Measuring brand experiences cross-nationally

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Abstract

The need for reliable and valid metrics for tracking consumers' experiences of products and brands cross-nationally is becoming ever more important as companies are increasingly operating in international markets. Brand experiences associated with global brands can manifest themselves very differently in different parts of the world; thus, the scales developed to track brand experiences should be validated cross-nationally. This research tests and revises an existing brand experience measurement scale cross-nationally in two countries that have very different cultural settings. Based on the findings from a survey with a sample of 1,008 respondents, the authors propose a revised and shortened scale that provides more reliable and valid measurement results of brand experiences of global high-tech brands. In general, the results demonstrate the need for tests on the cross-national applicability of measurement scales and, even further, they underline the importance of replication research.

Keywords

brand, consumer, experience, measurement, cross-national, scale development

Introduction

Brand measures are not automatically applicable globally if they have been developed and tested solely in one country (Lehmann et al. 2008). Brand experiences can be perceived differently depending on culture and country which should be taken into account when creating a brand scale for the global markets (Park and Rabolt 2009). The overall aim of this article is to investigate how the brand experience scale (BXS) of Brakus et al. (2009) can be applied cross-nationally to measure the brand experiences of technology products. More research on the meanings and types of consumer-brand relationships that are formed in different cultures has been called for (Fetscherin and Heinrich 2015), however, the actual cross-national measurement of consumer-brand relationships still lacks tested scales as is the case, for instance, with the measurement of brand experiences. Brand managers in global companies need to be well aware of the existing cultural differences in the consumer markets in different national settings when managing and building global brands.

The BXS provides a theoretical framework for measuring brand related experiences, however, it has not been tested extensively in different countries, only in a few individual cases in western developed countries. For example, Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) have tested the BXS with students in Spain with a fairly small sample size, and Nysveen et al. (2013) in Norway with a large sample size representative of the Norwegian population. The testing of the BXS in other countries is important as experiences are always formed in some context (Winzar 1992), and modern consumers in their decision making process and purchasing behavior are increasingly more interested in the style, personal identity and status of the brands they buy (Mason 2005).

The BXS measures brand experiences based on responses to brand-related stimuli on four dimensions: 1) sensory, 2) affective, 3) intellectual, and 4) behavioral. Brakus et al. (2009) have defined the brand experience concept on the basis of the brand personality concept created by Aaker (1997). The four dimensions in the BXS concentrate on capturing the way experiences happen and how they impact consumer behavior (Brakus et al., 2009). Consumers judge brands and form attitudes towards brands when they search, purchase, and use products, and in these situations the brand experiences are formed directly when in contact with brands in various environments. But brand experiences can also be formed indirectly when consumers see advertisements, browse content on the internet (Peterson et al. 1997), or associate brand experiences to imaginary settings (Pine and Gilmore 1998).

The focus in the study is to test and further develop the BXS based on the findings from two national contexts that were different than the one where the original scale was developed. In marketing science, replication research and

further testing of models and frameworks has been called for (Madden et al. 1995; Evanschitzky and Armstrong 2013; Uncles and Kwok 2013). We need to first replicate and test measures developed for global marketing purposes in different national contexts to find the cultural variances that will then help to make more reliable universal generalizations (Easley et al. 2000; Evanschitzky and Armstrong 2013). This paper contributes to the marketing and brand management literature in two ways. First, we test and replicate a brand measurement scale cross-nationally and thus add to the global validity of the scale by doing replication research in the area of brand scale development. We suggest that scales developed in western contexts should always be tested also in non-western contexts (Jafari et al. 2012) to help make further generalizations in marketing and accumulate marketing knowledge (Hubbard and Lindsay 2002). Secondly, our model indicates which dimensions in the BXS are stable and can be applied cross-nationally in two very different kinds of countries and which dimensions and measurement items may need some reformulation and further testing.

The paper is organized in the following manner: The first section below describes the theoretical basis for global brand experience measurements and the motivation for cross-national validation of brand measurement scales. The next section presents the research methodology and data collection. Finally, the results section reports the results of the analyses, and the conclusion section discusses the outcome and limitations of this study, suggestions for future research as well as managerial implications.

Theoretical background

In the selection and purchasing context there are many factors that have an impact on consumer experiences and behavior, including, for example, social, and cultural factors (Young et al. 2010) which are often dependent on the national settings where the consumers reside. The evaluations and experiences consumers form on brands are not even necessarily always rational and intellectual (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010). Cultures in different countries are no longer considered stable; instead, due to modernization and trends of convergence, they are constantly changing (Taras and Steel 2009). Consumers' experiences of brands are also constantly changing, as consumers seek new experiences and are actively engaging with companies through their feedback (Overby et al. 2005). As the reactions to different brand stimuli may be culturally dependent, testing of brand scales must be done in different countries to make sure that the scales are cross-nationally stable and that the items are applicable globally (Ambroise et al. 2003). Thus, we consider it important to empirically test the BXS outside the country where the original scale was developed and tested

by Brakus et al. (2009). In general, the cross-national examination of scales is critical when creating new tools for measuring brand concepts (Avis et al. 2014).

