

The Effects of Culture on Women's Opinions and Consumption Values for both Hedonic and Utilitarian Products in China and Taiwan

Women in China and Taiwan confront conflicting value systems as a result of a long tradition of Confucian philosophy, the modern and powerful influence of Western culture, and the influence of powerful domestic political forces. This study explores how these conflicting value systems influence women's opinions and attitudes toward gender roles and examines how these gender-role assessments affect their consumption values of hedonic versus utilitarian products across the two Chinese societies. The study uses survey results from China and Taiwan in 1997 to determine how women's attitudes towards themselves and their environment affected their purchasing decisions. The results of regression analysis show that women in these two Chinese societies have different opinions of their own independence and the degree of their responsibility toward family and the larger society. These attitudes are then related to the instrumental, aesthetic, family, and patriotic consumption values in the purchases of a hedonic good versus a utilitarian one.

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Introduction

With the increasing growth and economic development in both China and Taiwan, Chinese women have greater opportunities to absorb modern Western values than ever. This exposure may affect their self-perceptions and thereby influence their consumption behavior. Chinese women, who have been inculcated with traditional Confucian values, are traditionally expected to play the roles of devoted wives, dutiful spouses, and exemplary mothers in both China and Taiwan. However, after experiencing significant political and social transformation as well as unprecedented economic prosperity, adult female consumers in these two societies now may have conflicting views of what it means to be a "Chinese woman." Considering the fact that there are more than 630 million women in China and Taiwan (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2002; Directorate General of Budget Accounting and Statistics Executive Yuan, R.O.C., 2003), marketers need to be aware of the changing values of Chinese women and how it affects their consumption decisions.

China is the fastest-growing economy in the world, with per capita incomes more than quadrupling since its opening to the West in 1978. The influence of the West can be observed not only materially, such as on the development of technology but also on levels of consciousness (Yang, 1981). Compared with China, Western culture was introduced to Taiwan earlier, beginning in the 1960's. Western culture influences Chinese women in many ways, especially through the media through such channels as advertising, Hollywood movies, and television programming. This international exposure has affected Chinese women's value systems and created what in essence is a cultural hybrid - a mixture of traditional Confucian values and Western individualism.

"People buy products not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean (Levy, 1959, p. 118)." Cultural context influences a woman's attitudes towards herself, her family, and her society, and these attitudes in turn influence her consumption values. The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of conflicting value systems in Chinese women and to investigate the relationship between their value systems and consumption behavior.

In attempting to analyze the effects of cultural hybridization on women's consumption decisions, this paper will draw a distinction between hedonic and utilitarian consumption. Generally speaking, consumer choices are driven by both utilitarian and hedonic considerations (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000, p.60). Hedonic products provide more experiential consumption while utilitarian goods are primarily functional (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Purchases of these products provide different types of consumption value, an abstract and complex construct that can provide underlying continuity to a consumer's behavior. Following Rokeach, we will treat consumption values as enduring beliefs that a specific mode of behavior or end-state is more desirable than others (Rokeach, 1973). According to Sheth, Newman, and Gross's (1991) argument, consumption values are how consumers will relate their interests and choices to a product's attributes. Perceived attributes have long been

known as an important predictor of a consumer's purchases (Tse, Wong, 1988, p.387). Applied to our framework, hedonic consumption is motivated by fantasy, fun, sensual pleasure, excitement, and status-seeking (e.g., designer clothes) (Hirshman & Holbrook, 1982); while utilitarian consumption is motivated by functional needs and typically involves products that are considered practical, such as laundry detergent, toasters, and minivans (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

In this article, we will discuss the impact of differences in women's self-perceptions on the purchase of hedonic versus utilitarian products in the two Chinese societies of Mainland China and Taiwan, with the goal of assessing the impact of cultural hybridization on women's consumption. Although some studies have explored Chinese consumer society (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989; Lee & Tse, 1994; Tse, Sin, Yau, & Yu, 1999; Sin, So, Yau, & Kwong, 2001), few researchers have focused on the women's market specifically by comparing different types of products across cultures.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

In Western cultures, self-perception derives from a belief in the wholeness and uniqueness of each person's configuration of individual attributes (Johnson, 1985). The self could be represented as independent (i.e., as a referent to their own abilities, attributes) and as interdependent (i.e. emphasizing the needs of in-groups, which is with a closure relationships as well as with the same social identity) (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

People with independent opinions tend to react as individuals and express their own unique needs rather than respond as members of cohesive groups (Hofstede, 1984). In contrast, an interdependent opinion expresses conformity, compliance within in-groups, and a configuration of relationships with others. "Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.227)." In contrast to Western cultures, traditional Chinese Confucian values place more emphasis on the interdependent self. However, norms of family and society traditionally belong on different levels. The family concord is the basic level to be fulfilled; while social harmony is a more distant objective to be achieved. Given this bifurcation, the interdependent opinion or sense of self is separated into two parts in this study: one is the interdependence at the family level (referred as family responsibility), and the other is the interdependence at the society level (referred as social responsibility). These dimensions will be identified and their implications explored compared to each other as well as to what we earlier identified as the more Western independent opinion.

