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Impact of Fashion Innovativeness on Consumer-Based Brand Equity

Brand equity is the brand's overall strength (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity refers to the value derived from consumer recognition of the overall superiority of a particular brand, which raises a firm's competitive advantage based on brand value propositions besides low price (Lassar *et al.*, 1995). According to Keller (1993), consumer-based brand equity (hereafter CBBE) occurs when a brand's marketing mix leads to the following consumer responses: familiarity with the brand; favorable, strong, and unique brand associations; and consequent consumer loyalty toward the brand. Brand associations consist of the amalgamation of meanings that a consumer connects to a brand (Aaker, 1991). These associations are categorized as cognitive, sensory, or affective dimensions, yet most branding studies concentrate on the cognitive aspects of consumer associations (Cho *et al.*, 2015).

Research supports Keller's (1993) noted impact of CBBE, as it has been linked to preferential evaluations of the brand by consumers (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003) as well as increased consumer confidence and trust in their purchase decisions (Lassar *et al.*, 1995). These responses lead to higher levels of consumer satisfaction and repeat-purchase intentions (Buil *et al.*, 2013), along with an increased willingness to pay a premium price for the brand (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). Consequently, these consumer responses help to ensure the success of the brand (Lassar *et al.*, 1995; Keller, 1993). It follows that creating and maintaining equity among customers should be a top priority for brands (Aaker, 1991) and a topic of future study by researchers.

Despite numerous models of brand equity, researchers (Davicik *et al.*, 2015) have noted the need for further research on drivers of brand equity formation. Research has focused on brand equity measures such as brand awareness, associations, image, and loyalty (see Buil *et al.*,

2013) and influencing factors such as marketing mix variables (e.g., Cobb-Walgren *et al.*, 1995; Yoo *et al.*, 2000). However, non-marketing mix factors, such as consumer variables, have received little attention (Yasin *et al.*, 2007). Further investigation should focus on the role of the consumer in brand equity creation (Davicik *et al.*, 2015; Yasin *et al.*, 2007).

Consumer innovativeness—the propensity of consumers to buy or adopt new products (Midgely and Dowling, 1978)—may be particularly important to building equity for brands that depend on frequent product innovation to drive consumer demand, such as fashion-related brands. Such brands consist of appearance-related products including apparel, footwear, cosmetics, and jewelry. Consumer innovativeness leads to adoption of product innovations that build awareness of and purchasing confidence in the new product by others in the product adoption cycle (e.g., early majority consumers) (Kim *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, it is important to determine what role innovativeness plays in the CBBE model.

The present study examined the role of fashion innovativeness (FI), a product category-specific form of consumer innovativeness, in forming fashion-related brand equity. FI refers to one's willingness to explore and try a new fashion product earlier than other members of society (Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992). Specifically, the present study examined the effect of FI on perceived importance of brand image dimensions in Cho *et al.*'s (2015) CBBE model, which extended Keller's (1993) CBBE theory by (a) supplementing Keller's (1993) cognitive associations of brand image with sensory and affective associations and by (b) including Roberts' (2005) lovemark concept (i.e., high brand love and respect variables) in a model that leads to consumer loyalty toward fashion-related brands.

FI is associated with a high level of interest in fashion styles and brands (Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006; Workman and Cho, 2012), resulting in increased acquisition of knowledge

about new fashion styles and brands (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1996). Consumers high in FI are highly involved in information search for new products/brands (Cho and Workman, 2014; Muzinich *et al.*, 2003). This active information search may reflect the importance of cognitive associations (i.e., evaluation of functional and symbolic value of products) in brand image development by fashion innovators. In addition, consumers high in FI seek sensory stimulation as well as fun and enjoyment during shopping experiences (Cho and Workman, 2011, 2014; Muzinich *et al.*, 2003), which reflects the potential importance of sensory and affective associations to their formation of a brand image. These cognitive, sensory, and affective associations, which tap into consumers' rational and emotional perceptions of a particular brand, are antecedents to a lovemark (Cho *et al.*, 2015). Strength of the lovemark is positively associated with level of brand loyalty (Cho *et al.*, 2015; Roberts, 2005). The relative importance of perceived brand image dimensions to the process of augmenting loyalty may vary with the role of FI in the beginning aspect of the CBBE model.

Previous research has not explored the impact of FI on brand equity variables for fashion-related brands. To help fill that gap, this study investigates (a) how FI affects the perceived importance of brand image dimensions (i.e., cognitive associations, sensory associations, affective associations) connected to a favorite fashion-related brand, (b) the effects of these dimensions on lovemarks, and (c) the consequent effect of lovemarks on brand loyalty. The results may contribute to developing marketing strategies that perpetuate brand loyalty among those with high FI and prolong their potential impact on brand equity as catalysts and sustainers of mass adoption.

