

**On Congruence Between Human and Brand Personalities
in Chinese Culture Context**

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*The master thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the
University of Agder and is therefore approved as such.*

*However, this does not imply that the University
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Abstract

Brand personality is believed as an important concept in marketing for the reason that , consumers tend to grow an emotional bonding with the brands that have similar personality traits with their own and thus ,there is a congruence between human and brands personalities. This congruence however , to certain degree is believed to be influenced by another vital concept in consumer behavior : Culture. This paper is conducted in China ,and explores how culture affects the congruence pattern between human and brands personalities by comparing the congruence patterns in China and in another culture. To help defining and compare culture differences , Hofstede's five culture dimensions were applied in this paper. And reference for comparison is findings from a former research conducted in a western culture, Norway. this paper duplicated the methodology from the Norwegian study, so as to discover the congruence pattern in Chinese culture context: students from an university in a Chinese city were asked to fill a 2-staged survey, which aims at defining the chosen brands' personality separately and each respondents' personality and their preference towards these brands ; SPSS software was used to analysis the correlation between certain type of human personality and their similar brand personality. After the congruence pattern in China was discovered , the results in researches from Norway and China were compared so as to see the similarities and differences ; differences in culture dimensions from these two countries were applied to explain the difference of congruence patterns.

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Introduction

Brand personality, is an important construct in consumer behavior which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand and has received a considerable amount of attention from researchers and practitioners. Based on the Big Five model of human personality, Aaker (1997) developed a comprehensive framework for brand personality that includes five dimensions (sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness). Brands imbedded with human personality traits can differentiate themselves from competitors within the same product category, making brand personality an important tool in modern marketing strategies. Further support demonstrated that consumers tend to prefer brands with well-established personalities and show loyalty to these brands. (Ramaseshan and Hsiu-Yuan, 2007, Siguaw and Mattila, 1999)

Moreover, it is believed that consumers tend to prefer brands in which they share the same personality traits, but avoid brands with characteristics that conflict with their own. By doing so, they express themselves through the purchase of particular brands. (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982) There is wide interest in how brands function as a symbol of self-expression and the study of self-congruity (e.g, Kassarian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982;)

In addition, empirical studies have shown that brand personality attributes are culture-specific, (Michael Bosnjak, Valerie Bochmann, Tanja Hufschmidt, 2007) and moreover, the symbolic use of brands can vary from culture to culture. (Aaker, 1999)

Consumer behavior research considers culture a crucial factor influencing people's values and habits. (de Mooij, 2011) Hofstede's five national culture dimensions have been widely applied to comparing cultural differences and identifying cross-cultural consumer behavior (de Mooij Marieke, Hofstede Geert, 2002) However, studies that

explore a culture's influence on consumer preference toward brand personality are limited, despite its importance to international marketing. Studies have begun to address this gap, with early results suggesting a relationship between culture and consumer preferences for certain dimensions of a brand personality. Nevertheless, additional studies in different cultural contexts are still required (Shneor, Tunca and Efrat, 2011) and this study will focus on China.

China is the focus of this paper for two reasons: 1) China plays an important role in the world economy and to understand the mentality and behavior of Chinese customers is necessary for marketing success; 2) China influences other Asian cultures like South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia to some extent. Studying Chinese consumer behavior can serve as a reference for advertising in other Asian countries. For instance, Korean people emphasize values associated with Confucian traditions that originated in ancient China, and these values are evident within the Korean economy. (S. H. Lee, 1997)

Consequently, the current paper is inspired by studies of human-brand personality congruence and its cross-cultural analysis, especially by one recent research done in Norway by Maehle and Shenor, which attempts to uncover the link between human and brand personality by identifying consumer brand preference and its connection with different personality types (Sheoner, 2010). This study applied the Diversity Icebreaker to identify consumer personality types along with Aaker's five dimensions to identify chosen brands' personality. The results of this study showed that there is a positive relationship between preferences for certain brands that share personality traits with the test subjects.

The current study is conducted to offer a new cultural analysis on this congruence from a Chinese perspective. So as to examine if the findings of the earlier study on human-brand personality congruence made in the Western cultural context of Norway (Mahele&Shneor.2010), also holds in an Eastern cultural context-China.

Before providing a review of Chinese culture, the paper presents earlier literature on human personality models and typologies, brand personality frameworks, as well as the role of culture in related consumer behaviors, along with propositions. This is followed by the presentation of methodology and results, Following which, the differences and similarities in findings from China and Norway will be examined and identified, and I will try to provide cultural explanations for such differences. Finally, the potential contributions to the pool of research and the research limitations are discussed along with suggestions for future research.

Literature review

Chapter 1 on congruence between human and brand personalities

In this chapter, the literature related to human personalities, Brand personality Human personality typologies and proxies in business contexts as well as congruence between human and brand personalities are discussed. Several types of frameworks for brand and human personality proxies are introduced in this chapter. Later, for the purpose of international comparison, the study will specifically focus on Aaker's five brand personality dimensions and Ekelund's Diversity Icebreaker dimensions as a human personality proxy

1.1 Human Personality theories

Here we define the personality as inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his or her environment. (Schiffman & Kanuk , 2007, pp.125-200) These inner characteristics include specific qualities, attributes and traits that make an individual unique. According to a former study, personality reflects individual differences and is consistent and enduring, but also can change following major life events. (Michael Bosnjak, Valerie Bochmann, Tanja Hufschmidt,2007)

The Big Five model of McCrae and Costa (1990) is considered one of the most important theories on the human personality. The Big Five dimensions include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Conscientiousness is identified as being well-organized, strictly disciplined, and success-oriented. Neuroticism explains the extent of emotional control and mental stability.(Norris, Larsen, & Cacioppo,2007) Extraversion refers to the degree of sociability, assertiveness, and talkativeness. Openness is captured by traits of strong curiosity and a preference for flexibility and change.(McCrae, R. R. & Costa, P.T.

1987.) Finally, agreeableness refers to being helpful, cooperative, and compassionate for other people. (Lim, B., & Ployhart, R. E. 2004)

One human personality theory that has been previously used in consumer behavior research is Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality. This theory argues that unconscious needs originate in human personalities that are formed by one's response to previous incidents at different stages in life. The word 'unconscious' is the key word related to Freud's theory affecting consumer behavior because researchers believe that people make purchases without being fully aware of the true motivations behind their desire to buy a product. Some of the true motivations lie within their personalities. In other words, consumer purchases and consumption patterns reflect the extension of the consumer's personality. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2007) Therefore, a choice made by a consumer and the brand that appeals to his purchase is heavily influenced by individual personalities.

1.2 Human personality typologies and proxies in business contexts

Most commonly used personality typologies include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Briggs and McCaulley, 1985; Hammer, 1996), the Belbin Team Inventory (Belbin, 1981/1999; Belbin, 2000), the Adizes Management Styles (Adizes, 1976; Adizes, 2004), and the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile (Margerison and McCann, 1990/1996) (See Table 1 for details).

Author	Typology	Characteristics
Adizes (1976, 2004)	Producer	Impatient, active and always busy
	Administrator	precise, accurate and following rules
	Entrepreneur	visionary, creative and risk taking

	Integrator	harmonizer, peacemaker, and team player
Belbin (1981/1999, 2000)	Plant	the creative, unorthodox and generator of ideas
	Resource Investigator	the externally focused networker
	Coordinator	the confident, stable, mature and one seeing big picture
	Shaper	the ambitious, performance-oriented challenge undertaker
	Monitor evaluator	the analytical, fair and logical observer
	Teamworker	the diplomatic, non-aligned peacemaker and teamplayer
	Implementer	the efficient, self-disciplined loyal doer
	Completer finisher	the accurate, detail-oriented perfectionist
	Specialist	the able and skilled knowledge source
Margerison-McCann (1990/1996)	Reporter-advisor	supportive, tolerant, knowledgeable, and flexible
	Creator-innovator	imaginative, creative, future and research oriented
	Explorer-promoter	outgoing, influential, variety and excitement oriented
	Assessor-developer	Analytical, objective experimenter

	Thruster-organizer	results-oriented implementer
	Concluder-producer	efficiency and effectiveness oriented practitioner
	Controller-inspector	detailed oriented, standard and procedure inspector
	Upholdermaintainer	conservative, loyal, and purpose-oriented

Table1 Common Managerial Typologies based on Psychological Personality traits

Source: on congruence between human and brand personalities, Maehle & Shneor, 2010

However, these typologies share a common disadvantage which is that they are fixed within team roles, leadership and management styles, career planning, communication styles, as well as conflict and diversity management. (Maehle & Shneor, 2010) Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the Diversity Icebreaker scale (Ekelund, 1997; Ekelund and Langvik, 2008)

There are three main dimensions in the DI scale, represented by three colors: blue, red and green. People with blue orientation are described as task-oriented, structured, logical and successfully executes tasks; people with red orientation are identified as integrators focused on interrelationships with others, personal involvement and social perspectives; people with green orientation were characterized as focused on change, vision and ideas. (Maehle & Shneor, 2010) In this paper, the DI instrument will be used as a proxy for capturing certain dimensions of personality and classifying members of our sample accordingly.

1.3 Brand personality

1.3.1 definitions of brand personality

Brand personality is defined by Aaker as, "the set of human characteristics associated

with a specific brand". (J.L.Aaker,1997) brands for instance have been the focus of previous research in the USA in which Coca-Cola was perceived to contain the personality-traits of cool, all-American and real. (Pendergrast ,1993) Pepsi on the other hand was associated with youth, excitement and being hip, while Dr Pepper was nonconforming, unique and fun. (Plummer ,1985)

1.3.2 human personality and brand personality

Human personality and brand personality traits are to some extent alike since they share a similar conceptualization. (Epstein ,1977) However, human personalities and brand personalities are formed very differently. Park suggests that human personality traits are inferred on the basis of an individual's behavior, physical characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and demographic characteristics. (Park ,1986) On the contrary, as one example of how brand personality is formed, Plummer asserts that brand personality traits can be formed and influenced from both direct and indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand. (Plummer, 1985) The direct contact exists between the people associated with the brand and the indirect contact lies in the product-related attributes, such as packaging, function, brand name, logo, price and slogan. (Batra, Lehmann and Singh, 1993) Demographic features are also considered to be part of brand personality as brands can have gender, age and class. (Levy, 1959)

1.3.3 Importance of applying brand personality in marketing

Alternatively, brand personality is also regarded as "a set of human personality traits that correspond to the interpersonal domain of human personality and are relevant to describing the brand as a relationship partner".(Sweeney and Brandon, 2006) According to Azoulay and Kapferer's theory, only human personality traits are identified and only the traits applicable to brands are identified. (Michael Bosnjak, Valerie Bochmann, Tanja Hufschmidt,2007) Keller points out that brand personality serves a symbolic, or self-expressive, function for consumers while the physical and functional attributes serve a utilitarian function. (Keller, 1993) The possible explanation is that customers tend to imbue brands with human personality traits.

(Gilmore, 1919)

Therefore, brand personality is generally regarded as an important promotional tool appealing to targeted audiences for the development of an overall image. (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999) By purchasing and/or consuming brands which have been personified by advertisers, the customers can claim higher self-esteem. (Belk et al.,1982; Mccracken,1986) The presence of higher self-esteem can be an important driver of consumer preference and choice. (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994) To illustrate this point, Samsung cell phones tend to be perceived in the Chinese market as fun, fashionable and for the younger generation; whereas, Blackberry tends to be described as effective and made for well-organized business people. These perceptions are due in part to the marketing strategies of both companies. Samsung invited several of the most popular Korean singers to act in music videos featuring one series of Samsung's cellphones. Blackberry has targeted professional class customers, enterprises and state entities.

Practitioners view brand personality as a key way to differentiate a brand in a product category, (Hallyday, 1996) and as a central driver of consumer preference and usage. (Biel, 1993) The cases of Sumsung and Blackberry are two examples of consumers identifying brands with images of celebrities, (Rook, 1985) and as they relate to one's individual self. (Fournier, 1994) These two successful advertising strategies have imbued their brands with personality traits to differentiate themselves from competitors.

1.3.4 Aaker's five dimensions of brand personalities

Based on the "Big Five" human personality dimensions, (Briggs,1992) Aaker developed a theoretical framework of brand personality dimensions by exploring a valid and reliable measurement for brand personality traits. This measurement is called Aaker's five dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness) with 42 traits under the five dimensions. Three of the five dimensions overlap with the "Big Five" human personality dimensions: sincerity with

agreeableness, excitement with extroversion, and competence with conscientiousness.

