

Values and Lifestyles of Individualists and Collectivists: A Cross-culture Study on Taiwanese and US Consumers

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Abstract

This study, based on a large-scale representative data, implemented a Taiwanese version of lifestyle survey that adopted the questions from DDB Life Style Survey. Congruent with previous findings on values and lifestyles differences between ideocentrics (individualists) and allocentrics (collectivists) at the emic level (the US), this etic-level study found that consumers in the individualist culture (the US), as compared to those in the collectivist culture (Taiwan), were more brand-savvy, innovative, satisfied with their lives, financially satisfied and optimistic. They were also more likely to eat out, become impulsive buyers, and consider themselves better managers of finances. On the other hand, consumers in the collectivist culture were more health conscious. Results that were incongruent with those at the emic level were also discussed. In addition, findings could assist the decision makers in global business to effectively make better final decisions in the first place by responding to the quick-changing international market situation and severe marketing communication competition.

Keywords: consumer behavior, cross-culture study, individualists, collectivists, lifestyle

Cross-cultural researchers have attempted to use different constructs to explain cultural differences in consumer behavior. The dimension of individualism/collectivism is among those frequently evoked. For this dimension, researchers have tried to study the dichotomous construct and its effects not only at the cross-cultural level (etic), but also at the individual level (emic) (where idiocentrism stands for individualism and allocentrism for collectivism). The study by Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002) described the values and lifestyles of idiocentrics and allcentrics at the emic level (within the US). They called on future researchers to explore their original lifestyle questions at the etic level. Answering this call, this paper represents a follow-up study to test the individualism/collectivism theory by investigating some of the same values and lifestyles questions at the etic level -- between an individualist culture (the US) and a collectivist culture (Taiwan). Analogous results conducted at the emic and etic levels would strengthen the individualism/collectivism theory. On the other hand, any disparate results based on the two-level analyses of the same phenomenon will qualify the theory as weak or insufficient in explaining certain cross-cultural differences (Dutta-Bergman & Wells, 2002). This study also attempts to explain some incongruent results in the framework of cultural dimensions other than individualism/collectivism.

Literature Review

Cross-cultural consumer research has been conducted to inspect the universal applicability of a Western-born theory or test the effects of cultural values (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) upon various aspects of consumer behavior. Previous research topics include, but are not restricted to, product-usage patterns between Americans and Canadians (Ferley, Lea & Watson, 1999), mall shopping behavior between Americans and Chileans (Nicholls et al., 2001), green purchasing behavior between Americans and Chinese (Chan & Lau, 2001), consumption behavior between Slovenian and other Eastern Europeans (Rojsek, 2001), retail bargaining behavior between Americans and Chinese Singaporeans (Lee, 2000), gift-giving behavior between Koreans and Americans (Park, 1998), luxury consumptions between Southeast Asian and Western cultures (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998), responses to sales promotions among consumers from Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia (Huff & Alden, 1998), justice perceptions of complaint-handling between Chinese and

Canadians (Hui & Au, 2001), lifestyles of female consumers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China (Tai & Tam, 1997) , and the importance of self-congruity to the product evaluation between Australians and Malaysians (Quester, Karunaratna & Goh, 2000). Some of these studies have looked into the effects of the cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism, such as the comparisons done between Chinese and Americans, Koreans and Americans, and Chinese and Canadians. The topics of comparison along this dimension also include the content of advertising appeals (e.g., Han & Shavitt, 1994) and the processing and persuasiveness of advertising appeals (e.g., Zhang & Gelb, 1996) .

Experimental studies comparing Taiwanese to Americans based on cultural differences are few in consumer behavior. Some comparative research could be found in other disciplines. For instance, Niehoff and colleagues (2001) investigated the difference in classroom expectations of both student and teacher obligations. Jose and colleagues (2000) explored the differences on parental values and child-rearing practices relevant to young children's social development. Madu and colleagues (1995) examined the middle manager's perception differences in organizational performance and employee satisfaction in manufacturing firms. Although their topics are different, the conceptual framework deducting from cultural variation is similar.

Individualism / Collectivism

The distinction between individualistic and collectivist societies is crucial to the cross-cultural understanding of consumer behavior (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000) . This dimension has been identified as one of the major aspects of culture (e.g., Hofstede, 1980) and is perhaps one of the most significant ways in which societies differ. The complexity of the dimension has been indicated in studies of motivation, affection, cognition, self-definition, and social behavior (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Trafimow, Triandis & Goto, 1991; Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990; Shkodriani & Gibbons, 1995) .

This dimension refers to the relationship one perceives between one's self and the group he or she belongs to (Ueno & Sekaran, 1992; Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001) . Individualism was defined as emotional independence from "groups, organizations, and other collectivities" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 221) . Compared to people in collectivist cultures, people in individualistic societies tend to be more self-centered, self-oriented,

self-actualized, self-enhanced, independent, competitive; less cooperative, less willing to sacrifice for their in-groups, less loyal and emotionally attached to in-groups, and less concerned with their in-group goals, needs, views, beliefs, norms, welfare, interests, integrity and consequences. They tend to consider the individual self as a source of life identity, purpose and goals (Hofstede, 1991; Kagitcibasi, 1997). On the other hand, those in collectivist cultures expect other in-group members to look after and protect them, value the group membership and respect group processes and decisions. For them, keeping good and tight relationships inside the group is a priority; and avoiding loss of face is important. Their identity is based on the strong and cohesive in-groups to which they belong. In collectivist cultures, cooperation is high within in-groups, but is unlikely when the other person belongs to an out-group. As a comparison, people in individualistic cultures are good at forming new in-groups and getting along with those from out-group (Hofstede, 1980; Hui and Triandis 1986; Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988; Schwartz, 1994).

