

## Article

# Relationship Between Interior Layout of Second-Hand Houses For Sale and Feng Shui

Shihchien Chan \*, and Tzu-Chun Ma

School of Design, Ming Chuan University, Taoyuan 333321, Taiwan; horseuse@hotmail.com

\* Correspondence: scchan@mail.mcu.edu.tw; Tel.: +886-912817696

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**Abstract:** The second-hand housing market is important in the real estate industry. In choosing second-hand houses in Taiwan, traditional beliefs in Feng Shui are considered by potential buyers. Thus, we examined 327 cases of available second-hand and currently inhabited houses to analyze the internal Feng Shui layouts. The research findings indicated significant quantitative differences between inhabited second-hand houses and those for sale regarding the internal layouts of Feng Shui. An intermediate degree of correlation with Feng Shui principles was low. When considering quantitative differences and significant correlation in Feng Shui, four thematic principles were found to have a consistent relationship. These included the absence of a front balcony (B), the orientation of the entrance (E), the positioning of the kitchen stove (S), and the residential unit's see-through situations (T). These were correlated with houses that were sold easily in the market. By extracting the initial letters of the primary nouns involved, the "B. E. S. T." were important in the second-hand house market.

**Keywords:** Second-hand housing, Feng Shui, Traditional cultural beliefs

## 1. Introduction

A significant portion of real estate buyers purchase second-hand houses rather than new ones. Real estate agents and platforms disclose information regarding the condition, current state, and pricing as well as floor plans, on-site photographs, and even immersive 360-degree video tours. In reality, when selecting second-hand houses, numerous facets are considered. Buyers consider transportation convenience, property prices, location advantages, and even the community's resilience to disasters. In Taiwan, another aspect when purchasing second-hand houses is also considered: the influence of traditional Feng Shui. The Feng Shui layout of second-hand houses is one of the focal points in property acquisition for this group of people. Feng Shui beliefs impact Chinese individuals' choices regarding domestic layouts. Approximately 73% of the population believes in Feng Shui for residential properties [1]. The belief in traditional Feng Shui is no longer viewed as superstition but has evolved over millennia to become an integral cultural belief in Chinese society. Through centuries of faith and transmission, it has developed into ethnic and cultural housing ideologies, shaping a part of everyday cultural life [2].

In the concepts of Feng Shui for residential houses, a favorable layout is believed to contribute to good health, successful careers, and harmonious family life. Consequently, those residing in such houses tend to stay longer and are less inclined to sell or relocate. Conversely, an unfavorable interior layout is believed to cause instability in living conditions, erratic career paths, or a sense of unease often results in frequent relocations or property turnover. Therefore, the planning of a favorable residential layout is important. Feng Shui for residences is an ancestral legacy with a mindset regarding the design of the surrounding environment, emphasizing the harmony and compatibility between humans and nature. It focuses on the surroundings of a house's terrain, topography, orientation, soil, landscaping, lighting, and wind relationships—a discipline influencing ancient residential construction [3].

There is a popular belief that Feng Shui governs the fortunes of a household. People believe that if the interior layout is inadequately planned, it may lead to disturbances in family affairs, marital relationships, health, and financial prospects. This could make living in the house less pleasant, possibly resulting in a move and the property being listed as a second-hand house for sale [4]. Thus, it is worth examining the correlation between the Feng Shui interior layout of second-hand houses and those currently inhabited. By analyzing these crucial Feng Shui aspects of layouts, associations or substantive connections of houses to Feng Shui were researched in this study.

Therefore, we explored the Feng Shui interior layout of second-hand houses and investigated the relationship between the interior layout and Feng Shui for second-hand houses for sale and those currently inhabited. It was hypothesized that there were

internal Feng Shui pattern problems in several houses, leading to second-hand houses with a certain correlation. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of Feng Shui were conducted to authenticate Feng Shui concepts and demonstrate that they are more than myths. In this research, essential principles regarding Feng Shui layout were explored to discuss the correlation difference between the Feng Shui layout of second-hand houses for sale and those currently inhabited, and summarized interior layout principles that predisposed properties to become second-hand listings.

## 2. Literature Review

Data concerning real estate transactions and Feng Shui in residential properties are relatively lacking. The availability of articles on Feng Shui is also constrained as existing studies focus on the historical evolution and theoretical discourse of Feng Shui with less research. The following articulates the prevailing themes within the relevant literature.

