

## **Measuring Confucian Values Among East Asian Consumers: A Four Country Study**

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# **Measuring Confucian Values Among East Asian Consumers: A Four Country Study**

## **Abstract**

*This study aims to make a conceptual and empirical contribution by developing and operationalising suitable scales to capture certain Confucian values (face saving, humility, group orientation, hierarchy and reciprocity) that can influence East Asian consumers. Based on the pertinent literature, focus group discussions with extended East Asian families and East Asian scholar interviews, we develop and validate our measures on data from over 400 respondents across four East Asian cities (Tokyo, Hanoi, Beijing and Singapore). Despite some variance, our findings signal that East Asians are highly influenced by such traditional values. Several implications are extracted and future research directions suggested.*

*Key words:* Confucianism, Consumer, Culture, East Asia

## **Introduction**

In recent times, significant growth in the East Asian economies has made this region particularly attractive for academic scholars and businesses at large (Zhou *et al.* 2010). The region has been fuelled by strong market performance, rapid urbanisation and a high concentration of wealth among the upper classes of society (Yeung and Tung 1996, Howard 2009). Culturally, East Asia has been characterised as a group of societies that are influenced by Confucian dynamics and for over two thousand five hundred years, the teachings of Confucius has had a significant impact on the lives of people and their behaviour (Yan and Sorenson 2004).

Confucian values have been the subject of much social and anthropological research and in recent times have been the topic of increased discourse among business and management scholars (Zhu and Warner 2000, Rowley and Benson 2002, Zhu Warner and Rowley 2007, Cooke 2008). Given the fact that Confucianism has been identified as an important factor influencing East Asians (Ackerman *et al.* 2009), an appreciation of such cultural values is considered to be instrumental for better understanding people's motivational tendencies in this region. Moreover, whilst on one hand, there may be evidence to suggest that rapid modernisation and wealth creation are eroding certain Confucian traditions; on the other, some argue that such values prevail and continue to have a pervasive influence on human values and norms (Keller and Kronstedt 2005, Rowley and Warner 2010).

## ***Purpose of the Study***

Whilst certain research has been useful in advancing our understanding of the cultural traits in East Asia, notably the 'cultural connection' work of Hofstede, Bond and Chinese colleagues (1987) who developed a 40 item, uni-dimensional questionnaire to examine cultural values, their findings were somewhat limited due to a lack of sophisticated analytical techniques

available at that time. This work was also criticised for failing to encompass broader aspects that underlie such attributes, thus causing comprehension difficulties and confusion (Newman and Nollen 1992, Fang 2003). In a more recent study, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) maintained the use of single-item scales to measure Asian values and in research where multi-item measures were developed, their use and wording often makes them unsuitable for researching consumer markets.

In seeking a response, and to further broaden our understanding of the subject, this study aims to make a conceptual and empirical contribution by developing and operationalising suitable scales to capture values that can influence contemporary East Asian consumers. Specifically, it extends earlier research by providing fresh multi-item measures that can be easily understood and applied in a consumer context. In a bid to discover similarities and subtle differences that may be associated with a number of countries in this region, this study is among one of the first that attempts to piece together and develop several dimensions based on the literature as well as building on inductive insights from East Asian consumers and scholars, before validating them across four countries that are influenced by Confucian values.

Confucian Asia has been recognised and confirmed as one of ten cultural clusters in global studies (Gupta *et al.* 2002). We argue in this article that differences among sub-cultures make it impossible to simply cluster groups of consumers and instead advocate that similarities, yet significant differences are likely to co-exist across such countries (Warner 2000, Rowley and Benson 2002). Despite rapid interest there has been a paucity of research that has systematically attempted to draw on multiple samples of respondents in several countries within this region of the world (Phau and Teah 2009). By developing and testing scales to measure such values and compare these across four different country samples, our study will have interesting implications for both scholars and practitioners at large.

