

Understanding the Effects of Brand Label Attributes on Consumer Preference and Purchase
Intentions
An Exploratory Study of Multinational Food Brands

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Abstract

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The Canadian consumer packaged goods industry is rife with competition and brand managers are faced with limited marketing resources. This makes it essential for brands to stand out where it matters most: the store shelf. This research aims to understand the effect of a foreign brand's attributes—as represented on a product label—on Canadian consumers' preferences and purchase intentions. The results of this study suggest that brands must carefully select the language(s) which appear on the label when competing in a foreign market. This research helps brand managers as they form a strategy to either change an existing brand or introduce a new packaged goods brand to the Canadian market.

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Introduction

By the year 2031, Statistics Canada projects that 28% of the Canadian population will be comprised of visible minorities; 21% of those visible minorities will be Chinese-Canadians (cbc.ca, 2010). This drastic influx is not only expected to be the majority of the country's population growth but also the largest contributors to the growth of retail sales. Retailers are currently adjusting their long term strategies in order to meet the demands of these new customers. Grocery retail chains and supermarkets are no exception. As supermarket chains adjust their long term strategies, so must marketers, manufacturers, and brand managers of Chinese, or more broadly East Asian, food brands. Some supermarkets and domestic owners of East Asian brands have developed "ethnic marketing" strategies (Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998, p. 200) but have done so with limited success. This lack of success is partially attributed to the lack knowledge of how their foreign brands are perceived in Canada.

Brand managers of East Asian food brands are faced with limited marketing budget to attract new customers and—unless there are enough resources to invest into advertising and additional communication strategies—typically only get one opportunity to make an impression on potential customers: the store shelf. This single opportunity for brand managers forces them to get the most out to their brands perception by consumers through the design of their brand as signified by the packaging of the actual product. Brand managers must understand the perceptions of the individual attributes which create the brand image and form a preference for consumers. In the absence of direct prior experience with the brand, consumers must make their decision regarding which brand will taste the best, offer the greatest functional and financial value, and satisfy their overall needs based solely on their perception of the available brands on a shelf. This thesis thus seeks to investigate what visual packaging and brand label attributes influence consumer responses to East Asian food brands.

Conceptual Framework

Brand Label Attributes

Packaging and its attributes are a brand's primary method of communicating with potential customers. This is especially true for consumer packaged goods brands with limited marketing budgets. The majority of East Asian food brands would fall into this category. The challenge then is to ensure the product attributes, which are the elements that make up the brand

in the customer's eye, resonate with consumers. Since consumers respond based on their perceptions of reality and not reality per se (Lewin, 1936), it is vital for the brands to understand the perceptions of their target market, even if they are not based entirely on reality (Porter, 1976). Since reality is individually constructed and unique to the individual consumer, it is difficult and nearly impossible to assert the true nature of product. In this sense product marketing can be viewed as a contrast between the brand's ability to communicate an intended product benefits, through the formation of a brand identity, and the consumers' perception of the brand based on these branding activities.

Kotler (1991, p. 442) defines a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." In other words, a brand is a combination of product attributes as perceived by consumers that distinguish one product from another. Therefore, two products could be almost identical in function and taste, yet they can be perceived to be different based on the branding activities they are associated with.

Keller (1993) proposes that brand perceptions are—in part—influenced by brand attributes, and describes a framework for comparing types of brand attributes; this framework distinguishes between two types of attributes: product-related attributes, which refer to the functional aspect of the product, and non-product-related attributes, which refer to the external aspect of a product. Product-related attributes can be considered as the attributes which are under the control of the firm's product development team, whereas non-product-related attributes are under the control of the firm's marketing team. Non-product-related attributes are the attributes which are designed by marketers to shape the consumer's perception of the product. Keller (1993, p. 4) outlines the four main types of non-product-related attributes: "(1) price information, (2) packaging or product appearance information, (3) user imagery (i.e., what type of person uses the product or service), and (4) usage imagery (i.e., where and in what types of situations the product or service is used)." This suggests that product label attributes which appear on product packaging may influence consumers' brand perceptions and subsequent responses to the brand.

In order for the consumer's perception of the brand to be congruent with the firm's intended perception, the consumer must decode the marketing information of the packaging as

they were intended to by the firm (Koekemoer, 1991). The perception process is the greatest barrier to effective communication (Puth, Mostert, & Ewing, 1999). The success of a brand is conditional upon consumers' perceptions. Effective communication cannot be achieved without first understanding the perceptions of consumers (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1991).

The presence of a single attribute or the combination of certain attributes can set a brand apart from its competition (Belch and Belch, 1995). For new brands, the selection of attributes by the firm are essentially the design of the brand. Attributes and their infinite possible combinations are how a consumer evaluates a new brand and compares it to its competition. Marketers must understand the effects of each attribute in order to achieve the desired competitive positioning and segmentation strategy (Puth et al., 1999). Brands can simply be viewed as a bundle of perceived intrinsic and extrinsic attributes (Stokmans, 1991).

In a grocery store setting, the consumer often evaluates and compares brands based solely on the brand's visual attributes. For brand managers, attributes are the primary tool they can use to develop their positioning strategy and separate themselves from the competition (Peter and Donnelly, 1995). Marketers must also prioritize the attributes of the brand. The design of the brand will incorporate several attributes; some will be more prominent than others. To achieve the greatest success, marketers need to ensure that the prominent attributes visible on the packaging are the most salient to the target consumer (Puth et al., 1999).

