

The Positive Emotion Elicitation Process of Chinese Consumers Toward a U.S. Apparel Brand -A Cognitive Appraisal Perspective-

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Abstract

Emotion directly affects consumer buying behavior. This study examines Chinese consumers' emotion elicitation process toward a U.S. apparel brand in the Chinese market. Employing a cognitive appraisal theory, this study proposed and tested a conceptual model incorporating three factors of consumer global orientation as antecedents of consumer emotion and purchase intention as a consequence of emotion. Among the ten proposed hypotheses, eight were supported. Of the three antecedents of consumer emotion, exposure to global mass media and cultural openness positively increased Chinese consumers' appraisals of a U.S. apparel brand. Unlike these two antecedents, the effects of exposure to mass migration on consumer appraisals were found to be non significant. The relationships between appraisal dimensions and positive emotion were all supported. Finally, this study confirmed that positive emotions increased Chinese consumers' purchase intentions of a U.S. apparel brand. Theoretical and managerial implications were discussed based on the findings.

Key words: Cognitive appraisal theory, Emotion, Chinese consumer, Foreign brand

I. Introduction

China, with a population of 1.3 billion, offers a huge potential market to global firms. Boosted by increasing disposable incomes and emerging middle classes in China, the Chinese apparel market has achieved significant growth of 18.7 to 28.7% over the past years (Li & Fung Research Centre, 2008). Global apparel firms have rushed to the Chinese apparel market, already dominated the high-end apparel market, and recently expanded their businesses into the middle-priced market (Li & Fung Research Centre, 2008). Previous studies have reported that Chinese consumers prefer foreign brands over domestic ones (e.g., Schütte & Ciarlante, 1998; Smith & Wylie,

2004; Wang & Yang, 2008), but most studies have failed to provide reasons why Chinese consumers prefer foreign brands. Understanding why Chinese consumers exhibit preference toward foreign branded apparel is critical for multinational apparel companies to establish proper marketing strategies for Chinese market.

Emotion has been viewed as an important factor in understanding consumer behavior. A significant number of previous studies agree that consumers' buying behavior is directly affected by the emotions attached to the purchase or products (e.g., Alpert & Alpert, 1990; Laroche et al., 2005). Two frameworks, Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) hedonic consumption framework and Donovan and Rossiter's (1982) Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, have been used prominently in studying the impact of emotion on consumers' buying behavior. However, previous studies based on these frameworks have concentrated

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on direct relationships between stimuli and emotion, and have not examined the process of how consumer emotions are elicited in response to stimuli. Unlike these frameworks, Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) concentrates on the process through which emotions are elicited, providing insight into individual differences in emotional responses. Hence, this study employs CAT to explain Chinese consumers' preference toward foreign branded apparel goods.

The purpose of this study is to examine the Chinese consumers' emotion elicitation process toward a U.S. apparel brand, rather than general foreign brands because U.S. apparel brands and European apparel brands implement generally different market strategies such as target consumers, brand images, and price. Using CAT as a theoretical framework, this study proposes a conceptual model incorporating antecedents of consumer appraisal (i.e., exposure to global mass media, exposure to mass migration, and cultural openness) and a consequence of consumer emotion (i.e., purchase intention), then empirically tests the proposed model with consumer data collected in China. With this systematic approach, this study attempts to reveal what drives Chinese consumers' preferences toward U.S. apparel brands.

II. Conceptual Background

1. Chinese Consumer Behavior Toward Foreign Brands

Chinese consumers, generally, are known to prefer foreign branded apparel products over domestic ones (e.g., Schütte & Ciarlante, 1998; Smith & Wylie, 2004). The young Chinese generation, in particular, prefers and buys more foreign branded apparel products. McEwen et al. (2006) revealed that around 30% of respondents aged 18 to 24 purchased foreign branded clothing in 2005; the figures were about 20% and 10% for those aged 25-29 and 30-39, respectively. Smith and Wylie (2004) found that the Chinese college students in Beijing and Shanghai perceived foreign fashion brands, such as Nike, to be the savviest, whereas 51% of respondents stated China does not have any savvy domestic brands.

