

Favor Consumption: An Empirical Study on Chinese Villagers

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Abstract. The Chinese villagers lay great emphasis on face earned from exceeding consumption on renqing, with the expectation of receiving respects and fames. This study empirically tests the relationship between face and consumptions of renqing and reveals various effects. This study makes up the research gap in the consumption behavior in Chinese rural society.

Literature Review and Hypothesis

Renqing and face are closely related. Renqing is the potential face, and face is the obvious renqing. Renqing and face can be exchanged in the social contact. Face is renqing, and the value of renqing and face is in proportion. Face is the potential rule in the society of China.

With the penetration of social transition and market factors, the traditional rural society gradually transited from the acquaintance based society to strange based. Moreover, with the increase of migrant workers, the contacts among villagers transit from mainly blood relationship based and region relationship based to mainly region relationship based and business relationship based, and the utilitarianism and instrumentalism increase, showing the increase of the renqing consumptions, and the pursuit of face force the villagers join the game of renqing consumptions. If a villager cannot afford sending gifts and refuse the renqing consumptions because of poverty, he will be viewed as do not respect others and loses face. In the village face links renqing, giving others renqing means giving face, or they will break off contact. If people do not owe a favor each other, it is not necessary to contact. In the social exchange, the law of renqing transcends legal principals, and giving others face is a kind of moral obligation, or it will be considered as a kind of unforgivable irrational behavior. Face and renqing together form a set of value system, through long term cultural influence, it has become a way of thinking when the farmers deal with problems, solve contradicts and obtain interests. The result of the in-depth interview in the village also indicates that, the farmers consider renqing and face as the tie adjusting the relationship among villagers. Face and renqing consumption is the same at a certain degree. In the renqing consumption, if you give others face and pay more, and others will give you face and pay you more the next time, actually giving others face is adding you face. Thus, the author put forward the hypothesis below:

H1: The ego face has positive impact on the farmers' reciprocal renqing consumptions

H2: Others face has positive impact on the farmers' reciprocal renqing consumptions

H3: The ego face has positive impact on the farmers' utilitarian renqing consumptions

H4: The others face has negative impact on the farmers' utilitarian renqing consumptions

Research Design

Through in-depth interview and literature research, the author designs the scale of face concept and renqing consumption. The scale of ego face and others face in the face concept refers to the scale of ego face and others face developed by John G.Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey, the scale of reciprocal renqing consumption and utilitarian consumption is developed based on in-depth interview. All the scales adopt Likert's 7 scale, "1" stands for highly disagree, "4" stand for neutral, "7" stand for highly agree, and the smaller the figure stands for disagree, and the bigger figure stands for agree.

This paper processes data with SPSS17.0, and explores the composition of the factors by using the exploratory factor analysis, then use LISREL8.70 software to carry out the test factor analysis, test the reliability and validity of the factors, evaluate the rationality of the theoretical model, at last use LISREL8.70 to conduct structural equation model analysis, investigate the relationships among the latent variables and test the hypothesis.

Analysis and Results

Pre-research and Data Analysis

The questionnaires is build through adjustment, containing 12 questions(see table 1).

Table 1 Statement of indicators and questions

Indicators	Questions	Evaluation
Ego face	I highly value the prestige of myself in the village. I feel my own face is important.	Likert scale
Others face	I highly value the face of my family members and myself in the village. I do nothing hurt other's face. Often I won't point out other's mistakes.	
Reciprocal renqing consumptions	Often I care other's face preferably. Sending gifts is the need of reciprocity. Sending gifts is the need to express true feelings. Sending gifts is the need of strengthening feelings. I send gifts referring to others.	
Utilitarian renqing consumptions	I send gifts according to the counterparty sending me last time. I send gifts according to the expected gifts the counterparty send me the next time.	

Further test factor analysis (CFA)shows, $\chi^2(df=48)=104.09(p < 0.001)$, RMSEA=0.044, NFI=0.97, NNFI=0.97, CFI=0.98, IFI=0.98, GFI=0.98, indicates that the general fitting result is good. The test factor analysis results see table 2. Only one squared multiple correlations(R^2)is below 0.3, others are above 0.3, which shows again the measurement reliability is good. The reliability rates of the latent variables are above 0.3, indicating that the internal consistency of the scale is good.

Table 2 The analysis result of the test factor

Latent variables	questions	Standardized coefficient	t value	Standard deviation	CR	VE	R^2
Ego face	I highly value the prestige of myself in the village.	0.64	24.78	0.03	0.98	0.94	0.41
	I feel my own face is important.	0.69	26.98	0.03			0.48
	I highly value the face of my family members and myself in the village.	0.77	29.95	0.03			0.59
Others face	I do nothing hurt other's face.	0.67	24.28	0.03	0.98	0.94	0.45
	Often I won't point out other's mistakes.	0.65	23.52	0.03			0.42
	Often I care other's face preferably.	0.66	23.92	0.03			0.44
Reciprocal renqing consumptions	Sending gifts is the need of reciprocity.	0.59	22.98	0.03	0.98	0.96	0.35
	Sending gifts is the need to express true feelings.	0.73	29.54	0.02			0.53
	Sending gifts is the need of strengthening feelings.	0.81	32.78	0.02			0.66
Utilitarian renqing consumptions	I send gifts referring to others.	0.74	27.16	0.03	0.98	0.94	0.55
	I send gifts according to the counterparty sending me last time.	0.70	25.99	0.03			0.49
	I send gifts according to the expected gifts the counterparty send me the next time.	0.52	18.91	0.03			0.27

Explanations: $CR = (\sum \text{standardized coefficient})^2 / \{(\sum \text{standardized coefficient})^2 + \sum \epsilon_j\}$; $VE = \sum (\text{standardized coefficient})^2 / \{\sum (\text{standardized coefficient})^2 + \sum \epsilon_j\}$; ϵ_j is the standard deviation of j .

