



FIVE

CHAPTER 5 **THE RELATION BETWEEN CULTURE AND** **PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF CONSUMERS:** **ATTRIBUTES-CONSEQUENCES-** **VALUES LINKAGES VARIATIONS**

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MEANS-END THEORY IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Means-end chain (MEC) theory is grounded in a cognitive approach emphasizing connections between the attributes of the product, the consequences of consumption, and the corresponding instrumentality of satisfying consumer values (Gutman, 1982). Taking this hierarchical cognitive structure into account in cross-cultural contexts can lead to deeper understanding of international consumer behavior concerning product choice and consumption decisions. To date, however, international and cross-cultural applications of MEC theory have been conducted primarily by Western researchers with Anglo-Saxon consumers as subjects (e.g., Grunert et al., 2001; Hofstede, Steenkamp, and Wedel, 1999; Mort & Rose, 2004; Overby, Gardial, and Woodruff, 2004; Russel et al., 2004; Valette-Florence et al., 2000). In addition, little attention has been paid to consumers' cognitive processing styles, which determine different patterns of thinking, in comparative analyses of MECs among consumers from different cultural backgrounds, particularly Western and Eastern cultures. This is despite the fact that a growing corpus of cross-cultural psychology studies confirms cultural differences in styles of thinking, with Western societies characterized by analytic thinking and Eastern societies characterized by holistic thinking (Nisbett et al., 2001). We suggest that this cultural orientation in the different styles of thinking influences the hierarchical cognitive structure on which consumers from Eastern versus Western cultures base their purchase decision-making process. Thus, the question we address in this research is whether analytic versus holistic thinking affects the manner in which consumers cognitively link product attributes to different consequences and values. More precisely, this research aims to contribute to recent MEC research by examining the relation between cultural differences in cognition between Western (French) and Eastern (Korean) cultural members and their MEC linkages underlying wine purchase decision. Our research was undertaken at two different levels of cross-cultural analysis: a chronic cultural difference level and an experimental level in which either the analytic or the holistic thinking tendency is primed.

DYNAMIC APPROACH TO CULTURAL ORIENTATION IN STYLES OF THINKING

Different development of self-view between Westerners and Easterners has implications for fundamental differences in styles of thinking used for their intellectual and perceptual activities: An interdependent view of self is related to a tendency to perceive an object within a part of a whole, whereas an independent view of self refers to the ability to mentally isolate focal or distinctive object from its context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kühnen et al., 2001). As such, cognitive psychologists have demon-

strated the potential impact of self-view on cognitive processing style by describing the dichotomy between cultural perspectives—holistic (analytic) thinking encouraged in Eastern (Western) cultures. More specifically, analytic thinking involves a tendency to separate the object from a given environment and context by ignoring situational variance to focus on a salient object and its attributes, whereas holistic thinking involves an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationships (Nisbett et al., 2001). It is widely acknowledged that Easterners possess relatively more holistic ideas about the universe in general and more complex beliefs about causal reasoning in particular than do Westerners (Morris, Nisbett, and Peng, 1995; Hong et al., 2000). Likewise, the more holistic reasoners tend to consider a more diverse set of information as potentially relevant to causal analysis and thereby assume the presence of complex causality (Choi et al., 2003). Consequently, it would seem to follow that such different cognitive activity affects the way in which consumers cognitively connect perceptual MEC elements to each other across the range of attributes, consequences, and values. That is, this research attempts to clarify whether cultural differences in styles of thinking cause cultural differences in the number of MEC linkages underlying wine consumers' decision processes. It is suggested that holistic consumers, compared to analytic consumers, will be likely to generate a greater number of relationships between MEC constitutive elements, and then to develop more complex cognitive structures when selecting wine.

Although a culture determines a particular style of thinking that tends to be chronically accessible, this dominant cultural orientation is malleable in response to situational accessibility through cultural priming (Hong et al., 2000, 2003; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002). It is believed that the assumption that Easterners are born to be holistic and Westerners are primarily analytic may be too simplistic, and that contextual cues (cultural priming) will determine the activated cultural self-view, thereby resulting in culture-specific cognitive processing styles. We suggest, therefore, that the relative salience of analytic versus holistic thinking can be manipulated experimentally by means of priming, in which the activation level of the specific mode of thinking is increased through the presentation of a stimulus semantically related to corresponding self-view. To conclude, we propose that:

H1: Consumers from Eastern cultures will make a greater number of MEC linkages considered in purchase decision making than consumers from Western cultures.