However, most studies have not provided empirical evidence of the reasons for Chinese preference for foreign branded fashions and have only reported the phenomenon of Chinese preference or intuitively interpreted the cause of Chinese consumer preference (e.g., McEwen et al., 2006; Smith & Wylie, 2004). Based on previous studies, this study analyzed the possible reasons for the preference of foreign branded products in China: 1) symbolic values, 2) value-related perception, and 3) value transition. First, for Chinese consumers, foreign brands/products from developed countries carry symbolic values such as success, empowerment, and new lifestyle (McEwen et al., 2006). These symbolic values primarily drive the desire for foreign branded products in developing countries (Batra et al., 2000). As in many other developing countries, Chinese consumers form their preferences for foreign branded products because of social expression (Zhou et al., 2008). Second, Chinese consumers' positive perceptions of the quality of foreign branded products are formed in the relation with county-of-origin (Zhou et al., 2008). Foreign brands in China typically mean brands from highly developed countries, such as the U.S. or European countries, and the brands are positioned at the high-end level; Chinese consumers generally assume that the quality of foreign branded products is better than that of Chinese branded products. Third, Chinese consumers' preferences toward foreign branded products can be explained by value transition among Chinese people. With the influence of economic growth and modernization, Chinese consumers tend to become increasingly individualistic and materialistic (e.g., Gong et al., 2004; Xiao, 2005). With more individualistic and materialistic consumers in China, the cultural gap between China and other cultures lessens, and Chinese consumers are more likely to be familiar with foreign cultures and products, enhancing preference of foreign products. To address to the limitation of previous studies, this study attempts to reveal what leads to Chinese consumer preference for U.S. branded products and how this preference develops.

2. Cognitive Appraisal Theory

CAT focuses on emotion elicitation processes in

terms of how and why people feel emotions toward stimuli. CAT suggests that individuals appraise (evaluate) a stimulus, resulting in the elicitation of negative or positive emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). CAT explains how people have different emotional responses to the same event because individuals can evaluate and interpret the same stimuli differently. For example, when a romantic relationship ends, one person may feel sadness as a result of the appraisal that something desired has been lost and cannot be recovered (Roseman, 1984). However, another person might appraise the situation as bringing about what he/she wants, leading that person to feel happy.

Although several cognitive appraisal theorists have proposed different appraisal dimensions, two key dimensions reflect fundamental appraisals across the various theorists: relevance and congruence (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Bee, 2005; Lazarus, 1991). Relevance refers to the extent to which an individual places importance on a given stimulus. In other words, relevance implies that the stimulus is of importance to the individual. Congruence is the degree to which a situation is consistent with the desires of the individual. When a situation is consistent with personal desires, it is congruent, which is likely to result in positive emotions. Alternatively, if a situation is inconsistent with personal desires, it is incongruent and

would typically yield negative emotions.

CAT has been well established conceptually and has provided a fundamental understanding of the emotion elicitation process, including the antecedents (e.g., culture, individual beliefs, and experiences) and consequences (e.g., behavior) of an individual's appraisal. However, a limited number of empirical studies have actually examined antecedents of appraisal and consequences of emotion (Johnson & Stewart, 2004). Understanding antecedents and consequences of the emotion elicitation process is important. If causal factors of consumers' emotions are identified, marketing practitioners can establish proper marketing strategies based on a comprehensive understanding of consumer emotion-driven behavior.

III. Model and Hypotheses Development

Employing CAT as a theoretical framework, this study proposes a conceptual model incorporating three antecedents of consumer appraisal (i.e., exposure to global mass media, exposure to mass migration, and cultural openness) and a consequence of consumer emotion (i.e., purchase intention) (Fig. 1). Based on the proposed conceptual model, this study developed ten hypotheses to be tested.

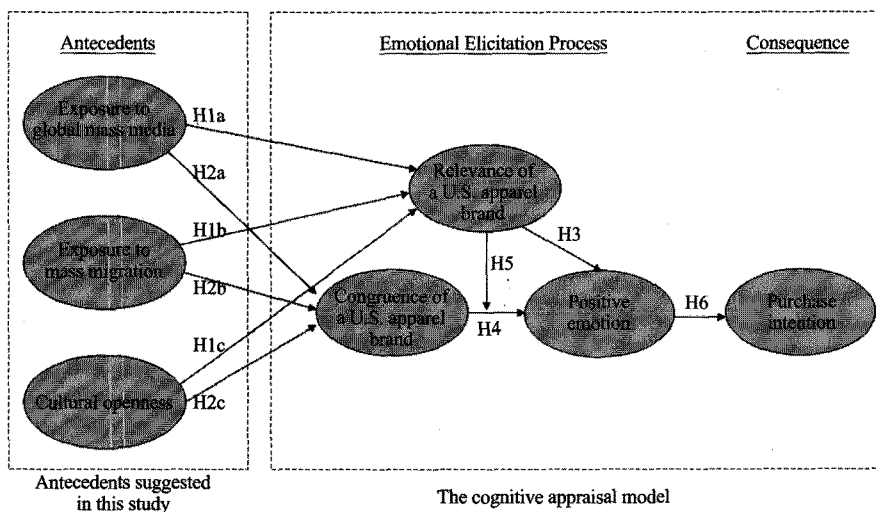


Fig. 1. The research model.