Women's Opinions

Traditional gender roles and a patriarchal family structure deriving from a culture steeped in Confucian values have influenced women's status and their responsibilities to their families for thousand of years in Chinese society. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher (551-479 B.C.) whose ideas molded Chinese society, is still strongly influential in contemporary China and Taiwan. The Confucian "Way" refers to a path of moral development and social responsibility in which the virtuous man would be the epicenter of a well-regulated family and, by extension, a harmonious social order. During the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.), Confucianism was adopted as the government's state doctrine, a set of secular rules prescribing social and family interactions. According to the Confucian structure of society, every aspect of a woman's life was lower in status and importance that of the man's, and most Confucians accepted the subservience of women to men as the natural order and consider housework as a woman's responsibility. Confucianism dominated Chinese society until the twentieth century and is still taught in the curricula of elementary and high schools as parts of history and culture. Recently, although the concept of gender equalization is included in public school curricula for both men and women, it is still widely believed that the natural order of society is based on the subservient position of women vis-à-vis men.

Over the past thirty years, China has faced two tremendous transformations: the first from a command economy to a market-based one, the so-called the modernization of China; and the other a swift evolution from a primarily rural agricultural society to an urban industrial one. The trends of modernization and urbanization provided an explicit hope for individual betterment (Yan, 1999) and an implicit hope of a more egalitarian role for women. Across the Taiwan Straits, Taiwan during the 1960's earned the title of the "miracle economy" by virtue of its export boom. With the advent of economic prosperity, the social structure began to change. With their new-found economic power, women rebelled against their inferior position in the neo-Confucian hierarchy and began to express their independent selves in both economic and social spheres. We will refer to this perception of an independent self as "individual responsibility".

The evolution of a Western-style feminism stirred up bigger storms in Taiwan than in Mainland China

because of the fact that modernization in Taiwan began earlier (Lin, 2000). Although both communism and capitalism emphasize the importance of gender equality, they create different impacts by virtue of the different ways this goal is pursued. In the 1970's and 1980's, communist doctrine in China held that women should be independent, participate in the labor force, and contribute what they earn to the country. In 1995, the World Bank reported that 80% of women in China participated in the labor market (World Bank, World Development Report, 1995). This extremely high rate was primarily due to Chinese government policy. However, Panayotova and Brayfield (1997) argued that the coercion of external policy couldn't effectively improve gender equity for women in Hungary. Thus, high labor force participation may not signal a transformation to egalitarian gender values for Chinese society. On the other hand, the Chinese government under communism did not encourage people, either women or men, to pursue consumption and wasteful habits, chase after wealth, or become part of a consumer society (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989). In Taiwan, in contrast, the spirit of capitalism that began to infuse the country in the 1960's fostered a much broader sense of economic independence for women. As such, the meaning of what can loosely be translated from the Chinese as "independent opinion" can be interpreted in different ways in these two societies. For the mainland Chinese, independence meant equal contribution to society in carefully prescribed ways; whereas in Taiwan women enjoyed more freedom to pursue their own goals. In terms of the attitude differences described above, it is thus reasonable to expect that women in Taiwan would exhibit more individual responsibility than women in China and less of a sense of family responsibility than women in China.

We also see evidence of this attitudinal bifurcation by looking at senses of social responsibility across the two cultures. The political pressure on women is stronger in China than in Taiwan. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), many Confucian values were treated as outdated and counter-revolutionary, and therefore were nominally abandoned. The Chinese government encouraged women to participate in political activities, contribute to the labor market, and devote themselves to the future of the society and country. Although Taiwan also imposed similar political restrictions before 1989, the government in Taiwan tended to respect free will in regard to political and social activities. After so many years of edification, then, women in China should demonstrate stronger senses of social responsibility and be more likely to devote time to social causes.

These hypotheses are formally stated below:

H_{1.1}: Women in Taiwan perceive stronger individual responsibility than women in China.