### 2.1. Real Estate Market

In 2022, Chen surveyed consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions regarding resilient communities among second-hand houses. Her findings revealed that the perception, attitude, and participation of second-hand dwelling buyers towards the community location and community resilience in disaster management significantly influenced their purchasing intentions. A significant impact was observed between the willingness to purchase second-hand properties and the perceived attitudes and involvement of resilient communities [5]. Additionally, from the VCOUS website, principles that consumers should consider when buying second-hand properties were found. Consumers need to gather and understand information related to natural environmental conditions when purchasing second-hand properties. Information acquisition methods and advice regarding common principles associated with second-hand properties are also available [6]. In 2019, Chiu found that declining birth rates shifted consumer preferences in housing purchases from traditional stand-alone houses to high-rise buildings and condominiums. The determining factors in property acquisition were considerations of lifestyle functionality and property prices. The impact of declining birth rates is related to a gradual decrease in the number of rooms, floor area, housing demands, and transaction volume, indicating substantial changes in people's housing behaviors and perceptions due to declining birth rates [7]. Mao investigated the dynamic factors affecting the transaction prices of second-hand properties. Using Chi-square automatic interaction detection (CHAID) analysis, she explored variables such as building floor area, age, parking spaces, housing types, and administrative space as independent variables against property transaction prices as the dependent variable. Her findings suggested a limited capacity of these variables to explain housing price fluctuations, revealing unclear associations within the studied residential supply and demand principles [8]. Chen recommended considering property purchases to prevent potential disputes. His guidance covered aspects from property inspections to contractual precautions, offering consumers clear and effective information to understand their rights in property acquisitions, significantly aiding their purchasing decisions [9].

### 2.2. Feng Shui Theory

The classification of Feng Shui systems within residential properties is primarily divided into two: Form School and Compass School. The Form School boasts ancient documented records and inherited literature with an abundance of historical accounts. Its narrative is comprehensive and systematic. Conversely, the Compass School believes in Yin Yang and the I-Ching theory, rendering it notably intricate and mysterious [10]. In 2003, Jiang researched ancient Feng Shui as a specialized technique for assessing both Yin and Yang residences. The viewpoint of Feng Shui affects the architectural design, internal and external spatial layouts, environmental design, and construction forms. Feng Shui considers natural geographic surroundings and climate factors around the site, aiming for a harmonious coexistence between human houses and the natural environment. However, over its long development, manmade factors gradually led Feng Shui to acquire a mystical and superstitious aura, causing criticism from intellectuals. Nevertheless, in recent years, scholars in Western countries have emphasized Chinese Feng Shui theory, highlighting concepts of unity between heaven and earth, correspondence with the natural environment, and even evaluating it as a facet of universal ecology [11].

Han, in his book "Feng Shui and Environment," proposed that the Feng Shui concept has evolved beyond mere practice and has become an integral part of the cultural life of Chinese society, serving as common traditional beliefs. This demonstrates that the influence of Feng Shui cannot be solely attributed to superstition [2]. Wu in his works "Enhancing Fortune in Residential Feng Shui" and "Feng Shui in the Workplace" in 2005 and 2006, divided residential Feng Shui into eight internal and eight external aspects. He explored practical Feng Shui operations and associated taboos based on different internal and external environmental themes [3,4]. Luo and Tang discussed residential Feng Shui from a theoretical standpoint to systematically explain the principles and taboos of Feng Shui patterns from various aspects [12]. In 2015, Chan studied the conflicting principles between green

architecture and traditional Feng Shui and explored the conflicts and resolution between the two from the perspective of Feng Shui and green architectural design strategies [13]. Additionally, Chan also reviewed the principles of water retention in green building sites and the differences in traditional architectural thinking [14], engaging in a series of discussions concerning Feng Shui principles and various related aspects of green architecture. The curiosity regarding a potential connection between the interior layout of second-hand houses and Feng Shui persists. This intriguing principle needs exploration and understanding. While Feng Shui concepts within Chinese society are complex, this study was carried out to systematically analyze them using a scientific approach and explore the relationship between Feng Shui patterns and internal layouts of houses.

