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THE INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER MINDSET ON THE INTENTION TO PURCHASE FAIR TRADE GOODS IN ETHNIC CHINESE SOCIETY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF MORAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether and how the individual mindset influences consumer response to fair trade goods. We applied structural equation modeling (SEM) to perform hypothesis testing and indirect effect verification. The results showed that collectivistic mindset positively influences the internalization and symbolization of moral identity. A further investigation on the mediating effect of moral identity showed that although a collectivistic mindset affects the purchase intention of fair trade goods indirectly through the internalization of moral identity. The results revealed the main influencing factors of ethical consumption in ethnic Chinese society in Taiwan. Implications for marketing decisions are considered.

KEYWORDS

collectivistic mindset, moral identity, fair trade goods, purchase intention.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many scholars have studied topics related to ethical consumption such as goods that exhibit social responsibility (e.g. fair trade goods) or environmental concerns (e.g., green products). Their research results have enhanced our understanding of the influencing factors of consumers' ethical consumption behaviors (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015; Bray et al., 2011; Chan, 1999; Chang, 2011). However, as the amount of studies has increased, differences have emerged between theoretical assertions and empirical research results. For example, with fair trade goods investigations of the determinants of consumption have mostly concentrated on the individual characteristics of consumers, such as individual values (Doran, 2009), ethical regulations and gender (Taylor & Boasson, 2014), perspective on political liberalism (Taylor & Boasson, 2014), and religion (Salvador, Merchant, & Alexander, 2014). Most studies have focused on the United States and United Kingdom (Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). In addition, although individual consumption influences the overall social output, previous studies have overlooked the influence of overall factors on individual values. Andorfer and Liebe (2015) claimed that price is the only factor influencing the consumption of fair trade coffee. However, a number of consumers expressed being willing to pay more to support ethical products. For example, consumers are willing to pay more to purchase ecorelated green goods (Chen, 2008). Furthermore, in the United States, 82% of consumers are willing to pay 5% more of the price to purchase green goods (Levin, 1990), whereas in China, consumers are willing to pay 4.5% more to buy green products (Chan, 1999; Chang, 2011). Thus, Chinese consumers are willing to pay less money than their Western counterparts for green or fair trade goods. However, previous studies have indicated that people from interdependent societies are more willing to pay higher prices to buy cause-related goods (Chang & Cheng, 2015). Therefore, in the investigations of ethical consumption behaviors in ethnically Chinese societies, factors other than price may have been overlooked.

Social cognitive theory assumes that human behavior and cognition (along with other individual factors) interact with environmental events and reciprocal influence each other. Under a triadic reciprocal causation structure, people are simultaneously the products and producers of their environment. Moreover, mutual influence does not assume that different sources exert identical levels of influence, nor does it entail that mutual influence occurs simultaneously. The causal relationships require time to develop (Bandura, 1989). Therefore, different cultural environments mold distinct values, thereby influencing individual behaviors (Lu et al., 2012). According to scholars' analyses of traditional Chinese culture, the most influential factor of the psychology and behaviors of ethnically Chinese people is Confucianism (Lu, 2003). Because individual behaviors are subjected to the influences of both inner morality and the outer environment, people with a collectivistic mindset who have been immersed in Confucianism for a long time are more willing to support prosocial behaviors.

Aquino and Reed (2002) developed moral identity theory from the perspective of social-cognitive, considering moral identity as a network connecting individual moral characteristics, goals, and behaviors. A previous study showed that collectivists are more likely to support prosocial behaviors than are individualists (Chang & Cheng, 2015). Being part of the East-Asian Confucianism cultural circle, Taiwan exhibits salient features of collectivism (Hofstede, 1997), specifically insofar that individuals pay considerable attention to the meaning and values shared between themselves and others (Hashimoto et al., 2011). Because collectivism and Confucianism have cultivated the psychological traits of ethnically Chinese people, this cultural influence is a necessary factor of consideration when investigating ethical consumption.