## **Search/ Review: East Asian Culture**

National cultures have been characterised using several dimensions in three influential frameworks (c.f. Hofstede 1980, 1997, Hall 1976, 1983 and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1999). Whilst researchers have found such frameworks to be useful for understanding national cultures (Kale and Barnes 1992), a number of scholars have expressed concerns with such typologies. First, some appear to lack empirical evidence (Hall 1983), and in other cases the sample of respondents may not be representative (Hofstede 1980, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1999). Second, those work-related values in Hofstede's study may not necessarily coincide with the priorities of people in other roles (Dahl 2004). Third, items used to measure the cultural dimensions may not always have the same meaning in different countries and certain values may also hide particular attributes. These factors make such concepts rather difficult to apply and generalise (Ng *et al.* 2007).

With concern that those dimensions posited in the original Hofstede (1980) framework may be limited in an Asian context, a number of Chinese social scientists joined forces to undertake a survey of Chinese values. This research was named as the Chinese Culture Connection study (1987). The study established a list of 40 values, which represented four underlying dimensions, i.e. 'Integration', 'Human heartedness', 'Moral discipline' and 'Confucian ethos'. Whilst the first three dimensions were found to be associated with attributes of culture in earlier classical models, the Confucian values were not found to be significantly associated with Hofstede's original dimensions. This was therefore considered to represent a dimension that is salient and unique to the East Asian culture.

In recognising the importance of Confucianism, a fifth dimension - 'Confucian Dynamism' was later added to Hofstede's (1980) original framework and labelled 'long-term orientation' (Hofstede and Bond 1988, Hofstede and Minkov 2010). It was claimed that people with long-term orientation are expected to continue to develop their self-esteem,

sacrifice today's pleasures for tomorrow's success and avoid improper behaviour that could ruin their honour or reputation. They are also likely to obey rules and conform to social expectations or norms (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987).

Unfortunately, despite the potential utility of this fifth dimension, researchers in this area tended to avoid its use, including those who have referred extensively to Hofstede's work, such as Triandis (1993). One reason for this may relate to the difficulty in understanding the dimension (Newman and Nollen 1996). Kale (1996) meanwhile claimed that the conceptual and empirical support for this dimension was not exhaustive. There has also been criticism that distinctions between the two ends of the scale are unclear, contradictory and misleading (Redpath and Nielsen 1997). As with the *Yin* and *Yang* concept, where values have interwoven aspects and no opposite effect, Confucian societies have often been described as being non-linear (Smith and Bond 1998, Faure and Fang 2008). Due to such potential flaws surrounding Confucian dynamism, further research is required in order to provide greater understanding of such values that are rooted in East Asian societies in order to provide appropriate measurement scales.

Although the background relating to Asian values and the Confucian ethos from a sociological context (The Chinese Culture Connection 1987, Matthews 2000) have been useful in highlighting a significant number of values that may influence Asian people, many of these tend not to relate to consumers at large, nor were they operationalised in order to develop suitable and valid measurement scales. Moreover, in recent times a growing number of academics have attempted to draw on cultural values in consumer research in East Asia (Wong and Ahuvia 1998, Lin and Wang 2010). However, such studies tended to be either conceptual or qualitative in nature and where certain values were developed they often focused on just one or two dimensions in isolation.



With the aim to operationalise several pertinent Asian dimensions, we identify five Confucian values from the literature that can have an influence on East Asian consumers. These include *face saving*, *humility*, a sense of *group orientation*, respect for *social hierarchy* and *reciprocity* in exchange<sup>1</sup>. Although these values have been the subject of much discourse in previous research (for example Lee and Green 1991, Chung and Pysarchik 2000, Cheung *et al.* 2001, Oetzel and Ting-Toomey 2003, Kim *et al.* 2005), such studies tend not to focus on the general consumer context. An overview of these five values is now provided:

### *Face Saving*

*Face saving* refers to maintaining one's public dignity and the avoidance of threats to public image (Lim 2003, Merkin 2006). Face is lost when an individual does not satisfy essential requirements corresponding to his or her social position (Chung and Pysarchik 2000). The loss of face can vary in its impact on one's social life, from being a small scale issue on one extreme, to the extent that it impedes totally on one's entire social intercourse. The face concept according to Ho (1976) is quite distinct from other related concepts such as pride and dignity. It is a function of social standing, which can either be obtained through personal qualities or derived from non-personal characteristics such as wealth, status, occupation and authority. The concept does not only relate to one's own face but also those of others that matter to them (Wang *et al.* 2011).