H_{1.2}: Women in Taiwan perceive weaker family responsibility than women in China.

H_{1.3}: Women in China perceive stronger social responsibility than women in Taiwan.

Consumption Values

We now turn to the question of the influence of these self-opinions on consumption behavior. As is well known in the marketing literature, consumers' preferences and consumption values are strongly influenced by their social and cultural environment (Tse & Wong, 1988). One objective of this study is to identify salient consumption values in the Chinese culture context and compare the difference across these two Chinese societies. Four major consumption values, i.e., instrumental, aesthetic, family, and patriotic values, are investigated based on previous studies (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Tse, Belk, & Zou, 1989; Sin & Yau, 2001) and the economic and political context described above. These consumption values are described below.

First, instrumental values concentrate on the characteristics or attributes of products (Ferber, 1973), such as reliability and durability. Second, aesthetic values relate to the arousal of curiosity, provision of novelty, and concern with beauty. Third, family values relate to the importance of considering relatives when making a purchasing decision. (For example, purchases might be made to facilitate family contacts and enhance one's family's quality of life.) Fourth, patriotic value might lead consumers to boycott foreign-made products in favor of domestic production (Sharma, Shimp, & Shin 1995; Jill, Etenson, & Morris, 1998). Consumer patriotism results from viewing a consumer's own in-group as central and offering protection against apparent threats from out-groups (Brislin, 1993). We should see evidence of consumer patriotism in both Chinese societies.

The Relationship between Independent Opinion and Consumption Values for Hedonic and Utilitarian Goods in the Two Chinese Societies

The four consumption values listed above are not equally important when a consumer makes a purchase decision. The demonstration of consumption values is strongly related to the types of products purchased. Consumers will focus on different motivations, values and product attributes for hedonic and utilitarian consumptions (Hirschman & Morris, 1982).

Utilitarian consumption focuses on functionality and the practical value of a product (Hirschman & Morris, 1982). We begin with the case of Taiwan and will discuss the mainland Chinese context below. In this paper, we suggest that women may demonstrate their independence by purchasing products with a high instrumental value

rather than simply “making do” with cheaper products that are less effective at fulfilling the function in question. Also, we expect highly independent women to be more likely to express their aesthetic taste in a purchase. Furthermore, we expect that more independent women may express their concern for family by purchasing certain types of products, such as labor-saving devices, to compensate for their own insufficient time for household duties. Since independent opinions are more self-centered and less group-oriented, we expect that women with strong independent attitudes may evince less concern about the society or country and thus express less patriotic consumption value in a purchase decision. In sum, women’s independent opinions are expected to have a positive relationship with instrumental values, aesthetic values and family values, but a negative relationship with patriotic values. Also, no difference between women in China and Taiwan is expected because utilitarian goods usually fulfill consumers’ basic needs, which are important for consumers across both cultural contexts.

In contrast, hedonic consumption is tied to imaginative constructions, to acts which are based on what the consumer desires reality to be, and to high culture products within popular culture (Hirschman & Morris, 1982). Since hedonic goods are usually not necessities, some consumers may experience guilt while purchasing these entertainment, luxury, or leisure-oriented products. Women with economic advantages are more likely to engage in self-gifting behavior because they feel less guilty about indulgence and material enjoyment than women with limited financial resources and the resulting high opportunity cost of non-essential purchases. In choosing such purchases, these consumers will tend to match gift qualities to their own personality traits (Schwartz, 1967). Self-gifts often suggests the attributes of youth, success, beauty, and independence. Furthermore, Mick & Demoss (1990) indicated that self-gifts can act as self-contracts in which the reciprocity for the gift is personal effort and achievement. We do not suggest that all the hedonic purchase is self-gift giving. However, we do suggest that the non-utilitarian nature of hedonic goods may elevate the feelings of self-reward. Women with high self-esteem and a sense of economic independence may tend to believe that they deserve to buy good quality, fashionable products for themselves by virtue of their own status and achievement.

On the other hand, although an independent woman may purchase a functional product for her family, she is less likely to include family concerns into a hedonic purchase. A hedonic product displays one’s own desires which elevate self-interest or self-expression above family concerns. Regarding patriotic consumption values and hedonic purchases, Fung (2000) finds that Asian women who live in urban areas might rely on foreign culture as their only means of liberation. In other words, an independent-minded Chinese woman may actually prefer imported products and pursue a more Western lifestyle to signal her independence. As such, we suggest that women’s feelings about independence are positively related to instrumental values and aesthetic values, but negatively related to family values and patriotic values in the case of hedonic consumption.

