백화점 내 신규 패션 브랜드
평가 기준과 브랜드 태도에 관한 연구

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본 연구는 소비자가 처음으로 접하는 신규 패션 브랜드에 대해 적용시키는 평가기준을 밝히는데 그 목적이 있다. 브랜드 평가기준에 대한 연구로서 다음의 세가지 논점을 강조함으로써 선행연구와 구별되는 차별점을 가진다. 첫 번째로는 본 연구가 개별 제품이나 점포를 포함하는 패션브랜드 수준에 대한 통합적인 평가기준을 밝힌다는 점이다. 두 번째로는 이미 형성된 태도에 의해 영향을 받는 기존 브랜드에 대한 평가기준이 아닌 새로운 브랜드에 대한 최초의 평가기준을 밝히며 본 연구에서의 "신규 브랜드"는 소비자가 처음으로 점포 내를 둘러보고 충분한 직접적 정보를 바탕으로 평가를 한다는 점에서 소비자의 관점에서의 새로운 브랜드로 조작적 정의가 되고 있다는 점이다. 마지막으로 전국적으로 유통되는 대부분의 패션 브랜드가 백화점 내에 입점되는 국내의 현실을 고려하여 소비자가 지각하는 백화점과의 관계의 질과 입점되어 있는 신규 패션 브랜드 평가와의 관련성을 분석하였다. 오백 삼십 칠 명의 여성 소비자에 대한 온라인 조사를 통해 신규 패션브랜드를 평가하는 평가기준 요인 (상품 파워, 점포 내 커뮤니케이션, 브랜드 및 회사 이미지, 판매원, VMD, 구색의 다양성)을 도출하고 이들이 브랜드 태도에 미치는 영향을 회귀모형을 통해 검증하였다. 또한 백화점 관계질의 차이에 따른 신규브랜드 평가 기준과 브랜드 태도의 관련성도 분석하였다.

Keywords: 신규브랜드 평가기준, 브랜드 태도, 소매점포-고객간 관계질

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a typical monopolistic composed of countless brands. In Korea alone, more than 2000 brands

are reported in exist at this moment of time, and 200-300 new brands are introduced into the market every year (Korea Fashion Brand Annual Book 2007). For the ordinary consumers with a middle level of fashion knowledge, the variety of brands available in the market could easily cause information overload which can hinder precise decisions.

In the fashion marketing literature, attempts to understand the cognitive processes consumers experience when making a product purchase decision, have focused exclusively on attribute evaluations for products. Only a few studies have tried to investigate the role of brand level evaluation in the consumer decision making process. It is true that brand evaluation itself is meaningless unless it is integrated into the decision making to purchase a specific product. In most cases, however, brand evaluation becomes a prerequisite for the product evaluation, and brand perception and brand attitudes influences product choice. Thus it is important to understand how consumers evaluate brand level attributes and form attitudes toward brands.

We should note distinct differences between brand choices and product choices. Especially in the case of fashion products, consumers seldom experience repeat purchase of the same products. A teen-ager considering purchase of his/her 10th pair of jeans will encounter completely different styles of alternatives with different brands, prices, quality, and promotions than were available at the purchase of his/her first pair of jeans. Whenever they make decisions about specific products, consumers should go through product evaluation processes that could vary in intensity and complexity. On the other hand, every consumer who has been exposed to a brand through purchase, browsing, or marketing communications has some level of brand attitude stored in memory. Thus, it is a consumer's first encounter with a brand – a physical contact at a store or an indirect experience through various communication channels – that forms brand attitudes (or diminished due to a failure of attracting enough attention of the consumer).

In the present study, we specifically focus on consumers' evaluation of new brands with which they make a first physical contact while browsing the inside the tenanted store in a department store. The primary purpose is to identify consumers' evaluation criteria for the new fashion brand in the context of the department store. As previously mentioned, the fashion marketing literature suffers

from a lack of knowledge about brand attributes evaluation. Therefore, this study uses an exploratory approach to identify fashion brand evaluation criteria, which is separated from the well-established product level attribute evaluation, even though we borrowed some classical ideas from that body of knowledge. The basic framework of the new brand evaluation criteria is based on service 7P[1] to ensure the practical applicability of the findings in developing marketing strategies for fashion brands in retail settings such as in the department stores (Yi 2004).

