

# Factors Affecting Korean Consumers' Brand Consciousness to Global Luxury Brands

Seung-Hee LEE and Jane E. WORKMAN

## Abstract

*In today's marketplace, the luxury market is a significant business sector accessible to global consumers. The increase of luxury brand purchasing has been motivated by social and business factors. Luxury fashion brands signal social status and prestige. As brand names gradually become a part of public language, brand consciousness plays an important role in consumers' lives, especially for consumers in East Asian cultures, who perceive social status and prestige as important values. Consumers in a collectivist culture such as that of Korea tend to have a higher public self-consciousness than consumers in an individualist culture such as in the United States. It is important to understand Korean consumers' personal values (e.g., collectivism, public self-consciousness) and their effect on brand consciousness with regard to global luxury brands. The purpose of this study is to examine determinants of Korean consumers' brand consciousness with regard to global luxury brands. For this study, 238 undergraduate students were recruited from universities in Seoul, South Korea. Results show significant relationships between personal values (collectivism, public self-consciousness), demographics (age, gender), and brand consciousness, indicating that young Korean consumers' personal values and demographic characteristics operate as determinants of brand consciousness of luxury fashion brands. This study may improve our understanding of Korean consumers' luxury consumption from a cultural perspective.*

**Keywords:** Korean consumers, global luxury brands, brand consciousness, collectivism, public self-consciousness, consumption behavior

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## **Introduction**

The market for global luxury brands has been steadily expanding for more than a decade. In today's marketplace, the luxury market is a significant business sector accessible to global consumers (Rosen 2008). China, Japan, and South Korea are currently among the highest consumer markets in Asia. The U.S. and EU luxury brand fashion markets are eager to expand their presence in these growing Asian markets by varying their activities with a balance of increased profits and minimal risk (Kyllo 2010).

The increased accessibility of luxury purchasing has been motivated by social and business factors (Silverstein and Fiske 2003). Luxury fashion brands signal social status and prestige (Barnett 2005). As brand names gradually become a part of public language (Friedman 1985), brand consciousness plays an increasingly important role in consumers' lives, especially for consumers in East Asian cultures, who perceive social status and prestige as important values (Hofstede 2001). With the increasing global accessibility of luxury brands, consumers are becoming more familiar with luxury brand names, something that naturally leads to increased brand consciousness. However, no one can assume that the consumption decisions of these global consumers are identical (Watchravesringkan 2008).

Brand consciousness concerns brands as signals of functional or symbolic value (Nelson and McLeod 2005). Consumers in collectivist cultures, such as those of Asian countries, tend to favor national or global brands more than consumers in more individualist cultures as in the West (Batra and Sinha 2000). Also, consumers in a collectivist culture such as Korea tend to have a higher public self-consciousness than consumers in an individualist culture such as the United States (Lee and Burns 1993). Consumers in collectivist cultures—in contrast to consumers in individualist cultures—consume luxury brand products to boost their social status (de Mooij and Hofstede 2002). All of these factors may lead consumers in collectivist cultures to have higher levels of brand consciousness, manifested in their global brand consumption. However, although these variables may be related to each other, there has been little research into the determinants of consumer brand consciousness, particularly among Asian consumers such as Koreans.

For successful luxury market expansion into Korea, global luxury brand retailers or marketers need to understand what kinds of variables impact young Korean consumers' purchasing of global luxury brands so that they can develop more effective luxury brand marketing strategies. The results of this study may help increase our understanding of young Korean consumers' cultural values and the influence this has on their consumption of luxury goods.

Thus, it is important to understand Korean consumers' personal values, such as collectivism or public self-consciousness, with regard to global luxury brands. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the determinants of Korean consumers' brand consciousness, particularly as regards to global luxury brands.

## Literature Review

### *Collectivism*

Hofstede's national culture model with dimensions is a powerful implement in international retailing strategies (de Mooij and Hofstede 2002). According to Hofstede (1980), people in individualist cultures value variety and hedonistic experiences, while those in collectivist cultures tend to value conformity and group behavior. Roth (1995) asserted that people in collectivist cultures (e.g., China or Korea) favor brands that strengthen group identity and affiliation. Also, collectivist subcultures tend to be more susceptible to social influence (e.g., the influence of friends) than individualist subcultures. On the other hand, people in individualist cultures (e.g., the United States or other Western countries) prefer brands that emphasize their independence and provide individual gratification.

