Motives for consumer choice of traditional food and European food in mainland China

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- Presents a Food Choice Questionnaire-based study in mainland China
- Proposes a novel construct with six food choice motive dimensions
- “Time or money saving” and “Sensory appeal” are key food choice motives
- Traditional food choices are driven by “Availability and familiarity”
- Preference for European food is linked to “Mood” motives

Motives for consumer choice of traditional food and European food in mainland China

Abstract

The demand for European (-style) foods in mainland China has been increasing dramatically during the last decade. Nevertheless, European food producers often appear to be not capable to fully exploit this huge market potential, partially due to the competition with traditional (Chinese) foods. This study examines the determinants of mainland Chinese consumers' choice of traditional food and European food. A web-based survey was administered with 541 consumers from two cities: Shanghai and Xi'an. Thereby, the Food Choice Motives model, predominantly used thus far in a European or developed context, is applied to mainland China in order to address the lack of knowledge on food motives of its consumer market and to detect associations between these motives, attitudes, and purchase intentions.

Factor analysis resulted in a new Food Choice Motive construct that is considered more appropriate within the context of mainland Chinese consumers, encompassing six dimensions: *Health concern*, *Time or money saving*, *Sensory appeal*, *Availability and familiarity*, *Mood* and *Food safety concern*. Path analysis demonstrated that *Time or money saving* was negatively associated with attitude toward traditional food on the one hand and purchase intentions toward European food on the other hand. *Availability and familiarity* had a positive association with attitude toward traditional food. *Mood* was a positive factor driving attitude toward

European food. For both food types, *Sensory appeal* and *Attitude* were positively linked to purchase intentions. Furthermore, *Mood* was negatively linked to the purchase intention toward traditional food in Shanghai. *Food safety concern* was positively associated with attitudes toward traditional food in Xi'an.

This study contributes to a better understanding of mainland Chinese consumers as well as the key factors that play a role in their choices for traditional (Chinese) food and European food. As such, these findings could support European food producers when developing marketing strategies for more effectively reaching Chinese consumers.

Keywords

China, Consumer, Traditional food, European food, Food choice motives, Path analysis

1. Introduction

Due to the growing income levels, its huge consumer market, the changing dietary habits and the Westernization of food consumption patterns in particular, and since its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2003 (WTO), mainland China became more and more important as a (potential) market for food producers around the world, especially from European countries (Curtis, Mccluskey, & Wahl, 2007; Hu, Cox, & Edwards, 2007; Pingali, 2007; World Bank, 2014). This is particularly the case in the past years, as the annual growth rate of 27.3% for imported, processed foods/beverages between 2008 and 2012 in mainland China shows (Alice, 2013). As a consequence, China quickly became the largest wine export market of the European Union (EU), for example (Alinna, 2013). And the Chinese food market is likely to become even more oriented toward European foods in the future.

Opposite to this trend, European food producers face strong competition from food producers in mainland China. Given the thousands of local traditional foods that still determine the modern Chinese diet (Cai & Situ, 2006; Cheng, 1994; Zhang, Zhang, Tang, Zou, & Su, 2009; Zhao, 2003), and the cultural dietary differences between Chinese and Western consumer behavior (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Sun & Collins, 2004; Wan, 1995; Zhang et al., 2011), European and Western producers of traditional foods are continuously seeking potential ways to successfully penetrate this promising market. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of understanding of mainland Chinese consumers' motives for their own traditional foods versus European foods.

When analyzing food choice motives, the work of Steptoe, Pollard, and

Wardle (1995) is indispensable. In their Food Choice Questionnaire (FCQ), they classified food choice motives (FCMs) into nine dimensions: *Health, Mood, Convenience, Sensory appeal, Natural content, Price, Weight control, Familiarity and Ethical concern*. This FCQ was widely used by researchers to explore choice motives of consumers with different cultural backgrounds for different food products (Chen, 2011; Honkanen, 2010; Honkanen & Frewer, 2009; Johansen, Næs, & Hersleth, 2011; Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero, & Hersleth, 2009; Pohjanheimo, Paasovaara, Luomala, & Sandell, 2010; Pula, Parks, & Ross, 2014; Sproesser, Strohbach, Schupp, & Renner, 2011; Vyth et al., 2010; Zakowska-Biemans, 2011). Several studies focused on traditional food products, mostly in Europe (Almli, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Næs, & Hersleth, 2011; Guerrero et al., 2010; Guerrero et al., 2012; Guerrero et al., 2009; Pieniak et al., 2009; Vanhonacker, Lengard, Hersleth, & Verbeke, 2010; Vanhonacker, Verbeke, et al., 2010). The study by Almli et al. (2011) showed that product attributes related to *sensory*, *health* and *quality* issues helped European consumers to create a positive image of traditional foods, whereas product attributes like *convenience* or *price*, had a negative effect on their perception. Pieniak et al. (2009) reported that the most important motives for European consumers to choose traditional foods were: *Weight control, Convenience, Familiarity, Healthiness* and *Natural content*. However, until now, few empirical studies have examined Chinese consumers' choice motives for European foods. Whereas Curtis et al. (2007) found that 'taste' has a large impact on Chinese consumers' preferences for Western-style convenience foods, Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, and Wang (2011) mentioned that

Chinese outbound travelers were very sensitive to the *cleanliness* / *safety* and *price* of local foods when visiting Western countries. Chinese tourists mainly looked at *appetizing assurance* and *familiar flavor* when choosing Australian local food (Chang et al., 2010). Notwithstanding the usefulness of their findings, none of these studies used a model like a FCQ-based model, to comprehensively analyze and understand mainland Chinese consumers' FCMs as well as their choice motives for traditional Chinese food and European food.

