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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Are brand benefits perceived differently in less developed economies? A scale development and validation

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Abstract The purpose of this paper is to develop a scale measuring consumers' brand benefits in less developed economies. Based on the literature, items have been generated in qualitative and quantitative studies and tested by using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The findings show that brand benefits converge into a two-factor structure (functional and symbolic) instead of three (functional, experiential and symbolic). These findings can be justified by the fact that consumers in developing economies do not have as much experience with brands as the ones from developed economies. The results also relate to previous literature findings on the topic of utilitarian and affective brand relationships. This scale can be used to advance the domain of brand benefits in a cross-cultural environment and can be employed by marketers when businesses plan to brand their products in developed economies.

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Keywords Brand benefits · Measurement scale · Functional · Utilitarian · Symbolic · Affective · Experiential · Less developed economies

Introduction

As globalization becomes more critical, multinational companies enter new markets and develop new positioning strategies. Indeed, today, branded products are competing against unbranded ones in emerging economies. Consumers in emerging and less developed economies are confronted with an array of local and international product choices that sometimes confuse them. In less developed economies, consumers are very different than their counterparts in developed ones (Doctoroff 2016). In developed economies, capitalism has resulted in post-materialistic values which consist primarily of new values of self-expression and autonomy (Inglehart 2008). Citizens are concerned about protecting freedom of speech, giving order and a right to say to consumers, markets are becoming capitalistic, and the role of institutions is still very minimal. While post-capitalism creates more hedonistic and emotional values, capitalism results in more utilitarian values (Zarantonello et al. 2013). Today, consumers from emerging markets have more spending power and, for many managers, opportunities in foreign markets are higher than domestically (Mullen et al. 2009). Between 2009 and 2014, consumer spending in less developed and developing economies has experienced a growth of up to 10%, but in 2016, the growth has been moderate to slow and is estimated to 7.4% (Euromonitor 2016). Therefore, it is essential to understand how consumers behave in emerging economies to target them with the right branding strategy. Many beliefs are taken for granted in less

developed economies and based on consumer behaviour in developed ones (Sheth 2011). As stated by Sheth (2011, p 166): "those beliefs are at odds with realities".

In developed economies, consumers rely on brand names in their purchasing behaviour (Arora et al. 2015; Granitz and Forman 2015; Rajagopal 2009); however, in less developed nations, consumers are less experienced and do not know about products and the value they are offering (Zarantanello et al. 2013). As a result, companies need to reconsider their home country strategies, which may not pertain to consumer behaviour in emerging economies (Zhang et al. 2011). That is why brand positioning must serve the needs and preferences of consumers, offering them the right value proposition based on the market (Armstrong and Kotler 2015; Bhat and Reddy 1998; Sheth 2011). In developed economies, international competition is so fierce that consumers are looking for more trustworthy relationships with brands and thus are more emotionally engaged with them (Granitz and Forman 2015; Leung et al. 2014; Wee and Ming 2003). In emerging economies, since consumers have been absent from the global market, they are then less experienced and might behave more rationally than their counterparts in developed economies (Zarantanello et al. 2013).

In developed markets, consumers are looking for iconic brands such as Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC, and Coca-Cola. They purchase products based on the association they have in their mind between the brand and the benefit or experience they have with it. A brand became more than just "a name, a term, a sign, or design", it is also an experience. Brands may evoke different benefits, functional, as well as hedonic, and consumers choose those advantages based primarily on their motivations (Park et al. 1986; Tlili 2006).

Various studies over the last few years have focused on understanding perceptions of brands, and the kind of information consumers are looking, analysing its intrinsic attributes (for example linked to product performance) as well as its extrinsic characteristics (related to its personality or history). Studies also examined brand attributes and the personal values and meanings consumers associate with benefits (for example functional, symbolic or experiential) (Biel 1997; Erdem et al. 2002; Keller 2008; Park et al. 1986; Romaniuk 2003; Rintoul et al. 2016; Wee and Ming 2003).

