

Shark Fin

When Traditional Dish Meets Ethical Awareness

Fostering Conscious Dining Habits Among Asians
Rooted in Traditional Food Beliefs

Yi- An Chen | Master Thesis

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Author

Yi-An Chen

Master of Science

Delft University of Technology

Faculty of Industrial Design

Design for Interaction

Graduation Committee

Chair

Dr. ir. H.N.J. (Rick) Schifferstein

Mentor

M. (Maurizio) Filippi



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Coming to the end of the master program in Delft, it went by fast, but intense and meaningful. At the beginning of the second year, I still had no idea what my graduation topic would be. I had no strong interest in anything in particular, except for one thing I've always been sure of, my love for food. It has been a fascinating journey to discover how design can take shape through food and interact with it in various ways. I was truly grateful to graduate with a topic based on the thing I love most.

The thesis process was quite challenging for me. Although I started with a topic I was really excited about, it turned out to be more challenging than I had expected. Big thanks to my supervisor, Rick and mentor Maurizio. I always remember when Rick said, "Don't be afraid of making a statement in your design, it's important to have personality as a designer." That sentence not only encouraged me to be braver in my design process, but it also became the best line to sum up my entire master journey. I believe that finding the balance between subtlety and making a clear statement will be an essential part of my design style, and it's something I will continue to develop in the future.

I also want to thank my parents for giving me the freedom to study in the Netherlands and for always supporting me when I needed. Thanks to my sister Tiffany, who is also my best friend, for picking up my phone calls at every possible time. She provided me not only with technical advice but also with emotional support. I also want to thank CPC, Jade, and Chance for always having my back and for being my living dictionary whenever I had nonstop questions. Thanks to all the friends who guided and supported me both physically and mentally throughout this process. Without the help of the supervisor team and friends, I would probably still be struggling in the world of shark fins.

Finally, this thesis marks not only the end of my master program, but also the beginning of my journey as a designer. I will continue to work on food-related design and explore the meaning behind taste, creating food that is both delicious and meaningful.

Executive Summary

This graduation project explores how Asians, particularly in regions where shark fin is traditionally served, navigate food choices at formal banquets when confronted with a culturally symbolic dish, shark fin soup. It examines how traditional food beliefs influence decision-making and how individuals balance ethical awareness with emotional tensions in response to family and societal expectations. The project also seeks to identify opportunities for design to support more conscious dining practices in group settings.

In the early research phase, seven participants from diverse Asian backgrounds were interviewed to uncover their views on shark fin soup and the emotions associated with it. Participants were shown an image of the dish alongside a traceable menu and asked to reflect on their experiences through a series of guided questions. PREMO, an emotion-assessment tool, was used to capture emotional responses before and after viewing the traceability information. The qualitative data collected were analyzed and synthesized into user archetypes to inform the next design phase.

Insights from the interviews shaped the project's design statement: to create a dining experience that honors the cultural traditions associated with shark fin while fostering ethical reflection. The design aims to help diners navigate social expectations without compromising personal values. Three key criteria guided the design development: Social Harmony, Cultural Sensitivity, and Personal Autonomy.

Three initial design directions were explored through user testing and workshops. These explorations led to the final concept: a double-layered glass sharing bowl for shark fin soup, accompanied by a set of supporting tableware designed to prompt reflection and encourage individual choice within a traditional dining setting.

The final design was evaluated with six participants, each representing one of the previously identified archetypes. Full-scale 3D-printed prototypes were presented during the interviews. Participants engaged in a pre-post visual response task and PREMO assessment to capture their emotional and reflective responses to the design, providing insight into its potential to support more conscious dining habits in culturally significant contexts.

The discussion reveals that although the final design encouraged reflection and supported more conscious choices, participants' reactions were still influenced by cultural habits and social expectations. Many appreciated that the design made the symbolism visible and gave them space to decide for themselves, but its effect also depended on the dining context and family roles. The evaluation suggests that promoting conscious dining extends beyond providing information or using symbols; it requires careful attention to emotional engagement, cultural sensitivity, and gently creating space for personal choice within shared traditions. This points to the importance of designing not just for individual change, but also for the complex and shared nature of group dining.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	9	Chapter 5. User Archetypes and Behavioral Themes	41
1.1 Context: Traditional food culture and changing consumption behaviors	10	Chapter 6. Design Directions	45
1.2 Problem Statement	11	Chapter 7. Design Process	49
1.3 Research Objectives	12	7.1 Design Criteria based on Research Insights	50
1.4 Research Questions	12	7.2 Ideation and Concepts	51
Chapter 2. Literature Reviews	15	7.3 Design Reflections Across Concepts	60
2.1 Cultural Symbolism and Traditional Food Beliefs	16	Chapter 8. Final Design Choice	63
2.2 Social Influence on Dining Decisions	19	8.1 Overview of Final Design	65
2.3 The Environmental Impact of Shark Fin Consumption	20	8.2 Design in Context	68
2.4 Trust, Ethics, and Transparency in Food Sourcing	21	8.3 How Design Reflects the Criteria	69
2.5 Gaps in Literature and Research Direction	21	8.4 Evaluation	70
Chapter 3. Research Design	25	Chapter 9. Discussion	75
3.1 Research Approach	26	9.1 Insights Based on Each Criterion	76
3.2 Participants and Sampling	26	9.2 Limitations	77
3.3 Methods	27	9.3 Recommendations and Future Steps	78
3.4 Data Analysis Process	30	Chapter 10. Conclusion and Reflection	79
Chapter 4. Insights from Interviews and PREMO Analysis	31	References	82
4.1 Analysis of Interviews	32	Appendix	86
4.2 Key Insights from Interviews	36		
4.3 PREMO Results: Emotional Reactions and Shift	38		
4.4 Insights from PREMO	40		

1. Introduction

1.1 Context: Traditional food culture and changing consumption behaviors

1.2 Problem Statement

1.3 Research Objectives

1.4 Research Questions

1.1 Context: Traditional food culture and changing consumption behaviors

In many Asian cultures, food is more than just nutrition, it is a powerful symbol of cultural identity, social values, and family heritage. Dishes like shark fin soup are not only culinary creations but carry deep meanings, often associated with status, respect, and hospitality. These symbolic foods are notably featured at social events, such as weddings and banquets, where they convey generosity and social status.

However, these long-standing traditions are facing growing criticism. Growing awareness of sustainability, ethical food sourcing, and environmental concerns has led many, especially younger generations, to question the consumption of these traditional dishes. They often find themselves caught between respecting cultural customs and sticking to personal ethical beliefs. This tension is especially visible at social gatherings, where guests may feel pressured to consume traditional dishes out of respect for the host, even when they have ethical concerns.

A lack of transparency in food sourcing further complicates the issue. Guests may unknowingly consume foods that conflict with their values because restaurants or hosts do not show the sourcing information. Even when such details are provided, doubts about their authenticity still exist, making it difficult for consumers to make informed choices. As a result, the challenge of fostering conscious dining habits, balancing cultural respect with ethical awareness, has become increasingly relevant in Asian dining settings.



Figure 1. Dining image generated with midjourney

1.2 Problem Statement

Traditional Asian social events, such as weddings and banquets, frequently serve symbolic dishes like shark fin soup, which represent honor, status, and respect. However, these dishes have sparked ethical debates due to concerns about sustainability, animal welfare, and transparency in food sourcing. As awareness of ethical dining grows, people often experience a conflict between maintaining cultural customs and making responsible food choices.

Social pressure further enhances this conflict. Guests may feel forced or expected to consume traditional dishes to avoid being rude or disrespectful, even if these foods conflict with their values. This pressure can lead to silent compliance, where individuals consume these dishes without openly expressing their discomfort. Furthermore, the lack of clear information about food origins can leave consumers uncertain about their choices. Even when transparency is provided, skepticism may still exist, preventing consumers from feeling confident in their decisions.

This thesis aims to address these issues by examining how cultural beliefs, social expectations, and transparency in sourcing influence dining decisions at social events. The goal is to develop practical strategies for promoting conscious dining habits that respect cultural traditions while supporting ethical eating practices.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study investigates the influence of cultural beliefs about food and information on food sourcing on individuals' emotions and dining choices at social events, such as weddings and banquets, particularly when shark fin soup is served. It examines how social expectations and cultural norms can influence what people eat, sometimes leading them to stay silent or feel conflicted about their choices. By understanding the emotional and social factors that influence dining behavior in these settings, this research aims to develop practical ways to help individuals make more informed food choices. These choices respect cultural traditions while also considering ethical and sustainable values.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: How do cultural food beliefs and sourcing information affect people's emotions and food choices at social events like weddings, especially when shark fin soup is involved?

This question is crucial because it demonstrates how cultural values and transparency in sourcing can influence emotions and decisions, even when ethical concerns are present. Understanding these emotional dynamics can help create strategies that encourage conscious dining while still respecting cultural traditions.

RQ2: How do social expectations and cultural norms at dining events interact with individual considerations of ethical and sustainable food choices when traditional dishes are served?

This question is important because it highlights the tension between social pressure and personal ethics, illustrating how social interactions can influence dining decisions. Understanding this conflict can help create solutions that honor both individual values and cultural traditions.

RQ3: What are potential strategies for fostering more conscious dining habits among Asians, especially with their traditional food beliefs and the impact of information regarding food origins and sourcing?

This question is important because it focuses on finding practical ways to encourage conscious dining without compromising cultural heritage. It aims to ensure that sustainable and ethical eating can coexist with traditional culinary practices.



Figure 2. Image of Shark Fin Soup

Note. Retrieved from Shin Pang Foods (https://www.shihpang.com.tw/product_d.php?lang=tw&tb=1&id=191)

2. Literature Review

- 2.1 Cultural Symbolism and Traditional Food Beliefs
- 2.2 Social Influence on Dining Decisions
- 2.3 The Environmental Impact of Shark Fin Consumption
- 2.4 Trust, Ethics, and Transparency in Food Sourcing
- 2.5 Gaps in Literature and Research Direction

2.1 Cultural Symbolism and Traditional Food Beliefs

Culture Symbolism

In many Asian traditions, food holds meaning beyond nourishment; it is closely tied to cultural identity and social practice. This is especially evident in formal dining occasions such as wedding banquets, where dishes are carefully selected not only for their flavor but for the messages they carry. In these settings, food becomes a symbolic gesture, used to express celebration, respect, and social standing. Among the many ceremonial dishes, shark fin soup has long been viewed as a sign of prestige, a luxurious item often served to honor guests and mark special occasions. The following section examines how shark fins gained their cultural significance within traditional banquet settings and how their symbolic meaning continues to influence perceptions and practices today.

History of Shark Fin

The historical significance of shark fin consumption is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, evolving over centuries from a rare delicacy to a powerful symbol of wealth and status. Shark fin consumption can be traced back to the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279) or even earlier. During this time, shark fin gained recognition as a delicacy, appearing on the tables of the elite rather than being a common food source (Fabinyi, M., 2011). By the Ming Dynasty (AD 1368–1644), shark fins had become a formal part of haute cuisine, frequently served at imperial banquets for emperors. It was also included in banquets for Japanese imperial ancestry, further emphasizing its prestige across parts of Asia (Crl, A., 2017). The inclusion of shark fin in imperial feasts elevated their status in Asian dining culture, establishing it as a luxury food with significant cultural and social importance.

Serving shark fin at imperial banquets was not only about indulgence; it was also a way to honor and show respect to visitors or distinguished guests. The risks and challenges associated with obtaining shark fins made it a fitting tribute for high-ranking officials and members of royal courts. Shark fin became a symbol of respect and a way to recognize the importance of valued guests (Crl, A., 2017). Over time, this tradition extended beyond the imperial court, spreading through elite circles. The shark fin became a symbol of wealth, social status, and connections within the upper class (Fabinyi, M., 2011).

In addition, due to its exotic and rare nature, shark fin was considered a valuable ingredient in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Since the Ming Dynasty, it has been believed to strengthen the body and provide tonic effects, making it a desirable component in Traditional Chinese Medicine (Fabinyi, M., 2011).

Shark fin from sea to plate

The journey of shark fins from sea to plate is relatively complex, which is one of the reasons it is considered a luxury food. Sharks are captured using various methods, ranging from large-scale industrial operations to small-scale artisanal fishing. Some fishers specifically target sharks, while others catch them incidentally alongside other fish, such as tuna (Jaiteh, V. F., 2017).

One of the most controversial practices in this process is finning, which involves removing the high-value fins from the shark and discarding the rest of the body (Choy, C., 2022). During this practice, the fins are cut off, and the shark carcass is often thrown back into the sea, sometimes while the shark is still alive (Crl, A., 2017). Finning maximizes the number of shark fins that can be collected while minimizing the storage space required for the less valuable carcasses (Choy, C., 2022).

After the fins are removed, they undergo several processing steps, including drying, grading, and skin removal. The fins are typically dried on racks at sea or in factory warehouses. Once dried, the fins are graded based on size, species, and the cutting method—either a straight cut, which retains more meat, or a moon cut, which includes less meat (Jabado, R., 2017). Much of the trade occurs after the fins have been further processed, with the skin and other morphological features removed (Houtan, K., 2020).

The shark fin trade is a global industry supported by a network of suppliers, ranging from largescale businesses to small-scale fishers (Jaiteh, V. F., 2017). Historically, Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Singapore have been the primary trading hubs for shark fins (Tsoi, K., 2016). Restaurants can source shark fins directly from traders, while customers can also purchase fins to prepare the traditional dish at home.



Figure 3. Image of Shark Finning

Note. From XinHua Retrieved from (<https://sharkstewards.org/shark-finning/>)

According to an online shark fin trading store, the preparation process for dried shark fins begins by soaking the fins in water. For smaller shark fins, soaking is recommended for approximately 12 hours, while larger fins require around 24 hours. It is advised to change the water every 4 hours during this process. After soaking, place the shark fin in a pot with a slice of ginger, peeled and flattened, along with green onion. Bring the water to a boil, then turn off the heat and keep the lid closed. Once the water has cooled, remove the shark fin, rinse it thoroughly, remove any gel foam from the fin, and drain the water. The prepared shark fin can then be stored in the refrigerator and used later for soup or other cooking purposes.

To cook shark fin soup, begin by chopping chicken into large pieces and preparing pork ribs and ham by washing and slicing them after blanching in boiling water. Peel and flatten the ginger. Place the shark fin in a soup mesh bag, then boil water and add all the ingredients to the pot. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 3 hours. Adjust the taste by adding salt as needed. Strain the soup to separate the liquid from the residue, remove the shark fin from the mesh bag, and the dish is ready to be served. (美味食譜 | 安興號)

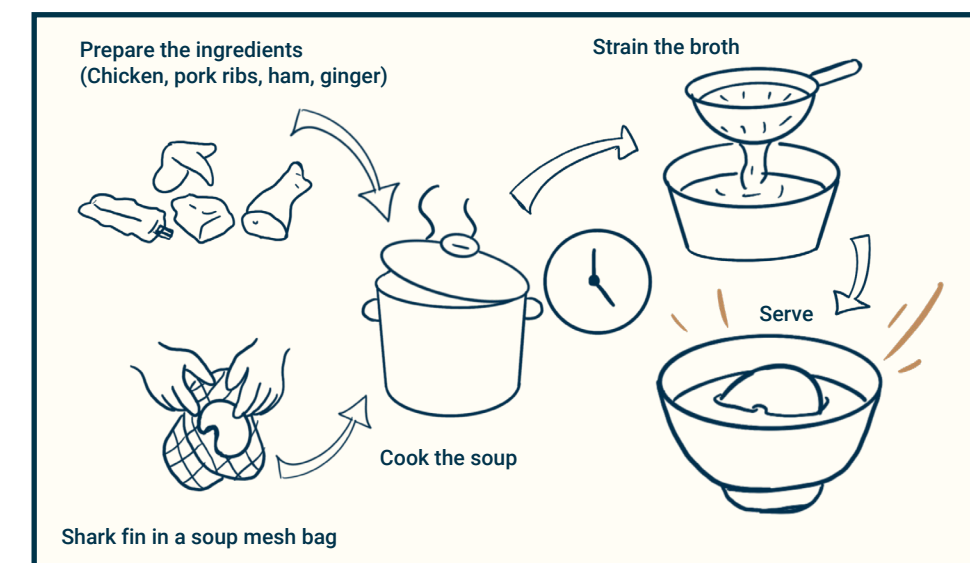


Figure 4. Steps of cooking Sharkfin Soup

Traditional Food Belief

In traditional Chinese food culture, the concept of "**Medicine-Diet Homology**"—the belief that food and medicine share the same origins—is deeply intertwined with traditional food beliefs. According to the literature, individuals often identify specific foods as beneficial for maintaining health and managing illnesses, accompanied by detailed preparation practices intended to enhance their medicinal effects. For example, chicken leg stewed with astragalus is commonly recommended to alleviate sneezing, while consuming fish is believed to "nourish the blood," emphasizing the nutritional and therapeutic significance attributed to specific foods. (Li, C., 2016)

Shark fin soup, similarly, has been historically valued for its perceived richness in collagen, believed to support skin health, bone strength, and general vitality. **However, contemporary research has revealed that the actual collagen and nutritional value provided by shark fin is relatively low when compared to other more accessible foods.** In addition to its limited nutritional contribution, shark fin consumption poses potential health risks. As apex predators occupying high positions in marine food webs, sharks, particularly long-lived species, accumulate and sometimes biomagnify toxic metals such as arsenic (As), mercury (Hg), and its organic form, methylmercury (MeHg). Excessive intake of these harmful substances has been associated with serious health concerns, including an increased risk of skin, bladder, and lung cancers. (Barcia, L. G., 2020)

This discrepancy between traditional beliefs and modern scientific understanding reflects a broader tension between cultural heritage and emerging concerns about health and sustainability, underscoring the importance of fostering more conscious dining habits rooted in both respect for tradition and awareness of contemporary knowledge.

