Cultural Variation in Affect Valuation and its Consumer Behavioral Consequences

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract (Summary)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Meaning(s) of Happiness and the Concept of Ideal Affect</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness and Choice</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Discussion and Implications</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A1: High-arousal &amp; Low Positive Advertisements (Cookie)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A2: High-arousal &amp; Low Positive Advertisements (Water)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A3: High-arousal &amp; Low Positive Advertisements (Cold Medicine)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A4: High-arousal &amp; Low Positive Advertisements (Shampoo)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Affect Valuation Index – Measuring Ideal Affect</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Singelis Prescreen – Measuring Independent vs. Interdependent Self-Construal</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Abstract

Amidst a recovering economy whose recent turmoil has effectively wrecked the lives of many, the promise of happiness has reasserted itself in the business world’s public dialogue. Marketers have recently increased their focus on promoting happiness, promising that positive feelings can be directly derived from acquiring and using their products. But while consumers might all want to be *happy*, a growing body of research suggests that happiness manifests itself very differently among individuals, and can be ordered into two categories—high-arousal positive affect, and low-arousal positive affect. Towards this end, previous studies suggest that cultural factors influence ideal affect (i.e., the affective states that people ideally want to feel), and individual’s definition of happiness and ideal affect can impact the choices they make. This study examined the role of ideal affect valuation in shaping how consumers respond to advertisements and brands across cultures. In Study 1, European American, South Asian, and East Asian females showed general support towards cultural differences in ideal affect, and consumer valuation differences when exposed to ads of varying degree of affective promises. In Study 2, East Asian females demonstrated a greater interest in the advertisements that showed a low-arousal positive affect, than those who were exposed to almost identical advertisements of the same product that showed a high-arousal positive affect. Moreover, images were more effective in eliciting a difference in response than words, which underscored the ability of images to effectively communicate affective states to the viewer. These findings suggest that cultural differences in ideal affect do play a role in shaping how consumers evaluate brands and their advertisements, and that the form of communication (words vs. images) can influence response.
Introduction

How does culture shape consumer choices? Imagine yourself an executive in charge of marketing your company’s product to a new consumer pool from a foreign culture. What considerations will you need to be aware of? How should you present your brand and product to become relevant and appealing to this new target customer group?

Amidst a recovering economy whose recent turmoil has effectively wrecked the lives of many, the promise of happiness has reasserted itself in the business world’s public dialogue. Marketers have recently increased their focus on promoting happiness, promising that positive feelings can be directly derived from acquiring and using their products. Examples of this practice are numerous: Hugh Boss offers “Orange, the fragrance of happiness,” while VISA promotes “Happiness Verified by VISA.” Likewise, the Coca-Cola Company has inaugurated an “Open Happiness” campaign, entreat ing consumers to enjoy the simple pleasures of life and to share their happiness with others.

Happiness appears to be a universal message appropriate for cross-cultural consumer goods. Most people like to feel happy (Larsen, 2000), yet the ways in which this state is achieved vary significantly. Surely psychologists, economists, and political scientists have made significant progress in determining scientific measures of happiness, ways to increase it as well as the importance of being happy (Diener and Chan 2011; Diener and Seligman 2002; Dunn, Akin, and Norton 2008; Easterline 2003; Kahneman et al. 2004, 2006; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade 2005; Mogilner 2010; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Yet, we still lack a strong empirical understanding of what “happiness” means, and to what extent it could have different meaning across cultures and individuals.

Indeed, a growing body of research suggests that happiness manifests itself very differently among individuals, and that our idea of happiness varies significantly from that of
our peers. While this line of research remains thin, even sparser is the research exploring whether and how differences in definitions of happiness across individuals can affect their own consumer choices. Is happiness truly universal in how it affects our decisions? Or does it also depend on how the promise of happiness is described and framed, and what it means to the consumer?

In a rapidly globalizing world where happiness is becoming an increasingly important element of marketers’ value proposition, we still know little about how definitions of happiness differ culturally and how happiness itself affects choices. Across cultures, we see people engaging in vastly different mood-producing behaviors to enter a happy state; will consumers from different cultures choose happiness-inducing products differently too?

