Selling "Kawaii" in Advertising: Testing Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Kawaii Appeals

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SELLING "KAWAII" IN ADVERTISING: TESTING CROSS-CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF *KAWAII* APPEALS

by

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ABSTRACT
SELLING "KAWAII" IN ADVERTISING: TESTING CROSS-CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF *KAWAII* APPEALS

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"Kawaii" (cute) culture has become a major global consumer culture. Advertisers in Asia have adopted *kawaii* appeals to attract attention and promote product images. From a cultural value perspective, this literature review proposes that culture not only affects ad content and appeal, but also influences consumer attitude and ad effects. While *kawaii* appeals are culturally specified, the effects of those appeals across distinct cultures might be systemically predictable.

Today, the concept of *kawaii* and its effects still remains vague to Western academia. This thesis provides a deeper understanding of *kawaii* examining the rich origin of *kawaii* culture in Japan and its expansion and globalization as a dominant consumer culture. Online surveys using specifically designed stimuli were administrated to respondents from both individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The thesis thus develops a theoretical definition for *kawaii* within the advertising appeal context and a measurement scheme for utilizing its multidimensional composite constructs.

Based on the self-congruity hypothesis, it is argued that culturally shaped self-construals affect responses to ads employing *kawaii* appeals. *Kawaii* appeals which stress interdependence should be more persuasive among consumers with self-construals congruent with the message. Findings suggested that *kawaii* appeals were perceived to be friendlier in both United States and China, while consumers with domain interdependent self-construal expressed stronger self-brand connection, more favorable ad attitude and purchase intention toward the *kawaii* ads.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Beauty, *Beast* and *Baby* are the components of the advertising 3B Rule, a popular and practical advertising tactic often employed in the Asian market. It utilizes these three components as spokespersons to gain consumer attention and thereby increase retention and purchase intention (Luo, Gao, & Cong, 2005). Considering that beautiful young girls, small animals, and babies are deemed as "cute", the wide application of the 3B Rule in Asia suggests that Asian advertisers have long adopted the *kawaii* appeals as a selling point. While *kawaii* in advertising is still a relatively new territory for academic research, the 3B Rule does suggest it has a long history in the advertising industry (see Figure).

Figure 1. Examples of 3B Rule: Beauty (Japan), Beast (China), and Baby (United States).

Originated in Japan, the word "kawaii" (cute) is often used to characterize a number of characteristics, including people (children, women), objects (clothes, accessories), styles (design, services), and even slang terms (Kinsella, 1995). *Kawaii* can be seen across a broad range of execution styles, ranging from photographic realism to anime illustration. At the center of this cute phenomenon is Japan's *kawaii* culture. Founded during the postwar era, today the *kawaii* style not only dominates Japanese

popular culture (Kinsella, 1995), but also has been exported as a cultural product all over the world through the burgeoning of global consumerism in recent years (Shiraishi, 1997).

Although there are abundant studies on the Japanese *kawaii* culture, little research has been done to investigate the effects of cute appeals in actual advertisements. Partially that is due to the lack of a reliable definition and measuring scale for the concept. Because the term *kawaii* is a versatile concept with great cultural variations (McVeigh, 2000), it is difficult to define precisely. Further, semantic analysis shows that the Japanese *kawaii* covers broader meanings than its English translation of "cute" (Asano-Cavanagh & the Australian Association for Research in Education, 2012). Thus, *kawaii* is currently being utilized in Western countries without translation, and there is no exact equivalent. This thesis proposes a clear conceptualization of *kawaii* in the context of advertising appeal. The goal of the thesis is to capture and measure *kawaii* appeals in ads quantitatively by developing an instrument with statistical reliability across high-low product involvement categories. This instrument will be useful in future cross-cultural advertising studies.

To test the perceptions of *kawaii* appeals in a cross-cultural setting, this study adopts the theory of self-congruity which suggests that higher congruency between advertising appeals and consumer self-construals leads to stronger self-brand connections and eventually more favorable evaluations toward the ad (Sirgy, 1982). Specifically, the current study seeks to empirically examine the effects of *kawaii* appeals between cultures and also in conjunction with individual self-construals. Moreover, self-construal literature indicates that gender-level variations can also account for variations in persuasion, thus, gender difference in effects of *kawaii* appeals is also explored.

Finally, this study adopts the research paradigm suggesting that product involvement plays a role in influencing advertising persuasion. Thus, two fictitious stimuli ads representing high-involvement product category and also low-involvement product category were developed to test the assumption that product involvement impacts the receptions of *kawaii* appeals. According to the elaboration likelihood model (Petty et al., 2005) as well as the heuristic-systematic model (Chaiken et al., 1989), readily available and accessible extrinsic cues such as *kawaii* appeals may be associated with the less involved, peripheral processing route, thus when employed in a low-involvement product, *kawaii* appeals will have greater impact than in a high-involvement situation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A dominant trend in cross-cultural advertising research is concerned with the impact of culture on advertising creative strategies, communication styles, appeal selections and other symbolic content. Studies following this trend often employ quantitative content analysis as a method (e.g., Cho et al., 1999; Daechun, 2007; Mueller, 1987, 1992; Oyedele & Minor, 2012). Yet, recent studies do suggest that cultural values not only affect advertising content, but also influence consumer attitudes and reactions toward certain advertising appeals, thus affecting advertising effects across cultures. For example, cross-cultural consumer research has found that any standardized advertisement is perceived differently depending on the cultural dimension values of individual cultures (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; House, Quigley, & de Luque, 2010; Terlutter, Diehl, & Mueller, 2010). The underlying assumption of this line of research is that cultural values significantly influence the cognitive structures of individuals, which in turn affect their responses to advertising (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Following this assumption, the proposed study develops a theoretical definition of *kawaii* appeal and explains the cultural influence on the effects of *kawaii* appeals in actual advertising venues.

A. History of the Kawaii Culture

To understand the importance of *kawaii* appeals in international advertising and thus develop a theoretical definition of those appeals, it's best to start with a brief review the history of the *kawaii* culture, its development, and its subsequent global expansion, where Japanese culture has played a leading role.

1. The Rise of the Kawaii Culture

Distributed by Japan's powerful anime and manga industry, *kawaii* aesthetics is today widespread among the international youth culture in the new millennium. Originating in Japan, the *kawaii* style has dominated Japanese popular culture since 1980s. The culture of *kawaii* was explicitly studied in Kinsella's (1995) pioneering essay where, according to Kinsella, *kawaii* can be described as a style that is "infantile and delicate at the same time as being pretty" (Kinsella, 1995, p. 220). The concept has since become a strong international consumer culture as well as a culture phenomenon, penetrating media, consumer goods, and services.

The word "kawaii" first appeared as *kawayushi* (かわゆし) in a Japanese collection of Buddhism tales near the end of the Taisho period (1912–26), where it carried the meaning of shy and embarrassed, also pathetic, vulnerable, lovable, and small. The term *kawayushi* was included in dictionaries from the Taisho period up until 1945. It subsequently changed into *kawayui* (可愛い) after World War II, but without any change in meaning. The contemporary spelling of *kawaii* became prevalent in the 1970s with additional meanings of shy, embarrassed, pathetic (i.e. pitiful), and vulnerable.

The rise of the modern term, *kawaii*, in the 1970s is interpreted by some Japanese scholars as a reflection of Japan's vulnerability and dependence on the United States during the postwar period. Such dependence, according to Murakami (2005), resembled a childlike relationship to foreign forces that also symbolized Japan's childish taste for security and shelter at that time. Following the end of World War II and the defeat of Japan, the previously virile confidence of Japanese artists met its demise, giving way to a search for solace in harmless and *kawaii* images (Murakami, 2005). It has since been

proposed that the intimate relationship that was binding Japan to America after the war deprived the Japanese of autonomy and drove them to create new popular cultural identities that included the cute culture known as *kawaii* (Matsui, 2005).

