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The interactive effect of cultural self-construal and social exclusion on consumers' impression management goal pursuit

Jessie J. Wang[a,*], Ashok K. Lalwani[b]

[a] Department of Marketing, Farmer School of Business, Miami University, 800 E. High Street, Oxford, OH, United States of America
[b] Department of Marketing, Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, 1309 E. 10th St., Bloomington, IN, United States of America

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ABSTRACT

Four studies suggested that social exclusion (vs. inclusion) by ingroups leads interdependents to discard impression management goals because of a lower tendency to identify with ingroups. In contrast, independents do not change their impression management goals when socially excluded (vs. included) by ingroups. Consequently, when included (but not when excluded), interdependents (vs. independents) are willing to pay more, and are willing to expend more effort in the purchase of publicly (but not privately) consumed products. Hence, when promoting publicly consumed products, managers should strive to include interdependent consumers (e.g., via ads or promotional campaigns). Similarly, on social media (Facebook, Twitter), it is easier than ever before to determine whether consumers have been included or excluded by their friends and families at a given time. With that information, managers may be able to selectively target consumers who are likely to pay more for publicly consumed products.

1. Introduction

People often experience exclusion or rejection, such as when they are not invited to a party hosted by close friends, or when their communications with others are ignored on social media. Social exclusion has been shown to influence behavior in important and profound ways. For instance, social exclusion impairs self-regulation (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005), intensifies lethargy (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003), and makes people sad, angry, or distressed (Leary, Koch, & Hechenbleiker, 2001; Leary & Leder, 2009). Recent research also suggests that social exclusion can significantly affect consumption behavior. For example, social exclusion causes people to consume strategically for affiliation or differentiation (Mead, Baumeister, Stillman, Rawn, & Vohs, 2011; Wan, Xu, & Ding, 2013), pursue riskier but potentially more profitable financial opportunities (Duclos, Wan, & Jiang, 2012), and spend more time shopping on multiple channels (Dennis, Alamanos, Papagiannidis, & Bourlakis, 2016).

However, limited research has examined whether the effects of social exclusion vary by consumers' cultural background and values. This is surprising, given that cultures vastly differ in the importance they place on social issues. The present research attempts to fill this gap by exploring how social exclusion, defined as the perception or feeling that one's belongingness needs have been threatened (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), affects people of different cultural self-construals. Specifically, we investigate whether and how consumers with independent or interdependent self-construals differ in their impression management goal pursuit in response to social exclusion (vs. inclusion) by ingroups.

Research suggests that consumers with an interdependent self-construal emphasize harmony, belongingness, and camaraderie (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They also have a greater need to belong than do consumers with an independent self-construal (Triandis, 1995). Because social exclusion can potentially heighten affiliation needs and the desire to reconnect with others (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007; Mead et al., 2011), one possibility is that when interdependent consumers are socially excluded, they may be motivated to reconnect and hence more vigorously pursue their impression management goals, defined as "the behavioral strategies that people use to create desired social images or identities" (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985, p. 59). Indeed, social exclusion can increase perceptions of self-threat (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and increase the need for self-affirmation, which can be obtained through impression management.

In contrast to these intuitively appealing perspectives, our results suggest that when consumers high (vs. low) in interdependence (henceforth, interdependents) are socially excluded (vs. included) by ingroups, they discard the pursuit of impression management goals. This tendency is reflected in a lower willingness to expend resources

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: wangj50@miamioh.edu (J.J. Wang), lalwani@indiana.edu (A.K. Lalwani).

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and effort in searching for publicly (but not privately) consumed products. We further find that the impression management goal pursuit of consumers high (vs. low) in independence (henceforth, independents) is not influenced when they are socially excluded by ingroups. The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents a literature review on social exclusion, self-construal, and impression management, as well as our hypotheses development. Section 3 describes the research method and results of the four studies we conducted. Section 4 summarizes our general findings and contributions. Section 5 discusses how current research relates to previous research.

2. Social exclusion, self-construal, and impression management goal pursuit

Research on consumer behavior has uncovered a variety of ways in which consumer responses and decisions are driven by impression management concerns. For instance, Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn (2002) examine the conditions that can lead consumers to actively misrepresent information about their consumption decisions, including falsely presenting the price of their purchases. Wooten and Reed (2004) examine the predictors of consumers' self-presentational style, demonstrating that their susceptibility to normative influence ("SNI," in Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989) differentially predicts the tendency to protect the self from perceived social disapproval.

The distinction between independent and interdependent self-construals is particularly relevant to understanding how social exclusion may moderate the effect of cultural factors on impression management. Interdependents (but not independents) have been shown to be generally more motivated to maintain a desirable impression of oneself in the eyes of important others (Lalwani, 2009; Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006). For example, because interdependents are more concerned about their social identity, they are more likely to rely on store reputation to judge product quality because it conveys image-relevant information (Lee & Shavitt, 2006). Other research suggests that interdependents' greater motivation to present themselves favorably leads them to invest more thought and resources in choosing products that are expected to be scrutinized by important others (Kim & Markus, 1999). Interdependents' tendency to engage in impression management also leads them to expend greater effort in purchasing a gift for a coworker (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). We expected impression management to lead interdependents to spend more effort in the purchase of publicly consumed products when socially included (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Bergh, 2010; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). However, when socially excluded, interdependents are likely to abandon impression management goals.

