The Two Different Effects of Chinese Traditional Culture on Luxury Consumption: Face and Harmony

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the different effects of two Chinese traditional cultural values on individuals’ materialism and desire towards luxury products. Specifically, face (mianzi) positively influences luxury products desire through materialism; harmony (hexie) moderates the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire in such a way that the relationship is stronger for those lower, rather than higher, in harmony. This research demonstrates the multidimensionality of cultural influence and points to the need for a sharper focus in building consumer behavior theory based on Chinese (Eastern) society.

INTRODUCTION
The largest population and fastest growing economy in the world leads to the emergence of a booming luxury market in People’s Republic of China. Now an increasing number of luxury brands appear in this huge market, some of which have entered the low-tier cities. Even during the recent economic recession period, the luxury sales amount within China staggeringly kept going up and the market size has reached 8.6 billion U.S. dollars in 2008, ranking 2nd in the world. Moreover, Chinese people spent another 11.6 billion U.S. dollars on luxury goods in overseas markets. Hence in total Chinese consumers contributed more than 10% of luxury sales all over the world in 2008 (Bain, 2009). With the great potential, China is estimated to replace Japan as the largest luxury market after 2015 (BCG, 2009).

This booming market intrigues a lot of scholars and practitioners, and also brings about a lot of confusions. For example, Chinese (Asian) people desire luxury goods even when they earn fairly low income (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Different from westerners who mainly buy house wares, Chinese prefer those public visible luxuries such as watches and bags (Liu, 2006). Consumers in Asia and Western societies may purchase the same products for different reasons (Li & Su, 2007). Thus, as Redding (1990) concluded, any attempt to explain the social behavior in China without considering cultural factors would be incomplete.

Actually in consumer analysis, because of its significant impact on human behavior, culture has been widely linked to consumption (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Yapak, 2008). In business research, culture could be assessed in three ways – ethnological description, cultural proxies and cultural values (Lenartowicz & Roth, 1999; Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2007). Of these approaches, due to the fact that consumers make decisions largely based on the value fulfillment obtained through consumption, cultural values as the dominant societal values shared by individuals in the same cultural group (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1999) have been usually thought of the significant antecedent of consumer behavior (Lowe & Corkindale, 1998). Therefore a large number of studies have examined the influence of cultural values on specific consumer behavior (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006; Kacen & Lee, 2002; Lee, 2000).