Previous studies have reported that self-identity is a crucial influencing factor of attitude (Shaw & Shiu 2002), and that if individual identity concentrates on the conception of self, the individual's moral self-schema is more likely to be influential than other self-schemas that compose self-identity (Aquino et al., 2009). In other words, moral identity is part of self-identity and should be considered an antecedent that influences the behavioral intention of ethical consumption. According to He, Gouran and Kolo (2016), situational factors and Moral identity have the joint effect to motivate moral behaviors. In ethnically Chinese societies, collectivistic mindset probably exerts great influence on individual identity, further influencing ethical consumption behaviors. The present study investigates whether and how psychological antecedent and individual difference influence consumer response to fair trade goods. The results presented the main influencing factors of ethical consumption decision-making in ethnically Chinese societies, serving as a reference for subsequent studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**ETHICAL CONSUMPTION AND RESEARCH GAP**

Historically, ethical consumption emerged in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries from European and American countries. By the twenty-first century, fair trade products had become the mainstream of ethical consumption. Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993) defined ethical consumption behaviors as when “the consumption decision-making, purchase behavior, and consumption experience are all influenced by ethical considerations of consumers.” Since the mid-1990s, multiple scholars have studied ethical consumption behaviors. Strong (1996) approached the topic from the theory of planned behavior, observing that individual belief influences individual attitude and behavior intention. Shaw and Clarke (1999) focused on belief structure, determining that the main influencing factors of belief are information and trustworthy and normative social factors such as peer, family, and religion influences. Shaw and Clarke (1999) also determined that ethical obligation and self-identity are likely to exert stronger influence on attitude–behavior than are the other influencing factors proposed by the early theory of planned behavior (Bray et al., 2011).

Recently, scholars have studied the influence of cultural and individual factors on green buying intention (Lu et al., 2015). Other scholars have researched the influence of consumers’ collectivistic and individualistic mindsets on their doubts regarding advertisements of cause-related marketing. Andorfer and Liebe (2015) also revealed in their study that in 2006, approximately two-thirds of American respondents answered that they were willing to buy fair-trade coffee, which cost a little more than ordinary coffee (Hertel et al., 2009), and that more than half of German respondents indicated that they were willing to buy most fair-trade goods. However, in reality, the market share of fair-trade coffee remains small, respectively comprising 20%, 7%, 3%, and 1% of the overall coffee market in the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and Germany. This phenomenon has been referred to as the attitude–behavior gap (Kim et al., 1997) by scholars or the ethical purchase gap (Bray et al., 2011). To summarize the aforementioned studies, individuals’ psychological traits influence individuals’ motivation, thus generating different purchase behaviors (Chang & Cheng, 2015).

Previous studies have claimed that consumers are mainly influenced by their own budget and the price of the goods when making consumption decisions (Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). In other words, price fluctuation affects consumer demand. In general, the demand is enhanced when the price is reduced. However, the consumption of certain goods aims to highlight social status; in this case, the higher the price is, the greater the demand becomes (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015). Several fair trade goods require consumers to collaboratively enable ethical premiums. In other words, the price of these products is slightly higher than that of ordinary ones, but the manufacturer or supplier can reinvest the premium to create a sustainable management model or to reduce poverty in communities (Nicholls & Opal, 2005), thereby achieving mutual benefits for both parties of the goods transaction. From the perspective of altruism, prosocial behaviors are altruistic behaviors performed by members of organizations (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Fair trade goods aim at improving the living and work environment of laborers or farmers in developing countries.

Consequently, the transaction price of the crops or handicrafts is fair enough to reimburse the production cost pertaining to farmers and labors (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015). Prosocial behaviors enable consumers to enhance personal benefits through their motivation to aid others (Winterich et al., 2013a). Because the goals of fair trade goods are to reduce poverty and enhance the working environment of laborers and farmers, supporting fair trade goods can be categorized as a type of prosocial behavior.