Aaker's five brand personality dimensions research suggests that compared with human personality's "Big Five", a total of three personality dimensions are asymmetric (sincerity, excitement and competence). These three dimensions are an innate part of human personality while sophistication and ruggedness tap a dimension that individuals' desire but do not necessarily have. (Aaker,1997) Therefore, the hypothesis of self-congruity (customers prefer brands with the same personality as their own) could fail if researchers focus on matching all the personality dimensions between brands and consumers. Instead, dimensions of personalities must be examined. (Kleine and Kernan, 1993) Aaker (1997)suggests that "brand personality should be defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand".

Aaker's Five brand personality dimensions have been applied to studies on the impact of these dimensions on brand performance, (Freling and Forbes, 2005) brand loyalty, (Kim, Han and Park, 2001) perceived quality, (Ramaseshan and Hsiu-Yuan, 2007) brand preference and purchase intentions, (OÇass and Lim, 2002). They also have been used to explore human and brand personality congruence (Maehle and Shneor, 2010) and to analyze consumers "preference towards brand personality dimensions across-culture". (Shneor, R. Tunca, B. and Efrat, K. 2011)

1.3.5 alternative brand personality measures

Aaker's framework has been criticized on several grounds including its loose definition of brand personality,(Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Bosnjak, Bochmann & Hufschmidt, 2007) its inability to generalize the factor structure for analyses at the respondent level, (Austin, Siguwaw & Mattila, 2003) and the non-replicability of the five factors cross-culturally. (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003)

An alternative brand personality measure developed by Geuens (2009), on the other hand, presented an appropriate and reliable scale for between-brand and

between-respondent within-category comparisons. Geuens framework demonstrates a valid construct and practical advantage compared with Aaker's scale for the reason that within-category comparisons of this kind are common in marketing research. (Austin et al., 2003)

There are another two models used to construct brand personality. These models are named brand identity prism and ACL. (Kapferer,1997;John,1990;Piedmont,McCrae and Costa,1991) These models attempt to conceptualize traits that can be related to brand personality with the disadvantage of only defining the personality traits as how consumers perceive, but it cannot be applied across different brands. As such, Aaker developed a set of consistent dimensions of brand personality with trait descriptions that are available for all brands. Moreover, over the past decade the brand personality scale developed by Aaker (1997) has been the most commonly used measure in both academic and commercial brand personality research. (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003;) For this reason, this paper will only use Aaker's five dimensions framework, while acknowledging its limitations.

1.4 On congruency between consumer's personality and brand personality

1.4.1 brand-personality congruence effect

Products and brands can be considered tools functioning as symbols of self-images. Consumers evaluate them on the basis of their consistency (congruence) with their own self-images. It is generally believed that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-image by selecting products and brands with "images" or "personalities" that they believe are congruent with their own self-image. They avoid products that are not. For some consumers who have strong preferences for particular brands, relevant research has demonstrated that they see these brands as a representation of an aspect of themselves. (Schiffman & Kanuk ,2007.pp.125-200)

Previous studies showed supporting evidence for the product-personality congruence

effect (Dolich, 1969; Ericksen and Sirgy, 1989, 1992; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Heath and Scott, 1998; Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Landon, 1974; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1985) Aaker (1999) also found the congruence effect between brands and human personalities. People have a preference for brands that carry similar personality characteristics. In addition, the congruence between brand and customer personality has an impact on the relationship that develops between the brand and the customer. (Aaker et al., 2004; Fournier, 1998)

For marketers, such connections are certainly an important step in the formation of consumer loyalty and a positive relationship with consumers. (Schiffman & Kanuk ,2007.pp.125-200) In one research paper on brand personality and self-expression, it is found that self-congruence is not developed by just positioning the personality dimensions of the brand to fit those of consumers. (Aaker,1996) Self-congruence can also be developed via the relationship between the user and the brand. (de Chernatony,L.and McEnally,M. 1999;Plummer,1984) Therefore, brand-customer relationship formation is an important factor to consider in building strong self-congruence with a brand.

Suggestions on building this relationship between individuals and brands is discussed in this research and is summarized through the application of two approaches. First, in order to properly align the brand personality and the personality of consumers, brand managers must identify the major influence played by consumer personalities on the perceived personality of their brands. Secondly, forming brand personality can be managed and executed with more accuracy and effectiveness under the influence of the majority of consumers' personalities. (Phau,Lau,2000) Brand personality should be divided into several dimensions so as to align the different personality dimensions of consumers.

1.4.2 Self image

Self and self-image are two important concepts in the study of consumer behavior. Consumers have more than one enduring image, and it is these self-images that drive individuals to buy certain products and brands in an effort to demonstrate who they are. In essence, consumers seek to depict themselves through their choice of brand. They tend to approach products with images that could enhance their self-concept and avoid those products that do not. (Schiffman & Kanuk ,2007,pp.125-200)

Each individual has an image of himself or herself with certain traits, qualities, habits, moral standards, behaviors and values that form their self-image. Each person has different ways to reinforce these images. In general, we develop and reinforce our self-images by interacting with people around us. It is almost as important what other people, such as family, friends, colleagues or strangers think about us than how we see ourselves. According to Freud, the whole human kind behaves based on the premise of two initiatives, animal instinct and the desire to become someone important. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to elaborate from this that people make decisions either to fulfill a basic need to survive, or with the motivation to stand out from others and earn the most attention. Anyone who cares about his relationships with others and garnering their attention will also care, to a large extent, on how others define him. How one talks, how one walks, how one looks all become symbols of who one is as a person.

1.4.3 two main challenges to human-brand personality congruence

There are two main challenges to human-brand personality congruence: one is related to the fact that self-image is actually a malleable construct and the other one lies in the fact that consumer behaviors vary across cultures.

One's self-image is a malleable construct. (Markus and Kunda 1986, Schlenker 1981, Tetlock and Manstead 1985) Therefore, some research fails to prove the congruence between the 14 brand personalities and those of consumers (which 14 brand personalities?). As discussed earlier, people's behavior depends on the circumstances,

and we act differently based on different situations and are further influenced by social roles and cues. (Aaker,1997) In addition, there is more than one kind of self-image according to consumer behavior literature. Many researchers believe that there are four kinds of self-images: 1) actual self-image (how we see ourselves); 2) ideal self-image (how we would like to see ourselves); 3) social self-image (how we think others see ourselves); 4) ideal social self-image (how we would like to be seen by others). (Schiffman & Kanuk ,2007 pp.125-200)

Recent research also indicates that strong and positive brand personalities can result in favorable product evaluations. (Wang and Yang, 2008) However, there is little empirical evidence proving the congruity between brand personality and human characteristics. Two reasons influence the lack of evidence, including the “malleable self” and culture’s influence on consumer behavior. Simply, people’s behavior is influenced by different social roles. Therefore, the strategy that only takes the personality profile of the target market into account when developing a brand personality is only valid in cases in which a user-positioning strategy is taken, or when the product is used across different situations. In such cases, the personality might play a major role in creating and influencing brand attitudes in contrast to situational factors. (Aaker, 1999)

Furthermore, self-congruity varies across cultures. For instance, it is believed that individualistic cultures like in the USA tend to form a relationship with certain brands easier than collectivist cultures. Recent research attempted to examine the influence of culture on consumer preference towards brand personality dimensions by applying the Diversity Icebreaker Scale and Aaker’s Five dimensions. The study compared the data collected from three countries with different cultures: Israel, Norway and Turkey. It concluded that there is a positive linkage between cultural dimensions and consumer preference levels towards specific brand personality dimensions. (Shneor,Tunca and Efrat,2010) However, this research only represents the cultural situations in these three countries. Data collected from other cultures is still needed.

China is considered one of the fastest growing economies and contributes a considerable amount to the world's economy. Foreign marketers in China need adequate knowledge of not only China's business environment, but also the conditions of both formal and informal institutions such as culture. There is not yet any research on brand-human personality congruence in the context of Chinese culture; furthermore, given that most earlier studies on congruence between human and brand personalities have been conducted in individualistic western societies, China may represent an interesting collectivistic cultural context to re-examine existing knowledge. Therefore, this paper will replicate the study introduced above. It will explore Chinese consumer preference towards specific brand dimensions and then compare the congruence pattern with the findings in Norwegian study to explore to what extent they are different.

Chapter 2: Culture influences consumer behavior

Culture is believed to have an impact on consumer behavior; in this chapter, definitions and dimensions of Culture is firstly discussed, where the concept of Hofstede's four manifestations of culture and five culture dimensions are introduced; moreover, literature and former studies on the influence of culture on consumer behavior as well as perceptions for brand personalities are discussed.

2.1 What is culture?

Hofstede defines culture as the collective mental programming of the people in an environment and that culture is not a characteristic of individuals. Hofstede believes culture encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience. (deMooij ,2010..pp40-66) He suggests that there are four manifestations of culture, including symbols, rituals, heroes and values. These manifestations can be depicted as an onion, with the implication that symbols lie within the most superficial layer while values are the deepest, core elements of culture.

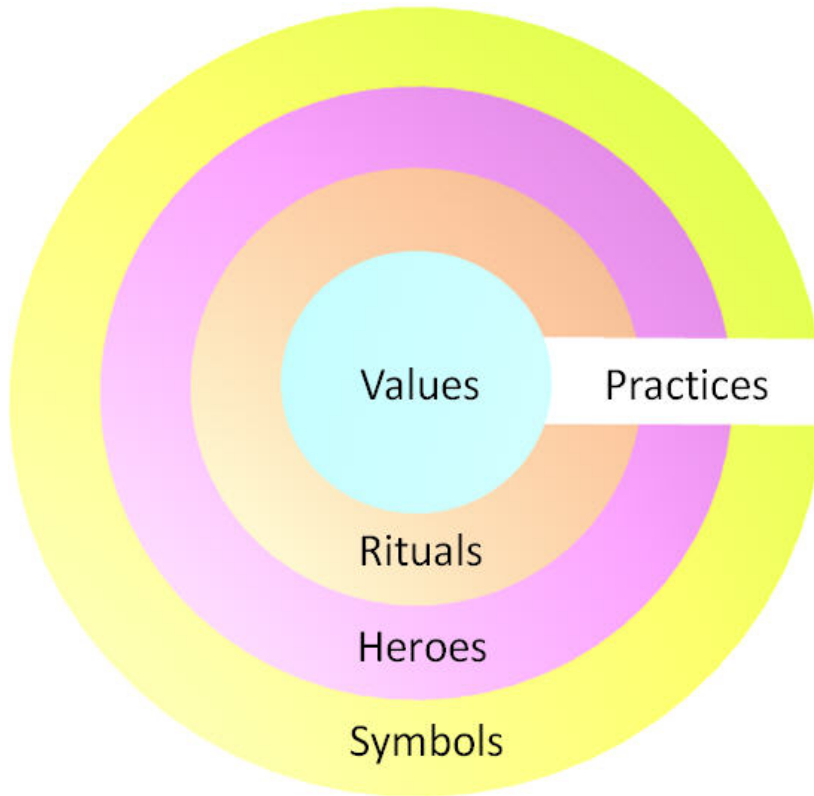


Figure 1 The ‘onion diagram: Manifestations of culture at different levels of depth

Source: Hofstede.1991,*Cultures And Organizations - Software of the Mind*, McGraw-Hill

Symbols consist of items like words, gestures and pictures that carry special meaning recognized only by those who share the same culture. The dress and languages discussed earlier is one example of symbols, as well as music and contracture styles brands also fit within this category.

Heroes are people who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a society and who serve as role models for behavior. One interesting comparison is that East Asian heroes are in most cases the people who sacrifice themselves to save the whole nation’s future. In comparison, western countries often express admiration for individuals who care for other individuals expressed with words like: “You are my hero”. A hero can be a good father or a good husband who takes care of his own

family. The different dimensions of culture will be discussed in more detail later.

Rituals are the collective activities considered socially essential within a culture: they are carried out for their own sake. Maori people greeting each other by nose touching, Spanish people kissing each other's cheeks and Japanese people bowing are different expressions of greeting rituals.

Values are located in the core of the culture onion. If the other three manifestations are visible and can be considered expressions of culture, then value is invisible and the essence of one unique culture. Rokeach defines values as an enduring belief that one mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable to an opposing mode of conduct or end-state of existence. One may argue that the basic value of all humanity is the same: we all want to look pretty, we all want to be successful and we all want to live a healthy life. However, the method we use and the results we search for are different across the world. For instance, in Africa, a degree of body fat is considered attractive, while most other continents value slim body types.

