



Cultural influences on consumer satisfaction with impulse and planned purchase decisions

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Abstract

This study examines factors thought to influence consumers' planned and impulse purchase decisions including subjective culture (individualist or collectivist consumers) and the presence of another person at the time of purchase. Data was collected in four countries — the USA, Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia. The results indicate that overall, consumers are differentially influenced by others in planned and impulse purchase situations, even after controlling for price. These differential influences can be explained by culture. Compared to more individualist consumers, more collectivist consumers are likely to be more satisfied with an impulse purchase when another person is present at the time of purchase.

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1. Introduction

Impulse purchasing has been recognized as a significant phenomenon in the United States. In 1997 alone, it was estimated that consumers spent \$4.2 billion on impulse items, including candy and magazines (Mogelonsky, 1998). Traditional retailers use techniques such as store design, product displays and package design to try to increase the number of impulse purchases (Hoyer and MacInnis, 1997). Furthermore, technologies such as television shopping channels, mobile phones and the Internet expand consumers' impulse purchasing opportunities, increasing both the accessibility to products and services and the ease with which impulse purchases can be made.

Previous research has shown that numerous factors influence impulsive purchasing behavior, including the presence of others (Luo, 2005), the consumer's mood (e.g., Beatty and Ferrell, 1998; Rook and Gardner, 1993), trait impulsiveness (e.g., Jones et al., 2003; Rook and Fisher, 1995; Weun et al., 1998), product category impulsiveness (Jones et al., 2003), evaluation of the

appropriateness of engaging in impulse buying (e.g., Rook and Fisher, 1995), individual and environmental touch (Peck and Childers, 2006), self-identity (e.g., Dittmar et al., 1995; Lee and Kacen, 1999), cultural orientation (e.g., Kacen and Lee, 2002; Lee and Kacen, 1999), as well as demographic characteristics such as gender (e.g., Dittmar et al., 1995; Rook and Gardner, 1993) and age (e.g., Helmers et al., 1995; Wood, 1998). While some research has focused on the consequences of impulse purchasing to the individual and society, including the appropriateness of impulse purchasing and potential negative effects like financial problems, guilt, or social disapproval (e.g., Rook, 1987; Rook and Fisher, 1995; Rook and Hoch, 1985; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989), few studies have examined potential consequences to a firm, in terms of consumer satisfaction (e.g., Ariely and Levav, 2000).

Research illustrates that impulsive purchases are a significant phenomenon in the United States (e.g., Mogelonsky, 1998), yet little is known about the phenomenon in other countries. A few studies have examined aspects of impulse purchasing in other countries, including Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore (Kacen and Lee, 2002), China (Li et al., 2004), Great Britain (Bayley and Nancarrow, 1998; Dittmar et al., 1995; McConatha et al., 1994), Singapore (Shamdasani and Rook, 1989), South Africa (Abratt and Goodey, 1990) and

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Vietnam (Mai et al., 2003). To date, no studies have been found to examine influences on customer satisfaction with impulse purchasing across cultures.

This study develops and tests the normative influences on consumers' satisfaction with their impulse and planned purchases across two Individualist (USA and Australia) and two Collectivist (Singapore and Malaysia) countries. This cross-cultural comparison is especially important as shopping is a major leisure activity in many Asian countries (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

The objective of this research is to investigate (1) whether impulsive purchasing behavior is more susceptible to normative situational influences than planned purchasing behavior and whether this susceptibility has implications for post-purchase product evaluation, and (2) whether culture moderates the influence of normative situational factors in an impulse purchase situation.

2. Impulse versus planned purchases

Impulse buying is defined as “an unplanned purchase” that was not anticipated or planned before the shopper entered the store (see Kollat and Willett, 1967; Prasad, 1975). It is characterized by “(1) relatively rapid decision-making, and (2) a subjective bias in favor of immediate possession” (Rook and Gardner, 1993, p. 3; see also Rook, 1987; Rook and Hoch, 1985). It is less deliberate, more arousing, and more irresistible buying behavior compared to planned purchases. Highly impulsive buyers are likely to be unreflective in their thinking, to be emotionally attracted to the object, and to desire immediate gratification (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991; Thompson et al., 1990). Impulse purchasing is more spontaneous than cautious and more carefree than contemplative.