Given the aforementioned research gaps, the aim of this study is to examine the association between FCMs and mainland Chinese consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward their own traditional food and European food. This allows for comparison of consumer behavior for two distinct types of food, local, traditional food versus European foods in mainland China. Thereby, 'European food' was defined as 'local food products imported from Europe or food with a European style or flavor that can be consumed in restaurants or other places in China'. Building upon the FCQ and theoretical models on food choice motives and consumer behavior (attitudes, purchase intentions, consumption) (Ajzen, 1991; Chen, 2007; Pieniak et al., 2009; Zakowska-Biemans, 2011; Žeželj, Milošević, Stojanović, & Ognjanov, 2012), a hypothetical model was developed, as shown in Figure 1. FCMs are assumed to have a direct impact on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (willingness to buy) of both food types. Meanwhile, FCMs are also expected to indirectly influence the purchase intentions through attitude. As previous FCQ-based studies have shown that the applicability of FCM constructs differs according to the cultural setting

(Honkanen, 2010; Honkanen & Frewer, 2009; Milošević, Žeželj, Gorton, & Barjolle, 2012; Pula et al., 2014; Zakowska-Biemans, 2011; Žeželj et al., 2012), we assessed the generalizability of the original construct of FCMs (Steptoe et al., 1995) to a consumer sample obtained from mainland China.

>> Insert Figure 1

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants and procedures

The data collection was conducted by a Chinese market research agency in December 2013. A web-based questionnaire was sent to registered members of a consumer panel maintained by the research agency, using strict identification verification. The study was done in two mainland Chinese cities: Shanghai and Xi'an. All participants who completed the questionnaire received a monetary incentive.

This rationale behind the selection of both cities is related to their location: Shanghai in Northern and Xi'an in Southern China. Besides obvious differences between both regions in terms of cultural history, dietary habits and lifestyles, there are also differences in consumption behavior between this low and high income region (He, 2013; Sun & Collins, 2004; Sun, 2012).

Being an international metropolis and the most developed city of mainland China, Shanghai has gained most exposure to Western (food) cultures in mainland China, while Xi'an is a more traditional city in a less developed region with far lower

per capita income (Liu et al., 2011; National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2013).

A total of 541 valid responses were collected for this study, of which 259 from Shanghai and 282 from Xi'an. Table 1 presents the detailed socio-demographic characteristics of the pooled sample and the subsamples, including age, gender, financial situation of the household and occupation. In line with previous research (Pieniak et al., 2009), the financial situation of households was subjectively assessed by participants on a 7-point interval scale ranging from '*difficult*' to '*well off*'.

>> Insert Table 1

2.2. Pretest

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and translated into Chinese. Two rounds of online pretests were carried out with Chinese participants living in China and working in Belgium. Apart from completing the questionnaire, these participants were asked to provide feedback about the design and interpretation of the questionnaire. Based on the results and feedback, the survey design and Chinese translation were adapted.

2.3. Measures

The questionnaire consisted of three sections: (1) the food choice motives in general; (2) the attitudes and purchase intentions (willingness to buy) related to traditional food and European food; and (3) socio-demographic characteristics.

160 FCMs were based on the original FCQ (Steptoe et al., 1995), but not all
161 original FCM items were considered in this study. We have followed the selection
162 strategy of Pieniak et al. (2009), in which only the most appropriate and relevant FCM
163 dimensions and items are included based on a prior qualitative study. Prior to this
164 study, a word association test was conducted to explore Chinese consumer
165 perceptions of traditional food and European food in 2012 (Wang, Gellynck, Liu, Liu,
166 Zhang, Vanhonacker, & Verbeke, 2014). In line with Hawkins and Mothersbaugh
167 (2009), who pointed out that consumer perceptions of marketing stimuli of a product
168 are influenced by motives, items and dimensions were selected based on the
169 frequencies of the terms that participants associated with the stimulus words
170 'traditional food' and 'European food'. For example, because none of the participants
171 related both stimulus words with ethical concern, political issues and environmental
172 protection issues, the overall FCM dimension of *Ethical concern* and its underlying
173 items were excluded in the present study. As a consequence, eight FCM dimensions
174 from the original FCQ were included to examine participants' motives for food
175 choices: *Sensory appeal*, *Convenience*, *Mood*, *Weight control*, *Natural content*, *Price*,
176 *Health* and *Familiarity*. This results in a total of twenty-seven original FCM items
177 (Table 2). Participants were asked to evaluate the importance of these items for their
178 daily food choice ('*It is important to me that the food I eat on a typical day*
179 *is/contains…'*), on a seven-point Likert scale: 1= disagree strongly, 2= disagree
180 moderately, 3= disagree slightly, 4= neither agree nor disagree, 5= agree slightly, 6=

agree moderately, and 7= agree strongly (Prescott, Young, O'Neill, Yau, & Stevens, 2002).

>> Insert Table 2

Participants' attitudes toward traditional food and European food were assessed by respectively three seven-point semantic differential scales using bipolar adjectives: unhappy/happy, dull/excited, and terrible/delighted (Table 3). This method had been employed in previous FCQ-based studies assessing consumers' general attitudes toward food products (Pieniak et al., 2009; Žeželj et al., 2012).

Items measuring purchase intentions (willingness to buy) were derived from a study by Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998), which examined mainland Chinese consumers' purchase intentions (willingness to buy) toward Japanese products. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements: (1) '*I would never buy a [food category] (R).*' (2) '*Whenever available, I would prefer to buy [food category].*' and (3) '*Whenever possible, I would avoid buying [food category] (R).*' (Table 3). Each of these three statements were asked for traditional food and European food, and assessed on a seven-point interval scale with the same response categories as in the evaluation part of the FCMs. The two reverse-scored items were recoded before data analysis.

