UNDERSTANDING SELF-GIFT MOTIVATIONS
OF ETHNIC MINORITY CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

Whilst there is an increasing interest in ethnic minority markets due to their growing sizes, purchasing power, and geographic concentration, very little is known about ethnic minority consumers' self-gifting behaviours. This paper explores how ethnic identity, acculturation level, and self-construal may influence ethnic minority consumers' self-gift motivation. The propositions are developed for future research and a potential methodological approach for testing these propositions is also discussed.

KEY WORDS

Ethnic Minority Consumer, Acculturation, Ethnicity, Self-Construal, Self-Gift

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INTRODUCTION

Western consumers have become increasingly self-oriented in their purchases and consumption behaviours (Mick and DeMoss, 1992). Acknowledging this trend, numerous studies have examined various personal acquisitions reflecting consumer characteristics which go beyond basic need fulfilment (Westphal, Shaw and Komaran, 2002). In particular, scholars have recognised self-gifts as an example of this phenomenon.

Although previous research on self-gifts have attempted to clarify the meaning of self-gift, some aspects of the concept, such as motivations and acquisitions have not been thoroughly explored yet. Mostly, this is because research on self-gifts have appeared in the consumer behaviour literature only recently (e.g., Levy, 1982; Mick, 1991; Mick 1996; Mick and DeMoss, 1990a; Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Sherry, McGrath, Levy, 1995). Prior to these initial studies, the concept of self-gifts has only been briefly mentioned within the context of other research on interpersonal gift-giving (Schwartz, 1967; Tournier, 1963). In addition, research on self-gifts is virtually non-existent outside the U.S.

Prior research strongly suggested the need to understand cross-cultural and cross-ethnic differences and similarities with regard to self-gifts (e.g., Mick, 1996; Sherry et al., 1995), because consumers from different cultures may have different tastes, values, and customs which might result in different preferences in terms of gift attributes, advertising messages, packaging, and presentation. It is also possible that some consumers may have the same preferences, but the reasons underlying their preferences may vary depending on their cultural norms and situations (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan, 2004). Very little self-gift research, however, has tapped into the area of ethnic minority consumers, even though there has been a growing awareness of the need for research regarding ethnic minority consumers due to their growing size, purchasing power, and geographic concentration (Jamal and Chapman, 2000).

One of the distinct characteristics of self-gifting is the focus on self. Previous research suggests that if views of the self cause people to react differently in self-gifting situations, self-gifting can consequently be considered as a means through which consumers express who they perceive themselves to be and who they aspire to be. Thus, studying the propensity of self-gifting among ethnic minority consumers and their self-gift motivations may expand our understanding of the relationship between self-gifts and self-concept. Furthermore, understanding the linkages between ethnic minority consumers' self-gift motivations and purchase preferences and intentions would help marketers to develop more effective advertising messages or promotional campaigns.

This paper will attempt to show how ethnicity, levels of acculturation, and self-construal may influence ethnic minority consumers' self-gift motivation and may serve to predict the self-gift behaviours that they would exhibit in a host country. The remainder of the paper is organised in four parts. Firstly, the concepts of self-gift, acculturation, ethnicity, and self-construal are reviewed. Then, the relationship between these concepts and the motivation is explored. The third part presents the propositions and the rationales. Finally, a methodological approach for testing these propositions is proposed for future research.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Self-Gift

Individuals acquire products and services as "a way to communicate symbolic and cultural meaning contributing to the construction of the culturally constituted world" (McCracken 1986:73). Indeed, many products and a variety of services acquired are identified as self-directed purchases. However, although self-gifts can be categorised as a type of self-directed purchase, it is partly differentiated from others by its situational and motivational contexts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a).

Mick and DeMoss (1990b:328) define "self-gifts as products, services or experiences that are personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context-bound." Self-gift motivations are

conceptualised into four types: (1) *puritanic* (to reward or provide an incentive toward a goal); (2) *romantic* (to do something nice for oneself); (3) *therapeutic* (to remedy negative behaviour); and (4) *holiday* (self-indulgence based on public and private holidays) (Mick, 1991). Another type of self-gift motivation was proposed by Luomala and Laaksonen (1999), as they found that the main motivation for buying a self-gift is to maintain good mood or eliminate bad mood.