The major differences between impulse and planned purchases are the amount of information that can be sought prior to the purchase decision and the length of time that is spent on the decision process. D'Antoni and Shenson (1973, p. 68) have described these differences, explaining that with an impulse buying decision fewer “bits of information” are processed by the consumer and thus the time taken to decide upon purchase is relatively less compared to the “normal decision time lapse” for a similar non-impulse purchase decision. Because the impulse purchase decision is an in-store process (see Kollat and Willett, 1967; Prasad, 1975), information and choice alternatives are limited to those present in the immediate environment, which often precludes thoughtful, deliberate consideration of *all* information and choice alternatives (cf. Rook, 1987).

For an impulse purchase then, the only available information, aside from internal or memory-based information, is the external information available at the time of purchase (e.g., product displays and people in the store). This differs from a planned purchase in which all sources of information are available (e.g., internal and external sources including media, interpersonal and expert advice [see Dowling and Staelin, 1994]). Thus, it is likely that the information available inside a store will have a greater overall impact on an impulse purchase than a planned purchase.

Of the types of information available within a store, personal or neutral sources are likely to be perceived as more credible than marketer-driven point-of-purchase information. The dominance of word-of-mouth over other forms of advertising influence has been well documented in the literature (see Gilly et al., 1998 for a review). As such, it is worthwhile to examine the influence of others who are present at the time of purchase on consumers' purchasing behavior and post-purchase satisfaction.

Some studies have shown that the mere presence of others can influence an individual's purchase decisions (e.g., Ariely and Levav, 2000; Argo, Dahl and Manchanda, 2005). For instance, in a study of shoppers' behavior in a University bookstore, Argo et al. (2005) found that undergraduate students managed their self-presentation behaviors more when there were other shoppers present compared to when they were alone. Participants chose to interact with a “nerdy” display less when others were near. The presence of others also impacted brand choice; participants were more likely to choose an expensive high-quality brand when other shoppers were nearby compared to when they were distant. In addition, Ariely and Levav (2000) found that American consumers changed their choice behavior when they were in the presence of others, resulting in more variety-seeking behavior and less personal satisfaction with the outcome. They argued that these changes were a result of consumers trying to balance their individual goals with the group goals. As both these studies focused on North American (i.e., individualist) consumers, it would be interesting to examine possible differences in purchasing behavior and post-purchase satisfaction among consumers from individualist and collectivist cultures.

3. Individualism and collectivism

The theory of individualism and collectivism is likely to impact the relative influence of important others on a consumer's shopping behavior. Triandis (1995) defines collectivism as a social pattern that consists of individuals who see themselves as an integral part of one or more collectives, such as family and friends, and individualism as a social pattern that consists of individuals who see themselves as autonomous and independent of collectives. These social patterns manifest themselves in a variety of ways. People from more collectivist societies are more likely to be motivated by norms and duties imposed by the collective, to give priority to the goals of the collective and to try to emphasize their connectedness to the collective. People from more individualist cultures are more likely to be motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights, to give priority to their personal goals and to emphasize their uniqueness and distinction from others. As one example of how these differences impact consumption choices, Aaker and Schmitt (2001) found that Americans have more positive attitudes toward brands with differentiation associations, i.e., brands that set one apart as an individual. Conversely, the Chinese have more positive attitudes toward brands with group assimilation associations, i.e., brands that demonstrate one's connection to others (Aaker and Schmitt, 2001).

Within each society these differences in the way an individual's self-concept is construed are reinforced at the cultural level through social institutions such as schools, workplaces and families (Kim et al., 1994). Even very ambitious people with individualist tendencies who grow up in Malaysia are more likely to incorporate family members' opinions when making a purchase decision than family-focused people with collectivist tendencies from the USA (see Triandis, 1994).

While consumers in both individualist and collectivist cultures expect that their purchase decisions will be evaluated by others, the effect of such interpersonal influence is different among consumers from each of the two cultures. Generally, normative social influences have been found to influence consumers' purchase intentions more strongly in collectivist compared to individualist cultures (e.g., Lee and Green, 1991; Bagozzi et al., 2000; Lee, 2000). In addition, the forms of social influence may also differ between people from individualist and collectivist cultures.

Kelman (1961) suggested three processes of social influence: compliance, identification and internalization. He defined compliance as the process where an individual accepts influence from another to achieve a favorable reaction (i.e., to gain rewards or avoid punishments). He defined identification as the process where an individual accepts influence from another to satisfy a self-defining relationship with the other (i.e., to establish or maintain a relationship that forms part of the person's self-image). He defined internalization as the process where an individual accepts influence from another because it is in line with the individual's value system (i.e., the behavior is a useful solution, or conducive to the individual's own values). According to Bearden et al. (1989), utilitarian social influence is based on the process of compliance, value-expressive social influence is based on the process of identification and informational social influence is based on the process of internalization.

