



# Hofstede's individual-level indulgence dimension: Scale development and validation

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## Abstract

In spite of the important role of culture in consumer behavior, there has been no study of the effects of indulgence vs. restraint, the sixth dimension of Hofstede's cultural framework, at the individual level. This is mainly because there has been no scale to measure indulgence vs. restraint at the individual level. Given that ascribing national-level cultural scores to individuals may cause an ecological fallacy, the four studies of this research conceptualize and develop a valid and reliable measure for individual-level indulgence. In *study 1* (n= 290), using PCA, the items were purified to the final six items. The result of an EFA in *study 2* (n=230) suggested a unidimensional six-item structure for the scale. This structure was confirmed by a CFA in *study 3* (n=257). *Study 3* established the reliability, convergent, discriminant, and criterion validities of the scale. In *study 4* (n=219), through developing and testing the nomological network, the nomological validity of the scale was supported by showing that the impacts of individual-level indulgence on hedonic attitudes and repurchase intentions are mediated by positive post-purchase emotions and hedonic attitudes, respectively.

## Introduction

Culture is one main factor influencing human behavior (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Shweder and Bourne, 1982; Sreen et al., 2018; Triandis, 1989), and it is widely studied in consumer behavior and marketing (McCort and Malhotra, 1993; McCracken, 1986; Shaw and Clarke, 1998; Steenkamp, 2001). In order to study the impact of culture on consumer behavior, the first step is to measure it reliably. Several studies confirmed that Hofstede's cultural framework (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010) is the most influential, comprehensive, and widely used model in studying the role of culture within areas of research, such as marketing, management, and psychology (Hofstede and McCrae, 2004; Leung et al., 2005; Soares et al., 2007; Søndergaard, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001). Over time, Hofstede created a framework consisting of six dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence-restraint (Hofstede, 1980, 2001, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010).

Originally, Hofstede developed his cultural dimensions at the national level using a sample of international managers. Although these dimensions are useful for comparing national cultures and investigating the various impacts of a national culture, several studies have shown that they are not appropriate for studying human behavior at the individual level (Bond, 1988; McCoy et al., 2005; McSweeney, 2002), and they may be the cause for unreliable and invalid results (Bearden et al., 2006; Blodgett et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2001). In fact, ascribing the national-level cultural dimensions to individual-level characteristics is deemed to be an ecological fallacy (Brewer and Venaik, 2014; Isaacson et al., 2018). An ecological fallacy occurs when one assumes that statistical relationships at a group-level also hold for the individuals belonging to that group (King et al., 2004; Schwartz, 1994a, Schwartz, 1994b). In other words, cultural heterogeneity exists among the people in each country due to several reasons, such as immigration, global media, international trade and finance, tourism, and technological flows (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Therefore, there is a pressing need for scales to measure Hofstede's cultural dimensions at the individual level. So far, there have been attempts for measuring only the first five cultural dimensions of Hofstede's framework. However, since indulgence vs. restraint is the most recent addition to the Hofstede's cultural framework, there has been no attempt in the literature to date to conceptualize and measure it at the individual level.

Hofstede's sixth cultural dimension, indulgence vs. restraint, is of high importance and influence in consumer behavior, as the core of the indulgence vs. restraint dimension is people's attitude toward happiness, pleasure, and pleasure-seeking, and toward the importance of fun, leisure, and entertainment in life (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov, 2007), which greatly influence people's desires and wants, and their decision-making process (Bathaee, 2014). Therefore, there is a critical gap in the literature regarding the lack of a valid and reliable scale for measuring indulgence vs restraint at the individual level to help researchers in various areas of human behavior.

