Traditional or Fast Foods, Which One Do You Choose? The Roles of Traditional Value, Modern Value, and Promotion Focus

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Abstract: Eating behaviors and food consumption motivations have been important research topics in consumer, nutrition, and food literature. This study aims to examine the impact of some key factors (i.e., nationalism, materialism, cultural values, and promotion focus) on the consumption of traditional food and fast food in an emerging market. Using a sample data of 691 urban consumers in China, results of structural equation modeling reveal that nationalism appears to be an important predictor of traditional personal value, while materialism is a major factor that enhances modern personal value. Additionally, promotion focus has a positive mediating effect on the relationship between traditional personal value and traditional food purchase intention and that between modern personal value and fast food purchase intention. Notably, the total effect of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention is stronger than the total impact of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention. This study provides fresh insights into motivations for traditional food and fast food consumption in China and have important implications for food marketers and policymakers who aim at promoting favorable eating behaviors.

Keywords: eating behavior; food consumption motivation; cultural value; nationalism; materialism; traditional food; fast food; overweight; emerging market; young consumers; China

1. Introduction

Eating is a behavior that every individual pursues to satisfy basic human need in daily life. Several studies have determined the issue of eating behavior in current food and consumer research [1]. Researchers have also focused on the antecedents and consequences of food consumption aspect of eating behavior. For example, Banik et al. [2] determined the impact of fast food consumption on obesity among adolescents in Bangladesh. Jacob et al. [3] investigated the relationship between fast food consumption and suicide attempt of adolescents aged between 12 and 15 years from 32 countries. Machado-Oliveira et al. [4] conducted a systematic review of current literature and determined the relationship between personality traits and food consumption. Yang, Zhen, and Wei [5] examined food consumption among rural residents and its dependence on local ecosystems in Inner Mongolia. Shi et al. [6] determined the influence of migration on food consumption in southwestern China. Lee et al. [7] examined the cuteness of product designs and food consumption in Taiwan.
Eating behavior and healthy eating are strongly associated with the consumption of different types of foods [2,8]. Prior studies have provided rich evidences on the consumption of food that contributes to the healthiness of people [3,5,9]. However, previous research tends to focus on eating behavior relating to the consumption of food in general and/or organic food [1–3,8–10]. Hence, more research attention should be given to other food categories, such as traditional food and fast food. Given that they differ in several aspects, including ingredients, nutrition, and processing methods, traditional food and fast food have different impact on human health [1]. Traditional food refers to foods and dishes that are passed through generations, whereas fast food is a type of mass-produced food designed for commercial resale and with a strong priority placed on speed of service versus other relevant factors involved in culinary science [2,5,11]. Notably, fast food consumption has been considered as an unfavorable eating behavior, contributing to overweight and obesity [3,12,13]. By contrast, traditional food is not necessarily healthy but considered as better than fast food in the eyes of consumers [2]. For example, Blanchet et al. [14] and Isaacs [15] stated that traditional foods are often selected foods with special recipes that are healthy for human health and has passed from generations to generations. In Chinese traditional foods, several special materials in Chinese medicine are often selected to make traditional foods (e.g., Shennong Bencao Jing, Shiliao Bencao) [11,15].

Research on the antecedents of traditional and fast food consumption will contribute to the literature relating to healthy eating and food behavior. In addition, it will advance consumers’ knowledge of traditional food, fast food, and the factors affecting their behavior, which helps them make better food choice decision. This knowledge is also useful for policymakers trying to promote healthy nutrition and society.

Cultural values reflect the social norms, beliefs, attitudes, and values that shape and influence individual’s behavior in their daily life [16,17]. Eating behavior and food consumption are also influenced by cultural values in which people select types of food in accordance with their cultural values [11]. For example, Shi et al. [6] suggested that people from southeast China may prefer foods that are culturally related to their customs and lifestyles. In current society, a national cultural value is often a mixed between traditional and modern cultural values [18]. Traditional cultural value is an inherent core value of an ethnicity and a country while modern cultural value is shaped and formed in modern society as a result of globalization and interaction with Western culture [19,20]. Both traditional and modern personal values are important factors that determine an individuals’ beliefs, attitudes, and behavior in their daily life [21]. Prior research has investigated different antecedents and consequences of general food and organic food consumption [1–3,8–10]. Although the role of culture in food consumption has been a focus in extant literature in previous studies [22–24], more research into the impact of cultural values on the consumption of and traditional and fast food would certainly advance the extant literature. Specifically, the research findings would provide consumers, business managers, and policymakers with a better understanding of the relationships between cultural values and the consumption of different food categories.