Theoretical Framework: Extended CBBE Theory

Researchers (i.e., Esch *et al.*, 2006) have emphasized the centrality of cognitive aspects of consumer associations in branding. A few studies (i.e., Chang and Chieng, 2006; Esch *et al.*, 2006; Low and Lamb, 2000) have acknowledged sensory and/or affective aspects of consumer associations along with cognitive associations. However, these associations have been geared toward a particular product category or cursorily addressed. The present study adopted the extended CBBE theory developed by Cho *et al.* (2015) to provide a parsimonious brand equity model for fashion-related brands. Cho *et al.* (2015) illustrated that brand awareness and the three brand image dimensions lead to a lovemark, which consequently affects consumer loyalty toward fashion-related brands. It offers all three aspects of cognitive, sensory, and affective associations applicable to a range of fashion-related brands. Cho *et al.* (2015) proposed brand image is a three-dimensional construct that consists of mystery, sensuality, and intimacy. Mystery captured cognitive associations shaped by great stories as well as past and present interactions with a brand. Sensuality reflected sensory associations formed by pleasant visual, olfactory, auditory, and tactile sensations from the store and product. Intimacy captured affective associations shaped by a consumer's commitment to the brand and enjoyment from interacting with the brand. Cognitive (e.g., Manlow and Nobbs, 2013), sensory (e.g., Clarke *et al.*, 2012; Manlow and Nobbs, 2013), and affective associations (e.g., Manlow and Nobbs, 2013) are central to impactful fashion-related brand experiences. Therefore, research supports the relevance of the tripartite nature of fashion-related brands in Cho *et al.*'s (2015) extended CBBE theory.

Moreover, Cho *et al.* (2015) included the lovemark variable, a combination of brand love and respect, as the predictor of loyalty toward fashion-related brands. Their findings align with past literature in its conclusion that both strong affective feelings and performance-related

judgments (Kim, 2012) are central to fashion-related brand experiences that shape brand loyalty (Batra *et al.*, 2012). These findings support the wisdom of using Cho *et al.*'s extended CBBE theory for framing the present study. Although Cho *et al.* accounted for brand awareness in the original CBBE model, brand awareness was not included as a factor in the present study, because formation of a brand image subsumes awareness of the brand. Moreover, such awareness may stem from negative associations (e.g., the brand uses child labor), which would detract from brand love, respect, and loyalty.

Literature Review

Fashion Innovativeness and CBBE

Innovativeness refers to the tendency to be among the first to adopt new products, services, and/or brands (Rogers, 1983). Innovativeness is a multi-dimensional construct that includes cognitive and sensory innovativeness (Venkatraman and Price, 1990). Cognitive innovativeness refers to a tendency to seek new experiences that stimulate thinking, whereas sensory innovativeness refers to a tendency to seek new experiences that arouse the senses (Venkatraman and Price, 1990). Additionally, innovativeness has been described as innate or domain-specific (Roehrich, 2004). Innate innovativeness refers to a generalized personality trait that reflects novelty seeking and the need for stimulation and uniqueness (Roehrich, 2004). Domain-specific innovativeness refers to the tendency to buy new products or acquire new information in a particular product category (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; Roehrich, 2004). For instance, a consumer might display a high level of innovativeness with regard to technological products, but not for other product categories such as apparel or music. FI falls

under domain-specific innovativeness because it describes the consumer tendency to adopt new fashion-related products or brands (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1999).

Consumers with high FI constitute a small segment of the overall consumer market, but their early adoption serves as a catalyst for mass adoption of products/brands (Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992; Goldsmith *et al.*, 1999). Exposure may increase familiarity or awareness of a product or brand, an element of CBBE, among other consumers. Fashion innovators are frequently admired by other consumers (Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992), potentially contributing to another element of CBBE, positive brand associations. Observing an admired fashion innovator wearing the product may lead to positive brand associations in the minds of consumers owing to the process of inferential belief formation (Jaccard and Fishbein, 1975), which entails the use of cues outside the product/brand to infer something about it (Fiore and Kim, 2007). Cho and Workman (2014) came to the same conclusion; fashion innovators increase the acceptance of a new product/brand by other consumers, because of the fashion innovator's role as an opinion leader. These innovators spark awareness of and interest in new products/brands, while promoting purchase behavior toward the brand among other consumers (Kim *et al.*, 2011). This enhancement of brand awareness, brand associations, and purchase by other consumers may augment overall CBBE.