Brand Experiences

Often when discussing shopping and consumption experiences, brands are considered from the perspective of utilitarian product attributes (Hoch 2002; Lemke et al. 2011). However, consumers also encounter other stimuli associated with brands which are very personal and result in feelings, sensations and can have an impact on the behavior of consumers (Fournier 1998). Schmitt (1997) introduced experiential branding and categorized brands into three types: sense, feel and think brands. Later Schmitt (1999) introduced the concept of brand experience in the context of experiential marketing and it consisted of three dimensions: sensory, affective and cognitive. The concept of brand experience can be linked to the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998) who introduced experience economy where experiences are the offerings targeted to consumers.. The strength as well as intensity of brand experiences can vary (Skard et al. 2011), as well as the duration of the experience in the consumer's memory so that a brand experience can have a long term impact on the brand loyalty and satisfaction of the consumer (Brakus et al. 2009).

The scale items in the BXS measure brand experiences on four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral (Brakus et al., (2009). These dimensions resemble the five brand personality dimensions defined by Aaker (1997). Brand experiences can arise in situations where consumers are shopping or consuming products and services, or they can occur when consumers see advertisements or marketing campaigns (Brakus et al. 2009) or on the internet (Peterson et al. 1997). The concept of brand personality, in turn, refers to human personality traits that consumers connect to brands in situations where consumers use brands to express themselves (Aaker 1997). Brand personality is measured on five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and it offers a way to analyze brand effects (Aaker 1997; Malar et al. 2012). Brand experiences are not so much focusing on the psychological aspects, but instead items that measure what kind of sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral experiences consumers have with a brand, regardless of the content of the experience (Brakus et al. 2009).

Brand experiences are increasingly important for consumers as brands have more than just utility value which needs to be taken into account when managing brands (Brakus et al. 2009; Keller and Lehmann 2006). Consumption

experiences have been associated with certain functions, however, not all experiences are necessarily functional, there may be non-functional aspects associated to the experiences as well, just as is the case with brand experiences. Lanier et al. (2015) have introduced the concept of anti-function with regard to experiences that are a result of ambiguous and unintended results of cultural aspects in the experiences.

Schmitt (2012) has introduced in his consumer psychology model of brands five brand-related processes (identifying, experiencing, integrating, signaling and connecting with a brand), of which the experiencing process has been described to have three levels of experiencing: sensory, affective-cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Schmitt, 2012), however, no intellectual dimension is explicitly mentioned as a dimension of its own. Schmitt (1997, 2009) has also proposed in his experiential branding approach that consumers actively seek experiences rather than information which results in the view that consumers experience brands on the emotional level and in a creative thinking mode rather than in the information processing paradigm presented in consumer psychology. The affective dimension as such is a very strong dimension that has been also referred to separately with different brand measurement models e.g. brand attachment (Thomson et al. 2005; Park et al. 2010) and brand love (Pawle and Cooper 2006; Rossiter 2012), and the cognitive level is not necessarily apparent on this dimension.

The importance of cross-national aspects

Consumer research has in the past mostly focused on single countries, primarily in western countries (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). Askegaard and Linnet (2011) have noted that consumer research has had a very strong bias as it has represented the middle class in the United States, and they call for a wider perspective that would allow researchers to do more generalizations.. In addition to the individual minds of consumers, there is the wider context consisting of the social and cultural aspects in different countries that may have an impact on the findings (Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Jafari et al. 2012). As different cultural aspects exist in different countries, brand measures are not automatically applicable globally if they have been developed and tested solely in one country (Lehmann et al. 2008). So far, brand-related scales measuring, for example, brand trust (Hegner and Jevons 2016), and branded product meanings (Strizhakova et al. 2008) have been tested cross-nationally. However, the BXS has not yet been developed, replicated and tested in a cross-national context.

When analyzing human behavior in association with brands, one needs to keep in mind that people are generally influenced both by instinctive responses as well as cultural values and social norms that apply in their environment

(Tadajewski 2006). Motivation research focuses on the subjective views and perceptions of consumers, however, also the culture and society in which the consumers live have an important impact on the behavior of individual consumers (Tadajewski 2006). Just as the value of a product or service varies in different cultures (Overby et al. 2005), also the brand experiences can be considered to vary in different cultures and countries. In addition to the personal and functional factors associated with consumption, there are social factors (Overby et al. 2005) that are highly impacted by the social and political climate of the country where the consumer lives (Jafari et al. 2012). When building brands, companies can also resort to cultural myths that are part of national identities and these can be very local and impact the consumption experiences of the consumers only in one nation (Coskuner-Balli 2013). Markets are increasingly understood to be social constructs that are formed by the relationships between marketers and consumers who are socially connected to their communities, and communities in turn are tied to locations and are sensitive to the cultural settings (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006).

The cross-national testing of measurement models is important when verifying the validity and reliability of measures developed in business and marketing research, and it can help the field progress and build stronger frameworks and theories (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998; Walsh et al. 2015; Evanschitzky et al. 2007). National cultures have been analyzed and categorized theoretically in various aspects, including the economic situation (IMF 2016), cultural dimensions (Nakata 2009; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005) and the socio-cultural and political climate that is apparent in people's values (WVS 2016).

Markets are constantly evolving as more consumers have access to the Internet and are able to get information on various brands quicker and easier than 30 years ago, when Hofstede's cultural dimensions were developed (Nakata 2009). Even though cultures are not stable, but they are not necessarily merging into one global culture. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created the 'Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity,' which presents a vision of a culturally diverse world that allows different kinds of cultures to coexist with mainstream cultural trends, thus providing the future generations with cultural pluralism (UNESCO 2001). Even though companies manage and plan brands globally, their branding strategies need to be localized with an understanding of the current views of local consumers and the market trends. For this purpose, cross-nationally tested scales can provide valuable input.