Collectivist cultures are considered to rely on extrinsic product cues, such as brand names (de Mooij and Hofstede 2002) for purchasing criteria. Batra and Sinha (2000) suggested that consumers who rely on extrinsic cues tend to prefer well-known brands compared to consumers who do not rely on extrinsic cues. In particular, people in collectivist cultures tend to prefer

national or global brands to private brands because they rely on national or global brands as extrinsic cues. This is supported by some research (e.g., Nicholls et al. 1994; Wong and Ahuvia 1998) showing that, in collectivist societies, the symbolic meaning associated with brand names can be used as an important symbol of group membership. De Mooij and Hofstede (2002) explain why consumers in collectivist cultures prefer national or global brands to private brands. First, national or global brands are used to represent a person's social status in society. Status needs are associated with power distance that is related to collectivism. Power distance refers to the extent to which members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In large power distance cultures, individuals have a designated place in a social hierarchy. Thus, less powerful members in a society can express their respect toward someone who has higher social status. Global brands can be used for displaying social status. Second, in collectivist cultures, the need for harmony within a group encourages a long-term relationship between customers and brand names. For example, people in collectivist cultures may want to have a long-term relationship with a well-known brand and exhibit strong brand loyalty or attachment, just as they tend to maintain long relationships with fellow group members.

Wong and Ahuvia (1998) argue that, compared with Western consumers, consumers in a collectivist culture emphasize consumption of luxury brands as a reflection of the public reputation of members of the group to which they belong. Luxury consumption may reflect positively the reference group members' personal values and consumer behaviors, inferring that members of the group are of high status, possess good taste, and are successful. Collectivism is related to conformity within groups; thus, it may be an important predictor of Korean consumers' brand consciousness.

#### *Public Self-Consciousness*

James (1890) asserted that self-consciousness consists of three components: the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. Contemporary researchers have paid the most attention to the social (public) and spiritual (private) self (Fenigstein 1987).

Private self-consciousness refers to the tendency to be aware of private aspects of the self, such as inner feelings, desires, goals, moods, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Carver and Scheier 1981; Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975). On the other hand, publicly self-conscious persons tend to view the self as a social object. They are concerned about the ways they present themselves, and care about how others observe or evaluate them. Moreover, publicly self-conscious persons are concerned about the impression they make on others and try hard to create a favorable public image of themselves. For example, according to some research (e.g., Doherty and Schlenker 1991; Fenigstein 1979; Froming and Carver 1981; Miller and Cox 1982), individuals who have high public self-consciousness tend to be sensitive to fashion and physical appearances, interested in gaining others' approval, compliant with social norms, and concerned with interpersonal rejection. As such, highly public self-conscious persons seem to be actively aware of how others perceive them, especially when it comes to a favorable public image or appearance, or loss of face (Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000), and thus public self-consciousness can impact individuals' consumption behavior. Face is a sense of favorable social self that an individual wants to have in interpersonal relationships and networking with others (Ting-Toomney and Kurogi 1998). People want to improve, maintain, and keep from losing face with regard to significant others (Bao, Zhou, and Su 2003).

However, researchers have paid scant attention to the role of public self-consciousness in consumer behavior. Products are consumed in public and can have images not only from the product itself but also other variables such as packaging or advertising (Sirgy 1982). The brand label is perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of a product (Fitzell 1982). Bushman (1993) revealed that publicly self-conscious persons prefer national brands to bargain brand labels because they consider products with bargain brand labels to be cheaper or inferior while they think national brand products can improve their public image. As a result, national brand goods were positively related to public self-consciousness, while bargain brand products were negatively related to public self-consciousness.

According to some research (e.g., Savage 2005), East Asian individuals tend to take special care of their physical appearance. Among East Asian

consumers, research has shown Koreans to be more likely to use cosmetic products than Chinese or Hong Kong consumers. This may mean that Koreans are very concerned about their appearance, as well as about how others evaluate them, meaning they possess high public self-consciousness (Savage 2005).

Consumers in collectivist cultures, such as Korea, tend to have higher levels of public self-consciousness that may be manifested in global brand consumption. For example, Lee and Burns (1993) examined the relationship between individuals' clothing purchase criteria and self-consciousness among American and Korean consumers. Public self-consciousness was significantly correlated with the importance of fashion and attractiveness as criteria for clothing purchases in both cultural groups. Consumers in Korea, a collectivist culture, appeared to have higher public self-consciousness than consumers in the United States, an individualist culture. Persons high in public self-consciousness and from collectivist cultures like Korea considered brand name an important purchase criterion.