### *Humility*

In order to control for possible negative consequences arising from envy among others, Confucian societies tend to emphasise the importance of *humility* in expressing wealth and knowledge (Douglas and Isherwood 1979). The reason for this stems from the collectivist culture that encapsulates a sense of community - whereby everyone would live happily and no one would be richer or too different from others (Tran *et al.* 2008). Even when a person is

better-off than others, he or she should keep a low profile to maintain harmony in the community. One should not boast about oneself in public and crude display of one's wealth may not be seen as appropriate to others, as it can damage harmony in society (Tran *et al.* 2008). The Confucian tradition teaches people about humility, yet it allows for a more elaborate display of wealth and knowledge if it is seen as appropriate to one's social stature (Tu 1998).

### *Group Orientation*

*Group orientation* relates to a sense of community, solidarity and harmony in society, where an individual co-exists with others (Tran *et al.* 2008). Confucian values and guidelines provide the primary basis for collective characteristics of East Asian societies (Yan and Sorenson 2004). In Confucius teachings, people do not exist in isolation but are part of a larger and more complex family, where harmony can be achieved by acting appropriately with one another. This value has originated from the commune culture in the past, where people lived dependently on each other and had very close relationships (Tran 2000). According to Wright (1962), the concept of *Ren* (benevolence), has a very strong collective orientation which is the basis of all other Confucian virtues. Here, the individual is part of an encompassing social relationship and is considered to be insignificant without the community.

### *Hierarchy*

Respect for *hierarchy* can be traced back to the Confucian notion of *lun* (hierarchical relationships) (Keller and Kronstedt 2005). The prime meaning of *lun* pertains to the paramount importance of human relationships and social order. Of the great variety of relationships, the most important ones were known as the *Wu Lun* (the Five Cardinal Relationships) (Berling 1982). According to Confucius, everyone has a fixed position in society and each person should behave according to their rank. In most East Asian societies,

affluence is a relatively new phenomenon, and as a result, it is understandable why economic achievement has started to become a determinant of social hierarchy in East Asia (Wong and Ahuvia 1998, Lim 2003).

### *Reciprocity*

In Confucian societies, *reciprocity* represents a golden rule that governs almost all kind of interpersonal relationships (Tu 1998). It refers to the exchange of favours between individuals and groups. The rules of reciprocity imply that if someone acts positively or provides a favour, this should be returned in the future with a significantly greater payback. The obligation to return favours stems from one's own feelings and is not forced on by the other party. Confucius teachings strongly advocate treating others as one would like to be treated. Reciprocity should be practiced throughout one's life. However, like many other concepts in Confucian societies, reciprocity is conceptual. If one does not manage it properly, it can have a negative impact on social life and business.

### **Methodology**

As alluded to earlier, because many of the existing studies surrounding East Asian cultural values have not tended to focus on consumers, we undertook a multi-methods research approach to study this area in greater depth. In initiating the primary research process, we first conducted focus group interviews with five extended East Asian families in order to clarify the relevance of such dimensions in the context of consumers among different generations of East Asians. These proved useful for generating further insights across different generations of family members relating to the teachings of Confucius and how such cultural values may influence consumers at large. The group dynamic confirmed the importance of the five values studied and helped to widen the meaning of each construct compared to the original literature

review (for example the consideration of others' face and new determinants of social hierarchy). These discussions also helped to clarify certain terminologies associated with the research, as well as providing useful tips to help administer the final survey.

In order to further clarify the relevance and significance of the five dimensions in question and validate our proposed measurement scales relating to the items captured by the five values, personal interviews were conducted face to face with eight East Asian scholars. Specifically, the scholars were presented with a list of measurement scales that had been used in earlier studies to capture such Asian values among contemporary consumers. For each of the dimensions in question, the scholars were asked to a) consider a number of scales for measuring a particular construct, b) select a scale that they felt could be used as a main scale to build from, c) gradually consider additional items that could also capture the meaning of that particular East Asian value and finally, d) comment on the wording and tense of all the items in order to eventually recommend appropriate scales that would be used in the final instrument. This procedure enabled us to confirm several pertinent dimensions that may have an influence on East Asian consumers. These discussions were particularly helpful in evaluating the appropriateness of questions, wording, phrasing and to develop scales that would be suitable in the modern consumer context.