Values are also conceptually different at the macro and micro-level. Macro-level values are called collective values or cultural values, and micro-level values are called value orientations. Value orientation that becomes manifest in the actions of a smaller group or larger group of people is considered a cultural value.” (deMooij ,2010. pp40-66)

2.2 Hofstede's Five Dimensions of National Culture

According to Hofstede (1965), culture in each nation can be characterized along five dimensions: Power/distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty/avoidance and long-/short-term orientation. Power distance dimension (PDI) is the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect power to be distributed unequally. In high power distance cultures, people place a

great importance on their appearance to demonstrate their status. While in low power distance cultures, people tend not to care as much about what they and others wear and what kind of brands they use.(de Mooij ,2010,pp.40-66)

Masculinity/femininity (MAS) can be defined as the dominant values in a masculine society being achievement and success, while the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life. (de Mooij,2000) In masculine cultures, success is the key value while feminine cultures value maintaining a low profile, and demonstrating a down to earth personae.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) is the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are not as open as low uncertainty avoidance cultures when it comes to change, such as innovation. People from high uncertainty avoidance cultures also use more medication than people of low uncertainty avoidance who typically hold a more positive attitude toward staying healthy. Uncertainty avoidance also influences the importance of personal appearance.

Long/short-term orientation (LTO) is the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view. With the Confucian philosophy establishing their core values, countries in East Asia, such as China and Japan, are considered the most representative long-term oriented cultures. There are many pictures symbolizing harmony of man with nature as important elements of advertising in Japan, China and other Asian cultures.

Individualism/Collectivism (IDV) can be defined as people only looking after themselves and their immediate family, versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty. Markus believes that individualists are motivated to project and express their true and unique self to others. (Markus,H.,1997)

At the same time, they consider the “self” to be who they are. (Triandis,1989) Oppositely, collectivists are motivated to express their similarities to their reference group in order to show conformity. (Aaker&Schmitt,1998;Triandis,1989) In line with this perspective, some researchers also argue that individualists are more likely to build strong self-congruity with a preferred brand than collectivists. Collectivists place a lower priority on expressing their self and building a relationship with a brand they prefer. (Phau&Lau,2001)

2.3 Influence of culture on customer’s behavior

2.3.1 stimulus-response model and customer’s black box framework

Philip Kotler (2003) defines marketing as “a social and management process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others”. An essential aspect of marketing is consumer behavior which includes the understanding of what consumers need and what exactly influences their buying behavior. The interaction between stimuli and human reactions is often depicted through the stimulus-response model shown in Figure below.

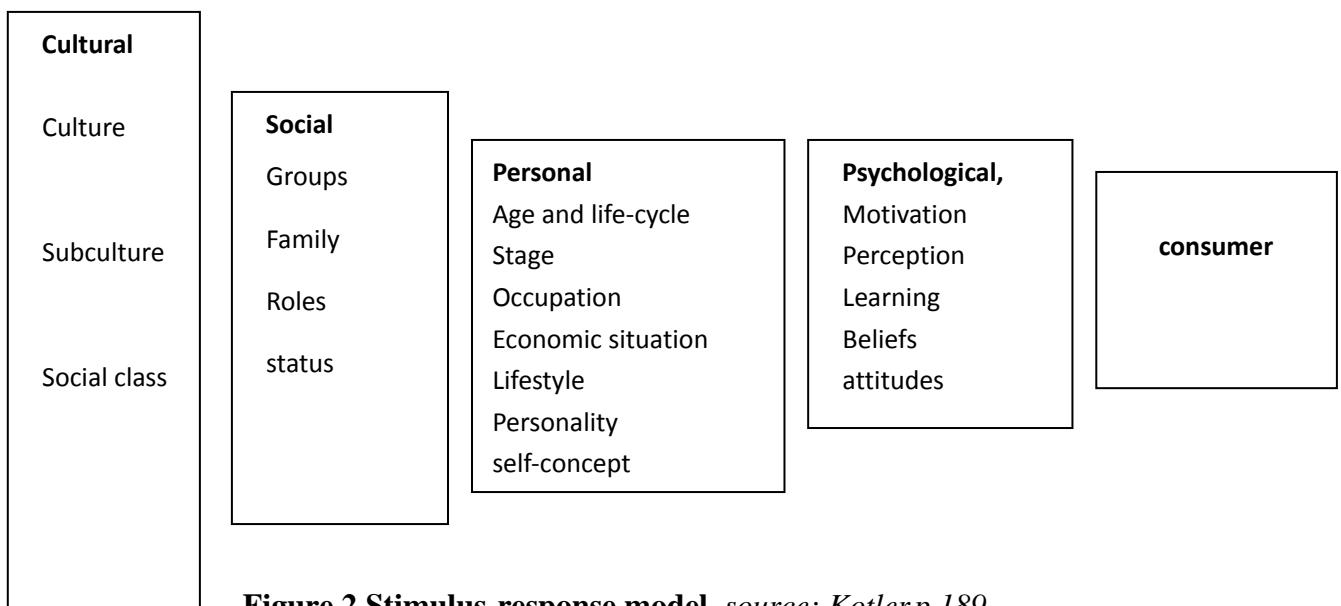


Figure 2 Stimulus-response model, source: Kotler,p.189

The external factors (marketing stimuli and other stimuli) are converted in a buyer's black box into a response. The buyer's black box consists of two parts: the buyer's characteristics and the buyer's decision process. The buyer's characteristics can be subdivided further, as demonstrated in Figure 3, and one element of these characteristics is culture.

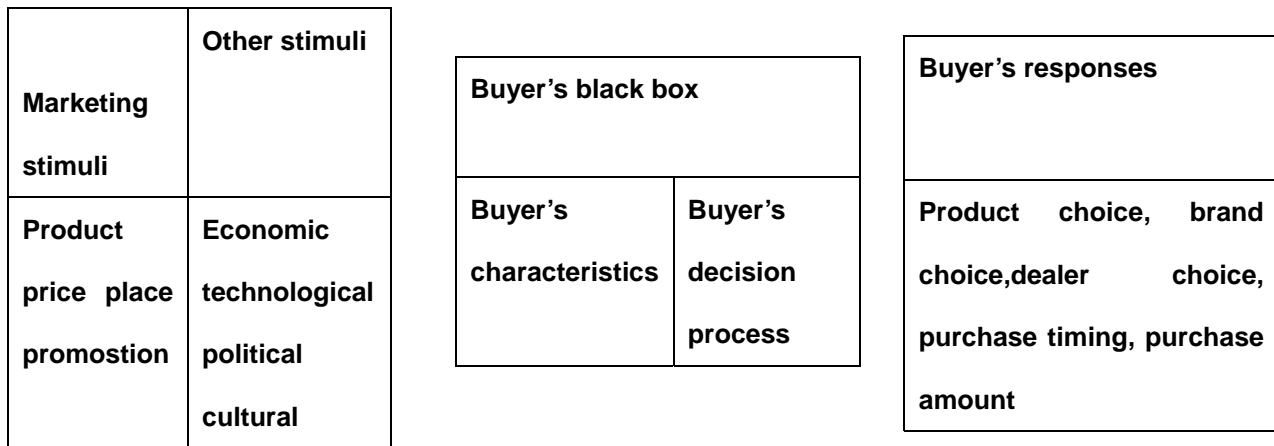


Figure 3. Factors influencing consumer behavior. *source: Kotler, p.189*

According to some psychoanalytical studies, it is obvious that the personalities overwhelmingly depend on the culture and society in which they belong. Culture and society affect how people function and communicate in society, their mode of being and experiences in the world and within themselves, and what their ideals and actualities of individualism. (deMooij ,2010. pp40-66) Ideas, values, acts and emotions are all cultural products. People are individuals under the guidance of cultural patterns and historically created systems of meaning.

Advertising reflects these wider systems of meaning because it reflects the way people think, what moves them and how they relate to each other. Advertising attempts to encapsulate how people love, eat, relax and enjoy themselves. (deMooij ,2010 .pp40-66) In addition, culture has traditionally been regarded as an environmental characteristic that influences consumer behavior. Therefore, many

aspects of a culture affect consumer needs differently through the acquisition and use of goods and services to satisfy needs. (Roth, 1995) Cultural differences lead to different consumption patterns between countries. Therefore, commercial brands can be considered as symbols that potentially carry cultural meaning. (McCracken,1986)

It is increasingly important to understand the values of a national culture and the impact they have on consumer behavior. This knowledge can be a powerful tool for international marketing. If it is accepted that the core values of national culture are stable and will influence both existing and future consumer behavior, future use of products and services can be predicted more easily. This result would make international marketing more efficient and effective. (de Mooij, 2000)

2.3.2 Cross culture consumer behavior frameworks

There are two models related to consumers and cultures that can help explain the influence of culture on consumer behavior. The model of cross culture consumer behavior framework, (adapted from Manrai and Manrai, 1996) assign attributes and processes that represent the cultural components of a person. It also assigns them so consumer behavior domains represent the culture components of behavior. Income enables people to consume and obtain attributes. The notional constructs of what people are and the processes refer to the motivations of humanity. All processes, such as motivation, emotion, cognition, and affect are involved in behavior. However, they operate differently across the various consumer behavior domains, such as product acquisition, ownership and usage, shopping and buying behavior, complaining behavior, brand loyalty, and adoption of innovations (deMooij ,2010..pp40-66). There is a cause and effect relationship between “culture of person” and “culture of behavior”, and more importantly, culture and values generate both identity and behavior.

The model developed by Hofstede explains most of the variations in consumption and

consumer behavior across countries and enables marketing executives to quantify the effects of culture. (de Mooij ,2011). One example is that previous research correlates some of the differences in product use and buying motives across Europe. For example, the volume of mineral water and soft drinks consumed, pet ownership, car choice, newspaper and book readership, TV viewing, internet use, usage of cosmetics, consumption of fresh fruit, ice cream and frozen food, usage of fast moving consumer goods and durables can all be examined for unique European trends. The differences can be stable or become stronger over time. (de Mooij,2000)

In addition, Hofstede's model of national culture is considered an efficient tool for international retailing strategy: "If we look at the daily use of the Internet from 1997 to 1999 for the four different purposes, small power distance and weak uncertainty avoidance explain daily usage for business. Low masculinity and weak uncertainty avoidance explain daily usage for education and science. Daily usage for leisure and 21 personal purposes is explained by low masculinity and additionally by weak uncertainty avoidance. Across the four purposes, daily e-mail use is explained by both weak uncertainty avoidance and low masculinity".(de Mooij & Hofstede,2002)

2.4 Brand personality and culture

Consumers not only respond to advertising messages that are congruent with their culture, but also seek brands with personalities that are congruent with either their own personalities or reflect the person they would like to become. (Sirgy, 1982)

Several studies reach a similar conclusion that brand personality is culturally-specific. One of them was conducted in the USA and Korea to explore how cultural meanings are embedded in consumer perceptions of brands. The conclusion supports the argument that cultures where people have very different values are likely to exhibit culture-specific differences in brand personality. (Sung and F. Tinkham,2005)

Another conclusion suggests that far from being universal, previous research found that European (Spanish) brand personality dimensions differ from those in America and Asia. (Japan) (Y.L. Chan, Saunders, Taylor, Souchon, 2003)

Moreover ,a six-nation study on the impact of culture on brand perceptions examined perceptions of brands among all six countries by using Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Aaker's brand personality dimensions. The studies demonstrated that brands can be perceived differently in different cultures in spite of their identical positioning. (Foscht, Maloles , Swoboda, Morschett and Sinha, 2008)

However, marketers often strive to make the images of global brands consistent across countries. Some brands can benefit from a consistent personality presented to customers around the world. Hello Kitty for instance, a cartoon feline figure created by Japan's Sanrio Company in 1974, is recognized in more than 40 countries throughout Asia, Europe and North America. Hello Kitty is one of the world's most successful commercial images because its popularity is easily transferred to products that carry the Hello Kitty image. The use of Hello Kitty has been very successful on notebooks, stationery pads and accessories. (Frost,2006)

Kitty's personality is believed to be interpreted in a similar way by young girls around the world. The perception of the brand in this cohort is basically cute and warm. In the article "Cultures split over brand personality" by Randall Frost(2006), Hello Kitty's case was discussed in relation to Asian consumers with collectivist cultures and western people with individualistic cultures. It was mentioned, and De Mooij argues, that individualists tend to develop a close relationship with brands easier than collectivists. While other options were also cited in the article, the theory that there is such a thing as 'individualistic' or 'masculine' cultures is problematic.(Frost, 2006)

To summarize: Brand personality dimensions have proven to be culture-specific.

However, there is still a possibility of imbedding a brand with global personalities. The concepts of individualistic or collectivist cultures is relative, and it is still debated whether consumers from two cultures relate to brands in similar or different ways.

Chapter 3 Five culture dimensions applied to China

In this chapter, culture-related topics are covered ,they are: brief review of Chinese culture and the key differences between Chinese culture and western culture; following that, Hofstede's five dimensions is used to analyze Chinese culture dimensions as well as its difference from other countries in general, and then the difference of culture dimension scores between China and Norway is high lightened and discussed; in the end, I quote Frans Giele 's study of "Chinese Consumer Behavior: An Introduction" as main reference so as to summarize Chinese consumer behavior.