Even though several research papers have evoked the importance of branded products (Aaker and Fournier, 1995; Holt et al. 2004; Keller 2008; Strizhakova et al. 2008), studies have not focused understanding how a scale can differ based on the country and context in which they are used. Due to cultural differences among the various markets, it is essential to understand consumers' perceptions of brand benefits so that companies can develop the right positioning strategies. A brand that might be purchased in the United States for its experiential benefits might be bought in other markets for its functional ones. For instance, when Kellogg entered the Brazilian market, Brazilians ate Kellogg cereals as a snack rather than as breakfast and Kellogg had to inform Brazilians on how to eat cereals in the morning with cold milk (Keller 2008). Therefore, Kellogg's positioning in Brazil was mainly based on the functionality of the brand rather than on the hedonic, emotional benefits of the brand. While Apple's positioning in the United States relies on the experiential aspect of the Apple brand, its strategy has other patterns in emerging markets, because of lower purchasing power (Keller 2008). In emerging economies, only a few people can afford to purchase Apple products. It is positioned based on its functionality and considered as a luxury product, that only 1% of the population could afford to buy. It appears that brand positioning will differ based on whether the market is a developed economy or less developed one. Indeed, Zarantonello et al. (2013) compared between advertising in developed markets and less developed ones and found that the maturity of the market economy impacts persuasion methods. In developed economies, consumers take functional features as granted and look mainly for more experiential advertising (Zarantonello et al. 2013). In emerging economies, consumers are learning about new brands and are less experienced, which make them more attentive to functional and utilitarian features. Therefore, based on these differences, it is important to evaluate and find out how consumers evaluate brands in less developed economies. Most of the brand research has been conducted in the US, and industrialized economies such as Spain, France, Japan and Denmark, but very few have attempted to understand branding in less developed economies. Thus, the primary objective of our research is to develop a measurement tool that can be used by companies to help them position their brands in less developed markets. This research analyses a market that is experiencing an economic growth and is located in North Africa, Tunisia. This study will fill a gap in the literature by providing a different setting for measurement development in a different culture. The development of a culturally adapted scale is essential, considering that research found differences in response style, bias and overall response behaviour among cultures and economies (Baumgartner and Steenkamp 2001; Diamantopoulos et al. 2006; Hult et al. 2008; Zarantonello et al. 2013).

From a managerial standpoint, it is of an essence to develop a scale to measure consumers' benefits from branded products so that companies can use it for their positioning strategies in different markets. The scale can be used as a tool to be able to promote brands effectively. This study will help marketers understand how consumers view

different brands and their benefits in various markets, with distinct cultural and economic characteristics that differ from the more researched Western cultures.

This article is divided into two sections. An initial section presents the theoretical framework of branding benefits. In the second part, a scale is developed and tested to measure consumers' benefits from brands.

Brand benefits background

Research has shown the significance of branding for academia (Aaker 1997; Fournier 1998; Granitz and Forman 2015; Keller 2008; Strizhakova et al. 2008; Wee and Ming 2003) as well as for practitioners. Brands are more than just a communication tool between businesses and consumers (Franzak et al. 2014), they are also used by corporations for differentiation purposes (Dickson and Ginter 1987). They also represent a tool for growth (Keller 2009; Keller and Lehman 2009; Franzak et al. 2014) and have equity or value (Aaker 1991).

Brands have personalities and evoke excitement, sincerity, ruggedness, competence and sophistication (Aaker 1997; Visentin et al. 2013). An extensive body of research has focused on consumers' relationships with brands (Fetscherin and Heinrich 2015; Leung et al. 2014). Several studies have introduced the emotional side of brand relationships such as the concept of brand attachment (Belaid and Behi 2011; Park et al. 2010; Thomson et al. 2005). Others have looked at brand commitment (Walsh et al. 2010), brand love (Ahuvia 2005; Batra et al. 2012; Fetscherin et al. 2014), brand attributes (Rintoul et al. 2016), brand communities and their effects on brand relationships (Stokburger-Sauer 2010). In sum, brands are more than just a symbol or a sign; they are also an asset for the company and an experience generator for consumers.