Existing research suggests that interdependents (but not independents) tend to invest more in their close relationships (Cornelissen, Dewitte, & Warlop, 2011; Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990; Triandis, 1989, 2001) and have a greater need to belong (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). As a result, they also expect more from their ingroups. For example, Miller et al. (1990) presented participants with a story in which "Lisa" refused to give her friend "Amy" directions to a store because Lisa was busy reading a book. Interdependents (but not independents) believed more strongly that Lisa was obligated to help her friend and should be punished for refusing. Other evidence suggests that interdependents (but not independents) expect their friends and family members to bail them out in case of financial losses (Hsee & Weber, 1999; also see Mandel, 2003). Similarly, interdependents are more dissatisfied with social failures but are less dissatisfied with nonsocial failures (Chan, Wan, & Sin, 2009). Chan et al. (2009) attribute these differences to the greater expectations for need and care among interdependents. In contrast, independents feel that they have fewer obligations towards ingroups and depend less on them for social support, resources, or security (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Hence, we propose that interdependents (but not independents) are less likely to expect ingroups to exclude them in social activities.[1]

These greater expectations of being socially connected and included may also lead interdependents (but not independents) to be dejected when these needs are not fulfilled. For example, because Asian Americans (interdependents) emphasize social harmony by attending to others; they perceive misunderstanding with others a sign of social disconnection and feel dejected as a result. As a consequence, their academic performance, persistence at tasks, and prefrontal electroencephalography (EEG) results deteriorate after being misunderstood by ingroups (Lun, Oishi, Coan, Akimoto, & Miao, 2010). In contrast, the performance of European Americans (independents) is not influenced when they are misunderstood. Furthermore, because the expression of social disapproval is highly controlled and discouraged among interdependents, social exclusion has a stronger negative impact on interdependents than on independents (Cheng & Kwan, 2008).

2.1. The mediating role of identification with ingroups[2]

Because being excluded by ingroups is highly unexpected by interdependents, we suggest that excluded interdependents (but not independents) are more negatively affected by social exclusion by ingroups. Therefore, the unexpected exclusion may lead interdependents (but not independents) to distance themselves from the perpetrators, and identify less with ingroups. Previous research supports this conceptualization. For example, people are likely to distance themselves from those who hurt their feelings (Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, & Alexander, 2005). More direct evidence suggests that rejection leads people to withdraw from others and avoid interpersonal interaction. When such individuals cannot physically leave the situation, they withdraw socially and psychologically (Tice, Twenge, & Schmeichel, 2002; Waldrip & Jensen-Campbell, 2007; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). Indeed, as aptly summarized by Smart Richman and Leary (2009, p. 368), "people who are rejected are also motivated to avoid further rejection and its accompanying hurt. As a result, they may withdraw from social contact, not only with those who have rejected them but sometimes from others whose acceptance they doubt," as exemplified by the adage "once bitten, twice shy." Furthermore, considerable research suggests that interdependents' impression management tendency is decontextualized and generalizable to others (see Lalwani et al., 2006; Riemer & Shavitt, 2011; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Based on these findings, we suggest that when excluded by any given ingroup(s), interdependents lower their motivation to engage in impression management in general because of their lowered identification with ingroups.

Following McCoy and Major (2003), we define group identification as the importance, or centrality, of the group in the self-concept, which is in line with other definitions of this construct (e.g., Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Smith & Henry, 1996; Tropp & Wright, 2001). Research suggests that interdependents (vs. independents) care more about their ingroups and its norms (Riemer & Shavitt, 2011), and that their behavior is largely determined by the goals, attitudes, and values shared with their ingroups (Lalwani et al., 2006). Because interdependents (but not independents) often engage in impression management to appear socially appropriate among ingroups, we suggest that interdependents are likely to abandon their impression management goal

[1] Indeed, our data ($N = 63$) revealed that interdependence ($\beta = 0.35$, $t(60) = 2.76$, $p < .01$), but not independence ($\beta = 0.05$, $t(60) = 0.35$, $p > .73$), is positively associated with people's belief that they should be accepted by their family and friends and included in social activities. Such belief was assessed using a 3-item, 9-point scale ($\alpha = 0.63$); a sample item: "I expect to always be accepted by my family and friends," where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree.

[2] We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this mediator.

pursuit when their identification with ingroups is lowered due to social exclusion. In other words, interdependents (but not independents) are less likely to manage their impression in front of ingroups when such a group identity has become temporarily less important or central to their self-concept. Therefore, shortly after experiencing social exclusion, interdependents are likely to reduce their impression management tendency in general. Because independents are less concerned about what ingroups think of them, they are less likely to be affected by social exclusion (Lalwani, 2009; Lalwani et al., 2006; Riemer & Shavitt, 2011) and are less likely to lower their identification with ingroups as a result.

Additional support for our hypothesis comes from the literature on self-presentations, which suggests that impression management is a strategic and goal directed activity, and is driven by the expectations of rewards and benefits and/or the possibility of avoiding negative outcomes (Lalwani, 2009; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Zivnuska, Michele Kacmar, Witt, Carlson, & Bratton, 2004). For example, job candidates are more likely to engage in impression management when interacting with a potential employer, compared to a peer, because of the expectations of rewards (in the form of a job) from the former. We propose that an additional reason interdependents are likely to lower identification with ingroups and reduce impression management when excluded is due to the reduced expectations of attaining rewards and benefits from ingroups. Formally,

H1. Social exclusion interacts with consumers' self-construal to determine their pursuit of impression management, such that interdependents (but not independents) are more likely to abandon impression management goal pursuit when they are excluded (vs. included) by ingroups.

H2. The interactive effect of social exclusion and consumers' self-construal on their impression management goal pursuit is mediated by strength of identification with their ingroups. Interdependents (but not independents) reduce their impression management goal pursuit because their identification with ingroups is lowered due to the unexpected social exclusion.

2.2. Attribution of inclusion or exclusion as a boundary condition

Attribution theory explains “how people make causal explanations, about how they answer questions beginning with ‘why?’ It deals with the information they use in making causal inferences, and with what they do with this information to answer causal questions” (Kelley, 1973, p. 170). Research suggests that an action that harms or frustrates a person is less tolerated and more reciprocated when it is attributed to the actor than when it is attributed to other contextual or environmental factors (Strickland, Barefoot, & Hockenstein, 1976). What happens when social inclusion or exclusion is attributed to the recipient (henceforth, *internal attribution*) versus to the perpetrator or actor (henceforth, *external attribution*)? In other words, do interdependents (independents) respond differently when either they or the ingroups are responsible for the exclusion or the inclusion? These are interesting and important questions that have not received much attention in previous work on social exclusion.