Based on the literature review, it can be assumed that public self-consciousness is related to brand-conscious consumption behavior because publicly self-conscious consumers may use well-known brands to present a favorable or successful image to others. Thus, public self-consciousness may be one important predictor of Korean consumers' brand consciousness.

### *Brand Consciousness*

Brand consciousness is the mental orientation to select brand-name products that are well-known and highly advertised (Sproles and Kendall 1986). Brand consciousness significantly impacts consumers' consumption choices (Lachance, Beaudouin, and Robitaille 2003).

Brand consciousness can be a response to the public language of expressing social status or prestige through a brand name (Friedman 1985). Brand consciousness is also related to the desire for using a product or a brand to enhance social status. Brand consciousness is the belief that well-known brands are superior to less well-known brands, thus becoming one of the most important influences on the purchasing decision (Nelson 1974).

Whereas commercial market research is mainly concerned with observation of brand consciousness, academic research has traditionally placed more emphasis on investigation and measurement of motives for and effects of brand consciousness (e.g., Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk 2001). Brand consciousness concerns brands as signals of functional or symbolic value (Nelson and McLeod 2005). According to Jamal and Goode (2001), brand-conscious consumers tend to place more importance on product attributes such as brand name and country of origin than those who are not interested in well-known brands.

Brand consciousness plays an important role in the consumption behavior of consumers in collectivist cultures (Hofstede 2001). In collectivist societies, in contrast to individualist societies, consumers rely more on interpersonal relationships for information searching or exchange. This information searching or exchange is especially important in brand choice because, in a collectivist society, positive experience with a brand can serve to enhance group belongingness (Money, Gilly, and Graham 1998). For example, Fan and Xiao (1998) found brand consciousness to be the most important determinant of consumers' purchasing among young Chinese. Another study found that high brand-conscious Chinese women felt that global brands were symbols of success to a greater degree than domestic brands (Tai and Tam 1997).

Likewise, Darian (1998) found that consumers with high brand consciousness accept that brands are symbols of status and prestige, and thus prefer purchasing expensive and well-known brand-name products, such as luxury products, because they feel these products to be symbols of wealth, status, and success. In particular, Korean consumers, as members of a collectivist society, tend to be status-oriented and want to exhibit their social standing through their possessions. These characteristics heighten their awareness of and attraction to brands in the market. Thus, Korean consumers' brand consciousness may orient them toward buying luxury brands.

Brand consciousness cannot be applied equally to everyone and should be considered as an individual variable such as gender. Vaughn and Langlois (1983) indicated that the relationship between attractiveness and social status was more apparent for women than men. Attractiveness can offer

women more social power and more social status than men. Thus, women are concerned more than men about brand consciousness as a means of presenting their social power. That is, female consumers are more likely than males to have a higher level of brand-consciousness (Warrington and Shim 2000; Workman and Lee 2013).

### **Korean Luxury Consumers**

Korea has become one of the most important global luxury brand markets in Asia and is one of the top five countries in the world for sales of luxury fashion goods (Kyllo 2010). The market for luxury brands is thriving in South Korea, unlike in Japan, Europe, or the United States, where the sale of luxury goods has either stagnated or shrunk. Since 2006, sales of luxury brands in the Korean market have increased approximately 12 percent annually, and have recently been estimated at US\$4.5 billion annually (Lamb 2012). On average, Korean luxury consumers spend five percent of their household income on luxury products, compared to four percent among Japanese luxury consumers (Lamb 2012). More specifically, as the main channel for the sale of Korean products, department stores had sales up more than 30 percent in the first four months of 2011 compared to 2010 (Kim and Shin 2011). This percentage represents the fastest rate for any primary market in the world. For example, at Shinsegae, one of the major South Korean department stores, the number of foreign luxury brands for sale increased from less than 20 in the early 2000s to almost 300 by 2009. Further, Korea's big three department store chains (Lotte, Shinsegae, and Hyundai) together account for three-quarters of all luxury product sales in Korea. In addition to these main department stores, young consumers are increasingly turning to new channels (e.g., premium outlets and online retailers) for purchasing luxury products. The Korean luxury market can have significant importance for global retailers since younger Korean consumers tend to spend greater portions of their disposable income on luxury brands.