### 3. Research Methods

Considering previous literature and related research methodologies, we developed a scientific research method. Traditionally, research on Feng Shui has been conducted through literature reviews and case analyses. We conducted quantitative statistical comparisons and correlation analyses, to validate the results in two research approaches. SPSS was used for such analyses. A questionnaire was created to question whether the analyzed cases are occupied residential units and the main Feng Shui principles within the internal layouts (Q1-Q10) to test the hypothesis of this study regarding the correlations between second-hand houses for sale and Feng Shui layouts.

This research was conducted in three main phases. In the first phase, Feng Shui principles were identified and cases were collected. For the analysis of Feng Shui concepts, expert interviews were performed. The Feng Shui principles concerning interior layouts are complex requiring screening and organization to accurately grasp the concepts of Feng Shui interior layouts. Simultaneously, publicly available information from real estate agent websites and data on cases were collected for currently inhabited houses from interior design and architectural firms that provide internal layouts. Each case was explored regarding the principles identified for analysis, and results were coded and recorded. In the second phase, statistical analysis was conducted to comprehend the principles. Subsequently, in the third phase, the coded data were analyzed. The data were collected in two main categories: floor plan and space for second-hand houses for sale and those currently inhabited. 196 cases of second-hand houses for sale and 131 cases of currently inhabited houses were collected, summing up to 327 cases. The interior layout of each house was investigated from the perspective of Feng Shui. Ten essential interior layout questions concerning internal layout principles were derived from the expert interviews. A flowchart depicting the research process is illustrated in Fig. 1.

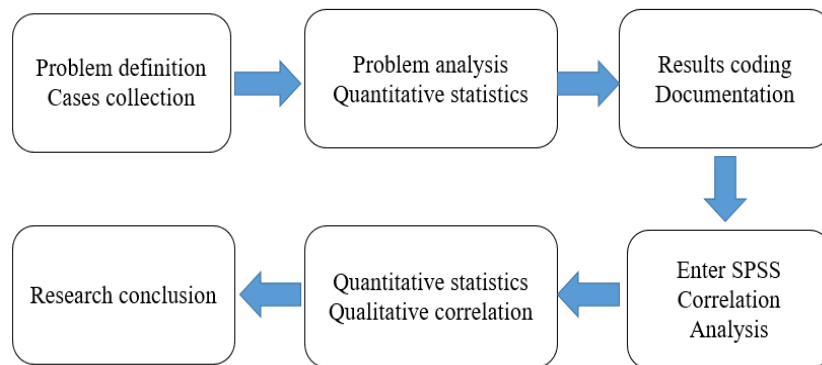


Fig. 1. Flow of research operations.

#### 3.1. Interior Layout Principles

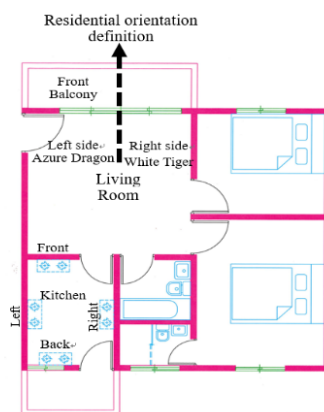
A second-hand house for sale or currently inhabited was the dependent variable in this research. The Feng Shui principles influencing the dependent variable were independent variables. To ascertain interior layout principles related to Feng Shui, a Feng Shui expert, Professor Zhang-Yu Wu was interviewed. He is a full-time university professor with nearly four decades of experience in Feng Shui. He wrote three practical Feng Shui operation books. Through the expert interview, 10 essential principles were determined related to interior layouts of Feng Shui as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** 10 important principles in Feng Shui.

<b>Principles</b>	
Q1	Is the shape of the living room square?
Q2	Is there a front balcony on the living unit?
Q3	Is the door of the dwelling set on the left side?
Q4	Is the kitchen a separate room (not an open space)?
Q5	Where is the kitchen stove set?
Q6	Is there a toilet door-to-room door situation in any room?
Q7	Are there any see-through situations from front to back in the residence?
Q8	Are there any room doors facing each other?
Q9	Are there independent space settings inside bedrooms?
Q10	Does the kitchen door face a room door?

The ten principles included the primary spaces within typical Chinese residences, including the living room, bedrooms, kitchen, entrance, balcony, and bathroom, among others. These spatial arrangements impact the health, career, wealth, and familial relationships of the inhabitants [10]. The following definitions and explanations in Feng Shui were used to facilitate subsequent exploration.