The commercial expansion of modern manga animation (visual comics arts) originated during the United States Occupation period (1945–1952). During the Occupation, censorship policies specifically prohibited art and writing that glorified war and Japanese militarism. Despite that censorship, publication of other kinds of material, including manga, was exempt from that ban (Frederik, 1986). This exemption resulted in the rapid growth of manga from the 1950s to the 1970s. However, the physical appearance, style, and plot of the manga at that time were strongly influenced by the United States' popular culture, e.g., comics brought to Japan and images and themes found in television, film, and cartoons (e.g., Disney comics and animation) (Kinsella, 2000). Representative of the work from this period is the Astro Boy (also known as *Mighty Atom*or or 鉄腕アトム in Japanese, as seen in Figure 2) by Osamu Tezuka in 1951. Astro Boy represented a new Japanese sociality and community-oriented masculinity that was much different from the pre-war Imperial Emperor worship and militaristic obedience (Frederik, 2007). The Astro Boy series (manga series, animated television series, films, video games and other works) transformed the fearful atomic power of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 into a heroic, positive and childish character, thereby helping the Japanese people to overcome those dreadful memories and embrace modern technology.

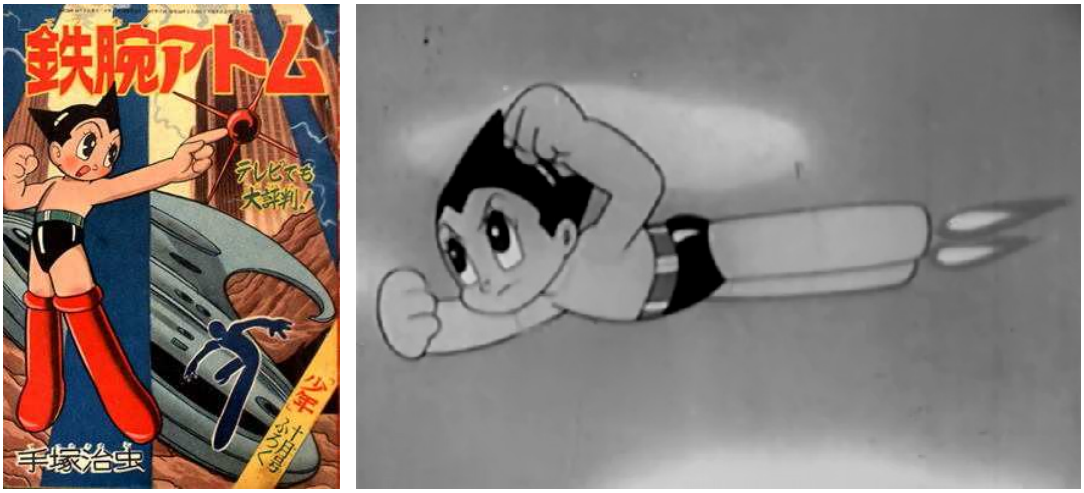


Figure 2. Astro Boy's Own Manga Series Published in the Shōnen (少年) Magazine in 1951-1968 (left). Japan's First Animated, Black & White Television Series, Astro Boy Airs on Fuji TV, 1963-1966 (right).

The 1970s also saw the surge of a form of cute handwriting among the Japanese young that mimicked childish character style, especially teenage girls. This new handwriting fashion was used by the young to communicate with each other. It became a national phenomenon during the mid-1970s, and reached five million young people in 1985 (Kinsella, 1995). This new fashion became so rift that many schools banned it entirely. The traditional Japanese script writing is vertical strokes, varying in thickness. The new childlike style was written laterally with rounded (*maru-ji* or 丸字) and even lines, often incorporating cartoon symbols, such as hearts, faces, and hands, and English words like 'love' and 'friend' (see Figure 3). The new style suggested that the younger generation was rebelling against Japanese traditional culture, while also identifying themselves as different from the adults.

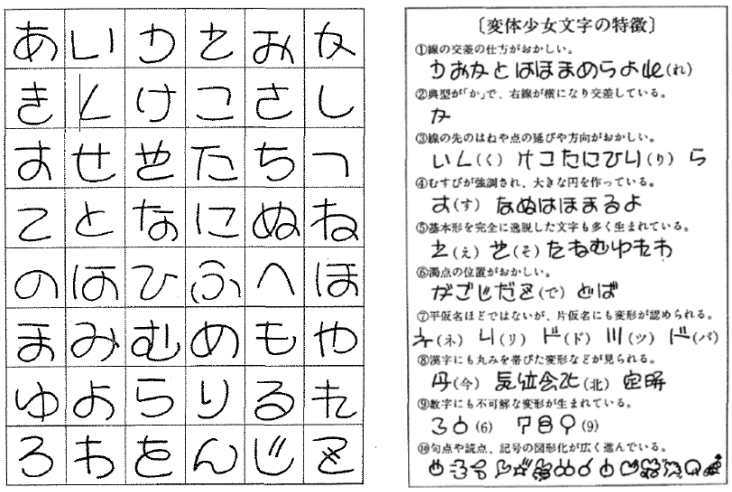


Figure 3. Samples of the Cute Handwriting from 1985 (Kinsella, 1995).

It must be noted as well that this cute fashion was characterized as a “demure, indolent little rebellion” (Kinsella, 1995, p. 243) rather than an aggressive, independent, sexually provoked rebellion associated with Western youth cultures. The long rooted thought of Confucianism linked the adult maturity to obligations for family and society, accepting personal sacrifices and compromises for the good of the group, as a typical collectivistic society demanded. A possible escape from these restrictions was to simply retreat to childhood fantasy where individual freedom was thus attainable. Thus, instead of acting as proactively aggressive and rebellious, Japanese young people in the 1970s chose to be recognized as non-sexual and too immature to be responsible for social responsibilities and did so adopting a *kawaii* fashion as their own.

Associated with this new handwriting style was the rise of consumption of cute goods, cute clothes and other cultural products. In the early 1970s, the Japan stationary giant, Sanrio, began production of cartoon character-decorated memo pads and diaries for students who fancied the cute handwriting fashion. Many of Sanrio’s designs were sourced from manga and cute handwriting of that time. After an initial success, Sanrio

expanded its product line to other small goods. Hello Kitty was added to the line-up of cartoon characters in 1974, and today it generates US$5 billion a year for Sanrio (Tabuchi, 2010). Other cute goods sold by Sanrio included accessories, stationary, clothing, jewelry, plush dolls and toys, cell phone accessories, car accessories, household decorations and snacks (for examples, see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Samples Advertisements of Cute Goods in Sanrio Official Website.

The association of cute cartoon characters with lifeless items was viewed as an approach to humanizing a product (Hjorth, 2003). By personalizing goods with lovely faces, these goods appeared more attractive to consumers and evoked warmer feelings rather than an image of faceless goods. The *kawaii* objects thus created quasi-relationships with people, allowing them to enter into a group with these friendly characters where they then could find a sense of belonging. Cute clothing served the same purpose via a more direct approach, by allowing the wearer becomes the cute object. By the late 1980s, cute fashion evolved into “cheeky, androgynous, and tomboy

sweetness" (Kinsella, 1995, p. 229). This change was expressed as androgynous and humorous clothing outfits in young fashion magazines.

The 1980s was also marked by a "moratorium mentality" (the desire to refuse to grow up and take on social responsibilities) among Japan's young population. For young women, cute objects provided a sanctuary free from social pressure. However, this sense of prolonged freedom also has contributed to the high rate of "parasite singles" (adults in their 20s and 30s who are unmarried and employed, but still living with their parents) in contemporary Japan society. For young men, these cute characters provided a sense of intimacy and quasi-relationships that help them escape from daily stresses and a detachment from family and friends (Shiraishi, 1997). Although men were less likely to wear cute outfits and purchase cute accessories, they expressed their cute side by fetishizing young women, either as a real girl friend or as girls in a manga series. All these influences together contributed to a strong consumer culture that was dominated by the cute culture since the 1980s. Sustaining the cute culture today is a booming consumer culture that springs from rising income and a thriving media and advertising industry (Garge, 2007).

2. Exporting the Kawaii Culture

1970s Japan shifted from being an information importer status to being one of exporter, marked by an explosion in exports of TV programs that rose from 2,200 hours in 1971 to over 19,500 hours by 1992. Over half of these were animated cartoons (Cooper-Chen, 2010). A METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) report showed that about 60 percent of animated series broadcast around the world were made in Japan (METI, 2004). The Japan animation market was estimated to be worth about $13

billion U.S. dollars in 2011, of which 20 percent comes from oversea markets (Rungfapaisarn, July 2013). Popular TV animation series like *Doraemon, Pokémon*, and *Dragon Ball*, have also been made into films, DVDs, and video games with an array of authentic anime merchandise that includes figures, foods, and other accessories circulating in many countries (see Figure 5). Inspirations from Japan anime can also be seen in many Hollywood blockbusters, like *The Matrix* (1999)—influenced by the anime series, *KokakuKidotai (Ghost in the Shell*) directed by Mamoru Oshii. Other often cited sources of influence include *Gatchaman*, *Speed Racer*, *Spirited Away* and *Akira*.