The importance of packaging as a marketing tool is increasing (Rettie and Brewer, 2000). It is equal to, and often greater than, any other marketing communication element (Silayoi and Speece, 2007). With 73% of purchase decisions being made at the store (Connolly and Davidson, 1996), consumers seldom think deeply about the particular brands they plan to buy (Silayoi and Speece, 2007), particularly in low involvement product categories.

Culture is a key element to consider when attempting to understand how a consumer perceives the attributes of a brand. Responses to attributes as basic as colour are perceived different across cultures (Walle, 1997). Brand managers should take an unbiased view when designing their brand's attributes especially when culture is a major factor. Consumers are unlikely to change their culturally conditioned responses to brand label attributes (Silayoi and Speece, 2007).

Consumers' purchase intention is based on the degree to which they believe the brand, as perceived through its label attributes, will satisfy their expectations of its performance (Kupiec and Revell, 2001). Attributes, in terms of brand evaluation on a store shelf, are interpreted by consumers based on visual cues. Pictures are the greatest form of stimulus when compared to words (Imram, 1999). When viewing photos on food packaging, also known as beauty shots, consumers are likely to imagine how that product tastes, smells, and looks (Underwood, Klein, and Burke, 2001). Flavour, nutritional value, and overall satisfaction can to some extent be inferred from the packaging, labeling, and the logo of a brand (Silayoi and Speece, 2007). Silayoi and Speece (2007) further note six elements of a brand's packaging that are perceived by the consumer and, in turn, aid in their assessment of the brand: graphics, colour, the placement of visual elements, packaging size and shape, product information, and technology (convenience).

The origins of the term "product position" is based on the creation of a product's visual attributes and price in order to differentiate itself from the competition; positioning does not directly refer to the product but rather how the product is perceived by consumers (Ampuero and Vila, 2006).

Olsen and Jacoby (1972) describe packaging as a combination of extrinsic elements or attributes that create a representation of the product and does not necessarily present the reality of the product. There are two main methods by which consumers can judge a brand, the physical assessment of a branded product, and the evaluation of the brand through media. Firms have great control over the evaluation of the brand through the media. Firms can control and shape the message. For example, the firm controls the narrative in a TV commercial and can choose how much of the product is actually featured in the commercial. Once the consumer arrives at the store, packaging represents an important opportunity for the firm to persuade consumers to become customers of their brand (McDaniel and Baker, 1977). Packaging and its attributes informs consumers about their products qualities and benefits and it is truly the "silent salesman" (Vidales Giovannetti, 1995).

Peters (1994) highlights the importance of packaging based on its ability to reach all, if not most, of the potential customers in a category; it is assessed by consumers at the moment when a purchase decision will be made, and that consumer can physically touch and evaluate the product and make their decision based on the attributes most salient to them. Of all the methods

marketers can use to communicate with consumers, packaging is the last to be evaluated by the customer before they actually consume the product and therefore has the highest possibility of transmitting brand values and product characteristics (McNeal and Ji, 2003).

Brand Preference & Purchase Intentions

The perception of a brand can be analyzed based on several concepts that are interrelated to one another. Brand image, brand attitude, and brand perceptions are among them. Brand image is simply a set of beliefs held about a particular brand (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996). More simply, brand image is related to consumers' perceptions of a particular brand (Chang and Liu, 2009). Consumers' brand image can be affected by marketing communication (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003). Brand image is also described by Biel (1992) as a set of attributes and associations that are connected by consumers to a brand name.

Based on brand image, consumers also form brand preferences. Brand preference is the bias a consumer hold towards a particular brand (Chang and Liu, 2009), compared to its competitors. Hellier, Guersen, Carr, and Rickard (2003) describe brand preference as the extent to which a consumer favors a particular brand over all others in the consideration set. Purchase intention is an extension to brand image and brand preference. Purchase intention is the outcome of positive brand image and brand preference. Brand preference can also be described as a reflection of purchase intention (Chang and Liu, 2009).

Consumers' Cultural Background

Consumers' perception of brand label attributes are likely contingent on individual difference variables. This thesis examines consumers' cultural background (hereinafter referred to as culture) as a consumer level moderator variable.

Culture is defined by Hofstede (1997, p.5) as "the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." To understand the purchasing behavior or purchase intent and its antecedents, it is useful to understand the mind and the thought process of consumers, and how it is shaped by culture. Culture can affect consumers' attitude toward the brand and how they make purchasing decisions. Hofstede's dimension of individualistic versus collectivist orientation has resulted in understanding major differences in consumer behavior between consumers from western versus eastern cultures (Patterson and Smith, 2003; Watkins and Liu, 1996). Understanding the

difference between an eastern mindset and a western mindset and the purchasing behavior of both is an important aspect for marketers in Canada in order to tailor their product offerings and services to target one or the other. The ultimate goal would be to adapt a product offering such that it satisfies consumers of eastern and western mindsets. Canadian retailers, and specifically grocery stores, have attempted to create such an offering, but may be biased toward using a western mindset when marketing towards eastern customers.

For East Asian consumers, and consumers of East Asian descent who have immigrated to Canada, the values of collectivism as well as Confucius teachings are paramount. Collectivism, as opposed to individualism, can be identified when group goals are prioritized above individual goals (Triandis, 1995). Hofstede (1991, p. 51) describes that individualism “pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family,” whereas collectivism is the contrasting value that “pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive groups which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” Collectivist values also place an emphasis on trust and strong relationships (Doney, Cannon and Mullen, 1998).