>> Insert Table 3

3. Data analysis and results

3.1. Analysis methods

The statistical software tools SPSS 22 and AMOS 21 were used for performing all analyses in this research. With respect to the generalizability of the original construct of FCMs (i.e. the eight dimensions, as shown in Table 2) for the specific case of our mainland Chinese sample, the analysis methods were similar as in the FCQ-based studies presented by Eertmans, Victoir, Notelaers, Vansant, & Van den Bergh (2006) and Milošević et al. (2012). First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to examine whether the original FCM construct has a good fit with the pooled sample and the samples of the two cities (AMOS 21); second, as the construct did not fit well with the samples, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to explore the appropriateness of the construct of FCMs for the specific Chinese sample. Principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was used (SPSS 22).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to assess the association between the FCM variables of the new FCM construct and the attitude and purchase intention variables related to traditional food and European food, based on two previous FCQ-based studies (Pieniak et al., 2009; Žeželj et al., 2012). Path analysis for the pooled sample and multi-group path analysis for the two city subsamples were conducted to detect significant relationships among the latent variables of FCM

224 dimensions, attitudes and purchase intentions as well as to identify if the data of the
225 two cities were suitable to analyze them together (AMOS 21) (Wu, 2009).

226 As Rigdon (1995) indicated that Chi-square may not be an appropriate
227 measure of goodness-of-fit for a SEM, due to the complicated structure, large amount
228 of variables or the use of data from the real world, and because Wu (2009) pointed out
229 that Chi-square is not suitable to evaluate the goodness-of-fit of a SEM collecting data
230 from questionnaire survey with a sample size above 200, we evaluated the goodness-
231 of-fit by four other indices, considering the complexity of the SEM and the sample
232 size in current study: (1) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the
233 value of acceptable fit is below 0.08; (2) Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the value of
234 acceptable fit is above 0.9 (with 'above 0.95' as ideal); (3) Incremental Fit Index
235 (IFI), the value of acceptable fit is above 0.9; (4) Normed chi-square (NC = Chi-
236 square / Degrees of freedom), the recommended value is between 1 and 3 (Hu &
237 Bentler, 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002; Pula et al., 2014; Wu, 2009).

238

239 ***3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis***

240 The 27 FCM items belong to eight dimensions of the original FCQ construct
241 (Steptoe et al., 1995). In this study, CFA was used for the pooled sample and the
242 samples of two cities to determine if the original FCM construct is apprpriate for our
243 mainland Chinese sample. As shown in Table 4, the goodness of fit is poor for either
244 the pooled sample or the samples of two cities. The values of all indices were outside
245 of what is acceptable. Values of RMSEA were above 0.08, CFI and IFI values were

below 0.9, and NC values were above 3. Therefore, the original FCM construct is not suitable for our specific sample.

>> Insert Table 4

Besides, in a CFA, factor loadings (standardized regression weights of items) should be between 0.5 and 0.95 for items to actually reflect the theoretical latent construct they are designed to evaluate (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014; Wu, 2009). In our case, the item '*Is good value for money*' had very low factor loadings in either the pooled sample or samples of the two cities (pooled sample 0.362, Shanghai sample 0.387, Xi'an sample 0.335). The factor loadings of the other 26 items varied between 0.502 and 0.845 for the pooled sample, between 0.443 and 0.841 for the Shanghai sample and between 0.503 and 0.843 for the Xi'an sample. The low factor loading of '*Is good value for money*' FCM in the dimension *Price* is in line with previous FCQ-based studies (Honkanen & Frewer, 2009; Januszewska, Pieniak, & Verbeke, 2011; Milošević et al., 2012; Pieniak et al., 2009; Pohjanheimo et al., 2010; Roos, Lehto, & Ray, 2012). It seems that this item should not be considered as an appropriate survey question for examining the FCM dimension *Price*. Therefore, *Price* and *Value for money* were treated as two separate food choice motive dimensions in the study by Brunner, van der Horst, and Siegrist (2010). Kornelis, Van Herpen, Van der Lans, and Aramyan (2010) also pointed out that the item '*Is good value for money*' did not contribute to the measurement of the price dimension,

268 because of its focus on the price-quality assessment, as compared to the price
269 assessment of two other items. As a consequence, we did not include this item in our
270 statistical analyses.
271
272 ***3.3. Principal component analysis (PCA)***
273 A PCA with varimax rotation was conducted to explore the construct of 26
274 FCM items for the pooled sample. A new construct with six dimensions was
275 identified. The item '*Is like the food I ate when I was a child*' did not load well on any
276 dimension (with factor loadings below 0.50). This item may be more suitable for
277 examining the concept 'Symbolic value of a food to people', an extra value of some
278 special food products, such as traditional food or ethnic food (Lupton, 1994;
279 Vanhonacker, Lengard, et al., 2010; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005; Zhou & Hui, 2003).
280 None of the other 25 items were related to the *Symbolic value* dimension. Therefore,
281 the item '*Is like the food I ate when I was a child*' was deleted from the new FCM
282 construct and was not incorporated in the analyses.
283 The six new FCM dimensions consist of 25 items as shown in Table 5.
284 Reliabilities of these six dimensions are relatively high given that they all have a
285 Cronbach's α score above 0.60 (Žeželj et al., 2012).
286
287 >> Insert Table 5
288
289 There are similarities and differences between the new and original FCM

290 constructs. First, the dimensions *Sensory appeal* and *Mood* of the new construct
291 contain the same items as in the original FCM construct.

292 Second, the new dimension *Health concern* included all items of the original
293 FCM dimensions *Health* and *Weight control*, and one item from the original
294 dimension *Natural content*, namely '*Contains natural ingredients*'. It seems that there
295 is no clear distinction between the concepts of *Health* and *Weight control* in mainland
296 Chinese consumers' minds.