While these assumptions about hedonic products may fit the Taiwan socio-cultural context, women in China should exhibit different attitudes toward hedonic consumption or “pleasure goods”. In China, as discussed above, hedonic consumption has been discouraged and treated as evil. The Chinese government took steps to prevent women from pursuing material enjoyment in the form of luxury goods at the beginning of the opening of Mainland China to the West. However, the cultivation of a sense of independence for women in China is not as complete as in Taiwan. Therefore, we would expect that independent opinions of women in China do not have a strong linkage with their consumption values of hedonic products.

H_{2.1}: For hedonic products, women’s opinions about individual responsibility are positively related to instrumental values and aesthetic values, but negatively related to family values and patriotic values. However, these relationships should be observable in Taiwan only.

H_{2.2}: For utilitarian products, women’s opinions about individual responsibility are positively related to instrumental values, aesthetic values, and family values, but negatively related to patriotic values. These relationships should be observable in both Chinese societies.

The Relationship between Family Responsibility and Consumption Values for Hedonic and Utilitarian Goods in the Two Chinese Societies

A dutiful woman in a traditional Chinese society is required to put the interests of her family above all else. In the case of utilitarian consumption, women with a strong sense of family responsibility consider the benefits of their families first when making consumption decisions, regardless of their own individual feelings and preferences. Therefore, they tend to care about the practical function of products rather than their personal preferences in order to provide the maximum utility to their families and thus enhance the quality of life for family members.

The Chinese are traditionally taught to strive for idealized achievement goals: cultivating the self, promoting the interests of the family, ruling the state, and making the world more peaceful (Yu, 1996). The foundation of this conception of achievement is the Confucian notion that a person should proceed from self, to family, then to the society. Embedded in this traditional culture, women with stronger family responsibility

opinions would tend to care more about society.

A traditional Chinese husband considers his wife as his property. As such, the wife is not encouraged to express her own needs or personal life. Since the status of a woman in her family is usually lower than the husband, a woman with strong family responsibility opinions would take her husband's opinions as her own opinions, and thus would avoid buying hedonic products purely for her pleasure. Therefore, no significant relationship between consumption values and family responsibility in a hedonic consumption is expected.

H₃: For utilitarian products, women's opinions about family responsibility are positively related to instrumental values, family values, and patriotic values, but negatively related to aesthetic values. These relationships should be observable in both China and Taiwan.

The Relationship between Social Responsibility and Consumption Values for Hedonic and Utilitarian Goods in the Two Chinese Societies

Women with high senses of social responsibility who live in developing countries may believe that citizens have the responsibility to improve the country's competitiveness. In this ethnocentric view, one's own in-group offers protection against apparent threats from out-groups (Brislin, 1993). Consumers with these tendencies could be expected to refuse to purchase foreign-made products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Jill, Etenson, and Morris, 1998). Thus, women with strong senses of social responsibility will be more likely to choose domestically-made products to demonstrate their commitments to their country. Also, women with strong senses of social responsibility may consider service to their country more important than fulfilling their own needs or enjoyment. In addition, based on the Confucian paradigm, a family is the basic unit of the country, so women with high social responsibility would contribute their time and effort to the family and society at the same time. Therefore, a woman who values her social responsibility tends to project instrumental values, family values, and patriotic values in her purchase of a utilitarian product, but care less about the aesthetic values.

In purchasing a hedonic product, a woman with a strong sense of social responsibility may want the product for a social reason, and not for her own pleasure. Even though hedonic products, such as a dinner dress, are for her to show off, she may attempt to justify the purchase by claiming it has a social purpose, thus transforming the dinner dress into a utilitarian or functional product. She cares about how people evaluate her in the dress more than how much she likes the dress. Then, a strong social responsibility should make no difference between hedonic and utilitarian products.

H_{4.1}: For hedonic products, women's opinions about social responsibility are positively related to instrumental values, family values, and patriotic values but not related to aesthetic values. These relationships should be observable in both Chinese societies.

H_{4.2}: For utilitarian products, women's opinions about social responsibility are positively related to instrumental values, family values, and patriotic values but not related to aesthetic values. These relationships should be observable in both Chinese societies.