1. House orientation: House orientation is determined by the direction with the largest area of natural light in the living room of the house, establishing it as the orientation of the dwelling unit. Fig. 2 shows the definition of residential orientation.
2. Left-side Azure Dragon, Right-side White Tiger: This is primarily based on the orientation of the houses. When looking from the inside to the outside of the unit, the left side represents the Azure Dragon (Fig. 2), while the right side signifies the White Tiger. The original concepts of the Azure Dragon and White Tiger trace back to ancient observations of astrology, corresponding to the surrounding directions of human habitations.
3. See-through situations in a dwelling: From the front wall of the house through windows or doors, a direct view across the internal space to the rear wall is important without obstructions. Figure 3 shows see-through situations in houses. Windows and doors are not fixed to walls.
4. Stove orientation: Similar to the definition of house orientation, stove placement is categorized into four spaces: left, right, front, and backside. In the Feng Shui concept of the Form school, the position of the stove on the left and right sides is good, while the position on the right and front is bad.
5. Entrance orientation: Based on the central axis of the living room in the houses, the entrance orientation is classified on the left or right side. In the Feng Shui concept of the Form school, the left side of the central axis of the living room is good for the door, while the right side is bad for it.



**Fig. 2.** Definition of residential orientation.

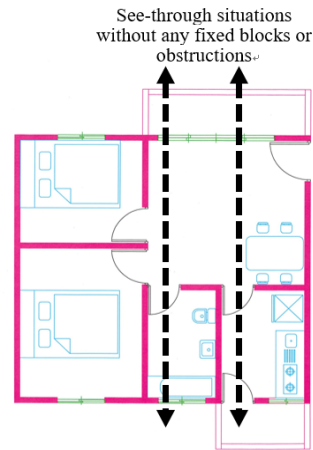


Fig. 3. Definition of see-through situations in a residence.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Six of the ten Feng Shui principles showed no significant difference between the houses for sale and those inhabited: Q1, Q4, Q6, Q8, Q9, and Q10. Q2, Q3, Q5, and Q7 exhibited significant differences. Figure 4 illustrates that 55.61% of the second-hand houses had a front balcony, while 76.3% of the inhabited houses had one. The proportion of inhabited houses with front balconies was much higher than those for sale. This indicated that houses without a front balcony were more likely to become second-hand houses for sale. From the Feng Shui perspective, the front balcony is the entrance to welcome good luck and is considered to influence the household's career development and family career opportunities. Those living in houses with a front balcony tended to experience career and family development [5].

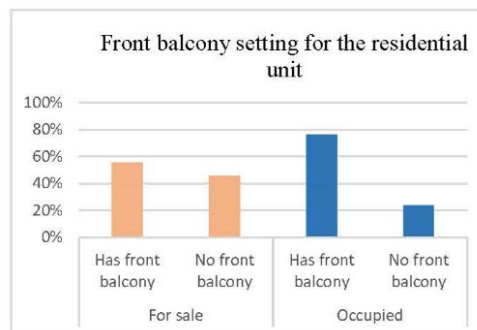


Fig.4. Living unit front balcony.

Figure 5 shows that 64.80% of second-hand houses for sale had main entrances on the White Tiger side, while 72.5% of inhabited houses had it on the Azure Dragon side. Most entrances were located on the left side. On the contrary, most entrances to second-hand houses for sale were located on the right side. From the Feng Shui perspective, an entrance from the Azure Dragon side signifies positive fortune entering the house, resulting in smoother household affairs. Conversely, entry from the White Tiger side implies more disputes and less favorable occurrences [4]. Therefore, houses with entrances on the White Tiger side were more likely to be sold. The entrance is the same as the balcony. It is a location that brings good fortune. When good energy enters the house, people feel refreshed and live in the house longer. Such houses were not for sale in general [15].



Fig. 5. Entrance location for the living unit.

