

A Study on the Influence of Cultural Differences on Purchase Intentions of Chinese and Japanese Consumers: Centered on Chinese Face Culture and Japanese Shame Culture

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Abstract: This study primarily employs the theoretical framework of “self-concept” from consumer psychology and behavior research to systematically explore the differential impacts on purchase intentions between Chinese and Japanese consumers through literature analysis, case studies, and comparative research methods. The findings reveal that “face culture”, driven by luxury consumption and conspicuous consumption, significantly influences Chinese consumers’ purchase intentions. To enhance social status and gain recognition, Chinese consumers often align their self-concept with product images by purchasing high-end brands. In contrast, Japanese consumers are deeply influenced by “shame culture”, exhibiting stable and strong purchase intentions in areas such as personal image management and cosmetics consumption. Driven by group orientation and collectivist values, Japanese consumers are more prone to conformist consumption tendencies. Theoretically, this study deepens the understanding of the cultural dimensions of purchase intentions among Chinese and Japanese consumers, while also providing new perspectives and methodological insights for cross-cultural consumer behavior research.

Keywords: Chinese face culture; Japanese shame culture; Self-concept; Purchase intention

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1. Introduction

Culture influences consumers’ ways of thinking, aesthetic preferences, value judgments, and needs for social recognition in a subtle yet profound manner, shaping their perception of needs, brand perception, the formation of purchase intentions, and the final decision-making process.

In the process of making purchasing decisions, consumers’ symbolic aspirations, purchase intentions, and preferences are influenced by various factors, including their cultural background and societal values. The consumption behavior of Chinese consumers is driven by face culture, exhibiting distinct individualized

and symbolic characteristics. Specifically, they prefer lively and festive atmospheres in consumption settings, favor visually striking designs in product selection, and are drawn to luxury goods, limited-edition items, and exquisitely packaged gifts—categories that signify social status. This consumption tendency reflects the psychological need of Chinese consumers to gain social recognition and express self-worth through commodity consumption.

In contrast, the consumption behavior of Japanese consumers exhibits markedly different characteristics. Deeply influenced by shame culture and collectivist values, their consumption orientation is closely tied to societal norms of etiquette and group consciousness, manifesting in reserved and restrained consumption tendencies. In product selection, they prioritize practicality and minimalist design. They place great emphasis on personal appearance, showing a preference for lightweight, breathable cosmetics that create a natural look. In consumption decisions related to clothing and home goods, their choices of colors and designs often reflect a clear conformity tendency, closely linked to societal normative pressures and the need for group acceptance.

2. Chinese face culture

As early as the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the concept of “face” was embedded in the “ritual” culture of Confucianism founded by Confucius^[1]. Confucian culture emphasizes the importance of “face” (lian), which refers to the self as perceived by others and the significance of maintaining one’s desired status in the eyes of others^[2]. Lin Yutang, in his book *My Country and My People*, noted that face is “abstract and elusive, yet it serves as the most delicate standard for regulating social interactions among the Chinese”^[3]. Hu Hsien-chin proposed that face possesses social attributes, such as “making a public appearance,” and argued that face represents an individual’s social status or reputation^[4]. Building on Hu’s work, Ambrose King expanded the concept of “face” from the perspective of moral standards, categorizing it into “social face” and “moral face”^[4]. In Chinese culture, “face” emphasizes the recognition and respect an individual receives from others, the public, and society^[5].

The “self-concept” theory in consumer psychology and behavior research refers to the totality of individuals’ thoughts and feelings about themselves, which are formed and developed through the integration of self-perception, others’ evaluations, and societal assessments^[6]. Self-concept reflects how individuals view themselves and position themselves within society; it explains how consumers express themselves, shape their identities, and achieve self-worth through the purchase and use of products. According to the self-image congruence model within the “self-concept” theory, products serve as significant carriers of user identity, and individuals tend to choose products whose attributes align with certain aspects of their self-concept^[7]. This choice behavior reflects the intrinsic motivation of individuals to express and reinforce their self-image through consumption. Behaviorists use the term “symbolic consumption” to describe the act of purchasing and consuming products for the purpose of social and self-expression, which is defined as the communication of social and personal identity^[8].

