

The relationship between individual-level culture and consumer decision-making styles through consumer involvement

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1 Introduction

The Antecedents-Involvement-Consequences (A-I-C) model is seen as a theoretical tool for understanding consumer behaviour (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1993). This model provides the basis for a conceptual framework that includes consumer involvement as the central component positioned between two sets of related variables, namely antecedents and consequences (Mittal and Lee, 1989).

There is a growing body of research indicating that culture constitutes the broadest and most pervasive influence on consumer behaviour (Hawkins et al., 2007). Culture is viewed as the collective programming of the hands, hearts and minds, which distinguishes groups of individuals from each other, often reported in national settings (Hofstede, 2001). Culture is, however, not confined to the national level but is an integral part of the individual consumer (de Mooij, 2011; Sharma, 2010). In this regard, individual-level culture is described as the personal cultural orientations (Yoo & Donthu, 2005). Centred on a system of societal values affected by norms and standards shared by the majority of the population, personal cultural orientations are the result of learning which occurs through the interaction between an individual and their social environment (Yoo in Zhang et al., 2013).

The influence of culture on consumer behaviour is particularly apparent when considering the affect of national culture on consumer decision-making styles (Leng

and Bothelo, 2010; Leo et al., 2005). However, the impact of culture on consumer decision-making styles is not just limited to the national level. Indeed, research conducted by Zhang et al. (2013) determined that consumers with different self-construals, defined by Markus and Kitayama (in Zhang *et al.*, 2013) as “one’s conception of oneself or one’s self-image”, which is the individual-level dimension of the national individualism-collectivism dimension, adopted different decision-making styles.

Another determinant that is considered to be central in affecting consumer behaviour is consumer involvement (Broderick, 2007). Defined as “a motivational variable reflecting the extent of personal relevance of the decision to an individual in terms of basic goals, values and self-concept” (Gabbott and Hogg, 1999), consumer involvement is considered to have a causal effect, influencing the extent or complexity of decision processes (Gabbott and Hogg, 1999; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). It is, however, not only the decision-processes which are influenced by consumer involvement but, as with culture, consumer decision-making styles as well.

Since the empirical evidence on the relationship between individual level culture and consumer decision-making, as well as the role of consumer involvement in the relationship between culture and decision-making is scarce, the purpose of this study is to establish the nature of these relationships based on the theoretical underpinnings of the A-I-C model. The main contributions of this study are twofold: First, the direct relationship between individual-level culture and consumer decision-making. This relationship will be examined by applying the national cultural dimension of masculinity-femininity (as the antecedent to consumer involvement) at

the individual level. In this regard, individual-level culture is represented by two independent personal cultural orientations, namely masculinity and gender equality (Sharma, 2010). Masculinity-femininity was selected because of its relation to consumer involvement (Broderick, 2007; Hofstede, 2001). Next, the direct relationship between masculinity and gender equality with consumer decision-making styles can be determined. In this regard, two consumer decision-making styles were selected for the purpose of this study, namely brand loyalty and brand consciousness (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). These two decision-making styles were selected due to the known connection between these brand styles and the other constructs in this study, namely culture and/or involvement (Bauer et al., 2006; Correia et al., 2011; Leng and Botelho, 2010). The proposed individual-level examination addresses the 'ecological fallacy' where previous studies used a national-level culture measurement when wanting to assess individual-level behaviour (Bond, 2002; De Mooij, 2011; Sharma, 2010; Venaik and Brewer, 2013). This is especially important given the heterogeneous nature of sub-cultures found today within nations (Yoo in Zhang et al., 2013).

Second, the conceptual framework will be applied by linking consumer involvement to personal cultural orientations (the individual-level antecedent), and consumer decision-making styles (as a consequence). This will enable us to determine the indirect relationship between individual-level culture and decision-making through consumer involvement.

The results of the study were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that the relationship between

personal cultural orientations and consumer decision-making styles was largely indirect, through consumer involvement, rather than direct, supporting the A-I-C model.

The findings of the study determined that there is a relationship between personal cultural orientations and consumer decision-making styles. Here, the statistical and practical significance of the relationships vary. Furthermore, the antecedent role of cognitive involvement on affective involvement was supported in this study. Lastly, it was determined that there is a relationship between consumer involvement and consumer decision-making styles, although, again, the statistical and practical significance of the relationships vary.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: first, a brief review of the relevant literature as well as the conceptual framework is provided. Next, the research method is discussed, followed by the research results and their implications for managers. Finally, the paper concludes with a brief discussion of the limitations associated with the study together with some recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

The literature review is structured according to the A-I-C model underpinning the study. On the one hand, the importance of consumer involvement (as the central component) in explaining consumer behaviour (as the consequence) has been highlighted for many years (Bienstock and Stafford, 2006; Broderick and Mueller, 1999; Mittal and Lee, 1989; O’Cass, 2000). On the other hand, researchers mention

that any conceptualisation of consumer involvement must also take cognisance of its motivating factors or antecedents (Gabbott and Hogg, 1999; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). In this regard, the A-C component will be considered first, followed by the consideration of the role of consumer involvement, addressing the A-I, I and I-C components of the conceptual framework.

2.1 Personal cultural orientations

The consumer decision-making process is affected by many different factors and determinants, both internal and external to the consumer (Blackwell et al., 2006). One of these determinants is culture (Karami et al., 2017). In and amongst the vast quantity of research conducted in studying culture, the most influential has been the work undertaken by Hofstede (Craig and Douglas, 2012). Indeed, Hofstede's 'five dimensions of national culture model' is the most widely accepted classification of national culture today (Craig and Douglas, 2012; De Mooij, 2011) and the overwhelmingly dominant culture metric (Yoo et al., 2011). The five dimensions of Hofstede's model include individualism-collectivism, power distance, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation (Fischer and Poortinga, 2012; Hofstede, 2001; Sharma, 2010; Venaik and Brewer, 2013).

