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**Personal Values and Mall Shopping Behavior: The Mediating Role of Attitudes
of Chinese and Thai Consumers**

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Abstract

In this study, a value-attitude-behavior and a value-attitude-intention-behavior hierarchical model were tested in Thailand and China, respectively, to understand how consumers' mall shopping behavior could be influenced by their personal values orientation in a non-Western context. The results revealed that while a value-attitude-behavior model could be used to profile Thai shoppers, a value-attitude-intention-behavior model worked better to portray Chinese shoppers. The findings imply that the mediating effect of shopping intention in these models may vary upon consumers' shopping motives.

Key words: personal values, attitudes, intention, mall shopping behavior.

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Introduction

Over the decades, the notion developed that personal values can serve as grounds for behavioral decisions in consumption behavior (Carman, 1977; Williams, 1979; Kropp, Lavack and Holden, 1999; Doran, 2009). Consumption behaviors are viewed as a means to achieving desired end states or values, which has been well documented in the literature (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds and Gutman, 1988; Michon and Chebat, 2004). However, the major criticism of examining a simple relationship between values and behavior is that values are relatively abstract, thus are viewed as distal determinants of behavior that can only affect behavior through a number of less abstract or more proximal determinants, like attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Rokeach, 1968; Vinson, Scott and Lamont, 1977; Stern & Oskamp, 1987; Horton and Horton, 1990; Homer & Kahle, 1988; McCartly and Shrum, 1993, 1994; Grunert and Juhl, 1995; Thogersen and Grunert, 1997; Shim and Eastlick, 1998; Jayawardhena's, 2004). Accordingly, a value-attitude-behavior (VAB) hierarchy was developed and has been validated in healthy food consumption (Homer and Kahle, 1988; Grunert and Juhl, 1995), environmental behavior (McCartly and Shrum, 1993; Thogersen and Grunert, 1997), and more recently, e-shopping behavior (Jayawardhena, 2004). The testing of the model in a mall setting is relatively new and has been limited. In their seminal study, Shim and Eastlick (1998) replicated Homer and Kahle's (1988) study, and found that compared with the previous study, the link between attitude and behavior was weaker in a mall setting, which implies the existence of additional factors that may influence this relationship. Shim and Eastlick's (1998) study was based in a Western context, thus it is unclear whether similar findings will hold in a non-Western context and whether the findings will differ across nations.

The lack of studies in this domain has triggered our interest to bridge the gaps by testing the value-attitude-behavior model across two non-Western nations (i.e., China and Thailand) and explore additional mediators to gain further insight into the value-behavior link.

Literature Review & Hypotheses

In the previous study, it was found that although attitude toward a shopping mall can directly influence mall shopping behavior, correlation between these two constructs was relatively weak (Shim and Eastlick, 1998). One possible reason may be attributed to the omission of the intention. A number of theorists have argued that compared with attitude, the intention to perform a behavior, is a closer cognitive antecedent of actual behavioral performance (eg., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Fisher & Fisher, 1992; Gollwitzer, 1993). Intentions have been found to be predicted accurately by attitudes (Shepherd *et al.*, 1988), and the more favorable the attitude with respect to a behavior, the stronger is the individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration (Ajzen, 1991).

Additionally, the effect of intentions in the attitude-behavior relation has been found

varied along the *level of effort* needed to perform the behavior (Bagozzi and Yi, 1989; Bagozzi et al., 1990; Schultz and Oskamp, 1996). According to Bagozzi et al., (1990), behaviors that require much effort are mostly determined deliberately and result from conscious thought processes before forming behavioral intentions; likewise, behaviors that require little effort are guided by less deliberate thoughts directly stimulated by attitudes. When the behavior requires substantial effort, the mediating role of intentions will be strong, and attitudes will have only indirect effects on behavior; when the behavior requires little effort, attitudes will influence behavior directly and the mediating role of intentions will be reduced.