Even though marketing research has been conducted to study cross-cultural differences of consumers with regard to, for example, advertising, also more studies on universal characteristics have also been called for (Saad 2008).

There is a wide range of tools for measuring brands and many concentrate on the measurement of emotional ties that consumers form with the brands, however, these are very much tied to the personal views of consumers, e.g. brand personality (Aaker 1997). There is a need for some more general views and tools for measuring brands, that concentrate on measuring a more public representation of a General Sentiment that is a strong affective bond between consumers and brands (Arvidsson 2011). Emotions are expressed in different ways in different cultures and they are also valued in different ways (Jantzen et al. 2012). The role of emotions in different decision points cannot be separated from the intellectual aspects of the decision making as feelings are linked to the intellectual processing of, for instance, consumption experiences (Jantzen et al. 2012).

Global brand experience measurement

The marketing literature contains various overlapping brand measurement scales for tracking customers' relationships and attitudes toward brands. One prominent scale is the brand personality measurement scale (Aaker 1997). Scales have also been developed for measuring brand loyalty and consumer-brand relationships (Fournier and Yao 1997), brand beliefs (Barnard and Ehrenberg 1990), and brand attitudes (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1987). Some of the brand measurement scales have also been refined and further developed in previous studies. For example, Geuens, Weijters, and De Wulf (2009) developed a new revision of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale.

The creation of brand measures for consumer surveys is demanding, especially in the global markets, as respondents in different countries may understand the survey questions differently and branding strategies can differ on a national level (Lehmann et al. 2008). Cross-national research is required to detect the common denominators and significant differences in the brand-related perceptions of consumers. When considering the various factors that can have an impact on brand experiences in different situations, one needs to take into account—in addition to the sales environment, location, and sales culture— the national context and the individual customer's viewpoints. These viewpoints include the consumers' cultural background and earlier purchasing experiences that are influenced by the national setting where the consumers live (Lawson 1997; Bettman et al. 1998; Rajala and Hantula 2000; Yankelovich and Meer 2006; Brakus et al. 2009; Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010).

The BXS developed by Brakus et al. (2009) was tested with brands ranging from toy brands to car and sports brands. The measurement items have been formulated on the basis of a literature review and feedback from consumers (Brakus et al., 2009). The scale measures brand experiences on four dimensions, the sensory, affective, behavioral,

and intellectual, with the following measurement items: Sensory - 1) This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses; 2) I find this brand interesting in a sensory way; 3) This brand does not appeal to my senses; Affective - 1) This brand induces feelings and sentiments; 2) I do not have strong emotions for this brand; 3) This brand is an emotional brand; Behavioral - 1) I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand; 2) This brand results in bodily experiences; 3) This brand is not action oriented; Intellectual - 1) I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand; 2) This brand does not make me think; 3) This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.

The management and tracking of brand-related experiences is becoming more popular in the marketplace, as the importance of brands' cultural value is understood and the experiential role of brands is considered an important factor that can also have an impact on the consumers' purchasing behavior (Brakus et al. 2009; Chabowski et al. 2013; Schmitt 2012; Schmitt et al. 2015b). Consumers have been found to form different kinds of consumer groups that experience brands differently on the different BXS dimensions with varying intensity (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010). It may be that consumers in different national settings pay attention to different aspects in their brand experiences, just as there are variations within one nation as was found by Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010).

Methodology and data

Testing and developing scales

This study is a replication and extension research designed to test how applicable and useful the BXS is in the case of high-tech brands in a cross-national context. The study assesses the applicability of the BXS cross-nationally in a large country with an emerging economy (India) and in a small country with an advanced economy (Finland) (IMF, 2016, 2013) by deploying the scale in a consumer survey on experiences associated with high-tech smartphone brands.

The growing number of online surveys sets certain prerequisites for web surveys. One is that they should be shorter and concentrate on the relevant measurement constructs that are the focus of the research (Stanton et al. 2002). The shortening of a scale can also be the target in scale development (Nenkov et al. 2008; Walsh et al. 2014). In that case, the external and internal criteria should be considered when selecting the measurement items that provide the best results (Stanton et al. 2002; Richins 2004). The downside of reducing scale items with a focus on maximization of internal consistency is that the measurement of the construct becomes narrower. When the focus is on maximizing item correlations, the negatively worded items tend to be excluded from the scale if they cover similar content as the

direct statements and the psychometric literature has actively discussed the true need to include negatively worded items in all scales (Stanton et al. 2002).

Response styles in surveys can vary considerably in different national contexts. The verification of the kinds of response styles in the examined countries is important when doing cross-national research (Diamantopoulos et al. 2006; Johnson et al. 2005). Researchers have identified several response styles, especially in the field of marketing. In the acquiescence response style and the disacquiescence response style, the positively and negatively worded items can have an impact on the respondents' scoring behavior (Barnette 2000; Dodeen 2015; Baumgartner and Steenkamp 2001).

We test an existing BXS in this study by conducting a survey in two countries at the same time. The survey includes the twelve original BXS measurement items measuring brand experience on four different dimensions developed by Brakus et al. (2009). In this study, we conduct structural equation modeling (SEM), item reduction and confirmatory factor analysis according to the same procedure that Brakus et al. (2009) follow in their study 3.

