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MARKETING: CHINA, MEXICO, & USA

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ABSTRACT

Two countries shaped by a long history of Chinese rule, but also two countries that have pushed for sovereignty. That unique similarity should show through Hofstede's 6D model comparison of the countries, yet it does not. Although Hong Kong and Taiwan score closely in terms of power distance, individualism, and masculinity, their scores for uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, and indulgence vary significantly. Because of the difference in three of the six cultural dimensions, ethics and strategic customer service within Hong Kong and Taiwan are likely to differ. In terms of shared cultural dimensions, Hong Kong and Taiwan both score highly on power distance, meaning inequalities amongst people are acceptable. Both countries also score low on individualism, meaning they share a collectivist culture. Finally, Hong Kong and Taiwan score around the middle for masculinity, meaning they are somewhat masculine and tend to be success oriented and driven, but can also care for quality of life. These three common traits indicate that culturally, for the sake of harmony in a group and respect for authority figures, citizens and companies will act ethically. Additionally, because the cultures are more focused on we than I, the burden of customer service will fall upon the advertiser, not the consumer. Hong Kong has a very low score for uncertainty avoidance, meaning they are very comfortable with ambiguity, whereas Taiwan scores around the middle, meaning they are less adaptable and entrepreneurial. Hofstede's analysis of this dimension is interesting, as the Chinese language is credited for Hong Kong's low uncertainty avoidance. Taiwanese citizens also primarily speak Chinese, in fact, it is Hong Kong whose citizens speak Cantonese more frequently than Mandarin Chinese. While Hong Kong scores highly for long term orientation, Taiwan almost maximizes the top score. In other words, both countries have pragmatic cultures, but Taiwan has an extreme perseverance in obtaining results. With indulgence, however, Taiwan scores higher than Hong Kong, so they are partly Indulgent, versus Hong Kong, a very Restrained society. Taiwan is less cynical than Hong Kong places slightly more emphasis on leisure time. What can be learned from the three dimensions that Taiwan and Hong Kong score disparately on? Ethically, expect to see Taiwanese businesses treat the market more optimistically but also with wariness for risk factors. Hong Kong's ethics should follow a dedicated workforce with late working hours. This also applies to Hong Kong customer service, in which hard work and personal effort pay off. Taiwan will likely have less start-ups and entrepreneurs, but will show a strong propensity to save and invest.

The United States and Mexico may share a border but these two countries are very different from each other in many aspects such as their culture's ethics, their 6D model, and their strategic customer service techniques. The United States is a country of relatively low power distance(40) as opposed to Mexico which is at an ultimate high(81). This result is not surprising because it can be seen in many aspects of everyday life such as the news or everyday life. Mexico struggles with this aspect of the 6D model partly due to the high level of corruption in the

government. It is apparent when watching the news coverage in Spanish channels that the U.S is in better living conditions than those of its southern neighbor. One of the reasons for this is because of the level of ethics enforced in each country. The ethics by the citizens of Mexico is mostly rebellious and violent which may be a key factor of why their power distance is very high. In contrast, the United States citizens tend to be more rule oriented and more peaceful then Mexico which explains their low score in the power distance column. Another column which is significantly different is the individualism factor. This result can be seen not just in television but in everyday life. Americans are very independent people in their jobs and even families as can be seen by the high percentage of divorce rate. In contrast, Mexico is very family oriented and tend to work better in teams or groups. It is very important to be culturally aware of each country's 6D model to successfully execute the desires of the business. Due to the high level of individualism of the United States, it can be seen that Customer service tends to be of lesser quality then what is offered in Mexico because they are more accustomed to people interaction. However, this does not by any means it is always like this, as there are always exceptions. The Cultural Differences Between the United States of America and Mexico.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERSONAL AFFECTS OF CONSUMER SERVICE IN EUROPE AND THE USA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines and tests the factors both environmental and personal that affect the quality of consumer service in international organizations. This focuses on the different influences such as transformational leadership, service climate in comparison to service quality, and the person-environment in predicting job performance that results in the different levels of customer service. The data was collected by exploring the effects between service climate and customer related service quality internally as well as externally. This was designed by pulling employee perceptions on corporate units and their branches within. From different levels of leadership internally to a person's environment externally, when guided, enhances an employee's customer orientation through support that results in high quality internal service which then increases an employee's job performance. Results find that when job performance increases customer service increases as well. Being examined before, the organization and management of certain international companies, this extends the understanding of the relationship between the certain support systems internally and externally and how they link to leadership customer orientation and employee job performance. Also predominantly examined, in research, service climate is related to service quality on a stronger level when internal service quality received, is also higher. We examine empirical data from Europe and the United States.

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ROMANIAN & GREEK MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Romania and Greece are both countries in southeastern Europe. They not only share the geographical area but they also share similar views. In the Ethics department, Romania is considered a very unethical and corrupt country while Greece shares the same position. According to GAN Integrity, corruption is a very serious issue in Romania with a very high prevalence of bribes, arbitrary application of legislation, and judicial corruption. The most corrupt and unethical segment among the Romanian institutions is the law enforcement. The police often takes bribes from not only the public but businesses alike. The legal sector is not much below the law enforcement on the ethics scale with well-known cases of trading in influence and bribery. Due to the high prevalence of unethical behavior, most businesses must engage in illegal activities to be successful. In the public view, corruption is seen as a necessary evil and most people have either used bribery to succeed or have accepted bribes from others. In Greece, corruption and bribery is more prevalent in the business sector. The largest issue they are currently facing is tax evasion and the tax authorities are seen as the most corrupt and unethical institution. Due to the unethical actions taken by companies, the competitive market is highly distorted and in order to remain in the market, most businesses must use bribery and collusion. Due to the poor enforcement of corruption laws, unethical behavior is also considered a necessary evil in the Greek culture.

According to Hofstede's research, Romania and Greece also share similar views in four of the six categories of the 6D model while being marginally different in the other two categories. In the power distance category, Romania scores 90 while Greece scores 60. While in Romania people expect a very hierarchical organizational structure and expect to have a superior that has control over their actions, in Greece people respect a hierarchical structure but are not dependent on their superiors. In the Individualism category, Romania scores 30 while Greece scores 35. Both countries score fairly low in this category which symbolizes a highly collective society. In both countries people value the group more than the individual. On the Masculinity scale Romania scores 42 while Greece scores 57. In Romania people value free time, quality of life, and compromise while in Greece people value success and hard work more. In the Uncertainty Avoidance category, Romania scored 90 and Greece scored 100. Both countries have similar views regarding the need of rules and controlling the future. People in both countries tend to avoid uncertain situations and like to control outcomes. On the Long Term Orientation scale, both countries score similarly again with Romania at 52 and Greece at 45. With both of these scores being very intermediate, both countries' people are neither normative nor pragmatic. On the Indulgence scale Romania scores a low 20 while Greece scores 50. In Romania people prefer restraint while holding a pessimistic outlook and control their desires. In Greece on the other hand, people have no preference between restraint or gratification of desires. In the customer service aspect, Romania's and Greece's views differ slightly. Since Greece is a country where tourism is one of the predominant sources of income, Greece places customer service and customer satisfaction very highly. The service is all about the customer and they attempt to make especially their foreign customers happy. For nationals, the customer

service in Greece is not as important. In Romania, good customer service is viewed as a necessary business function but the companies will not invest many resources in bettering their customer service and will not go above and beyond to make most of their customers happy.

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THE 2016 OLYMPICS & MARKETING STRATEGIES: WHAT HAS BEEN THE EFFECT ON BRAZIL?

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ABSTRACT

This project involves going into detail at the strategies that organizations chose to take during the 2016 Olympics games and the results that the marketing strategies and campaigns brought either more success or failure. Brazil needed extensive costly renovations. Some of the best advertisements during the Olympic games were from Coca-Cola, Under Armour, Nike, Gatorade and McDonalds. This project examines these campaigns as well as the financial outcomes of the games which were an overwhelming success however the costs far outweighed the income generated.

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PROUD OR PRACTICAL? UNDERSTANDING CHINESE CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENSION OF ETHNIC INSPIRED APPAREL

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing dynamic cultural interchange and interaction between China and the rest of fashion world increased national self-consciousness and the anxiety for recognition of Chinese culture and fashion design on the world stage. Meanwhile, a significant number of designers, manufacturers, and consumers in China appear to have gradually embraced the trend, making Asian chic become chic in China. However, the cultural interchange and interaction between China and the rest of world has not been balanced or even. For domestic fashion practitioners, historical and traditional Chinese cultural resources provide a great repertoire for creative designs, and brand positioning with less international competition. However, without world recognition, the Chinese fashion industry has limited power to set trends utilizing and capitalizing on its own rich cultural heritage. With the increasing modernization and globalization in China, the concept of fashion democracy has been accepted by more Chinese fashion consumers; consequently, the successes of developing and growing Chinese fashion industry, fashion brands, and even fashioning national identity depends significantly on consumers' acceptance. Without a stable and growing domestic market for Chinese ethnic fashion, the trend of Chinoiserie will eventually become demeaning. Therefore, it is very critical to scrutinize consumers' motivations for engaging in culturally-related consumption. To this end, this research made an initial attempt to understand Chinese consumers' purchase intention of an ethnic fashion line which was sponsored by the state and endorsed by an international event.

A research model was proposed through integrating the theory of reason action and Katz's functional theories of attitude. The research model specifies the relationships among cultural pride, perceived practical usefulness, fashion leadership, attitudes, and purchase intention. Individuals' awareness of the international event endorsement was specified as a moderating factor. An online survey was designed and administered to a convenience sample with 237 valid responses collected from the southeast area of China. The 2014 Beijing APEC costume line was selected to create experiment stimuli for testing the moderating effects of an international event. Structural equation modeling analyses showed that all the identified factors affect purchase intention directly or indirectly mediated through attitudes. We also found that cultural pride had the most salient impact on consumer acceptance. Cross-group comparison analysis found that the state-sponsored event had no moderating effect on the proposed relationship. Research findings should help fill the substantial knowledge deficit that exists in cultural/ethnic/ethnic-inspired apparel marketing in China. Implications were provided for China's domestic fashion market to establish national brands, and eventually, nurture Chinese designers with recognition from the rest of the fashion world.

INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, the trade success in textiles and apparel has not only contributed significantly to China's modernization, globalization, and economic success but also helped cultivate its fashion industry. In the process of achieving economic success, China has nurtured the largest growing consumer population with increasing desire for more fashionable clothing. The size of the market, 1.36 billion residents (China population statistic report, 2015), plus the increasing spending power of many Chinese consumers, has attracted from the fashion world. The trend of *chinoiserie* started when China's economy took off (Clark & Milberg, 2011). Meanwhile, a significant number of designers, manufacturers, and consumers in China appear to have gradually embraced the trend, making Asian chic become chic in China.