Figure 5. Examples of Authentic Anime Merchandises.

The *kawaii* culture is also popular in other Asian countries that share cultural similarities with Japan. A METI survey showed that four of the top five best-loved cartoon characters in China were created in Japan, while those in the United States like Snoopy, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse and Garfield rank from sixth to ninth in Japan (METI, 2004). The Taiwanese woman's *kawaii*-like baby talk is a common phenomenon also influenced by the Japanese cute culture (Chuang, 2005), and *kawaii* fashion is also widely adopted among Singaporean (Hao & Teh, 2004) and Thai youth (Shunya, 2000).

The successful exportation of the *kawaii* culture may be attributed to the fact that these exports are not images of traditional Japanese culture (Botz-Bornstein, 2011).

Scholars have long proposed that the *kawaii* culture is culturally faceless and odorless (Alison, 2002; Shearin, 2011), meaning it is not marketed as Japanese culture. By eliminating a national culture branding, this culture has greater transference, thus making it easier to target different foreign cultures. Hello Kitty, for instance, has no ties to the Japanese culture since there is no original background story provided by its owner, Sanrio. Instead, Sanrio gave the kitty a British nationality. The kitty's simplistic facial features, including being mouthless, has also made it easily identified by and appealing to people from different cultural backgrounds. Just as Herskovitz (1999) summarized: "Without the mouth, it is easier for the person looking at Hello Kitty to project their feelings onto the character… The person can be happy or sad together with Hello Kitty" (p. 3).

The historical cultural similarities and contemporary social developments in both China and Japan have added to the diffusion of *kawaii* culture in these markets. Sharing a common root in Confucianism, Chinese and Japanese societies stress collectivistic values, such as the importance of family and social groups, while individual interests are largely belittled. The *kawaii* culture emphasizes establishing quasi-connections with the cute character and evoking warm feelings and a sense of belonging (Chang & Li, 2010), both critical for collectivistic societies. Its characters' simple features have a sense of being generic, although they may in fact not be, and thus are also seen as less individualistic.

From a political economic point of view, another driving force for the *kawaii* culture lies in the rising political and economic status of women in Chinese societies. The traditional Confucian ideal emphasizes women's domestic role, in which women are to be humble and subservient to men. However, the arrival of socialism and Communism in Mainland China in 1945 also brought progress toward gender equality, improvement in

women's rights, and equal opportunity in employment. With the rapid economic growth and women's increased participation in labor forces happening in both Mainland China and Taiwan, traditional gender roles face challenges. As a way to soothe the conflict between the old and the new gender expectations, acting as *kawaii* has become a strategy for modern women to embrace. Acting *kawaii* or childlike helps deflect the confrontations with male counterparts. However, women are also accessing *kawaii*'s cultural capital to get ahead. A case at hand is a female member of the Taipei City Council who behaved in a *kawaii* way on a TV program to strengthen her position as a female politician (Chuang, 2005).

The Japanese government has used a similar strategy by accessing its soft power to promote the country's international image. In contrast with the hard power that serves to command and order, soft power is a co-optive power (Bornstein, 2011). In its narrow sense, the source of soft power is the popular culture that includes manga and anime. Soft power also covers a broader area that includes reacting to cultural values and traditions, such as preserving harmony and a co-existence with nature. The importance of soft power to Japan can be grasped in the Japanese government's emphasis on pop culture diplomacy, which depends on close collaboration with the private sector. Some examples of soft power at work are the 2010 Japan Expo held in Paris with 165,000 fans and the 2010 Romics in Rome, which saw 75,000 international participants (Monji, 2010).

Kawaii culture may also be understood and engaged with differently in less soft cultures, like Japan. For instance in the United States, a society rated high in its individualistic dimension in the Hofstede's cultural values model and high in assertiveness in the GLOBE cultural model, cuteness and its consumption are quite

different when compared to Asian countries. For Americans, cuteness is reserved for children and teenage girls. Cute things are signs of childishness or even naiveté (Lai, 2005). Despite owning a dedicated subsidiary in South San Francisco, California, and hundreds of boutiques and stores throughout the United States, in the 1990's, Sanrio only sold Hello Kitty products to children 13 and younger (Gallegos, 1995). Today one can see the popularity of Hello Kitty among teenage girls as well. Lai (2005) further comments that adult Americans now collect Hello Kitty products more out of a general love toward cats rather than the product's cuteness. For those adults who purchase Hello Kitty stuff, a sense of nostalgia for childhood could also be in play. In the United States Hello Kitty is further constrained by gender, as its consumption is predominantly among females. This scenario is very different from the case in Japan.

Going back to Japan, *kawaii*-ness is adopted by both men and women, beginning in childhood and transferring into adulthood. It "has become a 'standard' aesthetic of everyday life" (McVeigh, 2000, p. 135). In modern Japan, there is a recorded trend of men who are aspiring to be cute (Kaori, 2007). A 2007 *New York Times* report described how Japanese men avoid conformation with their girlfriends by acting submissive, and how this trend had affected men's fashion design that today emphasizes a skinny fit (Kaori, 2007). Yet, men's *kawaii*-ness goes even farther. Today, not only do men talk about *kawaii* women, but women are more likely to use *kawaii* when referring to men and what men are wearing (Kaori, 2007). There are anime and manga series that target women readers and feature feminine-looking teenage boys and cafés that hire submissive, but attractive, young men to serve female guests (Leukart, 2011). The significant difference in the reception of *kawaii* in the United States and Asian countries clearly has

its cultural roots, while *kawaii* appeals are used extensively among the Asian American demographic. Examples are AT&T's "Bigger is Better" and "Faster is Better" commercials featuring cute kids and M&M's funny commercials with chocolate characters. Based on this brief review of the history of the term *kawaii*, this discussion moves on to form a definition of the term in the context of advertising.

B. The Kawaii (Cute) Appeal Defined

To understand how *kawaii* is used by advertisers, one must first explore the actual concept of using advertising appeals. Advertising appeals are defined as the specific approaches that advertisers use to motivate potential consumers to purchase a product (Mueller, 1987) or change their attitude toward a product (Gelb, Hong, & Zinkhan, 1985). These appeals are typically conveyed via illustrations and headlines in the ads and are reinforced by the ad copy (Mueller, 1987). Successful appeals are always matched to a core brand emotion.

The concept of *kawaii* carries great cultural ubiquity (McVeigh, 2000). Although the word *kawaii* literally translates as "cute", it has a much broader semantic meaning. Cross-cultural psychologists point out that a word for emotion is not lexicalized in other languages, given that lexicons of emotions are culture-specific folk taxonomies (Wierzbicka, 1999). Thus, attempts at defining *kawaii* for a methodological purpose are problematic (McVeigh, 2000).

Kawaii is an attributive adjective in Japanese. The word 可愛い (*kawaii* or かわいい) comes originally from the Chinese word *ke'ai* (可愛 or 可爱), which can be literately translated as "can be loved." According to Kinsella's (1995) seminal essay on Japanese cute culture, the modern word *kawaii* derives from "a term whose principle

meaning was ‘shy’ or ‘embarrassed’ and secondary meanings were ‘pathetic’, ‘vulnerable’, ‘darling’, ‘loveable’ and ‘small’” (Kinsella, 1995, pp. 221-222). Today the original meaning of ‘shy’ and ‘pity’ has changed to “can’t leave someone alone, care for” (Shogakukan, 2000), while the negative or at least non-pleasing sense of pitifulness has been altered to produce another word—*kawaiso* (かわいそう) meaning “pathetic”, “poor”, “pitiable”, and “small”. Thus, the meaning of *kawaii* today is more related to affective feelings and not negative ones.

Similar to cute, *kawaii* is primarily a visual quality. However, the same attribute can also be applied to sound and textures. Following an ethnologist framework on babyish features, Morreall and Loy (1989) suggest that cute features are characterized by “a head large in relation to the body, eyes set low in the head, a large protruding forehead, round protruding cheeks, a plump rounded body shade, sort thick extremities, soft body surface, and clumsy behavior” (p. 68). Likewise, warm and bright colors in the natural world often symbolize youth and vitality and are often seen as being cute. For instance, the hues of pink are widely used in *kawaii* accessories. Voice quality, tempo, and pitch that incline toward a young, immature and overly feminine tone are considered *kawaii*, as are the re-duplication of monosyllabic words (Chuang, 2005). Further, soft textures that are related to the feeling of the touch of a cuddly baby, a young women’s skin or a pet’s fur may also evoke warm feelings that are associated with cuteness. In sum, *kawaii* can be used for objects as well as for people in terms of its characteristics.