2.2 Social Influence on Dining Decisions

Social Conformity in Asian Dining Habits

Shark fin soup holds a prominent place in social events, particularly in Asian cultures, due to deeply rooted social expectations and cultural norms. Abalone, sea cucumber, shark fin, and fish maw are considered the "Four Delicacies" of Chinese cuisine, with shark fin being the most popular (廚房說書人). Its presence at banquets, especially weddings, corporate events, and family gatherings, goes beyond the dish itself to reflect the social dynamics it represents (Choy, C., 2024). Shark fin is regarded as a luxury food due to its high financial value, individual perceptions, and significant social meaning. The perceived luxury of shark fins is also influenced by factors like sustainability and authenticity (Hartmann, L. H., 2016). Shark fin soup is often considered a "high-status" dish that enhances the overall prestige of an event (Fabinyi, M., 2011).

Family hierarchies and cultural norms often create pressure to include shark fin in banquets, especially at weddings (Wang, J.). Serving shark fin soup at these events is commonly seen as a way to maintain relationships in business, family, and friendships. Guests may feel compelled to accept shark fins when it is served, even if they are uncomfortable consuming them. The statement "**It's not up to me**" reflects the feeling of having food choices dictated by factors beyond one's control (Tang, C., 2021). As a result, many individuals passively consume shark fin soup at such events, even though they would not choose to purchase it themselves (Choy, C., 2024).



Bourdieu's Theory

The continued consumption of shark fin soup at these events can be understood through Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus refers to the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals develop based on their experiences within social structures. It encompasses the way people perceive, understand, and act in the world, often without being fully conscious of their behavior (Wagner, B., 2015). Habitus is a complex concept that includes personal preferences, social rules, restrictions, and conflicts, all of which are tied to an individual's position within the social hierarchy (Wagner, B., 2015).

In the context of shark fin consumption, habitus explains why people may conform to social norms and expectations, even if they have concerns about the ethical or environmental implications of consuming shark fin soup (Wagner, B., 2015). These social norms and expectations become deeply rooted over time, making it challenging to alter such behaviors. People may continue this dining practice because it feels natural or to avoid social awkwardness.

While shark fins remain a prominent feature in social events, growing awareness, especially among younger generations, has sparked increasing concern about the environmental and ethical impacts of shark fin consumption (Choy, C., 2024).

2.3 The Environmental Impact of Shark Fin Consumption

The impact of shark finning

The high demand for shark fins in Asian countries is a primary reason for overfishing, which has led to a significant decline in shark populations (Feitosa, L., 2018). Many shark species grow slowly, reach sexual maturity late, and have low reproductive rates, making them particularly vulnerable to overfishing (But, G., 2020). According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), some of the most well-known species in this category include the Whale Shark, Basking Shark, and Great Hammerhead (Cardeñosa, D., 2018). Oceanic shark populations have declined by up to 70% over the past 50 years (MacNeil, M. A., 2020). Additionally, a quarter of the world's ray and shark species are now considered threatened (Tsoi, K., 2016). Shark finning, a practice that contributes to the unsustainable exploitation of sharks, is one of the primary causes of this population decline (Jaiteh, V. F., 2017). Currently, 93% of shark species are listed as at risk on the IUCN Red List, with 14 of these species commonly involved in the shark finning industry. Overfishing of sharks also leads to biodiversity loss, as sharks are apex predators that play a critical role in maintaining the health and balance of marine ecosystems. The decline of shark populations has significantly impacted the structure and diversity of marine habitats (Choy, C., 2022).

Figure x shows the global percentage of decline was calculated by comparing the LPI values from 1970 with the final assessment year based on the full range of modelled results (posterior distributions). The black line shows the overall average trend, the white lines represent the 95% credible intervals, and the grey lines illustrate each individual simulation. (Pacoureau, 2021)

Global LPI for 18 oceanic sharks estimated from 1970 to 2018

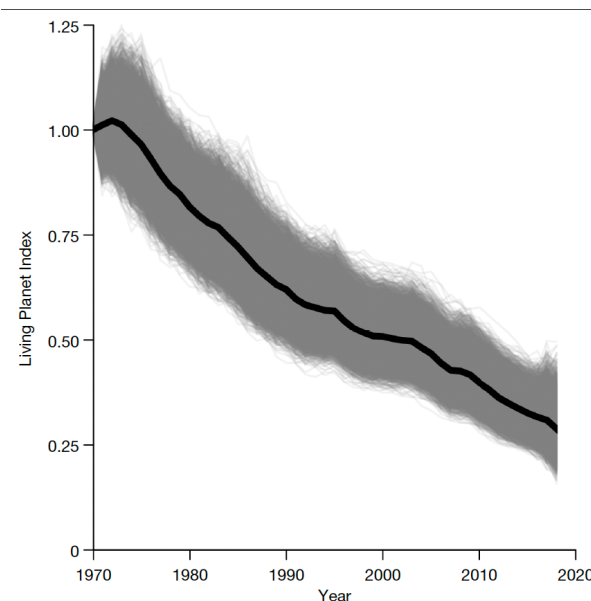


Figure 5. Graph of ocean shark population (Pacoureau, 2021)

2.4 Trust, Ethics, and Transparency in Food Sourcing

Misinformation and Knowledge Gap

Many consumers are unaware of how shark fins are harvested and the negative environmental impacts of their consumption. For instance, when eating shark fin soup, some consumers may not realize they are consuming an endangered species (Choy, C., 2022). Additionally, shark fin is often mistakenly believed to have medicinal or high nutritional value. However, it is primarily composed of collagenous protein fibers and is tasteless. Furthermore, shark fins contain high levels of mercury, a toxic element harmful to human health (Choy, C., 2024). A lack of transparency in banquet settings can further contribute to misunderstandings and a lack of awareness about the origins of shark fins, many of which come from unmanaged and unsustainable sources (Choy, C., 2024). The processing of shark fins makes it challenging to identify the species, which complicates the enforcement of conservation laws. Advanced techniques, such as DNA barcoding and molecular methods, can help identify shark species from processed fins, aiding efforts to combat illegal trade (Choy, C., 2022).

Given the widespread misinformation and limited public understanding, it becomes critical to address not only what consumers know, but also how they access trustworthy information about food sourcing. This is where the role of effective food traceability becomes essential.

Food Traceability

These challenges, including the information gap and the lack of clear details about the origin of the food and its species, make it difficult for consumers to make informed choices about both health risks and environmental impact. This situation highlights the importance of having better food traceability. A complete food traceability system should ideally have two main functions: checking quality before purchase and tracing problems afterward. (Hou, B., 2019) The first, called ex ante quality verification, helps consumers confirm the safety and quality of food before they buy it. This is often done through labels that show essential information, such as where the food comes from or whether it meets specific safety standards, making it easier for consumers to find and trust this information without too much effort. Examples of these labels include origin certification, quality inspection marks, and safety assurance badges.

The second function, called ex post traceability, is about tracking food back through the supply chain if something goes wrong. It allows quick recalls if a food safety issue is found and helps hold producers and sellers accountable. For this to work well, the system needs to record key risk points along the way, such as during farming, slaughter, transportation, and sales. (Hou, B., 2019)

Food traceability is recognized as a crucial tool to ensure food safety and quality throughout the supply chain. (Zhao, J., 2020) It is also considered one of the keys to restoring consumer confidence in food consumption, as it bridges the gap between consumers and producers.

Generational Differences

While improving food traceability can empower consumers to make better-informed decisions, the effectiveness of such systems also depends on how different generations perceive and respond to food-related values and risks. Exploring these generational differences offers more profound insight into changing dining behaviors.

There are notable generational differences in attitudes toward shark fin consumption, reflecting a shift in values and priorities over time. Younger generations are generally more aware of the environmental impacts and are less likely to support shark fin consumption. In contrast, older generations often adhere to traditional cultural beliefs and practices, which include consuming shark fin soup (Tsoi, K., 2016). This generational gap highlights the challenge of balancing cultural traditions with modern concerns about sustainability and wildlife conservation.

2.5 Gaps in Literature and Research Direction

Gaps in Literature

Existing literature on traditional food culture in Asia has extensively examined the cultural significance of symbolic dishes like shark fin soup, highlighting their complex roles in social and cultural contexts. These studies have explored various perspectives on shark fin, including its historical value as a symbol of wealth and status, its use in formal dining to showcase hospitality, and the ethical concerns associated with its consumption. Research has addressed issues such as sustainability, animal welfare, and health risks, particularly the environmental impact of shark fin harvesting and the negative health impact linked to heavy metal contamination in shark products. However, despite this extensive focus, several critical gaps remain in the current body of knowledge.

Several significant gaps remain within the existing body of knowledge:



Emotional Dynamics Remain Underexplored

While many studies have examined the cultural symbolism of traditional dishes, few have investigated how these cultural beliefs interact with emotions such as pride, guilt, nostalgia, or discomfort, especially when ethical concerns are involved.



Social Pressures Are Not Fully Understood

Although social expectations at Asian social events are widely recognized, limited insight is available into how these pressures influence individual decision-making, often leading to silent compliance or ethical conflict.



Limited Focus on Traceability and Transparency

Research has largely overlooked the role of sourcing information in dining decisions, particularly how transparency in food origins can shape consumers' emotions, trust, and willingness to make ethical choices.

Research Direction

To address these gaps, this study will explore how cultural food beliefs and sourcing information shape emotions and dining decisions at social events, focusing on the tension between cultural traditions and ethical awareness. It will also examine how social expectations influence dining behavior, leading to silent compliance or ethical conflict.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Approach

3.2 Participants and Sampling

3.3 Methods

3.4 Data Analysis Process

3.1 Research Approach

This research focuses on the social and cultural dining settings in Asian countries, specifically on occasions such as wedding banquets, formal dining, and family gatherings. This study uses qualitative methods to explore how people's belief, values and emotions influence their food choices. By focusing on how participants interpret their cultural and social experiences, the research aims to understand the deeper reasons behind their decisions.

To gather these insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted, offering participants the freedom to share their personal experiences and cultural views while ensuring that key themes were consistently covered. Additionally, the study used the PREMO, an emotional measurement tool (Desmet, P.M.A., 2018), to capture participants' emotional responses before and after viewing traceable and non-traceable menus. This method provided a more comprehensive view of how traceability and transparency affect dining choices, revealing not just what participants said, but how they felt.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

This study included nine participants from Asian cultural backgrounds, including Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and Malaysian adults, with ages ranging from 20 to 62 years. This broad age range ensured a mix of perspectives, providing the lens for exploring how cultural beliefs, social norms, and dining habits related to shark fin consumption differ between younger and older generations.

Participants were recruited based on several criteria that focused on cultural background, familiarity with shark fin, and experience in traditional dining settings, such as wedding banquets and formal dining. This approach ensured that participants could provide meaningful insights into the cultural, social, and emotional factors shaping dining decisions.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Participants who are familiar with shark fin, which can be through direct consumption, cultural knowledge, and also exposure through media.
- Participants should have experience of attending a traditional wedding banquet or other formal dining where sharkfin soup is commonly served.
- Participants should be willing to share their perspectives and feelings about traditional food beliefs and dining habits on food choice.

This targeted selection group allowed the study to capture a variety of perspectives while maintaining a focus on participants who could offer culturally rich insights related to the research questions.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews in this study were designed to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and decision-making processes related to traditional dining, with a particular focus on shark fin soup. The interviews covered three main topics:



Dining Memories: Participants were encouraged to share memorable dining experiences, especially those involving traditional dishes like shark fin soup. They described the settings, the people present, the social dynamics, and the emotions they experienced during these meals.



Food Beliefs: Questions explored participants' understanding of traditional food beliefs, including the cultural values associated with these dishes and any perceived health benefits. This section aims to uncover how cultural beliefs influence their perceptions and attitudes toward traditional foods.



Decision-Making at Banquets: Participants discussed how they make food choices at banquets or formal gatherings, including whether they feel social pressure to consume certain dishes like shark fin soup. This section revealed the role of social expectations in shaping their dining behavior.

To make the interviews more engaging and to help participants recall their experiences more vividly, each participant was shown a photo of shark fin soup. This visual prompt served as a memory trigger, allowing them to reflect on their familiarity with the dish and express their thoughts in greater detail. For more information, refer to Appendix B.

Participant Code	Age	Nationality	Occupation
Participant 1	25	Taiwanese Malaysian	Master Student
Participant 2	55	Taiwanese Married to Dutch	Chief
Participant 3	26	Chinese	Industrial Designer
Participant 4	35	Japanese Chinese Married to Dutch	Nail Artist
Participant 5	41	Taiwanese	Project Menager
Participant 6	31	Taiwanese	Ex Environmental social government engineer
Participant 7	40	Taiwanese	Food Designer

Figure 6. Participant list for the Interview



Figure 7,8. Traceable menu shown to the participant during interview

3.3.2 Stimuli: Shark Fin Soup Image and Traceable Menu Presentation

Visual Presented
At the beginning of each interview, participants were shown a photo of shark fin soup. This image helped trigger their immediate reactions and memories of the dish. Without any menu or sourcing details, participants shared their thoughts based on their own knowledge, cultural background, and past experiences. This approach captured their natural, unfiltered views of shark fin soup.

Traceable Menu Presentation
After participants shared their initial reactions and answered some interview questions, they were shown a traceable menu. This menu provided detailed information about the shark fin used in the dish, including:

- **Species Identification:** The specific type of shark used.
- **Catch Method:** How the shark was captured, including the fishing technique.
- **Traceability Icons:** Visual symbols showing sustainable sourcing, legal compliance, or environmental impact.

Participants then used the PREMO tool again to select the emotions they felt after seeing this traceable information. This helped the study capture any changes in their emotional responses caused by the added transparency.

3.3.3 PREMO emotional measurement before/after menu exposure

Participants first used the PREMO chart when they saw the image of shark fin soup, choosing the facial expression that best showed how they felt. After reviewing the traceable menu, they used the PREMO chart again to select the emotion that matched their feelings at that moment. They were also encouraged to explain why they chose those emotions.

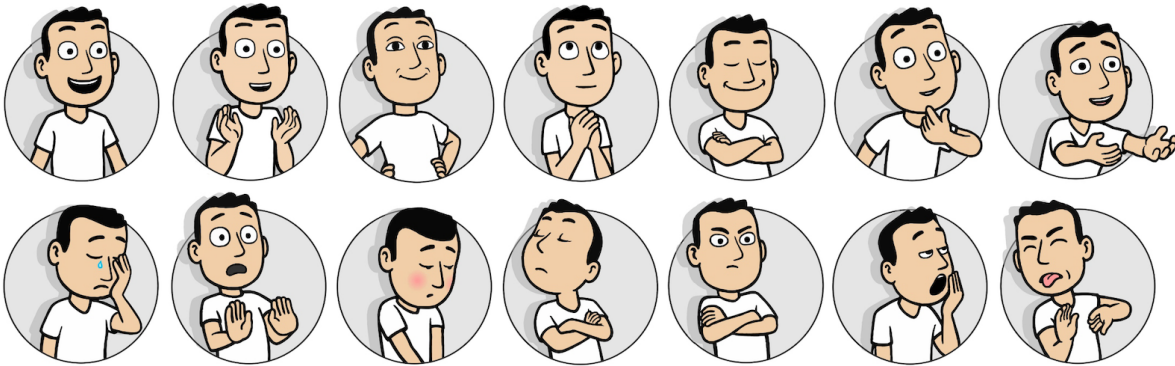


Figure 9. Image of PREMO by Desmet (Desmet, P.M.A., 2018)

3.4 Data Analysis Process

Transcription and Translation:

All interviews were audio recorded and the recording data were first transcribed into the script with Otter.ai, and the Mandarin was translated into English with Claude.