Effect of Fashion Innovativeness on the Importance of Brand Image Dimensions

Brand image refers to the amalgamation of associations a consumer connects with a particular brand (Keller, 1993). These associations include cognitive, sensory, and affective associations, which Cho *et al.* (2015) entitled mystery, sensuality, and intimacy, respectively. According to Cho *et al.*, cognitive associations are shaped by a consumer's past and present interactions with a brand; sensory associations reflect sensations obtained from the product, retail

environment, and/or advertisements; and affective associations involve a consumer's feelings derived from relationships established with the brand. Cognitive associations reflect consumer beliefs, thoughts, and evaluations regarding product attributes, service, performance, and symbolic or psychological meaning of a brand (Keller, 2001). Cho *et al.* noted that the cognitive dimension mainly captures present experiences (e.g., appropriate size and style, comfortable fit) and memorable past experiences (e.g., good childhood memories associated with a brand) with the product.

Fashion innovators, those high in fashion innovativeness, are highly engaged cognitively prior to (Kim and Hong, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012) and during product purchasing (Venkatraman and Price, 1990). Consumers with high FI put forth much effort searching for information related to price and promotions (e.g., sales and bargains) before purchasing a fashion product in order to achieve utilitarian benefits such as shopping efficiency and monetary savings (Kim and Hong, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012). The mental activity involved during the purchase process includes evaluating the fashion product's extrinsic cues (brand and store image), design cues (style and fit of a product), and product usefulness (utility, comfort, and appropriateness) (Muzinich *et al.*, 2003). These pre-purchase and purchase cues reflect potential cognitive associations as defined by Keller (2001) and Cho *et al.* (2015). Moreover, FI is linked to the importance of financial success and social status elements of a brand or product (e.g., Goldsmith *et al.*, 2013), which constitute a portion of the symbolic content (cognitive associations) noted by Cho *et al.* (2015). Because of the importance of the above cognitive associations related to a brand for those high in FI, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1a: Level of FI will positively affect the perceived importance of cognitive associations (mystery dimension) of brand image for a fashion-related product.

As noted above, product-related and retail environment-related attributes, and experiential benefits constitute sensory associations (Keller, 1993). Sensory associations are formed by the brand's engagement of the five senses (i.e., sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste) (Hultén, 2011; Schmitt, 2011). Product and retail environment-related attributes such as product color, packaging, in-store displays, and advertisements contribute to the sensory associations that provide a consumer with experiential benefits (e.g., sensory enjoyment) (Hultén, 2012). FI has a sensory innovativeness element (Venkatraman and Price, 1990); consumers with high FI seek the sensory stimulation offered by visual (Muzinich *et al.*, 2003) and tactile aesthetic cues (Cho and Workman, 2011). These consumers like to view and touch fabrics when shopping in order to appreciate the product's textural qualities such as softness, bulkiness, and warmth (Workman, 2010). This dependence on sensory experiences will likely lead to the importance of sensory associations for those high in FI. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1b: Level of FI will positively affect the perceived importance of sensory associations (sensuality dimension) of brand image for a fashion-related product.

Affective associations reflect positive feelings, such as excitement, happiness, fun, and joy that a consumer relates to a brand (Keller, 2001). The affective dimension of brand image captures consumer enjoyment from owning and interacting with a fashion brand as well as long-term consumer commitment to the brand (Cho *et al.*, 2015). The affective dimension aligns with Keller's (1993) experiential benefits, which reflect feelings derived from using a product. Consumers with high FI engage in experiential shopping—shopping for fun and enjoyment (e.g., Cho and Workman, 2011, 2014; Kim and Hong, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012). They consider shopping for fashion products to be an enjoyable and recreational activity, which satisfies their hedonic needs (Cho and Workman, 2014; Workman and Cho, 2012). The emphasis on

experiential benefits by those high in FI results in a positive relationship between FI and affective associations. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1c: Level of FI will positively influence the perceived importance of affective associations (intimacy dimension) of brand image for a fashion-related product.

Effect of Brand Image Dimensions on Lovemarks

A lovemark, proposed by Roberts (2005), refers to a brand that has garnered high levels of brand love and respect. Brand love denotes a consumer's strong affection for or deep emotional attachment to a brand (Albert *et al.*, 2008; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). The concept of respect is described as a positive attitude toward an individual based on positive assessment of the qualities of the individual (Frei and Shaver, 2002). Similarly, brand respect refers to a consumer's positive evaluation of a brand and attitude toward the brand based on its performance, trustworthiness, and reputation (Roberts, 2005). Positive cognitive associations (mystery) attributed to a brand may contribute to the formation of brand love. Findings from Batra *et al.*'s (2012) study showed that positive evaluation of a brand contributes to loving the brand. Congruency between a brand's image and a consumer's self-identity fosters brand love; brand love is augmented when the brand helps the consumer reflect his or her actual and ideal self-identity (Albert *et al.*, 2008; Albert and Merunka, 2013; Batra *et al.*, 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