Specifically, Kinsella (1995) offers a definition of *kawaii* as “means childlike; it celebrates sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine, gentle, vulnerable, weak, and inexperienced” (Kinsella, 1995, p. 220). From a biological point of view, psychologists

have proposed a two-layer model of *kawaii* that combines emotion and value (Nittono & Tanaka, 2010). In particular, this model characterizes *kawaii* as "expression of a positive emotion associated with a social motivation for protecting and nurturing others, which originally stems from affection toward babies" (Nittono & Tanaka, 2010, p. 269). When approaching from a design and engineering perspective, Cheok (2012) also developed a definition of cuteness as follows:

> Cuteness includes the feelings and emotions that are caused by experiencing something that is charming, cheerful, happy, funny, or something that is very sweet, innocent, or pure. It can stimulate a feeling of adoration, sympathy, or stimulating the care response. (p. 301)

Perhaps more relevant to the study of communication is semantic description, as offered by Asano-Cavanagh and the Australian Association for Research in Education (2012). Semantic analysis is based on the assumption that languages have irreducible semantic cores, so it is possible to describe complex meanings in terms of an exact paraphrase composed of simpler words. This analysis categorizes the meaning of *kawaii* into five components: a) external features, b) evoking strong positive feelings, c) expressing one's desire to possess and touch the object, d) being fragile and e) relating to positive thoughts (Asano-Cavanagh & the Australian Association for Research in Education, 2012).

C. Three Aspects of Kawaii

Adopting the above definitions and their components, this thesis has developed three aspects of *kawaii* (cute) which then form the foundation for developing a comprehensive method for measuring *kawaii* appeal: 1) the degree to which the appeal attempts to induce positive feelings, 2) the level of perceived powerlessness, and 3) the

external symbolic visuals of the appeal. Thus, for this study the definition of *kawaii* appeal can be stated as:

> *Kawaii* appeal is a visual or contextual approach in which human emotions are emphasized to induce a positive (feeling) reaction from the viewer. These appeals demonstrate certain youthful and feminine features through comfortable (soft) and simple illustrative forms, often employing cartoon elements and bright colors. These appeals are capable of inducing a desire to engage with, own and/or purchase the *kawaii* object or the product or service that *kawaii* is promoting.

Next, the rationale for the three aspects of *Kawaii* (cute) are discussed, namely, inducing positive feelings, powerlessness, and external symbolic visuals.

1. *Inducing Positive Feelings*

This dimension examines the degree to which the specific advertising appeal induces positive feelings from the viewer. Based on the Foote, Cone, and Belding (FCB) Matrix developed by Vaughn (1980), products are classified according to whether they induce cognitive (thinking) or affective (feeling) information processing. From the point of view of persuasion, advertising appeals either attempt to induce cognitive response from the viewer or convey emotions for an affective reaction. As discussed earlier, cuteness stimulates feelings of adoration. Thus, the ability of an appeal to trigger a positive emotion is an indicator of *kawaii*-ness (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Arlistan Le Gató (Instant Coffee), Argentina 2012.

2. Powerlessness

Prior studies in Japanese culture reveal that cuteness is marked by strong childlikeness and femininity (Kinsella, 1995; Maynard& Taylor, 1999; McVeigh, 2000). The opposites are maturity and masculinity, which are symbols of power and control. Thus, as an appeal, *kawaii* is marked by being small, delicate, fragile and/or vulnerable. Thus, it makes sense that *kawaii* appeals rely on displays of powerlessness, while showing power as being the opposite of *kawaii*. Examples of powerless cuteness can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Life Buoy Hand Wash "You Eat What You Touch", Indonesia 2008.

3. *External Symbolic Visuals*

A thorough examination of the symbolic visuals of cuteness was done by Cheok (2012). It focuses on size, shape and color. Size and proportion, as both relate to cuteness, are shown with larger heads and smaller overall sizes. Shape and form, as related to *kawaii*-ness, feature roundness far more often than any other geometric shape. The colors that indicate cuteness are warm and bright, with red, orange, and yellow deemed to be cuter. These findings are consistent with the prior literature that suggests cute objects are characterized by baby schema (Nittono et al., 2012). For example, in the Japanese cute culture, being small is positive. Cute clothing is often small and slim-fitting and decorated with cartoon characters and slogans, and *kawaii* accessories need to be small to be considered cute (Klapper, 2009). In particular, Lorenz (1943) assumes that a reaction to baby schema is an innate process of the human brain which then triggers the reward system in the brain (Glocker, 2009). Based upon the literature, therefore, it is reasonable to presume that certain external features, such as smaller size and/or brighter colors will be strong attributes of *kawaii*-ness. An example of an ad utilizing cute visuals can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Beijing Women and Children's Development Foundation, China 2009.

D. Kawaii in Advertising

Cuteness elements and aesthetics are widely used in advertisements of stationery and related items, such as foods and snacks, fashion clothing and accessories, online services, and even cars. Examples abound, namely, Volkswagen's baby Dark Vader, the animated gecko of GEICO, the Energizer pink bunny, and the Coca-Cola polar bear. Although the *kawaii* culture has received much scholarly attention (e.g., Botz-Bornstein, 2011; Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Cooper-Chen, 2010; Chuang, 2005; Kinsella, 1995, 2000; Klapper, 2009; McVeigh, 2000; Shiraishi,1997), only a few studies have explored the *kawaii* appeals in advertising.

A study by the Veterans Affairs Medical Center at the University of Michigan showed that high school students are more likely to accept anti-smoking messages that are accompanied by cute cartoon characters like a humanized penguin or a polar bear than without such cute spokespersons (Silva, 2003). Chang and Li (2010) compared the effectiveness of childlike and adult-like portrayals in advertisements in both Taiwan and the United States. They found that childlike visuals, such as model poses and facial expressions, evoke warmer feelings and stronger self-brand connections from Taiwanese than from Americans, thus are more effective in terms of ad/brand attitudes. The American participants' responses to the childlike and adult-like portrayals did not differ significantly. A possible explanation is that in collectivist societies, the cultural values of interpersonal relationships and harmony respond more readily to culturally congruent information than to culturally incongruent information (Chang & Li, 2010). Maynard (2002) agrees that in the cult of the cute culture, the Japanese are socialized to be fond of playful childlikeness. In Maynard and Taylor's (1999) study on girlish appeals in teen

magazine ads in the United States and Japan, the Japanese samples contained significantly more visual and verbal girlish portraits than did the advertisements in the American versions. While childlike portrayals and girlish appeals are both conceptual components of *kawaii*-ness, they do not capture the full implications of being *kawaii*. To develop a valid construct to use to measure *kawaii* appeals in advertising, a clear definition of the concept is imperative.

E. Cultural Values and Advertising Appeals

A discussion of culture values is needed here to express the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Indeed, values are "a set of hierarchically ordered prescriptions and proscriptions" (Rokeach, 1973, 13, p. 20). Individuals may hold different priorities over contradictory values, e. g., humble versus bold, or youth versus mature. Rokeach (1973) suggests that the definition of a value system indicates that both individuals and cultures can be characterized by the priorities attached to certain coexisting values. Scholars, however, agree that values do play a central role in distinguishing and characterizing different cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992; Smith & Schwartz, 1997). To be specific, Hofstede (2001) argues that cultures vary in the value dimensions on which these cultures rank values according to importance. For example, in individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) individual independence is highly valued; whereas in collectivistic cultures (e.g., China) people prioritize interdependence instead.

Cultural values, norms, and characteristics are often reflected in advertising appeals. While cultural values are manifested throughout a society, advertising appeals are carefully selected and designed with corresponding culture values in mind (Hetsroni,

2000). Several content analyzes have reported that advertising content does differ across cultures (Cho et al., 1999; Daechun, 2007; Mueller, 1987, 1992; Oyedele & Minor, 2012). Cross-cultural studies on advertising appeals in magazines (e.g., Mortimer & Grierson, 2010), on television (e.g., Lin, 2001) and online (Ying & ShaoJing, 2010) also indicate that different cultures will choose to use different advertising appeals.

