



Influences on Vietnamese Consumers' Preference for US Clothing Brands

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Vietnam is one of the most attractive markets in the world with their fast-growing middle class and increasing purchasing power. It is predicted that the middle class will be tripled in Vietnam between 2012 and 2020 ("Vietnamese Consumers", 2013). Vietnamese consumers are buying more sophisticated products. For example, urban Vietnamese women aged between 20 and 45 spend 18% of their monthly income on apparel (Breu, Salsberg and Tú, 2010). The majority of emerging market consumer studies investigate the two of the world's largest emerging markets, China and India. However, a number of studies reveal that Asian consumers are varied (e.g., Jin, Park and Ryu, 2010). Thus, Vietnam deserve equal attention. The purpose of this study is to help U.S. clothing brands effectively market in Vietnam, addressing influences on Vietnamese consumers' preference for US brands when shopping for clothing. Forsythe, Kim and Petee (1999) found that brands and product benefits people valued varied by culture. Particular product benefits that Vietnamese consumers desire can influence whether they prefer US clothing brands or Vietnamese clothing brands. Vietnamese consumers' perceived advantage of US clothing brands over Vietnamese clothing brands also can impact their preference for US clothing brands. Shem, Dickson, Lennon, Montalto and Zhang (2003) confirmed that attitude toward US-made apparel influenced purchase intention for the US-made apparel among Chinese consumers. Based on this rationale, the following hypotheses have been proposed.

H1: Vietnamese consumers' importance of product benefits in shopping for clothing will be associated with their preference for US clothing brand.

H2: Vietnamese consumers' perceived advantage of US clothing brand will influence their preference for US clothing brand.

A hundred Vietnamese consumers (male = 36 and female = 63) completed an online survey. A URL took participants to a letter explaining the research, followed by a questionnaire. Importance of product benefits in shopping for clothing, perceived advantage of US clothing brands over Vietnamese brands and preference for US clothing brands were assessed using multiple 5- point and 7-point Likert items. Items came from the research literature, had appropriate reported reliabilities, were adopted to reflect topics of this study and used rating scales. Demographic information was also collected. Participants' ages range from 18 to 32 (mean age = 23.68). Most of the participants were single (89%) and 55% of the participants had full-time jobs. Almost half of the participants (46%) reported annual incomes less than \$999.

Multi-item measures were subjected to EFAs and reliabilities were adequate (range = .73 – .86). EFA for the importance of product benefits measure yielded two-factor solutions – *perceived product benefits* and *actual product benefits*. *Perceived product benefits* include brand

reputation, trendiness and country of origin. *Actual product benefits* include comfort, durability, fit and quality. EFA for the perceived advantage of US clothing brand yielded two-factor solutions – *perceived higher value of products* (e.g., American brands are mostly luxury products.) and *perceived better shopping experience* (e.g., American brands offer more satisfying shopping services.). EFA for the preference for US clothing brand yielded one-factor solution.

Multiple regressions were used for hypothesis testing. Importance of *perceived product benefits* was associated with preference for US brands over Vietnamese brands ($t = 2.32, \beta = .18$), $F(1, 98) = 5.36, p < .05$. Importance of *actual product benefits* was not associated with preference for US brands over Vietnamese brands. *Perceived higher value of products* was related to preference for US brands over Vietnamese brands ($t = 2.17, \beta = .32$), $F(1, 98) = 4.69, p < .05$. *Perceived better shopping experience* was not related to preference for US brands over Vietnamese brands. Hypothesis 1 was supported, finding out that Vietnamese consumers who placed the importance on perceived product benefits such as brand reputation, trendiness, and country of origin prefer US brands to Vietnamese brands. However, Vietnamese consumers who place the importance on actual product benefits such as comfort, durability, fit and quality do not necessarily prefer US brands to Vietnamese brands. Hypothesis 2 was supported, finding out that Vietnamese consumers who perceive higher value of US products prefer US brands to Vietnamese brands. However, Vietnamese consumers who believe in better shopping experience of US brands does not necessarily prefer US brands to Vietnamese brands.

Vietnamese consumers would purchase from US clothing brands because of perceived product benefits such as brand reputation and trendiness, rather than actual product benefits such as quality and durability. Therefore, US clothing brands should focus on image –building marketing activities to be successful in Vietnam. In addition, Vietnamese consumers look for value-added products when shopping at US clothing brands. Vietnam might be a good market for high-end, US-made clothing.

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