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Self-Expression Through Brand and Consumption Choices: Examining Cross-Cultural

Differences

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

by

Mirei Takashima

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Self-Expression Through Brand and Consumption Choices: Examining Cross-Cultural

Differences

by

Mirei Takashima

Doctor of Philosophy in Management

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Sanjay Sood, Chair

In this dissertation, I investigated how the brand and consumption choices across cultures

vary in meaning. In particular, I examined how self-expression through choice varies between

the Western and East Asian cultural contexts due to the difference in how the self is viewed.

Specifically, Westerners express self-consistency because they view themselves as independent

and consistent regardless of the context. In contrast, East Asians express through self-

improvement efforts because they view themselves as interdependent and thus have an obligation

to invest effort into becoming a model social being through self-improvement.

The topic of self-expression is particularly relevant and intriguing in the East Asian

cultural context, as the most common portrayal of East Asian individuals emphasizes the

conformist, socially obligated nature of their being. Hence, in this current research, I explored

the meaning of East Asian individuality and selfhood in the context of brand and consumption choices.

In Experiments 1 through 3, the results provided converging evidence that Western individuals have a higher self-brand connection when compared to East Asian individuals, and therefore are more loyal to the brands that they favor. In contrast, East Asians are less loyal to brands because of their higher interest in non-brand attributes.

In Experiments 4 and 5, I focused on the luxury brands category to further explore the cross-cultural difference in brand and consumption choices. The results confirmed that East Asians, when compared to Westerners, have a higher appreciation for distinctive but relatively intangible features involving craftsmanship and heritage.

In Experiment 5, I explored the topic of East Asian self-expression more directly. The results confirmed my hypothesis that East Asians self-express through their consumption choices by selecting the more unique, less popular option over the standard, more popular option—but only when it is socially appropriate to do so.

The findings from this research provide new insight into the cross-cultural differences in how people self-express through their brand and consumption choices as a result of their varying self-concepts. Furthermore, the findings also shed additional light on the concept of East Asian self-expression, and confirm that one does not have to subscribe to the principles of individualism to be an individual.

The dissertation of Mirei Takashima is approved.

Noah J. Goldstein

Matthew D. Lieberman

Aimee Drolet Rossi

Sanjay Sood, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

This dissertation is dedicated to

my loving family, Ben, and Mugi.

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As I reflect on my journey to date, it is almost surreal that it is nearly complete. As is probably true for most people in my position, things were not always smooth and easy. However, I have made it this far because of the special people in my life who were always there to encourage and support me through the ups and downs.

First of all, I would like to thank Sanjay Sood. I am truly fortunate that we had the opportunity to work together. Not only has he been a great mentor and advisor—pushing me when I need to be pushed while also being encouraging—but he has also become a close friend. I hope that we have the opportunity to work on more exciting research projects together.

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POSTERS AND PRESENTATIONS

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Takashima, Mirei and Sanjay Sood (2015), "Why and How Brand Loyalty And Product Choice Differs Cross-Culturally," Paper presented at the annual *Houston Doctoral Symposium*, Houston, TX, April, 2015

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

We all make a countless number of choices everyday. We decide whether to walk or to drive to a nearby grocery store. We spend hours at a department store trying to choose the perfect birthday gift for our best friend. We agonize over whether we should go to yoga or go to a café to indulge in Belgian waffles on a Sunday morning. We debate whether we should take a job at a more prestigious firm known for its gruesome hours or at a newly established company where we can add more value. Of course, some choices are more significant and meaningful than others. Regardless, every choice we make is in some way a reflection of who we are.

But do our choices carry the same meanings across contexts? Is choice an act of self-expression for all? For example, when a Japanese person orders a Coca-Cola at a McDonald's in Tokyo, are the implications of the choice the same as when an American person chooses the same brand in Los Angeles? Are these individuals expressing who they are through their choice? Past research suggests that indeed, cultural differences often have a significant impact on the meanings and patterns of choices (Kim & Drolet, 2009; Kim & Markus, 1999; Savani, Markus, & Conner, 2008). Relatedly, how a specific act is perceived and interpreted can be vastly different depending on the cultural context (Bruner, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010; Shweder, 1991). Indeed in order to better understand individuals and their behaviors, it is necessary to examine the cultural context that they are a part of (Heine, 2001b).

In the past several decades, significant progress has been made in developing an understanding of cross-cultural differences in people's psychology and behavior, as can be seen in the extant social sciences literature. However, the accumulated knowledge of East Asian culture and psychology is still far from comprehensive, as East Asian individuals are by and

large depicted as inherently collectivistic and conformist, and thus are viewed as diametric opposites of individualistic, non-conforming Western individuals. In other words, the literature is more or less silent on East Asian selfhood and individuality. In this dissertation, I examine the meaning of the East Asian self and individuality in an attempt to provide a more nuanced and fuller perspective on East Asian culture and individuals.

I propose that regardless of culture, people self-express through the choices they make. Importantly, however, how and what people self-express depends on the type of self-concept that is promoted within each culture. Specifically, I propose that both Western and East Asian individuals express what is viewed positively in each culture—namely, internal self-consistency in the Western cultural context, and self-improvement efforts within the East Asian cultural context. Since different cultures promote distinct views of the self, the choices made in these different cultures diverge in the meanings they carry.

This dissertation has 8 chapters. Chapter 2 offers an overview of the different types of self-concepts promoted in Western and East Asian cultures. It provides an explanation of how these different perspectives of the self affect individuals' choices and what they express through these choices. Across both cultures, individuals express what others who belong to their own culture perceive positively. Specifically, Westerners are motivated to express that they are self-consistent individuals who make choices regardless of the context. East Asians, on the other hand, are motivated to express that they are model social beings that are constantly striving to fulfill their social obligations by improving themselves. In other words, Western individuals express self-consistency, while East Asian individuals express self-improvement through the consumption choices that they make.

Chapter 3 describes Experiment 1. In Experiment 1, I examine whether Westerners allocate more points to a fewer number of brands when compared to East Asians—since Westerners are more likely to have stronger, clearer brand preferences than do their East Asian counterparts. The results showed that Westerners distributed more points to a fewer number of brands compared to East Asians, while East Asians distributed fewer points to a wider range of brands.

Chapter 4 describes Experiment 2. In Experiment 2, I examine whether Westerners use more emotionally charged words to describe brands compared to East Asians—again since Westerners are more likely to have more explicit likes and dislikes compared to their East Asian counterparts. In contrast, East Asians are more likely to describe brands with less emotionally charged words, as they are more ambivalent about their preferences. I find that Westerners did in fact use more emotionally charged words compared to East Asians.

Chapter 5 describes Experiment 3. In Experiment 3, I examine individuals' brand switching behavior. I predicted that compared to East Asians, Westerners are less likely to switch from their favorite brand to a competing brand that has additional features. I also predicted that in contrast, East Asians are more likely to switch from their favorite brand to a competing brand compared to Westerners, specifically because they are more interested in trying the brand with new features than in being self-consistent and loyal to their favorite brand. I found that, as predicted, East Asians were more likely to switch to the competing brand than were Westerners. However, when Westerners were primed to think about self-improvement and trying new things, they were equally likely to switch to the competing brand as were East Asians. The results from Experiments 1 through 3 provide converging evidence that Westerners are more loyal to their favorite brands because of their stronger emotional attachment and desire to be self-consistent,

while East Asians are less loyal to their favorite brands because of their stronger interest in self-improvement and trying new things.

Chapter 6 describes Experiment 4. In Experiment 4, I examine the differences between Westerners and East Asians in their luxury brand choices. Specifically, I predict and find that East Asians, when compared to Westerners, have a higher appreciation for and thus willingness to pay for products that communicate a pursuit of perfection and mastery in that category. I conclude that since the East Asian cultural context celebrates individuals who are constantly in pursuit of perfection, East Asian individuals appreciate brands that exhibit excellence and authority in their expertise.

Chapter 7 describes Experiment 5. In Experiment 5, I examine whether East Asians make different self-expressive brand choices depending on the social context. Specifically, I predict and find that East Asians choose the more subdued, conservative brand option for professional, work-related occasions, while they choose the more unique, expressive brand option for more casual, social occasions. These results are consistent with the notion that East Asians self-express, but that this self-expression is contingent on the social context. Indeed, the fact that East Asians choose the expressive brand option over the conservative brand option for social occasions clearly goes against the notion that East Asians have an inherent preference for conformity. It seems clear that given the right occasion, East Asians have a preference to express themselves by choosing the unique brand option.

Finally, Chapter 8 offers a general discussion of the results from all of the experiments, including their limitations, implications for both researchers and practitioners, and future directions.

To summarize, the present dissertation reexamines the cross-cultural differences in consumption choices, with a focus on East Asian consumers and how they self-express. While past research has mostly only highlighted the interdependent, conformist side of East Asian culture, the findings from this present research provide a starting point to explore the less obvious, but perhaps more compelling topic of East Asian individuality and selfhood. Since there is more than one way to be an interdependent individual, there must be individual variation in how the interdependent self is expressed.

CHAPTER 2: CULTURE AND THE SELF: SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH CONSUMPTION CHOICES

The underlying assumption in cultural psychology is that there is an interaction between the culture and the self that results in a constant process, or cycle, of mutual constitution (Geertz, 1973; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). It is impossible to separate people from the sociocultural realm they live in, as culture is jointly created by the actions of the various individuals involved (or have previously been involved) in the culture, and the cultural context itself (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

Admittedly, it is true that there are certain common themes that are important to all humans and cultures as a result of our shared biological and evolutionary roots. For instance, regardless of culture, it is a fundamental human need to feel valued and accepted, and to feel a sense of belonging to a relevant social unit (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). In addition, assuming that people do in fact want to feel accepted and appreciated, they will strive to express characteristics and behaviors that are considered good in that context (Kim & Chu, 2011).

Over the course of their lifetime, people develop psychological processes that enable them to attune to their cultural system and thereby function well within their specific cultural context (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). The self is shaped and developed through the social interactions that it encounters daily; thus, the psychological tendencies and processes involving the self are sustained by the sociocultural realities that are collectively created within a culture (Cooley, 1992; Kitayama et al., 1997; Mead, 2009). Importantly, both the culture and the self are dynamic, since sociocultural factors are never static

and individuals are constantly influenced by their cultural surroundings (Kitayama, Duffy, &

Uchida, 2007).

Furthermore, the variation in cultural contexts has an undeniable, underlying influence on

how the self is defined and construed (Markus & Kitayama, 2010), thereby creating systemic,

intra-cultural sets of patterns, and promoting divergent models of the self (Heine, 2001b;

Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Kunda, 1986). Since

the definition of what is valued and considered good differs across cultures, it is not surprising

that individuals who belong to different cultures develop distinct psychological and behavioral

tendencies and a unique view of the self in relation to others. Specifically, how the various self-

relevant psychological processes such as cognition, emotion, and motivation—as well as their

associated outcomes—are organized within individuals depends on the type of self-construal

these processes are grounded in. (Heine, 2001b; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, before we

proceed further in analyzing how the meanings of consumption and brand choices can vary

cross-culturally, we must examine whether the definition of the individual—of personhood and

of the self—is universal or culturally bounded.

Culture and the Self

Cultures are critically distinct in the way they signify and define a person (Markus &

Kitayama, 1998). In recent decades, cultural psychologists have challenged the universality of

the self-concept—how the individual and the self are understood and defined (English & Chen,

2011; Heine, 2001b; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Kunda,

1986; Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2002; Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Suh, 2002). Although an impressive

amount of social sciences research has been conducted to date, the accumulated knowledge is

predominantly based on a Western cultural framework (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998). In this

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chapter, I review and examine the different perspectives of the self, and how the different self-views result in divergent self-expression motives.

The Independent Self-Construal

Culturally shared ideas are typically an amalgam of normative views and moral rules that are thought to govern human nature, are usually taken as a given, and are believed to be so blatantly obvious that they need not be brought to conscious attention (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). In the Western cultural context, the idea of the individual is believed to originate from the ancient Greek belief in personal agency and freedom (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Furthermore, there exists an intimate relationship between Western individualism and the Protestant Christian religious context. According to Dumont (1982), the original Christian view was that the individual and the world were in conflict, and thus self-sufficiency was deemed essential. Further, the Protestant view focuses on the individual's personal relationship with God; thus, the individual's independence and responsibility for salvation is emphasized (Sampson, 2000).

Given the historical and cultural context, individualism is often believed to be at the core of Western society (Lukes & Blackwell, 1973; Triandis, 1995), and the ideal, normative individual is imagined to be autonomous, bounded, and genuine; moreover, the individual is also believed to have inner attributes that are unique and fixed (Kanagawa et al., 2001; Markus & Kunda, 1986).

In other words, the Western self is considered a distinct and independent entity that exists entirely separately from others and the social environment (Heine, 2001b; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In this cultural context, the individual is prioritized over others as well as over society as a

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whole, and chooses freely to enter and exit relationships (Lukes & Blackwell, 1973). The

assumption is that social relations are primarily a means to an end—specifically that they are

formed to serve the interests of those who are involved. Moreover, the focal belief is that

individuals have the right to make choices for themselves, and that their attitudes, feelings, and

behaviors should be their own and should not be controlled by external factors (Kitayama,

Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). Above all, individuals are expected to have their own unique and

separate identities that are different from that of others. Not only is being a distinct, unique

individual accepted, but it is also embraced and celebrated, and is considered a moral duty

(Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Thus, in this cultural context, what critically defines an individual

are the internal attributes, abilities, traits, and values that differentiates him/her from others

(Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003).

The Western Self and the Pursuit of Self-Consistency

The ancient Greeks viewed the world as a collection of separate and distinct objects, and

postulated that the world can be understood by the utilization of rules and categories (Nisbett et

al., 2001). Because they valued the use of formal logic and reasoning, they had no tolerance for

contradictions and inconsistencies (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). The contemporary Western notion of

the self is built upon the Greek intellectual traditions, and hence the self is perceived as

independent and separate with a distinct set of internal attributes. Moreover, the self is

experienced as immutable and constant across contexts, as the self is considered the primary

anchor of behavior. This view of the self assumes that although the activated working self-

concept may vary across situations, the fundamental self-representations remain stable (Heine,

2001b). In other words, for individuals with an independent construal of the self, the core

attributes are of paramount importance in determining their behavior and are assumed to be an accurate reflection of the inner self. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals thus are expected to not be easily swayed by others; to be consistent and true to the self regardless of the context; and to be stable across time (Geertz, 1975). Moreover, individuals are expected to express their internal attributes through their behavior. Thus, people's behaviors are expected be consistent and stable regardless of the context and over time. The existence of this strong "consistency ethic" implies that individuals who alter their behavior across contexts are often perceived as being dishonest, wishy-washy, and hypocritical (Cross et al., 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Individuals who change their opinions and behaviors across situations are frowned upon (Cross et al., 2003), since the lack of self-consistency is considered the ultimate manifestation of not being one's genuine self (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997).

In this cultural context in which the independent self is defined by a set of relatively fixed, consistent inner attributes, it becomes beneficial for individuals to view themselves and their associated internal traits in the most positive way possible. Specifically, individuals develop a psychological tendency to identify and focus on positive attributes of the self, and express them through their actions (Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, et al., 2001). By maintaining a focus on what they view as positive aspects of the self, individuals are able to continue enhancing their positive self-view. In effect, maintaining a positive self-appraisal—as opposed to striving for constant self-improvement—becomes a priority. Furthermore, since the self is viewed as unchangeable, efforts to develop the self are deemed unfruitful (Heine, 2001b).

Moreover, classical Western psychological theories have often linked self-consistency with psychological well-being (Abelson, 1968; Festinger, 1962; Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 2012; Zajonc, 1960). On the other hand, inconsistencies in the self-concept have traditionally been

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linked to psychic tension and various mental and social adjustment issues such as anxiety and confusion (Erikson, 1993; Festinger, 1962; Lecky, 1945). Lecky (1945) argued that since the self-concept is at the core of a person's personality, internal consistency is crucial (Epstein, 1973); specifically, it enables individuals to feel that they have some ability to predict and maintain control over his/her own reality. Thus, people strive to preserve a sense of stability and inner unity (Allport, 1955; Snygg & Combs, 1949), and to possess a system of organized and consistent concepts that enables them to maintain that stability (Rogers, 1951). Well-adjusted individuals are believed to be true to their inner values and beliefs when making decisions, instead of being swayed by external influences such as others' opinions or social norms (Jourard, 1963). People are motivated to see themselves as being the same people as they have been in the past, and to defend these selves from potential threats that would jeopardize this continuity (Hilgard, 1949).

Consistent with this view, cognition research demonstrates that contradictory thoughts and reasoning create significant discomfort for Western individuals (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Further, the contemporary Western style of thinking is heavily influenced by the intellectual traditions of ancient Greece, which emphasizes analytical, rational thought (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2002). Specifically, analytical thought involves decontextualization (i.e. separating the object from the context), rule-based categorization of objects, and utilization of formal logic to make inferences (Nisbett et al., 2001).

Festinger (1962) described cognitive dissonance as a cause of psychological discomfort that compares to a tense physical state (e.g. sleep deprivation, hunger) that requires urgent resolution. Empirical evidence suggests that Western individuals will actively try to reduce cognitive dissonance because it creates psychological discomfort (Elliot & Devine, 1994).

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Individuals feel uncomfortable when they are made aware of a discrepancy in their thoughts, behaviors, or attitudes, and thus will attempt to reduce this discrepancy by some means. For example, Swann (1983) and colleagues (Swann & Read, 1981) found that individuals proactively maintain a certain consistent self-image by negotiating with reality. Further, individuals protect their self-image and ego by selectively interpreting and choosing contexts that they can use to affirm the consistency in their self-image (Linville & Carlston, 1994).

