

Motivations, Demographics & Self-Gifting Consumer Behavior in Japan and the USA

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Abstract

Self-gifting consumer behavior (SGCB) has been defined as types of self-communication, personally symbolic and context bound consumer purchase behaviors for managing a range of moods and motivations (Mick & DeMoss, 1990; Mortimer et al, 2015). A lot of qualitative work has been done on the topic in Japan and the USA where the phenomenon is quite significant. We propose using a number of validated scales to examine both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of SGCB in the US & Japan. We introduced demographic & personal cultural orientation factors to further explore the differences across individuals and geographic boundaries.

Keywords: Self-gifting, Consumer Behavior, Personal Cultural Orientations

1. Introduction

Gift giving behaviors have been extensively studied in a variety of environments. However, researchers have shown that the context and importance vary significantly across cultures (Parsons, Ballantine et al. 2011; Wang, Mohammed Abdur et al. 2007). As the socio-psychological focus shifted to more personal perspectives, this type of research identified a new area of personal consumer behavior. Self-gifting emerged as an exciting new area of research. Self-gifting consumer behavior (SGCB) has been defined as types of self-communication, personally symbolic and context bound consumer purchase behaviors for managing a range of moods and motivations (Mick and DeMoss 1990a; Mick and DeMoss 1990b; Mortimer, Bougoure et al. 2015). Specifically, self-gifting consumer behaviors occur on the occasions where you purchase a product, service or experience for yourself due to a range of motivations including a reward for accomplishments, overcoming difficulties, preparing for upcoming tough tasks/projects or just to improve your mood or to feel special (Clarke and Mortimer 2013; Mouakhar-Klouz, d'Astous et al. 2016).

Initially much of this research had a Western focus. In fact, one of the pioneering studies by Mick and DeMoss (1990) suggested that self-gifting consumer behavior would be predominant only in environments where we had an individually centered view of the self (Mick and DeMoss 1990a; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2016). However, subsequently, there have been a number of studies which have looked at SGCB in non-Western environments. Many of the first such studies used the typical national-level Hofstede value dimensions to compare consumer behaviors across cultural and geographic regions (Achim 2016; Baughn and Neupert 2003; Chen, Zhang et al. 2016; Kramer, Suri et al. 2007). Subsequently, research on consumption and identity formation eventually put the focus on how self-construal varied across cultures. This led to a large number of publications using individual-level cultural orientations to examine self-gifting consumer behaviors (Carnevale, Yucel-aybat et al. 2014; Clarke & Mortimer 2013; Niles 1998; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2016).

A major non-Western country where we have seen a surge in the self-gifting phenomenon is Japan. This has provided a great opportunity for researchers to examine factors that impact the context and intensity of self-gifting consumer behaviors (Bachnik 1992; Kanno & Suzuki 2018; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). One thing that became clear from these studies is that the self is not singular but rather a multi-dimensional construct. This highlighted the need to focus on the multiple motivations driving self-gifting consumer behaviors (Joy, Hui et al. 2006; Suzuki 2011). Given the need to understand individual level consumer behavior across cultures, two streams of research hold the promise of shedding light on SGCB in both Western and non-Western environments. One perspective uses personal cultural orientations measures to highlight the behavioral differences across environments. The other examines a set of self-gifting motivations to discern cross-border differences in behaviors (Cardona, Sun et al. 2017; Duncan, Ornaghi et al. 2013; Mortimer, Bougoure et al. 2015; Mouakhar-Klouz, d'Astous et al. 2016).

This paper will use validated measures of personal cultural orientations and self-gifting motivations to compare self-gifting consumer behaviors in Japan and the USA. Given that one is clearly a dominant individualistic country and the other a more collectivistic one, the goal is to clarify to what extent motivations and behavioral patterns vary. We will also include demographic variables to compare their differing impacts depending on the country. Statistical techniques such as linear regression will be used to evaluate a number of research hypotheses.