The purchase intentions of Chinese consumers are deeply influenced by the psychological effects of “self-concept” theory and the identity-signaling nature of “face culture.” Consumers express and reinforce their self-identity through purchasing behavior, focusing not only on the functional attributes of products but also on their symbolic meaning and social value. Luxury consumption serves as a typical example, where consumers establish and display their social identity by purchasing high-end brands, aligning with the “ideal self” and “social self” (how consumers believe others perceive them) within the framework of “self-concept”

theory. The “self-concept” theory posits that consumers possess multiple self-images: the actual self, ideal self, social self, extended self, digital self, and looking-glass self, among others. Sometimes, consumers choose products because they align with the “actual self,” while at other times, they select products that help them achieve the standards of the “ideal self” or “social self.” Chinese consumers’ preference for luxury goods is a quintessential manifestation of this psychology. Individuals often engage in impression management, striving to “manage” how others perceive them, and thus deliberately select products that make them appear more distinguished^[9]. Consumers may continually adjust their behavior to match how they wish to be perceived by others in different social contexts (ideal self, social self). Sirgy revealed that the ideal self and social self determine an individual’s preference for conspicuous products^[10].

For instance, many Chinese individuals, when traveling, dining, or visiting social media hotspots for photos, often use beauty cameras or photo-editing tools to enhance their images before sharing them on various social platforms. Similarly, in live streams or short video production, video-enhancing features are frequently employed to meticulously adjust visual effects, presenting a more flawless image. These practices represent a unique fusion of China’s face culture and the “digital self” within the self-concept framework. In cyberspace, traditional face culture finds new expression as individuals utilize digital tools for image management, elevating face maintenance to new heights. Chinese consumers exhibit a strong desire and demand for beauty-enhancing and photo-editing apps, not only because these tools enhance their appearance but also because they fulfill the need for digital face maintenance.

Furthermore, when purchasing luxury or high-end products, Chinese consumers are often driven by interpersonal relationships and face culture, seeking recognition and respect from others to elevate their social status and image^[11]. The evaluations and labels assigned by others are regarded as critical measures of an individual’s social standing, identity, and worth.

The China Luxury Market Insights Report (2024 Edition), jointly released by Tencent Marketing Insight (TMI) and Boston Consulting Group (BCG), provides an in-depth analysis of the evolving behaviors and preferences of Chinese consumers in luxury consumption, as well as new trends in domestic and overseas shopping mobility^[12]. The report reveals the current state and development trajectory of the Chinese luxury market. It indicates that Chinese consumers contribute a stable 20%–25% to the global luxury market. The Chinese market exhibits remarkable vitality and growth potential. Although the growth rate of luxury consumption in China is at the global median level, its vast consumer base and continuously increasing purchasing power make it a key driver of the global luxury market. **Figure 1** below is sourced from this report.

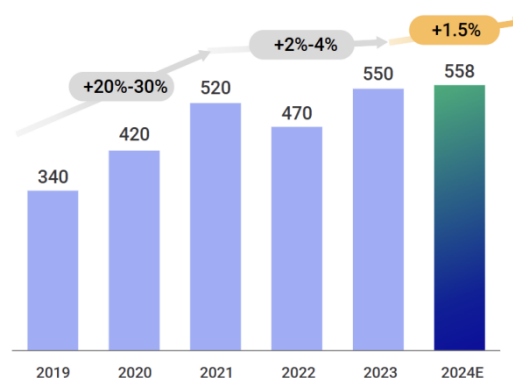


Figure 1. Mainland China’s luxury spending is projected to grow by 4% in 2024, with its share of the global luxury market holding steady at 20%-25% in the past five years

Notably, in recent years, the number of second-hand luxury consignment stores in China has increased significantly, primarily driven by the rapid development of the second-hand luxury market. According to the China report of PwC's 2023 Global Consumer Insights Survey, Chinese consumers' demand for luxury goods remains strong. The Analysis of Development Status and the Report of Investment Prospects of China's Second-Hand Luxury Industry (2025–2032) by Guanyan Research Report Network reveals that the market size of China's second-hand luxury industry reached 26.031 billion yuan in 2023, representing a year-on-year increase of 14% ^[13]. In the first half of 2024, the number of second-hand luxury enterprises in China had already exceeded 9,000. This demonstrates a significant rise in Chinese consumers' acceptance of and demand for second-hand luxury goods, reflecting not only a shift in consumption intentions and attitudes but also the market's pursuit of cost-effectiveness and sustainable consumption models.

