



# How Brand Awareness Strengthens the Relationship between Product Characteristics and Purchase Intention for Brand Extension Products?

Jingmei HUANG<sup>1</sup>, Eunmi KIM<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *First Author* Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate School of Business Administration, Pusan National University, Korea.  
E-mail: jmh1112@pusan.ac.kr

<sup>2</sup> *Corresponding Author* Associate Professor, Graduate School of International Studies, Pusan National University, Korea  
E-mail: eunmikim@pusan.ac.kr

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study investigates which product characteristics influence customers’ purchase intention for brand extension products of the fashion brands. Furthermore, this study suggests brand awareness as a moderator which strengthens the positive effects of the product characteristics on the consumers’ purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

**Research design, data, and methodology** – Two hundred and twenty-three Chinese consumers were randomly solicited to participate in this study. Email, website (www.wenjuanxing.com), social media (WeChat) were utilized to conduct the survey and collect data.

**Result** – The findings obtained through hierarchical regression analysis indicate that product uniqueness, product scarcity and product popularity have significant effects on purchase intention for brand extension products of the fashion brands. In addition, brand awareness moderates the relationship between product characteristics (uniqueness and scarcity) and purchase intention positively.

**Conclusion** –The results indicate that brand extension products of the fashion brands could attract more consumers by focusing on designing unique products and using limited release and celebrity publicity strategy. Additionally, the present research posits the crucial significance of brand awareness, thereby making a noteworthy contribution to the integrated marketing approach for fashion brand marketers.

**Keywords:** Brand extension, Product characteristics, Brand awareness, Purchase intention

**JEL Classification Code:** M16, M31.

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## 1. Introduction

The fashion industry has developed into a vast, profitable, and distinct enterprise. The apparel and textile sector is the fourth largest industry in the world. The fashion industry continues to expand, particularly in Western, Asian, and European developing nations. In 2021, Asia accounted for 38 percent of the global demand for apparel. Businesses that support diversity in the fashion industry generate 19% more revenue than those that do not. Brands and businesses have prioritized the design and promotion of fashion brand extension items, which can increase the variety of products, in order to increase profits. The incorporation of established brand names into novel product categories or classes is a tactic employed by organizations to introduce fresh merchandise to consumer markets (Czellar, 2003). According to a study conducted by the data measurement company Nielsen, brand extensions are up to five times more successful than new brand launches for consumer goods companies. It can also explain why brand extension is an attractive marketing strategy. The most prominent benefit of brand extension is a significant reduction in the cost of launching new brands, which is also the reason why brand extension is an attractive marketing strategy. For this reason, many fashion brands, such as Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, and Ralph Lauren, expand their product categories from garments to leather goods and eyewear as well as their product lines from business casual wear to jeans and underwear in order to capitalize on market expansion. Brand extension is widely regarded as a highly effective strategy for fashion retailers seeking to expand their market share. As a result of fashion brand extension, fashion merchants expect consumers to engage in cross-shopping (Forney et al., 2005). Nowadays, many brand extension products of the fashion brands are very popular in China, such as Adidas' Yeezy series sports shoes, Nike's AJ series of sneakers, and Supreme's limited home products.

Numerous researchers have exerted significant effort to identify the factors that influence consumers' intent to purchase extended products. Several studies have found that consumers' attitudes toward the parent brand of an extension product, product design factors, and the degree of resemblance between the extension item and the original brand item all influence their purchase intentions to buy an extension product. An increasing amount of scholarly inquiry has been dedicated to exploring the determinants of brand extension efficacy. In addition, in order to identify the influential factors, researchers evaluated the customer evaluations of brand expansion using a variety of metrics. The variables that have been most commonly examined in research include brand trust (Reast, 2005), perceived fit (Aaker & Keller, 1990), brand equity, and perceived brand quality.

