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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Cognitive Discrepancy in Chinese "Face": *Mian* and *Lian*, and their Impact on Cognition of Country-of-Origin Image

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Abstract Chinese "face," as a complex social and psychological phenomenon, has attracted much attention from the fields of sociology and psychology. However, in the field of consumer behavior, research about how *mianzi* (face) affects consumer behavior is lacking. Moreover, research on the connotations of sub-dimension of *mianzi* (face), that is, *lian* and *mian* as well as their influences on consumer behavior is seldom seen. Based on the grounded theory, using focus group interviews and the self-report method, this study extracted scenario sentences of *lian* and *mian*, initially forming a preliminary scale with 14 positive items and 20 negative items concerning *lian* and *mian*. Moreover, by using close-ended questionnaire originated from previous grounded theory in terms of Chinese face, this study validated the discrepancy between "*mian*" and "*lian*." Besides the discrepancy between "*mian*" and "*lian*" also appeared in consumer perception about product category and country-of-origin image.

Keywords Chinese face, *mian*, *lian*, cognitive discrepancy, country of origin image

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1 Theoretical Background and Research Questions

Since ancient times, "face is the spiritual creed of Chinese people" (Lü, 1934). Chinese proverbs, such as: "borrowed plumes," "to undergo a terrible ordeal in order to save face" (be more nice than wise), "people live on their face, trees lives on their skin," and "body suffering is better than face getting a fever," have been reflecting the normal lives of Chinese people, that is living for face. Therefore, the face issue has attracted those who are interested in Chinese culture. The extant literature is mostly unfolded in two perspectives in sociology. They are what face is and how face will.

No consensus has been reached on "what face is." However, most researchers in sociology and psychology consider face as something at the motivation level. For example, "Face is a basic requirement and demand of human being during social intercourse" (Brown, 1970); "Face is a public imago that a person demands from others. This imago is stemmed from the requirement of no oppression and requirement of being esteemed" (Lim and Bowers, 1991); "Face is a psychological construct as well as a social construct, with the characteristics of conditional and persistent, referring to the social dignity or public image which is claimed by individual and also recognized by others" (Zhou and Ho, 1994); "Face is a kind of social positive value, which is worthy to be gained by someone during his social intercourse" (Goffman, 1967).

Hu (1944) was the first to divided "face" into two dimensions, which was "*lian*" and "*mian*." The two interrelated and disparate concepts provide a direction for studying the connotation of Chinese People' face. Hu proposed that "*mian*" (an abbreviation of *mianzi* in this research) is kind of prestige stemming from the visible achievements or flaunting; "*lian*" is kind of respect given to someone who has a moral reputation in a group (Hu, 1944). Along with this view, some other Chinese scholars, such as Cheng (1987), Chu (1987), Chen (1982) and Zhai (2004) enriched and developed the concept of "*lian*" and "*mian*." However, research on differentiating "*lian*" and "*mian*" is very limited, among which, only two scholars, Chen (1982) and Chu (1987), conducted empirical research. Chen confirmed Hu's idea, that is, "face" can be divided into two parts, namely, "*lian*" and "*mian*" (Chen, 1982). However, Chen did not provide a concrete definition for the two constructs. Another researcher, Chu, observed that the discrepancy between the two concepts can be found only in amount, the internal factor structures are almost identical (Chu, 1987).

From the view of "how face will," most studies focus on the results of behavior affected by face. Some studies center on relationship (or *guanxi*, as it is called in Chinese, referring to the relationship among people) by differentiating three concepts, namely face, favor and power (status), and their interrelationship as well as their effects on social behavior of Chinese people (Huang, 1987;

Davies et al., 1995; Leung and Yeung, 1995; Leung et al., 1996; Tsang, 1998; Wong, 1998; Gao, 1998; Wong and Chan, 1999; Leung and Chan, 2000; Su, 2006). These scholars suggest that favor is the framework for relationship, while "keeping face" is a precipitating factor to building and developing relationship among Chinese people. Another school of research concentrates on studying the behavior caused by face. Such as "gift-giving behavior" of Chinese people (Yan, 1996; Yau et al., 1999; Wang and Razzaque, 2000; Gu, 2001; Wang, 2005; Buckley, 2006; Liu and Murphy, 2007). "Conspicuous consumption" and "luxury product consumption" (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Zhou and Nakamoto, 2000, 2004; Fan et al., 2006; Li and Su, 2007; Yuan et al., 2009). Their studies consistently consider face as an important feature of Chinese culture. As a result, Chinese people' consumption of high-value goods, such as automobile, branded clothing, mobile phone and housing consumption are highly affected by Face (Jiang, 2008).