In contrast, Japanese consumers place greater emphasis on brand stories and spiritual connotations when it comes to luxury consumption. They tend to choose products that convey brand culture and values rather than merely pursuing material value ^[14]. This shift in consumption attitudes is closely related to Japan's economic and social context. Since the collapse of Japan's economic bubble in the early 1990s, a trend of "de-luxurification" has gradually emerged in Japanese society. Consumers have become more rational and pragmatic, less willing to pay premiums for luxury brands, and more focused on the performance and quality of products themselves. Fewer Japanese individuals now seek to express themselves through ostentatious luxury brands ^[15].

Chinese face culture is not only reflected in the pursuit of luxury goods but also finds new interpretation and extension in personalized customization services. Driven by the culture of face, personalized customization has become a new way to showcase personal identity, taste, and social status. According to the China report of PwC's "2023 Global Consumer Insights Survey", Chinese consumers are more willing to embrace new consumption concepts, such as paying varying degrees of premiums for made-to-order or customized products ^[16]. On July 10, 2024, Mintel released the "2024 Chinese Consumer" report, suggesting that brands need to provide personalized and creative services to meet consumers' desire for emotional value beyond price from offline experiences ^[17]. The report of "Transformation of Chinese Consumers: Driving the New Normal with Precision Strategies", released by AlixPartners in January 2025, indicates that the consumption priorities and behaviors of Chinese consumers are undergoing significant changes in 2025, with strategies like customization remaining a favored channel among consumers ^[18]. The trend of personalized customization consumption among Chinese consumers is becoming increasingly prominent, closely related to the "self-image congruence model" of the "self-concept" theory and the growing need for consumer self-expression.

In China, luxury consumption has long been regarded as a dual symbol of personal taste and social status, with consumers' purchasing behaviors deeply influenced by social environments and collective ideologies. However, as global climate change and environmental issues become increasingly severe, green consumption and environmental awareness are gradually emerging as mainstream values, reshaping Chinese consumers' perspectives on luxury consumption. A growing number of consumers are beginning to pay attention to the environmental practices and sustainability commitments of luxury brands. From the perspective of social psychology, this shift in consumer behavior aligns closely with the "social self" dimension of the "self-concept" theory. When consumers perceive that their social groups generally advocate for environmental values, they often adjust their consumption choices to align with these group values. Nowadays, many consumers prioritize energy-efficient products when purchasing home appliances or prefer using biodegradable packaging, reflecting a shift in consumption intentions to fulfill psychological needs for

group belonging and social recognition.

In recent years, Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions have evolved significantly compared to previous years, where impulsive and trend-following consumption, such as snapping up toilet covers and rice cookers during trips to Japan, was prevalent. Beyond their preferences for luxury goods, personalized customization, and green products, Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions are increasingly shifting toward domestic and nostalgic products. This transformation reflects an upgrade in Chinese consumers' values. With technological innovation and cultural empowerment by domestic brands, an increasing number of Chinese consumers are supporting local products, significantly enhancing their sense of cultural identity and pride. According to the "2024 China New Domestic Products Market Development and Consumer Behavior Survey Data" released by iiMedia Research, over 64.54% of consumers purchase domestic products through e-commerce platforms, while 57.48% choose to shop at offline physical stores^[19]. This demonstrates that domestic brands have successfully integrated into the daily lives of Chinese consumers. Furthermore, the sustained popularity of nostalgic products reflects a new trend in consumer purchasing intentions. Nostalgia emphasizes the emotional connection between the present self and the past self, successfully evoking consumers' childhood memories and emotional resonance. This trend not only reflects the diversified development of the consumer market but also reveals an upgrade in Chinese consumers' emotional needs and cultural identity.