Nonetheless, a limited number of investigations have been conducted on how product characteristics of brand extension products of the fashion brands influence consumers' purchase intention, which is an important issue for marketers to understand. According to researchers, it is essential for fashion marketers to comprehend the driving forces behind fashion brand extension success, and the growing significance of fashion brand extension has sharply boosted interest in this field of marketing research. The research findings indicate that consumers consider quality, color, style, and design as crucial factors when assessing the brand extension of fashion merchandise. Nonetheless, the outcomes of their research were solely relevant to the horizontal brand extension and product design. Only a small number of studies in the field of brand extension products of the fashion brands research have examined multiple product characteristics simultaneously. So, more empirical research is needed to find out what aspects of brand extension products of the fashion brands are important to consumers when they buy them in the fashion market.

Although the correlation between product attributes and consumer purchase intent is apparent (Forney et al., 2005; Jeong & Kwon, 2012), few studies have investigated how to increase it. In brand expansion situations, consumers are likely to recognize alternative products and switch to them, even if they are attracted to products in a unique product series as opposed to a conventional product series due to its unique characteristics. This is due to the fact that consumers can quickly compare products across a variety of dimensions and find comparable products from other brands or generic products. In this instance, the relationship between product characteristics of brand extension products of the fashion brands and consumer intent to purchase is significantly weakened. However, previous research has not given this issue any significance. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to identify a variable, such as brand recognition, that can strengthen the relationship. A rise in consumer awareness has led to a preference for well-known and well-liked brands in recent years. Therefore, to remain competitive, enterprises must foster consumer attachment to their brands. According to Macdonald and Sharp (2000), brand awareness is still a factor in a consumer's decision to buy a product, even if they know about it and are willing to buy it. When a potential customer expresses interest in procuring a product or service, the initial brand that is recalled is indicative of a higher level of brand recognition. According to Dodds and Grewal (1991), consumers' purchase decisions can be influenced by their brand awareness. One of the factors contributing to a product's higher market share and superior quality evaluations is its greater level of brand recognition. In addition, brand recognition has a moderating effect on consumer purchase intention (Rao & Monroe, 1988).

This article aims to investigate, using brand awareness as a moderator, how brand awareness strengthens the relationship between product characteristics and customers' purchase intention for brand extension products of the fashion brands. This research is essential for fashion marketers to understand how to design appropriate products to attract consumers, what factors can influence and strengthen consumers' purchase intentions toward brand extension products of the fashion brands, and what type of marketing strategy they must implement to increase market profits.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1. Conceptual Background**

#### **2.1.1. Brand Extension**

Brand extensions refer to the introduction of novel products under an established brand name or the inclusion of fresh products within a particular category (Aaker & Keller, 1990). The purpose of brand extensions is to increase the equity of the original product's core brand and to reach previously untapped market groups. Through research on brand extension tactics and their effects on consumer purchasing decisions, it has been determined that brand extension strategies are a highly effective tool for businesses seeking to increase their market share and remain competitive.

The two primary types of brand extensions are horizontal and vertical (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Vertical brand extensions pertain to the introduction of a novel product within the identical product category, albeit with a unique price point and caliber. This is in contrast to horizontal brand extensions, which entail the use of an existing product name for a new product in the same or different product class. Vertical brand extension attempts to target distinct consumer segments, who are primarily concerned with price and quality, in order to increase the brand's customer base and ensure its growth (Keller & Aaker, 1992).

Several scholars have conducted research on the variables that influence the achievement of fashion brand expansion. The significance of brand credibility in relation to the assessment of brand extension has been established (Reast, 2005). Brand trust is a crucial and fundamental determinant of success for a company in the context of brand extensions. Moreover, status consciousness can positively affect consumers' evaluation of brand extension (Phau & Cheong, 2009). In situations involving factors that influence consumers' purchase intentions in relation to brand expansion, brand confidence can positively affect purchase intentions. Additionally, the positive influence of brand perceptions on consumers' purchasing intentions is a significant factor to consider. Additionally, the evaluation of brand extension and subsequent purchase intent are influenced by customer sentiment towards the parent brand.