Control Variables: Demographic Factors

A woman's construction of her gender role is also related to by demographic variables, such as age, education, marital status, presence of children, and percentage of family income contributed by women. Younger women are in general more interested in the culture of consumer materialism than older women (Cheng, 1997). In addition, higher levels of and access to education has been found to foster the advocacy of women's rights (Lin, 2000). Marital status and the presence of children also strongly influence women's attitudes toward their gender-roles (Dugger, 1988). In addition, women with successful careers generally have more power and greater ability to make consumption decisions by themselves. These demographic factors are all control variables in this study.

Method

This study employed a data set which surveyed more than 3000 women in Beijing, Taipei, and Hong Kong in 1997. Women in the two metropolitan cities, Beijing and Taipei, were more likely to have professional careers, have more chances to experience Western cultures, and participate in the economic development of the country. However, they are still strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy.

Survey Procedure and Sample

The quota for each age group and marital status was set the same to ensure a comparative sample from each city. A stratified sampling process was adopted in Taipei to randomly collect 1016 representative subjects. First,

Taipei was divided into 12 sub-districts according to the local government's criteria. The target sample size of each sub-district was then determined based on the population distribution. Second, in order to cover all levels of social status, the locations for sampling included department stores, traditional markets, restaurants, libraries, hospitals, parks, stations, office buildings, and beauty saloons, etc. In Beijing, the city was divided into regions and then blocks in each region. A random door-to-door survey was conducted within each block unit to collect a total of 1000 replies.

Three sets of questionnaires were used to survey women's consumption values vis-à-vis different products: refrigerators, dinner dresses, and a contribution to a charity fund. Each respondent reported their consumption values for two products. For the purposes of this study, refrigerators represent utilitarian products and dinner dresses represent hedonic products. Only a third of the total respondents who completely answered both refrigerators and dinner dresses were included in this study. The final sample size was 170 for China and 259 for Taiwan.

Clothing is a female-dominant product and often viewed as a part of the fashion in Chinese advertising (Cheng, 1997). Moreover, clothing is usually a tool of symbolic self-enhancement (Holman, 1981). As such, a dinner dress provides a good example of a hedonic product. Home appliances, in contrast, are a good example of utilitarian products because their purchase can fully modeled by the expected-value formulation of the traditional multi-attribute attitude model (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Although in some cases it may be argued that appliances may represent economic status because of their high costs, in general these products are fairly homogeneous and are less likely to be seen by anyone outside the family group. As such, quality and price were usually the major concerns for a purchase of home appliances in China at this time.

Measurement and Analysis

The first part of the questionnaire focused on women's perceptions of their gender roles. Respondents were asked to express their opinions regarding their perceived roles for 42 scenarios. The second part measured the consumption value of buying a dinner dress and purchasing a refrigerator. These two assessments were measured in 5-point Likert-type scales, labeled from '1' as "Strongly Disagree" and "Strongly Unimportant" to '5' as "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Important" in the first and second parts, respectively. The last part of the survey was devoted to demographic information.

In order to analyze further women's opinions regarding their roles, the 42 questions were divided into three sets, i.e., pertaining to self, family, and society according to the focus of the question. A high Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy Index of 0.788 indicated that the data set had a sufficient correlation in terms of sampling adequacy to run a factor analysis. After categorizing the women's opinions into three sets, a factor analysis was employed to determine the factor structure for self, family, and society for each of the two places. Due to the cultural differences, respondents in two places might perceive different meanings on particular items. Therefore, items were retained only when they located in the same factor and with a high item-to-total correlation. At the end, twelve items were retained to represent the three constructs, namely individual responsibility, family responsibility, and social responsibility with eigenvalues greater than one.

"Individual responsibility" referred to women's perceptions of economic independence, having their own careers, independence of thoughts, and social independence such as having the right to divorce. Four items composed the concept of family responsibility, including the importance of her family, the priority of taking care of her family, women's responsibility of housekeeping, and the superior status of the husband in the family. Four items were included for the social responsibility category, such as participating in political activities, environmental considerations when choosing products; doing volunteer work; and devoting herself to the future of the society. The Cronbach's alpha of "individual responsibility" was 0.5, alpha of "family responsibility" was 0.7, and alpha of "social responsibility" was 0.5.

Imputing consumption values involved the similar analysis to acquire the four constructs. Three items were found for instrumental value: quality and quantity of the product, value of the product, and durability. "Aesthetic value" referred to pursuit of aesthetic trends, which were represented by seeking novelty in models and types, and seeking fashion and new materials. There were two items in the family value category: enhancing the living quality of the family and maintaining contact between the family members. Three items were included in the category of patriotic value: i.e., the importance of local production, local brands, and local raw materials. The Cronbach's alphas of the four consumption values were between 0.7 and 0.9.