Confucius teachings and beliefs are inherently collectivist. They are also well described by long and short term orientations. Hofstede and Minnow (2010, p.495) outline three main teachings of Confucius:

“(i) The stability of society is based on unequal status relationships between people, (ii) the family is the prototype of all social organizations, and (iii) virtue with regard to one’s task in life consists of trying to acquire skills and education, working hard, not spending more than necessary, being patient, and persevering.”

When discussing Hofstede’s fifth dimension of national culture, long versus short-term orientation, Hofstede and Minnow (2010) family life is described as a pragmatic relationship where thrift is taught to children at a young age. Interpersonal relationship can exist between an individual and a brand (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2000). Asian cultures are long-term oriented with core values consisting of learning, adaptability, accountability, and self-discipline with a predisposition towards life-long relationship (Hofstede and Minnow, 2010). This is commonly referred to as guanxi.

In the context of long-term orientation, this personal brand relationship is one that is expected to last over a long period of time. The relationship is thus more of a marriage (Fournier, 1998) with inherent emotional costs if there was a separation, as opposed to causal relationship with few emotional ties (Fournier, 1998). Ambler (1997) explains that trust is the foundation of the relationship between an individual and the brand. Once the collective group of a society establishes trust with a brand, they form a long-term relationship with the brand that is reinforced by the collectivist values which increases the social costs of switching brands.

A secondary means by which cultures can be compared was developed by Schwartz (1992) whereby cultures are explained using ten dimensions: self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism, and stimuli. In a study on the congruency of humor and cultural values in print-ads Laroche, Nepomecuno, and Richard (2014) summarize the Chinese cultural values based on Schwartz's (2006) dimensions and found that Chinese score high on tradition and conformity.

Due to the complexity of measuring cultural background at the individual level, this research relies on self-reported ethnicity as a proxy of consumers' cultural background.

Consumers' Cultural Background and Brand Label Attributes

Firms who operate in multiple markets are faced with the decision to standardize their branding strategy or adapt their strategy to each market. A standardized approach is defined by Jain (1989, p. 70) as a marketing strategy that uses "a common product, price, distribution, and promotion program on a worldwide basis." Standardization is contrasted by an adapted strategy, whereby the marketing mix and branding attributes are tailored to the needs of consumers in each market; but it is important to understand that there are degrees to which a marketer can apply a standardized or adapted strategy (Quelch and Hoff, 1986). Firms typically consider the variances in nations as variances in cultures but of importance is also how the adaptation versus standardization strategy decision should be altered when the targeted customer base is of the same culture across many nations. This type of consideration is unique to firms who cater to a culture with strong tendencies to migrate. This is certainly the case for multinational food companies. For East Asian food brand manager, they must also consider the growing popularity of their authentic products amongst non-East Asian consumers.

Multinational companies have strived to create a standardized branding strategy, but recently cultural differences have challenged the notion that adaptive strategies are increasingly beneficial (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Cultural values are integral to what constitutes an individual and how one defines their own personality (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010), yet cultural convergence is being fuelled by multinational media outlets; marketers may achieve the greatest success by viewing their local markets as a single global entity (Winram, 1984). Fisher (1984) also notes that as consumers around the world become more affluent and better educated, their tastes actually begin to diverge. These contrasting views on culture present a challenge when it comes to the decision to adapt or standardize.

In the competitive arena of multinational firms, a brand name rarely stands as a single entity. Instead, brand names are a part of a bigger brand hierarchy of dominant brands, cooperate affiliation, sub-brands, co-brands, and alike. To categorize these variously affiliated brands, Douglas et al. (2001, p. 99) outline a brand architecture model, which is defined as “a formal process and outcome by which management rationalizes the firm’s brand and makes explicit how brands names at each level in the organization will be applied.” The three levels described by Douglass et al. (2001) are based on the level of affiliation of the brand: monolithic (single brand name worldwide, e.g., Apple), endorsed (brand name is a subsidiary of another brand, e.g., Virgin Mobile), and branded (multiple product level brands, e.g., P&G brands). These levels of brands are also integrated into the structure of the organizations and how the brands are actually managed. Douglass et al. (2001) propose that a decentralized management style that allows for more autonomous decision making by mid-level brand managers would be more suitable to an adaptive strategy with an emphasis on local brands whereas a centralized management style, where decision making power rests with top level managers, usually at the global head office, would be more suited to a standardized strategy that emphasizes the global brand.

Brand names can be the greatest element in product judgement, over price or physical appearance (Dewar and Parker, 1994), and thus a firm should make great efforts to avoid erosion of the brand capital that may be caused by adaptation. As global markets become increasingly linked together, brand managers must develop coherent marketing strategies across all national markets (Caller, 1996). As consumers around the world are exposed to a greater diversity of

product, cultures, and lifestyle, they become more receptive to products of foreign origin (Featherstone, 1990). Firms must also consider the management of their brands. Douglass and colleagues (2001) state that a firm's brand architecture should satisfy three key principles: parsimony (consolidate the number of brands in an effort to maximize the strength of each individual brand), consistency (striking a balance between differentiated brand identities across different product lines and leveraging the corporate brand identity), and endorsement (the effective leveraging of the corporate brand identity onto the lower order brands in the architecture). Here a standardized strategy would best satisfy the three principle, whereas an adoptive strategy would dilute the benefits of having a dominant brand at the top of the firms brand architecture.