297 Third, the other two items of the original dimension *Natural content*, namely
298 '*Contains no artificial ingredients*' and '*Contains no additives*', loaded on a new
299 dimension. These two items are semantically similar and deal with the topic of
300 artificial ingredients in food products. In recent years, a huge number of food safety
301 events suddenly emerged in mainland China, leading to increased concerns of
302 consumers with regard to food safety (Ortega, Wang, Wu, & Olynk, 2011; Qiao, Guo,
303 & Klein, 2012; Liu, Pianiak, & Verbeke, 2013; 2014). Furthermore, some of these
304 food safety events were specifically related to the problems of artificial ingredients or
305 additives in food products (Tang, 2013; Zhang, An, & Zhang, 2013). To this end, we
306 defined this new dimension as *Food safety concern*.

307 Fourth, similar with some previous FCQ-based studies, the five items of the
308 original FCM dimension *Convenience* loaded on different dimensions in the new
309 FCM construct (Honkanen & Frewer, 2009; Milošević et al., 2012). Among them,
310 three items with a semantic meaning about preparing food in a simply way, loaded on
311 a new dimension with two items of another original FCM dimension *Price*. We

named this new dimension *Time or money saving*. This dimension reflects a food choice motive about purchasing simple and everyday food to gain time and reduce costs.

Finally, the two other items of the original FCM dimension *Convenience*, dealing with the availability to purchase food, loaded on another new dimension with two items from the original FCM dimension *Familiarity.* This new dimension is defined as *Availability and familiarity*, and represents a Chinese consumer food choice motive about buying daily foods which are familiar or available in familiar markets.

3.4. Path analysis

A structural equation model (SEM) was built to assess the association between the FCMs and the attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food (see Figure 2). The model included ten latent variables, the six new FCM dimensions and the attitudes and purchase intentions toward the two types of foods. These latent variables encompass 37 observed variables. The observed variables of the four latent variables about attitudes and purchase intentions have good internal reliabilities, with high Cronbach α scores: 0.859 for the *attitudes toward traditional food*, 0.675 for the *purchase intentions (willingness to buy) toward traditional food*, 0.928 for the *attitudes toward European food* and 0.796 for the *purchase intentions (willingness to buy) toward European food* (Žeželj et al., 2012).

>> Insert Figure 2

Path analysis was conducted for the pooled sample. The SEM was modified through correlating the error variables between two FCM items '*Is cheap*' and '*Is not expensive*' because these items refer to a similar issue and because the values of modification indices were much higher than the values between other FCM items (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 2001; Wu, 2009). Regarding the goodness-of-fit indices for the path analysis, the modification lead to a substantial decrease in Chi-Square value, which further justifies the modification (Byrne, 2001; Wu, 2009). Table 6 shows the goodness-of-fit indices for this path analysis. The SEM performed well in the path analysis, as the values of all indices were within the acceptance limits: below 0.08 for RMSEA, above 0.9 for CFI and IFI and below 3 for NC (Table 6). Furthermore, multi-group path analysis was conducted for the samples of two cities based on the SEM after modification. The RMSEA and NC values indicated an acceptable fit for all restricted models (RMSEA, from 0.040 to 0.041; and NC, from 1.887 to 1.899); while only the CFI and IFI values were suboptimal (CFI, from 0.880 to 0.889; and IFI, from 0.880 to 0.891) (Žeželj et al., 2012). However, as Olsen, Scholderer, Brunsø, and Verbeke (2007) suggested, the RMSEA values of restricted models are a sufficient indicator for justifying the decision to pool the data. Moreover, RMSEA values are also considered a better indicator than other indices for model-fit evaluation (Marsh & Balla, 1994; Wu, 2009). This underpins our decision to pool our data in order to detect significant paths between the FCM dimensions and the attitudes

356 and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food.

357

358 >> Insert Table 6

359

360 Figure 3 shows the significant paths of the SEM, with standardized regression
361 weights, for the pooled sample and the samples of two cities. Generally speaking, for
362 either the pooled sample or the samples of two cities, consumers' attitudes were
363 positively and strongly associated with their purchase intention toward both
364 traditional food and European food. This means that the FCM factors, which directly
365 influence consumers' attitudes, would also indirectly influence their purchase
366 intentions toward both types of foods (Ajzen, 1991; Chen, 2007; Pieniak et al., 2009).
367 With regard to the pooled sample, consumers' attitude toward traditional food
368 was positively linked to the FCM dimension *Availability and familiarity*, and
369 negatively linked to *Time or money saving*. In other words, those mainland Chinese
370 consumers who attached more importance to daily food purchases in order to save
371 time or money had less positive attitudes toward traditional foods. By contrast, people
372 who preferred to buy familiar foods or foods in familiar market places had more
373 positive attitudes toward traditional food. Furthermore, consumers' attitude for
374 European food was positively associated with *Mood*. So, those mainland Chinese
375 consumers who often chose foods for relaxing or easing stress were more likely to
376 have a positive attitude toward European food. Moreover, the FCM dimension
377 *Sensory appeal* was recognized to have positively direct relationships with

consumers' purchase intentions toward both traditional food and European food. In addition, *Time or money saving* had a negative direct relationship with the purchase intention toward European food.

According to the samples of the two cities, *Sensory appeal* was found to have strong, positive, and direct relationships with consumers' purchase intentions toward European food in both cities and toward traditional food in Shanghai in particular. Additionally, *Time or money saving* had negative direct relationships with consumers' purchase intentions toward both traditional food and European food in Shanghai. *Mood* was negatively linked to the purchase intention toward traditional food, while it was positively associated with the attitudes toward European food in Shanghai. Like the pooled sample, the FCM dimension *Availability and familiarity* was also positively related to consumers' attitudes toward traditional food in Shanghai. Such significant paths were not found in the Xi'an subsample. Furthermore, *Food safety concern* had a positive association with consumers' attitudes toward traditional food in Xi'an. Here, no significant path was found in the sample of Shanghai consumers.