Two recent studies found differences in susceptibility to types of social influence for people from more individualistic versus collectivist cultures. Bagozzi and Lee (2002) studied social influence in friendship groups by examining participants' decision of where to eat lunch with friends. They found that students from a more collectivist culture (Korea) were more strongly influenced by identification processes (i.e., value-expressive influence), while students from a more individualistic culture (USA) were more strongly influenced by internalization processes (i.e., informational influence). Mourali et al. (2005) found that consumers from a more collectivist culture (French Canadians) were more susceptible to both utilitarian and value-expressive social influence than those from a more individualist culture (English Canadians). Mourali et al. (2005) found no difference between collectivists' and individualists' susceptibility to informational influence.

This body of research illustrates the forms that normative social influence is likely to take among people from individualist and collectivist cultures. First, consumers from collectivist cultures are likely to be more susceptible to value-expressive social influence, where a behavior is adopted to satisfy a self-defining relationship with an important other. This

form of social influence is not taken to please another (as in compliance), but to be like the other person (Kelman, 1961). Thus, an individual adopts the other's opinions and actions into his or her self-concept. As such, family and friends of people from more collectivist cultures are likely to provide information that is more diagnostic for the consumer's self-concept compared to information from family and friends of individualists. Friends or family members represent social categories to which collectivists belong, and by which they define themselves, not simply a standard of comparison. The information a friend or family member provides to a collectivist consumer at the time of purchase will be more congruent with the consumer's self-concept and better aligned with the consumer's preferences.

Second, consumers from individualist cultures are likely to be more susceptible to informational influence. This type of social influence is based on the process of internalization, where individuals do not typically accept recommendations in full, but modify them to suit their needs (Kelman, 1961). For instance, the opinion of an expert may be taken, depending on its relevance to the situation and its congruence with an individual's values (Kelman, 1961). As such, family and friends of people from more individualist cultures are likely to provide information that is less diagnostic for the consumer's self-concept compared to information from family and friends of collectivists. Individualists' self-concepts are not as strongly defined by their relationships with significant others compared to collectivists' self-concepts. People from more individualist cultures have a sense of themselves as distinct from others and are more likely to "regard the self as a separate entity and experience social influence more in terms of interpersonal pressure (i.e., compliance of oneself as an entity in response to social approval/disapproval from another person as a separate entity) and internalization (i.e., acceptance of a decision as a result of comparison or assimilation of another's values or goals with one's own values or goals)" (Bagozzi and Lee, 2002, p. 234). People from individualist cultures prefer to see themselves as different from others and as having independent attitudes and opinions (Triandis, 1994). Information provided by friends and family at the time of purchase will hold less diagnostic value for an individualist consumer compared to a collectivist consumer.

These differences between individualists and collectivists in the way their self-concepts are construed result in differences in the effects of social influence on purchase behavior and also on the level of post-purchase satisfaction they feel when shopping with family and friends. Post-purchase evaluations are thought to reflect the assessment of a product's performance, resulting from a comparison of pre-purchase expectations with the product's actual performance (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993). For impulse purchases, there is a limited amount of information available on which to base pre-purchase expectations. Discussing a purchase with a friend or family member who is present at the time of purchase is one way a consumer can reduce the level of uncertainty associated with the product performance.

As discussed above, in collectivist cultures family and friends are likely to provide information that is aligned with the

consumer's self-concept. This information is likely to confirm or contradict the attraction to an impulse item which favors immediate possession. This information also adds to the limited amount of diagnostic information available. This is likely to lead to product expectations being more accurately aligned with performance. We would expect consumers from a collectivist culture to be more satisfied with impulse purchases made when they are with an important other than impulse purchases made when they are alone.

H1. People from collectivist cultures will be more satisfied with their impulse purchase when they are with an important other at the time of purchase, than when they are alone.

As compared to collectivist cultures, family and friends in individualist cultures are more likely to provide information based on their own personal preferences and less likely to provide information that is aligned with the consumer's self-concept. Since people from individualist cultures are more susceptible to informational influence, they are likely to internalize the information only if it is relevant and congruent with their values. Since the information is less likely to be aligned with the consumer's self-concept and likely to be discounted if it is contradictory, the information a companion provides will have less influence on the individualist consumer's satisfaction with the purchase decision.