2. Literature Review

There are a variety of research areas which have directly or indirectly led to the present cross-border studies on self-gifting consumer behavior (SGCB). In this section, we will review 5 main literature streams and evaluate their importance in developing the current approach to SGCB research. The five areas are:

1. National level Cross-Culture Research
2. Individual Level Cross-Culture Research
3. Personal Cultural Orientations
4. General Gifting & Self-Gifting Behaviors
5. Self-Gifting Conceptualization and Motivations

Most of the concepts used in national level cross-culture research are directly linked to the work of Hofstede and his six cultural value dimensions. These studies attempt to show how national cultural value dimensions shape institutional and business practices in different environments (Quintal, Lee et al. 2010; Sigal & Herstein 2010; Szymura-Tyc & Kucia 2016; Wennekers, Thurik et al. 2007). The areas that this flexible framework have been used to investigate include cross-border differences in corruption, entrepreneurship, human resource management, mass customization, ethics, consumer tastes, communication strategies, firm internationalization, organizational identity and even brand preferences (Kramer, Suri et al. 2007; Lo, Waters et al. 2017; Park 2018; Park 2016; Pinillos & Reyes 2011). Three of the cultural value dimensions which were most often used to compare cross-border differences were individualism, collectivism and uncertain avoidance (Chen, Zhang et al. 2016; de Bellis, Hildebrand et al. 2015; Pinillos & Reyes 2011; Quintal, Lee et al. 2010). The general assumption in most of these studies was that cultural values were consistent within a particular region and thus differences were due to the impact of cross-cultural factors.

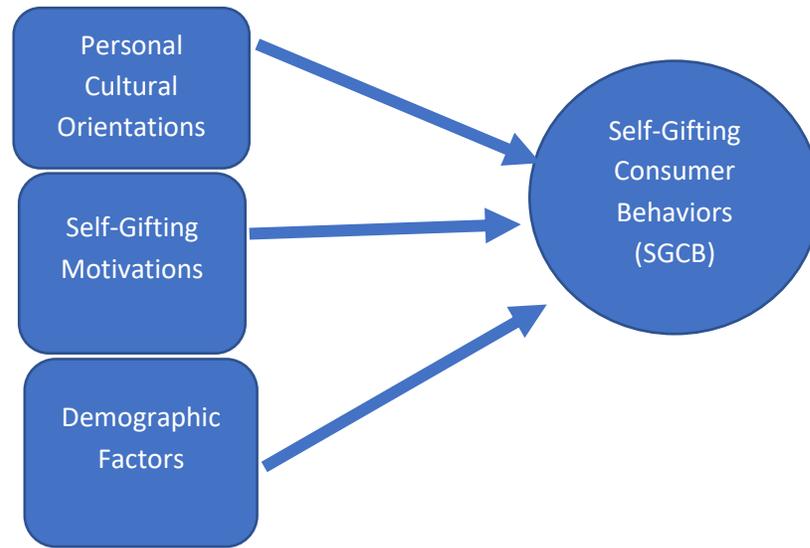
In the second research area, many studies started to acknowledge within-region variations and pushed for more individual-level measure of cultural values (Akoto, Hough et al. 2014; Alam, Mohd et al. 2015; Baker and Carson 2011; Frost, Goode et al. 2010). This realization opened the possibility of using individual cultural values to evaluate varying institutional, social and cultural behavior within borders. König, Steinmetz et al (2007) argued for scales measuring cultural orientations at the individual level. Others also adopted this approach and Frost, Goode et al (2010) explored whether collectivistic and individualistic users exhibited different e-commerce loyalty and purchase intentions. This application of personal level orientations was used to examine areas such as academic preferences, entrepreneurship behaviors, shopping motivations, brand loyalty, consumer ethnocentrism, and knowledge sharing behaviors (König, Steinmetz et al. 2007; Ryu & Fortenberry 2017; Yoo 2009; Yoo and Donthu 2005; Yu 2014). Nevertheless, most of these studies were, for the most part, a minor reworking of some or all of Hofstede's six cultural value dimensions.

In the third research stream we see a sharper focus on psychological self-construal and social identity as a way of highlighting differences within and across contexts and environments (Gould 1997; Lewis & Moital 2016; Ramamoorthy & Flood 2004). There were many articles on personal social characteristics such *independent and interdependent* social identities. The goal of many researchers here was on using variables that captured both social and psychological factors that made it easier to compare individuals within and across national boundaries (Jain, Roy et al. 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen, Finne et al. 2014). Duncan, Ornaghi et al (2013) investigated the role of self-construal in explaining psychological wellbeing in two European countries. Kumar, Fairhurst et al (2013) investigated the role of personal cultural orientation on ethnocentric tendencies of Indian consumers. Cardonna, Sun et al (2017) looked at the impact of personal cultural orientation on destination brand equity. There was even a combination of cultural intelligence with personal cultural orientation to look at the subjective success of self-employment (Mabunda, Fred et al, 2019). Across the numerous studies, many conceptual models were presented but relatively few rigorously validated measures were put forward (Cardona, Sun et al. 2017; Kumar, Fairhurst et al. 2013; Martin Mabunda, Julius Fred et al. 2019). What remained clear was that any personal cultural orientation measures needed to account for both social and psychological components in order to be comparable within and across national boundaries.

