Introduction: Brand Identification

- Brand identification
  - The more one favors a brand, the more one identifies with a brand, and therefore the more behavioral commitments one makes to that brand.
  - When consumers perceive negative evaluations of a brand, those with stronger self-brand connections tend to evaluate the brand less negatively.

- Lisjak, Lee, & Gardner (2012)
  - People with high self-brand connections would defend the brand "to preserve the integrity of the self.
  - Measured brand identification on Facebook and Starbucks.
  - Let participants read editorials that criticized the two brands.
  - Measured attitude change after reading.
  - People with higher level of brand identification defended the brands more strongly.

- Culture and self-expression
  - People's tastes are less easily swayed by social pressure in Western countries than in East Asian countries.

- Brand and self-expression

Study 1

HYPOTHESES:
- Participants from East Asian countries would be less defensive than participants from the U.S. when negative evaluation of a brand comes from a close friend vs a stranger.
- Exploratory: Mobile phone brands vs Clothing brands

METHOD:
- Around 500 participants from America.
  - East Asian vs USA.
  - Close friend vs Stranger.
  - Mobile phone vs Clothing brand.
- Measured brand identification on the Self-Brand Connection Scale (α = .86).
- Stranger vs. Close friend condition.
- Measured pre-reading attitude.
- Read a fabricated blog post.
- Measured attitude change for defensiveness.

RESULTS:
- High Brand Identification lead to higher defensiveness.
- No effect of information agent/culture.
- Main effect of brand category on defensiveness.
- Marginal interaction between culture and information agent for the clothing brand ONLY.

The Clothing Brand (Nike)

Study 2

STUDY 1 LIMITATIONS:
- Survey language & Brand origin

HYPOTHESES:
- When Chinese participants’ brand identification is threatened, they would more strongly defend:
  - Chinese brands than American brands.
  - When information is carried by a stranger than when it is carried by a close friend.
- Exploratory: Mobile phone brands vs Clothing brands.

METHOD:
- Around 500 participants from China.
  - Added two Chinese brands, Li-Ning and Huawei.
  - Same survey and measures as in Study 1.
  - Survey translated into Mandarin (α = .31).

RESULTS:
- High Brand Identification lead to higher defensiveness.
- No effect of brand origin/information agent.
- Main effect of brand category on defensiveness.
- Unexpected three-way interaction.

Goal of the Study

- Replicate Lisjak, Lee & Gardner (2012)’s finding in East Asian cultural context and on other brands.
- Explore if consumers’ response can differ when a threat to the brand is carried by friends vs strangers, and if the effect can be moderated by culture.

Conclusions

- Supported the potential cultural generalizability by replicating the finding of Lisjak, Lee, and Gardner (2012).
- Did not support the notion that defensive responses differ when a threat to the brand is carried by friends versus strangers, nor that this difference can be moderated by culture.
- Culture may not have as strong an impact on brand identification and brand defense as we expected.

Limitations:
- The demographic representativeness of the sample.
- The relatively impoverished manipulation of information agent.
- Nature of the brands.

Implications

- Commercial brands are different in how they can be incorporated into the extended-self.
  - Frequency of usage.
  - Degree of Individualization.
  - Privacy.
- Possibility of identity globalization:
  - Chinese consumption culture may be more individualized than we expected.
  - Further studies can be done in exploring the psychology of globalization and its potential effect on consumer behavior in East Asian countries.

References