However, most of the current cultural theories and constructs developed solely from Western societies might be culture bound and fail to catch the nuance in Eastern society (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). For example, the most important cultural dimension in Hofstede’s framework ‘collectivism’ could relate to several basic indigenous values in Asian cultures, such as face (mianzi), harmony (hexie), personal connections (guanxi), social favours (renqing) and so on. As one of the few countries that were not fully colonized by Western nations, China retained much of its unique cultural characteristics (Ackerman, Hu, & Wei, 2009; Yau, 1988). Several decades ago, scholars had noticed Chinese consumers tended to buy products that met Chinese social standards (Hamilton, 1977). Even today as Western culture swarms into China, the old norms, concepts and ways of thinking are still pervasive and significant in people’s daily life (Wang & Lin, 2009). Several studies have demonstrated that the indigenous Chinese cultural values could influence various consumer issues, such as customer satisfaction (Hoare & Butcher, 2008; Yau, 1994), consumer tolerance (H. Chan, Wan, & Sin, 2009), green purchase (R. Y. K. Chan, 2001), gift giving (Joy, 2001; Qian, Razzazque, & Keng, 2007), and pirated CD purchasing (Wan, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the role of traditional Chinese culture in luxury consumption is completely unknown. Hence it is necessary and meaningful to explore the impacts of indigenous cultural values on luxury consumption in China.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH
There are different functions of culture in behavioral research. It has been agreed by nearly all the (cross-)cultural psychologists that culture could play a significant role in shaping human thought and behavior (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Shweder, 1990; Triandis, 1994). In cultural-behavior analysis, two major issues – does the culture play a primary or secondary role and does culture have a direct or an indirect effect on the dependent variables could decide the role of culture in behavioral research (Lonnier & Adamopoulos, 1997). Firstly, culture could be viewed as the primarily significant determinant of human phenomena. In this category, researchers can treat culture as the independent variable which is similar as in experimental study (direct influence) or view culture as a contextual variable and compare specific behavior across cultures (cross-cultural comparison). Secondly, culture can be considered as an intervening antecedent variable (secondary importance) when some other variables are thought of to be more significant. Under this circumstance, culture is mostly studied as moderator to intervene the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Lonnier & Adamopoulos, 1997). This study will test two traditional Chinese cultural values as independent variable and moderator respectively.
MATERIALISM AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Materialism is often associated with luxury consumption (Mason, 1981; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). As a central driving force in modern consumer society (Cushman, 1990), materialism has become a popular topic in a broad range of disciplines (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). It is defined as the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions (Belk, 1985) and “represents a mind-set or constellation of attitudes regarding the relative importance of acquisition and possession of objects in one’s life” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p. 307). Based on the concept that possessions are individuals’ extended self, Belk (1985) treated materialism as a personality trait with three dimensions: possessiveness referring to the inclination to retain control of one’s possessions, nongenerosity viewed as an unwillingness to share possessions with others, and envy defined as desire for other’s superior possessions. A more popular conceptualization is from Richins & Dawson (1992). They regard materialism as a value which includes the dimension of acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness and possession-defined success. Acquisition centrality proposes that materialists tend to put possessions and acquisition at the centre of their lives. The pursuit of possessions would structure their lives and direct their behaviors. The second theme demonstrates the extent to which materialists view possessions as essential to their life satisfaction and well-being. Hence materialists pursue happiness through acquisition rather than through other ways. Possession-defined success suggests that materialists judge one’s own and others’ success by quality and quantity of their possessions. In capitalist culture, success is always defined in financial terms, so consumers with high level of materialism desire more money, and lay more stress on financial security (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Consumers high in materialism tend to spend money wastefully to enhance their social status (Mason, 1981). Compared to people low in materialism, they are more likely to value things that symbolize wealth and achievement (Richins, 1994a). Then they can obtain satisfaction from others’ admiration (Liao & Wang, 2009), so they usually valuate possessions based on price rather than utilitarian reasons and consume for the sake of consumption (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). Therefore, due to the public meaning and symbolic value (Richins, 1994b), expensive luxury products could be a natural choice for materialists (Tatzel, 2002; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Wong (1997) found that materialism is linked to luxury consumption through the dimensions of envy and possession-defined success. Liao & Wang (2009) discovered material values motivate consumers to purchase brand name goods.

FACE, MATERIALISM AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Face refers to a sense of favorable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of him or her in a relational and network context (Goffman, 1967). The concept of face (miianzi) was originally from Confucian society. In 1940s, Hu (1944) first introduced face to Sociology area. She proposed that although every person defines face as different values and uses different ways to pursue it, face does exist in every society. In other words, face is a cross-cultural and universal phenomenon, but more obvious in Confucian society (Ho, 1976). It reflects one’s social self-esteem and the desire to be respected during interpersonal interactions (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). In Western society, people consider themselves being independent to others, which is called ‘independent self’. In such culture, people tend to make decisions individually and do not care about others’ feelings. Whereas China is an extremely collectivist country where people rely upon others to live and are very concerned about how they are perceived by others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). So the value of face becomes a fundamental principle during social interactions (Ho, 1976; Hu, 1944). In China nearly everyone confronts face-related issues everyday (Li & Su, 2007). People try to gain and maintain face while avoiding losing face (Hwang, 1987).

In Western cultures, people choose brands according to their personal preferences. Whereas in China, people tend to choose brands and products more for prestige (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Because expensive luxury products are the symbol of wealth and success (Richins, 1994a, 1994b), people are likely to consume them to make themselves and their sociality counterparts have face (Joy, 2001). If their behaviors do not accord with others’ expectation, they will lose face. Therefore because of face, sometimes Asian consumers are not willing to buy the luxury products even when they have relatively low income (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998); Zhou & Nakamoto (2001) and Zhou & Belk (2004) also noted this indigenous construct could be a significant factor that leads to the booming luxury market in China.