Positive cognitive associations may lead to brand respect. Roberts (2005) conceptualized brand respect as a consequence of brand performance, reputation, and consumer trust. A consumer develops respect for a brand when the brand performs well and has a good reputation, thereby creating a sense of trust (Roberts, 2005). Factors of good performance, which reflect cognitive associations, include the brand's physical quality, reliability, durability, service,

effectiveness, and efficiency (Keller, 2001). Good performance contributes to a brand's ability to establish trust in the mind of a consumer because brand trust refers to a consumer's confidence in a brand to keep its promises and perform activities resulting in positive outcomes (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005). A good reputation contributes to trust when a brand is consistent, competent, honest, and responsible (Doney and Cannon, 1997). Belief in a brand is shaped by a consumer's positive past and present interactions with a brand (Doney and Cannon, 1997); these interactions are the foundation for cognitive associations according to Cho *et al.* (2015). Because cognitive associations are important in forming brand love and respect, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2a: Positive cognitive associations (mystery dimension) attributed to a fashion-related brand will contribute to creating a lovemark.

The pleasant sensory associations (sensuality) attributed to a brand may help create the requisite love and respect of a lovemark. These pleasant visual, auditory, and olfactory sensations may come from the product and the store (Cho *et al.*, 2015). Research (Babin *et al.*, 2003) has revealed that sensory elements of the product and the retail environment influence a consumer's feelings of pleasure and arousal as well as product evaluations. These feelings and evaluations are essential elements of love (Albert *et al.*, 2008; Batra *et al.*, 2012).

As noted earlier, good performance, trustworthiness, and reputation create brand respect (Roberts, 2005). Sensory elements, such as softness, come from the materials used, and these materials affect performance aspects, such as durability and strength. Therefore, the sensory elements may lead to respect-building impressions of brand performance and quality.

Researchers (e.g., Babin *et al.*, 2003; Bone and Jantrania, 1992; Hultén, 2012) have confirmed that sensory elements are important to positive evaluations of product performance and the store

environment, which may contribute to creating brand respect. Because of the importance of sensory associations in shaping brand love and respect, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2b: Pleasant sensory associations (sensuality dimension) attributed to a fashion-related brand will contribute to creating a lovemark.

Likewise, affective associations (intimacy) may positively influence the creation of brand love and respect (i.e., a lovemark). Researchers (Albert and Merunka, 2013; Shimp and Madden, 1988) have suggested the importance of intimacy (i.e., feelings of closeness, connectedness, bonding) and commitment in evoking feelings of love for a brand. Batra *et al.* (2012) revealed that a consumer's long-term commitment to a brand is an important construct of brand love. Consumers who are committed to a brand, trust the brand's quality and value (Keller, 2013), which may in turn enhance perceptions of brand respect. Psychological studies (Frei and Shaver, 2002; Hendrick and Hendrick, 2006) empirically support the relationship between affective associations and respect. When consumers have positive feelings toward a particular brand, they may perceive superior brand performance, which may enhance brand respect. Because emotional associations correlate with brand love and respect, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2c: Positive affective associations (intimacy dimension) attributed to a fashion-related brand will contribute to creating a lovemark.

Effect of Lovemarks on Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize[sic] a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). Brand loyalty is a two-dimensional construct that includes attitudinal and behavioral aspects (Oliver, 1999). Attitudinal brand loyalty reflects a

deep commitment to and continued liking of a preferred brand. Behavioral loyalty involves repeat purchasing of the same brand. According to Roberts' (2005) lovemarks model, lovemarks generate brand loyalty; consumers who love and respect a certain brand will retain a deep commitment to that brand and continue to purchase products from that brand. Empirical research (Cho *et al.*, 2015; Pawle and Cooper, 2006) has indicated the positive influence of lovemarks on brand loyalty. Marketing researchers (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) have found that brand love yields a positive direct effect on brand loyalty. Brand trust, a linchpin of brand respect (Roberts, 2005), has been found to contribute to building a long-term relationship, which entails consumer commitment and loyalty to a certain brand (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Therefore, the following hypothesis was posited:

H3: Lovemarks (brand love and respect) will be positively associated with consumer loyalty toward fashion-related brands.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

A national sample composed of male and female students and alumni from a large Midwestern U.S. university completed an online survey. This sample provided a broader range of ages and geographic locations than a student sample alone, which enhances external validity. A total of 3,042 individuals participated in the online survey. After discarding 550 surveys that were missing significant data, 2,492 were used for data analysis, resulting in a response rate of 3.2%. In exchange for participating in the survey, respondents received a chance to win one of four \$25 Visa check cards in a random drawing. Participant characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 1.