H2: Priming holistic thinking among Western consumers will increase the number of MEC linkages considered in purchase decision making, whereas priming analytic thinking among Eastern consumers will reduce the number of MEC linkages considered.

METHODOLOGY

General Study Design

To demonstrate the robustness of the effects of priming analytic and holistic thinking, we conducted our experiment in two cultural settings—in France and also in Korea. The hypotheses were tested through an experimental design employing a 2 (culture: French, Korean) \times 3 (priming: no priming, analytic priming, holistic priming) between-subjects factor analysis. Participants in both cultural groups were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. A non-priming control condition was included to compare the results of “chronic activation” of analytic or holistic thinking encouraged by each culture and “situational activation” by priming selected cognitive modes within a cultural group. Following the priming activity, participants were given the stimulus materials—measures of MEC linkages in a wine purchasing context. We explained both the priming task and measurement of the dependent variable beforehand to minimize the temporal interval between the two phases of our experimental procedure, which were presented as two independent studies.

Participants

The research participants were 157 French undergraduates (66% female, Mage = 20.95 years, SD = 2.39 years; home language = 100% French) from a university in Paris and 171 Korean undergraduates (59% female, Mage = 22.07 years, SD = 3.21 years; home language = 100% Korean) from a university in Seoul. All French (Korean) students who participated in the study identified themselves as being of French (Korean) descent, having lived in France (Korea) for their entire lives. All participants reported both consuming and purchasing wine at least once per month. Our experimental design was administered in exactly the same way at the two universities for both cultural groups.

Priming Manipulations

Participants’ analytic or holistic thinking styles were made temporarily more accessible via self-view priming manipulation adapted from Aaker and Williams (1998). Participants were exposed to a fictitious advertisement representing the independent self or interdependent self, or a neutral prime. The assignment of the participants to the two experimental conditions and the control condition was random. Participants in the analytic condition were shown an advertisement featuring an individual alone accompanied by the caption:

“I remember a day by myself at the beach. I hear the sound of the surf crashing on the beach. I feel joy and happiness in the bright light of the sun shining on me. I would like to extend these precious moments for myself without being disturbed by other people!” (See Appendix 1.)

Participants in the holistic condition received an advertisement featuring a group of friends or family accompanied by the caption:

“I remember a day with my family and friends at the beach. We hear the sound of the surf crashing on the beach. We feel joy and happiness in the bright light of the sun shining on us. We would like to extend these precious moments for ourselves without being disturbed by other people!” (See Appendix 2.)

Participants were then asked to form an impression of the given advertisement. Recent studies suggest that priming a self-view effectively activates a different cognitive style in one’s mind, making information congruent with the primed self temporarily more accessible (Kühnen et al., 2001; Kühnen & Oyserman, 2002; Ng & Huston, 2006). We thus expect that increasing the accessibility of a particular aspect of the self can promote related networks of cultural thinking styles. In our research, priming the independent (interdependent) self was intended to increase the level of activation of the analytic (holistic) cognitive processing style.

Measurement of MEC Linkages

Immediately after the cultural priming procedure, participants were introduced to the quantitative measurement for assessing hierarchical MEC relationships and were shown the association pattern matrix (APM) technique designed by Hofstede et al. (1998). APM is a quantitatively oriented method for uncovering MEC linkages, suitable for large-scale samples of consumers, particularly in international marketing research. In APM, the MEC is conceived as a string of connected matrices, an (attribute–consequence) A–C matrix and a (consequence–value) C–V matrix, which are independent of each other and are measured separately. Applying the structured APM method requires exploratory research to identify the main concepts to be included in the two matrices (Hofstede et al., 1998). Accordingly, our predefined set of attributes, consequences, and values that constitute the content of wine consumer’s MEC were transferred to the matrices and presented as a paper-and-pencil test in a questionnaire format. Figure 1 gives an example of a section of the A–C and C–V matrices used in our experimental study. In the A–C (C–V) matrix, participants were presented with the attributes (consequences) and consequences (values), respectively listed in the columns and rows. Thus each matrix includes all possible association networks between the elements provided. Participants simply checked the corresponding cell in the given matrix to indicate MEC connections they value when selecting wine. To ensure that the priming and APM materials correctly conveyed the same meaning in both cultures, we performed the standard technique of back translation (Hui & Triandis, 1989).