1. Antecedents of Appraisal

Global scholars have suggested and/or provided empirical evidence of antecedents of global/foreign brand consumption including exposure to global mass media (e.g., Alden et al., 2006; Appadurai, 1990), exposure to mass migration (e.g., Alden et al., 2006; Appadurai, 1990; Samiee et al., 2005) and cultural openness (e.g., Sharma et al., 1995). Although previous studies have not investigated the direct effects of the antecedents on appraisal of foreign brands, they revealed that these antecedents positively affect consumer attitude towards or preference for foreign brands. From these previous findings, this study infers that the antecedents of global/foreign brand consumption have direct impacts on consumer appraisal of a U.S. brand in the Chinese context. Therefore, these three factors (referred to collectively as consumer global orientation, or CGO, from this point on) are proposed as antecedents of consumer emotion.

1) CGO and Relevance

This study posits that CGO influences consumers' appraisals of a brand through consumers' increased knowledge about the brand. Exposure to global mass media, the first element of CGO, enhances consumers' knowledge about foreign brands. Global mass media, such as Music Television (MTV), global magazines, movies, and TV programs, is one of the most powerful global flows, carrying information of global brands and products (e.g., Alden et al., 2006; Appadurai, 1990). Weber (2001) revealed that youth in Shanghai gained information on foreign brands and products through global mass media. Exposure to mass migration, the second element of CGO, involves cross-cultural interactions, both direct (e.g., travel to outside cultures and living abroad) and indirect (e.g., social contact with people from other countries) (Alden et al., 2006; Appadurai, 1990). Consumers who engaged in cultural interactions possessed greater knowledge of foreign brands and products than did those who had no international experiences (Samiee et al., 2005). The last element of CGO, cultural openness, is a social-psychological factor referring to individual differences in terms of openness toward the peo-

ple, values, and artifacts of other cultures (Sharma et al., 1995). Cultural openness is also deemed to increase consumers' knowledge about foreign brands. Although no previous study has examined the relationship of cultural openness and consumers' knowledge about foreign brands, it is a reasonable expectation that consumers with high cultural openness are more knowledgeable about foreign brands because they have more interests in foreign products than individuals with lower cultural openness and, in turn, seek out information about such products.

Consumers who are more knowledgeable about a foreign brand are more likely to consider a foreign brand important; that is, more knowledgeable consumers have increased relevance toward a foreign brand. Keller (2003) suggested that if consumers recognize a brand and have some knowledge about it, consumers use a brand as a proxy variable, and make their assumptions about product characteristics and quality based on what they already know about the brand. Therefore, as consumers know more about a U.S. brand, their purchase decisions will be made based on brand, so the importance (i.e., relevance) of the brand will be increased.

Based on this rationale, this study posits that each of the factors included in CGO will increase relevance of a U.S. apparel brand in the appraisal process.

H1a: Exposure to global mass media will be positively related to relevance of a U.S. apparel brand.

H1b: Exposure to mass migration will be positively related to relevance of a U.S. apparel brand.

H1c: Cultural openness will be positively related to relevance of a U.S. apparel brand.

2) CGO and Congruence

Congruence denotes how much a product matches a consumer's desire. Consumers who are more frequently exposed to brands evaluate those brands more positively, inducing preference (Graeff, 1997; Winkelman & Cacioppo, 2001).

A study found that the greater the exposures to global mass media and mass migration (the first and second element of CGO, respectively), the higher the preference for foreign brands (Alden et al., 2006).

Cultural openness (the third element of CGO) is also related to increasing preference for foreign brands (e.g., Sharma et al., 1995). Consumers who are more open to other cultures show less ethnocentrism, resulting in increases in preference for foreign brands (Sharma et al., 1995). In sum, each factor of CGO increases consumer preference of foreign brands. This increased preference indicates that consumers are more likely to perceive the foreign brands meet a consumer's wants and/or desire (i.e., congruence) because preference are formed when products match to consumer wants and/or desires (Graeff, 1997), which facilitates congruence. Although the effect of CGO on congruence of a U.S. apparel brand has not been examined in the Chinese market, the rational from previous studies is expected to hold in China, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H2a: Exposure to global mass media will be positively related to congruence of a U.S. apparel brand.
- H2b: Exposure to mass migration will be positively related to congruence of a U.S. apparel brand.
- H2c: Cultural openness will be positively related to congruence of a U.S. apparel brand.

2. Appraisal and Emotion

This study posits that the two appraisal dimensions of relevance and congruence will increase consumer positive emotion. It has been widely confirmed that consumers with high relevance elicit stronger emotional responses (e.g., Darley & Lim, 1992; Peter et al., 1999). Hansen (2005) provided empirical support for this relationship by revealing that consumers buying food for a dinner party (i.e., important, high relevance) feel more positive emotions, such as pleasure, toward high quality food products than do consumers buying food for an everyday breakfast (i.e., less important, low relevance). Although the relationship between relevance and positive emotion has not been examined in the context of Chinese consumers, cognitive appraisal literature has maintained the universality of the appraisal mechanism (Scherer, 1997). That is, if an individual appraises that a stimulus is good, he/she experiences positive emotions, regardless of the country in which

he/she lives (Scherer, 1997). Therefore, the findings of previous studies that consumers with high relevance are more likely to experience positive emotions are expected to hold with Chinese consumers. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

- H3: Relevance of a U.S. apparel brand will be positively related to positive emotions toward the brand.