COLLECTIVISTIC MINDSET OF CONSUMER

Previous studies have reported that individuals with a collectivistic mindset tend to exhibit an other-serving motivation as well as behaviors that conform to social norms and others’ expectations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Mindset refers to the specific methods of cognitive operations, which can be applied as key factors in explaining the judgment and decision-making of individuals (Hamilton et al., 2011). Therefore, collectivism and individualism can also be considered as the mindsets to evaluate the relative value of individuals and groups (Triandis, 1989). The social cognitive theory claimed that a triadic reciprocal model exists among individual, environment, and behavior. Cultural differences influence the beliefs, attitudes, norms, characters, values, and behaviors of individuals (Triandis, 1994). For example, people with a collectivistic mindset value the group goal more than an individual one, whereas those with an individualistic mindset emphasize individual benefits more than group ones. In collectivist ethnically Chinese societies, a collectivistic mindset includes collective identification, emotional dependence, sharing rights and obligations, and emphasizes in-group harmony (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995).

On an individual level, Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed a self-construal related to the self–other relationship under multiple cultural contexts. From a psychological perspective, construal can be divided into interdependent self-construal and independent self-construal. This cultural dichotomy can be viewed as a pair of corresponding contrasts between individualism and collectivism on the individual and cultural levels. Previous studies have reported that consumers with an interdependent self-construal prefer cause-related marketing emphasizing discounts; moreover, different perspectives of self-construal influence individual moral emotions to cause-related marketing (Chang & Cheng, 2015). Other scholars have observed that consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to pay higher prices for cause-related products (Vaidyanathan et al., 2013). Because people in a collectivist culture are more likely to support prosocial behaviors, and consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more willing to support cause-related marketing, the following hypothesis can be inferred from both cultural and individual levels:

H1: A collectivistic mindset positively influences individual intention to purchase fair trade goods.

MORAL IDENTITY

Regarding the individual psychological aspect, Blasi (1984) proposed the perspective of moral identity, claiming that individual moral values and goals constitute the core of an individual’s self, and are essential to the individual. If individuals possess a strong or well-developed sense of self-as-moral they are likely to produce moral judgments with self-consistency, and further produce moral behaviors. Aquino and Reed (2002) divided moral identity into two dimensions, namely internalization and symbolization. Individuals who exhibit a high level of moral internalization do so as a result of having long used substantial moral-related knowledge to rapidly influence their self-concept (Aquino et al., 2009). The more influence moral identity exerts on self-concept, the more likely individuals are to employ a moral perspective to assess their own and others’ behaviors (Sparks, 2015). Furthermore, individuals organize their self-concept on the basis of their moral beliefs, and are highly likely to transform these beliefs into actions (Damon & Hart, 1992). Previous studies have reported that the internalization of moral identity is related to the relevance of moral characteristics to the self; in other words, to the way individuals value themselves. Nonetheless, the symbolization of moral identity means that individuals communicate in society with behaviors that exhibit moral characteristics and expect to receive approval from others. In other words, explicit behaviors are conducted to gain approval and praise. In particular, individuals that exhibit a low level of moral identity internalization and high level of identity symbolization tend to perform prosocial behaviors when receiving recognition (Winterich et al., 2013a).

However, showing a **low level** of moral **internalization** does not mean that individuals are amoral, nor that they lack connections to moral characteristics in their memories. The trait only shows that an individual’s internal processing speed is slower and that his or her mental process is more complicated than that of those with a **high level** of moral **internalization** (Aquino & Reed, 2002). However, the dimension of the symbolization of moral identity means that individuals attempt to communicate their moral identity to the external world through their behaviors. In other words, individuals that exhibit a **high level** of symbolization of moral identity tend to express their moral goals or thoughts to others, whereas individuals that exhibit a **low level** of symbolization of moral identity are less inclined to behave as such in a public setting (Winterich et al., 2013a).