In particular, fashion marketers have been using brand extensions as a key part of their business plans. Despite the abundance of research on brand extension, only a limited number of studies have specifically examined the phenomenon of fashion brand extensions. Some studies showed that the way customers feel about the parent brand, how much they trust the brand, and how creative they are all important factors in judging vertical extensions of fashion brands (Goldsmith & Stith, 1993). Phau and Cheong (2009) conducted a study which revealed that the inclusion of the original brand name in the title of vertical extensions of fashion brands was positively associated with consumer preference. However, these studies are limited regarding fashion brand extensions. Consumers' evaluation intentions of brand extensions were more likely to be affected by how loyal they were to the fast fashion brand, how involved they were with it, and how good they thought it was. Existing research barely touches on the factors that sway consumers to purchase fashion brand extensions products, let alone how to strengthen consumers' purchase intention toward fashion brand extensions products. This is despite the fact that both of these topics are important to the industry.

#### **2.1.2. Product Characteristics**

Product characteristics are the features that define a service or product and influence the purchasing decisions of customers. Typically, it includes product characteristics such as size, color, design, weight, etc. Marketers rely heavily on product characteristics and price to influence the product evaluations and purchasing decisions of potential customers.

Numerous researchers are devoted to examining the connection between product characteristics and consumer purchase intent. Product attributes, such as product information, quality, and prices, can positively influence purchase intent. Product attributes as the elements of a product that the consumer deems significant and that may serve as the basis for their purchase decisions. Specifically, aesthetic cues play a significant role in the evaluation of products and services by consumers (North et al., 2003). Eckman et al. (1990) asserted that aesthetic cues hold the highest degree

of influence during the point of sale. In addition, Chinese and Korean women considered style, color, and fashion trends when purchasing clothing.

In addition, product scarcity and product popularity are important characteristics for brand extension products of the fashion brands in comparison to other normal series products. It is possible to divide brand extension product scarcity into time-limited and limited-quantity purchases. Possibility constraints create psychological pressure and increase the likelihood of a purchase (Bozzolo & Brock, 1992; Lynn, 1991). The inclusion of a quantity-limited message on a product utilized in a high-use consumer product or public setting can lead to an increase in the consumer's purchase intent. Product popularity is the extent to which numerous individuals like, admire, or support something or someone. Jeong and Kwon (2012) found that claims about a product's popularity have a positive and direct effect on purchase intention. Nonetheless, the existing body of literature on the subject matter is limited, as it fails to comprehensively examine the impact of product attributes on the purchasing behavior of consumers regarding fashion brand extension merchandise.

### **2.1.3. Brand Awareness**

Effectively enhancing strong customer relationships is possible for brands (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Brand awareness pertains to the ability of consumers to recognize and recall a brand in various contexts. Brand awareness influences consumer brand preference, as consumers are more likely to purchase brands they are familiar with, and it also influences consumers' perceptions of a brand's quality when they are aware of it (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). It has been discovered that marketers strive to generate, maintain, and retain brand recognition. In the absence of consumer participation, marketers strive for success. In addition, previous research has demonstrated that brand awareness is a crucial factor that can strengthen a brand (Nevin & Houston, 1980).

According to previous research, brand awareness has a substantial impact on purchasing intent. Consumers possessing a high level of brand awareness are likely to exhibit a heightened inclination to procure products owing to their comprehensive understanding of the products' and brands' attributes and commitments (Jaiyeoba et al., 2019). Customers' desires play a significant role in their purchase intentions. Consumers have a greater intention to purchase a brand that is familiar or easily identifiable. The reason is that, compared to lesser-known brands, the majority of consumers recognize well-known brands and have a greater intent to purchase them. Numerous studies have demonstrated that consumers pay more attention to the popularity of particular brands (Hafstrom et al., 1992). According to Buckley's (1991) findings, there exists a positive correlation between the level of brand awareness and the intention to purchase.