Prior research suggests that the self-gift likelihood may be greatly moderated by cultural and personal values (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Olshavsky and Lee, 1993; Sherry et al., 1995). They argue that while indulgent behaviours are facilitated by individualist culture, members of collectivist culture who tend to think more in terms of the group or the family rather than the self might be less likely to accept self-gifts. Even if they think of themselves, it may be socially inappropriate to act on this individualistic desire (Olshavsky and Lee, 1993).

Rucker and her colleagues' (1994) finding, however, runs contrary to the above suggestion. They found that the group which self-identifies themselves with Asian cultures is not less accepting of self-gifts. Moreover, ethnicity was found to have a significant influence on the type of product selected as a self-gift. Although Rucker et al.'s (1994) study provided the initial indications of how self-gifts may fit into broader perspectives on ethnicity, the lack of a precise acculturation measurement and the limitation of motivational situations investigated do constrain the results. Yet, Westphal et al. (2002), who explored cross-cultural differences between Singapore and New Zealand in self-gift giving, found support for Rucker et al. (1994), as their results showed that Singaporeans who hold Asian culture values have a positive relationship with holidays and reward self-gifts.

To better understand the impact of culture-related variables on self-gift motivation and perhaps to correct some inconsistencies noted in literature, we feel that there is a need to further explore how culture influences self-gift motivations.

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936:149) as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come

into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes taking place in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."

Many consumer researchers have attempted to study the concept of acculturation within the individual context under the assumption that each immigrant has his or her unique way of going through the acculturation process (Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj, 1995). Penaloza (1994:33) has defined the term consumer acculturation as "the process of movement and adaptation by members of one culture engaging to learn behaviours, attitudes and values of another culture." The term is specific to the consumption process which involves how the immigrants adjust to their new roles and lifestyle patterns based on their ethnic identity and involvement in the host culture (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002).

Although during the past few decades numerous models have been developed to understand the acculturation process, each model tends to establish different assumptions and focus on different outcomes. Thus, extant literature on the subject contains many inconsistent results. In this study, we have categorised the various models found in the literature into three groups according to the acculturation pattern.

Uni-dimensional Model

Previous research adopted Gordon's (1964) assimilation model which claimed that in moving from one culture to another, the immigrant would show a linear pattern of behavioural change as he or she moves away from the pattern of their culture of origin and shifts toward the pattern of the culture of immigration. Gordon presents seven sub-processes constituting different stages of the assimilation process: (1) *cultural assimilation*, (2) *structural assimilation*, (3) *marital assimilation*, (4) *identificational assimilation*, (5) *attitude receptional assimilation*, (6) *behaviour receptional assimilation*, and (7) *civic assimilation*.

Many studies challenged this model as they found that the acculturation process is not a linear pattern (e.g., Jun, Ball, and Gentry, 1993; Quester and Chong, 2001; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983). It is widely accepted that immigrants may not acculturate to every aspect of the host culture or lose all aspects of their original culture (Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu, 1986; O'Guinn and Faber, 1985).

Bi-dimensional Model

Biculturalism posits a bidirectional relationship which assumes that an immigrant can understand two different cultures and can change his or her behaviour to fit a particular social context under the assumption that it is possible for the immigrant to assign equal status to the two cultures, even if he or she does not value or prefer them equally (La Fromboise, Coleman, and Gerton, 1993). The concept of biculturalism is coherent especially within the context of situational ethnicity because both reflect "the ability of a person to function effectively in more than one culture and to switch roles back and forth as the situation changes" (Jambunathan, Burts and Pierce, 2000:396).

The strength of bi-dimensional model is that it focuses on the cognitive and affective processes that allow researchers to consider the role and the impact that immigrants have in choosing how they will interact with the host and home culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The model, however, does not demonstrate the behaviour of the immigrants who have more difficulty adjusting into the host culture.

Multi-dimensional Model

A multi-dimensional model presents four patterns of acculturation: *assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization* (Berry, Trimble and Olmedo, 1986). The model is mainly based on two considerations: (1) value placed on maintaining home cultural identity, and (2) value placed on maintaining a relationship with the dominant society (Berry et al., 1986). The immigrants who want to *assimilate* will not be concerned about maintaining their traditional culture, while immigrants who want to *integrate* will attempt to maintain their home culture as well as move into the dominant society. *Separation* refers to holding onto the immigrants' original culture and avoiding interaction with the members of host culture. *Marginalization* occurs when there is little interest both in cultural maintenance and in relations with others in the host culture.