The ongoing dynamic cultural interchange and interaction between China and the rest of fashion world increased national self-consciousness and the anxiety for recognition of Chinese culture and fashion design on the world stage. Meanwhile, a significant number of designers, manufacturers, and consumers in China appear to have gradually embraced the trend, making Asian chic become chic in China. However, the cultural interchange and interaction between China and the rest of world has not been balanced or even. For domestic fashion practitioners, historical and traditional Chinese cultural resources provide a great repertoire for creative designs, and brand positioning with less international competition. However, without world recognition, the Chinese fashion industry has limited power to set trends utilizing and capitalizing on its own rich cultural heritage. With the increasing modernization and globalization in China, the concept of fashion democracy has been accepted by more Chinese fashion consumers; consequently, the successes of developing and growing Chinese fashion industry, fashion brands, and even fashioning national identity depends significantly on consumers' acceptance. Without a stable and growing domestic market for Chinese ethnic fashion, the trend of *Chinoiserie* will eventually become demeaning. Therefore, it is very critical to scrutinize consumers' motivations for engaging in culturally-related consumption. To this end, this research made an initial attempt to understand Chinese consumers' purchase intention of an ethnic fashion line which was sponsored by the state and endorsed by an international event.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

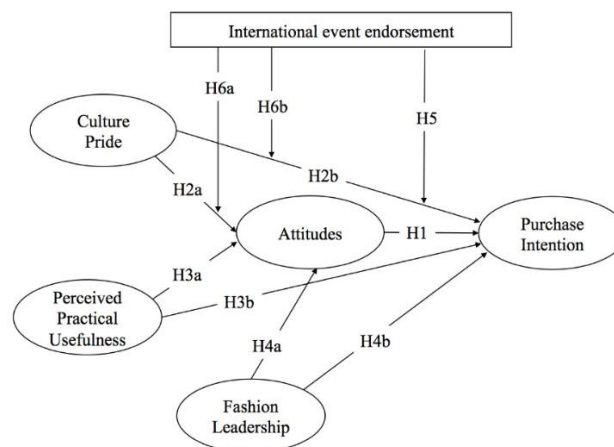
According to Eicher and Sumberg's (1995), dress is "ensembles and modifications of the body that capture the past of the members of a group, and cultural dress refers to the items of tradition that are worn and displayed to signify cultural heritage. In this study, we define Ethnic-Inspired Fashion (EIF) as fashionable clothing designed and created based on inspiration from ethnic costumes with fashionable elements added following previous research. According to the Theory of Reason (TRA) Action (TRA; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977, Dickson, 2000) consumer attitudes have been identified as a powerful predictor of their behavioral action. Katz (1960) argued that attitudes are formed based on an individual's expectation of the object to serve some function to meet the person's different needs, including utilitarian, value-expressive, and knowledge. In a context of consumer EIF decision making, consumers' expectation of an EIF product to serve utilitarian, value-expressive, and knowledge functions may be conceptualized as meeting dress code for special occasions, expressing cultural pride, and portraying fashion leadership.

EIF clothing, especially, signifies some important symbolic meanings and individual identity, and it is used to express the wearer's self (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Fazio (1989)

argued that the knowledge function of attitude perhaps the most fundamental function, and all attitudes serve this function to some extent. This function provides individual with a categorization of objects and some indication of one's behavior towards an object should be. Fashion leaders are considered to be product specialists who provide other consumers with information about a particular product class. We proposed that individuals' perceived practical usefulness, cultural pride, and fashion leadership affect their attitudes toward and purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels.

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese state has become deeply involved in its fashion industry, using the government's power to interact with market forces. The new government regime has called for achieving the *Chinese dream* by cultivating national and cultural pride among consumer- citizens through continually improving the nation's identities and image on the global stage. The conceptual model also specifies a government-sponsored international event as a situational factor moderating the relationships among individuals' cultural pride, attitudes, and purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels. Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual model and research hypotheses.

Figure 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CHINESE CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF ETHNIC FASHION



- H1 Attitudes positively affect the purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels.*
- H2 Cultural pride positively affects (a) attitudes towards; and (b) purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels.*
- H3 Perceived practical usefulness affects (a) attitudes towards; and (b) purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels.*
- H4 Fashion leadership affects (a) attitudes towards; and (b) purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels.*
- H5 The influence salience between attitudes and purchase intention of ethnic-inspired apparels will be different across consumer groups with or without awareness of state endorsement via international event.*

- H6 The influence salience between cultural pride (a) attitudes, and (b) purchase intention will be different across groups with or without awareness of state endorsement via international event.*

METHOD

An online survey was created using qualtrics.com. Research constructs were measured using multi-item scales using seven-point Likert scale for two direction responses (e.g., disagree/agree) and five-point Likert scale for one direction response (e.g., never/very often) to capture as much variances as possible (Dawes, 2008). The first part of the survey included measures to assess individual characteristics including fashion leadership, cultural pride, and PPUEA. The second part included a group of 2014 APEC dress images (see Figure 2). Participants were provided some descriptive words and requested to select those words which were associated with viewed dress images in their mind. Descriptive words including “APEC”, “Beijing APEC”, “Chinese style”, “traditional”, etc. Then, participants were requested to assess their attitudes towards, and purchase intention of, the viewed ethnic fashion line. The third part collected participants’ demographic information.

Of the participants, more than 62.4% were female. A majority of respondents were in the age range of 18–35, with 37.2% in the age range of 18–25, and 45.5% in the age range of 26–35. More than half of the respondents (55.8%) stated that their annual household incomes were less than RMB50, 000. Around 19.8% of the respondents had annual household income in the range of RMB 50,000–100,000. The rest of respondents (22.4%) had annual household income more than RMB100, 000. A majority of respondents had a four-year college education or graduate degree, with 65.4% of respondents having post-college degrees. Only 9.9% of respondents reported not having a four-year college education. The sample was a little biased toward a population with higher education. In fact, the majority of cultural fashion consumers in China are females with higher education and in the age range of 18–54. Therefore, our sample was representative of the ethnic fashion consumer population.

RESULTS

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood was conducted on the 20 indicators of five latent constructs to further ensure the measurements’ reliability and validity. The final CFA model showed that the fit was great ($\chi^2/df = 1.724$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .055, and CFI = .97; GFI = .90). Structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2009; Kline, 2011) was used to test the research model and hypotheses. The model achieved an excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 263.31$, $df = 157$, $\chi^2/df = 1.72$, $p < .001$, GFI=.906; CFI=.971, RMSEA=.053). With a good fit for the overall model, we turn our attention to the individual relationships contained within the model. H1 addressed the relationship between attitude and purchase intention. Results (Table 3) showed salient effects between attitude and purchase intention ($\beta_1 = .41$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. H2 addressed the effects of cultural pride on attitude (H2a) and purchase intention (H2b). The results supported both hypotheses: specifically, cultural pride positively affected attitude ($\beta_{2a} = .212$, $p < .001$) and purchase intention of cultural fashion ($\beta_{2b} = .264$, $p < .05$). H3 addressed whether or not perceived practical usefulness affects attitudes toward, and purchase intention of cultural fashion. The SEM results showed significant effects on attitude ($\beta_{3a} = .206$, $p < .001$), but not on purchase intention ($\beta_{3b} = .093$, $p > .05$). Therefore, perceived practical usefulness affected attitude

positively and H3 was partially supported. H4 addressed whether or not fashion leadership facilitated the formation of favorable attitudes toward, and purchase intention of, a cultural fashion line. Based on the SEM results, fashion leadership showed significant impact on both attitude ($\beta_{4a} = .18, p < .05$) and purchase intention ($\beta_{4b} = .15, p < .05$). Therefore, H4 was supported.

Table 3. SUMMARY OF DIRECT EFFECTS TESTING RESULTS					
Relationship within proposed research model			Path coefficient	Hypotheses	Testing results
Attitude	→	Acceptance	.43**	H1	Supported
Cultural pride	→	Attitudes	.21*	H2a	Supported
Cultural pride	→	Acceptance	.20**	H2b	Supported
Perceived practical usefulness	→	Attitudes	.18**	H3a	Supported
Perceived practical usefulness	→	Acceptance	.05	H3b	Not Supported
Fashion leadership	→	Attitudes	.19**	H4a	Supported
Fashion leadership	→	Acceptance	.18**	H4b	Supported
Model fit indices			GFI= .906; CFI= .971; χ^2/df = 1.68 RMSEA = .053		

* $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

The sample was classified into two groups with participants based on whether participants recognized the viewed ethnic fashion line was 2014 APEC garb (Figure 2). Then group comparisons were conducted following the approach suggested by Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002). Results found no χ^2 difference among models constrained at different indication no moderating effects. Therefore, Hypotheses H5, H6a, and H6b were not supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is important to note that perceived practical usefulness positively affected consumers' attitudes but not purchase intention. We also found the influence of perceived practical usefulness on purchase intention was fully mediated by attitudes, consistent with the functional attitude theory (Katz, 1960) in that individuals form attitudes toward ethnic fashion based on their expectation of the ethnic fashion to meet their clothing needs for some occasions. This study also shows that contemporary Chinese fashion designers hark to a notion of "Chinese." In the fashion industry, some global brands always have followed or created trends through the long history of Chinese culture or culture-inspired apparel. There is potentially a large market with more cultural products with Chinese characteristics and ethnic fashion for both domestic and global brands. Detailed research on consumer buying behavior, purchase intention, and attitude in ethnic and cultural apparel category is needed, especially in the China context. To better promote ethnic fashion, public and social events or companies' business marketing communications should connect cultural pride with promoted subjects. Furthermore, developing more national, provincial, or municipal cultural events to create more occasions for consumer-citizens to wear ethnic fashion to show their cultural pride will increase consumption of ethnic fashion.

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Available upon request.