The fourth research area showed the general importance of gift giving in various cultures and lay the groundwork for the new emphasis on the self-gifting phenomenon. It became clear that gift-giving was an important social activity in most parts of the world. Gift giving theory evolved around the context and significance tied to the giving and receiving of physical goods. However, the socio-cultural contexts and level of formality varied widely (Clarke 2006; Parsons, Ballantine et al. 2011; Wang, Mohammed Abdur et al. 2007). More recent research on gift giving has moved beyond the focus on products and started to look at services and experiences as gifts (Clarke 2008; Clarke 2006). The psychological benefits to both the giver and recipient have also been showcased in a number of studies (Thomsen & Zaichkowsky 2015; Wang, Mohammed Abdur et al. 2007). As the focus on the psychological aspects of gifting increased, researchers gravitated toward the growing phenomenon of self-gifting (Kauppinen-Räsänen, Finne et al. 2014; Mittal, Chawla et al. 2016; Mouakhar-Klouz, d'Astous et al. 2016). Mick and DeMoss (1990) conceptualized self-gifting as a type of symbolic consumer behavior where a range of personal motivations drive the acquisition of products, services or experiences. Many researches followed by focusing on the antecedents and consequents of self-gifting behaviors. The therapeutic, reward, compensation and indulgences motives were frequently highlighted (Park 2018; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé et al. 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2012; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2016). Quite often self-gifting was explored as a type of mood self-regulating mechanism that varied across contexts and environments. This approach reflected the view of the self as a multidimensional construct and made it a good fit for examining personal consumer behaviors within and across national boundaries.

The fifth research stream is the most current and mainly explores the conceptualization of the concept across borders as well as how a range of SGCB motivations vary depending on contexts and view of self. Initially there was the real question of whether or not the self-gifting concept was mainly a Western or universal one. Some believed that SGCB would only be dominant in individualistic environments and that in collectivistic environments the practice would be negatively viewed (Mick & DeMoss 1990a; Mick & DeMoss 1990b; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2012). However, research in East Asia and other non-Western locations showed that self-gifting was a widespread phenomenon (Joy, Hui et al. 2006; Kanno & Suzuki 2018; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). Not only did these other studies show that SGCB was moderated by self-construal (self-definition) but that both positive and negative contexts (moods) can drive self-gifting motivations. This self-regulatory dimension also linked SGCB to impulsive and compulsive consumption activities (Mittal, Chawla et al. 2016; Mouakhar-Klouz, d'Astous et al. 2016). What was truly revealing, however, was that in many different environments self-construal & SGCB had a personal and social dimension. Some refer to intrinsic versus extrinsic motivational contexts and others contrast personal and social motivations in the examination of SGCB. It is clear that independent and interdependent self-construal could both impact self-gifting behaviors (Park 2018; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé et al. 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2016). Given an extensive review of the literature, the figure below is a visual representation of how we see the various contexts impacting self-gifting consumer behaviors.

Figure 1: The Dynamics of Self-Gifting Consumer Behaviors



3. Theory, Research Context and Research Propositions

The context for most of the research on SGCB has generally been the motivational antecedents as well as the situational contexts and areas of consumption. Demographics has often been in the background for many of the studies. From the outset, the purchasing of jewelry and cosmetics as well as other glamour factors provided the context for the self-gifting behaviors of women. In addition to gender, income was shown to play an important role in luxury self-gifting purchases (Jain, Roy et al. 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé et al. 2015). A lot of research in Japan has centered around the central role that women play in self-gifting consumer behavior (Bachnik 1992; Joy, Hui et al. 2006; Kanno & Suzuki 2018; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). In this paper, we will include demographic factors such as gender, income, and marital status as control variables. Our main concern will be the role of personal cultural orientations and self-gifting motivations.