Another layer of the adaptation versus standardization decision deals with the identification of a brand's target market. Target markets are not necessarily constrained by geographical national borders. Target markets can be identified by consumers possessing homogeneous characteristics irrespective of their physical location. Firms targeting these consumers will benefit from the creation of global brands, which can also shape a distinctive global identity (Douglass et al., 2001). Target markets also need to be identified within the context of culture. Firms that design a marketing strategy for a brand of products that are culturally embedded are more likely to achieve success via an adapted strategy (Douglass et al., 2001). Food brands are particularly affected by this.

In terms of Hofstede dimensions of culture, marketers customize their brand image based on the variances of cultural proneness towards individualism and uncertainty avoidance (Roth, 1995). Consumers in collectivist cultures show greater responses to utilitarian brand label attributes (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Cultural conditions lead to brands being evaluated differently by consumers (Kocak et al., 2007). Japanese companies, for example, have designed brands based on corporate trust and thus emphasize the brand logo more strongly in advertisements than US or German companies (Souiden et al., 2006). North American consumers, who show strong individualistic characteristics, have greater difficulty accepting brand extensions into unrelated categories whereas collectivist consumers, who rely more strongly on brand trust in their decision making process, readily accept brand extensions (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

The goal of marketers in individualistic cultures should be to persuade in order to achieve maximum resonance, whereas marketers in collectivist cultures should focus more on creating a relationship with consumers built on trust (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Han and Shavitt (1994) further explain that advertising in collectivist cultures is most effective when emphasizing in-group benefits, such as family and harmony, whereas more effective advertising in individualistic cultures focuses on individual benefits and preferences built around the notion of personal success and independence. When a product is more compatible with the society of the foreign market, it is more suitable for the firm to implement a standardized strategy (Britt, 1974; Keegan, 1969).

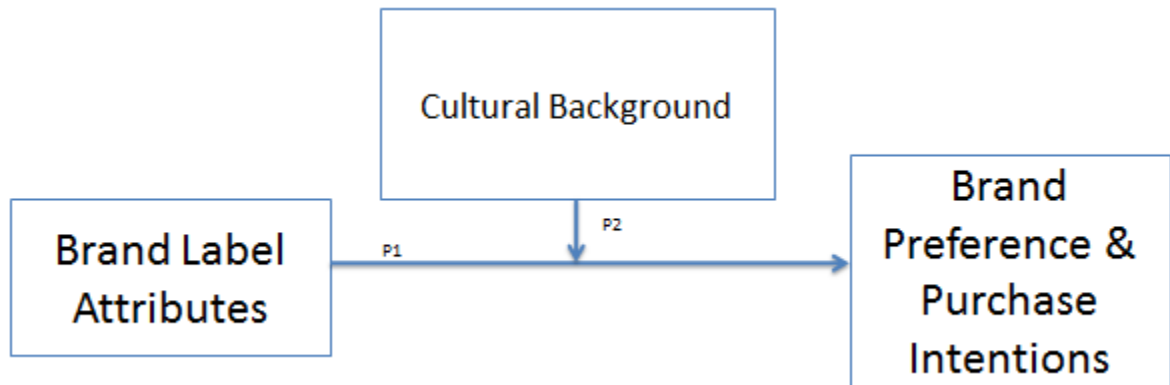
A brand name can be the single most valuable asset to a firm (Aaker, 1991) due to its ability to signify source of ownership, quality, provide trust to consumers in their decision making process, and act as a source of consumers' self-perceptions (de Chernatony & McWilliam, 1989). Alashban, Hayes, Zinkhan, and Balazs (2002) propose that there are five factors which must be considered by a firm when deciding whether to implement a standardized or adapted marketing strategy: religion, language, education, technology, and the economy. The level of standardization is dependent on the characteristic of the target market, the market position, the nature of the product, the competitive environment of the local market, and the influence of organization (Jain, 1989). Whatever an adaptation or standardization approach is undertaken by a firm, the decision must not be viewed as static. An audit of the firm's marketing strategy across all of its market must be undertaken annually (Douglas, Crag, and Njissen, 2001).

The level of competition in in the foreign market necessitates the degree of adaptation required for the product to be favorably viewed by consumers (Jain, 1989). In Japan corporations rely on the corporate brand image and the corporate brand's logo to convey and emphasize trust and reliability (Douglass et al., 2001). The nature of product can also have a significant effect on the marketers' ability to create a standardized strategy. Jain (1989) argues that industrial goods are greater candidates for standardization and that within consumer goods, durables are greater candidates than non-durables; non-durable consumer goods are thus the less compatible with standardization due to tastes, habits, and customs being unique to each market.

The literature thus far often examines brands associated with a high level of involvement, such as in the following product categories: technology based brands, consumables, durables, or

industrial based. This approach often ignores the qualities of the individual brand. Marketers must focus more on what does their brand stands for. This can be stated by the brand image and what attributes resonate with the brand’s customers in the domestic market. Once the factors are identified, then the brand manager can approach their strategic options with the proper framework on which to base their strategic decision.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Propositions

The research was designed to explore what brand label attributes are associated with more favorable brand preference and/or purchase intentions. A consumer’s brand preference or intent to purchase a particular brand is dependent on the attributes of that brand. Brand preference is defined by Chang and Liu (2009, p. 1690) as “the bias a consumer holds towards a particular brand” whereas purchase intention is “a customer’s plan to buy a specific brand”. In keeping with the ideas proposed by Kotler (1991), a consumer’s brand preference and purchase intentions can be formed based solely on the visual attributes of a brand and have less to do with the quality of the product within the packaging. This research question is based on the situation where a consumer must make a purchase decision of an unfamiliar category based solely on the visual branding of the available products. The premise of this research is that brand label attributes influence consumers’ brand preferences and purchase intentions. Since the goal was to explore what brand label attributes specifically relate to consumer preference and purchase intentions, the following exploratory proposition is tested in the context of a wide range of product attributes (discussed in the subsequent measures section of this thesis).