It is noted in the literature that the characteristics of national-level constructs cannot simply be projected onto individuals however convenient that may be. The reason being the increasing evidence of the diversity of cultural values found amongst individuals within societies (Sharma et al., 2016). Indeed, Sharma (2010) highlights

the importance of personal values or beliefs in determining cultural orientations and sets about extending Hofstede's (2001) framework. He reconceptualised the five nation-level cultural dimensions as 10 individual-level personal cultural orientations (Sharma, 2010).

This study measured the national cultural dimension of masculinity-femininity at the individual-level by means of two independent personal cultural orientations reconceptualised by Sharma (2010), namely masculinity and gender equality. In this regard, masculinity is the extent to which values within a society represent masculine characteristics, while gender equality is the extent to which the two genders are considered to be equal in terms of, for example, their social roles (Sharma, 2010). As mentioned before, this cultural dimension (masculinity-femininity) was selected because of its relation to consumer involvement (Broderick, 2007). In terms of the A-I-C model, these personal cultural orientations were treated as antecedents in the conceptual framework.

2.2 Consumer decision-making styles

There is an underlying belief that all consumers adopt basic styles to cope with complex decision-making when, for example, shopping (Durvasula et al., 1993; Lysonski et al., 1996). In this regard, consumer decision-making styles are defined by Sproles (1985) "as a patterned, mental cognitive orientation towards shopping and purchasing, which consistently dominates the consumer's choices."

For the purpose of this study, brand loyalty and brand consciousness were selected as the decision-making styles; mainly because they identified two different mental orientations when choosing brands. For example, brand loyalty relates to a brand-loyal consumer orientation together with habitual decision-making, while brand consciousness relates to price-quality consumer orientation and a penchant for purchasing expensive, well-known brands (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). Another reason for selecting these two styles was because of their known connection with the other constructs in this study, namely culture and/or involvement (Bauer et al., 2006; Correia et al., 2011; Leng and Botelho, 2010).

When considering the various direct relationships to be explored between personal cultural orientations and consumer decision-making styles, the discussion starts with the masculinity-femininity dimension as represented at the individual level by masculinity and gender equality. First, consumers whose decision-making style can be characterised as brand loyal have typically adopted a particular brand which they are likely to purchase on a habitual basis (Sproles and Kendall; 1986). There is, however, evidence that consumers who can be defined as masculine are unlikely to demonstrate ongoing commitment (or loyalty) to a particular brand (Mitchell and Rodgers et al. in Broderick, 2007; Sharma, 2010). Whereas these individuals are likely to purchase products that reflect their status and success (De Mooij, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Sharma, 2010) they are unlikely to show either brand loyalty or habitual decision-making (Steenkamp et al. in Broderick, 2007). From this it is

conceivable that a negative relationship might exist between masculinity and brand loyalty, and the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₁: There is a negative relationship between masculinity and brand loyalty

Similarly, a relationship was expected to exist between masculinity and brand consciousness. This was because a brand-conscious consumer-orientation relates to the preference of buying expensive, well-known brands indicative of the masculinity-femininity dimension of national culture which values status as a means of demonstrating success (de Mooij, 2004; Hofstede, 2001). At the individual level, masculinity too is characterised by masculine values (Sharma, 2010). Therefore, consumers who demonstrate a high degree of masculinity will attempt to demonstrate their material success through the consumption of expensive luxury products and services (Steenkamp et al. in Sharma, 2010). From the evident relationship between masculinity and brand consciousness, the following hypothesis was postulated:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between masculinity and brand consciousness

In addition to masculinity, gender equality was considered the second personal cultural element in the masculinity-femininity dimension measurement at an individual level. At a national level, cultures described as having a feminine orientation have been characterised as having a preference for relationships and the purchasing of products and services for use rather than status (De Mooij, 2004; Hofstede, 2001). Similarly, at the individual level, an increase in gender equality is

often accompanied by a decrease in an individual's motivation for social status (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Considering that, as stated previously, a likely negative relationship exists between a consumer's status and their loyalty towards products, as determined by Steenkamp et al. (in Broderick, 2007), it was conceivable that a positive relationship should exist between gender equality and brand loyalty, and the study hypothesises that:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between gender equality and brand loyalty

Further, with regard to brand consciousness, this consumer orientation equates price to quality which favours the purchasing of expensive, well-known brands. In terms of the cultural dimension of gender equality, the importance of status, as mentioned above, decreases with greater gender equality (Sharma, 2010; Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Therefore, consumers scoring high on this dimension are unlikely to value personal achievement or material success. As such, it will be unlikely for these consumers to purchase products that reflect the dominance of self-ego and status cues, which are characteristic of masculine societies (Sharma, 2010). It was therefore hypothesised that:

H₄: There is a negative relationship between gender equality and brand consciousness

Once the direct A-C relationship within the A-I-C model had been considered and theoretically supported, the role that consumer involvement (which represents the 'I' in the A-I-C model) was considered. In terms of the 'A-C' component, the study will

extend previous research undertaken by researchers including Correia et al. (2011), Leng and Botelho (2010), Leo et al. (2005), Podrug (2011) and Zhang et al. (2013) on the relationship between culture, at primarily the national level, and decision-making at the individual level.