3.1 Brief review of Chinese culture

3.1.1 Basic facts about China

China is the largest country by population and the second largest by land area. Thousands of years of monarchies have contributed to a very high power distance in Chinese history. But this distance shortened to some extent after the Chinese Communists defeated the Chinese Nationalists in the civil war and established the People's Republic of China. Since the introduction of market-based economic reforms in 1978, China has become the world's fastest-growing major economy. (BBC news ,Asia-Pacific,2009)

Confucianism is regarded by many as the most important value in China. Its merits include harmony, importance of family and social connections, as well as long-term orientation. The Chinese culture is argued to be one of the world's oldest and most complex. (Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2008)

Today there are 56 distinct and recognized ethnic groups in China. The dominant ethnic group is the Han Chinese. Throughout history, many groups have been assimilated into neighboring ethnicities or disappeared. At the same time, many

within the Han identity have maintained distinct linguistic and regional cultural traditions. (Fifty-six Ethnic Groups in China, 2009)

3.1.2 Chinese and western value differences

There are two different systems which form the core of scientific models of the Western and Chinese cultural traditions. The Western traditions are based on Euclid's geometry and Aristotle's logic and the Chinese on a book called Zhou Yi. According to the two western models, its cultural tradition can be framed from the inner to the outside, from the small to the big, from the low to the high and from the many to one. Chinese cultural traditions are often differently framed from the outside to the inner, from the big to the small, from the high to the low and from one to the many. To elaborate, the western form is a contract model built on the basis of individuals, but the Chinese built on the basis of "man administration". In Western societies, the inner structure of contracts allows for breaches to occur within a set of standards and values with features of reconstruction, regeneration and creation. The entirety theory is different as breaks and losses cause a complete collapse. The two traditions of western and Chinese cultures formed in human history still have great influence today. The proverb "two poles are intertwined" still has significance in understanding real life in human society.(Li)

Just as Chinese culture is deeply influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, ancient Greek and Roman philosophy has a vital impact on western culture. Western cultures emphasize individual freedom and rights, as well as scientific exploration and practice. Chinese people prefer to believe ancestral experience.(Diversity and Integration of Chinese and Western Culture)

In western cultures, people tend to emphasize autonomy, emotional independence, privacy, and individual need. (Sung and F. Tinkham,2005) They prefer to focus on the positive consequences of their actions and on their own feelings and goals. They

believe in self-reliance, hedonism, and competition. (Trandis, 1994) China on the other hand, and other East Asian cultures, tend to emphasize group harmony and long-term relationships and dependence on each other. Confucianism has a considerable influence on people's values and behaviors in China.

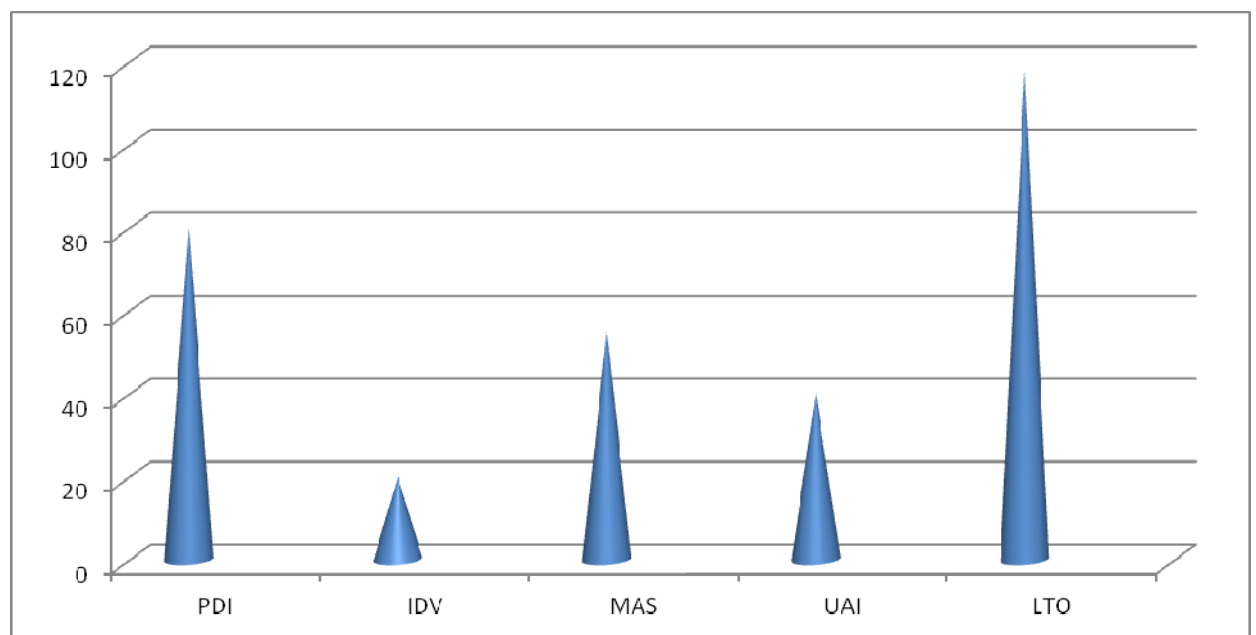
Westerners believe in self-dedication in achieving their goals, whereas Chinese have behavioral ethics and constraints that are dependent on their inner world and perceptions of eternal recurrence. The Western approach encourages searching outside of oneself, whereas the Chinese prefer to adopt a systematic approach, and search within themselves. The real happiness in Western society is based upon a materialistic approach, whereas the Chinese believe that true happiness is achieved by inner intervention, as the truth is the key to eternal bliss and happiness. The Western society believes in individualism, whereas the Chinese culture has faith in collectivism and the fundamental connections with others. A Westerner is overwhelmed by pragmatic, materialistic and emotional approaches in comparison to the Chinese, who have a more missionary and spiritual approach towards life. The Westerner analyzes and the Chinese meditate. The Chinese believe in virtues and Westerners believe in value ethics. (difference between Chinese and western culture)

If we relate the comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures to Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, we can highlight that two total different philosophies lead to different orientations in these two cultures in a relative sense. China is collectivist while the Western world is individualistic and China is long-term oriented while the Western world is short-term oriented.

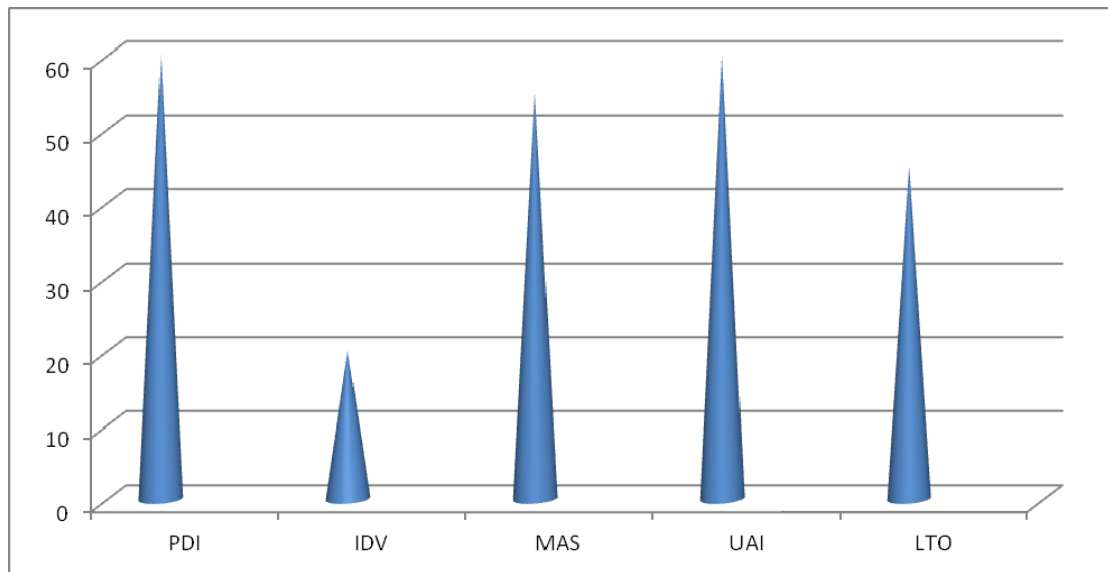
3.2 Chinese Culture Dimensions

3.2.1 Hofstede's Five culture dimensions' scores for China

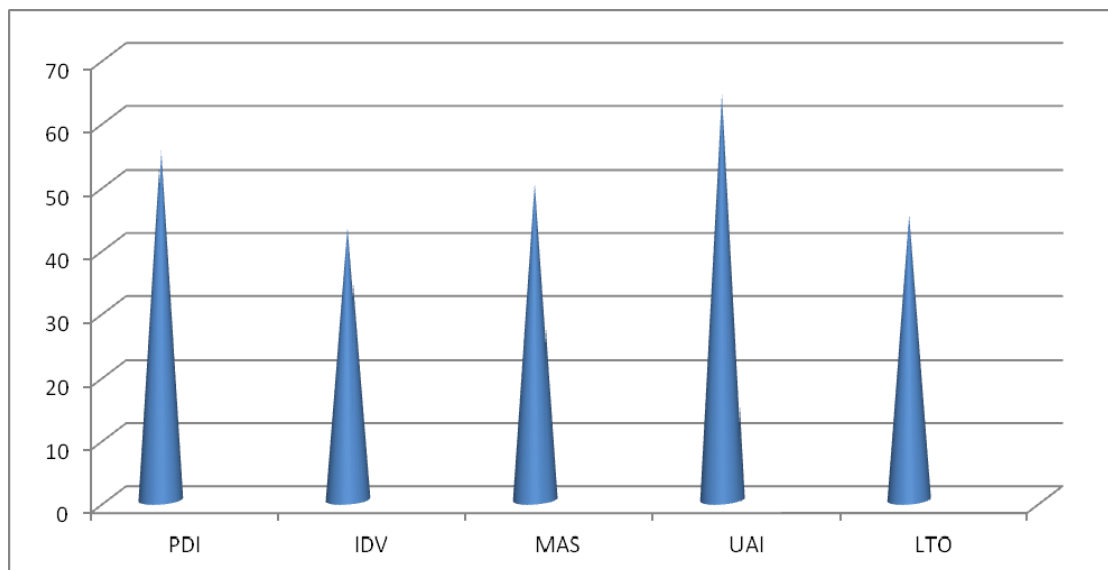
Hofstede's five national culture dimensions help to pinpoint the general differences of Chinese culture with the rest of the world. The scores of five cultural dimensions for Chinese culture, other Asian cultures as well as the world's average score are shown in the following graphs.



Graph1 China's culture dimension scores



Graph2 .Average of culture dimension scores for China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan



Graph 3. World average for Hofstede's dimensions

source : http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_china.shtml

Analysis: "Geert Hofstede analysis for China places Long-term Orientation (LTO) as the highest-ranking factor (118), the same as for all Asian cultures. This Dimension indicates a society's time perspective and an attitude of perseverance. The basic idea is that obstacles can be overcome with time, if not through will and strength.

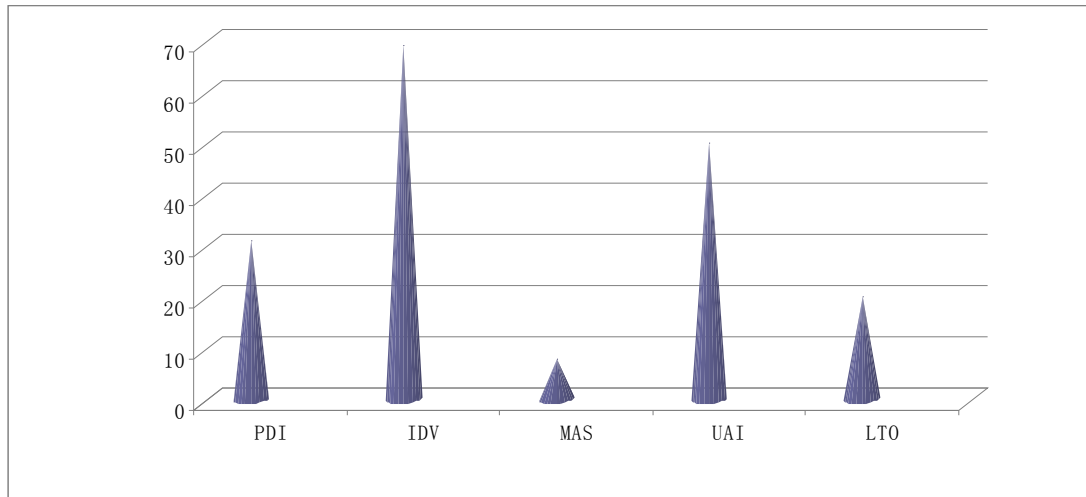
The Chinese rank lower than any other Asian country in the ranking of Individualism

(IDV) with a score of 20 compared to the average of 24. This may be partially attributed to the high level of emphasis on a Collectivist society by the Communist party. Low Individualism manifests itself through close and committed member 'groups' such as the family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

Of note is China's significantly higher Power Distance ranking of 80 compared to the other East Asian country averages of 60, and the world average of 55. This is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. This condition is not necessarily forced upon the population, but rather accepted by the society as their cultural heritage. China's religion is officially designated as Atheist by the State, although the concepts and teachings of the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (500BC) are woven into the society at large. Some religious practice is acceptable in China." (http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_china.shtml)

3.2.2 China VS Norway

Norway's scores is pivotal to discuss here for the reason that: the main guide for the current thesis "on congruence between brand and human personalities" was done in Norway; moreover, one of the two purposes of the current paper is to explore the influence of culture to consumer behavior. Hence, it is obviously quite important to compare the culture difference between China and Norway and Hofstede's culture scores can be applied here as a proper tool. Norway's score is demonstrated in the graph below:



Graph4: Norway's culture dimension scores

source:

<http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/long-term-orientation/>

Norway scores : PDI(31);IDV(69);MAS(8);UAI(50):LTO(20)

China scores: PDI(80);IDV(20);MAS(66);UAI(40):LTO(118)

We can see from the figures that except for the uncertainty avoidance index, these two countries are very different. China is much higher than Norway on power distance ,and masculinity as well as long term orientation. However on Individullism ,Norway is much higher than China while on uncertainty avoidance ,Norway is slightly higher than China. since these two countries represent such dramatic cultural distance they can serve as interesting sources for differences in human-brand personality congruence.