Following this phase and based on the dimensions described, five multi-dimensional scales for measuring perceptions of Confucian cultural values were developed. These consisted of twenty four items. A list of the measurement items and the sources that influenced the scale development can be seen in the Appendix. Each item consisted of a 7-point Likert scale anchored by -3 'strongly disagree' to +3 'strongly agree'. The full research instrument was then pilot tested in English with a sample of 52 East Asian graduate management students. This process helped refine and validate the measurement scales further.

The instrument was then translated into Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese using a back translation technique (Craig and Douglas 2000).

China (Beijing), Japan (Tokyo), Singapore<sup>2</sup> and Vietnam (Hanoi) were selected as locations for this study. The main reason being they are all in some degree influenced by Confucianism (Triandis 1989, Hofstede and Bond 1988, Yan and Sorenson 2004). The cities are also dynamic and represent different levels of economic development. The research was undertaken in over 20 different shopping malls throughout these four cities. One in three shoppers was approached on a pseudo-random basis and the survey was self-administered. Based on feedback from the focus groups, it was decided to undertake the survey during weekends and evenings, when urban shoppers typically have more leisure time. In each city local people were employed to assist with the research in terms of providing an introduction and explaining the rationale and purpose of the study. In total over 600 shoppers were approached and this yielded 443 fully completed questionnaires that were eventually used for the analysis. These included at least 100 responses from each city. The sample was representative of different gender, age, income, educational levels and professions.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Exploratory Factor Analysis***

First, exploratory factor analysis was administered on the 24 items using a Varimax rotation. This is a tried and tested approach that frequently yields simple structure (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007) and resulted in the extraction of five factors, with each item significantly loading on the factor as predicted. These 24 items explained 63% of the variance and each communality value exceeded the 0.50 minimum level recommended by Hair *et al.* (2009). The analysis proved useful for purifying the scales and resulted in 24 items that represented the five underlying dimensions presented in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here please

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### ***Testing for Measurement Invariance***

Equivalent measurement is an important first step in order to make claims concerning the generalisability of the constructs tested on the different samples. In this study, we use Mean and Covariance Structures (MACS) (Little 1997) to examine the equivalence of the Confucian Value Constructs across the four countries of Japan, Singapore, China and Vietnam. We therefore followed those procedures outlined by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998) and Vandenberg and Lance (2000) by focusing on three types of measurement invariance i.e. configural, metric and scalar (Hair *et al.* 2009). In order to assess the extent of measurement equivalence, we conducted multi-group confirmatory factor analyses on the group covariance matrices (see Table 2). The fit of each of the MGCFA models were assessed using traditional model fit statistics i.e. CFI, TLI and RMSEA. Each model was evaluated by examining their absolute fit relative to the generally accepted rules of thumb (Hu and Bentler 1999).

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Insert Table 2 about here please

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Based on the threshold, the goodness of fit for the Configural model is acceptable (CFI=.958, TLI=.951 and RMSEA= .023). Similarly, the goodness of fit for the Metric model is also within the threshold (CFI=.959, TLI=.955 and RMSEA= .022). Finally, although the Scalar model is lower than the Metric model, this is still acceptable based on the threshold (CFI=.902, TLI=.903 and RMSEA= .032). The outcome confirms full Configural invariance,

Metric invariance and equality of the five factors, thus suggesting measurement equivalence across the four country samples.

### ***Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Scale Validation***

Following this procedure, the entire data was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) – see Table 3 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1984). Whilst the Chi-square statistic tested significant, a favourable outcome was evident in terms of the  $\chi^2$  / d.f. ratio at 1.73. In addition, the other fit indices (Goodness of Fit Index [GFI] = 0.93; Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.96; Non-normed Fit Index [NFI] = 0.92; and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA] = 0.041) suggest that the overall model fits the data well.

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Insert Table 3 about here please

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Convergent validity was judged satisfactory as all the standardised loadings exceeded 0.60 and the t-values were all statistically significant. Likewise, the squared multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ) statistics exceed the 0.30 cut-off value recommended by Byrne (2001) and Hair *et al.* (2009). Discriminant validity was evident, as the squared correlation between each pair of constructs was less than their individual average variance extracted. Construct reliability was high, well above the threshold of 0.70 recommended by Hair *et al.* (2009). As such, the Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.76 to 0.91 and the composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.78 to 0.87. Overall it can be concluded from the statistics that the procedure outlined was thorough and the items and constructs were able to accurately reflect the Confucian values that they set out to measure.

