

Cross-Cultural Validation of a Fashion Brand Image Scale

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Introduction Using a national sample from the US (a Western culture), the three dimensions of a new fashion brand image scale have been shown to be reliable and valid (Cho, Fiore, & Russell, 2015). The scale, which captures cognitive, sensory, and affective dimensions (i.e., mystery, sensuality, intimacy, respectively), should be validated with national samples of consumers from Eastern cultures, because culture has been shown to have an influence on consumer behavior (Yoo & Donthu, 2002). Moreover, factors leading to a successful brand image can differ cross-nationally, based on cultural, social, and economic characteristics in a society (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, the present study sought to further validate this new scale by examining its performance across three consumer markets, that of the US, China, and South Korea. Specifically, the objectives of the present research were to (1) test the replicability of the three fashion brand image dimensions across three consumer groups, (2) test nomological validity of the fashion brand image scale using consumers in the Eastern market, and (3) provide empirical evidence that lovemarks (brand love and respect; Roberts, 2005) increase customer loyalty in both Eastern and Western cultures.

Method Professional survey firms gathered online survey data from national samples of consumers in the US, China, and South Korea (400 respondents per country) who were between 18 and 75 years of age. The survey was originally written in English then translated to Mandarin and Korean by bilingual researchers. To ensure measurement equivalence across groups, the questionnaire was back translated into English by two additional bilingual researchers. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to identify a favorite fashion brand for clothing, accessories, cosmetics, or footwear products that they really liked or loved and then answer the survey questions thinking of that brand. The survey continued with measures assessing the three dimensions of brand image, brand love and brand respect (i.e., lovemarks), and brand loyalty. A total of 1,143 responses (377 US, 374 Chinese, and 392 South Korean) were usable. All respondents indicated a fashion brand they really liked or loved. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the factor structure of each variable and to test a structural model.

Results Participants from the three countries were similar in gender (50% male, 50% female) and age distribution (24-65 years old). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) established the factor structure of each variable. Retained items varied across the three countries, but all themes identified for each of the three dimensions in the initial scale development stage were captured by these different sets of items. CFA results showed all standardized factor loadings were greater than .58 and were highly significant ($p \leq .001$). Cronbach's α values for the measures were all above .80, supporting the reliability of the measures. For each of the three samples the fit indices of the measurement models showed a good fit to the data (e.g., CFI > .95). The fit indices also indicated an acceptable fit of the structural models to the data (e.g., CFI > .90).

94). For the US and South Korean structural models, all proposed paths were statistically significant ($p \leq .001$) except for the path from the sensory (sensuality) dimension to lovemarks (US: $\gamma = .09$, $t = .95$; Korea: $\gamma = .04$, $t = .50$). For the Chinese structural model, the paths from the emotional (intimacy) dimension to lovemarks and lovemarks to loyalty were significant ($p \leq .001$), but the paths from the cognitive (mystery) dimension to lovemarks ($\gamma = .26$, $t = .98$) and from the sensory dimension to lovemarks ($\gamma = .09$, $t = .31$) were not significant.

Conclusions and implications Results confirmed that the new brand image scale is reliable and valid across the three cultures. However, only partial support for nomological validity was found (e.g., for all three structural models, the path from the sensory dimension to lovemarks was not significant). The emotional dimension (consumers' commitment and enjoyment) was the strongest predictor for lovemarks for consumers from China and South Korea (Eastern cultures), whereas the cognitive dimension (positive memories from past experiences and positive present experiences) was the strongest predictor for lovemarks for consumers from the US (Western culture). In contrast to the previous study (Cho et al., 2015), the sensory dimension (visual sensations from store and product) did not predict lovemarks for consumers from any of the three countries. Sample characteristics and level of exposure to the physical elements of the brand may have affected results; the previous study had more female participants (60%) who tend to be more fashion involved. Lovemarks significantly increased brand loyalty for each consumer group. The present research shows that the brand image contributors to brand loyalty may vary by culture, which has implications for theory and for marketing firms building an effective brand image. These findings may help marketers develop customized branding/advertising strategies for global fashion brands sold in various countries.

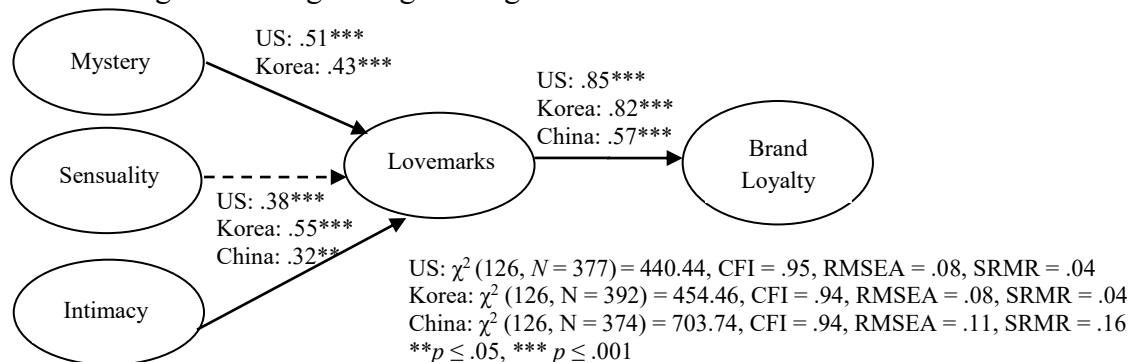


Figure 1. Significant paths in the structural model containing three fashion brand image dimensions, lovemarks, and loyalty for the three consumer groups

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