A review of the literature suggests that Chinese mall shoppers are more likely to be utilitarian driven (Tse et al., 1989; Tse, 1996; Li et al., 2004). Utilitarian shoppers tend to view shopping as work or a burden rather than fun (Rao and Monroe 1989; Sherry 1990; Nicholls *et al.* 2000), and they are more time conscious than recreational shoppers (Hansen & Deutscher 1977/78; Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Wilson and Holman 1984). Thus, it is assumed that deliberate conscious evaluation concerning the mall visit will be required for them to make the visit decision. Consequently, the intention to shop will be more likely to form as the end result of the evaluation of the behavior. Thus:

H1: In the Chinese sample, the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy is mediated by shopping intention.

Phillips (1966) proposed *mai pen rai* and *sanuk*, as two important Thai values. The value of *mai pen rai* (literally, something doesn't matter) suggests that adverse outcomes will get better eventually, so one should not worry about them, while the value of *sanuk* (literally, fun and joy) reflects that Thais tend to view life as full of fun and joy and not to be taken too seriously, even in the context of work (Warner, 2003). In addition, influenced by Buddhist teachings, Thais exhibit a strong present orientation. Several scholars have noted their tendency to seek present or immediate gratification (Skinner, 1962; Slagter and Kerbo, 2000). Chetthamrongchai and Davies (2000) proposed that hedonic shoppers score relatively high on present orientation, indicating that they are more concerned with what is happening now than in the past or in the future. Taken together, it is suggested that Thai shoppers will be more likely to shop for hedonic reasons. Hedonic shoppers tend to view shopping as fun rather than burden, thus less effort will be required for making the mall visit decision. Therefore:

H2: In the Thai sample, the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy is not mediated by shopping intention.

Research Methodology

A self-administered survey was used to collect the data in both countries. The survey questionnaire was developed based upon a comprehensive review of related literature, as well as the result of a focus group with five respondents in China. Twenty-two items were selected from the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992) to measure personal values. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 9-point unipolar scale with the end points "not important at all" and "of decisive importance as a guiding principle in my life." The respondents were instructed to read the list of

values first, then list out the value that was most important to them, and then list out the value most opposed to their values. They were then to rate the remaining values based on their importance. Based on the literature review (Bellenger *et al.*, 1977; Wong *et al.*, 2001; Sit *et al.*, 2003) and the result of the focus group, twenty-two mall attributes were selected to measure respondents' attitudes toward shopping malls.

By employing convenience sampling, the total number of usable returned questionnaires was 643, with 320 in China, and 323 in Thailand, with a response rate of 30-40% in each country. Fewer usable surveys were obtained in China because many respondents did not understand what a shopping mall is, confusing it with other shopping venues such as department store, great merchandiser or anchor supermarket within a shopping mall, likely because the format is relatively new. After the data editing and cleaning up processes, the final number of questionnaires with no missing values for all variables under analysis was 305 in China, and 308 in Thailand.

In terms of overall demographics, 90% were aged between 20 to 38, 69% were female, 71.6% were single and 82.7% had no children, 57.4% had a bachelors degree 65.7% were white collar, and 45.1% had monthly income between 2000 to 6000 Yuan (or 10,000 to 30,000 Baht). Compared with Chinese respondents, Thai respondents were older, better educated and more affluent ($p=.000$).

Results of Analysis

Before running the measurement model, a principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was first conducted to identify underlying dimensions of values (Homer and Kahle, 1988; Shim and Eastlick, 1998). This was due to three reasons: 1) the importance of personal value dimensions tend to be varied upon situational factors in different contexts (Kahle, 1983; Beatty *et al.*, 1991; Homer and Kahle, 1988); 2) it is suggested that resultant factors should be used in a causal modeling technique (Kahle and Kennedy, 1989); 3) to avoid the single-item measurement that is frequently raised in value surveys (Braithwaite and Scott, 1991).