ETHICAL MARKETING & CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN ITALY, JAPAN, NORWAY, & THE USA

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ABSTRACT

Ethics is one of the key factors in business decision making that helps ensure continued success. It is also beneficial for companies to have high levels of ethical behavior because trust is valued highly in the business field. I feel that countries such as Japan that have low levels of Indulgence are more likely to have stricter ethical standards. These scores usually indicate that they have a culture of restraint and tend to control their desires and impulses more. In comparison, the United States has a much higher score in Indulgence, while Italy has a low score similar to Japan's (actually even lower). Another dimension in Hofstede's 6D model that I feel can apply to ethics in the business field is the Individualism dimension. I believe that cultures that have lower individualism scores (i.e. countries that are characterized as collectivist), might have higher levels of ethical behavior because the mindset is more concerned with the community as a whole rather than focusing on individual needs. Especially when applied to business dealings, I believe this would influence a person's ability to go through with decisions that might hurt others in the process. While Japan also scores very low in this dimension as well, Italy & the United States both score in the higher range. These dimensions (along with the other 4) can give an indication of not only the ethics of the country, but also indications of how customer service can be applied in different countries. For example, in countries like Japan that have very high scores of Uncertainty Avoidance, customer service can be more geared towards warranties and other forms of "protection" from the uncertain future. In contrast, the United States has a below-average score which can indicate that while they might be receptive to some warranties, they might not give much value to those that are extensive. Countries like Italy that score high also tend to save and invest to prepare for uncertain situations. This may indicate that these countries are more likely to be more receptive to bundle deals. Another dimension that can help one analyze this aspect of business is their Long Term Orientation score. This can relate to customer service because countries on the low end experience mindsets that are more concerned with quick results and returns and less concerned with preparing for lasting durability than their higher scoring counterparts. According to Hofstede's six dimensions, Norway and Japan are opposites on every scale. The biggest difference between the two countries is masculinity. Japan scored a 95 out of 100 while Norway scored 8 out of 100. Known for being perfectionist and workaholics, Japan is rated one of the most masculine societies in the world. Work-related deaths, known as karo-shi, happen due to the overwhelming amount of exhausting hours employees will put into their work. The reason the Japanese spend an inordinate amount of time at the office is to prove to their managers that they are worthy of receiving a higher ranked position within the company. This hierarchy methodology leads to fierce competition in the workplace. Unlike Japan, self-indulging in time off is more important than spending 60+ hours at the job. Norwegians see competition as fruitless and unrewarding. This is because Norwegians follow the tenets of Jante

law. In an overview of Jante law, be humble as all people are equal. Do not flaunt achievements to others who are less fortunate. Instead of striving for perfection, everyone should try to do their best. Norway has become the second most feminine country in the world according to Hofstede's six dimensions. This drive for success and perfectionism is common with the customer service industry as well. How often are you told Hello when walking into a store and thank you when walking out of a store in the United States? Unless it is a small business, it typically does not happen in the United States. It is a common tradition in Japan to greeted in unison by all employees when someone walked into a restaurant or store and appreciated as they leave. The Japanese culture wants you to know that they are honored to have you come into their store as their sales associates enthusiastically sell you the products you are looking for, whether it be a new phone or a new toothbrush. It is not uncommon to have employees escort you to the sidewalk when leaving a store. Being over friendly like the Japanese do at the beginning of a transaction or relationship could be viewed as a sign of weakness in Norway.

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DO WE ACT OUR AGE? AN INVESTIGATION USING MATCHED GROUPS IN KUWAIT COFFEE SHOPS

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ABSTRACT

Age, the time from inception to present, is a well-established demographic variable used extensively both in market research and academic marketing literature. Studies show that the passage of time directly affects human biological properties, cognitive processes, and emotional operations (e.g., Phillips and Sternthal, 1977; John and Cole, 1986; Tepper, 1994). Specifically, many consumer behaviors are contingent upon the passage of time, whereupon consumers' needs, lifestyles, attitudes, and aspirations tend to evolve as aging occurs. However, this idea of chronological age is not the only perspective on age. Additionally, age can be conceived as perceived age (e.g., Tuckman and Lorge, 1954), a reflection of the mental perceptions of age. Perceived or cognitive age has also been shown to affect many items, such as consumers' self-image, lifestyle, and ultimately behaviors related to consumption (Gonzales et al., 2009; Lin and Xia 2012; Chang 2008). The purpose of this study is to test whether consumers act in relation to their chronological age or their cognitive age. This is accomplished by comparing the statistical tests between matched age groups to a normative guide derived from correlations of age with a variety of consumption-related variables. The authors focus on coffee drinkers of all ages in a Middle-Eastern country. The authors find that chronological age and cognitive age are highly correlated, but slightly different. Correlations reveal that one or both age indicators are related to most of the coffee variables in the study. Only three out of fifty-one t-tests revealed a significant test statistic necessary to support cognitive age. Therefore, a vast majority of the statistical tests, forty-eight out of fifty-one, support chronological age as more relevant than cognitive age. In conclusion, this research offers evidence that people act based on their chronological age rather than their cognitive age in the selected setting.

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EXPLORING CULTURALLY-PLURALISTIC SEGMENTATION AMONG COLLEGE MILLENNIALS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

While diversity among numerous consumer populations is growing rapidly, little is known about the existence of the culturally-pluralistic consumer, i.e., one who is multicultural but only one element culture presents as dominant in his consumer behavior. As the U.S. has continued to diversify with successive generations, such an understanding has become an increasingly significant and timely issue. One area with a potentially meaningful linkage to cultural pluralism manifests itself in ethnic food purchase and consumption habits. Marketers are pressed to meet the demands of up-and-coming consumers in new, creative, and cost-effective manners, more so than ever since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis. Furthermore, Millennials (born between approximately 1980 and 2000) are a promising generation in terms of size, diversity, and purchasing power for marketers. The present research posits that this key cohort has the propensity for being grouped as a culturally-pluralistic market segment.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This case study sought to uncover combined demographic, psychographic and geographic elements which might lead to new segmentation recognition and marketing stratagem to reach and communicate with a new subset of Millennials, the culturally-pluralistic. Using an exploratory approach, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the possible existence of cultural pluralism segmentation from the perceptions of U.S. community college Millennials attending school in New York City.

Twelve face-to-face interviews were conducted with millennial students from a New York City community college. The goal was to discern perceptions' from these participants as to how their cultural associations and cultural self-identification affect their food purchase and consumption patterns, particularly with regard to ethnic foods. Participant eligibility was determined by ascertaining the students' age range.

CONCLUSIONS

Results from the study were compiled with the assistance of a combination of Excel and NVIVO, the latter a qualitative analytic software package well suited for the evaluation of unstructured data. Findings revealed that millennials are aware of cultural pluralism and, in large part, consider themselves to be culturally-pluralistic. Millennials deem themselves culturally adept, self-identifying with cultures other than their original family bloodlines. Participants enthusiastically demonstrated eagerness and openness to seeking out and "belonging" to cultures other than their conventional ethnicity. Finally, participants' tendencies were inclined toward

choosing ethnic foods from a singular dominant culture from among their various cultural associations and relationships. The results from this study validate segmentation based on cultural pluralism as a method for marketing strategy development and can add substantively to current literature.

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MARKETING AND CROSS CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

Hofstede's 6D Model was developed from a comprehensive study by Geert Hofstede which examined the influence of culture on values. The model has 6 dimensions including power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation versus short term, and indulgence versus restraint. While the model is imperfect, it has been utilized in numerous research studies. More specifically, Hofstede's Model has been used to explain the differences between Russia and the United States in the areas of ethics and customer service. Views on ethical and appropriate business behavior vary by country or culture. While the US and Russia have an international business relationship, what is ethically acceptable in Russia, is not always considered ethical in the United States. According to Beekun in a US Department of Commerce report determined that Russia engages in behavior considered unethical and illegal including bribery, extortion, murder and mafia activity. These behaviors were obstacles to US business development in Russia. Similarly, when Russians do business in the US, they encounter ethical situations which are unfamiliar. Beekun's research incorporated Hofstede's Model. The research noted that the high individualistic and low power distance of Americans influenced their view of ethics as compared to Russians. When evaluating an ethical situation, Americans consider several factors including fairness and equality. Russians tend to focus on equality only. An understanding of the differences in business ethics between countries can lead to better business relationships and opportunities. Similar to ethics, customer service is influenced by culture. The behavior of customer service representatives will vary depending on the culture or country. Therefore, it is important for international companies to consider the culture of its customers when training customer service representatives. There are definite differences in customer service behavior in the United States and Russia. Wursten utilized Hofstede's Model and noted the high individualistic and low power distance of Americans. As a result, Americans expect customer service representatives to be competent, independent, reliable, and efficient in an informal manner. By comparison, the high power distance and uncertainty avoidance of Russians indicates that customer service representative should respect the customer at all times and avoid uncertain situations that will make the customer uncomfortable. In addition, representatives must be reliable and professional. The differences between Russia and the United States on ethics and customer service are just two of the many examples of how culture influences behavior. Success in international business requires and understanding of these differences. Ethics: It can be hard to sum up American ethics as a whole, being that the country is so large and diverse in its nature. With people stemming from all different parts of the world encompassing different backgrounds and ways of life, it is truly the world's melting pot. Though it can be expected that some ethical codes change from region to region and even state to state, there are a few things that all Americans do uphold to for the most part. One of these is that we do not bribe one another for something that we want(in a monetary sense), to add on top of that it is not acceptable to haggle with stores for price(whatever the set price is, is what you shall pay). Another key area is in opportunity that is

nondiscriminatory. In America it is known that a person shall not be discriminated against for a job based on gender, age, race, religious views, political views, etc. In Thailand the consumers feel that businesses should behave in a very ethical manor, not doing anything shady, or anything that could cause harm to someone. For instance, in 2003 Thai customers threatened to boycott the Nestle Company for producing genetically modified products. That being said it seems that the Thai customers are willing to punish companies that are not ethical, though nothing positive seems to happen to those who do practice ethical behavior. Now as far as the government and its employees' ethics differs a bit from the U.S. This is in the form of bribery, it is a common practice in Thailand and overall widely accepted in most parts. Especially in the case of law enforcement, police officers there are known to take bribes especially from foreigners visiting the country. Hofstede's 6D model: Power Distance: The U.S. and Thailand both have fairly high power distance rankings, the U.S. being at 40 and Thailand at 64. This shows that both countries have gaps in their difference between decision makers and that there are many individuals who have a lot of power that can make others follow them. Though with this score it does show that in Thailand there is an even broader gap between people with and without power. Individualism: There is a huge difference in this area between the two countries. The U.S. is at a 91 compared to Thailand being at 20. This shows that the U.S. culture is all about "Me" and whatever "I" want. Where in Thailand the people think in more of a group setting and what's best for "Us" and what can "We" do about it. Masculinity: In the U.S. even though it is a very diverse place and for the most part nondiscriminatory it is still a very male driven society with a score of 62. Whereas in Thailand with a score of 34 we see a much more feminine culture. Uncertainty Avoidance: With a score of 46 the U.S. can be said to have about an average avoidance of uncertainty, this could be seen as people willing to take some risk but not all of them. Whereas in Thailand with a score of 64 we can assume that many of their people do not want to take many risks as they want to remain stable in their life. Long Term Orientation: Both countries have very similar scores with the U.S. coming in at 26 and Thailand coming in at 32. It can be said that both countries do not spend much time thinking or looking towards the future but instead make decisions based on the here and now. Indulgence: In America indulgence seems to be part of the culture, with a score of 68 many people can be said to indulge or even over indulge on a lot of things. In comparison to Thailand with a score of 45, it seems that people do enjoy to indulge in things every now and then but do not want to overdo it, or over indulge in many things. Strategic Customer Service: In America the customer service culture is very customer driven. There is a saying "the customer is always right", meaning that no matter what, the employee's job is always to satisfy the customer with their needs (within rules and laws of course).

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THE ROLE OF PRICING METHODS IN CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF FINANCIAL ADVISORY SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the impact of alternate pricing methods on consumers' perceptions of financial advisory services. Basic information on services marketing and consumer evaluation of services is reviewed. Next, the role of pricing methods and perceptions of price are investigated; especially as they pertain to professional services. A proposition regarding the pricing methods used in financial advisory services is subsequently presented. Then, various pricing methods used in the financial advising industry, and their impact on consumer perceptions, are examined. Finally, current issues in the pricing and consumer evaluation of financial advisory services are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

While planning for their retirement many baby boomers, as well as millennials, seek the services of financial advisors. The service can be characterized as a provision of knowledge, information, and expertise. This paper constitutes an exploration of the theorized impact of alternate pricing methods and strategies, used by financial advising professionals, on consumers' evaluation of financial advisory services. Particular aspects of evaluating services including financial advisory services are first examined. Then elements of price and its role in influencing consumer perceptions of services are explored. Finally, the role that various pricing methods would be expected to play in consumer perceptions regarding financial advisory services is discussed.