In addition, brand recognition has a moderating effect on consumer purchase intent. Rao and Monroe (1988) discovered that brand awareness moderated consumers' attitudes toward sporting goods and influenced their intention to purchase. The influence of brand credibility on consumers' purchase intent would be greater if their brand awareness was greater. Furthermore, the study's empirical findings indicate that a renowned brand served as a potent moderating element that impacted consumers' perception of quality and their intention to purchase. However, little research has been conducted on the role of brand awareness as a moderator between products and consumer purchase intent.

### **2.1.4. Purchase Intention**

As per the study carried out by Warshaw and Davis (1985), a purchase intention refers to a predetermined plan to acquire specific products or services in the future. However, the actual purchase may not always materialize due to the impact of various factors that may hinder the ability to execute the plan. Purchase intention is the inclination of a consumer to engage in purchasing behavior towards a particular product. The purchase intention pertains to the consumer's cognitive and behavioral inclination towards a particular product or service. Thus, purchase intent can aid in predicting buyers' future purchase behavior. According to Dodds and Grewal (1991), the measure of purchase intention pertains to the probability of a consumer carrying out a purchase. In a similar vein, Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) stated that the probability of acquiring a specific product is positively correlated with the strength of the purchase intention.

Aligned with the consumer decision-making process, the purchase intention indicates that consumers will undergo the subsequent stages: recognizing a need, looking for information in the outside world, weighing their options, making a purchase decision, and having a good experience after the purchase (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds & Grewal, 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). The measurement of effectiveness through purchase intention is a widely employed approach, frequently utilized to forecast individuals' behavioral tendencies. For marketers, purchase intention helps them segment and target their markets and make important product decisions, like where to launch a product (Sewall, 1978). So, purchase intention is a good indicator of how people will act. Research has indicated that a favorable

correlation exists between purchase intention and factors such as product compatibility, product attributes and characteristics (Jeong & Kwon, 2012).

## 2.2. Hypotheses Development

### 2.2.1. Product Uniqueness and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Uniqueness of a product refers to the novelty and originality of its design, which can significantly influence consumer purchase decisions (Mugge & Dahl, 2013). Design attributes can help connect innovations with consumers by conveying aesthetic, functional, and symbolic information (Eisenman, 2013) and influencing consumer evaluations. According to previous research studies (Truong et al., 2014), customers tend to give more favorable feedback on products that possess an aesthetically pleasing appearance, commonly referred to as "looking cool". Additionally, these studies suggest that customers are more inclined to make a purchase of such products (Rubera, 2015). China has always been a collectivistic culture where individuals have tight ties to their family members or other members of their immediate in-group (Oyserman et al., 2002). Due to China's recent swift and significant socioeconomic growth, however, there has been a noticeable movement toward more individuality in Chinese culture and people's mentality, which has led Chinese consumers to seek out their own uniqueness (Oyserman et al., 2002). The design of brand extension products of the fashion brands is typically quite distinct from that of the main product line. The design of fashion brand extension merchandise is typically recognizable. The novelty of the product's exterior design suggests that it is superior to its predecessors, which increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase it (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Thus:

**H1:** Product uniqueness has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

### 2.2.2. Product Scarcity and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Product scarcity is associated with limited product quantity or limited time to purchase products. Marketers employ scarcity strategies to influence consumer decision-making. According to previous research conducted by Brock (1968) and Lynn (1991), rare items are perceived as possessing greater value and desirability. Previous studies have indicated that the utilization of scarcity messages can elicit a perception among consumers that rare products possess qualities of distinctiveness, exclusivity, and worth, thereby exerting a favorable impact on their evaluation of the product (Aggarwal et al., 2011) and their intention to purchase it (Aggarwal & Vaidyanathan, 2003; Eisend, 2008; Ku et al., 2012).

