



# Cultural Influences on Brand Identification and Brand Defense

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## 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<sup>1</sup>
  - When consumers perceive negative evaluations of a brand, those with stronger self-brand connections tend to evaluate the brand less negatively<sup>2,3</sup>
- **Lisjak, Lee, & Gardner (2012):**
  - People with high self-brand connections would defend the brand "to preserve the integrity of the self"<sup>4</sup>
  - 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<sup>5</sup>

### Brand and self-expression



## 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

## 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 Amazon's M Turk
  - East Asian vs USA
  - Close friend vs Stranger
  - Mobile phone (iPhone) vs Clothing brand (Nike)
- Measured brand identification on the Self-Brand Connection Scale<sup>6</sup> ( $\alpha = .86$ )
- 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

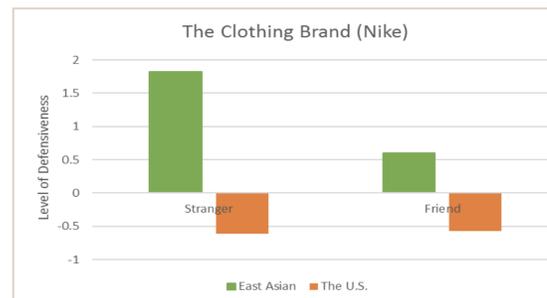


Figure 1.1. Study 1 shows means of level of defensiveness by information agent and culture for the clothing brand Nike,  $p < .10$ .

## 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 ( $\alpha = .91$ )

### 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

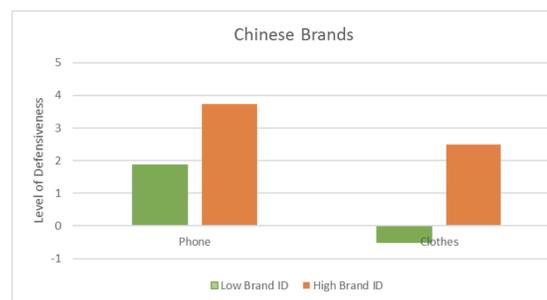


Figure 2.1. Study 2 shows means of level of defensiveness by brand category and brand identification for Chinese brands,  $*p < .05$ .

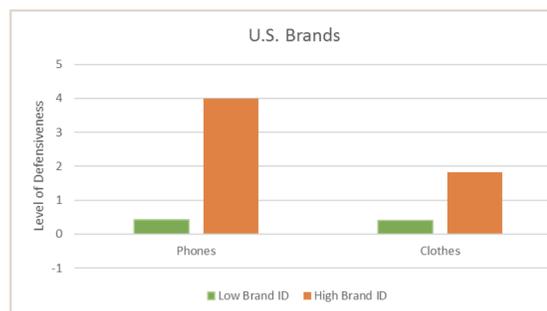


Figure 2.2. Study 2 shows means of level of defensiveness by brand category and brand identification for U.S. brands,  $*p < .05$ .

## 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 easily 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

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