Congram (1991) notes that success in achieving marketing goals in the professional services arena, as a whole, depends upon the understanding that all of the activities of a professional services firm influence *perceptions* of the firm itself and the services it offers. The emphasis of this paper is on the relationship between extrinsic cues such as *pricing methods*, and consumer perceptions of service value, trust, independence, objectivity, and quality. Of particular interest is the relationship between pricing methods used by financial advisors, and client perceptions and assessment of the value of the service.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

In general, professional services constitute a significant part of our service economy. Within the marketing mix, the question invariably arises as to how consumers evaluate services. Zeithaml (1981) argues that services are more difficult to evaluate than goods, resulting in a need for consumers to rely on various cues when evaluating services. This difficulty in service evaluation arises from specific distinguishing characteristics of a service, including: intangibility, non-standardization, and inseparability (Murray, 1991, p.13). Services, as a whole, are often conceptualized as *experiential*, often difficult to evaluate precisely in advance of purchase (Murray, 1991, p.12). Because of the transitory and varied nature of services, product evaluation

may often occur after purchase and use, raising pre-purchase uncertainty (Young, 1981). Services are therefore seen as being evaluated in a more complex and distinctive way (Booms & Nyquest, 1981; Davis, Guiltinan & Jones, 1979; Bateson, 1977). Particular types of services known as *credence* services are difficult for consumers to evaluate, *even after purchase and use* (Zeithaml, 1981). Unfortunately, many professional services fall into this category (Crosby & Stephens, 1987, p.404). Whole life insurance, for example, has been characterized as a high credence service that is abstractly complex, and focused on future benefits that are difficult to prove (Crosby & Stephens, 1987, p.404). Certainly, in this regard, professional financial advisory services would fall into the same category.

Professional services such as insurance, medical, and dental care have also been classified as *shopping services* in which buyers compare and seek information about competing services (Murphy & Enis, 1986, p.28). The shopping aspects of these services are a factor contributing to extensive search. Clearly, financial advisory services would fall into the *shopping services* category.

In the evaluation of high credence shopping services, such as professional financial advisory services, it would therefore be expected that consumers would focus on extrinsic cues for evaluation (such as price, reputation, education, professional certification) because of the complexity of the service and the difficulty of projecting future benefits.

THE ROLE OF PRICE

Monroe (1990, p.430) states that the price setter must understand "how customers *perceive* price and how customers develop perceptions of value." Zeithaml and Bitner (1996, p.498) define perceived value as the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a service based on *perceptions* of what is received and what is given.

The terms "fees" and "commissions" are among the many terms used for the "word" price in services marketing. Monroe (1990, p. 430), further, notes that "fees" are often paid to doctors and dentists; those in professional services while "tuition" is paid for education, "interest" is paid on loans, "admission" is paid for sporting events, "rent" is paid for apartments, and "fares" are paid for travel. Other service providers such as real estate and travel agents are compensated by "commissions" based on a percentage of the selling price (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996, p. 512). Clearly, the nomenclature used for price may impact consumer perceptions of value. Each name or label carries a set of associations along with it. A rose by any other name may *not* smell as sweet.

In general, "fees" often tend to be associated with professional compensation, e.g. doctors and lawyers, while commissions tend to be associated with salespersons. Commissions are also viewed as more incentive based. With a commission system, the more expensive the product or the more that is sold, the higher the compensation received by the professional, e.g. financial advisor.

As mentioned previously, financial advisory services are not only intangible, they are also difficult to evaluate prior to, and sometimes even after consumption. In fact, Guiltinan (1989, p.11-15) notes that most consumers of services are unable to assess the price-quality relationship prior to purchase, and often even after use. In such cases, the pricing method can act as a cue. "In many consumer services, the price element can itself interact with the product quality element of a positioning strategy. This can happen when consumers have difficulty distinguishing between competing services before consumption, and the price is seen as an

important indication of quality" (Palmer & Cole, 1995, p.237). Monroe (1990, p.432) makes the same point. Moebs & Moebs (1986, p.24) note that pricing can act indirectly as one of the major ways that an organization communicates its philosophy. By extension it can be proposed that:

- P1 *Consumers of financial advisory services, when evaluating such services, will ascribe a portion of perceived quality and value based on the method of pricing of such services.*

FINANCIAL ADVISORY SERVICES PRICING METHODS

Fee-Based Financial Advising

In the professional literature (Walker, 1998) states that advisors should be compensated "for value added consulting services and for the trust that they inspire, not transactions." Fee-based options range from hourly, to flat, to percentage-based. The hourly fee is probably the easiest to administer (Saucer, 1997).

Industry proponents of fee-based financial planning point out a variety of advantages that they believe are associated with the strategy. Fee-based pricing is said to increase the perception of and the fact of *objectivity* (Marcus, 1999; Saucer, 1997). Advisors are not swayed by the prospect of increasing their commissions, resulting in the *interests* of the advisor and client being *better aligned* (Reiser, 1999).

Some fee-based financial advisors charge a flat amount for a financial plan (*task based*), or an hourly fee (*time based*). *Task based* pricing relates compensation to the completion of a specific service task, e.g. cutting a customer's hair (Lovelock, 1996, p. 371-372). *Time based* pricing relates compensation to using a specific amount of time, e.g. an hour of a lawyer's time, or staying at a motel for a night (Lovelock, 1996, p.371-372). Other fee-based advisors (estimated at around 30%) charge a percentage based on "Assets under Management" (AUM) (Anderson & Lee, 2016, p.8 & 10).

The fee-based system is seen as imparting a more *professional* image to financial planning (Marcus, 1999). This strategy is also viewed as *more responsive to customer desires* as part of a change in the industry from being product driven to customer driven; as customers become more sensitive to commission sales and desire to save money on commissions (Winter, 1998; Saucer, 1997).

John Dodsworth, president and chief executive officer of Camico Insurance Co. of Redwood City California said that unethical advisors can abuse clients regardless of the method of payment. But with the fee-only strategy the worst that could happen is a higher charge than competitors. Dodsworth maintains that agents wouldn't have an interest in selling a bad product; while with commissions, a client could be sold a fairly risky product (Saucer, 1997). This seems to indicate that fee-based advisors would be viewed as more trustworthy in providing financial guidance; as such decisions carry a high degree of perceived risk. Clients who invest in stocks and bonds, often risk substantial sums and are very concerned with financial services and procedures (Johnson & Seymour, 1985, p.233). Financial planning clients have both their assets and financial futures on the line.

Commission Based Financial Advising

Commission compensated financial advisors usually charge a commission per transaction on purchases and sales; or receive their commissions from the providers of the financial products

that they recommend, e.g. mutual fund companies, insurance companies, etc. In a recent survey nearly 3 in 10 affluent investors indicated that they pay their advisor each time a transaction is made (Anderson & Lee, 2016, p.10). Proponents of commission based advising assert that it has been the *traditional* way of doing business and it's what *clients are used to* (Saucer, 1997). Older consumers are felt to be more comfortable with commissions because of this familiarity. Commission based advising may also be viewed as "free" by clients since they never see the commissions, so it is viewed as the more cost-effective way to go. Clients can receive financial advice and plans developed at, what appears to be, no cost. Commissions may also be viewed as an incentive to work harder (Saucer, 1997).

Questions also arise as to how fee-based planning would fare in a down market. Will investors continue to pay high fees for advice if they see a lessening in their returns? Will clients return to commission-based advising on the principle that they will be trading less and incurring lower transaction fees, or will they remain confident in their advisors; trusting that they are out for their best interests and that fees are a small price to pay for their financial security (Marcus, 1999).

Detractors hold that fee-based compensation is hardly the silver bullet (Saucer, 1997). It depends on how the fee-based system is structured. A client may seek objective advice from a financial advisor, but fees based on a percentage of assets under management (AUM) could, for example, discourage clients from paying off the debt incurred on investing in real estate because that would take funds from the pool of assets that are being managed (Anderson & Lee, 2016; Saucer, 1997). The AUM method may also harm small investors who might be dropped because their assets under management are too small to make them profitable, or for whom a transaction based method of pricing would be less expensive due to relatively limited annual trading (Maxey & Dagher, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This paper has looked at consumer evaluation of financial advising from a perceptual viewpoint. The emphasis is on the relationship between extrinsic cues such as *pricing methods*, and consumer perceptions of service value, trust, independence, objectivity, and quality.

A complicating issue on the horizon is a Department of Labor ruling that financial advisors must adhere to a "fiduciary standard" regarding issues of retirement advising (Maxey & Dagher, 2017). The fiduciary rule requires that when advising regarding retirement planning, advisors must act in the "best interest" of their clients rather than the previous suitability requirement that required recommendations that were "suitable" for the client (Tergensen, 2017). This "fiduciary rule" has now been put on hold by the Department of Labor (Tergensen, 2017).

However, the fiduciary issue remains an important one because fiduciary advisors have tended to be associated with fee-based advising, and even the suggestion of a new rule has caused a significant number of firms to alter their pricing structures. It has also made consumers more aware of the fiduciary standard versus the suitability standard when evaluating an advisor.

The situation is further complicated, in that the issue may not only be the method of compensation of advisors but the question of *full disclosure*. If those who are compensated by commissions clearly *identify themselves* as agents or brokers and don't hide behind the facade of a financial consultant or advisor there should be no problem. For example, everyone knows that real estate agents work on commission. In the final analysis, given all the options available, it comes down to a matter of consumer choice; highlighting the need for consumers to be vigilant when making important financial decisions (Zweig, 2017).

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WEBSITES VS. APPS: A COMPARISON OF CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF APPAREL MASS CUSTOMIZATION ACROSS ONLINE CHANNELS

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ABSTRACT

After 20 years of industrial practice, consumers now can shop for mass-customized apparel in various channels including websites and smart device applications (apps). Online apparel mass-customization (OAMC), which provides platforms and convenience for customers to communicate with retailers effectively, provides retailers with a growing opportunity in today's evolving omni-channel environment. Meanwhile, product value and experiential value delivered to consumers will help increase customer satisfaction and lower the return rate. However, little is known about consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and purchase intentions of mass-customized apparels when using different channels.

This research presents a comprehensive attempt to examine the factors that impact consumers' attitude toward using OAMC and the willingness to purchase online mass-customized apparel (through an experiment) with a focus on channel comparison between websites and apps. The technology acceptance model was applied as a theoretical foundation. Applying the technology acceptance model, we systematically examined how favorable attitudes are influenced or formed across different online channels. An online self-administered questionnaire was utilized to collect participants' responses including OAMC evaluations of usefulness, enjoyment, ease of use, choice variety, risks, attitude, and willingness to purchase after practicing OAMC in the experiment. A total of 388 responses were collected from a major university in the Southeastern of the United States. Factor analyses were conducted to test and confirm the measurement model with results showing that the reliability and validities were well achieved. Hypothesized relationships and moderating effects were tested using a structural equation modeling approach.

