

# The Relationship among Country of Origin, Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty:<sup>†</sup> Comparison among USA, China and Korea

## 原产国、品牌资产与品牌忠诚的关系：美国、中国和韩国的比较研究

원산지효과, 상표자산 및 상표충성 간의 관계에 관한 연구: 미국, 중국, 한국의 비교분석

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### Abstract

The marketing environment has become competitive to an extent that requires firms to target their products at markets that span national boundaries. However, competitive clout cannot be achieved in global consumer markets unless firms thoroughly understand and adequately respond to the core values and needs of those consumers.

Brand equity is one of the most important assets to a company. Especially in sportswear markets, brand equity is the crucial value added to a product by its brand name. Factors such as country of origin also influence customer's attitude towards brand equity. Therefore, this paper discusses the relationship between country of origin effect and brand equity, and how they influence consumers' loyalty for respective brands. This paper focused on the sports shoes market, because it is an increasing area of opportunity for world manufacturers.

The objectives of this study were the following.

- (1) Test the effect of country of origin on brand equity.
- (2) Test how brand equity influences consumers' brand loyalty.
- (3) Find whether there are differences in the effects of country of origin and brand equity among the three countries.
- (4) Find whether there are differences in the effects of country of origin and brand equity among the different lifestyles.

Based on the review of literature results, the hypotheses are concluded as the following:

H1-a: Country image has positive influence on country of origin.

H1-b: Product perception has positive influence on country of origin.

H2-a: Perceived quality has positive effect on brand equity.

H2-b: Perceived price has positive effect on brand equity.

H3: Country of origin has positive effect on brand equity.

H4: Brand equity has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Research model was constructed (see Fig. 1).

After data analysis, the following results were concluded: sports shoes purchase behavior showed significant differences among Korean, Chinese, and American consumers for favorite brand, purchased brand, purchased place, information usage, and favorite sports games. The results of this study also extend the research of the relationship among country of origin, brand equity and brand loyalty to the sports shoes market. Brand equity was proven to have a significant relationship with brand loyalty for all countries. The factors which can influence brand equity are different for different countries. The third finding of this paper is that we identified different three lifestyles, adventurer, follower, and laggard, for Korean, Chinese and American consumers. Without the nationality boundary, seeing the emergence of a new group of consumers who have similar preferences and buy similar brands is more important. All of the consumers consider brand equity to keep their brand loyalty. Perceived price is the only factor which can influence brand equity for adventurers; brand is more important for them. The laggards were not influenced by any factor. All of the factors expect perceived price are important for the followers.

Marketing managers should consider brand equity when introducing their brand into a new market. Also localization is the basic strategy that all the sports shoes companies should understand. But as a global brand, understanding the same characteristics for each country is more important to build global strategy.

*Keywords:* brand equity, country of origin, lifestyle, sports shoes market, product perception, perceived quality, perceived price, brand loyalty

### 摘要

市场环境的竞争日趋激烈, 要求企业把他们的产品投入到国际市场。但是如果不能对消费者的核心价值观和需求进行深入了解并作出充分的反应, 企业就无法在全球消费市场获得有竞争性的影响力。

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品牌资产是企业的一种重要资产。尤其是在运动服装领域,品牌资产能够通过他的品牌的名字增加产品的效用和价值。不仅品牌资产会影响消费者态度,其他因素,如国家地区也有这种作用。本研究探讨原产国和品牌资产之间的关系,以及它们如何影响消费者对某一品牌的忠诚。本研究关注运动鞋市场,这是因为这一市场为世界范围内的生产者提供了更多的机会。

本研究的目的包括:

- 1 原产国对品牌资产的影响;
- 2 品牌资产如何影响消费者的品牌忠诚;
- 3 在三国之间原产国和品牌资产的影响是否有所不同;
- 4 对不同的生活方式,原产国和品牌资产的影响是否有所不同

在文献综述的基础上提出以下假设:

- H1-a: 国家形象对原产国有积极影响;  
 H1-b: 产品认知对原产国有积极影响;  
 H2-a: 感知质量对品牌资产有积极影响;  
 H2-b: 感知价格对品牌资产有积极影响;  
 H3: 原产国对品牌资产有积极影响;  
 H4: 品牌资产对品牌忠诚有积极影响。

研究结果可以归纳为:在三个国家之间,运动鞋购买行为、喜爱品牌、购买品牌、购买地点、信息使用和喜爱的运动项目都有显著差异。研究结果把原产国、品牌资产和品牌忠诚的关系扩展到运动鞋市场。品牌资产在三个国家中都与品牌忠诚有显著关系。影响品牌资产的因素在三国之间有所不同。本研究还将三国的消费者按生活方式划分为:前卫型、跟随型和落伍型。不考虑国家界限整合成新的消费者群体,则每个群体内部有相似的偏好和购买品牌。所有的消费者都认为品牌资产影响品牌忠诚。对于前卫型消费者来说,感知价格是影响品牌资产的唯一因素,品牌本身更为重要。落伍者不关心任何因素,对于跟随型消费者,除了感知价格其他因素都是重要的。

当一个品牌引入新的市场时,营销经理需要考虑品牌资产。本地化是基本策略。对于全球品牌来说,了解各个国家消费者的共性特征比全球战略更为重要。

**关键词:** 品牌资产, 原产国, 生活方式, 运动鞋市场, 产品认知, 感知质量, 感知价格, 品牌忠诚

## I. Introduction

The globalization of the marketplace is the most important challenge facing companies today (Yip, 1995). Developments accelerating the trend toward global market unity include: rapidly-falling national boundaries, regional unification, standardization of manufacturing techniques, global investment and production strategies, expansion of world travel, rapid increase in education and literacy levels, growing urbanization among developing countries, free flow of information, labor, money and technology across borders, increased consumer sophistication and purchasing power, advances in telecommunication technologies, and the emergence of global media (Hassan and Katsanis, 1994; Hofstede et al., 2002). The marketing environment has become extremely competitive requiring firms to target their products at markets that span national boundaries. However, competitive clout cannot be achieved in global-consumer markets unless firms thoroughly understand and adequately respond to the core values and needs of those

consumers (Kaynak and Hassan, 1994).