The positive effect of congruence on emotions has been widely accepted (e.g., Nyer, 1997; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). That is, when a stimulus meets what an individual wants and/or desires (congruence), he/she is likely to exhibit positive emotions toward that stimulus. For example, Smith et al. (1993) confirmed that a given congruent condition, specifically a college student winning an honor award (a congruent condition under the assumption that students who apply for an award want and/or desire to win it), is associated with positive emotions, such as happiness.

While no study has been conducted to examine the effect of congruence on positive emotions in a Chinese context, the positive relationship between congruence and consumers' positive responses is well-established in previous research and is expected to hold. Based on this rationale, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H4: Congruence of a U.S. apparel brand will be positively related to positive emotions toward the brand.

CAT suggests an interaction effect of relevance and congruence on individuals' emotions and several scholars have evidenced this interaction effect (Bee, 2005; Darley & Lim, 1992; Nyer, 1997). Namely, if a stimulus is not important to an individual (i.e., low relevance), he/she is unlikely to experience emotions related to it. Alternatively, when a stimulus is important to an individual (i.e., high relevance), then something is at stake, and congruence would be expected to have an effect and, as a result, elicit an emotion in response. For example, Bee (2005) found that consumers' worries in selecting a hotel differ by their relevance levels; when consumers consider attributes of a hotel important (i.e., high relevance) and the infor-

mation on a particular hotel does not meet what they want (i.e., incongruence), they worry. However, when they consider attributes of a hotel less important (i.e., low relevance) and are faced with incongruent conditions, consumers' worries are significantly reduced. Likewise, Chinese consumers' emotions toward a brand are expected to differ as a function of the combined conditions of congruence and relevance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is developed.

H5: Relevance of a U.S. apparel brand will moderate the relationship between congruence of the brand and positive emotions toward the brand.

3. Appraisal and Consequence

Within the domain of consumption emotions, the direct effects of emotions on purchase intentions have been widely confirmed (e.g., Alpert & Alpert, 1990; Spies et al., 1997). Both Alpert and Alpert (1990) and Spies et al. (1997) found that when consumers experienced positive emotions in response to a product during shopping, they were more likely to have intentions to buy that product. In an on-line shopping context, Park et al. (2005) found that positive emotions elicited from an on-line product presentation tended to lead to higher apparel purchase intentions. Based on the robust relationship between consumer emotions and purchase intentions confirmed in previous studies, this study anticipates the same relationship will hold with Chinese consumers, and the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Positive emotions toward a U.S. apparel brand will be positively related to purchase intentions of the brand.

IV. Methods

1. Data Collection

A series of mall intercept surveys were conducted targeting shopping mall visitors in three major Chinese cities, Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou. Levi's was chosen as the U.S. brand for consumer appraisal in this study because Levi's has been identified as the most known U.S. brand among Chinese people in a

previous study (Wu, 2005). Surveys were distributed to shopping mall visitors if they knew the Levi's brand name. This was ascertained using one screening question concerning Levi's brand awareness.

Initially, a total of 758 questionnaires were collected. After excluding 11 questionnaires that were incomplete, 747 usable questionnaires were retained for data analysis (248 in Shanghai, 248 in Beijing, and 251 in Guangzhou). Females accounted for 50.6% of the 747 respondents. The mean age of respondents was 20.89, and the range was 18 to 36 years old. The respondents were relatively young, which may be due to screening based on awareness of the Levi's brand (presumably, younger mall patrons are more likely to be aware of jeans brands). Monthly household income of the respondents was widely distributed, but most (64.4%) had household income per month between US\$ 501 and US\$2,000. Compared to China's national statistics, the respondents in this study were relatively young with relatively higher family income, reflecting the characteristics of middle-class urban consumers whom are the targets of U.S. apparel firms.

2. Survey Instrument

A questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Chinese by an individual fluent in both English and Chinese. The questionnaire was then back-translated into English by another bilingual native Chinese unfamiliar with the survey instrument to ensure translation equivalence. The questionnaire consisted of eight main sections that measure the seven constructs in the proposed research model plus demographics. <Table 1> summarized the survey instrument used for the surveys.