To enrich knowledge in current literature, this study aims at investigating the influence of cultural values (traditional and modern personal values) on food consumption (traditional and fast food consumption) with the mediating role of promotion focus. According to regulatory focus theory, people are motivated to take actions toward an end goal by either positive or negative motivation. People who are promotion-oriented are often motivated by positive emotional state that encourages them by hopes, wishes, and aspirations [25,26]. Cultural values may act as a motivation that promotes individuals’ beliefs, attitudes, and behavior toward food consumption. Therefore, it is believed that promotion focus will play a mediating role between cultural values and food consumption. Furthermore, to clarify the antecedents of cultural values, this study also examines the influence of nationalism and materialism on traditional and modern personal values. In sum, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of nationalism and materialism on cultural values. Furthermore, this study also determines the relationship between cultural values (traditional and modern personal values) and food consumption (traditional and fast food purchase intention) with the mediating role of promotion focus. The findings of this study provide fresh insights into motivations for traditional food
and fast food consumption in China, hence expectedly have important implications for food marketers and policymakers who aim at promoting favorable eating behaviors.

This study selects traditional food stores and fast food stores in China as the focal context. According to China industry reports, traditional food market has steadily remained an average growth rate of 10% from 2014 to 2018 [27–29]. In addition, the market share of traditional food accounted for 28% of total food market in 2018 [27,28]. Old Chinese generations tend to be the main customers of traditional food. They often view traditional food as safer and healthier than other foods because traditional food often contains ingredients of Chinese traditional medicine [15]. The largest traditional food stores in China include those that are located at Gui street in Beijing, City God Temple in Shanghai, Huimin Street in Xi'an, and many other stores scattered everywhere in China. By contrast, fast food is a current phenomenon in China. The fast food market has increased largely in the last few years [29]. Specifically, China industry reports stated that the amount of sales of fast food has increased from 802 billion RMB from 2013 to 1066 billion RMB in 2018 [27,28]. The number of fast food chain stores has also increased from 165 chain stores in 2013 to 184 chain stores in 2018. Some of the largest fast food stores in China include KFC, McDonald’s, Burger King, Disco, and Real Kungfu. Although several people in China prefer fast food, but tend to perceive fast food as being unhealthy food [29]. However, fast food tends to be the first choice for younger generations in China [29,30].

This study is organized as follows. The second section reviews relevant literature and develops hypotheses. After that, the third section discusses data collection and sample procedure. The fourth section presents results of data analysis. Discussion and implications are discussed in the fifth section. The final section provides concluding remarks and directions for future studies.

2. Literature and Hypotheses

2.1. National Cultural Value and Chinese Cultural Value

The concept of national cultural value was proposed in the early 1980s with an advocated research of Hofstede [17]. Specifically, a national cultural value can be reflected in five different dimensions, including collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, power distance, and masculinity. Several studies have adopted this concept and determined the antecedents and consequences of cultural value [16,31]. However, some researchers have argued that Hofstede’s research had mainly focused on the context of Western country. For example, Jiang et al. [32] suggested that Chinese culture has its own unique characteristics. The study of Chinese culture must take into account the unique value of Chinese traditional values [33]. Zhang and Zhao [21] identified face consciousness, pragmatism, and materialism as the three main types of personal cultural values that are related to Chinese culture. Morris and Peng [34] recognized the difference between Western and Chinese culture. The authors developed a measurement scale with 40 value items to reflect Chinese way of life. Furthermore, Fan [19] added 31 values to form a measure of 71 Chinese values. According to Fan [19], eight dimensions are identified to reflect Chinese cultural values, including family and social orientation, work attitude, national traits, interpersonal relationship, business philosophy, personal traits, relationship with nature, and time orientation. Hsu and Huang [18] integrated Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism into their research and developed a measurement scale with 40 items that can be classified into three main dimensions: Interpersonal value, terminal value, and instrumental value. Recently, Wen, Huang, and Ying [35] integrated prior research and developed a short version to measure Chinese cultural values. The authors identified life enrichment and quality, traditional personal value, and modern personal value as the main dimensions that reflect Chinese cultural values. Due to prior studies that have defined and developed different measures, it is difficult to reach a common definition and agreement on Chinese cultural values. In this study, we adopted traditional personal value and modern personal value in Wen et al. [35] as the two main dimensions of Chinese cultural values to determine their impacts on Chinese consumers' food consumption. The reason to choose these two cultural values is because they reflect two contradictive values between tradition and modern in Chinese society.
Chinese cultural value (i.e., traditional and modern personal value) is the core predictive factor to understanding Chinese consumers’ perceptions and behavior in food and nutrition literature [36].

2.1. Nationalism and Traditional Personal Value

Nationalism is defined in terms of shared ethnicity, heritage, and culture. It seeks to preserve and foster a nation’s traditional cultures [37]. Nationalism is often associated with culturalism in which cultural values force and shape people’s perceptions of their self-image and national identity [38]. Harrison [39] stated that “the traditional Chinese self-image has generally been defined as ‘culturalism’, based on a common historical heritage and acceptance of shared beliefs”.