The definition of culture used in this thesis is that which recognizes that culture incorporates a set of learned values ranging from customs, language, material artifacts, attitudes and beyond (Radnor & Strauss, 2011). Understanding how cross-cultural consumers’ definition of happiness change is helpful, but being able to pinpoint cultural factors that determine the definition of happiness will yield a wider set of application. Toward this, we ask, what are the underlying factors that might explain how cultural differences impact an individual’s definition of happiness and how it determines consumer behaviors?

In order to address these questions, I report the results of a set of studies that apply to the subject matter at hand.

The Meaning(s) of Happiness and the Concept of Ideal Affect

Is Happiness universal? While some researchers see Happiness as a universal and singular message consistent across individuals, others suggest that it is highly subjective, and
can take on different individual meanings (Myers and Diener 1995; Layard 2005; Gilbert 2006). A third and smaller stream of research argues that there are multiple types of Happiness, and these types can be endorsed and viewed differently in function of age (Mogilner et al. 2011) and culture (Tsai, Knutson, and Fund 2006).

To understand the different types of happiness requires an understanding of affective states. Affective states are neurophysiologic phenomena that produce emotions, feelings or moods, and can be classified into two categories: valence and arousal (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1999; Larsen & Diener, 1992; Russell, 1991; Thayer, 1989; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). The valence category encompasses feelings that respond to potential gains (positive valence) or losses (negative valence), while the arousal category describes feelings that require energy and mobilization (high arousal) or allow rest and recuperation (low arousal; Russell, 2003). Various studies have shown that different feeling states can be defined and ordered in terms of the above-mentioned affective categories (e.g., Kuppens, Ceulemans, Timmerman,Diener, & Kim-Prieto, 2006; Yik & Russell, 2003). For example, enthusiasm, elation, and excitement can be grouped as high-arousal positive (HAP) states, and tranquility, serenity, and peacefulness can be grouped as low-arousal positive (LAP) states (Tsai, 2007).

While the psychology community focuses heavily on the actual affective states that people experience (their actual affect), little attention has been placed towards the ideal affective states they would like to feel (their ideal affect). To measure the existence of ideal affect, Jeanne Tsai and Brian Knutson developed the affect valuation index (AVI), and found that how their respondents actually feel differs from how they ideally want to feel, hence supporting the existence of ideal affect (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006).

What is interesting within this body of research is that researchers found evidence that suggests individuals endorse ideal affect differently. Some look for high-arousal positive emotions, for example excitement and elation, while others are more interested in low-
arousal positive emotions such as peacefulness and calmness. The two most prevalent explanations for this variation relate to age and culture. Through a study of over 70,000 expressions of happiness in personal blogs, Mogilner et al. (2011) revealed that the meaning of happiness tends to shift across ages, where young bloggers tend to define happiness as a high-arousal positive feeling, and older bloggers tend to define happiness as a low-arousal positive feeling.

Likewise, cultural differences also emerged as plausible explanations for cross-cultural differences in ideal affect valuation (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). To test this hypothesis, Tsai, Knutson, & Fung (2006) surveyed a group of European Americans (EA), Asian Americans (AA), and Hong Kong Chinese (CH) undergraduate students, and found that EA and AA individuals value HAP states more than CH individuals do. At the same time, CH and AA individuals value LAP states more than EA individuals do. Thus, one’s particular definition of happiness and one’s ideal affect may stem from the culture that he has been raised in and systematically exposed to.

Thus, differences in perception of ideal affect were found to emerge early in life and to be culturally learned. To further this hypothesis, Tsai et al. (2007) conducted three studies exploring whether cultural differences in ideal affect emerged early in life and were acquired through exposure to storybooks. They found that cultural differences in ideal affect were exhibited by preschoolers and consistent with previous studies. They also found that these differences were influenced by imagery present in storybooks presented to the children. Finally, they also found evidence that across cultures, exposure to exciting (vs. calm) storybooks influenced children’s preferences towards excited (vs. calm) activities and their ideal affect endorsements. Thus, culture can play a critical role in determining how individuals value ideal affective states, even at a very young age.
These findings underscore the importance of the role that culture can play in influencing one’s own meaning of happiness and ideal affect valuations, which leads to my first hypothesis. I propose that when people are more exposed to an American culture (either through their own ethnicity or years lived in America), they will value high-arousal positive (HAP) states more. However, when people are more exposed to an Asian culture (either through their own ethnicity or years lived in Asian countries), they will value low-arousal positive (LAP) states more.