2.3 Consumer involvement

In terms of the 'A-I' component, this study will broaden the work undertaken by Sharma (2010) in attempting to understand different facets of culture and their impact on consumer behaviour. This study has responded to Sharma's (2010) recommendation to explore the effects of personal cultural orientations on important outcome variables including consumer involvement. A consumer's level of involvement does not, according to Laurent and Kapferer (1985), systematically lead to the difference in behaviours. According to these authors, behaviours also depend on the antecedents or sources of involvement. Critically, just as understanding that the different sources of involvement is important, so too is understanding the different types of involvement, for the word 'involvement' is rarely used alone (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). In this regard, Broderick (2007), in defining a nomological network of involvement, identified four basic types of involvement. The first two types of consumer involvement describe affective motivational states, namely enduring and situational involvement. The second describe cognitive motivational states, namely risk and normative involvement. This study focused on normative (cognitive) and enduring (affective) involvement since there is evidence of positive relationships between these involvement levels and masculinity-femininity, at least at the national level (Broderick, 2007).

When considering involvement as part of the A-I-C model, several direct relationships are evident. These include the relationships between personal cultural orientations and consumer involvement, then between the types of consumer involvement, and finally between consumer involvement and the consumer decision-making styles. First, the direct relationship between masculinity and gender equality with normative involvement was considered. It can be deduced that this relationship may be present at an individual level as well. For masculinity, this relationship was expected to be positive because findings from a study by Sharma (2011) show that a masculine orientation relates to the symbolic value of products and their ability to provide pleasure, therefore linking with normative involvement in its association with the level of arousal causing personal relevance (Broderick, 2007; Broderick et al., 2007). For gender equality, this relationship was expected to be negative because gender equality generally decreases for values related to power, achievement and security (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between masculinity and normative involvement

H₆: There is a negative relationship between gender equality and normative involvement

In terms of the 'I' component, the study will apply Broderick's (2007) nomological framework of consumer involvement extending the value of the framework. The second direct relationship involving consumer involvement was the relationship between normative involvement and enduring involvement, also referred to as product involvement. Findings from two previous research studies concluded that

normative involvement describes a cognitive involvement stage, with enduring involvement representing the output of the cognitive stage, described as a felt involvement stage (Broderick, 2007; Mittal and Lee, 1989). In this regard, normative involvement directly influences the level of enduring involvement, considering the importance of the product class in relation to, for example, a consumer's values (Broderick, 2007). Arising from these considerations it was proposed that:

H₇: There is a positive relationship between normative involvement and enduring involvement

In terms of the 'I-C' component, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge with regard to consumer involvement as a construct influencing consumer behaviour and, in particular consumer decision-making styles. As suggested by Bauer et al. (2006) and Gupta et al. (2010), this study will further explore the discovered relationship that involvement has an important role on the decision-making styles that consumers' exhibit. The final set of direct relationships relates to enduring involvement with both brand loyalty and brand consciousness. Enduring or product involvement reflects a consumer's orientation that is associated with not only prior purchases (Houston and Rothschild, 1978), but also with centrally-held values to which the product is relevant (Bloch and Richins, 1983, Houston and Rothschild, 1978, Zaichkowsky, 1986). Enduring feelings of involvement in a product are translated into attitudinal and behavioural responses that are ongoing or long-lasting (Bloch and Richins, 1983). Indeed, according to Bauer et al. (2006) and Gupta et al. (2010), product involvement has an important influence on consumer decision-making styles. In this regard, both Bauer et al. (2006) and Gupta et al. (2010) found

a positive relationship between enduring involvement and brand loyalty. It was therefore posited that:

H₈: There is a positive relationship between enduring involvement and brand loyalty

Bauer et al. (2006) determined that a negative relationship exists between price-value consciousness and product involvement, where price-value consciousness relates to the search for the lowest price amongst products of a similar quality. Also reflecting a price-quality orientation albeit it focussed on expensive, well-known brands, it was conceivable that there would be a positive relationship between brand consciousness and enduring involvement. This notion is reflected in the following hypothesis:

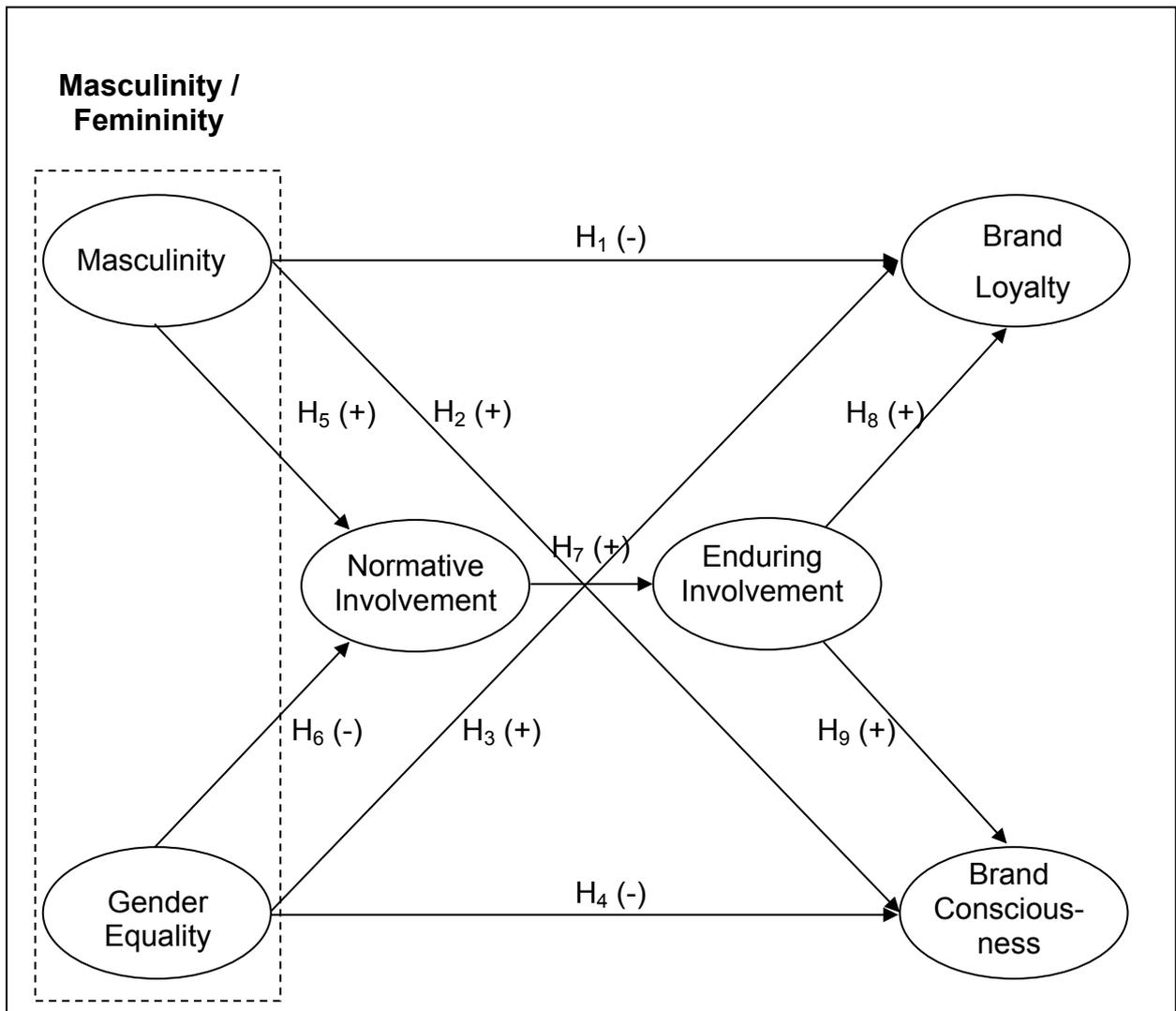
H₉: There is a positive relationship between enduring involvement and brand consciousness

As a final step in the A-I-C model, and following the results of the hypotheses testing, this study also aimed to explore the nature of these relationships by considering both the indirect- and total effects.

3. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework employed for the purpose of this study is shown in Figure 1 and is based on the Antecedents-Involvement-Consequences (A-I-C) model described by Flynn and Goldsmith (1993) as mentioned earlier. This model was

Figure 1 Path diagram



selected as it draws on earlier frameworks developed to explain consumer involvement, including the forms of consumer involvement as well as its sources and effects (Bloch and Richins, 1983; Houston and Rothschild, 1978; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; Mittal and Lee, 1989). The antecedents for this study in the conceptual framework (namely the 'A' in the A-I-C model) are represented by the masculinity-femininity dimension of national-level culture, which is measured on an individual level by means of masculinity and gender equality. The involvement element (the 'I' in the A-I-C model) is represented by normative involvement which, in turn, impacts enduring involvement. Finally, consequences in the conceptual framework (the 'C' in the A-I-C model) are represented by two styles of consumer decision-making associated with choosing brands, namely brand loyalty and brand consciousness.

4. Research method

4.1 Data collection and measurement instrument

Data was collected by a technology-driven research company via their online panel. This online panel dynamically leverages third-party applications and websites, and for the purpose of this study, applied non-probability quota sampling with an equal distribution between male and female respondents. A self-administered questionnaire was used for primary data collection which is consistent with the deductive research approach employed for the purpose of the achieving the

objectives of the study. The survey was completed by respondents residing in South Africa, who were 21 years of age or older and responsible for purchasing their own clothing. A realised sample of 814 respondents was obtained with an equal distribution between males and females.

The main part of the questionnaire consisted of three sections, each focusing on one of the elements of the A-I-C model. All the multi-item scales used a 7-point Likert-type response format ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. First, personal cultural orientations, more specifically masculinity and gender equality, were adapted from Sharma (2010), each consisting of four items. The two consumer decision-making styles, brand loyalty and brand consciousness were adapted from Sproles and Kendall (1986) and consisted of four and six items respectively. Consumer involvement was measured using a combination of the International Consumer Involvement scale (Broderick, 2007) and the Consumer Involvement Profiles scale (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Both involvement constructs consisted of four items each. Table 1 summarises the list of scale items with its original source citation.

Non-response bias was addressed through proper design of the survey, using an established research firm to host and conduct the survey, to limit the completion time of the survey, and to make respondents aware that the survey can be completed anonymously and confidentially. In instances where respondents did withdraw from completing the survey, the entire survey was discarded.

