**Final Comments**

The evidence of this thesis shows that the lack of realism in popular romantic series is related to and inspires individuals in their own experiences. These experiences run parallel to the expectations that people might have with romantic relationships. We can also see that instead of an identity that is just a fraction of
Asian or Western values, the Singaporean identity is one that is alive and not just in the realm of romance. This transcultural identity is now one that has gone through neoculturalism where the tactics and behaviours are specific to Singapore.

This thesis is not just a document that represents the research that has been conducted. I stated in the introduction that when I started this thesis I was single. Since then I have met someone and will be married on the 26th of November 2016. By doing this thesis I have not become an expert on long-term relationships. However, I have been able to question myself and the field with more clarity. Through the interviews and reading of secondary research materials I have been able to ask more questions about my own relationships which enable me to find the right answers. I may be recently married but many of the themes that have been brought up throughout this thesis are things that I am dealing with or have dealt with before. So this emphasises the significance of this thesis to me. Following the thesis, it has become clear that the design anthropology framework used here has been able to provide a platform for better understanding a cultural group and how it navigates itself within the wider contemporary Singaporean population. It is also able to provide a greater impact for future projects that follow and use the design anthropology methodology.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Screener for Interviews

**PARTICIPANTS WANTED for PhD research project on romantic relationships and media.**

- Are you a person of Chinese heritage who was born in either Singapore or China?
- Do you watch Asian and Western romantic comedies?
- Are you between the ages of 20-30?
- Are you currently in Singapore?
- $10 SGD cash for your participation in this research.

If so, you may be eligible to participate in this research project.

This project is part of a supervised PhD thesis undertaken at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. This project seeks to uncover values of love; the representation of love in romantic comedies; and to draw connections between the media and the experience of choosing a life partner.

We seek your participation in this research in three ways: face-to-face interviews; observations of your romantic comedy watching; and focus groups.

Your anonymity and confidentiality will be of utmost importance. If you wish to remain anonymous we can mask your identity in various ways. We will seek your informed consent, before any research is conducted.

Your participation is strictly voluntary, which means that you are free to withdraw at anytime during the study without any explanation.

If you are keen on the relationship between love and media and can spare some time to contribute to this PhD study, please contact Nicholas Teo at nteo@swin.edu.au or +65 81091936 for more details.
## Appendix B: Value Cards

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<th>Fashionable</th>
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Appendix C: Acknowledgement of reimbursement
Acknowledgement of reimbursement

Project Title: *ài* (ài) TV: Media and the transcultural aesthetics of love between local and migrant Chinese in Singapore

Signing on this form will acknowledge that you have received SGD $10 as part of this research.

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Appendix D: Consent Information Statement
Consent Information Statement

Project Title: (The) TV: Media and the transcultural aesthetics of love between local and migrant Chinese in Singapore

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Elizabeth Tunstall

Student Investigator: Nicholas Teo

This project is part of a supervised PhD project being undertaken at the School of Design, Swinburne University of Technology. The project looks at how love is portrayed in romantic comedy television series, and how this portrayal affects how local and migrant Chinese in Singapore choose life partners amongst each other.

Introduction to the project
This study is driven by three primary concerns: first, to identify what the different values of romantic love are for local and migrant Chinese in Singapore; second, to understand how these values are represented and communicated in television series; and third, to draw connections between the viewing of these media and the experiences of choosing a life partner.

This study seeks to discover the following information from participants:
1. The values of love for local and migrant Chinese in Singapore.
2. The choices and behaviours regarding the choosing of life partners.
3. The experiences of and exposure to romantic comedy television shows.

What participation will involve
You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a male or female of Chinese heritage living in Singapore, between the ages of 20 and 30 years of age, and have some exposure to romantic comedy television series. Participation will involve you providing information on your exposure to romantic comedy television series and how it affects you. You are asked to provide this information through the methods of semi-structured interviews, observation and focus groups as outlined below. NOTE: There are no correct or incorrect answers, only those you judge as best based on your own experience and knowledge.

a) A semi-structured interview that will be recorded with an audio-visual recorder. The duration of a semi-structured interview will take up to 1 hour of your time and you will be compensated with $10 SGD cash.

b) An observation where you will be recorded with an audio-visual device while you are watching and viewing television material.

c) To be a member of a focus group which will take up 1 hour of your time and you will be recorded with an audio-visual device. This focus group will involve participatory design games, which will be done as a group of no more than 8 other people.