Therefore, in this cultural context, consistency promotes a sense of self-authenticity and integrity. By maintaining a consistent, stable view of the self, individuals reinforce the notion that they are independent and autonomous beings who are not susceptible to contextual pressures and are free to make choices that are based on their own preferences (Cross et al., 2003). For the independent self to feel psychologically unified, the view of the self must be organized and maintained in a coherent, consistent manner (English & Chen, 2011).

There is now a fair amount of anecdotal and empirical evidence indicating that an individualistic view of the individual as an independent being does not accurately depict how the individual is defined and perceived in other, more collectivistic cultures (Heine, 2001b; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 2001). In particular, various social scientists have conjectured over the past several decades that there is another, more interdependent view of the self that is widely held in other parts of the world, such as in East Asian cultures (Mead, 2009; Triandis, 1995, 2001). Furthermore, the prevailing assumption of research on the self had been that there is a universal need for individuals to maintain a positive, consistent self-image. However, evidence from cross-cultural research shows that the pervasiveness of the phenomenon seems to be culturally bounded (Heine & Lehman, 1995; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The Interdependent Self-Construal

In contrast to individualistic Western cultures, East Asian cultures are collectivistic, and emphasize harmony as well as obligations and responsibilities to groups (Kitayama et al., 2000; Triandis, 1989, 2001). In this cultural context, individuals are not viewed as separate and distinct from each other. On the contrary, the assumption is that people are inherently interdependent and interconnected in a web of relationships; hence the self cannot be severed from others or from the social context (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). In fact, people are often defined by their social roles and group memberships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989).

Given that sensitivity to others and to the social context is considered paramount, individuals are more contextually perceived and defined, and are expected to be fluid and flexible depending on the situation (Heine, 2001b; Kanagawa et al., 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This self-orientation is in stark contrast to the Western ideal of the consistent and stable self. In a collectivist cultural context, self-consistency and stability across contexts are not particularly valued (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine & Lehman, 1999), since individuals are expected to modify their behaviors and play different roles according to the context (Cross et al., 2003; Heine, 2001b).

The interdependent self develops under the assumption that people are social products. In this cultural context, cultivating the feeling of interconnectedness with significant others is vital to the realization and well-being of the self (Ho, 1993; Suh, 2002). Moreover, relationships are assumed to be inherently worthwhile—thus individuals create value for themselves and for others through the connections they form with other people. In other words, the core focus of individual experiences is the self in relation to specific, relevant others (Markus & Kitayama,

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1998). In such cultural contexts, it is conventional for the group's interests to be prioritized over individual interests. Therefore, it is critical in such cultures for members to possess the ability to understand and interpret situational cues properly so that they are able to adjust their behaviors and actions accordingly. Whenever necessary, individuals are expected to conform to social norms in the contextually appropriate way (Triandis, 1995).

This interdependent view of the self is consistent with a more holistic style of cognition. In contrast to the independent self-construal that brings about a context-independent mode of thinking, an interdependent self-construal brings about a more context-dependent mode of thinking (Nisbett et al., 2001). This view originates from the East Asian philosophies such as Confucianism and (East Asian) Buddhism. These intellectual traditions are more holistically oriented, and emphasize the importance of attending to the surrounding context and incorporating experience-based wisdom. Indeed, empirical evidence from cognition research shows that compared to Westerners, East Asians are less negatively affected by inconsistencies and contradictions (Heine & Lehman, 1997), weigh the importance of consistency between internal attitudes and behavior less (Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992), and are not as bothered by the inconsistency in behaviors between private and public contexts (Fu, Lee, Cameron, & Xu, 2001). Because everything is dependent on the context, inconsistencies are expected and accepted as a fact of life (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2002). In fact, the ability to understand different contexts and modify one's behavior accordingly is considered to be a sign of maturity and social intelligence (Kitayama & Markus, 1999). Moreover, the relationship between psychological health and having a consistent self-view is significantly weaker for East Asians compared to Westerners (Campbell et al., 1996; Suh, 2002).

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Thus, in the interdependent cultural context in which attention to the social context is emphasized and expected, flexibility and fluidity of the self is valued significantly more than is self-consistency (Suh, 2002). Having the ability to detect and adapt the self to what is socially appropriate in the given context is what matters to interdependent selves, since the cultural imperative is to maintain and nurture social relationships instead of for the individual to become separate and autonomous from others (Kitayama et al., 2000; Suh, 2002).

The East Asian Self and the Pursuit of Self-Perfection

As mentioned earlier, the East Asian culture has been significantly influenced by intellectual traditions such as Confucianism and Buddhism, particularly Zen Buddhism. These major East Asian philosophies provide a sociocultural framework of selfhood and self-identity for individuals, specifically in relation to others and to society as a whole (Ho, 1995).

Contrary to what is often implicated in the literature, Confucian teachings are not academically oriented, but are instead moral in nature (Li, 2003, 2010). The core assumption of Confucianism is that self-perfection can be sought by all people; however, since self-perfection is realistically impossible to obtain, the true significance of this principle lies in the pursuit of perfection (Li, 2003). These moral ideals are intertwined with the importance of the ethics of managing human relationships and fulfilling societal obligations (Ho, 1995). Since a tenet of Confucianism is that self-cultivation is a necessary condition in order to fulfill one's social and familial role properly and to maintain harmony, there is a moral obligation to invest effort in improving the self, as well as to understand how to act appropriately in relation to others (Li, 2010).

Further, there is an emphasis on daily inner self-reflection that must be conducted even in the absence of others. In this context, developing an external frame of reference—paying close attention to the context and appropriately adjusting one's behavior to consensually shared standards held by others—is considered critical (Heine, 2001a), since the act of self-monitoring even in private implies that both the private and public self must uphold the same moral standards (Ho, 1995). In this way, individuals are able to better fulfill their social obligations based on their social roles.

On the other hand, Buddhism is traditionally and fundamentally a philosophy of non-existence—to speak of the self is an inherent contradiction (Ho, 1995). The idea that the self exists and the desires of that self are considered to be the central source of suffering; thus, the prescription for reaching enlightenment is meditation and the acquisition of knowledge to extinguish ignorance. The paradoxical idea is that individual effort is required, yet there is no individual agent seeking self-salvation. Thus, Buddhism is silent on the idea of the self in relation to others and society, since there is no separate self (Ho, 1995).

Zen Buddhism interprets the nature of enlightenment differently: the mind is not nonexistent, but is empty of the self and its desires (Ho, 1995). In other words, the selfless-self is essential in attaining the mindless-mind. Zen teachings convey that the only way people can learn is by gaining deep, spiritual inner experiences. At the very heart of Zen Buddhist psychology is the notion that it is part of human nature to want to achieve transcendent consciousness. Enlightenment, or *satori*, can only be reached when one is able to engage in introspection and develop an intuitive mode of understanding (Lebra, 1976). Conceptual knowledge, according to this perspective, does not allow people to get in touch with the spirituality and the mystery of being, as it is not evolved from the inner self (Suzuki, 2010).

Furthermore, Buddhism teaches that nature is always in motion, and that the only permanence in the universe is change; thus the self cannot be an unchanging, permanent, and independent entity (Suzuki, 2010). One who is changeable should be admired, as this trait is indicative of progress, evolution, and a lack of attachment. There is beauty in ephemerality and its transitory nature that should be appreciated in the moment, and thus change must be readily accepted and embraced (Peng, Spencer-Rodgers, & Nian, 2006).

Thus, in many ways, Zen Buddhism is a philosophy that encourages a private, introspective pursuit of self-discovery. For example, Japanese people regularly seek and find their individuality in self-reflective introspection (Lebra, 1976). Introspection directs individuals into their own private, inner world where they ensure that their heart and spirit are free from external pressures. In contrast, Confucianism encourages self-perfection but in the broader context of fulfilling social and moral obligations to others. However, both philosophies emphasize the sheer importance of the pursuit of some form of self-transcendence through perseverance and effort.

Given the significant influence of the traditional East Asian philosophies on the development of cultural values, it is not surprising that the fundamental goal in the East Asian cultural context is the cultivation of the individual into a model social being (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). By definition, being a model social being—fitting into and fulfilling social roles—requires the comparison of the self to others (White & Lehman, 2005). Evidently, in an interdependent cultural context, others' views are pertinent to the evaluation of the self. Thus, in the pursuit of self-perfection, how others perceive one's effort, achievements, and choices become pertinent. Indeed, East Asians vigilantly monitor the social environment in order to

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obtain essential information regarding the social context, norms, and cues (White & Lehman, 2005).

There is strong, converging evidence that self-enhancement motives are largely absent among East Asians (Heine & Hamamura, 2007). On the contrary, East Asians often exhibit more self-critical tendencies which go beyond self-presentation (Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000). They tend to actively search for their flaws and imperfections so that they can improve on them, and ultimately affirm their social connection (Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001). In this way, the identification of weaknesses is not perceived as threatening to East Asians, since it is seen as an opportunity for self-improvement.

White and Lehman (2005) provide empirical evidence to suggest that East Asians seek social comparisons more when self-improvement motives are deemed relevant; moreover, East Asians also seek upward social comparisons more so than Westerners do, especially when they are made aware of the opportunity for self-improvement. It is important to emphasize here that the self-improvement motives for East Asians are not driven solely by self-serving purposes. In fact, self-improvement at least in part reflects a preventive attitude (Higgins, 1998; A. Y. Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000) that enables them to satisfy societal expectations and thereby not disappoint others (Heine, 2001a). Thus, making social comparisons is a nontrivial component of self-improvement in the interdependent context.

As mentioned earlier, East Asians, when compared to Westerners, tend to view themselves as relatively more malleable and improvable (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). In effect, there is naturally a significant emphasis placed on the importance and value of personal effort, as the assumption is that effort is the primary determinant of achievement (Holloway, 1988). Moreover, self-improvement by definition can only be realized by personally investing effort.

Consistent with this idea, the Japanese *kaizen* mentality promotes the practice of continuous improvement in all aspects of life (Imai, 1986).

In the realm of education, learning encompasses more than just the acquisition of specific skills and is not limited to academic topics. Rather, learning includes both moral and social learning, and is considered a lifelong process of self-cultivation in the pursuit of self-perfection (Li, 2010). In other words, the outlook is that learning is about investing effort in order to master or understand something new over time, rather than about garnering positive evaluations of one's ability (Grant & Dweck, 2001). Holloway (1988) calls this tendency the "morality of aspiration," which can be described as one's persistent investment of effort to fulfill personal goals and ideals. Heine (2001a) notes that East Asian expressions that are associated with effort, such as *gambaru*, *doryoku*, and *gaman*, have strikingly positive connotations, especially when compared to the Western equivalents of perseverance, effort, and endurance, respectively.

For example, the main objective of Japanese grade schools is to provide a holistic education that will help students discover themselves (Sato, 2003). School curriculums include a broad range of nonacademic activities that encourage students' social and moral development. Moreover, there is an emphasis on self-discipline as well as on how to manage time, appearance, and home life. This type of all-encompassing education is believed to lead students to personal fulfillment; and the hope of the schools and the teachers is that students will, with the guidance of their teachers and parents, internalize certain norms and ideals, and develop into mature adults (Fukuzawa, 1994). In this way, students are regularly encouraged to self-reflect and think of how they can improve themselves.

In summary, interdependent individuals should benefit by being self-critical and being motivated to improve the self (Heine, 2001a) regularly and throughout life. Essentially, the

pursuit of self-perfection through learning is closely connected to other interrelated purposes, such as moral and social self-perfection and contribution to society (W. O. Lee, 1996). Specifically, deepening and broadening one's knowledge throughout life enables one to better understand how to utilize such knowledge, which in turn enables one to deepen and broaden knowledge even further. In this way, one's wisdom and the ability to employ this wisdom will increase as long as one continually participates in moral and social learning (Li, 2010). In other words, the total betterment of the self—including the social, moral, and academic aspects of the self—is an imperative for self-perfection within the interdependent context.

It is important to mention that in the context of East Asian self-improvement, the value of the self is not necessarily deemphasized. Of course, in the interdependent East Asian cultural context, the primacy of the group and society as a whole is a given. However, an often exaggerated and misconstrued notion is that the interdependent self is always slighted for the sake of the group, and thus that East Asians lack in independence, moral autonomy, and originality (Miller, 1997). Similarly, Confucianism is often mistakenly believed to promote conformity, when in fact it encourages harmony (Nisbett, 2010). While there are certain contexts in which the group must be and is prioritized, this prioritization does not necessarily have to translate into a mitigation of the self.

Furthermore, another common misconception seems to be that individuality is not acknowledged or recognized within the East Asian, interdependent model of the self. It is absolutely critical to understand that recognizing the existence of individuality does not necessarily require a pledge to the ideology of individualism (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). In this cultural context, individuality is not separate from the sociality of a person. In other words, the

assumption is that an individual is influenced by the self as well as by the social context, and that these two components are inseparable.

Unlike in the Western cultural context in which the individual is considered independent and distinct, the East Asian interdependent individual is a fused product of social roles and individual uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Put differently, because of the relational nature of the East Asian individual, there exists a conditionality of the individual on the social context.

The Japanese idiom, *rashii*, serves as a good example of individual distinctiveness within a social context (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995). In Japan, the idiom *rashii*, is very commonly used to describe individuals. A rough translation of the term into English would be, "-like," or "ish." Critically, the underlying assumption is that there is a consensually shared set of ideas that pertains to the term. For instance, a teacher who is *teacher rashii* is someone who acts, dresses, and talks like a prototypical teacher. The prototype in this cultural context encompasses the ideal characteristics of people in a specific social role (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). However, that does not mean that there is a single, fixed way of fitting the prototype. Mr. Suzuki may be *teacher rashii* because of his sternness and strictness in class, and Mrs. Tanaka may be *teacher rashii* because of the way she properly greets students in the hallways.

It should be pointed out that this term can also be used for specific individuals. If Ayako loved children, an Ayako *rashii* thing to do may be for her to volunteer at child care centers and write children's books. Ayako may also like to paint, so it may also be *Ayako rashii* to always be on the lookout for new painting equipment.

The core idea is that in an interdependent cultural context, individuals are still individuals, but the context is always taken into consideration. Thus, though Mr. Suzuki may be

teacher rashii at school, he may act very differently when he spends time with his own grandchildren. Ayako may like children and painting, but if the context is not appropriate to express her interests, she will refrain from doing so. That is because in some contexts—such as when she is at work—being *Ayako rashii* in those specific ways may not be deemed socially appropriate. In other words, there are an infinite number of ways in which someone can be *teacher rashii*, or be *self rashii*.

It is clear that the individuality and uniqueness of each person is explicitly understood and recognized in this cultural context as well. Individuals can exist even in an interdependent cultural context because one does not need to be individualistic to be an individual. One can still be an individual even while taking the social context into consideration. In other words, simply because when and how an interdependent individual decides to express individuality is contingent on the context does not mean that they lack individuality. Furthermore, being in tune with the social context does not necessarily have to be framed in direct opposition to being a free and distinct individual, or interpreted as a relinquishment of one's individuality (Markus & Kitayama, 1998).

Culture and Self-Expression

The implications and modes of self-expression vary depending on the cultural context and how the self is viewed (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Self-expression is typically defined as the expression of an individual's unique set of characteristics, emotions, or thoughts, and is particularly emphasized in the Western, independent cultural context in which people are expected to assert their individuality openly and publicly (Kim & Chu, 2011). In contrast, self-expression is not as explicitly valued or appreciated in the East Asian, interdependent culture, as

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the cultural imperative is for individuals to properly fit into the given social context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

These stark differences in the perceived value of self-expression again stem from the notion that what is construed as good and valuable in each respective culture is what will be expressed by individuals (Heine, 2001b; Kim & Chu, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1998, 2010).

Western Self-Expression

The ancient Greeks considered the ability to debate as one of the most important skills a man could have (Nisbett et al., 2001). In the independent cultural context, self-expressiveness is considered a positive, ideal characteristic of an individual. Individuals are expected to express their true, inner thoughts and feelings openly through their words and actions (Kim & Sherman, 2007), and thereby display their individuality and uniqueness to others (Kim & Chu, 2011). By doing so, individuals are also able to crystallize their inner thoughts and feelings, and make them more transparent and palpable to themselves as well as to others (Bem, 1973). Thus, the emphasis on overt acts of self-expression such as speech and making choices—referred to as "expressive individualism,"—is considered one of the hallmarks of individualism, as it enables individuals to uphold their own, inner uniqueness (Bellah, 2008).

Thus, in this cultural context, individuals often believe that they have a moral responsibility to proactively exercise their right to express their inner thoughts (Kim & Markus, 2002) in some way. One vital form of self-expression is the act of speech. In the Western— particularly in the American—cultural context, thinking and speaking (i.e. speaking one's mind) go hand in hand. Speaking is what makes one an individual, as what is spoken is perceived to be a reflection of his/her core, internal attributes, and in effect, of himself/herself. This notion is true

to a greater extent for Westerners than it is for East Asians (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Furthermore, engaging in a self-expressive act leads Western individuals to become more committed to their expressed opinions—since they believe that their thoughts are genuine and self-defining—and hence that the expression of these thoughts reflects who they truly are.

In a similar vein, making a choice is also considered a fundamental form of self-expression that enables individuals to overtly express their unique preferences and values (Kim & Drolet, 2003, 2009; Kim & Sherman, 2007). Since the act of choosing is predicated on having freedom (Kim & Drolet, 2003), choice effectively becomes an expression of one's free will and a reflection of the self. Therefore, choice, like speech, is considered an expression of one's inner thoughts and preferences (Kim & Chu, 2011). Indeed, people who are provided with choice opportunities are physically and mentally healthier than those who are not (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, & Deci, 1978).