Numerous cross-cultural advertising studies indicate that Western cultures and non-Western cultures show significant differences in their advertising themes and their advertising execution styles. For example, in Western countries, advertising tends to feature individualistic values, emphasize personal pleasure, self-enhancement, focus on performance, competitiveness, and use hard-sell approaches (Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010). In Eastern cultures, advertising often emphasizes collectivistic values, is less self-indulgent, enhances the individual for the good of the group, and uses emotional appeals and soft-sell approaches (Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010). In particular, Lin (2001) found that Chinese ads tend to put emphasis on establishing rapport through image and emotional appeals. The American counterparts prefer presenting facts and proof. Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) explicitly developed the link between culture values and advertising appeals by bringing together the advertising appeals identified by Pollay (1983) and the national cultural dimensions developed across 11 countries by Hofstede (2001). This thesis is based on the premise that advertisements have the potential to be more effective when they are culturally relevant to consumers. In fact, there is substantial evidence suggests that advertisements reflecting (some) local cultural values are more persuasive than those that simply ignore these values.

Because members of a culture will perceive advertising appeals through the “lens” and “blueprint” (the values, norms and traditions) (Kaynak & Kara, 2013) of their distinct culture, they tend to respond to appeals that are congruent with their own culture. Empirical studies supporting the effects of culturally congruent advertisements are abundant (e.g., Chang & Li, 2010; Cui et al., 2012; Leach & Liu, 1998; Taylor, Gordon, & Wilson, 1997). Adding to the advocacy of cultural congruent advertising appeals, Pollay and Gallagher (1990) argue that cultural values are indeed at the core of those advertising messages that endorse and reinforce cultural values to the population.

Several cultural dimension models have been developed to understand the differences between cultures. Perhaps the most celebrated is Hofstede’s pioneering cultural research conducted in the 1980s (Hofstede, 1980, 2011). Common criticisms of the Hofstede model include its definition problems, methodological simplicity, and equivalency (Orr & Hauser, 2008). Despite these criticisms, Hofstede’s model is still one of the most widely adopted by both scholars and practitioners.

Developed during 1967 to 1972, a database of over 116,000 survey results from IBM’s worldwide employees allowed Hofstede to derive four cultural dimensions. Among them, Individualism-Collectivism (IDV) was one of the most prominent dimensions that was used to explain cross-cultural differences in advertising research (Taylor, Wilson, & Miracle, 1994). According to Hofstede (2010, online), “individualism on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups.” Individualistic cultures are oriented around the self, independent of that person identifying with a group mentality. They emphasize autonomy, emotional independence and privacy, and value personal goals above those of the group. In contrast,

collectivism stresses the importance of cohesion within social groups. Collectivistic cultures focus on community, society, nation or country, and the priority of group goals are often placed over individual goals. Collectivistic societies emphasize emotional dependence, harmony and cooperation, and value the collective over the individual. Studies have used IDV in content analyses of advertising across cultures and have linked that dimension with systematic variation in advertising effects across cultures (e.g., Cho et al., 1999; Han & Shavitt, 1994; Hsu & Barker, 2013; Mueller, 1987). Specifically, Han and Shavitt (1994) found that advertising displaying collectivistic appeals has a stronger effect in collective cultures; Advertising featuring individualistic appeals are more effective in individualistic cultures. Since the United States and China have historically been categorized as rating differently on the IDV cultural dimensions (see Hofstede, 1980, 2001), these two countries offer a suitable context for testing the viability of deploying advertisements with a certain appeal cross-culturally.

F. Self-Construal and Culture

Closely tied to the cultural value dimension, research suggest that cultural values significantly affect the way people communicate or process information (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Taylor, Gordon, & Wilson, 1997). This view is based on the idea that the chronic level of accessibility of the culture values, which are more dominant, tends to determine how people construct the self. Self-construal refers to an individual's knowledge about oneself in relation to others, reflecting the extent to which the individual views himself or herself either as an independent entity or as an entity dependent on others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individualistic and collectivistic cultures develop different ways to construct the self: independent and interdependent

(Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These two aspects of self-construal coexist within a single individual, but the dominant aspect tends to be determined by social or cultural surroundings (Aaker & Schmitt, 2001).

In individualistic cultures, such as the United States, which emphasizes autonomy, personal achievement and independence, people develop an independent self-construal. They view themselves as being separate from others and value maturity, self-integrity, and personal uniqueness. Conversely, in collectivistic cultures like China where relationships and social interdependence are the key elements, people develop interdependent self-construal. As a result, interpersonal harmony and affiliation are highly valued.

The differences between independent and interdependent self-construals can explain the variability in the ongoing responses to advertising appeals across the individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Wang et al., 2000). For example, Wang and colleagues (2000) found that advertising appeals that stress interdependence and togetherness result in more favorable brand attitudes than appeals that stress independence and autonomy among the Chinese, who tend to view themselves as part of others. the opposite effect was found among American consumers, who tend to see themselves as individuals with an independent identity. Aaker and Schmitt (2001) discovered that individuals with a dominant interdependent self-construal are more likely to recall products framed by affiliation themes than those framed by differentiation themes, whereas individuals with a dominant independent self-construal hold the opposite point of view.

Analyses of consumer research offer a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon based on the self-brand congruity theory. The self-congruity hypothesis proposes that a higher congruency between product image (advertising appeals) and consumer self-construals leads to stronger self-brand connection, which then contributes to an increased evaluation (Sirgy, 1982). Consistent with that theory, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) found that adopting an appeal that is consistent with consumers' self-concepts can result in more favorable brand attitudes. A theoretical explanation for the self-congruity hypothesis stems from a well-accepted social psychological dynamic, that is, individuals strive to resolve disagreeing psychological experiences and maintain cognitive consistency in their beliefs and behaviors (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). In this light, the feature of *kawaii* appeals, which signal friendliness, should be more relevant for those individuals' emphasizing interdependent self-construal. These appeals should trigger more favorable evaluations among individuals with interdependent self-construal than with individuals with independent self-construal. Thus, in collectivist cultures, where interpersonal relationships and social harmony are stressed, it is expected that *kawaii* appeals will receive more favorable evaluations than they will in individualistic cultures, where such features are deemed less important.

G. Self-Construal and Gender

Markus and Oyserman (1989) argue that men and women have a different way to construct the self. They (1989) suggest that men view the self as discrete, with individuality realized through the demarcation of boundaries between the self and others, whereas women view themselves as "self-in-relation" with others. For example, Wang and colleagues (2000) found that female consumers preferred advertising appeals that

stress an interdependence and togetherness over appeals that stressing independence and autonomy, whereas the reverse was observed among male consumers.

Furthermore, Kashima et al. (1995) found that the self-construals that mark the difference between cultures are different from those that describe the differences between genders. Because women and men differ in their self-construals, it is expected to see gender-level variations in persuasion effects that are similar at the cross-cultural level. Indeed, different advertising executions not only have various impacts on consumers from different cultures, but also on different genders. Since *kawaii* appeals carry an inherent concept of femininity, the current study hypothesizes that female consumers exhibit a more favorable evaluation of advertisements with a *kawaii* execution than do their male counterparts.

H. Self-Brand Connections

Prior consumer research has focused on the psychological mechanism of self-brand connection. As suggested by Sirgy (1982), consumers use brands to meet self-needs and form associations between their self-concepts and brand personalities, referred to as self-brand connections. Simply put, they use brands to communicate their self to others. The idea is that consumers identify a brand's image and associate it with their own self-concept. A strong self-brand connection is formed when the self-concept and brand image reach a high level of congruence. The current study proposes that in collectivistic societies, consumers are more likely to establish a connection with the brand utilizing *kawaii* appeals, because that image is congruent with their own interdependent self-construals.

I. Product Category Involvement

It has been suggested that situational factors, such as product involvement, can motivate individual cognition toward certain persuasive messages (Chaiken et al., 1989). Product involvement generally refers to a person's enduring perceptions of the importance of a product category based on that person's inherent needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The level of involvement indicates how personally important or interested the person is in purchasing a product and how much information the person needs to make a buying decision. Since this concept of involvement was introduced, it has become widely recognized as a central framework for understanding consumer decision-making behavior.