Results and Discussions

The majority of respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 50 years old, 79% in the China sample and 88% in the Taiwan sample. The education attainment of the majority of women is higher than junior high school. The percentage of respondents with a college degree or above in Taiwan is 70.3%. Compared to 63.5% in Beijing, the Taipei education level was higher ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 21.47, p < .01$). Respondents' marital status was not significantly different across the two places; more than 70% were married. The percentage of respondents who had children were greater than 58% in both places and showed no significant difference ($\chi^2_{(1)} = .073, p > .10$). The percentages of respondents who live with parents-in-law were 38.2% in China and 43.1% in Taiwan. Women's incomes as percentages of a family's total incomes were significantly different between China and Taiwan ($\chi^2_{(5)} = 49.94, p < .01$). Women in China contributed more income to the family relatively than women in Taiwan did.

To confirm the nature of the two products selected in this study, two items were examined first. Purchasing a dinner dress induced more feelings of pursuing social status than buying a refrigerator ($t_{(1, 338)} = 7.287, p < .01$ in China; $t_{(1, 516)} = 9.822, p < .01$ in Taiwan). Furthermore, the purchase of a dinner dress was more reflective of the buyer's tastes than the refrigerator purchase situation ($t_{(1, 338)} = 6.865, p < .01$ in China; $t_{(1, 516)} = 8.521, p < .01$ in Taiwan). These tests support our notion that a dinner dress can represent hedonic products; whereas a refrigerator can be a proxy for utilitarian products.

Comparisons of Women's Opinions between the Two Places

No significant difference was found between Taipei and Beijing in terms of women's sense of individual responsibility ($t_{(1, 427)} = -.480, p > .05$). Women in China had greater sense of family responsibility than Taiwanese women ($t_{(1, 427)} = 8.32, p < .01$). Women's senses of social responsibility was not significantly different between these two groups ($t_{(1, 427)} = 0.21, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1-2 are supported, but Hypotheses 1-1 and 1-3 are not supported. While further examining the social responsibility, an interesting result was found. We identified two facets of the social responsibility: social participation (i.e., devoting oneself to society and country and participating in political activities) and social consciousness (i.e., caring whether the product contaminates the environment and doing volunteer work). Taiwanese women's sense of social participation was weaker than women in China ($t_{(1, 427)} = 5.27, p < .01$), whereas their social consciousness was stronger than women in China ($t_{(1, 427)} = -4.84, p < .01$). This seems to suggest that Taiwanese women feel less responsibility toward the state than Chinese women, but more responsibility toward community and environment.

The Influence of Women's Opinions and Social-economic Variables on Women's Consumption Values

The correlation coefficients between the demographic variables and women's opinions in China were within the range of -0.367 and 0.70. The only coefficients higher than 0.4 were the correlation between age and children (Pearson's $r = .70$), children and marital status (Pearson's $r = .657$), and age and marital status (Pearson's $r = .432$). In Taiwan, the correlation coefficients ranged from -0.314 to 0.704. The coefficients higher than 0.4 were the correlation between age and children (Pearson's $r = 0.604$), children and marital status (Pearson's $r = 0.704$), and age and marital status (Pearson's $r = 0.410$). Since some variables were highly correlated, the variance inflationary factor (VIF) was used to examine the degree of multicollinearity among the independent variables. The results indicated that there was virtually no multicollinearity problem since the VIF value of all independent variables were below 4, far smaller than the criterion 10 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). There was thus no serious multicollinearity problem in the models.

A linear multivariate regression analysis was then used to investigate the relationship between women's opinions regarding their roles and their consumption values of the two products in the two societies. Results for the determinants of women's consumption values of dinner dresses are shown in Table 1 and results for refrigerators are listed in Table 2. Most of the models are significant at $\alpha = 0.05$, except for two: the model of family value in the dinner dress purchase in Taiwan and the model of aesthetic value in the refrigerator purchase in China.

In the dinner dress model for Taiwanese women, the independent opinion variable has a significantly positive relationship with women's instrumental value and aesthetic value, but has a significantly negative relationship with patriotic value as expected. However, the relationship between independent opinion and family value is not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2-1 is only partially supported.

The regression results for the refrigerator model show that the independent opinion variable is positively related to women's instrumental values and family values, but negatively related to patriotic values in both places. However, the relationship between independent opinion and aesthetic value is not significant. It is suspected that since the utilitarian product is not associated with pleasure for women with strong self-opinion, there is no need to

demonstrate their aesthetic value on this purchase. Hypothesis 2-2 is thus partially supported.