In the first phase, we utilize confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to replicate the original brand experience model with the data collected from the two countries. Then, we conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and principal component analysis (PCA) to examine how the measurement items divide into different components in the model structure in different national contexts. The factors that have provided satisfactory loadings in the PCA are again tested by CFA to investigate how well the measurement model fits the data (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). The items that have acceptable loadings in the PCA and CFA are reevaluated, and their impact on the reliability of the scale is assessed with diagnostic measures such as reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), which are commonly used for assessing internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) tests will then prove the validity and reliability of the scale (Hair et al. 2010).

In all of the phases, the 'do not know' options were treated as missing data, and the maximum likelihood method that applies the missing-at-random (MAR) approach (Bentler 2010) was used to analyze the data. MAR has also been referred to as a 'missing data mechanism' and is a method used to reweight responses and calculate unbiased estimates when the response rates differ per item (Nishimura et al. 2016). IBM SPSS and Amos software were used for the analysis.

Data collection

The target in this study is to concentrate on smartphone brands that represented in 2013 (3rd quarter of 2013) the three largest smartphone manufacturer brands: Samsung (Android Operating System (OS)), Apple (iOS), and Nokia (Windows Phone OS) (International_Data_Corporation 2013) respectively according to global market shares. The overall brand experiences that consumers have are the result of various kinds of brand stimuli, for example, product model, marketing messages, other people's experiences, etc., therefore, the study did not investigate the differences between smartphone models.

We tested the brand experience measurement model in both countries with sample sizes that were over 500 and these can be considered to be sufficient to reduce items and to find a proper solution (Iacobucci 2010) The data were collected via a web survey in the country with an advanced economy (Finland; N=506) and via phone interviews in the country with an emerging economy (India; N=502). In this study, the multiple-mode survey approach was considered appropriate because it allows the survey to cover populations that fit in the scope of the survey, as issues may exist in reaching the population with only one survey mode, even within one country (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2014).

The original brand experience items were translated into Finnish for the survey questionnaire used in Finland, while in India, the study used the original English versions of the BXS items. The equivalency of the Finnish translations with the original wordings of the BXS items were verified first by an English language expert, and later in a pilot survey using both the English and Finnish versions of the questionnaire. The survey was piloted with a group of respondents from both Finland and India. Based on the results, the questionnaire was modified so that all the response options were anchored to a worded response and the option ‘do not know’ was added as the eighth response option. The addition of eighth option helped to ensure that the respondents did not use the midpoint option in situations where they did not have an answer or did not understand the statement, thus ensuring that validity issues with the responses would be eliminated (Asun et al. 2016).

The survey was conducted in September 2013 in India and Finland. To ensure that the sample was representative of the population using smartphones, participants for the survey were selected from different parts of the two countries and from different age groups that had been identified to include potential smartphone users, and representing as evenly as possible the two genders[1]. In Finland, in 2013 nearly 100% of the households had a mobile phone and 56% of the population had a smartphone (Official_Statistics_of_Finland 2013). In India, in 2012 10%

had a smartphone, and the most smartphone owners lived in large cities with a population over 4 million (Nielsen 2012).

The response rate was 11% in Finland and 7% in India. With the increasing number of online surveys, the non-response rates have started to grow as well. The non-response rate is not necessarily an indication of non-response bias (Nishimura et al. 2016). In the present study, the samples are representative of the populations that use smartphones in the countries, which is one way of eliminating any systematic differences between the respondents and non-respondents.

In Finland, the majority (65.8%) of respondents had a Nokia branded phone, 17.4% had a Samsung phone, and 9.3% had an Apple phone. Only 6.3% of the respondents had a phone of another brand. Among the respondents in India, 36.5% had a Samsung phone, 25.5% had a Nokia phone, and 5.4% had an Apple phone. The rest of the respondents had phones with brands such as Blackberry, Sony, and HTC.

Results

Factor and model fit analysis of the original BXS model

We analyzed the data individually for each brand and the entire data set as a whole, combining the three brands in one data set without brand differentiation, to minimize the effect of brand bias and get results on a general brand experience for smartphone brands. Thus the survey results reflect a more general brand experience for smartphone brands. First, we conducted CFA with the original brand experience model and compared the results between the two countries. The factor loadings indicate serious issues with the negatively worded items, which is evident especially in the case of India. Table 1 presents the factor loadings for the measurement items in the original brand experience measurement model. When assessing the convergent validity and composite reliability, in the SEM model, the factor loadings should be at least .50. If the factor loadings are under .50, the variables are not aligned with the factors; however, loadings below .50 are acceptable if the CFA model fits satisfactorily (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). For Finland, the absolute values of the loadings for the negatively worded items are lower than for the rest of the items, but only one negatively worded item has a factor loading under .30. For India, all the negatively worded items have very low loadings, which raises questions on the suitability of these items in this scale.

[insert Table 1.]

The metrics used to analyze and compare the fit of the models include the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). Generally, as models differ by complexity, parameter values, sample sizes, and data distributions, no strict rules for cut-off values exist (Markland 2007). The chi-square is sensitive to the sample size, so a model that fits well produces a chi-square close to the sample size (Iacobucci 2010). When the TLI and CFI are greater than 0.90, the model fit indices are acceptable (Tomarken and Waller 2005). The SEM literature presents different cut-off values for the RMSEA; the cut-off values can range from .05 to .06, and some sources consider a model as having acceptable fit even when the RMSEA is .08 (Janssens et al. 2008). The RMSEA is not reliable with all samples, and the fit tends to worsen as the number of variables in the model increases (Iacobucci 2010).