Brands are used as a signal when users are missing information about a product. The consumer is acquiring information from his/her environment to clarify and evaluate cognitions related to a brand or a specific product category (Srinivasan 1990). When performing an external search, consumers can adopt two perspectives, either an economic point of view or a psychological standpoint (Srinivasan 1990). According to the cost–benefit approach, consumers are believed to be utility maximiser. Consumers will be driven in their choices by the utility provided by the product and will look at attributes such as quality and price to make their decision. In that case, consumers will search to the point where the marginal cost of search equates the marginal revenue of search (Stigler 1961). Thus, functional benefits of a brand are relevant in consumers' decision process (Park et al. 1986).

However, Grewal and Marmorstein (1994) argue that consumers sometimes will engage in considerably less price search than is predicted by the economics of information. In that case, consumers will be motivated by other features of the product such as the experiential or the symbolic aspect of it. Consumers will then look at what it feels like to consume the brand (brand experience) and take into consideration symbolic benefits (Keller 2003, 2009; Orth and De Marchi 2007; Park et al. 1986; Rossiter et al. 2014).

Researchers also found that recall for an advertised claim depends on the strength of existing brand–benefit links in consumers' memory (Heckler et al. 2014). In circumstances when consumers associate a brand with a benefit, they are also more likely to purchase the respective name (Romaniuk 2003).

In sum, consumers' benefits from purchasing products are driven by three primary sources of value (Ambler 1997; Ambroise et al. 2007, 2010; Keller 2008; Park et al. 1986): functional, experiential (pleasure) and symbolic value. The functional or utilitarian value is based on the intrinsic attributes of the brand and its economic aspects such as price, and the quality–price ratio (Keller 2008; Orth and De Marchi 2007). For the consumer, a quality product or service is one that corresponds to his/her requirements, and this determines satisfaction and renewed purchases (Oliver 1977).

Experiential value, however, corresponds to the brand's capacity to procure pleasure or amusement. Purchases are likely to be motivated by a need for entertainment, but also for exploration (testing new products, for example). Indeed, experience with the brand has to do with "what it feels like to use the product" (Orth and De Marchi 2007). Beyond the role of functionality and experience, brands also have a symbolic dimension when consumers consider the brand as a partner (Fournier 1998), or when they relate to a brand's personality (Aaker 1997). Based on the literature, most of the studies (Keller 1993; Park et al. 1986) agree that brands provide consumers with three types of benefits: Functional, symbolic and experiential. Therefore, an understanding of each benefit is outlined.

Functional benefits

Functional benefits are usually related to product attributes and the utilitarian value of the brand (Granitz and Forman 2015). These characteristics are directly related to the use of a product and are derived from the ownership of goods (Porto et al. 2011). From a cognitive standpoint, consumers associate the product class with a set of selection criteria or attributes. Functional characteristics become critical when making a decision (Porto et al. 2011).

To solve customers' problems, companies can use attributes such as safety, reliability, high quality and fast delivery to signal the functionality of the brand. As stated by Park et al. (1986, p 136): "A brand with a functional concept is defined as one designed to solve externally generated consumption needs". Many firms have been able to build their reputation based on the functionality of their brands, such as Toyota, or Dell computers (Orth and De Marchi 2007; Strizhakova et al. 2008). Research has also found that many businesses include the meaning of the product and its benefits in the name of the brand, such as Bank of China and Bed, Bath and Beyond (Arora et al. 2015). While a functional brand will mainly respond to external consumption needs, a brand with a more symbolic connotation will deal with internal needs, such as belonging to a social group. Consumers who rely on brand's functionality are usually very rational (Bhat and Reddy 1998; Iyer et al. 2016). Therefore, consumers will look for functional attributes to satisfy their choices. The quality–price relationship becomes an important decision variable for consumers. Companies will then build their brands based on that relationship and signal its functionality.

