

## **A Study on the Influence of Awe on Diversification of Consumer Behavior from the Perspective of Sino-Thai Cultural Differences**

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**Abstract:** In order to understand the impact of cultural differences between China and Thailand on emotion and consumer behavior, this paper studied the impact of awe on diversified consumer behavior and the moderating effect of cultural differences between China and Thailand on the impact by the experimental method. In this paper, 280 students in Nanchang for China and Bangkok for Thailand were selected as the research object, and the students in these two places were divided into four groups: the Chinese control group, the Chinese experimental group, the Thai control group and the Thai experimental group. The research showed that awe had a significant negative impact on the diversification of consumer behavior, and awe had an impact on both Chinese and Thai consumers. However, the impact on Chinese and Thai consumers had not reached a significant difference, that was, the cultural differences between China and Thailand have no significant moderating effect on this effect. This paper could provide some empirical references for future cross-cultural researchers.

**Key words:** awe, consumer behavior diversity, cross-cultural management

**Introduction.** Awe emotion means a magic and elusive thing show up to a individual unit ,itcan not use self-knowledge to explain awe emotion, the individual unit engender complicated emotional feeling ,such as shock, humility, and resignation, along with some confusion, fear, and curiosity. For example, when the consumer sees vast grasslands, high mountains, and boundless seas will have awe emotion; and also listening the magnificent music or watch flood relief video will have the individual awe emotion. At present, most researches on awe are concentrated in the fields of theology, philosophy, religion and sociology, but there are few researches on consumer psychologyandbehavior.

Diversification of consumption behavior means consumers are facing single choice

diversity of consuming behavior refers to the number of times that consumers transit from centralized choice to choices of different products or services under a single choice, or among products, brands, consumer activities and services. When consumers have awe emotion, consumers can feel a kind of self-small, and then behave as a kind of courtesy and obedience. Are those personal characters will influence on diversification of consumption behavior? If yes, how could company use influence to reduce diversification of consumption behavior and increase the brand loyalty? This is one of the research purposes of this paper.

Thailand is known as the yellow robe Buddhist country title, more than 90% of the population believes in Buddhism. Is the Thai consumer's initiation of awe emotion different from Chinese consumers? Does awe emotion have the same impact on the diversification of consumer behavior to Thai consumers and Chinese consumers? If not, what is the difference? This is another research purpose of this paper.

This article focuses on the following questions:

(1)How do Chinese and Thai consumers start to be awed respectively? Does awe have a significant impact on the diversification of consumer behavior?

(2)Is there a significant difference in the degree of such influence between Chinese and Thai consumers? If there is difference ,try to explain the differences.

## **BACKGROUND**

An empirical study of systematic quantitative science of awe, from the perspective of prototype theory, Keltner and Haidt proposed a prototypical model of awe. In addition, they use the prototype method to analyze the core characteristics of awe and the situation factors that induce awe. The awe of archetypes had two core characteristics: the macroscopic and perceptual needs of consciousness, and the two characteristics of awe are indispensable. Only one of the features is not awe<sup>1</sup>. The prototype definition of awe for Keltner and Haidt provided theoretical guidance and research measures for subsequent empirical research on awe.

Scholar Dong Rui added some unique insights based on the research of Keltner and Haidt and introduced the measurement of awe and summed up the starting method of awe<sup>2</sup>. Scholars Ye Lan-ling and Zhou Xin-yue have redefined the essence and connotation of awe in the previous studies, and revealed the reasons for its complexity<sup>3</sup>. They also analyzed five dimensions of awe: fear, aesthetic pleasure. Feeling, admiration, moral uplifting and mystery.

The initiation of awe could be something objective (both natural and man-made), which was the most common cause of awe<sup>1,4</sup>, or artificial Things (painting, music)<sup>5</sup> could also be

commodities on the market<sup>5</sup>, or could be highly authoritative social roles such as business leaders, scientists or artists<sup>1,6</sup>.