In ethnically Chinese societies, individuals internalize moral identity under the influence of traditional Confucian thought, which emphasizes that benevolence and righteousness are the basic principles of life. Individuals also sustain self-consistency according to their individual moral values. Therefore, being influenced by Confucian thoughts in their moral identity, individuals treat others according to the principle of reciprocity. Furthermore, in ethnically Chinese societies, individuals emphasize interpersonal relationships and “face” (Huang, 1987), caring about how other view them. In accordance with the social-cognitive model, Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, and Felps (2009) proposed that the interaction between situational factors and moral identity influences moral behaviors. In other words, if situational factors enhance the intensity of moral identity in the self-concept, situational factors are likely to motivate moral behaviors. Multiple studies have claimed that by living in a collectivist culture, ethnically Chinese people exhibit a situational orientation. Specifically, the term designates that ethnically Chinese people pay more attention to different social situations than do Westerners, and exhibit multiple values and attitudes accordingly. Ethnically Chinese people possess an interdependent and inclusive self (Lu, 2003). Heavily influenced by traditional Confucian culture, ethnically Chinese people conducting social behaviors

that involve the self as the main subject follow established sociomoral order, emphasizing the relational self (Ho, 1995). Therefore, the other–self relationship is quintessential in ethnically Chinese societies where relationships are crucial. The term *guanxi* orientation best represents the essence of the behaviors in ethnically Chinese societies (Huang, 1987). For ethnically Chinese people, their lives become meaningful only through coexistence with others (Lu, 2003).

In a collectivist society, people exhibit strong desires to be accepted, approved, and recognized by others. Praise or punishment from others exerts considerable influence on the determination or change of individual behaviors. In particular, because of a socially oriented self-concept, ethnically Chinese people seek a high level of individual–social integration and emphasize social rules and norms when interpreting situational demands. Consequently, they can perform behaviors that are appropriate for the specific environment while successfully adhering to their role responsibility. Ethnically Chinese people can also gain social recognition by cultivating their own morality (Lu et al., 2012). Therefore, in a collectivist environment, the collectivistic mindset and moral identity of individuals are both influenced by the cultural environment. Furthermore, a collectivistic mindset influences consumption decision-making through moral identity. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: The collectivistic mindset influences the intention to purchase fair trade goods through the mediating effect of moral identity internalization.

H3: The collectivistic mindset influences the intention to purchase fair trade goods through the mediating effect of moral identity symbolization.

Figure 1 presents an integrated model that jointly covers the direct and indirect effects caused by the research variable and summarizes the predicted relationships between those variables.

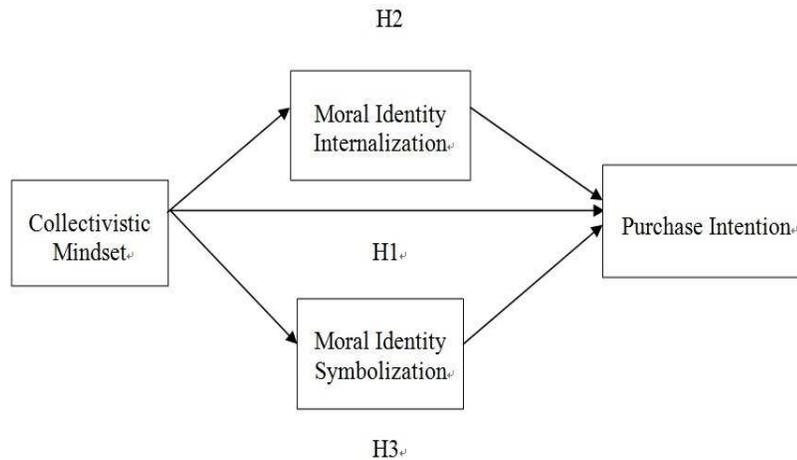


Fig. 1 The conceptual framework

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

To examine the proposed hypotheses, a survey was conducted at a university in Northern Taiwan. The field work was conducted in mid-2015. A diverse group of 367 undergraduate and graduate students and faculty members was recruited to participate in this study. Most respondents were 20–24 years old (72.21%) and female (65%).