Research reimbursement
For being part of this research you will be offered $10 SGD cash as gratitude for your participation in our semi-structured interviews, observations, or focus groups.

What are the potential risks of this research?
The research focus and discussion on romantic love may raise personal, emotional or psychological memories, experiences and issues that might affect some more than others; if this causes you too much concern then it may be better not to participate.

If participants in Singapore have issues dealing with the emotional aspects of the research that require counselling, one such facility is the Care Corner Hotline Counselling 1800-3555-600.
Privacy and confidentiality
Care will be taken with data collected for this research which is confidential and there are a number of ways we can ensure anonymity of your data if you do not wish to be cited or be otherwise identified in the research outcomes. As outlined below, we will seek your consent to any use of your identifiable data in published outcomes. Otherwise, we can mask your identity in various ways: using a false name, pixel out or mask your appearance.

Research Outcomes
This study is undertaken in the pursuit of knowledge and research, the result of which will be included in the student investigator's thesis. Other outcomes may include:

- Academic outcomes: published journal articles, books, presentations, governmental reports, and video documentaries.
- Community outcomes: online media content training materials and workshops for communities, skills development in social intelligence, racial harmony, multiculturalism, romantic, love, media production, male selection, media consumption and media advocacy.
- Possible Video Documentary

One possible outcome is that the audio-visual material collected may be used for analysis and materials for the production of a video documentary as part of the project which could be published in online materials: television material; film festivals; conference or journal publications and presentations; art installations; and other creative works. Should the video documentary become a viable option and you agree for us to contact you again, we will provide further information about what is anticipated. Please note: we will only use your data with your explicit consent. Before any public release of the video documentary, we will present to you the portion of the video containing your data for your approval and consent.

Participant rights and interests
Your participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during the study without any explanation. Should you decide to withdraw from the study before any publication, any data collected associated with you will be destroyed. Your consent to participate will be collected through the use of a consent form, which you will sign and hand over to the student investigator before the study commences.

Important: Please note that, at this stage you are only being asked about participating in the research, not in any publishable outcome such as a video documentary.

All research data and documents will be stored in a locked research facility for a maximum of five years after the last publication the data is used in.

Further information about the project – who to contact
If you would like further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact:

Position Title and Name: Associate Professor Elizabeth Tunstall
Swinburne Contact Address: John St, Hawthorn VIC 3122
Tel No: +61 4 0214 6098
Email: etunstall@swin.edu.au

Concerns/complaints about the project – who to contact:

This project has been approved by or on behalf of Swinburne Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you can contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (HE8),
Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122.
Tel (03) 9214 8216 or +61 3 9214 8219 or research@swin.edu.au
Interview and Observation Consent Form

Swinburne University of Technology

Project Title: TV: Media and the transcultural aesthetics of love between local migrant and Chinese in Singapore
Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Elizabeth Tunstall
Student Investigator: Nicholas Toc

1. I consent to participate in the project named above. I have been provided a copy of the project consent information statement to which this consent form relates and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. In relation to this project, please circle your response to the following:
   - I agree to be a participant in a semi-structured interview and be asked questions with regard to lifepartner choices, romantic love and romantic comedy television series.
   - I agree to allow the researcher to observe me watching my television series.
   - I agree to allow the recording by an audio-visual device.
   - I agree to be contacted again re use of identifiable data about me in project outcomes.

Yes No

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
   (b) the data collected from this project will be used for research purposes;
   (c) this Swinburne project is for the purpose of research;
   (d) any identifiable information about me which is gathered in the course of and as the result of my participating in this project will be (i) collected and retained for the purpose of this project and (ii) accessed and analysed by the researcher(s) for the purpose of conducting this project;

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

Name of Participant: .................................................................

Signature & Date: .................................................................

Preferred contact details if I have consented to be contacted again:

..........................................................................................
..........................................................................................
Focus Group Consent Form

Swinburne University of Technology

Project Title: (ii) TV: Media and the transcultural aesthetics of love between local and migrant Chinese in Singapore
Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Elizabeth Turnstall
Student Investigator: Nicholas Tec

1. I consent to participate in the project named above. I have been provided a copy of the project consent information statement to which this consent form relates and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. In relation to this project, please circle your response to the following:
   - I agree to be a participant in a focus group and be asked questions with regards to life partner choices, romantic love and romantic comedy television series. Yes No
   - I agree to allow the recording by an audio-visual device. Yes No
   - I agree to be contacted again re use of identifiable data about me in project outcomes. Yes No

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
   (b) the data collected from this project will be used for research purposes;
   (c) this Swinburne project is for the purpose of research;
   (d) any identifiable information about me which is gathered in the course of and as the result of my participating in this project will be (i) collected and retained for the purpose of this project and (ii) assessed and analysed by the researcher(s) for the purpose of conducting this project;

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

Name of Participant: ........................................................................................................