As far as the convergence validity is concerned, the coefficients of the variables are above 0.5, the standard deviation are below 0.5 and the VE(variance extracted) is above 0.5, which indicates that the questionnaire has good convergence validity.

Generally speaking, the questionnaire has ideal reliability and validity level

Hypothesis Test

On the basis of pre-research, through explorative factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability and validity test, the author find the reliability and validity of the scale is good, and the goodness of fit of the model is also ideal, thus the questionnaire is finalized. Then the author choose rural regions in 30 provinces as samples, and hands out 1800 questionnaires, among which 1770 (98.3%) are returned and 1596 are effective, the validity reaches 90.2%. The author carries out structural equation model to test the relationships among the variables in the conceptual model, and the fit indicators can be seen in table 3, which shows that all the fit indicators meet the requirement, indicating the fit effect is good.

Table 3 The fit indicators of the structural equation model

Indicator	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	PGFI	IFI	PNFI
Value	3.72	0.067	0.075	0.96	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.60	0.95	0.70

There are four hypotheses in this study, three of them are supported, and one is not supported. The results of the hypothesis test see Table 4.

Table 4 The results of the hypothesis test of the structural equation model

	regression coefficient	standardized coefficient	t value	significance	conclusion
H1: ego face → reciprocal renqing consumptions	0.25***	0.28***	6.66	P<0.001	support
H2: other's face → reciprocal renqing consumptions	0.23***	0.26***	6.10	P<0.001	support
H3: ego face → utilitarian renqing consumptions	0.37***	0.33***	7.35	P<0.001	support
H4: other's face → utilitarian renqing consumptions	0.07	0.06	1.48	P>0.05	Not support

Note: *** indicates $p < 0.001$

Discussion

The study results indicate that the ego face in the village has significant influence on the reciprocal renqing consumptions. In the rural society, the biggest failure is losing face; in the acquaintance based society, there's nothing worse than "losing all standing and reputation" (Zhong Qiu, 2006). Therefore, the villagers highly value the renqing in daily life and think renqing is face, with the idea that friendship cannot stand always on one side, or they will lose face. The villagers who have strong concept of ego face think renqing is the most important tie maintaining the relationships among villagers and is the source of emotional communication and exchange, and renqing consumptions is a kind of way for the individuals and families to express their feelings to the counterparty. Meanwhile, through reciprocal renqing

consumptions, the farmers can strengthen the interpersonal relationships with the villagers, adding the face of themselves and their families.

The data analysis indicates that, in the village other's face has positive significant influence on the reciprocal renqing consumptions. The rural residents who value other's face think that giving others face is adding them face actually, and others will respect themselves on condition that they respect others. Villagers who value others face have pretty well interpersonal relationships in the village and are willing to help others; when research in the village, the author also find that they play very active roles in the reciprocal renqing consumptions, and they give money or gifts voluntarily when some villager holds wedding and funeral ceremony or runs into difficulties needing other's help.

The results of the empirical study indicate that, the ego face has positive significant influence on the utilitarian renqing consumptions in the village. One of the of expression of renqing consumptions is "reward", and one of the motivation of giving renqing in China is expecting to get rewards from others(Huang Guangguo, 1987). As one of the ways of showing renqing, the renqing consumptions relate with the social and cultural environment. In some rural regions, some villagers value the ego face without considering their own economic conditions, giving renqing everywhere, and have renqing consumptions as a kind of investment of interest and as a kind of way to collect money nakedly, leading to the strong utilitarianism and mammonism of renqing consumptions(Liu Yi, 2008). Under such conditions, famers with strong ego face are more utilitarian in the renqing consumptions, consequently the economic interest take the place of emotional and ethical factors gradually.

The results of the data analysis indicate that, other's face in the village has insignificant influence on the utilitarian renqing consumptions. The value of the people who have renqing consumptions as interest investment and ways of collecting money transit from "value justice above material gains" to "value material gains above justice", and under such circumstance, people highly value the ego face and neglect other's face.

People value other's face care other's feelings in daily life value the friendship and relationship with others, and always concern about others, having renqing consumptions as a kind of way revealing their own feelings, and give money or articles to others voluntarily while never have renqing consumptions as a tool of collecting money instead. Therefore, other's face has insignificant influence on the utilitarian renqing consumptions.

Limitations and the Future Study Direction

This paper studies the influence of the idea of face of China's rural residents on the renqing consumptions from the angle of rural sociology and consumer behavior. There are few study fruits up till now, other than the empirical studies, and there's no available scale of relevant concepts, thus there are some inappropriate points in the exploratory study of this paper.

In the future study, completing the relevant scales is needed, meanwhile the difference of regions should be considered, to carry out the comparative study on the idea of face of rural residents in various regions , and enrich the study of local consumer behavior.

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