Ais It a Foreign Product? a Scale to Classify Products in an Era of Globalization

Jufei Kao, The City University of New York

ABSTRACT - This paper defines foreign product competence as a base to classify products in an era of globalization. Foreign product competence is the knowledge required to adopt foreign products. It includes three dimensions: (1) product cultural uniqueness, (2) language, and (3) change behavior. Foreign product competence is the antecedent of expertise and the affective involvement. It indirectly influences attitude. However, foreign product competence is not related to the cognitive involvement. The scale distinguishes those products perceived as foreign from those perceived as non-foreign. The scale's managerial implications are discussed.

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ABSTRACT
This paper defines foreign product competence as a base to classify products in an era of globalization. Foreign product competence is the knowledge required to adopt foreign products. It includes three dimensions: (1) product cultural uniqueness, (2) language, and (3) change behavior. Foreign product competence is the antecedent of expertise and the affective involvement. It indirectly influences attitude. However, foreign product competence is not related to the cognitive involvement. The scale distinguishes those products perceived as foreign from those perceived as non-foreign. The scale’s managerial implications are discussed.

PRODUCT CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT
The product classification approach is the hallmark of commodity school of marketing thought (Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett, 1988). The benefit of classifying products into homogeneous groups is that the same marketing tactics can be utilized for all products in that particular category. This approach usually provides pragmatic recommendations to marketing practitioners as well as insights to consumer behavior theory.

The bases to classify products have evolved since Copeland (1923). Based on search behavior, Copeland classified products into convenience, shopping and specialty goods. As consumer behavior theory developed, it was posited that involvement determines search behavior. Therefore, classifying products based on involvement became a better approach (Lastovicka, 1979). In high involvement cases, attitude preceded behavior; in low involvement cases, behavior preceded attitude (Rothschild, 1979). In addition to involvement, the FCB model (Vaughn, 1980, 1986; Ratchford, 1987) introduced decision mode to classify products into four groups: the high involvement/think, the high involvement/feel, the low involvement/think, and the low involvement/feel products. Hence, the bases to classify products have evolved from a tangible construct, behavior, to more abstract yet fundamental constructs, i.e. involvement and decision mode.

Recent research on involvement posits that cognitive structure is the underlying construct that determines involvement (Laaksonen, 1994). However, it has not attracted much attention to use cognitive constructs to classify products. Also, the relationship between cognitive structure and involvement is less defined. Some previous research posited that involvement influenced consumers’ motivation to attend to and comprehend information; domain knowledge affected consumers’ ability to process information (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Involvement and domain knowledge were expected to exert independent effects on consumers’ information processing. Still, other research found that involvement was positively related to domain knowledge (Sujan, 1985).

This study has two objectives. The first is to develop a scale to classify products based on cognitive constructs in an era of globalization. The second is to investigate the relationships among knowledge, involvement and cross-cultural adoption intention.

CULTURE AS SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE
Cognitive anthropology holds the notion of cultures as systems of knowledge (D’Andrade, 1984). Culture refers to the cognitive knowledge aggregated by people and accumulated over time within a culture (Resnick, 1991). A society’s culture reflects what one ought to/ought not to do to be considered as a member of the community by other members. Members learn cultural knowledge through participation in cultural group activities. The structure of cultural knowledge systems is the result of the dynamic learning process (Roth and Moorman, 1988). Hence, “culture at once is constituted and constituting (Sherry, 1986).”

Consumer good are one of the locations of cultural meaning (McCracken, 1986). Products carry a repertoire of cultural information. Cultural practices, values and beliefs are accumulated in products within a cultural group. Through consumption, consumers acquire culture (McCracken, 1986; Oswald, 1999). Brand is also a cultural symbol (Aaker & Benet-Maartinez, 2001). “The meaning embedded in brands can serve to represent and institutionalize the values and beliefs of a culture.” The dimensions of brand personality carry both specific and universal cultural meaning.

In cross-cultural consumption, consumers encounter unfamiliar products. There is little foreign product knowledge in their memory. In addition to rudimentary foreign product knowledge structure, product attributes are also not well-linked to relevant personal consequences or values. In a cross-cultural consumption decision, learning new product knowledge and updating prior knowledge are more important than retrieving existing product knowledge, consequences, or values. Therefore, this paper posits that the knowledge associated with learning the foreign products can be a base to classify products.