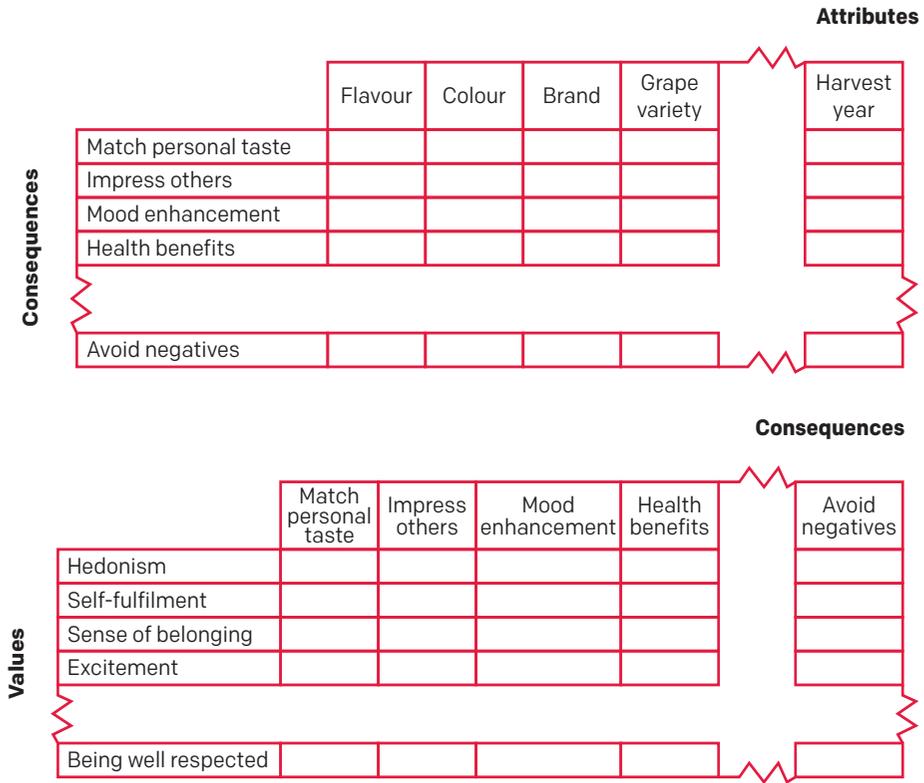


Figure 1. Example of the A-C and C-V matrices for wine purchase decisions

RESULTS

Quantitative Variations in A-C and C-V Linkages

We examined the relationship between cultural differences in wine consumers' thinking styles and cultural differences in the number of MEC linkages they consider. The aggregate numbers of A-C and C-V linkages for our control and experimental groups were calculated by averaging all the cognitive linkages each participant indicated in the corresponding matrices. The A-C and C-V linkages generated were subjected to a 2 (culture) x 3 (prime) ANOVA with, culture and priming mechanism as a between-subjects factor. We first explored whether Korean participants considered a greater number of cognitive linkages when buying wine than French participants. Planned comparisons confirmed that there were significant differences between the two cultural groups (in the non-priming condition) in the means of A-C linkages ($F(1, 322) = 12.31; p < .001$) and C-V linkages ($F(1, 322) = 7.92; p < .01$; see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). Consistent with H1, we found that a greater num-

ber of MEC linkages emerged in Korean consumers' cognitive structures compared to their French counterparts.

Table 1. Mean numbers of A–C and C–V linkages

French consumers				Korean consumers		
MEC linkages	No priming (n = 52)	Analytic priming (n = 50)	Holistic priming (n = 55)	No priming (n = 53)	Analytic priming (n = 58)	Holistic priming (n = 60)
A-C	12.53	12.27	14.86	16.15	13.62	16.93
	(1.94)	(2.31)	(2.01)	(2.56)	(1.54)	(2.09)
C-V	10.77	11.03	13.12	13.58	10.19	14.07
	(2.23)	(1.85)	(1.74)	(2.18)	(1.89)	(1.61)

Note. Standard deviations shown in parentheses; A-C = attributes-consequences linkages; C-V = consequences-values linkages.