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES

The constructs were adopted from various studies and were measured using multiple items. Moral identity was measured using 10 items that were adopted from the Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale proposed by Aquino and Reed (2002). Five items were used to measure each dimension (moral identity internalization and symbolization). Collectivism was measured using a five-item scale from a study by Chang and Cheng (2015). Purchase intention was assessed using four items from a study by White et al. (2012). All measures were assessed on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

To ensure the quality of the questionnaire, the following procedures were adopted in this study. First, we employed the translation–back translation procedure suggested by Van de Vijver and Leung (1997) to ensure consistency between the Chinese and English versions of the measurement items. The English questionnaire was initially translated into Chinese and then retranslated into English by a second translator, after which the two versions were compared. A pretest was then completed by 30 undergraduate students. After a reliability analysis was performed, any item with an item-to-total value below .3 was deleted. Six items were removed: two for collectivism, two for moral identity internalization, and two for moral identity symbolization (see Table 2 in the Appendix). Respondents required approximately 15 min to complete the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted in three parts. Following the two-step approach proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), confirmatory factor analysis was first conducted to evaluate the quality of the measurement model by examining the reliability and validity of each construct. H1 was then tested by assessing the structural model. AMOS Version 18.0 was employed to assess both the measurement and structural models. Finally, bootstrapping was employed to confirm the indirect effects of moral identity internalization and symbolization proposed in H2 and H3. The results are detailed in the following sections.

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 2. The findings indicate that the measurement model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 121.996$, degrees of freedom [*df*] = 59, $\chi^2/df = 2.068$, goodness-of-fit index [GFI] = .950, normed fit index [NFI] = .946, comparative fit index [CFI] = .971, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .054). The factor loadings of all the scale items were greater than .5 (range, .582–.927) and significant at the level of .001. Thus, the convergent validity of the measurement items was confirmed in accordance with the criteria set by Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

Table 1 displays the correlations, summary statistics, and internal consistency estimates among the constructs. The Cronbach's alpha values of the measured constructs (range, .747–.883) met the criterion proposed by Nunnally (1978; i.e., higher than .70). The composite reliability of the scales of the four constructs in Table 2 range from .763 to .888, which is within the acceptable range recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The reliability analysis results indicate that the measures of all the constructs were reliable.

The discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed through two methods. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was calculated and compared with the correlation coefficient between each pair of constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is supported if the square of the correlation coefficient is less than the AVE. Adherence to this rule was verified by comparing the AVE values (range, .522–.669) with the correlation coefficients (range, .289–.490) for each pair of constructs, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CORRELATIONS, SUMMARY STATISTICS AND INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

Constructs	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Mean	SD
1.COL	.753				5.528	.887
2.MIS	.469	.746			4.493	1.001
3.MII	.490	.405	.723		5.737	.909
4.PI	.318	.289	.418	.818	5.347	.969
5. α	.793	.747	.760	.883		

Diagonal elements (in bold) are VAVE (Rooted Average Variance Extracted)

COL collectivism, MIS moral identity symbolization, MII moral identity internalization, PI purchase intention, SD Standard deviation

TABLE 2: RESULTS OF CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

	t-value	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
Collectivism				
It's important for me to readily help others in need of help	14.018	0.806	0.797	0.567
I could do what is good for most of the people in the group, even if it means that the individual with receive less	15.211	0.748		
Sharing with others is important	16.694	0.701		
Moral Identity Internalization				
It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics	17.600	0.833	0.786	0.556
Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am	16.600	0.796		
Having these characteristics is not really important to me	11.260	0.582		
Moral Identity Symbolization				
The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics.	15.917	0.807	0.763	0.522
The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics	14.634	0.749		
I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics.	11.216	0.594		
Fair Trade Purchase Intention				
I would be likely to purchase this product	21.609	0.901	0.888	0.669
I would be willing to buy this product	22.628	0.927		
I would likely make this product one of my first choices in this product category	16.242	0.743		
I would exert a great deal of effort to purchase this product	14.213	0.674		