Signature & Date: ........................................................................................................

Preferred Contact Details if I have consented to be contacted again:
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
   a. <20
   b. 21-24
   c. 25-29
   d. 30-34
   e. 35-39
   f. 40-44
   g. 45<

2. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

3. Relationship Status
   a. Single
   b. In a relationship
   c. Married
   d. Widowed
   e. Divorced/Separated
   f. Engaged
   g. In an open relationship
   h. It’s complicated

4. Place of birth?
   a. Singapore
   b. China
   c. Malaysia
   d. Indonesia
   e. Philippines
f. Others (Please Specify)

5. How would you describe your ethnic background?
   a. Chinese
   b. Malay
   c. Indian
   d. Others (Please specify)

6. What is your current occupation?

7. What hobbies do you have?

8. Highest qualification attained
   a. Below Secondary
   b. Secondary
   c. Post Secondary (Non-Tertiary)
   d. Diploma & Professional Qualification
   e. University

Relationships

9. What is love to you? Describe.
10. What would you consider as a relationship?
11. What are some of your long-term and short-term goals in life?
    a. How does love fit into that?
12. How would you describe the processes of a relationship for you? Use the storyboard provided to draw out the process.
13. How long is/was your last/current relationship?
   a. 0 - 6 months
   b. 7 - 11 months
   c. 1 - 1.5 years
   d. 1.5 - 2 years
   e. 2 - 3 years
   f. 3 to 5 years
14. Describe your current/last partner physically? (eg: tall, wears glasses, blonde, short hair)
15. How would you describe your current/last partners personality?
16. If your partner and your parents had an argument who would you be inclined to side with?
17. Would you take advice on choosing a partner from your parents or a parent? Please explain why.
18. Where do you usually go to discuss relationship advice or potential partners? (Eg: Friends, Family)
19. What are different ways you meet people new people?
20. How open are you to joining social dating activities, organized by community or government.
21. What do you think about online dating?
22. What impression do you have about the idea of “The One”.
23. How much do you think a couple needs to earn (combined income) to have a comfortable lifestyle in Singapore?
**Mate/Partner Selection**

For question 24 to 27 please use the cards provided. Blank cards have been provided for qualities that have not been mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physically Attractive</th>
<th>Financial Stability</th>
<th>Fashionable</th>
<th>Charming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>Environmentally Aware</td>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>Romantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Family Oriented</td>
<td>Career Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Interest</td>
<td>Emotionally Opened</td>
<td>Well-Travelled</td>
<td>Smells Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygienic</td>
<td>Technologically Savvy</td>
<td>Fearless</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>High Academic Qualifications</td>
<td>Street Smart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. With your current/latest partner:
   a. what are the qualities that are essential.
   b. Please rank 10 qualities from most important to least important.
25. In terms of what you are looking for in a partner, which celebrity/famous person would you say comes closest to what you are looking for? Please use the list of qualities to:
   a. Pick the essential qualities that you think they possess
   b. Rank 10 qualities from most important to least important.

26. In terms of the local population what qualities do you feel are lacking, please rank the qualities from most lacking to least lacking.

27. In terms of the local population of Singapore what qualities do you feel are existent; please rank the qualities from most existent to least existent.

28. In terms of your ethnic group what qualities do you feel are lacking, please rank the qualities from most lacking to least lacking.

29. In terms of the local population what qualities do you feel are lacking, please rank the qualities from most lacking to least lacking.