### *Comparisons Across East Asia*

Following on from the invariance testing, a series of ANOVA and Scheffe's post hoc tests were administered to identify similarities and statistically significant differences across the samples of respondents. Table 4 provides an overview of these findings for each of the five dimensions. In observing the mean averages and the fact they are all positive (except one, the Japanese mean value of 0.00 for humility), this suggests that East Asians generally agree that such Confucian values have a role to play in their society. It is particularly apparent when studying the data that reciprocity is something that is particularly highly and equally valued among the four different country group respondents (relatively high mean averages ranging from 1.60 to 1.79, with no significant differences). The practice of exchanging favours and being honourable is therefore something that is highly apparent across all four countries. The sample suggests that respondents from each of the four countries implement the reciprocity rule, suggesting a high degree of cultural convergence exists in this respect.

In stark contrast however, some degree of variation was apparent for the face saving dimension. The data also reveals that the level of face saving among the Japanese respondents is lower than that of the Singaporean, Chinese and Vietnamese (mean = 0.62 compared to 1.20, 1.75 and 1.98). The ability to save face appears particularly pertinent for both the Chinese and Vietnamese group of consumers, which may reflect historical and political values whereby Vietnam has tended to follow in the footsteps of China over the years (Tran *et al.* 2008).

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Insert Table 4 about here please

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A similar pattern also emerged for the humility dimension, with the Japanese sample on average holding a somewhat neutral view (mean = 0.00). The Vietnamese, Singaporean and Chinese sample of consumers all appeared to be statistically more humble (means ranging from 1.00 to 1.28). By and large the Japanese are less humble, which could relate to their economic and business success over the last three decades. It may also relate to their international exposure to mass media and the impact that globalisation has had on Japan<sup>3</sup>.

In terms of group orientation, Singapore respondents (with a mean of 1.97) have the highest inclination towards group activity. This may relate to the size, significance and location of Singapore, along with its dependence on the region for economic stability. This makes Singapore a very collective and group orientated society at large. As with the previous dimension, the Vietnamese, Chinese and Singaporean samples all have significantly greater mean averages than the Japanese sample of consumers. Interestingly the Japanese mean of 0.20 has an excessive standard deviation of 2.07. It would appear that Japanese people tend not to think alike, which provides some evidence that they may be less homogenous compared with other East Asian consumers.

Finally a more common appreciation of the hierarchy dimension was apparent among the four groups that were sampled. Whilst it would appear on first glance that the Chinese sample of consumers are more hierarchy orientated (mean = 1.82), there was only one statistically significant difference compared with the other three samples, and this was related to the Vietnamese sample (mean = 1.41). Thus, whilst the Vietnamese appear relatively less hierarchical compared with the Chinese, by and large it would appear that all four groups of respondents consider status and hierarchy as an important construct and some degree of cultural convergence therefore exists between the four country respondents.

## **Discussion**

### ***Implications for Theory***

Overall, this research has contributed to the literature by developing and testing new scales to illustrate some significant findings relating to Confucian values among East Asian consumers. Although earlier studies by Hofstede and colleagues were useful for helping to pave the way in further advancing our understanding of such cultural traits in East Asia and recognising the importance of ‘Confucian Dynamism’, unfortunately, researchers in this area have tended to avoid its use (Fang 2003). This may not only relate to the difficulty in understanding the dimension, but also the fact that uni-dimensional measures have been the subject of criticism, particularly in terms of them failing to encompass broader aspects that can underlie such values (Newman and Nollen 1992).

In attempting to further enhance our understanding, this study therefore extends earlier research through providing new and comprehensive multi-item scales that can be easily understood and applied in an East Asian consumer context, and even beyond. In brief, this is one of the first studies that have attempted to successfully piece together and develop several dimensions based on the literature and inductive insights from East Asian consumers and scholars before testing them across four different countries that are influenced by Confucian values.