Chinese nationalism is largely based on its traditional values that rooted in its traditional culture of Taoism and Confucianism [40–42]. When Chinese people identify themselves as a particular ethnic group with a common culture, they perceive themselves with unique culture that forms their own nation [43,44]. For example, Chinese people often identify themselves as a nation of Taoism and Confucianism. In other words, when Chinese people hold the perceptions that they are Chinese, they often identify themselves as people who share traditional values and beliefs of Taoism and Confucianism [45,46]. Therefore, it is believed that nationalism strengthens and influences people’s traditional personal value. The following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** Nationalism will be positively related to traditional personal value.

2.1.2. Materialism and Modern Personal Value

Modern personal value refers to the beliefs and values that are influenced and shaped by modern society [47]. It is often characterized in terms of individualism and materialism which emphasize self-confidence, competitiveness and competence, and respect for legal practices [48]. Specifically, modern personal value often motivates people pursuing self-fulfillment, self-achievement, stimulation, and hedonism [49]. This type of personal value has been viewed as an important factor that influences people’s consumption behavior in modern society, including eating, clothing, sporting, and entertainment [48,50].

In modern society, materialism has been an important part of human life. It shapes and affects people’s perceptions, attitudes, and behavior in their social lives [51,52]. As globalization increases, cultural interaction becomes more frequent between countries. Consequently, materialism becomes a common cultural value in several cultures in today’s social world [35]. Although China has very rich cultural heritages with a history of more than 4000 years, the country’s modern society has been influenced by Western’s modern cultural values. For example, Zeng and Greenfield [20] stated that China is facing a substantial cultural change in which individualism and materialism are universally emerging in the society. Specifically, Chinese younger generations have received and viewed materialism as their core cultural value that influences their beliefs and behavior in their daily life [28]. Therefore, it is expected that materialism will be an important factor that shapes and influences peoples’ modern personal value in current Chinese society [20]. The following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** Materialism will be positively related to modern personal value.

2.2. Cultural Value and Food Consumption

Modern Chinese cultural values have been mixed between traditional and modern personal values. As indicated in Hsu and Huang’s [18] research, Chinese traditional values inherently pass from generations to generations and play as a key driver to guide Chinese people’s beliefs and behavior through their lives. These values are shaped and influenced by Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Wen et al. [35] stated that Chinese people who are traditionally orientated tend to possess characteristics such as harmony, benevolence, courtesy, and honesty. Because their beliefs are shaped and influenced
by traditional values, they tend to engage in activities that reflect their personal values [28]. For example, Ma [11] reported that eating behavior and consumption of food largely reflect cultural values in Chinese society. Chinese people often eat traditional foods to represent certain traditional meanings, such as eating dumplings to express the relationship between people and God in the Spring Festival [53]. Furthermore, different foods symbol different meaning for Chinese people: Peanuts mean longevity, oranges and chestnuts mean good luck, and noodles mean long (health and longevity) [11]. Therefore, it is expected that people who possess traditional personal value and who are more traditionally oriented tend to prefer and choose to purchase more traditional food in their daily eating behavior because these traditional foods fit their beliefs and preferences. The following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** Traditional personal value will be positively related to traditional food purchase intention.

In contrast to traditional personal value, people who possess modern personal value and who are modern-oriented tend to favor individualism and materialism [47]. Because they place important weight on individualism and materialism, these people are more likely to engage in activities that are stimulated and hedonic [49]. Modern personal value is often associated with Western cultures [21]. For example, fast food (eating fried chicken and drinking Coca-Cola at KFC or McDonald’s) is often seen as an eating behavior that represents modern cultural value [54]. Furthermore, people who are modern-oriented tend to favor and pursue activities that lead to hedonic experience [48]. For example, Ma [11] and Fan [19] stated that going to the pub to drink beer and engaging in short-term dating are becoming a tendency of younger people in modern Chinese society. In current China society, due to globalization and cultural interaction with Western culture, younger Chinese generations are influenced by modern cultural value from Western countries. Their beliefs and behavior are also affected by modern cultural values [20]. For example, Jiang et al. [32] reported that thousands of food stores from Western countries (KFC, McDonald’s, Starbucks, etc.) have developed rapidly in China in the past decades as a result of Chinese people’s acceptance of modern cultural values. Consequently, eating behavior in some ways reflects Chinese people’s modern personal value in their daily activities [55]. Therefore, it is expected that modern personal value will enhance Chinese people’s intention to purchase more fast food. The following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** Modern personal value will be positively related to fast food purchase intention.

### 2.3. The Mediating Role of Promotion Focus

Regulatory focus theory states that people are motivated toward pursuing goals by approaching pleasure and avoiding pain [25,26]. In other words, two mechanisms operate to guide individuals’ attitudes and behavior toward desired goals: Promotion and prevention [56]. When people are promotion-oriented, they are guided by a positive emotional state that motivates them by hopes, wishes, and aspirations. They tend to seek means for advancement and fulfillment. By contrast, when people are prevention-oriented, they tend to experience negative emotions that prevent them to avoid approaching the end goals. These people are often strategically likely to use vigilance as a means to avoid negative outcomes [57]. In eating behavior, the desire to eating different types of food may activate an individual’ eager to obtain the goal [58]. As eating behavior is a national instinct in human, the choice between food alternatives may naturally activate a promotion orientation. That is, individuals are easier to be promotion oriented when they seek to satisfy eating behavior [59].

