



Full Length Article

Hedonic shopping motivations in collectivistic and individualistic consumer cultures



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ABSTRACT

We reinvestigate what constitutes hedonic customer experiences in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures using four country samples (N=2,336) in Germany and the U.S. as well as Oman and India. Across country samples, intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences are associated with the same underlying hedonic shopping motivations as shown in the original U.S. context. In comparison with individualistic cultures, we find that a hedonic shopping experience in collectivistic cultures is less strongly associated with self-oriented gratification shopping, yet more strongly associated with others-oriented role shopping.

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1. Introduction

Although a rich body of literature investigates customer experiences from a hedonic versus utilitarian perspective, little research has examined the cross-cultural variation in what constitutes hedonic experiences in a retail setting, and the underlying hedonic shopping motivations consumers have in different cultures. Replicating Arnold and Reynolds (2003) data in the U.S. in three countries, we investigate if intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences in collectivistic societies are driven by the same hedonic shopping motivations as in individualistic societies.

2. Expected cultural differences

Hedonic shopping experiences are deemed as a critical component for companies to differentiate themselves in Eastern markets, emphasizing the relevance of research on culturally-influenced drivers of hedonic shopping (see Web–Appendix 1). Hedonic

shopping motivations consist of six shopping dimensions (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003): adventure, gratification, idea, role, social, and value. These six hedonic shopping motivations mediate the link between fundamental drivers within the goal system hierarchy, which are likely to be universal across cultures, and enjoyable shopping outcomes (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012). Therefore, we expect that all hedonic shopping motivations are cross-culturally relevant for the customer experience.

H1. In individualistic consumer cultures (i.e., USA, Germany), intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences are associated with all hedonic shopping motivations.

H2. In collectivistic consumer cultures (i.e. India, Oman), intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences are associated with all hedonic shopping motivations.

However, important differences may arise in the weighting of these hedonic shopping motivations for the customer experience. In the U.S., Arnold and Reynolds (2003) found that intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences are particularly strongly associated with adventure and gratification shopping. Especially the link to gratification shopping may be stronger in individualistic than in collective cultures because gratification shopping serves personal goals which are more pronounced in individualistic cultures (Singelis, 1994). In contrast, consumers in collectivistic cultures less often feel the right to engage in self-gratification, but feel

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obliged to more strongly aim at maintaining groups' resources, relationships, and mutual obligations such as inherent in role shopping (Triandis, McCusker, & Harry, 1990).

H3. *In collectivistic cultures, the association of intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences with gratification shopping is weaker, and the association with role shopping is stronger than in individualistic cultures.*

In cross-cultural comparisons, attention must be devoted to the reflective measurement; that is, whether the different weighting of hedonic motivations is real or results only from differences in the mapping of underlying latent constructs (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Moreover, differences in income between Western and Eastern markets may bias the association of hedonic shopping motivations with intrinsically enjoyable experiences.

H4. Cross-cultural differences in the weighting of hedonic shopping motivations for intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences are not confounded by differences in reflective measurement or in income.

3. Method and samples¹

We conducted studies in two individualistic countries (U.S. and Germany) and in two collectivistic countries (India and Oman) retaining the original US data (Table 1). In line with Arnold and Reynolds (2003), we use hedonic shopping motivations (7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree") as independent variables and measure intrinsically enjoyable customer experiences as outcomes by the flow scale (7-point Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree"; Bloch, Ridgway, & Dawson, 1994). Among socio-demographic measures, income levels vary significantly between countries so we compute a four level relative income variable that approximately divides respondents into quartiles of the income distribution for each country sample (coded 1 for the lowest income class and 4 for the highest income class). As an indicator for collective orientation, the generosity scale (7-point Likert scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree"; Belk, 1985) validates that collectivistic country samples have a significantly higher generosity score than individualistic country samples (India and Oman: 4.88; U.S. and Germany: 4.68, $t = 4.60$, $p < .05$).

4. Findings

Regarding H1 and H2, we separately test path coefficients between each hedonic shopping motivation and flow in all country samples. Because the flow construct is operationalized as one item assessing the overall shopping flow experience and three items that reflect flow based on distorted time perceptions, the model considers covariance between residual errors of the three related items. For all country samples, we find that each hedonic shopping motivation is positively associated with flow, replicating Arnold and Reynolds (2003) finding for the U.S. (see Web—Appendix 2). Confirming H1 and H2, the conceptualization of six hedonic shopping motivations is relevant to investigate hedonic shopping experiences across

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Samples	Individualism score ^a	N	Gender (female)	Age (<36 years)
U.S.	91	233	67%	55%
Germany	67	931	48%	52%
India	48	885	40%	87%
Oman	38	287	53%	94%

^a On Hofstede's individualism scale with scores of 91 and 67 representing highly individualistic and scores of 48 and 38 representing collectivistic consumer cultures (Hofstede Center, 2013). Oman was not explicitly investigated by Hofstede, but is supposed to have a very low individualism score between 25 for Arab emirates and 38 for other Arab countries (Hofstede Center, 2013). In India and Oman, the major share of population is below 36 years (India: 63%) with a median age of 26.7 years in India and 24.7 years in Oman, which is even higher in urban areas, and a higher share of the male population (CIA 2013). Therefore, we deem the samples as a good representation of the overall population.

cultures. However, as posited in H3, cross-cultural differences may occur regarding the relative strength of associations which we will investigate next.

The comparison of relationships between constructs across cultures requires partial metric invariance which is provided if at least one indicator besides the marker item for each construct has invariant (i.e., equivalent) factor loadings across cultures (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). We specify a model with at least two factor loadings per construct that are held equal across samples while not constraining the remaining (non-invariant) items. This partial mediation model results in 14 out of 22 factor loadings that are fixed (Web—Appendix 3). Using chi-square difference testing, the partial metric invariance model is compared with a model where all factor loadings are free across samples (Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989). Across all country samples, the partial metric invariance model did not differ significantly from the model with free factor loadings ($\Delta\chi^2_{27} = 36.34$, n.s.), confirming partial metric invariance (see Appendix 1). We also successfully performed invariance models for the pooled individualistic and collectivistic samples (see Web—Appendix 4).

To test H3, we simultaneously examine the path coefficients of hedonic shopping motivations on flow in a multi-group model with pooled samples for individualistic cultures (U.S. and Germany) and collectivistic cultures (India and Oman) (see Table 2). At first, we assess stepwise for each path if coefficients significantly differ between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. We compare a model where all paths are free across samples with six models in which one path of interest is fixed, respectively. Significant differences in chi-square indicate that paths differ between individual and collectivistic cultures. In line with H3, we find that the association of gratification shopping with flow is stronger in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures ($\Delta\chi^2_1 = 24.32$, $p < .05$). In collectivistic cultures, stronger associations with flow are indicated for role shopping ($\Delta\chi^2_1 = 5.77$, $p < .05$), adventure shopping ($\Delta\chi^2_1 = 5.91$, $p < .05$), and value shopping ($\Delta\chi^2_1 = 7.04$, $p < .05$), compared with individualistic cultures.

To test H4, we assess interaction effects between hedonic shopping motivations and cultural differences.² Model 1 shows significant associations between all six hedonic shopping motivations (operationalized as average scores) and flow, even when controlling for cultural difference

¹ Data is available from IJRM website. Due to missing values, the final dataset has been reduced to 2336 instead of 2501. However, results remain stable when models are run on the full dataset with imputed data.

² Additional invariance tests for multi-group comparisons are included in the Web—Appendix.

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