Thus, in this independent cultural context, individuals are motivated to convey their true, unique self to others through self-expressive vehicles such as speech and choice (Kim & Markus, 1999). Perhaps it is not surprising then that compared to East Asians, Westerners are known to place a higher value on their freedom to make choices and exhibit stronger psychological commitment to their choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2007; Savani et al., 2008). Indeed, there is evidence that people spread their alternatives after they make a decision: they perceive the option that they chose to be more attractive and the option that they did not choose to be less attractive (Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, & Suzuki, 2004). In other words, individuals are motivated to justify their choice, since the choice implicates core aspects of the inner self.

East Asian Self-Expression

In contrast, in the East Asian, interdependent cultural context, there is less emphasis on the importance of individual free will and on the act of overtly expressing the inner self, since the priority is on the social, relational aspects of the self (Kim & Sherman, 2007). The expression of one's thoughts and opinions is not particularly valued, and may in fact be considered a sign of immaturity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the psychological consequences of expressing the self in an explicit manner are not likely to be as positive as they are in the independent cultural context (Kim & Chu, 2011).

Moreover, speech is not equated with the expression of one's inner attributes—rather, speech takes on a more communicative, relational role as opposed to an expressive, informational role (Kim & Markus, 2002). Indeed, the act of speaking has significantly more negative connotations in the East Asian cultural context compared to the Western cultural context. In some social contexts, talking about one's thoughts and opinions can be associated with a lack of substance and intelligence (Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996), or can potentially disrupt social harmony (Kim & Markus, 2002). Hence, individuals are expected to be thoughtful about what they vocalize, and to be conscientious about the social context whenever they are expressing thoughts and opinions in a conversation (Bond & Lee, 1978). In this way, speech may or may not be a pure reflection of one's inner attributes, as what is expressed is contingent on the social context.

Similarly, choice may not reflect the inner self to the same degree as it does in the Western cultural context (Kim & Chu, 2011). There is no significant emphasis on choice, and thus individuals may not find the act of making a choice as psychologically taxing as it is in a more independent cultural context (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Indeed, East Asians generally do not

spread their alternatives like Westerners do after they make a choice (Kitayama et al., 2004), and show no change in the degree of investment and commitment to a choice after the choice has been made (Kim & Chu, 2011).

However, that is not to say that East Asians do not partake in expressing the self. It is not the case that East Asians do not value self-expression; it is more that self-expression means something qualitatively different in the East Asian cultural context than what it does in the Western cultural context. Naturally, the difference in how the self is construed has implications for both the content and the mode of self-expression. In the independent cultural context, individuals are expected to be open and direct, and to express their internal attributes. In the interdependent cultural context, the manner in which the self is expressed is likely to be less overt and more subtle. Indeed, there is evidence that East Asian individuals use more indirect means to communicate their thoughts and beliefs (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Holtgraves, 1997) so as to avoid creating potential conflicts and disagreements that could have a negative impact on social relationships (Kim & Chu, 2011).

Notably, not only is the manner in which individuals express themselves different, but what is expressed is also different. In both cultural contexts, individuals express and realize the self. Again, the assumption must be that all individuals—regardless of culture—want to feel appreciated and valued within their respective societies. In this way, what society views as positive and desirable is what individuals should strive to accomplish and express. Thus, Westerners affirm their unique, positive attributes by openly expressing them through various self-expressive actions. In contrast, East Asians are motivated to determine the areas they need to improve on in order to be a model social being, and to invest effort daily to eliminate these weaknesses (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Hence, East Asian individuals experience self-

fulfillment when they feel that they are successfully living up to the personally internalized and consensually shared standards (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995). More so than for the Western individuals, the authentic, positive sense of self for East Asians may consist of a collection of context-dependent selves, and thus is more closely tied to the idea of self-improvement rather than to self-consistency. Given this cultural context, I propose that individuals self-express not their positive inner attributes, but instead self-express their effort to continuously self-improve along with the associated outcome of this effort. Since self-improvement is a lifelong endeavor that permeates all aspects of everyday life (Li, 2003, 2010), how it manifests itself and how it is expressed depends on the social context.

Next, I discuss how and why East Asians and Westerners differ in their brand and consumption choices, as well as the implications of these differences. In particular, I focus on how East Asians self-express through their brand and consumption choices.

Culture and Consumption Choices

There is no question that culture has a significant impact on individuals' psychological tendencies, and how that translates into different self-concepts and a multitude of behavioral outcomes. Admittedly, it would make sense then that different cultural contexts promote varying consumption behaviors. There is a substantial amount of anecdotal as well as empirical evidence to suggest that these differences are in fact real and significant.

In a choice study, Kim and Sherman (2007) examined whether expressing their choice preference affected Westerners' and East Asians' evaluation of the un-chosen option differently. They found that when Westerners explicitly expressed preference for a choice, Western individuals showed less liking for the un-chosen option compared to when they kept their choice private. In contrast, East Asians showed no difference in the evaluation of their choices

regardless of whether they expressed their preference or not. Since choice is more closely tied to the inner self for Westerners than it is for East Asians, the act of expression led Westerners to become more invested and committed to the chosen option.

In another series of studies, Wilken and her colleagues (2011) examined cross-cultural differences in preference consistency over time. They hypothesized and found that since Westerners, when compared to East Asians, are more consistent in their self-concepts when there is no specific context, they will show more consistency in their preferences across time.

Kim and Markus (1999) showed that when given a choice between a unique option and non-unique options, Westerners are more likely to select the unique option while East Asians are more likely to select the non-unique, more conformist option. They argue that in this way, individual preferences and cultural norms seem to correspond in both cultural contexts. Yamagishi and his colleagues (2008) replicated and modified the choice study and found that what appears to be an East Asian preference for conformity is actually a default strategy to avoid being perceived negatively in certain social situations, and that when the possibility for negative evaluations are clearly defined, East Asians make unique choices at the same rate as their Western counterparts. Thus to be viewed positively, individuals act in a way that is considered socially appropriate in their respective cultures; for East Asians, the implication is that the choice they make is not context-independent but hinges on the specific social context.

Culture and Brand Loyalty

Given the differences in psychological tendencies and the self-concepts that individuals hold across cultures, such differences should have an impact on various aspects of life, including people's values, perceptions, and behaviors. The consumption context should be no exception.

The self-concept that one holds influences the choices that are made. Thus, the brand and consumption choices individuals make are likely to differ across cultures.

I propose that Westerners and East Asians make consumption choices for different reasons, and thus that the choices they make carry different meanings. Specifically, I propose that for Westerners, their favorite brands are more self-defining than they are for East Asians, and thus Westerners will tend to be more brand loyal than are East Asians.

Before we proceed further, it is important to define and understand what brand loyalty is, and how emotional attachment to brands can develop.

Brand Loyalty

Needless to say, there is a large volume of research that has been conducted on the topic of brand loyalty. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) made the first attempt to clearly define this concept. Subsequently, many researchers have developed numerous conceptualizations as well as ways to measure brand loyalty (Day, 1976; Dick & Basu, 1994). According to Oliver (1999), brand loyalty can be defined as: "A deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior." The phrase "deeply held commitment," is critical, as it implies a true psychological commitment as opposed to what may behaviorally appear to be commitment. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) explain why it is important to differentiate between psychological and behavioral loyalty. They conclude that some consumers may appear behaviorally loyal because of certain circumstances (e.g. purchase convenience, brand availability) even though they may not be psychologically loyal. On the other hand, other consumers may appear to be

behaviorally disloyal even though they are psychologically loyal—for instance, if they are psychologically loyal to multiple brands and thus make multi-brand purchases. In other words, the notable distinction between truly loyal consumers and consumers who only appear to be loyal (but are actually not) is based on whether they are emotionally invested in a brand or not.

Emotional Attachment to Brands

The pertinent question is how one develops an emotional attachment to brands. In the domain of psychology, there is ample evidence that the degree of emotional attachment one feels to another individual predicts how committed s/he is to the relationship (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult, 1983; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Specifically, a higher degree of attachment is typically associated with stronger emotions, such as affection and love (Aron & Westbay, 1996; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Collins & Read, 1990, 1994; Feeney & Noller, 1996). Attachment theory, which offers a model that explains how an individual becomes psychologically and emotionally tied to another individual, was initially developed in the context of parent-infant relationships (Bowlby, 2005). The fundamental idea of this theory is that infants are helpless on their own and thus depend on their parents to survive. As infants spend time with and are cared for by their parents, they develop a dependency and attachment to them. The infant feels content and at ease when the parents are available and present, whereas s/he becomes distressed and insecure when s/he feels separated from his/her parents (Bowlby, 1998; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). These feelings that arise as a consequence of attachment are not unique to infant-parent relationships. Since human beings are born with a basic need to form a strong emotional bond with certain individuals, they develop a special bond with select individuals who prove significant throughout their lives (e.g. to their romantic partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1994),

siblings, and friends (Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997; Weiss, 1988)). However, the development of attachments is not limited to bonds between individuals. At a more general level, attachments can also occur between a person and an object.

Indeed, in the realm of marketing, research suggests that consumers can develop an attachment to certain brands and products (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Fournier, 1998; Kevin, 2003; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Existing evidence suggests that in the relationship domain, individuals who have a strong attachment to another individual are more likely to be invested in and more willing to make sacrifices for this individual (Bowlby, 2005; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Thomson and his colleagues (2005) argue that in the consumption context, the degree of consumers' emotional attachment to a brand predicts their loyalty as well as their attitudes and behaviors towards the brand. Simply put, how emotionally committed a consumer is to a brand is likely to be a reliable predictor of how loyal s/he is to this brand (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999).

In consumer research, the cognitive and emotional attachment that an individual feels towards a brand is known as self-brand connection (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Self-brand connections can occur when a consumer feels that the brand has personal relevance beyond its functional value. Like possessions in general, brands are not only utilitarian but can also serve other symbolic, self-expressive purposes (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994b); they can be used to fulfill certain psychological needs (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998). For example, brands can help consumers feel a certain way, or express whom they are or who they aspire to be (Richins, 1994b). Thus, individuals can consume brands in part for what they symbolize; these symbols are then used to develop and define individuals' self-concept and unique identity (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Levy, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1990).

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Culture and Self-Brand Connection

Empirical evidence suggests that culture has an impact on how people perceive consumer goods and brands (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001). Thus, it would not be surprising if culture also has an influence on self-brand connection. The most popular view on how self-brand connections are formed is that consumers employ a sort of matching process between the self and the brand (Chaplin & John, 2005; Sirgy, 1982) to identify brands that are consistent with their self-image (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Gardner & Levy, 1955). For a self-brand connection to occur, consumers must perceive the brand to have aspects that are relevant to and can be related to the self (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005). That is, the brand must, in consumers' minds, have a set of associations that are personally relevant. Alternatively, if the set of associations consumers have about a brand is not consistent with their own self-concept, they will not feel a connection with the brand. For example, if the brand being analyzed is Gatorade, the associations tend to be images of the prototypical user—an athletic youth who likes to play sports with his friends. The brand associations can also pertain to consumers' psychological benefits, which enable consumers to build their self-concept as well as express their unique self-identity to others (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). By drinking Gatorade during a sports game, consumers may not only feel more hydrated but also more athletic and popular.

It is important to understand that consumers can have favorable attitudes towards numerous brands but not be attached to any of them. That is, though often correlated, there is a significant and relevant difference between having positive attitudes towards brands and being attached to them (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). Just because a consumer likes a brand does not mean s/he will only purchase that brand. For example, if this

consumer likes cola drinks, s/he may not necessarily have a preference between Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Or, s/he may like both Coca-Cola and Pepsi, but not be attached to either. In other words, having a preference for a certain brand is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a consumer to feel emotionally attached to the brand. In a similar manner, other marketing constructs such as satisfaction are also significantly different from attachment (Thomson et al., 2005). A consumer may be satisfied with a brand but may not feel the need to maintain a relationship with, or experience distress when, separated from the brand. Unlike when one is attached to a brand, having a positive attitude or being satisfied with a brand does not necessarily involve a cognitive and emotional self-brand connection in which a link between the self and the brand develops. In other words, the brand is only incorporated into the self-concept if and when there is brand attachment. Indeed, in their research, Malär and her colleagues (2011) provide empirical evidence that the fit between the self-image (actual or ideal, depending on different factors such as product involvement) and the brand plays a key role in the development of self-brand connections.

Thus, I propose that Westerners are more likely to develop a self-brand connection with their favorite brands than are East Asians. For Western individuals, a favorite brand is likely to be a brand that has been repeatedly selected over time and across contexts because of its fit with one's self-concept. Thus, since the brand is a reflection of the inner self, Westerners should feel more psychologically committed to their choice. It is self-affirming for them when they consistently choose their favorite brand over other options.

Indeed, consumers exhibit a preference for brands that they perceive to be self-consistent (Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). When there is a self-brand connection, the brand is incorporated into the individual's self-concept, and in this sense the individual and the brand form a bond and

become one (Park et al., 2010). Importantly, consumers who develop an attachment to brands and feel a self-brand connection with these brands are more likely to invest personal resources to maintain these relationships—the more consumers are strongly attached to a brand, the more they are motivated to keep purchasing this brand even if they have to overcome various obstacles. For instance, if the consumer goes to a store and the brand s/he is attached to is sold out, this consumer will be more likely than another consumer—who is not as attached to the brand—to drive to another store to buy the brand rather than opt for a substitute brand.

The fit between the self and the brand is critical in the context of brand attachment because consumers not only make brand and other consumption choices as a way to express themselves (Aaker, 1999; Belk, 1988) but also to construct and present their own, unique identity (Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1989; Richins, 1994a) based on the consistency between the brand image and self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

In contrast, a favorite brand for East Asians is not necessarily a pure reflection of the inner self, but is a product of both internal preferences and the social context. The brand may have become a favorite because it helped them improve the self in some way. For example, the brand may have continuously launched new flavors, an act that encourages individuals to expand their palate and learn about unique ingredients. Thus, in a sense, East Asians use brands as a tool for self-improvement. They appreciate brands that enable them to discover new things and those that help them signal to others that they are aware of and are interested in what is happening in the social context—for example market trends and new product launches. However, precisely because it is imperative for East Asians to always be fluid, flexible, and cognizant of their social surroundings, undying loyalty to a favorite brand is not encouraged or viewed positively.

In summary, East Asians will self-express through their brand and consumption choices in a different way than do Westerners. For Westerners, maintaining self-consistency is highly critical, and thus their main reason for choosing a brand or a product is to be self-consistent. Thus, I propose that Westerners have a higher need for consistency when choosing their brands. It is worth mentioning that the idea that Westerners have motives to be both consistent and unique is not necessarily contradictory. In Western cultural contexts, it is considered normative and positive to seek variety and to appear unique (Kim & Drolet, 2003), as such acts can convey individuals' free will (Kim & Markus, 1999). However, when one's inner attributes are implicated, the need to be true to the core self becomes highly relevant. Thus, in choice contexts that involves one's favorite brands, self-consistency takes priority, as these brands are self-defining.

In contrast, brand choice for East Asians is holistic, and is a function of both brand and non-brand attributes. The brand name plays a relevant role; however, East Asians are also attentive to the brand's product features. In other words, I propose that East Asians express themselves by choosing brands and products that have distinctive features, and that they have a higher focus on these distinctive non-brand features than do Westerners. Thus, East Asians will have a higher need for distinctiveness in their brand choices compared to Westerners. However, given that East Asians are sensitive to the social context, one caveat is that East Asians will only self-express through their choices when they feel that is it socially appropriate to. Lastly, I propose that East Asians will be less brand loyal when compared to Westerners, as they will have a higher willingness to consume a wider variety of brands relative to their Western counterparts.

In Experiments 1 through 3, I show that Western individuals indeed are more psychologically invested in their favorite brands, and as a result are more loyal to them than are East Asian individuals. In Experiment 4, I show that East Asians are indeed more interested in distinctive non-brand features compared to Westerners, and thus have a higher willingness to pay for brands with such features. Finally in Experiment 5, I show that East Asians self-express by choosing the more unique, less popular option, but only when it is deemed socially appropriate to do so. In all 5 experiments, I also show that East Asian individuals are more interested in brands with distinctive features that help them self-improve and be a good social self.

CHAPTER 3: EXPERIMENT 1 – EXPRESSING BRAND LIKING THROUGH ALLOCATION OF POINTS

Every consumer, regardless of culture, has an affinity for certain brands more than for other brands. Needless to say, there are myriad reasons why preferences vary across consumers. However, the focal question here is not why, but how preferences vary. Some consumers may have a stronger affinity and liking for certain brands, while other consumers may like certain brands over other brands, but not to the same degree. In other words, some consumers could have a more polarized attitude towards certain brands when compared to other consumers who possess a relatively more neutral attitude.

Cultural expectations and tendencies should be no different in the brand consumption context. Specifically, we can predict that the Western cultural imperative to have unique opinions, express them publicly, and be consistent in one's thoughts and behaviors across contexts should have a significant impact on one's brand preferences. In contrast, the East Asian cultural context encourages moderateness in behavior and thought (Drolet Rossi, Luce, & Hastie, 2016), and does not encourage people to explicitly express their opinion. In fact, especially in Japanese culture, ambiguity in certain social situations is preferred and expected. The self in this context is most often defined and experienced as being malleable, open, and fluid across situations (Kanagawa et al., 2001).