After reviewing the existing literature on "face," we have the following findings: Firstly, studies on the concept of Chinese face appeared clustering in Taiwan in 1980's. In contrast with Taiwan researchers, scholars in the mainland of China seldom used the grounded theory methodology to dig into the connotation and dimension of face concept. Moreover, there is little work on developing scales to measure "face." Secondly, taking face as an integrated concept instead of differentiating two sub-concepts of face, "*lian*" and "*mian*," current researches focus on how face affecting behaviors, lacking of empirical studies on how "*lian*" and "*mian*" affecting consumer behavior separately. Therefore, we intend to investigate in the following three aspects in this study. Firstly, pass judgment on different face behaviors; secondly, explore different constructs consisting of the two dimensions of face, namely "*lian*" and "*mian*"; thirdly, try to distinct between "*lian*" and "*mian*" and their respective impacts on consumer behavior.

2 Research Design and Methodology

The grounded theory methodology (GTM) is used in this study to explore what Chinese people think about face. As a qualitative method, GTM provides a linkage between phenomena and theory by collecting empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This study mainly aims to distinguish the difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" as well as their influences on consumer behavior, such as consumer perception, consumer attitude and purchase intention towards country-of-origin image. We constructed our survey by using the self-report method and focus group interview to collect items about "*lian*" and "*mian*," and closed-ended questionnaire to measure difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" and their effects on consumer behavior.

2.1 Item Collection

Firstly, we used open-ended self-report method to investigate 46 senior undergraduate students and 43 MBA students in Sun Yat-sen University. The participants were asked to answer the following two questions: (Q1) Do you think there is any difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" in Chinese culture? If yes, please use a sentence to describe the two concepts, respectively; (Q2) Please write down 3 incidents to describe the following scenarios, respectively: consumer behavior with "*lian*," consumer behavior without "*lian*," consumer behavior with "*mian*" and consumer behavior without "*mian*."

In order to differentiate the participants' transient response and memory response regarding "*lian*" and "*mian*," we used PPT to show the questions and the researcher also read out the question in sequence. The participants were given 3 seconds to answer the first part of Q1 and 2 minutes to answer the latter part of Q1. For Q2, in order to let the participants have enough time to try to recall their memory on some incidents about "*lian*" and "*mian*," they were given 8 minutes to describe each situation.

A total of 552 pieces of description were collected. Subsequently, judged by experts in sociology and marketing, description items with similar semanteme were combined. Glossolalia items were deleted. Finally, we sorted out 14 positive items representing the meaning of having face in terms of "having *lian*" and "having *mian*," 20 negative items representing the meaning of shame in terms of "losing *lian*" and "losing *mian*." Moreover, all participants were asked to value the attributes of each item in terms of "having *lian*/*mian*" or "losing *lian*/*mian*" or "uncertain."

2.2 Questionnaire Design and Test

At the second stage, we developed a scale using the 14 positive items and 20 negative items collected. In the scale, the participants were asked to judge the degree of "honor" in the 14 positive items standing for having face, and the degree of shame or embarrassment in the 20 negative items standing for shame. Furthermore, the participants were asked to differentiate what nature the 34 items belong to in terms of "having/losing *lian*" or "having/losing *mian*" or "uncertain," respectively.

In order to test the cognitive dissonance between "*lian*" and "*mian*" as well as their influence on Chinese consumer behavior, this research introduced a construct called "country-of-origin image" (COI), because COI might generate halo effect. What perception and attitude a consumer holds concerning a country will influence his/her understanding about products or brands originally made in that country. Moreover, COI will influence consumer purchase intention (Min,

1989; Gabrielle et al., 1998). In addition, this research differentiated cognitive difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" when consumer buying necessity products and non-necessity products under the category of "private use" and "public use." Because reference groups, like social norms, could have significantly different influence on consumer buying decision when consumer purchasing products or brands for "private use" and for "public use" (Bearden and Michael, 1982). "*Mianzi*," as a well-known and broadly accepted Chinese cultural concept, can be considered as a kind of social norm which has a great influence on Chinese consumer behavior.