To explain the role of involvement in information processing and message persuasion, several models have been developed. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) developed by Petty et al. (2005) suggests that persuasion will occur via either a central or a peripheral route, determined largely by the level of involvement. Likewise, the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) developed by Chaiken et al. (1989) postulates similar concepts. When information is deemed important or personally relevant, individuals adopt a systematic (central) processing route and exert a considerable amount of cognitive effort toward evaluating the information available to them. In this mode, individuals tend to judge the validity of persuasive messages by focusing on diagnostic cues such as attributes and performance related information. In contrast, when individuals' involvement with a message is low, they will exert relatively less cognitive effort and rely on readily accessible decision rules or cognitive heuristic (peripheral) cues. Both communicator characteristics (e.g., likeability or expertise) and structural characteristics

of a message (length or number of arguments) are capable of activating decision rules, which in turn will link the cues or the context to actual message validity (Maheswaran, Mackie, & Chaiken, 1992).

Following this logic, different levels of product involvement may actually cause variations in *kawaii* appeal processing. According to the cognitive resource matching (CRM) hypothesis, a message's persuasiveness will be enhanced if the execution is congruent with the individual's processing level (Keller & Block, 1997). For low involved products, individuals will be less likely to adopt a central route of processing. Their motivation to evaluate the message is low, and product related attributes will be less likely to have a significant impact on purchase decisions (Kong & Zhang, 2013).

Instead, individuals tend to make their decisions based on a superficial analysis of readily available and salient cues in the stimuli presented to them (Coulter, 2005). While *kawaii* appeals in advertisements are often unrelated to intrinsic product attributes, they are perceived as readily available and accessible cues for peripheral processing. Thus, *kawaii* appeals will be more effective for products that are less involving.

On the other hand, *kawaii* appeals might hold less persuasion power when individual involvement is high. People who are highly involved become motivated and are more aware of the risk associated with the purchase. Under these conditions, a central route of persuasion will engage, and the advertising message will be scrutinized for product attribute information. In this case, when compared with peripheral cues, informational advertising executions armed with a high amount of cognitive resources will be more likely to influence people's attitudes (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010). According to the CRM hypothesis, when a high level of message elaboration meets the

individual's demand for cognitive resources under a high-involvement condition, the effectiveness of the message is enhanced (Keller & Block, 1997).

Supporting this claim, Erevelles (1998) found that utilitarian appeals are effective when individual involvement is high. Peripheral cues, in this case, will be less effective. Brown and colleagues (1998) have found that, ad-evoked feelings generally produce weak effects when product involvement is high, because the central passage demands greater cognitive elaboration, critical evaluation, and a less affective response.

J. Kawaii Appeals as Heuristic (Peripheral) Cues

In the traditions of Western art, cuteness as an aesthetic feature is considered an obvious property which can be discerned easily and react to automatically (Morreall, 1991). While subtle aesthetic features are recognized as being discerned only by the educated and can bear several interpretations, obvious property requires no aesthetic education to discern and can only evoke single, simple, and shallow reactions from audience in general. As described by Morreall (1991), the emotion evoked by obvious property is "quick, easy, [and] thoughtless" (p. 46).

Kawaii features, by definition, are designed to elicit positive responses or tender feelings, emotions that are automatic and require no deliberation. The pure innocent look of a baby, a kitty or a puppy is no more than a one-dimensional evocation of obvious emotions. Furthermore, the presentation of *kawaii* appeals needs no further decoration than a straightforward display of the cute object in an unambiguous way. The manipulations of the *kawaii* appeals are obvious to most audience: the use of young and charming women, cute babies, and small, cuddly pets—the classic 3B Rule in action. These fast and direct cues are meant to press the "aww button" of every adult.

Put into the ELM as well as the HSM model frameworks, this research argues that such characteristics of *kawaii* appeals can serve as heuristic (peripheral) decision rules, in that people with a high level of product involvement are more likely to respond to these extrinsic attributes less favorably. On the basis of these findings, it is expected that *kawaii* advertising appeals will perform better for low-involvement products than for high-involvement products.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

The main objective of this thesis is to develop and validate a method for measuring *kawaii* appeals in advertising. After a review of the prior literature on the origin and development of the *kawaii* culture, a definition was advanced to capture the precise meaning of the Japanese word *kawaii* in advertising language. Using the derivation of this definition, a measurement scheme was developed to answer the main research question of the thesis:

RQ: Do the measurement instruments address the categories in predicting *kawaii* in advertising?

To this end, candidate items were generated via a review of the literature and relevant ads in magazines. A variety of magazines were reviewed, include the English version of *Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan*, Japanese fashion magazine *VOGUE*, Chinese fashion magazine *Color*, *milk*, *U Magazine* and *marie claire*. These instruments were then purified and validated using a general consumer sample. To validate the measurement scale further, the study conducted additional tests to examine the effects of *kawaii* appeals on various dependent variables used in other studies by accessing the nomological validity of the new scale. By definition, nomological validity refers to the degree to which a measure "fits 'lawfully' into a network of relationships or a 'nomological network'" (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003, p. 82). Specifically, this study examined the effects of *kawaii* appeals for the following dependent measures: (a) ad friendliness, (b) self-brand connection, (c) ad attitude, and (d) purchase intention.

A. Predictions for Friendliness/Favorability Levels across Cultures

As indicated in the literature review, the definition of *kawaii* is often associated with friendliness, and thus, ads that adopt *kawaii* appeals should be seen by all as friendlier than non-*kawaii* ads. Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that messages that use *kawaii* appeals will convey a sense of friendliness to people in both the United States and China:

H1: For consumers in both the United States and China, messages with *kawaii* appeals will be rated as friendlier than messages without *kawaii* appeals.

In line with the self-brand congruity theory which holds that a higher congruency between advertising appeal and consumer self-construals leads to stronger self-brand connections and contributes to increased evaluation (Sirgy, 1982). Self-brand connection has been found to relate to favorable brand attitude (Escalas, 2004), which is also a strong, direct, and positive predictor of purchase intention (Bagozzi, 1981).

As indicated in the literature review here, *kawaii* appeals positively link to friendliness and self-other relationships; thus they are congruent with individuals stress interdependent self-construal. Thus, it is expected that individuals with interdependent self-construal will exhibit stronger self-brand connections, more favorable ad attitudes, and greater purchase intention than those emphasizing independent self-construal. Thus, the present study hypothesizes the following:

H2: Compared to consumers with a dominant independent self-construal, consumers with a dominant interdependent self-construal will form stronger self-brand connections (H2a), exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H2b) and purchase intention (H2c) for ads that feature *kawaii* appeals, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals.

Culture is not the only force shaping self-construals. Men and women have a different approach for constructing the self, and thus they demonstrate different emphases on self-construals (Markus & Oyserman, 1989). As clearly demonstrated in the literature review, women may prefer a dominant interdependent self-construal, while men tend to lean toward independent self-construal. Thus, it can be assumed that gender-level variations in persuasion effects are similar at the cross-cultural level. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H3: Compared to male consumers, female consumers will form stronger self-brand connections (H3a), exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H3b) and purchase intention (H3c) for ads that feature *kawaii* appeals, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals.

B. Level of Favorability Predictions within Cultures

Based on the assumption that cultural values shape self-construals, individualistic and collectivistic cultures do differ in their emphases on the self compared to self-other relations. Therefore, different self-construals emerge (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Generally, interdependent self-construals are prevalent in collectivistic cultures, whereas independent self-construals are common in individualistic cultures.

As noted in the prior cross-culture studies, the United States and China have historically been rated differently on several key cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House, Quigley, & de Luque, 2010). When compared to the United States, China is generally considered to be a highly collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1980), with a score of 20 in the individualism (vs. collectivism) dimension, while the United States scored 91 (higher score indicates more individualism, while a lower score points to collectivism). The United States was ranked the first in individualism among all other countries for this

dimension (Hofstede, 2010) (see Appendix 1 for detail). In light of this finding, this study hypothesizes that consumers in the United States and China will differ in their perception of *kawaii* appeals in terms of ad attitude, purchase intention, and self-brand connection. Thus the following hypothesis emerged:

H4: Compared to American consumers, Chinese consumers will form stronger self-brand connections (H4a), exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H4b) and purchase intention (H4c) for ads that feature *kawaii* appeals, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals.

C. Level of Effectiveness Predictions for Product Involvement Categories

According to the ELM as well as the HSM model, persuasion will occur via a central (systematic) route when consumer involvement level is high. When involvement level is low, consumers will turn to peripheral (heuristic) processing (Chaiken et al., 1989; Petty et al., 1983). Under this scenario, the level of product involvement may cause variations in *kawaii* appeal processing. As *kawaii* appeals are perceived as readily available and also accessible cues, they may be associated with less involved, peripheral processing, while the opposite association may occur when product involvement is high, and consumers are engaged in central processing. Thus, the following hypotheses are offered:

H5: For low-involving products, messages with *kawaii* appeals will yield more self-brand connections (H5a), favorable attitude toward the ad (H5b), and greater purchase intention (H5c) than messages without *kawaii* appeals.