In addition, both face and materialism relate to the desire for using a brand or a product to enhance social prestige (Liao & Wang, 2009). Specifically, people with strong face consciousness are likely to pursue money and material wealth regardless of how rich or poor they are to enhance their reputation and status (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Bao et al. (2003) found because of face Chinese consumers attach more importance to the extrinsic attributes (e.g., brand, prestige) than intrinsic attributes (e.g., value, quality) of products, which is consistent to the trait of materialists. So we could say face makes materialism stand out. Wan et al. (2009) also discovered face could positively influence materialism which leads to pirate CD purchase. It is noteworthy that in some studies researchers conceptualize face as a consumption style (face consumption) rather than a value or personality trait (Bao, et al., 2003; Li & Su, 2007). Then face becomes a consequence of materialism (Liao & Wang, 2009). In the present research, we consider face as a personal value people tend to conform to, hence we postulate that face could influence luxury consumption through materialism. H1: Face would have a positive influence on luxury products desire and this relationship is mediated by materialism.

HARMONY, MATERIALISM AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Compared to Western individualist countries, China is a highly collectivist nation (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). This culture emphasizes ‘we-identity’ instead of ‘I-identity’ in individualist culture. People are motivated by norms and duties imposed by the in-group, give priority to the goals of the in-group, and try to stress their connectedness with the in-group (Triandis, 1995). This leads to an indigenous value – harmony (hexie) which refers to the concept of avoiding extreme behavior or conflict to maintain and achieve harmonious relationship with other people (Kirkbride, Tang, & Westwood, 1991; Yau, 1988). As the
foundation of Chinese culture, harmony relates to several important social norms, such as reciprocation of social favors (renqing), group orientation, personal connections (guanxi), solidarity with others, face and so on. For Chinese the word ‘mature’ means one could maintain a harmonious interpersonal relationship and care about others’ feelings. Cocroft & Ting-Toomey (1994) found that Chinese tend to use indirect and mild conflict styles to keep interpersonal harmony whereas US respondents are more likely to use direct and threatening conflict styles. Even when dealing with international affairs, currently Chinese government proposes the concept of harmonious world to reduce conflicts across nations and focus on world peace and development.

In order to achieve harmonious interpersonal relationship, people should have a high degree of self-control and moderation (Yau, 1988). A daily-life example is that in Western society when one gets praised he would accept it and say ‘thank you’, whereas Chinese are prone to say ‘No’ to show humbleness, or else they would be thought of arrogance and the relationship with others might be damaged. Hence in China, low-key is a most important principle during social interactions. In collectivist cultures, the tendency to focus on group harmony requires the ability of managing and repressing personal internal expressions (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Even if a person is very talented and contributes a lot at work but behaves aggressively, he breaks the harmony and therefore would not gain popularity from others. So Asian people always repress negative emotions and only express positive emotions to their acquaintances (Gudykunst, 1993). Ho (1994) also found that children in Confucian countries tend to control the impulses at their early ages.

Culture could affect an individual’s behavior by determining the appropriate way of emotional expression (McConatha, 1993). Because of harmony, people in collectivist cultures are likely to put personal feelings aside and act in a socially appropriate manner depending on the context and situation instead of personal attitudes and beliefs (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Hence it has been found that attitude-intention and attitude-behavior are weaker in collectivist than in individualist societies (Bagozzi, Wong, Abe, & Bergami, 2000; Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992; Lee, 2000). The most important motivation of luxury consumption is showing off the wealth and status (Mason, 1981; Richins, 1994b), which is against the principle of low-key and then would break in-group harmony. Especially now although Chinese economy greatly developed in recent years, a majority of the population especially those who live in inland and rural areas are still too poor to purchase even necessities (McEwen, Fang, Zhang, & Burkholder, 2006). Consequently, as an expression of material values, purchasing expensive luxury products is still considered as an extreme behavior and often criticized by mass media. Therefore people high in harmony are more likely to suppress their desires for luxury products even if they are fairly materialistic.