The literature research on the study of awe and emotion behavior is rare. The main research results of the main research on the behavior of awe in consumer behavior are:Rudd et al. found that the induction of awe was more willing individuals to choose to consume spiritual products rather than physical products<sup>7</sup>, which gave people a higher level of life satisfaction<sup>7</sup>. The study by Tian and Lu<sup>8,9</sup> found that awe-inspiring help high materialists gain more happiness and higher life satisfaction,and after launching a sense of awe, they chose more experiential consumption projects instead of secularproperty<sup>10,11</sup>.

In a conclusion, though previous studies have explored many of the core variables in awe and sentiment decision-making<sup>12,13</sup>, little attention has been paid to whether consumer awe will affect the diversification of consumer behavior<sup>14,15</sup>. This paper mainly studies the influence of awe emotion on the diversification of consumer behavior and the moderating role of Chinese and Thai culture in this influence<sup>16</sup>.

Consumers would not take the irritative and risky staff,according to attachment theory<sup>17</sup>, when people were under the pressure and the pain, and they would choose the people product or things which they were familiar with to reduce the anxiety ,scary and fear from the outside irritative , So the selectiondiversity of the behavior was reducing.Then put forward the rest hypothesis :

H1: Awe has a significant negative impact on the diversity of consumer behavior.

Due to differences in language and habits, Thai culture and Chinese culture were very different. The difference in awe-inspiring emotions had different effects on the diversity of consumer behavior. Therefore, the following assumption was made:

H2: The national backgrounds of Chinese and Thai consumers play an moderating role in awe emotion onthe diversification of consumer behavior.

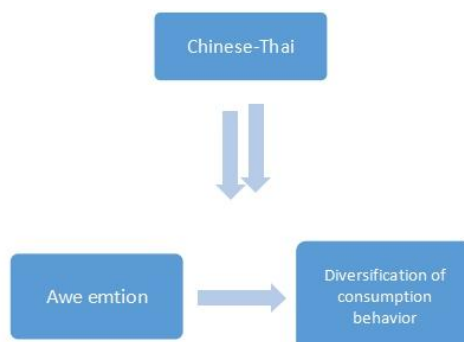


Image1: A hypothetical model of the problem

## EXPERIMENT PARTS

This article adopt experiment method to test hypothesis. In order to test the theoretical hypothesis proposed in this paper, the following two regression models were constructed:

$$Var = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Awe + \beta_2 Gender + \beta_4 Cu + \varepsilon_1$$

$$Var = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Awe + \beta_2 Gender + \beta_3 Cu + \beta_4 Awe \times Cu + \varepsilon_2$$

(1) Diversification of consumer behavior (Var). This article was using questionnaire survey to test diversification of consumption behavior. Tester were required to select 5 products of 8 different outbrands. The test subjects could choose a product mix of different brands or a product mix of the same brand, and use number 1-5 to indicate that the number of selected brands.

(2) Variables of awe. The picture about to arousing the awe emotion, according to the national culture of China and Thailand, This article was selecting the pictures about natural disasters in China and the Buddha statues in Thailand. After arousing the awe emotion, the two test groups used the 7-level Likert scale to measure.

(3) Cultural differences (Cu). This article use 1 for Chinese consumers, 0 for Thai consumers.

(4) Control variables (Gender) The article set age and gender as control variables. This article select testers age around 20-22 years old, because this range people were more easier emotional. Therefore, the age of the control variable was constant.

This article applied experiment method to test hypothesis. This experiment was hold in China and Thailand (Both the experimental group and the control group).

(1) Research in China This survey finished at Nanchang city in China. The experimental group, after three surveys, successfully activated the awe in the experimental

group for the outside world to be very quiet. A total of 61 consumer sample data groups aged 20 to 25 were collected during June 1 to 3, 2020. In the experiment of inducing awe, the questionnaire with low awe perception was invalid questionnaires. Therefore, among the collected questionnaire data, 1 invalid questionnaire was screened and 60 valid ones were selected, with an effective rate of 99% and a male-female ratio of 11:9.