Table 1 Constructs and measurement items

| Personal Cultural Orientations | | | Source | |
|---------------------------------|------|---|---|---|
| Masculinity | MAS1 | Women are generally more caring than men | Adapted from Personal Cultural Orientations scale (Sharma, 2010) | |
| | MAS2 | Men are generally physically stronger than women | | |
| | MAS3 | Men are generally more ambitious than women | | |
| | MAS4 | Women are generally more modest than men | | |
| Gender Equality | GE1 | It is all right for men to be emotional sometimes | | |
| | GE2 | Men do not have to be the sole breadwinner in a family | | |
| | GE3 | Men can be as caring as women | | |
| | GE4 | Women can be as ambitious as men | | |
| Consumer Decision-making Styles | | | | Source |
| Brand Loyalty | BL1 | I do not regularly change the clothing brands I buy | | Adapted from Consumer Styles Inventory scale (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). |
| | BL2 | I go to the same stores each time I shop for branded clothing | | |
| | BL3 | I have favourite clothing brands I buy over and over | | |
| | BL4 | Once I find a clothing brand I like, I stick with it | | |
| Brand Consciousness | BC1 | The well-known clothing brands are best for me | | |
| | BC2 | The most advertised clothing brands are usually very good choices | | |
| | BC3 | The more expensive clothing brands are usually my choices | | |
| | BC4 | The higher the price of the brand of clothing, the better its quality | | |
| | BC5 | Good quality stores offer me the best clothing brands | | |
| | BC6 | I prefer buying the well-known clothing brands | | |
| Consumer Involvement | | | Source | |
| Normative Involvement | NI1 | Buying branded clothing helps me express my personality | Adapted from International Consumer Involvement (ICI) scale (Broderick, 2007) and Consumer Involvement Profiles scale (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). | |
| | NI2 | I can tell a lot about a person by the brand of clothing he or she buys | | |
| | NI3 | The branded clothing I buy reveals a little bit about me | | |
| | NI4 | The clothing brands I buy give a glimpse of the type of person I am | | |
| Enduring Involvement | EI1 | I have a strong interest in branded clothing | | |
| | EI2 | I attach great importance to branded clothing | | |
| | EI3 | I enjoy buying branded clothing | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|--|--|
| | E14 | Buying branded clothing is like buying a gift for myself | |
|--|-----|--|--|

Finally, in order to limit the possible negative effects of common method variance, the following remedies, as suggested by MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), were incorporated when designing and structuring the questionnaire including labelling all response options, avoiding the inclusion of double-barrelled questions and minimising the overall length of the questionnaire.

4.2 Data analysis

This study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to explore the hypothesised relationships. Since this method is exploratory in nature, focussing on the extension of existing structural theory, it was ideal to explore the relationships between the variables in the A-I-C framework. In addition, PLS-SEM could accommodate the complexity of the structural model (comprising six constructs and 21 indicators), the constrained sample size and, the non-normal distribution of the data since it is a distribution free method (Hair et al., 2011; Sarstedt et al., 2014). In this regard, following an assessment of common method variance, both the measurement and structural models were analysed.

5. Testing the model

5.1 Assessment of common-method variance

Given that both independent and dependent measures obtained from a common source were used in this research study, common-method variance could bias the findings despite the remedies incorporated in designing and structuring the

questionnaire. In order to assess method bias, one of the most widely used techniques was employed, namely Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). From the exploratory factor analysis undertaken on the raw data collected for this study, more than one factor emerged, while the factor that accounted for the majority of the variance, accounted for only 33.63% of the variance among the measures. The results, therefore, indicate that common-method variance does not appear to be a serious concern in this study.

5.2 Assessment of the measurement model

The first step was to analyse the measurement model using a reflective approach to assess convergent validity, composite reliability and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent validity was assessed by firstly, determining the outer loadings of the indicators and secondly, the average variance extracted (AVE) of a specific construct. Three items were eliminated as they did not meet the minimum threshold levels of 0.70 for standardised outer loadings and 0.50 for AVE values (Hair et al., 2017). These items were: GE3 (Men can be as caring as women), MAS1 (Women are generally more caring than men), and MAS2 (Men are generally physically stronger than women).

Next, in terms of assessing composite reliability (CR), the values varied between 0.70 and 0.90, which are considered to be satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017). Finally, in terms of assessing discriminant validity, a Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations test was undertaken. This approach is considered to be more sensitive and, therefore, more reliable in detecting a lack of discriminant reliability compared to

the Fornell-Larcker criterion or the examination of cross-loadings (Hensler et al., 2015). The results of this test indicated that the value of the HTMT between the indicators of the brand consciousness and enduring involvement constructs, which was 0.871, exceeded the threshold value of 0.85 suggested by Hensler et al. (2015) indicating a lack of discriminant validity. As the HTMT ratio is the average of the heterotrait-heteromethod correlations relative to the average of the monotrait-heteromethod correlations, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between the items measuring these two constructs. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed that item BC1 (The well-known clothing brands are best for me) correlated highly with items EI1 (I have a strong interest in branded clothing) ($r=0.668$) and EI2 (I attach great importance to branded clothing) ($r=0.614$). Also, item BC6 (I prefer buying the well-known clothing brands) correlated highly with items EI1 ($r=0.671$), EI2 ($r=0.609$) and EI3 (I enjoy buying branded clothing) ($r=0.629$). Based on these correlation results, items BC1 and BC6 were excluded from the measurement model to improve the HTMT ratio between the two constructs. The results of the HTMT test for the modified measurement model are provided in Table 2, suggesting sufficient evidence of discriminant validity, while Table 3 presents the standardised outer loadings and AVE values for the modified measurement model, indicating adequate evidence of convergent validity. Again, in terms of CR, the values achieved are considered to be satisfactory.