In daily life, eating behavior is a human basic need. People naturally seek foods to satisfy their needs when they are hungry [60]. However, people differ in their preference and taste when they seek to satisfy the same need of eating behavior [61]. That is, people have different choices of food for their eating in daily life [62]. Pfattheicher and Sassenrath [59] suggested that cultural values play an important role in affecting people’s choice of food consumption. For example, Asian people often eat rice while Western people often eat fast food in their daily life [11]. The difference between cultural
value influences people’s preference and choice of food consumption. Specifically, people who are traditionally oriented are often motivated to purchase traditional food because this type of food fits their preference and their personal values. For example, Chinese people who are traditionally oriented often prefer eating Chinese traditional foods and drinking tea. This is not only their inherent habit of eating behavior, but also their beliefs about the relationship between food and traditional culture [63]. By contrast, people who are modern-oriented are more likely to favor and purchase fast food because their beliefs and behavior are influenced by modern personal value and Western culture. In other words, modern personal value play a role as a driver to motivate people toward activities that are characterized by modern cultural values, including eating, sporting, and entertainment. For example, people who love Western culture often prefer watching American movies and music and eating Western foods (e.g., fast food, Coca-Cola, etc.) [64]. Therefore, it is argued that traditional personal value will motivate people who are traditionally oriented to purchase traditional food whereas modern personal value will motivate people who are modern-oriented to purchase fast food. The following hypotheses are developed.

**Hypothesis 5a (H5a).** Promotion focus will mediate the relationship between traditional personal value and traditional food purchase intention.

**Hypothesis 5b (H5b).** Promotion focus will mediate the relationship between modern personal value and fast food purchase intention.

### 2.4 Comparing the Effects of Traditional Personal Value and Modern Personal Value on Food Consumption

Chinese culture is a mix of traditional and modern personal values [18]. Traditional personal value is inherently passed from generations to generations. It is a core value that is not easy to change in Chinese society [35]. By contrast, modern personal value is a result of globalization, Internet and technology, and the interaction between Chinese with outside world [21]. Modern personal value has only become a phenomenon in the modern Chinese society in the last few decades [20]. Both traditional and modern personal values shape and influence Chinese people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behavior in their daily life. Their eating behavior is also strongly influenced by these cultural values [39,44]. However, the effect of traditional and modern personal values may differ in Chinese people. As compared with modern personal value, Chinese traditional cultural value had emerged more than 4000 years ago. This cultural value is the core value that is unique and makes it different between Chinese and the world [40,44]. Furthermore, Chinese is often seen as a country with strong ethnicism and nationalism in which traditional cultural value is the core of their beliefs. This traditional cultural value not only deeply affects Chinese people in every aspects of life but also strongly influences their daily eating behavior [11]. In contrast, modern cultural value is a value of modern society. It is often viewed as external cultural value, which has its origin from Western culture [21]. Although modern personal value shapes and influences Chinese people’ belief and behavior, its effect may be weaker than traditional value because Chinese traditional value has long history that has deeply penetrated in Chinese society. Based on these arguments and the above hypotheses, if the influence of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention and the effect of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention are supported, it is expected that the effect of traditional personal value is stronger than the effect of modern personal value. The following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** The total effect of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention will be greater than that of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention.

Figure 1 presents the research model including the hypothesize relationships investigated in this study.
3. Methods

3.1. Instrument and Measures

To test the hypotheses, this study developed a questionnaire to collect sample data. Items measuring the variables included in the research model were selected from previous studies. Because the definitions and operationalizations of some constructs (e.g., nationalism, materialism, cultural values, and promotion focus) may vary among different disciplines, this study adopted measures of these variables that have been widely used and proved to have high reliability and validity in marketing and consumer research. In the initial stage, the research team discussed with university colleagues to ensure the content validity of the items. The questionnaire was designed with the assistance of three bilingual translators. The original English version was translated to Chinese by the first translator and then was translated back to English by another translator. The third translator checked and compared the results of these two translators and ensured the final version of the questionnaire. We conducted a pilot test with the participation of 45 students in a large university to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire. The formal questionnaire is comprised of two sections. The first section includes all items of variables in this study (see Table 1). The second section asks demographics of the respondents. This study utilized a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to ask respondents’ measures.