>> Insert Figure 3

4. Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first study that uses the FCQ and its FCM dimensions to evaluate food choice motives with consumers from mainland China. Moreover, it evaluates its applicability by targeting two distinct food types, Chinese

400 traditional versus European foods, and two different regions, Shanghai (Southern
401 China, with high degree of development) and Xi'an (Northern China, with a lower
402 degree of development and less developed). The original FCQ is considered a
403 comprehensive and reliable tool to explore consumers' daily food choice motives, but
404 was initially developed through research in a Western (European) setting (Fotopoulos,
405 Krystallis, Vassallo, and Pagiaslis & 2009; Steptoe et al., 1995). As such, previous
406 studies indicated that the FCM constructs of the original FCQ cannot be totally
407 replicated across different countries or regions (Eertmans et al., 2006; Fotopoulos et
408 al., 2009; Milošević et al., 2012; Pula et al., 2014). Indeed, the result of our
409 confirmatory analysis in this study confirmed that the original FCM construct
410 (dimension *Ethical concern* was not included) is not appropriate for analyzing FCM
411 in mainland China. By using exploratory factor analysis, a novel, more suitable FCM
412 construct was revealed for the mainland Chinese sample, characterized by six
413 dimensions: *Health concern*, *Time or money saving*, *Sensory appeal*, *Availability and*
414 *familiarity*, *Mood* and *Food safety concern*. Based on this new FCM construct, a
415 structural equation model for path analysis provided a good fit to identify associations
416 between mainland Chinese consumers' food choice motives and their attitudes and
417 purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food.

418 With respect to the motivation factors that drive mainland Chinese consumers
419 to choose traditional food, five factors had a direct or indirect effect, either in the
420 pooled sample or a city subsample: *Time or money saving* (negatively related to the
421 choice of traditional food), *Sensory appeal* (positively related), *Availability and*

familiarity (positively related), *Mood* (negatively related in Shanghai) and *Food safety concern* (positively related in Xi'an). This is partially in line with previous consumer-based studies related to traditional food in Europe, where *Sensory appeal* and *the assurance of safety and quality* were key factors for European consumers, and *inconvenience* and *high price* were key barriers (Almli et al., 2011; Pieniak et al., 2009). It also corresponds with the positive association between traditional food consumption in Europe and the original FCM dimensions *Familiarity* and *Natural content*, although in our study two items of the dimension *Natural content* were classified into a new FCM dimension *Food safety concern*, while a negative link was found with the dimension *Convenience* (Pieniak et al., 2009). Not surprisingly, traditional food consumers prefer to spend a relative high percentage of income and a long time on (preparing) food, as compared to non-traditional food consumers (Almli et al., 2011; Pieniak et al., 2009; Vanhonacker, Lengard, et al., 2010).

Some differences were found with respect to the choice motives for traditional food between European consumers (Pieniak et al., 2009) and mainland Chinese consumers. Whereas *Weight control* and *Healthiness* were two negative factors for European consumers to choose traditional food (Pieniak et al., 2009), the dimension *Health concern* was not found to have a significant relationship in our study. This may be due to differences in dietary patterns, culture and customs between China and Europe. A traditional Chinese dietary pattern, for instance, contains more vegetables, less meat, less calories and less fat than that of Europeans (Behar, 1976; Wan, 1995). This may have resulted in more traditional foods with less unhealthy ingredients in

444 mainland China. Furthermore, the dimension *Mood* was negatively linked to
445 consumers' purchase intentions toward traditional food in Shanghai, while this FCM
446 dimension was not included in previous FCQ surveys on European consumers'
447 traditional food choice motives (Pieniak et al., 2009). As *Mood* reflects consumers'
448 emotional feelings toward food products (Steptoe et al., 1995), this finding reveals
449 that traditional food was not chosen by consumers for emotional reasons, such as
450 stress relieve.

451 When looking at European food, three important motivation factors directly or
452 indirectly influenced mainland Chinese consumers' choice: *Mood* (positively related),
453 *Sensory appeal* (positively related) and *Time or money saving* (negatively related).
454 *Sensory appeal* was found to have a strong and direct influence on mainland Chinese
455 consumers' choice for European food. This confirms the importance of *appetizing or*
456 *taste reassurance* in China in order to try or consume Western-style foods, as reported
457 previously by other studies (Chang et al., 2010; Curtis et al., 2007). Further, *Mood*
458 was an important reason for choosing European food. This corresponds with previous
459 studies showing that Chinese consumers often consume Western-style foods for the
460 aesthetic and emotional pleasures as well as to experience Western cultures (Curtis et
461 al., 2007; Zhou & Hui, 2003). In addition, *Time or money saving* was considered as a
462 barrier (negatively related) for purchase intentions toward European food, which fits
463 with the current reality of Western-style foods in mainland Chinese markets. The
464 imported Western-style food products are often much more expensive than Chinese
465 local food products. For most of mainland Chinese consumers, such foods are not a

crucial component of their daily diet. In this study, the concept of European food was defined as 'a local food product imported from Europe or the food with European style or flavor that can be consumed in restaurants or other places of China', rather than convenient or, even, fast foods. Participants may directly associate the concept of European food with the high-priced imported foods or the foods in high-end Western restaurants. Therefore, it is reasonable that Chinese consumers who attach importance to saving money or time when buying food are less willing to choose European food.

There were also differences in consumer behavior toward traditional food and European food between the two cities. *Mood* and *Time or money saving* appeared to be significant for consumers to choose both food types in Shanghai, while these two factors did not play a role in the Xi'an sample. This may be caused by the discrepancy between the development levels of the two cities or regions. Hence, *getting relaxed* or *saving time or money* from foods may become important for Shanghai people in order to deal with the high-pressure style of daily life.