Familiarization with Data:

The data were carefully reviewed, with transcripts being read and re-read to ensure a thorough understanding of participants' responses.

Coding Process:

Thematic analysis began with open coding, where codes were assigned to specific text segments based on participants' descriptions, feelings, and opinions. These codes were then grouped into broader themes with related categories, providing a clear structure for analyzing the data.

Contextual Quote Extraction:

Key quotes were selected and grouped under each theme to highlight important insights, making sure participants' perspectives were accurately represented. These quotes were anonymized such as Participant 1 or Participant 2.

Identify the User Archetypes and Behavioural Themes:

User archetypes and behavioral themes were identified by examining recurring patterns in participants' attitudes, emotions, and decision-making strategies. Participants with similar views and behaviors were grouped into archetypes, each representing a distinct approach to dining decisions. These archetypes were then connected to behavioral themes that highlighted how cultural values, social pressure, ethical awareness, and curiosity shaped their choices.

More information about Ethical Consideration can be seen in Appendix A

4. Insights from Interview and PreMo Analysis

4.1 Analysis of Interviews

4.2 Key Insights from Interviews

4.3 PREMO Results: Emotional Reactions and Shift

4.4 Insights from PREMO

4.1 Analysis of interviews

4.1.1 Research Context

This study focused on exploring the cultural beliefs, emotional experiences, and dining decisions of Asian adults from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and Malaysian participants. These individuals were selected because of their cultural familiarity with shark fin soup, a dish that holds significant symbolic value in many Asian dining traditions. The interviews were designed to capture participants' memories, beliefs, and emotions related to shark fin soup, particularly in the context of formal dining settings such as wedding banquets and family gatherings. By engaging participants from various backgrounds, the study aimed to gain a broader understanding of how cultural symbolism, social expectations, and ethical awareness influence dining decisions in these settings.

4.1.2 Interview Themes Identified

Through thematic analysis, several key themes emerged from the interviews, reflecting participants' complex perspectives on shark fin soup in traditional dining settings. These themes capture how cultural values, social expectations, and ethical considerations shape participants' thoughts and behaviors.

Theme Number	Theme Title	Core Idea	Keywords
1	Cultural Significance and Symbolism	Shark fin related to tradition, respect, social status	Heritage, Symbol, Prestige, Ceremony
2	Social Pressure and Silent Compliance	People follow norms even if they disagree in order to avoid conflict.	Group norms, Respect, Elders, Silent Resistance
3	Emotional Conflict	Pride in tradition vs. guilt over ethics and environmental harm.	Nostalgia, Discomfort, Pride, Guilt
4	Food Transparency and Trust	Desire to know food origins; prefer visual or story-based information.	Labeling, Visual Cues, Authenticity, Storytelling
5	Transitioning Values and Conscious Dining Habits	Shift from passive eating to intentional, ethical food choices.	Curiosity, Health, Change, Awareness

Figure 10. Summary of theme identified

Theme 1: Cultural Significance and Symbolism

Shark fin soup was consistently viewed as a symbol of respect, status, and tradition, particularly in formal dining settings such as wedding banquets. Participants described the dish as a way to honor guests and demonstrate generosity. For some, serving shark fin soup was an essential part of maintaining cultural heritage and showcasing hospitality.

One participant highlighted this cultural significance, stating, *"Shark fin was always associated with wealth and social status." (Participant 7)* Another participant echoed this view, explaining that its value is rooted in *"its scarcity and symbolism. In our food culture, it represents something that only the wealthy can afford." (Participant 6)* These reflections emphasize that shark fin soup is not merely a dish but a powerful symbol of social status and prestige.

The connection between shark fin soup and cultural tradition was further reinforced by family dynamics in dining settings. One participant shared a memory of a family gathering, noting how elders often take charge of dining decisions: *"When I was in L.A. with my dad's friends. It's like a gathering. Like a family friend gathering from a friend we haven't seen in a long time... We tried to get the bill, but that uncle got the bill instead because he was really fast... That uncle did. It was an uncle." (Participant 1)* This story illustrates how younger individuals often defer to family elders, who maintain control over dining decisions, including the choice to serve shark fin soup.

The importance of tradition was also highlighted by another participant who shared their experience of planning a wedding menu: *"When planning my own wedding menu, I told the elders I didn't want shark fin, and they said, 'It's just part of the ceremony.'" (Participant 7)* This quote reflects how certain dishes, like shark fin soup, are seen as essential for completing the ritual of a banquet, even when younger individuals may have different preferences.

Another participant recalled, *"From my childhood memories, shark fin was always associated with wealth and social status. You'd see it at weddings and important celebrations, and its presence signaled that the host was wealthy and respectable" (Participant 4).* This memory emphasizes how shark fin soup is seen as an indicator of wealth and hospitality, reinforcing the idea that the host is generous and capable of providing the best for their guests.

For many participants, the dish carried meanings beyond taste, it represented a cultural legacy passed down through generations. Even in cases where the dish was no longer personally valued or was ethically questionable, its inclusion in formal settings persisted due to its symbolic weight. This strong cultural attachment often influenced participants' dining choices, even when their personal beliefs were conflicted.

Theme 2: Social Pressure and Silent Compliance

Many participants expressed feeling pressured to consume shark fin soup due to social expectations, particularly in settings where elders were present. In these situations, participants often chose silent compliance, eating the dish to avoid appearing rude or disrespectful, even if they had personal preferences. This pressure was especially strong in banquet settings, where group dining and family traditions were emphasized.

One form of silent compliance was silent resistance, where participants avoided controversial foods without directly expressing their disagreement. As one participant explained, *"If it's (shark fin soup) in a big shared bowl, I won't take it. But if it's already served individually, I won't eat the shark fin part." (Participant 6)* This approach allowed them to follow personal values without causing conflict or drawing attention.

Others try to avoid disruption, making subtle food choices without openly challenging the menu. One participant described this approach, saying, *"The food at those events is often too salty, so I tend to select dishes that seem more lightly seasoned or less processed. I try to avoid anything deep-fried or braised." (Participant 5)* However, they also noted that their cautious eating habits were sometimes misunderstood, with others perceiving them as being difficult.

Respect for the host was another strong influence on participants' dining choices. Many felt obligated to follow the host's menu for being polite. One participant shared, *"But at weddings, since food is served in large batches, I worry that I'm making things inconvenient. So sometimes I just avoid eating. But people at the same table might still think I'm picky. They might give me looks or make comments." (Participant 5)* This indicates how the desire to maintain social harmony can override personal preferences.

For some participants, the sense of being unable to change the menu was even stronger. Traditional banquet menus were often viewed as fixed and non-negotiable, especially for younger participants. One participant expressed this sense of constraint, saying, *"I'd say no, I'm not free. When I arrive at a banquet, the menu is already set, so I really don't have a choice. I can't ask for fair-trade wine or ingredients from small, eco-friendly farms—everything is already predetermined."* (Participant 7) This feeling of menu fix nature reinforced the expectation to conform to cultural dining norms without question.

Together, these examples show how social pressure in formal dining settings led participants to choose silent compliance, balancing respect for tradition with their personal beliefs. Even those who were aware of ethical concerns or had dietary preferences often chose not to voice them, prioritizing social harmony over personal values.

Theme 3: Emotional Conflict

Participants experienced mixed emotions when facing shark fin soup, reflecting a deep tension between cultural values and ethical awareness. For some, the dish evoked pride in maintaining cultural traditions and honoring guests. However, this sense of pride was often accompanied by feelings of guilt and discomfort, especially among those who were aware of sustainability and animal welfare concerns.

One participant expressed strong ethical discomfort, saying, *"It's a feeling of disdain. It's like—seriously? In this day and age? I think our ethics around food should have evolved, so seeing shark fin soup still served gives me a sense of contempt."* (Participant 7) This quote illustrates how some participants experienced ethical guilt, feeling conflicted between their cultural heritage and their awareness of environmental harm.

Despite this awareness, some participants rationalized consuming shark fin soup due to situational factors. As one participant explained, *"During Chinese New Year, we had like three meals and we had it in all three of those meals... And everyone has it."* (Participant 1) This response highlights how participants justified eating the dish because it was traditionally served, choosing compliance over conflict.

For others, their ethical awareness developed gradually. One participant reflected on how shark fin soup became less common in their life, saying, *"Later this dish (shark fin soup) rarely appeared, it became less common, and people learned that it's something that causes harm. Anyway, it's not a very good dish."* (Participant 3) This gradual shift in awareness was often influenced by external factors, such as documentaries, education, or social media.

Nostalgia also played a significant role in the emotional conflict experienced by participants. One participant described their mixed feelings, explaining, *"Paradoxically—precious. I say 'precious' because growing up, I was taught that it was a luxury item."* (Participant 7) This quote reflects how childhood memories and cultural teachings can conflict with current ethical beliefs, creating a struggle between emotional attachment and moral awareness.

These conflicting emotions, ranging from pride and nostalgia to guilt and ethical awareness, revealed the complex relationship between cultural tradition and conscious dining choices. Participants found themselves navigating between honoring their heritage and aligning with their evolving ethical values.

Theme 4: Food Transparency and Trust

Participants expressed a strong interest in knowing the source of the shark fin served at banquets, reflecting a growing concern for sustainability and ethical dining. Many favored clear, visually intuitive information, such as icons or traceability labels, which made it easy to understand whether the dish was ethically sourced. This preference for transparency was rooted in a desire for trust, participants wanted reassurance that the food they consumed aligned with their values.

One participant emphasized the importance of transparency, stating, *"Yes, I think having this kind of information gives power back to the consumer. Transparency allows us to make informed choices. Transparency from suppliers empowers consumers."* (Participant 7) This quote highlights how clear sourcing information can restore a sense of control to consumers, allowing them to make decisions that align with their ethical values.

Visual clarity was also a key factor in building trust. One participant explained their preference, saying, *"I like pictures, first of all, on my menus. I like pictures. So I know what I'm eating, and then everything looks the same, and I just, I wouldn't want to read through everything and I would get lazy."* (Participant 1) This response shows how icon-based labeling can make information more accessible and user-friendly, enhancing consumer confidence.

However, despite the desire for transparency, some participants remained skeptical. One participant described their cautious attitude, explaining, *"It would be a good first step. I'd still be skeptical, but I'd see it as a positive effort. At least it shows they're starting to care. It would be a process to verify whether the info is real."* (Participant 6) This quote indicates that even with traceability information, doubts about its authenticity can still exist.

For some, trust was further strengthened when traceability information was presented in a story-based format. One participant shared, *"It (menu with traceability information) makes me more comfortable using their products. I would believe them, and it would reduce my psychological doubts. Because they're essentially providing identity certification."* (Participant 4) This response highlights that stories or visual narratives about ingredient sourcing were seen as more authentic and emotionally reliable than standard labels.

Together, these perspectives illustrate that while transparency is valued, trust is not automatically granted. Participants wanted clear, accessible information but remained cautious, looking for signs of authenticity and honesty from suppliers.

Theme 5: Transitioning Values and Conscious Dining Habits

Participants' attitudes toward shark fin soup revealed a gradual shift from passive consumption to more conscious dining choices. While some continued to view the dish as a symbol of tradition and social status, others began to question its ethical implications and environmental impact. This transition was often influenced by factors such as educational content, social media, or personal experiences, leading to a growing awareness of sustainability and ethical dining.

For some participants, this shift was marked by a growing sense of awareness, even if their behavior did not immediately change. As one participant explained, *"Yes. I would also start questioning what I've eaten before. In the past, I didn't care about things being out of season or GMO, but once you start noticing, you start caring. I only think about it when I'm conscious of it; otherwise, I just eat."* (Participant 3) This quote highlights the ongoing process of becoming more mindful, a struggle between habitual eating and growing ethical awareness.

Curiosity was another driver of change. One participant described how their interest in learning about food origins and sustainability provided a shift in their values: *"Curiosity, wanting to explore the story behind the food, its origin, how it's produced, its connection to culture and environment."* (Participant 7) This curiosity led them to make more informed and intentional dining choices.

For others, the shift toward conscious dining was rooted in a preference for natural, minimally processed foods. As one participant explained, *"Conscious dining means more like natural food, food in its original way, because every food, for example vegetables, has vitamins, and those vitamins exist because they have to protect their body from predators. That's why they make these elements in their body, and that's what we are eating."* (Participant 4) This response emphasizes that for some individuals, conscious dining is about choosing foods in their most natural state, without excessive processing or artificial additives, reflecting an appreciation for the natural benefits and nutritional value of ingredients.

Emotional reflection also played a role in changing dining habits. Some participants described feeling discomfort or regret after eating foods that conflicted with their values. As one participant stated, *"If they've violated my values, I avoid them."* (Participant 7) This sense of emotional discomfort pushed them to make more conscious decisions in future dining situations. Together, these insights illustrate how participants' dining habits evolved over time, moving from passive conformity to active, conscious decision making. This transition was not always immediate or consistent, but it reflected a broader shift toward personal responsibility in food choices.

4.2 Key Insights from Interviews

The key insights gained from the interviews were organized into thematic categories to address the research questions effectively. Through thematic analysis, several core themes emerged, reflecting participants' complex perspectives on shark fin soup in traditional dining contexts. These themes were then categorized based on their relevance to the research focus, resulting in five main areas: Cultural Role of Shark Fin Soup, Social Pressure Influences Dining Choices, Awareness and Skepticism of Authenticity, Desire for Transparency and Clear Communication, and Mixed Emotions and Ethical Dilemmas. Each category conveys specific insights that highlight how cultural beliefs, social norms, and ethical awareness influence dining decisions. By structuring insights in this way, the analysis provides a clear and organized understanding of how participants navigate the tensions between tradition, social expectations, and conscious dining practices.

Cultural Role of Shark Fin Soup

Symbol of Respect, Status, and Tradition

Shark fin soup is viewed as a powerful symbol of respect, status, and tradition, especially at formal dining events. Its presence signifies the host's generosity and social standing.

Ritual Completion Through Traditional Dishes

Serving shark fin soup at a wedding banquet can sometimes be seen as essential for completing the ceremony, reinforcing the dish's cultural importance, even when younger generations may not value it.

Cultural Legacy vs. Personal Values

Despite ethical concerns, the cultural symbolism of shark fin soup often outweighs personal values, maintaining its presence at formal events.

Generational Influence on Food Choices

Younger participants often defer to elders for banquet menu decisions, leading to the continued inclusion of traditional dishes like shark fin soup.

Social Pressure Influences Dining Choices

Social Pressure and Silent Compliance

Participants reported feeling pressured to consume shark fin soup to avoid appearing rude or disrespectful, especially in the presence of elders.

Silent Resistance and Subtle Avoidance

Some participants avoided eating shark fin soup without openly expressing their objections, using subtle methods like leaving it on their plate.

Respect for the Host and Social Harmony

Participants often chose to eat shark fin soup out of respect for the host, even if it conflicted with their personal beliefs, prioritizing social harmony over personal values.

Rationalization of Consumption

Some participants justified eating shark fin soup by citing cultural or social contexts (e.g., "*Everyone eats it at Chinese New Year*"), reflecting the tension between cultural conformity and ethical awareness.

Awareness and Skepticism of Authenticity

Skepticism Toward Traceability Information

Although participants valued transparency, they remained skeptical of the accuracy of traceability information provided by restaurants, questioning whether the sourcing claims were reliable.

Story-Based Transparency Builds Trust

Participants were more likely to trust sourcing information when it was presented in the form of stories or narratives, which felt more authentic and emotionally engaging.

Visual Cues for Transparency

Visual icons or symbols were preferred over text-heavy descriptions, making sourcing information clearer and easier to understand.

Gradual Awareness and Behavioral Change

Participants described how their ethical awareness developed over time, influenced by educational content, social media, or personal experiences.

Desire for Transparency and Clear Communication

Preference for Clear, Accessible Information

Participants expressed a strong interest in knowing the source of the shark fin served at banquets, preferring visually intuitive information like icons or traceability labels.

Health as a Gateway to Conscious Dining

For some, the shift toward conscious dining began with a focus on health, preferring natural, minimally processed foods, which later expanded to ethical considerations.

Mixed Emotions and Ethical Dilemmas

Emotional Conflict and Moral Reflection

Participants experienced mixed emotions regarding shark fin soup, pride in maintaining cultural traditions and guilt over concerns about sustainability.