From the perspective of the Feng Shui house layout, the orientation of the kitchen stove affects the wealth and health of family members. Generally, the stove is located on the left or rear side of the residence, while the right or front side is deemed less auspicious [16]. In the favorable stove position in the Feng Shui principle, a well-positioned kitchen stove brings health to your family (auspiciousness), and wealth comes with it (prosperity). Regarding the orientation of the kitchen stove, the stove was positioned on the right side (the White Tiger side) in 37.76% of the second-hand houses for sale and 9.70% on the front side (Vermilion Bird side). Conversely, 36.6% of the inhabited houses had the stove at the rear (the Black Tortoise side) and 32.1% on the left (the Azure Dragon side). There was a significant difference in the stove location on the right side between the second-hand houses for sale and those inhabited. 69% of inhabited houses had stoves on the left and rear sides according to the principles of Feng Shui kitchen layouts. Several houses had two stoves placed in different locations in the kitchen, but from a Form School Feng Shui perspective, this is not good, implying that the family members in this housing unit live apart soon, and the number of family members decreases in the future [10]. Figure 6 displays the results of the orientation of the kitchen stove. A significant difference in the locations of the stoves between second-hand houses for sale and habitied houses.



Fig. 6. Kitchen stove setting position.

From the perspective of Feng Shui, see-through from the front wall to the back wall without any obstacles significantly impacts the health of its inhabitants, causing colds or flu and severe health problems [16]. Figure 7 illustrates that 49% of houses for sale exhibited this see-through situation, but 53.40% of inhabited houses had this situation. The proportion of see-through situations was significantly higher in houses for sale than in inhabited houses.

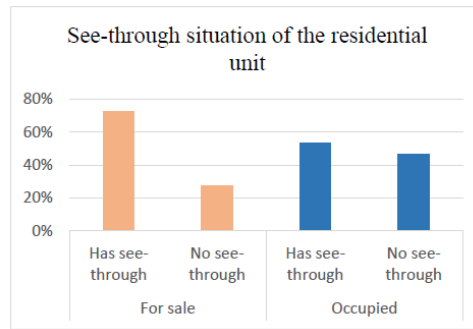


Fig. 7. Houses see-through situation from front to back.

The results showed that second-hand houses for sale had suboptimal arrangements in Feng Shui. The location of front balconies, main entrances, kitchen stoves, and the see-through layout were considered of concern in Feng Shui.

#### 4.2. Qualitative Analysis Results

We examined the correlation between the internal layout of second-hand houses for sale and the principles of Feng Shui. Pearson correlation values with absolute coefficients of 0.5 were considered significant while those lower than 0.3 indicated a moderate degree of correlation [17] [18]. Correlation coefficients ranging between 0.1 and 0.3 indicate a low degree of correlation, while those between 0.3 and 0.7 show a moderate degree of correlation. When the Pearson correlation coefficient exceeds 0.7, it indicates a high degree of correlation [19]. Six principles exhibited Pearson correlation coefficients >0.1 at a significance level of 0.01, indicating a low and moderate degree of correlation between these six interior layout principles and the possibility of the second-hand house sold. Table 2 presents the calculation results of Pearson’s correlation correlations and the significance values between the category and the principles. Q1, Q2, Q5, Q7, and Q9 exhibited correlation coefficients of 0.1– 0.3 at a significance level of 0.01, indicating a relatively low level of significant correlation. The orientation of the entrance exhibited a correlation coefficient of -0.366, indicating a moderate negative correlation. Regarding the entrance position, an ideal location is the left Azure Dragon side, symbolizing vitality and prosperity. The negative correlation coefficient indicated that the entrance was located on the side opposite the Azure Dragon. 64.8% of second-hand houses for sale had their entrances on the right White Tiger side, suggesting that entrances positioned on the White Tiger side were more likely to become for sale in the future.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between second-hand houses for sale and layouts of Feng Shui.

	Q0	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Q0. Is it a second-hand house for sale?	1	-0.166**	-0.211**	-0.366**	-0.084	-0.144**	0.102	0.195**	0.074	-0.165**	0.083
		0.003	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.009	0.067	0.000	0.183	0.003	0
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327	327	327	327	327

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed) \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Five principles demonstrated a significant low-level correlation and one exhibited a significant moderate-level correlation between house for sale and inhabited houses. Such results suggested a low and moderate degree of association between houses and Feng Shui. Four principles were distinctive including a front balcony, the orientation of the main entrance, the positioning of the kitchen stove, and a see-through situation in the houses inhabited.