[Place Table 1 about here]

Survey Instrument and Procedure

Respondents first completed a six-item FI scale (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; $\alpha = .83$), which captured the tendency to know about and purchase new fashion-related products before most other consumers. This scale included three negatively phrased items that were reverse coded. Higher scores indicated higher levels of FI. Next, respondents indicated the name of a fashion-related brand they like or love. Respondents were asked how much they liked the brand, ranging from “I like this brand somewhat” (1) to “I really love this brand” (5), to ensure the respondents reflected on their experiences with a liked or loved fashion-related brand when completing the survey questions related to these six variables: cognitive, sensory, and affective associations; lovemarks (brand love and respect); and brand loyalty. Valid instruments measured the six variables. Cognitive, sensory, and affective dimensions of fashion brand image were measured using the respective six-item mystery ($\alpha = .92$), seven-item sensuality ($\alpha = .90$), and nine-item intimacy ($\alpha = .95$) scales developed by Cho *et al.* (2015), which had an overall Cronbach’s α value of .95. The two constructs of a lovemark (Roberts, 2005), brand love and respect, were measured using items found in Cho *et al.*’s (2015) study. These items consisted of five adapted items from Carroll and Ahuvia’s (2006) brand love scale and eight items from Frei and Shaver’s (2002) brand respect scale. Seven items, adopted from Keller’s (2001) brand loyalty scale, assessed attitudinal and behavioral constructs. Cho *et al.*’s (2015) study reported a Cronbach’s α value of .91 for the lovemarks and .82 for the loyalty measure. Each of the six variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The survey collected demographic characteristics of participants, including age, gender, ethnicity, and annual household income.

Results

Preliminary Data Analyses

Exploratory factor analysis was performed using principal axis factoring with oblique rotation, because oblique rotation (i.e., promax) accounts for correlations among factors (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994); correlations between the three brand image dimensions were expected. An eigenvalue greater than 1.0 determined the number of factors extracted for each construct. Items were retained if they loaded above .50 on one factor and below .30 on other factors (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Findings showed each variable had a single factor dimension with satisfactory to high item loadings (i.e., .53 to .90), which confirms construct validity (Hair *et al.*, 2006) (see Table 2). Moreover, all Cronbach's standardized α values were greater than .70, indicating internal consistency (i.e., reliability) (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The values for composite reliability (CR) were all above .70 as shown in Table 2, confirming the internal consistency of all the constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

[Place Table 2 about here]

Measurement Model Testing

As the first step in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the fit of the measurement model, was examined using a maximum-likelihood estimation procedure in Mplus 7.0. Goodness-of-fit was evaluated using chi-square with the following indicators and cut off values for good fit: the comparative fit index ($CFI \geq 0.95$), root mean square error of approximation ($RMSEA \leq 0.06$), and standardized root mean square residual ($SRMR \leq 0.08$; Hu and Bentler, 1999). The model fit the data well: [$\chi^2 = 1,662.53$ ($df = 172$), $p < .001$], $CFI = .95$, $RMSEA = .06$, $SRMR = .04$. All parameter estimate t values were greater than 2.00, providing evidence of statistical significance (Byrne, 2012).

Standardized factor loadings in confirmatory factor analysis for FI, the three brand image dimensions, lovemarks, and brand loyalty measures ranged from .59 to .93, with highly significant *t*-values ranging from 39.64 to 178.85. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was equal to or above .50. This shows that the variance captured by the construct was greater than the variance from measurement error (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). These results support convergent validity for the constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The correlations between the six factors, with the expected low correlation between FI and brand loyalty ($r = .04$), ranged from .20 and .72. These correlation values, less than .85 (Kline, 2010), provide evidence of discriminant validity.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

As the second step in SEM, a structural model was tested using the maximum-likelihood estimation procedure in Mplus 7.0. The fit indices of the structural model demonstrated satisfactory fit to the data: [$\chi^2 = 1,763.26$ ($df = 177$), $p < .001$], CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04. All seven paths were positive and statistically significant ($p < .001$), as shown in Figure 1. The results showed that FI positively influenced cognitive, sensory, and affective associations, thus supporting Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, respectively. Sensory associations yielded the strongest relationship with FI ($\beta = .40$), followed by cognitive ($\beta = .30$) and affective associations ($\beta = .29$). The three brand image dimensions had a significant and positive influence on lovemarks, thus supporting Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c. Affective associations had the strongest impact on lovemarks ($\beta = .52$), followed by cognitive ($\beta = .34$) and then sensory ($\beta = .15$) association. Lovemarks had a significant and positive influence on brand loyalty ($\beta = .64$), supporting Hypothesis 3.