P1: Brand label attributes will significantly relate to consumers' brand preference and purchase intentions.

Consumer Level Moderator

This moderating effect is based on the premise that if a consumer is familiar with the quality of the contents inside the packaging, then they are less likely to base their preferences or purchases on the visual branding attributes of the packaging. A consumer's cultural background will affect the perception of a brand's attributes and have a moderating effect on brand preference and purchase intentions

P2: For consumers of East Asian (vs. Western) cultural backgrounds, the relation between brand label attributes and brand preference and purchase intentions will be stronger.

Methodology

The study focused on sauce brands due to their popularity in East Asian cuisines. Other categories such as noodles and rice were not considered due to their being commodity based products. Keeping the product category of analysis (sauce brands) constant allows for the isolation of the effects of branding on consumer perceptions. The variables used in this study are a combination of coded variables collected using content analyses, and variables obtained through a consumer oriented survey.

Measures

Coding of brand label attributes was completed by two independent coders (who were unaware of the propositions tested in this research) using content analysis. Twenty-two individual attributes were identified for 20 sauce brands available in Canadian grocery stores. Of the 22 attributes, 8 were eliminated due to high multicollinearity with other attributes leaving 14 distinct attributes for analysis. These 14 attributes were then separated into two categories: one for attributes that could be perceived visually by the consumers when standing in a grocery aisle such as language and packaging color and one for those could not be perceived visually such as value proposition and breadth of offering. The attributes that were non-visual were analyzed as control variables and the visual attributes were analyzed as the independent variables.

Four brands were selected from the initial 20; these four brands represented visual brand label attribute combinations that were unique. The four brands were thus chosen due to their

distinct offerings to the market. The final list of brands and attributes is shown in table 1. The moderators in the study were coded by the author based on his experience working in the industry with a leading company in grocery retailing, and the input from various industry experts. Brand preference and purchase intentions were measured using a questionnaire administered to a sample of Canadian consumers. The scales used in the study were adapted based on the work by Chang and Liu (2009).

Table 1 Attributes and Brands

Attribute	Attribute Description	Lee Kum Kee	Pearl River Bridge	Squid Brand	T&T
Control Variables					
Breadth of Offering	Coded Variable (2) – Only 1 Product Sub-Category (Ie Only Sauces), Or Diversified Offering (All Product Sub-Categories Under Same Brand)	Single Category	Diverse Offering	Single Category	Diverse Offering
Value Proposition	Coded Variable (3) - Used As An Aggregate Measure Of Price – Value Brand (Low Price Point), Mid-Level Brand (Mid-Level Price Point, Or Premium (High Price Point)	Mid-Level	Value	Mid-Level	Premium
Brand Age	Continuous Variable: Age Of The Brand In Years	33	58	46	4
Branding Strategy	Standardized Vs. Adapted	A	S	A	S
Independent Variables					
Language	Coded Variable (3) – Predominately Asian, Predominantly English, Or A Equal Split.	Asian And English	Asian And English	Only English	Asian And English
Lable Crowding	Continuous Variable – Number Of Individual Characters Of Front Facing Label	100	125	355	487
Mascot	Coded Variable (2) – Presence Or Absence Of Mascot	Mascot	No Mascot	No Mascot	No Mascot
Control Brand	Coded Variable (3) – Non-Associated Cb, Associated Cb, Or National Brand	National Brand	National Brand	National Brand	Private Label
Logo Colour	Coded Variable (Depends On How Many Colors Are Observed)	Yellow	Red	Green	Green
Package Colour	Coded Variable (Depends On How Many Colors Are Observed)	Red	Silver	White	Brown
Emphatic Statement	Such As “Super” Or “AAA”: Coded Variable (2) – Presence (Y) Or Absence (N) Of Emphatic Statements	N	Y	N	Y
Brand Country of Origin	Coded Variable (Depends On How Many Colors Are Observed)	Hong Kong	China	Thailand	Canada
Beauty Shot	Coded Variable (3) Beauty Shot Of Food, Family Image, No Image	No Image	No Image	Food Image	Food Image
Quality Statement	Coded Variable (2) – Presence (Y) Or Absence (N) Of A Quality Statement	N	Y	N	Y

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for the consumer survey consisted of two parts. Part one asked respondents to answer a series of preliminary demographics questions and their level of

familiarity of the type of brands being studied. Part two consisted of the same set of questions being asked to respondents for each of the four brands in the study. The scales were adapted from the works of Chang and Lui (2009) for brand, preference and purchase intentions, and Hellier and colleagues (2003) for brand preference and consumer loyalty. Respondents were instructed to read all questions carefully and answer all questions in order. Questionnaire items were evaluated using Likert scales anchored by 1 = “Strongly Disagree” and 7 = “Strongly Agree”. An existing consumer panel (Qualtrics) was used to ensure that the sample taken was representative of the Canadian population. Appendix 1 presents the full Qualtrics survey and results of frequency analyses. Table 2 provides an overview of the respondents’ demographics.