H2. People from an individualist culture will show no difference in satisfaction with their impulse purchase when they are with an important other compared to when they are alone at the time of purchase.

As discussed earlier, one of the major differences between impulse and planned purchases is the ability to gather information about the product prior to the purchase decision. For a planned purchase, a consumer is able to consult many sources of information (e.g., internal and external sources including family and friends, media, and expert opinion) prior to the purchase decision. Information provided by friends or family members is available to an individualist or a collectivist consumer well before he or she enters the store so that information will have already been incorporated into the consumer's decision process and is unlikely to provide additional diagnostic information to consider at the time of purchase. Thus, it is likely that the information provided by a friend or family member present at the time of purchase will have less overall impact on satisfaction with a planned purchase compared to an impulse purchase for both collectivist and individualist consumers.

H3. For a planned purchase, there will be no difference in satisfaction for either individualists or collectivists whether they are with an important other or alone at the time of purchase.

4. Methodology

A survey was designed to elicit information from consumers about a recent impulse and a recent planned purchase decision. The study used a 2 (purchase type: impulse versus

planned) × 2 (purchase situation: alone versus with an important other) × 2 (cultural region: individualist versus collectivist) × 2 (order: impulse first versus planned first) mixed-factorial design. Purchase type was a within-subjects factor and purchase situation, cultural region and order were between-subjects factors.

Definitions for the type of purchase situation were supplied in the questionnaire introduction. Each questionnaire opened with the following text:

As consumers, we buy things for lots of different reasons. Sometimes we put a lot of thoughtful consideration into our purchase, sometimes our purchases are spontaneous. We would like to know something about your recent purchase decisions.

The manipulation for purchase type and purchase situation followed. While each subject received only one purchase situation condition, the definition for an impulse purchase presented below describes the purchase situation involving an important other and the definition for a planned purchase describes the purchase situation where the consumer is alone.

An impulse purchase is one in which you experience a sudden urge to buy something that you cannot resist. Impulse purchases occur while a person is in the store and involve rapid decision making. Think about a recent *impulse purchase* you made when you were *with someone* important to you, such as a family member or a friend, at the time of purchase and that person was involved in the purchase, such as offering an opinion or advice.

A carefully planned purchase is one which you think about prior to going to the store. It is a purchase for which you carefully consider all the choices available to you before making your selection. Think about a recent *carefully planned purchase* you made where you were *alone*.

Following the randomized mixed-factor design, four versions of the questionnaire were created. Each subject received one set of questions concerning a planned purchase and one concerning an impulse purchase, both of which were made either alone or with a significant other. Subjects were then asked to provide information regarding their *impulse purchase* and their *carefully planned purchase*. The order of the purchase type was randomized in each country.

Respondents were asked questions about what they purchased (e.g., shirt, CD player), the price they paid, the time spent making this purchase decision prior to entering the store, their satisfaction with the purchase, as well as some demographic questions including the country in which they currently live, whether this country is the one lived in most of their life, the year in which they were born, and their gender.

Satisfaction was measured with two items asking how satisfied they were with their purchase immediately after the purchase and how satisfied they were at the current moment. These items were measured on a five-point scale (where 5 is "very satisfied"). The two satisfaction items were averaged to produce

one overall satisfaction score for each purchase type (planned, impulse) in a manner similar to Darke et al. (2006).

The surveys were administered in English to a convenience sample of consumers in the USA, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia. Students who were studying business in English were asked to fill out a questionnaire themselves and to ask two other older non-student consumers to fill out the other questionnaires.

4.1. The sample

Surveys were administered to students and non-students in highly individualist and highly collectivist countries purposefully selected from their positioning on Hofstede's (1991) ranking of individualism. The countries in which surveys were administered included the United States (individualism score=91) and Australia (90) as highly individualistic countries and Singapore (20) and Malaysia (26) as highly collectivist countries.

4.1.1. Sample size

The resulting samples comprised 706 respondents, 127 from the USA, 199 from Australia, 195 from Singapore and 185 from Malaysia. The mean age across respondents was 24 years (range: 18 to 45 years). Forty-three percent ($n=302$) of the respondents were male.