In the refrigerator model, the family responsibility opinion is significantly and negatively related to women's aesthetic value in both China and Taiwan. This suggests that women who perceive higher levels of family responsibility do not care too much about fashion trends. However, the opinion family responsibility has no relationship with instrumental, family-contacted, and patriotic value. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is also partially supported.

Surprisingly, the family responsibility variable has a negative relationship with family value in the dinner dress model for Taiwanese women. This suggests seems that women with strong perceptions of family constraints in Taiwan may use hedonic purchases to reward themselves for the dispensation of family duties.

Table 1

Regression Analysis For Women's Consumption Values In China and Taiwan—the "Dinner dress Model"

Model	China (n=170)				Taiwan (n=259)			
	Instrumental value	Aesthetic value	Family Value	Patriotic value	Instrumental value	Aesthetic value	Family Value	Patriotic value
Constant	2.496**	4.098**	2.055*	3.052**	2.411**	2.485**	2.872**	2.982**
Individual responsibility	0.220	0.446	0.181	-0.128	0.282**	0.236*	-0.024	-0.276*
Family responsibility	0.062	0.469	0.051	0.073	-0.119	-0.119	-0.230**	-0.023
Social responsibility	0.257*	0.073	0.298**	0.152	0.240*	0.079	0.424**	0.231*
Age	0.015	0.097	-0.027	0.022	0.085*	0.047	0.054	0.084
Education	-0.081	0.862	-0.117*	-0.153*	-0.007	-0.032	-0.068	-0.003
Marital	-0.109	0.464	0.084	0.106	-0.170	0.007	0.036	-0.010
Kids	-0.139	0.920	0.135	0.029	-0.168	-0.094	-0.151	-0.017
Income %	-0.022	0.035*	-0.063	0.016	0.006	0.056	0.026	-0.020
Model F	3.399**	0.020*	2.829*	2.662*	12.089**	1.400	4.926**	2.240*
R ²	0.144	0.105	0.123	.117	0.156	0.047	0.136	0.067

Note 1: Figures in the table are coefficients. ** denotes significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level; * denotes significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level

Note 2: US\$1=RMB\$8.31 in 1996 (Published on Taiwan Institute of Economic Research Web, 1998), US\$1=NT\$ 27.46 in 1996 (Published on Economic Research Department, the Central Bank of China Web, 2002).

Table 2

Regression Analysis for Women's Consumption Values In China and Taiwan—the "Refrigerator Model"

Model	China (n=170)				Taiwan (n=259)			
	Instrumental value	Aesthetic value	Family Value	Patriotic value	Instrumental value	Aesthetic value	Family Value	Patriotic value
Constant	2.718**	4.312**	1.079	4.084**	2.024**	2.549**	2.217**	2.737**
Individual responsibility	0.177*	0.051	0.407*	-0.370*	0.359**	-0.039	0.222*	-0.234*
Family responsibility	-0.018	-0.151*	0.059	0.010	-0.079	-0.143*	-0.109	-0.039
Social responsibility	0.269**	0.022	0.249	0.207	0.254**	0.231*	0.284*	0.385**
Age	0.040	-0.042	-0.021	0.058	0.087*	0.104*	0.041	0.043
Education	0.033	-0.080	-0.047	-0.152*	0.001	0.054	0.019	-0.045
Martial	-0.037	-0.128	-0.101	0.029	0.046	-0.063	-0.065	0.027
Kids	-0.303*	0.118	0.266	-0.020	-0.227*	-0.097	-0.032	-0.123
Income %	-0.026	-0.030	-0.021	0.079	-0.020	0.059	0.005	-0.007
Model F	5.868**	1.277	2.611*	3.418**	8.225**	2.968*	3.122*	2.313*
R ²	0.226	0.060	0.115	0.145	0.208	0.087	0.091	0.069

Note 1: Figures in the table are coefficients. ** denotes significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level; * denotes significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level

Note 2: US\$1=RMB\$8.31 in 1996 (Published on Taiwan Institute of Economic Research Web, 1998), US\$1=NT\$ 27.46 in 1996 (Published on Economic Research Department, the Central Bank of China Web, 2002).

The regression results for the dinner dress model illustrate that social responsibility is positively and significantly related to the instrumental value and family value in both China and Taiwan. The positive relationship between the social responsibility and patriotic value is significant only in Taiwan. As expected, the relationship between the social responsibility and the aesthetic value is not significant in both places. Hypothesis 4-1 is partially supported.