Research suggests that interdependents (but not independents) highly identify with their ingroups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). For example, people are more likely to identify with, and be bonded to, their friends and coworkers in Asian, compared to Western cultures (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). We propose that when social exclusion is attributed externally to the perpetrators (rather than internally), interdependents consciously or unconsciously blame the perpetrators and lower their identification with ingroups, which in turn reduces their motivation to engage in effortful impression management (Lalwani, 2009; Vohs, Baumeister, & Ciarocco, 2005). On the other hand, when social exclusion is attributed internally, the perpetrator or actor is not to be blamed, and the person who is excluded should not attribute responsibility to ingroups. Under such circumstances, interdependents should not lower their identification with ingroups when excluded and, therefore, should not reduce impression management goal pursuit when excluded (vs. included).

Further, based on our earlier arguments, independents' impression management tendency should not be affected by their attribution of who is responsible for the exclusion/inclusion because the exclusion from ingroups is not as unexpected to independents as it is to interdependents. Therefore, external attribution should not make independents lower their identification with ingroups and reduce impression management goal pursuit when excluded by ingroups. As such, their impression management tendency following social exclusion should not change when the perpetrator or actor is the reason they were excluded versus when they themselves are the reason they were excluded. Taken together, we propose that:

H3. Social exclusion (vs. inclusion) negatively influences interdependents' (but not independents') motivation to pursue impression management goals when the attribution is made externally. However, when the attribution is made internally, interdependents' impression management goal pursuit is not affected by social exclusion (vs. inclusion).

3. Methods and results

A multi-method approach was used to establish reliability and generalizability across three studies. Impression management was assessed in a number of ways, via an established scale and via the resources and effort participants were willing to expend to purchase publicly consumed products. Similarly, cultural self-construal was assessed by measuring chronic cultural orientation via standard scales as well as via manipulation of the salience of cultural self-view (i.e., priming). Study 1 suggested that social exclusion (vs. inclusion) by ingroups decreases interdependents' (but not independents') impression management goal pursuit. Study 2 showed that social exclusion (vs. inclusion) influences interdependents' (but not independents') tendency to pursue impression management goals because interdependents (but not independents) lower their identification with ingroups when excluded (vs. included). Study 3 examined a boundary condition. Specifically, it explored the moderating role of attribution of responsibilities and showed that the effects emerge when the responsibilities of social exclusion/inclusion are attributed externally (i.e., to ingroups); however, the effects do not emerge when the responsibilities are attributed internally (i.e., to participants who were being excluded/included). Study 4 (an abridged version of the study is reported in the main text and the full study is reported in the extra materials) examines the moderating role of the nature of the product (public or private) and shows that the effects emerged for products consumed in public but not for those consumed in private (elaborated later).

3.1. Study 1

The first study was conducted to test H1 that when socially excluded (vs. included), interdependents (but not independents) abandon their impression management goal pursuit.

3.1.1. Participants and design

One hundred and forty two Mturkers (40 males; M_{age} = 37) participated in the study in exchange for monetary compensation. Respondents were randomly assigned to either a social exclusion or inclusion condition.

3.1.2. Measures and manipulation

Following Gardner, Pickett, and Brewer (2000) and Maner et al. (2007), social inclusion (vs. exclusion) was manipulated by asking participants to recall a time when they felt included (or excluded) by a

friend or a family member. To assess the validity of the manipulation, we asked participants to complete a 2-item scale (1 = loved, accepted; 7 = unloved, rejected). Participants in the exclusion condition felt more excluded than those in the inclusion condition ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.39; $M_{exclusion}$ = 3.01; $t(140) = -2.56$, $p < .02$), suggesting that the manipulation was effective.

Self-construal was measured using a 16-item scale developed and validated by Triandis and Gelfand (1998). Sample items for interdependence (8 items; $\alpha = 0.78$) include "Parents and children must stay together as much as possible" and "I feel good when I cooperate with others." Sample items for independence (8 items; $\alpha = 0.69$) include "I'd rather depend on myself than others" and "I often do 'my own thing'." Impression management goal pursuit was measured using the 20-item ($\alpha = 0.85$) scale developed by Paulhus (1991). This scale has been successfully used to capture behaviors and personalities related to impression management (Lalwani, 2009; Lalwani et al., 2006; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). Sample items include: "I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught" and "I have never dropped litter on the street." The items in both the self-construal and the impression management scales were anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Participants also responded to demographic questions.

3.1.3. Results and discussion

We predicted that interdependents (but not independents) are less likely to engage in impression management when excluded (vs. included). The data supported these expectations. A GLM with the standardized impression management score as the criterion variable and the standardized interdependence and independence scores, and social exclusion/inclusion (dummy coded: social inclusion = 0, social exclusion = 1), as well as all the two way interactions as the predictor variables revealed non-significant main effects of social exclusion/inclusion ($F(1,135) = 0.28$, $p > .59$) and independence ($F(1,135) = 1.48$, $p > .22$). The main effect of interdependence was significant ($F(1,135) = 17.99$, $p < .001$). The 2-way interaction between social exclusion and independence ($F(1,135) = 0.75$, $p > .38$), as well as between interdependence and independence were also non-significant ($F(1,135) = 1.48$, $p > .22$). Importantly, the 2-way interaction between social exclusion and interdependence was significant as predicted ($F(1,135) = 6.03$, $p < .02$), suggesting that the effect of interdependence (but not independence) on impression management varied by social inclusion (vs. exclusion).

Next, we used two separate floodlight analyses to assess the effect of social exclusion on impression management. First, we focused on interdependence. A floodlight analysis revealed significant main effects of social exclusion/inclusion ($\beta = 1.93$, $t(138) = 2.18$, $p < .04$) and interdependence ($\beta = 0.94$, $t(138) = 3.34$, $p < .002$), and a significant interaction between the two ($\beta = -0.39$, $t(138) = -2.30$, $p < .03$). The analysis also revealed a significant negative effect of social exclusion on impression management for participants whose interdependence score was > 6.06 ($B_{JN} = -0.43$, SE = 0.22, $p = .05$), suggesting that interdependents lowered their impression management tendency when exclusion (vs. included). However, those whose interdependence score was < 6.06 did not change their impression management goal pursuit based on social exclusion (vs. inclusion).