In addition, we examined whether the number of linkages considered by wine consumers varied at an individual level after being primed for analytic versus holistic thinking within each culture. As predicted, the interaction effects were found to be significant between culture and priming for A–C linkages ($F(2, 322) = 3.97; p < .05$) and C–V linkages ($F(2, 322) = 6.12; p < .01$), as shown in Table 2 (means and standard deviations). More specifically, while the holistic priming induced more cognitive linkages among French participants, the analytic priming induced fewer cognitive linkages among Korean participants. The results of our planned comparisons indicated that the French A–C linkages were significantly more numerous in the holistic prime than in the non-priming condition ($F(1, 214) = 6.93, p < .01$); the Korean A–C linkages were significantly fewer in the analytic priming condition than in the non-priming condition ($F(1, 214) = 8.75, p < .01$). We further verified that French consumers primed with holistic thinking tended to consider a greater number of C–V linkages than when in the neutral priming condition ($F(1, 214) = 5.18, p < .01$); Korean consumers accessed fewer C–V linkages when analytic thinking was primed in contrast to the neutral priming condition ($F(1, 214) = 14.23, p < .001$). In short, a visual summary of the means of MEC linkages (see Figures 2 and 3) highlights that quantitative variation in the number of cognitive linkages appeared in accordance with culturally relevant priming frames, broadly consistent with H2. These priming results thus provide evidence that a shift in thinking styles among French and Korean consumers plays a crucial role in the modulation of the cognitive approach guiding the A–C–V hierarchy structures involved in their wine choice.

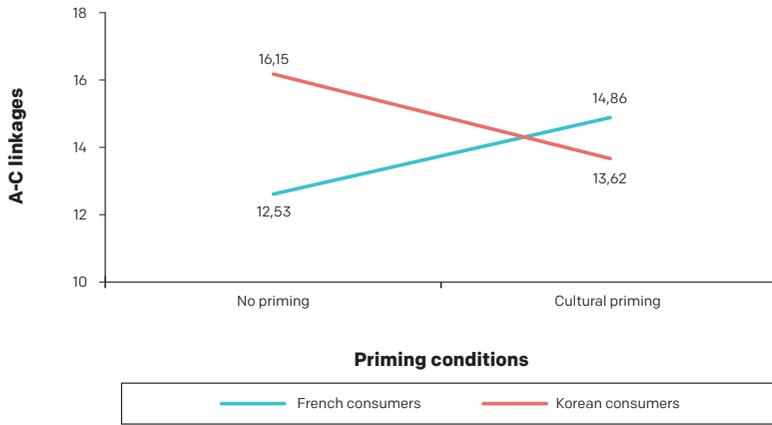


Figure 2. Effect of cultural primes on the number of A-C linkages considered by wine consumers

Note. A-C = attributes-consequences linkages; cultural priming = holistic priming for French wine consumers and analytic priming for Korean wine consumers.

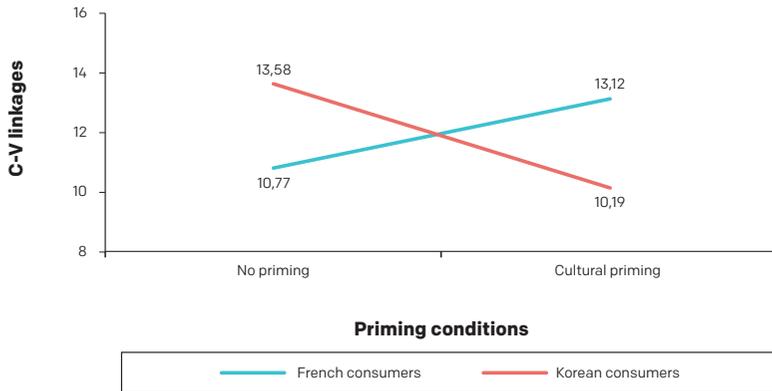


Figure 3. Effect of cultural primes on the number of C-V linkages considered by wine consumers

Note. C-V = consequences-values linkages; cultural priming = holistic priming for French wine consumers and analytic priming for Korean wine consumers