Festinger (1962) argues that upon making a decision, individuals are motivated to reduce any dissonance that they experience, either by increasing the attractiveness of the chosen option, or by decreasing the attractiveness of the alternative option. Consistent with this notion, there is empirical evidence that Westerners are more prone to exhibiting the spreading alternatives effect

than are East Asians—after choosing between 2 options, they tend to increase their liking of the chosen option and increase their disliking of the un-chosen option (Brehm, 1956). In a similar vein, Kim and Sherman (2007) find that once Westerners expressed their choice preference, they became more invested in their selected choice and showed a stronger disliking for the un-chosen one. Westerners were also more convinced of and tied to their own attitudes after they had vocally expressed them (Higgins & Rholes, 1978; Kiesler & Sakamura, 1966). This pattern did not hold true for East Asians—the expression of their choice seemed to have no impact on how they felt about their choice. Interestingly, Kitayama and his colleagues (2004) found that the only context in which East Asian participants exhibit the same pattern as do Western participants is when they were primed to think of the opinions of social peers.

I predict that when Westerners like a certain brand, they will express this liking in a more obvious, clearer manner than will East Asians. Moreover, this liking for a certain brand may have a polarizing effect on other non-liked brands. In other words, Westerners will show a clearer distinction in their attitudes toward brands that they like and brands that they do not like. This attitude also implies that Westerners will express liking for a few select brands as opposed to a wide array of brands.

In contrast, I predict that East Asians compared to Westerners will have less explicit preferences for brands. They will also be more likely to express liking for more (vs. fewer) brands compared to Americans, since they do not feel the imperative to be selective and definitive about their liking. Thus, I predict that Westerners will express stronger liking for a fewer number of brands compared to East Asians.

Method

Sixty-one participants between the ages of 18 and 40 (M_{age} = 31; 54% female) took part in an online survey in the U.S. and in Japan. The participants were part of the Qualtrics database. Responses from 6 participants were eliminated from the data due to the fact that they were not paying proper attention (e.g. there was a systematic pattern to their responses, such as selecting the same number on the Likert scale for all questions). Only Caucasian American participants were included in the English (U.S.) survey. For the Japanese participants, professional translators translated the English survey into Japanese using the proper translation measures.

Participants were asked to allocate a total of 100 points across several brands in each category so that the brands they like most (least) are assigned the highest (lowest) number of points. For instance, if a participant only liked one of the brands in the product category, s/he could allocate all of the 100 points to his/her favorite brand, and allocate 0 points to the rest of the brands. Alternatively, a participant could distribute points evenly (or unevenly) across multiple brands that they like. The target categories included the following: soda, fast fashion, game console, sportswear, and beer.

To ensure that participants in both countries were familiar with the brands relatively equally, only the top global brands with significant market share in both countries were chosen. This selection process entailed examining global brand rankings on reputable brand ranking websites such as www.interbrand.com. The rankings for the top global brands were highly consistent across the different websites; only brands listed in the top 100 across all websites were included. For example, for the soda category, the brands listed were Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Sprite, and 7Up. In addition, participants also filled out a familiarity measure, which was on a 1 to 7 Likert scale: "How familiar are you with this brand?"

Results

To examine the difference in distribution of points between the 2 cultures, I looked at the average maximum number of points as well as the standard deviation of the number of points allocated to each brand per product category. In both analyses, I controlled for brand familiarity to ensure that the results were not affected by this factor.

First, I calculated the average maximum number of points allocated to a brand in each product category per subject. For example, if a subject allocated 10, 60, 20, and 10 points to Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Sprite, and 7up respectively, the maximum number of points allocated to a brand in the soda category by this subject was 60 points. This calculation was performed for each product category per subject. These numbers were then used to calculate the average maximum number of points allocated to a brand per product category.

Overall, American participants—compared to Japanese participants—allocated more points to fewer brands, as indicated by the higher average maximum number of points allocated ($Ms = 59.45$ vs. 46.18, respectively), ($F(1, 37) = 5.47$, $p < .02$). I also analyzed whether this trend was true by product category. There was a significant difference between American and Japanese participants' average maximum point allocation for soda ($Ms = 50.97$ vs. 37.57, respectively), ($F(1, 54) = 10.54$, $p < .002$), fast fashion ($Ms = 64.68$ vs. 49.73, respectively), ($F(1, 55) = 5.02$, $p < .03$), game console ($Ms = 67.52$ vs. 54.97, respectively), ($F(1, 56) = 4.02$, $p < .05$), and beer ($Ms = 61.81$ vs. 47.57, respectively), ($F(1, 54) = 3.90$, $p < .05$). This difference was only marginal for sportswear ($Ms = 52.29$ vs. 41.07), ($F(1, 54) = 2.33$, $p > .13$).

Additionally, I also examined the difference in the standard deviation of the number of points allocated to each brand by product category. Across all categories, American participants had a higher standard deviation compared to Japanese participants ($Ms = 25.42$ vs. 17.72,

respectively), ($F(1, 37) = 5.28$, $p < .03$). There was a significant difference between American and Japanese participants' average standard deviation of the number of points allocated in each of the following categories: soda ($Ms = 20.80$ vs. 14.83, respectively), ($F(1, 54) = 8.94$, $p < .005$), fast fashion ($Ms = 28.38$ vs. 18.73, respectively), ($F(1, 55) = 5.10$, $p < .03$), and game console ($Ms = 31.69$ vs. 21.09, respectively), ($F(1, 56) = 4.57$, $p < .04$). This difference was marginally significant for beer ($Ms = 26.29$ vs. 18.94), ($F(1, 54) = 3.84$, $p < .06$), and was not significant for sportswear ($Ms = 19.94$ vs. 14.99), ($F(1, 54) = 2.58$, $p > .11$).

Finally, I also explored whether the distribution of points was in fact different across all ranks of brand preferences by product category. For each participant, I rearranged the allocated points from the most to the least amount of points by product category. For example, if a participant had distributed 15 points to Coca-Cola, 85 points to Pepsi, and 0 points to the other 3 soda brands, the rearranged rank order was: 85, 15, 0, 0, and 0. I then rank ordered the points for each participant per product category in the same manner. As the values in Table 3.3 indicate, American participants distributed more points to the higher ranked brands per product category compared to Japanese participants. In other words, American participants had a more skewed distribution of points compared to their Japanese counterparts.

Experiment 1: Average Maximum Number of Points Allocated to a Brand by Culture and
Product Category

	Soda	Fast Fashion	Game Consoles	Sportswear	Beers	Total
Western	50.97	64.68	67.52	52.29	61.81	59.45
Eat Asian	37.57	49.73	54.97	41.07	47.57	46.18

Figure 3.1

Experiment 1: Average Maximum Number of Points Allocated to a Brand by Culture and Product Category
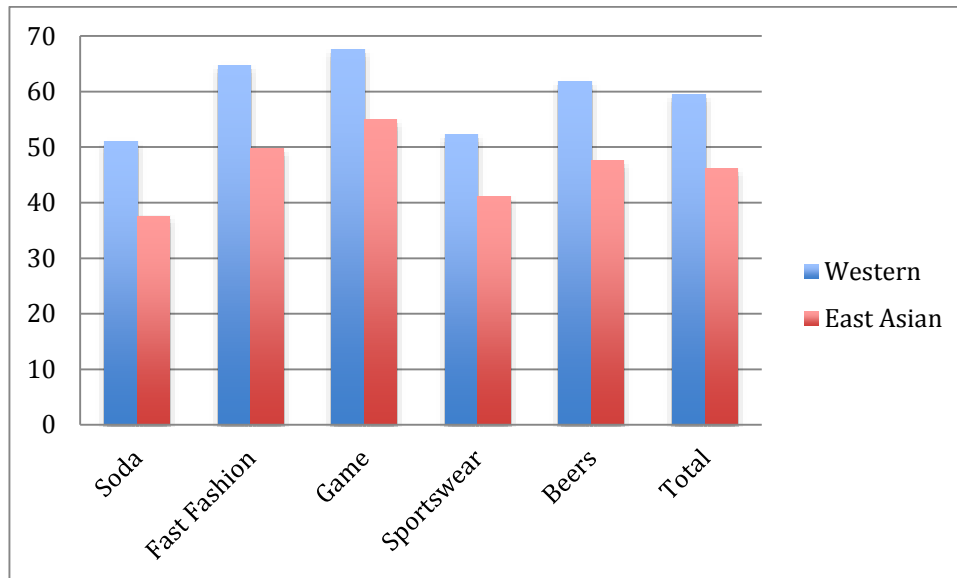
Table 3.2

Experiment 1: Average Standard Deviation of Points Allocated to a Brand by Culture and Product Category

	Soda	Fast Fashion	Game Consoles	Sportswear	Beers	Total
Western	20.80	28.38	31.69	19.94	26.29	25.42
Eat Asian	14.83	18.73	21.08	14.99	18.94	17.71

Figure 3.2

Experiment 1: Average Standard Deviation of Points Allocated to a Brand by Culture and Product Category
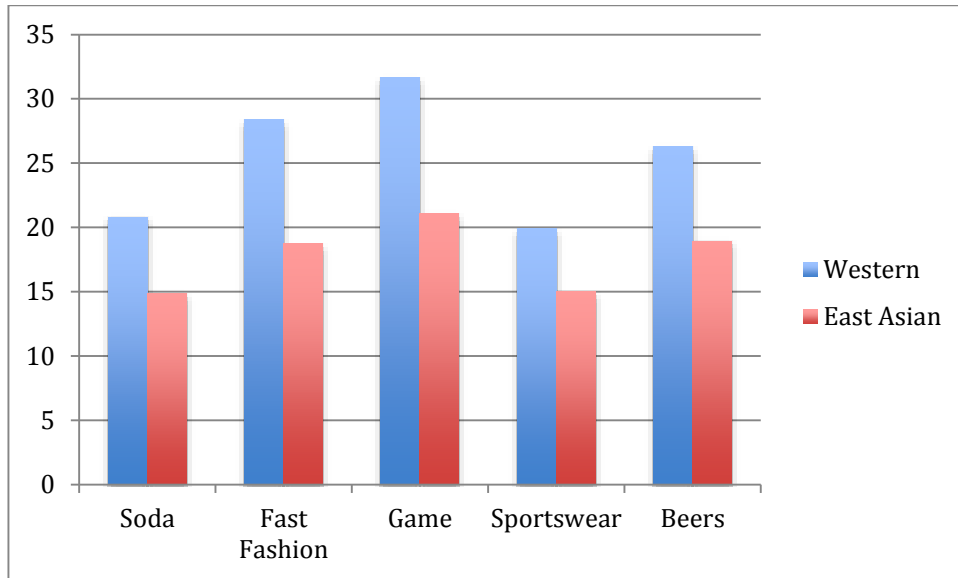
Table 3.3

Experiment 1: Average Number of Points Allocated by Order of Brand Preference by Culture and Product Category

	Soda		Fast Fashion		Game		Sportswear		Beers	
	Western	**East Asian**	**Western**	**East Asian**	**Western**	**East Asian**	**Western**	**East Asian**	**Western**	**East Asian**
Rank 1	50.97	37.57	64.68	49.73	67.52	54.63	50.35	41.07	61.81	47.57
Rank 2	25.97	29.83	17.94	25.03	21.48	28.77	20.19	23.03	21.65	26.03
Rank 3	10.81	17.33	10.48	14.13	11.00	16.60	13.03	17.70	6.65	10.83
Rank 4	7.74	9.43	6.90	11.10	N/A	N/A	9.77	11.27	5.16	8.63
Rank 5	4.52	5.83	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.16	6.93	4.74	7.10

Figure 3.3

Experiment 1: Average Number of Points Allocated by Order of Brand Preference by Culture and Product Category
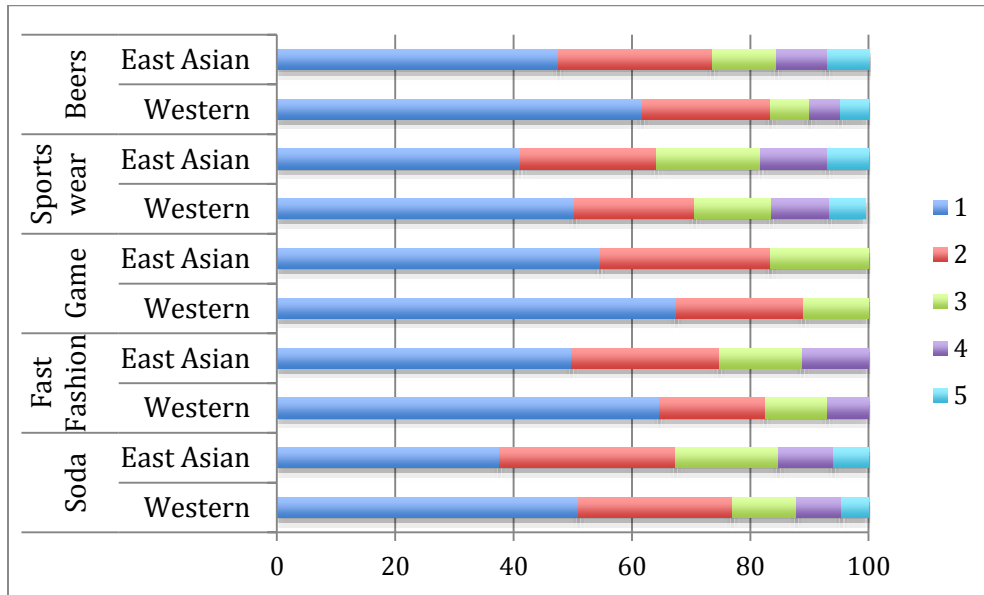
Discussion

In general, Western participants allocated more points to a fewer number of brands compared to East Asian participants, as indicated by both the average maximum number of points and the standard deviation of the number of points allocated to each brand per product category—in addition to the difference in the skew of the distribution across ranks. This trend was directionally true across all product categories, though the difference only reached marginal statistical significance for the sportswear category in the average maximum number of points, and the difference was not statistically significant for the same category in the standard deviation of the number of points allocated to each brand. Additionally, the difference across cultures in standard deviation of the number of points allocated to each brand in the beer category was only marginally significant. Overall, the results are consistent with the idea that Westerners have a stronger liking for a few select brands compared to East Asians.

The results of Experiment 1 provide initial evidence that Westerners are more inclined to possess and express stronger, clearer preferences for the select brands that they like compared to East Asians. In Experiment 2, I approach this idea from a different perspective.

CHAPTER 4: EXPERIMENT 2 – MEASURING EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH

BRANDS THROUGH WORD DESCRIPTIONS

The results from Experiment 1 in the previous chapter can be taken as initial evidence that Westerners have stronger, clearer preferences for brands compared to East Asians. It can be reasoned that Western participants allocated more points to these brands because they feel a deeper commitment to the brands that they decided they like sometime in the past. Westerners indeed do become more committed to their expressed choices and preferences (Kim & Sherman, 2007) because speech is often perceived to be the most important act of self-expression (Bellah, 2008). East Asian participants allocated points to more brands because they very simply have a relatively more similar level of liking for multiple brands than do their American counterparts.

If it is indeed true that Westerners generally have stronger, clearer brand preferences compared to East Asians, it is also likely to be true that they feel a stronger emotional connection to certain brands. Though Westerners, when compared to East Asians, typically tend to engage in a more logical style of thinking (Nisbett et al., 2001), once they make and commit to a choice, an emotional attachment to the choice develops. This attachment develops most likely because the brand choices are considered a reflection of the self (Kim & Sherman, 2007), and can symbolically emphasize and reinforce how consumers think about themselves (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). In contrast, choice does not necessarily implicate one's inner self, and is not as self-defining for East Asians (Kim & Sherman, 2007). As a result, East Asians do not develop the same level of commitment or emotional attachment to a choice.

Thus, I predict that since Westerners tend to have stronger brand preferences and feel a stronger emotional connection to these brands, they will be more likely to express emotion

towards these brands. Specifically, I predict that Westerners will use more emotional words to describe these brands compared to East Asians.

Method

Fifty-nine participants between the ages of 18 and 40 (M_{age} = 33; 66% female) participated in an online survey conducted in the U.S. and Japan. The number of observations that were used in the analysis was 58 due to a missing response. The method of recruitment and translation was identical to that of Experiment 1; however, the participants were from a different survey pool.

In the survey, participants were presented with a brand and the following sentences: "What words come to mind when you think of the following brand? These words can be related to features, images, or anything you associate with the brand. Please list as many words as you can come up with." Participants were allowed to list up to 20 words per brand. There were a total of 34 global brands in various categories that were chosen to be part of this survey—each participant viewed and answered this question for 17 brands. A multitude of brands and product categories were included in the survey to achieve better generalizability. The brands were selected based on the same criteria as that of Experiment 1.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to answer questions about the 17 brands that they had provided descriptions for in the previous section. These questions asked about the participants' emotions toward each brand. I included 3 measure items that more directly spoke to the connection that participants felt with each brand. The first item asked, "How much would you care if this brand disappeared from the market?" The second item asked, "How special do you think this brand is?" The third item asked, "How important is this brand to your identity?"

All of these measures, which were measured on a 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("A lot") Likert scale, can be found in the Appendix.

Results

In order to analyze the data, the first step was to code participants' responses into hot and non-hot words. 2 independent coders who were English-Japanese bilinguals and blind to the hypothesis and predictions conducted the coding (intercoder reliability = .86). They were first given a few examples of hot words (e.g. awesome, love) and non-hot words (e.g. beverage, convenient). They then coded participants' responses separately. The 2 different coding results were compared, and only when the 2 coders agreed that a word was hot was it ultimately coded as such. When the 2 coders disagreed, the word was ultimately dropped.