Table 2 Sample Demographics

Total Respondents	210
Male	98
Female	112
Familiar with East Asian Brands	
Yes	105
No	105
Region of Residence	
Atlantic Canada	28
Quebec	23
Ontario	104
Western Canada	55
Age	
18-29	41
30-39	42
40-49	40
50-59	39
60-69	35
70+	13
Cultural Background	
East Asian	26
North American	120
European	43
Other	21

Analysis and Results

Five items were used to measure brand preference and purchase intentions. Using factor analysis, the five scales were found to load on one factor. An index variable was created to act as the criterion for the regression analyses conducted to test the propositions.

Control variables were entered into a regression to identify (and control) potential influences of product familiarity, usage, and attitudes on an index of brand preferences and purchase intentions. Of the 35 control variables, six were found to be significant. The full list of control variables is available in Appendix 1 (questions 52-87). The six variables controlled for in the model are related to: brands being advertised with relevant information, products are relevant to consumers, preference for brands within the product class, repeat purchases and second choice brands, and the notion that all brands are the same. The control variables were adapted from the works of Kleiser and Mantel (1994) for consumer familiarity; Pisharodi and Parameswaran (1992) for country of origin effects; Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) for category involvement; and Muncy (1996) for brand parity. The additional non-visual control variables that were separated from the independent variables were also run through the models yet none were found to be significant.

Given that the research was exploratory, multiple regression was used to develop a model that best fit the data and thus captured the effects of brand characteristics on the index variables for brand preference and purchase intentions, as well as the brand and consumer level moderators. Table 3 summarizes the models tested and the remaining variables. Due to the large number of control variables, variables that did not have a significant coefficient were removed after evaluation of each model for the sake of parsimony. All models were developed using SPSS default settings (F entry =.05 removal =.10). Model 2 was chosen as the model that best fits the data ($R^2=.341$, $F=63.017$, $p\text{-value}<.001$) with all variables significant.

Table 3 Regression Models

Model	Hypothesis	Method	R-Squared	Significance	F	Variables Entered	Variables Remaining
1	A	Enter	0.339	0.00	44.114	11 Control Variables (CV) 10 Independent Variables (IV)	8 CV 2 IV
2	A	Stepwise	0.341	0.00	63.017	11 Control Variables (CV) 10 Independent Variables (IV)	6 CV 1 IV
*Decision : Continue with model 2 (parsimony) to test Proposition B							
3	B	Enter	0.342	0.00	34.607	1 Consumer Moderators (CM) with 1 interactive terms (IT)	8 CV 2 IV 1 IT
4	B	Stepwise	0.341	0.00	63.017	2 Consumer Moderators (CM) with 2 interactive terms (IT)	6 CV 1 IV

*Decision : Models 2 and 4 are identical and are the best fit for the data

Proposition 1 Results: Brand Label Attributes

A summary of the proposition tests is available in table 4. The sole significant brand characteristic influencing the brand preferences/purchase intentions index was the language of the text on the bottle ($\beta=.309$, $t=11.041$, $p\text{-value}<.001$). All other predictors were not significant. Language of the label was also the strongest standardized beta coefficient of any variable in the model. With at least one brand characteristic significant in the final model, P1 was supported ($\beta=.309$, $t=11.041$, $p\text{-value}<.001$), such that the presence of East Asian characters on a brands label positively affects brand preference/purchase intentions.

Table 4 Proposition Results

	Propositions	Standardized Regression Coefficients	t	Supported or Rejected
P1	Attributes → Brand Preferene & Purchase Intentions	.309*	11.041	Supported
P2	Attributes x Cultural Background	-.004	-.066	Rejected

Proposition 2 Results: Consumer Moderators

Multiple regression was used to analyze the moderation proposition as well. The proposal was not supported. Consumers’ cultural background had no interaction with brand label attributes, and there was no evidence supporting P2 ($\beta=-.004$, $t=-.066$, $p\text{-value}=.947$).

General Discussion

Only one brand label attribute was significant out of the 10 variables created. The final model developed has nonetheless a few theoretical and managerial implications. The rejection of the moderating proposition also helps outline what is truly relevant when considering how

consumers perceive brands based on visual brand label attributes. It indicates that brands managers can benefit from focusing on the brand label attributes (rather than consumer culture), such as the representation of language on package labels.

Theoretical Implications

This research provides limited support for an impact of visual brand label attributes on consumers' preferences and purchase intentions toward East Asian sauce brands in a Canadian grocery store context. It is possible that the moderating proposition was not supported due to the nature of the specific product category selected. East Asian sauces were chosen due to the size of their market segment, second in terms of sales after rice for East Asian consumers, and their prevalence in East Asian cuisine. East Asian sauces are typically sold in 500-1000ml bottles with a price ranging from \$2.00-\$6.00 with a high index of the volume sold on promotion. The segment is very price sensitive and consumers are always searching for the best value. These factors make East Asian sauces a low-involvement category and thus the results indicate that the proposed moderating effects may not be salient factors to consumers given that there is little risk in making a poor purchasing decision.

Consumers' cultural background did not emerge as a moderating factor. This suggests that Asian and non-Asian consumers perceive brands in a similar fashion. The perceived value of a brand, as represented by the combination of attributes on a label, are perceived with little difference across consumers' cultural background. This can also be explained by the low-involvement of the category. Consumers need not be loyal to any given brand due to the heavy promotion of every brand within the category. Value conscious consumers can easily find value within the East Asian sauce category because the brands essentially take turns being on sale.