**Television Shows**

30. List the shows that you are currently watching?

31. How many hours a week would you spend watching television shows?
   a. 0-2
   b. 3-5
   c. 5-10
   d. 10-15
   e. 20-30
   f. 30+

32. Which channels do you watch on free-to-air or cable television?
33. Do you download television shows to watch them?

34. What are your favorite genres of television shows?

35. What were/are your favorite television shows during these periods?
   a. Primary School
   b. Secondary School
   c. Junior College/Polytechnic/ITE
   d. Undergraduate
   e. Initial Working
   f. Present

36. What were/are your favorite romantically themed television shows during these periods?
   a. Primary School
   b. Secondary School
   c. Junior College/Polytechnic/ITE
   d. Undergraduate
   e. Initial Working
   f. Present

37. From any television show do you think there is a character that represents you very well?

38. Comparing reality and television series, do you feel there is a disparity? What do you think needs to change.

39. How would you describe the latest romantic television series romance that you have seen? Use the storyboards provided to draw out the processes.
Wrap Up

40. Do you have any questions for me?
41. Have I left out anything in this interview?
Appendix F: Casting Call

Casting Call For Short Film

"First Date" is a short film about two people who are seeking advice from their friends about a first date they are about to have. The short film will show Hui Ying and Sabrina talking about the date. While at the same time Daniel and Bryan are doing the same. This is a dialogue heavy short film. Shooting should take up about half a day. This is part of a PhD thesis therefore only nominal fee will be provided and meals will be provided as well. Shooting will either be the 1st or 2nd of July. There will be a day for rehearsals before the shoot on the 30th of June.

There are 4 characters that need to be casted; Daniel and Hui Ying are the people who will be going out on the date. Bryan and Sabrina are the friends. All actors speak in proper Singapore English without any American or UK accents, if interested please contact Nicholas at 81891938 or nteo@swin.edu.au

Characters

Daniel
- Chinese, 26 years old
- Works in the bank
- English speaking with some Singlish accents
- Shy character that is not very confident, super easy going
- Likes football and comic books.

Hui Ying
- Chinese, 25 years old
- PhD student, part time lecturer
- Shy introverted personality, while strong headed
- Fixed in her ways
- Does not like buying designer goods
- Overall simple in taste

Sabrina
- Chinese, 25 years old
- She is a carefree person who likes to live it up
- She believes that if you have it flaunt it
- She likes to bright clothing and carries branded bags.
- Accessories are here thing
- She is a confident person. And will not shy away from confrontation.

Bryan
- Chinese, 26 years old
- Player, Cool, Calm, Collected.
- Is confident of himself. Can be loud at times
- Has a look that is a little smug
Appendix G: Script for Short Film
“FIRST DATE”

By
Nicholas Teo

41 Chartwell Drive
Singapore 558735
+61403939711
nteo@swin.edu.au
INT. CAFÉ DAY

The Café is sparsely filled with people. The sound of the barista heating the milk for the coffees fills the room. The café is not too noisy, there are people talking but not loudly. Also calm music is playing in the background.

HUI YING is sitting in the café while she is texting and smiling to her phone.

INT. HOME DAY

The interior of a bedroom, typical guy bedroom with posters of comic book characters and football stars. DANIEL is in his room playing video games. DANIEL’s phone rings and he picks it up to read the text and reply.

HUI YING (V.O.)

Good Morning. @ How are you? It was fun chatting to you last night.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Hey. Yeah it was fun. First time really chatting with someone from an online dating site so was a bit shy.

HUI YING (V.O.)

You were fine.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Hahaha Thanks. So are we still on for dinner tomorrow night?

INT. CAFÉ DAY

HUI YING is smiling to her phone while SABRINA her friend walks into the café. SABRINA scans the café for HUI YING. SABRINA finds HUI YING and walks towards her.

SABRINA

Hello woman.

HUI YING

Hello.

SABRINA sits down while HUI YING keeps her phone.
SABRINA
Sorry I’m late ah. Traffic was super bad.

HUI YING
It’s ok. I just got here too.

SABRINA
Ok ok good. So who were you texting ah? Smile until so happy?

HUI YING
Haha no one la Just a friend.

SABRINA
Don’t bluff. What type of friend?

HUI YING
Just a friend la. Kaypo. (giggle)

SABRINA
I want details. NOW!

HUI YING

SABRINA

HUI YING
Relax please hahaha I just started chatting with him like this week only. One question at a time.

INT. HOME DAY

DANIEL is playing video games at home when suddenly his phone rings. He was excited but his smile goes away when he sees the phone.

DANIEL
Hello.
EXT. STREET DAY.

BRYAN is walking along a street while he is on the phone with DANIEL.

BRYAN
Hey Bro. Tomorrow night you free? I wanna watch that new movie. Been waiting for it to come out for a while.