3.1 Personal Cultural Orientations (PCOs)

Personal cultural orientation scales are a more dynamic reconceptualization of national cultural values often used by Hofstede and others. Personal cultural orientations consist of shared cultural values and norms, as well as personal beliefs based on unique individual experiences. In effect, these self-construals represent a combination of thoughts, feelings and actions that reflect one's personal and social identity (Singlelis, 1994). Although there are theoretical reasons to expect a conceptual link between national level and individual level cultural values, recent PCO scales are more rooted in personal and social self-related factors. They are also not bipolar but rather multi-dimensional constructs (Cardona, Sun et al. 2017; Duncan, Ornaghi et al. 2013; Kumar, Fairhurst et al. 2013). PCOs start with the assumption that the self is a multi-dimensional construct and that individual level variables should capture the personal and social variations within and across cultures (Martin Mabunda, Julius Fred et al. 2019; Mortimer, Bougoure et al. 2015). Since many nations are made up of range of ethnic and multi-cultural groups, national level measures would not be an accurate picture of the richness of a particular national environment. Nevertheless, we still expect some level of influence from national cultural trends. The PCOs to be considered in this paper are independence, interdependence, risk aversion, & emotional control. Self-efficacy was added an important self-construal factor present in many research streams (Ryu and Fortenberry 2017; Sharma 2010; Sharma, Wu et al. 2016). Based on our discussions to this point, we would like to posit some research hypotheses related to personal cultural orientations.

Research Hypothesis 1: Both independent and interdependent individuals will have a positive view of self-gifting consumer behavior.

Research Hypothesis 2: In dominant individualistic environments, independent individuals will have a stronger positive view of SGCB while in dominant collectivist areas, interdependent individuals will have a more positive view of SGCB.

Research Hypothesis 3: Female individuals will have a more positive view of SGCB in both dominant individualistic and collectivist environments.

Research Hypothesis 4: Given that luxury items have an important social dimension, interdependent individuals will more likely prefer acquiring luxury items as self-gifts.

3.2 Self-Gifting Motivations (SGMs)

A lot of the work on self-gifting motivations can be traced back to research on moods, consumption behavior and identity formation. Social identity theory has also showed how motivations related to social categories, groups, and contexts can be incorporated into a sense of self (Gould 1997; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). As consumption patterns became more self-centered, we saw a boost in self-gifting activities and related research streams. There resulted a general agreement that consumers have different motivations for consuming products, services and experiences. Some of this consumption can support one's image of oneself, some to respond to how one wishes to be perceived by others and some can be the result of a need to satisfy or regulate one's moods (Mortimer, Bougoure et al. 2015; Mouakhar-Klouz, d'Astous et al. 2016). Overall, self-gifting motivations cover a range of contexts and there is an expectation that these motivations have a different impact on consumption behavior depending on the dominant cultural environment and personal cultural orientation. The SGMs to be evaluated in this paper are linked to reward, disappointment, celebration, and therapeutic factors. One key assumption is that both positive and negative mood factors can stimulate self-gifting consumer behaviors. Some studies have shown that positive and negative motivational factors result in different types of consumption patterns (Carnevale, Yucel-aybat et al. 2014; Gould 1997; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar 2016). Consequently, in this comparison of SGCB in Japan and the USA, we do expect a divergence in certain consumption patterns.

Research Hypothesis #5: There will be a different pattern for the impact of positive and negative self-gifting motivations in the USA and Japan.

Research Hypothesis #6: Across the product, service and experience categories, both positive and negative self-gifting motivations will have an impact on SG preferences in both countries.

4. Empirical Context & Research Methodology

The main aim of this research is to compare self-gifting consumer behavior in dominant collectivistic (Japan) and individualistic (USA) environments. We will also use individual-level personal cultural orientation scales and self-gifting motivational factors clarify variations within and across national boundaries. Demographic factors such as gender, income and marital status will be included as controls. Many researchers initially expected that self-gifting would be viewed negatively in collectivist countries but subsequent research has proved to the contrary (Suzuki 2011; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). Our key concern is whether or not the individual-level self-gifting motivations and personal cultural orientations operate in the same manner in both environments. The dependent variables to be examined are 1. Positive view of self-gifting 2. Frequency of self-gifting 3. Product, service, experience preferences and 4. Luxury items preference. The independent variables will be linked to demographic factors, personal cultural orientations and self-gifting motivations.

We used targeted and snowball sampling techniques in Japan and the USA to gather responses to our specially designed survey on self-gifting consumer behavior. We collected over 400 responses in the USA and over 300 in Japan. After eliminating those with missing values, we had 439 complete responses for the USA and 273 for Japan. For *personal cultural orientations*, we used Sharma's (2010) scales which were rigorously tested for validity, reliability and cross-cultural measurement equivalence. In essence, it was a reconceptualization of Hofstede's five cultural factors into ten personal cultural orientations. In this paper, we will only be using five of them. For *self-gifting consumer behaviors (SGCB)*, we used the extensively tested and validated scales presented by Mortimer, Bougoure et al (2015). Their research built upon prior literature and through a series of studies, they produced validated multidimensional measures of SGCB. We used 4 of them in this research paper. Based on the above-mentioned variables and factors, we will use linear regression to examine our research propositions. Below is a description of the variables and scales used in our study.