CR Composite Reliability, AVE Average Variance Extracted

STRUCTURAL MODEL

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted for hypothesis testing. The goodness model-fit indices of structure model were $\chi^2 = 131.13$, $df = 60$, $\chi^2/df = 2.186$, GFI = .947, NFI = .946, CFI = .967, RMSEA = .057. All the fit indices indicated an acceptable fit between the model and data. H1 states that collectivistic mindset is positively related to fair trade purchase intention. However, this effect was nonsignificant ($\beta = .006$, $z = .056$, $p = .955$). Thus, H1 is not supported.

INDIRECT EFFECTS OF MORAL IDENTITY INTERNALIZATION AND SYMBOLIZATION

To further confirm the mediating roles of moral identity internalization and symbolization, bootstrapping was employed to examine the indirect effects of these factors because bootstrapping is more powerful than the Sobel test and the causal step approach to testing intervening variable effects (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2004; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). According to the suggestion of Hayes (2009), bootstrapping was performed to generate a sample of 1,000 observations to derive percentile-based confidence intervals (CIs), which were adjusted to yield bias-corrected CIs (Table 3). If a zero value is not between the lower and upper confidence limits, then the indirect effect is significant with 95% confidence. The results reveal that the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CIs for specific indirect effects through moral identity internalization do not include a zero value (.221 to .541, with a point estimate of .349). However, these CIs for specific indirect effects through moral identity symbolization include zero (CI, -.065 to .184; point estimate, .044). Thus, H2 is supported, but H3 is not supported. Table 3 also indicates that the direct effect of collectivism on fair trade purchase intention was nonsignificant (CI, -.229 to .245; point estimate, .006). Therefore, collectivistic mindset indirectly affects only fair trade purchase intention through moral identity internalization (see Mathieu & Taylor, 2006 for a discussion on the distinction between indirect effect and mediation).

TABLE 3: BOOTSTRAPPING INDIRECT EFFECTS

Mediation effect	Product of coefficients			Bootstrap 1000 times Confidence Interval			
	Estimate	SE	Z-value	bias-corrected CI		Percentile CI	
				Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
COL to MII to PI	.349	.076	4.592	.221	.541	.210	.504
COL to MIS to PI	.044	.061	.721	-.065	.184	-.066	.182
COL to PI	.006	.125	.048	-.229	.245	-.228	.247

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Investigating the decision-making of ethical consumption is theoretically complex, because the decision-making process is subjected to the mutual influence of moral and emotional factors (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1991). This study investigates whether and how psychological antecedent and individual difference influence consumer response to fair trade goods. The hypotheses proposed in this study were verified through structural equation modeling, and three main findings were identified as follows.

First, the research result showed that moral identity played a mediating role in the decision-making of ethical consumption. The present study reported that a collectivistic mindset did not directly influence intention to purchase fair trade goods, but indirectly affected the intention through the internalization of moral identity. Moral identity can be triggered by situational factors (Aquino et al., 2009). In ethnically Chinese societies, individuals are flexible and changeable, showing appropriate behaviors according to various situations (Lu et al., 2012). In other words, in certain situations, when the internalization of moral identity is initiated, individuals with a collectivistic mindset produce a purchase intention for fair trade goods. By contrast, when the internalization of moral identity is not initiated, individuals may use price as the basis to make the consumption decision of ethical products. If ethical products are more expensive than ordinary ones are, consumers are more inclined to refuse purchasing them. Previous studies have reported that consumers who possess an interdependent self-construal are willing to pay a higher price to purchase cause-related products (Vaidyanathan et al., 2013). Because an interdependent self-construal is a self-concept corresponding to collectivism, consumers who possess such a construal can be inferred to exhibit a higher level of internalization of moral identity. Subsequent studies are suggested to focus on the interaction between interdependent self-construal and the internalization of moral identity.