Therefore, this study tested the cognitive differences between "*lian*" and "*mian*" when consumer purchasing different product originally made in different countries. Four kinds of products, namely cosmetics, food, automobile and refrigerator, were selected to represent "publicly used necessity," "privately used necessity," "publicly used non-necessity" and "privately used non-necessity," respectively. Japan, USA, Germany, and China were selected to test COI. The three foreign countries have ranked among the top 10 FDI inbound countries into Chinese market since 2000. As a result, Chinese consumers are comparatively more aware of products and brands originated from these countries. Consumers' attitude toward COI of these countries is easier to investigate than that of other countries. Lastly, this research also tested consumer re-purchasing intention after knowing company scandals or product deficiency respectively under the four countries' circumstance.

3 Data Collection and Analysis

We employed a convenience sampling approach and recruited respondents from a large leading university in China. Students from a marketing course were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. The incentive was a small portion of extra credit points in the course. Participants were told that the focus of the study was to learn about the influence of Chinese culture and its influence on consumer behaviors. They were informed that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and only be used for academic purposes. A total of 98 MBA students took part in the study by filling the questionnaire, among which, 83 valid responses were collected. SPSS 15.0 was used for data analysis. The results are discussed in following paragraphs.

3.1 Cognitive Discrepancy between the Concept of "*Lian*" and "*Mian*"

Respondents were asked Q1. "Do you think there is any difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" in Chinese culture?" The data shows that there is a significant difference between the two concepts, "*lian*" and "*mian*." Nearly 87% of the

respondents considered the two concepts as different and can be distinguished (Fig. 1), lending preliminary support to the hypothesis of this study ($p = 0.000$).

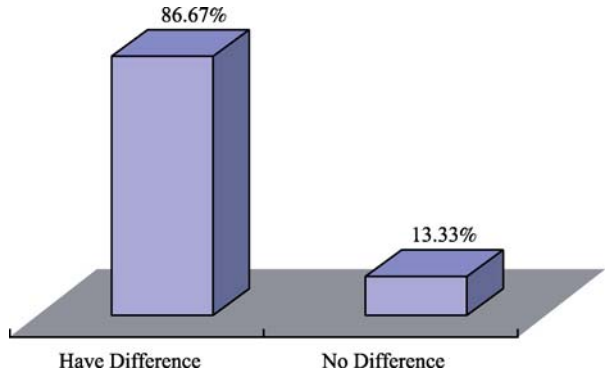

Fig. 1 Responses to the Existence of Difference between "*Lian*" and "*Mian*" in Chinese Culture

3.2 Discrepancy on "*Lian*" and "*Mian*" in Positive Items and Negative Items Respectively

In the first stage of survey, we got 14 positive items standing for the meaning of having face in terms of "having *lian*" and "having *mian*" (Table 1), 20 negative

Table 1 Positive Items on *Lian* and *Mian*

Scenario Items	Frequency(%)		
	Have *mian*	Have *lian*	Uncertain
1. Having dinner in high-class restaurant	73.0	9.4	17.6
2. Buying an apartment for parents	35.6	34.3	30.1
3. Buying an elite housing	79.7	9.5	10.8
4. Helping people who have higher social status	39.7	23.3	37.0
5. Helping people who have lower social status	32.9	17.8	49.3
6. Accepting help from people with higher social status	38.4	17.8	43.8
7. Accepting help from people of lower status	16.4	12.4	71.2
8. Speaking foreign languages in public places	50.0	4.2	45.8
9. Making friends with people with higher social status	49.3	26.0	24.7
10. Making friends with people with lower social status	20.2	6.8	73.0
11. Graduated from a prestigious university	64.9	31.0	4.1
12. Possessing things that other people do not have	47.9	13.7	38.4
13. Let others know that I was born in rural areas	13.5	4.1	82.4
14. Let others know that I was born in big cities	23.0	5.4	71.6

items representing the meaning of shame in terms of "losing *lian*" and "losing *mian*" (Table 2).