Ethical Guilt

Some participants expressed strong feelings of guilt or discomfort, feeling that serving shark fin soup conflicted with their ethical values.

Emotional Reflection on Food Choices

Some Participants feel emotional discomfort when their dining choices conflicted with their values, which makes them try to avoid dishes they viewed as unethical.

4.3 PREMO Results: Emotional Reactions and Shifts

In this section, the emotional responses of participants to shark fin soup were captured using the PREMO (Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance Mapping) tool. This approach allowed the study to measure participants' emotions at two critical points: first, when they were shown an image of shark fin soup without any sourcing information, and later, after they were presented with a traceable menu detailing the dish's origin. This method directly addresses the research question:

How do cultural food beliefs and sourcing information affect people's emotions and food choices at social events like weddings, especially when shark fin soup are involved?

Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions
Pride Participants felt a sense of pride in the cultural significance of shark fin soup, viewing it as a symbol of respect, tradition, and status. Quote: <i>"Happy. Because shark fin is something rarely used in home cooking. Plus, the ingredients are expensive."</i> (Participant 2) Curiosity Some participants, especially younger ones, were curious about the dish's cultural meaning or its preparation. Quote: <i>"I'd quite like to try it. It looks delicious. I'm curious about what it tastes like since I haven't tried it before."</i>(Participant 3)	Discomfort Ethical concerns led to discomfort, especially for those who recognized the dish's controversial nature. Quote: <i>"Others think it's luxurious, but it causes heavy metal poisoning, and it can make your kids dumb."</i> (Participant 5) Detachment The participant sees the dish as something that is wasteful, lacking real value despite its cultural prestige. Quote: <i>"Unnecessary."</i> (Participant 6) Moral Disgust The participant views the continued existence of shark fin soup as a symbol of outdated ethical values, suggesting strong disapproval toward a practice they believe should have evolved. Quote: <i>"It's a feeling of disdain. It's like, seriously? In this day and age? I think our ethics around food should have evolved, so seeing shark fin soup still served gives me a sense of contempt."</i> (Participant 7)

4.3.1 Initial Reactions: Emotions Before Viewing the Menu

When first shown the image of shark fin soup, participants displayed a range of emotional responses. These initial reactions reflected their immediate feelings about the dish, shaped by cultural beliefs, memories, and ethical awareness.

4.3.2 Emotional Shifts After Viewing the Traceable Menu

The traceable menu provided participants with sourcing information about the shark fin, revealing how transparency influenced their emotional responses. Participants' reactions were categorized into three main patterns: Positive Shift, Negative Shift, and Mixed Emotions.

Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions
Empowerment Some participants appreciated that transparency gave them the ability to make choices aligned with their values. Quote: <i>"Yes, I think having this kind of information gives power back to the consumer. Transparency allows us to make informed choices."</i> (Participant 7) Pleasant Surprise A few participants described feeling unexpectedly positive after seeing the effort to provide transparency. Quote: <i>"I feel it's a pleasant surprise. I think because my personality is more positive. If I were a negative person, I might think 'Is this true?' You know, it's related to personality."</i> (Participant 2) Curiosity and Intellectual Engagement Some found value in the information itself, feeling that the menu gave them new insights. Quote: <i>"Gaining some new knowledges"</i> (Participant 3)	Health Concerns Persist Even with traceable information, some participants remained concerned about health risks related to shark fin consumption. Quote: <i>"Still doesn't like it, there's still heavy metal and it's meaningless."</i> (Participant 5) Mixed Emotions Curiosity with Caution Participants appreciated the transparency but still felt hesitant to consume the dish, reflecting a balance between openness to information and lingering concerns. Quote: <i>"Curiosity. Still will not consume it but curious about how they described the sourcing process. It's a positive attitude toward transparency."</i> (Participant 6) Desire for Visual Clarity Some participants expressed that although transparency was valuable, the way it was presented could be improved for better understanding. Quote: <i>"Not easy to read, too many words, wish to have pictures so you know what you are eating."</i> (Participant 1)

4.4 Insights from PREMO

1. Cultural Symbolism Shapes Initial Emotions

Participants' initial reactions were strongly influenced by cultural symbolism. Those who viewed shark fin soup as a symbol of status, respect, and tradition experienced positive emotions such as pride and curiosity.

Cultural beliefs can create an emotional attachment to traditional dishes, even if participants are aware of ethical concerns.

2. Ethical Awareness Triggers Negative Emotions

Participants who were aware of ethical and health concerns related to shark fin soup showed negative emotions, such as discomfort, guilt, or disdain. These negative reactions were closely related to awareness of sustainability issues, health risks, and the sense that the practice was outdated.

Ethical awareness can create emotional discomfort, even before transparent information is presented.

3. Transparency Can Reassure and Empower

Participants who experienced a positive shift after seeing the traceable menu felt more comfortable consuming the dish, as transparency gave them a sense of control and confidence. For this group of people, transparency enhanced trust by transforming ethical ambiguity into informed decision-making.

Transparency can empower consumers by providing clear, accessible information, reducing ethical uncertainty.

4. Mixed Reactions Reflect the Complexity of Conscious Dining

Some participants experienced mixed emotions, balancing curiosity about transparency with ongoing caution. They appreciated the effort to provide traceability but remained doubtful about consuming the dish.

Transparency can create a space for reflection but does not always resolve ethical conflicts, especially when cultural values are strong.

5. Personality Influences Emotional Reactions

Participants' personalities influenced how they interpreted the traceable menu. Those with a positive outlook were more likely to view transparency as a good effort, while skeptical participants questioned its authenticity.

Personal attitudes and personality traits can affect how individuals react to transparency and ethical information.

6. Visual Presentation Enhances Transparency's Impact

Participants who preferred visual information over text found the traceable menu more trustworthy and easier to understand. This preference indicates that clear, visually intuitive transparency can support consumer confidence.

The effectiveness of transparency depends on how the information is presented, visual clarity is key.

7. Emotional Responses Directly Affect Dining Choices

The emotional shifts triggered by transparency will influence participants' dining decisions, some felt more confident to eat, others felt more reluctant, and some remained undecided.

Emotions play a central role in conscious dining decisions, and transparency can either reduce or intensify these emotions.

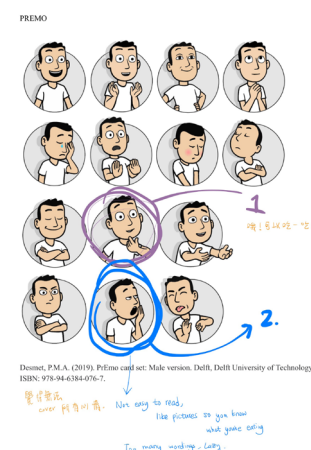


Figure 11. Example image of filled out Premo by participant

5. User Archetypes and Behavioral Themes

Through thematic analysis of interview responses and PREMO results, this study discovered several key insights that reveal the complex factors influencing participants' dining decisions. These insights highlighted a wide range of emotional responses, from pride and nostalgia to guilt and skepticism, suggesting the tension between cultural traditions and ethical awareness. Participants also reacted differently to transparency, with some feeling supported by traceable information and others remaining skeptical.

While these insights provided a deep understanding of participants' thoughts and emotions, further organization was needed to make them more actionable. Distinct behavioral themes were identified by examining how participants navigated cultural beliefs, social expectations, ethical awareness, and transparency. These themes captured how participants balanced cultural loyalty, social pressure, ethical reflection, and curiosity in their dining decisions.

Participants were grouped based on their shared attitudes, emotional reactions, and decision making strategies to clarify these behavioral themes. This process led to the identification of four user archetypes, each representing a unique approach to dining decisions in the context of shark fin soup.

The Tradition Keeper



Key Characteristics

Strongly values cultural traditions and views shark fin soup as a symbol of respect, status, and heritage. Often defers to family elders for dining decisions, maintaining traditional practices even when they have personal ethical concerns.

Behaviour Themes

Cultural Loyalty vs. Ethical Awareness

Prioritizes tradition over ethical considerations.

Respecting Norms

Follows cultural expectations to maintain social harmony, even if it conflicts with personal values.

The Silent Adapter



Key Characteristics

Feels pressured to consume shark fin soup due to social expectations, especially in family settings or formal events. Prioritizes maintaining social harmony and avoiding conflict, even if it means silently adapting with cultural norms.

Behaviour Themes

Social Pressure and Silent Compliance

Eats shark fin soup to avoid appearing disrespectful or causing conflict.

Subtle Resistance

Avoids eating the dish by using quiet methods.

The Skeptic Observer



Key Characteristics

Questions the authenticity of traceable information and remains doubtful about the sourcing claims, even when transparency is provided. Avoids shark fin soup due to ethical concerns (sustainability, species endangerment) or health risks (heavy metal contamination).

Behaviour Themes

Trust and Transparency

Values transparency but remains skeptical of its authenticity.

Health Concerns as an Ethical Trigger

Avoids to consume shark fin due to health risks, even if cultural values encourage consumption.

The Conscious Explorer



Key Characteristics

Actively looking to learn about food origins, sustainability, and ethical practices. Often using curiosity as a driver for conscious dining. Willing to adapt dining habits based on new knowledge, but may still struggle with cultural attachments.

Behaviour Themes

Curiosity as a Trigger for Change

Engages with transparency to gain knowledge and explore food ethics.

Gradual Awareness and Behavioral Change

Transitions from passive consumption to conscious dining over time.

The user archetypes and behavioral themes identified in this study will form the foundation for developing design directions that directly address the research questions and insights. By examining how participants navigate cultural beliefs, social expectations, ethical awareness, and transparency, this thesis can propose targeted strategies to foster conscious dining habits. Each archetype reveals distinct motivations, conflicts, and decision-making patterns, offering valuable insights for designing interventions that respect cultural values while promoting ethical dining choices.

6. Design Directions

Design Statement

The design aims to create a dining experience that honors cultural heritage while promoting ethical awareness, enabling Asian diners to navigate social expectations in gatherings without compromising their personal values.

This project responds to the emotional and cultural tension experienced during formal dining events where shark fin soup is served. Instead of opposing the traditions, the design seeks to gently shift behaviour through subtle cues that encourage reflection while maintaining group dynamics.

Design Directions

Based on the cultural tensions and behaviors found during interviews and analysis, three possible design directions were developed. Each one focuses on a different part of the conscious dining issue, whether it's about making food sourcing clearer, highlighting cultural meaning, or helping people make choices without creating tension during group meals. These directions helped turn the research insights into practical design ideas.

Design Direction 1: Enhanced Transparency in Dining

Goal: Help diners make better choices by showing clear and reliable information about where their food comes from.

Design Direction 2: Cultural Awareness in Dining

Goal: Showcase the cultural importance of traditional dishes while encouraging diners to think about their choices.

Design Direction 3: Social Harmony in Group Dining

Goal: Allow diners to make ethical choices without causing tension or discomfort during group meals.

The design direction that was chosen is the Social Harmony in group dining. This design direction was selected based on the repeated themes observed during interviews. Several people mentioned that even if they personally disagreed with certain dishes, they still ate them out of respect to avoid conflict. Family expectations, cultural habits, and social pressure often made it hard to speak up or say no. Some people quietly avoided the dish, while others felt they had no choice.

Enhancing transparency with provided information is also important; however, it was not always enough. What really mattered was how the message was shared, whether it felt respectful, subtle, or awkward in a group setting. Due to these reasons, the design focuses on creating quiet and respectful ways to invite reflection. It looks for ways that people can express their values without needing to explain or confront others.

Why do these directions matter

This design direction is essential since eating is rarely an individual act in traditional Asian settings. Food choices are often made through shared decisions, shaped by family, culture, and tradition. Even if someone cares about ethics or sustainability, they may still follow the group to maintain peace. To support conscious dining, design must not only show the facts and logic. It should fit within the unspoken rules of politeness, respect, and shared meaning.

The research questions that led me to further design ideations:

- What kind of behavior signals a quiet ethical refusal?
- How do we communicate sensitive information without shame or blame?
- Can discomfort become a productive emotion in a shared meal?

These questions formed the basis for the next stage of the project, explored how interaction, material, and form could respond to the tensions found in the research. The following chapter introduces the design process, showing how early insights were translated into concepts, prototypes, and tests. Throughout this process, the focus remained on creating gentle ways to support ethical reflection without disturbing the social balance of group dining.

7. Design Process

7.1 Design Criteria based on Research Insights

7.2 Ideation and Concepts

7.3 Design Reflections Across Concepts

This chapter documents the step-by-step development of the design process including concept exploration to prototyping, user testing and workshop.

7.1 Design Criteria based on Research Insights

In shared dining situations such as formal banquets, people do not always speak openly about their personal values, especially when it comes to symbolic dishes like shark fin soup. Some guests may feel uncomfortable but still find it difficult to say no. The design should offer a quiet and respectful way to make their own choices without needing to explain, directly refuse, or interrupt the flow of the meal. This allows personal values to be expressed in a gentle and private way while still being part of the shared experience.

Based on the key findings and insights from interviews and analysis, a set of design criteria was developed as a filter to evaluate the design ideas. The design criteria include:

Social Harmony- Subtle Integration in Formal Settings

In formal banquets such as weddings or other ceremonial gatherings, guests often prefer not to draw unnecessary attention or disrupt the natural flow of the event. Although expressing a personal perspective is not inappropriate, it is expected to remain understated and mindful of the setting. When making ethical choices, guests are more likely to act through quiet, low-effort gestures that preserve the shared atmosphere. For this reason, the design should integrate smoothly with the visual language of the banquet, including its colors, materials, and table decor. It should support discreet expression without requiring explanation or interrupting the flow of the occasion.

Cultural Sensitivity- Respect for Cultural Norms and Emotional Sensitivity

Interviews revealed that many guests still value traditional practices and the presence of symbolic dishes like shark fin soup. While introducing a sense of discomfort is part of raising awareness, doing so too directly may result in resistance. By respecting the aesthetics, rhythm, and social codes of the dining ritual, the design can introduce subtle prompts for reflection without disrupting the experience or challenging tradition in an extreme way.

Personal Autonomy- Quiet Support for Personal Choice in Shared Settings

Many participants described the inner conflict of not wanting to eat certain dishes while feeling obligated out of politeness or social expectation. Providing a gentle and effortless way to opt out, without needing to explain or justify, helps guests stay true to their values while preserving the group's emotional comfort. Designing for quiet, personal autonomy gives guests space to express their choices without making them stand out from the group. This creates a more inclusive dining experience, where tradition and individual values can exist side by side.

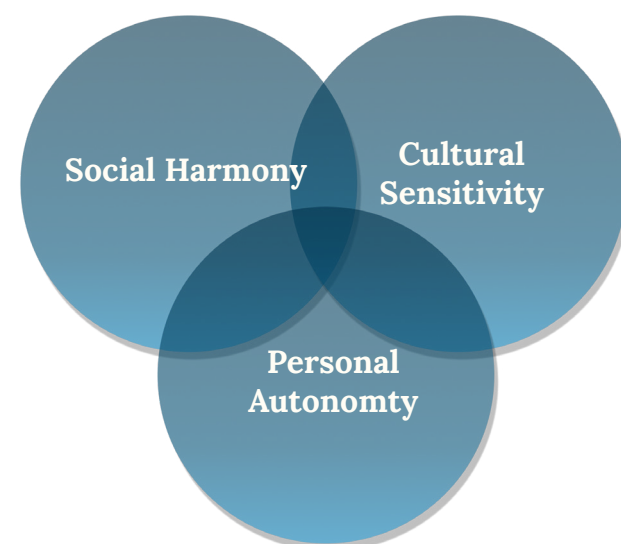


Figure 12. Design Criteria for the Design

7.2 Ideation and Concepts

With the design criteria in place, the next step was to explore how these ideas could take form through early concepts. This stage focused on developing sketches and low-fi ideas that responded to the emotional, social, and cultural tensions identified in the research. Each concept was created to test how design might gently support personal values, invite reflection, or shift behavior without disrupting the flow of a formal banquet. The following section outlines the directions considered and the role each idea played in shaping the final design.

With the design direction focused on social harmony in group dining, three key criteria guided the early concept development: subtle integration in formal settings, respect for cultural and emotional sensitivity, and quiet support for personal autonomy in shared spaces. At the start of the design process, two guiding questions were used to explore possible directions:

How can a guest quietly decline a symbolic dish without causing disruption?

And can sensory or symbolic cues gently prompt reflection?

These questions were shaped by tensions repeatedly observed in the interviews, such as Silence versus Expression, Tradition versus Change, and Comfort versus Discomfort. These tensions revealed the emotional and social dilemmas diners face, and helped frame the kind of responses the design needed to consider, ones that allow personal values to be expressed, but without creating conflict or discomfort in a shared setting.