Idiocentricism and Allocentricism

The terms “allocentricism” and “idiocentrism” were used to refer to collectivism and individualism respectively, at the individual emic level (Triandis et al., 1985). Allocentrism was found to be correlated positively with social support and negatively with alienation and anomie; idiocentrism was found to be correlated positively with achievement orientation and perceived loneliness (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988).

In a study focused on the individual-level manifestations of individualism-collectivism, Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002) explored values and lifestyles of idiocentrics and allocentrics in an individualist culture (the US). They argued that the lifestyle of an individual within a culture is often related to the extent to which the individual is idiocentric or allocentric in orientation. Based on five self-concept variables from the 1995 DDB Needham Life Style data, Dutta-Bergman and Wells used the technique of a median split to draw a comparison between ideocentrism and allocentrism among US consumers. They found that compared with allocentrics, idiocentrics were more satisfied with their lives, more financially satisfied and optimistic, more likely to be opinion leaders, more innovative in terms of product usage, more fashion-conscious, more brand-savvy, more impulsive in relation

to buying. Idiocentrics also considered themselves better managers of finances. Compared with idiocentrics, allocentrics were more health-conscious, and more into food preparation. The authors argued that the implications drawn from the comprehensive analysis of idiocentrics and allocentrics might be extrapolated to the realm of individualism/collectivism at a cross-cultural level. They believed that the process of generating knowledge about etic and emic level phenomena could be cyclical. While etic research suggests a nomological framework for emic studies, findings from emic research provide theoretical questions to be explored at the cross-cultural level. To achieve a convergence between the two levels, Dutta-Bergman and Wells proposed some lifestyle questions to be explored at the etic (cross-cultural) level. For example, they wonder whether individualistic and collectivist cultures also differ in terms of impulse buying, fashion consciousness and food preparation.

This paper tries to answer some of the research questions raised by Dutta-Bergman and Wells. Specifically, the study seeks to understand whether individualistic and collectivist cultures differ in terms of such lifestyle questions as impulse buying, fashion consciousness (personal appearance), food preparation, health consciousness (concerns), brand consciousness, money management, life satisfaction, financial satisfaction and optimism, opinion leadership, product innovativeness, females' role and perception, family orientation and environmental consciousness. For instance, do Taiwanese consumers have significantly higher level than their American counterparts with regard to health-conscious and food preparation? Do American consumers have significantly higher level than their Taiwanese counterparts in terms of life satisfaction, financial optimism, opinion leadership, fashion-conscious, brand-savvy, and impulsive buying.

Given such, individualism/collectivism is an independent variable and dependent variables include such DDB Needham items as mentioned above.

Methodology

In this study, samples from Taiwan constitute a collectivist culture and subjects from US individualistic culture. The suggestion that Taiwan is collectivist and the US an individualist has been consistently and repeatedly documented (Chia, Cheng & Chuang, 1998; Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, 1980). In addition, both nations have

homogenous cultures, because in each nation, there exists a single dominant language, educational system, army, and political system, and shared mass media, markets, services, and national symbols. These can produce substantial sharing of basic values among residents of a nation under investigation (Smith & Schwartz, 1997).

The US data were based on the 2002 DDB Needham Life Style survey. The Taiwanese data were derived from a primary lifestyle survey that adopted some of the same DDB Needham questions. Questions from the DDB Needham Life Style Study were translated verbatim from English into Chinese by applying back translation technique, and then used in the Taiwanese study. The scalar equivalence with Cronbach's coefficient alpha was achieved to certain extent as presented in Table 2. Independent-samples T tests were conducted for comparing lifestyle differences between the two cultures ($p < .05$).

DDB Needham Life Style Study

Based on standing panel quota sampling, DDB Needham Life Style survey has been mailed annually to 4,000 heads-of-household via Market Facts' Consumer Mail Panel since 1975, with an average response rate of 80% (Cafferata, Horn & Wells, 1997). Because the demographics of the respondents closely match those described in the US Census on gender, age, income, and area of residence, Piirto (1991) suggested that the DDB Needham Life Style sample is good representative of the US consumer population. The 2002 Life Style survey was completed by about 3,200 US subjects.

