



## **Ethnic-Inspired Products: From the Experiential Consumption View**

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### Research Background

With substantial growth of ethnic consumers in the United States, consumers increasingly notice ethnic-inspired products (EIPs), defined as products whose designs incorporate ethnic motifs and styles into mainstream products. For example, distinctive ethnic flavors such as Asian inspired designs (e.g., Asian floral and kimono style) have successfully been embedded in product designs in the mainstream market. The prevalence of EIPs in the United States can be explained by the acculturation theory. Acculturation is the process by which people in one culture learn the norm, values, and attitudes of another (Moschis, 1987). That is, the learning process may take place in either group or both groups. As a result, EIPs are increasingly favored and adopted by mainstream US consumers.

This study integrates experiential view of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) to explain a hierarchical structure of perceived hedonic attributes, consumption values, and behavioral intention. In this view, positive consumption experiences are often based on hedonic attributes such as the colors and shapes that are seen, the touches that are felt, and the symbolic meanings attached to the product. Perception of hedonic attributes from EIPs as novel and esthetic can yield consumption values that are desirable hedonic responses.

### Purpose

This study examines whether EIPs can successfully crossover into mainstream consumers' market and explains why US consumers buy EIPs in women's apparel context. Specifically, it explores whether hedonic attributes of EIPs (i.e., novelty and esthetics) can produce consumption values (i.e., emotional and social values) and how these consumption values contribute to their purchase intention toward EIPs.

### Hypotheses

- H1: US consumers' perceived novelty from EIPs will enhance their emotional value (H1a) and social value (H1b) toward EIPs.
- H2: US consumers' perceived esthetics from EIPs will enhance their emotional value (H2a) and social value (H2b) toward EIPs.
- H3: US consumers' emotional value (H3a) and social value (H3b) will enhance their purchase intention toward EIPs.
- H4: The effect of perceived novelty on emotional value (H4a) and social value (H4b) toward EIPs will be stronger for those who perceive a higher level of ethnic cue than those who perceive a lower level of ethnic cue from EIPs.
- H5: The effect of perceived esthetics on emotional value (H5a) and social value (H5b) toward EIPs will be stronger for those who perceive a higher level of ethnic cue than those who perceive a lower level of ethnic cue from EIPs.

### Methods

Eight ethnic-inspired products image were used as stimuli and they are from China, Indian, Thailand, and Japan because of the fast growth of Asian-inspired products in US. A total of 1,153 responses were collected by using a web survey from a marketing research firm. All measures are from previous studies and are 7-point Likert-type. The scale items of perceived novelty were adapted from previous studies including Hirschman (1980) for perceived novelty; Bell, Holbrook, and Solomon (1991) for perceived esthetics; and Sweeney and Soutar (2001) for emotional and social value.

### Results

Data analyses were conducted by using Mplus. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the measurement model, and structure equation modeling was used to test all hypotheses except the moderating effect of the perceived ethnic cue. The measurement model fits the data well (CFI=.979; TLI=.976; RMSEA=.050) and all measures are reliable and valid (all factor loadings>0.5; composite reliabilities>0.7; and average variance extracted>0.5). The structure model fits data well (CFI=.976; TLI=.972; RMSEA=.054) and hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b) were supported. The multi-group analysis was conducted with chi-square difference testing to measure the moderating effect of perceived ethnic cue. Based on the multi-group analysis, hypothesis 4a was supported.

### Discussion and Implications

US consumers' perceived EIPs attributes (novelty and esthetics) positively influenced their consumption values (emotional and social values) and eventually their purchase intention. For the moderating effects, only one relationship (perceived novelty---emotional value) was moderated by the level of perceived ethnic cue.

By emphasizing the hedonic attributes of EIPs, retailers and manufacturers could positively influence US consumers' consumption values and purchase intention toward EIPs. The significant moderating effect of novelty on emotional value suggests that by emphasizing the unique, novel attributes of EIPs, retailers and manufacturers could strongly influence US consumers' emotional value and eventually their purchase intention toward EIPs.

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