The results are shown by product category and by culture. Since there was no significant interaction between product category and culture, the results are pooled.

In order to compare the frequency of hot words used in the responses across cultures, I examined the raw number of hot words generated as well as the number of hot words as a percentage of the total number of words generated.

I ran separate models to examine the effect of culture on the following variables: number of hot words, total number of words, and percentage of hot words generated. The analyses controlled for product category. There was a main effect of culture on the number of hot words generated, $F(1, 57) = 11.54, p < .002$. On average, American participants generated hot words more frequently per brand compared to Japanese participants (Ms = 2.22 vs. .63, respectively). There was also a significant difference between the two cultures in terms of the total number of words generated (Ms = 11.98 vs. 7.72, respectively), $F(1, 57) = 8.21, p < .006$. Finally, American

participants generated a higher percentage of hot words compared to Japanese participants ($Ms =$ 18.53% vs. 8.16%, respectively), $F(1, 57) = 8.05$, $p < .007$.

Ancillary Analysis. I examined 3 other variables separately: positive emotions towards the brand, negative emotions towards the brand, and perceived brand connection. For the positive emotion variable, I combined and averaged 9 items from the measures taken at the end of the survey ($\alpha = .97$). For the negative emotion variable, I combined and averaged 4 items from the measures taken at the end of the survey ($\alpha = .89$). For the perceived brand connection variable, 3 items from the measures taken at the end of the survey were combined and averaged ($\alpha = .97$). Details for these variables can be found in the Appendix.

American participants felt a marginally more positive emotion towards brands compared to Japanese participants (3.89 vs. 3.27, respectively), ($F(1, 57) = 3.34$, $p < .08$). The same pattern held true for negative emotions, though the effect was not statistically significant: American participants felt more negative emotions towards brands compared to Japanese participants (3.34 vs. 2.86, respectively), $F(1, 57) = 2.03$, $p > .15$.

In addition, I looked at each of the 3 key brand connection measures separately. Specifically, my purpose was to explore whether there was a significant cross-cultural difference for each variable. Consistent with my predictions, American participants were significantly higher in their concern if the brands were to disappear from the market compared to Japanese participants (4.16 vs. 3.19, respectively), $F(1, 57) = 8.62$, $p < .005$. American participants also perceived the brands to be significantly more special compared to Japanese participants (4.23 vs. 3.01, respectively), $F(1, 57) = 13.34$, $p < .001$. Finally, American participants felt that the brands were part of their identity significantly more than did Japanese participants (3.90 vs. 2.93), $F(1, 57) = 6.48$, $p < .02$.

Mediation Analysis. In order to determine whether the brand connection measure mediated the effect of culture on the number of hot words used to describe brands, I conducted a mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The mean indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis was negative and significant (*a* x *b* = -.0687), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (-.1027 to -.0454). The direct effect (*c* = -.2486) was also significant (*p* < .001). Thus, we can conclude that there seems to be a complementary mediation of brand connection. Specifically, American participants, when compared to East Asians, use more hot words to describe brands at least in part due to their higher degree of self-brand connection.

Figure 4.1

Experiment 2 Average Number of Hot Words, Total Words, and Percentage of Hot Words per Pair by Culture

	Western			East Asian		
	Hot Words	Total Words	% Hot Words	Hot Words	Total Words	% Hot Words
Coke/Pepsi	3.05	12.15	25.12%	1.22	9.00	13.61%
Domino's/Pizza Hut	4.81	14.10	34.14%	1.07	7.10	15.06%
iPhone/Galaxy	4.88	16.05	30.42%	0.98	6.95	14.08%
Disney/Barbie	2.35	13.40	17.54%	1.74	10.00	17.38%
McDonald's/Burger King	4.03	17.15	23.51%	1.27	12.40	10.27%
Louis Vuitton/Gucci	1.62	10.35	15.69%	0.34	8.70	3.89%
Canon/Nikon	1.30	11.30	11.54%	0.05	7.35	0.67%
Nokia/Motorola	1.49	16.05	9.29%	0.11	9.05	1.27%
Nike/Adidas	0.34	8.55	4.01%	0.19	5.65	3.33%
Gap/H&M	0.66	9.80	6.73%	0.54	7.25	7.47%
Seiko/Casio	0.41	7.70	5.38%	0.53	10.35	5.11%
Asahi/Budweiser	1.32	11.75	11.22%	0.07	6.45	1.11%
Epson/HP	1.33	10.95	12.18%	0.05	6.45	0.83%
UPS/Fedex	1.33	11.45	11.61%	0.00	4.85	0.00%
Xbox/PlayStation	1.23	10.00	12.32%	0.00	7.10	0.00%
Ford/GM	1.43	10.90	13.10%	0.45	5.80	7.78%
Mastercard/Visa	1.23	11.45	10.71%	0.32	6.95	4.60%
Total	2.22	11.98	18.53%	0.63	7.72	8.16%

Discussion

As predicted, Western participants generated more hot words compared to East Asian participants. This pattern was true for all brand pairs (with the exception of the Seiko and Casio pair, for which participants from both cultures barely used hot words). These results are consistent with the notion that Westerners generally feel and express more emotions toward brands than do East Asians. However, the degree of emotion felt by participants from both cultures depends on the product category, and most likely on the brand in question as well. Apparently, some brand and product categories are more self-defining and/or relevant than are others, resulting in different degrees of self-brand connection.

In terms of the positive and negative emotions felt towards the brands, East Asians and Western participants did not differ significantly. Western participants reported having marginally more positive emotions compared to East Asian participants, but the two did not differ in the amount of negative emotion. However, more importantly, Western participants espoused a significantly stronger connection with brands compared to East Asian participants. Specifically, Western participants reported a higher level of concern if the brands were to disappear from the market, believed that the brands were more special, and felt that the brands were part of their identity to a stronger degree compared to their East Asian counterparts. Moreover, the mediation analysis confirmed that Western participants used more hot words to describe brands due to their higher level of self-brand connection. These results in aggregate suggest that Westerners generally feel more strongly about brands than do their East Asian peers.

As discussed earlier, Westerners are known to employ a more analytical, logical style of thinking compared to East Asians (Nisbett et al., 2001). At the same time, however, once they express their opinion, they are more likely to become psychologically and emotionally

55

committed to it compared to East Asians (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Thus, in the future, additional insight could be gained by conducting a follow-up study that uses the same word association exercise—but instead involves participants' favorite brands. Specifically, similar to the design for Experiment 3, we could ask participants to list their favorite brands prior to the survey, and then examine whether they use more emotional words for their favorite brands when compared to brands they have no self-brand connection with. By employing this survey design, we should be able to better understand how self-brand connection affects the way certain brands are perceived and described.

In the next chapter, I investigate whether Westerners are indeed more brand loyal compared to East Asians.

CHAPTER 5: EXPERIMENT 3 – CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN BRAND SWITCHING BEHAVIOR

The first 2 studies provide converging evidence that Westerners have a stronger emotional connection with brands than do East Asians. In this study, I explore whether and how brand loyalty differs across Western and East Asian cultures. Specifically, I examine how brand switching behavior differs across the 2 cultures, and whether this difference is consistent with the notion that Westerners are more brand loyal compared to East Asians.

As discussed earlier, once Westerners express their commitment to a brand, they are unlikely to break this commitment and switch to a different brand. Further, once this commitment to a brand is formed, they feel the psychological need to remain true to certain brands because they believe that their commitment to their decision is a reflection of their internal self (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Kanagawa et al., 2001).

East Asians, on the other hand, do not form relationships with brands to the same degree as do Westerners, and thus do not feel the same level of commitment. Thus, East Asians express liking for and interest in a number of brands. Furthermore, since they do not feel the need to exhibit consistency across contexts (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999; Petrova, Cialdini, & Sills, 2007), it is likely that they do not feel the same pressure that Westerners do to be consistent in their brand choices. In fact, in the East Asian cultural context, people are expected to vary their behavior according to the social situation. People who do not, or cannot, aptly read the context and alter their behavior appropriately are considered immature and selfish (Kanagawa et al., 2001; Kim & Markus, 1999; Triandis, 2001).

In East Asian culture, people are expected to embrace and be adaptive to change (Heine, 2001b; Nisbett et al., 2001; Peng et al., 2006). The idea is that life is ephemeral and constantly in flux. Correspondingly, East Asian philosophies emphasize the importance of not resisting, but accepting and evolving with change. Therefore, it is not surprising that East Asians, when compared to Westerners, are more likely to be motivated by self-improvement. On the hand, Westerners are more motivated by the desire for self-consistency compared to East Asians (Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, et al., 2001; Kitayama et al., 1997; White & Lehman, 2005).

Given that Westerners are motivated to view themselves as consistent, I predict that Westerners will display stronger brand loyalty to their favorite brands. In general, given the choice between their favorite brand and a competing brand, Westerners should show less switching behavior compared to East Asians. On the other hand, I predict that East Asians will be more open to trying a different brand compared to Westerners because they are motivated to self-improve by seeking new information and expanding their horizons. This trend will especially be true if the competing brand has a new, unique feature that East Asians' favorite brand does not have. In other words, East Asians will be more interested in a brand with a new attribute, while Westerners will be more concerned about being consistent and staying true to their favorite brand.

Method

Three hundred and thirty-seven participants between the ages of 25 and 40 ($M_{age} = 33$; 48% female) from the U.S. and Japan took part in this online survey. This survey was conducted as a section of a multi-part study. For the American population, only Caucasian Americans were included. The recruitment method was identical to that of Experiments 1 and 2. I developed the English survey and subsequently translated it into Japanese myself.

As part of the screening process, potential participants were first asked about their favorite brands from 2 of the following 6 product categories: cola, sneakers, chocolate candy bars, fast fashion apparel, and chips. These 2 product categories were randomly assigned to each participant. There were 2 target brands in each product category; potential participants were only eligible to take the survey if they chose target brands in both of the product categories that they were assigned. For example, if the potential participant was assigned to the cola and sneakers categories, they had to choose either Coca-Cola or Pepsi, and Nike or Adidas, respectively, to take the survey. Alternatively, if the potential participant chose the option, "Other," s/he was considered not eligible. This screen was put into place in order to ensure that participants would be making choices between their favorite brand and a competing brand. For each product category, brands with significant market share and distribution in both the U.S. and Japan were chosen as the 2 target brands. Such a selection process was followed to ensure that participants from both countries would be familiar with the brands, as well as to ensure a sufficiently high likelihood that these brands would be chosen as favorites.

Eligible participants were told that they were going to be participating in multiple studies. They were then randomly assigned to 1 of 2 conditions. In the control condition, participants were asked to describe what they had done the day before. In the prime condition, participants read a short paragraph about the value of trying new things. They were specifically told that they would have to recall what they had read; this instruction was included so that participants would pay more attention to the prime. The paragraph the prime condition participants read was the following: "Even on a day to day basis, there is always room to grow and to learn new things. One simple way to make this happen is to break the chain of habits. If you tend to get stuck in a routine, try something different for a change. Try something new. These seemingly simple acts

can open your eyes." To ensure that participants had properly read and understood the paragraph, they were then asked to summarize what they had read. Participants were then told that this was the end of the survey, and that they would be moving onto the next one. In the next section, participants filled out an unrelated filler survey to ensure that the possibility of demand effects was minimized.

Subsequently, participants made choice decisions in the 2 product categories that they encountered during the initial screening process. Specifically, for each product category, participants were asked to choose between 2 brands: the brand that they had indicated as their favorite and a competing brand. In each choice paradigm, information was given about 3 attributes only: the brand name, price, and a specific brand feature. The 2 brands always had the same price. While the participant's favorite brand always had the standard feature, the competing brand always had a new feature. For example, if a participant chose Pepsi as his/her favorite brand in the cola category, Pepsi contained the standard feature, while the competing brand (Coca-Cola) had the new feature. Both colas were priced the same. Participants were then asked to choose between the 2 brands given this information. The full stimuli can be found in the Appendix.

As part of the final survey, participants were asked to fill out a total of 15 items selected and adapted from 4 different scales: Consumer Innovativeness scale (Manning, Bearden, & Madden, 1995), Consumers' Need For Uniqueness scale (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001), Resistance to Change scale (Oreg, 2003), and Preference for Consistency scale (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995). The items borrowed from these scales can be found in the Appendix. My key objective was to better understand the relationship between such individual differences and the brand and product choices people make, and to see if there were differences at the cultural level.

Results

Manipulation check. In order to ensure that the participants in the prime condition were properly primed, their free response summary of the paragraph was reviewed. The responses of participants who failed to recall what the paragraph was about, wrote about an unrelated topic, or wrote nonsensical words were excluded from the data analysis.

Choice responses. To examine the effects of culture on choice, I included product category as a covariate in my model. In general, American participants were less likely to switch to the competitor brand than were Japanese participants (31.1% vs. 50.6%, respectively), (χ^2 = 27.09, $p < .001$). In a separate model, I let culture and prime interact, per my prediction that the prime would have a different effect on each culture. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between culture and prime on choice ($\chi^2 = 6.77$, $p < .01$). In the control condition, American participants were significantly less likely to switch from their favorite brand to the competing brand compared to Japanese participants (22.0% vs. 48.7%, respectively). However, in the prime condition, there was no significant difference in switching behavior between American and Japanese participants (41.5% vs. 53.1%, respectively). In other words, American participants appeared to act more like Japanese participants when primed compared to when they were not primed. Examining the effects of the prime on choice by culture in two separate models, there was a significant difference in American participants' switching behavior between when they were not primed and primed (22.0% vs. 41.5%, respectively), ($\chi^2 = 9.39$, $p < .003$), while there was no significant difference in Japanese participants' switching behavior regardless of whether they were not primed or primed (48.7% vs. 53.1%, respectively), ($\chi^2 = .39$, $p > .53$).

Ancillary Analysis. I explored whether there was an effect of consistency on choice. Affinity for Newness was a 7-item subscale ($\alpha = .92$) and Consistency was an 8-item subscale ($\alpha = .89$) that I

created from the 4 scales I borrowed items from. To create these subscales, I combined and averaged the items. The full subscales can be found in the Appendix. There was no significant effect of affinity for newness on choice ($\chi^2 = .37$, $p > .54$). However, there was a significant effect of consistency on choice ($\chi^2 = 5.06$, $p < .03$). Furthermore, those who chose to stay with their favorite brand, as opposed to switching to the competing brand, were higher on the consistency scale (*Ms* = 4.65 vs. 4.23, respectively).

Additionally, there was a significant relationship between culture and both affinity for newness and consistency. Contrary to what was predicted, American participants were higher on affinity for newness compared to Japanese participants (*Ms* = 5.63 vs. 4.93, $p < .001$). However, American participants were also higher on consistency compared to Japanese participants (*Ms* = 4.49 vs. 4.21, $p < .03$), a result that was expected.

Figure 5.1

Experiment 3: Brand Switching Frequency (%) by Culture and Condition
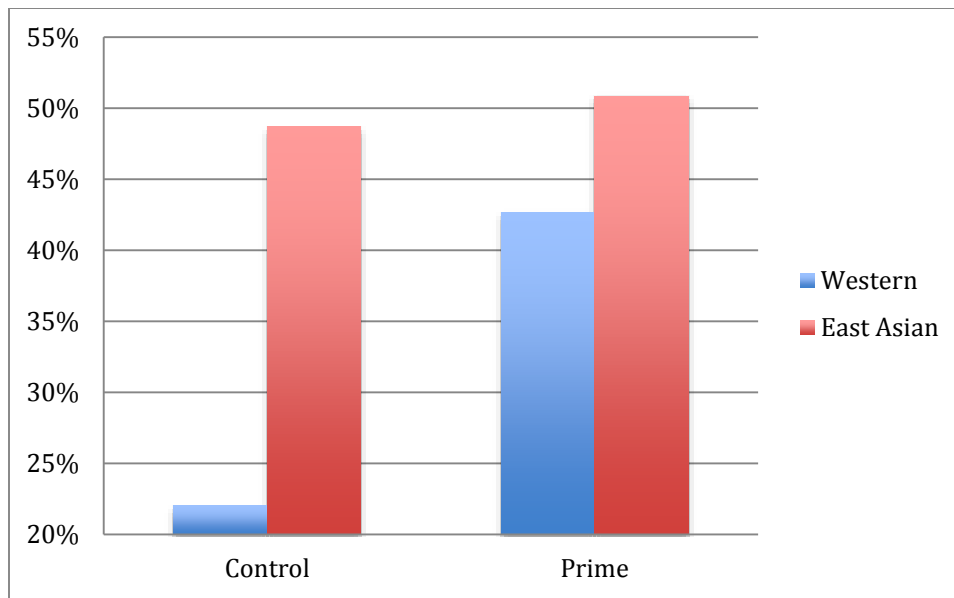
Table 5.1

Experiment 3: Brand Choice by Culture, Condition, and Product Category

		Control			Prime		
		Stay	Switch	Switch %	Stay	Switch	Switch %
Cola	Western	21	1	4.5%	25	4	13.8%
	East Asian	19	13	40.6%	8	8	50.0%
Sneakers	Western	19	10	34.5%	10	13	56.5%
	East Asian	10	16	61.5%	8	10	55.6%
Chips	Western	28	2	6.7%	12	16	57.1%
	East Asian	19	4	17.4%	12	9	42.9%
Pizza	Western	20	10	33.3%	20	10	33.3%
	East Asian	5	15	75.0%	5	15	75.0%
Apparel	Western	22	7	24.1%	4	11	73.3%
	East Asian	13	13	50.0%	7	8	53.3%
Chocolate	Western	21	7	25.0%	15	7	31.8%
	East Asian	14	15	51.7%	13	10	43.5%
Total	Western	131	37	22.0%	86	61	41.5%
	East Asian	80	76	48.7%	53	60	53.1%

Discussion

As predicted, brand switching behavior differed across cultures. In general, East Asian participants were significantly more likely to switch from their favorite brand to a competing brand, regardless of whether they were in the prime or control condition. Western participants, on the other hand, switched significantly more when they were primed to think about the ability to grow and to take the opportunity to try new things, than when they were not. In the prime condition, there was no significant difference in the switching behavior of East Asian and Western participants.