Table 2 Results of the HTMT test

| | Brand Consciousness | Brand Loyalty | Enduring Involvement | Gender Equality | Masculinity | Normative Involvement |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Consciousness | | | | | | |
| Brand Loyalty | 0.663 | | | | | |
| Enduring Involvement | 0.819 | 0.604 | | | | |
| Gender Equality | 0.198 | 0.058 | 0.141 | | | |
| Masculinity | 0.474 | 0.361 | 0.379 | 0.293 | | |
| Normative Involvement | 0.747 | 0.550 | 0.804 | 0.136 | 0.394 | |

Table 3 Modified measurement model metrics

| Construct | Item | Outer loadings | AVE | CR |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|
| Brand Consciousness (BC) | BC2 | 0.749 | 0.582 | 0.847 |
| | BC3 | 0.807 | | |
| | BC4 | 0.762 | | |
| | BC5 | 0.730 | | |
| Brand Loyalty (BL) | BL1 | 0.744 | 0.638 | 0.875 |
| | BL2 | 0.731 | | |
| | BL3 | 0.865 | | |
| | BL4 | 0.846 | | |
| Enduring Involvement (EI) | EI1 | 0.907 | 0.743 | 0.920 |
| | EI2 | 0.875 | | |
| | EI3 | 0.868 | | |
| | EI4 | 0.795 | | |
| Gender Equality (GE) | GE1 | 0.798 | 0.543 | 0.778 |
| | GE2 | 0.801 | | |
| | GE4 | 0.591 | | |
| Masculinity (MAS) | MAS3 | 0.837 | 0.647 | 0.785 |
| | MAS4 | 0.770 | | |
| Normative Involvement (NI) | NI1 | 0.855 | 0.701 | 0.903 |
| | NI2 | 0.725 | | |
| | NI3 | 0.882 | | |
| | NI4 | 0.877 | | |

5.3 Assessment of the structural model

Once the reliability and validity of the measurement model were established, the next step was to analyse the structural model by assessing collinearity, path coefficients, the coefficient of determination of each endogenous construct, f^2 effect sizes, Q^2 values and q^2 effect sizes (Hair et al., 2017). In assessing collinearity, with Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values only ranging between 1.000 and 1.070, none of the VIF values exceeded the maximum threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2017) suggesting that collinearity among the exogenous constructs is not an issue. In terms of assessing the structural model path coefficients, values approaching -1 or +1 were considered to be statistically significant, representing either strong negative or positive relationships, respectively. In terms of p values, at a significance level of 5%, values must have been less than 0.05 in order to conclude that a particular relationship was indeed significant.

With regard to assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2 value) for each of the endogenous constructs in the structural model, the R^2 values range from 0.071 to 0.515. These values suggest that the predicative power of the exogenous constructs linked to brand consciousness was modest, explaining 48.4% of its variance. While, in terms of brand loyalty, its predictors accounted for only 28.3% of the variance in this construct. In terms of enduring involvement, the predicative power of normative involvement explained 51.5% of its variance. The predicative power of gender equality and masculinity on normative involvement, however, was weak, accounting for only 7.1% of the variance in this construct.

Next, the f^2 effect sizes were calculated to assess whether the omission of a particular exogenous construct from the model had a meaningful effect on the endogenous constructs. Effect sizes with values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 respectively can, according to Cohen (in Hair et al., 2017) be classified as small, medium and large. In this regard, the results are presented in Table 4 indicating that enduring involvement has a large effect on brand consciousness while, in terms of brand loyalty, the effect is considered to be medium.

With regard to examining the Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values. This measure provides an assessment of the predictive power of the model (Hair et al., 2017). In this regard, the results presented in Table 5, indicate Q^2 values larger than zero for all four endogenous constructs, namely brand loyalty, brand consciousness, enduring involvement and normative involvement suggesting that there is support for the predictive power of the model.

Finally, the results of the extent to which the exogenous constructs, namely masculinity, gender equality, normative involvement and enduring involvement contributed towards the Q^2 value of the endogenous constructs are presented in Table 6. In this regard, the q^2 effect sizes, compared to the threshold values suggested by Hair et al. (2017), indicate that the predicative power of enduring involvement for both brand loyalty and brand consciousness is medium, varying

Table 4 Results of the f^2 analysis

| | Brand Consciousness | Brand Loyalty | Enduring Involvement | Gender Equality | Masculinity | Normative Involvement |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Consciousness | | | | | | |
| Brand Loyalty | | | | | | |
| Enduring Involvement | 0.762 | 0.331 | | | | |
| Gender Equality | 0.010 | 0.000 | | | | 0.008 |
| Masculinity | 0.022 | 0.011 | | | | 0.063 |
| Normative Involvement | | | 1.062 | | | |

Table 5 Results of the Q² assessment

| | SSO | SSE | Q² |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| Brand Consciousness | 3,256.000 | 2,402.000 | 0.262 |
| Brand Loyalty | 3,256.000 | 2,712.986 | 0.167 |
| Enduring Involvement | 3,256.000 | 2,082.644 | 0.360 |
| Gender Equality | 2,442.000 | 2,442.000 | |
| Masculinity | 1,628.000 | 1,628.000 | |
| Normative Involvement | 3,256.000 | 3,109.141 | 0.045 |

between 0.167 and 0.289, respectively. The predicative power of masculinity for normative involvement, however, is small.

6. Discussion of hypothesis testing results

A summary of the hypotheses testing is provided in Table 7. It is evident from the results that all, but two, of the hypotheses were supported.