4.1.2. Manipulation checks

To test the success of the impulse versus planned purchase manipulation, we examined the time consumers spent making the purchase decision prior to entering the store. For the impulse purchase condition 40% of all subjects had spent no time, and 93% had spent no more than 30 minutes thinking about the impulse purchase prior to entering the store. By definition a planned purchase would be thought about prior to entering the store. For the planned purchase condition 61% of all respondents reported thinking about the purchase for more than an hour, and 72% had spent 30 minutes or more thinking about the purchase prior to entering the store. Responses to the impulse purchase questions were deleted for those subjects who had thought about the impulse purchase for more than 30 minutes prior to entering the store.

4.2. Cultural analysis

Respondents were classified into cultural groupings based on their country of residence: individualist (Australia and United States) or collectivist (Malaysia and Singapore). This resulted in 326 respondents in the individualist grouping and 380 respondents in the collectivist grouping.

In cross-cultural research, it has been noted that some cultures tend to be more acquiescent, producing higher means on questions using scale measures (e.g., China, Nepal, Philippines, Italy, Greece and Portugal, as compared to the United States, Australia, Britain, Germany, and France [see Grimm and Church, 1999; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998; Usunier and Lee, 2005; van Herk, Poortinga and Verhallen, 2004; Watkins and Cheung, 1995]). While several authors have

suggested various types of standardization, Fischer (2004) outlines when each type is appropriate, given the problem and analysis technique. He recommends within-group standardization when researchers are interested in the effect of one variable on another irrespective of the group differences, which is the case in this research. In this study, an individual's satisfaction score was standardized based on the cultural mean (see Aiken and West, 1991).

5. Results

A repeated-measures ANOVA was run to assess the impact of the within-subjects factor (type of purchase) and three between-subjects factors (purchase situation, culture and order) on satisfaction. As the order effects were non-significant, the analysis was repeated without the order factor. In addition, price paid was added as a covariate, but was not found to be significant. As such the analysis was repeated without the price covariate.

First, support was found for Hypothesis 1. The repeated-measures ANOVA resulted in a significant interaction between purchase type, purchase situation and culture [$F(1647)=5.33$, $p<0.05$]. As Fig. 1 illustrates, collectivist consumers were more satisfied after an impulse purchase when they were with an important other at the time of purchase ($X_{\text{collectivist with}}=0.19$), than when they were alone ($X_{\text{collectivist alone}}=-0.20$; $t=2.25$, $df=327$, $p<0.05$). Having a friend or family member with them at the time of purchase enhanced collectivist consumers' satisfaction with their impulse purchase compared to their satisfaction with the impulse purchases made when they were shopping alone. Consistent with prior research indicating collectivists are more susceptible to interpersonal influence than individualists (Mourali et al., 2005), the collectivist participants in this study were more satisfied with their impulse purchase when it was made in the presence of an important other.

As predicted by Hypothesis 2, there were no significant differences in satisfaction after an impulse purchase for individualist consumers when they were with an important other at the time of purchase ($X_{\text{individualist with}}=0.43$) compared to when they were alone ($X_{\text{individualist alone}}=0.21$; $t=1.51$, ns). Individualist consumers in our study were equally satisfied with their impulse purchases whether they were alone or shopping with someone. Our results support previous research that holds that individualists are less susceptible to interpersonal influence than collectivists (Mourali et al., 2005).

Finally, Hypothesis 3 also was supported. There were no significant differences in satisfaction after a planned purchase for collectivists when they were with an important other at the time of purchase ($X_{\text{collectivist with}}=0.07$) compared to when they were alone ($X_{\text{collectivist alone}}=-0.07$; $t=1.04$, ns), nor for individualists when they were with an important other at the time of purchase ($X_{\text{individualist with}}=0.11$) compared to when they were alone ($X_{\text{individualist alone}}=-0.11$; $t=1.51$, ns). The results suggest that the planned purchase decision was made prior to entering the store, and expectations regarding product performance were already established prior to purchase. The presence of a friend or family member at the time of a planned purchase did not