**H1:** Cultural orientation impacts one’s valuation of ideal affective states, whereby (a) orientation to an American culture increases the tendency to value HAP states more than LAP states; and (b) orientation to Asian cultures increases the tendency to value LAP states more than HAP states.

**Happiness and Choice**

Because we generally want to be happy (Larsen, 2000), what we choose to do to achieve that happiness can differ according to the way we define happiness and how we value ideal affective states. In support of this thought, Tsai (2007) suggests that ideal affect represents a goal; it has great motivational force and has the potential to strongly alter behavior. She finds that cultural differences in ideal affect correspond with predicted behavioral consequences in leisure activities and drug use. Americans are found to take part in activities that produces HAP states more frequently than East Asians do, while East Asians are found to take part in activities that produces LAP states more frequently than Americans do. But a question remains - how do cultural differences in ideal affect impact consumer choices?
While some markets operate under the assumption that happiness is the universal message and promise that all consumers are looking for, research shows that happiness is simply one of the many drivers behind choice (Benjamin et al. 2011). To explore how happiness impacts choice, Mogilner et al. (2011) conducted a series of studies that identify temporal focus to be a factor that influences the type of happiness one experiences, and consequently choice. In one study, they asked a sample of younger adults and older adults to listen to both an exciting and calming version of a song, to record how happy they felt during the song and their temporal focus, and to pick a version of the song as an additional thank you. They conclude that what happiness represents to an individual can impact their choice, and that their definition of happiness can be altered through a shift of temporal focus. For those individuals who defined happiness as more exciting than calm, they chose the song that was more exciting. For those individuals who defined happiness as more calm than excited, they chose the song that was calmer.

These findings underscore the importance of the definition of happiness in its ability to influence choice. What is lacking however is an understanding of how differences in culture or a shift in cultural focus can impact choice. I hypothesize that the extent to which one is closer to Asian cultures or an American culture will determine which ideal affect state one values more, and thus whether a calming or exciting option will be more valued by the individual. Specifically, if an individual is more culturally oriented towards Asian cultures, LAP states will be preferred over HAP states, so he should be more interested in an option that promises or results in calmness. However, if an individual is more culturally associated with an American culture, HAP states are valued over LAP states, so consumers should be more interested in an option that promises or engenders excitement.
**H2:** Cultural orientation impacts choice, whereby (a) orientation to Asian cultures increases the tendency to choose a calming option over an exciting option; and (b) orientation to an European American culture increases the tendency to choose an exciting option over a calming option.

Culture is also a broadly defined variable. Previous studies have hypothesized that differences in ideal HAP states endorsement and ideal LAP states endorsement could be partially explained by differences in self-construal between independence and interdependence. I hypothesize that how one defines their self-construal will determine which ideal affect states they value more, and thus whether a calming or exciting option will be more appealing and of interest. Specifically, if an individual is more socially interdependent, LAP states is valued over HAP states, so he should be more interested in an option that promises or exhibits calmness. Thus, interdependent consumers should tend to choose more calming options. However, if an individual is more independent, HAP states are valued over LAP states, so consumers should be more interested in an option that promises or exhibits excitement. Thus, independent consumers should tend to choose more exciting options.