Symbolic benefits

Midgely (1983) has found that the search for information underlying individual decisions stems from the symbolic meaning related to the product. Symbolic benefits have been defined by Park et al. (1986, p 136) as the desire for the product to satisfy internal needs such as self-enhancement or group membership. Historically, researchers have been aware of the symbolic dimension of products. Indeed, Haire (1950) shows that a product such as a coffee can be purchased for its symbolic rather than its functional appeal. Similarly, Levy (1959) asserts that firms sell symbols in addition to the product and its attributes. A brand with symbolic connotations associates the individual with a desired social group and reflects his/her self-image. The intangibility of a brand communicates information about it outside of its functional benefits and represents a way to build the brand's personality (Bishnoi and Kumar 2016).

Symbolic benefits usually represent non-product-related attributes and are satisfying consumers' need for acceptance to a group (Orth and De Marchi 2007). They are more affective in nature and are related to brand attributes such as trust, security, and pride (Leung et al. 2014; Lynch and de Chernatony 2004). Symbolic benefits can also include superiority and connection to the past (Granitz and Forman 2015). Symbolic values are intangible and are usually derived from socialization processes and social interactions (Wee and Mind 2003). Firms often use social values, expressive values and terminal values as a symbolic benefit of products (Franzak et al. 2014; Orth and De Marchi 2007). Indeed, companies will use their logos everywhere to emphasize the social values and community belonging (Franzak et al. 2014). They might also use personalized features for expressive values such as Amazon (Franzak et al. 2014). Consumers will sometimes be looking for individual values such as freedom, independence as a way to satisfy their needs such as in the case of Harley-Davidson products (Franzak et al. 2014). Furthermore, consumers can also be motivated not only by the symbolic and functional features of a brand but also by its experiential elements. A brand with an experiential connotation satisfies the need for sensory pleasures, variety and cognitive stimulation.

Experiential benefits

Experiential benefits are defined "as the advantages of acquiring a product that provides sensory pleasure, change or cognitive stimulation. A brand with an experimental concept is one that meets internally generated needs for stimulation and variety" (Park et al. 1986). The experiential value of a brand comes from its hedonic and emotional benefits offered (Granitz and Forman 2015). While some researchers have highlighted the importance of symbolic meanings for products and brands, others have examined the product and brands as an experiential process (Orth and De Marchi 2007). Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) define "brand experience as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments". Companies such as Home Depot, Ikea, Build a Bear and Disney Parks are good examples of positioning themselves based on consumers' experiences. The experiential model developed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) is an attempt at establishing a conceptual framework stating that individual's experience is more important than the attributes of the product or service itself. Indeed, consumers are more driven in their decisions by their emotions and are looking for hedonic gratification, rather than just search for information for an optimal choice. The customer's primary concern is maximizing his/her pleasure of consumption and not choosing the best option to meet his/her functional needs. A consumer who adopts an experiential approach is in fact very sensitive to both subjective and symbolic features of the product or service. The experiential approach explains the process of choosing hedonic products (for example music, theatre or films) based on subjective and emotional reasons.

In sum, studies have agreed that brand benefits are functional, symbolic and experiential. Consumers, when

making their choices, may rely on one of these benefits or even use a combination of them (Park et al. 1986). However, there are branding differences across markets. These variations need to be considered by marketers when it comes to branding strategies. In newly capitalist countries, consumers are more driven in their purchasing behaviour by the functional, utilitarian values of products (Zarantanello et al. 2013). Weber (1978) characterized it by the "disenchantment" of the society or the importance of rationality in the community. In the post-materialistic society, however, or developed economies, the concept of re-enchantment is implemented where emotional and value-expressive values are the most important ones (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Inglehart 1977, 1990; Jenkins 2000; Ritzer 2005; Zarantanello et al. 2013).