Second, a collectivistic mindset positively influenced the internalization and symbolization of moral identity. Moral identity is stored in individual memory, comprising complex moral values, personal objectives, characteristics, and a blueprint of behaviors, and requires long-term accumulation to be fully established (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Therefore, the research results showed that in a collectivist society, individuals' internal psychological traits are molded by their environment; moreover, individuals' internal moral concepts are cultivated by Confucian thought. The research results again verified the points previously proposed by other scholars, namely that moral values are equivalent to cultural values, and that they are gradually formed by environmental influences (Lu et al., 2012).

Finally, the internalization of moral identity positively influenced individual intention to purchase fair trade goods. Individuals that possess a high level of moral internalization do so as a result of having long employed substantial moral-related knowledge to rapidly influence their self-concept (Aquino et al., 2009). In other words, individuals that exhibit a high level of moral internalization endeavor to sustain their internal self-consistency, and tend to pay attention to whether their behaviors meet the moral criteria. Because the price of fair trade products is set to a just standard that is sufficient to cover the production cost of farmers and labors (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015), such products are ethical to individuals who exhibit a high level of moral internalization. Therefore, in terms of practices, if companies wish to promote fair trade goods, they should start by inducing the internalization of moral identity in consumers. In particular, because collectivism emphasizes the individual-group relationship, companies can adopt a group buying model. Marketers are encouraged to choose media or program contexts related to collectivism.

The present study obtained an unexpected result: the symbolization of moral identity did not exert a significant influence on the intention to purchase fair trade goods. Because the fair trade good applied in the present study was coffee, a possible cause can be inferred that the price of coffee was too low for the consumers to use it to highlight their social status (Andorfer & Liebe, 2015). Subsequent studies should conduct further exploration on ethical products with a higher price. People in a collectivist society are eager to be accepted, approved, and recognized by others. Therefore, if ethical products with high prices are praised by the media, then ethnically Chinese people can be expected to symbolize their moral identity quickly, thereby engaging in more prosocial behaviors. Marketers can also use recognition to induce consumers' symbolization toward purchasing behavior.

This study makes two major contributions to the literature. First, to date, little research has focused on the psychological trait and individual difference of consumers toward fair trade goods. When studying the influence of individual characteristics on behaviors, most previous studies have considered moral identity as a confounding variable to investigate the interaction between variables (Winterich et al., 2013a; Winterich et al., 2013b; Xie et al., 2015). However, the present study considered moral identity as a mediating variable. The results showed that the internalization of moral identity completely mediated the relationship between collectivistic mindset and intention to purchase fair trade goods. The results showed that the internalization of moral identity is a main influencing factor of the ethical consumption decision-making of ethnically Chinese consumers.

One of the limitations of this study pertains to the narrow focus of the study. Our primary interest was in how collectivistic mindset, measured at psychological level, relate to consumer attitudes and behavior toward fair trade goods in ethnic Chinese societies. Because of this interest, we focused on a limited set of antecedents. Therefore, individualistic mindset was not included. Second, this research depended exclusively on participants' self-reports which may have been vulnerable to the effects of common method variance. However, the flaws may be overstated (Spector 2006) because in our case, self-reports may be the most accurate means of assessing psychological characteristics. The third potential limitation of this study is that the empirical model presented here is specific to young adults, and, therefore, may not be transferable to older generations.

The current work points to a number of opportunities for future research. In this study, mindset has been investigated at the individual and psychological level. Future research may explore it at the cultural level (e.g., differences in individual or collectivism across countries) (e.g., Leigh and Choi 2007; Chang and Cheng 2015). Furthermore, future studies could consider more complicated models such as the hierarchical Bayes model (Allenby and Ginter 1995) to incorporate consumer heterogeneity and to investigate how consumers' response to fair trade goods may be affected by consumer demographic and psychographic profiles.

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