Limited-edition products have been created by renowned brands with the aim of augmenting consumer desire and purchase intention. Mianzi is an image of self-esteem associated to social qualities that, according to Goffman's definition, shows the desire to be recognized or respected by others during interpersonal interactions. Chinese people carefully consider their attire, attitudes, and speech to fit their status because they are highly aware of their place in a vast social network and they are also very anxious to safeguard their self-esteem without sacrificing mianzi (Hwang 1987). Chinese customers who place a high value on their mianzi are more inclined to spend more money on expensive goods in order to elevate their perceived social standing and to avoid buying items that are on sale or that are inexpensive in the eyes of others. The acquisition of rare commodities by Chinese consumers can fulfill their desire for both individuality and adherence to social norms, leading to an augmented perception of the product's worth and a heightened inclination to make a purchase. Many brand extension products of the fashion brands are offered for a limited time or limited release (e.g. Yeezy and AJ). The curtailed accessibility of a product restricts the consumer's autonomy to acquire it, leading to a psychological response known as reactance. After seeing the limited supply claim as a danger to their independence, consumers are likely to buy to regain it. According to empirical studies, product availability restrictions result in increased purchase intent (Eisend, 2008). Thus:

**H2:** Product scarcity has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

### 2.2.3. Product Popularity and Consumers' Purchase Intention

According to Berns and Moore (2012), the product in question has a wide appeal among the masses. This assertion is supported by Steinhart et al. (2014), who also found that the product is favored by many individuals. Wu and Lee (2016) conducted a study which suggests that the inclusion of popularity indicators may have the potential to decrease the perceived level of consumption risk. This, in turn, may result in more favorable evaluations of the product and an increase in purchase intentions. The impact of popularity on consumers' choices has been demonstrated across a wide range of product categories. Additionally, researches have indicated that Easterners, or those from collectivist nations like China, Korea, and Japan, have a deeper sense of interdependence in general (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013), which suggests that Chinese consumers frequently agree with and follow the judgments of others because interdependence requires integrating into a wider network of socially prescribed roles, norms, and obligations. As a result, Chinese consumers are more willing to do the same when making fashion product purchases.

Numerous idols and even celebrities post photos of their outfits on social media after purchasing brand extension products of the fashion brands so that more people will see the product, their fans and other consumers will like it, and the product will become popular. According to Surowiecki (2004), the observation of a widespread phenomenon often leads individuals to infer the existence of a justifiable rationale behind its prevalence. Consumers tend to emulate the actions of their peers under the assumption that their choices are sound, thereby inferring that the prevailing alternative is of higher quality. According to Bikhchandani et al. (1998), it is posited that the prevalence of a particular choice may convey information regarding the product. According to Steinhart et al. (2014), popularity cues are more efficacious than other cues in terms of augmenting purchase intentions. Thus:

**H3:** Product popularity has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

### 2.2.4. Moderating Effects of Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a metric that gauges the level of a brand's attractiveness and visibility in the consciousness of a consumer (Setiadi et al., 2018). According to Wijaya et al. (2020), there exists a positive correlation between a customer's knowledge of a brand and their ability to recall or identify it, as well as associate it with its distinctive characteristics. The significance of brand awareness lies in its role as a crucial stage in the customer decision-making process. The absence of brand awareness can result in a lack of knowledge or comprehension on the part of the customer regarding the availability of options pertaining to a particular brand. Therefore, the extent of a customer's familiarity with a brand can help strengthen that brand's positioning within the customer's consideration set, which in turn can influence the customer's choice of brand and decision-making (Phung et al., 2019; Wijaya et al., 2020; Setiadi et al., 2018). Increased familiarity with a brand can help consumers make more informed acquisition choices. They judge the quality of a product by how well-known it is and are more likely to buy a familiar brand than an unfamiliar one (Ho et al., 2015).