When Aaker published his book entitled *Managing Brand Equity* (1991), the overall concept of brand equity formally appeared and has now become a very important asset to companies. Brand equity is the incremental utility or value added to a product by its brand name, especially in the sportswear markets (Kamakura and Russell, 1993) including Nike, Adidas and Reebok. Mahajan et al. (1991) claimed that customer-based brand equity could be measured by the level of a customers' perception. When the perception of such a product satisfies a customers' mind known as the customers' preferred product's attributes, then the customers will purchase the product. Other factors, such as country of origin influence the customer's attitude. Some people are very busy in responding to the changing of the new world economy of the globalization. They often discuss the "home country made" of the products, and where those products originate by looking at "made in label". They are also talking about the price, quality, warranty, brand, and advertising in their decision making process to buy. Therefore, this paper is going to discuss the relationship between the country of origin and brand equity, and how they influence consumers' loyalty for respective brand. This paper focused on the sports-shoe market, because it is an increasing area of opportunity for world manufactures.

2007 Global Market Review of Branded Footwear by Global Information Inc. mentioned that the global footwear market will continue to grow over the next five years. In 2002, the world consumed 12.5 billion pairs of shoes, however in 2008 the world consumed 14.4 billion pairs of shoes totaling 192 billion US dollars. This research focused on three main shoe-consumption countries including: United States, China and South Korea. In the US market, footwear sales totaled 42 billion dollars in 2005, which is a 9 percent increase from the previous year which totaled 39 billion dollars in sales, ranking footwear growth among the fastest in the apparel and fashion market. China View 2007 reported that China consumes about 2.7 billion pairs of shoes per year ranking them number one in the world and exceeding the USA (1.9 billion pairs). China is also the biggest shoes producer and exporter in the world. Although compared to the US and China, South Korea is not the biggest country for footwear production and consumption, however they do play an important role in the footwear market in Asia. In 2005, the import of footwear to Korea was nearly 563 million dollars. Compared to 2004 it rose nearly 7.3 percent. In 2005, 8.7 million pairs of shoes were imported rising 21.3 percent compared to 2004.

Consumer lifestyle is also a well accepted basis for market segmentation (Todd et al., 1998). In consumer behavior, lifestyle reflects different modes of living and the patterns of consumption that tend to accompany them. A consumer's lifestyle offers a more comprehensive view of behavior and the motives that underlie many of their purchases; they are advantageous for market segmentation. However, there is almost no research focused on lifestyle in developing country and this research investigated if there is significant difference

among different lifestyles.

Therefore, the objectives of this study were as following:

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## II. Literature Review

### 2.1. Country of Origin

Over the past 30 years, the growth in international trade and the development of global markets have been accompanied by a significant increase in interest in the nature of competitiveness. After Schooler (1965) was published, researchers and marketers tried to extend the study on the effect of country of origin even more widely in today's research field. Among the many factors which are believed to impact upon international competitiveness, country of origin effects have attracted growing attention (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998).

The issue on country of origin began about four decades ago and has grown rapidly to stand as one of the most important fields in international marketing and business theory. Up to now, the research on product country of origin has been published in over 700 studies (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2006; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2000). Country of origin (COO) is one of the most important factors that significantly influence the purchasing decision of consumers. It is defined as comprising the subjective perceptions of a consumer about the products that provide an important observation that such belief, ideas and impressions before making buying decision. Therefore, the country of origin "Made in label" has been used as an important function in meeting with today's competitive and global environment in order to increase product sales. Agrawal and Kamakura (1999) found that country of origin is an extrinsic cue that affects consumers' perceptions and behavioral intentions. Consumers use country of origin to evaluate the product's quality and make a purchase decision (Cai et al., 2004). Not only country of origin can influence consumers' attitudes, but also country of origin can be influenced by some antecedents. Schaefer (1997) found that the effect of country of origin was influenced by consumers' knowledge, such as product knowledge of the country of origin. Agarwal and Sikri (1996) found that country of origin was influenced by country image when consumer purchased pick-up trucks, mountain bicycles and graphite tennis rackets.

### 2.2. Brand Equity

Brand equity is the subjective appraisal of a customer's brand choice (Kim et al., 2008a; Vogel et al., 2008). It is the value added to a product and service as a result of prior investments in the marketing mix (Keller, 1993; Kim and Kim, 2003; Rust et al., 2000; Vogel et al., 2008). Brand equity has been regarded as a very important concept in business practice as well as in academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantage through successful brands (Lassar et al., 1995). In 2003, Keller and Sood (2003) gave a customer-based definition defining brand equity as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand. Brand equity is managed over time by maintaining the brand consistency, protecting the sources of brand equity, making appropriate decisions between fortifying and leveraging the brand, and fine-tuning the supporting marketing program (Keller, 1998).

Simon and Sullivan (1993) used movements in stock prices to capture the dynamic nature of brand equity, on the theory that the stock market reflects future prospects of brands by adjusting the price of the firms. Customer-based brand equity is another measurement; it focuses on consumer behavior which has led to measurements such as: overall preferences, perceived value, and a measure of utility or satisfaction that is an intangible value.

### 2.3. Brand Loyalty

Customer-brand loyalty is generally considered the ultimate desirable marketing-based outcome from strategic-marketing activities (Chaudhuri, 1999; Gwinner, 1998; Kumar, 1999; Taylor, 2004). It is the most positive post-purchase outcome which will lead to the next purchase behavior. In a purchase situation, loyalty intentions reflect favorable attitudes toward the brand or firm (Dick and Basu, 1994; Kim and Ock, 2008; Vogel et al., 2008).