7.2.1 Concept 1 - Coaster and Scented Envelope

These two early design ideas explored how diners might express their feelings or reflect on a symbolic dish in a subtle and socially acceptable way. The coaster aimed to support gentle autonomy, allowing individuals to make quiet decisions without needing to explain or verbally confront others. In contrast, the scented envelope focused more on the emotional story behind the dish, using scent and narrative as a way to prompt reflection. Together, the two concepts tested whether non-verbal cues and sensory storytelling could help navigate the complexity of collective dining without disturbing the shared atmosphere.

Design Intentions:

The **coaster** was designed as a quiet signaling tool. It used a simple turning mechanism with three levels of preference: Yes, A Little, or No, allowing diners to express their comfort level without needing to speak. The goal was to provide a discreet and non-intrusive way to express a personal stance within a group setting.

The **scented envelope** used scent and short storytelling to evoke emotion and reflection. By placing the envelope in the center of the table, it invites guests to interact with it, either by opening it or simply noticing the aroma. The content inside was written in a gentle, poetic tone, offering a narrative about family memory, tradition, and food. This concept aimed to spark reflection without direct confrontation.



Figure 13. Low-Fi prototype for Concept 1



Figure 14. User testing for concept 1

A lo-fi version of both ideas was created and tested in a small user session that simulated the context of a traditional banquet. Participants were given time to engage with both objects, followed by an evaluation form and a group discussion.

Insights Gained

This section presents the insights gained from this concept. The testing procedure, evaluation, observation, and reflections can be found in Appendix C.

The main insights were list as follow:

Quiet gestures are appreciated, but need to feel natural

Participants appreciated the idea of expressing themselves without words. However, the coaster and envelope still felt slightly out of place in a formal setting. If subtle actions don't match the atmosphere or rhythm of the occasion, they can become more noticeable than intended.

Not enough emotional or cultural meaning with the coaster

The coaster was easy to understand, but it felt neutral, in a more functional way rather than thoughtful way. It didn't carry the kind of emotional tone or symbolism that would connect with the cultural weight and the sensitive aspect of the dish

Too focused on the individual, not shared experience

Both ideas encouraged personal reflection, but they didn't blend into the group setting. The interaction felt separate from the meal rather than part of it, which made it harder for guests to engage naturally.

Guests still need to act, and some choose not to

A few people weren't sure when or how to use the envelope. Others didn't act at all, and the design didn't support passive choices. There was also concern that a guest's plate looking different might still draw attention, even without saying anything.

The design goal wasn't fully met

The ideas tested in this round showed potential, but they didn't yet offer a clear and gentle way to help guests navigate expectations. They didn't fully support quiet, confident decisions that preserve warmth and social harmony.

7.2.2 Concept 2- Elevated Bowl

Design Intention

This concept explored how the physical setup of the table itself could quietly influence how guests interact with a symbolic dish. Instead of relying on separate tools for individual signaling, the idea was to let the shared object, the bowl, communicate something through its existence.

By slightly raising the height of the shark fin soup bowl, the goal was to create a small shift in behavior that invites guests to pause before serving. The act of needing to stand up or lean in could create a moment of hesitation or subtle discomfort, not in a confrontational way, but just enough to open space for reflection.

The design did not aim to disrupt the group setting or draw attention directly to the object. Instead, it was meant to gently shift how the dish is experienced without needing to explain its meaning. The intention was to explore whether a subtle change in form and placement could serve as a social cue, prompting guests to notice, hesitate, and perhaps think differently, while still maintaining harmony at the table.

How Concept 1 Leads to Concept 2

The first concept focused on personal tools like a coaster and a scented envelope to help guests make quiet, individual choices. These designs let people express their values without needing to explain, and were appreciated for being gentle and respectful. However, their impact was mostly limited to the individual. While the concept supported private self-expression, it didn't affect the overall mood or interaction at the table. The actions were subtle and personal, so others often didn't notice them. This showed the need for a design that not only supports individuals but also connects with the group experience.

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This led to a shift in design approach. Rather than giving each guest an object to interact with on their own, the attention turned toward the center of the table. The question became whether the shared serving dish could carry meaning through its presence and form.

Could the way the dish is placed invite people to pause, without needing to act or speak directly?

The elevated bowl was developed from this new idea. By slightly raising the dish above the others, the design aimed to create a small moment of hesitation. The change was subtle but visible. It invited people to either stand, lean in, or simply become curious. This kind of interaction felt more natural. It did not require guests to learn something new or to make a decision through a separate object. It also did not interrupt the conversation or shift the group's focus.

Guests could choose how to respond. There was no pressure to explain or justify their reaction. The elevated form gave space for people to make a quiet choice in their own way. It supported personal reflection while still keeping the group setting intact. This allowed for expression that was both silent and non-judgmental, and helped shape a more shared and intuitive moment at the table.

Observation for Concept 2

To explore whether small changes in table arrangement could influence group behavior during shared dining, an informal observation was conducted using a round banquet-style table. A total of five dishes were presented to the guests. Among them, three were intentionally elevated to different heights using hidden platforms beneath the plates. The dishes were selected for their visual balance, and none of them specifically represented shark fin soup. However, the tallest one was a soup dish, chosen to test whether height alone could influence how participants interacted with it.

The observation focused on a few key questions:

- *Would participants notice the difference in height among the dishes?*
- *How would the elevated dishes affect their decisions, gestures, or serving behavior?*
- *Would anyone stand up, pause, or physically adjust in response to the change?*
- *Did these spatial shifts create a moment of attention or simply blend into the background?*

The goal of this observation was not to direct attention or provoke discussion, but to explore how design can quietly shape dining behavior through form and placement. By adjusting only the physical height of the dishes, the observation aimed to understand whether spatial cues alone could create room for reflection, even without assigning explicit meaning.



Figure 15. Sketches for the elevated bowls and 3D modelings from Chat GPT

Insights Gained

This section reports the insights that were found in this concept. The result of the observation can be found in appendix D.

The main insights were listed as follows:

Shifting attention through elevation is possible, but subtle

The tallest dish required all guests to stand, which created a noticeable moment of movement. This simple change introduced a brief pause in the dining rhythm, showing that spatial shifts can gently interrupt familiar actions without needing explanation.

Curiosity was triggered, but not reflection

Some guests stood up or leaned in to see what was inside the soup, as the contents were not visible while seated. Although this created a moment of curiosity, the action remained purely physical. There was no further discussion or verbal questioning, and without additional framing, the interaction did not lead to deeper reflection or conscious choice.

Shared action encouraged informal support

The guest sitting nearest to the soup often helped others serve, which created small moments of coordination. This suggested that shared physical effort could bring people together, but also risked normalizing the act rather than encouraging pause or choice.

Subtle changes need stronger narrative support

The physical gesture of elevation was noticed through action, but its meaning was not understood. Without symbolic cues, cultural framing, or emotional context, the design intervention blended into the table and was perceived as neutral.

Intuitive design reduced resistance, but it was not clear enough

Because the elevation did not interrupt conversation or create discomfort, it was accepted naturally. While this made the gesture non-disruptive, it also meant the design risked being overlooked entirely.



Figure 16, 17. Photos of observation during meal with bowls elevated in different heights.

Direction Forward

This observation pointed to the need for a clearer and more intentional message. In the next step, the design will shift from subtle spatial cues to a stronger approach where the tableware itself becomes the communicator. Rather than blending into the setting, the design should invite reflection in a way that is quiet but unmistakable, allowing the meaning to be understood without needing to be explained.

7.2.3 Concept 3- The regulated Bowl (Speculative System Concept)

Design Intention

This concept explored how speculative design could help imagine a future where the act of serving shark fin soup is no longer purely a cultural or personal decision, but something shaped by formal regulation. It proposed a fictional system in which only ethically certified shark fin soup could be served using officially approved vessels. Within this imagined scenario, the bowl becomes more than a functional object, it becomes a signal of permission, restriction, or accountability within the dining experience.

The intention was not to propose a real-world solution, but to push the boundaries of how meaning can be carried by tableware. Rather than relying on soft cues or personal gestures, this concept tested whether the object itself, through its form, texture, weight, or markings, could convey its message independently. By doing so, the design positioned the bowl as a symbolic gatekeeper, raising questions about what it would mean for diners if the meaning behind the dish could not be ignored.

This speculative direction was used as a way to explore how ethical messaging might be made more visible, while still respecting the ritual and visual language of formal banquets. It asked whether a more structured and expressive object could still feel appropriate at the table, and whether that presence could gently reflect on tradition without rejecting it entirely.

How it builds on Previous Concepts

This concept was shaped by reflections on the limitations of the earlier two directions and developed further through a co-creation workshop. In Concept 1, the coaster and scented envelope encouraged personal reflection, but the interaction stayed too private and lacked visibility within the group setting. In Concept 2, the elevated bowl created a shared physical shift, prompting guests to move or pause; however, the gesture remained ambiguous, and its meaning was easily overlooked without added framing.

Building on these insights, Concept 3 explored a more structured and symbolic direction. Rather than relying on subtle shifts or personal signaling, the bowl was reimagined as part of a broader system, one that could visually communicate regulation, legitimacy, or discomfort without needing explanation. This concept aimed to create meaning not only through interaction, but through the object's presence itself.

The co-creation workshop helped shape this direction by introducing a wide range of symbolic ideas and emotional associations. Participants explored how form, layering, texture, and ritual cues might influence perception. Their input reinforced the idea that a dining object could communicate more clearly if its visual language was intentional and well-framed. As a result, this concept evolved into a bowl that already holds meaning simply by being there; it quietly draws attention without disrupting the ceremony.

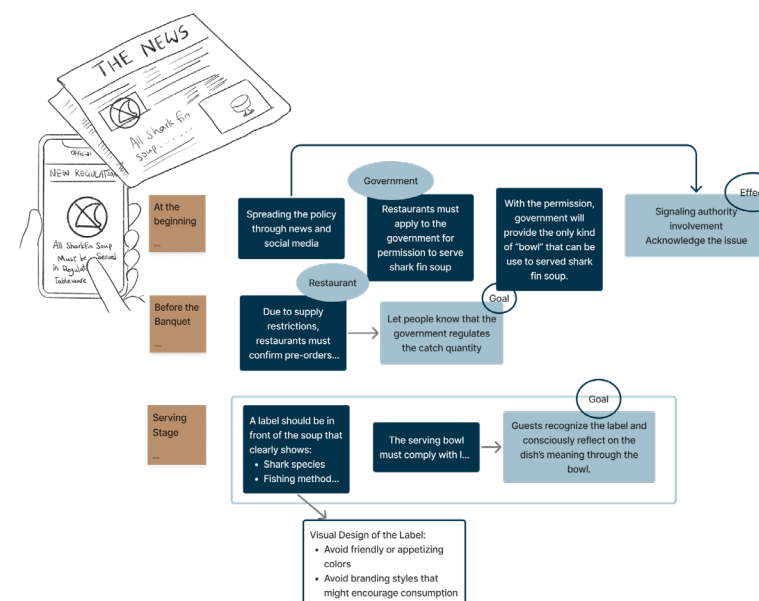


Figure 18. Simple system map for Concept 3

Speculative Scenario and System Mapping

In this speculative scenario, serving shark fin soup is not only based on personal or traditional choices. Instead, it becomes part of a regulated dining system where only certified hosts or restaurants can serve the dish. A special serving tableware, called the Regulated Bowl, is required. This bowl served as both a legal tool and a symbol of accountability. Its unique form and material visually signal that the dish has passed ethical checks. Additional items like traceability labels may also be included to show details such as shark species, fishing method, and certification status.



Figure 19. Graphic on Cigarette Packaging in Australia
Note: From Reuters Retrieved from (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/australia-proposes-tough-cigarette-warnings-1.1002354>)

FCTC regulates the tobacco packaging, making sure the packaging is not appealing or misleading, promoting the product in a misleading way. (Lempert, L., 2016)

The design doesn't aim to shame diners or start conflict, it invites quiet reflection through the bowl's presence. Like cigarette warning labels or inspection stamps, the bowl uses its physical form to prompt ethical awareness without interrupting the ceremony. This imagined system is not meant as a real policy proposal but as a way to explore how design can shift norms and emotions. It shows how even small changes to tableware can influence how people think and feel during traditional meals.

Co- Creation Workshop

To further explore how form and symbolism could communicate ethical concerns within a formal dining setting, a co-creation workshop was conducted. This session aimed to expand the speculative concept of a regulated bowl by inviting participants to reimagine how dining objects might carry meaning, responsibility, or emotional weight. Instead of evaluating complete designs, the focus was on exploring narrative and visual possibilities through collaborative ideation.

Participants were divided into two groups, each consisting of three design students with Taiwanese background. As individuals familiar with the social and cultural expectations surrounding formal banquets, including the serving of shark fin soup, they represented a relevant stakeholder group for this project. Their perspectives were shaped by both personal experience and design sensitivity, making them well-suited to reflect on the tensions between tradition, symbolism, and ethical values.

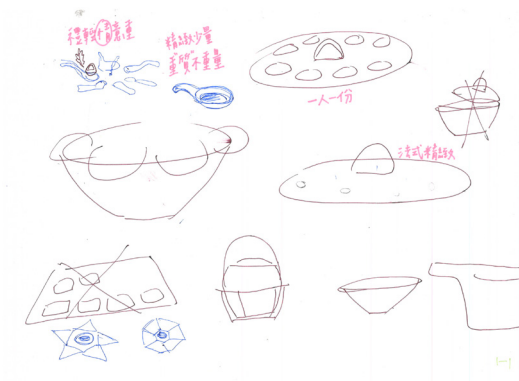


Figure 20, 21. Photos of Participants interact during the co-creation workshop.

Each group was invited to respond to all three thematic prompts:

- *How might the dish communicate that it is precious, not to be consumed casually?*
- *How can it reflect a respectful transition, maintaining dignity while introducing change?*
- *How might it visualize the cruelty or ecological impact connected to the dish?*

Example images that were drawn by the participants. Full set of images can be found in appendix E.



Several common themes and ideas emerged across both groups

- *Layered or disappearing surfaces to suggest extinction or fragility.*
- *Blood-toned materials, scarred textures, or partially obscured forms to reflect harm and discomfort.*
- *Bowls that reveal images or stories little by little as people eat.*
- *A shared idea that the message should be gentle but noticeable, creating quiet reflection instead of direct conflict.*

The workshop confirmed that visual storytelling works best when it matches the formal and subtle tone of traditional dining. Participants' ideas helped guide the next steps of visual design, supporting a direction that is expressive and respectful. These symbolic ideas became the starting point for new bowl sketches, focusing on how the bowl's look alone could express emotion, even without being touched or used.

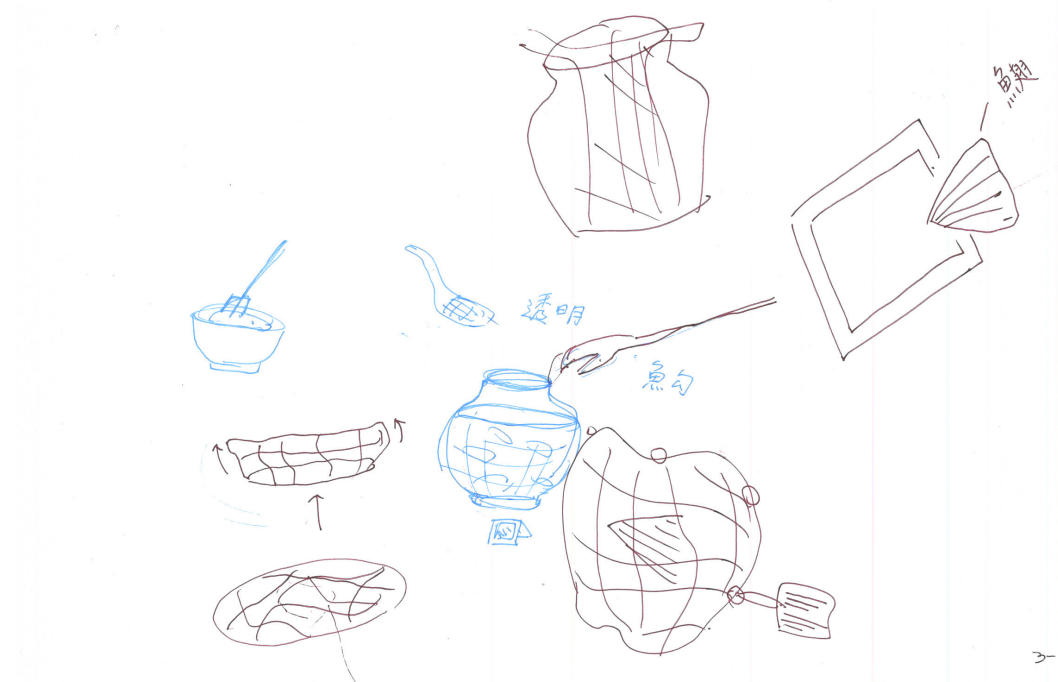


Figure 22, 23. Examples of outcome of the drawings from the co-creation workshop.