Table 1. Construct and item of the measures.

| Constructs                  | Item                                                                 | Source |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Traditional personal value  | I am a self-confident person.                                        |        |
|                             | I am the person who focuses on long-term orientation.                |        |
|                             | I am a person who is self-disciplined.                               |        |
|                             | I always have a sense of obligation to everything in my life.        |        |
|                             | I always seek ways to be competitive in my life.                     | [18]   |
| Modern personal value       | I’m very easily indulgent                                            |        |
|                             | I’m a type of person who pursues individualism                       |        |
|                             | I tend to pursue materialism and ostentation                        | [35]   |
|                             | I appreciate foreign cultures.                                      |        |
Table 1. Cont.

| Constructs       | Item                                                                 | Source |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Materialism      | I like a lot of luxury in my life                                    |        |
|                  | I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes            |        |
|                  | I like to own things that impress people                             |        |
|                  | My life would be better if I owned certain thing I do not have       | [65]   |
|                  | The things I own say a lot about how well I’m doing in life          |        |
|                  | I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things              |        |
|                  | Buying things give me a lot of pleasure                              |        |
| Nationalism      | People who do not wholeheartedly support China should live elsewhere |        |
|                  | I would support my country right or wrong                             | [66]   |
|                  | If I criticize China, I do so for love of country                    |        |
|                  | If you care about China, you should notice her problems and work to correct them |        |
| Promotion focus  | I often devote time and energy to understand foods                   |        |
|                  | I make efforts to show my interest in food consumption               |        |
|                  | I often seek information and obtain knowledge about food.            | [67]   |
| Traditional food purchase intention | If I need to eat, I intend to purchase Chinese food. | [68]   |
|                  | I intend to continue purchasing Chinese food in the future.          |        |
|                  | I will regularly purchase Chinese food in the future.                |        |
| Fast food purchase intention | If I need to eat, I intend to purchase fast food. | [68]   |
|                  | I intend to continue purchasing fast food in the future.             |        |
|                  | I will regularly purchase fast food in the future.                   |        |

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

This study chose consumers in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou as the target population because these are the three largest cities in China. In each city, the researchers selected two traditional food stores and two fast food stores. Hence, the survey was conducted at six traditional food stores and another six fast food stores from January to March 2019. The research team was stationed at the stores and requested each out of four consumers who visited the stores to participate in the survey. They were presented with the informed consent statement and asked to complete the survey in stores. For those respondents who agreed to provide responses, facilities were provided for them to do so. Among a total of 800 consumers who were invited by the researchers, 700 consumers agreed and returned the questionnaires. Nevertheless, nine questionnaires were invalid due to containing missing values. Hence, the final sample data included 691 valid questionnaires with a response rate of 86.38%.

3.3. Ethics Approval

Regarding ethical standards that are related to human research activity, this study was conducted with the approval of the Major Project of The National Social Science Fund of China (20ZDA084). The research invited consumers to voluntarily and anonymously complete the questionnaire. The survey was conducted to ensure the privacy and avoid negative impact on the respondents.

3.4. Analysis Methods

To test the hypotheses, this study used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The direct relationships between variables were tested using basic PLS-SEM. The mediating effect was tested using the bootstrap procedure suggested by Preacher et al. [69]. To control the potential effect of demographics of respondents, this study included gender, age, marital status, education, income, and area as control variables in the analysis. These variables were treated as dummy variable.
4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 2 illustrates demographic characteristics of the final sample including 691 respondents. Of these, 196 respondents were from Beijing, 199 from Shanghai, and 296 from Guangzhou. It should be mentioned that the majority of the respondents (61.4%) were aged between 20 and 30 years old. One possible explanation is that the younger Chinese generation prefers to eat at restaurants and food stores whereas older people often eat at home [28,29].

| Variable            | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender              |           |         |
| Male                | 238       | 34.40%  |
| Female              | 453       | 65.60%  |
| Age                 |           |         |
| Under 20            | 125       | 18.10%  |
| 20-under 30         | 424       | 61.40%  |
| 30-under 40         | 100       | 14.50%  |
| 41 and above        | 42        | 6.10%   |
| Marital status      |           |         |
| Marriage            | 502       | 72.70%  |
| Not marriage        | 189       | 27.40%  |
| City                |           |         |
| Beijing             | 196       | 28.36%  |
| Shanghai            | 199       | 28.80%  |
| Guangzhou           | 296       | 42.84%  |
| Education           |           |         |
| High school and below | 187   | 27.10% |
| University          | 486       | 70.30%  |
| Master and above    | 18        | 2.60%   |
| Income              |           |         |
| Under 500 USD       | 186       | 26.90%  |
| 500-under 1000 USD  | 445       | 64.40%  |
| 1000 USD or above   | 60        | 8.60%   |

Table 3 shows descriptive statistical analysis of all variables in the present study. Among all variables, materialism (Mean = 3.79, SD = 0.77) and traditional personal value (Mean = 3.73, SD = 0.81) had the highest value of means whereas promotion focus (Mean = 3.47, SD = 0.86) and traditional food purchase intention (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.87) had the lowest value of means. However, all variables had a mean higher the average value (ranged from 3.47 to 3.79). Results also show that traditional personal value was positively related to promotion focus ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$) and traditional food purchase intention ($r = 0.49, p < 0.01$). Modern personal value was positively related to promotion focus ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$) and fast food purchase intention ($r = 0.41, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, nationalism was positively related to traditional personal value ($r = 0.53, p < 0.01$). Materialism was positively related to modern personal value ($r = 0.55, p < 0.01$).
Table 3. Descriptive statistical analysis and Pearson correlations.