According to one research study (Salsberg and Shin 2010), Koreans

tend to have more favorable attitudes toward luxury brands than people in other developed countries such as Japan, the United States, or the countries of the EU. For example, only five percent of Korean respondents indicated they felt guilty about purchasing luxury brands, compared to 10-15 percent of consumers in other developed countries. Only five percent of the Korean sample thought purchasing luxury-products was a waste of money. And in contrast to 45 percent of Japanese and 38 percent of Chinese, only 22 percent of Koreans thought showing off luxury products was a bad taste. Among luxury fashion brands, sales of luxury brand handbags rose notably in 2009, followed by watches and jewelry (Salsberg and Shin 2010).

In Korea, the core consumers of luxury brand goods have traditionally been women in their 40s to 60s with financial power. However, recently young consumers in their 20s have become the main consumers of global luxury brands, replacing middle-aged consumers (Salsberg and Shin 2010). Korean consumers in their 20s are the most enthusiastic about luxury brands: 63 percent of respondents in their 20s replied that purchasing luxury brands was exciting, while only 20 percent of older consumers did (Salsberg and Shin 2010). For example, at Lotte's Avenue, a high-end branch of the Lotte department store chain, consumers in their 20s and 30s have increased from 35 percent of shoppers in 2006 to 44 percent in 2009 (Salsberg and Shin 2010). According to Yoon (2003), young Korean consumers tend to embrace a material lifestyle, be brand-conscious, view money as a symbol of success, and value global luxury brands for their symbolic status.

Female college students are the most potential luxury brand consumers. It can be assumed that among female college students in their 20s, older students may be more brand-conscious and may have purchased more global luxury brand products than younger students because they might have been more exposed to luxury brand advertising and gained more information as to what luxury brands mean.

For the purposes of providing practical information to global luxury brand markets, this study will examine the impact of personal values and demographics on young Korean consumers' brand consciousness toward foreign luxury brands. Based on the conceptual framework and the review of literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Collectivism is positively related to brand consciousness.
- H2: Public self-consciousness is positively related to brand consciousness.
- H3: Age is positively related to brand consciousness.
- H4: Being female is positively related to brand consciousness.
- H5: Brand consciousness is positively related to the purchasing of global luxury brand products.

## Method

### *Instruments*

The questionnaire included demographic items and items asking participants to indicate “Yes” or “No” concerning whether they had purchased luxury products from each of five categories (handbags, shoes, clothing, sunglasses, and accessories). Responses were added to create the variable “purchase of luxury products,” which had a range of 0-5. A 6-item brand-consciousness scale (Nelson and McLeod 2005), an 8-item collectivism scale (Triandis 1995), and a 7-item public self-consciousness scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975) were used for this study. Each item was accompanied by a 7-point scale (7 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree).

In this study, public self-consciousness was measured using Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss's (1975) self-consciousness scale. Fenigstein focused on individuals' tendencies to have different degrees of self-awareness, which have been conceptualized as “self-consciousness.” The scale was developed to measure the tendency to focus on those aspects of the self that others can observe and evaluate. Self-consciousness includes two dimensions: public and private. This scale has seven public self-consciousness items. Sample items from the public self-consciousness scale include: “I usually worry about making a good impression” and “I'm concerned about what other people think of me.”

Both the public and private self-consciousness subscales have been used by numerous researchers and have been shown to be reliable and content valid (Buss 1980; Carver and Scheier 1981; Scheier and Carver 1981).

In addition, the scale is acknowledged as applicable to consumers in other countries. For example, Ruganci (1995) examined whether the scale could be applied to Turkish college consumers. Results were consistent with the original study (Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975).

Brand consciousness was measured by the 6-item brand consciousness scale that Nelson and McLeod (2005) developed to measure perceptions of brands. For example, "I pay attention to the brand names of the clothes I buy." Higher scores reflect higher brand consciousness.

Collectivism was measured by the 8-item collectivism scale developed by Triandis (1995) to measure attitudes related to collectivism. Sample items from this scale include: "My goals are more achievable if I work with my community as a group" and "Family members should stick together no matter what sacrifices are required."

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Scale	Mean	SD	Observed range	Reliability
Collectivism	5.021	.883	2-7	.878
Public self-consciousness	5.577	.890	3-7	.895
Brand consciousness	4.394	1.124	2-7	.832

For the data analyses, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation, and multiple-regression were conducted. As seen in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha for each scale ranged from .83 to .90, suggesting that the measures for the scales were internally consistent.