With the exception of demographic variables, all constructs were measured on a seven point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, least important, most unlikely, not at all, least meet, or never; 7=strongly agree, most important, most likely, extremely important, highly meet, or very often). Examples of measures are presented in the Appendix. Before the actual survey was distributed in China, a pre-test was conducted with 50 Chinese college students at a U.S. university. Based

Table 1. The survey instrument

Constructs	Number of Items	Sources
Exposure to global mass media	5	Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991; de Mooij, 2005
Exposure to mass migration	6	Alden et al., 2006
Global openness	7	Sharma et al., 1995
Relevance	7	Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 1997; Keller, 2003; Sharma et al., 1995; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004
Congruence	7	Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 1997; Keller, 2003; Sharma et al., 1995; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004
Positive emotion	19	Richins, 1997
Purchase intention	4	Mathur, 1998

on the results of this pre-test, several questions were elaborated and a few words were retranslated into Chinese.

V. Results

Prior to model tests, descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for all variables in the proposed model were examined (Table 2). The correlation coefficients for seven variables were in the range of .14-.64 and were all statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, showing a positive correlation pattern among them.

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step modeling approach was employed for data analysis. First, a measurement model was tested using CFA to confirm the measurement properties of the scales employed in this study. Then, a structural equation model was assessed to test the proposed hypotheses. To test the interaction effect of relevance and congruence on positive emotion, the two-step estimation method advocated by Ping (1995) was employed. All CFAs and structural equation models were run using Lisrel 8.80.

1. Measurement Model Test

A CFA model was specified using item-level indicators (43 in total) for the study's seven constructs with the exception of positive emotion. For positive emotion, following Richins's (1997) approach, the items within each of the descriptors were combined to yield seven descriptor-level indicators of positive emotion, rather than using the 19 items as indicators. This CFA yielded acceptable fit ($\chi^2=3989.91$ ($df=839$), p -value=.001; RMSEA=.06; 90% CI for RMSEA=.06-.07; CFI=.95; SRMR=.07). However, the convergent validity of both relevance and positive emotion proved problematic as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of these failed to exceed the recommended level of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Hence, the measurement model was modified by removing the item or indicator with the lowest factor loading from each of the two constructs. The item of brand origin was deleted as an indicator of relevance and the indicator of peacefulness was removed for positive emotion. Because the structure of relevance and congruence should be identical, the same item (i.e., brand origin) was removed as an indicator for

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

(n=747)

Variables	Mean	SD	EGMM	EMM	CO	R	C	PE
Exposure to global mass media (EGMM)	5.04	1.37						
Exposure to mass migration (EMM)	3.88	1.52	.44**					
Cultural openness (CO)	5.47	1.22	.47**	.37**				
Relevance of a U.S. apparel brand (R)	5.59	1.14	.27**	.14**	.29**			
Congruence of a U.S. apparel brand (C)	5.59	1.06	.31**	.17**	.33**	.64**		
Positive emotion (PE)	4.72	1.07	.26**	.27**	.24**	.40**	.47**	
Purchase intention (PI)	5.01	1.42	.37**	.28**	.39**	.40**	.44**	.40**

** $p < .01$

congruence as well.

This revised CFA, utilizing three fewer indicators (40 in total) for the study's seven constructs, provided an acceptable fit ($\chi^2=3337.24$ ($df=719$), p -value=.001; RMSEA=.06; 90% CI for RMSEA=.059-.064; CFI=.96; SRMR=.07). Convergent validity was also established, with all factor loadings statistically significant ($p<.01$) with standardized values ranging from .50-84. Other indications also supported the adequacy of the measures, with all seven Composite Reliability (CR) values and AVE values exceeding recommended cut-offs of .70 and .50, respectively (Fornell & Larcker 1981). This information is provided in <Table 3>.

Discriminant validity was examined following the procedure recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In all cases, the AVE of the measure of each construct was larger than the square of the factor correla-

tions between the target construct and all other constructs, providing evidence of discriminant validity. Also, it should be noted that the factor correlations between the seven constructs ranged from .12 to .73, with none approaching 1.0. This is another indication that the measures of the constructs demonstrate adequate levels of discriminant validity. As such, we next investigated a structural equation model for purposes of testing the study's hypotheses.

2. Structural Model Test

To test the hypotheses, a structural equation model was assessed, with the results summarized in <Fig. 2>. The overall fit statistics of the structural equation model indicated an acceptable level of fit ($\chi^2=3956.96$ ($df=764$), p -value=.00; RMSEA=.07; 90%

Table 3. The results of the measurement model test

(n=747)

Latent	Indicator	CSS	CR	AVE	Latent	Indicator	CSS	CR	AVE
Exposure to global mass media	EGMM1	.73**	.86	.55	Relevance of a U.S. apparel brand	R1	.81**	.86	.51
	EGMM2	.74**				R2	.83**		
	EGMM3	.79**				R4	.65**		
	EGMM4	.75**				R5	.70**		
	EGMM5	.70**				R6	.70**		
			R7	.58**					
Exposure to mass migration	EMM1	.50**	.88	.56		Congruence of a U.S. apparel brand	C1		
	EMM2	.83**			C2		.78**		
	EMM3	.83**			C4		.74**		
	EMM4	.73**			C5		.78**		
	EMM5	.77**			C6		.78**		
	EMM6	.78**			C7		.65**		
Cultural openness	CO1	.69**	.89	.55	Positive emotion		E1	.64**	.86
		.68**				E2	.74**		
		.76**				E4	.60**		
		.84**				E5	.75**		
		.76**				E6	.80**		
	.81**	E7				.71**			
	CO7	.63**				Purchase intention	PI1	.80**	
		PI2	.82**						
		PI3	.77**						
		PI4	.69**						