We are also interested in examining the relationship between new brand evaluation criteria and brand attitudes. Therefore, we tested a regression model between these variables. Finally, to understand the association between consumers' relationship with a department store and their brand evaluation within that department store, separate regression modes of brand attitudes will be tested for both high relationship quality group with the department store and low relationship quality group. This might allow fashion retailers and brand manufacturers to make proper target marketing strategies according to the

consumers' level of relationship with the retailers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. New Fashion Brand Evaluation

In the fashion marketing literature, consumers' cognitive perception of brands has been investigated using several different approaches. The most prevalent concept is brand equity. Brand equity, defined as the added value a brand provides to a product (Farquhar 1989), has been a focal concept to explain the power of brand affecting consumer attitudes and behaviors. Choi (2003) emphasized that fashion brand equity should incorporate the concept of customer image dimension so it ensures consumers' emotional satisfaction. Brand image and brand positioning have also been studied by numerous scholars, and most of them agreed that brand images have meaningful associations with consumers' attitudes towards brands. However those researchers were interested in only identifying the roles of brand perception and gave minimal attention to the process of brand image

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1) Service7P is an extended marketing mix which supplements traditional marketing 4P mix by adding physical evidence, process, and people, in order to reflect increasing importance of service aspects in retail environments.

formation.

On the other hand, studies on the consumers' cognitive perceptions of specific product level attributes have produced a rich body of research on the evaluation processes that determine consumer attitudes and behaviors (Park 2006; Kim 1992; Park 1991). In particular, many researchers have tried to identify evaluation criteria for fashion products. Evaluation criteria are the product attributes consumers consider when they make a purchase decision for a product (Park 2006) and include both objective and subjective features (Park 1991). The classical perspective on the evaluation criteria uses an intrinsic versus extrinsic classification to summarize evaluation criteria. And the most frequently cited dimension of the evaluation criteria in fashion discipline is utilitarian versus hedonic (Williams 2002; Havelena and Holbrook 1986) based on the consumers' expected benefit. Utilitarian evaluative criteria include product attributes related to objective, economic, rational, concrete, and functional benefits, whereas hedonic criteria relate to experiential, abstract, subjective, emotional, symbolic, sensory, and non-rational, and aesthetic benefits (Williams 2002).

Darby and Karni (1973) proposed that evaluation attributes could be classified into search attributes, experience attributes, and credence attributes (SEC

Framework), and this proposition has been widely adopted in numerous studies (Mittal 2004). Search attributes are those that can be judged by personal inspection before consumers try or own a product. The size, color, and texture of fashion products are examples of search attributes. Experience attributes can be evaluated only by personal trial and use and include fashion product attributes such as fit and practicality. The last of the tripartite classification is credence attributes which are determined by marketer credentials not by inspection or trial.

Recently Kim and Lee (2005) proposed a structure for new fashion brand evaluation attributes based on the theoretical foundation of the tripartite classification of product attributes. They examined the relationships between new brand evaluation attributes and consumer characteristics such as risk perception, information search, and demographics. The study adopted product attribute measures from Mittal (2004) and modified them to make them applicable to the brand evaluation. It found that new fashion brand evaluation attributes comprised five factors: product experience attributes, celebrity credence attributes, product search attributes, brand credence attributes, and salesperson search attributes. In addition, the study found that new brand evaluation attributes were

related to risk perception, the amount of information seeking, the use of information sources, age, and to monthly clothing spending.