A total of 60 samples of the control group were collected on June 5, 2020. Because there was no special design, the collected questionnaires were all effective, with an effective rate of 100%. The male to female ratio was 8:12. The ratio of males to females in the control group was similar to that in the experimental group.

(2) Research in Thailand This survey finished at Bangkok, Thailand. The experimental group collected 61 data samples from age 20-25 years old consumption, 60 valid questionnaires on July 28, 2019, which gender ratio was 9:12; 61 samples of control group data were collected on July 29, 2019, one was invalid (not correctly filled), 60 valid questionnaire, gender ratio 8:11.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For experiment group, as shown in Table 1, according to the data, the tester scored in the 7-level emotion scale after watching the 1 minute picture for generating the awe emotion which was target, and in the 120 valid questionnaires, the  $M=5.39$  points of the awe score. The standard deviation is 1.707 points, indicating that the tester's awe-inspiring scores are relatively similar, which proved that the tester was more successful in the target emotion initiation test, and the selected picture could induce the tester's awe. It could also be seen from Table 1 that the tester's tiny emotions and fearful emotions are also higher. On the other hand, it was also verified that the group of pictures could induce the emotional characteristics of the tester's fearful emotions.

Further independent sample t test showed that awe in the experimental group was significantly higher than that in the control group ( $M$  experimental group =5.39,  $M$  control group =2.77,  $t(239)=8.62$ ,  $P=0.000<0.01$ ), so awe manipulation was successful.

From above the data, it was concluded that the experiment on target emotion (awe emotion) was relatively successful, and it could continue to verify the diversified choice tendency of consumption behavior after activated the awe emotion of the tester.

From the table 2, it analyzed the induction of awe between men and women. in the 7-level Likert scale, the 5 points indicated that the emotion was a little strong, 6 points

indicated emotion was strong, and 7 points indicate that emotion was very strong. Therefore, the main scores were 5 points or more for men and women,. The ratio for 5 points for women with awe was about 43.5%, while the proportion of men with awe of 5 points or more was 28.7%, which shows that women were more likely to be perceived awe than men.

**Table 1 Measurement results of the emotional scale**

	N	max	min	mean	Standard deviation	var
awe	120	1	7	5.39	1.707	2.913
tiny	120	1	7	4.85	1.712	2.931
charm	120	1	5	3.47	2.142	4.588
joyful	120	1	4	2.29	1.865	3.478
magic	120	1	6	3.01	1.862	3.467
scary	120	2	7	4.90	1.546	2.391

**Table 2 Awe in Emotions \* Gender cross tabulation**

			gender		total
			male	female	
awe	1	times	2	11	13
		% in awe	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	2	times	2	2	4
		% in awe	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	3	times	7	7	14
		% in awe	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	4	times	15	20	35
		% in awe	43.8%	56.3%	100.0%
	5	times	29	44	73
		% in awe	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	6	times	26	31	57
		% in awe	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%
	7	times	28	53	81
		% in awe	35.1%	64.9%	100.0%
total		times	96	144	240
		% in awe	40%	60%	100%

Because of the previous crossover analysis, women were more likely to be perceived as awed than men. To prevent Multicollinearity problems, the correlation coefficient between the variable of Awe and the gender variable was now calculated.

It could be seen from table 3 that the correlation coefficient between gender and Awe1 is -0.1, and the associated probability sig of the bilateral test is 0.539>0.05, while gender and Awe were not significantly correlated.

**Table 3 correlation coefficients of Awe and gender in China**

		Gender	Awe
Gender	Pearson correlation	1	-0.100
	Significance (bilateral)		.539

It could be seen from table 4 that the correlation coefficient between gender and Awe was -0.288, and the associated probability sig of the bilateral test was 0.068 > 0.05, while gender was not significantly correlated with Awe.