MEC Linkage Complexity

To reveal the cognitive structures in participants' minds, we aggregated all the linkages evoked in the form of a graphical representation, that is to say, we visualized the set formed by various relationships between all the attributes, consequences, and values related to wine purchases. The forms of A–C–V sequences are represented in hierarchical value maps (HVMs; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) of the consumer decision-making process based on the frequencies of linkages. Specifically, the construction of the HVMs enabled us to compare all possible combinations for the hierarchical relations made by two separate groups of wine consumers; all participants primed with analytic (holistic) thinking were taken as analytic (holistic) consumers, irrespective of their own cultural background. The entire contents of the MEC were presented in order of their assigned numbers across the range of three different levels of abstraction. A visual comparison of two HVMs (see Figures 4 and 5) demonstrates that the linkages between each element of content are considerably more numerous in the holistic consumers' MEC network than in the analytic consumers' one. We find that holistic consumers consider a large pool of hierarchical MEC relationships, such that they form more complex, even confusing, cognitive structures. Indeed, a given attribute (consequence) is associated with a greater number of consequences (values) in the holistic priming condition than in the analytic priming condition.

Overall, in line with the results of the statistical analysis, the global observation of the HVMs reinforces the argument that the salience of analytic versus holistic thinking creates different complexity in the MEC with regard to consumers' decision-making processes concerning the purchase of wine.

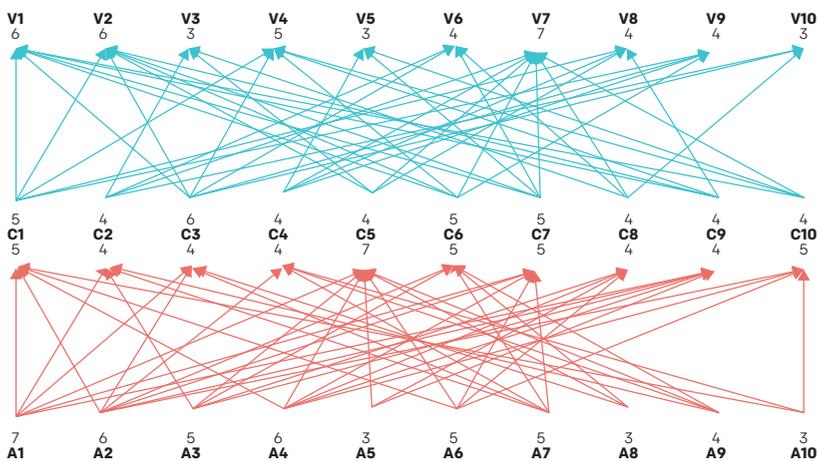


Figure 4. MEC network of wine consumers primed with holistic thinking

Note. The number shown above (below) each MEC content indicates the number of elements connected upstream (downstream) of MEC network.

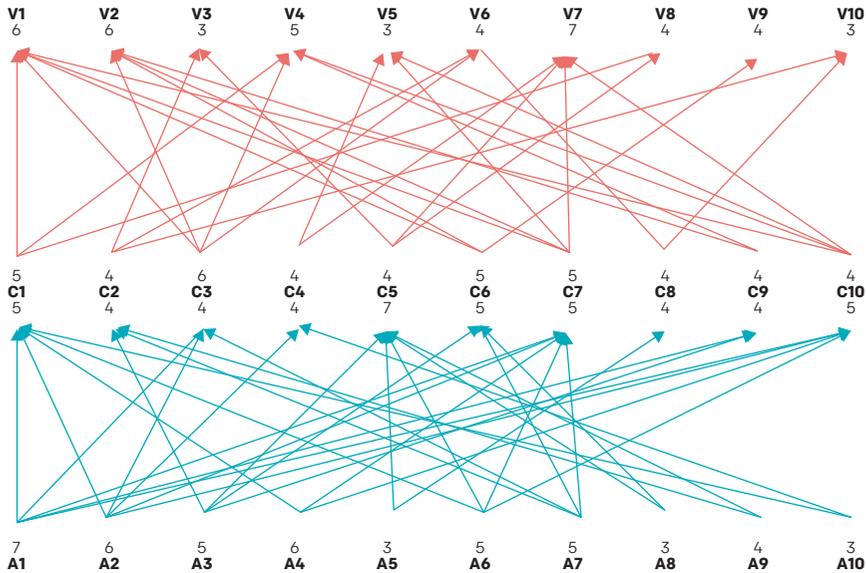


Figure 5. MEC network of wine consumers primed with analytic thinking

Note. The number shown above (below) each MEC content indicates the number of elements connected upstream (downstream) of MEC network.