CONSTRUCT DEFINITION
This study defines foreign product competence as the knowledge required to adopt foreign products. Here the term “product” is used in a broad sense. It refers to any object in an exchange transaction. The object includes product categories, services, ideas, religions, customs, and brands etc. Knowledge is a complex construct. This paper is not to exhaust the list of knowledge required to adopt foreign products. However, from reviewing relevant literatures, it is hypothesized that there are three types of knowledge most relevant in foreign product adoption:

The first dimension refers to the knowledge accumulated in the foreign products that the consumers have to learn to adopt them. Knowledge is classified into declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge (Anderson, 1976), and conditional knowledge (Alexander, Schallert & Hare, 1991). Declarative knowledge refers to knowledge of facts about the products, e.g. product attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Procedural knowledge is knowledge about how to do things, e.g. how to use Windows Office 2000 software. Conditional knowledge is knowledge to make judgment about when, where or under what conditions to take proper actions, e.g. business suits are proper for corporate meetings. This dimension includes the cognitive structure associated with the foreign products. It is the product knowledge structure shared by the foreign cultural members that defines the first dimension of foreign product competence. For example, the western consumers perceive that there is specific knowledge associated with tea ceremony practiced by Japanese consumers. Because of the multidimensional property of knowledge structure, this dimension may be a multi-facet construct itself.
The second dimension is language. Language carries a repertoire of cultural knowledge (Goodenough, 1981). For example, the classification elements in language, the classifiers, provide specific schemes for classifying objects in the world. The culture classification schemes are inherent in the classifiers to organize external objects. Speakers of a language classify products differently from speakers of another language (Schmitt and Zhang, 1998). Language is also the communication media to transfer cultural knowledge, and the mediator of cultural identities (Northover, 1988). Language competence is the major dimension of bicultural competence (LaFromboise et. al., 1993). Language competence influences consumers’ cross-cultural learning and communication processes. Therefore, products that demand the proficiency of a foreign language are considered more foreign than products that do not.

The third dimension refers to the dimension of change. The ability of acquiring more than one area of expertise within adjacent or radically different fields is one dimension of professional expertise (Van der Heijden, 2000; Van der Heijden and Verhelst, 2002). Professional experts are capable of developing a strategy to master a new area of expertise, i.e. to learn faster. Van der Heijden (2000) termed these experts as “flexperts.” For example, expert computer programmers are able to respond quickly to changes in computer technology. However, novice programmers cannot bridge the gap easily. The ability to change may involve the ability to analyze information, and the ability to elaborate on given information (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). Qualitative research found that a learning pattern could be developed as bicultural competent consumers exposed to different cultures over a period of time (Kao, 2002). Although the dimension of change is not directly related to foreign product knowledge itself, it influences learning processes. The more effort necessary to bridge the foreign product knowledge with consumers’ existing knowledge, the more foreign the objects are to the consumers.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The scale development follows the procedures defined by Churchill (1979) and psychometric theory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

1. Item Generation:

Two preliminary studies were conducted for item generation. The first study was two focus groups. One consisted of 4 subjects from western countries. The other consisted of 5 subjects from eastern countries. They ranged in age from 24 to 33. In these two focus group sessions, the subjects were asked to talk about their cross-cultural product/brand consumption experience over time. This data provided longitudinal aspects of cross-cultural consumption. In the second preliminary study, 50 objects were randomly assigned to 55 undergraduate students in a business school in New York City. Each subject was shown 10 objects. These objects originated from various cultural backgrounds. For each object, the subjects answered the open-ended questions: “What do you think about the object?” “Are you willing to adopt the object? Why or why not?” The data provided cross-sectional aspects of cross-cultural consumption.