Table 2 Negative Items on *Lian* and *Mian*

Scenario Items	Frequency(%)		
	Lose *mian*	Lose *lian*	Uncertain
1. Wearing shabby clothes	59.5	23.0	17.5
2. Misspeaking on important occasions	29.7	66.2	4.1
3. Having disabled family member(s)	8.1	1.4	90.5
4. Being scolded in public	56.8	41.8	1.4
5. Refusing to give a tip on some occasions where it is necessary	43.2	36.5	20.3
6. Speaking loudly when using mobile phone in public	25.7	52.7	21.6
7. Incapability in work	17.6	75.7	6.7
8. Being found when using counterfeit	37.8	25.7	36.5
9. Speaking inappropriate words on certain occasion	47.3	44.6	8.1
10. Standing treat but found that money is not enough	56.8	37.8	5.4
11. Checking bill carefully in restaurant before paying	24.3	5.4	70.3
12. Being rejected frequently when finding a job	24.3	31.1	44.6
13. Misbehavior of family member(s)	55.4	31.1	13.5
14. Behaviors like Sister Furong (a vulgar internet celebrity in China)	6.8	56.8	36.6
15. Being openly criticized	43.2	48.6	8.2
16. Fail to keep one's promise to one's superior	27.0	62.2	10.8
17. Fail to keep one's promise to one's subordinate	51.4	35.1	13.5
18. A husband helps his wife buy sanitary napkins	16.2	6.8	77.0
19. Purchasing condoms in the supermarket	9.5	5.4	85.1
20. Bringing back gifts for a friend from overseas which are printed with "Made in China"	41.9	13.5	44.6

From Table 1, we can see that 5 scenario items are highly related to "having face," rather than "having *lian*" ($p = 0.000$). These 5 scenario items are, "buying an elite house," "having dinner in fine cuisines," "graduated from a prestigious university," "speaking foreign languages in public places," and "making friends with people with higher social status" (Fig. 2). However, the attributes of most of 14 positive items are not highly related to "having *lian*" (frequency mean = 15.407 14). In other words, the positive items (scenarios) mostly reflect the attributes of *mian* other than *lian* in terms of Chinese face concept.

Table 2 shows that there are 5 scenarios highly related to "losing *mian* (face)"

(frequency mean = 55.98). They are "wearing shabby clothes," "being scolded in public," "standing treat but found money is not enough," "misbehavior of family member(s)," and "fail to keep one's promise to one's subordinate" (Fig. 3).

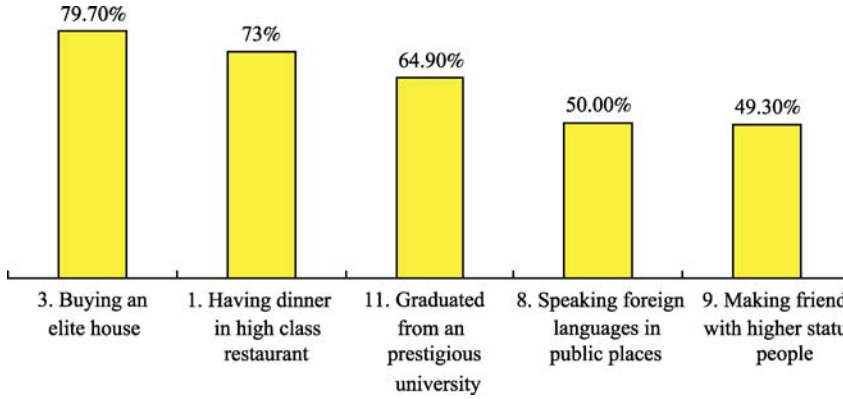

Fig. 2 Positive Items on "Having *Mian*"