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | TPV | MPV | Nat | Mat | PRF | TFPI | FFPI |
|----------|------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| TPV      | 3.73 | 0.81               | 0.80|     |     |     |     |      |      |
| MPV      | 3.59 | 0.85               | 0.51**| 0.73|     |     |     |      |      |
| Nat      | 3.65 | 0.83               | 0.53**| 0.55**| 0.80|     |     |      |      |
| Mat      | 3.79 | 0.77               | 0.56**| 0.55**| 0.51**| 0.87|     |      |      |
| PRF      | 3.47 | 0.86               | 0.34**| 0.40**| 0.48**| 0.43**| 0.72|      |      |
| TFPI     | 3.49 | 0.87               | 0.49**| 0.48**| 0.49**| 0.24**| 0.45**| 0.87|      |
| FFPI     | 3.62 | 0.85               | 0.51**| 0.41**| 0.43**| 0.26**| 0.43**| 0.51**| 0.83|

Note: n = 691, significant level: ** p < 0.01, TPV = traditional personal value, MPV = modern personal value, Nat = nationalism, Mat = materialism, PRF = promotion focus, TFPI = traditional food purchase intention, FFPI = fast food purchase intention. The values on the diagonal are square roots of AVE.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Prior studies suggested that Cronbach’s alpha is often used to test the reliability of a measure. This value must be greater than 0.60 [70]. Results in this study show that Cronbach’s alpha for all variables ranged from 0.69 to 0.93 (see Table 4), thereby providing evidence for a satisfactory reliability for the measures in this study.

Table 4. Reliability and validity.

| Constructs | Item | Factor Loadings | CR Value | AVE Value | Cronbach’s α |
|------------|------|-----------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Traditional personal value (TPV) | TPV1 | 0.644*** |          |           |              |
|          | TPV2 | 0.820*** |          |           |              |
|          | TPV3 | 0.826*** |          |           |              |
|          | TPV4 | 0.858*** | 0.898    | 0.639     | 0.894        |
|          | TPV5 | 0.830*** |          |           |              |
| Modern personal value (MPV) | MPV1 | 0.679*** |          |           |              |
|          | MPV2 | 0.758*** |          |           |              |
|          | MPV3 | 0.733*** |          |           |              |
|          | MPV4 | 0.764*** | 0.823    | 0.537     | 0.818        |
| Materialism (MAT) | MAT1 | 0.704*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT2 | 0.770*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT3 | 0.826*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT4 | 0.817*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT5 | 0.810*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT6 | 0.834*** |          |           |              |
|          | MAT7 | 0.836*** |          |           |              |
| Nationalism (NAT) | NAT1 | 0.892*** |          |           |              |
|          | NAT2 | 0.881*** |          |           |              |
|          | NAT3 | 0.824*** |          |           |              |
|          | NAT4 | 0.864*** |          |           |              |
| Promotion focus (PROF) | PROF1 | 0.674*** |          |           |              |
|          | PROF2 | 0.740*** |          |           |              |
|          | PROF3 | 0.736*** |          |           |              |
| Traditional food purchase intention (TFPI) | TFPI1 | 0.903*** |          |           |              |
|          | TFPI2 | 0.872*** |          |           |              |
|          | TFPI3 | 0.827*** |          |           |              |
| Fast food purchase intention (FFPI) | FFPI1 | 0.799*** |          |           |              |
|          | FFPI2 | 0.865*** |          |           |              |
|          | FFPI3 | 0.836*** |          |           |              |

N = 691, ***p < 0.001.
This study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis for the measures. Results of this measurement model show a good model fit: Chi-square/degree of freedom = 1201.45/456 = 2.63, which was less than the cutoff value of 3; CFI = 0.93 and GFI = 0.92, which were greater than the cutoff value of 0.90; and RMSEA = 0.06, which was less than the cutoff value of 0.08 [71]. Based on the results of this measurement model, the validity of the measures was tested. Results indicate that all factor loadings of the measurement model were significantly greater than 0.60. Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated to test the convergent validity. Accordingly, CR value must be greater than 0.70 while AVE value must be greater than 0.50 [70]. As shown in Table 4, all the CR and AVE of variables met the requirement threshold value, thereby providing evidence for a satisfactory convergent validity of the measures in this study. In addition, Hair et al. [70] also asserted that discriminant validity can be tested by comparing the square roots of AVE and the correlation coefficient between variables. As results illustrated in Table 3, all square roots of AVE were greater than all correlation coefficients, thereby providing evidence for a good discriminant validity of the measures in this study.

4.3. Common Method Bias

Given that the data were collected from respondents in a single point of time using self-reported survey, the impact of common method bias might exist. This study followed Podsakoff et al.’s [72] suggestion and conducted a Harman’s one-factor test to determine the problem of common method bias. Results of the unrotated solution of exploratory factor analysis indicate seven factors emerged with 64.62% of variance, whereby the first factor accounted for 14.12% of variance. Furthermore, a poor model fit of one-factor CFA also confirm this result (Chi-square/degree of freedom = 4366.47/377 = 11.58, CFI = 0.73, GFI = 0.64, RMSEA = 0.12). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the results of hypothesis testing were not be seriously influenced by the common method bias in this study.