Content analysis of the two preliminary studies resulted in 10 categories: (1) product cultural knowledge: refers to intangible cultural value, knowledge or historical tradition associated with the objects. (2) Aesthetic standard: refers to cultural unique concepts of beauty. (3) Sensory flavor: refers to specific taste of food. (4) Practice/technique: refers to unique cultural practice or technique associated with the objects. (5) Language: refers to how learning the foreign language can facilitate product adoption. (6) Change of existing behavior: refers to how adopting the objects will lead to change of current habit. (7) Country image: refers to the associated country images to the objects. (8) Self-image: refers to how the objects reflect the individuals’ personality or ideal self-image. (9) Utility: refers to how the objects provide functionality. (10) Quality: refers to the perceived quality of the objects. 48 items were generated from these two preliminary studies with multiple items in each dimension.

2. Content Validity:

The 48 items were further investigated. Among them, self-image and utility were two dimensions of consumer involvement profile (CIP) (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). They were eliminated since they were involvement constructs. Quality and country image were also eliminated since they were evaluation constructs. This process resulted in eliminating 19 items. The remaining 29 items were subjected to further analysis. The scale was a 5-point Likert scale.

3. Reliability and Dimensionality:

The 29-item scale was administered to 90 undergraduate students in a business school in New York City. 17 objects were randomly assigned to the subjects. Each student was given 2 to 3 objects. Subjects were asked to indicate their home culture. Those from western countries were given objects from Asia. Those from eastern countries were given objects from the United States or Europe. If a subject had never heard of the object, s/he was not qualified to answer the questionnaire, and was given another object. After eliminating some records with non-response items, there were 118 records.

The initial 29-item scale had a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.80. However, several items were only marginally correlated with other items. Also, factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the 29 items. Initially it resulted in a 4-factor structure based on eigenvalue>1. However, the factor structure was not clear-cut. Some items were loaded on multiple factors, and their factor loading scores were low, which made the interpretation difficult. Therefore, those items that had low item-to-total correlation were removed.

With each item removed, new Cronbach alphas were calculated, and factor analyses with rotation were performed. This process continued until the model had a satisfactory Cronbach

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2The 50 objects were sushi, martial art, cola, kimchi, goat cheese, French food, cocktail, balsamic vinegar, bubble bath, dental floss, chopsticks, sashimi, Chinese food, Tamagotchi, brush calligraphy, Korean traditional clothes, fast food stores, milk, cheese fondue, frappuccino/coffee, soymilk, sake, boba milk tea, soy sauce, instant noodle, Chinese herb medicine, Daewoo, Samsung, Morning Glory, Home Depot, BMW, GOYA, Iron Chef, Hello Kitty, SONY, the Great Wall, Shanghai, Buddhism, Italy opera, Chinese opera, Broadway show, Brazil carnival, Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, American Idle, Jackie Chan, Bob Marley, Martha Stewart, Thanksgiving, Lunar New Year, and Halloween.

3The 17 objects were green tea, soymilk, chopsticks, cheese, coffee, Hello Kitty, SONY, Buddhism, the Great Wall, Jackie Chan, martial art, Daewoo, Peking opera, sushi, Chinese herb medicine, brush calligraphy, and GAP.

4American 25%, Asian 23%, Caribbean 21%, European 19%, Southern American 5%, Other 7%, Female 71%, Male 29%. 80% of them spoke a second language other than English.
alpha and non-ambiguous factor loading structure. Also, attention was paid to check if the factor structure reflected the construct definition. Aesthetic standard and sensory flavor items were loaded ambiguously among several factors, and their item-to-total correlations were low. Some of them were single-item factors. This indicated that they were trivial given other items in the model, or they were not the same constructs. These items were eventually eliminated. Also, practice/technique fused with cultural knowledge. It implied that consumers perceived them as one single dimension. This factor was renamed product cultural uniqueness.

The result of the scale purification was an 11-item scale. Further elimination of any items reduced the reliability and blurred the factor structure. The final scale had a Cronbach alpha of .88. Item to total correlations ranged from .48 to .77. The three factors accounted for 100% of the variation. The three factors are (1) product cultural uniqueness: which includes the perceived culture-specific value, culture-specific technique, and unique cultural life style. The product cultural uniqueness dimension includes both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge associated with the foreign objects. (2) Language: which refers to the ability to speak a foreign language required to adopt the foreign products. (3) Change behavior: which refers to the perceived necessity to change behavior. The three-dimension result supports the hypothesis that the foreign product competence has three facets.