[Place Figure 1 about here]

Post Hoc Analysis: Mediating Effects

Decomposition of direct, indirect, and total effects was examined. The proposed model showed that FI had a significant effect on cognitive, sensory, and affective associations. Moreover, the three brand image dimensions each had a significant, direct effect on lovemarks. These results suggest that the three brand image dimensions may mediate, or have an indirect effect on, the relationship between FI and lovemarks. These potential indirect effects were tested using 1,000 bootstrap samples (Shrout and Bolger, 2002) and were found to be significant at the $p < .05$ level, because the 95% confidence intervals did not include zero. The effect of FI on lovemarks (a) through cognitive associations ranged from .07 to .13, (b) through sensory associations ranged from .04 to .08, and (c) through affective associations ranged from .12 to .19. The total effect of FI on lovemarks was positive and significant (.31, $p < .05$), but the direct effect between FI and lovemarks was not significant (.002, $p > .05$). These results provide support for the mediating effect of the three brand image dimensions on lovemarks.

Discussion and Implications

Consumers with high FI may contribute to long-term brand success, because they increase brand awareness (Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992; Goldsmith *et al.*, 1999) and perpetuate positive brand associations (Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006), important elements of brand equity. Despite the potential importance of FI to brand success, the present study appears to be the first to confirm how FI relates to brand image variables in an extended CBBE model (Cho *et al.*, 2015) for fashion-related brands. FI was associated with the importance of all three brand image dimensions—cognitive, sensory, and affective associations. These dimensions, in turn, led to

brand love and respect (i.e., a lovemark), as well as a lovemark experience, consequently contributing to brand loyalty.

The importance of all three brand image dimensions demonstrates that consumers high in FI value associations resulting from past and present interactions with a brand, product-related and retail environment-related aesthetic attributes of a brand, and positive emotional feelings and commitment forged with a brand. These results align with studies demonstrating that consumers with a high level of FI (a) engage heavily in mental activity during pre-purchase and purchase stages (Kim and Hong, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012), (b) embrace sensory stimulation offered by the product (Cho and Workman, 2011; Muzinich *et al.*, 2003), and (c) engage in experiential shopping for fun and enjoyment (Cho and Workman, 2011, 2014; Workman and Cho, 2012). Moreover, the significance of all three brand image dimensions aligns with consumer involvement theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985); consumers with high FI will actively engage with, or be involved in, various aspects of the consumption process for fashion-related products (Naderi, 2013).

Results of this study indicate that the sensory dimension of brand image ($\beta = .40$) had the strongest association with FI, reinforcing the importance of the brand's aesthetic elements to those high in FI (Cho and Workman, 2011; Workman, 2010). That is, the ever-changing sensory elements (e.g., shape, color) of the product and sensory elements of retail environments (e.g., displays) (Muzinich *et al.*, 2003; Workman and Caldwell, 2007) may keep those high in FI most engaged in the consumption process. The cognitive dimension of brand image was significant ($\beta = .30$), but at a lower level than the sensory dimension, perhaps owing to the more product function-related (i.e., less stimulating) content of some brand messages. Yet, the cognitive dimension may provide stimulation and raise curiosity to engage those high in FI (Steenkamp *et*

al., 1999) through creativity or variation in the source (e.g., different spokespersons) of the message. Affective associations had the strongest impact on lovemarks, followed by cognitive and sensory associations. These results are consistent with previous studies (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Hendrick and Hendrick, 2006), which found that enjoyment and long-term commitment to a brand are most important in creating brand love and respect, respectively. Thus, the mediating effect of the brand image dimensions is evident between FI and lovemarks.

The significant association between FI and the importance of sensory, cognitive, and affective associations in the process of establishing CBBE for fashion-related brands has a number of managerial implications. For instance, retailers (e.g., Macy's) facing the closing of physical stores must maintain physical experiences to engage consumers with higher FI in order to foster sensory, cognitive, and affective associations. One option may be the use of pop-up shops, which are temporary shops with a unique assortment of products and store design (Niehm *et al.*, 2006). These shops may offer positive sensory associations through the physical experience of viewing and feeling the products while being immersed in an elaborate shop environment (De Lassus and Freire, 2014). Pop-up shops may also offer rich cognitive associations through their themes (e.g., Louis Vuitton's flower theme) and through memorable events embedded in the consumer's lifestyle (Pomodoro, 2013). Affective associations may be created by "insider invitations" for openings sent to a select group of consumers and by interactions with enthusiastic brand representatives and fellow visitors (Pomodoro, 2013).