4.4. Testing the Direct Effect

This study used PLS-SEM to test the hypotheses. Results in Figure 2 show that nationalism was positively related to traditional personal value ($\beta = 0.673, p < 0.001$), providing support for hypothesis H1. Materialism was also positively related to modern personal value ($\beta = 0.650, p < 0.001$), providing support for hypothesis H2.

![Figure 2. Hypothesis testing.](image_url)
Furthermore, results in Figure 2 also indicate that traditional personal value was positively related to traditional food purchase intention ($\beta = 0.132, p < 0.001$). Thus, hypothesis H3 was supported. Modern personal value was positively related to fast food purchase intention ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.001$). Thus, hypothesis H4 was supported.

In addition, Figure 2 shows that traditional personal value was positively related to promotion focus ($\beta = 0.108, p < 0.01$), which in turn was positively related to traditional food purchase intention ($\beta = 0.342, p < 0.001$), thereby providing initial support for hypothesis H5a. Modern personal value was positively related to promotion focus ($\beta = 0.329, p < 0.001$), which in turn was positively related to fast food purchase intention ($\beta = 0.131, p < 0.001$), thereby providing initial support for hypothesis H5b.

4.5. Testing the Mediating Effect

To confirm the mediating effect of promotion focus, we followed Preacher et al.’s [69] procedure to perform a bootstrap analysis with 1000 bootstrap samples. Results reveal that the indirect effect of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention through promotion focus was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.156, p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.110, 0.207]$). Thus, hypothesis H5a was supported. Furthermore, results of the bootstrap analysis also show that the indirect effect of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention through promotion focus was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.091, p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.058, 0.138]$). Thus, hypothesis H5b was supported.

4.6. Comparing the Effect of Traditional and Modern Personal Values

To compare the effect of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention and that of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention, this study computed the total effects of each variable (total effect = direct effect + indirect effect). Results indicate that the total effect of traditional personal value on traditional food consumption (total effect = 0.169) was less than that of modern personal value on fast food consumption (total effect = 0.372). Thus, hypothesis H6 was not supported.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study is among the first attempt to investigate the key factors influencing traditional and fast food consumption among urban consumers in an emerging market, i.e., China. Traditional food and fast food have different nutrients and contribute differently to consumer diets. Given the importance of understanding consumer motivations for eating behavior and food choice [13], the findings of this study provide implications for academic researchers, business practitioners, and policymakers in several manners.

First, although food consumption has been a widely discussed topic in current literature, the role of cultural values in affecting food consumption has been largely ignored in prior studies. Our findings indicate that Chinese traditional personal value enhances people’s intention to purchase traditional food while modern personal value increases their intention to purchase fast food [11,28]. These findings imply that Chinese people select types of food depends largely on their cultural values. That is, people who are traditionally oriented tend to purchase traditional food and people who are modern oriented are more likely to purchase fast food. The reason is that their choices of food consumption fit their beliefs and values [21,48]. Findings in this study shed a new light on the role of cultural values in affecting food consumption. Therefore, this study fills the research gap that has not determined the relationship between cultural values and food consumption in current literature.

Second, this study clarifies the antecedents of cultural values in which nationalism is an important predictor of traditional personal value whereas materialism is an important factor that predicts modern personal value. These findings indicate that traditional personal value is not only inherently rooted in traditional culture but is also influenced and strengthened by nationalism [18,36]. That is, people who love their country tend to express their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior that are characterized by their core traditional cultural values [21,35]. By contrast, modern personal value is shaped and influenced by materialism in modern society. People who are modern-oriented tend to prefer stimulation and
hedonism, which are important characteristics of materialism [49,50]. In other words, people who favor materialism are more likely to engage in activities that express the cultural values of modern society. Their beliefs and attitudes are influenced by materialism [20,28]. Findings of this study provide evidence to clarify the antecedents of cultural values, which have not been determined in prior literature. The present study’s findings provide important implications for researchers who may be interested in exploring the impacts of nationalism, materialism, and cultural values on food consumption.

Third, regulatory focus theory is often discussed in psychology and organizational management literature. Its application in marketing and consumer research is still limited. This study extends regulatory focus theory and clarifies the mediating mechanism of promotion focus in the relationship between cultural values and food consumption. Findings indicate that people are motivated by both traditional and modern personal values that drive people toward selecting different types of foods. That is, promotion focus positively mediated the link between traditional personal value and traditional food purchase intention and that between modern personal value and fast food purchase intention. Thus, this study provides new insight into the mediating mechanism of promotion focus in the relationship between cultural values and food consumption. This mediating mechanism of promotion focus has been also an absence in current literature.