Although many researchers have continued to adopt the multi-dimensional model (e.g., Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard, 2005; Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1999), it is still the less favoured approach in consumer behaviour research, mainly due to the lack of a measurement scale which could classify consumers a summated acculturation score (Laroche, Kim, and Tomiuk, 1998). In this case, however, the

concept of the multi-dimensional model suits to broaden the complexity of the consumer acculturation process because it is not only a case of acculturating with the host country, but it also balances values between host and home cultures. Thus, this study plans to further develop a consumer acculturation model based on Berry et al.'s (1986) model.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is defined broadly as a concept of individual and group identity that "embraces differences identified by colour, language, religion, or some other attribute of common origin" (Horowitz, 1985:41). Hirschman (1981) was one of the pioneering researchers who investigated the concept of ethnicity within the context of consumer behaviour. She concluded that ethnicity could be used as a useful determinant of consumption patterns, and that it has an impact on competency in making purchase decisions.

The lack of a precise definition of the concept of ethnicity in consumer behaviour research is attributed to the basic disagreement between the objective and subjective approaches (Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu, 1986; Laroche, Joy, Hui, and Kim, 1991). The objective approach refers to the group sharing common cultural traits, as the characters that include several identifiers such as language, religion, and country of origin (Hui, Kim, Laroche, and Joy, 1997). This perception alone ignores individual's attitude and mental states (Stayman and Deshpande, 1989). Ethnic identity, later, has been developed as a subjective construct to indicate a person's internal beliefs, commitment and strength of association to a particular group (Ogden, Ogden and Schau, 2004).

The concept of strength of ethnic identity stems from the subjective view. It is usually perceived to embrace various aspects including the intensity of affiliation with a particular ethnic group (Deshpande et al., 1986; Ogden et al., 2004), the level of attachment with a particular ethnic group (Phinney, 1992), attitudes towards a particular ethnic group, and feelings of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Jamal and Chapman, 2000; Stayman and Deshpande, 1989).

Researchers have defined strength of ethnic identity in many ways. Some ask individuals to identify their ethnic identity using ethnic labels, while others use multi-

dimensional measures of strength of ethnic identity including a variety of aspects such as strength of affiliation, feeling of belonging, pride, happiness, and attachment (Donthu and Cherian, 1992; Hirschman, 1981; Phinney, 1992). Past studies on strength of ethnic identity (e.g., Deshpande et al., 1986; Xu Shim, Lotz and Almeida, 2004) showed that there are differences in consumption patterns within ethnic minority consumer groups between those who have a strong ethnic identity (strong ethnic identifiers) and those who have a weak ethnic identity (weak ethnic identifiers).

Ethnicity and acculturation may be related phenomena but they have evolved as two distinct constructs (Mehta and Belk, 1991). For example, some immigrants can be acculturated to the host culture but still maintain strong ethnic identification. Moreover, ethnic identity also varies depending on situations (Oswald, 1999; Stayman and Deshpande, 1989; Xu, et al., 2004). Even though some researchers support the idea that these constructs are independent, many consumer researchers have used the same set of indicators such as language, reference group influence, and adherence to cultural customs to operationalise both ethnicity and acculturation (Hui, Joy, Kim and Laroche, 1992; Ogden et al., 2004). This study will deploy both objective and subjective measurement of ethnicity in studying the relationship between ethnicity and self-gift.

Self-Construal

Over the past few decades, researchers have identified the broad cultural differences distinguishing mainstream western cultures and eastern cultures (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1988). They have begun to recognise that culture can and does affect the self's structures and processes (Singelis, 1994). Markus and Kitayama (1991:230) have divided the view of self into two types: "*independent self-construal* values of being unique, expressing themselves, and promoting their own goals, while *interdependent self-construal* values of belonging, fitting in, and promoting other's goals." Both argue that the type of self-construal an individual holds can affect his or her thoughts, emotions, and motivations.

According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), individuals in western culture are more likely to have independent self-construals. These western people emphasise the importance of the individual over the group and of construing the individual as

independent, autonomous, and self-contained. On the other hand, individuals from eastern cultures are more likely to hold interdependent self-construals. Eastern people emphasise the group over the individual and view persons as interdependent and connected. Prior research, however, suggested that each individual is likely to have both independent and interdependent self-construals, although giving preference to one type of self-construal over the other depends on the cultural factors and situations (Singelis, 1994).

Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, and Lai (1999) added that self-construal promises to be an important concept linking culture to behaviour. They suggested that it is essential for researchers to build theoretical frameworks and also to produce empirical findings in which cultural differences are seriously considered rather than ignored, if we are interested in better understanding social behaviours of ethnic minority consumers.