Table A: Dependent Variables

Variable or Scale	Description/Composition	Cronbach Alpha
View of Self-Gifting	A two-item scale. Extent to which the respondent agreed to the statements below (1-7): 1. Self-gifting is an important activity for individuals these days. 2. Self-gifting is especially important for me	.817
Frequency of Self-Gifting	The response to how often you buy a gift for yourself: 1. Once every few years 2. Once a year 3. Once every 6 months 4. Once a month.	A variable
Preference for Products, Services, Experiences	Response to a 1-7 scale about the following statements: 1. When I give myself a gift, I usually prefer to purchase physical objects. 2. When I give myself a gift, I usually prefer to purchase services. 3. When I give myself a gift, I usually prefer to purchase special experiences.	Variables
Prefers Luxury Items	Response to a 1-7 scale about the following statement: 1. When I give myself a gift, I usually prefer high-end luxurious items or experiences.	Variable

Table B: Independent Variables: Self-Gifting Motivations

Variable or Scale	Description/Composition	Cronbach Alpha
Reward	A positive motivational factor and 4-item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7) 1. I buy gifts for myself when I achieve goals. 2. I buy things to reward myself for an achievement. 3. In order to reward myself, I would buy something special 4. I think it is rewarding to buy a gift for myself when I get a promotion.	.629
Celebration	A positive motivational factor and a 2-item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7) 1. Purchasing a gift for myself makes a special occasion more memorable. 2. I will buy things for myself as memorabilia of events in my life.	.729
Disappointment	A negative motivational factor and a 3-item scales based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7) 1. When I get sudden bad news, I buy things to make me feel better. 2. If I get unexpected criticism, I will go out buy myself something nice. 3. I feel buying a gift for myself would help me deal with a sudden or unexpected loss.	.845
Therapeutic	A positive motivational factor and a 4-item scales based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7) 1. Buying something special for myself motivates me to do more. 2. I buy gifts for myself which inspire me to work harder 3. I purchase gifts for myself to feel motivated to achieve my goals 4. I buy things for myself which make me motivated to achieve my goals.	.620

Table C: Independent Variables: Personal Cultural Orientations

Variable or Scale	Description/Composition	Cronbach Alpha
Independence	<p>Seeing oneself as unique, competitive and self-reliant. This is a 5- item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would rather depend on myself than others. 2. My personal identity, independent of others, is important to me. 3. I rely on myself most of the time, rarely on others. 4. It is important that I do my job better than others. 5. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects 	.827
Interdependence	<p>Seeing oneself as a social entity who depends on and prefers group & family activities. This is a 5- item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The well-being of my group members is important to me. 2. I feel good when I cooperate with my group members 3. It is my duty to take care of my family members whatever it takes. 4. Family members should stick together, even if they don't agree. 5. I enjoy spending time with group members. 	.821
Risk Aversion	<p>Seeing oneself as cautious and avoiding unpredictable developments. This is a 5- item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I tend to avoid talking to strangers 2. I prefer a routine way of life to an unpredictable one full of change. 3. I would not describe myself as a risk taker. 4. I do not like taking too many chances to avoid a mistake. 5. I am very cautious about how I spend my money. 	.705
Emotional Control	<p>Seeing oneself as being in command of one's emotions even in challenging situations. This is a 6- item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I do not let bad moods ruin my day. 2. I can manage distressing feelings so they don't keep me from doing things I need to do. 3. I don't get upset and frustrated when inconvenienced. 4. I am able to maintain my composure when things do not go well. 5. I maintain control when I feel threatened. 6. I have control over my emotions 	.826
Self-Efficacy	<p>Seeing oneself as being a problem solver and very capable of performing successfully even under difficult circumstances. This is a 10-item scale based on the agreement to the following statements (1-7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough 2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want. 3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. 4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. 	.927

4.1 Observations and Implications

This examination of self-gifting consumer behavior will use both the combined dataset (USA & Japan) as well as within country analyses. In some instances, we will introduce the key factors in two different stages (model 1 & 2) in order to view the differing impact of personal cultural orientations and self-gifting motivations. In regression #1 below, the first column (model 1) introduced the personal cultural orientation variables with the demographic factors as controls. We see that both individuals with independent and interdependent self-construals had a positive view of self-gifting. The other personal cultural orientation factors registered no significant impact. In terms of demographic factors, females had a significantly more positive view of self-gifting (SG). Japanese respondents as a whole also had a more positive view of SG.