3.3 Highlights of characteristics of Chinese customers

The article “Chinese Consumer Behavior: An Introduction” by Frans Giele(2009) provides a brief but accurate description of Chinese customers from multiple

perspectives such as cultural, social, personal and psychological. Based on this article, I am going to highlight the key characteristics of Chinese customers as follows:

Brands and decision making: Former research demonstrates that 78% of the buyers decide in the store what they are going to buy, 37% are easily susceptible to promotions, and only 22 % stick to their original purchasing intentions before entering the store. The majority of Chinese customers make purchasing decisions at the last minute and are influenced by in-store marketing.

Ambition and work motivation: This concerns the Chinese employee attitudes towards work. According to a nationwide survey, the percentage of Chinese employees who desire to become rich by working hard fell from 68 in 1994 to 53 in 2004. In the meantime, the percentage of those who claim that “money or fame is less important than living as how I like” has increased from 10% to 26%. This change represents a change in ambition.

Ethnocentrism: Chinese people are not ethnocentric compared to the Japanese and Koreans according to one survey in 2008 done by McKinsey. The survey showed that only 30% of Chinese respondents only chose local brands. In addition, consumers did not always know about a brand’s “nationality”.

Face concept: Chinese people dislike losing face, otherwise referred to as losing status in the presence of others. This value leads Chinese consumers towards luxury products which reflect well on their status or “face”. (Li and Su ,2007) Chinese tourists traveling to Europe are the biggest consumers of luxury brands such as LV, Gucci and Prada. Approximately 44% of these luxury retailers’ revenues come from Chinese tourists. Another example of the influence of “face” can be found in the marketing strategies of electronics brands such as Apple and Samsung. The two companies imbed their products with trendy, energetic characteristics to appeal to young people. This is especially important in China where many young consumers are

the only child in their family with parents willing to spend money to show parental love. This is also one reason why Nokia has gained more market share than Motorola and Ericsson by emphasizing fashion over function. (William McEwen, Xiaoguang Fang, Chuanping Zhang, Richard Burkholder,2006)

Consumer knowledge: Research done in China and France showed that Chinese consumers remembered more product attributes than the French. This might result from the fact that the Chinese language has much more categorization than French and leads to more stereotypical judgments; and the use of mandarin asks more of the human brain and therefore Chinese are better in remembering product attributes.

Generation Y: Generation Y stands for the youth in its early twenties or late teen years. This generation enjoys better education than earlier generations, and western culture and products are more accepted by this generation. Marketers believe this is the generation to focus their attention on developing brand awareness.

Customer division: According a survey done in Beijing, Chinese customers can be divided into four groups. 50.8% are pragmatic and buy products for their functional purpose, 33.9% are commercial and pay attention to commercial information and brands, 11.7% are sociable and are usually affected by the brand preferences of their family and friends, and 3.6% are conservative and consists of a more senior population that does not want change. However, the data is limited to Beijing and cannot be directly applied to broader China.

Regional division: China can be divided into seven regional markets: South, East, North, Central, Southwest, Northwest and Northeast China. These 7 markets can be categorized into 3 groups based on income levels: growth markets, emerging markets and untapped markets.

Growth markets: South and East China.

South China (Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan) has the largest population in China, economic development focused on exports that attracts foreign investment.

East China (Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu) is a highly modernized area and has the

most developed economy.

Inhabitants from growth markets are generally better educated than the rest of the country.

Emerging markets: North, Central and Southwest China.

These areas are generally less developed than the growth markets and consumers have less buying power.

North (Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei and Shandong) and Central (Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Anhui)

These areas are more developed than the southwest (Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Sichuan). This area focuses on agriculture but also increasingly attracts the attention of both the central government and FDI.

Untapped markets: Northeast and Northwest.

The area is home to a dispersed population that is poor and undereducated. The economies are the least developed and their purchasing power is the least in the country.

Different attitudes: Inland consumers have retained more traditional Chinese values and are more collectivist than their coastal counterparts. As a consequence of these value differences, coastal Chinese consumers care more about their own feelings and desires, and less about the opinions or evaluations of other people. (Zhang, Grigoriou and Li, 2008) This study has confirmed the divergence between the different regions of China down to the level of values and attitudes. They demonstrate that Chinese consumers in the coastal areas have accepted more western values and that they have become more individualistic than inland consumers. ”(Frans Giele,2009)

Chapter 4 Propositions :Congruence between Human and Brand Personality in the Chinese cultural context

In this chapter, the 15 propositions tested in Maehle & Shneor's study of "on congruence between brand and human personalities" is discussed and replicated, before which, the concept and main findings of this former research which was conducted in Norway is discussed briefly.

4.1 summary of former study: on congruence between brand and human personalities

The current paper focuses on two variables that influence Chinese consumer behavior: personality and culture. As mentioned earlier, the current paper follows the study of "On Congruence between Brand and Human Personalities". (Maehle,&Shneor, 2010) ,which was conducted in Norway and attempted to find the relationship between brands and human personalities by linking consumer brand preferences with different human personalities. DI forms are used to identify candidate personality dimensions and Aaker's five dimensions are applied to identify brand personality. Proposed conclusions are offered through this study of customers with certain DI type (Red, Blue, Green) have a strong preference for and/or against brands with certain personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness). Results of this study show that there are positive relations between Blue DI type and the excitement dimension of brand personality, and between Red DI type and the sincerity dimension of brand personality. But there is no clear preference for and/or against any brand personality dimension from the Green DI type. (Maehle&Shneor, 2010)

4.2 logics for propositions of congruence between human and brand personality

The current paper shares similarities with the study mentioned above in respect to methodology. The proposed conclusions used in this previous research can also be a

proper reference here. People with 'blue' character tend to be task-oriented, structured and logically successful executors. They would find sincerity based brand personality dimensions to be in harmony with their realistic and pragmatic orientation towards wholesome and down-to-earth brand personality traits. Brands with a competent personality dimension correspond with their search for success. The ruggedness dimension that includes traits like tough mindedness and self-reliance also strikes a chord with the blue-type characteristics. On the other hand, pragmatic people with a Blue personality dimension would not like the idea of showing off by purchasing sophisticated and exciting brands that are trendy and contemporary. These personality dimensions are against the stability-seeking of Blue DI type. Therefore, respondents with a Blue personality tendency. They have a strong preference for brands with personality dimensions of sincerity and/or competence and/or ruggedness. respondents with a tendency toward a Blue personality have a weak preference towards brands with personality dimensions of excitement and/or sophistication.

People with 'red' personality relational focused social perspectives would find: sincerity dimension in brand personality reflects their search for harmony; brands with an excitement dimension explain their desire for social acceptance and fashion. In addition, people with 'red' personalities would avoid brands with rugged personalities for the reason that these brands seem tough and inflexible, which is against the approach of those who seek harmony and soft diplomacy. The competent brands that identify with success are not what people with a 'red' orientation are looking for. But there might not be an obvious relationship between their preferences and the sophisticated brands. Therefore, respondents with a Red personality tendency have a strong preference toward brands with personality dimensions of sincerity and/or excitement.; respondents with a Red personality tendency have a weak preference toward brands with personality dimensions of competence and/or ruggedness.

People with 'green' orientation tend to focus on change and new ideas. They would

prefer exciting brands which are always up-to-date and innovative. Competent brands which tend to be successful would also strike a chord with people who have a 'green' orientation who are seeking to improve their reality through intellectual and creative approaches. However, this type of person would avoid brands with sincerity and ruggedness for the reasons that they do not value down-to-earth, traditional or inflexible things. 'Green' orientation is not in contrast with a charming or upper-class personality. However, since sophisticated brands do not necessarily demonstrate innovation and modernity, people with 'green' orientation would not hold a strong preference towards sophisticated brands either. therefore, respondents with Green personality tendencies have a strong preference toward brands with personality dimensions of excitement and/or competence; respondents with a Green personality tendency have weak preference for brands with personality dimensions of sincerity and/or ruggedness. (Maehle&Shneor,2010)

4.3 propositions: Congruence between Human and Brand Personality

For the high similarity in methodology between the current paper and study on congruence between brand and human personalities conducted in Norway,I will now replicate the 15 propositions tested in Shenor's article:

P1: The higher an individual scores on the Red dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Sincerity dimension of brand personality.

P2: The higher an individual scores on the Blue dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Sincerity dimension of brand personality.

P3: The higher an individual scores on the Green dimension of the DI scale, the weaker the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on

the Sincerity dimension of brand personality.

P4: The higher an individual scores on the Red dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Competence dimension of brand personality.

P5: The higher an individual scores on the Blue dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Competence dimension of brand personality.

P6: The higher an individual scores on the Green dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Competence dimension of brand personality.

P7: The higher an individual scores on the Red dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Excitement dimension of brand personality.

P8: The higher an individual scores on the Blue dimension of the DI scale, the weaker the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Excitement dimension of brand personality.

P9: The higher an individual scores on the Green dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Excitement dimension of brand personality.

P10: The higher an individual scores on the Red dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Sophistication dimension of brand personality.

P11: The higher an individual scores on the Blue dimension of the DI scale, the weaker the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Sophistication dimension of brand personality.

P12: The higher an individual scores on the Green dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Sophistication dimension of brand personality.

P13: The higher an individual scores on the Red dimension of the DI scale, the weaker the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Ruggedness dimension of brand personality.

P14: The higher an individual scores on the Blue dimension of the DI scale, the stronger the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Ruggedness dimension of brand personality.

P15: The higher an individual scores on the Green dimension of the DI scale, the weaker the preferences exhibited by the same individual for brands scoring high on the Ruggedness dimension of brand personality.

In later chapters I will discuss how Chinese culture influence consumer behavior by analyzing the data and test the propositions above ,so as to compare the results to Shenor's study; based on the obvious culture difference between China and Norway, distinguishing analysis results is expected, and this difference can be interpreted into: Culture difference leads to different degrees of congruence between consumers and brands personalities.

Research Methodology

This chapter contains the theories related to research methods such as qualitative and quantitative method, validity and reliability . and also present the choice of method and the research design for the current paper.

5.1 research design

To test the propositions presented in the last chapter, a two-stage survey was conducted in an university in a city called Enshi, located in the middle part of China. The purpose of the data collection in the first stage is to identify the personality dimensions for each brands by comparing if they score high or low against a mean score for each of Aaker's (1997) five brand personality dimensions, by doing so , can generate a relative ranking of brand scores on the five dimensions.

After the brands are classified by scores , the second stage of survey is introduced to collect data on Diversity Icebreaker types' scores and the relationships between these scores and brand preferences. Fifteen brands from three different product categories are chosen for this survey, the details can be found below. During the both data collection stages ,the same brands are used.

5.2 Survey Design

Stage 1: measuring brand personality dimensions for each brand

The first data collection round is to measure brand personality of the 15 brands which we were going to use in the main survey ,which is second stage of data collection. Three sets of five brands representing different product categories were selected, the product categories are : Automobile, clothes, Electronics .

brands are: Automobiles brands of Toyota, Volkswagen, BMW ,Volvo, Mitsubishi
Clothes brands of Nike, FANCL, Esprit, Mark huwfei ,Levis
Electronics brands of Sony, Lenovo, Apple, Samsung, IBM

Among these brands, three from clothes category and electronics category are local brands,they are :FANCLE pronounced in Chinese as “fan ke cheng pin” ,who mainly sell T-shirt through internet shops and Mark Huwfei pronounced in Chinese as “ma ke hua fei”,who used to be a girls’brand and now aims at target groups of both genders ;as well as Lenovo ,who mainly produce personal computers and bought the patent for production of IBM’s personal computer several years ago.

sixty economics and business students from the university in Enshi, China participated in the first data collection stage. first stage is to list all the 15 brands and the focus group were asked to use Aaker’s five brand personality dimension to score each of these brands on a five-point scale. The five dimensions scale here are divided into detail facets so as to be more descriptive and easier to comprehend ,and the dimensions as well as the facets were translated into Chinese by the author.