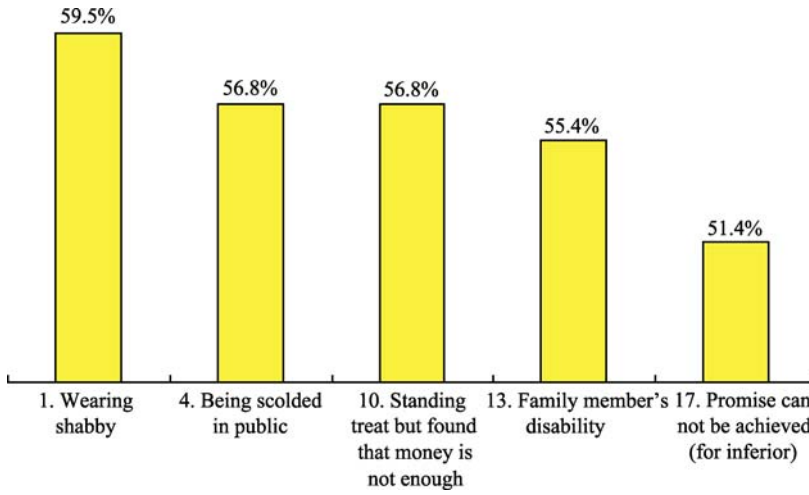

Fig. 3 Top 5 Scenarios Defined as "Losing *Mian*"

However, another 5 scenarios in the 20 negative items are highly related to the nature of shame, that is, "losing *lian*" (frequency mean = 62.72%). They are: "Incapability in work," "Misspeaking on important occasions," "Fail to keep one's promise to one's superior," "Behaviors like Sister Furong (a vulgar internet celebrity in China)," "Speaking loudly when using mobile phone in public" (Fig. 4). Interestingly, the degree of embarrassment of lose *lian* is higher than

that of lose *mian* (Pt.Diff = 6.74). We can therefore infer that, in terms of losing face, some scenarios which mostly reflect lose *mian* is a feeling of embarrassment by nature, whereas some scenarios mostly reflect lose *lian* is a feeling of shame even of guilty.

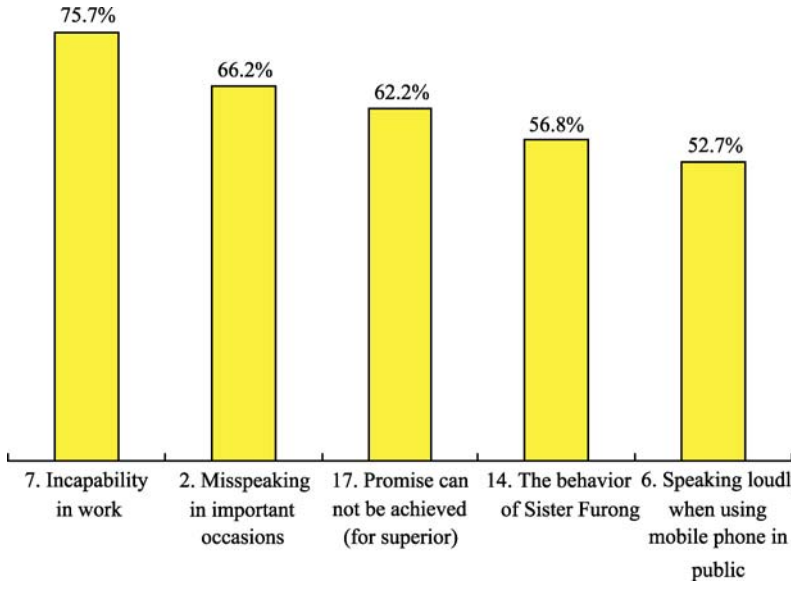

Fig. 4 Top 5 Issues Being Defined as "Losing *Lian*"

3.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis on the Scale of "*Lian*" and "*Mian*"

Checking on content consistency of the 14 positive items and 20 negative items in the scale, it is found that the Cronbach's α for positives items, negative items, and the whole scale is 0.812, 0.813, and 0.845, respectively. It reflects that the whole items (scenarios) collected in our study have higher internal consistency with respect to "*lian*" and "*mian*" (face). The 34 items mostly reflect the nature of Chinese face. The reliability of this scale is thus high and acceptable. We also checked the construct validity of the scale in this study. By factor analyzing, we found that KMO for positive items and negative items is 0.680 and 0.690, respectively. Moreover, the significant level in Bartlett Test of Sphericity is