#### 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The findings of this research revealed relationships between the interior layout and houses from the perspective of Feng Shui. Feng Shui is believed to affect the occupants' career, health, and wealth. When Feng Shui principles are lacking, living conditions and property may not be enough. Statistical analysis results showed that the presence of a front balcony, Q3 the orientation of the entrance door, the orientation of the stove, and the presence of a see-through passage in houses were important for houses. The presence of a front balcony, the orientation of the stove, the presence of a see-through passage, and the presence of rooms within rooms showed the Pearson correlation coefficient between 0.1 and 0.3 at a significance level of 0.01, indicating a low to moderate

level of significance. The orientation of the entrance door had a coefficient higher than 0.3 (-0.366), indicating a moderate negative correlation with Feng Shui.

The presence of a front balcony (B), the orientation of the entrance door (E), the orientation of the stove in the kitchen (S), and the presence of a see-through passage in houses (T) were important for houses.

1. "B" indicates the presence or absence of a front balcony in houses. In Feng Shui principles, a front balcony symbolizes the career development of the household head, closely related to their career prospects and family income. Those who live in houses without a front balcony tend to experience more setbacks in career development, making these units less conducive for long-term occupancy and more likely to enter the second-hand housing market.
2. "E" represents the entrance door, denoting the direction of entry and exit for houses. According to Feng Shui, residences where the main door allows entry from the left side, symbolizing the Azure Dragon, tend to attract auspicious fortunes. Conversely, if the door is situated on the right side, symbolizing the White Tiger, the household is prone to disputes and instability, leading to frequent relocations, consequently making such houses more susceptible to resale.
3. "S" stands for a stove, indicating the orientation of the kitchen stove in houses. In Feng Shui, the stove influences the health and wealth of household members. The stove towards the left side (Azure Dragon) or the rear (Black Tortoise) is considered auspicious, fostering comfort and longevity in residency. Conversely, incorrect placement adversely affects the health and wealth of occupants, resulting in shorter durations of occupancy and consequently making the houses more likely to be resold.
4. "T" denotes the presence of a see-through situation in houses, which impacts physical health. Residences with numerous through passages tend to have poor physical health among occupants, leading to discomfort and frequent relocations, thus increasing the likelihood of such houses being resold.

These four indicators, identified from the perspective of Feng Shui, reveal deficiencies in second-hand houses for sale, as they are related to discomfort and frequent relocations among occupants. These results help prospective buyers in purchasing second-hand houses. Considering the Feng Shui principles, interior renovations can be conducted for comfortable and enduring residency, promoting long-term stability and happiness in houses.

There are following limitations in this research. The houses investigated in this research were located in the metropolitan area of Greater Taipei as more complete and clear information was obtained. The houses were predominantly within buildings equipped with elevators and constructed 30 years ago with 2-4 bedrooms. Such houses constituted a significant portion of the second-hand housing market. Additionally, the interior layout and functions of these buildings were similar, making it easier to identify differences during analysis. The analysis was performed based on floor plans and photos available on real estate agents' websites, facilitating subsequent analysis and judgment of Feng Shui principles. Conversely, information was obtained from architects, interior designers, and existing acquaintances to ensure the authenticity and usefulness of the provided data. Feng Shui encompasses numerous thoughts, each emphasizing different Feng Shui principles. We adopted the Form School of Feng Shui, as its theoretical discourse is more complete and systematic. The principles discussed in the Compass School of Feng Shui are beyond the scope of this study. The interior layout of Feng Shui principles is multifaceted and complex. We interviewed Feng Shui experts to clarify important principles within the interior layout, serving as the basis for Feng Shui principle analysis.

There are numerous reasons why houses become properties for sale. We explored the correlation between the interior layout and Feng Shui principles. The principle cannot be regarded as a sole reference for purchasing second-hand houses. There are many facets of houses related to Feng Shui principles, and future research is necessary to explore the exterior layout of residences. Feng Shui beliefs have existed in traditional folk culture, and systematic, purposeful scientific analysis is demanded to unravel the mysteries of Feng Shui. Using advanced technology with AI, traditional Feng Shui beliefs and discourses need to be considered in future research. Architectural and interior designs can be less constrained by Feng Shui principles. With scientific exploration, the relationship between houses and Feng Shui was researched to contribute to the development of interior and architectural designs based on Feng Shui.

**Author Contributions:** This research was completed by the first author S.C. Chan and the second author T.-C. Ma. In all research work, except for data management and statistical graph drawings, which were completed by the second author, other works were completed by the first author.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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