Acculturation, Ethnicity and Self-Construal

Self-construal and ethnic identity are important components of the acculturative process (Barry, Elliott, and Evans, 2000). Previous research in psychology found that acculturation was significantly correlated with the independent self-construal (Norasakkunkit and Kalick, 2002), while ethnic identity was strongly correlated with the interdependent self-construal (Barry et al., 2000; Okazaki, 1997).

Drawing on conceptualisations of Berry et al.'s (1986) multi-dimensional acculturation process and Singelis's (1994) measurement of self-construals, Yamada and Singelis (1999) found that individuals who experience varying degrees of cultural contact and make different choices in adjusting to cultural groups might portray distinctive self-construal patterns. Their results indicate that the individuals who have been identified as *Bicultural* are high in both independent and interdependent self; the *Western* group has a high independent and a low interdependent self; the *Traditional* group has a low independent and a high interdependent self; and the *Culturally-alienated* group has an underdeveloped sense of both their independent and interdependent self (Yamada and Singelis, 1999).

Moreover, Yamada and Singelis (1999) suggest that Berry et al.'s (1986) four acculturation levels can correspond to their self-construal patterns. While *assimilation* is viewed as adopting the new culture as their primary culture, it can be

related to the *Western* self-construal pattern. In the case of the *segregated* individuals who resist the host culture and maintain their home culture, these individuals would demonstrate a *Traditional* self-construal pattern. With *integrated* individuals who maintain both cultural values, the pattern of self-construal would be similar to a *Bicultural* pattern. Finally, some *marginal* individuals who may not feel a part of either their home or host culture, this lack of cultural integration corresponds to a *Culturally-Alienated* self-construal pattern.

Based on the reviews of literature, we conclude that acculturation, ethnicity and self-construal are relevant constructs that have a crucial impact on ethnic minority consumers' purchase behaviours and intentions. Surprisingly, however, we could not find any published research in the field of consumer behaviour that employed these three constructs in a single study. To understand the ethnic minority consumers' self-directed purchase behaviour, this study proposes to examine the relationships among these three constructs with regard to self-gift motivations.

Motivation and Culture-related Variables

Murray (1964:7) defined motivation as "an internal factor that arouses, directs and integrates a person's behaviour in a given set of circumstances in order to achieve some goal." Motivations are often divided into utilitarian and hedonic motivations. Utilitarian motivations constitute desires to achieve functional benefits, while hedonic motivations are those that are based on emotional, experiential, and subjective rewards (Solomon, 1992).

Previous self-gift research (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a) found that people may give a gift to themselves as a reward for the accomplishment of a task (*puritanic self-gift*), to be nice to themselves (*romantic self-gift*), to celebrate holidays (*holiday self-gift*) or to cheer them up when they feel down (*therapeutic self-gift*). Some self-gift motivations, naturally, have been categorised as hedonic motivations.

The most common self-gift motivation is achievement motive, which results in relative successes or failures, potentially leading to reward or therapeutic self-gifts (Mick, 1991). Achievement motive may be recognised in different ways in different cultures, and it should be understood in the socio-cultural context (Ramirez and Price-Williams, 1976; Maehr and Nicholls, 1980; Yang, 1981). The motivation to achieve

does not necessarily reflect a motive of personal achievement but can have social or collective origins (Maehr and Nicholls, 1980). Ramirez and Price-Williams (1976) and Yang (1981) distinguished between two types of achievement motive: *personal-oriented* and *social-oriented*. *Personal-oriented achievement* motive is viewed as a functionally autonomous desire in which the individual strives for internalised standards of excellence, whereas *socially-oriented achievement* motive is a desire in which individuals strive to fulfil the expectations of significant others, typically the family.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) supported the idea that the drive for achievement in an interdependent self-construal may have some very different aspects from the motivation for achievement in an independent self-construal. They suggested that the person with an independent self-construal may be motivated to the actions that allow expression of one's self-defining, inner attributes, whereas the person with an interdependent self-construal should be motivated to the actions that enhance one's connection to others. While those actions could look similar from both self-construal views (e.g., working hard to gain admission to a college), they may be different in terms of the source of the energising motivation (e.g., personal achievement versus family recognition) (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Ethnicity and acculturation are also shown to influence motivation. One previous study, which examined Chinese American and Anglo Americans' motivations for outdoor recreation using self-construal along with ethnicity and acculturation measurement (Walker, Deng, Dieser, 2001), found that ethnicity has direct and indirect effects on some outdoor recreation motivations, which is often mediated by self-construal. The result also showed that while both groups of ethnic minority consumers may choose to do the same activity, they may do so for different reasons and to different degrees. Walker et al. (2001: 275) also found that "the more acculturated a Chinese respondent was, the more independent he or she also was" but there was weak support for the acculturation influencing outdoor recreation motivation. They suggested that future research should examine more fully the influence that acculturation has on the self-construal.