Table 3 Reliability Analysis

Positive Items		Negative Items		Total Items	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.812	14	0.813	20	0.845	34

0.000, indicating the acceptability of the scale for testing "*lian*" and "*mian*" under the context of Chinese culture (Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 4 Validity Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test-Positive Item			KMO and Bartlett's Test-Negative Item		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.680	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.690
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	311.530	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	419.563
	df	91		df	190
	Sig.	0.000		Sig.	0.000

3.4 Effects on Consumer Behavior Caused by "*Lian*" and "*Mian*"

3.4.1 Effects on Buying Behavior

The forgoing part verified that there exists a cognitive discrepancy on the connotation of "*lian*" and "*mian*." Data analysis showed that, 45.6% of participants agreed that "*lian*" and "*mian*" have the most significant influence on automobile buying decision; followed up by cosmetics consumption (37%), refrigerator consumption (36.1%), and lest influence on milk consumption (26.3%) (Fig. 5). This result supports William O. Bearden's theory, that "*mianzi*" (including "*lian*" and "*mian*"), as a well-known and broadly-accepted Chinese cultural concept, have distinctively influences on consumer buying decision under different buying situations. "Publicly used non-necessity" is mostly influenced by social norms, namely "*lian*" and "*mian*" in this paper; by comparison, "privately used necessity" receives least influence from social norms.

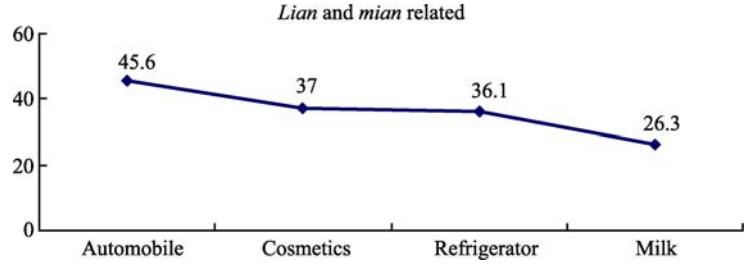

Fig. 5 Influence of "*Lian*" and "*Mian*" on Buying Behavior of 4 Product Categories

3.4.2 Effects on Country-of-Origin Image (COI)

As far as COI is concerned, a significant cognitive discrepancy between "*lian*"

and "*mian*" appears when considering buying product or brand originally made in different countries. Taking automobile buying behavior as an example, with respect to positive items of "*lian*" and "*mian*," we can see that the behavior of buying German car earns the most "face" (have *mian*/face) for Chinese consumers. Buying Chinese car earns the least "face" (Fig. 6).

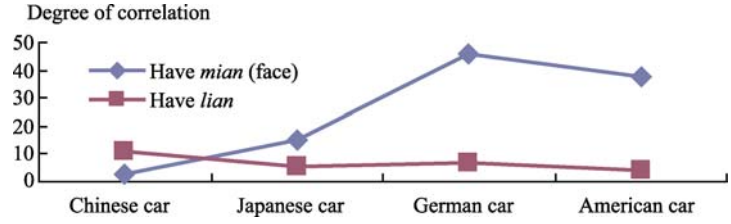

Fig. 6 Influence of Positive Items of "*Lian*" and "*Mian*" on COI

With respect to negative items of "*lian*" and "*mian*," we can see that the behavior of buying Chinese car, Germany car, or American car has nothing to do with "losing *lian*" (shame). However, the behavior of buying Japanese car has been considered as "losing *lian*" (shame). And buying home-made car is something of "losing *mian* (face)" (Fig. 7).

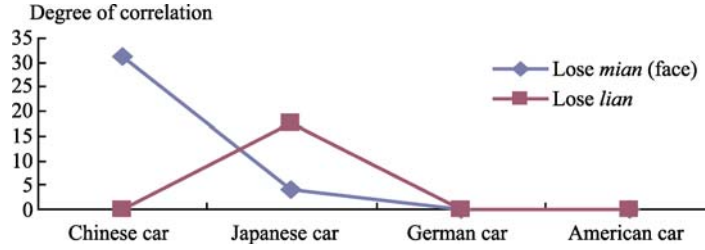

Fig. 7 Influence of Negative Items of "*Lian*" and "*Mian*" on COI

From Fig. 6 and Fig. 7, what interesting to see is, the behavior of buying Japanese car can earn more face than buying home-made car (Chinese car), but buying Japanese car also lose "*lian*." This result further verified the basic hypothesis of this study, that is to say, there certainly exists cognitive discrepancy between "*lian*" and "*mian*" in Chinese culture. Especially the discrepancy is significant in negative connotation of "*lian*" and "*mian*."