Kim and Lee's (2005) study emphasized the importance of brand level evaluation as differentiated from product level evaluation or brand image or brand equity centered perspectives. However, this study failed to identify brand level evaluation criteria that incorporate a broader spectrum of brand attributes. Specifically, most fashion brands in Korea are tenanted in department stores that have their own store brands, such as Lotte, Shinsegae, and Hyundae. Thus, no new fashion brand evaluation process can be complete without considering a brand position within the typical fashion retailer environments. Besides, Kim and Lee's (2005) study asked the subjects to evaluate one of 15 newly launched fashion brands (2004 F/W launch). When they collected the data in the middle of October, consumers could have experienced the brand through browsing, trying, or even purchasing it several times, depending on their frequency of department store visits. In our study we tried to control the "newness"of the fashion brand by asking subjects to evaluate a fashion brand they decided to browse inside the store for the first time.

To identify "brand level" evaluation criteria, we reviewed the literature on store attributes as well as product attributes. Moreover, we considered fashion brand store (tenant store) and department store attributes coincidentally. As a foundation in search of new brand evaluation criteria in the department store context, we used the extended service marketing mix proposed by Yi (2004). The extended service marketing mix includes product, price, promotion, place, process, physical evidence, and people. This approach satisfied the needs to consider fashion brands both in the setting of their own stores and in the department store, which increased this study's practical implications. It was strongly believed that the identified structure of new fashion brand evaluation criteria should be directly applicable to building marketing strategy.

2. Relationship Quality with Department Stores

Relationship quality is an overall assessment of the strength of the relationship among transaction partners, and it has been used most often as a successful outcome measure of relationship service marketing (Choo 2004). Specifically, in a service marketing context such as a department store business, relationship quality is known to be multi-dimensional including sub- dimensions of satisfaction, trust, and commitment, as well as be

multi-level including various relationships with salespeople, product brands, and retail brands (Choo 2004; Moon 2007).

According to the monumental work of Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987), a relationship between a seller (retailer in this study) and a buyer (consumer) matures through five developmental stages: awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment, and dissolution. In the early stages of the development, the seller has a higher motivation to initiate the relationship, and a consumer is likely to become interested in a potential partner through advertising and other promotional efforts of the seller. As the relationship matures, the unbalance between the two parties declines, and buyers themselves show strong voluntary willingness to maintain and develop the relationship.

In our present study, we expected the effects of consumers' new fashion brand evaluation criteria on brand attitudes to be different according to the consumers' level of relationship with the department store.

III. METHODS

1. Data Collections and Sampling

This study used an on-line consumer esearch panel service with a nationwide panel. We used 537 complete reposes for data analysis. To accomplish the research objectives, a brief scenario was given to each participant for new and familiar brand situations in the survey instrument. Participants were instructed to recall a recent visit to the department store especially for the purpose of apparel purchases to answer the questionnaire.

A series of verification were conducted to extract a final valid sample. First, because this study aimed to investigate consumers' new fashion brand evaluation criteria in department stores, we recruited only female consumers between the age of 20 and 49, who are the major target group of department stores and fashion brands (FIBA report, 2008). Second, only participants who had shopped at a department store within the past two weeks were included. Third, for new brand evaluation, subjects were asked to recall finding a new brand during their last visit to the department store, one they had never examined before. If a subject could not recall such a situation, he/she was asked to quit answering the survey and leave. For familiar brand evaluation, subjects were instructed to answer each question for any brands with which they were familiar.

2. Instrument Development

A self-administered data collection questionnaire was developed based on the

literature and study objectives. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first section contained a series of filtering questions for sample verification. The second parts included evaluation criteria, relationship quality, and attitudes towards brands. The last part was intended to obtain respondents' demographic information.

On the basis of Yi's (2004) extended service marketing 7P, brand and store attributes proposed in the previous studies (Lee 2006; Mittal 2004; Kim and Lee 2005; Park 2006) were reviewed and adopted with some modifications to make them applicable in measuring fashion brand evaluation criteria in the department stores. Initial list of new brand evaluation criteria included 48 attributes. Five fashion marketing researchers reviewed the list and were asked to make suggestions and comments to improve the scales. Besides, 20 graduate students were recruited for the pre-test of the scale. On the basis of this preliminary study, 36 items were finally selected as measures for fashion brand evaluation criteria.