The findings describing the relationships between masculinity and gender equality as antecedents, and brand loyalty and brand consciousness as consequences, provided evidence of path relationships between some, but not all of the constructs. It was apparent from the empirical data that a positive relationship exists between masculinity and brand loyalty: $\beta=0.092$, $t=2.862$, $p=0.004$. This finding was contrary to the negative relationship posited in Hypothesis 1. Where it was hypothesised that consumers who could be defined as having a masculine personal cultural orientation were unlikely to purchase brands that reflected their status and success on a routine basis, the empirical data instead suggested a habitual decision-making orientation. The hypothesis was, therefore, not supported. On the other hand, Hypothesis 2 was supported in that there was a positive relationship between masculinity and brand consciousness: $\beta=0.111$, $t=4.176$, $p=0.000$.

Table 6 Results of the q^2 effect sizes

| | Normative Involvement | Enduring Involvement | Brand Loyalty | Brand Consciousness |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Enduring Involvement | | | 0.167 | 0.289 |
| Gender Equality | 0.005 | | 0.000 | 0.001 |
| Masculinity | 0.039 | | 0.006 | 0.008 |
| Normative Involvement | | 0.000 | | |

Table 7 Summary of the hypotheses testing

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Direction | Path Coefficients | p-values | 95% Bias-corrected Confidence Intervals | | Support / Not Support Hypothesis |
|------------|--|-----------|-------------------|----------|---|--------|----------------------------------|
| | | | | | LLCI | ULCI | |
| H1 | Masculinity → Brand Loyalty | - | 0.092 | 0.004 | 0.031 | 0.156 | Not Supported |
| H2 | Masculinity → Brand Consciousness | + | 0.111 | 0.000 | 0.059 | 0.163 | Supported |
| H3 | Gender Equality → Brand Loyalty | + | 0.013 | 0.675 | -0.048 | 0.077 | Not Supported |
| H4 | Gender Equality → Brand Consciousness | - | -0.074 | 0.006 | -0.125 | -0.021 | Supported |
| H5 | Masculinity → Normative involvement | + | 0.243 | 0.000 | 0.165 | 0.311 | Supported |
| H6 | Gender Equality → Normative Involvement | - | -0.088 | 0.010 | -0.148 | -0.012 | Supported |
| H7 | Normative Involvement → Enduring Involvement | + | 0.718 | 0.000 | 0.679 | 0.752 | Supported |
| H8 | Enduring Involvement → Brand Loyalty | + | 0.503 | 0.000 | 0.441 | 0.559 | Supported |
| H9 | Enduring Involvement → Brand Consciousness | + | 0.648 | 0.000 | 0.603 | 0.688 | Supported |

In terms of the relationship between gender equality and brand loyalty, the findings suggest neither a statistically- nor practically significant relationship between the two constructs: $\beta=0.013$, $t=0.419$, $p=0.675$. Hypothesis 3 was, therefore, not supported. In terms of the relationship between gender equality and brand consciousness, however, the findings show a negative relationship: $\beta=-0.074$, $t=2.733$, $p=0.006$, providing sufficient evidence to support Hypothesis 4.

The significant positive relationship between masculinity and normative involvement provided support for Hypothesis 5: $\beta=0.243$, $t=6.680$, $p=0.000$. This relationship implies that as the level of ambition and self-confidence increases, so too does the level of normative involvement which relates to the symbolic and hedonistic values associated with a particular product or group of products; in this instance, branded clothing. Further, the findings also showed a significant negative relationship between gender equality and normative involvement: $\beta=-0.088$, $t=2.583$, $p=0.010$. This relationship suggested that as a consumer's acceptance of gender equality increases, the symbolic value of products will decrease, particularly products related to power, achievement and security. Hypothesis 6 was, therefore, supported.

Hypothesis 7 related to the relationship between the two involvement types, namely normative involvement and enduring involvement. The results showed a significant positive relationship between these involvement types ($\beta=0.718$, $t=37.859$, $p=0.000$) and, as such, Hypothesis 7 was supported.

For the next two direct relationships, the results indicated a relationship between enduring involvement and brand loyalty which was both positive and statistically

significant: $\beta=0.503$, $t=16.707$, $p=0.000$; providing support for Hypothesis 8. Further, the findings indicated a similar relationship between enduring involvement and brand consciousness: $\beta=0.648$, $t=29.841$, $p=0.000$. This influence suggested that as a consumer's perception increases that a particular product or product class will satisfy their particular values, so too will the consumer's orientation towards buying expensive, well-known national brands. Consequently, the results supported Hypothesis 9.

7. Discussion of indirect and total effects

The results presented in Table 8 show that the indirect effects associated with masculinity and gender equality with brand loyalty and brand consciousness, are all statistically significant with $p<0.05$. It is also evident from the results that the indirect effects obtained for masculinity to brand loyalty and for masculinity to brand consciousness are also practically significant, with $\beta=0.088$ and $\beta=0.113$, respectively.

In terms of Table 9, the results indicate that apart from the total effect associated with gender equality to brand loyalty, the total effects associated with masculinity and gender equality, and brand loyalty and brand consciousness, are all statistically significant with $p<0.05$. In this regard, while the size of the total effect between masculinity and brand loyalty is $\beta=0.180$, the direct effect is somewhat smaller with $\beta=0.092$; As suggested by Hair et al. (2017), these results indicate that, in this

Table 8 Results of the indirect effects analysis

| | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values | Bias-corrected CI | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|
| | | | | LLCI | ULCI |
| | | | | 2.50% | 97.50% |
| Masculinity → Normative Involvement → Enduring Involvement → Brand Loyalty | 0.088 | 5.835 | 0.000 | 0.058 | 0.117 |
| Masculinity → Normative Involvement → Enduring Involvement → Brand Consciousness | 0.113 | 6.290 | 0.000 | 0.076 | 0.148 |
| Gender Equality → Normative Involvement → Enduring Involvement → Brand Loyalty | -0.032 | 2.519 | 0.012 | -0.054 | -0.004 |
| Gender Equality → Normative Involvement → Enduring Involvement → Brand Consciousness | -0.041 | 2.550 | 0.011 | -0.069 | -0.006 |