Next we focused on independence. Another floodlight analysis revealed non-significant main effects of social exclusion/inclusion ($\beta = -0.43$, $t(138) = -0.42$, $p > .67$) and independence ($\beta = -0.20$, $t(138) = -0.57$, $p > .56$), and a non-significant interaction between the two ($\beta = 0.06$, $t(138) = 0.30$, $p > .75$). The analysis also revealed a non-significant effect of social exclusion on impression management for all participants. These results suggest that independents did not change their impression management goal pursuit in the social exclusion (vs. inclusion) condition, as predicted.

Study 1 suggests that when socially excluded (vs. included), interdependents abandon their impression management goal pursuit. In contrast, independents' pursuit of social identity goals is not influenced by social exclusion (vs. inclusion). These findings shed light on the nuanced role played by self-construal in how exclusion affects consumers' impression management goal pursuit. In the next study, we examine the underlying mechanism—identification with ingroups. We operationalize impression management goal pursuit as the extent to which consumers expend effort in the purchase of products that are subject to public scrutiny. We also rule out the role of emotions that potentially provide an alternative interpretation of our findings.

3.2. Study 2

In Study 2, we examined the underlying mechanism of identification with ingroups. We predicted that when interdependents are socially excluded by ingroups, their identification with the group is lowered. Therefore, they abandon their impression management goal pursuit due to the unexpected social exclusion. However, independents do not lower their identification with ingroups when excluded, and their impression management goal pursuit is not affected by social exclusion (H2).

Some may argue that because interdependents (vs. independents) are more sensitive to social transgressions, they may be more emotionally distressed after exclusion. In turn, this may make them unable or unwilling to pursue their impression management goals. However, we did not expect emotions to play a role in our findings because previous research suggests that, emotions driven by social exclusion do not influence downstream behaviors and that emotions have failed to mediate the relationship between exclusion and downstream behaviors (Mead et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2003; Williams, 2001). We propose that the unexpected exclusion by ingroups experienced by interdependents does not translate to negative emotions, but rather elicits cognitive responses such as a lowered tendency to engage in impression management. Indeed, impression management is a conscious, deliberate, and strategic activity (Lalwani, 2009; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Zivnuska et al., 2004), whereas the effects of emotions tend to be more spontaneous, impulsive, impromptu, and are easier to be suppressed (Cornelius, 1996; Izard, 1991). Nevertheless, we considered it prudent to rule out the role of emotions empirically.

3.2.1. Participants

One hundred and forty eight Mturkers participated in the study (52 males; M_{age} = 39) in exchange for a nominal payment.

3.2.2. Measures and manipulations

Self-construal was manipulated using a well-established prime that required participants to count the number of pronouns in a paragraph (Agrawal & Maheswaran, 2005; Mandel, 2003; Monga & John, 2007). In the interdependent prime condition, the pronouns were "we," "us," and "our," which made the connection between a participant and others salient. In the independent prime condition, the pronouns were "I," "me," and "mine," which drew participants' attention to themselves. A pretest (N = 219) revealed that participants in the independent (vs. interdependent) prime condition scored significantly higher on the independence scale ($M_{independent}$ = 5.34, $M_{interdependent}$ = 5.09; $t(217) = 2.20$, $p < .05$; $d = 0.30$) developed and validated by Triandis and Gelfand (1998) (the same scale was used in study 1 to measure self-construal), and significantly lower on their interdependence scale ($M_{independent}$ = 5.45, $M_{interdependent}$ = 5.63; $t(217) = 1.96$, $p = .05$), suggesting that the manipulation was effective. Social exclusion/inclusion was manipulated as in Study 1 (dummy coded: social inclusion = 0, social exclusion = 1). To assess the validity of the

manipulation, we asked participants to complete a 4-item scale (1 = accepted, connected, together, and included; 7 = rejected, disconnected, alone, and excluded). Those in the exclusion (vs. inclusion) condition felt more excluded ($M_{inclusion}$ = 1.65, $M_{exclusion}$ = 5.90; t(174) = −25.09, p < .001), suggesting that the manipulation was successful.

Thereafter, participants were asked to imagine needing to buy a chandelier for their living room, where they enjoy entertaining friends and family. To measure impression management, participants were asked to rate the statements "How far are you willing to travel to get the right chandelier?" and "How much time are you willing to spend looking for the right chandelier to purchase?" on a nine-point Likert scale, where 1 = not much and 9 = very much (r = 0.73, p < .001).[3] We created a composite measure of *willingness to expend effort* to obtain a chandelier by taking the average of the two variables. Identification with ingroups was measured using a three-item, seven-point scale adapted from Hornsey and Hogg (2000) (α = 0.86). A sample item included, "At this moment, I feel similar to my friends and family." Following previous work (Mead et al., 2011), we tested the alternative explanation based on emotions by measuring consumers' emotions following social exclusion using a twenty-item, five-point modified PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; see Appendix for the full scale). Participants also responded to demographic questions.

3.2.3. Results and discussion

A GLM with the standardized willingness to expend effort score as the criterion variable, and self-construal prime, social exclusion/inclusion, their interaction, and standardized PANAS score as the predictor variables, revealed a significant two-way interaction between self-construal prime and social exclusion/inclusion (F(1,143) = 6.13, p < .02). The main effect of emotions was also significant (F(1,143) = 12.44, p < .001). The main effects of self-construal prime (F(1,143) = 0.05, p > .83) and social exclusion/inclusion (F(1,143) = 0.06, p > .81) were non-significant. These findings suggested that the effect of social exclusion on willingness to expend effort varied by self-construal prime. A follow-up spotlight analysis suggested that interdependents were more willing to expend effort to obtain the chandelier in the inclusion (vs. exclusion) condition (β = −1.07, t(144) = −2.04, p < .05; $M_{inclusion}$ = 4.07, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 2.21; $M_{exclusion}$ = 3.00, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 2.01). However, independents' willingness to expend effort was not influenced by social exclusion (β = 0.56, t(144) = 1.20, p > .23; $M_{inclusion}$ = 3.07, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 1.95; $M_{exclusion}$ = 3.63, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 2.19). These findings support H1 that interdependents (but not independents) are more likely to pursue impression management when they are included (vs. excluded) by ingroups.