To measure consumers' relationship quality with the department store, 7 items from Kim's (2005) study were borrowed. The items included "I have a good relationship with this department store", "This department store is an important relationship partner for me", "I

am committed to this department", "I have a long term relationship with this department store", "This department store always has much of what I want", "I trust that this department store is faithful", and "I trust that this department store is willing to offer what I need in any situations".

Attitudes toward the brand were measured using 6 items: "I had a good feeling about the brand", "To choose the brand will be beneficial to me", and others. At the end of the survey, subjects were asked to report their demographic information including age, sex, marital status, educational background, monthly income, and clothing spending.

IV. RESULTS

1. Sample Description

537 complete responses were collected. The subjects were all female as intended, and were between 20 and 49 years old with a mean age of 30.85 (S.D.=6.945) and a median age of 30. About half of the participants were married (n=267), and the other half were single (n=267). 13% of the subjects described themselves as high school graduates, 88.8% as college and university students and graduates, 8.2% as achievers of higher

degrees. The participants were 23.8% housewives, 52.3% employees, 4.7% business owners, and 16.8% students. Regarding the monthly income of all family members in a single residence, 37.4% of the sample reported between 2 and 4million Won, 23.5% reported 4~6million Won, and 14.1% higher than 6 million Won.

2. The Structure of New Fashion Brand Evaluation Criteria

To examine the structure of new fashion brand evaluation criteria, exploratory factor analysis was performed first. Principal-Component Factor Analysis with Varimax rotation resulted in 6 factor solutions that explained 62.181% of the total variance. One item that failed to achieve factor loading of 0.45 was dropped. Hair et al. (1998) suggested that when sample size is 150 or greater, factor loadings higher than 0.45 should be considered as significant. The six factors were named as merchandise power, in-store communication, brand/company image, salesperson, VMD (visual merchandising), and assortment variety.

The first factor, which consisted of 11 items reflecting respondents' perceptions of product design, quality, and price, was labeled merchandise power. The second factor, in-store communication, included items that represented the role of in-store communications such as in-store advertising and events as brand evaluation criteria. The third factor, labeled brand/company image, included items dealing with the effects of company recognition/credence and brand identity perception on new brand evaluation. The fourth factor was labeled sales person, because the items loading highly on this factor were all related to sales person evaluation. The fifth factor, VMD, reflected the store interior and display. Even though the items included in the final factor were related to product attributes that were included in the first factor, this factor was distinguished from the first factor in that they were all about variety of product assortment.

In addition to product level evaluation criteria such as merchandise power, assortment power, brand level attributes, including brand/company image, were extracted as an independent dimension. Moreover, store related attributes were perceived as multiple distinct dimensions including in-store communication, VMD, and salesperson.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for New Brand Evaluation Criteria

Factor	Items	Loadings	Item Mean	Eigenvalue/ % of Variance Explained	Reliability/ Factor Mean
Merchandise Power	Product quality of discounted items	.799	5.64	12.380 34.389%	.910 5.558
	Discount rates	.775	5.56		
	Availability of bargain items	.765	5.53		
	Price perception based on quality	.747	5.75		
	Price zone	.725	5.55		
	Stylish design	.673	5.80		
	Product quality	.644	5.66		
	Product color	.591	5.47		
	Depth of product lines	.558	5.40		
	Variety of product lines	.526	5.39		
	Fashionable styles	.469	5.38		
In-Store Communication	Model attractiveness of in-store adver- tising	.822	4.54	4.259 11.831%	.876 4.592
	Model credence of in-store advertising	.819	4.57		
	Advertising in the store	.740	4.47		
	In-store events	.641	4.83		
	Communication materials in the depart- ment store	.605	4.68		
	PR materials	.573	4.46		
Brand/ Company Image	Company recognition	.776	5.05	1.846 5.128	.871 4.928
	Company credence	.735	5.13		
	Images of neighboring brands	.645	4.83		
	Logo attractiveness	.622	4.85		
	Brand name attractiveness	.599	5.02		
	Accessibility in the department store	.546	4.98		
	Size and space of the brand store	.474	4.62		
Salesperson	Dress of sales person	.757	4.85	1.564 4.343	.860 5.056
	Salesperson appearance	.729	4.69		
	Salesperson Impression	.714	5.09		
	Salesperson Fashion Knowledge	.675	5.15		
	Salesperson friendliness	.604	5.67		
	In-store crowdedness	.537	4.88		
VMD	In-store display attractiveness	.637	5.18	1.276 3.544	.793 5.049
	Store interior	.576	4.91		
Assortment Variety	Availability of articles for special offers	.621	5.08	1.061 2.947	.702 5.186
	Hot items in stock	.566	5.08		
	Availability of various sizes	.488	5.39		