### ***Implications for Readers***

In general, the findings suggest that East Asian consumers appreciate such values, which form part of their deep-down beliefs (Tran *et al.* 2008). Among them *reciprocity* had the relatively highest overall mean and lowest standard deviation. This suggests a consensus among respondents that *reciprocity* appears to be an extremely important social norm. *Hierarchy* also had similar results across the data set, implying that the sample of the four countries held

consistent opinions for these two constructs. *Humility* meanwhile had the lowest overall mean value. Despite this, findings from our earlier focus groups signalled that East Asian families still stressed the importance of ‘maintaining a low profile’. One possible reason for this contrasting finding is that the *humility* value may have changed with modern society. Take for example, Tokyo Japan, which for a long time has been on centre stage for state of the art innovation and technology. As a result, such innovation and technological advances have steadily diffused into society to become a way of life.

An examination of each nationality group revealed that Vietnamese and Chinese consumers held similar views relating to safeguarding *face*. Although this finding provides corroboratory evidence to support the *face* concept being particularly salient for people of a Confucian culture (Merkin 2006), very little prior research has been concluded on Vietnam. The finding that our Vietnamese sample had the highest value for this construct is of interest and particularly worthy of future research. The findings regarding the relatively higher *group orientation* among Singaporeans also represents a potential interesting topic that could be investigated in further research.

In contrast with the Chinese, Singaporean and Vietnamese consumer samples, the Japanese respondents had very low mean values for *Face Saving*, *Group Orientation* and *Humility*. It was surprising to see that the mean values for the latter two were at, or close to zero and the standard deviation statistics were large. It has also been debated that Japan is experiencing a sophisticated transitional change, whereby sometimes conflict between traditional and adopted Western values can lead to extreme beliefs and behaviour (Silverstein and Fiske 2003). Whilst on one extreme a fraction of society is moving away from traditional values, particularly the younger generation, others are strongly averse to newly adopted values and are in support of protecting tradition at any cost (Ornatowski 1996, Okazaki 2004).

### ***Implications for Practice***

At a practical level several of these issues have implications for managers. First, due to such high values that are associated with *reciprocity* across all four nationalities, business people should be conscious of the tendency among East Asian people to exchange favours. This often creates a strong bond and allegiance where individuals tend to be honourable and frequently depend on one another. Suppliers of consumer goods need to bear this in mind as well as the gift giving culture, as these have implications in terms of product design, packaging and service in appealing to both givers and receivers in such societies.

It appears from our research that the Japanese may not only be different to other East Asian groups, but the high standard deviations relating to the consumer responses suggest they may represent a mix of consumers that are less homogenous. Although subsequent statistical tests that we administered did not reveal any significant differences in terms of age and education in the Japan sample, this is something that practitioners should be cautious of and further research with larger samples of different demographics needs to address. This provides an added challenge, as it may be possible that different pockets of customer segments exist.

Totally adopting Confucian values into marketing and ad campaigns is therefore likely to have a mixed reaction from consumers and will certainly not appeal to all. For these reasons, it may be useful to incorporate such values along with promoting the technological advancements that such products can provide. For example, as earlier hinted, appealing more to individuals' needs may generate greater success in Japan. However, and despite this, *reciprocity* is still highly valued and the gift giving culture probably plays a more crucial role in this society than any other, so those points raised earlier deserve particular attention.

The influence of peer *groups* should not be under estimated when targeting East Asians, particularly Singaporean and Chinese consumers. There is some evidence to suggest

that people in this region of the world share a collective culture and are group orientated at large. Practitioners may therefore find it useful to communicate family values, a group ethos and effective teamwork in order to appeal to such values. By and large, the research suggests that such messages could be standardised for the region, however, some modifications, as explained earlier may be needed in order to appeal to larger groups of the Japanese society.

## **Conclusions**

This study has successfully demonstrated how we have developed and tested scales to measure the influence of certain Confucian values among East Asian urban consumers. Also the scales proved useful for identifying similarities and differences associated with such values across a sample of four different East Asian countries. In general, it can be concluded that these societies are under strong influence of such traditional cultural values, they are often nurtured within a person's family and social life and are part and partial of the official education system in East Asian countries. Traditional values are therefore disseminated and strengthened not only in the early years of life, but also in higher education. Prevailing group values also lead to resistance to change, as going against traditional norms is not socially acceptable.