3.4.3 Effects on Scandal Events Associated with COI

"Losing *lian*" (shame) has long been considered as a shameful behavior in China. However, the effect of "losing *lian*" on consumer buying behavior will change

when some scandals relate to either the product itself or the product-made country, for instance, product quality accident of a certain foreign brand, Chinese people being disrespected or belittled by a certain foreign country or its companies. By asking question "will you keep buying the product originally made in the country which is now damaging the national interests of China (abnormal situation)? From the data analysis we can see, compared to the situation of no scandal (normal situation), keep buying products which are originally made in such a foreign country will be regarded as a shameful behavior, that is, "losing *lian.*" However, under normal situations, only buying Japanese products will be regarded as a shameful behavior whereas buying products originally made in either Germany or USA have nothing to do with "losing *lian*" (Fig. 8).

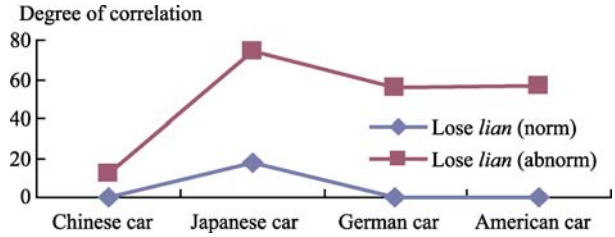

Fig. 8 Change before and after COI Scandals

4 Conclusion and Discussion

4.1 Conclusion

This study explored the connotation of "*lian*" and "*mian*" as well as their effects on consumer behavior. The main conclusions are as below. Firstly, there certainly exist a cognitive discrepancy between "*lian*" and "*mian*," the two dimension of "*mianzi*" (Chinese face). This discrepancy exists in both consumers' unconscious response and conscious perception (Fig. 1, Table 1 and Table 2).

Cognitive psychology suggests that most psychological experience has occurred beyond conscious awareness (Kihlstrom, 1987; Mandler, 1975). Being an unconscious trace potentially accumulated past experiences and attitudes will affect individual's feelings, perceptions and behaviors about a certain social subject (Greenward and Banaji, 1995). To measure this kind of unconscious reaction, in 1998, Greenward and other scholars used "reaction time" (latency) to test participants' reaction to the coupling degree of a certain concept and a certain attribute. Based on this approach, the current study introduced "three seconds of reaction time" method to test unconscious awareness of the

participants. Result shows that there indeed exists a cognitive discrepancy in the concepts of "*lian*" and "*mian*" (Fig. 1). And items (scenarios) standing for "*lian*" and items (scenarios) standing for "*mian*" which were extracted from participants' memory are also different for each other. This finding further enhances the preceding conclusion. In our study, we found that it's not easy to distinguish the difference between "*lian*" and "*mian*" in positive items (Table 1), which is consistent with the study result of Ling (1987). However, the discrepancy is quite significant in negative items (Fig. 3 & Fig. 4) and such a discrepancy exists in both quantity and the nature of content. For example, for an individual who "fails to keep his promise," when this situation happens in front of his/her subordinate, he/she would feel "losing *mian* (face)." However, when this happens in front of his/her superior, he/she would feel "losing *lian* (shame)." The feeling of shame or embarrassment becomes more prominent in the latter situation. In Chinese culture, "benevolence, loyalty and ceremony" are considered as social rules. If one made a promise to his/her boss but fail to keep the promise, he/she will be regarded as disloyalty, or kind of disgrace. However, if one failed to keep his promise to his subordinate, it is something more of innocuousness. Another scenario in our study, the behavior of Sister Furong was regarded as something of shame. Sister Furong is an after-70s internet celebrity who uploads her photos with exaggerating body shapes onto the internet, and thus gains quick "fame" nationwide. Supporters of Furong argue that the behavior of exhibiting one's personality should be understood, while opponents argued that Sister Furong's behavior doesn't comply with the morals and values admitted by society. Her behavior is shameful and disgraceful. In summary, the connotations in negative "*lian*" and "*mian*" are different not only in quantity but also in their nature.