Experiential shopping experiences should remain fresh and new. As an example, fashion retailers (i.e., Coach, Topshop, Tommy Hilfiger) have incorporated virtual reality technology such as 360-degree videos and the Google Cardboard VR platform to enhance sensory experiences from their fashion shows (Jones, 2016; Lanquist, 2016; Tabuchi, 2015). Being

innovators of these offerings may win favor among those high in FI, supporting a lovemark connection to the brand. Additionally, digital retailers, such as Amazon, are opening brick-and-mortar stores to provide consumers experiential shopping opportunities not easily created online (McDowell, 2016). Inaugural events with a guest list consisting of consumers high in FI may help digital retailers achieve rapid mass adoption.

Furthermore, crowdfunding platforms such as Indiegogo and Kickstarter provide a virtual space where supporters can fund creative projects or place preorders for new products. These platforms may be a means for smaller, entrepreneurial operations to engage with those high in FI (i.e., fashion innovators), because the platforms offer all three types of associations—product development information and storytelling about the new product (cognitive associations), product pictures and videos (sensory associations), and excitement and gratification (affective associations). These early adopters tend to influence subsequent consumers, potentially leading to broader adoption of new products.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Brand experiences vary by age and culture (Zhang *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, caution must be given to generalization of the present results to all U.S. consumers and consumers outside the U.S. The focus on fashion-related brands affects generalizability to other product categories because aesthetic (sensory) aspects are more critical to fashion-related products than other product categories (Fiore, 2010). To further validate the scale and verify the role of FI in building brand equity, future research could test the brand image scale and extended CBBE model with consumers in other countries and other product categories. Finally, future research

could explore other consumer characteristics (i.e., fashion involvement, status consumption, identity expressiveness) that may affect variables leading to CBBE.

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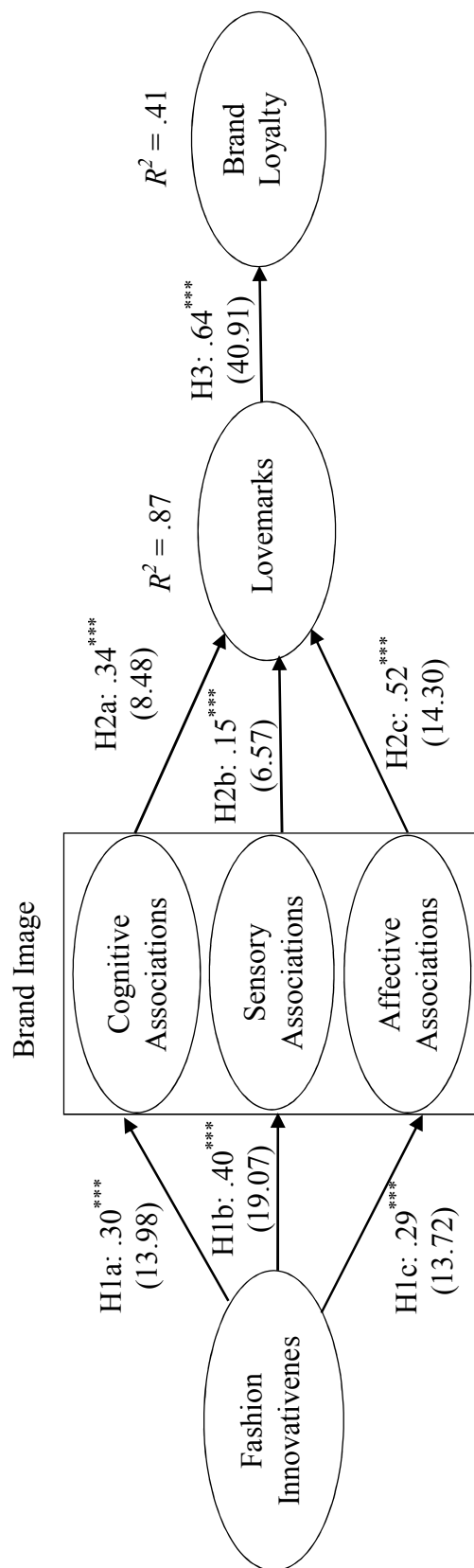


Figure 1. Results of SEM for the Proposed Model.

Note: $\chi^2 = 1,763.26$ ($df = 177, p < .001$); CFI = .95; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .04; t -values are in parentheses ($t > 2.00$).
 *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 1. Participant Characteristics of Sample.