The five-point scale represents the degree of how much each facet describe each brand.for instance,for brand A,if someone think facet1 describe exactly and correctly ,then he can write a “5” under this facet,and if facet 2 ‘s description to a very low extent match with brand A,then maybe he would only give a “1”.the purpose of this stage is to entitle each brand with a certain personality from the big five brand personalities in a relatively fair and accurate way, for the reasons that some of the brands are local and even though some are international ,given the fact that culture plays an important role in customer’s behavior and perception towards brands ;therefore ,this stage is crucial for the whole survey and is the foundation of the next stage. After data is collected ,SPSS was introduced to analyze the data.

Stage 2: Analyzing relationships between DI types and brand preferences

After the first stage of data was collected, the second stage, which is the main survey was conducted among another 200 students in the same university from faculty of law and faculty of art.

In the main survey we planned to collect data which will enable us to discuss the relationships between three DI types and brand preferences in order to analyze if they match with the 15 propositions presented in the last chapter.

The author asked several members in student union to help me with the data collection. Two hundred copies of surveys in total which includes two pages were handed out to students in these two faculties. The first page is the DI test forms. The DI form is a self-scoring questionnaire based on the DI scale used here as a well established proxy for measuring dimensions of human personality (Ekelund and Langvik, 2006; Ekelund et al., 2007; Langvik, 2006). and purpose of this stage is to analyze the personality types of our respondents; in this form, there are in total fourteen questions about habits and views to certain social situations with three possible options; to answer each questions, 6 points are required to divide to the three options in each question according to the degree of describing the respondent. For instance, if he or she thinks the description in the option 1 does not fit his/herself at all, then he or she can give zero or one or two points to this option, whereas if he or she thinks option 2 or 3 describe exactly how he/she is and what he/she would do in real life, then he/she would like to give four to six to one of them or divide six points into three and three to each description.

Attached together with the DI forms, the second page is a form with the names of the selected fifteen brands from three product categories, the respondents were asked to write their preference towards each brand with a five-point-scale that represents the degree of how much the respondents like a certain brand. First, they ranked their

preferences for five Automobile brands. Then they ranked their preferences for five clothes, and also they ranked their preferences for five clothes brands.

Even though two hundred copies of the main survey were handed out, in the end turns out 190 students responded and 8 of them either missed the first page or the second . hence ,there are in total 182 surveys are usable. However, it is difficult to define the average age and the exact numbers of each gender because approximately 40% respondents did not fill their gender or age.

5.3 general demographics of the sample

the majority of the respondents did not write their age , we only can be sure that the data were collected among the fresh and sophomore students , there fore the actual average age of the sample stays ambiguous, which to some extent weakens the comparability with Norway's research. Another factor weakens this comparability lies in the respondents' education background. in the first stage of the data collection , both respondents in Norway's and China's research are students major in economics ,however, in the second stage of the data collection, researchers in Norway chose the students majored in economics while I chose students from fine art faculty and law school .

5.4 data analyses procedures - by stage.

To analyze data collected in the first stage, which aims at measuring brand personality of the chosen 15 brands, SPSS statistical analysis software was used. To begin with, brand personality scores were computed for all brands on the five dimensions; after that ,the mean brand personality score for each personality dimension in each product category was computed. T-tests was applied to compare one brand's scores on each dimension with the mean score on the very dimension in a certain product category.

After that we used T-tests in order to compare each brand's personality scores on every dimension with the mean score on this dimension in a particular product category. The result of these comparisons from one dimension to another, one brand by one brand is, brands were divided into three groups for each dimension depending on its score is significantly higher ($p \leq 0.05$) or not significantly different ($p \leq 0.05$) or significantly lower ($p \leq 0.05$) than the mean score on a dimension in a product category. Please see details in Tables 2 to Table 6.

SPSS statistical analysis software was used again for data analysis in the second stage, where we explored correlations between DI types and brand preferences. Firstly, DI scores were computed for each respondent on each dimension: Blue, Red, and Green. Then the mean DI scores for each dimension were computed. Then we will examine to what extent each respondent tends to be more or less "red", "blue", or "green" by computing the distance from the mean for each respondent on each dimension. In the end, we examined the correlations between DI types and brand preferences. Please see table 7 for details.

Table 2. Sincerity

Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. *** Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

	Brands with a score which is significantly higher than the mean score	Brands with a score which is not significantly different from the mean score	Brands with a score which is significantly lower than the mean score
car brands		TOYOTA , VW	BMW***, VOLVO*, MITSUBISHI*
fashion brands		NIKE , VANCL , MARK, LEVIS	ESPRIT**
electronics brands		LENOVO , SUMSUNG	SONY** , APPLE***, IBM**

Table 3.Excitement

	Brands with a score which is significantly higher than the mean score	Brands with a score which is not significantly different from the mean score	Brands with a score which is significantly lower than the mean score
car brands	BMW**	TOYOTA、VOLVO、MITSUBISHI	VW*
fashion brands		NIKE 、 MARK 、 LEVIS、 ESPRIT	VANCL**
electronics brands	SONY***、 APPLE***、 LENOVA*、 SAMSUNG*	IBM	

* Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. ***Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Table 4. Competence

	Brands with a score which is significantly higher than the mean score	Brands with a score which is not significantly different from the mean score	Brands with a score which is significantly lower than the mean score
car brands	VW** 、 VOLVO* 、 MITSUBISHI**	TOYOTA、 BMW	
fashion brands		NIKE 、 MARK 、 LEVIS 、 ESPRIT 、 VANCL	
electronics brands	LENOVA** APPLE***、 IBM***	SONY 、 SAMSUNG、	

* Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. ***Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Table 5.Sophistication

	Brands with a score which is significantly higher than the mean score	Brands with a score which is not significantly different from the mean score	Brands with a score which is significantly lower than the mean score
car brands		TOYOTA 、 VW 、 BMW 、 VOLVO 、 MITSUBISHI	
Fashion brands	LEVIS*、 ESPRIT*	MARK	NIKE**、 VANCL**
electronics brands	APPLE**	SONY、 SUMSUNG、 IBM	LENOV**

* Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. ***Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Table 6.Ruggedness

	Brands with a score which is significantly higher than the mean score	Brands with a score which is not significantly different from the mean score	Brands with a score which is significantly lower than the mean score
car brands		TOYOTA 、 BMW 、 VOLVO 、 MITSUBISHI	VW*
Fashion brands	NIKE ***	MARK 、 LEVIS 、 ESPRIT、 VANCL	
electronics brands		IBM	SUMSUNG** 、 LENOV***、 APPLE***、 SONY**

* Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. ***Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Table 7: Correlations between DI types and brand preferences

		Positive	Negative
Blue DI	car brands	TOYOTA(0.014) BMW(0.002) VOVLO(0.018) MITSUBISHI(0.013)	VW(-0.019)
	fashion brands	VANCL(0.15*) ESPRIT(0.028*) MARK(0.009)	NIKE(-0.012) LEVIS(-0.003)
	electronics brands	APPLE(0.015)	SONY(-0.027) LENOVO(-0.001) SUMSUNG(-0.003) IBM(-0.043*)
RED DI	car brands	TOYOTA(0.029) VW(0.005) VOVLO(0.007) MITSUBISHI(0.01)	BMW(-0.007)
	fashion brands	VANCL(0.026*) ESPRIT(0.031**) MARK(0.026*) LEVIS(0.014)	NIKE(-0.005)
	electronics brands	SONY(0.022) SUMSUNG(0.028*)	LENOVO(-0.02) APPLE(-0.012) IBM(-0.006)
GREEN DI	car brands	TOYOTA(0.009) VOVLO(0.016) MITSUBISHI(0.021)	VW(-0.003) BMW(-0.012)
	fashion brands	NIKE(0.029) ESPRIT(0.002)	VANCL(-0.005) MARK(-0.006) LEVIS(-0.024)
	electronics brands	SUMSUNG(0.015) IBM(0.001)	SONY(-0.007) LENOVO(-0.02) APPLE(-0.003)

* Significant at $p \leq 0.1$ level. ** Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. *** Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Findings and Discussion

6.1 Findings and Discussion

The data collected is an attempt to reflect the relationship between consumer preferences and brand personalities. The information collected looked into the scores of car brands, fashion brands and electronic brands in relation to Aaker's Five Dimensions for brand personalities. Therefore, the study looked into five different brand types from each consumer category to find if any of them demonstrated significant differences from the mean measurement.

The car brands include Toyota, Volkswagen, BMW, Volvo and Mitsubishi and attempt to capture car companies from multiple cultures. The fashion brands also reflect multiple cultures, but unlike the car brands do not have a major brand from Asia. The brands include Nike, VANCL, Mark, Levis and Espirit and are all considered major international fashion brands. The electronics brands on the other hand are mainly Asian with two companies from the USA. This is the only category that contains a Chinese brand, Lenovo if Volvo is disregarded as a Chinese brand. The electronics brands are Lenovo, Samsung, Sony, Apple and IBM.

The brands are all measured against the Aaker's Five Dimensions of brand personality, and due to the differences in product categories, there are limitations to comparing the results across the different categories. However, the disparity between product categories also allows for broader comparisons in relation to how people and cultures react to different brands across product categories. With these considerations in mind, the brands can be analyzed according to the five dimensions.

The first dimension is sincerity, and as with all the different dimensions, it is analyzed for significance based on three different levels set at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01. None of the brands examined in the study have a score which is significantly higher than the mean score. However, seven of the fifteen score significantly lower than the mean and include BMW, Volvo and Mitsubishi among the car brands, Espirit for the fashion brands, and Sony, Apple and IBM in electronics.

Within the dimension of excitement it is worth noting that BMW is the only non-electronic brand that is considered higher than the mean score. Surprisingly, all the fashion brands do not demonstrate a higher than expected excitement score, and may reflect the higher level of specificity attached to fashion brands and how they are perceived. Unlike the car and fashion brands, all the electronic brands except IBM scored higher than the mean for excitement. This could be a reflection of the image of IBM as the corporate computer that serves white collar executives. Also, it is interesting to note that the majority of electronics brands are considered exciting and most likely reflects the fast pace of change and development within consumer electronics.

Similar to excitement, all the fashion brands also don't break away from the mean for competence. Competence may not be a major component of clothing or other fashion accessories as a person's competence is not always related to fashion choices. There was a majority of car and electronics brands that did demonstrate significant levels of competence. One surprising result had Mitsubishi, but not Toyota, demonstrating significant competence. This could be the result of recent recalls in America of the company's products.

Sophistication demonstrated a more dispersed sense of brand personality for fashion and electronics brands, while no car brands broke away from the mean. Ruggedness on the other hand demonstrated that most brands in these product categories are similarly scored. Electronics consistently scored below the mean while IBM again separated itself from the remaining brands by not significantly scoring below the mean.

It is useful to highlight some examples from the brands and how they relate to Aaker's Five Dimensions. For instance, BMW presents interesting results as it is considered less sincere and more exciting, thereby reflecting some of the characteristics of youth and renewal. BMW is not considered exceptional in relation to competence, sophistication or ruggedness. Similar to BMW, Apple scores significantly low for sincerity and high for excitement. However, unlike BMW, Apple also distinguishes itself as both competent and sophisticated, two characteristics often attributed to adults and more discerning customers. This is a remarkable accomplishment because not only is Apple considered exciting and youthful, but also is reliable and competent. Finally, IBM is an outlier in electronics brands as it is the only brand that did not score above average in excitement or below average in ruggedness. Although the attributes of IBM may not be the most advantageous in the consumer electronics industry, the company has established a strong brand that differentiates its products from its competitors.

After looking at the brand personalities of these different companies, it is necessary to look into how they are perceived by different personality types. Therefore, the data is used in relation to different D1 types classified as blue, red and green. The blue orientation applies to people who are task oriented, structured and logical, while red describes people interested in interrelationships and social perspectives, while green represents a focus on change, vision and ideas. Combined with the results from the brand personalities described through Aaker's Five Dimensions of brand personality, the personal preferences described for the same consumer brands will help identify the major characteristics these brands contain.

Therefore the analysis will look at the personality traits described through the D1 types and see if they view each of the examined brands positively or negatively. After grouping the brands according to their perception amongst these types, patterns start to emerge between brand personalities and the preferences of individual personality types. These two data points provide the foundation for applying further analysis to cultural considerations.