3. Japanese shame culture

The concept of "shame culture" originates from the description of Japanese culture by American anthropologist Ruth Benedict in her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Based on cultural typology, the author first proposed the idea that Japanese culture is a "shame culture"^[20]. The ideological roots of shame culture can be traced back to the Confucian cultural tradition, which emphasizes that individual behavior should conform to social norms and avoid causing trouble or negative evaluations from others. This culture shapes individuals' self-perception through social norms and external evaluations, thereby influencing their behavioral patterns. This characteristic of shame culture resonates with the "self-concept" theory in consumer psychology and behavior research. The self-concept theory provides an important theoretical foundation for analyzing the psychological mechanisms of shame culture. This section, combining the characteristics of Japanese shame culture and relying on the self-concept theory, explores the impact of shame culture on Japanese consumers' purchasing intentions from two dimensions: image consciousness and collective consciousness.

3.1. Image consciousness

Japanese shame culture is characterized by a heightened sensitivity to others' evaluations and opinions, making individuals easily influenced or dominated by their surroundings and social environment^[21]. It emphasizes the importance of external constraints and social evaluations, shaping Japanese behavior patterns, ways of thinking, and modes of social interaction. This culture has also profoundly influenced personal image and etiquette in Japan.

In Japan, wearing makeup is regarded as a basic etiquette or social norm. Not wearing makeup may be perceived as impolite or disrespectful to others or the occasion. Makeup has become a means of personal expression and self-enhancement. Japanese shame culture and the emphasis on personal image have driven the prosperity of Japan's cosmetics market. Japanese women generally wear makeup; in recent years, Japanese men have also gradually begun to pay attention to skincare and light makeup, leading to

the emergence of skincare and cosmetic products specifically targeted at men. From the perspective of consumer psychology, Japanese women commonly view makeup as an indispensable part of daily life. This phenomenon aligns with the “multiple selves” (multiple dimensions of self-perception) within the framework of self-concept theory: they construct their “ideal self” through makeup, using it as an important manifestation of the “extended self,” while also reflecting the psychological concept of the “looking-glass self.” The acceptance of cosmetics among Japanese men is significantly increasing, particularly among younger demographics. Especially among young men living in metropolitan areas, there is a growing emphasis on personal image and fashion sense. They are not only willing to try new products and trends but also view the use of cosmetics as an important means of self-expression and enhancing their quality of life.

The Japanese cosmetics industry has long been globally renowned for its high quality and innovation. According to data analysis from the “2024 Research Report of Japan Cosmetics Industry Status and Development Trend” by Bizwit Research & Consulting, the global market size of Japanese cosmetics reached RMB 205.895 billion in 2023, with the Chinese market accounting for RMB 38.049 billion [22]. The report predicts that the global market size of Japanese cosmetics will reach RMB 273.326 billion by 2029, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.75% during the forecast period. This indicates that the Japanese cosmetics industry maintains strong growth momentum in the global market, particularly showing significant development potential in the Chinese market.

According to the “2024 Overseas Market White Paper” released by Magic Mirror Insights in October 2024, Japan is one of the largest cosmetics and personal care markets globally, with an estimated market size of USD 32.05 billion in 2024 [23]. Japan’s offline retail sector, including drugstores and multi-brand stores, is highly developed, offering diverse product categories at low prices, while online growth has also stabilized. As shown in **Figure 2** of the “2022 Pan-Asia Cross-Border Industry Report,” based on an analysis of the Japanese market, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of e-commerce in beauty and personal care from 2020 to 2025 is expected to reach 10%, second only to food and beverages. According to the “2024 Japan Beauty Market Insights Report” by Big Data Cross-Border, the market size is projected to reach USD 36.93 billion by 2029, with a CAGR of 2.87%.

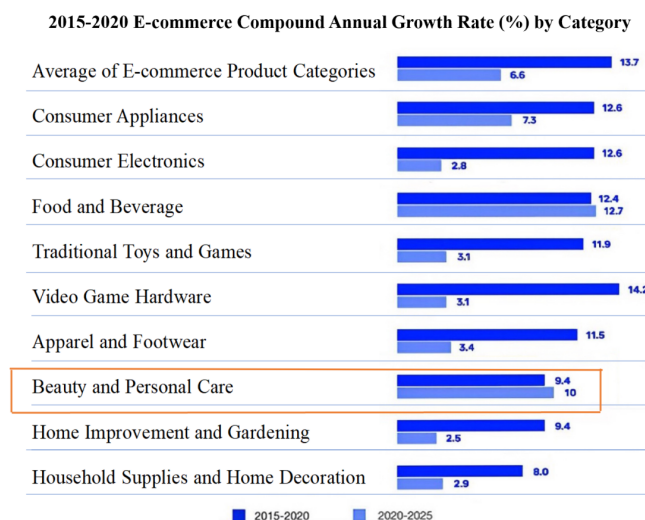


Figure 2. 2015–2022 E-commerce compound annual growth rate (%) by category (2022 Pan-Asia Cross-Border Industry Report)