As Table 2 shows, the model fit indices for the original BXS in the case of Finland are on the borderline and can be considered partly acceptable. However, in the case of India, the fit of the model for the original scale is not acceptable.

[insert Table 2.]

Exploratory factor analysis

As the model fit indices and the factor loadings for the negatively worded items are not acceptable for India in the original measurement model, the next step is to check the individual items in the model to verify what items are not loading on the common components. Before conducting EFA, it must be verified whether the factor analysis can be conducted.

For the original scale, when analyzed with the data from Finland, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO) is .880, which is above the recommended threshold of .50 (Malhotra et al. 2012), thus allowing factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity is also significant (χ^2=6559.57, p<.000). The factor analysis results in a three-factor model, with factors with eigenvalues > 1 and the factors explaining 68.3% of the variance. With the data collected from Finland, the negatively worded items load on a component that is not shared by the other factors. In addition, the affective items load on a separate third component.

When analyzing the model with the India data, the KMO is .886, and Bartlett's test is significant (χ^2=10257.41, p<.000). The factor analysis results in a two-factor model composed of eigenvalues > 1 and explaining 67.7% of the variance. The data from India load slightly differently than the Finland data, as the negatively worded items load on the same component as one of the intellectual items. The negatively worded items for all of the four brand experience

dimensions load on a different component than the majority of the other items for both the Finnish and Indian data, which indicates that the negatively worded items do not necessarily fit in the same model as the other items.

Differences at the .01–.04 level only exist in a few of the loadings for the positively worded items when the negative items are excluded from the model. When looking only at the direct statements that are included in the eight-item model, one factor in the intellectual dimension ('I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand') loads clearly below .50 in the case of India.

The fit of the model for the shortened eight-item scale is now acceptable in both countries; this acceptability is also based on the comparative analysis between the countries (χ^2=498.92, CFI=.965, TLI=.909, RMSEA=.075).

Reliability analysis

The internal reliability of the brand experience dimensions is assessed by verifying the Cronbach's alpha for each dimension. A Cronbach's alpha greater than or equal to .80 indicates that no more items need to be removed from the model. As Table 3 shows, the intellectual item does not fit the model because the Cronbach's alpha is .704 for Finland and .472 for India without the negative items. If the model excludes the intellectual dimension, the rest of the dimensions have an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value.

[insert Table 3.]

Final revised scale

In the next phase, we leave out the intellectual dimension from the scale. For the India data, the factor loadings for one of the intellectual items ('I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand') range from .33 to .44, which are below the recommended .50 threshold for factor loadings (Janssens et al. 2008; Bagozzi and Yi 2012). To test the impact of removing the intellectual dimension, we conduct CFA on the revised brand experience model.

Figure 1 presents the outcome of the final CFA of the revised brand experience model. The figure indicates the factor loadings beside the corresponding arrows leading to the factor for both India (IN) and Finland (FI). At this stage, all of the factor loadings are well above the .50 threshold.

[insert Figure 1.]

The model fit indices improve considerably for the revised brand experience model, which is also apparent from the fit indices for the individual brands (see Table 4).

[insert Table 4.]

Since the model fit indices are good for the revised model, the validity and reliability of the scale are investigated by analyzing the AVE and CR (Hair et al. 2010). In the revised model, all the dimensions for both Finland and India yield a CR value above the recommended .70 (see Table 5). For the revised measurement model, the AVE values are all acceptable and above the recommended threshold of .50 (Hair et al. 2010). Therefore, without the negatively worded items and intellectual dimension in the model, the factors indicate construct reliability, and the revised measurement model indicates adequate convergence.

[insert Table 5.]

Comparing brands based on the revised brand experience scale

The revised BXS can be used to track how competing brands are positioned on a national level based on consumers' brand experiences. As the sample size in this study is well over 400 for both of the countries, the sampling error component is minimal, and even small differences can be considered statistically significant (Hair et al. 2010). As Table 6 shows, in Finland, the respondents rated Nokia, which is a local brand, the highest on all the BXS dimensions. On the other hand, in India, the respondents rated Apple the highest on most of the dimensions.

The means for the items in Table 6 show that the ratings from the respondents in India are systematically higher, which is a response-style issue that needs to be considered when comparing the responses cross-nationally.

[insert Table 6.]

Based on the findings we reduced the scale by removing all of the four negatively worded items under each of the dimensions which did not load satisfactorily in the model. In addition, the intellectual dimension was taken out from the revised scale as the factor loadings in India were not satisfactory for one of the measurement items and the fit indices did not support this model.