The Taiwanese Life Style Study

Also done in 2002, the Taiwanese study based its questions on the DDB Needham Life Style study, which basically asks the same questions across the years. In other words, most questions in the 1995 DDB Life Style data analyzed by Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002) stay the same as those in the 2002 DDB Needham Life Style data examined by this study. The Taiwanese subjects were multi-stage sampling selected among the Taiwanese Navy personnel, and their family members and friends. According to the Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan), it is mandatory for a man to serve in the armed forces for 22 months when he reaches 18

years (except for the disabled and exceptionable cases). Many of these young men, by drawing lots, are assigned into major branches of the armed forces such as Army, Navy, Air force, Marines and are then assigned to different units in the same way. In general, a unit consists of young men with diverse social economic status as well as having diversity in personal backgrounds and coming from different cities and counties of Taiwan. With the support of the Taiwan Navy personnel as survey agents, the Navy Address Codebook was used as the sampling frame and six units were randomly selected that contained around 900 sailors and officers to ask their families, relatives, friends and neighbors, who were over the age of 18, to complete the shortened Chinese version of DDB Needham Life Style survey. In addition to the survey among the Navy staff and their contacts, two rounds of supplementary surveys were conducted conveniently on cross-island trains during weekdays and weekends. Incentives (e.g., sweepstakes and lottery tickets) were provided to encourage subjects' participation. As a result, 1527 samples from a total of 1800 surveys were completed (at a response rate of 84.8%). Of the valid samples, 186 cases were eventually dropped to make sure that the characteristics of the sample reflect and match those of the Taiwanese population, as indicated by the Taiwan Census of 2000 (see Table 1). The final sample size is 1341.

After both representative surveys were ready for analysis, the two data were combined into one single SPSS file. Although most of the questions in the Taiwanese version were the same as those in the 2002 DDB Needham study, some questions were not. The combined data contained 145 attitude, interests, opinions and activities items, which cover such areas as diet/nutrition, cooking/baking, health/health concerns, brand names, buying behavior, current financial concerns, future financial outlook, money management, socio-political attitudes/conservatism, religion, energy/environment, life satisfaction, opinion leadership, personal appearance/fashion, home and family, and eating/ordering out. The data also included some demographic variables. The attitude, interests and opinion questions were measured on a six-point scale, where 1 represents "definitely disagree", 2 "generally disagree", 3 "moderately disagree", 4 "moderately agree", 5 "generally agree", and 6 "definitely agree". The activities questions were measured on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 "none in past year", 2 "1-4 times", 3 "5-8 times", 4 "9-11 times", 5 "12-24 times", 6 "25-51 times" and 7 "52+ times". The activities items only cover eating out/ordering out.

Results

Findings that Correspond to the Emic Level

The following findings on values and lifestyles at the etic level are analogous to those already found at the emic level by Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002).

Health Consciousness (Diet/Nutrition)

It was found that Taiwanese subjects (collectivists) were more health conscious than their American counterparts (individualists) did. As compared to US subjects, Taiwanese subjects were more concerned with their food intakes in calcium (Taiwan = 4.22; the US = 3.72; $\rho < .01$), cholesterol (Taiwan = 4.56; the US = 3.82; $\rho < .01$), salt (Taiwan = 4.70; the US = 3.90; $\rho < .01$), fiber (Taiwan = 4.79; the US = 3.33; $\rho < .01$), sugar (Taiwan = 4.30; the US = 3.73; $\rho < .01$), fat (Taiwan = 4.83; the US = 3.83; $\rho < .01$), calorie (Taiwan = 3.73; the US = 3.18; $\rho < .01$), and vitamin (Taiwan = 4.47; the US = 3.76; $\rho < .01$). Taiwanese consumers were more worried about their weight control (Taiwan = 4.46; the US = 3.60; $\rho < .01$) and processed the nutritional information on food labels more than their US counterparts did (Taiwan = 4.22; the US = 3.37; $\rho < .01$).

Brand Savvy Shoppers

Americans were more brand-savvy than Taiwanese consumers did. Compared to Taiwanese consumers, Americans indicated a higher tendency to stick to well-known brand names (Taiwan = 3.37; the US = 3.67; $\rho < .01$), prefer a brand name prescription drug to a generic prescription drug (Taiwan = 2.41; the US = 2.93; $\rho < .01$), and buy a favorite brand no matter what else is on sale (Taiwan = 3.49; the US = 3.82; $\rho < .01$). However, compared to Americans, Taiwanese tended to prefer buying products with designer names (Taiwan = 2.62; the US = 2.37; $\rho < .01$).

Impulsive Buying

Compared to Taiwanese, American consumers tended to be impulsive buyers. They rated higher on such statements as “I pretty much spend for today and let tomorrow bring what it will” (Taiwan = 2.51; the US = 2.59; $\rho < .05$), “I frequently buy things when I cannot afford them” (Taiwan = 1.92; the US = 2.57; $\rho < .01$), and “I am an impulse buyer” (Taiwan = 2.62; the US = 3.01; $\rho < .01$).

Brand Innovativeness

Americans consumers were more innovative in terms of new product adoption. They were more likely to try new and different things (Taiwan = 3.13; the US = 3.97; $\rho < .01$), and to be among the first to try new products (Taiwan = 2.56; the US = 3.25; $\rho < .01$).