To test whether identification with ingroups mediated the interactive effect of social exclusion and self-construal on impression management, we conducted a bootstrap estimation with 10,000 iterations (PROCESS model 5, Hayes, 2013; see Hagtvedt & Brasel, 2017 for an example) with the willingness to expend effort score as the dependent variable, social exclusion/inclusion as the predictor variable, self-construal prime as the moderator variable, and identification with ingroups score as the mediator variable. Results revealed a significant indirect effect of identification with ingroups (β = −0.19, SE = 0.10, CI95 = −0.41, −0.01), which indicates mediation.

A GLM with the standardized PANAS score as the criterion variable, and self-construal prime, social exclusion/inclusion, and their interaction as the predictor variables revealed non-significant effects of self-construal prime (F(1,144) = 1.33, p > .25), social exclusion/inclusion (F(1,144) = 0.59, p > .44), and the interaction effect of the two (F(1,144) = 0.05, p > .82). These findings suggested that the effect of social exclusion on emotions did not vary by self-construal prime. Next, we conducted PROCESS model 5 as described above, replacing the identification with ingroups score with the PANAS score, and found a non-significant indirect effect (β = 0.09, SE = 0.11, CI95 = −0.10, 0.32). As predicted we did not find evidence indicating emotions as the mediator.

Further analyses suggested that social exclusion did not affect participants' emotions ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.14, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 0.58; $M_{exclusion}$ = 2.23, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 0.55, p > .35). Examination of the individual items of the PANAS revealed that social exclusion manipulation significantly affected participants' feeling of alertness ($M_{inclusion}$ = 3.07, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 1.33; $M_{exclusion}$ = 3.49, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 1.06, p < .04). Although this finding runs counter to the findings of existing research that socially excluded people show emotional numbness (see Baumeister, 1990 for a review), the effect size is small (r = −0.17) and the main effect of social exclusion is not the primary interest of the current research. Social exclusion also did not affect other individual items in PANAS scale (ps > .10).

Additional t-tests suggested that participants' positive (calculated by aggregating emotions such as excited and proud) ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.68, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 0.92; $M_{exclusion}$ = 2.74, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 1.05, p > .80) and negative emotions (calculated by aggregating negative emotions such as distressed and upset) ($M_{inclusion}$ = 1.45, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 0.69; $M_{exclusion}$ = 1.57, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 0.81, p > .51) were not affected by social exclusion manipulation. Further, we also did not find that social exclusion affected interdependents' ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.06, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 0.59; $M_{exclusion}$ = 2.15, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 0.58, p > .52) or independents' ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.22, $Std_{inclusion}$ = 0.55; $M_{exclusion}$ = 2.27, $Std_{exclusion}$ = 0.53, p > .66) overall emotions. Examination of individual items of PANAS among interdependents or independents also did not yield significant results (ps > .11). These results suggest that the interactive effect of social exclusion and self-construal cannot be attributed to emotions, which is consistent with the findings of previous research (Mead et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2003; Williams, 2001).

Study 2 provides evidence for the underlying role of identification with ingroups in the interactive effect of self-construal and social exclusion/inclusion on impression management goal pursuit. Social exclusion influenced interdependents' (but not independents') impression management goal pursuit because interdependents (but not independents) lowered their identification with ingroups when excluded (vs. included).

3.3. Study 3

In study 3, we explored the moderating role of attribution of responsibilities. We predicted that when the responsibility of social inclusion/exclusion is attributed externally (i.e., to the perpetrators), interdependents abandon their impression management goal pursuit when socially excluded (vs. included) by ingroups, in line with our previous findings. We further predicted that when the responsibility for social inclusion/exclusion is attributed internally (i.e., to the participants themselves), interdependents do not abandon their impression management goals when excluded (vs. included) by ingroups. We also predicted that independents' impression management is not affected by social exclusion/inclusion or external/internal attribution of responsibilities (H3).

3.3.1. Participants and design

One hundred and eighty eight Mturkers (88 males, M_{age} = 37) participated in the study in exchange for a nominal payment.

3.3.2. Measures and manipulations

Social exclusion was manipulated as in studies 1 and 2 (dummy

[3] A pretest (N = 88) validated the assumption that impression-management concerns would be associated with greater efforts being made when selecting publicly consumed products. We found a positive association between impression management (measured as in study 1; Paulhus, 1991, α = 0.77)) and willingness to expend effort to buy a lamp that would be used in public (β = 0.66, t(84) = 1.92, p = .05, d = 0.42).

coded: social inclusion = 0, social exclusion = 1). Participants completed manipulation check items as in study 2. Those in the exclusion (vs. inclusion) condition felt more excluded ($M_{inclusion}$ = 2.27, $M_{exclusion}$ = 6.28; $t(189) = -20.59$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the manipulation was successful. Half of the participants (N = 94) were randomly assigned to the external attribution condition, in which, following the social exclusion manipulation, they listed three reasons supporting the idea that their friends or family were the reason that they experienced inclusion/exclusion. The rest (N = 94) were randomly assigned to the internal attribution condition, in which they listed three reasons supporting the idea that they, but not their friends or family, were the reason that they experienced inclusion/exclusion. Results from a pretest (N = 119) suggested that participants in the internal attribution condition took responsibility for being included/excluded more than those in the external attribution condition (item: "I take responsibility for being included (or excluded) in the scenario I recalled earlier"; $M_{internal\ attribution}$ = 5.33, $Std_{internal\ attribution}$ = 1.35; $M_{external\ attribution}$ = 4.65, $Std_{internal\ attribution}$ = 1.61; $p < .02$), suggesting that the manipulation was successful.

Thereafter, all participants were asked to imagine that they are looking to purchase a watch. They were then asked to complete the two questions as in study 2, which measured their willingness to expend effort to find the right watch ($r = 0.85$, $p < .001$). The two items were averaged to form a composite measure of participants' impression management tendency. To ascertain the generalizability of our findings, we used a different scale to assess self-construal from that in the previous studies. Interdependence (6 items, $\alpha = 0.86$) and independence (3 items, $\alpha = 0.85$) were measured using scales developed and validated by Brewer and Chen (2007). Sample items for interdependence included, "My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me" and "To me, pleasure is spending time with others." Sample items for independence included, "I often do 'my own thing'" and "I am a unique individual."