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Familiar Brands

Factor	Items	Loadings	Item Mean	Eigenvalue/ % of Variance Explained	Reliability/ Factor Mean
Merchandise Power	Availability of bargain items	.810	5.39	14.395 39.987	.929 5.437
	Discount rates	.803	5.42		
	Product quality of discounted items	.302	5.47		
	Price perception based on quality	.781	5.50		
	Price zone	.753	5.42		
	Product quality	.738	5.55		
	Stylish design	.714	5.57		
	Product color	.689	5.40		
	Depth of product lines	.682	5.37		
	Variety of product lines	.596	5.30		
	Availability of articles for special offer	.520	5.09		
In-Store Communication	Model attractiveness of in-store advertising	.804	4.50	4.608 12.799	.920 4.554
	Model credence of in-store advertising	.786	4.44		
	Advertising in the store	.779	4.45		
	Communication materials in the department store	.764	4.59		
	PR materials	.748	4.46		
	In-store events	.658	4.69		
	Images of neighboring brands	.541	4.76		
Store Environment	Store interior	.751	4.88	1.715 4.763	.906 4.790
	In-store crowdedness	.693	4.76		
	In-store display attractiveness	.661	4.95		
	Dressing of salesperson	.649	4.88		
	Shopping bag attractiveness	.648	4.60		
	Salesperson Impression	.627	4.94		
	Salesperson appearance	.626	4.66		
	Store Size/Spaces	.549	4.64		
Brand/ Company Images	Company credence	.733	5.11	1.381 3.836	.861 4.989
	Company recognition	.664	4.99		
	Brand name attractiveness	.620	5.00		
	Logo attractiveness	.619	4.85		
	Salesperson fashion knowledge	.469	5.19		
	Store accessibility in the department store	.457	4.85		
Assortment Variety	Hot items in stock	.658	5.16	1.029 2.858	.694 5.223
	Fashionable styles	.565	5.28		

3. The Structure of Familiar Fashion Brand Evaluation Criteria

For familiar brand evaluations, same procedure of analysis was performed. Through this process, we intended to examine the factor structure of familiar brand evaluation which should differ from the new brand evaluation. In this preliminary study, further verification and comparison for the structure of both new and familiar brand evaluation criteria was not performed. Thus, statistically meaningful comparison between the two evaluation criteria could not be delivered. Further analysis using more sophisticated techniques such as Analysis of Covariance using Structural Equation Modeling should be pursued in the next study.

Exploratory factor analysis for familiar brands resulted in five factor solutions: merchandise power, in-store communication, store environment (salesperson+VMD), brand/company image, and assortment variety. These five factors explained 62.24% of the total variance. Two items with factor loadings lower than .45 were deleted. Six factors were extracted as new brand evaluation criteria, whereas only five factors emerged for familiar brands. Regarding familiar brand evaluation criteria, salesperson and VMD were extracted as a single dimension representing store the environment.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