For either traditional or European foods, *Sensory appeal* was a direct and strong factor driving mainland Chinese consumers' purchase intention. Indeed, sensory pleasure, such as tasty, nice smell and good appearance, is considered of great importance for consumer food preferences in China (Dang, 2010; Wan, 1995). In this respect, when Western food marketers aim to exploit the mainland Chinese consumer market, they could employ sensory-related marketing strategies, for instance, by adjusting the sensory attributes (e.g. taste and appearance) of their products in line with specific (regional) food patterns and consumer requirements. Similarly as our

finding that one needs to adapt the FCM construct to the specific cultural setting, one needs also to adapt its marketing strategy when aiming to enter a different food market. By providing a better understanding of Chinese consumers' food choice motives, this study has contributed to provide an answer to both issues.

Nevertheless, our study has some important limitations. First of all, given the nature of our survey, i.e. an online questionnaire, and the relatively small number of participants involved, our sample did not fully represent the demographic characteristics of mainland China as well as the two particular cities. Additionally, this study focused on FCQ-based items and dimensions. It is necessary for future research to also focus or integrate factors outside the FCQ, such as *Origin of food*, *Food neophobia* and *Symbolic values*. Furthermore, as we focused on traditional food and European food as two general types of food, we did not analyze whether our novel construct is valid for specific food categories. Moreover, due to the fact that our FCM construct is based on PCA, our data should not be used for a CFA (Biddle & Marlin, 1987; Breckler, 1990; Wu, 2009). A CFA might be conducted for the new construct in future FCQ-based studies for mainland China. In addition, given the scope of this study, our SEM model (Figure 2) was used for a path analysis to address the lack of understanding of Chinese consumers' motives for traditional food and European food, whereas developing a theoretical model for those food choices was not part of this study.

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Table 1. Detailed socio-demographic characteristics of the samples

		Pooled sample	Shanghai	Xi'an
Sample size (n=)		541	259	282
Gender				
	Male	42.7%	38.6%	46.5%
	Female	57.3%	61.4%	53.5%
Age				
	Mean	35.63	37.16	34.23
	Range	19- 68	19- 59	19-68
	19- 30	32.2%	24.3%	39.4%
	31-40	31.2%	34.4%	28.3%
	> 40	36.6%	41.3%	32.3%
Financial Situation				
	Difficult-Moderate	10.4%	5.4%	14.9%
	Moderate	24%	20.1%	27.7%
	Moderate-Well off	65.6%	74.5%	57.4%
Occupation	Managing employee	31.8%	36.7%	27.3%
	Salaried employee	34.6%	44%	25.9%
	Student	17.7%	5.4%	29.1%
	Skilled worker	6.3%	7.3%	5.3%
	Other	9.6%	6.6%	12.4%

Table 2. Selected FMC items and original dimensions

Code	Item and dimension
	Health
FCM1	Contains a lot of vitamins and minerals
FCM2	Keeps me healthy
FCM3	Is high in fiber or roughage
	Weight control
FCM4	Is low in fat
FCM5	Helps me control my weight
FCM6	Is low in calories
	Convenience
FCM7	Can be bought in shops close to where I live or work
FCM8	Is easily available in shops and supermarkets
FCM9	Takes no time to prepare
FCM10	Is easy to prepare
FCM11	Can be cooked very simply
	Sensory appeal
FCM12	Smells nice
FCM13	Tastes good
FCM14	Looks nice
FCM15	Has a pleasant texture
	Familiarity
FCM16	Is familiar
FCM17	Is what I usually eat
FCM18	Is like the food I ate when I was a child
	Mood
FCM19	Helps me cope with stress
FCM20	Cheers me up
FCM21	Helps me relax
	Natural content
FCM22	Contains natural ingredients
FCM23	Contains no artificial ingredients
FCM24	Contains no additives
	Price
FCM25	Is cheap
FCM26	Is not expensive
FCM27	Is good value for money

Table 3. Measurement items for attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food

Code	Item and dimension
ATT	**Attitudes toward traditional food**
ATT1	unhappy/happy
ATT2	dull/excited
ATT3	terrible/delighted
ATE	**Attitudes toward European food**
ATE1	unhappy/happy
ATE2	dull/excited
ATE3	terrible/delighted
WTBT	**Willingness to buy (purchase intentions) traditional food**
WTBT1	I would never buy a traditional food (R).
WTBT2	Whenever available, I would prefer to buy traditional food.
WTBT3	Whenever possible, I avoid buying traditional food (R).
WTBE	**Willingness to buy (purchase intentions) European food**
WTBE1	I would never buy a European food (R).
WTBE2	Whenever available, I would prefer to buy European food.
WTBE3	Whenever possible, I avoid buying European food (R).

Table 4. Goodness-of-fit indices for confirmatory factor analysis

	Pooled sample	Shanghai	Xi'an
Chi-square	1442.138	940.833	910.213
DF	296	296	296
NC	4.872	3.178	3.075
CFI	0.815	0.792	0.808
RMSEA	0.085	0.092	0.086
IFI	0.816	0.796	0.811

** $p<0.001$ for the pooled sample and the samples of each city.*

Table 5. Summary of the PCA, with rotated factor loadings (>0.50) of items and the Cronbach's α scores of dimensions