Guest (1964) defined brand loyalty as an attitude behavior and a measured degree of preference consistency and purchasing behavior. But brand loyalty is more than simple repurchasing. It consists of a consumer's commitment to repurchase the brand and can be demonstrated by repeatedly buying a product or service or other positive behaviors such as word-of-mouth advocacy (Dick and Basu, 1994).

Brand loyalty is viewed as a multidimensional construct. Olson and Jacoby (1971) explained four types of brand loyalty including: behavioral-brand loyalty, attitudinal-brand loyalty, multi-brand loyalty, and general-brand loyalty. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) developed a measurement of brand-loyalty behavior, concluding that brand loyalty is a composite of behaviors, including both behavioral and attitudinal properties. In this paper, we defined brand-loyalty intentions as customers' behavioral intentions to continue buying a brand in the future,

accompanied by a deeply held commitment to such a brand.

## 2.4. Research Hypotheses

### 2.4.1. Effects of Antecedents of Country of Origin

Country of origin has been studied starting from the single cue to multiple cues (Chao, 1998). Han and Terpstra (1988) implied that country image directly affects consumer beliefs about product attributes and indirectly affects their overall evaluation of products through these beliefs. But when consumers are more knowledgeable about a country's products, country image may be less important in forming their beliefs about the product attributes and their brand attitudes, the effect of country of origin may be less (Ahmed et al., 2002). The role of price in consumers' decision making has not been widely studied in previous country of origin studies. Among the few researchers who investigated price, Schooler and Wildt (1968) and Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1993) concluded that consumers' biases about products from certain countries could be offset by price concessions of varying amounts. It means that the effect of country of origin may be influenced not only by country image, but also the perception of the product from country of origin, such as perceived price and perceived quality. Therefore, following hypotheses were proposed:

H1-a: Country image has positive influence on country of origin.

H1-b: Product perception has positive influence on the country of origin.

### 2.4.2. Effects of Antecedents of Brand Equity

Aaker (1991) suggested using a brand-earnings multiplier that is based on a weighted average of the brand on five key components of brand equity: awareness, associations, perceived quality, loyalty, and other proprietary assets such as patents and trade marks. In this study, brand equity was measured by the overall perception of brand image (Vogel et al., 2008); because the sports-shoe market is full of highly-branded products. This paper investigated the influential factors of the product itself which can influence customer-based brand equity. Therefore, only perceived quality and perceived price about the brand were considered as the antecedents of brand equity.

H2-a: Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand equity.

H2-b: Perceived price has a positive effect on brand equity.

### 2.4.3. The Relationship between Country of Origin and Brand Equity

Country of origin is known to lead to associations in the minds of consumers (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Researchers have argued that country of origin effects may be part of the brand equity of certain names (Shocker et al., 1994). The country of origin image has the power to arouse importers'

and consumers' belief about product attributes, and to influence evaluations of products and brands (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). Pappu et al. (2006) found that for the product categories of televisions and cars in the Australian market, the customer-based equity of a brand varied significantly according to its country of origin. The equity of a brand may be enhanced or detracted by the brand's association with new and different countries of origin. Therefore, we predicted that:

H3: Country of origin has a positive effect on brand equity.

### 2.4.4. The Relationship between Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty

A brand attaches additional value to a product or service, it increases the value compared with a non-branded one. Brand loyalty can be influenced by a lot of factors, such as value perception (Kim et al., 2007), product attributes (Ko et al., 2006), involvement (Taylor et al., 2002) etc., however brand equity is one of the most important factors. If customers perceive a brand as having a favorable and strong image, it could positively influence their likelihood of choosing that particular brand over competing offerings (Vogel et al., 2008). Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995) also implied that higher brand equity generated significantly greater brand preferences. Rust et al. (2000) also stated that brand equity is likely to influence a customer's willingness to stay, repurchase probability, and likelihood to recommend the brand. Thus,

H4: Brand equity has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

### 2.4.5. Effects of Nationality and Lifestyle

Roth (1995) supported the presence of a strong linkage between social values and consumers' needs to be fulfilled in country markets that represented a different socio-economic status and culture. Yau (1994) stated that consumers' product choice and preference for a particular product or brand are generally affected by very complex social influences, and because of differences in culture and socio-economic conditions, certain types of values may be regarded as more important to consumers in one country market compared to those in another country market.

Customers define their lifestyles by the consumption choices they make in a variety of product categories. Lifestyle can therefore be defined quantitatively and used as a group identity for market segmentation. Lee and Kim (2004) examined the apparel purchase intention, information usage for product selection, and store selection for purchasing apparel products of Japanese female university students. Samples were segmented into groups by lifestyle factors. Lifestyle factors fully explained the differences in the characteristics of each segmented groups.

Thus it is worthy to research whether consumers' nationality and lifestyle can influence relationships among country of origin, brand equity and brand loyalty.

### III. Research Method

#### 3.1. Research Model

Based on the literature review results in related areas and our research hypotheses, the following research model was constructed (see Fig. 1). This model describes the relationships between country of origin, brand equity and brand loyalty.

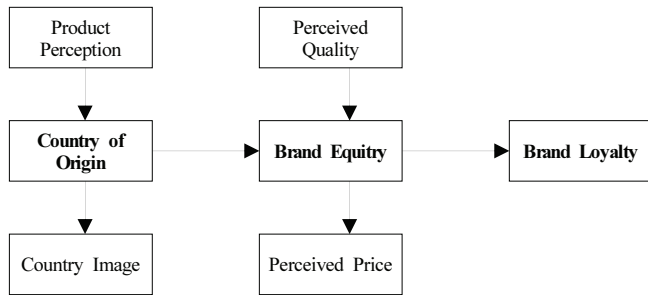


Fig. 1. Research Framework

#### 3.2. Instruments

We developed the items for measuring the constructs of the study, drawing on prior research in the literature. Bergikvist and Rossiter (2007) found no difference in the predictive validity of the multiple-item and single item measure. Therefore, each factor in this research was measured by two items.