**Table 4 correlation coefficients of awe and gender in Thailand**

		Awe	Gender
Awe	Pearson correlation		-0.288
	Significance (bilateral)		0.068

It was the analysis of the influence between the teaser's awe emotion and the teaser's consumption behavior diversity in table 5, which was the main analysis of the empirical research in this paper.

**Table 5 dependent variable: consumption behavior diversity**

model	Non-standardized coefficient		standard coefficient		t	Sig.
	B	Standard error				
constant	4.124	0.591			6.973	0.000
Awe	-0.576	0.047	-0.262		-12.25	0.000
Gender	.242	0.347	0.110		0.698	0.490
Bias	-0.589	0.84	-0.281		0.700	0.500
The cultural	-0.486	0.83	-0.386		0.588	0.610

As could be seen from table 5, the coefficient of awe was -0.576, sig=0.000 < 0.1 indicating that awe was negatively correlated with the diversification of consumption behaviors. The stronger the awe was, the less diversified the consumption behaviors would be, indicating that awe had a significantly negative impact on the diversification of consumption behaviors.

The differences in the degree of influence caused by cultural differences between the Chinese

group and the Thai group were analyzed in the experimental group that had activated awe as shown in table 6.

**Table 6 cultural differences between China and Thailand**

model	Non-standardized coefficient		standard coefficient		
	B	Standard error	A trial version	t	Sig.
constant	3.101	0.857		3.617	0.001
Gender	-0.272	0.531	-0.089	-0.512	0.612
Awe	0.109	0.156	0.144	0.697	0.491
bias	-0.322	0.46	-0.214	0.70	0.500
Culture	1.955	1.697	0.641	1.152	0.257
Awe×Culture	-0.294	0.315	-0.553	-0.931	0.358

It could be seen from table 6 that the coefficient of the interaction term awe × nationality was negative,  $t=0.931$ ,  $sig=0.358$ , indicating that awe × nationality has no significantly influence on the diversification of consumer behaviors, that was, cultural difference has no significant moderating effect on the influence of awe on the diversification of consumer behaviors.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper explored the influence of awe on consumer behavior diversification and discussed the moderating role of Chinese and Thai cultural differences in this influence, and drew the following conclusions : (1) Thai consumers were more likely to initiate awe. In the experimental group, the emotions were activated successfully after a single experiment in Thailand, and they were able to overcome external interference. But in China, it took three times to successfully activate an emotion, and the environment was demanded strictly. This might have been because there was the image of Buddha in the launch pictures. Many people in Thailand were devout Buddhists; (2) Awe emotion had a significantly negative impact on Chinese consumers, and awe emotion also had a significantly negative impact on Thai consumers. It could be seen that both Chinese and Thai consumers were affected by awe



emotion. This might be because the awe emotion make consumers want to be accommodating, and consumers would choose products with certain inertia or loyalty, thus reducing the diversification of consumer behavior. (3) Cultural had no significant moderating effect on influence for awe and consumer behavior diversification. This might be due to the geographical proximity of China and Thailand, and there were cultural differences but not obvious, so the moderating effect was not obvious.

This paper further improved the relationship between emotion and behavior by empirical research. Enterprises could use the awe of consumers to enhance the loyalty of their products according to the characteristics of awe. For example, the use of products on the packaging could lead to awe , such as towering buildings or broad oceans.

The limitations of this paper were :(1) there was no further research on other characteristics of consumers, such as education and income; (2) heteroscedasticity analysis was not carried out in the regression model; (3) only multicollinearity for gender and awe was analyzed in this paper, while other independent variables and control variables were not tested for multicollinearity, such as the multicollinearity of cultural difference and awe. (4) Brand preference was not considered in the selection of control variables .Further research in the future needed to be strengthened in these four aspects.

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