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that Japanese consumers' demand for cosmetics remains robust, with purchasing intentions showing steady growth. This phenomenon not only reflects the significant role of cosmetics in the daily lives of Japanese people but also deeply reveals the profound impact of makeup behavior on individual self-perception and identity construction. Through makeup, consumers can express their ideal self, extend their self-image, and create personalized appearances, using it as an important medium for self-definition and social recognition. The combination of this consumption trend and psychological needs has further driven the diversified development and innovative upgrading of the Japanese cosmetics market. Sociologists, when studying the relationship between thought and behavior, pay particular attention to the theory of "embodied cognition." This theory posits that "changes in bodily states can influence mental states" [24]. Makeup behavior itself can be regarded as a form of "embodied metaphor", which affects an individual's internal psychological state and cognitive patterns by altering external physical features. After applying makeup, individuals often perceive themselves as renewed, thereby gaining a fresh cognitive experience psychologically.

Under the profound influence of Japanese shame culture, individuals meticulously refine their external appearance to meet societal expectations. Makeup not only helps avoid the potential shame associated with inappropriate appearances but also transcends mere aesthetic enhancement. It serves as a crucial component of social etiquette and an essential means of self-presentation. According to the 2024 Japan Beauty Market Insights Report released by Big Data Cross-Border, in recent years, Japanese consumers' preferences for makeup have gradually shifted from pursuing a flawless and perfect look to a more natural and authentic appearance. This trend has led to increased attention on base makeup products that can create a light and translucent finish, such as cushion compacts, primers, and thin-textured color cosmetics [25]. This trend has increased the popularity of base makeup products that create lightweight and translucent finishes, such as cushion compacts, primers, and sheer cosmetics. This shift in consumer preferences has not only driven the sustained prosperity of the Japanese cosmetics market but also accelerated rapid advancements in product innovation and technological upgrades. Examples include multifunctional makeup sets and portable makeup tools. Some successful products have gained market recognition by fulfilling consumers' fantasies of their ideal selves. For instance, Shiseido launched "Shiseido Virtual Makeup" as early as 2008, the first smartphone-based virtual makeup try-on application. Additionally, the Japanese market has adopted the "Makeup Simulation" app introduced by the fashion magazine *Vogue*. This app utilizes virtual try-on technology, allowing consumers to visualize the effects of using specific cosmetic products, thereby enhancing the shopping experience and satisfying their pursuit of ideal makeup looks [26]. These developments highlight the significant progress Japan has made in virtual makeup and digital experiences.

Based on the above cultural and theoretical analysis, case studies, and data analysis, and in reference to the "Antom China Beauty Cross-Border Insights" report released by E-Commerce Research Institute in March 2024, this study summarizes the core characteristics of consumer purchasing intentions and the development trends in the Japanese cosmetics market as follows [27].

3.1.1. Significant trend toward digital consumption

Social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc.) have become the primary channels for Japanese young consumers, particularly Generation Z, to access beauty and makeup information.

3.1.2. Accelerated integration of cross-cultural aesthetics

The penetration of Chinese-style makeup and domestic Chinese cosmetics brands in the Japanese market has significantly increased. On social media, “rankings of Chinese cosmetic brands recommended by beauty bloggers” have become an important reference for many Japanese women when choosing makeup products.

3.1.3. Formation of omnichannel consumption models

Traditional channels (such as the Cosme Awards and lifestyle magazines) and digital channels have created a synergistic effect. Japanese consumers’ purchasing intentions exhibit a dual characteristic of “rationality and sensibility coexisting.”

3.1.4. Upgraded product safety standards

Japanese consumers place great emphasis on the quality and safety of cosmetics when making purchases, increasingly favoring products with natural ingredients, low irritability, and high-quality technology.