Life Satisfaction

Generally speaking, Taiwanese were less satisfied with their current lives. They rated higher on the statements “I wish I could leave my present life and do something entirely different” (Taiwan = 4.26; the US = 3.04; $\rho < .01$), “If I had my life to live over, I would do something entirely different” (Taiwan = 4.34; the US = 4.06; $\rho < .01$), “I feel I am under a great deal of pressure most of the time” (Taiwan = 4.14; the US = 3.52; $\rho < .01$), “Some things I feel that I do not have enough control over the direction my life is taking” (Taiwan = 4.87; the US = 3.53; $\rho < .01$), “I feel like I am so busy trying to make everybody else happy that I do not have control of my own life” (Taiwan = 3.53; the US = 3.20; $\rho < .01$), “I dread the future” (Taiwan = 3.39; the US = 2.24; $\rho < .01$), “I wish I knew how to relax” (Taiwan = 4.29; the US = 3.35; $\rho < .01$), and “my greatest achievements are still ahead of me” (Taiwan = 5.03; the US = 4.00; $\rho < .01$).

Financial Satisfaction and Optimism

As compared to Taiwanese consumers, Americans reported a higher level of financial satisfaction. They rated higher on the statement “Our family income is high enough to satisfy nearly all our important desires” (Taiwan = 3.18; the US = 3.69; $\rho < .01$). American consumers expressed more optimistic financial outlook. They rated

higher on the statement “I will probably have more money to spend next year than I have now” (Taiwan = 3.46; the US = 3.79; $\rho < .01$) .

Money Management

In the meanwhile, Taiwanese were less likely to consider themselves good managers of finances. They agreed more with the statements “I do not know much about investing money” (Taiwan = 4.02; the US = 3.74; $\rho < .01$) and “When making an investment, maximum safety is more important than high interest rates” (Taiwan = 4.52; the US = 3.98; $\rho < .01$) .

Eating Out

Americans were more likely to visit a fast food restaurant (Taiwan = 3.73; the US = 4.65; $\rho < .01$), went out to dinner at a restaurant (Taiwan = 4.27; the US = 4.42; $\rho < .01$) .

Findings that Contradict the Emic Level

The following findings at the etic level contradict what has been found at the emic level by Dutta-Bergman and Wells.

Cooking/Eating

Compared to Taiwanese consumers, American consumers agreed more with the statements “I like to cook” (Taiwan = 3.74; the US = 4.10; $\rho < .01$) , “I like to bake” (Taiwan = 3.22; the US = 3.85; $\rho < .01$) , and “I am interested in spices and seasonings” (Taiwan = 3.47; the US = 4.21; $\rho < .01$) .

Taiwanese rated in higher frequency in the statements “Bought food at a fast food or other restaurants to eat at home” (Taiwan = 4.58; the US = 3.73; $\rho < .01$) , and “Bought ready-to-eat takeout food from a grocery store or convenience store” (Taiwan = 4.07; the US = 2.84; $\rho < .01$) .

Opinion Leadership/In-Group Contact

Taiwanese were more likely to be opinion leaders. They rated higher on the statements “My friends and neighbors often come to me for advice about products and brands” (Taiwan = 3.55; the US = 2.94; $\rho < .01$), “I am influential in my neighborhood” (Taiwan = 3.70; the US = 2.93; $\rho < .01$) and “I spend a lot of time visiting friends” (Taiwan = 3.13; the US = 3.06; $\rho < .05$).

Fashion Consciousness/Personal Appearance

Taiwanese were more conscious of their personal appearance. They consistently rated higher on the statements “the clothes I wear reflect who I am as a person” (Taiwan = 4.29; the US = 3.95; $\rho < .01$), “I want to look a little different from others” (Taiwan = 3.84; the US = 3.74; $\rho < .05$), “I enjoy getting dressed up” (Taiwan = 4.35; the US = 4.03; $\rho < .01$), “Dressing well is an important part of my life” (Taiwan = 4.50; the US = 3.63; $\rho < .01$), “I enjoy looking through fashion magazines” (Taiwan = 3.95; the US = 2.96; $\rho < .01$), “I have more stylish clothes than most of my friends” (Taiwan = 3.17; the US = 2.67; $\rho < .01$), “I think I am very good looking” (Taiwan = 3.82; the US = 3.32; $\rho < .01$), and “I work at trying to maintain a youthful appearance” (Taiwan = 4.10; the US = 3.66; $\rho < .01$).

Additional Findings

The following results are additional values and lifestyles questions investigated at the etic level.

Saving/Hoarding Behavior

As compared to Taiwanese consumers, Americans were more likely to report heavy family debt (Taiwan = 2.84; the US = 3.09; $\rho < .01$) and too much personal credit card debt (Taiwan = 2.18; the US = 3.08; $\rho < .01$). They rated higher on the statements “No matter how fast our income goes up, we never seem to get ahead” (Taiwan = 3.64; the US = 3.76; $\rho < .05$) and “saving for the future is a luxury I cannot afford right now” (Taiwan = 3.21; the US = 3.40; $\rho < .01$).

Environment Consciousness

Taiwanese were more environmentally conscious. They rated higher on the statements “I would be willing to accept a lower standard of living to conserve energy” (Taiwan = 3.63; the US = 3.13; $\rho < .01$), and “I make a strong effort to recycle everything I possible can” (Taiwan = 4.58; the US = 3.79; $\rho < .01$).