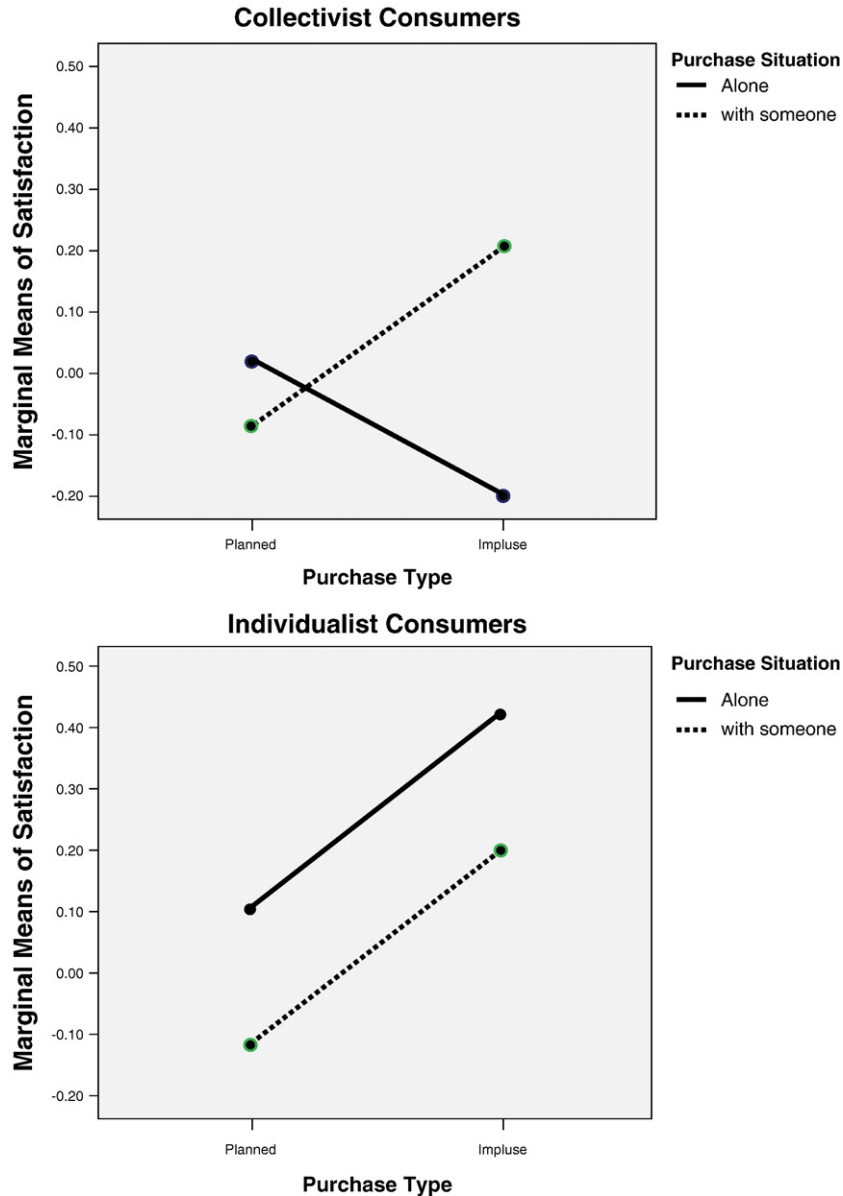


Fig. 1. Satisfaction marginal means for purchase type × purchase situation × culture interaction.

provide additional information that influenced the consumer's satisfaction with his or her purchase.

6. Discussion and limitations

Our research supports earlier studies indicating that normative social influences are more influential for people from collectivist cultures than those from individualist cultures. While normative influences have been shown to be more important for collectivist consumers by other researchers (e.g., Lee and Green, 1991; Bagozzi et al., 2000; Lee, 2000), most of the research has focused on the influence of others on purchase intentions, rather than behaviors or post-purchase evaluations. This study demonstrates that the effect is robust for actual purchase behavior as well as for measures of satisfaction with the purchase decision.

Further, this research illustrates problems in generalizing across cultures from research solely based in Western countries.

Researchers and practitioners need to be aware of cultural differences when applying Western-based research findings to consumers in other countries. There are essential underlying differences between consumers in Western individualist and Eastern collectivist cultures. This paper adds to the body of literature examining normative influences across cultures by extending our understanding to post-purchase satisfaction.

The impact of normative influences on satisfaction is interesting and warrants further research. Specifically, how is satisfaction impacted by the presence of an important other at the time of purchase? It could be that the information helps the consumer to make a better decision by adding diagnostic information, or by forcing greater elaboration of the information. In addition, the evaluation of important others may also enter into the satisfaction equation for collectivist consumers but not for individualist consumers. In this case typical measures of satisfaction may not be capturing the full influence of other people

on a purchase decision. Thus, a comparison of pre-purchase expectations with the product's actual performance may be overly simplistic. It could be that the actual performance involves not only a consumer's personal consideration of product performance, but also evaluations of performance by important others.