3.1.5. Personalized needs driving market segmentation

As market segmentation continues to deepen, Japanese consumers’ purchasing intentions for cosmetics are gradually trending toward specialization, refinement, and scenario-specific products. Items targeting specific needs, such as sensitive skin, post-sun repair, and emergency care for late nights, are becoming increasingly popular.

3.1.6. Prevalence of naturalist aesthetics

Japanese consumers prefer compact, portable cosmetics that are suitable for carrying and quick touch-ups. With the growing preference for lightweight, translucent natural makeup, the demand for products like cushion compacts and primers continues to rise, reflecting the current Japanese consumers’ high pursuit of a “burden-free” beauty experience.

3.2. Collective consciousness

Japanese social anthropologist Chie Nakane proposed that “in Japanese society, the latent group consciousness is deeply rooted”^[28]. Japanese society is deeply influenced by the tradition of collectivist culture, characterized by the concept of “uchi-soto” (inside-outside) consciousness. By clearly delineating the boundaries between “inside” and “outside”, the collective’s boundaries and interests are maintained. This distinction between inside and outside not only strengthens the cohesion within the group but also forms a unique mechanism of group identity, shaping the strong collectivist values of the Japanese people. Against the backdrop of Japanese shame culture and collectivist culture, interpersonal interactions in Japanese society exhibit a high degree of sensitivity and attention to detail^[29].

For example, Japanese individuals often use vague and non-committal language in communication, rarely expressing their opinions directly or refuting others outright. Individuals tend to suppress personal expression, preferring to subordinate their views to the collective opinion. There is a widespread tendency toward conformity, achieving harmony with the group through self-restraint. Personal behavior patterns are dominated by group consciousness, with individuals choosing to integrate themselves into the collective and maintaining a deep sense of belonging to their group. Another example is the most visible manifestation of identity across different groups in Japanese society: the standardized dress code, known as Japan’s

“uniform culture.” Whether corporate employees or students, the identity of their respective organizations is first and foremost displayed through standardized uniforms. Uniform attire not only reflects Japanese society’s emphasis on order and norms but also serves as an important visual symbol for distinguishing group affiliation. Dress codes are not only a concrete manifestation of “uchi-soto” consciousness but also a concentrated expression of Japanese shame culture and collective consciousness.

Japanese shame culture and collective consciousness are not only reflected in the daily behaviors of the Japanese people but also profoundly influence the purchasing intentions of Japanese consumers. In the process of brand selection and product purchases, Japanese consumers exhibit a distinct tendency toward conformity, favoring products with high public acceptance. This behavioral pattern not only reflects the high homogeneity of Japanese social culture but also deeply embodies their group-oriented psychology and conformist consumption characteristics. Specifically, when making purchasing decisions, Japanese consumers often prioritize the word-of-mouth effects within their social circles, tending to adopt usage recommendations from their surrounding groups and opting for brands with higher market shares. This consumption tendency stems from a dual psychological motivation: on one hand, it aims to avoid the risk of social evaluation that may arise from choosing niche or unconventional products; on the other hand, it seeks to gain a sense of group identity by imitating mainstream consumption behaviors.

The purchasing intentions of Japanese consumers are particularly pronounced in clothing coordination and home selection. They tend to opt for products that conform to mainstream aesthetics, feature subdued colors, and are socially recognized, thereby highlighting their sense of group belonging and pursuit of the traditional Japanese “wabi-sabi” aesthetic, which advocates simplicity, modesty, and nature. The Japanese color aesthetic exhibits unique cultural characteristics, focusing on sensory experience and aesthetic artistic conception. There is a widespread preference for achromatic colors (such as black, white, and gray) and low-saturation hues (such as beige, light camel, grayish blue, and light brown). This color preference not only reveals the Japanese pursuit of minimalist aesthetics and refined tastes but also profoundly interprets the philosophical connotations of the “wabi-sabi” aesthetic. It reflects the Japanese nation’s unique understanding of simple beauty, that is, through restrained and subdued color expression, it conveys a deep appreciation for the essence of nature, inner depth, and the marks of time. Achromatic and low-saturation colors discard strong visual impact and excessive decoration, creating a soft, tranquil, and implicit atmosphere that perfectly aligns with the core idea of “simplicity over complexity” in the “wabi-sabi” aesthetic. This application of color is not only reflected on the visual level but is also deeply integrated into the very essence of Japanese culture.