It is possible that some cultural variables not measured in the previous ethnic consumer research might be the cause behind the inconsistent results for ethnic

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minority consumers' self-gift behaviour. Our literature indeed provides strong support for including self-construal as an independent variable in ethnic consumer research. This current study suggests that concurrent deployment of these three constructs (i.e., self-construal, ethnicity and acculturation) would allow a more comprehensive understanding of the ethnic minority consumers' self-gift motivations.

PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

There are some reasons to believe that self-gift is a widely practiced phenomenon amongst ethnic minority groups. Moreover, during a birthday occasion, the motivations of ethnic minority consumers to engage in self-gifting may be similar to host members' self-gifting motivations (Westphal, Shaw and Komaran (2002). We, however, conjecture that the actual sources of motivation might be different. More specifically, we predict that ethnicity, acculturation, and self-construal may appropriately explain the actual sources of motivation. For example, ethnic minority consumers might acquire self-gifts as a means to help them increase their emotional well-being in various occasions. Thus, we propose the following propositions.

Firstly, recent immigrants may have difficulties in adapting to the new environment of the host country. They might face the challenge of building significant and supportive interpersonal relationship with members of the host society. Some findings showed that a consumer who has deficient dyadic-gift relationships may be more likely to acquire self-gift (Mick, 1996). For instance, during the immigrant's birthday, one may want to engage in self-gifting due to the lack of dyadic-gift relationships with others.

> *P1: Recent immigrants may be more likely to engage in holiday or romantic self-gifts whilst there is a lack of an interpersonal gift-giving relationship.*

Secondly, young members of ethnic minority groups may feel alienated as they desperately want to belong to a social group. Some may be under high levels of stress due to the feelings of marginality and alienation and identity confusion (Jun, Gentry, Ball and Gonzalez-Molina, 1994). According to Marcus and Kitayama (1991), ethnic minority consumers with interdependent self-construal may be motivated to find a

way to fit in with relevant others and create an obligation to become part of various interpersonal relationships. This is because the interdependent self-construal places a great value on belonging to a group, and there is strong concern about acceptance by peers and anxiety about exclusion. Self-gift, therefore, may be acquired as a way to be connected and less differentiated from others.

> *P2: Young members of ethnic minority groups may decide to engage in romantic self-gifts to acquire products, services or experiences that help them better fit into the host society.*

Thirdly, past psychology research using measures of depression, social anxiety, and other forms of distress have indicated that Asian Americans report higher levels of distress than White Americans (Uba, 1994), with recent Asian American immigrants reporting the highest level of distress (Abe and Zane, 1990; Sue and Zane, 1985). These ethnic minority consumers are often overburdened with the requirement of working life and the pressure from their family and relatives. Asian culture, according to Uba (1994), has emphasised maintaining harmony in relationships and the importance of fulfilling obligations, particularly obligations to the family expectations. This may generate stress and anxiety for these working groups. It is expected that they may engage in self-gifts as a way to alleviate their bad mood.

> *P3a: Due to the pressure at work and/or at home, ethnic minority consumers may be more inclined to engage in therapeutic self-gifts to cheer them up or alleviate their negative moods compared to young members of the host country.*

Self-gifting may be used by ethnic minority consumers who have a strong will to fulfil their family obligations as an incentive in reaching their goals.

> *P3b: Ethnic minority consumers may be more inclined to engage in puritanic self-gift as an incentive to reach their goals compared to members of the host country.*

Fourthly, people are likely to engage in self-directed consumption when life transitions are characterised as it is a way to redefine the self and restore self-esteem (Mick and DeMoss, 1992). Liminal transitions are considered to play an important

role in ethnic minority consumers' self gifting because they could provide richer insights into the functions of possessions as markers or vehicles of personal history and maturation (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b). After succeeding in acquiring high education and reaching a new height in their career, the feeling of deservingness may make them consider indulging in self-gratification. Their rewards might contain messages that reflect their new social status and indicate their achievement in living in the new country. It is possible that during liminal periods these people may place a greater value on acquiring self-gifts.