Contrary to what was expected, affinity for newness was higher for Westerners compared to East Asians. One possible reason for this result could be due to the social desirability bias. Specifically, in Western cultural contexts being open to experiences and seeking variety is viewed positively (Kim & Drolet, 2003). As a result, it is possible that Western participants' responses on the affinity for newness subscale may have been inflated to some degree. Furthermore, the possibly inflated results may be the reason that no relationship was found between affinity for newness and choice in the current study.

Overall, the general findings from this study suggest that one of the key reasons why Western consumers, when compared to their East Asian counterparts, appear to be more brand loyal—and thus less likely to switch from their favorite brand to a competitor brand—is that the need or desire to be open-minded and to try something new and different is often not salient. Since the Western cultural imperative is to have a consistent inner self (i.e. to be true to one's beliefs and values) and to not be pushed around by external influences, the inclination to stay with one's favorite brands is understandable. In contrast, the East Asian cultural imperative to

always cultivate and improve oneself—and be attentive to the context—encourages consumers to be in-the-know about, and to try different brands.

It may also be true that since the East Asian cultural context promotes self-cultivation (Ho, 1995; Suzuki, 2010), East Asians perceive inherent value in the act and experience of trying new things. Indeed, effort, endurance, and the mastery of various skills are regarded very highly in East Asia. I explore this topic further in the context of luxury brand purchases in the next chapter.

In the future, it would be interesting to explore whether East Asians are indeed more likely to switch when there is a new feature associated with a competing brand as opposed to a competing brand without any new features, as these findings should further clarify what is truly driving East Asians to switch to a different brand. In addition, identifying a more indirect way to measure participants' affinity for newness may prove useful.

CHAPTER 6: EXPERIMENT 4 – CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN LUXURY BRAND CHOICE

In the studies discussed thus far, participants responded to questions and made choices about brands in multiple product categories. In the next 2 chapters, I examine East Asian participants' brand and consumption choices in the luxury category. Examining East Asian brand and consumption choices in the luxury category is a useful way to test popular beliefs about East Asian conformity and (lack of) self-expression, as luxury consumption is often conspicuous, but is typically interpreted in the literature as a way to fit in.

Conventional wisdom says that East Asian consumers have an obsession with luxury brands (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Moreover, this supposed obsession has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon as a result of the strong social need to follow norms and conform within East Asian cultural contexts. Without question, buying well-known, popular brands decreases the uncertainty of approval by one's social group. Louis Vuitton bags are extremely prevalent in Tokyo because of the cultural imperative to avoid losing face, a desire that encourages people to conform (De Mooij, 2013). In other words, the idea is that in the East Asian cultural context, buying well-known brands mitigates the negative social risk of not being accepted by the group. Indeed, consumers are more likely to have favorable attitudes towards brands that they can easily justify their choice (Wånke, Bohner, & Jurkowitsch, 1997). If the group believes that certain brands have a favorable image and high credibility, the likelihood that a member of this social group will choose those brands over others should be higher (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Keller, 1993). In this way, brands are perceived as the "safe choice" that enables people to fit into the crowd.

Indeed, empirical research on cross-cultural differences between Western and East Asian cultures has consistently shown that Westerners tend to make more expressive, unique choices, while East Asians are less likely to express their uniqueness and are more likely to follow social norms (Kim & Markus, 1999; Kitayama et al., 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Moreover, Kim and Drolet (2009) showed that East Asians, when compared to Westerners, consistently chose brand-name products over generic products, and that this choice pattern was due to social status concerns. These results are consistent with the notion that East Asians—relative to Westerners—are more concerned about expressing that they are upholding the consensually shared standard of striving for excellence, which in this context translates into choosing the brand-name over the generic product.

In this current study, I explore whether there are other reasons that drive East Asian consumers to purchase luxury brands other than to conform and to send a social signal. Specifically, I examine whether Westerners and East Asians differ in their appreciation of craftsmanship and heritage.

As discussed earlier, in East Asian culture, the pursuit of mastery and perfection is highly valued (Lebra, 1976). In Zen Buddhism, an essential teaching is that merely acquiring technical knowledge of an art is not sufficient to make someone its true master; rather, one needs to delve deeply into the inner spirit of the art (Suzuki, 2010). In other words, one can only truly become a master when one learns to not only think rationally and cognitively—to view logic as the ultimate evaluation of human behavior is considered a terrible mistake—but also to know and to intuitively feel it in the gut. Cultivating an art is often perceived as an opportunity for spiritual enhancement.

As Suzuki (2010) very aptly explains, the Zen principle of *satori*, or awakening, reflects the true essence of Oriental thinking:

"The principle of *satori* is not to rely upon concepts in order to reach the truth of things, for concepts are useful in defining the truth of things but not in making us personally acquainted with it. Conceptual knowledge may make us wise in a way, but this is only superficial. It is not the living truth itself, and therefore there is no creativeness in it, being a mere accumulation of dead matter… There is truth in saying that the Oriental mind is intuitive while the Western mind is logical and discursive… the ultimate truth of life and of things generally is to be intuitively and not conceptually grasped…"

Thus, the *satori* experience is not something that can be attained by the typical techniques of teaching or learning. Learning by utilizing a linear, progressive method does not allow one to experience and understand the beauty, mysteries and significance of life. Truly understanding and mastering an art can only be achieved through intrinsic experience and inner evolution.

It is apparent that the idea of *satori* is very relevant in the domains of arts and crafts. A craftsperson only truly surpasses being a "mere" expert or a specialist and becomes a *meijin*, or a master, when his/her originality and individuality differentiates and defines him/her. It is critical to emphasize that no one is born a *meijin*; one can only evolve into a *meijin* through patience, endurance, and scrupulous discipline. Thus, East Asians have a deeply felt appreciation of the extreme difficulty of becoming a true master of an art or a craft.

Though Confucianism and Zen Buddhism are generally very different philosophies that focus on different ideas, Confucian teachings also emphasize the importance of self-realization and self-cultivation, though the motivations to strive to fulfill these goals are vastly different from the Buddhist notion of *satori*. In Confucianism, one is encouraged to better oneself in order to fulfill moral and social obligations. In fact, cultivating the self is believed to lubricate society, as it serves to maintain harmony in social relationships (Ho, 1995).

Given the emphasis on self-cultivation and mastery in East Asian culture, I propose that East Asians appreciate intangible brand attributes related to effort and the pursuit of perfection, such as craftsmanship and heritage, more so than do Westerners. Specifically, I predict that East Asians will have a higher willingness to pay for a product that has more of these intangible attributes related to craftsmanship and heritage than will Westerners. Westerners, on the other hand, do not view these values as important to the same degree. Thus, I predict they will not have the same level of willingness to pay a premium for a product that is perceived to be higher in craftsmanship and heritage.

Method

Participants between the ages of 25 and 40 (M_{age} = 35; 54% female) from the U.S. and Japan took part in this online survey. Since Japanese participants took this survey as part of a multi-part survey, there were significantly more Japanese participants than American participants. Since 87 Americans took part in this current survey, I randomly selected 87 Japanese participants from the Japanese participant pool by utilizing the randomizer function in Excel. Thus, the resulting number of participants included in this current data analysis is 174. The recruitment and translation method was identical to that of Experiment 3.

Since this survey focused on luxury brand choice behavior, it was important to ensure that the participants were familiar with and had an appreciation of the product category. As a proxy for these measures, potential survey participants were asked prior to beginning the survey about their past luxury purchase behavior. Specifically, participants were asked to answer the following question: "Of the following, please select the brands that you have purchased in the past, if any." The list was composed of 13 major luxury brands that are often associated with the luxury bag and/or watch categories, as these were the 2 product categories that participants were

asked about in the actual survey. A full list of the brands is included in the Appendix. A potential participant was eligible to take the survey if s/he selected at least one of the brands. Alternatively, if a potential participant selected the choice, "None of the above," s/he was deemed not eligible.

All participants were asked to read a short description about and make choices for 2 fictitious luxury brands: luxury leather bag brand Z and luxury watch brand N. The description for each brand conveyed a story about its history, heritage, and focus on craftsmanship. It also contained information about the price range for the brand's products. The full stimuli can be found in the Appendix.

For each brand, participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 non-overlapping conditions. For example, if a participant was randomly assigned to the first condition for brand Z, s/he was randomly assigned to either the second or third condition for brand N, but not to the first condition. For each brand, the brand description was identical across all conditions. What did differ across conditions were the 2 options the participants were asked to choose between.

Across all conditions and both brands, Option X was the less expensive, "lower craftsmanship cue," option and Option Y was the more expensive, "higher craftsmanship cue," option (Option X and Option Y will herein be referred to as the "low craftsmanship option," and "high craftsmanship option," respectively). In the first condition ("Involvement"), participants were asked to make a choice between products that differed on the number of craftspeople who were involved in the making of each product. More (less) craftspeople were involved in the making of Option X (Option Y). In the second ("Expertise") condition, the 2 choices differed on the number of years of experience the craftsperson(s) had acquired. Option X (Option Y) was made by a craftsperson(s) with less (more) experience. In the third ("Origin") condition,

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participants made a choice between 2 options that were made in different countries. Option Y was made in the same country where the brand was founded, while Option X was made in a foreign country.

It should be noted that across all conditions and for both brands, it was emphasized that the 2 choice options differed only in 1 way—"Involvement," "Expertise," or "Origin"—besides the price. For example, in the "Involvement" condition for watch brand N, participants read the following: "The 2 watches are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the number of craftspersons who worked on each watch."

After participants made their choice, they were asked to explain the rationale for their choice. They also answered questions about their perception of the quality, heritage, and craftsmanship of the brand. These items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale anchored on 1 ("extremely high" for quality and craftsmanship; "extremely poor" for heritage) and 7 ("extremely low" for quality and craftsmanship; "extremely rich" for heritage). At the end of the survey, participants filled out items selected from 4 different measures. Participants were also asked about their level of annual household income.

Results

Participants' responses are shown by culture, by condition, and by product category. Since the results are consistent between the 2 product categories, I will only discuss pooled results.

As expected, there was a significant main effect of culture on choice ($\chi^2 = 27.03$, $p < .001$). Overall, Japanese participants were more likely than their American counterparts to select the high craftsmanship option (76.4% vs. 48.9%, respectively). Unexpectedly, there was also a significant main effect of condition on choice ($\chi^2 = 8.75$, $p < .02$). This effect was due to

significantly more participants selecting the high craftsmanship option in the Origin condition compared to the Involvement condition and the Expertise condition ($\chi^2 = 7.48$, $p < .01$). As will be explained next, this effect is driven by American participants' choice responses.

Interestingly, there was a significant interaction between culture and condition ($\chi^2 = 6.98$, $p < .03$). This effect was driven by the fact that American participants were significantly more likely to choose the high craftsmanship option in the Origin condition than in the Involvement condition and the Expertise condition ($\chi^2 = 6.97$, $p < .01$). Thus, though Japanese participants were significantly more likely to choose the high craftsmanship option compared to American participants in the Involvement condition and the Expertise condition, there was no significant difference between the 2 cultures in the Origin condition. In other words, American participants in the Origin condition appeared to be more like Japanese participants—they preferred the high craftsmanship option to the low craftsmanship option more often.

As expected, participants who chose the high craftsmanship option compared to participants who chose the low craftsmanship option had a significantly higher perception in terms of product quality ($Ms = 5.46$ vs. 5.35, $F(1, 347) = 7.32$, $p < .008$), craftsmanship ($Ms = 5.58$ vs. 5.47, $F(1, 347) = 8.05$, $p < .005$), and heritage ($Ms = 5.48$ vs. 5.42, $F(1, 347) = 8.36$, $p < .005$). Additionally, there was a main effect of culture on quality ($F(1, 347) = 34.29$, $p < .001$), craftsmanship ($F(1, 347) = 32.78$, $p < .001$), and heritage ($F(1, 347) = 50.61$, $p < .001$). Perhaps not surprisingly, American participants were more generous in their evaluation and gave higher ratings overall (across product categories, condition, and choice) compared to Japanese participants on quality ($Ms = 5.72$ vs. 5.12), craftsmanship ($Ms = 5.82$ vs. 5.26), and heritage ($Ms = 5.78$ vs. 5.13).

Figure 6.1
Experiment 4: Choice Ratios by Culture
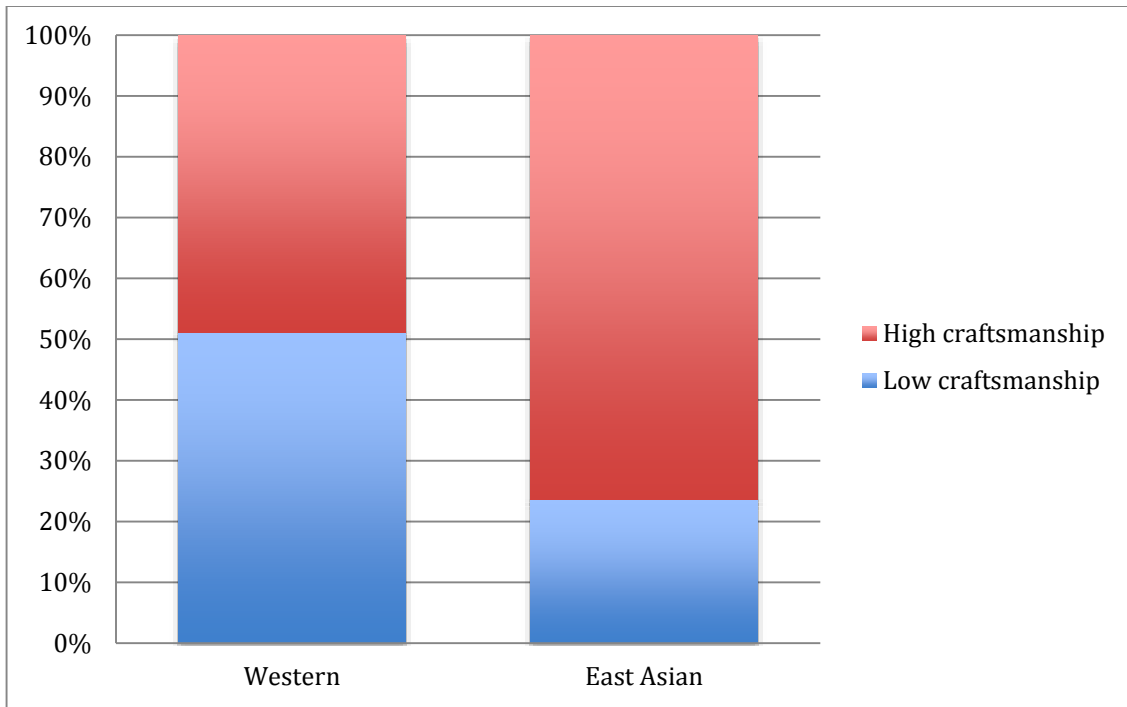
Table 6.1

Experiment 4: Choice Responses by Condition, Culture, and Product Category

		Watch			Leather Bag		
		Low Craftsmanship	High Craftsmanship	% High Craftsmanship	Low Craftsmanship	High Craftsmanship	% High Craftsmanship
Involvement Condition	American	22	7	24.1%	17	13	43.3%
	Japanese	9	25	73.5%	7	17	70.8%
Expertise Condition	American	20	11	35.5%	13	16	55.2%
	Japanese	5	25	83.3%	7	26	78.8%
Origin Condition	American	7	20	74.1%	10	18	64.3%
	Japanese	4	19	82.6%	9	21	70.0%
Total	American	49	38	43.7%	40	47	54.0%
	Japanese	18	69	79.3%	23	64	73.6%

Figure 6.2

Experiment 4: Choice Frequency (%) of High Craftsmanship Option By Culture and Condition
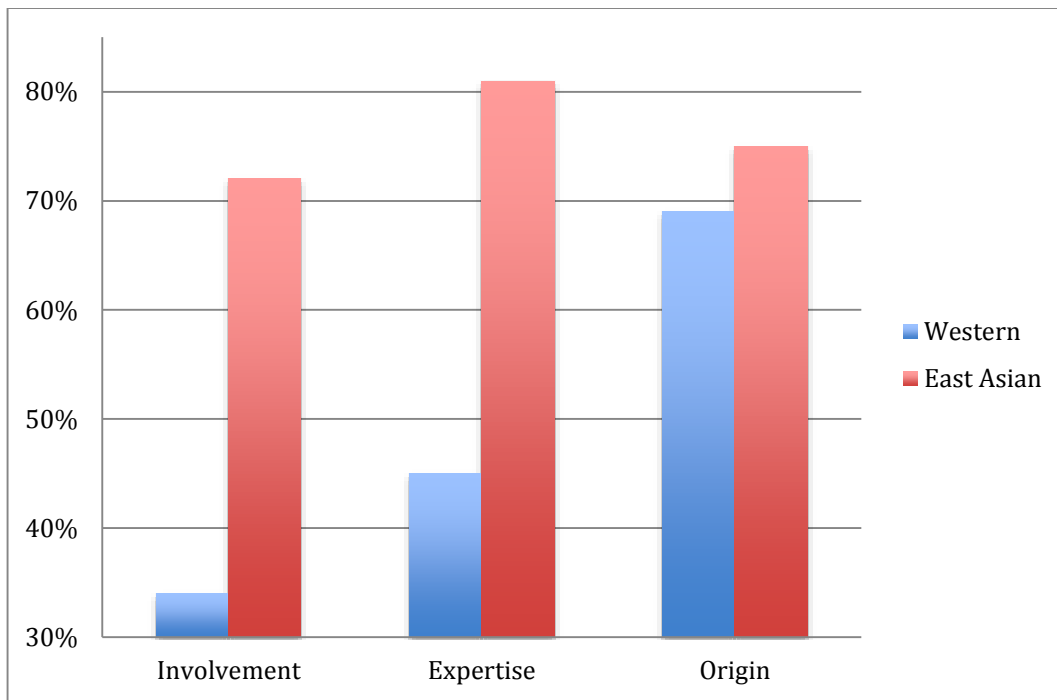
Discussion

As predicted, overall, East Asian participants were significantly more likely to choose the high craftsmanship option compared to their Western counterparts. The rationale that East Asian participants provided for their choice was consistent with the notion that they have a higher appreciation and thus willingness to pay for a brand's craftsmanship and commitment to heritage. They believed that a product made by fewer (more) craftspeople, a product made by a craftsperson with more (less) years of experience, and a product made in the brand's (non-) founding country was more (less) valuable and worthwhile.