The items of country image were selected from Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) research, which focused on the position and economy of the country. Product perception, which includes the perception of quality and price about the product from the country of origin, uses the scales introduced by Cai et al. (2004). Brand equity focused on the overall perception of brand image, with two items, using the scale that Vogel et al. (2008) and Kim et al. (2008b) introduced. Perceived quality and perceived price were measured by two separate items, using the scales introduced by Ko et al. (2008) and Suk (2008). Brand loyalty is the consumers' behavioral intentions to continue buying such a brand in the future, accompanied by a deeply held commitment to that brand. We adapted the scale from researches of Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Vogel et al. (2008) for this research. All of the items were measured using a five-point Likert-style scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

#### 3.3. Data Collection and Sample

Samples of 411 global consumers were used for this study. The data were collected from college students in Korea (N=180), USA (N=90) and China (N=141). A two-way language barrier complicated the comparison of responses, translation and back-translation. Demographic characteristics of total samples from USA, Korean, and China, are described in

Table 1. Among the 180 Korean respondents, there were 50 males (27.8%), and 130 females (72.2%). One hundred respondents were (55.6%) less than 20 years old, 74 respondents (41.1%) ranged from 20 to 25 years old and, 6 respondents (3.3%) were older than 25. Their majors were not evenly distributed, because many respondents came from Human Ecology (76.7%). Their monthly incomes were in the middle (49.1%) and high (11.3%) brackets. Only 7.5% were in the very low household income bracket. The distribution of consumption on apparel was the same as the household's income. More than half of Korean respondents spend at the middle and high level. Around 90% of the respondents are living in big cities.

Table 1. Demographic Analysis of Korean, Chinese and US Respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Korea (180)		China (141)		USA (90)	
		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	50	27.8	75	53.2	0	0
	Female	130	72.2	66	46.8	90	100
Age	Under 20	100	55.6	39	27.7	59	65.6
	20-25	74	41.1	53	37.6	29	32.2
	Up 25	6	3.3	49	34.7	2	2.2
Major	Human science	138	76.7	1	0.7	3	3.3
	Management	12	6.7	94	66.7	0	0
	Literature	7	3.9	2	1.4	0	0
	Engineering	5	2.8	21	14.9	0	0
	Mathematics	1	0.6	3	2.1	0	0
Resistance	Art and Design	17	9.4	20	14.2	87	96.7
	Big city	164	91.1	46	32.6	10	11.1
	Middle city	14	7.8	85	60.3	46	51.1
Household income	Small city	2	1.1	10	7.1	34	37.8
	Very Low	13	7.2	129	91.5	32	35.6
	Low	37	20.3	10	7.1	21	23.4
	Middle	87	49.1	1	0.7	7	7.8
	High	21	11.3	1	0.7	9	10.0
Consumption on Apparel	Very High	22	11.9	0	0	21	23.3
	Very Low	16	8.9	97	68.8	9	10.0
	Low	39	21.7	31	22.0	35	38.9
	Middle	66	36.7	9	6.4	18	20.0
	High	33	18.3	3	2.1	15	16.7
	Very High	26	14.4	1	0.7	13	14.4

Among the 141 Chinese respondents, 75 were males (53.2%), and 66 were females (46.8%). Thirty-nine respondents (27.7%) were less than 20 years old, 53 respondents (37.6%) ranged from 20 to 25 years old and, 34.7% of respondents were older than 25. Most of the respondents studied management (66.7%) or engineering (14.9%). Ninety percent of the respondent's incomes were distributed in the very low level. More than 68% of Chinese respondents spend at the very low level, and nearly 22% of them spend at a low level. Thirty-seven percent of the Chinese respondents are living in big cities, and 60.3% of them are living in smaller cities.

Among the 90 American respondents, all of them were females because the research was surveyed in a college of Art and Design. Therefore, more than 97% of them were less than 25 years old. Their monthly incomes were also mostly distributed in very low level (35.6%) and low level (23.4%). However, 23.3% of them have a high-level house income. Most of the American respondents spend at the low (38.9%) and middle (20.0%) levels. Fifty-one percent of the American respondents are living in a middle city, and 37.8% of them are living in a small city.

## IV. Results

### 4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

Factors	Scales	Factor Loadings			t-value			Cronbach's alpha		
		Korea	China	USA	Korea	China	USA	Korea	China	USA
Country Image	This country is very strong.	.87	.96	.91	Fix	Fix	Fix	.83	.87	.89
	This country's economy is very good.	.82	.82	.89	6.01	9.72	10.76			
Product Perception of COO	Quality of this country's product is very good.	.72	.96	.59	Fix	Fix	Fix	.60	.74	.65
	Price of this country's product is the very high.	.60	.60	.68	6.11	4.52	4.74			
COO Effect	I will purchase the product of this country again.	.83	.76	.81	Fix	Fix	Fix	.85	.84	.77
	I will recommend the product of this country to others	.88	.95	.78	9.17	7.68	6.72			
Perceived Quality	This brand is comfortable to wear.	.72	.68	.60	Fix	Fix	Fix	.67	.68	.82
	This brand is not deformed by wash or sunshine.	.69	.76	.53	3.33	6.40	3.19			
Perceived Price	This brand has the most valuable product.	.73	.72	.45	Fix	Fix	Fix	.72	.76	.83
	This brand has the best quality product compared to the price.	.77	.86	.82	4.84	5.40	3.90			
Brand Equity	This brand is fashionable.	.72	.68	.84	Fix	Fix	Fix	.65	.72	.66
	This brand is famous.	.67	.82	.61	3.88	4.87	4.71			
Brand Loyalty	I will try this brand's new products soon.	.56	.90	.79	Fix	Fix	Fix	.64	.82	.72
	I will buy this brand's product because I like this brand.	.86	.78	.72	3.42	6.42	4.93			
Korea	$\chi^2=41.61$ , $df=56$ , $GFI=.97$ , $AGFI=.94$ , $NFI=.94$ , $CFI=1.00$ , $RMSEA=.00$									
China	$\chi^2=120.07$ , $df=56$ , $GFI=.90$ , $AGFI=.82$ , $NFI=.87$ , $CFI=.93$ , $RMSEA=.08$									
USA	$\chi^2=84.91$ , $df=56$ , $GFI=.88$ , $AGFI=.81$ , $NFI=.85$ , $CFI=.94$ , $RMSEA=.07$									