Research results indicated that the proposed hypotheses were partially supported. A positive attitude predicted willingness to purchase. Ease of use, enjoyment, and choice variety significantly influenced customers' attitude. Usefulness and risks did not influence attitude in this research model. The moderation effects of online mass-customization channels, consumers' level of fashion involvement, and consumers' need for uniqueness were tested separately through multi-group comparisons. The results showed that there was no significant difference among consumers with different levels of fashion involvement, or different levels of need for uniqueness, or consumers who shop online mass-customized apparel in different channels. This study provides a theoretically grounded suggestion of how a targeted implementation of OAMC across channels can enhance the acceptance of OAMC from providing the choice variety of colors, fabrications, and shape of collars on websites and apps. Moreover, the research findings provide empirical support for further investment in the development of apps, because a user-friendly and easy navigational app will bring a favorable attitude. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributed to the TAM model by extending this model to consumers' evaluation of real shopping experience. The results indicated that TAM is also applicable to this

type of evaluation. Moreover, the study results also indicated that the technological environment (e.g. websites or apps) does not set boundaries for the well- applied TAM model. TAM model is suitable to be used in websites and apps, which showed the stability of the research model.

INTRODUCTION

Involved from conventional customization which focuses on craft, the application of mass customization (MC) in apparel industry started in the late 1990s (Ives & Piccoli, 2003). It enables customers to purchase best-fit garments while personalizing certain desired features (e.g., color, pattern, and materials) at an acceptable price premium (Lee & Chang, 2011). Online apparel mass-customization (OAMC), which enables customers to communicate with retailers effectively, allows customers to specify unique requirements precisely. It provides retailers with a growing opportunity in today's evolving omni-channel environment because the product value and experiential value delivered to consumers will help increase individual consumer satisfaction and lower the return rate. With the wide use of the Internet, consumers are accessible to online shopping channels anytime by using their personal computers and smart devices (Chaffey, 2016). To satisfy consumers' diverse shopping habits, OAMC retailers made their products available on both online web channel and smart devices application (apps). During the last few years, apps are getting popular and mobile commerce is gradually taking off. These online shopping channels, which focus on the buying and selling of goods and services online, have brought a radical shift in the way business activities are conducted and pushed the boundaries of virtual commerce revolution (Omonedo & Bocij, 2014). Mobile smart devices make taking and sending personal measure much easier, and significantly facilitate consumers to order customized apparel products. However, it is still under-researched regarding how customers perceive and use apps to create and order customized apparel. Such knowledge is needed for apparel businesses to better use of apps to reach target customers and offer products to meet or exceed customers' expectations. In this current research, we intend to shed some lights on understanding purchasing customized apparel products across websites and apps. Therefore, a clear understanding of customers' acceptance of OAMC across channels is essential, because it is key to understand technology-driven customers in the omni-channel environment.

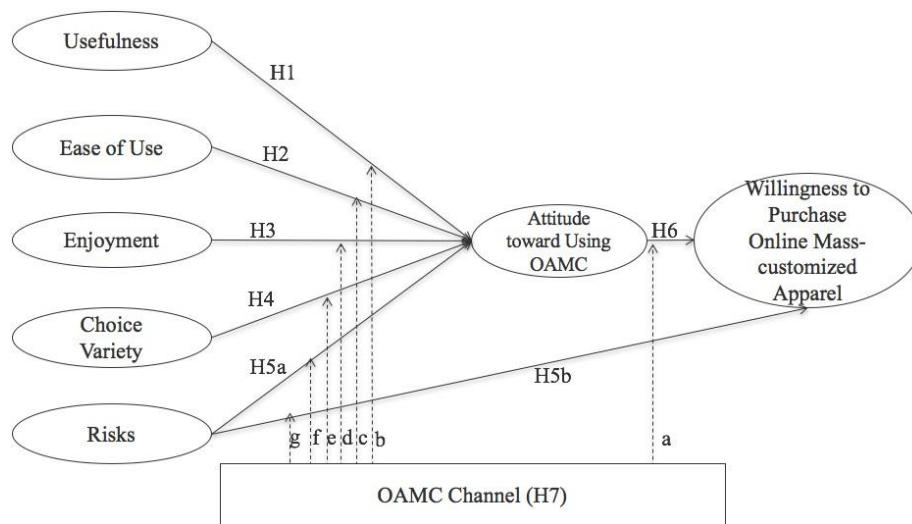
Literature concerning OAMC on website channels is currently prevalent; however, since many OAMC apps' development and application are still at a beginning stage, literature is deficient concerning strategic design and consumer acceptance of apps offering OAMC. Moreover, not all the participants of previous OAMC research have OAMC experience, and research results were based on consumers' perceptions rather than experience. Therefore, most of the perceptions and evaluations remained at the pre-purchase stage. To this end, the purpose of this study is to fill the gap through an experiment focusing on comparing customers' experiences across different OAMC channels. Research findings should provide insights into customers' attitudes and expectations, and identify directions to improve purchase intention to further development of Omni-channels for retailers.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A research model with hypotheses was developed based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Figure 1), which was widely used for modeling user acceptance of information systems (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). According to TAM, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are of primary relevance for the acceptance behaviors (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989).

A review of the related literature (e.g., Lee & Chang, 2011) identified additional exogenous factors, which may affect consumer acceptance of OAMC and their usage experiences. Accordingly, these factors were added to extend the original TAM, including enjoyment (Lee & Chang, 2011), risks (Cho & Fiorito, 2009), and choice variety (Blecker & Abdelkafi, 2006). The original TAM model is more about consumers' perceptions; all the factors are therefore specified as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived risks. However, in this research, we aim to measure consumers' feedbacks on a real OAMC experience rather than their general perceptions of OAMC concept. During the empirical study, consumers' evaluation of the usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, risks, and choice variety were assessed after they had a real OAMC experience. The conceptual framework below shows the variables included and the ensuing hypotheses.

Figure 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



H1 Usefulness of OAMC will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC. H2

Ease of use of OAMC will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC. H3

Enjoyment of OAMC will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC.

H4 Choice Variety of OAMC will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC.

H5a Risks of OAMC will negatively influence consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC.

H5b Risks of OAMC will negatively influence consumers' willingness to purchase online mass-customized apparel.

H6 Consumers' attitudes toward using OAMC will positively influence consumers' willingness to purchase online mass-customized apparel.

H7 The salience of the path between (a) attitude toward using OAMC to willingness to purchase mass-customized apparel, (b) usefulness, (c) ease of use, (d) enjoyment, (e) choice variety, (f) risk to attitude toward using OAMC, and (g) risk to willingness to purchase mass-customized apparel would be different across groups of

OAMC through websites and through smart device apps.

METHOD

A comprehensive Google search identified 50 online customization brands. T-shirts were the most popular apparel product of OAMC, offered by 9 out of the 50 identified brands. Because of its popularity and simplification, “T-shirt” was selected as the experiment product category. Zazzle, a well-established mass customization brand providing T-shirts customization via websites and apps, was selected for use as a design platform of an online survey experiment. Before the experiment, full randomization was used to assign participants to groups and assign groups to different channels. During the survey experiment, participants were requested to customize a T-shirt on Zazzle.com or the Zazzle app. After customization, participants were requested to send their creations to the researcher through email. Then participants were directed to an online self-administered questionnaire to provide responses to statements assessing their evaluations of usefulness, enjoyment, ease of use, choice variety, risks, attitude, and willingness to purchase based on their mass customization experience.

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to search for quality measurement for the research constructs in the proposed research model. Constructs and measures were selected because they were tested by researchers and displayed excellent reliability. Moreover, because the implication of OAMC in app channel is still new, up-to-date scales were searched and selected to be comprehensive. Empirical data was collected using a marketing research lab with student participant panel from a major southeastern university in the United States. Twenty-two lab sessions with 400 participants in total were scheduled for this online experiment. It took 30 minutes for each lab session. Participants were randomly assigned to Website Group or App Group full randomization before the experiment. A total of 388 responses were collected. After data cleaning, two incomplete and 85 unengaged responses were eliminated. The remaining 301 responses (with 150 in the website group and 151 in the App group) were included in data analysis. The website group contains 65 male and 85 female participants; the App group included 66 male and 85 female participants.

RESULTS

Three rounds of exploratory factor analyses were conducted, and items having low communalities, low loadings, or high cross loadings were removed. Varimax rotation resulted in seven factors, with 81.28% of the total variances explained, and item loadings ranging from .657 to .901, while Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .844 to .969, demonstrating the good reliability of the scales. EFA loadings ranging from .718 to .943. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to confirm the measurement model with the reliability and validities achieved. Path analysis with a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 403.067$, $df = 235$, $\chi^2/df = 1.72$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI = 0.976, and GFI = .902). Ease of use, enjoyment, and choice variety—had direct, positive effects on attitude toward using OAMC (Hypotheses 2-4), with standardized β coefficients of .184 ($p < 0.05$), .241 ($p < 0.05$), and .357 ($p < 0.001$), respectively. Attitude toward using OAMC had a direct positive effect on consumers’ willingness to purchase online mass-customized apparel (Hypothesis 6), with a standardized β coefficient of .571 ($p < 0.001$). Based on the results, the paths of usefulness and risk to attitude (Hypotheses 1 and 5a) and the path from risk to willingness to purchase online mass-customized apparel (Hypothesis 5b) were not significant. Therefore, Hypotheses 1, 5a, and 5b were not supported.

Table 1 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES AND TESTING RESULTS					
Path to	Path from	Coefficients	Critical Ratio	<i>p</i>	Hypothesis Testing
Attitude	Usefulness	-.012	-.201	ns	H1 Not supported
	Ease of Use	.184	2.299	*	H2 Supported
	Enjoyment	.241	3.143	*	H3 Supported
	Choice Variety	.357	4.656	**	H4 Supported
Willingness to Purchase	Risk	.034	-.67	ns	H5a Not supported
	Risk	-.034	-.67	ns	H5b Not supported
	Attitude	.571	10.621	**	H6 Supported

Note. ** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$

Multiple group analysis was conducted to examine differences across the two channels. The results indicated that the chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = 9.072$, $df = 7$; $p > .05$) between the two models was not significant, indicating that the consumers' attitude purchase intention of online mass-customized apparel did not vary across channels. Therefore, H7a to H7g were not supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

By adapting previous research measurements, this study constructed a conceptual model and tested it empirically using a sample of college students from a major university in the southern U.S. Unlike previous research which was focused on consumers' perceptions of OAMC, this study provided a real shopping environment and analyzed consumers' evaluations of their experience. The results demonstrated that consumers' evaluation of the usefulness of OAMC did not significantly influence their attitude toward using OAMC, which is different from previous research (Cho & Fiorito, 2009; Lee & Chang, 2011; Merle et al., 2010).