Visual and Sketches

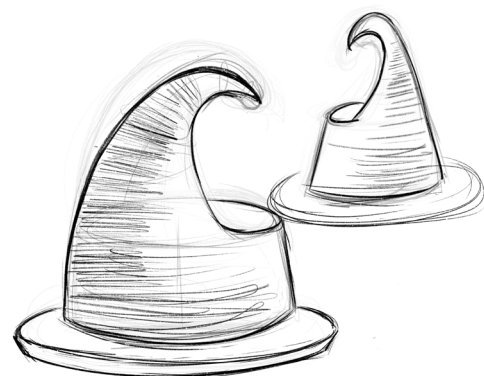


Figure 24. Sketches of Ideation 1

The personal serving bowl was shaped like a shark fin, with a raised front that partially hides its contents. This design provides diners with a sense of privacy, enabling them to choose how much soup to consume without drawing attention.

The second design is a double-layered transparent sharing bowl. The inner layer is made of red transparent glass, representing the opposite shark fin.

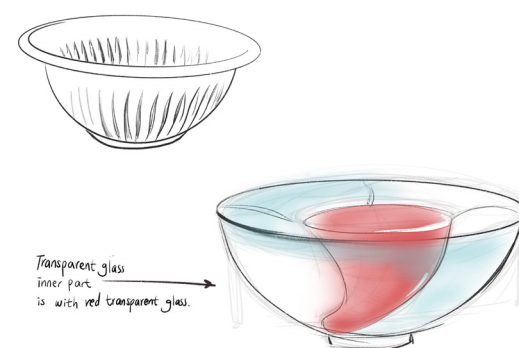


Figure 25. Sketches of Ideation 2

While this speculative concept helped push the boundaries of how tableware could communicate ethical meaning, the idea of government enforcement raised concerns. Some feedback suggested that involving a governmental mandate may feel too heavy for this project's context. Although it introduced a bold direction, the emphasis on systemic control might shift the focus away from the core intention of encouraging reflection through design.

A key takeaway was that the design does not need to rely on fictional policy to be powerful. Instead, more can be done with the form, appearance, and material of the bowl itself. The feedback encouraged a shift from relying on imagined authority to allowing the object to speak through its own visual and tactile language.

It was also noted that the speculative system **encouraged a braver approach**, stepping beyond the fear that dining objects must always blend quietly into their surroundings. Rather than avoiding discomfort, the design can be more expressive while still allowing guests the freedom to choose. This reflection affirmed that the next step should focus on physical expressiveness, using visual and symbolic elements in the tableware to highlight ethical concerns. The goal is to keep the choice in the hands of the diner, but to make that choice more visible, more thoughtful, and harder to ignore.

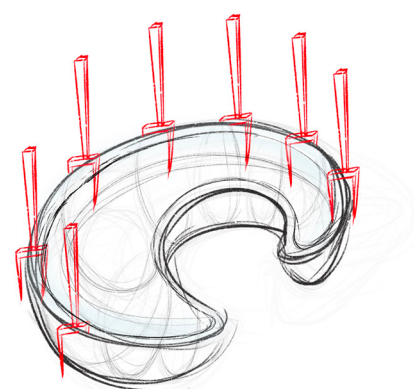


Figure 26. Sketches of Ideation 3

The bowl's design was inspired by the appearance of a processed shark fin as it is served in soup. The fork elements were influenced by the tools used in shark hunting, referencing the act of capture.

7.3 Design Reflections Across Concepts

This section brings together the key learnings from Concept 1 (Coaster and Envelope), Concept 2 (Elevated Bowl), and Concept 3 (Speculative Regulated Bowl). Each idea offered different ways of encouraging reflection and quiet decision-making, while highlighting recurring tensions between expression, tradition, and social comfort. These reflections helped clarify what direction was most effective and suitable for the next design stage.

7.3.1 Concept Comparison Table

Eveluation Criteria	Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 2
Level of Disruption	Low	Low to Medium	Medium to High
Visibility in Group Setting	Low (Individual Focus)	Medium (Shared One)	High (Object on Table)
Cultural Fit	Medium (felt out of place)	High (Formerly appropriate)	Medium (Based on the speculative setting)
Emotional Resonance	Medium (Scent and story)	Low	Medium to High (Designed tableware)
Symbolic Clarity	Low (Require explanation)	Low (Require explanation)	Medium to High (Visual message embedded)
Easy to Use	Coaster- Easy Envelope- Ambiguous	Very Easy (No learning needed)	Easy
Degree of User Action Required	High (Manual interaction needed)	None (Passive observe)	None (Message built into the object)
Ability to Prompt Group Reflection	Low	Low	Medium to High

Design criteria relate to Social Harmony

Design criteria relate to Cultural Sensitive

Design criteria relate to Personal Autonomy

Figure 27. Table of Concept Comparison

7.3.2 Recurring Challenges

Throughout the development of the three concepts, several challenges appeared repeatedly. These recurring patterns shows the complexity of designing for quiet ethical expression in shared dining spaces, especially when cultural rituals, politeness, and emotional sensitivity are involved.

- Too much reliance on individual action
- Lack of integration with the group atmosphere
- Unclear or weak symbolism
- Conflicting intentions
- Subtlety without narrative support
- Emotional sensitivity and message clarly

7.3.3 Key Takeaways

Shared visual meaning is more effective than private tools

Designs placed at the center of the table or embedded with shared symbolism were more likely to be noticed and remembered.

Physical form can influence behavior, but meaning must be clear

Subtle changes such as raising the dish encouraged small physical responses, like standing or pausing. However, to lead these gestures with deeper thought, clearer framing or visual messaging will be needed.

Symbolism works best when grounded in cultural formality

When symbolic cues match the materials, colors, and style of formal banquets, they feel more natural and acceptable. Shapes with a ceremonial look or layered design add emotional meaning without seeming inappropriate.

Clarity does not require confrontation, but design should be brave

A message can remain quiet and respectful while still being strong. When meaning is embedded in the form, structure, or surface, it can be felt without needing to be explained. The goal is not to satisfy every stakeholder, but to open space for reflection. It is acceptable, and sometimes necessary, for design to gently challenge expectations rather than avoid them.

Challenging the “harmonious” status can be necessary

The goal of the early design was to respect both sides of the shark fin debate, but this neutral approach may create a false sense of harmony. This project later moved toward challenging that view, suggesting that shark fin should not be treated as just another menu item. Instead, design can help break the silence and make a quiet but firm ethical statement that questions passive acceptance.

To conclude Chapter 7, the design process explored different ways of encouraging reflection during shared meals, balancing between being quiet and being clear. Each concept offered something different: some focused on personal choice, while other focusing on shared moments and symbolic meaning. Together, they demonstrated what worked, what felt unclear, and how far the design could be taken while still respecting the setting. These insights now lead to Chapter 8, where the final design will be develop, using what was discovered to better support conscious dining in a way that feels both respectful and meaningful.

8. Final Design Choice

8.1 Overview of Final Design

8.2 Design in Context

8.3 How Design Reflects the Criteria

8.4 Evaluation

Figure 28. Image of the set of tableware



8.1 Overview of Final Design

The final design is a glass tableware set created to bring quiet attention to the ethical issues surrounding shark fin soup in formal shared dining. Instead of relying on text or confrontation, the design employs form and material, focusing on how people interact with the object at the table. The goal is to gently shift how guests experience the dish, turning a moment of serving into a space for reflection.



Figure 29. Image of the fin bowl



Figure 30. Graphic of shark caught by net
Note. Photo from Brain Skerry Retrieved from <https://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/sharks-rays/good-bye-gillnet-hello-shark-recovery>



Figure 31. A pile of Sharfin
Note. Photo from Ricardo Roberto Retrieved from <https://why.org/segments/u-s-takes-debate-shark-fin-trade/>

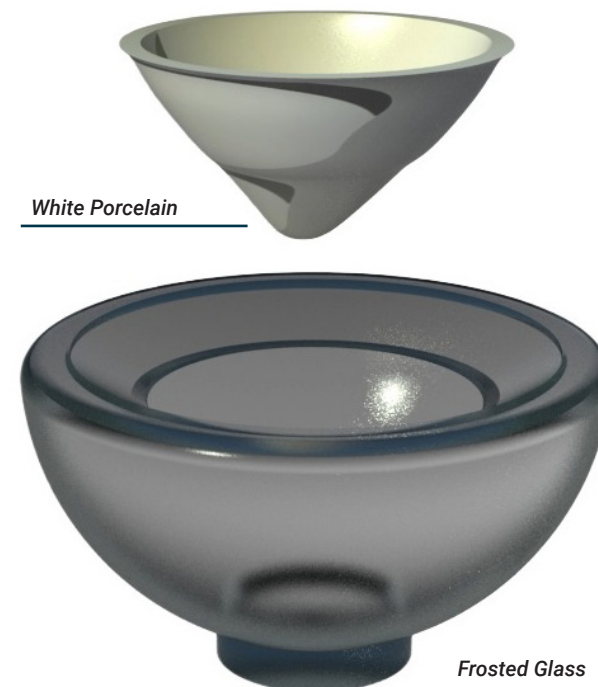


Figure 32. Image of exploded view of the bowl

At the center of the design is a large sharing bowl made of transparent double layered glass with inner layered made with porcelain. Inside the bowl, the space that holds the soup takes the shape of an upside down shark fin. This detail is not just visual, it limits the portion size and suggests that something is not quite right. The large outer bowl maintains the respectful appearance of a formal banquet, while the small inner space indicates a need to reconsider how much is served and why. The separation and distance created by the double-layered structure create the feeling of viewing something on display.

Surrounding the bowl is a net-like element, representing the common catching method of the shark. This adds another layer of meaning, reminding guests of the fishing practices that are often hidden behind the tradition.

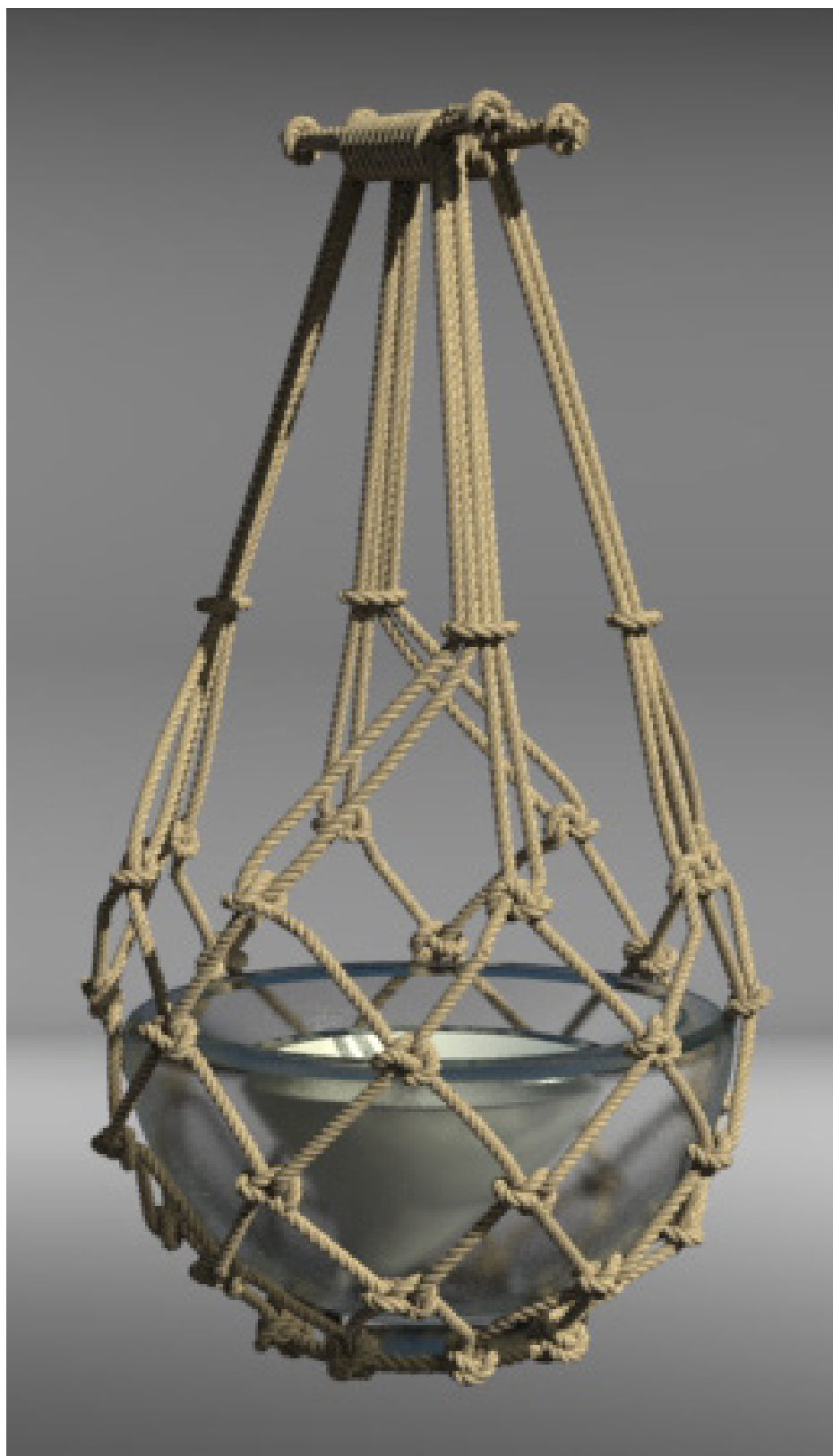


Figure 33. Image of Prototype

Each guest is also given a small individual bowl, designed with a wide flat surface and a small recessed area to hold the soup. The amount it can contain is minimal, reinforcing the idea that the soup, and the shark itself, is rare and should not be taken lightly. The surface pattern is not a direct copy of a fishing net, but an abstract and elegant interpretation, inspired by the feeling of tangled nets. This uneven form creates both visual and tactile contrast. Instead of prompting direct reflection, it makes a personal space where the response remains ambiguous. Because guests are not served individually, they have more control over their actions. They can choose how much to take, or whether to take any at all, without being questioned or watched too closely. This method gently reduces the social pressure often present in traditional banquets, allowing space for quiet autonomy without disrupting the shared atmosphere.

Figure 34. Image of Prototype



The spoon designed to accompany this tableware has a narrow scooping surface. This allows it to reach into the tight, pointed area of the upside-down shark fin shape in the shared bowl. At the same time, it limits the amount of soup served with each scoop, encouraging diners to take smaller portions more mindfully.

The complete set transforms a familiar dining experience into something more thoughtful and refined. Without altering the tradition too directly, it introduces subtle moments of pause, visibility, and emotional weight, creating space for conscious choice within a shared setting.



Figure 35. Image of Prototype



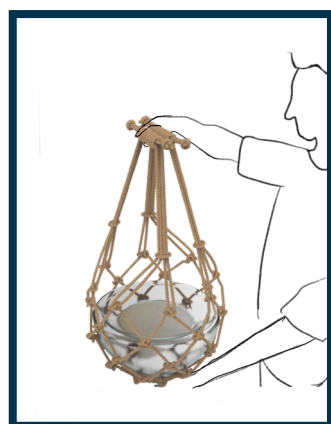
Figure 36. Image of Prototype

8.2 Design in Context

This design is intended for settings where restaurants or diners are seeking a smooth transition toward a more ethically aware dining atmosphere. While it remains difficult to eliminate shark fin soup entirely, due to its deep cultural roots and continued value among certain groups, this design offers an opportunity to make an ethical statement in a respectful and non-confrontational way. It introduces gentle reflection without disrupting the formality or emotional tone of the occasion, allowing tradition and awareness to coexist at the table.



1. Sue was invited to a wedding banquet with her family. She is seated at a table with several relatives she hasn't seen in a long time.



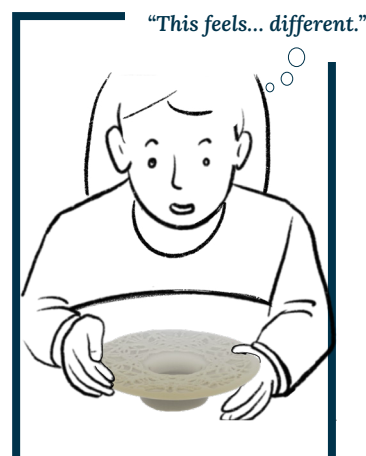
2. A waiter brings in a dish with a net carefully wrapped around the bowl, drawing the attention of the guests.