A series of confirmatory-factor analysis models were estimated using the data from the Korean, Chinese and American samples. The two-step approach to structural

equation modeling suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was used in this study. Before estimating the paths to test the relationship among constructs, a confirmatory-factor analysis for brand equity and lifestyle was conducted to assess construct, convergent, and discriminate validity through Amos 7.0. Table 2 indicates the results of the CFA for the measurement model and gives factor loadings and t-values.

Table 2 also indicates that every item has a significant t-value on its latent construct for each factor. For each country, the CFA model is acceptable because each GFI (Korea .97, China .90 and, USA .88) and AGFI (Korea .94, China .82 and, USA .81) values are acceptable. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check reliability. All of the values of Cronbach's Alpha are higher than 0.6, therefore, reliability of the data from three countries was sufficient enough for further analysis. In summary, the measurements used in this research have high enough validity and reliability for further analysis.

Table 3 indicates that every item has a significant t-value on its latent construct for lifestyle. Because  $GFI = 0.93$  and  $AGFI = .90$ , thus the CFA lifestyle model is acceptable. For testing reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was used. All of the values of Cronbach's Alpha are higher than 0.6, therefore, reliability of each factor was sufficient enough further analysis (Kim, 1998). Therefore, the measurements of lifestyle have high enough validity and reliability for further analysis.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Test for Lifestyle

Factor	Scales	Factor Loadings	t-value	Cronbach's alpha
Healthy Life	I spend many hours for leisure activities.	.74	5.88	.64
	I regularly do exercise.	.85	5.61	
	I enjoy performing sports rather than just watching.	.53	Fix	
Leadership	I like being in charge of a group.	.66	12.18	.77
	I have more ability than other people.	.71	11.59	
	I like to lead others.	.82	Fix	
Adventure	I like doing things that are new and different.	.82	14.64	.82
	I like the challenge of doing something I have never done before.	.74	13.78	
	I like trying new things.	.78	Fix	
Fashionable	I like to be considered well-groomed.	.64	11.18	.77
	I try to make changes by wearing different clothes.	.91	11.99	
	I follow the latest trends and fashions.	.66	Fix	
Brand Consciousness	A branded products are worth paying for.	.65	6.93	.60
	A well-know brand means good quality.	.60	6.85	
	When I find what I like I usually buy it without hesitation.	.51	Fix	
Fit Statistics	$\chi^2=158.91$ , $df=48$ , $GFI=.93$ , $AGFI=.90$ , $NFI=.91$ , $CFI=.93$ , $RMSEA=.07$			

### 4.2. Identification of Lifestyle

Cluster analysis using the K-means method was conducted to determine whether consumers could be segmented into distinct groups based on lifestyle factors. The clustering was undertaken to minimize similarity and redundancy among clusters of respondents.

Table 4. Cluster Analysis for Lifestyle

Lifestyle Group	Group Means (SD)									F
	Follower (N=188)			Laggard (N=53)			Adventurer (N=165)			
	Korea	China	US	Korea	China	US	Korea	China	US	
	n=83	n=77	n=28	n=24	n=23	n=6	n=68	n=41	n=56	
Healthy Life	3.28 (.66)			2.80 (.93)			3.97 (.68)			71.62***
Leadership	3.32 (.56)			2.45 (.73)			3.92 (.67)			117.06***
Adventurer	3.50 (.64)			2.97 (.67)			4.41 (.58)			147.20***
Fashionable	3.58 (.62)			2.72 (.62)			4.18 (.63)			116.11***
Brand Conscious	3.40 (.56)			2.81 (.74)			3.84 (.68)			57.20***

\*\*\* p<.001

As shown in Table 4, after K-mean cluster analysis, three groups were classified: group 1, with 46.3% of the subjects (n=188), had the medium level mean scores on every lifestyle factor. Respondents in this group showed positive attitude on all the factors but not the highest, thus, they were named as "Follower", which means they follow most of the trends and do not take too much risk. Group 2, with 13.1% of the subjects (n=83), had a low level mean scores in each factor, falling almost below 3. Thus, this group was named "Laggard", which means they do not care anything but themselves. Group 3, with 40.6% of the subjects (n=165) had high level mean scores, close to or above 4. Thus, this group was named "Adventure", which means they like to take risks and are adventurous; they create trends and are positive in their life. The results of ANOVA showed that the differences between groups 1, 2, and 3 are significant. Most Chinese consumers are followers (54.6%) and laggards (16.3%). These two rates are highest in the groups of follower and laggard. The US had the highest percentage of adventurers at 62.2%.

### 4.3. Differences of Sports Shoes Purchase Behavior in Korea, China and USA

As shown in Table 5, the nationality segmentation of Korea, China and USA showed differences in sports shoes purchase behavior. Favorite brand, purchased brand, purchased place, information usage, and favorite sports game were significantly for sports shoes purchase behavior among the different consumers in the three countries. All three countries' consumers like Nike the most. In Korea, the second favorite

brand is Adidas. In China, the second favorite brand is Li-Ning, which is a Chinese sports-shoe brand. In USA, the second favorite brand is Fila. Korean and American consumers purchased Nike the most, but Chinese consumers purchased Li-Ning the most. The most preferred purchasing place is specialty stores in Korea and China, and shopping malls in the USA. Korean and American consumers like to listen to their family and friends' opinion when they purchase sports shoes, but Chinese consumer like to listen to the sales person's words. Running is the favorite sports game for all the three countries, however tennis and ping pong are the second favorite sports games for the American and Chinese; football is the second favorite game for the Korean. All the consumers showed the same characteristics on sports shoes shopping frequency, number purchased, total number of sports shoes and weekly-exercise hours. Therefore, we can predict significant differences exist in their shopping attitude toward sports shoes brands and shopping behaviors.