3.3.3. Results and discussion

We predicted that when the responsibility for social exclusion is attributed to the perpetrator (i.e., externally), interdependents would abandon their impression management goals when socially excluded (vs. included), which replicates the findings in studies 1 and 2; we further predict that when the responsibility for social exclusion is attributed to the receiver (i.e., internally), interdependents do not change their tendency to engage in impression management when socially excluded (vs. included). Finally, independents' impression management goal pursuit would not be affected by social exclusion and attribution of responsibilities. The data support these expectations.

A GLM with the standardized willingness to expend effort score as the criterion variable, and the standardized interdependence and independence scores, social exclusion, attribution, and all the two- and three-way interactions as the independent variables, revealed a significant three-way interaction between social exclusion/inclusion, external/internal attribution, and interdependence ($F(1, 175) = 3.62$, $p = .06$), and a non-significant three-way interaction between social exclusion/inclusion, external/internal attribution, and independence ($F(1, 175) = 0.15$, $p > .69$); the main effect of interdependence ($F(1, 175) = 6.63$, $p < .02$), the interaction effects between interdependence and independence ($F(1, 175) = 7.64$, $p < .007$), and that of social exclusion/inclusion and external/internal attribution ($F(1, 175) = 3.51$, $p = .06$) were significant. All other main and two-way interactions were non-significant (all $ps > .45$). The significant three-way interaction suggested that the interactive effect of interdependence and social exclusion on impression management varied by external/internal attribution conditions, as predicted. On the other hand, the non-significant three-way interaction between social exclusion/inclusion, external/internal attribution, and independence also supports our prediction.

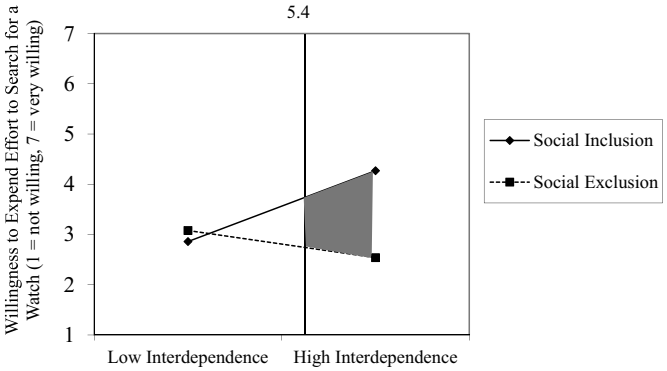

Fig. 1. The effect of interdependence and social exclusion/inclusion on willingness to expend effort to search for a watch when the responsibility for social exclusion/inclusion is attributed externally (Study 3).

Next, we used floodlight analyses to assess the interactive effects of social exclusion and interdependence separately in the external and internal attribution conditions. In the external attribution condition, a floodlight analysis revealed a non-significant main effect of social exclusion/inclusion ($\beta = 3.40$, $t(90) = 1.55$, $p > .12$), a significant main effect of interdependence ($\beta = 1.41$, $t(90) = 2.19$, $p < .04$), and a significant interaction between the two ($\beta = -0.82$, $t(90) = -1.94$, $p = .05$). The analysis also revealed a significant negative effect of social exclusion on the willingness to expend effort score for participants whose interdependence scores were > 5.41 ($B_{JN} = -1.03$, SE = 0.52, $p = .05$), suggesting that interdependents lowered their willingness to expend effort in search of the right product when excluded (vs. included). However, those whose interdependence scores were < 5.41 did not change their willingness to expend effort based on social exclusion (vs. inclusion, see Fig. 1). In the internal attribution condition, another floodlight analysis revealed non-significant effects of social exclusion/inclusion ($\beta = 0.85$, $t(90) = 0.35$, $p > .72$) and interdependence ($\beta = 0.62$, $t(90) = 0.85$, $p > .39$), and a non-significant interaction between the two ($\beta = -0.29$, $t(90) = -0.65$, $p > .51$). These results suggest that interdependents did not change their willingness to expend effort in the social exclusion (vs. inclusion) condition, as predicted.

We also conducted additional floodlight analyses to assess the interactive effect of social exclusion and independence separately in the external and internal attribution conditions. In both the external and internal attribution conditions, floodlight analyses revealed non-significant interactions between social exclusion and independence (external condition: $\beta = -0.29$, $t(90) = -0.65$, $p > .51$; internal condition: $\beta = 0.57$, $t(90) = 1.33$, $p > .18$), which also supports our prediction.

Study 3 supports our hypothesis that interdependents abandon their impression management goal pursuit in the social exclusion (vs. inclusion) condition when the responsibility for exclusion is attributed externally. However, they do not change their impression management goal pursuit when the responsibility for exclusion is attributed internally. Further, independents do not change their impression management goal pursuit, regardless of external/internal attribution or inclusion/exclusion.

3.4. Public versus private consumption as a boundary condition

We have argued that social exclusion affects interdependents' desire to portray themselves in positive light. But what happens when the behavior is private instead of public? Should managers be concerned with interdependents' impression management tendency following exclusion when consumption is in private versus public? For example, a customer can use a tablet either at home or in a coffee shop. Research suggests that people strategically use public (but not private) consumption as a tool for pursuing impression management. For instance, people are more likely to seek variety in public because variety seekers are considered upbeat and lively (Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Similarly, people are more likely to use expensive environmentally friendly products in public to signal that they are not only altruistic, but also conscientious of the environment (Griskevicius et al., 2010). In public settings, people are also more likely to diverge from majorities to appear more unique (Berger & Heath, 2007). Apparently, public (but not private) consumption offers people the opportunity to signal a desired identity to others. Therefore, we propose that,

H4. Social exclusion (vs. inclusion) will negatively influence interdependents' motivation to expend effort and resources towards maintaining their public but not their private images. This difference is not expected for independents.

