The Role of Fashion Innovativeness, Brand Image, and Lovemarks in Enhancing Loyalty towards Fashion-Related Brands

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Consumers who have high innovativeness are likely the first to buy new brands and tend to switch brands (Cho & Workman, 2014; Steenkamp, ter Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999). These consumers influence the purchase of new products by later buyers (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Goldsmith, 2003), which contributes to the successful launch of a new fashion brand. Moreover, those high in fashion innovativeness are frequently opinion leaders (Cho & Workman, 2014), which supports the importance of building their brand loyalty, thus affecting loyalty of others. Yet, little research has examined factors leading to fashion brand loyalty for those with high innovativeness. Thus, the present study examines factors affecting loyalty towards fashion-related brands among those with high levels of innovativeness.

The present study adopted the extended brand equity model (Cho, Fiore, & Russell, 2015). In this brand equity model, three dimensions of brand image predict lovemarks (i.e., a combination of high levels of brand love and respect), which consequently influence brand loyalty (i.e., repeat purchase behaviors over time). The three dimensions of brand image include 1) mystery–cognitive associations shaped by great stories and past and present interactions with a brand, 2) sensuality–sensory associations formed by pleasant visual sensations from the store and product, and 3) intimacy–affective associations shaped by consumers' commitment and enjoyment. Because consumers with high levels of fashion innovativeness tend to engage in sensually- and emotionally-rich experiential aspects and cognitively engaging entertainment aspects of shopping (Cho & Workman, 2014), we hypothesized that fashion innovativeness is positively associated with the three brand image dimensions. These dimensions will increase lovemarks, leading to brand loyalty, as found in past research (Cho et al., 2015) (see Figure 1).

An online survey was conducted by recruiting respondents through the Alumni Association at a large Midwestern university in the U.S. Reliable and valid instruments were used to measure the six variables (i.e., fashion innovativeness, mystery, sensuality, intimacy, lovemarks, and loyalty) from previous studies. For example, Goldsmith and Hofacker's (1991) innovativeness scale was adapted to focus on fashion, and brand image and lovemarks scales from Cho et al. (2015) were adopted. Respondents were asked to identify a brand for fashion products they really liked or loved and then to answer the survey questions thinking about that brand. A national sample of 3,042 respondents between the ages of 18 to 76 participated in the study. After removing missing or incomplete data, 2,492 responses (1,006 male and 1,486 female) were acceptable for data analysis. The median age was 46 years, and a majority of the respondents (75%) were highly educated, middle-aged Caucasian Americans between 30 and 65 years. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was run in Mplus 5.21 for data analysis.

Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the dimensionality and validity of the factor structure for each variable. All factor loadings were greater than .59 and were highly significant ($p \leq .001$). Reliability for all variables was supported, based on acceptable Cronbach's α values (> .79). The fit indices of the measurement model showed a good fit to the data: [$\chi^2 = 1,662.53$ ($df = 172$), $p \leq .001$], CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04. The fit indices of the structural model also indicated a good fit to the data: [$\chi^2 = 1,763.26$ ($df = 177$), $p \leq .001$], CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04. All seven paths were positive and statistically significant ($p \leq .001$), as shown in Figure 1. The results confirmed the role of brand image dimensions in building loyalty among those high in fashion innovativeness. Support was found for positive associations between (a) fashion innovativeness and each of the three dimensions of brand image, (b) these dimensions and lovemarks (brand love and respect), and (c) lovemarks and loyalty towards fashion-related brands. Whereas sensuality had the strongest relationship with fashion innovativeness, intimacy had the most impact on lovemarks, which affected loyalty towards fashion-related brands. This suggests that marketers should promote not only pleasant sensory associations to appease those with high levels of fashion innovativeness, but also promote cognitive and affective associations to achieve the end goal of loyal customers among those with high fashion innovation.
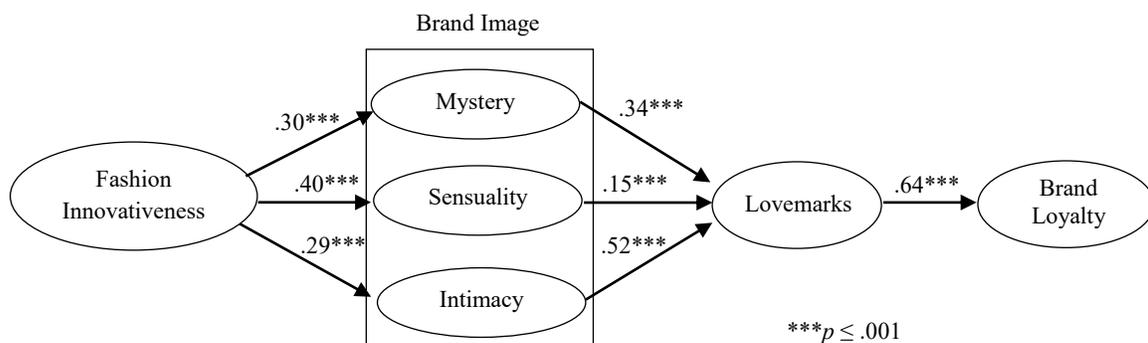

Figure 1. The Structural Model Showing the Relationships between the Variables

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