### 4. A Second Sample:

To further test the reliability and validity of the scale, a second sample of 135 subjects from the same business school in New York City were recruited. In this study, the 11-item scale along with the 10-item personal involvement inventory (PII) scale (Zaichkowsky, 1994), and the 5-item consumer ethnocentrism scale (CETSCALE)5 (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) were administered to the second sample. At the same time, attitude, familiarity, and adoption intention, were measured on a 5-point scale. Each individual was randomly assigned two foreign objects. There were 9 objects6 in total. Each object cell had 27-31 subjects. After eliminating non-qualified or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Item to Total Correlation</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Product Cultural</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Change Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The object involves some unique technique that is not common in my</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.701</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The object gives me an opportunity to experience the foreign culture.</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.629</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The object involves some unusual practice that is not common in my</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The object involves some value that is not common in my culture.</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Consuming the object lets me understand the foreign cultural life-style.</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Foreign language plays an important role in learning about the</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Proficiency in the foreign language will help me understand the</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Adopting the object requires me to learn the foreign language.</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If I adopt the object, I will need to change my current routine.</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Adopting the object requires me to change my current habit.</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Adopting the object will change my life-style.</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance explained by each dimension (proportion)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha of each dimension (Cronbach alpha of the 11-item scale is .83)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5The original scale had 17 items. To ensure parsimony, only 5 items were selected based on the researcher’s judgment.
6The 9 objects were green tea, martial art, Chinese herb medicine, chopsticks, brush calligraphy, the Great Wall, coffee, jazz music, and IKEA.
missing value records, there were 266 observations. The 11-item scale had a Cronbach alpha of .83. It was lower than the first sample. Nonetheless, the factor structure remained the same as before. Table 1 summarizes the results from the second sample.

5. Convergent and Divergent Validity:
Since foreign product competence is assumed to be the antecedent of expertise, it should show convergent validity with expertise. Expertise was measured via one item, “are you familiar with the object?” Although familiarity is not the same as expertise (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987), it is an acceptable proxy of expertise in this scale development study. Also, since the foreign product competence is related to consumers’ cognitive structure, it is expected that it will have convergent validity with involvement. The 10-item PII scale was used to measure involvement. However, the PII scale measures “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests. (Zaichkowsky, 1985)” Therefore, the correlation between PII and foreign product competence should not be too high.

Further, a third construct, consumer ethnocentrism, was correlated with the existing scale as a comparison. It was measured via the 5-item CETSCALE scale. Consumer ethnocentrism refers to “the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products. (Shimp & Sharma, 1987)” Foreign product competence is much more different from ethnocentrism than from expertise and involvement. Therefore, the correlation with CETSCALE should be lower than that with familiarity or PII.

The 10-item PII scale had a Cronbach alpha of 0.92 and 2-factor structure, affective and cognitive components. The 5-item CETSCALE has a Cronbach alpha of 0.77 and one-factor structure. Table 2 summarizes the correlations. All three dimensions of foreign product competence are correlated with familiarity. Product cultural uniqueness is correlated with the affective component of involvement. Most importantly, the coefficients with CETSCALE are smaller than those with familiarity or the affective involvement. The results support the scale’s construct validity.

6. Nomological Validity:
As defined, foreign product competence includes foreign product specific knowledge, and knowledge related to communication and learning. The more foreign product competence associated with the products, the more effort required to adopting them. Therefore, the three dimensions of foreign product competence should be negatively correlated with familiarity.

H1: Familiarity is negatively correlated with product cultural uniqueness, language, and change behavior.

Also, since the current scale measures the knowledge required to adopt foreign products, it is related to the cognitive structure. Therefore, the three dimensions should be correlated with involvement.

H2: Involvement is correlated with product cultural uniqueness, language, and change behavior.

Furthermore, attitude theory posits that consumers form their attitudes based on various product related attributes and the associated values. High familiarity and high involvement lead to accessible attitudes. Therefore, familiarity and involvement should be correlated with attitude. Since foreign product competence is the antecedent of involvement, it should not be directly correlated with attitude. Therefore,
**H3.1**: Attitude is positively correlated with involvement and familiarity.