Conclusion

This research tests and further develops the brand experience scale (BXS) in two countries with large sample sizes concentrating on three high-tech brands. The findings challenge the original BXS as the resulting revised model includes fewer items that are valid and reliable across national settings. Therefore, the resulting revised model can be regarded as more generalizable in a cross-national setting. Further, our findings invite more replication research and

cross-national validations. As our findings in modelling the brand experience of smartphone brands challenge the original BXS it nevertheless was able to reproduce the three original dimensions of the BXS model: the affective, sensory and behavioral. However, in the brand experiences of high-tech brands, the intellectual dimension results in most variation across national contexts. We empirically proved that brand experiences of high-tech brands can be measured with a revised BXS with 6 measurement items in two different national contexts. The growing number of online surveys also requires that participants in surveys are offered shorter scales that concentrate on the relevant measurement items that are valid and in the focus of the research (Stanton et al. 2002). If there is more than one factor in a scale, it is sufficient to have only two items that identify the factors, and the scale can still be considered to be reliable, even though these cases are not prevalent (Raubenheimer 2004).

The negatively worded items in the original scale disturbed the model structure and had to be taken out of the model. The four negative statements did not add any value to the brand experience construct as such, so it can be considered to be a clear improvement for the scale and its further usability if they are not included in the scale. The use of negatively worded items in measurement scales could have an impact on the response styles even though their intention is to prevent so-called acquiescence in the responses (Barnette 2000; Dodeen 2015). Other brand measurement scales do not include negatively worded items (see the brand performance measurement items combined from various sources by Lehmann et al. (2008).

One of the intellectual items in the original scale did not yield satisfactory results in the factor loadings for India, which led to the elimination of the intellectual dimension from the revised scale in this study. The reduction of the intellectual dimension raises questions on the formulation of the original statements used to measure this dimension. The measurement item “I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand” did not load satisfactorily in the model for India, however, the factor loadings were not as low as for the negative items. There may be national and cultural differences on this dimension that cannot be necessarily universally generalized. It may be that the intellectual dimension is partially a nationally dependent dimension in the case of high-tech brands; however, there are also references in literature to the irrational elements in the evaluation of brands and experiences consumers have with brands (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010), which may explain why the one measurement item in the intellectual dimension does not load as strongly as the other measurement items in the model for both of the countries. Another reason for this may be that emotions also play an important role in decision points and are linked to the intellectual processing of consumption experiences (Jantzen et al. 2012) and the two dimensions are not as distinct in India as in

Finland. The items for the intellectual dimension need to be still further developed and tested as the other one of the intellectual items ("This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving") still has fairly high factor loadings in both of the countries, as can be seen in table 1.

We have replicated and tested the existing BXS scale and then revised it to the point where the model is supported by the data collected in two different national contexts. Our findings show that brands are experienced in varying ways on different dimensions in different countries. In Schmitt's (2012) consumer-psychology model of brands the experiencing process has been described to have three levels of experiencing: sensory, affective-cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Schmitt 2012), but the intellectual dimension mentioned was not listed as a separate dimension of its own. With reference to this specific mapping of psychological aspects of brands by Schmitt (2012) it is not surprising that the intellectual dimension was reduced from the revised BXS model in our study, as consumers in India and Finland were shown to experience brands on the sensory, affective and behavioral dimensions. As suggested by Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), different kinds of consumer groups seem to be appealed by different kinds of experiences, and this is also reflected in the way they experience brands in varying ways on the BXS dimensions in different national contexts.

Based on our findings we propose that the BXS could be revised to a shorter version of the scale when measuring brand experiences of high-tech brands cross-nationally in advanced and emerging economies. Also, this confirms that more testing of scales should be done outside the country where the scale has been originally developed. Response styles in different countries are dependent on the cultural context (Diamantopoulos et al. 2006; Baumgartner and Steenkamp 2001). The respondents in India have evaluated the brands slightly more favorably than Finns, as can be seen in table 6.

Naturally, our study has some limitations. The study includes only two countries, but they are heterogeneous and very different from one another. Therefore, theoretically, the use of these countries is sensible, as it increases the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation is that the majority of respondents in Finland have a Nokia branded phone. This fact could affect the means and standard deviations in the responses, although it does not necessarily have an impact on the model structure. When using a brand that originates from a country included in the research, such as Nokia that originates from Finland, there is the risk of having home country bias in the research findings (Riefler 2012). However, at the time of the survey in Finland, Nokia was understood to be a global brand as a part of Microsoft and major newspapers in Finland, e.g. Helsingin Sanomat and Taloussanomat (Sajari 2013; Taloussanomat 2013) and

the national broadcasting company Yle (Yle 2013) were already reporting on the strong market position of Samsung and Apple compared to Nokia's Windows Phones. In 2012 Android OS had the largest market share, Apple iOS was the second and Windows Phone OS was the third (Idean 2013). These aspects can be considered to decrease the home country bias but still this source of bias indeed may be present in our findings and further studies are needed to validate our results in other country settings.

The shorter measurement model resulting from our study is an attested starting point for further research; short measurement models have been called for (Stanton et al. 2002; Nenkov et al. 2008) as they are easier to apply, extend and test further. The results on the intellectual dimension are not conclusive; thus, the wording of the intellectual dimension needs to be further developed and tested in a cross-national setting. To further study the four dimensions that were originally introduced by Brakus et al. (2009) in the BXS, the negatively worded items that were removed from the revised model could still be reworded so that they do not include a negation. This would help to further test how strongly the different dimensions appear to be in consumers' brand experiences. In addition, further research should investigate positively and negatively worded versions of the items of the scale which will tell more about how the positive and negative aspects of experiences affect consumer behavior (Brakus et al. 2009). This will also help to understand how brands could help to increase the happiness of consumers (Schmitt et al. 2015a). Future research could study whether the revised model can be generalized to other product categories, local brands, and other national settings. Future studies could also analyze what kind of socio-demographic differences exist between different consumer segments. As national cultures are highly heterogeneous, the scale should also be tested in smaller communities or consumer groups.