While related and linked, Hofstede's national-level cultural dimensions are conceptually and operationally quite different from individual-level conceptualizations and measures representing these dimensions at the individual level (Bond, 2002; Oyserman et al., 2002; Sharma, 2010). Hofstede's national-level dimensions explicitly focus on cultural differences between countries, and do not take into account the diversity of cultural values, beliefs, and orientations, which exists more or less among individuals within each country (Hofstede, 1980; Leung, 1989; Oyserman et al., 2002). As mentioned, not all individuals in a country possess, follow, and share the dominant national-level cultural values of their society to the same extent, and therefore using Hofstede's national-level scores to conceptualize, define and measure culture at the individual level, and consequently for predicting consumer behavior is an ecological fallacy (Bearden et al., 2006; Bond, 2002; Sharma, 2010). In response to this concern, Hofstede's cultural dimensions should be reconceptualized from national-level to individual-level measures that take into account the aforementioned cultural heterogeneity; therefore, they are appropriate for examining individuals' cultural values and orientations and their relationships with relevant behavioral variables, and they make it possible for researchers to avoid committing the ecological fallacy by using primary data instead of national-level cultural scores and stereotypes (Bond, 2002; Soares et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2011). Individual-level conceptualizations of Hofstede's cultural dimensions are personal cultural beliefs and values that are more or less over-learned and internalized by individuals from the dominant cultural values of their society (Dake, 1991; Lau et al., 2001; Oyserman et al., 2002; Sharma, 2010; Soares et al., 2007). Accordingly, appropriate individual-level measures of Hofstede's cultural dimensions determine to what extent these national-level dimensions are reflected in individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors, and have become part of their personality, and how strongly they respect and believe in the key national-level cultural values of their society (Soares et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2011).

This article addresses this gap for the sixth dimension of Hofstede's framework, indulgence vs. restraint, by conceptualizing it as a personal cultural orientation, and developing a valid and reliable scale for its

measurement at the individual level. The developed scale measures to what extent this national-level Hofstede's dimension (indulgence vs. restraint) is reflected in individuals' personality (i.e., individual's attitudes towards fun and pleasure-seeking in life), and to what extent individuals believe in and respect indulgence vs. restraint as the national-level cultural value in their society (i.e., society should allow or suppress gratification of desires related to enjoying life and having fun). The individual-level conceptualization and measure for indulgence vs. restraint provided will help researchers study this particular cultural dimension at the individual level both within and across countries, using primary data. This scale measures individual-level indulgence. High individual-level indulgence means low individual-level restraint and vice versa, which is the same as how these two concepts are treated at the national level in Hofstede's framework.

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### The sixth Hofstede dimension: indulgence vs. restraint

Based on a thorough analysis of the world value surveys of 2007–2008, Minkov (2007, 2011) identified a new dimension of culture, which he named; indulgence vs. restraint. Then, since it was covering a new aspect of culture, Hofstede et al. (2010) added it as the sixth dimension to his framework. According to this framework, "Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a ...

### Individual-level scales for Hofstede's cultural framework

Indulgence vs. restraint is a new dimension of culture at the individual level. To our knowledge, no scale has been developed at that level, although some efforts were made for the other five dimensions of Hofstede's framework. In fact, most of these scales may be somewhat flawed or incomplete. Erdem et al. (2006) developed a reliable and valid individual-level scale for Hofstede's framework, but their scale comprised only three dimensions: collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power ...

### Item generation

In order to develop a psychometrically sound scale to measure indulgence vs. restraint at the individual level, the main literature related to the indulgence vs. restraint concept (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov, 2007, 2011) was thoroughly reviewed. At this stage, the goal was to generate a comprehensive pool of items to capture all aspects of the construct. An initial pool of 50 items was generated. All the items were positively worded. ...

### Content validity

First, the preliminary evaluation by the research team ...

## Discussion and conclusion

Through four studies, we conceptualized and developed a reliable and valid measurement scale for the sixth dimension of Hofstede's framework, indulgence vs. restraint, at the individual level. The first 50 items were derived from the three main resource books for indulgence vs restraint in the literature. After screening the initial pool of 50 items by authors and the expert panel into the shortened list of 17 items, a principal component analysis and an exploratory factor analysis with two ...

## Acknowledgements

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...These items were adapted/taken from a well-established environmental sustainability scale ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) in the literature (Verain *et al.*, 2021). Then, participants were asked to complete a six-item indulgence-restrain scale ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ) taken from Heydari, Laroche, Paulin, and Richard (2021). Participants rated their level of agreement with statements such as: there should not be any limits on individuals' enjoyment, and the gratification of desires should not be delayed....

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...For instance (Lee *et al.*, 2021), show that online video games are mainly hedonic activities, in which players want to satisfy their experience of pleasure and fun. Players vary in their goals and motives, so they have distinct self-indulgence levels (Heydari *et al.*, 2021). In other words, instead of long-term orientation, players who engaged in the video game with higher self-indulgence focus mainly on short-term orientation to make them happy (Ayadi *et al.*, 2013; Mazhar *et al.*, 2022)....

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