Marketing researchers have found that functional ads are more persuasive in emerging markets, while experiential ads are more convincing in developed economies (Zarantonello et al. 2013). In fact, ad processing is different based on the development of the market economy. Studies have also explored store brands in emerging markets and found that consumers were avoiding them because most of their premises were based on low price rather than the quality and functionality of the brand (Herstein and Jaffe 2007). Therefore, since there are differences, it is paramount to develop the appropriate measures so that managers in less developed economies can position their brands based on consumer attitude towards them. Each of the three dimensions can be measured by generating a multi-item scale, which can benefit branding research, especially in a cross-cultural context. It is with this background in mind that we attempted to develop a scale to measure each of these dimensions.

Methodology

To develop the scale, we conducted focus groups, gathered expert opinions and distributed a survey (Hair et al. 2010). Cross-cultural data were used to create the new scale of measurement, and multiple statistical analyses were employed to ensure the creation of a reliable and valid instrument. The study was conducted in Tunisia, located in North Africa, an emerging economy

Focus groups

To generate items for the scale, a focus group of 12 students has been used (Churchill 1979; Gerbing and Anderson 1988). Each one of the students described the benefits that they were looking for when choosing brands for any product category. Also, for each product category, participants were asked to name brands with which they were familiar in that product category, as well as their benefits. We took into consideration different product categories by including products with functional and hedonic features (Yeung and Wyer 2004). Then, a set of generated items were submitted to three marketing researchers to evaluate the items' representativeness of each construct. Each expert was given a description of each dimension (functional, symbolic and experiential) and asked to sort items into three groups. Any item classified as representing any of the dimensions by all three judges was kept for further analysis. After these steps, 19 items were selected to express the benefits sought by consumers when choosing brands. Thus, content analysis allowed us to generate 19 items. An exploratory factor analysis and a CFA were then performed to develop the final scale (Table 1).

Exploratory factor analysis

Initial quantitative analyses were conducted to purify the measures and provide an initial examination of the scale psychometrics properties.

A sample of 270 undergraduate students from Tunisia (70% female and 30% male) were invited to participate. The choice of a sample of students is mainly justified by a search for a homogeneous sample, primarily with regard to understanding the items. Moreover, this study is part of a theoretical application (Calder et al. 1981). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). Interviewers approached the respondents, explained the nature of the survey and conducted the interview through a structured questionnaire. The survey was administered in French since the Tunisia is a French-speaking country.

Surveys were analysed using principal components analysis (PCA) to identify brand benefits' dimensions (Churchill 1979; De Vellis 1991; Hollebeek et al. 2014). The first two factors accounted for 47.17 and 16.62% of the total variance, respectively. The initial PCA was rotated using the Varimax rotation. Table 2 represents factor loadings, Eigenvalues and explained variance.

Based on the results, five items represent brand functional benefit (0.62–0.69) on the first rotated factor, and six items represented both affective and symbolic benefits together loaded highly on the second factor (0.58–0.69). Based on PCA, brand benefits are composed of two dimensions, including eleven items, with an Eigenvalue higher than one, which explains 63.79% of the total variance.

The first dimension includes functional items that describe the brand's quality. The second dimension

Table 1 List of generated items

Code	Item
FUNC1	**People buy this brand for its utility**[a]
FUNC2	This brand solves many problems in my daily life
FUNC3	**This brand offers more functionalities than the others**
FUNC4	**This brand is more expensive than the others in terms of costs**
FUNC5	People buy this brand for its functional performances
FUNC6	**I buy this brand because it is known for its quality**
FUNC7	This brand is very helpful for those who possess it
FUNC8	I buy this brand because it's sturdy
FUNC9	**I buy this brand because it lasts a long time**
AFFE1	I buy this brand because it's very attractive
AFFE2	**This brand offers comfort and emotional security**
AFFE3	Possessing this brand provides pleasure
AFFE4	**I am always happy to possess this brand**
SYMB1	**Possessing this brand is a means of expressing myself**
SYMB2	Possessing this brand allows me to be unique and different from others
SYMB3	People buy this brand to express themselves
SYMB4	**People possess this brand so they can identify with those who possess it already**
SYMB5	**Possessing this brand is prestigious**
SYMB6	**Wearing this brand offers access to a certain social status**