Finally, this study found that the effect of traditional personal value on traditional food purchase intention is less than that of modern personal value on fast food purchase intention. This interesting finding reflects the shift from traditional value to modern value in current Chinese society. While the finding is surprised and contradictory to our expectation, it highlights the important role of modern personal value in explaining consumer’s intention to purchase fast food. That is, Chinese people are increasingly characterized by modern values that strongly influence their beliefs and behaviors including fast food consumption. A possible explanation is that the sample of this study included numerous young people. The younger Chinese generation lives in a global environment in which Internet and technology and cultural interaction strongly shape and influence their worldview. Therefore, their beliefs and behavior toward fast food consumption are greatly motivated by modern values, such as materialism and individualism, rather than by health concerns. This finding provides fresh insights for the design of healthy eating campaigns aimed at promoting the consumption of healthy food with good nutritional value.

This study’s findings have several implications for advancing healthy nutrition and society, which requires collaborative efforts from consumers, food companies, and policymakers. Consumers should be well aware of how different factors such as cultural orientation, personal values, and promotion focus affect their behaviors towards traditional food and fast food. This will help them balance the consumption of these types of foods, contributing to healthy eating behavior. Consumers should particularly select traditional foods that are good both human health. For example, some of the Chinese traditional foods containing good nutritional value include “Ginkgo stewed chicken” from Sichuan, Cantonese cuisine from Guangdong, and other dishes that contain Chinese medicine ingredients [11,15]. These dishes are often known to have rich nutrients and low-fat contents as well as contain several ingredients that are healthy for human [15,30]. Consumers endorse materialism and favor modern value may enjoy the stimulation and hedonism of consuming fast foods. However, because several fast foods have been criticized as being unhealthy and having negative impact on the environment [12], such consumers should rationally consume fast foods that are better for human health and the environment. For example, Subway in China provides organic and healthy foods for consumers. This brand may be a good choice for consumers when they want to purchase fast food [60,73]. Subway is known as a healthy brand that provides foods with low calorie and fat. They select materials with high standards that ensures materials are plant and processed without pesticides and fertilizers [60,73].

Furthermore, it is suggested that food store managers should notice the effects of different cultural values on consumers’ choice of different types of foods. Because Chinese culture is a mix of traditional and modern cultural values, managers should develop suitable marketing strategies for various types of consumers who endorse different values. Traditional and fast food stores should innovate their
menus by offering more products that provide consumers with important nutrients to maintain their health. In addition, food stores should avoid using ingredients that contain chemicals and fertilizers. A strict selection standard of food ingredients will help both traditional and fast food stores provide healthy products for their consumers.

In addition, given that fast food consumption and advertising have been believed to contribute to overweigh and obesity [12,74], fast food consumption has been considered as an unfavorable eating behavior [61]. Policymakers should have clear regulations about the advertising of food, especially fast food, to ensure that such communication programs provide clear and honest information about the nutrients and calories of food products. In addition, given the important role of promotion focus in the consumption of traditional food and fast food, both policymakers and food companies need to implement promotional and informational programs that increase consumer knowledge of the benefits of these types of foods and consumer interests in healthy products with good nutritional values.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides several implications for researchers and managers, several limitations in this study should be overcome in future research. First, the cross-sectional data may be a major limitation because they generate bias when detecting the causal relationship between variables. It is suggested that future research should test the causal relationship between variables using longitudinal data.

Second, given that this study utilized self-reported survey to collect primary data, participants might have tried to answer the questions in a socially desirable way. Consequently, common method bias might influence the results of hypothesis testing in this study. Although the analytical tests indicated that common method variance was not a serious problem, it would be desirable for future research, if possible, to use different methods that avoid the problem of common method bias, such as a longitudinal study and an experimental method.

Third, the sample in this study included a majority of consumers who were aged between 20 and 30 years old with incomes ranging from 500 USD to 1000 USD. This may affect the generalizability of the results in this study. Therefore, to improve the representativeness of sample in this study, future research should collect data from respondents from different demographic groups.

Furthermore, this study proposes a model with several key constructs, including nationalism, materialism, cultural values, and promotion focus. These constructs have been discussed in psychology, management, anthropology, sociology, and marketing and consumer research. The definitions and operationalizations of these constructs may vary between different research areas. In this study, we adopted the definitions and operationalizations of these constructs in the field of marketing and consumer research. Although these measures have been proved to have high reliability and validity, future research should compare and contrast the definitions and operationalizations of these constructs across different disciplines.

Finally, the generalizability of the results in this study may be another limitation because our data were collected from only consumers in China. Some other markets such as India, Southeast Asian countries, Egypt, etc., may also be important to determine the issue of cultural values and food consumption. In addition, some typical Chinese fast-food chains such as Real Kungfu may generate certain different effects on consumers’ perceptions, attitudes, and behavior because this food chain store has several unique characteristics that reflect Chinese traditional culture. Consumers may perceive higher nationalism and traditional values when they purchase foods from Real Kungfu than other multinational food chains. Therefore, future research should collect data from such Chinese food stores to validate the research model in this study.
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