**H3.2**: Attitude is correlated with neither product cultural uniqueness, nor language, nor change behavior.

Finally, familiarity, involvement, and attitude lead to adoption intention. Since foreign product competence is the antecedent of familiarity and involvement, it is hypothesized that the three dimensions will not directly correlate with adoption intention. Therefore,

**H4.1**: Adoption intention is positively correlated with attitude, familiarity and involvement.

**H4.2**: Adoption intention is correlated with neither product cultural uniqueness, nor language, nor change behavior.

Backward/forward regression analyses were performed to test the nomological framework. Table 3 summarizes the results of the regression analyses. In the familiarity model, as predicted, the three dimensions have significant regression coefficients with familiarity. The model is significant and the coefficients are all negative.

In the involvement model, only product cultural uniqueness is related to the affective involvement, and none of the three dimensions are correlated with the cognitive involvement. The results suggest that the foreign product knowledge associated with the objects does not evoke cognitive involvement. This finding is consistent with the qualitative data from the two focus groups. The participants frequently talked about how they felt about the foreign objects, but none of them mentioned any cognitive evaluation processes.

Although the above two models are significant, the variances of these two models explained by the three dimensions are low. This is an expected result, since the antecedents of involvement are numerous, and familiarity is the consumers’ accumulated experience and exposure to the object. The current scale does not intend to include all related antecedents of involvement and familiarity. Hence, the low R² values are not crucial in judging nomological validity.

In the attitude model, as predicted, involvement and familiarity significantly influence attitude formation. Also, as expected, the three dimensions of foreign product competence do not influence attitude directly.

In the adoption intention model, attitude and familiarity, as predicted, correlate with adoption intention. However, only cognitive involvement correlates with adoption intention. Affective involvement does not have direct effect on adoption intention. Also, language and change behavior both directly contribute to adoption intention though of weaker impact. Moreover, the coefficient of change behavior is negative. Change behavior seems to be a blocking factor in cross-cultural adoption.

In sum, the result from the nomological validity analysis suggests that the three dimensions play differential roles in cross-cultural adoption decision. The data provide evidence that the three dimensions of foreign product competence are the antecedents of familiarity and involvement. Familiarity and involvement influence attitude formation. Most interestingly, only product cultural uniqueness influences the affective involvement. None of the three dimensions are related to the cognitive involvement. However, cognitive involvement directly influences adoption intention, but affective involvement does not. These findings are worthy of further investigation.

### 7. Criterion-Related Validity:

To fulfill criterion-related validity, the scale scores should be sensitive to the differences among objects. Mean factor scores of the 9 objects in the second sample were calculated. The ANOVA tests showed object effect was significant for all three dimensions. Table 4 summarizes the sample sizes, the average factor scores and standard deviations of the 9 objects.
Jazz music (0.50), martial art (0.37), and chopsticks (0.54) score high on product cultural uniqueness. These product categories are highly associated with unique cultural meaning and technique. On the other hand, the most globally marketed product categories, e.g. coffee (-0.45) and green tea (-0.70), score low on product cultural uniqueness.

Learning foreign language is important in Jazz music (0.77) and brush calligraphy (0.39). However, some product, e.g. chopsticks (-0.87), does not require proficiency in foreign language. Even a product as complicated as Chinese herb medicine (-0.10) does not require foreign language competence. This finding is consistent with the qualitative data from the focus group discussions. Some subjects mentioned that because translations of product usage instructions were readily available, they did not need to learn the foreign language to adopt the products. Although language has been reported as the most important factor in acculturation (LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton, 1993), in cross-cultural consumption, language may have weaker impact on product adoption.

Martial art (0.50) and chopsticks (0.48) score high on change behavior dimension since they require consumers to change their current regime of exercise or the way to handle food. On the other hand, visiting the Great Wall (-0.47) is just a temporary exposure to Chinese culture. It requires no change of behavior. Also, green tea (-0.40), and coffee (-0.29) score low on change behavior. Since consumers have probably already adopted these products, they do not have to change any existing behavior.