	Full model	Low relationship quality group		High relationship quality group	
Adjusted R^2	.182	.215		.033	
	Standardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	Mean	Standardized Coefficient	Mean
Merchandise power	.265**	.345**	5.175	.175*	5.932
In-store communication	.128**	.158*	4.137	−0.072	5.024
Brand/company image	.165**	.226**	4.444	.074	5.328
Salesperson	.162**	.114	4.581	.196*	5.459
VMD	.216**	.271**	4.540	.065	5.462
Assortment variety	.065	−0.022	4.754	.134	5.568

* p<.05 **p<.01

4. Effects of Evaluation Criteria on Consumers' Attitudes towards New Brands

For the six items measuring attitudes toward the new brands, factor analysis was conducted to test the dimensional structure of the scale. Factor analysis with Varimax rotation resulted in a single factor with a high reliability of 0.941. We regressed the six new brand evaluation criteria factors on attitudes toward the brand. All variables were generated by factor scores. Six factors explained 18.2% of the attitudes. As shown in table 3, five out of six factors (merchandise power=.265, p=.000; VMD =.216, p=.000; brand/company image=.165, p=.000; salesperson=.162, p=.000; and in-store communication=.128, p=.001) were found to significantly affect the dependent variable.

5. Department Store Relationship Quality

For the seven items measuring the quality of consumers' relationship with the department store, we performed exploratory factor analysis to test the uni-dimensionality of the scale. The reliability test for 7 items yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.877. The distribution of the mean of the 7 items

was analyzed. The mean was 4.62, median 4.57, and mode was 5. The low relationship quality group was determined as the subjects whose relationship quality scores were 4 or lower (25 percentile), and the high relationship quality group included subjects whose scores were 5.14 and higher (75 percentile). The high relationship quality group contained 156 subjects, and the low relationship quality group contained 149 subjects. We tested regression model for two groups separately.

For the low relationship quality group, predictors in the regression model explained 21.5% of the dependent variable variance. Four out of six brand evaluation criteria factors (merchandise power=.345, p=.000; VMD=.271, p=.000; brand/company image=.226, p=.003; and in-store communication=.158, p=.040) were found to have significant effects on the dependent variable. On the other hand, the regression model for the high relationship quality group explained only 3.3% of the brand attitude variances. The only estimated coefficients that showed significant predicting effects were only salesperson (β=.196, p=.023) and merchandise power (β=.175, p=.042) (See table 3).

Factor means for the low relationship quality group and the high relationship quality group were compared using an independent t-test. For all factors, the

high relationship quality group means were significantly higher than the low group's at the 0.01 level.

V. Summary and Conclusions

Partly from the innate characteristics of fashion products and also due to the failure of fashion brand marketers to target and differentiate their brands, consumers must go through a complex information processing procedure for numerous brands and products. Thus, the subject of fashion brand evaluation, which should be completely different from the evaluation of other consumer goods such as laundry detergent or frozen food products, deserves more attentions from academics and practitioners alike.

This study supports the importance of developing new fashion brand evaluation criteria. Through a critical review of the relevant literature, the evaluation criteria for the new fashion brands in familiar department stores are proposed and tested with empirical consumer survey data. New fashion brand is operationally defined in the study as any fashion brand in a department store that a visitor has browsed inside the store for the first time.

Our data analysis with an online survey panel sample of 537 female consumers has produced six new fashion brand evaluation criteria: merchandise power, in-store communication, brand/company image, salesperson, VMD, and assortment variety. When we analyzed the evaluation criteria for the familiar fashion brands, the salesperson and VMD factors were categorized as a single dimension, thus a five factor structure resulted. As we did not apply statistical techniques to produce a structural comparison between two evaluation criteria, direct comparison should be avoided. However, the different factor structure for new and familiar fashion brand evaluation criteria should be noted and deserves attention. For familiar brands, consumers perceive salesperson attributes and various in-store attributes as reflecting uni-dimensional concept of "store environment", whereas consumers differentiate the social store environment from the physical store environment for new fashion brand evaluation. Moreover, regression analysis finds that the salesperson and VMD factors have different effects on consumers' attitudes toward new fashion brands according to their level of relationship quality with department store.