As for extension products for fashion brands, different brands have different design concepts and promotion strategies, so they will launch products with their own design characteristics and sell them in a variety of ways. Faced with these uniquely designed and promoted products, consumers typically waver between numerous brands when deciding which to purchase. In this instance, brand recognition will be decisive. According to Kadir and Shamsudin (2019), brand recognition is a prerequisite for customers' purchase intentions. Consumers exhibit a heightened inclination to procure a brand that is recognizable or readily identifiable. The reason is that, compared to lesser-known brands, the majority of consumers recognize well-known brands and have a greater intent to purchase them. Furthermore, consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by their brand recognition and they exhibit a preference for established brands. As a result, consumers tend to choose established brands, as noted by Nelson and McLeod (2005). The augmentation of consumers' brand awareness regarding fashion brand extensions leads to a proportional increase in the impact of product characteristics on customer purchase intention. Thus:

**H4:** Brand awareness enhances the positive impact of product uniqueness on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

**H5:** Brand awareness enhances the positive impact of product scarcity on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

**H6:** Brand awareness enhances the positive impact of product popularity on consumers' purchase intention towards brand extension products of the fashion brands.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data Collection

This study employs a quantitative method, including the development of well-structured questionnaires, to test the hypothesis. Respondents were Chinese consumers who purchase brand extension products of the fashion brands frequently and are knowledgeable about them. The questionnaires were sent to consumers at random. Using the professional questionnaires website ([www.wenjuanxing.com](http://www.wenjuanxing.com)), the primary social media (WeChat), and email, questionnaire surveys and data were collected. Based on the existing body of literature, the English version of the questionnaire was translated into Chinese for data collection in China. Two linguists are recruited to review the translation and ensure that the questionnaire's source and target versions are identical. Approximately 96% of the original questionnaire and its back translation are identical. As a result, 223 valid questionnaires were collected within 21 days.

There were 108 (48.4%) males and 115 (51.6%) females among the participants of the obtained samples. At a rate of 32.3%, those between the ages of 21 and 25 constitute the majority in terms of age distribution. The majority of respondents were unmarried; 61.4% of them were single. 52.5 percent of the population holds a bachelor's degree, in terms of educational attainment. In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents (35% and 31.4%, respectively) were students and employees. 27.4% of interviewees have a monthly disposable income between ¥6001 and ¥9000. In terms of purchase experience, 205 (91.9%) individuals have purchased brand extension products of the fashion brands. The majority of individuals who purchase brand extension products of the fashion brands purchase them between one and five times, at a rate of 70.4%.

**Table 1:** Sample Demographic Characteristics

Age	Frequency (%)	Month Income (¥)	Frequency (%)
Below 20	25 (11.2)	Below 3000	60 (26.9)
21-25	72 (32.3)	3001-6000	51 (22.9)
26-30	25 (11.2)	6001-9000	61 (27.4)
31-35	17 (7.6)	9001-12000	23 (10.3)
36-40	27 (12.1)	12001-15000	17 (7.6)
Above 40	57 (25.6)	Above 15000	11 (4.9)

#### 3.2. Measures

All items are scored using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). In this study, the items for product uniqueness (Cronbach's alpha = 0.745) are derived from Lynn and Harris (1997) and Franke and Schreier (1998). These things pertain to the special product design, materials, and packaging of brand extension products of the fashion brands that differ from conventional products. In this work, the items for product scarcity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.712), which is related to limited-time and limited quantity sale of fashion brands extension products in this paper, are adjusted from Lynn and Bogert (1996). The elements for product popularity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.708), which is related to the product influence, mass popularity, mass usage and mass acceptance of brand extension products of the fashion brands in this paper, are amended from Goedegebure et al. (2020). The present study examines the construct of brand awareness (Cronbach's alpha = 0.884), which pertains to the extent to which a fashion brand is capable of creating a compelling appeal and establishing a prominent presence in the minds of its customers, are from Valette et al. (2011) and Chaniotakis et al. (2010). Dodds and Grewal (1991) provided the items for consumer purchase intention (Cronbach's alpha = 0.732), which relates to the likelihood that customers are willing to make a specific purchase of brand extension products of the fashion brands. In addition, the analysis used factor loading and average variance extraction (AVE) methods to test the validity of the questionnaire. And the composite reliability (C.R.) is used to assess scales' reliability. Values for composite reliability range from 0.712 to 0.885, which were above the suggested threshold of 0.7. It indicates that the scale has good reliability. Convergent validity was confirmed by examining both the indicator loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 2, the standard

loadings range from 0.700 to 0.850, above the desired threshold of 0.6. The average variance extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.452 to 0.605, which is higher than the recommended level of 0.4, indicating that the convergent validity basically passed the test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The data from 223 valid questionnaires are analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 for the empirical investigation. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to estimate the model's variables. Hierarchical regression analysis was utilized to examine the proposed hypotheses, namely, to determine the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable and the influence of moderators between independent variables and the dependent variable, while holding demographic variables constant.

