



Face Consciousness, Gender, and Money Attitudes

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Keywords: face consciousness, gender, money attitudes, brand names

Conceptual framework. Factors affecting consumer decision-making are becoming more complex and require more research attention as the consumer market becomes more globalized. Face consciousness as a variable affecting consumer decision making has received scant research attention (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003). Face consciousness is “people’s desire to manage their face as to present themselves in a favorable way in social encounters” (Zhang & Cao, 2010, p. 323). Consumers with high face consciousness have heightened concern for appearance, engage in activities to boost or maintain face (Bao et al., 2003), and purchase brand name products as a symbolic social achievement (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Material values and brand consciousness were positively related to face consciousness (Zhang & Cao, 2010). Materialism encompasses attitudes toward money and possessions (Christopher, Marek & Carroll, 2004). Money is emotionally meaningful--stimulating consumers to compare themselves with others in social power, control, quality, and freedom (Medina et al., 1996). Money attitude is a construct which involves both positive (e.g., prestige and quality) and negative feelings (e.g., distrust, anxiety) (Chang & Arkin, 2002). Limited research has examined the relationships between face consciousness and money attitudes in the fashion merchandising area.

The purpose of this study was to if money attitudes differ among consumers who differ in face consciousness and gender. The following hypotheses were proposed: H1a-d: Men and women will differ in money attitudes related to (a) power/prestige, (b) distrust, (c) quality, and (d) anxiety. H2: Participants with high compared with low face consciousness will differ in money attitudes related to (a) power/prestige, (b) distrust, (c) quality, and (d) anxiety.

Method. A questionnaire contained demographic items, a 4-item face consciousness scale (Tse, 1996) and a 27-item money attitudes scale (Yamauchi & Templer, 1982) scored on 7-point response categories. Items from the face consciousness scale are “Purchase of brand name products brings me a sense of prestige; Brand name purchase is a good way to distinguish people from others.” Examples of items from each factor of money attitudes follows: Power/prestige (“I must admit that I buy things because I know they will impress others”), Distrust (“It bothers me when I discover I could have bought something for less elsewhere”), Quality (“I buy name brand products”), and Anxiety (“I spend money to make myself feel better”).

Participants were students at a US mid-west university (134 women, 81 men; Mean age = 20.78) from 51 majors; 61% Caucasians, 25% African-American, 10% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% other. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and M/ANOVA. Reliability was acceptable (Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .77-.94). Money attitude factors were: Power/prestige (9 items, $\alpha=.94$), Distrust (7 items, $\alpha=.81$), Quality (5 items, $\alpha=.90$), Anxiety (6 items, $\alpha=.80$).

Results. Two groups were formed using the median for face consciousness. MANOVA followed by ANOVA was conducted with gender and face consciousness (high/low) as independent variables and four money attitude factors as dependent variables. There were effects for gender [$F(4, 204)=6.702, p<.000$] and face consciousness on all money attitudes [$F(4, 204) = 11.933, p<.000$]. ANOVA ($p<.05$) revealed that men and women differed in three of four money attitude factors: Power/prestige $M=25.26^{\text{men}}; 22.37^{\text{women}}$; Distrust $M=28.39^{\text{men}}; 25.65^{\text{women}}$; and Anxiety $M=22.29^{\text{men}}; 25.00^{\text{women}}$. H1a, b, d were supported; H1c was not supported. ANOVA revealed that participants with high (vs low) face consciousness scored higher ($p<.05$) on three factors of money attitudes: Power/prestige ($M^{\text{high}}=29.33; M^{\text{low}}=18.30$), Quality ($M^{\text{high}}=20.82; M^{\text{low}}=16.94$) and Anxiety ($M^{\text{high}}=24.72; M^{\text{low}}=22.56$). H2a, c, d were supported; H2b was not.

Discussion/Implications. The results of this study provide insight into consumers' decision making as influenced by face consciousness, gender, and money attitudes. Women scored lower on money attitudes related to power/prestige and distrust but higher on anxiety than men. Those high (vs. low) in face consciousness scored higher on power, quality, and anxiety. In particular, power/prestige seemed to be much more important to those high (vs low) in face consciousness which might explain why they rely on brand names as social status symbols. This research adds new findings to the literature in the fashion merchandising area, especially regarding money attitudes. Face consciousness, gender and money attitudes are important links to consumption—a detail that fashion marketing managers might want to remember in developing their strategies. For further study, money attitudes might be investigated regarding a variety of brand variables such as brand love or brand loyalty as well as consumption variables such as compulsive or impulsive buying within and across cultural contexts.

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