Table 5. Differences of Sports Shoes Purchase Behavior in USA, China and Korea

Category	Contents	Description	USA (N=90)	China (N=141)	Korea (N=180)	$\chi^2$
Sports Shoes Purchase Behavior	Favorite Sports Shoes Brand	Nike	59(65.6)	53(37.6)	100(55.6)	43.92***
		Adidas	5( 5.6)	32(22.7)	35(19.4)	
		Fila(USA),	10(11.1)	-	-	
		Li-Ning(China),	-	34(24.1)	-	
		Prospects(Korea)	-	-	20(11.1)	
	Others	16(17.8)	22(15.6)	25(13.9)		
	Purchased Sports Shoes Brand	Nike	48(53.3)	33(23.4)	71(39.4)	66.92***
Adidas		3( 3.3)	18(12.8)	27(15.0)		
Sports Shoes Purchase Behavior	Purchased Place	Fila(USA),	15(16.7)	-	-	105.9***
		Li-Ning(China),	-	38(27.0)	-	
		Prospects (Korea)	-	-	29(16.1)	
		Others	24(26.7)	52(36.9)	52(28.9)	
		Discount/Wholesaler	5( 5.6)	5( 3.5)	22(12.2)	
	Department Store	12(13.5)	44(31.2)	57(31.7)		
	Shopping Mall	28(31.5)	22(15.6)	8( 4.4)		
Information Usage	Specialty Shop	18(20.2)	61(43.6)	70(38.9)	154.80***	
	Internet	5( 5.6)	6( 4.3)	17( 9.4)		
	Other	21(23.6)	3( 2.1)	6( 3.3)		
Total number of Sports Shoes	Sales person/catalog	5( 2.0)	56(39.7)	27(15.0)	18.53	
	Mass media	8( 8.9)	38(27.0)	38(21.1)		
	Observing others	24(26.7)	7( 5.0)	16( 8.9)		
Purchase Times in One Year	Friends or family	43(47.8)	4( 2.9)	52(28.9)	13.11	
	Internet	10(11.1)	36(25.5)	47(26.1)		
	1 - 2	34(37.8)	48(34.0)	48(26.7)		
Num. of sports shoes purchased in last year	2 - 5	37(41.1)	82(58.1)	103(57.2)	23.01	
	More than 5	19(21.1)	11( 7.8)	29(16.1)		
	1 - 2	79(87.8)	127(90.1)	150(83.3)		
Favorite sports game	3 - 5	8( 8.9)	11( 7.8)	27(15.0)	104.46***	
	More than 5	3( 3.3)	3( 2.1)	3( 1.7)		
	Football	15(16.7)	17(12.1)	24(26.7)		
Sports Behavior	Favorite sports game	Basketball	5( 5.6)	27(19.1)	15( 8.3)	104.46***
		Tennis,	25(27.8)	28(19.9)	8( 4.4)	
		Ping-Pong etc	44(48.9)	58(41.1)	123(68.3)	
		Running	1( 1.1)	11( 7.8)	10( 5.5)	
		Others	1( 1.1)	11( 7.8)	10( 5.5)	
	Exercise hours in one Week	1 - 3	39(43.3)	73(51.8)	109(60.6)	23.21
		4 - 7	30(33.3)	50(34.5)	53(29.4)	
More than 7		19(21.1)	28(19.7)	28(15.6)		

\*\*\*p<.001

### 4.4. Hypothesis Test

#### 4.4.1. Comparison among USA, China and Korea

To test the hypotheses in each country, SEM was used to find out the relationship among each factor. The research model of this study produced reasonable model fitting indexes for Korean data ( $\chi^2=84.4$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.94$ ,  $AGFI=.91$ ), Chinese data ( $\chi^2=127.6$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.90$ ,  $AGFI=.84$ ) and United States data ( $\chi^2=102.3$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.87$ ,  $AGFI=.80$ ).

##### 4.4.1.1 Effects of the Antecedents of Country of Origin

As shown in Table 6, for Korean respondents, country image ( $\beta = -.21$ ,  $t\text{-value} = -2.16$ ) and product perception for country of origin ( $\beta = .96$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 4.19$ ) have a significant relationship with country of origin effect, however the effect of country image is negative. Thus, Korean consumers consider the product's perception more important than country image; H1-b was supported. For Chinese respondents, only country image ( $\beta = .57$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 5.32$ ) positively influence country of origin effect; H1-a was supported. For USA respondents, country image ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.19$ ) and product perception for country of origin ( $\beta = .79$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.91$ ) have a positive relationship with the country of origin effect. Thus, H1-a and H1-b were both supported.

Table 6. Results of SEM for Nationality

Hypothetical Path	Path Estimates			t-value			Results		
	Korea	China	USA	Korea	China	USA	Korea	China	USA
Country Image → Country of Origin	-.21	.57	.36	-2.16*	5.32***	2.19*	X	O	O
Product Perception → Country of Origin	.96	.03	.79	4.19***	.25	2.91**	O	X	O
Perceived Quality → Brand Equity	-.07	.49	3.97	-.53	2.79**	.37	X	O	X
Perceived Price → Brand Equity	.30	.11	-3.07	2.36*	.85	.79	O	X	X
Country of Origin → Brand Equity	-.01	.17	.23	-.12	2.66**	2.03*	X	O	O
Brand Equity → Brand Loyalty	.21	.56	.79	1.96*	3.81***	4.36***	O	O	O

X: not supported; O: Supported  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

##### 4.4.1.2 Effects of the Antecedents of Brand Equity

For Korean respondents, only perceived price ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.36$ ) positively influence brand equity; H2-b was supported. For Chinese respondents, only perceived quality ( $\beta = .49$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.79$ ) positively influence brand equity; H2-a was supported. For USA respondents, neither perceived quality nor perceived price had a significant relationship with brand equity.