> *P4: During the liminal periods, particularly when ethnic minority consumers become successful in their career and their family lives, they may be more inclined to engage in puritanic self-gifts to celebrate their achievement of reaching their goals compared to members of the host country.*

Fifthly, Western consumers often buy themselves a gift during the holiday occasions. Thus, it is possible that holiday self-gifts could be used by ethnic minority consumers as evidence to show that they have adapted to the host country and/or have maintained their ethnic identity depending on their ethnicity and acculturation level.

> *P5a: During the host country's holidays, ethnic minority consumers who have a high level of acculturation may be more inclined to engage in host holiday self-gifts.*

> *P5b: During the home country's holidays, the ethnic minority consumers who have a low level of acculturation may be more inclined to engage in home holiday self-gifts.*

METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

Sample and Design

To test the propositions, a survey questionnaire should be developed, and data should be collected using a stratified sampling method. Within each stratified minority consumer group, the convenience sampling method should then be used to collect data from a sufficient number of respondents. We suggest that questionnaires be

collected in a personal interview setting, and the administration of the questionnaire be followed up by an in-depth interview in order to triangulate the findings.

The target samples could be sought amongst university students as well as other young adult ethnic minority consumers. This is based on three reasons. Firstly, previous research showed that self-gift behaviour may be fairly common among young adults. Secondly, students and young adults face a number of situations (e.g., exams, assignments, finding a job) which increase the possibility of reward or therapeutic self-gifts. Furthermore, international students can act as surrogate samples of the first-generation ethnic minority consumers as they just arrived to the host country and have less dyadic-gift relationship with others. Finally, students possess English proficiency, and this will eliminate the need to translate the questionnaire instrument into different languages.

Data should also be collected from the members of the host country so that a comparison could be made. A similar approach suggested above should be employed for the sampling and the research process.

Measurements

The measurements of each construct would be taken mainly from the relevant literature, in areas such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and marketing, with some modifications.

Demographics: The questionnaire will include several demographic items to help evaluate the breadth of respondent characteristics. Respondents will be asked to indicate their gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, native language, level of education, migration experience, parents' ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk, 1998; Phinney, 1990).

Level of acculturation: For Asian participants, the level of acculturation will be measured using the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Scale (SL-Asia) (Suinn, Ahuna, and Khoo, 1992), which is a 21-item measure of four content areas of acculturation: (1) language familiarity, usage, and preference; (2) ethnic identity; (3) cultural behaviours; and (4) ethnic interactions. Most items will be measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Ethnic Identity: The Multi-group Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1992) will be used to measure ethnic identity. The measurement consists of 14 items assessing three aspects of ethnic identity: positive ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging (5 items); ethnic identity achievement (7 items); and ethnic behaviours or practices (2 items). Items will be measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Independent and interdependent self-construal: Twenty-four self-reported items of Singelis' (1994) self-construal scale items will be used to measure the two types of self-construal, reflecting the emphasis on connectedness of the person to situations and relationships with others (interdependent) and the separateness and uniqueness of the individual (independent).

Self-gift Motivations: Drawing on the works of Mick (1991), items measuring self-gift motivations will be developed for four main self-gift types: (1) puritanic self-gift; (2) romantic self-gift; (3) therapeutic self-gift; and (4) holiday self-gift. Respondents will be asked whether they engage in each self-gift situation. For each situation in which they engage in self-gifts, they will be asked the degree to which they engage in self-gifting and the level of efforts they exert in the selection of self-gift. This will be measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Respondents will be asked to describe the situations in which they experience self-gifting.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this paper was to develop propositions of the ethnic minority groups' self-gift motivations. By emphasising the culture-related variables, we wanted to identify specific situations in which ethnic minority consumers give themselves gifts. We believe that this approach offers two important contributions. Firstly, it expands our knowledge of ethnic minority groups' consumption behaviour. In particular, this study will help to explain the degree to which acculturation and ethnicity influence the self-gift consumption behaviours. In terms of practical contribution, knowledge generated on the ethnic minority consumers' self-gift behaviour will help marketers to accommodate their needs and wants. Marketers who

are familiar with how ethnic minority consumer groups engage in self-gifts may design advertising messages or provide promotional campaigns that could more effectively tap into what motivates them to engage in various self-gift behaviours and how these consumer reach their purchase decisions, and how they could yield more satisfying self-gift outcomes (Mick and DeMoss, 1992).

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