Measurement Model Results

In the present study, SPSS 16.0 and structural equation modeling via AMOS 17.0 were used to test the hypotheses in both countries. Before proceeding with structural equation modeling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed initially to validate the scales measuring the constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006). The results of the measurement model in both samples indicate that the factor loadings of the latent variables were generally high and statistically significant (i.e., $>.50$). The fact that all t-tests were significant indicated that all items were measuring the construct they were associated with. In addition, convergent validity may be further evidenced if each indicator's standardized loading on its posited latent construct is greater than twice its standard error (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The results indicate that all items under investigation met this requirement. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if both AVEs are greater than the squared correlation, and were met by both samples.

Note that shopping behavior was a single item scale in the model, therefore, it was adjusted to reflect estimated variance. Using the level of reliability (.85) employed

in previous studies (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993; Shim and Eastlick, 1998), the error variance for the scale was estimated at .15 (1- reliability) (Hair *et al.*, 2006, p.857). In the present study, shopping behavior was measured by money spent during the mall visit.

Structural Equation Model Results

In the Chinese sample, the value-attitude-behavior model was tested initially. The result indicated that the model demonstrated an acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 430.052$, $df=185$, $p=.000$, $GFI=.88$, $CFI=.85$, $RMSEA=.066$). As hypothesized, personal values were positively correlated with attitudes ($\beta_{value1} = .54$, $p<.001$, $\beta_{value2} = .19$, $p= .006$), and attitudes were positively correlated with behavior ($\beta_{attitude} = .18$, $p=.021$). The results confirm the existence of value-attitude-behavior hierarchy in Chinese context. The value-attitude-intention-behavior model was then tested to justify the hypothesis. Its final model yielded a χ^2 value of 546.196 ($p=.000$), with 247 degree of freedom, GFI of .87, CFI of .85, RMSEA of .063 demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data. As hypothesized, attitudes were positively correlated with shopping intention ($\beta = .49$, $p<.001$), and shopping intention was positively associated with shopping behavior ($\beta = .20$, $p=.010$). The mediating effect of shopping intention was further confirmed with Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Similarly, the value-attitude-behavior model was tested first with the Thai sample, the model yielded a χ^2 value of 423.916 ($p=.000$) with 246 degree of freedom, and a GFI of .89, CFI of .89, RMSEA of .049, which demonstrated an acceptable fit with the data. The significant path coefficients also confirmed the existence of value-attitude-behavior hierarchy in a Thai context ($\beta_{value} = .15$, $p = .044$; $\beta_{attitude} = .21$, $p=.036$). In the test of value-attitude-intention-behavior model, although the statistics revealed that the model demonstrated an acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 554.582$, $p=.000$, $df=317$, $GFI=.88$, $CFI=.88$, $RMSEA=.049$), a significant coefficient was not found for shopping intention. The result revealed that attitudes had a positive influence on shopping intention ($\beta_{attitude} = .38$, $p<.001$), but shopping intention did not correlate with behavior. In this regard, it can be concluded that shopping intention does not mediate the attitude-behavior link in the Thai sample. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Discussion and Conclusions

First, the results of this study provide empirical evidence to verify the existence of a value-attitude-behavior hierarchy in a non-western mall context. That is, personal values only influence mall shopping behavior indirectly through the mediating effect of attitude (Shim and Eastlick, 1998). In addition to attitudes, the results of this study suggested that shopping intention served as an additional factor that can be used to better explain the value-behavior relationship. Nevertheless, it was found that the value-attitude-intention-behavior model can only be used to understand shopping behavior of Chinese consumers, while the value-attitude-behavior model works better to predict Thai shoppers' behavior. One possible reason behind is that shopping intention tends to emerge in the attitude-behavior link when *level of effort* needed to perform the behavior is high (Bagozzi and Yi, 1989; Bagozzi et al., 1990; Schultz and Oskamp, 1996). Arguably, the level of effort needed for mall shopping may vary upon the shopping motives. That is, consumers who shop for utilitarian reasons will

need a relatively higher level of effort to conduct the shopping behavior. In contrast, consumers who shop for hedonic reasons will need a relatively lower level of effort to make the shopping decision. Although not directly tested, this study may shed some light for researchers about how value-behavior relationships will be influenced when consumers have different shopping motives. The testing of the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy based on different shopping motives may provide an interesting direction for future research.

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