As for the refrigerator model, the social responsibility has a significantly positive relationship with the instrumental value in both China and Taiwan, and with the family value and patriotic value in Taiwan. Women in Taiwan with strong perceptions of social responsibility buy more domestically-made products and care about their value towards family welfare. Surprisingly, the social responsibility is found to be positively and significantly related to the aesthetic value in Taiwan. After dividing the social responsibility into two subcategories, social-participation and social-consciousness, only the social-consciousness has a positive relationship with the aesthetic value. It is possible that women with stronger social-consciousness may consider new environmentally friendly materials in their aesthetic preferences. Hypothesis 4-2 is partially supported.

Conclusions and Implications

This study compares the differences between women's attitudes toward her gender roles and consumption values in Beijing and Taipei in the purchase of both hedonic and utilitarian products. The relationship between women's self-concepts and their environment and their consumption values for these product classes was also investigated. The results indicate that women in China, in general, hold more traditional opinions and are more likely than Taiwanese women to view their family as their first priority.

While making a decision to buy dinner dress, independent-minded women are more likely to focus on the instrumental value and aesthetic value of the dress. In Taiwan, women with strong senses of self care about themselves more than the society, and as such these independent women are more likely to pursue aesthetic fashion trends and foreign products. They also emphasize the instrumental value, perhaps to demonstrate their ability to pursue a high living standard.

Women with strong senses of independence are more likely to focus on the instrumental value for utilitarian products and tend to purchase foreign products to demonstrate their independence in both China and Taiwan. However, even with highly independent attitudes, women still tend to focus on the family value of the utilitarian product. They purchase labor-saving devices to compensate for their own insufficient time for the family. On the other hand, women with strong attitudes of family responsibility concerns less about their own aesthetic or pleasure in a purchase decision.

In both cities, the positive relationship between the social responsibility and the family value of the dinner dress suggests that women with strong senses of social responsibility also tend to have family-responsibility perceptions. Since Chinese society is a hierarchical ranking of authority relations that focuses on the harmony of relationships, it makes sense that these consumers also focus on the family value when they buy hedonic goods.

In addition, for the purchase of both hedonic and utilitarian product, the positive relationship between social responsibility and instrumental values suggests that women who feel responsible to their societies tend to emphasize product quality and value improvement in the country's industrial competitiveness and world image.

Many insightful implications can be drawn from these results for marketers. Foreign firms planning to launch their products into the booming market in China should employ separate strategies for hedonic and utilitarian products. For hedonic products, marketers should relate the instrumental value of the product as a symbol of buyers' economic independence in their marketing communications. Marketers may want to signal to consumers that selecting a high quality product may demonstrate a woman's independence as well as her commitment to society. In the case of utilitarian products, emphasizing the instrumental value alone is not enough in a competitive market. Marketers can include the notion of family value in their advertisements to attract consumers and reduce the guilt associated with material indulgence. Also, associating the high-quality image with foreign brands can overcome women's patriotism toward domestic products. It is especially useful to attract women with strong independence attitudes because of their significant and rising purchasing power

Women's opinions and consumption values differ across China and Taiwan, and across hedonic and utilitarian products. Marketers should take note of the differences between these two markets when they try to promote products in both China and Taiwan, even though consumers in these two countries inherit the same Chinese

traditional culture.

Limitations and Suggestions to Future Research

One should also be reminded that women in Beijing are more Westernized and more influenced by politics than those living in other rural areas of China. As such, these results should not be generalized to all other provinces in China. It is expected that women in rural areas of China hold more traditional Confucian opinions about feminine roles and consumption values. In addition, many of the original survey items which represent other significant differences between the two places were deleted because they were not relevant to this analysis. This study only discusses the same factors to make the two data sets comparable.

The survey was conducted in 1997 and may now be out of date, especially in China where markets have significantly broadened. The opinions of women we report thus may not represent women's attitudes today. However, considering the difficulty and limitation of conducting a value survey in China, the results of this study are still precious in characterizing the changing path of women's opinions and their consumption values.

This study compares only the differences of women's opinions and the impacts on consumption values across the Taiwan Straits. The differences can be partially attributed to the change of histories and cultures. However, the change in consumption values is a long-term interactive process between consumers and liberalized markets. Media and advertisements play important roles in the education of consumers. Therefore, a longitudinal study to examine the influences of media and advertising on the consumption values of Chinese consumers would be an interesting and important follow-up.

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Endnotes

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