For example, the gray tiles and white walls of traditional Japanese architecture showcase the harmony between nature and architecture through their plain and unadorned colors. The sand and moss in karesansui (dry landscape) gardens create a serene and profound artistic conception through low-saturation color combinations. The plain-colored pottery used in the tea ceremony conveys a pursuit of simplicity and restraint in aesthetics.

The purchasing intentions of Japanese consumers are prominently reflected in their clothing choices, characterized by a distinct preference for subdued colors and basic styles. In Tokyo’s business districts (as opposed to fashion hubs such as Harajuku and Shibuya), the prevalence of dark suits and outerwear in achromatic and low-saturation colors illustrates the deep integration of Japanese consumer psychology and cultural aesthetics. Japanese consumers tend to minimize visual impact through simplified colors and styles,

favoring modest and restrained outerwear tones and minimalist, natural clothing materials (such as cotton and linen). This low-key and simple dressing style also fulfills the Japanese consumers’ need for group identity, further reinforcing the manifestation of collectivist values in everyday life.

In terms of home selection, Japanese consumers’ purchasing intentions are marked by a significant preference for “minimalist” design and natural materials. When purchasing home furnishings, they generally favor designs with clean lines and have a particular penchant for natural materials (such as bamboo, wood, cotton, linen, and ceramics) and muted color schemes (such as natural wood tones, beige, and light gray). Additionally, they pay close attention to storage functions and space utilization, reflecting a pursuit of simplicity, naturalness, and practicality. This not only embodies the principles of the “wabi-sabi” aesthetic—simplicity and naturalness—but also reflects their consumer mindset that emphasizes practical value and intrinsic quality. Such purchasing intentions also reveal the Japanese consumers’ conformist psychology—opting for widely accepted design styles ensures that their living environments meet societal aesthetic standards while avoiding potential social evaluation risks associated with being overly distinctive. While striving for personalized living spaces, consumers still prioritize group identity, seeking a balance between personal aesthetics and social acceptance. For instance, the Japanese brand MUJI, which also holds a significant market share in China, predominantly features natural wood tones complemented by beige and light gray, evoking a sense of naturalness, simplicity, and cleanliness. Its product designs are minimalist and streamlined, with a focus on detail and functionality, eschewing excessive decoration. The “minimalist” design, rooted in the concept of “nothingness,” is highly favored by consumers (Figure 3).

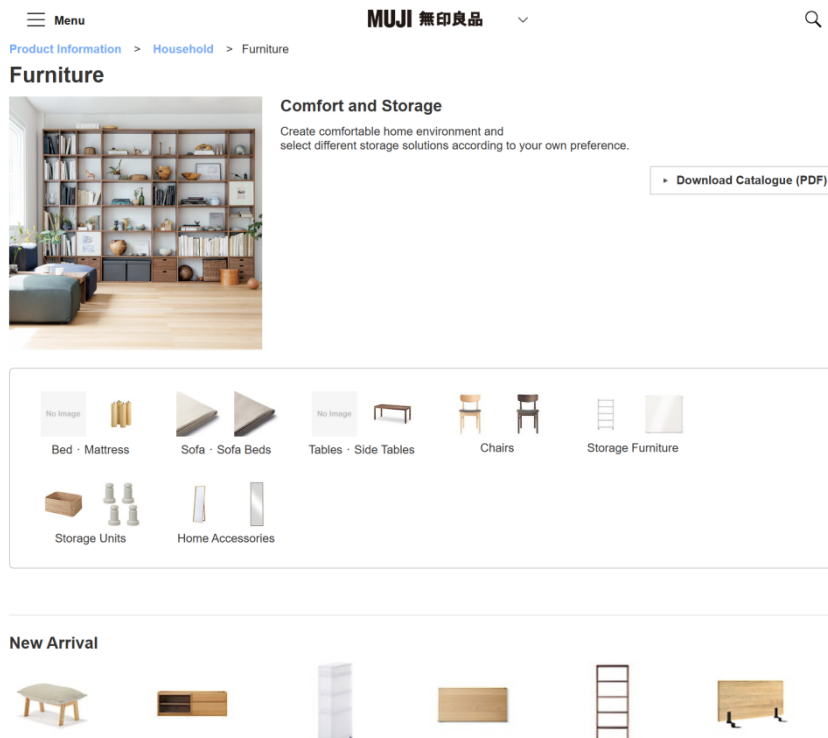


Figure 3. MUJI official website

According to research studies, including the Edelman Trust Barometer, Japanese consumers are generally averse to risk and exhibit a relatively low level of trust towards businesses. This has led them to