**H3:** Interdependence vs. Independence self-construal helps impact choice, whereby (a) orientation to an interdependence self-construal increases the tendency to choose a calming option over an exciting option; and (b) orientation to an independence self-construal in increases the tendency to choose an exciting option over a calming option.
Overview

To test these three hypotheses, I recruited two samples of participants, one a broad adult sample and one a college age sample. Both were administered the same survey, evaluating advertisements for various products, presented in high or low arousing positive ways. Each participant was exposed to four different advertisements, and we measured how they evaluated the brand and the ad, as well as some demographic information, how they valued ideal affective states, and their interdependence vs. independence mode of self-construal. The two studies hoped to extend previous studies in three ways. First, we hoped to explore how participants directly respond to advertisements. Second, we hoped to explore the differences in representations of happiness, either conveyed through words or images. Specifically, each participant will be exposed to 4 distinct kinds of advertisements - one of which will promise HAP states through words, one of which will promise HAP states through an image, one of which will promise LAP states through words, and one of which will promise LAP states through an image. Finally, the existing literature has focused primarily only on differences between European American and East Asian (e.g., China, Japan) cultures, in the first study we also explored potential cultural differences in HAP and LAP among Southeast Asians (e.g., India) as well.

Two studies were thus conducted. In Study 1, the study recruited a broad sample of adults online representing European American, South Asian, and East Asian ethnic backgrounds. In Study 2, the study recruited college students of European American or East Asian ethnicities. In both studies the advertisements presented, as well as the dependent variables assessed, were identical.
Study 1: Method

*Ad Set Development.* To enhance external validity, eight advertisements on four products were specifically designed for this study. To minimize prior brand and product affinity, generic products were chosen. Those specific products were cookies, bottled water, shampoo, and cold medicine. Each product was showcased in two ads, each one containing a different endorsement of ideal affective state, presented by *triggers* of the same category (words vs. image). For example, the water ads had two variations. In the *exciting version*, an image of a water bottle was shown, along with the following advertising message “Now with an exciting taste of lemon.” In contrast, the *calming version* showed an image of a water bottle accompanied by the tagline; “Now with a calming taste of lemon.” Likewise, the shampoo ads had two variations. In the *exciting version*, it read, “have beautiful hair”, and featured a woman displaying a very elated and excited laugh. In contrast, the *calming version* read, “have beautiful hair”, and featured the same woman shot at the same angle with a very calming, closed-mouth smile.

Within each set, the participants saw four ads pertaining to the four products — both image and verbal triggers were used to convey HAP and LAP respectively, resulting in a total of four total trigger/state combinations.

*Participants.* One hundred and twenty-six European American females, seventy Southeast Asian females, and thirty-three East Asian females were recruited through Amazon’s mechanical-turk and participated in an online survey. The participants each received a $2.02 online credit for their participation.

*Instruments.* Two distinct variables were used to measure how effective each ad was in communicating with the participants. The first measure, termed Ad Appeal Index, aims to assess the participants’ general impression of the ad. Participants were asked to rate the ad on
one seven-point scale anchored by “Not at all appealing”/”Very appealing”. The second measure, termed Brand Affinity Index, taps the participants’ level of brand affinity. Specifically, they were asked to indicate whether they would consider buying the product, how willing they were to learn more about the product, and how willing they were to be notified for future promotion / coupons. They were asked to answer these three questions on three seven-point scales anchored by “Would definitely not consider buying it”/”Would definitely consider buying it”, “Not at all willing”/”Very willing”.

To measure ideal affect, participants were to answer the AVI Index, developed by Tsai, Knutson, & Fung (2006). Participants were asked to “rate how often you would IDEALLY like to have that feeling” of each of 30 items “over the course of a typical week”, by using a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time). We then calculated mean aggregate scores of items from each octant of the affective complex.

To measure whether group differences were due to independence-interdependence, participants completed the Prescreen developed by Singelis (1994). Participants rated how strongly they agreed with statements assessing independence (e.g. “I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I’ve just met.”) as well as interdependence (e.g. “I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.”) using 24 seven-point scales, each anchored by “Strongly disagree”/”Strongly agree”.

As for demographics information, the participants reported their age, ethnicity, and number of years lived in US, in a Southeast Asian country, and in an East Asian country.