DISCUSSION

The MEC approach has been particularly successful in exploring cross-cultural consumer mindsets and behavior in the food domain (e.g., Hofstede et al., 1999; Nielsen, Bech-Larsen, & Grunert, 1998; Overby et al., 2004; Russel et al., 2004; Valette-Florence et al., 2000). Until now, MEC-related research has not explicitly considered the influence of consumers' cognitive processing styles on their hierarchical cognitive structures, although recent research from cross-cultural psychology has revealed that modes of thinking are different between Westerners with a dependent self-view and Easterners with an interdependent self-view. The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether consumers exhibited different cognitive complexity in consumption decisions, depending on which thinking style was salient. This idea was investigated in the context of wine consumers' purchases with two different cultural groups, French and Korean,

believed to be analytic and holistic respectively within their own cultures. This study, using a priming paradigm in a cultural analysis of wine consumers' MEC linkages, has provided some clarification on the role of analytic versus holistic thinking in the consumer decision-making process. Thus, it contributes to recent research in food marketing by clarifying the different styles of thinking as a driving force for the potential cultural variation in the number of hierarchical relationships linking attributes, consequences, and values consumers consider in making a decision.

As holistic thinkers have a tendency to focus on relationships among objects and events, while analytic thinkers are inclined to focus on the attributes of a focal object divorced from its context (Choi et al., 2003; Nisbett et al. 2001), we hypothesized and confirmed that Korean wine consumers, compared to French wine consumers, would consider broader connections between the key perceptual elements of the MEC, resulting in more complex structures of interconnected motives. Specifically, drawing upon previous research validating that the two ways of viewing the self affect human cognition (Gardner et al., 1999; Kühnen et al., 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), we have demonstrated the effects of thinking style on MEC linkages after priming consumers with independent versus interdependent self-view prompts. In an experimental setting, we found that self-view priming differentially influences the number of A-C and C-V linkages engendered by two cultural groups, such that French (Korean) consumers exposed to contexts fostering an interdependent (independent) orientation, when compared to those in the non-priming condition, considered more (fewer) hierarchical MEC relationships. Thus, these findings suggest that different cognitive processing styles among French and Korean wine consumers can be induced through priming an independent or interdependent self-view, and that the thinking style consistent with situationally activated self-view can in turn affect the process by which they form sets of cognitive linkages between the product's attributes and their motivations to consume.

Furthermore, wine consumers' hierarchical cognitive structures are graphically represented in HVMS constructed based on individual A-C and C-V matrices to observe their mental images and networks related to wine purchase decisions. Splitting the total sample into analytic versus holistic consumers, regardless of culture, results in parallel patterns of cognitive complexity for French versus Korean consumers. The holistic thinking-primed consumers draw a highly complex MEC network containing a larger number of perceived connections across the range of attributes, consequences, and values than the analytic thinking-primed consumers. These consistent prime effects show that the thinking style associated with a particular self-view, even when temporarily activated, plays an important role in determining the structure of the A-C-V hierarchy underlying the consumer decision process. As a whole, the results provide support for our basic premise that cultural differences in the relative complexity of MEC linkages underlying consumers' wine-buying decision making are due to cultural differences in

holistic tendency: Easterners take more complex relationships into consideration in the causal reasoning of the world than Westerners.