Managerial Implications

The implication from the final model in this exploratory study is that the presence of East Asian writing is a salient brand label attribute that relates significantly to consumer preferences and purchase intentions, and this relationship is not moderated by cultural background. The recommendation to brand managers—based on the findings of this research—is that it is critical for a brand competing in the ethnic (i.e., East Asian) sauce product category to have East Asian writing on the label. This consideration seems particularly important when brand managers consider modifications to an existing brand, or the creation of a new brand in this category. It is

possible that the impact of language on the product label relates to consumer perceptions of the brand's country of origin and/or production. Ultimately, label language may thus relate to consumers' perceptions of the brand's authenticity. While it is certainly favourable to feature East Asian writing on the label, its presence must reinforce the brand's authenticity as originating East Asia or an authentic flavour of East Asian. On the other hand, if consumers realize that a Canadian firm is going to produce a new East Asian brand that is manufactured in Canada, the presence of East Asian writing may be viewed as a gimmick. But for an East Asian brand or firm considering rebranding or importing a new brand, this research indicates that East Asian writing needs to be placed/kept on the label to reinforce authenticity in the consumers' perceptions. As Kotler (1991) highlights, a brand is simply sum of multiple attributes that, when perceived together, begin to form the consumer's perception. After a brand manager concludes that the label should have East Asian writing there are still many important decision regarding other attribute that will be perceived at the same time by consumers.

The lack of support for the moderating proposition is still meaningful for brand managers. The consumer moderator of cultural background, although not supported in the research, should be considered when defining the scope of the brand and/or the target market. Canada, as a very multicultural country, can be viewed by brand managers as too diverse for a single brand and they may decide to segment the market by adjusting their brand's attributes. This research suggest that the Canadian market should be considered as one single market as a whole. One's cultural background is the lens through which they view the world (McCraken, 1986) but it may not be the lens through which they view brands. A brand's strategy is a complex web of many elements of a firm working together, but for the purposes of this research and the implications for managers, it should be limited to the question of adapting or standardize the brand's strategy across multiple countries. The results indicate that it does not matter if a brand adapts or standardizes its strategy; however, the presence of East Asain writing as a salient attribute may inherently make the standardized strategy the default option for brand managers.

Brand managers in Canada are faced with a highly competitive environment where they need to make their brands resonate with consumers in seconds. They are also faced with limited resources and cannot afford to make a mistake with branding. As Peter and Donnelly (1995) point out, a brand's attributes are the primary tool for developing a perception in a consumer's

mind. Given a firm's or brand's current position, this research will help define what step they need to take when considering changes to an existing brand or the creation of a new brand. However, this task should be considered as more art and science. Certain attributes can be identified as more salient than other, but in the end it is always the summation of all the brand's attributes that for a consumer's preferences.

Limitations and Future Research

The greatest limitation of the research was its focus on a single category. This was done to control for any category effects, but the research was also designed to explore interactions of variables, which may not have been relevant mechanisms within the context of the low-involvement category selected. Future research should certainly explore the constructs presented here in other more highly involved categories with a prevalence of East Asian brands, such as electronics or automobiles.

The final model, with label language being the single significant variable, is very simple yet points to interesting areas for potential future research. The research presumes that consumers perceive all of a brand's attributes simultaneously to form a single perception of the brand yet of all the attributes studied, language is the only attribute that is perceived on independently across all brands. Consumers must read the label if for no other reason than to ensure they are buying the right product for their intended usage. If an English speaking consumer is interested in a given brand that has both English and Asian language on the label, they perceive both languages as they are forced to actively ignore the Asian language in order to read the English. In this case the perception of the Asian language on an Asian brand is a signal for authenticity. This is shown in that an Asian brand will emphasize the Asian language more so than English on a label. This is a great area for future research. What are the links between country of origin, language, and perceive authenticity? What other attributes could be a strong signal for authenticity? Of the attributes explored in this research, the presence of a mascot or beauty shot may be a signal as would any other image, picture, or art work.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Q **report**
The *Importance* *of* *Brand* *Label* *Attributes*
August 10th 2017, 8:41 am MDT

Q86 - The following survey is related to your preferences of East Asian Sauce Brands. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement: I am familiar with East Asian Sauces Brands

Q90 - What area of Canada do you live?

Q88 - G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

Q1 - I think PEARL RIVER BRIDGE is superior to other competing brands

Q5 - I am interested in trying brand other than PEARL RIVER BRIDGE

Q6 - I intend to use a different brand

Q7 - I would consider purchaisng PEARL RIVER BRIDGE

Q8 - I will purchase PEARL RIVER BRIDGE

Q9 - I think LEE KUM KEE is superior to other competing brands

Q10 - I am interested in trying brand other than LEE KUM KEE

Q11 - I intend to use a different brand

Q12 - I would consider purchaisng LEE KUM KEE

Q13 - I will purchase LEE KUM KEE

Q14 - I think T&T is superior to other competing brands

Q15 - I am interested in trying brand other than T&T

Q16 - I intend to use a different brand

Q17 - I would consider purchaisng T&T

Q18 - I will purchase T&T

Q19 - I think SQUID BRAND is superior to other competing brands

Q20 - I am interested in trying brand other than SQUID BRAND

Q21 - I intend to use a different brand

Q22 - I would consider purchaisng SQUID BRAND

Q23 - I will purchase SQUID BRAND

Q27 - KIKKOMAN

Q29 - LEE KUM KEE

Q31 - ROOSTER

Q32 - T&T

Q33 - HUY FONG

Q34 - SQUID BRAND

Q35 - PEARL RIVER BRIDGE

Q36 - MAGGI

Q38 - KIKKOMAN

Q39 - LEE KUM KEE

Q45 - ROOSTER

Q40 - T&T

Q41 - HUY FONG

Q42 - SQUID BRAND

Q43 - PEARL RIVER BRIDGE

Q44 - MAGGI

Q46 - Are you loyal to any East Asian Sauce brands?