As for the fitting indicators of confirmatory factor analysis, in accordance with the criteria (Bentler, 1990), the fitting index indicates that the model performs well (CMIN/DF=1.117, GFI=0.938, CFI=0.990, TLI=0.987, IFI=0.990, and RMSEA=0.023), indicating that the structural model and the sample are fairly comparable.

**Table 2:** Measurement Model Results of Validity Analysis

Measurement items	Factor loading	Standardized Estimate	AVE	CR
<b>Product Uniqueness</b>			0.494	0.746
Unique color	0.755	0.713		
Unique materials	0.765	0.703		
Unique product	0.771	0.693		
<b>Product Scarcity</b>			0.453	0.713
Scare products	0.724	0.646		
Difficulty to acquire	0.744	0.713		
Limited number	0.794	0.658		
<b>Product Popularity</b>			0.452	0.712
Many people buying	0.757	0.643		
High demand	0.733	0.669		
Popular products	0.761	0.703		
<b>Brand Awareness</b>			0.605	0.885
Recall the particular symbol or logo	0.797	0.734		
Recognition	0.820	0.769		
Being remembered well	0.850	0.815		
Familiarity	0.826	0.771		
Coming to my mind	0.837	0.799		
<b>Purchase Intention</b>			0.478	0.733
Encouraging relatives and friends to purchase	0.791	0.649		
Brand extension products rather than normal products	0.781	0.721		
High shopping likelihood	0.700	0.702		



Prior to the regression analysis in this research, a Pearson correlation analysis was finished as well. The averages and standard deviations of each variable, as shown in Table 3, were essentially within acceptable bounds. There are no irregularities in the overall model as a result of the correlation between all variables ranging from 0.351 to 0.444.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Brand Awareness	3.799	0.888	1				
2. Product Uniqueness	3.819	0.769	-0.047	1			
3. Product Scarcity	3.894	0.677	-0.013	.430**	1		
4. Product Popularity	3.791	0.779	0.011	.407**	.357**	1	
5. Purchase Intention	3.770	0.725	0.042	.405**	.351**	.444**	1

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4. Results

In order to validate the proposed hypotheses, this research employed a hierarchical regression analysis that incorporated the variable of gender (0 = male; 1 = female), marriage status (unmarried = 0; married = 1) and age (natural logarithm) as control variables. Table 4 shows that product uniqueness has a significantly positive effect on consumer purchase intention toward fashion brands extension products ( $\beta = 0.203, p < 0.01$ ), indicating Hypothesis 1 was supported. Additionally, product scarcity has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention toward fashion brands extension products ( $\beta = 0.144, p < 0.05$ ) and product popularity positively affects consumer purchase intention toward fashion brands extension products ( $\beta = 0.272, p < 0.001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 and 3 were supported. Moreover, the results showed that brand awareness positively moderate the relationships between product uniqueness and product scarcity and consumer purchase intention toward fashion brands extension products respectively ( $\beta = 0.169, p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.187, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, we confirmed that Hypothesis 4 and 5 were supported. However, the brand awareness as a moderator showed no significant effect in the relationship between product popularity and consumer purchase intention toward fashion brands extension products ( $\beta = -0.020, n.s.$ ), indicating Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

