

A Cross-Cultural Investigation into the Antecedents of Global-Mindedness: Cultural Values and Fashion Involvement

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I. Introduction

As globalization expands, powerful segments of consumers who possess global mind-sets emerge throughout the world. Multinational marketers should consider both local and global-mindsets within consumers and integrate traditional and global aspects in standardized global marketing strategies.

Korea has been deeply influenced by Confucian ethics and human relationships and responsibilities were the most important element in everyday life. At the same time, Korea has experienced dramatic economic growth in the late 20th century. Social and political values are changing from authoritarianism to individualism and from traditional to modern morality. An international media and internet are common among young generations and it is reported that Korean young consumers were conscious about standardized fashion and styles through international marketing (Lee & Burns, 1993).

In this study, the responses of Korean and U. S. consumers toward global-mindedness were compared to explore whether their responses are similar. The purpose of this study is to explore how the dual existence of traditional (or Eastern) and non-traditional (or Western) cultural values related global-mindedness of the two young global consumer groups. The specific focus of this research is how fashion involvement plays a mediating role in this process.

II. Literature Review

Values can be defined as "beliefs that pertain to desirable end states or modes of conduct, transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior, and are ordered by importance in relation to another to form a system of value priorities" (Steenkamp, Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999, p. 55) and a well known conceptualization of cultural values is individualism/

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collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). People in individualistic society such as United States and Western Europe value high probability element of personal life whereas people in collectivistic society such as Asia and South America value elements of the collective self. There was much doubt on whether Confucianism can survive after the recent economic crises in Asia. But Eastern communitarian values as well as Western liberalism will be needed especially for the future leadership. Therefore, a mix of traditional and non-traditional values will be seen in global consumers (Rozman, 2002).

Global-mindedness can be defined as "the receptiveness to cultures other than one's own" (McQuail, 1998, p. 847). Young consumers are postmodern have a cosmopolitan outlook on life (Domzal & Kenan, 1993). They have a strong sense of self and a strong concern for bodily appearance, and continually familiarize themselves with the global-mindsets.

Fashion is a standardized global product. Fashion and clothing styles change constantly follow international trends. The everyday wear that we put on does not necessarily visualize the traditional cultural values that we have in our cultural heritage. As McCracken and Ruth (1988) stated, the meaning is conveyed through the culturally bounded product. Involvement in fashion and apparel should be anteceded by cultural values and result in generating consumers' global-mindsets.

III. Methods

A conceptual model with non-traditional and traditional values as exogenous variables, global-mindedness as endogenous variable and fashion involvement as mediating variable were created for the study. Measures of research variables were modified from existing literature. Eight items measuring cultural values, six items measuring global-mindedness, ten items measuring consumers' fashion involvement were included in the survey questionnaire.

Female undergraduate students, diverse in majors, were the sample for the study. Data was collected at major urban Universities and 224 usable questionnaire from Korean respondents and 278 U. S. respondents were used. SPSS Version 11.0 and structural equation modeling using LISREL VII was used for data analysis.

IV. Results and Conclusion.

In order to examine differences in research variables between Korean and U. S. subjects, a *t*-test was conducted. The results showed that there are significant differences in cultural values between the U. S. and Korea. Overall, U. S. respondents tend to have higher levels of traditional and non-traditional values. However, for fashion involvement and global mindedness, no significant mean differences were detected across the two cultural groups.

Structural equation modeling results showed that both non-traditional and traditional values had significant influence on fashion involvement for the two cultural groups. However, non-traditional values only significantly influence global-mindedness. The influence were stronger for

Korean consumers compared to that for the U. S. ones. The main cultural differences were found in the influence of fashion involvement on global-mindedness. The influence was significant for Korean consumers($\beta = .13, t=2.0$), but not for the U. S. consumers($\beta = .10, t=1.6$)

The benefits of the present study reside in helping researchers understand the underlying structure of cultural values and their role in evoking fashion involvement and global-mindedness. This study affirmed the fact that long supported categorization of individualism for Western culture and collectivism for Asian or Eastern culture does not seem to characterize the postmodern generation. No major differences between Korean and U. S. samples were found in the empirical study except that U. S. respondents showed higher levels of cultural values and Korean samples associates fashion involvement with global-mindedness more strongly. The impact of cultural values were similar across cultures but the mediating role of fashion involvement may be dissimilar depending on the cultural backgrounds of respondents. The role of fashion involvement in evoking global-mindedness should be further investigated.

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