The first examination will look into perception of brands based on blue orientation. Based on the definition of brand personalities in Aaker, it could be assumed that task oriented people would prefer brands that are competent, sincere and sophisticated. The preference for cars supports this claim as the highest positive score for car brands was for Volvo which also scored significantly above the mean for competence. The other preferred car brands were Mitsubishi and Toyota that both scored well for competence and sophistication. However, sincerity does not seem to be a deciding factor for people with a blue orientation as Mitsubishi and Volvo scored significantly below the mean while Toyota was not significantly different.

Within the blue cohort, only Apple is viewed positively as an electronics product. Apple combines high significance in competence, sophistication and excitement while demonstrating a negative correlation to sincerity. Lenovo and Samsung have the lowest negative scores for the blue type in relation to electronics. The only two categories shared by both Samsung and Lenovo are an insignificant difference from the mean for sincerity. They are the only two electronic brands without a negative correlation to sincerity. They both are also viewed as worthy of excitement along with Apple and Sony. It is difficult to highlight a specific characteristic of electronics that blue personalities prefer, beyond recognizing their preference for Apple products.

Red types are people interested in interrelationships and social perspectives. Red types have a positive impression of all cars except BMW's and of all fashion brands except Nike. Nike is the only fashion brand considered significantly rugged while it also is considered less sophisticated. BMW is isolated among the car brands as the only representative in the significantly exciting category and is also viewed as less competent. For the most part, red types viewed all brands more favorably than both blue and green types with only a total of five brands viewed negatively. Most strikingly within this subgroup was their high degree of positive perceptions given to four out of the five fashion brands.

One would expect people interested in change, vision and ideas to have a preference for

technology, excitement and ruggedness. This assumption is partially supported by Nike receiving the highest positive ranking given by green types. Nike is the only brand amongst all other brands within the study that was found to have a significant positive measure of ruggedness. However, the connection to excitement is not pronounced and in actuality can be considered negatively correlated to the green type. Green types do not prefer BMW's although the BMW brand is the only car brand that is considered exciting. Of the four electronics brands within the excitement category, the green types only have a positive outlook for one, Samsung. In addition, beyond Samsung, the green cohort has an overall negative view of electronics brands. The preference for Volvo, Mitsubishi and Toyota demonstrated by this group actually demonstrates an appreciation for competence and ruggedness.

Comparing the three personality types, there are some interesting differences with preferred brands. One of the more pronounced examples involves Nike. The shoe company is viewed negatively by blue with a score of -0.012 and by red with a score of -0.005, but receives a positive score from green at a very high 0.029. As mentioned earlier, Nike is unique because of its classification as a rugged brand and along with the positive view that the green group gives to rugged car brands, it can be assumed that this group has a significant preference for rugged brands.

Another example of differences in preferred brands amongst the different cohorts is the disparity between the perception of Sony between the red and blue types. Reds view Sony with a very positive view of 0.022 while blue people see Sony negatively to the tune of -0.027. Sony can best be categorized as a very exciting and less than sincere brand by the data. Therefore, it appears that either one or both brand personalities influences the perceptions of type red and blue people. With the support of some of the other perceptions of the brands by these two cohorts, it appears that red types are more strongly influenced by excitement, while blue people are affected more by sincerity.

Finally, IBM presents itself as an outlier among the three personality types. IBM is considered more competent, rugged and less exciting than its counterparts. The green

cohort views it slightly positive while the red type sees IBM in a slightly negative light. However, the blue type places a very high level of negativity on the IBM brand. One possible explanation for this is the low sincerity score that IBM holds. But, if sincerity was the determining factor than blue types would also view Apple with a high level of negativity. On the other hand, the blue cohort is the only group that views Apple positively. It may be that in the interest of staying on task, the blue types only have time for one type of technology and Apple is able to meet their needs and preferences.

The Chinese consumer is heavily influenced by the culture in which he operates. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese are highly group oriented, place a great emphasis on the idea of face, and live within a society that has a large power separation. Therefore, the cultural personality of China has a large influence over the individual decisions and brand awareness in the country. Based on the cultural description, it can be assumed that Chinese would prefer brands that are associated with sophistication, sincerity and competence.

The brands with the highest degree of sophistication in the data set include Levis, Espirit and Apple. As discussed earlier, Blue types were the only subset to view the Apple brand positively. The red type also valued the brands for Espirit and Levis and had a minimal negative view of Apple. Of these three brands that are considered sophisticated, only Levis is also considered sincere. Both Apple and Espirit have significant negative relationships to sincerity, and may not match well with Chinese consumers. Apple, however, has a high level of competence while Levis and Espirit match the mean. Therefore, according to the assumptions of Chinese consumer preferences based on cultural links, Levis is well positioned to grow a favorable brand in China.

As any casual observer would describe, Apple has been wildly successful in China. I would argue that the influence of sophistication and prestige remains the dominant force with Chinese consumers. The degree of power separation and the desire to maintain face within the group has made Apple a force in the Chinese consumer market. In relation to the consumer types, many Chinese consumers could be classified either as red or blue.

Table 8 Propositions

Propositions	Supported/Part. supported/Rejected/No correlation	car brands		fashion brands		electronics brands		Total 3 Sectors	
		Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship
P1	Rejected				1/1				1/1
P2	Partially supported				1/1	1/1		1/2	1/2
P3	No correlation								
P4	No correlation								
P5	Rejected						1/1		1/1
P6	No correlation								
P7	Partially supported				1/1	1/1		1/2	1/2
P8	Supported			1/1				1/1	
P9	No correlation								
P10	Partially supported			1/1	1/1			1/2	1/2
P11	Partially supported			1/1	1/1			1/2	1/2
P12	No correlation								
P13	supported					1/1		1/1	
P14	No correlation								
P15	No correlation								

Table 9 Propositions from Norwegian research (Source: Mæhle, N. and Shneor, R. 2009. *On Congruence Between Brand and Human Personalities*)

Propositions	Supported/ Part. supported/ Rejected	Clothes		Furniture		Supermarkets		Total 3 Sectors		Total 2 Sectors*	
		Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship	Expected Relationship	Opposite Relationship
P1	Supported	3/3 brands		3/3 brands				6/6 brands		6/6 brands	
P2	Rejected		1/1 brands		3/3 brands				4/4 brands		4/4 brands
P3	Supported	2/2 brands						2/2 brands		2/2 brands	
P4	Partially supported	1/2 brands	1/2 brands	2/2 brands				3/4 brands	1/4 brands	3/4 brands	1/4 brands
P5	Rejected		1/1 brands		2/2 brands		1/1 brands		4/4 brands		3/3 brands
P6	Supported	1/1 brands						1/1 brands		1/1 brands	
P7	Partially supported	2/3 brands	1/3 brands	2/3 brands	1/3 brands			4/6 brands	2/6 brands	4/6 brands	2/6 brands
P8	Supported	2/2 brands		3/3 brands		1/1 brands		6/6 brands		6/6 brands	
P9	Supported	1/1 brands						1/1 brands		1/1 brands	
P10	Partially supported	1/3 brands	2/3 brands	1/1 brands				2/4 brands	2/4 brands	2/4 brands	2/4 brands
P11	Supported	1/1 brands		1/1 brands		1/1 brands		3/3 brands		2/2 brands	
P12	Supported	2/2 brands						2/2 brands		2/2 brands	
P13	Partially supported	3/4 brands	1/4 brands					3/4 brands	1/4 brands	3/4 brands	1/4 brands
P14	Partially supported	2/2 brands			1/1 brands			2/3 brands	1/3 brands	2/3 brands	1/3 brands
P15	Partially supported	1/1 brands	1/1 brands					1/1 brands	1/1 brands	1/1 brands	1/1 brands

*exclude supermarkets

6.2 Compare the results of propositions

As we can see clearly from table 8 and table 9 above, the results for the propositions testing are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. comparison of results of propositions

	CHINA	NORWAY
P1	Rejected	Supported
P2	Partially supported	Rejected
P3	No correlation	Supported
P4	No correlation	Partially supported
P5	Rejected	Rejected
P6	No correlation	Supported
P7	Partially supported	Partially supported
P8	Supported	Supported
P9	No correlation	Supported
P10	Partially supported	Partially supported
P11	Partially supported	Supported
P12	No correlation	Supported
P13	Supported	Partially supported
P14	No correlation	Partially supported
P15	No correlation	Partially supported

To compare the two results ,first thing I do here is to exclude the Propositions that have been proved not to have correlation between DI types and brand personalities, such as P3,P4,P6,P9,P12,P14,P15,by doing this the ones that have clear correlations are left; then I will discuss the two results in terms of propositions share similarities such as P5,P7,P8,P10,P11,P13,as well as the ones that are different ,such as P1 and P2.

6.2.1 Similar results between China and Norway researches.

When looking at the actual content the 15 propositions stands for ,we can come to a conclusion that both in Chinese and Norwegian markets:

The more “Blue” a customer is, the higher chance he or she prefers brands that shows a personality of Competence but not the ones perceived as exciting or sophistication ; and the more “Red” he or she is , the stronger the preference shown by him or her for brands tend to be exciting and sophisticated, while in the mean time, the weaker the preferences exhibited by him or her for brands with a ruggedness personality.

6.2.2 Different results between China and Norway researches.

Basically, there are two propositions shows opposite results between China and Norway ,which is proposition 1 and proposition 2 : when the proposition is rejected/supported in one of these two countries, the opposite result is shown in the other country; in other words, while Chinese customers who with a “Red” personality show no clear tendency to prefer brands with a sincerity personality dimension , the Norwegian customers who with the same personality type do; and those Chinese customers with “Blue” personality shows a clear preference towards the brands with sincerity personality , Norwegian customers with the same personality do not.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the brand personality dimension of Sincerity symbolize the traits such as down-to-earth and honest ,cheerful and wholesome and brands with this personality dimension are expected to be attractive to the individuals who show a Red personality type. However, it is the case in Norway but not in China. We can try to explain this difference by comparing these two countries’ cultural dimensions. We can take a look back at the Hofstede’s scores for these two cultures, where three of obvious

gaps are indicated as: Power distance Index, Individualism as well as long-term orientation index. To elaborate, Norway is perceived as a culture that small power distance, individualistic, and short-oriented; China on the other hand, is high-power-distant, collectivistic and long-term-oriented. What we learn from this comparison and how can relate it to the two different results for propositions 1 and 2 is : in high power distant but collectivistic culture like China, the products and brands that can symbolize high-status are welcomed; those who can not afford such brands still would prefer to own them one day since in collectivistic culture, people tend to pursue homogeneity instead of uniqueness; hence, it is high likely that people with “Red” personality will not necessarily show high preference towards the brands who are down-to-earth or cheerful, instead, they would still prefer to purchase brands that are glamorous. However, in cultures like Norway, the congruence between Red DI type and sincerity personality dimension is expected to be reasonable, since low power distance make the “face” concept or “status” less important and even though people around them dislike brands that are not sincere, they would not be influenced since of the symbolic utility of those brands are in accordance with their own.

Likewise, the possible reasons for in China, respondents with a Blue DI type prefers sincere brands while their counterparts in Norway do not might lie in the cultural difference also. Blue DI stands for the kind of people who are organized, and task-oriented, and it is logically expected that they would prefer brands who show a personality of down-to-earth, wholesome, since it seems relatively more rational and economical to purchase such brands, and organized “Blue-personality” people are rational in general. this assumption could be right, only if money-saving habit is highly valued in the society. Expenditure structure indicates to some extent if the culture is long-term oriented; in China, people tend to form a habit of saving money out of a long-term perspective, while in a short-term oriented culture such as Norway, saving money is not popular, instead, how to spend money belongs to the task range for Blue personality individuals. Hence, we can come to a conclusion that, the gap between these two countries’ cultural dimension scores to certain degree, leads to the result difference for proposition 1 and 2 between China and Norway.

Another difference between the China's and Norway's results lies in the fact that many correlations between brand preferences and human DI types were non-significant in China but significant in Norway. One possible explanation here is that in Norway, as a more individualistic society, consumers are more concerned with brand-human personality congruence, while in China, as a more collectivistic society, consumers are more concerned with social perceptions of this congruence overriding individual preferences

Conclusion

This research paper set out to explore a culture's influence on consumer preferences toward brands. Specific emphasis was placed on examining the relationship between Chinese culture, Chinese consumers and brand preferences. Studies that explore a culture's influence on consumer preference toward brand personality are limited despite its importance to international marketing. Early results suggest a relationship between culture and consumer preferences for certain dimensions of a brand personality. Therefore, as China develops into a leading consumer market, it will be increasingly important to understand the relationship between its culture and consumer preferences. This is especially important for leading western companies because there is a large gap between the cultures of China and western nations. Furthermore, this study focused on China because it plays an important role in the world economy and also influences other Asian societies. Therefore, a study of China will help identify key considerations for the second biggest economy in the world, but also lead to a better understanding of other major economies in Asia like Japan and Korea.