Although a robust effort was made to conduct this research in four different countries, this too could also be a limitation of the study, as a significantly greater number of respondents could have been accessed through undertaking the study in one or possibly two markets. The relatively small sample size in each country market is therefore acknowledged, thus the findings need to be interpreted with subsequent caution, particularly in terms of the cross country analysis. For these reasons we cannot make any generalisations from this data for the four markets in question, however, we feel the findings provide some useful insights

on urban consumers that will interest and provide a useful reference point for both practitioners and academics alike.

Further research should therefore seek to extend this study by drawing on a larger sample of respondents to allow for greater cross-sample comparisons. Future investigations could also seek to take this study a step further by introducing a dependent variable to the equation, in order to test such scales for their ability to predict attitudes, behaviour or purchase intention. Such research is likely to provide fruitful findings that will interest managing practitioners. Finally, further empirical research could be undertaken in the region to re-address the standardisation v adaptation debate and the use of Confucian values. This could be developed through an experimental research design across nations with different groups of consumers. Studies in these areas are likely to provide fruitful findings that will make a useful contribution within this research discipline and be highly valued by academics, practitioners and consumers alike as we strive to learn more about Confucian values and their influence on individuals in East Asia.

## **END NOTES**

1. The relevance and significance of these five values were also confirmed during our focus group discussions and interviews with scholars. Further detail and explanation can be found in the Methodology.
2. In Singapore, the entire respondents were of Chinese origin.
3. Due to such propensity among the Japanese respondents to emphasise face saving and humility, a series of further statistical tests were also administered to examine this sample in more detail. Interestingly enough we found no significant differences based on age and education. Future research with larger demographic data may however yield more significant findings.

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**Table 1: Factor Loading Matrix**

Items		Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Face Saving</i>	FS 1			0.69		
	FS2			0.67		
	FS3			0.81		
	FS4			0.69		
	FS5			0.67		
<i>Humility</i>	HUM1		0.85			
	HUM2		0.74			
	HUM3 (R)		0.69			
	HUM4		0.69			
	HUM5		0.78			
<i>Group Orientation</i>	GO1	0.85				
	GO2	0.74				
	GO3 (R)	0.75				
	GO4	0.73				
	GO5 (R)	0.77				
<i>Hierarchy</i>	HIE1					0.75
	HIE2					0.65
	HIE3					0.59
	HIE4					0.78
<i>Reciprocity</i>	REC1				0.74	
	REC2				0.65	
	REC3				0.58	
	REC4				0.66	
	REC5				0.63	

Extraction Method: Factor Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

(R) denotes a reverse item scale.

**Table 2: Measurement Equivalence Tests**

Equivalence tested	Comparison	RMSEA	90% CI <sup>a</sup>	CFI	$\Delta$ CFI	TLI	$\Delta$ TLI	$\chi^2$ (df)	$\Delta\chi^2$ ( $\Delta$ df)
1. Configural	–	.023	.017–.027	.958	–	.951	–	971.05 (792)	–
2. Metric	1 vs. 2	.022	.016–.026	.959	.001	.955	.004	1015.33 (843)	44.28 (51)
3. Scalar	2 vs. 3	.032	.028–.036	.902	–.057	.903	–.052	1322.38 (909)	307.05 (66)

**Table 3: CFA for the Cultural Values**

Construct	Item	Factor loading	T-value	R <sup>2</sup>	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average Variance extracted
<i>Face saving</i>	FS 1	0.63	-	0.40	0.80	0.78	0.52
	FS 2	0.60	10.74	0.36			
	FS 3	0.87	13.60	0.77			
	FS 4	0.58	10.41	0.34			
	FS 5	0.67	11.64	0.45			
<i>Humility</i>	HUM 1	0.94	-	0.89	0.85	0.81	0.56
	HUM 2	0.71	18.26	0.50			
	HUM 3	0.64	15.73	0.41			
	HUM 4	0.69	17.70	0.48			
	HUM 5	0.71	18.28	0.50			
<i>Group Orientation</i>	GO 1	0.97	-	0.95	0.91	0.87	0.71
	GO 2	0.82	27.74	0.68			
	GO 3	0.76	23.29	0.58			
	GO 4	0.79	25.46	0.63			
	GO 5	0.79	27.84	0.68			
<i>Hierarchy</i>	HIE 1	0.82	-	0.72	0.82	0.77	0.56
	HIE 2	0.70	15.67	0.49			
	HIE 3	0.71	16.01	0.50			
	HIE 4	0.71	16.10	0.51			
<i>Reciprocity</i>	REC 1	0.67	-	0.45	0.76	0.76	0.52
	REC 2	0.61	10.79	0.37			
	REC 3	0.61	10.86	0.37			
	REC 4	0.60	10.67	0.36			
	REC 5	0.64	11.23	0.41			