Procedure. After collecting demographic information, participants were randomly assigned to one of two ad sets. Each ad within the set appeared in a random fashion to control for possible order effects. The participants were asked to evaluate each ad using the Ad Appeal Index and the Brand Affinity Index. Afterwards, they were shown the AVI Index and the independence-interdependence scale.
Results and Discussion

To explore the cultural differences in ideal affect endorsement, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with ideal affect type (high-arousal affect vs. low-arousal affect) as a within-subject factor and culture (European American vs. Southeast Asian vs. East Asian) as a between-subject factor. There was a significant interaction between affect type and ethnicity type, $F(2,226) = 17.66, p < 0.001$. In contrast to our hypothesis, European American (EuA) females endorsed HAP states ($M = 3.74$) less than they did with LAP states ($M = 4.16$). Southeast Asian (SA) females endorsed HAP states ($M = 3.77$) more than they did with LAP states ($M = 3.50$). On the other hand, East Asian females (EA) females endorsed LAP states ($M = 3.64$) more than they did with HAP states ($M = 3.43$). Unexpected response bias was found in the main effect of ethnicity, $F(2, 226) = 9.979, p < 0.001$, EuA females gave high endorsement generally ($M = 3.951$) than did SA females and EaA females ($Ms = 3.635$ and $3.539$, respectively). Pair-wise comparison showed that SA females gave higher endorsements to HAP states ($M = 3.77$) than EaA females did ($M = 3.43$), $t(101) = 2.167, p < 0.05$.

To explore the cultural differences in independence vs. interdependence self-construal, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with self-construal type (independence vs. interdependence) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. SA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor. There was a significant interaction between self-construal type and culture, $F(2, 226) = 5.837, p < 0.01$. Similar to previous studies, EuA females saw themselves as more independent than interdependent ($Ms = 4.92$ and $4.63$, respectively), whereas SA females saw themselves as more interdependent than independent ($Ms = 5.14$ and $5.00$, respectively). Finally, EaA females saw themselves as more interdependent than
independent \((Ms = 4.80\) and \(4.57\), respectively). Unexpected response bias was found in the main effect of ethnicity, \(F(2,226) = 7.711, p = 0.001\), SA females gave high endorsement generally \((M = 5.064)\) than did EuA females and EaA females \((Ms = 4.78\) and \(4.68,\) respectively). Pair-wise comparison showed that EuA females defined themselves as more independent \((M = 4.92)\) than EaA females did \((M = 4.63)\), \(t(157) = 2.416, p < 0.05\).

Of central interest, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Ad Appeal Index from each ad type (WrdHApI vs. WrdLApl vs. ImgHApI vs. ImgLApl) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. SA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor to explore how differences in culture will alter consumer valuation on ad appeal with varying degrees of affective promises. Mauchly’s Test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, \(\chi^2(5) = 21.08, p = 0.001\), therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity \((\varepsilon = 0.96)\). The results showed a significant interaction between Ad Appeal Index from each ad type and culture, \(F(5.66, 654.10) = 2.91, p = 0.01\). Pair-wise comparison showed that SA females gave higher endorsements to both high arousal image ad and low-arousal image ad \((Ms = 5.64\) and \(5.17,\) respectively) than EuA females did \((Ms = 4.84\) and \(4.56,\) respectively), \(t(194) = 3.58, p < 0.001\), and \(t(194) = 2.66, p < 0.01\), respectively. Likewise, pair-wise comparison also showed that SA females gave higher endorsements to the high-arousal-image ad \((M = 5.64)\) than EaA females did \((M = 4.94)\), \(t(194) = 2.18, p < 0.05\).

To continue, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Brand Affinity Index from each ad type (WrdHBrd vs. WrdLBrd vs. ImgHBrd vs. ImgLBrd) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. SA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor to explore how differences in culture will alter consumer affinity towards brand with varying degrees of affective promises. Mauchly’s Test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, \(\chi^2(5) = 37.93, p < 0.001\), therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using
Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = 0.92$). The results did not show a significant interaction between Brand Affinity Index from each ad type and culture, $F(5.50, 620.72) = 1.83, p > 0.05$.

Together these results show general support towards cultural differences in ideal affect, independence-interdependence self-construal, and consumer valuation differences when exposed to ads of varying degree of affective promises across these participants.