DANIEL
Erm... Tomorrow ah. Cannot. Busy.

BRYAN
Busy? Busy with what? What could be more important than your best bro?

DANIEL
Busy la! Why you so kypoh? (nosey)

BRYAN
COCOOh. So sensitive. Got new girl ah?

DANIEL
Er......

BRYAN

DANIEL
Relax la. Just started chatting with her only la.

BRYAN
Where are you?

DANIEL
At home why?
BRYAN

Ok. (Hangs up)

DANIEL

Hello? Hello?

BRYAN hangs up the phone and starts walking faster to get to DANIEL’S house.

INT. HOUSE DAY and INT CAFÉ DAY.

BRYAN gets to DANIEL’S house and rings the doorbell. DANIEL opens the door and lets BRYAN into the house. DANIEL then takes his phone and shows a photo of HUIYING to BRYAN. HUIYING also takes her phone and shows a photo of DANIEL to SABRINA.

DANIEL AND HUI YING

Nah.

BRYAN

Not bad. Quite cute.

SABRINA

Oooh. I like, so your type. Got Fu Qi Xiang (Couple look). He looks tall.

BRYAN

She got sister? Intro leh.

DANIEL

How I know. I haven’t asked about family yet la. And aren’t you going out with Jamie?

BRYAN

That one no more la. Over already.

SABRINA AND BRYAN

So what does he/she do for work?

HUIYING

I think he is working in a bank. I can’t
remember if he is in HR or Marketing.

DANIEL

She ah? She is a tutor at NTU. Part time lecturing. And a PhD student at the same time.

BRYAN

Wah sounds like super smart.

DANIEL

Yah I know right? I hope I don’t look stupid in front of her. Later she thinks I stupid or something.

BRYAN

Aiyah won’t la she book smart you street smart perfect match. Academic qualifications not everything ok.

SABRINA

So not a fellow PhD person? I always thought you will be looking for someone who had a PhD.

HUI YING

Nope. But well I guess. I mean he is has an undergrad degree and that is not important anyway. I’m not going to look down on someone who doesn’t have a PhD. You also don’t have a PhD. So? Cannot be friends ah?

SABRINA

True hor. We are best friends mah!

BRYAN

Anyway enough about work ah. Where is the date going to be? Anywhere romantic? A boat ride along the river? Or maybe a nice café under the moonlight. I know a place in the city that has an open garden concept which is very nice.
DANIEL

Singapore so small. Most romantic is the Singapore Flyer. If we don’t go for a movie then we will be going out to eat. Can’t be super romantic like the tv shows la. Which in my opinion you watch too much of. You think you are Barney Stinson is it?

HUIYING

I hope he bring me to nice place. Wonder if I will ever get to go to a nice romantic place for a first date like in the Korean TV shows?

SABRINA

Shouldn’t be somewhere romantic. It’s a first date. It should be simple. Don’t want to get too distracted by the romance of it. You should be somewhere that is simple and you can get to know the guy better. When you meet someone online you don’t have any prior knowledge of the person so it’s better to just get to know the guy and not get caught up in the romantic stuff. Trust me.

DANIEL

I think I’ll just bring her to this place in Somerset. There is a nice place that has nice chocolates. Everyone like Chocolates. And even though it’s in the shopping centre it’s quiet.

BRYAN

Sounds like a good idea. Better than mine. I was thinking you could bring her for bowling. Then I realized that it’s going to be noisy.

HUI YING

Actually I’m starting to think twice about this date tomorrow.
SABRINA

Why? If you don’t try you will never know ok!

HUI YING

I don’t know. It’s the first time I’m going out on a date with someone I met online. It’s worrying what if he is a crazy person? All your fault. If you intro me guys last time I won’t have to go online dating. And if I tell people I went online. People will look at me weird.

DANIEL

Actually should I go ahead with it?

BRYAN

With what?

DANIEL

The date la then? I mean I broke up with my ex like not that long ago. And work has been super stressful. My boss making us OT everyday. And you know right, he keeps shouting at us like a crazy person.

SABRINA

Stop thinking too much. The guys I intro to you, you always reject. Not my fault hor. You too picky la. And you are going to be fine. You are meeting in a public place. If you feel weird then leave.