Consistent with the idea of analytic versus holistic thinking (Choi et al., 2003), and the perspective of culture as a dynamic construct (Hong et al., 2000), our overall findings may shed light on the variation in cognitive processing styles as a function of the shift in self-concept styles induced by self-view priming manipulation. What is particularly notable is the fact that our research presents a pattern of results consistent with those of Kühnen and Oyserman (2002), who demonstrated that the independent (interdependent) self is stored in a semantic network—autonomous (social) semantic knowledge of the self—which is connected to cognitive procedures of analytic (holistic) thinking, and that priming these different views of the self brings about an associated thinking mode influencing judgment and decision making. Therefore, our results also contribute to the dynamic understanding of culture-specific thinking styles by supporting the argument that the activation of a particular cognitive process depends on culture-priming cues encountered in a given situation (Hong et al., 2003; Morris & Peng, 1994; Ng & Huston, 2006). Interestingly, in comparison to prior research with Western participants, we believe that this is one of the first cross-cultural studies of consumer behavior to include both Western and Eastern participants who are thought to be dominated respectively by independent and interdependent self-views, as analytic and holistic thinkers. More importantly, what is unique about this study is the identification of consumers' cognitive styles as a determinant of cultural differences in the number of cognitive linkages between the attributes, consequences, and values that serve as a basis for decision making. Considering culturally encouraged versus situationally primed self-view, this cross-cultural investigation of MECs contributes to a better understanding of the flexibility of thinking styles in consumers, thereby emphasizing the importance of the accessibility of cultural mindsets in making product choice decisions. As such, these findings suggest the possibility of applying a dynamic perspective to culture and cognition in research on cross-cultural consumer behavior toward food. We hope that our experimental study of wine consumers' hierarchical cognitive structures will stimulate international food marketing researchers to explore the fundamental mechanisms that underlie cultural differences in consumer cognition and decision making in the food consumption context.

The possible limitation of this research is that the divergent thinking styles were not actually measured. We inferred consumers' analytic or holistic tendency from experimental manipulations of the independent and interdependent self, based on previous priming studies on culture and cognition. Recently, Choi et al. (2007) constructed the analysis-holism scale for cross-cultural research to measure analytic versus holistic reasoning, such as locus of attention (parts versus whole) and causal theory (dispositional versus contextual). Administering this convenient measure of thinking

style after priming may open up new possibilities for the direct examination of the various antecedents and consequences of consumers' cognitive differences. Potentially, future experiments can thus find which aspect of the analytic–holistic thinking dimension comes to be particularly salient due to priming independence or interdependence. Further research would help broaden our knowledge of the causal role of the consumer's self-view in determining cultural cognitive styles by using the analytic–holism scale as complementary tool for manipulation checking.

In summary, our findings may fruitfully be extended to naturalistic environments, such as retail food stores and restaurants. It would be worth trying to explore whether drawing on congruent contextual cues in real-world purchase situations also facilitates relevant cognitive processing styles, thereby giving rise to the cross-cultural variations in decision makers' hierarchical cognitive structures. We hope that this study linking chronic or activated thinking styles to the MEC framework will provide fresh avenues for much more international research on the relationships between analytic–holistic cognition and consumer decision making regarding food products.

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APPENDIX A.

Analytic priming condition for French and Korean wine consumers

<p>해변에서 나만의 즐겁고 여유로운 시간을 보내며 산책을 즐깁니다.</p> <p>나에게 쏟아지는 따뜻한 햇살을 받으며, 해변으로 밀려드는 부서지는 파도소리와 함께 그 무엇도 나만의 소중한 시간을 깨뜨릴 수 없습니다.</p> <p>그 누구에게도 방해 받지 않는 나만의 휴식을 보내고 싶습니다.</p>	
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<p>Je me balade le long de la plage en passant mon temps à relaxer et à jouir du beau temps.</p> <p>Je sens avec délice les rayons du soleil qui me caressent les joues, et j'entends le bruit que font les vagues qui déferlent sur la plage.</p> <p>J'aimerais prolonger ces moments précieux pour moi sans être gênés par personne.</p>	
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APPENDIX B.

Holistic priming condition for French and Korean wine consumers

<p>Nous nous baladons le long de la plage en passant notre temps à relaxer et à jouir du beau temps.</p> <p>Nous sentons avec délice les rayons du soleil qui nous caressent les joues, et nous entendons le bruit que font les vagues qui déferlent sur la plage.</p> <p>Nous aimerions prolonger ces moments précieux pour nous sans être gênés par personne.</p>	
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<p>해변에서 우리만의 즐겁고 여유로운 시간을 보내며 산책을 즐깁니다.</p> <p>우리에게 쏟아지는 따뜻한 햇살을 받으며, 해변으로 밀려드는 부서지는 파도소리와 함께 그 무엇도 우리들의 소중한 시간을 깨뜨릴 수 없습니다.</p> <p>그 누구에게도 방해 받지 않는 우리만의 휴식을 보내고 싶습니다.</p>	
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