H6: For high-involving products, messages with *kawaii* appeal will yield no more self-brand connections (H6a), favorable ad attitudes (H6b), or greater purchase intention (H6c) than messages without *kawaii* appeals.

IV. MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT

The procedure for the development of the measurement instruments for *kawaii* appeals is outlined in Figure 9.

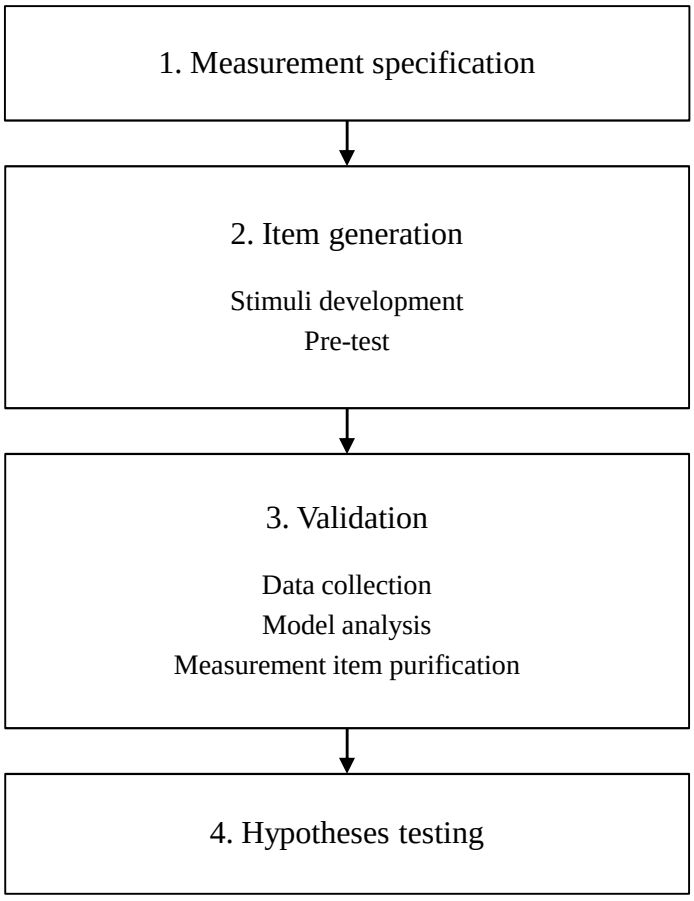


Figure 9. Flowchart of Measurement Development Procedure.

A. Measurement Specification

This first procedure establishes an appropriate model specification for the current study. More precisely, the objective was to specify the relationship between the dimensions of *kawaii* appeals (positive feeling, powerlessness, and external visuals) and the latent construct.

In marketing research, increasing attention is placed on constructing validity especially on the issue of possible misspecification regarding the direction of causality between a construct and its measures. Prior studies have pointed out that observed indicators can be treated as either reflective or formative. Reflective indicators stem from classical test theory and factor analysis models; indicator constructs are hypothesized to cause changes in these indicators. In contrast, formative indicators are not designed to account for observed variables; instead, formative indicator constructs are hypothesized so as to cause changes in the underlying construct (Jarvis et al., 2003). Often, researchers turn to reflective indicators since most of the assessment of constructs and the measures they use are based on classical test theory. The choice between formative and reflective models has received only limited attention in the literature. To offer clarification on the issue, Jarvis and colleagues (2003) thoroughly explained the distinction between the formative and reflective measurement models and offered recommendations on modeling formative indicator constructs. A short summary of the differences between these types of measurement models by Jarvis et al. (2003) is presented in Table 1. In sum, in the case of the formative model, the indicators serve to determine the conceptual and empirical meaning of the construct; however, these indicators are not required to correlate with each other.

Table 1. Differences between Types of Measurement Models (Jarvis et al. 2003).

Principal Factor (Reflective) Model	**Composite Latent Variable (Formative) Model**
Direction of causality is from construct to measure.	Direction of causality is from measure to construct.
Measures expected to be correlated (Measures should possess internal consistency reliability).	No reason to expect the measures are correlated (Internal consistency is not implied).
Dropping an indicator from the measurement model does not alter the meaning of the construct.	Dropping an indicator from the measurement model may alter the meaning of the construct.
Takes measurement error into account at the item level.	Takes measurement error into account at the construct level.
Construct possesses "surplus" meaning.	Construct possesses "surplus" meaning.
Scale score does not adequately represent the construct.	Scale score does not adequately represent the construct.

The choice between formative and reflective specification should thus rest primarily on theoretical considerations (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). In light of these discussions, this study concluded that the concept of *kawaii* appeal should be multidimensional composite constructs, where second-order factors (*kawaii* appeals) should have first-order factors (positive feeling, powerlessness, and external visuals) as their formative indicators because causality will flow from the indicators to the construct. To elaborate further, based on the premise that the first-order factors are independent from one another, it make more sense to say that because a message uses positive feelings, powerlessness, and certain symbolic visuals therefore it is considered *kawaii* rather than saying that because that message use *kawaii* appeals, therefore it features positive

feelings, powerlessness and certain cute visuals. The causality indeed does flow from the indicators to the construct.

In the current *kawaii* appeal measurement instrument, the three dimensions of positive feeling, powerlessness, and external visuals are relatively independent sources of appeal that are not interchangeable and have potentially different antecedents and consequences, and thus would not necessarily correlate with each other. As formative indictors, these items are not required to highly correlate (Jarvis et al., 2003). For example, an ad that employs *kawaii* appeals might score high on the positive feeling factor while ranking low in powerlessness. Together, these three components share the characteristic of being *kawaii*. Thus, they are conceptualized as first-order factors that cause or determine the second-order factor: *kawaii* appeals. By adopting the formative model, the causality flow ensures that an ad with a high level of either of the factors in the framework receives the proper definition.

The first-order factors, however, are designed to be measured by their reflective indicators. Such a model is in line with Jarvis et al.'s (2003) discussion of multidimensional constructs, as Jarvis and colleague argue that "whether a construct is viewed as unidimensional or multidimensional may depend on the level of abstraction used to define the construct" (p. 204). An apt example of this type of reflective first-order, formative second-order measurement model offered by Jarvis et al. (2003) is the multidimensional composite construct of noncontingent influence attributions developed by John (1984). As suggested by Jarvis et al. (2003), John measured first-order—three different types of noncontingent influence (expert, referent, and legitimate) using reflective measures. Yet while these three factors are relatively independent, together

they determine a second-order, noncontingent power construct. As a result of this conceptualization, the current *kawaii* appeal measurement instrument was constructed and validated as a reflective first-order, formative second-order measure (See Figure 10).