The results also supported that choice variety will positively influence consumers' attitude toward using OAMC. Therefore, extensive choice selections such colors, fabrications, and shape of collars on websites and apps might lead to greater consumer acceptance levels. Moreover, the comparison across channels provides insights into what users expect retailers to offer. That is, providing greater features that will add enjoyment to OAMC on the websites and user-friendly interfaces in apps. For example, retailers could provide features related to information sharing and, correspondingly, the retailer app could contain fewer features, such as posting pictures and sharing comments on Facebook and blogs. Furthermore, the research findings provide empirical support for further investment in the development of apps, because a user-friendly and easy navigational app will bring a favorable attitude.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributed to the TAM model by extending this model to consumers' evaluation of real shopping experience, which is different from previous research only concentrated on the general perception and imagination. The results indicated that TAM is also applicable to this type of evaluation. Moreover, the study results also indicated that the technological environment (e.g. websites or apps) does not set boundaries for the well-applied TAM model. TAM model is suitable to be used in websites and apps, which showed the stability of the research model.

Despite the meaningful implications, this study is not without limitations. First, it used a convenience sample; therefore, interpretations and generalizations of the findings should be made with care. Future research should include a larger sample of consumers to verify the results of this study. Next, during data collection, participants responded to questions within a certain time frame and in a research lab. Future research should try to find out consumers' evaluations by using other kinds of smart devices. In addition, because consumers may perceive OAMC on different apparel products at different level of services, future research could implement the same model on other categories of apparel so as to address consumers' evaluations precisely.

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Available upon request

MANUFACTURER TRUST: THE INFLUENCE OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT CUES

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ABSTRACT

Manufacturers fulfill their sales function by staffing and managing a sales force, outsourcing to a Manufacturer Representative (MR), or deploying a combination of these methods. The Manufacturer Representative (MR) receives commissions to handle the sales function on an extended contract basis. Outsourcing the sales function to an MR allows the manufacturer to focus more time and effort on core competencies. Manufacturer trust in the MR is examined in this study because of its importance to the effectiveness and achievement of a long-term interfirm relationship. A manufacturer may decide to end the arrangement with an MR if an adequate level of trust in the MR is not formed. This possibility necessitates that MRs interact with manufacturers in ways that generate trust. This need is addressed by answering the research question "What are the manufacturer's perceptions of an MR that influence the manufacturer's formation of trust in the MR?" This study contributes to our understanding of how an MR may obtain manufacturer trust by measuring relationships between trust components and relationships between them and manufacturer trust. The findings show that some trust components are direct cues that manufacturers use to determine trust. Other components are indirect cues influencing trust perceptions by way of relationships with direct cues. The direct cues examined are a manufacturer's perceptions of MR credibility, benevolence, and compatibility. Indirect cues include perceptions of MR expertise, attentiveness to the manufacturer, and the quality of information provided by the Manufacturer Representative (MR).

LICENSING OR NOT? AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF A MASS-MARKET AUTO BRAND'S FASHION CLOTHING EXTENSION

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ABSTRACT

The idea that consumers use brands to express their identities has led many companies to reposition their brands with efforts to fit into a consumer's lifestyle and compete for a share of identity among consumers. By licensing the brand name to manufacturers in fashion and other lifestyle-related categories, cross-category extending into different categories has been adopted by brand managers to create a "lifestyle" brand image. Auto brands are increasingly looking for opportunities of licensing arrangements to the billion-dollar global fashion industries, which may provide positive feedback to parent brand in building lifestyle brands. Some luxury auto brands have evolved into life-style brands and extended into fashion industry successfully, but not much research or empirical effort has paid to those Functionally orientated Mass-market Auto Brands (FMAB). From theoretical perspective, concept fit and product feature fit both can lead to extension success. Fashion clothing has many different categories with some products deliver more experiential values while others deliver functional value such as Jeans, and activewear. So those FMABs may have chances to extend into fashion clothing categories through leveraging product features such as durability, reliability. From practical perspective, FMABs are facing decreasing market and increasing competition, it is very critical to explore chances to expand market for long-term sustaining growth. To this end, this research attempts to search answers for the question, do functional brands, such as mass-market auto brands, have a chance to extend into more experiential oriented product categories such as fashion clothing? Since the success of extending FMABs into fashion clothing category depends on whether consumers accept its extensions, this research focuses on understanding and empirically examine the acceptance of licensed fashion extensions under a mass-market auto brand name.

A research model was proposed based on a review of extant literature, which specifies hypothesized relationship among acceptance, attitudes toward brand extension, perceived fit, attitudes toward parent brand, parent brand image, and parent brand quality. Moreover, product information about brand extension was proposed to be moderating factor which sets boundaries on the influences from fit to attitudes towards extension, and to acceptance. A quasi-experiment was designed and conducted. Participants were recruited from a convenience sample. A total of 449 responses were received. Structural equation modeling analysis was conducted and results show that acceptance of a mass-market auto brand's fashion extension is affected by attitudes toward the fashion extensions, perceived fit, attitudes toward parent brand, parent brand image, and parent brand quality. Moreover, consumers' acceptance of the mass-market auto brand's fashion extension is moderated by the amount and type of product information exposed to. Implications are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Many established durable goods brands have been practicing brand extension strategies through licensing and to get into other product categories including fashion clothing, home bedding, and accessories. Instead of two distinct branding strategies, extant literature suggests that licensing be treated as an “external” brand extension (Walsh, Rhenwrick, Williams, & Waldburger, 2014). When a firm entering to a different product categories requires additional resources or acquisition of competences using internal development, the difficulty can be overcome by the use of licensing (Colucci, Montaguti, & Lago, 2008).

Lifestyle positioning is another popular approach. Fashion, home décor, fitness, sports, and culinary arts are among the industries catering to markets with specific lifestyles (Danskin, Englis, Solomon, Goldsmith, & Davey, 2005), therefore, successfully launching licensed extensions in these lifestyle-related categories, especially in fashion category, is a good combination of brand extension and lifestyle branding. In fact, many luxury auto brands have been growing their licensed merchandise programs or launching lifestyle products, in order to bond with consumers’ personal lives (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011), including Bentley, Ferrari, Land Rover, Porsche, Cadillac, etc. Those licensed products includes but not limited in outdoor specialties, sporting goods, fashion clothing, eyewear, electronics, luggage, and toys.

Luxury brands with prestigious image and featuring desirable lifestyles are more likely to succeed in extending into a variety of product categories including fashion clothing and accessories (Park et al., 1991), while functional mass-market brands are normally considered less likely to be able to extend. Moreover, the billion-dollar fashion industry has been full of self-expressive brands and very competitive in all segments. Do functional brands, such as mass-market auto brands, have a chance to extend into more experiential oriented product categories such as fashion clothing? It depends on whether consumers accept its extensions. To this end, it is our goal to examine consumers’ acceptance of fashion clothing extensions licensed by functional mass market auto brands. We intend to examine how those identified extension success factors, including parent brand image, quality, and perceived fit, affect consumers’ attitudes toward and acceptance of an auto brand-licensed fashion clothing extension. We also want to explore whether consumers’ favorable attitudes toward a functional mass-market auto brand can be transferred into favorable attitudes toward its fashion clothing extension. Moreover, we want to explore how extension product information can be provided to consumers to form favorable attitudes and to increase the likelihood of brand extension acceptance.

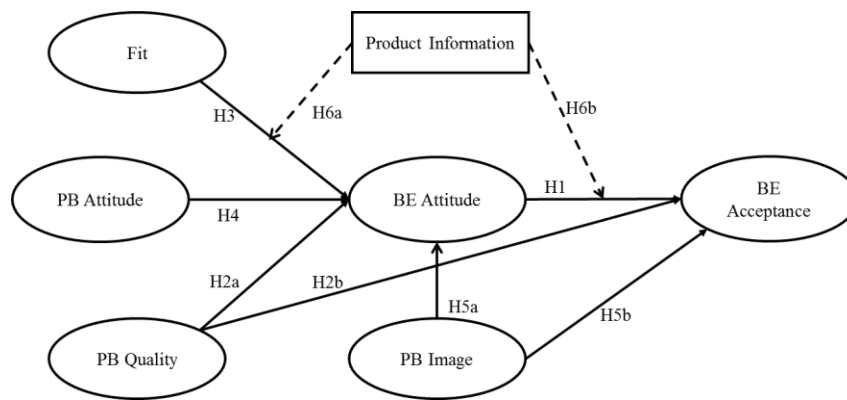
LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Aaker and Keller (1990) found that the perception of high quality for a parent brand led to more favorable extension evaluations, and consumers are willing to pay more for the brand extension and recommend it to others (Fedorikhin, Park, & Thomson, 2008). Greater perceived fit between the current and new products leads to a greater transfer of affect to the new product (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Compared to the similarity of product features, fit at the level of the brand concept affects brand extension success more saliently than the similarity

of product feature (Broniarczyk & Gershoff, 2003). It is also important for the parent brand to be perceived reasonable, or “make sense”, to enter a new product category (Sandeberg & Östlund, 2003).

Brand image refers to all of the different perceptions that consumers hold in their mind about a brand (Keller, 1993) that result from communicating the brand identity to markets (Martínez et al., 2009). If consumers see that a brand extension is closely related or similar to the brand image, they could easily transfer their existing attitudes about the parent brand to its extension (Hem, De Chernatony, & Iversen, 2003), then directly apply the brand favorable associations into product evaluation and come up with more positive evaluations of brand extensions (Martínez et al., 2009). The information provided about brand extension may lead a consumer to process decision making and extension evaluation (Keller et al., 2011). Keller and Aaker (1992) found that elaborating briefly on specific extension attributes about which consumers were uncertain or concerned led to more favorable evaluations. Lane (2000) found that repeating an ad that evokes primarily brand associations could overcome negative perceptions of a highly incongruent brand extension. Based on the above literature, a research model was proposed to guide this empirical study as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



- H1 Consumers' favorable attitudes toward licensed fashion extensions increases the likelihood of their acceptance of the fashion clothing extensions.*
- H2 Higher perceived quality of an auto brand leads to (a) more favorable attitudes toward, and (b) higher likelihood of acceptance of its licensed fashion extensions.*
- H3 Perceived fit between parent brand and its licensed fashion extensions leads to favorable attitudes toward fashion extensions.*
- H4 A favorable attitude toward a parent brand leads to a favorable attitude toward its fashion extension.*
- H5 Favorable perceptions of an auto parent brand image lead to (a) favorable attitudes toward, and (b) acceptance of the fashion clothing extension.*
- H6 Individuals' (a) perceived fit and (b) attitudes toward a brand extension vary when exposed to different levels of information of extension products.*

METHOD

A self-administered online quasi-experiment was developed using Qualtrics.com to collect empirical data. Ford was selected in this study as the parent brand because it fit the two criteria we had in choosing a brand: 1) familiar to consumers and 2) similar, moderate-positive associations across participants. Menswear was identified as the fashion clothing extension category, selected by a sample of 37 undergraduate college students majoring in fashion.

The moderating role of product information was tested with an experiment referred to a three level (advertisement type: no advertisement vs. brand focused vs. extension focused) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three versions. After exposed to the product information, respondents were asked questions on perceived fit, attitude, and acceptance of Ford fashion clothing extension, then, all three versions ask about the quality, image, and attitude toward parent brand of Ford in the same order and format.