rely more heavily on trust mechanisms formed through group consensus. Under the interactive influence of the dimensions of image consciousness and collective consciousness, this trust mechanism further shapes the unique mechanism of purchasing intention formation among Japanese consumers.

In the dimension of image consciousness, consumers construct and maintain their ideal self-image through consumption choices that conform to societal expectations. In the dimension of collective consciousness, Japanese consumers' preferences for apparel and home products tend to favor widely popular brands, colors, and styles in the market. Such choices not only align with mainstream social aesthetics but also avoid unnecessary attention that may arise from being overly conspicuous. This conformist behavior reduces decision-making risks while fulfilling the need for group identification.

Moreover, the high emphasis placed by Japanese consumers on product quality and durability reflects their tendency, under the influence of Japanese shame culture, to avoid the economic burden and social evaluation pressure associated with frequent product replacement. This consumer psychology profoundly reflects the Japanese society's pursuit of harmony, modesty, and practical value.

4. Conclusion

The present study primarily employs the theoretical framework of "self-concept" in consumer psychology and behavior research, through a combination of literature analysis, case studies, and comparative research methods, systematically investigating the differential impacts of Chinese face culture and Japanese shame culture on the purchasing intentions of consumers in the two countries. The study reaches the following principal conclusions:

4.1. The purchasing intentions of Chinese consumers are significantly driven by face culture

Face culture emphasizes social evaluation and the recognition of others, thereby propelling Chinese consumers toward conspicuous and symbolic consumption. As a result, Chinese consumers tend to engage in luxury consumption and ostentatious purchasing behaviors to achieve consistency between self-concept and social image. High-priced goods and exquisite packaging have become important tools for demonstrating social status and obtaining social recognition. This consumer behavior not only reflects the pursuit of self-worth but also highlights the profound influence of face culture on consumption decisions. In recent years, with the continuous evolution of consumer attitudes, green and environmentally friendly products, high-quality domestic brands, and nostalgic products have gradually become important factors in the purchasing decisions of Chinese consumers, fully reflecting the diversification of consumption trends.

4.2. The purchasing intentions of Japanese consumers are predominantly influenced by shame culture

Shame culture emphasizes the importance of external evaluation and social order, and it is customary for individuals to adjust their desires and behaviors based on the evaluations of others. Consequently, Japanese consumers, who place a high value on image and etiquette, invest more in personal image building (such as cosmetic consumption). Moreover, due to the profound influence of group orientation and collective consciousness, Japanese consumers are prone to conformist consumption behaviors. They tend to choose products that conform to social norms and group approval to reduce the social pressure associated with

nonconformity. This tendency encourages Japanese consumers to focus more on restrained, practical, and normative consumption. For example, Japanese consumers are more likely to develop purchasing intentions for products with minimalist, simple, and low-key designs or colors.

4.3. Significance and implications

Through comparative analysis, this study finds that the differences in purchasing intentions between Chinese and Japanese consumers essentially stem from their unique cultural backgrounds. Specifically, Chinese consumers are more inclined to use consumption as a means of demonstrating personal value and exhibit a stronger demand for personalization. In contrast, Japanese consumers place greater emphasis on the alignment of consumption behaviors with social norms, reflecting a stronger sense of collective consciousness. This difference is not only manifested in the choice of specific products but also profoundly reflects the essential distinctions in self-perception and social identification between consumers in the two cultural contexts: Chinese consumers focus more on personal expression and self-actualization, while Japanese consumers are more inclined to maintain social harmony and group identification. This study not only deepens the understanding of the differences in purchasing intentions between Chinese and Japanese consumers from a cultural perspective but also provides new insights and methodological references for cross-cultural consumer behavior research.

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