This study provides fruitful avenues for the further development of the BXS for tracking global brands in multi-national consumer markets. Because of the globalization of business, marketing departments have a demand for cross-national measures that can help position brands and launch new products. Future research could build on the findings of the present study to refine brand experience measurement to suit the changing needs of various stakeholders, following, for instance, Hillebrand, Driessen, and Koll (2015). Companies that can actively respond to the varying requirements of consumers in different countries have the best chance to build the leading global brands of the future.

Managerial implications

The findings imply that brand managers in global companies can devise a standardized branding approach in sensory, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This means that, for example, global brand marketing can have elements that induce sensory cues and engage recipients in emotional responses with the same standardized approach. Of course, these aspects need to be tested in local conditions before implementation but our results clearly suggest that the three dimensions can be used similarly in differing country settings. However, other dimensions that may be part of brand experience, like the intellectual dimension, need to be localized with an understanding of the dimensions in the brand experiences and how they are interpreted by consumers in the specific target countries. A standardized global brand approach can be designed for positive brand experiences in a target country, so that the brand-related experiences appeal to the senses, they engage the consumers on the physical level to behave in a positive way, and finally that the experiences create good feelings to the consumers (following Schmitt et al. 2015a). Additionally, our results highlight the dangers of using negatively worded statements inquiring consumers' perceptions in different country settings. Therefore, as the global brand managers are monitoring or testing impact of their actions in the marketplace they should be careful when using this type of approach.

Notes

1. The respondents in Finland are from four different regions in Finland and the coverage is close to the distribution of the population in Finland, so that 29,6% of the respondents were from the Helsinki area, 22,5% from other parts of Southern Finland, 26,1% from Western Finland, and 21,7% from Northern and Eastern Finland (Official_Statistics_of_Finland 2012b). To verify that the sample represents the urban population in India, respondents were randomly selected from the top five metropolitan areas in India: Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore, based on the census 2011(Census_Organization_of_India 2011). The Indian urban population was 31% of the total population in 2011 (Census_Organization_of_India 2011) . From the respondents, 37,5% were from Mumbai, the largest metropolitan area in India, 18,1% were from Delhi, 18,1% were from Bangalore, 17,1% from Chennai, and 9,2% from Kolkata (Census_Organization_of_India 2011). In Finland, the distribution of the respondents in the age groups that use smartphones is divided fairly closely to the age distribution among the whole population of Finland (Official_Statistics_of_Finland 2012a): 13,4% were aged 18-24 years, 20,6% were 25-34 years, 20,2% were 35-44 years, 22,9% were 45-54 years, and 22,9% were 55-64 years. In India, the age group that had the most smartphones is the group of 18-24 year olds and a few years above 24 years (Nielsen 2012) which is reflected in the higher

proportion of younger adults in the age groups included in the Indian sample. In India, 20,9% of the respondents were aged 18-24 years, 42,6% were 25-34 years, 20,1 % were 35-44, 10,4% were 45-54, and 6,0% were 55-64 years. Both of the genders were nearly evenly represented: in Finland, 47% of the respondents were female and 53% were male, and in India 48% were female and 52% male.

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Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the original brand experience model (Brakus et al., 2009)

MEASUREMENT ITEMS	**Finland**				**India**			
AFFECTIVE	Combined[a]	Samsung	Apple	Nokia	Combined[a]	Samsung	Apple	Nokia
This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	.78	.74	.72	.78	.80	.81	.79	.80
This brand is an emotional brand.	.90	.92	.89	.85	.83	.82	.83	.85
I do not have strong emotions for this brand.	*-.59*	*-.55*	*-.48*	*-.62*	*.01*	*.04*	*.08*	*-.10*
INTELLECTUAL								
This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	.84	.90	.88	.78	.84	.90	.81	.82
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.	.64	.73	.58	.59	.38	.33	.44	.35
This brand does not make me think.	*-.42*	*-.52*	*-.33*	*-.35*	*.15*	*.16*	*.20*	*.12*
SENSORY								
I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	.91	.92	.93	.87	.82	.84	.83	.79
This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	.86	.88	.84	.86	.80	.77	.80	.83
This brand does not appeal to my senses.	*-.59*	*-.59*	*-.63*	*-.52*	*.08*	*.04*	*.13*	*.08*
BEHAVIORAL								
This brand results in bodily experiences.	.90	.93	.95	.83	.88	.89	.86	.87
I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.	.86	.89	.80	.88	.83	.84	.80	.86
This brand is not action oriented.	*-.23*	*-.22*	*-.17*	*-.31*	*.17*	*.18*	*.23*	*.13*

[a] Combined data set including responses for three brands: Samsung, Apple, and Nokia.

Notes: The negatively worded items in the scale are in italics.