3.4.1. Study 4 (abridged version)[4]

In study 4, we explored the moderating role of the context in which the product is used – public or private. 257 Mturk workers and undergraduate students (138 males; M_{age} = 26) participated in the study. Social exclusion was manipulated following Twenge et al. (2003), Maner et al. (2007), and Mead et al. (2011). About half of the participants (N = 132) were randomly assigned to the public use condition, in which they read a paragraph about using a tablet PC in public. The rest (N = 125) were assigned to the private use condition, in which they read about using the products in private. Thereafter, all participants were asked to respond to the two questions that measured their willingness to expend resources and effort in search of the right tablet PC (r = 0.24, p < .001). Self-construal was measured using a 16-item scale developed and validated by Triandis and Gelfand (1998) as in Study 1 ($\alpha_{interdependence}$ = 0.79; $\alpha_{independence}$ = 0.69).

3.4.1.1. Results and discussion. A GLM revealed a significant three-way interaction between social exclusion/inclusion, public/private use, and standardized interdependence score (F(1, 245) = 3.83, p = .05), and a non-significant three-ways interaction between social exclusion/inclusion, public/private use, and standardized independence score (F(1, 245) = 0.56, p > .45). All other main and interaction effects were not significant (all ps > .10). The significant three-way interaction suggested that the interactive effect of interdependence and social exclusion on impression management varied by public/private conditions, which supports our prediction.

Next we used floodlight analyses to assess the interactive effects of social exclusion and interdependence separately in the public and private conditions. In the public condition, a floodlight analysis revealed a significant interaction between social exclusion/inclusion and interdependence (β = −0.97, t(132) = −2.27, p < .03), as predicted. The analysis also revealed a significant negative effect of social exclusion on the willingness to expend resources and effort for participants whose interdependence scores were > 5.75 (B_{JN} = −0.73, SE = 0.41, p = .05), suggesting that interdependents lowered their willingness to expend resources and effort in search of the right product when excluded (vs. included). However, those whose interdependence scores were < 5.75 did not change their willingness to expend resources and effort when socially excluded (vs. included). Further, in the private condition, a floodlight analysis revealed a non-significant interaction between social exclusion/inclusion and interdependence (β = 0.11, t(121) = 0.31, p > .75), suggesting that interdependents did not change their willingness to expend resources and effort in search of the right product in that condition. Further analyses also suggest that social exclusion/inclusion did not affect independents' willingness to expend resources and effort in search of the right product in public or in private condition (see the full version of this study in the extra materials for more details).

Study 4 supports our hypothesis that interdependence is positively associated with the motivation to expend resources and effort in the purchase of publicly (but not privately) consumed products when included, but not when excluded. However, independence was not associated with such motivation, regardless of product use (public or private) or inclusion/exclusion.

4. General discussion and concluding remarks

Our goal in the current research was to examine the interactive effect of cultural self-construal and social exclusion on consumers' impression management goal pursuit. The results from four studies suggest that the effect of social exclusion (vs. inclusion) by ingroups on the pursuit of impression management goals depends on people's self-construal. We also examined two boundary conditions for the relationships. In Study 2, we show that identification with ingroups underlie these effects. Therefore, these effects were not obtained when the responsibility for social exclusion/inclusion was attributed internally, as interdependents maintain their identification with ingroups in that condition. In contrast, independents' impression management goals are less influenced by social exclusion. In Study 4, we demonstrate that these effects hold for public, but not for private products, which provide interdependents with a lower potential to pursue impression management. In contrast, independents' impression management goals are less influenced by social exclusion by ingroups.

4.1. Theoretical contributions

Our research has a number of theoretical and managerial implications for the impression management, cultural self-construal, and social exclusion literature. First, we offer important qualifications to previous research that has robustly demonstrated self-construal differences in impression management. We replicate the general findings of Lalwani et al. (2006) and Lalwani (2009) that interdependents are more likely to engage in impression management than are independents, but only when they are not excluded by ingroups. When interdependents are excluded by ingroups, they discard the pursuit of impression management.

Second, although volumes of research have examined the effects of social exclusion (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Maner et al., 2007; Mead et al., 2011; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Williams, 2001), limited research has explored the role of culture in these effects (for exceptions, see Nakashima, Kawamoto, Isobe, & Ura, 2013; Pfundmair, Aydin, Frey, & Echterhoff, 2014). Third, some research suggests that social exclusion causes people to more vigorously reconnect with others (Maner et al., 2007; Mead et al., 2011). However, we find that not to be true when interdependents are excluded by ingroups. We find that exclusion by ingroups causes interdependents to abandon their desire to pursue social goals. Fourth, while some previous research shows that excluded individuals may engage in withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, the downstream consequences of such behaviors are less clear. We identify an important consequence of exclusion among interdependents, namely, decreased impression management tendency, which manifests in a reduced willingness to expend resources and effort in the purchase of publicly consumed products. Fifth, by showing that the effects are driven by

[4] Due to space constraints, we have provided only the abridged version of the study here. The full version of this study is being provided in the Supplementary materials.

reduced identification with ingroups, we provide evidence of the underlying mechanism. Sixth, we identify two important boundary conditions for our effects.

4.2. Managerial contributions

Our findings also have implications for managers' segmentation and targeting strategies. Nations, states, and neighborhoods often differ on self-construal and managers could utilize that information to identify independent and interdependent consumers (see Hofstede, 2001 for self-construal scores of different nations and Vandello & Cohen, 1999 for self-construal scores of the 50 states in the US). In addition, with the widespread proliferation of social media, it is now much easier than ever before for managers to monitor consumers' interpersonal relationships and related dynamics. For example, using Facebook profiles or Twitter feeds, managers can determine whether consumers have been included or excluded by their friends and family at a given time. With those information, managers may be able to selectively target consumers who are likely to expend greater effort in search of publicly consumed products (e.g., interdependent consumers who feel included). Furthermore, managers of privately consumed products should be less concerned about the deleterious effects of social exclusion on interdependent consumers.