[a] The items in bold were selected after the items generation phase

Table 2 Factor structure for the brand benefits scale

Items	Dimensions	
	Functional	Affective/experiential
FUNC1	0.826	
FUNC3	0.818	
FUNC4	0.809	
FUNC6	0.740	
FUNC9	0.715	
AFFE2		0.757
AFFE4		0.744
SYMB1		0.791
SYMB4		0.690
SYMB5		0.810
SYMB6		0.781
Variance explained as %	47.17	16.62
Eigenvalues	5.23	1.7
Cumulative variance as %	63.79	
Cronbach's alpha	0.83	0.79

includes items that represent emotional and experiential benefits evoked by brands. These results were consistent regardless of product category. Two dimensions rather than three were used to choose brands.

We then conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. A questionnaire was administered to 330 undergraduate students in Tunisia (65% female and 35% male, age 21–25).

Table 3 Confirmatory factor analysis and validity

Item	Standardized loadings	AVE
FUNC1	0.78	0.66
FUNC3	0.83	
FUNC4	0.83	
FUNC6	0.82	
FUNC9	0.79	
AFFE2	0.65	0.61
AFFE4	0.78	
SYMB1	0.80	
SYMB4	0.79	
SYMB5	0.73	
SYMB6	0.81	

The remaining 11 items described above were analysed using confirmatory factor analysis (using Amos 8.3). Table 3 summarizes the results.

Measurement model

Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed (Hair et al. 2010). The constructs exhibited a Cronbach alpha higher than 0.7 (Table 2) (Hair et al. 2010). Convergent validity for all constructs was established since loadings were higher than 0.5 (Hair et al. 2010). To assess discriminant validity, we compared our

scale to two other scales that have to do with brand attachment and brand familiarity (Table 2). The correlations between items of any two constructs should be lower than the square root of the average variance shared by items within the construct (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed since the latent variable shares more variance with its own measures than with any other (Fornell and Larcker 1981) or, in other words, the average variance extracted is higher than the square root correlation with another construct all average variance extracted exceeded 0.5 which is an acceptable cut-off.

Our results are summarized in the following table.

Structural model

The structure was confirmed. Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validities were examined. We also calculated reliability coefficients (Hollebeek et al. 2014; Jöreskog 1971). Table 4 summarizes the obtained fit indices.

The set of indices selected shows that the theoretical model fits the empirical data. They are indeed higher than the recommended critical thresholds.

The examination of the primary indices (NFI, IFI and CFI) shows that the model we tested here has a better fit than any other model, more restrictive, one regarding the "null" or "independent" model (Bentler and Bonett 1980). Finally, to study the parsimony of the brand benefits scale, we opted for two indices (normed χ^2 and PNFI). The values displayed by these indices show that the model is parsimonious.

Discussion, conclusion and future research

The study produced a two-dimensional scale consisting of 11 items. The first dimension consists of five items that characterize the brand regarding its functional performance. The second dimension has an experiential and affective connotation that highlights a desired social status achieved through the ownership of the brand or the pleasure that possession provides.

Therefore, the choice of a brand in a less developed economy, unlike in developed ones would depend on the functional performance or the capacity to facilitate self-expression by offering signs contributing to a sense of comfort and self-confidence. The brand would transmit messages highlighting either performance or the need for belonging, recognition and self-realization.