Version 1(V1), the no-visual information version, only includes some verbal text information indicating that Ford is launching its brand extension in the menswear category without image. Version 2 (V2) , the brand-focused version, includes graphic advertisement images (see Figure 2) obtained from an unpublished advertising catalogue which contains models in stylish Ford T-shirts and jeans, and Ford cars and other accessories, creating a scene of a western outdoor lifestyle. Version 3 (V3), the product-focused version, includes only basic-view image of apparel with the Ford logo, no more parent brand information were presented (see Figure 2). Images were collected from the Ford Apparel online store.

Previously established measures from relevant research were adapted. All scales were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree/very bad/very unlikely/not at all, 7=strongly agree/excellent/very likely). A pretesting was conducted to ensure each component measured was unidimensional with alpha levels of .7 or greater. Then the survey was refined for clarity based on the pretest findings, and the revised survey was then deemed to be ready for use in collecting data. Participants were recruited from students registered in a major university in the south area of U.S. A total of 449 responses were received and 391 valid responses were included, with V1 group having 128 responses, V2 group having 166 responses, and V3 group having 97 responses.

RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first conducted. Items exhibiting low factor loadings (<0.70), high cross-loadings (>0.40), or low communalities (<0.30) were eliminated (J. F. Hair, 2006). The final factor analysis solution, with 23 items measuring 6 factors, showed clear structure and high factor loadings. The total variance explained was 75.89%. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood approach was conducted on the 23 items. The results showed a good fit measurement model ($\chi^2 = 408.359$, $df = 212$; $\chi^2/df = 1.926$; GFI = .915; CFI = .973, RMSEA=0.049). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS 23 to test the proposed research model and hypotheses. Results showed great model fit, with major fit indices higher than cutting points ($\chi^2 = 408.359$, $df = 212$; $\chi^2/df = 1.926$; GFI = .915; CFI=0.973; RMSEA=0.049) (J. Hair et al., 2009), indicating that the research model was accepted. Significant path coefficients supported H1, H2b, H3, H4, and H5b, but not H2a nor H5a (see Table 1). Therefore, BE acceptance is directly affected by BE attitude, PB image, and the PB quality. BE attitude is affected by PB attitude and perceived fit. However, empirical results did

not show support for the hypothesized effects from PB quality, and PB image on BE attitude. The highest path coefficient is BE attitude on BE acceptance, followed by the path of PB attitude on BE attitude and perceived fit on BE attitude.

Multi-group comparisons were conducted to test the moderating effects of product information on the tested structural model. The cross-group invariance testing results showed significant differences among the three groups, indicating the existence of moderating effects of product information, as shown in Table 2. To further examine the moderating role of product information, cross-group comparisons on the construct structural means of perceived fit, and BE attitudes were compared across three groups exposing to different stimuli of product information (Table 2). Overall, the significant differences on the structural means indicates that, compared to the no visual information group, participants that were able to visualize the extension products, no matter the plain product pictures or the commercial pictures featuring parent brand, have a more favorable attitude towards the extension.

Table1 SUMMARY OF DIRECT EFFECTS TESTING RESULTS					
Relationship within proposed research model			Path coefficient	Hypotheses	Testing results
BE Acceptance	←	BE Attitude	0.751**	H1	Supported
BE Attitude	←	PB Quality	-0.337	H2a	Not Supported
BE Acceptance	←	PB Quality	0.145*	H2b	Supported
BE Attitude	←	Perceived Fit	0.364**	H3	Supported
BE Attitude	←	PB Attitude	0.468**	H4	Supported
BE Attitude	←	PB Image	0.117	H5a	Not Supported
BE Acceptance	←	PB Image	0.13*	H5b	Supported
Model fit indices			GFI= .910; CFI= .969; χ^2/df = 2.65, RMSEA = .055		

Note. ** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings reveal that favorable attitudes toward the brand extension, higher perceived PB quality, and favorable PB image directly lead to consumers' acceptance of the auto brand's fashion clothing extension. Among the three factors directly affecting brand extension acceptance, consumers' attitudes toward the brand extension is undoubtedly the strongest one, consistent with Solomon and Rabolt (2009)'s fashion decision making model. Favorable attitudes toward fashion clothing extension will be strongly likely to occur when individuals perceive high fit in terms of brand concept consistency and hold favorable attitudes toward the parent brand.

This finding is consistent with Keller et al. (2011) argument that "successful brand extensions occur when the parent brand is seen as having favorable associations and there is a perception of fit between the parent brand and the extension product" (p. 431). Moreover, our research findings indicates that conceptual fit is not only important for prestigious brands' extensions, but also for relatively functional brands' extensions when extending into different product categories. Instead of being mediated through attitudes toward the extension, higher perceived PB brand quality and image directly contribute to a higher likelihood of acceptance of the brand's fashion clothing extension. It indicate that both tangible PB brand equity (i.e., quality) and intangible equity (i.e., brand image) can be contribute to BE acceptance, even in the context of cross-category long-distance brand stretching with the low product-feature similarity.

To increase consumers' acceptance of the fashion extension, brand managers should focus on

maximizing the conceptual fit between PB and BE. Choosing the appropriate categories to extend or stretch the parent brand to expand markets is the most critical first step. In addition, marketers need to provide sufficient information about the fashion extension product to increase the perceived fit that leads to positive consumers' attitudes toward the BE products. Marketing communications should focus more on the extension product itself and be cautious about leveraging parent brand image and associations.

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Available upon request.

FACEBOOK & BODY IMAGE: WHAT INFLUENCES DOES FACEBOOK HAVE ON USER'S BODY IMAGE?

BACKGROUND

Facebook is a place where one can find old friends, connect with loved ones, and share information about how life is going with people. According to Facebook, there were over 1.44 billion monthly active users as of March 31, 2015, and 1.25 billion mobile monthly active users as of March 31, 2015 (Facebook, 2015). This is a large group of users interacting with each other daily. One must ponder what effects this is having on the Facebook user. One main factor anyone can notice about Facebook is that people have profile pictures. These profile pictures can tell a lot about users. If the user chooses to put a picture of something other than themselves, this suggests they may not have the best body image. According to Dictionary.com, "Body image is an intellectual or idealized image of what one's body is or should look like (Dictionary.com, 2015)." What influences does Facebook have on a user's body image? Do pictures of friends, ex-lovers, ex-rivals, and the like make the user feel more insecure about themselves? Do all the independent distributors of weight loss products flooding the news stream change the way users see themselves? With the time spent on Facebook growing, one must wonder what is happening to the body image of the users. The aim of this research project is to explore how Facebook is effecting body image.

Literature Review

Previous research on how the mass media influences body image might shed some light on our current research topic of how Facebook influences body image. Facebook provides pictures of real people, that more often than not the user actually knows, and may influence how the user of social media views his or her own body image. These friends may serve as possible models of what the user may want to be in terms of outward appearance. The pictures coupled with the comments and statuses of friends may lead to a negative or positive self-image of the user. In the remainder of this article, we will review the previous literature and make an assessment of our research question so that we can gain a better understanding of a person's tendency to model after others in social media. We will also discuss how friends and family influence body image in general.

Body Image & the Theory of Social Comparison

In a research study conducted by Bergstrom, Neighbors, and Malheim, the theory of social comparison was tested. This theory states that, "Individuals use the social environment to evaluate their own opinions and abilities (Bergstrom, Neighbors, & Malheim, 2009, p. 264)." They often use other people as comparisons to determine how they measure up to these targets. The researchers wanted to see if women who viewed pictures of other women models would evaluate their own self-image differently, before and after being exposed to the images. They discovered that women with a larger BMI, viewed themselves more negatively after seeing thinner models. Whereas, if they were shown more full figured models they had more favorable views of themselves. With lower BMI women, they did not seem to be affected by the thinner

women models. The researchers also wanted to know if the women that viewed themselves more negatively after seeing the images, would try to compensate in other ways. The researchers administered tests to see which traits were most valuable in people, and most of the larger BMI women picked traits other than those associated with weight. Hence, according to this study, women are negatively affected by images they deem to be more attractive than themselves. They tend to compensate by saying that other characteristics such as being a good friend or a good student are more important than outward appearances (Bergstrom, Neighbors, & Malheim, 2009).

Body Image & the Social Cognitive Theory

In a research study by Kapidzic and Martins, the researchers wanted to see if there was link between how magazines and television portray the ideal person, and the general public's choice of Facebook profile picture. According to the researchers, "Social cognitive theory suggests that stereotypes of attractiveness from mainstream media may function as models for online profile pictures" (Kapidzic & Martins, 2015, p. 278). In the study, they surveyed 288 college students. The team found out how much television the students watched and how many magazines they looked at. The team then analyzed the students' Facebook profile pictures.

Kapidzic and Martins were looking for three things, body-ism, clothing, and gaze. It was hypothesized that if the students watched more television and that is what they internalized as role models, the students' pictures would show more of the body, have less clothing, and the gaze would be into the camera. If the students modeled the magazine content, they would have more body in the picture for females, more of the face for males, have less clothing, and the gaze would be averted from the camera. The results were that the study participants modeled themselves more after television than magazines. This was thought to be due to social cognitive theory because thinner, more scantily clad characters on television received more praise than their less appealing counterparts. In magazines, one do not see the behavior being rewarded or punished, so magazines are not internalized enough to a level to be modeled. Television, which is mass media, has a strong correlation to a person's choice of profile picture on Facebook.

Body Image Dissatisfaction

In a research study conducted by Curtis and Loomans, four undergraduate students participated in a body image dissatisfaction qualitative study. The researchers were looking to see how family and friends influence how these women viewed their own body image. What was recurrently found is that how the students' mothers viewed themselves while the girls were growing up lead to how the women saw themselves now. They found that fat talk was very common among the students. Fat talk is where one person says negative things about their own body. Then people of the same size or a little bigger begin to see themselves negatively as well. It is a reciprocal unhealthy interaction where one female may say my thighs are too big and another female may reply that her arms are as big as the other woman's thighs (Curtis & Loomans, 2014). Western women have internalized the "thin ideal" which means in order to be attractive one must be thin. All study participants were well within proper weight for their height but felt that they were overweight in some form (Curtis & Loomans, 2014). In summary, this study indicated that from a very young age girls are subjected to body image dissatisfaction often times by the way her mother views herself. Comments made by friends or family, even with the best intentions, still seem to have a negative impact on body image dissatisfaction. Women in

general tend to feed off each other's negativity about body image dissatisfaction.

Summary of Literature Review

Based on the existing literature, we observe that mass media tends to affect body image negatively if the images are viewed as more attractive than oneself. We can see that people are using mass media to determine what profile pictures to choose for Facebook. Lastly, we can see that women basically feed off each other's insecurities to contribute to the thin ideal.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Question

We realize from the existing literature that there is a desire in marketing research to uncover factors that may affect Facebook users' body image. Therefore, our research question is: "What effects does Facebook have on a user's body image?"

Study Participants

In order to locate participants for our study, we turned to Facebook because the respondents must be Facebook users. We posted a status to our one hundred and eleven Facebook friends to find survey participants. Of the people asked, only 20 responded. Even though this is a small response rate, it is acceptable given the exploratory nature of our research. A total of three males and 17 females responded. They were all Caucasian. Participant ages ranged from 20 years old up to 60 years old. Only six participants had a High School Diploma or GED as their highest level of education. The rest of the participants had either been to college or completed college.

