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Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

## **Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture: a Cross-Cultural Study**

Lianxi ZHOU, Brock University, Canada

Patrick POON, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

This study builds on a newly developed measurement scale for consumers' susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC) to investigate the motives underlying global consumption behaviour in two different Chinese societies. The measurement of SGCC highlights three dimensions related to global consumption tendencies, namely conformity to social norms, quality perception, and social prestige. The results from the Hong Kong consumers and Shanghai counterparts provide a support of the reliability and validity of the SGCC scale, as well as the connection between the psychological traits and purchase intentions. Managerial implications concerning positioning and communication strategies for global brands are discussed.

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# Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture: A Cross-Cultural Study

Patrick Poon, Lingnan University, China\*

Lianxi Zhou, Brock University, Canada\*

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Global Consumer Culture (GCC) refers to generally accepted beliefs and consumer tendencies toward globally shared consumption-related symbols such as brands, product categories, and consumption activities. Previous studies have shown its strategic implication for brand positioning strategies. However, the potential contribution of global consumer culture and its positioning strategy to brand value would depend on consumers' susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC), a general trait that varies across individuals and is reflected in the desire or tendency for the acquisition and use of global brands.

This paper aims to use a newly developed measurement scale for SGCC to investigate the global consumption behaviour in two different globalizing contexts of Chinese societies. Questionnaire surveys were conducted in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The major measurements were the three dimensions of SGCC (i.e., conformity to social norms, perception of product quality, and social prestige), and purchase intentions for global brands. The items used in the measurement of social and cultural dimensions of SGCC (i.e., symbolic value of social prestige and conformity to social norms) were drawn to the maximum extent possible from those that have previously been used in measuring global and foreign brand influences, while the quality perception dimension of SGCC includes the item scales that have been used in the literature of product evaluation and perceived brand globalness.

The procedure for data collection involved with young adults in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The young consumers are more subject to the influence of global and foreign consumer cultures. Two sets of samples were collected. A total of 400 university students were recruited for the study (200 from Hong Kong, 200 from Shanghai). Coincidentally, 169 valid Hong Kong samples and 169 valid Shanghai samples were collected. Among the Hong Kong sample, 99% of the Hong Kong sample aged between 18 and 24; 44.4% were males whilst 55.6% were females; 54.5% of the sample had an average monthly family income between HK\$10,000 and HK\$29,999. For Shanghai samples, all the respondents were between 18 and 23 years old; 38.5% were males whilst 61.5 were females; 14.8% of the sample had an average monthly family income less than RMB1,000; 61.5% of the sample had an average monthly family income between RMB1,000 and RMB5,000. Totally, there were 338 valid samples for the analysis.

The measurement of the items used in the questionnaire was on a 6-point scale rather than the typical 7-point scale to avoid potential measurement bias to a neutral point. The scale was labeled from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. Prior to conducting the survey, a pretest was done with a small group of students to verify the face validity of the instrument. The dimension of conformity to social norms is consisted of five items: the tendency to consume global/foreign brands - "makes one look good in his/her social group"; "makes one feel a sense of belonging"; "makes good impression on others"; "makes one feel closer to modern lifestyle", and "makes one feel to be part of the social trend". The quality perception dimension is also composed of five items: global/foreign brands - "have a very high quality image"; "have a very

high level of reliability"; "have a very high level of standard in safety"; "are associated with latest technology", and "are associated with long-lasting quality". The social prestige dimension contains six items: global/foreign brands - "signify one's fashion image"; "represent the latest lifestyles"; "symbolizes one's social image"; "are associated with the symbol of prestige"; "tell something about one's social class", and "are associated with wealth". Purchase intention is measured by two items: "like to buy/repurchase this kind of global brand", and "like to recommend these brands to my friends and relatives".

Structural equation modeling analyses were performed to examine the two sample groups with regard to the SGCC dimensions. Several reliability and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on the variables to examine the SGCC dimensions with Hong Kong and Shanghai samples. All of the Cronbach's alphas were greater than 0.70. Satisfactory results were obtained for the convergent validity and discriminant validity tests for the three dimensions of SGCC. In order to assess the adequacy of construct measures for the dimensions of SGCC across the two sample groups, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed by using AMOS5.0 with maximum likelihood as the estimation method. The goodness of fit of the model can be considered as acceptable (GFI > 0.9, RMSEA is 0.08). However, the chi-square statistic is not desirable, which may be related to sampling errors. Standardised regression weights and t-values for the structural model are shown in the table (t-values in excess of 1.96 were accepted as significant:  $t \geq 2.58$ , significant at 0.01;  $2.58 > t \geq 1.96$ , significant at 0.05;  $1.96 > t \geq 1.65$ , significant at 0.10;  $t < 1.65$ , insignificant). However, only two of the dimensions of SGCC (conformity to social norms and quality perception) are found to be significantly related to purchase intentions ( $p < 0.05$ ). Social prestige is found to be not significant. Similar findings are found for the two sample groups. Furthermore, based on a test on chi-square differences, no significant differences are found among the two sample groups with respect to the relationship between each of the three dimensions of SGCC and purchase intention.

In short, the results show a support of the reliability and validity of the newly developed three-dimensional scale of SGCC, which can help us to understand more about a specific consumer segment's motivation in buying global brands with regard to symbolic, normative, and/or quality reasons. As such, the SGCC scale can help firms identify how a global brand may be positioned along with the three dimensions, and understanding the score for each dimension is likely to provide direction for guiding a firm's brand positioning strategies. However, more work need to be done to assess the generalization of the SGCC in other developing countries.

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