** $p<.01$

CSS: Completely Standardized Solution

CR: Construct Reliability=(square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings)+(summation of error variances)}

AVE: Average Variance Extracted=(summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings)+(summation of error variances)}

Model fit indexes: $\chi^2=3337.24$ ($df=719$), p -value=.00; RMSEA=.06; 90% CI for RMSEA=.059-.064; CFI=.96; SRMR=.07.

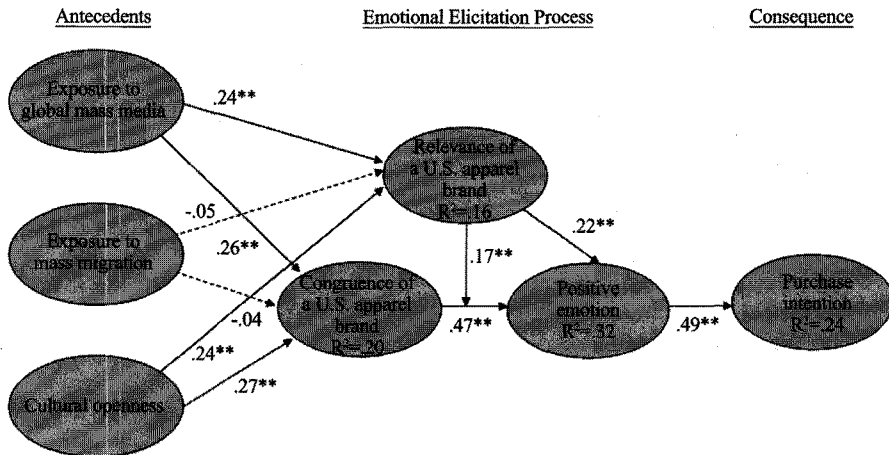
R3 (brand origin), C3 (brand origin), and E3 (peacefulness) with low factor loadings were deleted based on the first measurement model test; all t-value are significant at $p<.01$.

CI for RMSEA=.06-.07; CFI=.95; SRMR=.12).

Testing the effect of CGO on relevance relates to three hypotheses. The effects of exposure to global mass media and cultural openness on relevance were both positive and significant ($\gamma=.24$ for both), supporting H1a and H1c. However, the influence of exposure to mass migration on relevance was not significant ($\gamma=-.05$), failing to support H1b. Testing the effect of CGO on congruence also relates to three hypotheses. The effects of exposure to global mass media and cultural openness on congruence were both positive and significant ($\gamma=.26$ and $\gamma=.27$, respectively), supporting H2a and H2c. However, the influ-

ence of exposure to mass migration on congruence was non significant ($\gamma=-.04$), failing to support H2b.

The influence of relevance on positive emotion was positive and significant ($\beta=.22$), supporting H3. The effect of congruence on positive emotion was also positive and significant ($\beta=.47$), supporting H4. The interaction effect of relevance and congruence on positive emotion was significant as well ($\beta=.17$). The plot of the interaction effect, depicted in <Fig. 3>, shows that the positive relationship between positive emotion and congruence is slightly stronger under the high level of relevance than under the low level of relevance, thereby proving support for H5. Lastly,



** $p < .01$; Numbers on paths indicate structural coefficients. $\chi^2 = 3956.96$ ($df = 764$), p -value = .00; RMSEA = .07; 90% CI for RMSEA = .06-.07; CFI = .95; SRMR = .12. Straight lines indicate significant paths and dotted lines indicate non significant paths.

Fig. 2. The results of the structural model test.

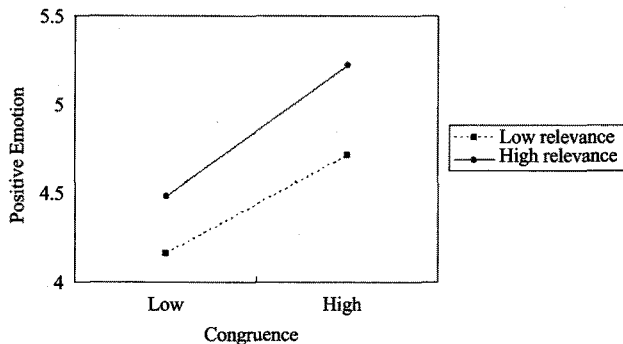


Fig. 3. The interaction effect of relevance and congruence on positive emotion.

the effect of positive emotion on purchase intention was found to be positive and significant ($\beta=.49$), providing support to H6.