Q47 - If yes, which brand(s):

Q48 - Please indicate your gender:

Q49 - Please indicate your age:

Q50 - Please describe your cultural background:

Q52 - Unreasonably expensive

Q53 - Cheaply put together

Q54 - Intensely Advertised

Q55 - Advertises with relevant information

Q56 - Easily available

Q57 - Good value

Q58 - Pretigious products

Q59 - I automatically know which brands of East Asian Sauce to buy.

Q60 - I am loyal to one brand of East Asian Sauce.

Q61 - At the place of purchase, I can visually detect my preferred brand without much effort.

Q62 - I can immediately identify my preferred brand even if it is located with other brands of East Asian Sauce.

Q63 - When I purchase my preferred brand, I do not pay attention to the other brands of East Asian Sauce.

Q64 - I consider myself knowledgeable on East Asian Sauce.

Q65 - I use my knowledge on East Asian Sauce to verify that adverting claims are in fact true.

Q66 - I can recall almost all existing brands of East Asian Sauce from memory.

Q67 - I can recognize almost all brand names of East Asian Sauce.

Q68 - I can recall product-specific attributes of East Asian Sauce.

Q69 - I can recall brand-specific attributes of the various brands of East Asian Sauce.

Q71 - I understand the features well enough to evaluate the brands.

Q72 - They are products that interests me.

Q73 - I have a preference for one or more brands in this product class.

Q74 - These are products for which I have no need whatsoever.

Q75 - I am not at all familiar with these products

Q76 - I usually purchase the same brand within this product class.

Q77 - If my preferred brand in this product class is not available at the store, it makes little difference to me if I must choose another brand

Q78 - My choice of brand allows others to see me as I would ideally like them to see me.

Q79 - I definitely have a “wanting” for these products

Q80 - If evaluating brands in this class, I would examine a very long list of features.

Q81 - I use this product to define and express the “I” and “me” within myself.

Q82 - I rate this product as being of the highest importance to me personally.

Q83 - Most of the brands in this product class are all alike

Q84 - I can't think of any differences between the major brands of East Asian Sauces

Q85 - To me, there are big differences between the various brands of East Asian Sauces

Q86 - The only difference between the major brands of East Asian Sauces is price.

Q87 - All major brands of East Asian Sauces are the same.

Appendix 2 SPSS Models

Model 1

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.281	.733		9.929	.000
	BA_CV	-.042	.006	-.222	-6.591	.000
	Q55_CV	.548	.109	.154	5.017	.000
	Q72_CV	.308	.116	.119	2.659	.008
	Q73_CV	.850	.123	.339	6.928	.000
	Q76_CV	-.462	.106	-.151	-4.355	.000
	Q77_CV	.270	.090	.094	3.003	.003
	Q83_CV	.332	.094	.106	3.513	.000
	BLOY_CV	.103	.283	.011	.364	.716
	IV11_BS_Y	-2.323	.249	-.307	-9.330	.000
	IV12_QS_Y	.835	.219	.110	3.812	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Index_DV

Model 2

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
7	(Constant)	3.007	.665		4.520	.000
	Q73_CV	.853	.122	.340	6.968	.000
	IV3_LNG_AE	2.705	.245	.309	11.041	.000
	Q55_CV	.550	.109	.154	5.051	.000
	Q77_CV	.265	.089	.092	2.986	.003
	Q76_CV	-.454	.103	-.149	-4.388	.000
	Q83_CV	.331	.094	.105	3.508	.000
	Q72_CV	.312	.115	.121	2.717	.007

Model 3

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.911	.717		4.061	.000
	BA_CV	.001	.006	.007	.222	.824
	Q55_CV	.564	.109	.158	5.154	.000
	Q72_CV	.317	.116	.123	2.735	.006
	Q73_CV	.818	.123	.326	6.642	.000
	Q76_CV	-.448	.106	-.147	-4.214	.000
	Q77_CV	.274	.090	.095	3.046	.002
	Q83_CV	.340	.094	.108	3.601	.000
	BLOY_CV	.036	.286	.004	.126	.900
	IV3_LNG_AE	1.956	.458	.224	4.268	.000
	IV10_CoO_HK	.240	.260	.028	.925	.355
	ETH_EA_INT	1.237	.530	.095	2.335	.020
	ETH_nA_INT	.782	.421	.102	1.860	.063
	ETH_EUR_INT	.421	.473	.040	.888	.375

a. Dependent Variable: Index_DV

Model 4**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
7	(Constant)	3.007	.665		4.520	.000
	Q73_CV	.853	.122	.340	6.968	.000
	IV3_LNG_AE	2.705	.245	.309	11.041	.000
	Q55_CV	.550	.109	.154	5.051	.000
	Q77_CV	.265	.089	.092	2.986	.003
	Q76_CV	-.454	.103	-.149	-4.388	.000
	Q83_CV	.331	.094	.105	3.508	.000
	Q72_CV	.312	.115	.121	2.717	.007

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