The paper was organized to examine the existing research on personality, culture and brand personality frameworks, followed by a discussion on culture and the influence culture has on customer behavior and brand preference, combined with the application of the cultural framework to the Chinese market, and finally introduced potential contributions the examination has on the research in this field. The section on existing research introduced human personality theories with an emphasis on the Big Five Model of McCrae and Costa and the management-oriented proxy of the Diversity Icebreaker Scale. It also looked into brand personality frameworks, and that of Aaker in particular. In order to look into the congruence between consumer and brand personality the paper introduces a number of studies supporting the connection between the two personalities and looks further into studies on self-image.

The section on culture relies on different cultural examinations conducted by Hofstede,

including the Four Manifestations of Culture and the Five Dimensions of National Culture. To make the connection between consumer behavior and culture, two models were utilized. The cross-cultural consumer behavior framework adapted from Manrai and Manrai as well as the variations in consumption and consumer behavior across countries model of Hofstede proved useful to this exercise. These frameworks helped to conclude that brand personality dimensions have proven to be culture-specific. This is an important conclusion as it supports the claim that the study of Chinese culture and the country's consumers is important for effective marketing and brand development.

Therefore, the paper transitions into a discussion on Chinese culture and the differences found between the cultural foundations in western nations and China. The paper introduces the influence of Confucianism in Asian societies and compares it to the concept of the individual prevalent in western countries. If this examination is placed within Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, it is found that each culture has a different orientation toward products and their brands. The different orientations were demonstrated through a comparative study of the cultures of China and Norway. Four out of the five measures found significant differences between the two countries. China demonstrated much higher levels of power distance and long-term orientation, while Norway was much more individualistic and feminine. The two countries demonstrated a similar orientation towards uncertainty avoidance with Norway scoring slightly higher than China. These results demonstrate that consumers in Norway will respond to brands and marketing much differently than their Chinese counterparts. Therefore, it is essential for marketers to understand the expectations and preferences of the Chinese consumer before embarking on a major campaign.

The paper addresses this need by highlighting the key characteristics of Chinese consumers based upon the article by Frans Giele, "Chinese Consumer Behavior: An Introduction". The discussion about the Chinese consumer covers many different topics, but important considerations can be drawn from the results on brands and decision making, the concept of face, consumer knowledge, generational divisions and the geographic segmentation of the Chinese market. The findings covering the concept of

face are worth noting because they address an important attribute of Chinese consumers in which they dislike losing status in the presence of others. Generally speaking, this can be said for all people, but the intensity of this dislike is greater in China and more formalized. Therefore, up until now, Chinese consumers prefer luxury products that reflect well on their status, or “face”. In addition, the information about geographical segmentation is worth highlighting because it demonstrates that China should not be considered a contiguous market. Different regions have different attitudes and have evolved to different levels of consumer choices. Not only that, but there are emerging areas where economies are growing faster than in established cities, and there remain untapped markets in the northeast and northwest.

China is not only a large consumer market, but one with great variability and constant change. To succeed in the country, one must understand as many of the different variables influencing consumer choice as possible. This paper sheds light on the Chinese consumer by following the example of the study “On Congruence between Brand and Human Personalities” (Maehle & Shneor, 2010) in establishing a Diversity Icebreaker Scale. Taking the findings on consumer personalities and utilizing Aaker’s Five Dimensions for brand personalities allows the paper to follow a similar methodology as the study that was done in Norway. Proposed conclusions are offered through this study through a comparison of customers with certain DI type (Red, Blue, Green) against brands with certain personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness). Comparison between the findings in Norway cultural context and China cultural context demonstrate that only 2 propositions’ result are opposite ,which can be fairly explained by the difference in culture dimensions

Limitations and Implications

Limitations:

this research was made on a limited sample size of university students located in a small city in middle China , which can not be representatives of the whole Chinese customers ; furthermore , most of the respondents did not clarify their age and gender ,which to certain degree affects the accuracy and depth of the data analysis ,and there exist an uncertainty to some degree about the comparability of the samples used in China and Norway in terms of such variables. another limitation is frameworks applied in this paper for both brand(Aaker's five dimensions) and human personalities(DI types) were developed in western countries, which may be biased to begin with and less relevant to an Asian context in general, and a Chinese one in particular ;in addition, the data collected did not show correlation between Green DI type and brand preference at all , therefore further research is needed to be done other parts of China and make conclusions about propositions concern Green DI types.

Implications:

The practice of using different measures for brand and individual personalities allows for a close reflection on the influence of culture on purchasing decisions. This type of analysis is essential for large companies as they confront the prospect of entering a tremendously large and complex market like China. Understanding the interrelationships between culture, personalities and brand awareness allows for better decision making. Moreover, for international marketers and managers in multinational enterprises, findings of this paper can be a proper reference for advertising and branding strategies ,for instance, the personalities the same brand demonstrates in a individualistic culture might not be popular and acceptable in a collectivistic culture. however, based on the findings and their limitations in this paper, additional studies are recommended in the future so as to explore more the pattern of congruence between brand and human personalities and compare samples among more cultural settings.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: questionnaire for brands ranks used in data collection stage 1.

Age

Gender Male/Female

School Year 1/2/3/4/5/ 6 and above

Please evaluate how well the following characteristics describe each brand listed using a 5 point scale (see example below).

1- to no extent, 2- to low extent, 3-to some extent, 4- to a large extent, 5-to a very large extent

EXAMPLE		Brand A	Brand B	Brand C	Brand D	Brand E
Helpful	helpful, kind, service oriented	2	2	1	3	5

Meaning brand C is not helpful at all and brand E is very helpful.

car brands

		TOYOTA	VW	BMW	MITSUBISHI	VOLVO
Down-to-earth	down-to-earth, family oriented, small-town					
Honest	honest, sincere, real					
Wholesome	wholesome, original					
Cheerful	cheerful, sentimental, friendly					
Daring	daring, trendy, exciting					
Spirited	spirited, cool, young					
Imaginative	imaginative, unique					
Up-to-date	Up-to-date, independent, contemporary					
Reliable	reliable, hard-working, secure					
Intelligent	intelligent, technical, corporate					
Successful	successful, leader, confident					
Upper class	upper class, glamorous, good looking					
Charming	charming, feminine, smooth					
Outdoorsy	outdoorsy, masculine, western					
Tough	tough, rugged					

fashion brands

		NIKE	VANCL	MARK	ESPRIT	LEVIS
Down-to-earth	down-to-earth, family oriented, small-town					
Honest	honest, sincere, real					
Wholesome	wholesome, original					
Cheerful	cheerful, sentimental, friendly					
Daring	daring, trendy, exciting					
Spirited	spirited, cool, young					
Imaginative	imaginative, unique					
Up-to-date	up-to-date, independent, contemporary					
Reliable	reliable, hard-working, secure					
Intelligent	intelligent, technical, corporate					
Successful	successful, leader, confident					
Upper class	upper class, glamorous, good looking					
Charming	charming, feminine, smooth					
Outdoorsy	outdoorsy, masculine, western					
Tough	tough, rugged					

electronics brands

		APPLE	SONY	IBM	LENOVO	IBM
Down-to-earth	down-to-earth, family oriented, small-town					
Honest	honest, sincere, real					
Wholesome	wholesome, original					
Cheerful	cheerful, sentimental, friendly					
Daring	daring, trendy, exciting					
Spirited	spirited, cool, young					
Imaginative	imaginative, unique					
Up-to-date	up-to-date, independent, contemporary					
Reliable	reliable, hard-working, secure					
Intelligent	intelligent, technical, corporate					
Successful	successful, leader, confident					
Upper class	upper class, glamorous, good looking					
Charming	charming, feminine, smooth					
Outdoorsy	outdoorsy, masculine, western					
Tough	tough, rugged					

Appendix 2: DI forms used in data collection stage 2 to define respondents' personality types.

DI - Human Factors AS

Diversity Icebreaker™

Working Across Differences



This self-scoring questionnaire was developed in order to promote awareness and improve communication and collaboration in teams. After you have finished filling out the questionnaire, you can rip off the front page and find guidance for identifying your preferences.

Divide 6 ticks across each horizontal line, such that you rank the statements as to how well they fit you. Don't spend too much time thinking about answering. Just tick what occurs to you first. If you find it is really impossible to rank the horizontal statements, you can place 2 ticks by each. Below is an example.

Eks	✓	I like sharing ideas with others	✓	I enjoy my own company	✓✓	I like working with my hands
-----	---	----------------------------------	---	------------------------	----	------------------------------

Here are 14 rows. Put 6 checks in each row:

1	I have both feet on the ground	I like to do things with other people	I often have a need for variety
2	I like to think logically	I can get so involved in an idea, that I overlook practical details	I enjoy being with people I don't know well
3	If someone is to influence me, they should present the significance or broader perspectives	If someone is to influence me, they should present facts, details and examples	If someone is to influence me, they should be personal and enthusiastic
4	I want to know what possibilities will open up in the future	I want to know how ideas can be applied in a useful and practical manner	I want to know how suggestions affect us as people
5	I like suggestions that are creative and unusual	I like suggestions that take people and their feelings into account	I like suggestions that are direct and practical
6	I think communication should be oral and personal	I think communication should convey the overriding context	I think communication should be concise and to the point
7	I show my feelings	I am practical-minded	I often try new things
8	I like it best when I have people around	I like tasks where I can use the skills I have	I like to philosophize about an issue
9	I appreciate tangible things the most	I'm easy to get to know	I like to work with few matters at a time
10	I liked maths better than languages at school	I set high goals	I think people's feelings are important
11	I like to work with numbers	I am considerate towards others	I sometimes suggest original solutions
12	I'm patient with others	I make decisions based on facts	I find imaginative solutions
13	I like to work on practical things	I tell my thoughts to others	I see new possibilities quite quickly
14	I do a decent job	I see quite clearly how things are related	I like to meet lots of people

Blue: Red: Green: =84

For research purposes: Age: _____ Gender: _____ Occupation: _____ Organisation: _____

DI - Human Factors AS

Diversity Icebreaker™

Working Across Differences



This self-scoring questionnaire was developed in order to promote awareness and improve communication and collaboration in teams. The three preferences blue, red and green have their theoretical background in different personality traits. You can now add how many ticks you have given each colour.

The total number of ticks should equal 84 points.

	Blue	Red	Green	=84
1	I have both feet on the ground	I like to do things with other people	I often have a need for variety	
2	I like to think logically	I can get so involved in an idea, that I overlook practical details	I enjoy being with people I don't know well	
3	If someone is to influence me, they should present the significance or broader perspectives	If someone is to influence me, they should present facts, details and examples	If someone is to influence me, they should be personal and enthusiastic	
4	I want to know what possibilities will open up in the future	I want to know how ideas can be applied in a useful and practical manner	I want to know how suggestions affect us as people	
5	I like suggestions that are creative and unusual	I like suggestions that take people and their feelings into account	I like suggestions that are direct and practical	
6	I think communication should be oral and personal	I think communication should convey the overriding context	I think communication should be concise and to the point	
7	I show my feelings	I am practical-minded	I often try new things	
8	I like it best when I have people around	I like tasks where I can use the skills I have	I like to philosophize about an issue	
9	I appreciate tangible things the most	I'm easy to get to know	I like to work with few matters at a time	
10	I liked maths better than languages at school	I set high goals	I think people's feelings are important	
11	I like to work with numbers	I am considerate towards others	I sometimes suggest original solutions	
12	I'm patient with others	I make decisions based on facts	I find imaginative solutions	
13	I like to work on practical things	I tell my thoughts to others	I see new possibilities quite quickly	
14	I do a decent job	I see quite clearly how things are related	I like to meet lots of people	

For research purposes: Age: _____ Gender: _____ Occupation: _____ Organisation: _____

Appendix 3: Survey for brands preference used in data collection stage 2.

Survey

Age: _____ **Gender:** man/ woman **Years of Study:** 1/2/3/4/5/6 and higher

Please rank your preference for the following brands, assuming you have no financial, time, or other limitations, and you are about to go shopping for yourself and the ones dear to you:

Use the following scale:

1- Least preferred, 2 – Would rather not, 3 - No special preference,
4 –Preferred, 5 - Most preferred

Example:

Book shops:

	Preference Level
Norli	4
Tanum	5
Bok & Media	3
Libris	3

Please fill the following:

Car brands:
brands:

fashion

	Preference Level
TOYOTA	
VW	
BMW	
MITSUBISHI	
VOLVO	

	Preference Level
NIKE	
VANCL	
MARK	
ESPRIT	
LEVIS	

Electronics brands:

	Preference Level
APPLE	
SONY	
SUMSUNG	
LENOVO	
IBM	