New fashion brand evaluation criteria factors include both brand attributes and store attributes. Brand related evaluation criteria are merchandise power, assortment variety, and brand/company images. And

store related criteria are VMD, salesperson, and in-store communication. When we regressed these six factors on brand attitudes, 5 factors with the exception of one factor, assortment variety, were found to be significant predictors.

This study suggests that depending on the relationship quality level between a retailer and its customers, a retailer might emphasize different aspects of brand offerings. When separate regression analysis was conducted for both high and low relationship quality group, we found that the explaining effects of the evaluation criteria factors were different. For the low relationship group, merchandise power, VMD, brand/company images, and in-store communication showed significant effects, and regression model explained 21.5% of the brand attitudes variance. On the other hand, for the high relationship group, only merchandise power and salesperson showed significant effects on brand attitudes with a low explanation power of 3.3%. This result implies that consumers who have high relationship quality with a department store are less influenced by brand attribute evaluation in forming attitudes. Credence and commitment to the department store may moderate the effects of brand evaluation on consumer attitudes and behavior. This finding is in the same vein with previous beliefs that loyal consumers are less sensitive to the increased price of a

product (Rhee, 1998).

Even for those having high relationship quality with a department store, the merchandise power and salesperson factors were found important. Merchandise power is an intrinsic factor including product quality, price, style and other attributes, and it seems a critical factor in determining consumer attitudes. Also the role of the salesperson for consumers with high relationship quality should not be overlooked. Other store attributes such as in-store communication and VMD might become less important as consumers build relationships with a department store, however, the salesperson in the store is an important factor even for these amicable consumers. Retailers' loyal consumers may use less complete information processing, probably using heuristics related to inter-personal clues (salesperson). Their evaluation of new fashion brand is influenced by their relationship with the retailers because they might regard new fashion brands as a part of the retailer.

On the other hand, to encourage information processing by those consumers in the early stage of relationship development with the department store, marketers should focus on designing and implementing customer-oriented VMD and in-store communication. Retailers could accomplish that by developing strong relations with

fashion brands. They might gain exclusive rights to sell a brand's merchandise or offer special promotions.

VI. Limitations and Future Research

In the present study, we aim to identify potential new brand evaluation criteria that are differentiated from product evaluation or familiar brand evaluation criteria. The trial is incomplete as there are more steps and analysis left to go through to achieve valid and reliable measures. Specifically, much of the disturbance in measuring focal concepts in the test model could be controlled if a mall intercept survey could be used instead of a recall-based method. Observational study could increase external validity of the findings and provide more realistic implications for retailers who wish to understand customers' behavioral responses to new brand stimuli.

Furthermore, investigating the association of these new fashion brand evaluation criteria with other relevant concepts such as brand consideration set, consumer knowledge, and involvement should follow in the future studies. What makes one new fashion brand so special enough to be considered as a purchase alternative and successful when others fail to get the attention of retail customers? The effects of various customer characteristics, brand characteristics, retailer characteristics, and the interaction among these factors should be investigated.

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New Fashion Brands in Department Stores: Evaluation Criteria and Attitudes

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Abstract

This study proposes new fashion brand evaluation criteria. In developing the criteria, we emphasize the following considerations: first, the object of the evaluation should be the brand rather than the products or store second, the "new" brand should be the "new" brand from the consumer's perspective finally, only fashion brands available in department store are included to examine the relationship between evaluation criteria and consumers' relationship quality perception with a department store. Our data analysis of an online survey panel sample of 537 female consumers produced six new fashion brand evaluation criteria: merchandise power, in-store communication, brand/company image, salesperson, VMD, and assortment variety. New fashion brand evaluation criteria factors include both brand attributes and store attributes. Brand-related evaluation criteria are merchandise power, assortment variety, and brand/company images, whereas store-related criteria are VMD, salesperson, and in-store communication. The associations among brand evaluation criteria, brand attitudes, and the consumers' relationship quality with department store were tested by regression analysis.

Keywords: New brand evaluation criteria, Brand attitudes, Relationship quality

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