VI. Conclusions and Implications

This study examined the Chinese consumer emotion elicitation process toward a U.S. apparel brand. This study forwarded a conceptual model based on CAT and tested the model with consumer data collected in three cities in China.

Among the ten hypotheses proposed, eight hypotheses were supported and two hypotheses were not supported. Of the three proposed antecedents of consumer emotion, two variables, exposure to global mass media and cultural openness, positively affected Chinese consumers' appraisals (relevance and congruence) of a U.S. apparel brand. Further, these effects were fairly uniform, with standardized coefficients for the four relationships ranging from .24 to .27. These results suggest that as Chinese consumers are more exposed to global mass media containing information on foreign cultures, people, and products, they are more likely to regard a U.S. apparel brand, and aspects of it (e.g., brand reputation, brand image, brand popularity, brand credibility, brand prestige, and brand uniqueness) as important. Similarly, Chinese consumers who are more open to foreign cultures, people, and products, tend to perceive the brand as more important. The findings of the direct effect of exposure to global mass media and cultural openness on relevance provide empirical evidence as to what factors increase the importance of brand in consumer perception, which has not been examined in previous studies.

Along with relevance, congruence was also positively affected by two antecedents, again exposure to global mass media and cultural openness. Chinese consumers with high exposure to global mass media and high cultural openness are more likely to perceive that a U.S. brand meets their desires in apparel products. This finding provides an explanation what factors affect consumers' positive evaluation of U.S. apparel brands in the global context.

Unlike exposure to global mass media and cultural

openness, the effects of exposure to mass migration on relevance and congruence were found to be non significant. These findings are inconsistent with previous studies, which revealed that mass migration positively influences consumers' attitudes toward or perceptions of a foreign brand (e.g., Alden et al., 2006; Samiee et al., 2005). The study from which this measurement of exposure to mass migration was adopted (Alden et al., 2006) evidenced that exposure to mass migration affects positive attitudes toward general global brands. Perhaps the application of the measurement to a specific apparel brand (Levi's) in this study, which was not the case with Alden et al. (2006), created a discrepancy in the findings of this study versus those of Alden et al. (2006) with regard to this variable. In other words, exposure to mass migration is probably related to consumers' general attitude toward foreign brands, not evaluation of a specific apparel brand.

The relationships between appraisal dimensions (i.e., relevance and congruence) and positive emotion were all supported. That is, the more important consumers consider a U.S. apparel brand, the more positive emotions consumers felt toward the brand. Similarly, the more consumers think a U.S. apparel brand meets their desires for an apparel product, the more consumers felt positive emotions toward the brand. These findings of the relationships between appraisal and emotion are consistent with previous studies employing CAT (e.g., Darley & Lim, 1992; Nyer, 1997; Peter et al., 1999) and also support the fundamental notion of CAT that people's emotions are elicited through individual appraisals of stimuli.

Of course, the results surrounding the main effects of relevance and congruence on positive emotion are superseded by the interaction effect between these two variables. Specifically, we hypothesized and found a significant interaction effect of relevance and congruence on positive emotion. While significant, it is worth noting that the interaction effect was not terribly strong, as evidenced by the slight difference in slopes depicted in <Fig. 3>. That is, if Chinese consumers consider a brand important (high relevance), the effect of congruence on positive emotions is slightly stronger than if a brand is seen as unimportant (low

relevance). This finding concerning the interaction effect of appraisal dimensions corresponds to the findings in Nyer (1997) and Bee (2005), adding more empirical evidence of the interaction of appraisal dimensions to the few previous studies on the relationship among appraisal dimensions.

Finally, this study confirmed that positive emotions influenced Chinese consumers' purchase intentions for a U.S. brand. That is, Chinese consumers' positive emotions play an important role in forming their purchase intentions of a U.S. brand. Previous studies have revealed the effect of positive emotions on purchase intentions in the U.S. market (e.g., Alpert & Alpert, 1990). The finding in this study confirmed this effect with Chinese apparel consumers.

As an initial attempt to systematically understand the emotion elicitation process of Chinese consumers toward a U.S. apparel brand, this study makes several contributions. First, this study approaches consumer emotion research with a strong theoretical framework to explain the emotion elicitation process and individual differences in it. Previous consumer emotion research has primarily concentrated on the relationship between stimuli and consumers' emotions, failing to explain why people elicit different emotions toward the same stimuli. This study, employing CAT, is able to explain the process of how the same stimuli can elicit different emotions. Second, this study forwarded and tested a model that incorporated antecedents of appraisal. Cognitive appraisal theorists have suggested a variety of antecedents of appraisal, but none of the previous studies have investigated the effect of antecedents on appraisal empirically. This study addressed a deficiency of previous studies and examined the direct effect of global mass media, exposure to mass migration and cultural openness on consumer evaluation of a brand in the elicitation of consumer emotions. The findings surrounding the cause-effect relationship of antecedents and appraisal in this study provide empirical support for the propositions of CAT, especially in the global context. The final contribution of this study is to enrich the understanding of Chinese consumer preferences for U.S. apparel brands. Previous studies on Chinese consumers have been mainly limited to reporting the phenomenon of Chinese

preference for foreign brands (e.g., McEwen et al., 2006; Smith & Wylie, 2004). This study discovered that Chinese consumers' positive emotions toward a U.S. apparel brand are formed through their appraisals of the brand, and the elicited emotions lead them to purchase a U.S. apparel brand.