In the second column (model 2), after introducing the self-gifting motivational factors, only independent self-construal showed a significant positive view of SG. We see again that female and Japanese respondents maintained a significantly more view of SG. Three of the self-gifting motivations appear to boost the respondents' positive view of SG. We see that both positive (reward & therapeutic) and negative (disappointment) motivational factors impacted the respondents' view of self-gifting.

We also examined the how the independent variables impacted the frequency of self-gifting. In the third column (model 1), independent self-construals, females and single individuals appear to engage in self-gifting more frequently. There was no significant difference between the Japanese and American respondents. In column four (model 2), once we controlled for self-gifting motivations, independent and interdependent self-construals had no significant impact. There was still no difference between Japanese and Americans in this model. However, we see that females and single respondents continued to frequently engage in SG. Interestingly only the positive self-gifting motivations (reward & therapeutic) appear to significantly impact self-gifting frequency. These results give some insights into the general impact of some of these variables self-gifting. However, separating the datasets and examining within country differences might provide clearer insights.

Table 1 Regression : View of Self-Gifting & Frequency of Self-Gifting

	View of Self-Gifting (1)	View of Self-Gifting (2)	Frequency of Self-Gifting (1)	Frequency of Self-Gifting (2)
PCOs	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Constant	3.00 (.98)	-1.30 (.93)	1.86 (.32)	1.33 (.34)
Independence	.10*** (.02)	.06** (.02)	.02* (.01)	.01 (.01)
Interdependence	.05* (.02)	.02 (.02)	.003 (.01)	.001 (.01)
Risk Aversion	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.002 (.01)	.001 (.01)
Emotional Control	.01 (.02)	.005 (.02)	-.001 (.01)	-.001 (.01)
Self-Efficacy	.03 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.003 (.01)	-.01 (.001)
Demographics				
Age	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	-.001 (.01)	-.001 (.01)
Female vs Male	1.14*** (.21)	.680** (.19)	.345*** (.07)	.27*** (.07)
Education	-.03 (.20)	-.004 (.18)	.01 (.07)	.02 (.07)
Single vs Married	.49 (.29)	.09 (.26)	.48*** (.09)	.43*** (.09)
Income	.13 (.16)	.11 (.16)	.09 (.06)	.09 (.06)
Japan vs USA	.58* (.25)	.79** (.23)	-.10 (.08)	-.14 (.09)
SG-Motivations				
Reward		.17*** (.03)		.04*** (.01)
Celebration		.04 (.04)		-.01 (.01)
Therapeutic		.06* (.02)		.02* (.01)
Disappointment		.24*** (.03)		.01 (.01)
N=	859	859	859	859
R-Square	.169	.350	.085	.126

In regression #2 below we use the same two stage approach to introduce first the personal cultural orientations and then the self-gifting motivations. However, in columns one and two, we are doing within country analyses and comparing the dynamics in the USA and Japan. We have an interesting result in that in the dominant individualistic country (USA), the independent self-construal individuals have a positive view of self-gifting (SG) while there is no significant effect for the interdependent individuals. On the other hand, in the dominant collectivist country (Japan), the interdependent self-construal individuals have a positive view of SG while the independent one do not. Females in both countries have a significantly strong impact on the view of SG. Comparing the full model (columns 3 & 4) where we include the self-gifting motivations, we still see the same pattern with independent and interdependent self-construal individuals and female respondents.

We see another interesting result when we examine the impact of self-gifting motivations. For American respondents both positive and negative self-gifting motivations boosts their view of self-gifting. However, for the Japanese respondents, we also a significant impact with the positive self-gifting motivations (reward & celebration). In both regression#1 and regression #2, we see that the full model (both PCOs & SGMs included) explained a lot more of the variation in the dependent variables. There was a significant jump in the R-squares going from a partial to the full set of variables.