3. Sue observes the unusual form of the bowl. There is a brief pause at the table as the design prompts quiet curiosity.



4. One cousin stands to serve. The narrow opening of the upside-down fin slows the action, making the moment feel more deliberate and slightly awkward.



5. Sue reflects on the material and form. The uneven texture and limited portion invite a moment of silent awareness among the guests.



6. Guests quietly make their own decisions. Sue politely declines by not serving herself. The mood remains warm, allowing space for subtle awareness and personal reflection.

Figure 37. Storyboard for the design context

8.3 How Design Reflects the Criteria

This final design reflects the three main directions developed from earlier research and concept testing: supporting social harmony, respecting cultural rituals, and offering quiet space for personal autonomy. Instead of fully blending in, the design gently disrupts the usual setting to raise awareness, just enough to make people pause, without causing direct confrontation.

Social Harmony

The design incorporates new elements, such as the upside-down shark fin and the net surrounding the bowl. These details are easy to notice, but they still match the look and feel of a formal banquet. This slight difference stands out quietly. The transparent bowl makes each person's action visible when they serve, creating a shared moment without needing to speak. When someone stands up to serve from the small space in the bowl, it creates a natural pause in the meal that invites reflection.

Cultural Sensitivity

The design does not detract from the dish or question its presence directly. Instead, it keeps the large, respectful form while limiting the actual soup portion to the narrow inner space shaped like a reversed fin. This points to the ethical concern without ignoring the dish's symbolic meaning. Because the bowl is see-through, guests become more aware of how much they take. Taking too much might leave others without any, which adds a quiet pressure to be considerate.

Personal Autonomy

In most traditional banquets, shark fin soup is served to each person directly. This design changes that. Guests now receive a small personal bowl and must choose for themselves whether to take the soup or not. This gives people more control. Some might feel unsure or hesitate, but this moment of choice helps reduce passive consumption. Choosing to take less, or none at all, becomes a quiet way to reflect the intention of the design.

Overall, this design isn't trying to change the whole tradition. It simply adds a moment of reflection, just enough to help people notice, think, and take more mindful actions together. By using form and interaction to tell a story, the tableware creates space for conscious dining within a shared setting.

8.4 Evaluation

8.5.1 Evaluation Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this evaluation was to see how well the final design supports conscious dining while still respecting social and cultural expectations in traditional Asian banquets. It focused on how people understand the redesigned shark fin soup presentation, especially in terms of ritual, personal choice, and ethical reflection.

To achieve this, a pre-post visual response task was used with six adults who are familiar with formal Asian dining. This method was chosen to explore how the design affects people's feelings and thoughts, not whether it works realistically, but whether it effectively communicates specific values.

Participants were shown two images: one with a traditional banquet setting, and one with the new design. They shared their emotional responses using the PREMO tool and filled out a short rating form based on three key values: Social Harmony, Cultural Sensitivity, and Personal Autonomy. Short follow-up conversations helped clarify how they interpreted the design's intended message. This approach helped reveal whether the design could support reflection and choice while staying respectful to tradition. The interview question can be found in Appendix F.



Figure 39. Image of Pre visual



Figure 40. Image of Post visual

Participant	Age	Nationality	Archetype
P1	28	Taiwan	Traditional Keeper
P2	63	Taiwan	Traditional Keeper
P3	25	Taiwan	Conscious Explorer
P4	26	Taiwan	Conscious Explorer
P5	24	Taiwan	Silent Adapter
P6	25	Taiwan/ USA	Silent Adapter

Figure 38. Table of participant involve in Evaluation



Figure 41. Image of Prototype

8.5.2 Quantitative Results for the Rating

Participants rated the final design using a short form based on three main values: Social Harmony, Cultural Sensitivity, and Personal Autonomy. Each value was broken down into words such as "Respectful," "Appropriate," or "Empowering," and participants scored each one on a scale of 1 to 5.

To better understand how personal beliefs shaped their responses, participants were grouped into three types: Tradition Keeper, Silent Adapter, and Conscious Explorer. These groups were based on how they talked about tradition, social pressure, ethics, and food choices during the interviews.

Tradition Keeper: Valued ritual, hospitality, and followed cultural norms even if they had some personal doubts.

Silent Adapter: Felt tension between their values and tradition but tried to avoid conflict, often navigating this quietly.

Conscious Explorer: Demonstrated strong curiosity about food ethics and was open to changing their habits, although still influenced by social context.

This way of organizing the data helped show how people with different values experienced the same design, highlighting where the design supported their views or caused tension.

The Skeptic Observer was part of the original idea but wasn't used in this evaluation. None of the participants showed distant or doubtful reactions. Instead, they all engaged with the design in thoughtful or tradition-based ways.



Figure 42. Image of Interview with Prototype



Figure 43. Image of Interview with Prototype

8.5.3 Interpretation of Findings based on the criteria

Social Harmony

Tradition Keeper

Tradition Keepers generally see the design as respectful and symbolic, preserving the cultural value of shark fin as a noble and meaningful dish. They appreciate that it offers guests the choice to eat or not, which aligns with modern concerns without abandoning tradition. However, both participants (P1& P2) express concern about the small portion size and unfamiliar presentation. For them, generosity and ritual familiarity is essential for proper hosting, elements they feel may be compromised by the new format, even if the message is wellintended.

Silent Adapter

The Silent Adapter archetype sees the design as highly effective in supporting social harmony, particularly by easing the tension between tradition and ethical awareness. Both participants highlight that the communal serving format creates emotional distance from the dish, giving diners more room to choose without feeling pressured. P6 views the design as a thoughtful “buffer” that encourages dialogue rather than conflict, making it a more respectful approach than removing the dish entirely. P5 also finds it appropriate and respectful in formal settings, noting that it lowers the social expectation to eat. However, he raises a practical concern that the small, repeated servings may be inconvenient for the elderly, suggesting that while the design reduces social pressure, it may still challenge traditional expectations of comfort and flow.

Conscious Explorer

The Conscious Explorer archetype offers a more layered and emotionally complex perspective on social harmony. While both participants recognize the design’s intent to encourage reflection, their experiences diverge. P4 finds the design provocative, particularly the net, which she describes as “controversial” and emotionally disruptive. For her, it creates hesitation and tension, making the social interaction feel unnatural and potentially judgmental of tradition. P3, in contrast, interprets the design more gently. Though the symbolic elements remind her of the negative aspects of shark fin harvesting, she feels the design allows room for quiet reflection without provoking direct conflict. Overall, this archetype values the design’s ability to spark awareness, but also mentioned that such awareness can challenge the comfort and natural flow of social interaction in traditional settings.

Design criteria relate to Social Harmony

Design criteria relate to Cultural Sensitive

Design criteria relate to Personal Autonomy

Archetype	Appropriate	Respectful	Comfortable	Non- Disruptive
Traditional Keeper	3.5	4.5	3.5	3
Conscious Explorer	6.5	4	2.5	2.5
Silent Adapter	4	3.5	3	4.5

Archetype	Respectful	Sincere	Symbolic	Familiar
Traditional Keeper	4	4	4.5	3.5
Conscious Explorer	4.5	4	5	3.5
Silent Adapter	3.5	3.5	4	2

Archetype	Empowering	Reflective	Non- Judgemental	Free
Traditional Keeper	5	4.5	3.5	5
Conscious Explorer	3.5	4.5	1.5	4
Silent Adapter	5	5	2.5	5

Figure 44. Table of scale based on Archetype

Cultural Sensitivity

Tradition Keeper

Tradition Keepers see the design as respectful and still carrying the cultural meaning of the shark fin as a precious dish. They appreciate that it allows for individual choice while acknowledging environmental concerns. However, both participants felt that the small portion size and non-traditional presentation, like the net and spoon, could seem insincere and unfamiliar in a formal setting. Although the message was clear, some felt the changes might clash with traditional ideas of generosity and ritual.

Silent Adapter

The Silent Adapter generally sees the design as a thoughtful attempt to balance tradition and change. P6 views it as respectful and sincere, appreciating how the form maintains a sense of formality while creating space for conversation between generations. He sees it as a gentle way to introduce ethical reflection without rejecting cultural values. In contrast, P5 feels the small portion and individual presentation are too Western and differ from traditional serving practices. Despite this, he still acknowledges the design’s symbolic intent. Overall, this group recognizes the design’s effort to engage with tradition, though their acceptance depends on how much the format aligns with familiar cultural expectations.

Conscious Explorer

The Conscious Explorer recognizes the design’s symbolic depth and reflective intent, but also questions how its message may be received. Both participants view the design as respectful and meaningful, particularly in its use of traditional materials and forms. However, P4 is concerned that the net element might be too controversial or critical of the culture, which could affect the sincerity of the gesture. P3, on the other hand, fully acknowledges the design’s respect for tradition while also mentioning that it brings up uncomfortable associations with shark fin harvesting. Overall, this archetype values the design’s ability to prompt ethical reflection, even if it introduces tension within the cultural setting.

Personal Autonomy

Tradition Keeper

Tradition Keepers feel the new design gives them more freedom to choose. Both participants appreciated that guests can decide for themselves whether to take the soup, avoiding the pressure of a pre-served portion. They felt comfortable making their own choice and suggested that the design encourages quiet reflection, prompting people to think more about the dish, its meaning, or its portion size. Overall, the design supports autonomy without disrupting traditional values.

Silent Adapter

The Silent Adapter archetype sees the design as strongly supportive of personal autonomy. Both participants felt the shared bowl gave them the freedom to choose without pressure, unlike the traditional individual serving, which often made them feel obligated to eat. The design created enough distance to let them quietly decide for themselves. They also mentioned that it encourages reflection, prompting them to think more deeply about the dish and its meaning. However, both felt the design was not entirely neutral; it seemed to make a statement or promote a particular message, which could feel slightly judgmental.

Conscious Explorer

The Conscious Explorer archetype holds mixed but generally positive views on autonomy. Both participants recognized that the design encourages reflection and allows for individual interpretation. P3 felt fully free to decide whether to eat or not, appreciating the space the design provides for personal choice. However, P4 felt that social pressure still exists and choosing not to eat could still be seen as impolite. Both mentioned that the design makes a clear statement, which can feel judgmental toward tradition or cultural practices. While it supports autonomy, it also makes diners feel pressured to take a position.

9. Discussion

9.1 Insights Based on Each Criterion

9.2 Limitations

9.3 Recommendations and Future Steps

9.1 Insights Based on each Criterion

Overall Insights for Social Harmony

Softens ethical tension

Participants appreciated the “emotional distance” created by the shared bowl, which made it easier to navigate personal values without disrupting the group setting.

Maintains a respectful tone

Most participants felt the design did not confront diners directly, which helped preserve politeness and avoid open conflict.

Encourage dialogue, not just compliance

The design isn’t just neutral; it invites reflection. Visual elements, such as the net and fin shape, are intended to spark quiet discussion.

Promotes reflection, but not always comfortably

While the design encouraged thoughtful engagement, some felt the symbolism made the setting feel emotionally heavy or socially unnatural.

Tries to keep a formal look, but reactions are mixed

The large glass bowl keeps the dish looking impressive, which fits the atmosphere of a formal banquet. However, the minimal amount of soup inside received mixed feedback.

Overall Insights for Cultural Sensitivity

Respects tradition while introducing choice

Across archetypes, participants acknowledged that the design maintains the cultural value of the shark fin as a symbol of sincerity and respect. The option to choose whether to eat it was seen as a thoughtful way to address environmental concerns without rejecting tradition.

Symbolism is noticed, but interpretations differ

The design’s symbolic elements, like the net and the fin shape, were widely recognized. While some saw these as meaningful and reflective, others found them controversial or emotionally uncomfortable, especially when they seemed to critique cultural norms.

Unfamiliar presentation challenges expectations

Elements like the small portion size, net structure, and Western-style serving raised concerns among participants who valued ritual and generosity. Acceptance of the design depended on how well it aligned with familiar cultural practices and the context of formal dining.

Overall Insights for Personal Autonomy

Supports quiet, voluntary choice

Across archetypes, participants appreciated the ability to choose whether to eat shark fin without pressure. The communal bowl allowed for discreet decision making, avoiding the discomfort of pre-served portions.

Encourages ethical reflection

The design prompted guests to think more deeply about the meaning, symbolism, and ethics of the dish. This reflective space was particularly valued by participants who sought a more conscious engagement with traditional foods.

Encourage dialogue, not just compliance

The design isn’t just neutral, it invites reflection. Visual elements like the net and fin shape are meant to spark quiet discussion.

Can be perceived as judgmental

While the design allows for personal choice, some participants felt it also conveyed a subtle message or judgment. This made the decision feel heavier, especially for those who are sensitive to cultural expectations.

The findings show that people had different reactions to the final design based on how they value tradition, ethics, and personal choice. Many participants felt the shared bowl reduced pressure and allowed them to choose more freely. Some also appreciated the symbolic elements, which made them think more deeply about the meaning of the dish. However, others found parts of the design, like the small portion or the use of a net, less familiar or slightly uncomfortable in a formal setting. Overall, the design was perceived as thoughtful, but its effectiveness depended on each person’s background and their interpretation of the details.

9.2 Limitations

Small and selective sample size

The evaluation section included only six participants, which limits the scope of the findings. The small group size may not capture the full range of opinions, especially those from different age groups, regions, or cultural backgrounds within countries that consume Sharkfin Soup.

Archetype categorization may oversimplify

Dividing participants into three archetypes helped organize the analysis, but it also simplified some of their personal views. In reality, people often hold mixed feelings that change depending on the situation, which a single fixed category can’t fully represent.

No representation of a skeptical observer

Although the Skeptic Observer archetype was considered in the initial framework, none of the participants showed this kind of distant or resistant attitude. This means the evaluation didn’t capture how less engaged users, those who might reject both traditional and ethical views, would respond to the design.

Not focusing much on traceability

The issue of traceability was identified early in the research; however, it wasn’t highlighted in the later phases.

Context was represented visually but not experientially

Participants only responded to still images, rather than experiencing the design in a real dining situation. This makes it harder to fully capture their emotional or social reactions, especially aspects such as group interactions, the atmosphere, and how they might actually use or feel the object in context.

Focus on reflection over practicality

The evaluation primarily focused on how the design affects people’s feelings and thoughts, rather than its practicality. Things like how easy it is to serve or clean weren’t looked at closely, but these details could still affect whether the design works well in real life.

9.3 Recommendations and Future Steps

Design Recommendations

Apply the aspect of transparent food sourcing and traceability

Consider including clear signs that indicate the origin of the shark fin, such as icons, labels, or QR codes, so diners can understand the background and feel more confident about their choices.

Enhance the visibility of the symbolism in the bowl itself

Explore different possibilities for the bowl's shape, texture, or materials to make its message more noticeable and understandable, even without explanation.

Evaluation Recommendations

Include a wider age range of participants

Invite both younger and older participants to a workshop to understand how people from different generations react to the design.

Create practical prototypes

Create a version of the bowl that people can actually touch, hold, and use, so their feedback is based on real experience.

Test out different materials

Try making the bowl from various materials to see which ones feel most fitting for formal banquets.

Create practical prototypes

Create a version of the bowl that people can actually touch, hold, and use, so their feedback is based on real experience.

Study emotional response during meals

Test the design during meals to see how people actually use it and how it affects the mood at the table.

Explore long-term impact

Follow up after the dining experience to see if the design influenced how people think or act over time.

Implementation Recommendations

Apply in real banquets

Pilot the design in real wedding banquets or traditional restaurant settings to see how well it works in practice.

Work with restaurants, chefs, and wedding planners

Collaborate with chefs and wedding planners to adjust the design to fit different events and cultural needs.

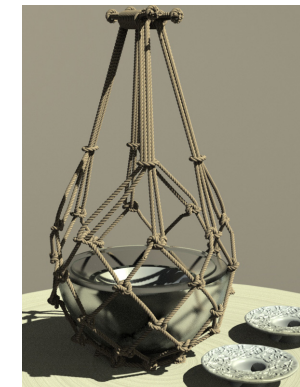
10. Conclusion and Reflection

This study examines how symbolic tableware design can promote more conscious eating in traditional Asian banquets, with a particular focus on the culturally controversial dish, shark fin soup. Throughout the interviews, many participants had experienced internal tensions between their emotional feeling towards traditions and their growing ethical awareness. The tableware design aims to evoke gentle reflection with its symbolic form, while offering a natural and intentionally minimal portion size. The design makes tableware not just a container for food, but quietly communicates messages and invites diners to be conscious about what is served.