The findings of this study provide meaningful implications for marketers. This study revealed that exposure to global mass media positively affects Chinese consumers' appraisals of a U.S. apparel brand. This finding indicates the importance of global mass media in forming Chinese consumers' positive evaluations of U.S. apparel brands. Hence, U.S. apparel firms seeking marketing opportunities in China ought to enhance their advertising via global mass media (e.g., Vogue, MTV). Second, cultural openness was also found to be a factor influencing Chinese consumers' appraisals of a foreign apparel brand. An individual's cultural openness is not easily identified by others because it is a personal trait. Hence, if U.S. apparel firms plan to enter the Chinese market, one way to forecast the firm's success in China could be to conduct research on target consumers and to identify if target consumers are open to foreign cultures, people, and products. Third, this study found that the interaction effect of relevance and congruence influences Chinese consumers by eliciting positive emotions toward a U.S. apparel brand. As such, U.S. apparel firms need to identify which aspects of their brands, such as brand prestige and uniqueness, are most important (relevant) to their target Chinese consumers and then need to focus on these important categories to enhance congruence. U.S. apparel firms need to implant the belief in Chinese consumers that a global apparel brand will satisfy the specific desires they have for an apparel brand (congruence) to lead Chinese consumers' positive emotions toward a global apparel brand.

This study has several limitations. First, this study focused on only positive emotion in examining the Chinese consumer emotion elicitation process in relation to antecedents and a consequence. However, research negative emotion or ambivalent emotion toward a foreign apparel brand in a Chinese context would also provide valuable information about how

Chinese consumer emotions are formed and how those emotions affect purchase decisions about foreign apparel brands. This merits further investigation. Second, this study incorporated only two appraisal dimensions (i.e., relevance and congruence) to examine the Chinese consumer emotion elicitation process toward a U.S. apparel brand. Cognitive appraisal theorists have suggested different appraisal dimensions for different situations. Expanding this initial study, future studies could examine other appraisal dimensions related to apparel brands. Lastly, this study used only one U.S. jeans brand to examine Chinese consumers' positive emotions toward U.S. apparel brands. However, consumers' elicited positive emotions may vary with different apparel brands and categories. Hence, to enrich the understanding of Chinese apparel consumers' emotion elicitation process toward a foreign apparel brand, research on different apparel categories and brands is suggested for the future.

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Appendix 1. Examples of research constructs and measurement items

Construct	Example Items										
<p>CGO</p> <p>Exposure to global mass media</p> <p>Exposure to mass migration</p> <p>Cultural openness</p> <p>Appraisal</p>	<p>How often do you watch domestic TV programs containing foreign information? How often do you see domestic or foreign movies containing foreign information? How often do you watch TV programs produced in other countries?</p> <p>I enjoy meeting people from other countries. I often travel to other countries. I often choose to vacation in a foreign country.</p> <p>I would like to have opportunities to meet people from other countries. We should have a respect for traditions, cultures, and ways of life of other nations.</p>										
<p>Relevance</p> <p>Congruence</p>	<p>How important is brand reputation of Levi's to you? How important is brand image of Levi's to you? How important is brand origin (country) of Levi's to you?</p> <p>To what extent does brand reputation of Levi's meet what you desire in an apparel brand? To what extent does brand image of Levi's meet what you desire in an apparel brand? To what extent does brand origin of Levi's meet what you desire in an apparel brand?</p>										
<p>Positive emotion</p>	<p>To what extent do you experience each of the following emotions when you think of Levi's?</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="417 832 1140 884"> <tr> <td>sexy</td> <td>romantic</td> <td>passionate</td> <td>love</td> <td>sentimental</td> </tr> <tr> <td>warm hearted</td> <td>calm</td> <td>peaceful</td> <td>content</td> <td>fulfilled</td> </tr> </table>	sexy	romantic	passionate	love	sentimental	warm hearted	calm	peaceful	content	fulfilled
sexy	romantic	passionate	love	sentimental							
warm hearted	calm	peaceful	content	fulfilled							
<p>Purchase intention</p>	<p>I would definitely intend to buy Levi's jeans. I would absolutely consider buying Levi's jeans.</p>										

The entire measurement items will be provided upon request.