##### 4.4.1.3 Influences of Country of Origin on Brand Equity

For Chinese and USA respondents, country of origin (China:  $\beta = .17$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.66$ ; USA:  $\beta = .17$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.66$ ) influences

brand equity. But for Korean respondents, the effect of country of origin does not affect brand equity. Thus, H3 was supported for China and USA.

#### 4.4.1.4 Influences of Brand Equity on Brand Loyalty

For all the respondents, brand equity (Korea:  $\beta = .21$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 1.96$ ; China:  $\beta = .56$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.81$ ; USA:  $\beta = .79$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 4.36$ ) positively influence brand loyalty. Therefore, H3 was supported for all Korean, Chinese and USA respondents.

#### 4.4.2. Comparison among Different Lifestyles

Using SEM, each lifestyle group was tested. The research model also produced good (word choice) model fitting indexes for the follower ( $\chi^2=81.3$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.94$ ,  $AGFI=.90$ ), laggard ( $\chi^2=74.6$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.90$ ,  $AGFI=.85$ ) and adventurer ( $\chi^2=106.9$ ,  $df=68$ ,  $GFI=.91$ ,  $AGFI=.86$ ).

##### 4.4.2.1 Effects of the Antecedents of Country of Origin

As shown in Table 7, followers country image ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.09$ ) and product perception for country of origin ( $\beta = .63$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 4.51$ ) have a significant relationship with country of origin effect, and all the effects are positive. H1-a and H1-b were both supported. For laggards, only country image ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 1.99$ ) positively influenced country of origin effect. H1-a was supported. Adventurers' country image ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.15$ ) and product perception for country of origin ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.35$ ) have positive relationship with country of origin effect. H1-a and H1-b were both supported.

Table 7. Results of SEM for Lifestyle

Hypothetical Path	Path Estimates			t-value			Results		
	F	L	A	F	L	A	F	L	A
Country Image → Country of Origin	.20	.29	.30	3.09**	1.99*	2.15*	O	O	O
Product Perception → Country of Origin	.63	.31	.37	4.51***	1.52	2.35*	O	X	O
Perceived Quality → Brand Equity	.88	-.09	-.32	3.79***	-.64	-1.13	O	X	X
Perceived Price → Brand Equity	-.12	.37	.36	-.62	1.82	2.51*	X	X	O
Country of Origin → Brand Equity	.19	.16	.10	2.19*	1.63	1.56	O	X	X
Brand Equity → Brand Loyalty	.72	.41	.36	5.59***	2.26*	2.07*	O	O	O

F: Follower; L: Laggard; A: Adventurer  
 X: not supported; O: Supported  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

##### 4.4.2.2 Effects of the Antecedents of Brand Equity

The followers perceived quality ( $\beta = .88$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.79$ ) positively influenced brand equity, and brand equity ( $\beta = .72$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 5.59$ ) positively influence brand loyalty. H2-a was supported. Both the laggards perceived quality and perceived price significantly did not influence brand equity. Adventurers



perceived price ( $\beta = .36$ , t-value = 2.51) had a significant relationship with brand equity. H2-b was supported.

4.4.2.3 Influences of Country of Origin on Brand Equity

The followers perception of country of origin ( $\beta = .19$ , t-value = 2.19) positively influenced brand equity. The laggards and adventurers country of origin perception did not influence brand equity. Thus, H3 was only supported by followers.

4.4.2.4 Influences of Brand Equity on Brand Loyalty

For all the respondents, brand equity (Followers:  $\beta = .72$ , t-value = 5.59; Laggard:  $\beta = .41$ , t-value = 2.26; Adventurer:  $\beta = .36$ , t-value = 2.07) positively influences brand loyalty. Therefore, all lifestyle groups' respondents supported H3.

4.4.3. Summary of Comparisons among USA, China and Korea and among Lifestyles

Product perception can influence country of origin effect for Korea and USA but not China. The influence of perceived quality on brand equity only influences Chinese, and the influence of perceived price on brand equity only affects Koreans. The effect of country of origin on brand equity affects Chinese and Americans but not Koreans (see Fig. 2).

Product perception can influence country of origin effect for followers and adventures but not laggards. The influence of perceived quality on brand equity only works on followers, and the influence of perceived price on brand equity only works on adventurers. The effect of country of origin on brand equity only works on followers but not laggards and adventurers (see Fig.3).

Thus, this study found consumer's nationality and lifestyle have a significant role in relationships among country of origin, brand equity and brand loyalty in global sports shoes market.