This scale has been developed according to standards recommended in the literature to produce "good measures" (Crié 2005). Within the same product category, brands offer functional benefits linked to their performance. These benefits correspond to the product's functional, physical or practical performance and are derived from its tangible attributes. Other perceptions reflect benefits that are much more emotional. Unlike previous studies in the field, the experiential benefit was not distinguished from the symbolic benefit. Respondents assimilated these two categories with a single one that they distinguished from the functional benefit. Even though the theoretical framework reveals three types of associations of brand benefits, this distinction did not emerge during our empirical study since symbolic and experiential benefits merged as one dimension.

These results can be explained in part by the nature of the products and brands used in the study. We were careful to take into consideration products that respond to functional motivations and others focused on hedonic needs. We did not consider services for which the experiential perspective is much more evident. Also, the reason for these findings might be explained by the fact that in less developed economies, consumers do not have the same experience with products as the way it is in advanced economies (Atsmon et al. 2012). Research has indicated that consumers in early stages of market capitalism behave rationally and tend to pay attention to products' utility and functionality rather than experiential values (Zarantonello et al. 2013). Studies have found that consumers' lack of knowledge about products and brand differentiation in the global market is the reason for which they are usually persuaded by functional advertising rather than experiential ones (Zarantonello et al. 2013). In emerging economies, some consumers are buying international brands for the first time because either the brand has just entered the country or their spending power has just improved and allowed them to try the product (Atsmon et al. 2012). Therefore, it seems that experiential benefits are more prominent in developed economies rather than less developed one unless the brand has existed in the market for a long time. Moreover, in the context of affective and utilitarian brand relationships, previous research found that utilitarian brand relationships are better since they increase the chances of the brand being considered, perceptions of

Table 4 Fit indices for the brand benefits scale

Indices	Normed χ^2	CFI	RMSEA	NFI	GFI	IFI	RMR	PNFI
Values	41.87/18 = 2.326	0.97	0.063	0.96	0.97	0.98	0.036	0.57

the brand's uniqueness and a consumer's propensity to pay more for the brand (Leung et al. 2014).

This study produced a two-dimensional scale consisting of 11 items. The first dimension consists of five items that characterize the brand regarding its utilitarian performance. The second dimension has a symbolic and affective connotation that highlights a desired social status achieved through the ownership of the brand or the pleasure that possession provides.

This study contributes to branding research by formulating a measurement scale to assess consumers' perceived benefits from brands and the types of benefits they receive. This helps researchers to measure consumers' perceptions regarding the nature of the benefits that brands provide in different cross-cultural environments. It also represents the base for future studies that can analyse consumers' brand benefits in a different context and relation to various individual and brand-related variables.

These findings also show that brands are being purchased for their functional and symbolic benefits rather than for their experiential ones. This is a critical finding from a strategic point of view. Indeed, brand managers can use this scale to understand how consumers categorize different brands and develop the right communication strategies. The empirical results suggest that managers should focus on two benefits in less developed economies (utilitarian and symbolic) since foreign brands have not entered the market until recently.

Therefore, the choice of a brand would depend on its utilitarian performance or its capacity to facilitate self-expression by offering signs contributing to a sense of comfort and self-confidence. The brand would transmit messages highlighting either performance or the need for belonging, recognition and self-realization. It seems relevant for managers to measure the latter's perceptions regarding the nature of the benefits that their brands provide and so position themselves accordingly. Their communication strategies should also take these measures into consideration. Despite the results, this study has some limitations that are worth pointing out. The use of an ad hoc sample, the nature of a sample consisting exclusively of students, as well as the sample size can constitute an initial category of limitations. The number of product categories and the nature of the products form the second one. Considering the purpose of this study, several possibilities for future research appear to emerge. The scale could be tested with other product categories and in other cultural contexts to confirm its psychometric stability. Our results could be confirmed with a larger sample, consisting of a more heterogeneous group of consumers, using other product categories with different levels of involvement and brand awareness. Questionnaires could be administered with consumers that are making purchases at the point of sale. A final option for future research would consist in determining the response styles of the people questioned to consider their effect on their answers and, consequently, on the psychometric qualities of measurement scales.

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