Participant characteristics	Frequency (<i>n</i> = 2,492)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	1,006	40.4
Female	1,486	59.6
Age		
18-34	729	29.3
35-49	739	29.7
50-59	632	25.4
60-69	358	14.3
70-76	34	1.3
Ethnicity		
Asian	64	2.6
African American	30	1.2
Caucasian American or European	2,306	92.5
Hispanic or Latino	24	1.0
Native American	4	0.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.1
Two or more races	27	1.1
Other	35	1.4
Annual household income		
Less than \$9,999 or none	87	3.5
\$10,000-19,999	65	2.6
\$20,000-39,999	220	9.0
\$40,000-59,999	419	16.8
\$60,000-79,999	384	15.4
\$80,000-99,999	329	13.2
More than \$100,000	811	32.5
Do not know	177	7.0

Notes: The median age of the sample, 46 years, was understandably higher than the national median age of 37.2 years (U.S. Census, 2010) because the sample did not include respondents below the age of 18. The national percentage for Caucasian American or European (U.S. Census, 2015) is 61.6%. The median household income of the sample, \$40,000-\$99,999, was in line with the national median household income of \$53,889 (U.S. Census, 2015).

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Constructs in the Proposed Model.

Constructs	Scale items	Factor loading
FI	1. In general, I am among the last in my circle of friends to buy a new fashion item when it appears.	.76
	2. If I heard that a new fashion style was available in the store, I would be interested enough to buy it.	.63
	3. Compared to my friends, I own few new fashion items.	.65
	4. In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know the names of the latest fashions and styles.	.80
	5. I know the names of new fashion designers before other people.	.68
	6. I will buy a new fashion item, even if I have not heard of it yet. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 45.09; Eigenvalue = 2.71 Cronbach's α = .86; Composite Reliability (CR) = .83; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = .50		
Cognitive Associations	1. This brand awakens good memories for me.	.74
	2. This brand captures a sense of my life.	.83
	3. This brand comes to mind immediately when I want to purchase a fashion product.	.53
	4. This brand captures the times.	.69
	5. This brand is a part of my life.	.70
	6. This brand adds to the experience of my life. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 49.82; Eigenvalue = 2.49 Cronbach's α = .83; CR = .83; AVE = .50		
Sensory associations	1. The design of this brand's ads is really well done.	.75
	2. The well-ordered store environment appeals to me.	.61
	3. The website design for this brand is really well done.	.68
	4. The packaging of this brand is as pleasing as the product.	.73
	5. This brand has incredible displays.	.75
	6. The store environment of this brand appeals to me. †	
	7. This brand has a beautiful color scheme. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 49.65; Eigenvalue = 2.48 Cronbach's α = .83; CR = .83; AVE = .50		
Affective associations	1. I feel happy when I wear this brand.	.78
	2. I have fun with this brand.	.74
	3. I feel satisfied with this brand.	.71
	4. I really enjoy wearing this brand.	.77
	5. I have solid support for this brand.	.71
	6. I like looking at the products of this brand.	.67
	7. I can rely on this brand. †	
	8. I feel connected to this brand. †	
	9. I would stay with this brand. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 53.62; Eigenvalue = 3.22 Cronbach's α = .87; CR = .87; AVE = .64		

Table 2. (Continue)

Constructs	Scale items	Factor loading
Brand love	1. I love this brand.	.82
	2. This brand is a pure delight.	.88
	3. This brand is totally awesome.	.89
	4. This brand makes me feel good.	.81
	5. This is a wonderful brand.	.85
Percentage of variance explained = 72.02; Eigenvalue = 3.26 Cronbach's α = .90; CR = .93; AVE = .72		
Brand respect	1. I respect this brand.	.53
	2. This brand is honest to me.	.90
	3. This brand communicates well with me.	.75
	4. This brand is very faithful.	.77
	5. I approve of this brand's performance. †	
	6. I'm very committed to this brand. †	
	7. This brand leads fashion trend season to season. †	
	8. This brand is responsible to me. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 55.89; Eigenvalue = 2.24 Cronbach's α = .82; CR = .83; AVE = .56		
Brand loyalty	1. I consider this is the only brand of this product I need.	.59
	2. I buy this brand whenever I can.	.76
	3. I buy as much of this brand as I can.	.72
	4. This is the one brand that I would prefer to buy or use.	.70
	5. I would go out of my way to use this brand.	.78
	6. I consider myself loyal to this brand. †	
	7. If this brand was not available, it would make little difference to me. †	
Percentage of variance explained = 50.98; Eigenvalue = 2.55 Cronbach's α = .83; CR = .83; AVE = .51		

Note: †Scale items removed due to low factor loading (< .50).