Table 2: Regression: Contrasting Views of Self-Gifting in the USA & Japan

	View of Self-Gifting (USA 1)	View of Self-Gifting (Japan 1)	View of Self-Gifting (USA 2)	View of Self-Gifting (Japan 2)
PCOs	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Constant	4.48 (1.21)	.08 (2.12)	-.83 (1.14)	-3.33 (2.10)
Independence	.13*** (.03)	.05 (.04)	.07* (.03)	.002 (.04)
Interdependence	-.03 (.03)	.15*** (.04)	-.02 (.03)	.08* (.03)
Risk Aversion	.01 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.03)
Emotional Control	-.01 (.03)	.04 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	.03 (.03)
Self-Efficacy	.04 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Demographics				
Age	.001 (.001)	.01 (.03)	.001 (.001)	.01 (.03)
Female vs Male	.97*** (.27)	1.49*** (.35)	.63** (.24)	.92** (.34)
Education	-.19 (.24)	.32 (.34)	-.31 (.21)	.52 (.32)
Single vs Married	.75 (.41)	.82 (.98)	.24 (.36)	.50 (.90)
Income	.23 (.23)	.09 (.29)	.24 (.36)	.09 (.27)
SG-Motivations				
Reward			.15*** (.03)	.18*** (.05)
Celebration			-.03 (.05)	.13* (.06)
Therapeutic			.07* (.03)	.10 (.06)
Disappointment			.31*** (.04)	.09 (.06)
N=	439	273	439	273
R-Square	.155	.256	.374	.380

We have explained that in the self-gifting process, individuals will choose a product, service or experience. Instead of looking a specific example of either area, we will examine how our independent variables impact the preference for products, services or experiences in general. We will use the full set of independent variables but will continue to examine within country differences (USA & Japan). In regression #3, we see that for the personal cultural orientations, only risk aversion self-construal had an impact on the preference for physical products. It appears that individuals in both countries that wanted to avoid surprises or uncertainty would choose a physical product as a self-gift (columns 1 & 2).

Age was not significant in Japan but younger Americans clearly preferred products as self-gifts. In the USA both positive (therapeutic & disappointment) self-gifting motivations (SGMs) impacted product preference while in Japan it was only a positive SGM (therapeutic).

For service preference (columns 3 &4), a negative self-gifting motivation (disappointment) was the most impactful for both the USA and Japan. However, married individuals in Japan preferred services as self-gifts. There was no difference for American respondents between single and married individuals. One unusual result was those with lower self-efficacy scores had a significant preference for services in the USA. Examining the preference for experiences as self-gifts (columns 5 & 6), except for married individuals in Japan, we have very similar patterns of significance in both countries. Those who are less risk averse clearly prefer experiences as self-gifts. Both a positive (celebration) and a negative (disappointment) self-gifting motivation significantly impacted the preference for experience SG. In this examination of generic product, service & experience categories, the level of risk aversion and disappointment SGM were the two factors explained the outcomes the best.

Table 3 Regression: Product, Service & Experience Preferences in the USA & Japan

	Product Preference (USA)	Product Preference (Japan)	Service Preference (USA)	Service Preference (Japan)	Experience Preference (USA)	Experience Preference (Japan)
PCOs	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Constant	.935 (.681)	-.405 (1.22)	1.57 (.65)	1.57 (1.07)	.181 (.566)	.594 (.893)
Independence	-.002 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.02)
Interdependence	.01 (.02)	-.003 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Risk Aversion	.03* (.01)	.05** (.02)	-.02 (.01)	-.001 (.02)	-.04** (.01)	-.03* (.01)
Emotional Control	-.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Self-Efficacy	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02* (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Demographics						
Age	-.002* (.001)	-.003 (.02)	.001 (.001)	-.03 (.02)	.001 (.001)	-.02 (.01)
Female vs Male	.08 (.14)	.14 (.19)	-.04 (.14)	.28 (.17)	.19 (.12)	.09 (.15)
Education	.13 (.13)	.34 (.19)	.06 (.12)	.08 (.16)	.05 (.11)	.20 (.14)
Single vs Married	-.07 (.22)	.31 (.52)	.15 (.21)	-.98* (.48)	.14 (.18)	-.97* (.38)
Income	-.06 (.12)	-.15 (.16)	.14 (.11)	.04 (.14)	-.05 (.09)	.03 (.11)
SG-Motivations						
Reward	.01 (.02)	.04 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Celebration	-.07* (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.05 (.03)	.06 (.03)	.07** (.02)	.10*** (.03)
Therapeutic	.06*** (.02)	.12** (.04)	.02 (.02)	.03 (.03)	-.004 (.01)	-.05 (.03)
Disappointment	.14*** (.03)	.03 (.03)	.15*** (.02)	.20*** (.03)	.31*** (.02)	.34*** (.03)
N=	439	273	439	273	439	273
R-Square	.165	.219	.146	.322	.437	.594