Family Orientation

Taiwanese were more family oriented. They rated higher on the statements “Children are the most important thing in a marriage” (Taiwan = 4.22; the US = 3.57; $\rho < .01$), and “When making important family decisions, consideration of the children should come first” (Taiwan = 4.48; the US = 4.07; $\rho < .01$).

Females' Role and Perception

Taiwanese were more conservative in their attitudes toward females' roles in the society. They rated higher on the statements “Men are better at investing money than women” (Taiwan = 3.00; the US = 2.82; $\rho < .01$), “The father should be the boss in the house” (Taiwan = 3.31; the US = 3.09; $\rho < .01$), “Men are smarter than women” (Taiwan = 2.93; the US = 2.13; $\rho < .01$), and “Men are naturally better leaders than women” (Taiwan = 3.37; the US = 2.70; $\rho < .01$).

Discussion

A current debate in cultural psychology is about the right approach for conducting research across cultures. The emic approach favors within-culture investigation, arguing that theorizing is culture specific and should, therefore, be inductive. This orientation requires that a structure be identified during the analysis of the culture. In contrast, the etic approach advocates generalization and focuses on issues that are universal and common to all cultures. Both emic and etic approaches are valid and contribute to our understanding of consumer behavior in the global context. These two perspectives can converge and enrich cultural research (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000). This study takes such a convergence approach.

The etic-level findings revealed some of the similar patterns of values and lifestyles of individualists and collectivists discovered at the emic level. Similar to the

differences between idiocentrics and allocentrics in an individualist culture, consumers in the individualist culture (the US), as compared to consumers in the collectivist culture (Taiwan), were more brand-savvy, innovative, satisfied with their lives, financially satisfied and optimistic. They were also more likely to eat out, become impulsive buyers, and consider themselves better managers of finances. On the other hand, consumers in the collectivist culture were more health conscious. These corresponding findings further boost the confidence that these characteristics do help us make a distinction between individualism and collectivism. Self-centered and self-oriented in nature, individualists are more likely to, as compared to collectivists, consider life contentment as a domain of their own. Unlike collectivists, individualists are less worried about making their in-group members happy. Individualists tend to possess higher self-esteem and thus are more contented with their own lives. As financial satisfaction and health satisfaction are part and parcel of overall life satisfaction, it seems reasonable that individualists also reported higher financial satisfaction and lower health concern at both emic and etic levels. As individualists are less concerned about their in-group norms and reactions and more mindful of their own gratifications, they are assumed to feel less restrained in making spontaneous and novel buying decisions.

The etic-level results supported these findings at the emic level. These analogous results strengthen the individualism/collectivism theory at both levels, and further suggest that individualism/collectivism is an important trait of both individuals and groups. As the results indicated, while US consumers were more brand-savvy than their Taiwanese counterparts (a result that corresponds to the emic-level findings), they were also less conscious of fashion and personal appearance (which contradicts the emic-level results). Also incongruent with the emic-level findings, Taiwanese consumers (collectivists) were more likely to be opinion leaders, and less likely to enjoy cooking and baking. The disparate results based on the two-level analyses of the same phenomena suggest two possible scenarios. One is that opinion leadership, fashion/appearance consciousness and cooking/baking are distinct indicators of neither individualism nor collectivism. Instead, these characteristics might reflect other cultural dimensions.

The other scenario is that these constructs might have been interpreted differently across cultures. While the Life Style questions that measure opinion leadership might signify certain levels of reputation and accomplishment for US

consumers (e.g., I am influential in my neighborhood; my friends and neighbors often come to me for advice about products and brands), it might be simply regarded as ways of in-group connectivity and communication in Taiwan. In an individualist culture like the US, those with individualist traits (e.g., independent, assertive) are more likely to survive and succeed because this trait-culture match. This might explain why idiocentrics tend to claim themselves as opinion leaders. However, in a collectivist culture that emphasize connectedness (e.g., Triandis, 1995) and relationship, the information flows more easily between in-group members (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998) and individual experiences are more likely to be shared within in-groups. Consumer decisions are also more likely to be made with family or group members involved. As a result, people in a collectivist environment are probably more willing and therefore more likely to serve as opinion leaders (or opinion transmitters) to the other members of the collectives. They are also more ready to seek opinions from other in-group members.

Dressing well and stylishly might convey a sense of individuality among consumers in individualist cultures (e.g., US). However, it might be interpreted by consumers in collectivist cultures like Taiwan as a way to demonstrate their in-group identity, show their concerns with in-group views, follow in-group trends and avoid loss of face in front of in-group members. Cooking and baking might be also read as conceptually and semantically different family chores across the two cultures. Cooking is a complicated and time-consuming household task in Taiwan, where people tend to be picky about the flavor, color, smell of foods served. Compared to US cooking, Chinese cooking tend to generate more smoke and grease. This might possibly explain why Taiwanese consumers reported less affection toward cooking than their US counterparts did. Baking is not a traditional and standard cooking practice among Chinese consumers. Thus it seems that the construct “cooking” turned out not to be functionally and experientially equivalent across the two cultures. This might be the reason why US consumers reported enjoying baking more than their Taiwanese counterparts did.