### *Participants*

The data were collected from undergraduate students at three universities located in Seoul, South Korea. Questionnaires were distributed to students in fashion-related classes and completed within approximately 15 minutes. For this study, out of 247 questionnaires distributed, 238 usable questionnaires were analyzed. Sixty-seven percent (N=160) were females and 33

percent ( $N=78$ ) were males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 29 (mean age = 22.2;  $SD=2.206$ ). Most student respondents' majors were fashion- or business-related. About 52 percent of the respondents reported making at least one purchase of luxury fashion goods, such as bags, shoes, sunglasses, clothing, or fashion accessories.

### Results

To examine the relationships among all variables, a correlation test was used. Hypothesized variables (collectivism, public self-consciousness, age, and buying frequency) were related to brand consciousness (see Table 2). The correlations were low to moderate, ranging from 0.01 to 0.51, indicating that the determinant variables used in this study were relatively independent of one another and that there is a low possible presence of multicollinearity for further analysis using multiple regression. Results revealed that all determinant variables, including collectivism ( $r = .328, p < 0.01$ ), public self-consciousness ( $r = .287, p < 0.01$ ), age ( $r = .176, p < 0.05$ ), and purchasing frequency ( $r = .149, p < 0.05$ ), were positively correlated with brand-consciousness.

**Table 2.** Correlation Analysis

	Brand consciousness	Collectivism	Public self- consciousness	Age	Buying frequency
Brand consciousness	1				
Collectivism	.328**	1			
Public self- consciousness	.287**	.508**	1		
Age	.176*	.053	.012	1	
Buying	.149*	.141*	.127*	.029	1

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted using brand consciousness as a dependent variable. For independent variables, collectivism and public self-consciousness, as personal value variables, and age and gender, as demographic characteristics, were used for testing. The results of multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 3. All the variables together explained approximately 18 percent of the variance in brand consciousness ( $F = 13.946, p < .001$ ). With respect to the relative importance, collectivism showed the largest standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = .274, t = 3.864, p < .001$ ) followed by age ( $\beta = .234, t = 3.745, p < .001$ ) and gender ( $\beta = .232, t = 3.491, p < .001$ ). However, public self-consciousness was not significantly related to brand consciousness. Thus, H1, H3, and H4 were accepted.

**Table 3.** Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent variable	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Collectivism	.274**	3.864	13.946**	0.179
Public self-consciousness	.066	.886		
Age	.234*	3.745		
Gender	.232*	3.491		

Note: Dependent variable is brand consciousness.

\* $p < .01$  \*\* $p < .001$

**Table 4.** Simple Regression Analysis

Independent variable	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Buying	.149	2.309*	5.329*	0.18

Note: Dependent variable is brand consciousness.

\* $p < .05$

Simple regression was conducted to examine the relationship between the purchase of luxury products and brand consciousness. Brand consciousness was used for the independent variable, while frequency of buying of luxury brand goods was used as a dependent variable. Results revealed that the purchase of luxury products was significantly related to brand consciousness ( $\beta = .149, t = 2.309, p < .05$ ). Thus, H5 was accepted.

## Discussion

As mentioned in the literature review, brand consciousness is found to play a significant role in consumer behavior in collectivist cultures such as Korea and China (Hofstede 2001). Fan and Xiao (1998) also revealed brand consciousness to be the main predictor of purchasing behavior among Chinese female consumers. Thus, this research attempted to examine the determinants of Korean consumers' brand consciousness of global luxury brands. As for the results, the significant relationships between personal values such as collectivism, demographics (e.g., age and gender), and brand consciousness indicate that young Korean consumers' personal values and demographic characteristics operate as determinants of brand consciousness toward luxury fashion brands.

As a personal value, the collectivism of young Korean consumers influences their brand consciousness. In this study, collectivism was shown to be the most influential variable in terms of luxury fashion brand consciousness. Collectivism is considered a main cultural value of individuals (Yoo 2009). In collectivist cultures, as compared to individualist societies, greater emphasis is placed on the interpersonal relationships between group members and on the public reputation of members of the group to which they belong. This focus may foster higher brand consciousness among Korean consumers, who consider possession of luxury brand products to be symbolic of wealth and success. This is why international luxury retailers or marketers need to understand how important personal values are in developing brand consciousness and may wish to incorporate more references to personal cultural values into their international marketing strategies. Per-

sonal cultural values may be a very important basis for crosscultural market segmentation. In this study, although public self-consciousness was significantly correlated with brand consciousness in the simple correlation analysis, it was not a significant variable in the model when hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. These results might be explained by the power of collectivism, age, and gender to explain brand consciousness—overshadowing the importance of public self-consciousness when considered along with the other variables. Perhaps, the importance of brand names as they relate to the reputation or image of important groups—as expressed in the measure of collectivism—is more important than brand names as they relate to the self-image—as expressed in public self-consciousness.