**H2:** Harmony moderates the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire in such a way that the relationship is stronger for those lower, rather than higher, in harmony.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of this paper. It is believed that face could influence luxury products desire through materialism and harmony would moderate the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire.

**METHOD**

The sample consisted of 100 adults from a diverse set of organizations in various Chinese cities. The data cleansing took into consideration ‘spurious’ cases in the data set that classified respondents as potentially providing false or erroneous information while completing the questionnaire. Three respondent cases were removed because of the extreme consistent responses (i.e., 3,3,3,3 etc.). Therefore the total sample size was 97. Participants included 31 males and 66 females with a mean age of 32 years (SD=10.9). Most of respondents’ monthly incomes were less than RMB8,000 (approximately US$1,200). Almost all the respondents had an education level of a university degree.

We chose five items from Zhang, Cao & Nicholas’s face scale (in press) where they measured face as a personal value rather than a consumption style. Three items were adapted from Cheung et al. (1996) and Yang et al. (1991) to measure harmony. Materialism was measured by 9 items from material value scale (MVS) (Richins, 2004; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Last, we used three items to measure individuals’ desire toward luxury products which were adapted from O’Cass (2004). The translation and back-translation method was used to ensure that the statements could be well understand by Chinese consumers (Brislin, 1980). All measures were 5 point Likert-type scales with poles from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**RESULTS**

Firstly the data were factor analyzed using principle components with varimax rotation. Table 1 provides an overview of the factor structures. All the items of face, harmony and luxury products desire loaded onto their appropriate factor and their factor loadings were above 0.54. In terms of the materialism scale, two factors were extracted, which was consistent with Griffin, Babin & Christensen’s (2004) finding that the original three-factor structure of Richins and Dawson’s scale did not always work, especially in non-English speaking countries, so the
two-factor structure in our study could be acceptable. All constructs showed acceptable reliability with Cronbach’s α ranged between 0.65 and 0.84. Then a composite score was computed for each construct by averaging the items pertaining to the construct. Table 2 displays the correlations among the key constructs and demographic variables. Specifically, luxury products desire was significantly related to face (r=0.26) and materialism (r= 0.44). Face positively correlated with materialism (r=0.50). In terms of the demographic variables, only age has significant correlations with the key constructs. It was surprised that age negatively correlated with face which demonstrated this fundamental value is even more prevalent among young people. The negative relationship between age and materialism was consistent with some former studies (Hung, Gu, & Yim, 2007; O’Cass, 2004).

Table 1 Preliminary result for constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Cronbach α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Face</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope people think I can do something others can not.</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I care about praise and compliments from others.</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to own some products others desire but can not afford.</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope others know I have acquaintance with some big names.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope in other people’s mind, my life is better than most people.</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmony</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always try to get along well with everyone.</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am interacting with others, I notice to consider others’ feelings.</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my life I always try to avoid the extreme behavior which might offend others.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materialism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things I own say a lot about how well I’m doing in life.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My life would be better if I owned certain things I don’t have.</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can’t afford to buy all the things I’d like.</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually buy only the things I need.</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always spend money on things that aren’t practical.</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luxury products desire</strong></td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury products are important to me.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in luxury products.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury products are a significant part of my life.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * reversed score items.

Table 2 Correlations and descriptive statistics (N=97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Face</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Harmony</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Materialism</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Luxury products desire</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gender</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Age</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.41**</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>32.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>10.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **p <0.01; *p <0.05.
*1=male; 0=female.
Table 3 Results of Regression Analysis for Mediation (N=97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Materialism</th>
<th>LPD</th>
<th>LPD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender a</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.24*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>Face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² Adjusted R² F

-0.31 0.28 13.58***

-0.08 0.05 13.58***

Note: LPD= Luxury products desire. ***, p <0.001; **, p <0.01; *, p <0.05.