The additional findings suggested that consumers from individualist and collectivist cultures were different in terms of saving/hoarding, family orientation, environment consciousness, females' role and perception. However, items measuring these same factors appeared in the 1995 Life Style data (analyzed by Dutta-Bergman and Wells), but were not reported as significant enough to distinguish individualism

and collectivism at the emic level. The incongruent results might suggest that these concepts were not clear indicators of either individualism or collectivism. This qualifies the individualism/collectivism theory as insufficient in explaining these differences, as the dichotomy may overlook multifaceted social situations. Kagitcibasi (1997) cautioned about the danger of using individualism/collectivism too readily to explain every behavioral variation between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Kagitcibasi urged researchers to show whether the observed differences are actually due to variations in individualism/collectivism or to some other cultural/group characteristics that may overlap with it at least partially.

There is no denying the fact that individualism/collectivism is one of the most important cultural dimensions in social behavior. However, some researchers believe that this dimension only deals with a culture's view on relationships between people. For example, Hawkins, Best and Coney (2001) considered this dimension just a part of other-oriented values (views on human relationships), which also include such dimensions as limited family vs. extended family, diversity vs. uniformity, competition vs. cooperation, youth vs. age, and masculinity vs. femininity.

In addition, Hawkins, Best and Coney (2001) suggested two other sets of value orientations: self-oriented (individual objectives/approaches to life society finds desirable) and environment-oriented (society's view of relationships between humans and environment). Self-oriented values include such dimensions as active vs. passive, material vs. nonmaterial, hard work vs. leisure, postponed gratification vs. immediate gratification, sensual gratification vs. delayed gratification, and religious vs. secular. Environment-oriented values include maximum cleanliness vs. minimum cleanliness, performance vs. status, tradition vs. change, risk taking vs. security, problem solving vs. fatalistic, and admiring nature vs. overcoming nature (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001). These cultural orientations might help make sense of some additional findings that were clearly not well accounted for by individualism/collectivism.

The fact that Taiwanese consumers were more into saving and environmentally conscious than US consumers might be due to some self-oriented and environment-oriented values possessed by Taiwanese consumers. Compared to US consumers, Taiwanese consumers might value postponed gratification (e.g., saving) more than immediate gratification, and admire nature more than overcome the nature.

In addition to the three broad value orientations proposed by Hawkins, Best and

Coney (2001), many other value concepts are equally illuminating to account for additional lifestyle differences revealed in this study. As one of the leading cross-cultural researchers, Hofstede (1980) factor analyzed his sample of over 100,000 IBM employees in 40 countries and identified four dimensions of cultures -- power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance. Later Hofstede and Bond (1984) added a fifth dimension, long-term orientation to the fold.

According to Hofstede (e.g., 1991), power distance is defined as “the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.” Measured from low to high, a high score on this dimension describes a culture that consents to an authoritarian leadership, whereas a culture with a low score generally asserts their decision-making rights. Clear social hierarchy is, as Triandis (1988) indicated, a highlight in large power distance cultures where everyone has his or her assumed position along this hierarchy. In general, the more hierarchical a society is, the larger a power distance. Dependency is a natural product of hierarchical relationship between people (Hofstede, 1991). In large power distance cultures, strong dependency relationships exist between parents and children, husband and wife, bosses and subordinates, teachers and students (Sondergaard, 1994). This dimension might help explain the US-Taiwan differences in terms of attitude toward gender roles and family relationship. Probably with a high power distance, Taiwan, as compared to the US, might be a culture with stronger dependency relationships and more clearly ascribed social hierarchies. This might be the reason why Taiwanese consumers had a stronger tendency to be family-oriented and conservative in their views on gender roles in the society.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to a syndrome related to anxiety, rule orientation, need for security, and deference to experts (Hofstede, 1980). It is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situation and try to avoid these situations” (Hofstede, 1991). In cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, people have a higher level of anxiety, stress and tension so that they try to avoid uncertain situations by attaining greater career stability and establishing more rules and policies (Hofstede, 1991). In a society of low uncertainty avoidance, people prefer as few rules and ritual behaviors as possible (Hofstede, 1991). They are less likely to be concerned with life-security and more likely to accept risk (Bochner, 1994). This dimension might help us understand why

consumers from Taiwan (a high uncertainty avoidance culture) engage in saving more than consumers from the US (a low uncertainty avoidance culture) do. This dimension might also complement individualism/collectivism in explaining US-Taiwan differences in terms of life satisfaction, health concerns and product innovativeness. Since Taiwanese consumers are more conscious of uncertain situations, they might be more likely to worry about their health conditions, their overall life security, and also be less willing to try innovative products that are unknown to them.