**Study 2: Method**

*Participants.* Forty-nine European American females, forty-nine East Asian females were recruited through from a large Midwestern University. The participants entered into a lottery drawing for $50 in cash for their participation.

They completed the same survey as the study 1 participants, followed the same procedure, viewed the same ad sets, and were measured by the same instruments.

**Results and Discussion**

To explore the cultural differences in ideal affect endorsement, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with ideal affect type (high-arousal affect vs. low-arousal affect) as a within-subject factor and culture (European American vs. East Asian) as a between-subject factor. The results did not show a significant interaction between affect type and ethnicity type, $F(1.94) = 0.38, p > 0.05$. Although non-significant, the pattern of cultural differences in ideal affect endorsements were in line with previous studies. EuA females endorsed HAP states slightly but non-significantly higher than they did with LAP states ($Ms = 4.02$ and 3.98,
respectively), while EaA females endorsed LAP states slightly and non-significantly higher than they did with HAP states ($Ms = 3.89$ and $3.84$, respectively).

To explore the cultural differences in independence vs. interdependence self-construal, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with self-construal type (independence vs. interdependence) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor. The results did not show a significant interaction between self-construal type and culture, $F(1, 94) = 2.067, p > 0.05$. Similar to previous studies, slight and insignificant cultural differences in ideal affect endorsements were however demonstrated. EuA females saw themselves as more independent than EaA females did ($Ms = 4.57$ and $4.52$, respectively), whereas EA females saw themselves as more interdependent than EuA females did ($Ms = 4.93$ and $4.72$, respectively).

Of central interest, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Ad Affinity Index from each ad type (WrdHApl vs. WrdLApl vs. ImgHApl vs. ImgLApl) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor. Mauchly’s Test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2 (5) = 12.80, p < 0.05$, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = 0.953$). The results did not show a significant interaction between Ad Affinity Index from each ad type and culture, $F(2.86, 268.81) = 0.42, p > 0.05$.

To continue, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Brand Affinity Index from each ad type (WrdHBrd vs. WrdLBrd vs. ImgHBrd vs. ImgLBrd) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. EaA) as a between-subject factor. Mauchly’s Test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2 (5) = 19.54, p < 0.01$, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = 0.903$). The results did not show a significant interaction between Brand Affinity Index from each ad type and culture, $F(2.71, 254.76) = 0.26, p > 0.05$. 
Concerned with the effect of ad set on the dependent variables, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Ad Appeal Index from each ad type (WrdHApl vs. WrdLApl vs. ImgHApl vs. ImgLApl) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. EaA) and Ad set (one vs. two) as a between-subject factor. The results showed a significant interaction between Ad Appeal Index from each ad type and Ad set, \( F(3, 276) = 27.30, p < 0.001 \). Similarly, to examine the effect of ad set on Brand Affinity, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with Brand Appeal Index from each ad type (WrdHBrd vs. WrdLBrd vs. ImgHBrd vs. ImgLBrd) as a within-subject factor and culture (EuA vs. EaA) and Ad set (one vs. two) as a between-subject factor. The results showed a significant interaction between Ad Appeal Index from each ad type and Ad set, \( F(3, 276) = 19.54, p < 0.001 \). Together, these findings suggest that ad set plays a role in determining how each ad was evaluated with both indexes. Looking at the results more closely, we find that some ads were generally rated much higher than other ads, regardless of their affective states trigger, suggesting that within-subjects comparisons might not be applicable.