BRYAN

Please lah. One girl cheat on you doesn’t mean all your other relationships are going to fail. It’s not your fault. And that was like 2 years ago. What you talking about? Also your work. Everyone also got crazy bosses. Mine I think is the devil. Cannot use that as an excuse. We n Singapore everyone also stressed at work.
SABRINA

Ok don’t stress about this date. Tell me what are the qualities you are looking out for? What do you want in a guy?

HUI YING

Hmm... well, for my ideal guy, I would like someone independent. I mean someone who can look after me and after themselves. Cannot be a mummy’s boy!

SABRINA

Then that makes you not independent right?

HUI YING

Ok independent for themselves. I can look after myself. Also confidence is an important trait. Many guys here don’t have much confidence. Always so shy and don’t know how to make the first move.

DANIEL

I hope to find someone who is family oriented. I can’t understand how some people are rude to their parents. Family to me is very important. I won’t be like chatting to my mum heart to heart but I will be there for them. And I guess wanting kids in the future. She must also support me in whatever I do. If she can cook that would be good too. What else ah?

BRYAN

Reminds me I better tell my mum I’m not going home for dinner. Aiyah you want these qualities, yes, they are important, but they will not make the relationship. Look at me and the new girl I’m going out with now. We not really each other’s ideal. But we compromise and work around it. Now even though started with problems, all ok now. She wanted things to change, I wanted things to change. Mutual effort.
DANIEL

Who is this new girl anyway I also haven’t met her.

BRYAN

I met her at work. Don’t worry about me let’s worry about you

SABRINA

Eh Eh. Ask you ah? Tomorrow first date. You think maybe will have, you know (raises eyebrows)? Maybe (smooching sound) kiss kiss, or more?

DANIEL

Please ah. You watch too much TV already you think we will do anything meh. Even if I want you think the girl will let me meh. I know Singapore opening up, but I don’t think that open.

BRYAN

Hehehe (smiles)

HUI YING

What? No la! (pauses) Ok maybe. I dunno la. He is quite cute. If he is a gentleman, maybe I’ll give him a good night kiss on the cheek. BUT nothing more. You think I’m one of those girls in the ang moh tv shows is it?

SABRINA

Sure or not? Don’t bluff. You single so long already. You having a dry spell now. Need some action I think. HAHAHA

HUI YING

Stop it la. Hahaha

SABRINA

We talk about tomorrow for so long. Have you confirmed about tomorrow yet?
HUI YING
Oh yeah hor. I was going to then you came and started disturbing me. I better message him now.

HUI YING takes out her phone from her bag and starts texting.

SABRINA
Ya la, Ya la, you always forget to reply. Better reply now. Don’t forget to set a time and location. Remember. Somewhere simple.

HUI YING
Ya la stop nagging me.

DANIEL’S phone rings and he checks it.

BRYAN
She message ah?

DANIEL
Ya.

BRYAN
Then?

DANIEL
Wait la let me reply her can?

BRYAN
Hahah okok.

EXT. STREET DAY.

BRYAN is walking along the foot path to the bus stop. He gets his phone and makes a call.

BRYAN
Hello. Hope all is going ok. Are we still on for tonight?
# Appendix H: Shot List for Short Film

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Shot</th>
<th>Seconds</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Shot Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>INT. CAFE - DAY</td>
<td>CU of barista making coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of interior of Cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of people walking into Cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of people in the cafe talking and chatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECU of Hui Ying texting on her phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Hui Ying texting on her phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Sabrina walking towards the cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Sabrina walking towards Huiying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Huiying smiling while Sabrina approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CU of Sabrina phone ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VO of Hui Ying messaging Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Huiying Messaging Daniel about the date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Sabrina talking to Daniel on the phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of Sabrina and Huiying Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Dialogue on Sabrina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Dialogue on Huiying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>INT. HOME - DAY</td>
<td>CU of toys on table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECU of Bryan’s phone ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Bryan playing Xbox and checking his phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Bryan reading the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of video game screen playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Daniel phone ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Daniel talking on the phone with Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of Daniel showing phone to Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VO of Daniel messaging Huiying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of Bryan coming into Daniels house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Daniel sitting next to Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of Daniel and Bryan Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Dialogue on Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Dialogue on Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>EXT. STREET - DAY</td>
<td>WS of Bryan walking along the street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Bryan calling and talking to Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of Bryan leaving the house and talking to Sabrina on the phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of house from exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WS of cafe exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS of house garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