### TABLE 4
Mean (Standard Deviation) of Factor Scores by Object

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Product Cultural Uniqueness</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Change Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Tea</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-0.70 (0.68)</td>
<td>-0.36 (0.73)</td>
<td>-0.40 (0.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial Art</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.37 (0.66)</td>
<td>0.17 (0.93)</td>
<td>0.50 (0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Herb Medicine</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.75)</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.74)</td>
<td>0.29 (0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chop Sticks</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.54 (0.79)</td>
<td>-0.87 (0.43)</td>
<td>0.48 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush Calligraphy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.22 (0.73)</td>
<td>0.39 (1.04)</td>
<td>0.22 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Wall</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.72)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.71)</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-0.45 (0.84)</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.74)</td>
<td>-0.29 (0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz Music</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.50 (0.69)</td>
<td>0.77 (0.83)</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-0.25 (0.81)</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.94)</td>
<td>-0.21 (0.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F Value: **10.04*** **9.62*** **6.66***

*** significant at .001

### CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

This study defines foreign product competence to classify products in an era of globalization. Foreign product competence has three dimensions: (1) product cultural uniqueness, (2) language, and (3) change behavior. Firstly, the three dimensions have important implications in cross-cultural marketing communications. Only product cultural uniqueness is linked to affective involvement. Surprisingly, none of the dimensions of foreign product competence directly influence cognitive involvement. It suggests that affective advertising may be more effective than informative advertising in cross-cultural consumption communication. Also, language and change behavior directly influence adoption intention. These two dimensions are not directly related to product knowledge, but they facilitate learning. It suggests that simply conveying foreign product-related information to consumers may not be sufficient. Marketers need to help consumers to learn the foreign products. Moreover, change behavior has negative effect on adoption intention. Hence, in global marketing, steps should be taken to reduce the adoption barriers. Strategic focus should be on minimizing the perceived difficulty to change behavior, or on identifying creative usage that can integrate the foreign objects into consumers’ current consumption.

Secondly, the current scale provides a measure of the objects’ degree of globalization. Figure 1 plots 9 objects against product cultural uniqueness and change behavior. The size of the bubble...
represents the language dimension. The objects on the lower-left corner indicate a higher degree of globalization. Consumers perceive the objects as low in product cultural uniqueness and they do not perceive any need to change their behavior to adopt the objects. They perceive the objects as “non-foreign.” On the other hand, the objects on the upper-right corner are perceived as “foreign.” These objects are perceived to have unique cultural knowledge and require change of existing behavior.

Thirdly, figure 2 depicts the objects’ foreign product competence dimensions in triangles. These foreign product competence triangles provide a visualization of the intrinsic product characters that may influence each object’s diffusion pattern. The objects demonstrating larger triangular areas are those perceived to require higher foreign product competence to adopt. These objects demand more cultural unique knowledge, changing existing behavior and learning a foreign language. Therefore, these objects may have limited global acceptance. Martial art, brush calligraphy, and jazz music belong to this type of product. Most likely, the diffusion pattern of this type of products remains a cultural mosaic.

On the other hand, products demonstrating smaller triangular areas demand less foreign product competence to adopt, for example, coffee and green tea; these enjoy greater acceptance in the global marketplace. Most likely, these objects have become part of the converged global consumption culture.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

The relationship between knowledge and involvement is less studied. This study finds that product specific knowledge, lan-
language, and ability to change are three types of knowledge that are perceived as relevant in cross-cultural product adoption. This study also provides a plausible relationship among foreign product competence, involvement, product expertise, attitude, and adoption intention (Figure 3). Attention should be addressed to the differential roles the three dimensions of foreign product competence play in cross-cultural adoption. All three dimensions of foreign product competence are the antecedents of expertise. In turn, expertise influences attitude and adoption intention. However, only product cultural uniqueness contributes to the affective involvement. None of the three dimensions of foreign product competence are related to the cognitive involvement. In turn, cognitive involvement directly influences adoption intention, but affective involvement influence adoption intention indirectly through attitude.

On the other hand, the knowledge that is required to bridge the foreign product knowledge with the consumers’ prior knowledge, i.e. both language and change behavior, directly influence adoption intention. Future research may investigate in more detail this causal relationship via structural equation modeling.

REFERENCE