Long-term orientation is defined as “the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional or short-term point of view” (Hofstede, 2001). According to Hofstede (2001), cultures with a higher score on the long-term orientation (e.g., East Asian countries like Taiwan) tend to show more persistence, perseverance, thrift and a strong sense of shame as well as ordering relationship. People from a culture with a lower score on the long-term orientation (e.g., the US) tend to spend more to keep up with social pressure, save less and prefer quick results. De Mooij (1998) indicated that long-term orientation people are more likely to pursue a peaceful mind rather than the happiness. Roland (1988) identified a strong association between long-term orientation and reverence for nature. Obviously, this dimension should also help account for US-Taiwan differences in terms of saving and environmental consciousness. In addition, some analogous findings under individualism/collectivism might also receive additional conceptual support here. For example, long-term oriented Taiwanese consumers would be less likely to make a rush and impromptu decision on product purchase, and would be more likely to monitor their health conditions for long-term personal security.

The above discussions on those relatively less explored dimensions proposed by Hofstede should broaden our understanding of cross-cultural consumer differences identified both by Dutta-Bergman and Wells and by this study. These constructs do not necessarily form opposite poles and may coexist in individuals or groups at the same time in different situations or within different target groups or toward different interactional goals (Kagitcibasi, 1997). No single cross-cultural value construct can explain every lifestyle question. Other dimensions of cultural values can be and should be evoked to account for something unaccounted for by individualism/collectivism. The question is: How can we identify disparate values at

the right time for the right place? It is always a challenge to establish meaningful relationship between values and behaviors, if not a causal one. This study is such an attempt in this direction. However, to answer this question, future studies might want to take one step backward by exploring a deeper question: Certain values are associated with particular attitudes, interests, opinions and consumption activities. Then what helps us explain the formation of these values? When it comes to the value dimension of individualism/collectivism, Kagitcibasi (1990, 1996) suggested a main shift toward a combined (coexistence) model, as these two satisfy two basic human needs. For instance, individualism serves to gratify the human need for agency (autonomy) and collectivism the need for relatedness. Future studies may need to add these need sets to the mix of individualism/collectivism and specific behaviors. A structural equation model can be developed to explore these relationships. A possible causal pattern can be: The human need for agency (autonomy) leads to individualism, which in turn leads to brand name consciousness and product innovativeness. These two basic needs can be expanded to include Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A future research question can be: Is individualism tied to higher levels of Maslow's need hierarchy (e.g., self esteem or self-enhancement) than collectivism is (e.g., safety or belongingness)? The same question can be asked on the need or motivational antecedents of other value dimensions (e.g., power distance).

The degree of correspondence between values/attitudes and behavior is a perennial problem in social psychology. In collectivist contexts this would appear to be an even trickier issue, given the greater sensitivity to situational demands (others' expectations, etc.). In individualistic contexts, however, there are less situational constraints on behavior, which therefore might better reflect personal attitudes or values (Kagitcibasi, 1997). Collectivism depends very much on which ingroup is present, in what context and what behavior was studied (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). The definition of the ingroup, in collectivist cultures, depends to some extent on the situation. While "family and friends" is the main definition, fellow villagers, political allies, or the country as a whole (in time of war) become the relevant ingroups for particular behaviors. A person may be idiocentric in relation to specific ingroups, but allocentric in relation to other ingroups (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). Future research needs to look at ingroup as a possible mediating variable between individualism/collectivism and specific consumption behaviors.

The difference in behavior toward in-groups and out-groups is much larger in collectivist cultures than in individualistic cultures, where individuals do not feel as attached to any in-group when there are numerous in-groups to which they can be attached, and when each in-group provides only a small portion of their material and emotional security (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). In other words, collectivism is correlated with in-group harmony and sharp ingroup-outgroup distinctions. Future cross-cultural lifestyle studies need to investigate whether consumers in collectivist cultures behave (e.g., dress) differently from out-group members and similarly within an ascribed in-group, and whether consumers in individualistic cultures behave consistently in both group settings.

There exist differences in the extent to which individuals in different cultures accept in-group norms. Allocentric persons in collectivist cultures might feel positive about accepting in-group norms and might not even question whether or not to accept them. Idiocentric persons in collectivist cultures might feel ambivalent and even bitter about acceptance of in-group norms. Whereas allocentric persons in collectivist cultures may experience consistency among the behavioral, affective, and cognitive elements of their social behavior, idiocentrics may experience discrepancies. For these idiocentrics, the behavioral elements may comply with the norms, but the affective and cognitive elements may be at odds with the norms. In individualist cultures parallel phenomena may take place (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). More research needs to be done on how this trait-culture match or mismatch might be related to consumer behavior patterns in individualist and collectivist cultures.

Extreme individualism has been found to be associated with certain forms of social pathology, such as high crime, suicide, divorce, child abuse, emotional stress, and physical and mental illness rates. Higher levels of social support in collectivist cultures make it more likely that a person will stop smoking, lose weight, persist at a task under unfavorable conditions (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). Future research might want to test the association between individualism/collectivism and deviant consumer behavior (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse) at both emic and etic levels. Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) proposed that individualism is tied to loneliness. Future studies can also investigate whether some loneliness-related consumer behaviors (e.g., pet ownership) correlate with individualism at both emic and etic levels.