What was not necessarily expected was that the Western participants had a significantly higher appreciation and willingness to pay for products that were manufactured in the country in which that brand was originally founded. Specifically, Western participants, when compared to East Asian participants, were significantly more likely to choose the low craftsmanship option over the high craftsmanship option in the Involvement and Expertise conditions. However, there was no significant difference between the 2 cultures in the Origin condition. In other words, Western participants in the Origin condition appeared to be more like Japanese participants— they preferred the high craftsmanship option to the low craftsmanship option more often.

The reason why Western participants appreciated and had a higher willingness to pay for a product that was made in the country where the product was originally founded may be that the product's country of origin is a relatively obvious and salient proxy for quality in their minds. While attributes such as how many craftspeople were involved in the making of a product or how many years of experience a craftsperson has acquired may not be a topic of frequent discussion in the Western consumption context, a product's country of origin may be a topic that is

relatively more common. Moreover, the country of origin is typically stamped or printed on the product, and is thus visible on the product.

The findings from this study provide initial evidence that East Asians and Westerners do not necessarily purchase luxury brands for the same reasons. Specifically, East Asians have a higher appreciation and willingness to pay for the quality, craftsmanship, and heritage that is associated with luxury brands more so than do Westerners. In this way, East Asians are able to simultaneously express that they are self-improving by choosing the high craftsmanship option, and that they appreciate the brand's pursuit of perfection.

The findings also suggest that Westerners, in this case Americans, are more price sensitive compared to East Asians. In the free response in which participants were asked to explain the reason for their choice, Western participants who chose the low craftsmanship option most commonly said that it was because of the lower price. East Asians who chose the low craftsmanship option also explained that the lower price was the reason for their choice, but less frequently.

Interestingly, a notable number of Western participants who chose the low craftsmanship option also mentioned that this option was "good enough," an opinion that is suggestive of the idea that they are using a more satisficing—as opposed to a maximizing—choice strategy (Schwartz et al., 2002). None of the East Asian participants who chose the low craftsmanship option alluded to such reasoning. In fact, in the involvement condition, the majority of the East Asian participants who chose the low craftsmanship option explained that they perceived the option with more craftspeople involved as the better choice because of the diversity in skill that the different craftspeople collectively brought. Most notably, multiple East Asian participants who chose the high craftsmanship option reasoned that they want the product that is better, and is

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reflective of the expertise, spirit, and passion of the craftsperson(s). A majority of both Western and East Asian participants who chose the high craftsmanship option mentioned that they want the better quality option.

In order to provide stronger evidence that these results were not only driven by the higher price sensitivity of Westerners but also by East Asians' higher willingness to pay for distinctive, non-brand features—in this case attributes that implicate heritage and craftsmanship cues—a follow-up study that incorporates a choice vs. matching paradigm (Carmon & Simonson, 1998; Drolet & Luce, 2004; Luce, Payne, & Bettman, 1999; Tversky, Sattath, & Slovic, 1988) would be valuable. This paradigm would enable further investigation of the cultural differences in the tradeoff made between price and other non-brand attributes. If East Asians do indeed have a heightened focus on and appreciation for distinctive non-brand features, this tendency should be reflected in the price-matching task as well as in the choice task.

It might also be valuable to explore whether similar effects can be found in product categories that are more directly and obviously related to improving the self. For instance, an interesting product category to examine may be cell phone cases. It is fairly typical for consumers across both cultures to personalize their cell phone by adorning it in some manner, most commonly by purchasing a cell phone case. In East Asia in particular, consumers often customize their cell phones to a much greater degree. They often purchase a blank case that they design and decorate with various materials. Similar hands-on customizing behaviors can be observed in several other product categories, including mint cases and nail extensions for women. By examining consumers' behaviors in product categories that directly implicate consumer learning, practice, and experience may provide us with a more comprehensive view of how self-improvement manifests itself in consumption and consumption choices. Moreover, in

future studies, we could include a question that directly asks participants how much self-improvement they think they can achieve through their consumption choice. By asking such a question, we would likely be able to obtain a clearer picture of the degree to which the need for self-improvement drives consumption choice for East Asians.

In the next study, I examine East Asians' luxury brand choices again, but from a different perspective.

CHAPTER 7: EXPERIMENT 5 – OCCASION-BASED SELF-EXPRESSION AND LUXURY BRAND CHOICE FOR EAST ASIAN CONSUMERS

In the previous chapter, I explored how Westerners and East Asians differed in their appreciation of and willingness to pay for craftsmanship and heritage. In this chapter, I take a closer look at East Asians and their luxury brand choices across occasions. Specifically, I examine whether and how East Asians self-express through different brand choices across varying social contexts. I did not include Western participants in this study, since it is already well established that Westerners make self-expressive choices (Kim & Chu, 2011; Kim & Markus, 1999). Since there is no study (to my knowledge) that provides evidence of East Asian self-expression, my current objective was to explore this very topic.

As previously discussed, conventional wisdom, as well as research findings, suggest that East Asians purchase brands in order to conform to the social norm and to send a social signal to others that they are making the socially appropriate choice (De Mooij, 2013; Kapferer, 2012; Kim & Drolet, 2009).

Self-expression in the Western and East Asian cultural contexts carry different meanings, and are thus manifested in distinct ways. In Western culture, self-expression is typically associated with voicing one's internal beliefs and thoughts to others. Indeed, in the Western cultural context, individuals are expected to explicitly express themselves, and talking is considered a valued and respected act. In East Asian culture, expression and communication is often relatively indirect and vague. Because of the high value placed on social harmony, what might be interpreted as a friendly debate or animated discussion is considered a social faux pas in the East Asian cultural context.

I propose that since consumption is an indirect form of self-expression that is not inherently social in nature, East Asians self-express through their brand choices. I also propose that East Asians do not necessarily make conformist choices. In fact, I propose that East Asians have a desire to self-express, and will self-express not to fit in, but to stand out. Namely, I propose that they will choose the more unique, limited edition option that fewer people own over the standard edition option that more people own. However, they will only do so when the social context is appropriate. Specifically, I investigate whether East Asians make different choices depending on whether they are making a choice for professional occasions or social occasions. In professional contexts, such as meetings with important clients or business trips, people are more likely to be concerned about being on their best behavior and being perceived as serious and competent. In other words, for professional occasions, people are less likely to take risks in terms of brand choices, and opt for more conservative, safer choices over riskier, more adventurous choices. On the other hand, in more relaxed and informal contexts such as hanging out with friends, or going to the movies, people are more likely to feel comfortable expressing themselves freely.

Therefore, I propose that East Asians will choose the more self-expressive, unique option when they feel that it is socially acceptable to do so. Only in other contexts in which they feel that it is not appropriate to self-express will they choose the more conformist option. In other words, East Asians will choose to self-express to different degrees depending on the situation, and their choices will differ accordingly.

Method

Sixty-nine Japanese participants between the ages of 25 and 40 ($M_{age} = 33$; 48% female) took part in this online survey. The recruitment method was identical to that of Experiments 3

and 4. The screening rationale and process used to determine participation eligibility for this survey was identical to that of Experiment 3.

Each participant was asked to make 2 imaginary purchase decisions. For each purchase decision, participants were first asked to imagine making a purchase and then to read a short scenario that briefly described the purchase occasion and the product options. Specifically, participants were asked to choose between 2 options (Option X: standard classic vs. Option Y: limited edition design) in 2 product categories (leather bags and shoes) for 2 contextually different occasions (professional vs. social). The 2 options belonged to the same brand for each product category—Louis Vuitton for leather bags and Ferragamo for shoes—and were priced the same (100,000 JPY for leather bags and 65,000 JPY for shoes). Each participant was randomly assigned to 2 non-overlapping product category-occasion combinations. For example, if the participant was randomly assigned to the leather bag-professional scenario for the first set of questions, s/he was then assigned to the shoes-social scenario for the second set of questions.

In the professional condition, participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which they were going to purchase a new bag (or a pair of shoes) for work. It was emphasized that this product would be used for work occasions in which it was critical to not offend or leave a negative impression on others.

In the social condition, participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which they were going to purchase a new bag (or a pair of shoes) for social, personal occasions. The scenario described that this product would be used when engaging in activities such as hanging out with friends and shopping.

In both conditions, it was made clear that Option Y had a design that was likely to stand out. It was also mentioned that the participant knows that some of his/her colleagues (friends) in

the professional (social) condition were contemplating purchasing Option X. It is also important to note that it was made clear in the scenarios that the 2 options differed only in design, specifically in terms of its physical attributes. The other differing factor between the 2 options was the number of units sold. Across all scenarios, Option X had twice the number of units sold compared to Option Y. The full stimuli can be found in the Appendix.

As in Experiment 4, upon making their choice, participants were asked to explain their rationale. Before the conclusion of the survey, participants filled out the same items selected from the 3 different measures as in Experiment 4. Finally, participants were asked about their level of annual household income.

Results

Participants' choice responses are shown by condition and by product category, both separate and pooled. As predicted, participants in the 2 scenarios differed in their likelihood of choosing Option X and Option Y ($\chi^2 = 6.12$, $p < .02$). Participants were more likely to choose Option X over Option Y in the Professional condition (60.3% vs. 39.7%, respectively), while they were more likely to choose Option Y over Option X in the Social condition (61.9% vs. 38.1%, respectively). Participants were more likely to choose the safer, more standard option in the Professional condition, while they were more likely to choose the more adventurous and expressive option in the Social condition. This trend was true in both product categories, though the differences in the choice responses across conditions per product category were not statistically significant.

An examination of participants' rationale for their choice provided a fuller picture of the results. For those who chose Option X in the Professional condition, the primary reason mentioned regarding their choice was a concern for social appropriateness. For those who chose

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Option Y, the most common reason mentioned in both the Professional and Social conditions was that they wanted to own something special and that differed from their peers' possessions. Another reason mentioned for choosing Option Y was their general interest in limited edition products. However, a reason a few participants mentioned for choosing Option X in both conditions was their general preference for more standard (i.e. less adventurous) designs.

Ancillary Analysis. To assess whether affinity for newness had an effect on choice by condition, I used the Affinity for Newness subscale I developed for Experiment 3. I tested whether there was a significant interaction effect of affinity for newness and condition on choice. Other relevant covariates (product category, how many luxury brand items from the screening list the participant owns, and income level) were also included in the model. The interaction effect was marginally significant ($\chi^2 = 3.59$, $p < .06$). There was a significant main effect of condition ($\chi^2 = 5.31$, $p < .03$) and of affinity to newness ($\chi^2 = 7.06$, $p < .01$) on choice. To further explore this result, I ran the model by condition. Interestingly, affinity for newness had a significant effect on choice in the Professional condition ($\chi^2 = 7.45$, $p < .01$), but not in the Social condition ($\chi^2 = .60$, $p > .43$). In other words, participants' affinity for newness made no significant difference on what choice they made in the Social condition. However, in the Professional condition, participants who had a higher affinity for newness were significantly more likely to choose Option Y over Option X.

Table 7.1

Experiment 5: Choice Responses by Product Category and Condition

|	Professional Condition			Social Condition		
	Option X	Option Y	% Option X	Option X	Option Y	% Option Y
Leather Bags	21	12	63.6%	9	21	70.0%
Shoes	17	13	56.7%	15	18	54.5%
Total	38	25	60.3%	24	39	61.9%

Figure 7.1
Experiment 5: Choice Responses by Condition
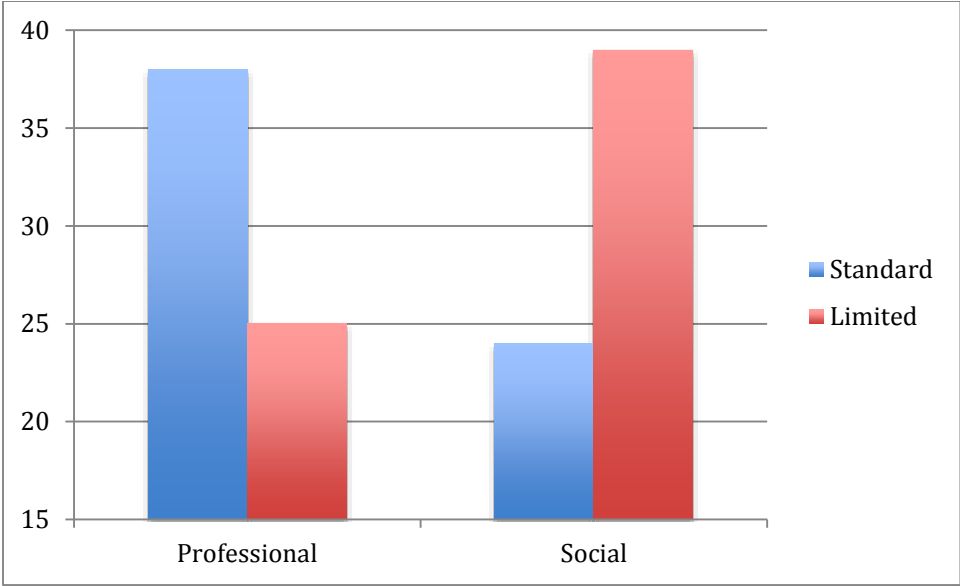
Discussion

As expected, East Asian participants made different choices depending on the occasion. When it was evident that the situation required them to conform to what was socially appropriate and to not stand out, they opted for the safer, more conservative choice. On the other hand, when they felt that it was socially acceptable and appropriate to be themselves—or *like* themselves, to be more precise—and to self-express, they showed preference for the more unique, expressive option. The majority of participants who chose the more conservative option in the professional condition stated that they chose this option precisely because they wanted the safer, less potentially offensive option. In contrast, the majority of participants who chose the riskier option in the social condition explained that they chose this option because they do not want to own something their friends own, and prefer the limited edition product because of its uniqueness.

These results suggest that East Asian individuals do not necessarily have a preference for conformity, but that they will act in a conformist manner when it is socially necessary to do so. However, in other, less socially rigid contexts, East Asians have a preference for differentiating themselves through self-expression. Indeed, the reasons participants gave for their choice indicate that in a professional setting, there is tension between what is considered socially appropriate—i.e. not standing out and being a professional self—and wanting to self-express.

It is also interesting to observe that the relationship between affinity for newness and choice marginally differed depending on the social context. Specifically, when making a choice for social occasions in which there was no apparent need to conform, participants' product choice was unrelated to their affinity for newness. However, for professional occasions in which the socially acceptable behavior was to fit in, participants with a higher affinity for newness were

more likely than those with a lower affinity for newness to select the expressive option over the more conservative option.

In summary, Experiments 4 and 5 provide strong converging evidence that East Asians are not blindly purchasing luxury brands simply because they are popular and because they want to blend in with the crowd. These studies suggest that to the contrary, East Asians are more discerning and self-expressive in their choices than they are believed to be. Precisely because they are sensitive to the social context, they make more thoughtful, conscious choices that are self-expressive in context-dependent ways.

CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Though the mode of self-expression—what is expressed and how it is expressed—differs across cultures, individuals in both Western and East Asian cultural contexts proactively engage in this act. In the consumption context, choice appears to be a self-expressive act for both Westerners and East Asians. For Westerners, choice is a means to express their inner attributes; on the other hand, for East Asians, choice is a means to express their individual distinctiveness, but within the given context. In terms of brand choice, Westerners are loyal to their favorite brands because they want to appear consistent in their attitudes and behaviors. In the Western cultural context, not being swayed by the context or by others and always remaining true to oneself is viewed positively. In contrast, East Asians are less brand loyal and are thus more likely to switch from brand to brand or to simultaneously consume multiple brands, since the cultural imperative is to constantly self-improve by being aware of and being informed about distinctive brands and products. Evidently, individuality and self-expression are not limited to the Western cultural context, but are manifested differently in the East Asian cultural context.

Summary of Findings

This dissertation examined how individuals self-express through brand and consumption choices, and how the meanings and modes of self-expression differ between Western and East Asian cultural contexts. Experiments 1 through 3 focused on cross-cultural differences in self-brand connection and brand loyalty. Experiment 1 asked participants to allocate points to brands, depending on their preferences. The results revealed that Westerners tend to concentrate their points on a fewer number of brands compared to East Asians, who tend to distribute their points

more widely across a larger number of brands. Thus, the results were consistent with the idea that Westerners have a clearer, stronger preference for certain brands over others, while East Asians have a more vague, weaker preference for brands. Experiment 2 asked participants to come up with words they associated with the brands listed. The results showed that Westerners tend to use more emotionally charged words compared to East Asians. The results were consistent with the notion that Westerners have stronger, clearer preferences about certain brands. The results from Experiments 1 and 2 are suggestive of the idea that Westerners, when compared to East Asians, have a higher self-brand connection with certain brands.