Survey & Measurements

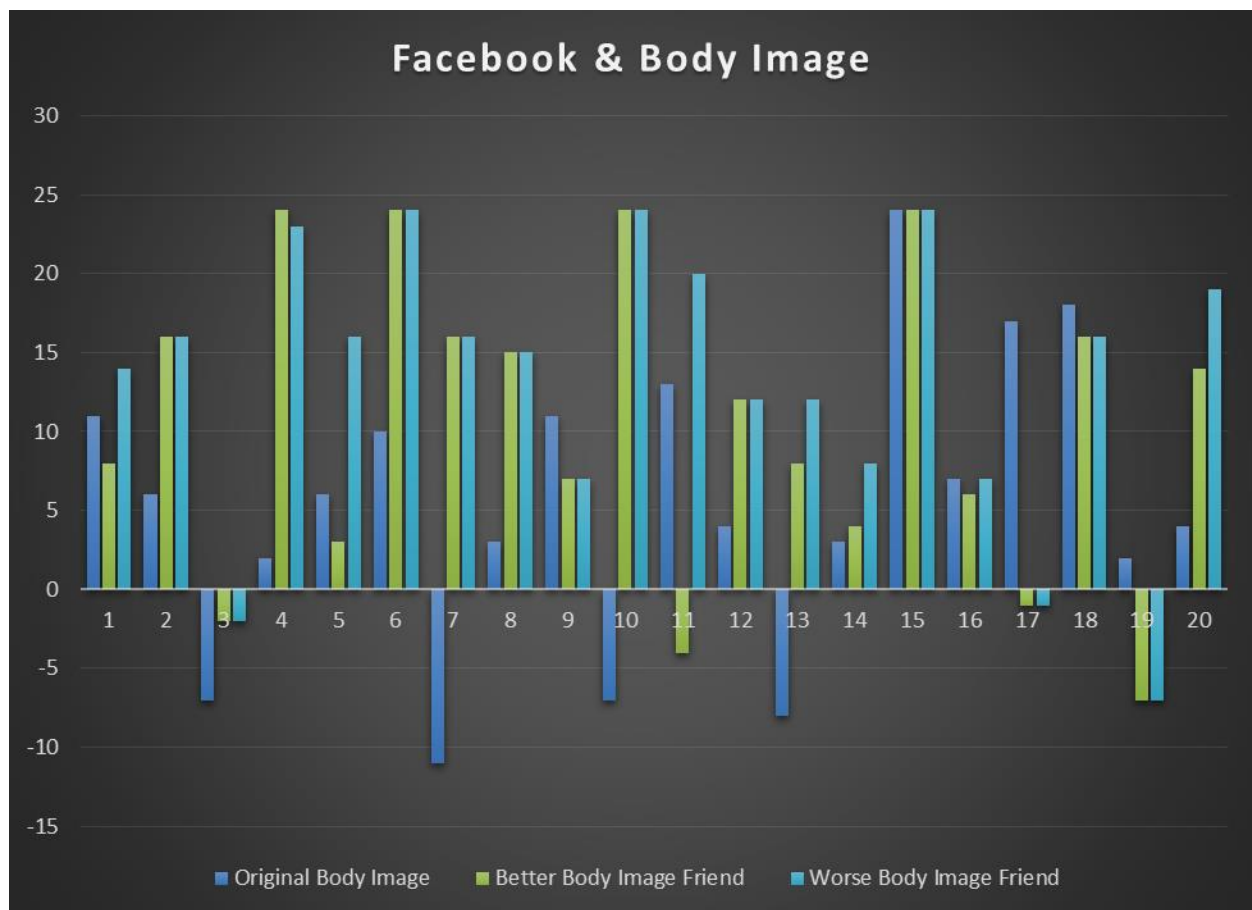
In order to explore the research question, we have designed a survey (Appendix 1). In this survey, the participants were first asked questions about the way they viewed their own body image. Questions on weight and facial appearance were asked. In the next two sections, the participants were given two different scenarios. In the first scenario, the comments and posts were made by a Facebook friend that the participants imagined looked better than themselves. In the next section, the comments and posts were made by a Facebook friend that the participants imagined was less appealing than themselves. The participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The statements were scored based on agreement and disagreement. If agreeing with the statement led to a positive body image the answers were scored 1, 2, and 3 depending on how much agreeance was present. If disagreeing with the statement led to a negative body image the answers were scored -1, -2, and -3 depending on the level of disagreement. The scores were tabulated for each section, and an overall score was given for each.

Procedure

The Facebook users that agreed to take our survey, private messaged us their email addresses. Then, we emailed the survey to them. They provided their answers and demographics

in a reply email. In order to maintain their confidentiality, we tabulated their overall scores in a notebook with no identifying information. Their emails were deleted after that. Study participants will be referred to by the number in which they returned their survey. Because their answers were simply agreeing or disagreeing with a statement and were simply the numbers one through six, we do not feel survey participants would try to alter their scores.

RESULTS



Person	Original Body Image	Better Body Image Friend	Worse Body Image Friend
1	11	8	14
2	6	16	16
3	-7	-2	-2
4	2	24	23
5	6	3	16
6	10	24	24
7	-11	16	16
8	3	15	15
9	11	7	7
10	-7	24	24
11	13	-4	20
12	4	12	12
13	-8	8	12
14	3	4	8
15	24	24	24
16	7	6	7
17	17	-1	-1
18	18	16	16
19	2	-7	-7
20	4	14	19
<i>Mean</i>	5.4	10.35	13.15
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	9.12	9.74	8.91

DISCUSSION

The results show that with this particular group of study participants, their mean body image score of themselves, 5.4, was relatively average. The highest possible score was a 24, and the lowest was a negative 24. Overall, these participants were just ok with their own bodies. They weren't especially pleased or displeased. Granted this is the mean, and some participants were very unhappy with their bodies and a few were very happy. The questions in section two and three gave the participants a choice on whether they would attempt to change something about themselves when compared to someone else. The higher the score means the less likely they are to change something about themselves, which would imply a better body image. With section two, the comparison figure was someone the participant deemed to have the most ideal body image. The mean score of 10.35 out of 24, where 24 is no change to themselves, is pretty astonishing. With a group that did not view themselves very positively to begin with, they did not seem to be phased by better looking counterparts very much. Of course this is a mean, and each individual varied. Some individuals were much more likely to change something about themselves when compared to a better looking counterpart. In section three, individuals were again given a choice to change something about themselves, but this time, it was in comparison to a less attractive counterpart. The mean score of 13.15 was higher than that of section two. What this means is that participants were less likely to change something about themselves

compared to someone less attractive than they were with someone more attractive. Again these are just means, and individual scores varied. Looking at the standard deviations, we can see how much individual scores varied from the means.

A factor to note is that all study participants were Caucasian. We had multiple races of friends on our friends list, but the only respondents were Caucasian. This leads one to wonder if different groups would view body image and comparisons differently.

Another situation worth noting, is that participants agreed to the questions about starting a diet and going to the gym far more frequently than making other changes to their bodies. In the attached survey it can be seen that participants were given the choices to cut their hair, change their eye color with contacts, and change their clothes. On the individual scores, the participants almost always answered they would participate in weight loss practices more than anything else. Also, of interest is that all participants except for one, felt that they did not need to gain weight, but they felt they needed to lose weight.

IMPLICATIONS

Since this was a descriptive study, inferences could not be made towards the general population. If a researcher were to conduct a bigger study with a more diversified sample, then inferences could be made. According to the results of this study, the researchers could see that people are more willing to change themselves in comparison to better looking counterparts. Based on an exploratory research study, we found that people are more willing to change themselves in comparison to better looking counterparts. This would be a helpful information for marketers. Hence, a good way for marketers to sell their products could be to get people to use their products and create posts about them on Facebook. They could accomplish this by having promotions such as contests or giveaways that encourage users to make posts about products.

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APPENDIX 1

Research Survey

The aim of this study is to interpret how a person views his or her body image, i.e. how the person feels in regards to his or her outward appearances. This survey is completely voluntary and will shed great light into the research topic, if you choose to participate. All answers are strictly confidential, and only numbers will be used from this survey. Please do not write names on this survey. There are no wrong answers, please answer however you feel.

Section 1- Please select the option that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1-Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Somewhat Disagree 4- Somewhat Agree
5- Agree 6- Strongly Agree

1. I feel my current body weight enhances the way I see myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I am happy with my current body weight. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I feel I should gain weight to be happy with my body. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I feel I should lose weight to be happy with my body. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I feel my facial appearance enhances the way I see myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I am happy with my facial appearance. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. There is some part of my face I do not like, but overall I am happy with my facial appearance. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. There is some part of my face I do not like, and overall I am unhappy with my facial appearance. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Section 2- In this section, pretend that a friend on Facebook has posted these statuses or pictures. This friend is a friend that you view as having the most ideal body and appearance. Please select the option that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1-Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Somewhat Disagree 4- Somewhat Agree
5- Agree 6- Strongly Agree

1. Your friend has just posted that they have lost some weight. You feel the urge to start a diet. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. Your friend has just posted a picture in a swimsuit. You feel the urge to go to the gym and workout. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Your friend has just got a new haircut/color. You set up an appointment with the hairstylist. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. Your friend just participated in a 5K. You feel the urge to start running. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. Your friend has just posted a selfie and his or her skin is flawless. You feel the urge to try skin products. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Your friend's new picture highlights his or her eye color, and it looks exceptionally vibrant. You set up an appointment with the eye doctor to try colored contacts. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Your friend always posts pictures in the most flattering clothes. You feel the urge to go buy some new clothes. 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Your friend is always eating the healthiest foods. You feel the urge to buy organic foods. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Section 3- In this section, pretend that a friend on Facebook has posted these statuses or pictures. This friend is a friend that you view as having a less appealing body and appearance than yourself. Please select the option that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1-Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Somewhat Disagree 4- Somewhat Agree
5- Agree 6- Strongly Agree

1. Your friend has just posted that they have lost some weight. You feel the urge to start a diet. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. Your friend has just posted a picture in a swimsuit. You feel the urge to go to the gym and workout. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Your friend has just got a new haircut/color. You set up an appointment with the hairstylist. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. Your friend just participated in a 5K. You feel the urge to start running. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. Your friend has just posted a selfie and his or her skin is flawless. You feel the urge to try skin products. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Your friend's new picture highlights his or her eye color, and it looks exceptionally vibrant. You set up an appointment with the eye doctor to try colored contacts. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Your friend always posts pictures in the most flattering clothes. You feel the urge to go buy some new clothes. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. Your friend is always eating the healthiest foods. You feel the urge to buy organic foods. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Demographics Section- This section is completely voluntary and confidential. It will be used for research purposes only.

1. I am a: Male or Female
2. My age is: between 20-30 between 30-40 between 40-50 between 50-60
3. My marital status is: Single Married Divorced Widowed
4. My highest level of education: High school/GED Some College Completed College
5. My ethnicity is: American Indian Asian African American Caucasian Hispanic Pacific Islander Multi-Racial Other:_____