Table 4 Results of Regression Analysis for Moderation (N=97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LPD</th>
<th>LPD</th>
<th>LPD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender a</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>Materialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism × Harmony</td>
<td>-0.20*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² Adjusted R² F

-0.03 0.20 1.49

-0.01 0.17 1.49

Note: LPD= Luxury products desire. ***, p <0.001; **, p <0.01; *, p <0.05.

Face, Materialism and Luxury Products Desire

To test the mediating effect, the following analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) were adopted: (1) The results of the first regression in Table 3 indicated that face significantly accounted for variations in materialism which provided initial support for a mediation effect. (2) The second step showed that after controlling the demographic variables, the correlation between face and luxury products desire was initially significant. (3) When we included materialism in the final regression, the influence of face on luxury products desire was not significant. Moreover, the increased R² value (0.12, p < 0.001) resulting from adding materialism in the equation was relatively large, demonstrating that the impact of face on luxury products desire was completely mediated by materialism (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Thus, H1 was fully supported.

Harmony, Materialism and Luxury Products Desire

Determining the partial values of the interaction term was an important step in understanding how the variables serve as moderators (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Hence for the moderating effect of harmony, hierarchical regression analysis was performed to test for linear and interaction effects on the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire. Variables were entered into the model in the following order: control variables, materialism and harmony, and materialism × harmony interaction.

The results of the regressions were showed in Table 4. At the first step, the two control variables did not account for a significant portion of the variance in luxury products desire (R²= 0.03, ns). In the step 2, the main effect of materialism (β= 0.45, p < 0.001) was significant, but harmony had no significant influence on luxury products desire. Finally, step 3 obtained a significant incremental variance represented by the interaction term of materialism and harmony (ΔR²= 0.04, p < 0.05), and the F-value for the overall regression model is 5.75 (p < 0.001). As predicted, a negative interaction was observed (β= -0.20, p < 0.05), indicating the lower in harmony, the stronger the relation between materialism and luxury products desire.

Moreover, Champoux & Peters (1987) proposed that a graphical depiction may better interpret the moderating effect. Thus, following Cohen & Cohen (1983) we computed simple standardized regression slopes for individuals high (+1SD) and low (-1SD) in harmony, and plotted the two slopes. In Figure 2, as predicted the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire is stronger for those lower, rather than higher, in harmony. Thus H2 was fully supported.
CONCLUSION

The present study systematically tested the impacts of two most basic traditional cultural values -- face (mianzi) and harmony (hexie) on materialism and luxury products desire in China. First, the finding showed that face could positively influence individuals’ desire toward luxury products through the mediation of materialism, which could better explain the existing luxury fever in China and other Eastern countries. Different from the former relevant research (Bao, et al., 2003; Li & Su, 2007; Liao & Wang, 2009), this study firstly treated face as a personal value which exerts direct impact on consumption. In addition, we found that the value of harmony could moderate the relationship between materialism and luxury products desire, which could help explain why attitude-intention and attitude-behavior are weaker in collectivist than in individualist cultures (Bagozzi, et al., 2000; Kashima, et al., 1992; Lee, 2000).

The sample of this study is relatively small. In the next step, the research should be conducted among a larger sample. Moreover, behavioral measures were not included in this paper and there might be different relationships if the research is repeated in the context of the intended purchases of specific luxury brands for social conscriptions products such as luggage, clothing, mobile phones and watches. Lastly, one issue should be addressed: the cross-cultural generality and specificity of the findings in the present study. Although these values are developed from Chinese society, they are not cultural-specific. For example, several studies have demonstrated that the value of face also exists in Western cultures (H. Chan, et al., 2009; Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998), so testing the theory in western nations and make a cross-cultural comparison to build a culturally universal theory would be very much the focus of future research by the authors.

REFERENCE


The Two Different Effects of Chinese Traditional Culture on Luxury Consumption: Face and Harmony