Moreover, marketers could activate self-construal via ads or POP material by using priming procedures and hence influence coupon redemptions using contextual cues. For example, ads could invite consumers to think about themselves versus their family and friends (Lalwani & Wang, 2019; Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991), and slogans could state, “Remember, enjoying your life is what it is really all about,” or “Remember, relationships are what life is really all about” (Hamilton & Biehal, 2005) to activate the independent or interdependent self-construal, respectively. In combination with the above strategy, managers could also evoke interdependent consumers' memory of being included by their friends and family in order to encourage them to spend more on publicly consumed products.

5. A discussion of current research in relation to previous research

As noted earlier, some research suggests that social exclusion leads to a greater desire to reconnect with others to satisfy the need to belong (e.g., Maner et al., 2007; Mead et al., 2011). However, an important requirement for this effect should be noted. This effect emerges only when excluded individuals subsequently expect a face-to-face interaction with the perpetrator (Maner et al., 2007) or when they are certain that doing so boosts their chances of connecting with their interaction partners (Mead et al., 2011). In the present research, participants were not given the opportunity to reconnect with others following the exclusion episode. Although participants imagined consuming products in public, there was no assurance that the audience would accept the excluded individuals and relieve them from the agony of exclusion—a necessary precondition for the effect (Maner et al., 2007; Mead et al., 2011). Moreover, our interest focused on the generic consequences of social exclusion rather than those directed towards a particular individual, and our measures of impression management tendency were also selected to tap the persona that respondents wished to portray in public. Our findings echo previous research suggesting that people exhibit withdrawal and avoidance behaviors when excluded. Our results also support the notion that for interdependents, being excluded by one in-group member violates an entire network of relationships, deterring them from pursuing impression management in general.

Previous research suggests that interdependents (but not independents) engage in impression management to appear social appropriate among ingroups (Lalwani et al., 2006). We advance these findings by demonstrating that when interdependents are socially excluded by ingroups, they abandon their impression management goal pursuit to distance themselves from ingroups. These findings are consistent with those of Nakashima et al. (2013), who found that social exclusion strengthens interdependents (but not independents) motivation to connect with their overall interpersonal networks, but weaken their identification with specific reference in-groups.

Unlike Nakashima et al. (2013), we did not examine the effect of exclusion on interdependents' response to their overall interpersonal networks (including outgroups). However, we went beyond their research and isolated the underlying mechanism based on lowered identification with ingroups. In addition, we also examined a boundary condition, based on attribution of inclusion or exclusion. Future research should examine the boundary conditions when social exclusion leads interdependents to increase versus decrease their desire to connect with ingroups.

Further, Pfundmair et al. (2014) found that independents (but not interdependents) are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior such as shutting down and feeling sad when excluded (not specifically by ingroups). At first glance, these findings seem inconsistent with ours. However, a deeper examination uncovers a different story. Specifically, Pfundmair et al. did not study exclusion by ingroups. For example, in their study 2, participants were either included or excluded by strangers. Previous research confirms that interdependents (e.g., Japanese) are less hurt by rejection by strangers than are independents (e.g., Americans; Fiske & Yamamoto, 2005). In that light, Pfundmair et al.'s (2014) finding that independents (but not interdependents) are affected when excluded by strangers is not surprising. However, consistent with Nakashima et al.'s (2013) work, we found that interdependents (but not independents) are influenced when excluded by ingroups. We suggest that, because interdependents (vs. independents) have a greater expectation of be included by ingroups, they are more likely to lower their identification with ingroups when excluded by members from that group. This assumption was validated via a pretest that revealed that interdependence (but not independence) is positively associated with people's belief that they should be accepted by their family and friends and included in social activities (see footnote 1).

In summary, this research represents one of the first steps in understanding the linkages between social exclusion, self-construal, and impression management tendency. It also adds to a growing literature suggesting that the effects of self-construal are context dependent. The results of this study likely have important implications for the study of impression management tendency and the interplay between cultural and exclusionary factors.

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Appendix A. PANAS Scale

Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1 = very slightly or not at all
2 = a little
3 = moderately
4 = quite a bit
5 = extremely

Interested	Irritable
Distressed	Alert
Excited	Ashamed
Upset	Inspired
Strong	Nervous
Guilty	Determined
Scared	Attentive
Hostile	Jittery
Enthusiastic	Active
Proud	Afraid

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.02.069.

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Jessie J. Wang Ph.D., Indiana University, Bloomington (2014); M.S., Indiana University, Bloomington (2013); B.S., Indiana University, Bloomington (2006)

Jessie Wang is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Jessie's research focuses on several different areas including cross-cultural consumer behavior, consumers' response to coupons and discounts, the various factors that influence consumers' brand preferences, as well as pro-social consumption. Her work has been published in *Journal of Consumer Research*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing, and Journal of Business Research*. At Miami, Jessie teaches Marketing Research to juniors and seniors. Prior to joining the Farmer School of Business, Jessie taught Marketing Principles at Indiana University as an Associate Instructor. Jessie won Sharon E. Beatty Best Services Marketing Proposal Award in the 2014 with her doctoral dissertation proposal.

Ashok K. Lalwani Ph.D., University of Illinois (2006); M.S., University of Florida (2002); M.S., National University of Singapore (1998); B. Tech. (Engineering), Indian Institute of Technology (1994)

Ashok is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, Bloomington. Ashok's research focuses on the role played by cultural factors in shaping consumers' judgments, behaviors, and responses. Another research stream examines biases in consumers' price perceptions. Ashok has published more than a dozen articles in scholarly journals such as *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. Prior to joining the Kelley School, Ashok taught marketing courses at Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Texas at San Antonio. He also held an executive position in the marketing division of a multinational firm. Ashok has won numerous awards for his research and teaching. He is the recipient of the President's Distinguished Award for Research Achievement, and the Dean's Research Excellence Award, both at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His co-authored paper titled "The Horizontal/Vertical Distinction in Cross-Cultural Consumer Research" was one of the top 20 most cited articles in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 2006–2011. He was also on the list of excellent instructors (top 10% campus-wide rated as outstanding), at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is the recipient of the Board of Trustees Teaching Award at Indiana University.