Secondly, "publicly used non-necessity" is mostly influenced by "*lian*" and "*mian*" (Fig. 5). The effects of cognitive discrepancy between "*lian*" and "*mian*" on consumer behavior have also been proved in our study. From Fig. 5 that we can infer, Automobile consumption, standing for product category of "Publicly used non-necessity," is mostly influenced by "*lian*" and "*mian*"; This result accords with Jiang's study, in which she focused on issue of face and consumption. By investigating 26 kinds of product consumption, she found that automobile ranks first when participants answering question of "which kind of product are more influenced by face when buying them." Clothing ranks the second and mobile phone takes the third place. Furthermore, our study supports William's theory, that is, "effects of reference group (RG) on consumer decision making." In this theory it is said that buying "Publicly used non-necessity" decision are influenced by RG either for product choosing or for brand choosing (Bourne, 1957; Bearden, 1982). In China market, automobile still belongs to product category of "non-necessity." Automobile owning rate is rather lower

compared with that in developed countries. Therefore, owning a car, especially an expensive car, is something of honor or having face. People like to show off themselves by owning something others can't afford.

Thirdly, the cognitive discrepancy between "lian" and "mian" can affect consumers' attitudes toward COI (country of origin image) (Fig. 6–Fig. 8). Interestingly, the behavior of buying Chinese products is something of "losing face," but "have *lian*"; Buying Japanese products behavior is considered to be shameful, but "have face"; And buying German and US products are considered to be the most face-earning behavior (Fig. 7); When China's interests are hurt by some foreign countries, then keep buying products originally made in those countries will be regarded as shameful behavior. Among which, buying Japanese products is the most shameful behavior. Unexpectedly, consumer attitudes towards Chinese product with quality problems are much tolerant (Fig. 8).

This interesting result might be caused from Chinese consumers' positive attitudes towards those products originally made in developed countries, such as product originally made in Germany, USA and Japan. Buying products or brands originally made in these countries are regarded as having face. However, because of Japanese invasion of China in the past, buying Japanese products are considered as shameful behavior, as demonstrated by the responses of most of the participants in our study. Buying domestic products is considered as "earning less face" because of the lower price, but, such behavior can also show their patriotisms. Therefore, a large proportion of the participants believe that buying domestic products is behavior of "having *lian*." For another situation, once China's interests being damaged by some foreign countries, the behavior of continuing to buy products originally made in such countries will be regarded as very shameful and lack of patriotism.

It is worth mentioning that a special accident occurred in the autumn of 2008. The melamine scandal burst out in the dairy industry in China that year. This event brought extensively bad influence on the Chinese dairy industry as well as the poor image of "Made in China." Many Chinese people believe that this event makes all Chinese "lose face" in the international arena. Therefore, we specifically selected "milk" representing for "privately used necessity" in our study. The purpose was to test whether there is a significantly different attitude between "China's milk trouble" and other China's products trouble with respect to the cognitive discrepancy of "*lian*" and "*mian*." However, we do not see a significant difference from the data analysis, which further shows that Chinese consumers are much more tolerant for their domestic products even with quality problems.

4.2 Future Research

This study verified the cognitive discrepancy between "*lian*" and "*mian*,"

distinguished positive and negative events concerning with "*lian*" and "*mian*," discussed the influences of cognitive discrepancy on buying product category and attitude toward COI. However, the validity of the scale developed in this study is not good enough. The limitation of sample numbers and sample homogeneity exist. Therefore we are unable to analyze factors and the construct of "*lian*" and "*mian*" very clearly. Future research should not only need to enlarge sample size, but also need to investigate a larger number of participants of different generations. This will help collecting much more consumer behavior-related items to find the factors and constructs of consumers' cognition on "*lian*" and "*mian*." In addition, study issue on the influence of generation change on the changing of connotation of "*lian*" and "*mian*" is also of value.

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