Instead, I crossed ethnicity (EuA vs. EaA) with ad set (one vs. two) to create four new groups. Each group represents one ethnicity and one ad set, or one specific rendition of each ad. To test how culture types might respond differently to high-arousal ad vs. low-around ad of the same product, I conducted four separate one-way between subjects ANOVAs to compare the effect of group type (1 vs. 2 vs. 3 vs. 4) on the Ad Appeal Index of each product. There were no significant effect of group type on Ad Appeal Index for the cookie product and the water product, \( F(3, 92) = 0.76, p > 0.05 \), and \( F(3, 92) = 0.29, p > 0.05 \). However, there were significant effects of group type on Ad Appeal Index for the cold medicine product and the shampoo product, \( F(3,92) = 3.57, p < 0.05 \), and \( F(3,92) = 4.62, p < 0.01 \). This is of particular interests because we found cultural groups to respond differently to ads when affective states were presented through images rather than words, suggesting that
images might be able to communicate affective states more effectively than words. For both the cold medicine product and the shampoo product, the pair-wise tests showed no significant differences between how EuA females valued the high-arousal ad vs. the low-arousal ad. However, EaA females found the low-arousal shampoo ad to be more appealing ($M = 5.60$) than the high-arousal shampoo ad ($M = 4.39$), $t(46) = 3.36, p < 0.01$. At the same time, EaA females found the high-arousal cold medicine ad to be more appealing ($M = 4.96$) than the low-arousal cold medicine ad ($M = 3.70$), $t(46) = 3.10, p < 0.01$. At first glance, these results might seem contradicting to our original hypothesis, but further inspection suggests that it might not. Congruent to our intuition, the shampoo ad features one woman, and EaA females found the ad to be more appealing when the woman showed a low-arousal positive state. The cold medicine ad, however, features a group of twelve people of mixed gender and race. The tendency for EaA females to find the high-arousal positive cold medicine ad to be more appealing could be explained by their interdependent self-construal. While individually, they might be more interested in a low-arousal positive state or being more calm-happy, they might be more interested in a high-arousal positive state in a group, or in seeing a group to more excited-happy.

Moving away from Ad Appeal Index, I conducted four separate one-way between subjects ANOVAs to compare the effect of group type (1 vs. 2 vs. 3 vs. 4) on the Brand Affinity Index of each product. There were no significant effects of group type on Brand Affinity Index for all products. To extend from this study, I conducted separate one-way between subjects ANOVAs to compare the effect of group type (1 vs. 2 vs. 3 vs. 4) on each question for each product. In particular, there were a significant effect of group type on how willing the participant indicated that she was to be notified for future promotion with the cookie product ($F(3, 92) = 3.10, p < 0.05$), and a significant effect of group type on how the participant indicated whether she would consider buying the product with the shampoo
product \((F(3, 92) = 3.10, p < 0.05)\). Under the pair-wise comparison, EaA females indicated that they were more willing to be notified for future promotion to the low-arousal positive cookie ad \((M = 4.87)\) than they did to the high arousal positive cookie ad \((M = 3.44)\), \(t(46) = -2.66, p < 0.01\). Likewise, they also indicated that they would consider buying the product more when exposed to the low-arousal positive shampoo ad \((M = 4.92)\) than they did to the high arousal positive shampoo ad \((M = 3.96)\), \(t(46) = 2.81, p < 0.05\). The pair-wise comparison also found that EaA females indicated that they were more willing to be notified for future promotion to the low-arousal positive cookie ad \((M = 4.87)\) than EuA females did to the same ad \((M = 3.42)\), \(t(45) = -2.70, p = 0.01\). Finally the EuA females indicated they would consider buying the product more when exposed to the high-arousal positive shampoo ad \((M = 4.92)\) than EaA females did to the same ad \((M = 3.96)\), \(t(45) = 2.32, p < 0.05\).

Together these findings suggest that culture does play a role in consumer behavior. In line with our hypothesis, orientation towards Asian cultures improved the attitude of the individual towards products that exhibit a low-arousal positive affect. There were also evidences that images might be more effective in communicating affective states. Yet, it also must be noted that a simple substitution in one word could yield very different responses across consumers as in the case of the cookie ad.

**General Discussion**

Happiness is a universal goal. We all want to be happy, and we often work towards that goal. However, the current body of literature seems to only have a weak understanding of what types of happiness are there, how they differ across individuals, and how they influence our choices. This research takes a preliminary step in exploring how cultural factors could shape happiness and how that affects our choices and evaluations. The findings from the two
groups of participants show that culture does play a role in how we define happiness and how we endorse ideal affective states. More specifically, we find that orientation to an American culture vs. Asian cultures has an impact towards how individuals evaluate different advertisements and brands.