Although most participants respond positively to the design, whether it is entirely accepted still depends on generational differences, cultural expectations, and dining habits. This project suggests that design doesn't need to create conflict to convey a controversial message. Through material, shape, and interaction, design can strike a balance between respecting tradition and promoting conscious dining habits. This design offers a transitional option, turning shark fin soup from a symbol of cultural obligation into an opportunity for valuable dialogue.

While this project focuses on the dish, shark fin, throughout the paper, the questions it raises go beyond the dish itself. It explores the opportunities for design to emerge when the group found itself in an ethically uncomfortable yet culturally expected situation. I began the topic with my personal experience, as I am the family member who refuses to consume shark fins. I've always felt the tension when the dish is served at the table, and I've always wondered how to minimize that discomfort without being too obvious. It's been a meaningful but unexpectedly complex topic to work on.

The biggest challenge for me wasn't just addressing the issue of shark fin, but also exploring the group dynamic at the dining table and challenging the existing dining pattern. As an individual who often prefers to stay quiet and hesitate before making a statement, this design project not only serves as a tableware design project but also as a way for me to explore how to express my own values clearly. From this perspective, this is not only a design for others to reflect on, but also an opportunity for me to find my unique voice.



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I Appendix

Appendix A. Ethical Considerations and Methodology

The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone, and participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the analysis and in the final report. While basic information such as participants' names, ages, and nationalities was collected, it remained private. Participants were informed that they could skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering and could withdraw from the interview at any time without giving a reason. The PREMO data was securely stored alongside the interview data, with emotional responses linked only to anonymous participant IDs.

Before each interview, participants were verbally informed of these privacy measures and asked to sign a consent form confirming their agreement. Interviews were conducted in either English or Mandarin, depending on participants' language preferences, ensuring they could express themselves comfortably. Questions were carefully phrased to respect cultural beliefs, and sensitive topics, such as personal opinions on traditional foods, were handled with cultural sensitivity. For Mandarin interviews, transcripts were translated into English using Claude AI, ensuring that the original meaning and context were accurately preserved.

In this paper, ChatGPT was used as a language tool to assist with rephrasing text, enhancing clarity, and selecting suitable wording. It was used to ensure that the writing is clear and effectively communicates the research findings.

Appendix B. Research and Interview Detail

Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was conducted either in person or online (via Google Meet), depending on the participants' preferences. This flexible approach ensured that participants could comfortably share their experiences.

Interviews were conducted in both English and Mandarin, depending on participants' language preferences. For interviews conducted in Mandarin, the audio recordings were transcribed and then translated into English using Claude AI, ensuring consistency and accuracy in analysis.

Questions			
1	Do you know what this is? If yes, please circle the emotion you had when it was served to you at a wedding. Then, use three adjectives to describe this dish. (If participants don't know what it is, skip to question 3) (Show Image) (PREMO)	8	Please circle the emotion you had when shark fin soup was served to you at a wedding banquet with a menu showing its species. (PREMO)
2	Do you ever consume shark fin soup? If yes, in what context? If not, why not?	9	If you were served shark fin soup, how much information about its source would you want to know before deciding whether to eat it?
3	Please circle the emotion you had when shark fin soup was served to you at a wedding. (PREMO)	10	Have you ever changed what you eat because of ethical or environmental reasons (e.g., choosing sustainable seafood and eating less meat)?
4	What do you think makes shark fin valuable, its taste, cultural meaning, or something else?	11	What usually influences your food choices when dining out?
5	Do you think the way shark fins are sourced affects their value or meaning as a dish?	12	What does the term Conscious Dining mean to you? Please use three words to describe.
6	Some people assume that if food is served in a restaurant, it must be sourced legally and ethically. Do you think that's always true?	13	Would you feel more confident in your food choices if menus provided full sourcing details?
7	If restaurants provided sourcing information for the shark fin soup, how would it change your feelings, and would you consume it? (Show image)	14	Should consumers take more responsibility for their food choices, or should it be up to restaurants and suppliers to ensure that their food is sourced ethically?
		15	Do you think you are free to choose what you eat at social events like banquets or weddings, or do social expectations influence your choices?

Figure B1. Interview Questions

Appendix C. Concept 1 Detail

Design Evaluation For Scented Envelope

Rate each of the following statements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Evaluate each object separately based on your experience.

Low-Visibility, Non-Disruptive: The envelope blended naturally into the table setting.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Gentle Individual Expression: It allowed me to reflect personally without pressure.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Emotional over Moral Language: The tone felt gentle and open, not persuasive or judgmental.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Cultural Politeness: It gave me space to reflect or opt out without feeling rude.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Operational Simplicity: It was easy to understand without needing further explanation.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Keepsake Value: This object felt meaningful or memorable, even beyond its function.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Intuitive Interaction: I knew how to interact with it without needing instructions.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Engagement: I felt free to engage or not, without feeling excluded.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Navigating Social Expectations: This helped me process or respond to unspoken group expectations.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



Figure C1. Rating Form

Testing steps included:

Introduction to the design context and the two prototypes. (5 min)
Hands-on interaction: opening the envelope and using the coaster. (10 min)
Filling out a structured evaluation form covering different criteria. (5 min)
Group reflection and discussion of thoughts or feelings. (10 min)

Evaluation Results:

Participants were asked to rate the envelope and coaster across several categories, including usability, emotional tone, intuitiveness, and how well each helped navigate social expectations. The table below summarizes the average scores (1–5 scale).

Evaluation Criteria	Scented Envelope	Coaster
Non-Disruptive	2.7	2.7
Gentle Individual Expression	3.3	4.7
Emotional over Moral Language	4.0	5.0
Cultural Politeness	3.7	3.3
Operational Simplicity	3.3	3.3
Keepsake Value	3.7	3.7
Intuitive Interaction	2.3	3.0
Engagement	3.0	4.0
Navigating Social Expectation	3.3	3.3

Figure C2. Table of Evaluation Result

Observation and Reflections:

During the discussion, some participants shared that they hesitated to open the envelope because they were unsure of its purpose. Others mentioned that it felt emotionally thoughtful but slightly awkward in a formal setting. Several said it was “nice to take home,” but they did not feel confident engaging with it during the meal. The scent and story were appreciated, but the moment of interaction and desired outcome was unclear.

In contrast, the coaster was generally well understood. Most participants quickly grasped its function and found it easy to use. However, some noted that if their plate looked different due to choosing not to eat the dish, it might still draw attention or trigger questions. The coaster functioned well as a quiet decision-making tool but lacked an emotional or symbolic dimension.

Appendix D. Concept 2 Result of Observation



Figure D1. Photo from Observation

During the meal, small shifts in behavior were observed in response to the different heights of the dishes. The tallest dish, which was a soup, required all participants to stand up in order to serve themselves. Because the soup surface could not be seen while seated, guests often leaned forward or got up entirely to check what was inside. The person sitting closest to the soup sometimes helped others by serving or passing the bowl, which added a layer of informal coordination around that particular dish.

In contrast, the second and third elevated dishes created less movement. Some guests still adjusted their posture slightly or leaned forward, while others served without needing to move at all. These interactions felt more casual and did not disrupt the rhythm of the meal.

Throughout the observation, no one directly commented on the elevation of the dishes. The difference in height did not interrupt the group's flow or prompt verbal reflection. The elevated forms were accepted as part of the table setting, and without additional context or symbolic framing, they were perceived as neutral rather than meaningful.

Photographs taken during the meal documented body movements, angles of interaction, and moments of adjustment. Voice recordings captured casual conversation but did not include any remarks related to the physical setup of the table. These results suggest that while small spatial interventions can gently influence how guests move and interact, the meaning behind those shifts may remain unnoticed unless supported by clearer cultural or emotional cues.

Overall, the observation showed that elevation can subtly affect physical behavior and group interaction. However, without added framing or symbolic language, it may not yet be enough to invite ethical reflection or conscious decision-making within a formal dining setting.

Appendix E. Concept 3 Workshop Drawings

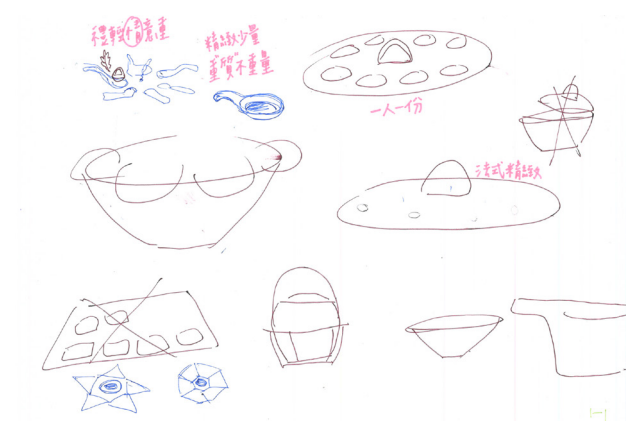


Figure E1. Drawing from group A

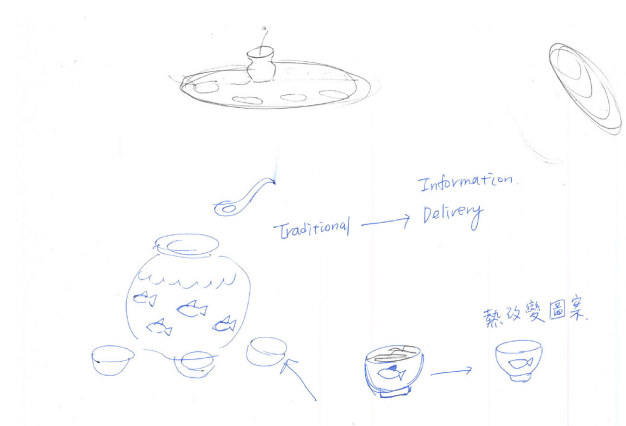


Figure E2. Drawing from group A

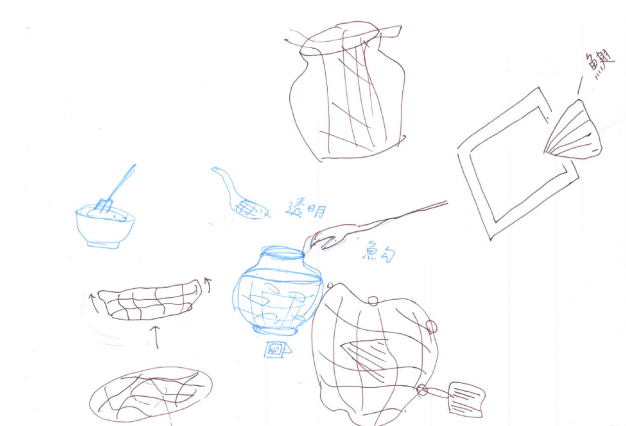


Figure E3. Drawing from group A



Figure E4. Drawing from group B

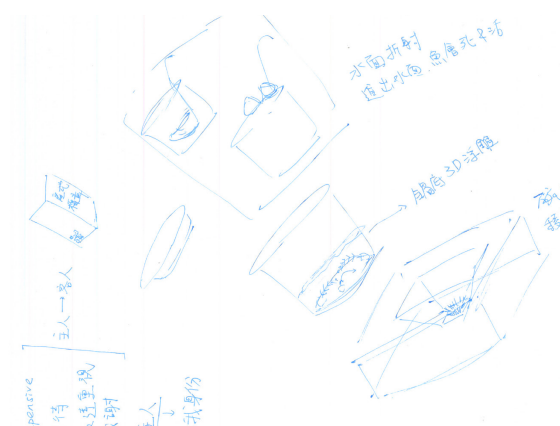


Figure E5. Drawing from group C



Figure E6. Drawing from group D

Appendix F. Interview Questions for Eveluation

	Questions
	(Show Image A)
1	What does this setting make you feel? (Please circle the emotion that best shows your feeling) Why?
2	If you were dining at this table, what would you do with the sharkfin soup?
	(Show Image of Re-design)
3	What does this new setting make you feel? (Please circle the emotion that best shows your feeling/ Premo)Why?
4	If this were your dining situation, what would you do?
	Follow-up Questions
5	Does this setting feel natural and acceptable for a formal banquet? Why or why not
6	Do you feel this design respects traditional values and dining rituals?
7	Do you think this setup still communicates sincerity and hospitality?
8	Would you feel more comfortable making your own choice in the situation?

Figure F1. Questions for eveluation interview



Figure F2. Picture of shark fin soup that were shown

Appendix E. Original Project Brief

DESIGN FOR our future

TU Delft

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name studentYi- An ChenStudent number5,984,726

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT
Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project titleFostering Conscious Dining Habits Among Asians Rooted in Traditional Food Beliefs

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Traditional Food beliefs hold a central role in shaping dining culture across Asian societies. These beliefs are often tied to rooted cultural values, rituals and social norms which makes the food more than just nourishment. However, these practices sometimes lead to passive consumption, where the act of consuming was not based on conscious thought but traditional beliefs. This has been a relevant dining habbits in some Asian countries especially in traditional dishes including sharkfin, remain central to celebration events such as wedding, Lunar New Year and other significant occasions. Shark fin soup, for instance, is deeply rooted in traditional banquet culture dating back to the Sung Dynasty (AD 960–1279), and it has long been regarded as a symbol of status, wealth, and respect. Oceanic shark populations have declined by up to 70% over the past 50 years, a quarter of world's ray and shark species are now considered threatened. (Tsoi, K., 2016). While shark fin consumption is deeply ingrained in cultural practices, it also highlights the broader tension between preserving these traditions and addressing modern ethical concerns such as sustainability and animal welfare. This research explores how to promote conscious dining habits across Asian societies by fostering a thoughtful balance between honoring traditional food beliefs and embracing more ethical, sustainable dining practices. The two main stakeholders in this research are the elderly generations, who often prioritize the preservation of traditional cultural heritage and the symbolic meaning associated with traditional dishes, and the younger generations, who are more conscious about modern ethical dining practices. The key interests at stake include cultural preservation, ethical dining practices, and environmental protection. Possible opportunities include bridging the generational gap by fostering mutual understanding between cultural traditions and advocates ethical practices. However, limitations may arise from resistance by stakeholders who view these changes as a threat to cultural identity.

→ space available for images / figures on next page

introduction (continued): space for images



image / figure 1 Sharkfin soup served in restaurant.



image / figure 2 The formal dining settings for gathering in Taiwanese culture



Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.
(max 200 words)

This project focuses on bridging the communication gap between generations about traditional dining practices and modern ethical concerns, using shark fin consumption as a key example. Older generations often value preserving cultural traditions, such as serving shark fin soup as a symbol of respect and status, while younger generations are more focused on sustainability and ethical eating. This can lead to resistance from elders to try new dining practices and limit younger people's efforts to maintain traditional food culture. The goal is to help both generations understand each other better. This means encouraging older generations to explore ethical alternatives to dishes like shark fin soup without losing their cultural significance and guiding younger generations to respect and preserve traditions while promoting sustainable practices. The project aims to bring these perspectives together to create dining habits that honor both tradition and modern values.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design to engage users to explore the cultural significance and environmental impact of traditional dishes, inspiring them to discover and embrace ethical alternatives.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

The possible research methods for this project will be including:
Literature reviews for history of the culture and the harms of the environment.
Conducting user interviews with individuals from different generations to understand their views on traditional dining practices, sustainability, and ethical dining habits.
Stakeholder Mapping to identify key stakeholders and analyze their roles, concerns, and influence on dining culture.
Ethnographic research by observing real life dining habits to identify behaviors, social dynamics, and passive consumption patterns.
Co-Design sessions by collaborate with users from different generations to ideate and prototype design solutions that address their needs and preferences.

Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting

19 Feb 2025

Mid-term evaluation

6 May 2025

Green light meeting

3 Jul 2025

Graduation ceremony

5 Aug 2025

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	
For how many project weeks	22
Number of project days per week	5,0

Comments:

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.
(200 words max)

The motivation for this project comes from my personal experience with shark fin consumption in my family, a practice I find hard to fully agree with. Growing up in a family that values traditional habits in many aspects of life, I have a deep appreciation and respect for preserving cultural traditions. However, some dining habits, like eating shark fin, raise ethical concerns and offer opportunities to explore alternatives that balance cultural heritage and sustainability. My passion for food design and cultural traditions inspires me to take on this project. It is an opportunity to align my personal values with my professional goals. Through this project, I aim to improve my design skills, especially in interaction design and creative coding, an area I currently find challenging but want to explore further. Along with developing these skills, I will focus on cultural preservation and ethical dining habits. My goal is to create solutions that connect traditional and ethical dining practices, helping to foster understanding between generations and contributing to a more sustainable future for dining culture.