251
Appendix I: Online Survey
Romantic Comedy Television Programs and Long-term Relationships in Singapore

Demographics

1. Age *
   - 15-19
   - 20-24
   - 25-29
   - 30-34
   - 35-39
   - 40+

2. Are you a Singaporean Citizen or Singapore Permanent resident? *
   - Yes
   - No

3. Gender *
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other - Write In

253
4. Ethnic Background *
- Chinese
- Malay
- Indian
- Eurasian
- Other - Write In

5. This survey focuses on the romantic relationships between heterosexual couples in television programmes and in real life. Do you feel that this relates to you? *
- Yes
- No

Relationships in Singapore

6. Marriage is something that will happen eventually if you are in a long term relationship. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Buying a house together is something long-term couples plan for. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Long-term couples eventually will have children. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Children should be had after marriage. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships in Singapore
10. Singaporeans place more importance on their careers and improving of social status as compared to romantic relationships. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Singaporeans are too picky when it comes to finding long term partners. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Singaporeans are conscious of their social status, which breeds a sense of comparison. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Lack of worklife balance makes dating in Singapore hard. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Relationships in Singapore**

14. Males in Singapore feel pressured to satisfy females expectations when it comes to romantic relationships. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Females in Singapore feel pressured to satisfy males expectations when it comes to romantic relationships. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
16. Males in Singapore are picky when it comes to looking for long-term partners. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Females in Singapore are picky when it comes to looking for long-term partners. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

18. Males in Singapore are direct in their approach to romantic relationships. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Females in Singapore are direct in their approach to romantic relationships. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Males in Singapore draw inspiration from what they see on television shows when they are deciding on a romantic activity. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Females in Singapore draw inspiration from what they see on television shows when they are deciding on a romantic activity. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Long-term Partner Qualities and Traits

22. Passion *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Faithful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Unimportant</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
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<td>24</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Asian vs Western Values

32. How would you rate each quality culturally. Asian or Western? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Television Programmes

33. With romantic comedy television programmes, how often do they have a romantic relationship between two people? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34. With romantic comedy television programmes, how often do they have a good amount of comedic elements and scenes? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35. With romantic comedy television programmes, how often do they have a positive ending? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. With romantic comedy television programmes, how often do they portray characters that are realistic? *

- Never
- Sometimes
- All the time

37. With romantic comedy television shows, how often do they portray romantic gestures or activities that are realistic? *

- Never
- Sometimes
- All the time

**Television Programmes**

38. In a typical week, how many hours do you spend watching television programmes? *

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-9
- 10-14
- 15-21
- 22+

39. What percentage of your weekly television programme viewing is spent watching programmes with strong romantic and comedic aspects? *

0% [ ] 50% [ ] 100% [ ]

40. How often do you watch Asian made programmes? *

- Always
- Usually
- About Half the Time
- Seldom
- Never
41. How often do you watch Western made programmes? *
   - Always
   - Usually
   - About Half the Time
   - Seldom
   - Never

Romantic Television Programming and Long-term Partner Choices

42. Romantic comedy television programmes of Western origin have influenced how I select a long-term partner. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

43. Romantic comedy television programmes of Asian origin have influenced how I select a long-term partner. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

44. Characters in Western television programmes portray qualities that I look for in a partner. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45. Characters in Asian television programmes portray qualities that I look for in a partner. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Media

Please watch this 10 minute video before moving on to the next part of the survey.

Evaluation of video
46. The video presented a romantic relationship between two people. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. The video presented had a good amount of comedic elements and scenes. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. The video presented had a positive ending. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

49. The video portrayed characters that were realistic. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50. The video portrayed romantic gestures or activities that were realistic. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. The video presented portrayed local Singaporean culture accurately. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of video**

52. Overall how would you rate the video? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
53. Overall how would you rate the quality of the acting in the video? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54. Overall how would you rate the quality of the editing for the video? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55. Overall how would you rate the quality of the storytelling of the video? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56. Any additional comments about the video?

Demographics

57. Monthly Personal Income *

- Circle Less than $1000
- Circle $1000-$1999
- Circle $2000-$2999
- Circle $3000-$3999
- Circle $4000-$4999
- Circle $5000-$5999
- Circle $6000+
58. Highest qualification *

- Below Secondary School
- Secondary
- Post Secondary (non-Tertiary)
- Diploma and Prof Qualification
- University
- Postgraduate

59. Relationship Status *

- Single
- In a relationship
- Married
- Divorced

60. How long have you been in your current relationship?