5. Conclusion

This was a study of self-gifting consumer behavior (SGCB) in a collectivistic and individualistic country. The contrasting environments allowed us to verify the generalizability of a number of concepts and measures. In previous research of SGCB there were many qualitative and some quantitative studies of within-country dynamics but not as many cross-border comparisons. Many older studies also posited or assumed that non-Western collectivistic societies might view self-gifting negatively. Our study and a lot of research in Japan and the rest of East Asia has proved otherwise (Jain, Roy et al. 2015; Joy, Hui et al. 2006; Suzuki 2011; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016). This study also employed rigorously validated scales for *personal cultural orientations* (PCOs) and *self-gifting motivations* (SGMs). That the SGMs had both positive and negative motivational aspects allowed us to corroborate findings from some prior research on the topic (Mortimer, Bougoure et al. 2015; Park 2018; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé et al. 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter and Thakkar 2016). Finally, the use of statistical techniques to test and explore our research propositions helped to make this study more valuable.

The results in table 1 showed that individuals with independent and interdependent self-construals had a positive view of self-gifting; confirming our first hypothesis. Those who positive a negative view of SG for individuals with interdependent self-construals were definitely wrong. However, by examining dynamics within each country carefully, we saw that the argument was even more nuanced. It turns out that in a dominant collectivistic country like Japan, interdependent self-construal individuals were more likely to view self-gifting positively. Similarly, in a dominant individualistic country like the USA, independent self-construal individuals were more like to have a positive view of self-gifting. This is a clear confirmation of our second hypothesis. This might also point to the possibility that the self has more than just a personal focus but that there could also be social dimension which plays an important role in collectivistic societies. Other researchers in Asia have pointed out that luxury self-gifts satisfies both a personal and a social self (Jain, Roy et al. 2015; Stiehler 2016). In fact, some Japanese scholars have done a lot of qualitative working pointing out the existences of multiple selves and faces that motivate self-gifting consumer behavior in that country (Suzuki 2011; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016; Suzuki, Kanno et al. 2016).

One factor in self-gifting dynamics that operates quite strongly within and across borders appears to be gender. Table 2 made it clear that for both a positive view of self-gifting and for the frequency of self-gifting, female respondents played a consistently significant role. This confirmed our third hypothesis and many other studies have supported this impact of gender (Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé et al. 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter and Thakkar 2012).

In general, the findings related to the personal cultural orientations (PCOs) were pretty consistent. Not all PCOs played a significant role but *independent and interdependent* self-construal stood out in their impact on the positive view of self-gifting. It was not until we looked specifically at categories of self-gifting consumption (product, service, experience) that we see that risk aversion orientation can signal a preference for products or experiences. In table 3 we saw that for both Americans and Japanese, those who scored high on risk aversion tended to prefer purchasing physical products while those who were more open to risks generally preferred experiences as self-gifts. There was no significance for services. We can imagine targeted advertising campaigns taking advantage of such tendencies.

Unlike the results for personal cultural orientation factors, self-gifting motivation scales less predictable. Much of this could be due to the different patterns of self-gifting motivations (SGMs) in each country (table 2). One approach which helped provide some insight was the classification of self-gifting motivations as negative or positive. Both negative and positive SGMs boosted a positive view of self-gifting. However, for Japanese respondents, it was mainly the positive SGMs (reward & celebration) while for the Americans we saw both negative and positive SGMs boosting a positive view of self-gifting (table 2). This result supports our fifth hypothesis. Moving to a specific view of self-gifting categories in table 2 (products, services, experiences), there is a discernable pattern. For the preference for products and services, only negative self-gifting motivations (SGMs) positively impacted the dependent variable. For the preference for experiences as self-gifts on the other hand, both positive and negative SGMs had a significant impact. This could imply that experiences represent a more complex choice and consequently more susceptible to more varied self-gifting motivations across different cultural environments.

One self-gifting motivation that was significant for almost all SG categories was that of *personal disappointment*. It is interesting to note that in our regression analysis of the preference for luxury self-gifting items, *personal disappointment* was the most impactful factor. These results do not support our sixth hypothesis that both negative and positive SGM will have an impact on self-gifting preferences in both countries. More work needs to be done to verify why negative SGMs seem to be more consistently impacting consumer preferences.

This study expands on the small number of cross-cultural studies on self-gifting consumer behavior. The main contribution is its quantitative assessment of the impact of both personal cultural orientations and self-gifting motivations on the phenomenon of self-gifting in these two countries. Going forward, a more in-depth examination is needed into the impact of positive and negative self-gifting motivations. Future studies could look at specific types of products, services and experiences to verify any predictable patterns. Understanding the contrasting impact of negative and positive self-gifting motivations could be very insightful. Beyond demographic tendencies, this would allow marketers to more specifically target certain types of motivations in their campaigns in different national environments.

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