However, the current research is limited in several ways, which provide areas for further research. For one, I have only conducted the study through a surveying method. Given that people’s cultural orientation (especially in the case of cross-cultural individuals) and independence-interdependence self-construal could be manipulated, it is important to further examine how cultural orientation or other cultural factors might directly impact choice with the help of priming.

Further research is also needed towards understanding the interplay between actual affect and ideal affect. Of theoretic interest is whether ideal affect directly drives choice, or would it be the gap between ideal affect and actual affect that would have greater impact towards consumer choices.

Mongilner et al. (2011) found temporal focus to be a factor determine kinds of happiness and choice. Hence, of equal interest, we could also examine how temporal focus might interact with culture. Research could be conducted on how temporal focus alters across cultures. At the same time, further research might also need to account for temporal focus’s effect on happiness, and be able to control that across participants.

Finally, further research could also extend towards representations of happiness and how different individuals would evaluate them. In this study, I explored how phrases and images alone could demonstrate different affective types and promises. Further research could examine other types of images or colors, to build a stronger empirical understanding of how marketers could best create happy brands, tailored to their consumers.
Appendix A1: High-arousal & Low Positive Advertisements (Cookie)

Delicious cookies to **celebrate** with!

Gourmet cookies made with top quality flour and chocolate chips. Baked to perfection, and suitable for all occasions.

Cookie Co.

Delicious cookies to **relax** with.

Gourmet cookies made with top quality flour and chocolate chips. Baked to perfection, and suitable for all occasions.

Cookie Co.
Appendix A2: High-arousal & Low Positive Advertisements (Water)

Now with an **exciting** taste of lemon.

Water Co.

Now with a **calming** taste of lemon.

Water Co.
Appendix A3: High-arousal & Low Positive Advertisements (Cold Medicine)

feel good again

Coldmeds Co.

feel good again

Coldmeds Co.
Appendix A4: High-arousal & Low Positive Advertisements (Shampoo)
Appendix B: Affect Valuation Index – Measuring Ideal Affect

Listed below are a number of words that describe feelings. Some of the feelings are very similar to each other, whereas others are very different from each other. Read each word and then rate how often YOU WOULD IDEALLY LIKE TO HAVE that feeling over the course of a typical week, using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>A small amount of the time</td>
<td>Half the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>All the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the course of a typical week, I would IDEALLY like to feel…

- enthusiastic _____
- astonished _____
- nervous _____
- dull _____
- quiet _____
- relaxed _____
- excited _____
- surprised _____
- elated _____
- sleepy _____
- still _____
- lonely _____
- strong _____
- passive _____
- content _____
- sluggish _____
- inactive _____
- sad _____
- euphoric _____
- fearful _____
- happy _____
- idle _____
- calm _____
- unhappy _____
- aroused _____
- hostile _____
- satisfied _____
- rested _____
- peaceful _____
- serene _____
Appendix C: Singelis Prescreen – Measuring Independent vs. Interdependent Self-Construal

Please use the following scale to depict your agreement with each item. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as possible. When “group” is referred to in a question, think about a group in which you are a member, any group that is important to you – it could be a fraternity, your family, an ethnic, gender, or religious group, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
_____ I respect people who are modest about themselves.
_____ Speaking up during class is not a problem for me.
_____ I’d rather say “No” directly than risk being misunderstood.
_____ Having a lively imagination is important to me.
_____ If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
_____ I value being in good health above everything.
_____ I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
_____ My happiness depends upon the happiness of those around me.
_____ I am comfortable being singled out for praise or rewards.
_____ It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
_____ I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor.
_____ I am the same person at home that I am at school.
_____ Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
_____ I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
_____ I should take into consideration my parents’ advice when making education/career plans.
_____ I act the same way no matter who I am with.
_____ It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
_____ Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
_____ I feel comfortable using someone’s first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
_____ I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I’m not happy with the group.
_____ I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I’ve just met.
_____ I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
_____ My personal identity independent of others is very important to me.
References


