The Influence of Values on Brand Attitude and Intention to Purchase: A Case Study of Female Under Armour Customers

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Over $100 billion is spent on sport related products and services each year. Most of this consumption is driven either by materialistic or hedonistic values. Recent media and political emphasis on environmentalism, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and cause-related business practices, has elevated the awareness of the consumer of such socially-just, value-related aspects. Thus, the purpose of the proposed research is to examine whether hedonistic values or social justice-related values have a greater influence on sport-specific product and brand purchase intentions. Specifically, we examine whether social justice related values predict knowledge about the product better than hedonistic values. We also test whether knowledge about the product will predict the perceived quality, value, and aesthetics of the product. Furthermore, we suspect that knowledge about the product will also predict attitude toward the brand, intent to purchase the product and to purchase the brand. The results will provide information to organizations as to whether marketing campaigns that focus on social-justice related values would be as effective as marketing campaigns that focus on hedonistic values.

Many theories have been proposed to explain consumer behavior. As Lee and Trail (2009) noted, those include values theory (Rokeach, 1973a, 1973b) and attitude theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) among others. Personal values have been well-researched as potential influences on various behaviors (e.g., Belk, 1984; Braithwaite & Law, 1985; Kahle, 1983; Richins, 1994; Rokeach, 1973a; Schwartz, 1992). In addition, many researchers have claimed that attitude plays a significant role in brand choice and product consumption (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fishbein & Ajzen; Homer & Kahle, 1988; Lutz, Mackenzie, & Belch, 1983). Product attributes have also received significant attention from various disciplines in explaining consumer behavior (e.g., Lutz, 1977). Lee and Trail (2009) suggested, a meshing of these theories may predict consumption behavior better than any one theory individually.

Personal values are defined as established beliefs that result in “a specific mode of behavior or end-state of existence [that] is preferred to an opposite mode of behavior or end-state” (Rokeach, 1973a, p. 25). Values can be segmented into values that are individually oriented and focus on self-enhancement such as hedonistic, materialistic, and achievement-oriented values or values that are collectivistic and conservation-oriented values such as environmentalism, social equality, benevolence values (Schwartz, 1992). Values theory indicates that personal values influence attitudes toward products and brands. Homer and Kahle (1988) found that values predicted anywhere from 25-50% of the variance in attitudes, which then predicted about 31% of the variance in consumption behavior. However, values predicted less than 4% of consumption behavior directly, indicating that they may be mediated by attitudes.

Based on this evidence, Lee and Trail (2009) proposed a model that tested whether values predicted purchase intentions. However, consistent with attitude theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the product attribute framework of Lutz (1977), Lee and Trail (2009) proposed that the relationship between values and purchase intentions might be mediated brand attitude and the perceived attributes of the product. Their test of the proposed model determined that personal values influenced attitudes toward various brands of licensed sport-merchandise (e.g., Nike, adidas, etc.) and indirectly, intentions to purchase a specific brand or product. However, these relationships were mediated by perceived product attributes. In the Lee and Trail model, they did not make a distinction between types of values
The purpose of the present research is to attempt to expand previous research and determine whether social-justice related values can be marketed by brands successfully, rather than the typical marketing campaigns that emphasize hedonistic/materialist values. Specifically, we want to determine the effect that the two categories of values have on both product and brand purchase intentions, taking into account that the relationships will probably be mediated differentially by the attributes of the products, knowledge about the product, and attitude about the brand.

A convenience sampling method was used to gather data from women who had purchased sport related apparel within the last year. These individuals were identified at shopping malls and sporting events. Instructions were given to the respondents about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of the information to be provided. The questionnaire consisted of the items and scales from the Lee and Trail (2009) research project and consisted of values, attitudes, perceived product attributes, and purchase intentions. The focal brand was Under Armour. We used the RAMONA structural equations modeling (SEM) program to test model fit and evaluate of the different relationships in the model.

Two CFAs were run; one on the seven values (Supporting Women’s Causes; Companionship; Corporate Social Responsibility; Environmentalism; Materialism; Maintaining Physical Fitness; Personal Success) and one of all of the other scales (Product Aesthetics; Product Quality; Product Value; Knowledge about Product Performance Benefits; Brand Attitude; Intent to Purchase General Product; Intent to Purchase Brand). The CFA on the Values showed adequate fit (RMSEA = .077; c2/df = 2.24) as did the CFA on the other dimensions (RMSEA = .072; c2/df = 2.02). All AVE values exceeded .50 on all dimensions across both CFAs.

The structural model fit indexes indicated adequate fit (RMSEA = .080; c2/df = 2.15). The path coefficient from Individualistic Values (Materialism and Personal Success) to Knowledge was .243 and the path coefficient from Collectivistic Values to Knowledge was .758. The path from Knowledge to Product Attributes was .992 and from Knowledge to Intent to Purchase General Product was .860. The path from Product Attributes to Brand Attitude was .750 and from Brand Attitude to Intent to Purchase the Brand was .831. The path from Intent to Purchase General Product to Intent to Purchase the Brand was .094.

These results indicated that collectivistic values explained considerably more variance in the knowledge about the benefits of performance sports apparel that individualistic values, and the effects of values on brand purchase intentions were mediated by knowledge, product attributes, and brand attitude. Furthermore intentions to purchase performance apparel in general did not predict purchasing it from Under Armour.

The implications to marketers in general are that values do influence both product and brand purchase intentions, but are mediated by other factors such as the attributes of the products and the attitude toward the brand. Thus, marketers need to promote and associate relevant values with the attributes of their product to build a positive brand attitude. Specific to Under Armour, marketers, the values varied contingent on the mediator, indicating that there were probably multiple segments. We ran a cluster analysis and determined that there were four segments: Hedonists (32%), Fitness Enthusiasts (24%), Environmentalists (33%), and Anti-materialists (12%). These segments differed on the amount they exercised, their preference for product attributes, their brand attitude, and their intention to purchase the brand.