Table 2. Model fit indices for the original brand experience model (Brakus et al., 2009)

Indices	Combined[a]		Samsung		Nokia		Apple	
	Finland	India	Finland	India	Finland	India	Finland	India
Chi-square	1006.01	4045.58	373.57	1530.33	383.43	1333.84	382.41	1291.42
df	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Probability level	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
TLI	.818	.381	.843	.349	.792	.401	.791	.395
CFI	.888	.619	.903	.599	.872	.632	.872	.628
RMSEA	.115	.235	.116	.248	.118	.231	.117	.227

[a] Combined data set including responses for three brands: Samsung, Apple, and Nokia.

df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 3. Reliability analysis of the original brand experience model (Brakus et al., 2009)

	Finland (N=1,518)	**India** (N=1,506)
MEASUREMENT DIMENSIONS		
AFFECTIVE		
Cronbach's α with negative item	-.433	.410
Cronbach's α without negative item	.821	.802
INTELLECTUAL		
Cronbach's α with negative item	-.137	.521
Cronbach's α without negative item	.704	.472
SENSORY		
Cronbach's α with negative item	-.304	.349
Cronbach's α without negative item	.867	.799
BEHAVIORAL		
Cronbach's α with negative item	.416	.596
Cronbach's α without negative item	.874	.843

Table 4. Model fit indices for the revised brand experience model

Indices	Combined[a]		Samsung		Nokia		Apple	
	Finland	India	Finland	India	Finland	India	Finland	India
Chi-square	14.10	101.34	18.95	66.75	16.87	31.81	5.14	21.03
df	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Probability level	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
TLI	.994	.933	.975	.875	.972	.947	1.002	.966
CFI	.998	.981	.993	.964	.992	.985	1.000	.990
RMSEA	.030	.103	.065	.142	.060	.093	.001	.071

[a] Combined data set including responses for three brands: Samsung, Apple, and Nokia.

df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

A sensitivity analysis was also conducted by running a multi-group analysis, and the results were in line with the results presented in this table.

Table 5. Reliability and validity analysis of the revised brand experience model

	Composite Reliability		**Average Variance Extracted**	
	Finland	India	Finland	India
Affective	.835	.805	.720	.674
Sensory	.872	.800	.773	.667
Behavioral	.878	.845	.784	.731

Table 6. Differences between the brands in Finland and India based on the revised brand experience model

		Mean (standard deviation)		
		Samsung	**Apple**	**Nokia**
SENSORY	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.			
Finland		3.6 (1.6)	3.6 (1.8)	3.9 (1.7)
India		5.5 (1.4)	5.8 (1.3)	5.3 (1.5)
	This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.			
Finland		3.5 (1.4)	3.8 (1.6)	3.8 (1.5)
India		5.4 (1.4)	5.5 (1.4)	5.1 (1.5)
AFFECTIVE	This brand induces feelings and sentiments.			
Finland		4.0 (1.5)	4.8 (1.6)	5.5 (1.3)
India		5.3 (1.6)	5.4 (1.5)	5.3 (1.5)
	This brand is an emotional brand.			
Finland		3.3 (1.5)	4.0 (1.8)	4.7 (1.7)
India		5.1 (1.6)	5.4 (1.5)	5.3 (1.5)
BEHAVIORAL	This brand results in bodily experiences.			
Finland		2.9 (1.4)	2.8 (1.4)	3.1 (1.5)
India		5.1 (1.5)	5.2 (1.5)	4.9 (1.5)
	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.			
Finland		2.7 (1.4)	2.6 (1.4)	2.9 (1.5)
India		5.1 (1.6)	5.1 (1.6)	4.9 (1.5)

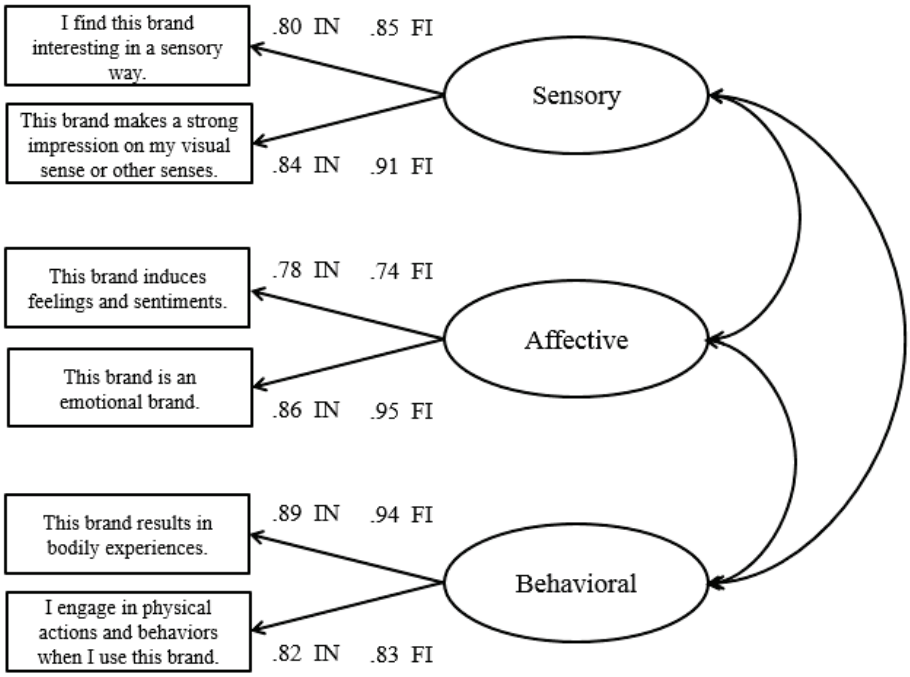

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the revised brand experience scale with the combined data set. In the figure, IN stands for India and FI for Finland.