This study conducts cross-cultural comparisons based on the assumption that

individualism/collectivism is an independent variable, and that Taiwan is a collectivist culture and the US an individualist culture. In other words, the levels of individualism or collectivism of the subjects in these two cultures were not directly measured but were assumed on the basis of their national status. The argument for this assumption is that cultural elements change slowly. In societies with long traditions the collectivism elements may persist although the societies have become very complex (e.g., Japan) (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988). Hofstede (2001) also argued that the value system was so stable (especially at the cultural level) that his data were still valid. However, more than 30 years have passed since his data (including Taiwan and US) were collected. Culture is dynamic and will change over time due to socio-economic changes. It must continually evolve in order to function in the best interests of a society (Wells & Prensky, 1996). As a result of information revolution, economic globalization and international travel, cross-cultural differences between the US and Taiwan might have been reduced. Future cross-cultural studies along individualism/collectivism need to measure this dimension in separate cultures to avoid any unsafe assumptions.

Nationals differ in a variety of ways (including culture) and these uncontrolled differences might complicate the attribution of observed cross-cultural differences to cultural values (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000). Some of its alleged effects (observed behaviors) may be determined by other (societal) antecedent conditions (e.g., economic development). One reason for this attributional error is the tendency of psychologists toward psychological reductionism. They look for psychological explanations for behavioral regularities that may in fact have socioeconomic bases (Kagitcibasi, 1997). How to control for socio-economic factors is another issue facing cross-cultural value researchers.

Methodologically speaking, a lack of functional equivalence might have explained incongruous findings at both emic and etic levels in terms of opinion leadership, fashion and personal appearance, and cooking/baking. Future cross-cultural studies should conduct a pilot test before going directly to comparisons. Another limitation of this study is due to the nature of secondary data used. As a result, some question items that were discussed by Dutta-Bergman and Wells were not included in the 2002 Taiwanese survey, such as questions concerning domestic chores, workaholics, traveling, sports and adventure, gambling, entertainment, socializing, computer usage, media usage, reading and other hobbies. Future studies

should include these and more lifestyle questions and test them at both emic and etic levels. As the 2002 Taiwanese survey did not include self-concept variables (which helped operationalize ideocentrism and allocentrism in the study by Dutta-Bergman and Wells), neither did the 2002 DDB Needham Life Style data, it is impossible to look at those lifestyle variables at both levels at the same time on the same combined data.

Conclusion

Despite the limitation of the secondary data, these etic-level findings analogous to those emic-level results by Dutta-Bergman and Wells demonstrated the strength of the individualism/collectivism theory in explaining certain aspects of consumer lifestyles across cultures. However, individualism/collectivism cannot explain everything. Otherwise, it will explain nothing (Kagitcibasi, 1997). Other dimensions of cultural values have also been used to account for something unaccounted for by this dimension. Different cultural values should complement each other in explaining complex cross-cultural differences in consumer lifestyles.

We live in the information and globalization age, when information technologies are breaking down traditional barriers in time and space. However, converging technologies and disappearing income differences across countries will not necessarily lead to homogenization of consumer behavior (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). Instead, as the world economy is becoming more and more cross-cultural, consumer behavior will become more heterogeneous because of newly exposed cultural differences, which make it increasingly important to understand values of national cultures and their impact on consumer behavior (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). In the context of international marketing, cross-cultural value orientations can profoundly affect the way products are consumed in a culture. Thus knowledge and understanding of cultural values are essential to successful international marketing efforts (McCarty, 1994). It is hoped that marketers involved in the trade between the US and East Asian countries (including Taiwan) would benefit from this study by gaining an insight into how cross-cultural values are related to specific consumer behaviors.

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TABLE 1

Comparison between Taiwan Census and the Current Survey
on Four-Key Demographic Variables (in percentages)

Demographics	Census in 2000 (N=22,167,159)	This Survey (N=1,341)
Gender		
Male	51.1	50.7
Female	48.9	49.3
Age		
16-25	21.2	20.1
26-50	54.1	58.3
51-65	13.9	12.9
66 and over	10.8	8.7
Area of Residence		
Northern	44.1	44.2
Central	24.6	21.3
Southern	28.6	29.9
Eastern	2.4	4.4
Kingmen-Matsu	0.3	0.2
Personal Monthly Income		
NT \$9,999 and less	na	9.3
NT\$10,000-29,999	na	20.8
NT\$30,000-49,999	na	36.4
NT\$50,000-69,999	na	21.2
NT\$70,000 and over	na	12.2

Source : 2001 statistical year-book of Republic of China

TABLE 2

Comparison between US and Taiwanese Consumers
on Scalar Equivalence and Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha/ Pearson's r *		Number of items
	US	TW	
Health Consciousness (Diet/Nutrition)	.75	.73	10
Brand Savvy Shoppers	.71	.75	4
Impulsive Buying	.77	.79	3
Brand Innovativeness	.64	.60	2
Life Satisfaction	.83	.80	8
Financial Satisfaction and Optimism	.47	.41	2
Money Management	.39	.36	2
Eating Out	.52	.45	2
Cooking/Eating	.86	.83	5
Opinion Leadership	.73	.69	3
Fashion Consciousness	.89	.85	8
Saving Behavior	.82	.79	4
Environment Consciousness	.66	.63	2
Family Orientation	.57	.68	2
Females' Role	.75	.77	4

* A scale with two items uses Person's r to present its reliability.

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