Code	Item and dimension	Rotated factor loading	Cronbach's α
HC	**Health concern**		0.894
FCM1	Contains a lot of vitamins and minerals	0.756	
FCM4	Is low in fat	0.754	
FCM5	Helps me control my weight	0.747	
FCM3	Is high in fiber or roughage	0.746	
FCM6	Is low in calories	0.732	
FCM2	Keeps me healthy	0.701	
FCM22	Contains natural ingredients	0.667	
TMS	**Time or money saving**		0.775
FCM25	Is cheap	0.796	
FCM26	Is not expensive	0.739	
FCM9	Takes no time to prepare	0.657	
FCM10	Is easy to prepare	0.587	
FCM11	Can be cooked very simply	0.555	
SA	**Sensory appeal**		0.739
FCM12	Smells nice	0.722	
FCM13	Tastes good	0.713	
FCM14	Looks nice	0.659	
FCM15	Has a pleasant texture	0.637	
AF	**Availability and familiarity**		0.678
FCM16	Is familiar	0.677	
FCM7	Can be bought in shops close to where I live or work	0.601	
FCM17	Is what I usually eat	0.574	
FCM8	Is easily available in shops and supermarkets	0.550	
M	**Mood**		0.743
FCM19	Helps me cope with stress	0.746	
FCM20	Cheers me up	0.739	
FCM21	Helps me relax	0.731	
FSC	**Food safety concern**		0.826
FCM23	Contains no artificial ingredients	0.783	
FCM24	Contains no additives	0.661	

** FCM1-FCM25: the codes of FCM items (see Table 2); HC, M, TMS, SA, AF and FSC: the codes of six FCM dimensions.*

Table 6. Path analysis goodness-of-fit indices (pooled sample, n=541)

	Pooled sample
Chi-square	1515.278
DF	587
NC	2.581
CFI	0.901
RMSEA	0.054
IFI	0.902

** $p<0.001$*

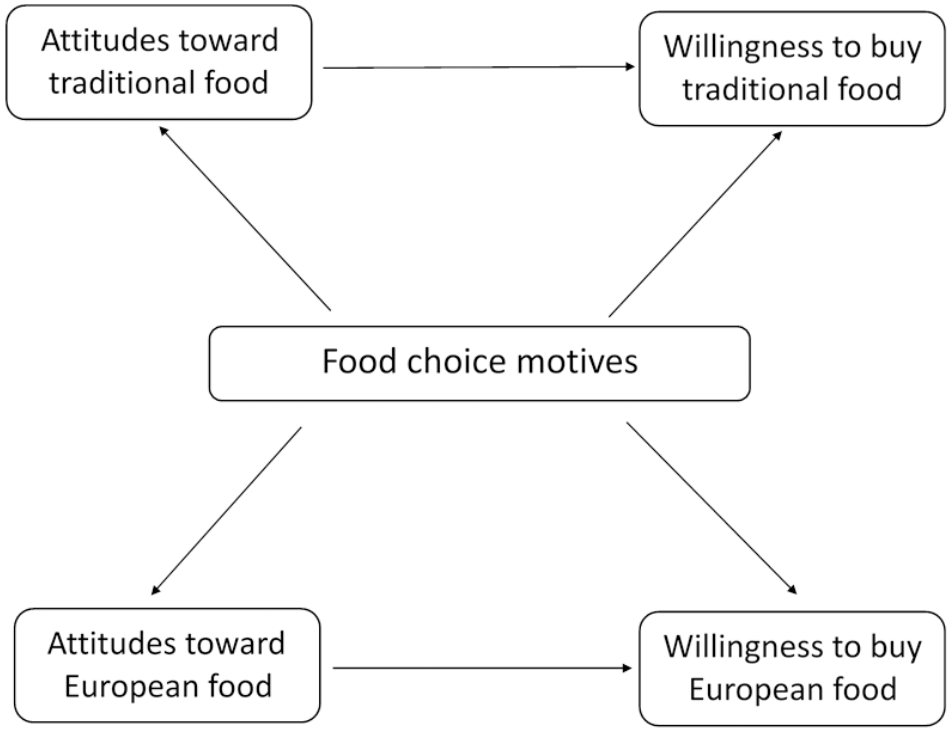
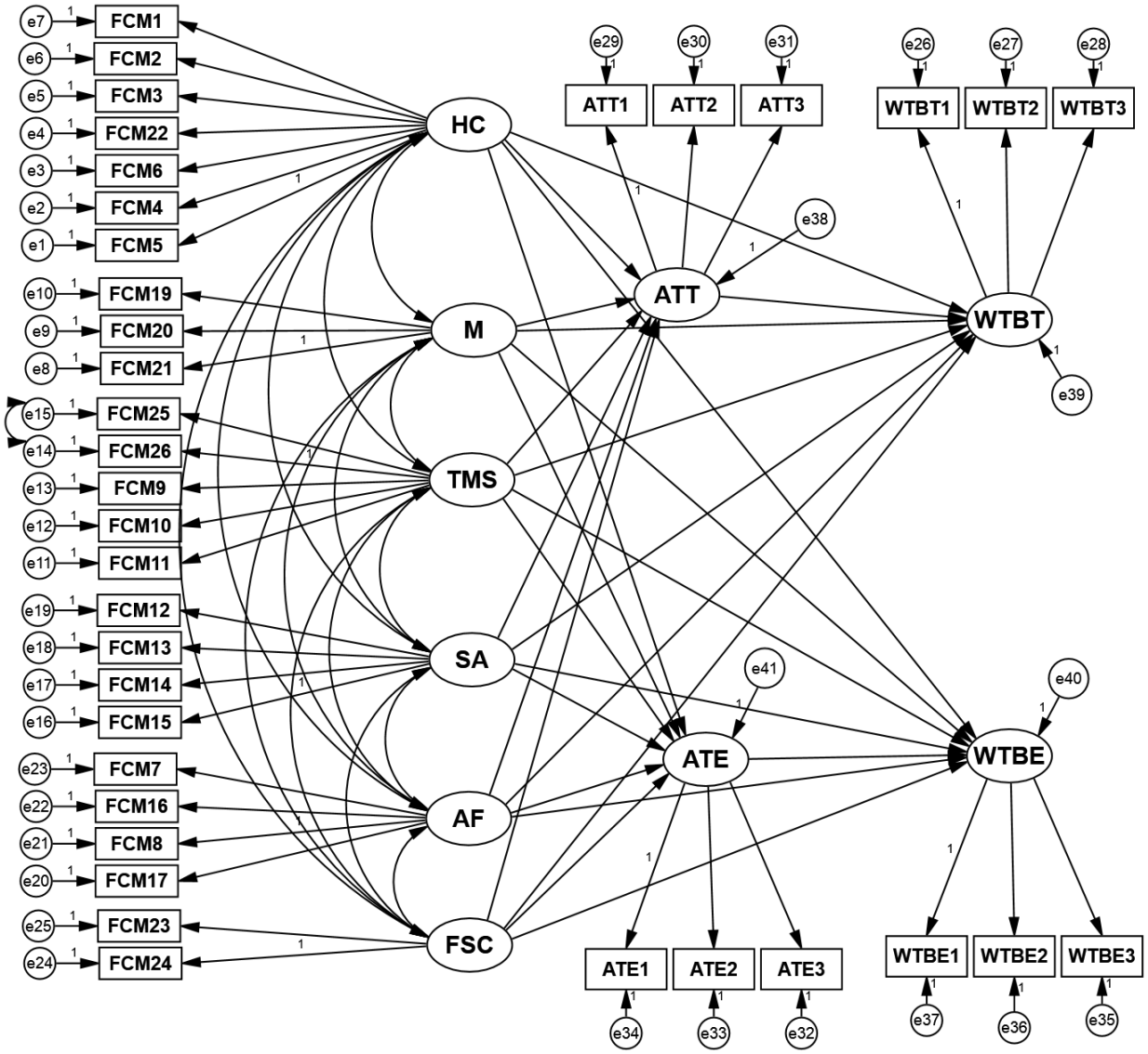