The results of the demographic analysis offer a clearer profile of young Korean female consumers, the potential marketing targets for global luxury fashion brand marketers. Young Korean women are more brand-conscious than men, and tend to value global luxury brands as a means of showcasing their symbolic status. The results also showed that, among Korean female consumers in their 20s, the older segments were more brand-conscious than younger ones. This means that older consumers among the surveyed have had greater exposure to luxury brand advertising than their younger counterparts. Awareness of these demographic characteristics may allow international luxury marketers to develop strategies to enhance young Korean consumers' awareness of and attraction to luxury brands in the international market.

The positive relationships between brand consciousness and the buying frequency of luxury products also indicate that brand consciousness is an important variable for luxury brand purchasing. This may mean that higher brand consciousness among Korean consumers leads to their more frequent purchasing of luxury products.

The luxury brand market in Korea is growing rapidly, and also is expected to continue to grow. Heavy purchasers, that is, those who spend at least 10 million won (US\$9,300) per year on luxury goods, sustain the Korean luxury brand market (Lamb 2012). Heavy purchasers seem compelled to upgrade because the habitual purchase of luxury goods can be a practice that is difficult to discontinue. Given that more Korean women are working

full time than ever before, and are becoming the primary consumers of luxury goods, an increase in the income level of women will likely result in an increase in the consumption of luxury goods. Interest in luxury goods is also increasing among teenage girls and young women. For example, every March 14, a month after Valentine's Day, White Day is observed primarily by teenagers and young adults in Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan. For White Day, men are expected to give a gift to the women who gave them chocolates or handmade gifts on Valentine's Day. Men usually present chocolates, cookies, or jewelry to women. However, retailers suggest that men give gift sets of cosmetics from imported brands such as SK II and Lancôme, priced between 200,000 and 300,000 won (US\$190-290), or a scarf or purse from an imported luxury label. Women give their boyfriends chocolate, but they expect more than candy for White Day. According to a survey by cable channel Life Styler, women mostly prefer a handbag or jewelry as a White Day gift (Yoon 2012).

The results of this study revealed that personal cultural values play an important role in high brand consciousness. Thus, with the increasing globalization of consumer markets, global luxury marketers need to be aware of the importance of cultural values such as collectivism or public self-consciousness. To be specific, international luxury retailers or managers who want to be successful in Korean market need to understand how young Korean consumers' cultural values influence their purchasing behaviors toward luxury fashion brand products.

Another finding of this study is that individuals with high brand consciousness regard global brands as symbols of status and prestige, and prefer purchasing global luxury brands, especially in collectivist cultures, such as Korea. Thus, this study presents some suggestions for future studies as follows. Although only two personal cultural values were used—collectivism and public self-consciousness—to investigate brand consciousness in this study, other variables related to culturally specific personal values, such as face consciousness, vanity, and materialism, can be considered as factors increasing brand consciousness. As mentioned previously, individuals in collectivist cultures are more brand-conscious, which indicates that they have higher public self-consciousness compared to those in individualist

cultures. As also mentioned earlier, in collectivist cultures, brand consciousness may also be related to social face, which is interpersonal and represents the social self. Especially with the cultural influence of Confucian concepts, Koreans tend to consider face in terms of family prestige or of their significant others as well as of themselves, showing a strong face consciousness. This may lead Koreans to the consumption of well-known brand products that connote their social status or prestige. In order to gain and maintain face, Korean people in collectivist cultures may tend to prefer more global luxury brands because they tend to believe that such global luxury brands can best display their wealth and social success, and symbolically build their social reputation. Therefore, how face and cultural values such as collectivism and public self-consciousness combine to influence Koreans' brand consciousness may be the focus of a future study.

Further, the present study only used Korean samples, representing how the level of collectivism impacts brand consciousness within Korean culture. It is suggested for future studies that a crosscultural comparison be conducted to determine if there exist differences in the impact of collectivism and individualism between Eastern and Western cultures. In this study, college students with fashion- or business-related majors were the participants in the survey. Therefore, it is also proposed that future research needs to include a more diverse major sample in an effort to enhance our understanding of consumers' brand consciousness toward luxury fashion brands.

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