**Fit indices:** Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )= 418.24, df=242, p=.00, GFI=0.93, CFI=0.96, NFI=0.92, RMSEA=0.041

**Table 4: Comparisons Between Respondent Groups**

Cultural values	Respondent groups: Mean (Standard Deviation)				ANOVA test		Statistics
	Tokyo (I)	Singapore (II)	Beijing (III)	Hanoi (IV)	F value	P-value	Scheffe's test
<i>Face Saving</i>	0.62 (1.61)	1.20 (0.95)	1.75 (0.93)	1.98 (0.71)	34.69	0.00	II>I, III>I, IV>I, III>II, IV>II
<i>Humility</i>	0.00 (1.18)	1.13 (0.95)	1.28 (0.99)	1.00 (0.84)	36.03	0.00	II>I, III>I, IV>I
<i>Group Orientation</i>	0.20 (2.07)	1.97 (1.16)	1.68 (1.27)	1.25 (0.72)	33.66	0.00	II>I, III>I, IV>I, II>IV
<i>Hierarchy</i>	1.46 (1.40)	1.58 (1.05)	1.82 (1.06)	1.41 (0.63)	3.40	0.02	III>IV, III>I*
<i>Reciprocity</i>	1.60 (1.21)	1.72 (0.93)	1.79 (0.91)	1.68 (0.57)	0.81	0.49	

**Note:** I = Tokyo, II = Singapore, III = Beijing, IV = Hanoi

\* significant at p<0.1 level

## Appendix

**Face Saving** (Cheung *et al.* 2001, Oetzel and Ting-Toomey 2003).

- ♦ I am concerned with not bringing shame to myself. (FS1)
- ♦ I am concerned with not bringing shame to others. (FS2)
- ♦ I pay a lot of attention to how others see me. (FS3)
- ♦ I am concerned with protecting the pride of my family. (FS4)
- ♦ I feel ashamed if I lose my face. (FS5)

**Humility** (Kim *et al.* 2005)

- ♦ I avoid singing my own praises. (HUM1)
- ♦ I try not to openly talk about my accomplishments. (HUM2)
- ♦ I like to draw others' attention to my accomplishments. (R) (HUM3)
- ♦ Being boastful is a sign of weakness and insecurity. (HUM4)
- ♦ I only tell others about my achievements when I am asked to. (HUM5)

**Group Orientation** (Kale 1996, Kim *et al.* 2005).

- ♦ I recognise and respect social expectations, norms and practices. (GO1)
- ♦ When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I try to do the same as what others do. (GO2)
- ♦ I usually make decisions without listening to others. (R) (GO3)
- ♦ When I buy the same things my friends buy, I feel closer to them. (GO4)
- ♦ If there is a conflict between my interest and my family's interest, I'll put priority on mine (R). (GO5)

**Hierarchy** (Hyun 2001).

- ♦ I am happy if people look up to me. (HIE1)
- ♦ We have a vertical order in the society that we should respect. (HIE2)
- ♦ A person with high personal achievements is considered to have high social standing. (HIE3)
- ♦ Wealth and power are becoming important determinants of social status. (HIE4)

**Reciprocity** (Mavondo and Rodrigo 2001).

- ♦ The practice of "give and take" of favours is an important part of social relationships. (REC1)
- ♦ I feel a sense of obligation to a person for doing me a favour. (REC2)
- ♦ It is bad manners not to return favours. (REC3)
- ♦ When I receive a big favour, I try to go an extra mile to do something nice in return. (REC4)
- ♦ When I buy a gift to say thank you to someone I try my best to make sure the person will appreciate it. (REC5)

(R) denotes a reverse item scale.