Table 9 Results of the total effects analysis

| | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values | Bias-corrected CI | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|
| | | | | LLCI | ULCI |
| | | | | 2.50% | 97.50% |
| Masculinity → Brand Loyalty | 0.180 | 5.265 | 0.000 | 0.112 | 0.244 |
| Masculinity → Brand Consciousness | 0.224 | 6.706 | 0.000 | 0.158 | 0.290 |
| Gender Equality → Brand Loyalty | -0.018 | 0.557 | 0.577 | -0.079 | 0.052 |
| Gender Equality → Brand Consciousness | -0.115 | 3.749 | 0.000 | -0.171 | -0.053 |

instance, consumer involvement (encompassing normative involvement and enduring involvement) does play a role in the direct relationship between masculinity and brand loyalty. Similarly, the total effect for masculinity to brand consciousness ($\beta=0.224$) is somewhat larger than the direct effect ($\beta=0.111$). Again, this suggests that consumer involvement fulfils a role in this direct relationship. The total effect of gender equality to brand consciousness is $\beta=-0.115$. This value is smaller than the value of the direct effect of gender equality and brand consciousness which is $\beta=-0.074$. These results suggested that consumer involvement does fulfil a role in the direct relationship between gender equality and brand consciousness.

8. Managerial implications

Consumers' decision-making styles towards choosing their preferred brands are influenced by their personal cultural orientation, for example, more masculine values are associated with brands which exude achievement and success. As such, personal cultural orientations could serve as an additional market segmentation criterion along with, as suggested by Walsh et al. (2001), consumer decision-making styles. However, while the role of masculinity on brand loyalty may be direct, it is largely indirect, through consumer involvement. In this regard, marketers should take into account overall consumer involvement levels as they relate to a particular product when tailoring their marketing communications because, in addition to being less spontaneous and less price-value conscious, highly involved consumers are more brand loyal (Bauer, et al., 2006; Gupta et al., 2010). However, in order to be

more effective, marketers should also tailor the communications to address the different types of involvement (Broderick, 2007). In this regard, given its positive role in the relationship between normative involvement and enduring involvement, it is suggested that marketers focus on stimulating normative involvement by activating intrinsic consumer values (Broderick, 2007). In this regard, a promotional message associated with a particular product would relate to expressions of assertiveness and ambition, for example.

No relationship was found between gender equality and brand loyalty. Therefore, in targeting consumers with a brand loyal orientation, other personal cultural orientations, in addition to masculinity, will need to be considered.

There was also a positive relationship between a consumer's brand consciousness and their expression of masculine values. The relationship between brand consciousness and a consumer's acceptance of qualities associated with equality amongst men and women, such as social roles and gender rights is a negative one. In both instances, the relationships are direct, but largely indirect, through consumer involvement. Therefore, it is again suggested that marketers should focus on stimulating normative involvement by activating intrinsic consumer values (Broderick, 2007). In formulating marketing communication targeting consumers with a masculine orientation and exhibiting a brand consciousness decision-making style, marketers are advised to deliver a promotional message related to expressions of assertiveness and ambition. While, in targeting consumers with a gender equality orientation, marketers are advised to focus on those consumers whose involvement

level is low, with regard to a particular product, and who subscribe to more masculine values associated with personal achievement and material success.

9. Limitations and future research

This study used a non-probability sampling technique and as such the findings cannot be generalised to the South African population. It is recommended, in order to extend the generalisability of the theoretical framework and its underlying hypotheses, that future research is conducted among different target populations, drawn from different country settings and demographic backgrounds.

In addition, the lack of convergent reliability among items contained in two of the scales (specifically, gender equality and masculinity, as per Sharma's (2010) personal cultural orientations scale) could have impacted the results. The low proportion of shared variance among some of the items related to masculinity and gender equality necessitated their removal from the particular measurement scale and future studies should consider validating this scale again.

Further, the lack of discriminant validity among two of the constructs, namely brand consciousness and enduring involvement necessitated the exclusion of two items from the brand consciousness construct. While the exclusion of these items improved the HTMT ratio between the two constructs, it may have negatively impacted on the content validity of the brand consciousness construct. Future research will need to consider reassessing and validating these constructs and their associated scales.

There are a number of recommendations for future researchers. Firstly, it is recommended to extend the findings of this study by examining the relationships with other personal cultural orientations related to Hofstede's (2001) four remaining national cultural dimensions namely, risk aversion-ambiguity intolerance, independence- interdependence, power-social inequality and tradition-prudence on consumer involvement. Secondly, it is suggested that future research consider replicating this study using different products spanning the spectrum of high and low involvement. Thirdly, in terms of consumer involvement, it is recommended that further studies examine the relationship between enduring involvement and the other decision-making styles identified by Sproles and Kendall (1986) related to perfectionism, novelty-fashion consciousness, recreational shopping consciousness, price-value consciousness, impulsiveness and confused by overchoice. Finally, demographic characteristics associated with, for example, gender (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2004; Mitchell and Walsh, 2004; Sylvie and Huang, 2008) and to a lesser extent age (Anić et al., 2010; Yoo et al., 2011) have been found to influence the key constructs contained within the A-I-C framework to varying degrees. It is, therefore, recommended that future research investigate the role of one or more of these characteristics in the relationships contained within the model.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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