Figure 1. Hypothetical model associating FCMs with attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food


FCM1
FCM2
FCM3
FCM22
FCM6
FCM4
FCM5
FCM19
FCM20
FCM21
FCM25
FCM26
FCM9
FCM10
FCM11
FCM12
FCM13
FCM14
FCM15
FCM7
FCM16
FCM8
FCM17
FCM23
FCM24
HC
M
TMS
SA
AF
FSC
ATT
ATE
ATT1
ATT2
ATT3
WTBT
WTBT1
WTBT2
WTBT3
WTBE
ATE1
ATE2
ATE3
WTBE1
WTBE2
WTBE3
e38
e39
e40
e41

1

Figure 2. Structural equation model for path analysis using AMOS21

**e1-e41: error variables; FCM1-FCM26 (without FCM 18 and 27): for the codes of the observed variables of FCM items, see Table 2 and Table 5; HC, M, TMS, SA, AF and FSC: for the codes of the latent variables of the six FCM dimensions, see Table 5; ATT WTBT, ATE, WTBE: for the codes of the latent variables of attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food, see Table 3; ATT1, ATT2, ATT3, WTBT1, WTBT2, WTBT3, ATE1, ATE2, ATE3, WTBE1, WTBE2, WTBE3: for the codes of the observed variables of attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food, see Table 3.*

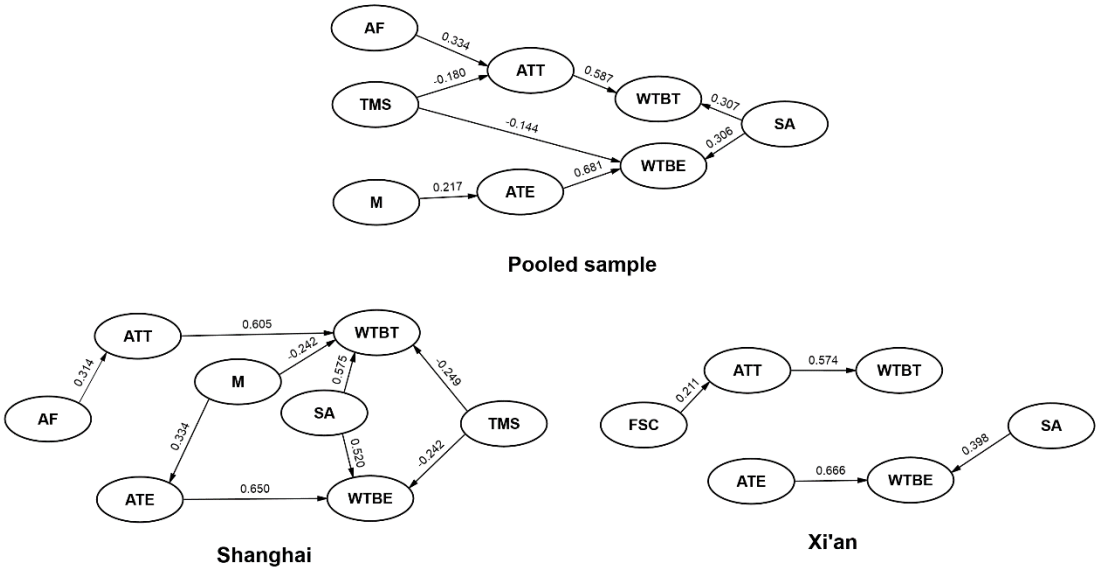


Figure 3. Significant paths with standardized regression weights for the three models

** HC, M, TMS, SA, AF and FSC: the codes of the latent variables of six FCM dimensions (see Table 5); ATT WTBT, ATE, WTBE: the codes of the latent variables of attitudes and purchase intentions toward traditional food and European food (see Table 3).*