



U.S. Consumers' Patronage Intentions towards Asian Brands' Uniqueness: Moderating Role of Consumer's Lifestyle

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Keywords: Asian, uniqueness, patronage, lifestyle

In response to the growing number of Asian brands expanding into Western markets like the U.S., this study examines U.S. consumers and their lifestyle characteristics that may especially attract them to the unique appeal of Asian brands. Even though Asian brand uniqueness has been found to be an important asset for encouraging consumers to patronize a brand (Knight & Kim, 2007), the role that lifestyle characteristics play particularly in the context of Asian brands has not been studied. However, given that gaining the consumer's patronage is a key goal to attain for Asian brand in the U.S. market, the study can provide valuable implications on the types of consumers who would be most effective to target the uniqueness of the Asian brands. To fill this gap, the study specifically examined how Asian brand uniqueness can influence patronage intention (PI) and how these outcomes are moderated by different consumer lifestyle characteristics such as global identity, consumer innovativeness, and urban living. Furthermore, the study specifically examines Asian brand uniqueness through the influence of cultural authenticity of the Asian brands.

The literature suggests three key consumer lifestyle characteristics that may impact the way in which Asian brand uniqueness impacts PI: global identity, consumer innovativeness, and urban living. Lifestyle characteristics in marketing refer to the behaviors (e.g. how they spend their money; how they allocate their time) of individuals or groups that can be attributed as a potential consumer marketing segment (Kucukemiroglu, 1999). According to the social identity research, when a source of information (e.g. marketing) is consistent with the how the consumer identifies him- or herself (e.g. lifestyle characteristic), they tend to respond more favorably to the relevant information (as opposed to irrelevant information) because it is considered more meaningful to them (Forehand et al., 2002). Thus, this theory supports the idea that consumers with certain relevant lifestyle characteristics may be more willing to patronize from the brand when a unique Asian brand is presented. Based on supporting literature, the following hypotheses are developed: Asian cultural authenticity created by the brand logo positively influences Asian brand uniqueness (H1); Asian brand's uniqueness positively influences U.S. consumers' PI towards the brand (H2); the impact of brand uniqueness on PI is moderated by global identity (H3), urban life (H4), and consumer innovativeness (H5).

A data of 570 respondents were collected nationwide through an online survey using Qualtrics, with a mean age of 47 ($SD=16.91$), ranging from 18 to 86. The variable cultural authenticity was measured via brand logo designs with varying degrees of cultural authenticity. China and India were used as the brand origins of the Asian brands because both are emerging countries with high potentials to expand their brands into global markets. Pretests were first conducted to develop reliable scales and ensure content validity. Five measures were adopted from previous

studies with adequate reliabilities (all Cronbach's alphas > .85). All used 7-point likert-type scales; demographic items were also included.

SEM results for H1 and H2 suggested a good fit ($\chi^2(81) = 188.49, p < 0.001, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .02$). The results confirmed cultural authenticity's influence on brand uniqueness, which in turn influenced patronage intentions. Furthermore, the regression results indicated a significant moderating effect of global identity ($\beta = .04, t = 2.13; p < .05$), urban living [difference among consumers living in urban and suburban areas ($\beta = -.13, t = -2.74; p < .01$) and consumers living in urban and rural areas ($\beta = -.22, t = -2.56; p < .05$)], and consumer innovativeness ($\beta = .05, t = 2.24; p < .05$), supporting H3-H5.

The results indicated that global identity, consumer innovativeness, and urban living are moderating factors which influence the relationship between the consumers' perceived uniqueness (via cultural authenticity) of the Asian brand and patronage intentions. Specifically in marketing to consumers with high global identity, Asian brands should highlight their products and services to appeal to the global tastes when providing marketing communications via advertising, public relations events, sponsorships, and etc. Second, consumers with high consumer innovativeness naturally have a predisposition for innovative brands, thus Asian brands should use marketing communications that highlight the innovativeness of their product or service. Lastly, it is best for Asian brands to look towards urban areas to market where consumers are exposed to other ethnic groups and foreign brands on a daily basis. That is, the more urban a city and the larger the population, the easier and more advantageous it can be for Asian brands to establish patronage with their customers. Consequently, urban areas such as New York and Los Angeles are often the first locations that overseas brands tend to market (e.g. Amore Pacific; Red Mango). In light of the important influence of consumer's lifestyle on their patronage towards the uniqueness of Asian brands, future studies can examine more lifestyle characteristics which may influence consumer's commitment to the Asian brand.

References

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