It would also be interesting to explore the normative influence of important others in situations where the consumer is discouraged from making a purchase. Our survey only measured impulse and planned purchases that were completed. But consumers often decide *not* to make a purchase after consulting with a friend or family member. Since negative word-of-mouth has been shown to have a more detrimental effect on consumers' product evaluations than positive word-of-mouth (see, e.g., Bone, 1995; Lutz, 1975), how does negative diagnostic information provided at the time of purchase influence collectivist versus individualist consumers' impulse purchase decisions? Future research might examine whether collectivists are more susceptible to such negative information than individualists, or whether negative information has the same impact for both individualists and collectivists.

Although many studies have explored the factors that influence the decision process for planned purchases and other studies have looked at impulsive consumer buying behavior, none have compared these two distinctly different types of purchasing behavior. While this study did not compare satisfaction with impulse purchases to satisfaction with planned purchases, the data suggest that consumers from individualist countries are generally more satisfied with their impulse purchases compared to their planned purchases, regardless of whether they are alone or with someone at the time of purchase. This suggests that, for some purchases, a lack of planning may result in "better" (i.e., more satisfactory) decisions. Future research might directly compare consumers' impulse purchase decisions and their planned purchase decisions to investigate the conditions under which careful, "rational" decisions are sub-optimal (i.e., less satisfactory) compared to impulse decisions.

This research is limited by the traditional problems with self-report survey research. In addition, satisfaction was measured with two single items representing two different points in time. While these two measures were averaged, similar to the method used by Darke et al. (2006), future research should use multi-item scales to assess satisfaction. Future research should also examine satisfaction with purchase decisions for specific product categories in a broader set of countries. While this study included two individualist and two collectivist cultures, the individualist countries were both English speaking and the collectivist countries were both Asian cultures. As such, future research should examine whether the results are due to the Western–Eastern divide or to the broader constructs of individualism and collectivism.

7. Conclusion

Our research focused on cultural differences in consumers' satisfaction with their planned and impulse purchases. An impulse purchase is an unplanned purchase that is not antic-

ipated before the consumer enters the store (Kollat and Willett, 1967). This type of purchase behavior involves rapid decision-making and a desire for immediate possession (Rook and Gardner, 1993). Surprisingly, cultural differences leading to consumers' satisfaction with their impulse purchases has not been widely examined in the literature. Yet impulse buying accounts for almost 80% of purchases in some product categories (Abrahams, 1997), and shopping is a major leisure activity in many countries (see Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Our study was designed to enhance marketers' understanding of this important buying behavior.

We gathered data from consumers in four countries: two Individualist (USA and Australia) and two Collectivist (Singapore and Malaysia) countries. Our mixed-factorial design allowed us to elicit information from 706 respondents about their satisfaction with a recent impulse and a recent planned purchase decision made when they were with an important other or when they were alone.

Overall, our findings highlight important differences in consumers' planned and impulsive purchasing behavior. Specifically, we show that the effect of being with another person during an impulse purchase has a differential effect across cultures. Consumers from collectivist countries were more satisfied with their impulse purchase when they were with an important other versus when they were alone at the time of purchase, while consumers from individualist countries showed no difference in satisfaction between these two purchase situations. For planned purchases, the presence of another person had no impact on post-purchase satisfaction for either collectivists or individualists.

By exploring consumers' planned and impulsive buying behavior across culture, this research identified when shopping with family and friends is likely to influence post-purchase satisfaction. Our findings have implications for retailing practices in both collectivist and individualist cultures. Consumers in collectivist countries should be encouraged to shop with a friend or family member. Retailers in collectivist countries who want to encourage impulsive buying behavior would be wise to develop in-store events and promotions centered around a theme of "bring a friend" or "family shopping days" in order to enhance consumers' satisfaction with their impulse purchases. Retailers in individualist countries may want to encourage more impulsive buying behavior among their shoppers – whether alone or with someone – in order to enhance overall customer satisfaction.

Culture clearly impacts consumers' buying behaviors. As economies expand in countries throughout the world (e.g., India, China), more shoppers will be able to indulge in impulse buying. This presents marvelous opportunities to marketers who understand how best to promote a consumer's satisfaction with the purchase decision.

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