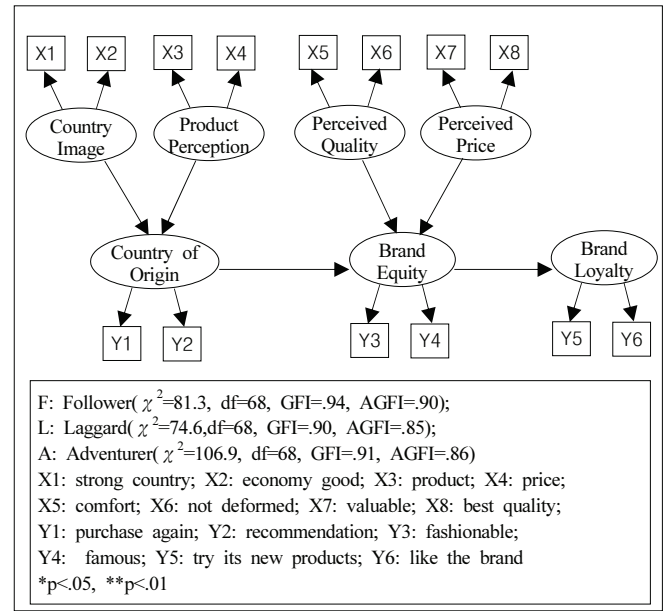


Fig. 3. Comparison of SEM Results for Lifestyles

5.1. Discussion

Favorite brand, purchased brand, purchased place, information usage, and favorite sports games showed significant differences for sports shoes purchase behavior among Korean, Chinese, and American consumers. Nike is the most well liked brand in the world. However, Chinese and American consumers like their other domestic brands too. Fila is the second favorite brand for American, and Li-Ning is the second favorite brand for Chinese. Koreans chose Adidas as their second favorite brand. Despite a growing assortment of non-store outlets (including catalogs, party-concept selling, personal-shopping services, and the Internet), consumers still do the vast majority of the shopping at traditional brick-and-mortar stores (Cox et al., 2005). However, technological developments are increasing internet shopping. Word-of-mouth from friends or family, as well as sales people, is also important for consumers when they make purchase decision. Investing on advertising in media and focusing on retailing and service can help change consumers' attitudes toward different brands.

The results of this study also extend the research of the relationship among country of origin, brand equity and brand loyalty to the sports shoes market. Brand equity was proved to have significant relationship with brand loyalty for all the countries. The factors which influence brand equity vary by country. Country of origin can positively influence brand equity for both Chinese and American consumers. As a newly developing country, Chinese consumers believe that a positive country image will increase country of origin perception. The Chinese consumers are also influenced by perceived quality. The country of origin effect for American consumers can be influenced by country image and product perception of country of origin. As the strongest country in the world, Americans

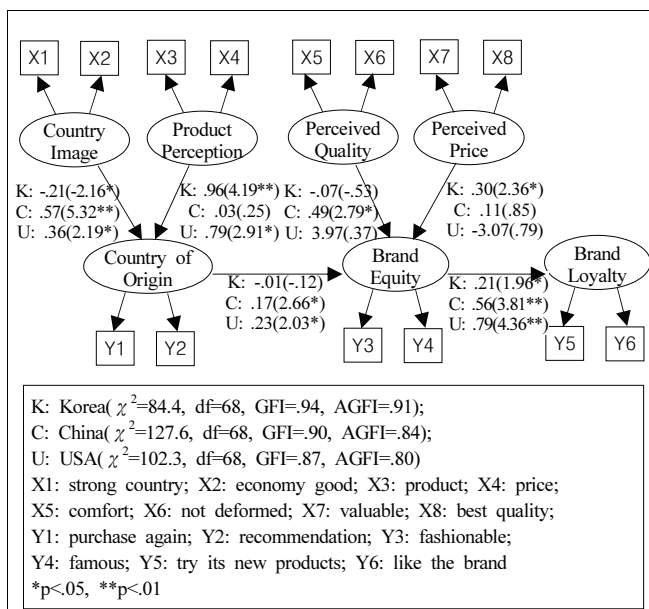


Fig. 2. Comparison of SEM Results for Nationalities

considered more factors than others when they purchase sports shoes. Korean consumers only consider perceived price. Higher prices stimulate Korean consumer purchases.

The third finding of this paper is that we identified three different lifestyles for Korean, Chinese and American consumers including: adventurer, follower and, laggard. Without the nationality boundary, seeing the emergence of a new group of consumers who have similar preferences and buy similar brands is more important (Ko et al., 2007). But most of American consumers are adventurers which can lead the sports-shoes trend. Korean consumers quickly follow the new trend, because most of their consumers are adventurers and followers. Chinese consumers are a litter behind the trend, because most of them are followers and laggards; nearly 30% of them are adventurers. As we discussed, all of the consumers consider brand equity to keep their brand loyalty. But for adventurers, perceived price is the only factor which can influence brand equity and brand equity can significantly influence brand loyalty. All these means Brand itself is more important for them. Laggards are not influenced by any factors. But for the followers, all of the factors expect perceived price are important for them. When they purchase a pair of sports shoes, the decision was hard to make, because they balanced all of the factors.

## 5.2. Implications

As Jung and Sung (2006) discussed, an understanding of how to develop and maintain brand equity in the target market is important in all countries. Marketing managers should consider brand equity when introducing their brand into a new market. Investment in advertising and improvement of service in retailing may help to build relationships with consumers in the long term. Only considering the brand itself is not enough, country of origin should also be considered. A marketer must develop a strong marketing strategy to attract or push up consumers' attitude towards the product when a brand with low-country image and low-product perception of country of origin. For example, the marketing manager should develop strong advertising to enforce consumer familiarity or product knowledge.

Also localization is the basic strategy that all the sports-shoes companies should understand. But as global brands, understanding the same characteristics for each country is more important to build global strategies. The best sports shoes companies always use the same commercials in different countries because although they are in different countries, they may have similar hobbies, interests, or favorite sports stars. Successful global marketers segment the world market according to consumer similarities.

## 5.3. Limitations

Despite the significant contribution made by the present

study, there are still some limitations that remain for future research.

First, the small sample size of Korea, China and USA may have affected the results revealed from this research. All of the USA respondents were female, which limited the US results. Also, the results reflect college students' behavior of sports shoes purchasing, thus, limiting its generalization and application. Future study should be conducted across different aged consumers in different country markets.

Second, only two antecedents were considered for brand equity, because we wanted to find out the influence of the product itself. But in future research, it is more beneficial to find out other factors which also influence brand equity.

Third, although this paper found that lifestyle was a moderating factor which influences the relationship between brand equity and purchase intention, the specific lifestyle of the most important influence was not tested. Therefore, future research must be done to find out which lifestyle dimension has a significant effect on consumers' sports shoes purchase intention.

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