Experiment 3 asked participants to make a choice between their favorite brand and a competing brand that contained a new product feature. As expected, East Asians were more likely to switch to the competing brand with the new product feature when compared to Westerners. However, when primed to think about self-improvement, Westerners were as equally likely as East Asians to switch to the competing brand. The results show that Westerners are generally more brand loyal than are East Asians. Taken together, the results from Experiments 1 through 3 provide converging evidence that Westerners have a higher self-brand connection with the brands that they like compared to East Asians. The results also provide evidence that East Asians make more distinctive brand choices that are reflections of their desire to self-improve.

Experiments 4 and 5 focused on how East Asians self-express through brand and consumption choices in the luxury category. Experiment 4 asked participants to choose between a more expensive, higher craftsmanship cue option and a less expensive, lower craftsmanship cue option. The results reveal that East Asians are more likely to choose the high craftsmanship option over the low craftsmanship option compared to Westerners. Thus, the results are

consistent with the idea that East Asians have a higher appreciation of distinctive non-brand features that help them express their self-improvement efforts. Experiment 5 focused exclusively on East Asians. It asked participants to choose between a more unique, less popular option and a standard, more popular option, either for professional occasions or for social occasions. As expected, East Asians were more likely to choose the standard option over the unique option for professional occasions. However, they were more likely to choose the unique option over the standard option for social occasions. These results show that East Asians do in fact self-express and choose the more unique, less popular, and thus non-conformist option when they feel that it is socially acceptable to do so. The results from Experiments 4 and 5 reveal that East Asians indeed self-express by making the more distinctive brand choice when the context is appropriate.

Implications and Future Directions

The interpersonal nature of East Asian culture is what has been emphasized in the cross-cultural social sciences literature. This dissertation contributes to a more enhanced, comprehensive understanding of East Asian culture and the East Asian self by examining how and what is self-expressed in this cultural context. Specifically, I focus on the East Asian self and the cultural importance of self-improvement efforts. By contrasting the East Asian self and self-expression with those of the West, this current research also sheds light on what Western individuals are motivated to self-express.

Additionally, the findings from this research contribute to the general understanding of people's attitudes and relationships with brands, and how that varies across cultures. The research suggests that for both Westerners and East Asians, brand and consumption choices are used as vehicles of self-expression, but that what is expressed can differ significantly. In other words, the drivers for brand choice and brand switching seem to vary across cultures. For the

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independent self in the Western cultural context, the choices that one makes are self-defining and thus have to be self-consistent. For the interdependent self in the East Asian cultural context, the choices that one makes can be used as a way to express one's self-improvement efforts. Given the findings from this dissertation, developing a better understanding of East Asian individuality and selfhood seem critical and relevant in the realm of marketing and consumer behavior.

Limitations

One notable limitation of this research was the sample population. The Western participants were Caucasian American, and the East Asian participants were Japanese. Thus, in the future, it would be valuable to recruit participants who are from other Western and East Asian nations to examine the generalizability of the results. Additionally, it may be useful to conduct studies in which bicultural individuals who are part of both Western and East Asian cultural contexts are primed to think and behave either more independently or interdependently.

Another limitation was in the survey design. Since all of the studies were conducted online and were for the most part scenario-based, it would be valuable to conduct field studies in which we can observe participants' actual behavior.

In addition, a general challenge when examining global brand choices was the fact that a majority of the global brands that are widely known and distributed in both cultures were Western, primarily American, brands, an element that may create country of origin effects that bias the results. One way around this issue is to have participants choose between fictitious brands; however, this type of research design renders it difficult to measure brand loyalty, as participants will not have any emotional attachment to these brands. Alternatively, using bicultural participants may resolve the issue to some degree, as the country of origin effects may

be more attenuated for them. As is true with cross-cultural research generally, making accurate

comparisons across cultures pose challenges that are difficult to completely overcome.

Please allocate points to each brand so that the brands you like are assigned more points. The maximum number of points you can allocate to one brand is 100, and the minimum is 0. The total number of points across the brands should equal 100.

Carbonated beverages:
Coca-cola
Pepsi
Mountain Dew
Sprite
7UP

Fast fashion apparel:
Zara
H&M
Abercrombie & Fitch
Gap

Game consoles:
Nintendo
PlayStation
XBox

Sportswear:
Nike
Adidas
Reebok
Puma
Asics

Beers:
Corona
Asahi
Budweiser
Heineken
Sapporo

Please answer the following questions.

Not at all						A lot
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How familiar are you with this brand?
How likely are you to purchase this brand?
How positively do you feel about this brand?
How negatively do you feel about this brand?
How much would you care if this brand disappeared from the market?
How special do you think this brand is?
How important is this brand to your identity?

How much does this brand make you feel:

Not at all						A lot
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Disappointed
Unfulfilled
Discontented
Happy
Fulfilled
Pleased
Enthusiastic
Comforted
Proud
Excited
Thrilled

Positive Emotion Subscale
(The average of the following items)

1. How positively does this brand make you feel?
How much does this brand make you feel:
2. Happy
3. Fulfilled
4. Pleased
5. Enthusiastic
6. Comforted
7. Proud
8. Excited
9. Thrilled

Negative Emotion Subscale
(The average of the following items)

1. How negatively does this brand make you feel?
How much does this brand make you feel:
2. Disappointed
3. Unfulfilled
4. Discontented

Perceived Brand Connection Subscale

1. How much would you care if this brand disappeared from the market?
2. How special do you think this brand is?
3. How important is this brand to your identity?

Affinity for Newness Subscale*

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I often seek out information about new things. (1)
2. I like to go to places where I will be exposed to information about new things. (2)
3. I seek out situations in which I will be exposed to new and different sources of information. (5)
4. I take advantage of the first available opportunity to find out about new and different things. (8)
5. I often look for one-of-a-kind things. (14)
6. I'm often on the lookout for new things. (15)
7. Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it. (8)

Note: This scale was created by borrowing and adapting items from 3 different scales (original items are shown after the next scale).

Consistency Subscale*

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. I typically prefer to do things the same way. (5)
9. I generally consider changes to be a negative thing. (6)
10. I like to do the same old things rather than try new and different ones. (7)
11. I don't change my mind easily. (12)
12. Once I've come to a conclusion, I'm not likely to change my mind. (11)
13. My views are very consistent over time. (13)
14. When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me. (9)
15. I sometimes find myself avoiding changes that I know will be good for me. (10)

Note: This scale was created by borrowing and adapting items from 2 different scales (original items are shown on the following page).

Manning, Bearden, and Madden's Consumer Innovativeness Scale

1. I often seek out information about new products and brands.
2. I like to go to places where I will be exposed to information about new products and brands.
3. I seek out situations in which I will be exposed to new and different sources of product information.
4. I take advantage of the first available opportunity to find out about new and different products.

Note: The original scale referred to products and brands; in order to make the scale more general, I eliminated the terms products and brands. When appropriate, I replaced the terms products and/or brands with the word "things."

Tian, Bearden, and Hunter's Consumers' Need for Uniqueness Scale

5. I often look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own.
6. I'm often on the lookout for new products or brands that will add to my personal uniqueness.

Note: The original scale referred to products and brands; in order to make the scale more general, I eliminated the terms products and brands. When appropriate, I replaced the terms products and/or brands with the word "things." In addition, I eliminated the phrases that emphasized uniqueness, as I believed that those phrases would not resonate with Japanese respondents, and would thus bias their responses. For example, a Japanese respondent may indeed often be on the lookout for new things, but not necessarily for the sole purpose to be unique.

Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom's Preference for Consistency Scale

8. I typically prefer to do things the same way. (5)

Oreg's Resistance to Change Scale

7. Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it. (8)
9. I generally consider changes to be a negative thing. (6)
10. I like to do the same old things rather than try new and different ones. (7)
11. I don't change my mind easily. (12)
12. Once I've come to a conclusion, I'm not likely to change my mind. (11)
13. My views are very consistent over time. (13)
14. When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me. (9)
15. I sometimes find myself avoiding changes that I know will be good for me. (10)

Experiment 3 – Target Brands Screening Questions

What is your favorite cola brand?

Coca-Cola
Pepsi
Other

Sneakers:
What is your favorite sneakers brand?

Nike
Adidas
Other

What is your favorite American chips brand?

Doritos
Cheetos
Other

What is your favorite delivery pizza brand?

Domino's
Pizza Hut
Other

What is your favorite European apparel brand?
H&M
Zara
Other

What is your favorite chocolate candy bar brand?

Kit Kat
Snickers
Other

Control

Study 1

Please read the instructions and answer the questions carefully.

Please describe what you did yesterday. There are no wrong answers.

Prime

Study 1

In this study, you will be asked to recall the content of what you read.

Even on a day to day basis, there is always room to grow and to learn new things. One simple way to make this happen is to break the chain of habits. If you tend to get stuck in a routine, try something different for a change. Try something new. These seemingly simple acts can open your eyes.

In your own words, please give a detailed summary of what you read on the previous page.

Study 2

In this study, you will be asked to choose between two different brands. One of the brands will have a new feature. Please read and answer each question carefully.

Note: For each product category, the brand chosen as the participant's favorite brand was assigned the original feature, while the competitor brand was assigned the new feature. For presentation purposes, only 1 out of 2 possible combinations per product category is shown below.

Given these descriptions, which cola brand would you buy?

Brand	Price	Feature
Coca-Cola	$1.00	Original
Pepsi	$1.00	NEW carbonation boost

- o   Coca-Cola
- o   Pepsi

Given these descriptions, which chocolate candy bar brand would you buy?

Brand	Price	Feature
Kit Kat	$1.00	Original
Snickers	$1.00	NEW bittersweet Belgian chocolate

- o   Kit Kat
- o   Snickers

Given these descriptions, which chips brand would you buy?

Brand	Price	Feature
Doritos	$3.00	Original
Cheetos	$3.00	NEW sweet and spicy flavor

- o   Doritos
- o   Cheetos

Given these descriptions, which fashion apparel brand would you buy?

Brand	Price	Feature
H&M	$25	Standard
Zara	$25	NEW sweat-resistant material

- o   H&M
- o   Zara

Given these descriptions, which sneaker brand would you buy?

Brand	Price	Feature
Nike	$175	Standard
Adidas	$175	NEW shock reduction technology

- o   Nike
- o   Adidas

Given these descriptions, which delivery pizza brand would you choose?

Brand	Price	Feature
Domino's	$10	Original
Pizza Hut	$10	NEW truffle oil flatbread

- o   Domino's
- o   Pizza Hut

Of the following, please select the brands that you have purchased in the past, if any.

- o Louis Vuitton
- o Gucci
- o Prada
- o Ferragamo
- o Chanel
- o Hermes
- o Fendi
- o Cartier
- o Rolex
- o Versace
- o Burberry
- o Omega
- o Tag Heuer
- o None of the above

Brand Description for Luxury Leather Bag Brand Z

Luxury leather bag brand Z was founded in 1804 in Italy, over 200 years ago. The founder started off as an apprentice at a successful box-making and packing workshop – a craft that was highly respected at the time. He went on to serve elite and royal clientele, and opened up his own shop. Ever since its inception, the brand has stayed true to its heritage and focus on quality and craftsmanship.

Unlike other luxury brands that involve dozens of craftspersons to make each leather bag, brand Z only allows up to 10 craftspersons to be involved per leather bag. A craftsperson is not allowed to handcraft a leather bag until they have had 5 years of experience. Traditionally, the brand has only produced its leather bags in Italy. Within the last several years, the brand has opened a new production facility in Argentina. The price of this brand's leather bags ranges from $500 to $2,500.

Brand Z – "Involvement" Condition

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a leather bag from this brand. Given the information provided, which leather bag would you choose? The 2 leather bags are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the number of craftspersons who worked on each leather bag. (Recall that unlike other luxury brands that involve dozens of craftspersons to make each leather bag, brand Z only allows up to 10 craftspersons to be involved per leather bag.)

	Design	Number of craftsperson(s) who worked on each bag	Price
Option X	Standard	8	$1000
Option Y	Standard	1	$1200

Brand Z – "Expertise" Condition

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a leather bag from this brand. Given the information provided, which leather bag would you choose? The 2 leather bags are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the craftsperson's years of experience. (Recall

that a craftsperson is not allowed to handcraft a leather bag until they have had 5 years of experience.)

	Design	Craftsperson's years of experience (before working on the current bag)	Price
Option X	Standard	5	$1000
Option Y	Standard	15	$1200

Brand Z – "Origin" Condition

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a leather bag from this brand. Given the information provided, which leather bag would you choose? The 2 leather bags are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the country where they were manufactured. (Recall that traditionally, the brand has only produced its leather bags in Italy. Within the last several years, the brand has opened a new production facility in Argentina.)

	Design	Country of manufacture	Price
Option X	Standard	Argentina	$1000
Option Y	Standard	Italy	$1200

Brand Description for Luxury Watch Brand N

Luxury watch brand N was founded in 1759 in Switzerland. The founder grew up watching and helping his watchmaker father make watches with great care. After losing his parents at a young age, he met a successful watchmaker who offered him an apprenticeship and taught him about the importance of pursuing perfection. When the watchmaker passed away, the then 18 year old founder vowed to always remain focused on quality and craftsmanship.

Unlike other luxury brands that involve dozens of craftspersons to make each watch, brand N only allows up to 8 craftspersons to be involved in the making of each watch. A craftsperson is not allowed to handcraft a watch until they have had 7 years of experience. Traditionally, the brand has only produced its watches in Switzerland. Within the last 2 years, the

brand has opened a new production facility in Turkey. The price of this brand's watches ranges from $600 to $3,000.

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a watch from this brand. Given the information provided, which watch would you choose? The 2 watches are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the number of craftspersons who worked on each watch. (Recall that unlike other luxury brands that involve dozens of craftspersons to make each watch, brand N only allows up to 8 craftspersons to be involved in the making of each watch.)

	Design	Number of craftsperson(s) who worked on each watch	Price
Option X	Standard	6	$700
Option Y	Standard	1	$900

Brand N – "Expertise" Condition

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a watch from this brand. Given the information provided, which watch would you choose? The 2 watches are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the craftsperson's years of experience. (Recall that a craftsperson is not allowed to handcraft a watch until they have had 7 years of experience.)

	Design	Craftsperson's years of experience (before working on the current watch)	Price
Option X	Standard	7	$700
Option Y	Standard	14	$900

Brand N – "Origin" Condition

Imagine that you were thinking of buying a watch from this brand. Given the information provided, which watch would you choose? The 2 watches are produced in the exact same way, with the only difference being the country where they were manufactured. (Recall that

traditionally, the brand has only produced its watches in Switzerland. Within the last 2 years, the brand has opened a new production facility in Turkey.)

	Design	Country of manufacture	Price
Option X	Standard	Turkey	$700
Option Y	Standard	Switzerland	$900

Experiment 5 Stimuli
(English translated version)

Ferragamo Shoes – Professional Condition

Imagine that you are buying shoes for professional use. You will wear these shoes on occasions when it is critical not to offend others (e.g. interviews in conservative industries, job roles, meetings with the CEO or important clients, business trips).

Option Y has a design that is likely to stand out. Some of your colleagues are thinking about buying Option X. Based on the information below, if you had to choose one product, which would you purchase? The 2 pairs of shoes differ only in terms of design.

	Brand	Design	Units Sold	Price
Option X	Ferragamo	Standard classic	50,000	65,000 yen
Option Y	Ferragamo	Limited edition	25,000	65,000 yen

Ferragamo Shoes – Social Condition

Imagine that you are buying shoes for social (i.e. personal) use. You will wear these shoes when you go out (e.g. go shopping, go to the movies, go out with friends).

Option Y has a design that is likely to stand out. Some of your friends are thinking about buying Option X. Based on the information below, if you had to choose one product, which would you purchase? The 2 pairs of shoes differ only in terms of design.

	Brand	Design	Units Sold	Price
Option X	Ferragamo	Standard classic	50,000	65,000 yen
Option Y	Ferragamo	Limited edition	25,000	65,000 yen

Louis Vuitton Leather Bag – Professional Condition

Imagine that you are buying a leather bag for professional use. You will use this bag on occasions when it is critical not to offend others (e.g. interviews in conservative industries, job roles, meetings with the CEO or important clients, business trips).

Option Y has a design that is likely to stand out. Some of your colleagues are thinking about buying Option X. Based on the information below, if you had to choose one product, which would you purchase? The 2 bags differ only in terms of design.

	Brand	Design	Units Sold	Price
Option X	Louis Vuitton	Standard classic	60,000	100,000 yen
Option Y	Louis Vuitton	Limited edition	30,000	100,000 yen

Louis Vuitton Leather Bag – Social Condition

Imagine that you are buying a leather bag for social (i.e. personal) use. You will use this bag when you go out (e.g. go shopping, go to the movies, go out with friends).

Option Y has a design that is likely to stand out. Some of your friends are thinking about buying Option X. Based on the information below, if you had to choose one product, which would you purchase? The 2 bags differ only in terms of design.

	Brand	Design	Units Sold	Price
Option X	Louis Vuitton	Standard classic	60,000	100,000 yen
Option Y	Louis Vuitton	Limited edition	30,000	100,000 yen

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