**Table 4: Results of Hierarchical Regression**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	VIF
Gender	-0.122 (0.098)	-0.035 (0.086)	-0.030 (0.086)	-0.064 (0.085)	1.094
Marriage Status	0.217 (0.134)	0.161 (0.117)	0.168 (0.118)	0.112 (0.116)	1.930
Age	-0.085 (0.035)	-0.060 (0.031)	-0.062* (0.031)	-0.052 (0.030)	1.856
Product Uniqueness		0.194** (0.063)	0.197** (0.063)	0.203** (0.062)	1.378
Product Scarcity		0.151* (0.069)	0.151* (0.069)	0.144* (0.068)	1.301
Product Popularity		0.281*** (0.061)	0.280*** (0.061)	0.272*** (0.060)	1.305
Brand Awareness			0.045 (0.047)	0.011 (0.047)	1.064
Product Uniqueness x Brand Awareness				0.169* (0.080)	1.268

Product Scarcity x Brand Awareness				0.187* (0.080)	1.121
Product Popularity x Brand Awareness				-0.020 (0.071)	1.169
Constant	4.050*** (0.124)	1.543*** (0.315)	1.365*** (0.365)	1.543*** (0.360)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.020	0.267	0.267	0.298	
F value	2.476	14.473***	12.533***	10.443***	

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Managerial and Academic Implications

This study's findings indicate that marketers who wish to boost customers' purchase intent for brand extension products of the fashion brands should give careful regard to product characteristics and brand awareness. As a result, this study advises that companies should build effective and distinct segment marketing strategies for normal fashion brand products and extension fashion brand products. Numerous studies from a variety of disciplines have examined the effects of product characteristics on consumers' purchase intention; however, few studies have researched how to increase the relationship between product characteristics and consumers' purchase intention. In developing and testing an extended conceptual model by a merging moderator, brand awareness, with product characteristics of brand extension products of the fashion brands, this study is unique.

In the overall model, the results revealed that significant effects of product uniqueness, product scarcity and product popularity as independent variables played significant roles in the purchase of brand extension products of the fashion brands. Furthermore, the impact of brand awareness as a moderator on the association between product attributes and the intention to purchase exhibited a significant variation. The study found that brand awareness plays a positive moderating role in the relationships between product uniqueness and purchase intention, as well as between product scarcity and purchase intention. The moderating effect of brand awareness on the relationship between product popularity and consumers' intention to purchase brand extension products of the fashion brands is absent.

Considering product characteristics and brand awareness, the outcomes of this study provide insights for practical consequences. For the development of brand extension products of the fashion brands, sellers need to spend a lot of effort on product design. For instance, on the basis that the materials, color matching and pattern design of the brand extension products of the fashion brands are different from ordinary products, it is also necessary to inject a unique design concept into the product, reflecting different life styles and personality colors, so that consumers can feel the uniqueness of the product layering and richness. For example, sellers can find niche artists with unique design concepts or representative popular artists in recent years to jointly design extended products with their own brands.

In addition, marketing managers may plan and implement marketing strategies that emphasize the scarcity of items. For instance, first increase the product's popularity, employ A-list celebrities as publicity persons, and let buyers experience the product's status symbol and financial symbol. Concurrently, the sales method adopts the reservation sales system or raises the purchase threshold, such as the dollar amount required for buy reservation eligibility based on the prior purchase amount. Enhance the purchasing experience of consumers in terms of services by, for example, providing additional limited gifts to every customer who is eligible to purchase extended products, offering ritual-filled services, and allowing customers to experience their supreme status throughout the purchasing process.

### 5.2. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

This study only selects three product features among the many features of brand extension products of the fashion brands. Further research needs to choose other characteristics of brand extension products of the fashion brands, such as product quality, as independent variables to further conduct more in-depth research on extended products and consumers' purchase intentions. In the selection of moderating variables, this study only selects brand awareness for research. Further research can select other factors related to the brand as moderating variables, such as brand loyalty, brand image, etc., which will be of great help to the brand in shaping a better image in the fashion market.

Moreover, this study only focuses on consumers in mainland China, which will be of great help to fashion brands entering and developing the Chinese market. But this is of limited help to fashion brands looking to market outside of China. Further research can expand the scope of the research object of the survey, such as taking consumers in European and American countries as the research object.

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