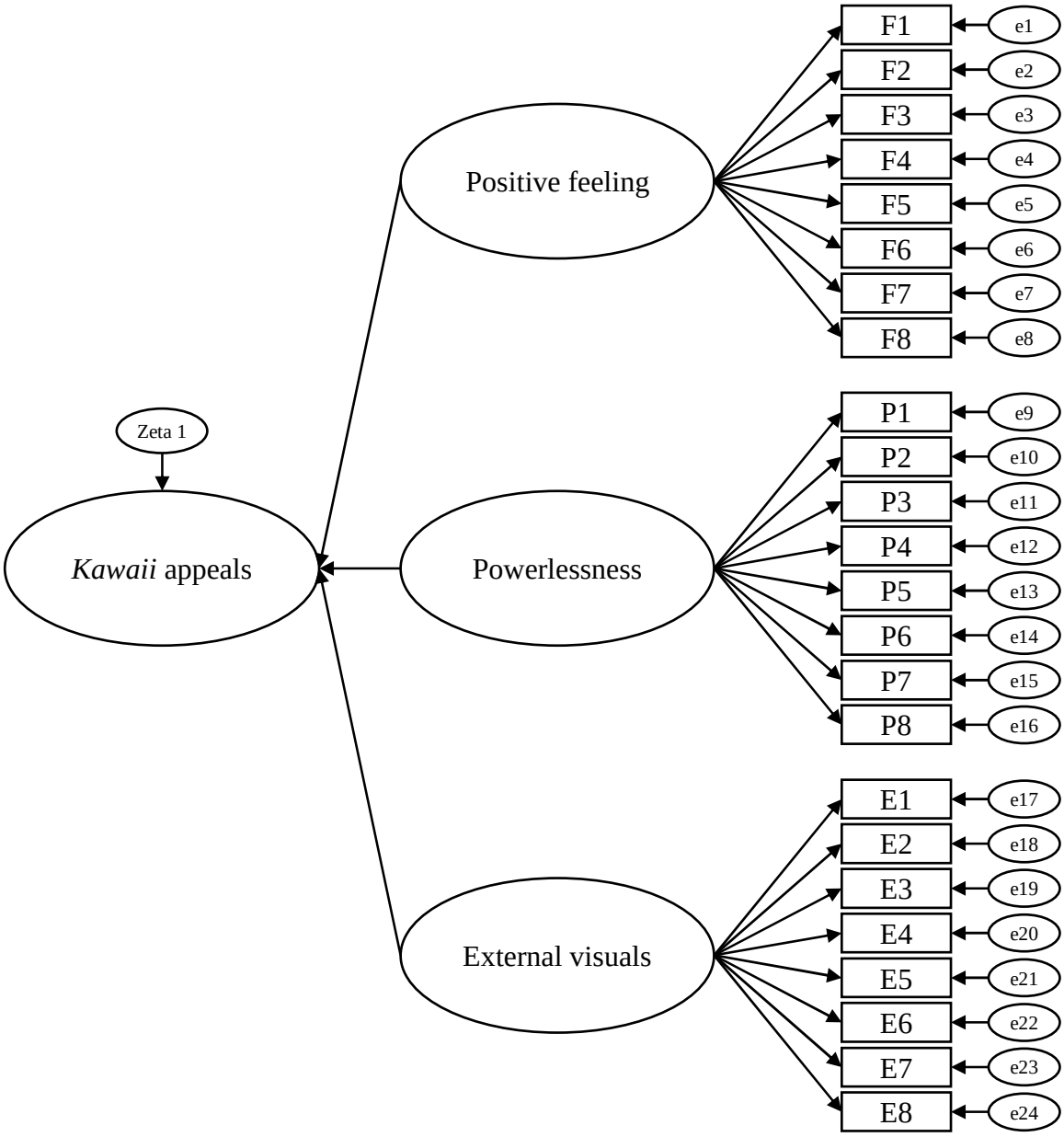


Figure 10. Reflective First-Order, Formative Second-Order Measurement Instrument.

B. Item Generation

The next step involves the construction of the above mentioned first-order factor indicators to use to predict the dimensions of *kawaii* appeals: positive feeling, powerlessness, and external visuals. The primary basis for the development of these items was the literature review. After the review this study initially generated a pool of 24 items for the 3 *kawaii* components (See Table 2). These items were translated into Chinese using the translation-back-translation procedure suggested by Craig and Douglas (2005) to ensure content equivalency in both cultures and languages.

Table 2. Original Measurement Items for *Kawaii* Appeals.

Dimensions	**Proposed items**
Positive feeling	Desire to touch Want to possess Delightful Amusing Enchanting Cheerful Intimate Light-hearted
Powerlessness	Fragile Innocent Childish Immature Juvenile Feminine Playful Ingenuous
External Visual	Small Simplicity Colorful Bright Roundness Cartoonish Modern Anthropopathic

Adopted from Okazaki and colleagues' 2010 study, which recruited seven advertising/marketing experts to evaluate the appropriateness of the possible measurement items, this study invited 10 professional advertising and marketing practitioners in China to rate the 24 items using a 3-point scale: appropriate, indifferent, and inappropriate regarding the generally accepted definitions of *kawaii* appeals. The results showed that all potential items were deemed suitable in light of the definition of *kawaii* appeals.

C. Stimuli Development

To answer the research question and test the hypotheses in the current research, fictitious ads were developed and pre-tested among a small sample of American and Chinese. A brainstorming session was first conducted to determine what product categories are suitable for a standardized campaign across both the Chinese and the United States markets. Since standardization requires common or similar advertising content used around the world, adopting a standardized rather than a globalized approach is essential to the current study because the effects of *kawaii* and non-*kawaii* appeals needed to be clearly and precisely comparable across different markets. The brainstorming session is based on the following criteria: 1) equally applicable to both Chinese and American consumers; 2) equally important to both male and female consumers of all ages; 3) equally accessible to the general public with average income and buying power; 4) covering both high and low-involvement product categories. The session concluded that purified bottled water (low-involvement) and flat-screen LCD/LED television (high-involvement) are the most appropriate product categories.

Next, real purified bottled water and flat-screen LCD/LED television ads were collected from Chinese and American publications to serve as the basis for the themes of the stimuli ads. A search resulted in 23 purified bottled water ads and 11 flat-screen LCD/LED television ads. Among these ads, product display and quality (purity of water and the technology used in the television set) were the most seen strategies/themes for both product categories. As a result, the study identified the following important features for the two categories. For purified bottled water: “naturalness”, “purity”, “water element”, and “bottle design” with “naturalness” being the most common feature. For the flat-screen LCD/LED television: “technology”, “design”, “function”, “color”, and “multiple dimensions” with “technology” being the most frequent seen feature.

To reflect “naturalness” and “technology”, respectively, in the fictitious ads, two sets of each product category were designed by the researcher who had been a full-time advertising design professional for more than 6 years (now working part-time). To reduce potential confounding effects, similar copy and layout of the ads were used for both the *kawaii* and the non-*kawaii* ads. For the purified bottled water ad, two sets of visuals were designed, namely, a bottle with cartoon characters for the *kawaii* ad and a bottle with water depictions for the non-*kawaii* ad. Similarly, for the flat-screen LCD/LED television ads, a LED television set with a cute animal was crafted for the *kawaii* ad and a LED television set with technology illustration was created for the non-*kawaii* ad. Slogans for both types of ads were also developed: “Pure water - Just as nature intended” for the purified bottled water ad, and “Crystal clear” for the LED television ad. Chinese versions of the ads were translated by a native Chinese student also fluent in English. Finally, fictitious brand names were desirable in the current study because fake names tend to

reduce potential confounds from attitudes toward actual existing brands. The purified bottled water was branded as "Spring^2", and the LED television brand was named as "BOSERE" (See Appendix 3).

D. Pretest of the Stimuli

To verify that the stimuli ads possessed the intended appeals, an online pre-test was conducted with 22 (12 female, 10 male) Chinese consumers and 22 (12 female, 10 male) American consumers. The study was approved by Marquette University's Institutional Review Board and granted exempt status. Each of the 44 participants was asked to rate the four fictitious ads using the measurement items developed as stated in Figure 10, in which *kawaii* appeal was conceptualized as a first-order reflective, second-order formative model. A 7-point Likert scale (ranging from "not at all applicable" to "very much applicable") was used to evaluate the first-order measurement items. Assuming an equal weight of each loading, mean value of the constructs were then calculated. A t-test showed that the purified bottled water ads with *kawaii* appeal generated a significantly higher mean value on the summed *kawaii* appeal scale than did the non-*kawaii* ads (t_{86}=16.40, p<.001). Likewise, the *kawaii* LED television ad received significantly higher ratings than the non-*kawaii* ad (t_{86}=15.84, p<.001). Thus, the ads with *kawaii* appeals were indeed perceived as *kawaii*. To prepare for the full survey, minor edits to the wording of the questions were made to ensure all items were fully comprehensible to both Chinese and American participants.

E. Validation of the Measurement Instrument

To validate the measurement instrument, an online survey was conducted with a non-student sample of respondents in both China and the United States.

1. Participants

A total of 330 American participants were recruited from an online nation-wide respondent pool administered by Amazon.com. Another 330 participants were recruited from a Chinese online survey platform operated by a privately-owned Chinese company. These online platforms are discussed in detail below. All subjects are anonymous and were paid to participate. The survey protocol was granted exempt status by Marquette University's Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number: HR-2767).

Of these responses, all participants returned a completed instrument. Five American cases and two Chinese cases were dropped due to bad data, where every question were answered with the same choose. An additional 12 American cases and 25 Chinese cases were eliminated because their response time was less than five minutes which was far shorter than the average completion time of about 21 minutes, thus suggesting rushed response. Thus, the study gathered an effective American sample of N=313 and a Chinese sample of N=303.

Of the American sample, 51.8% were women and 48.2% were men; 70.6% were 18 to 35 years old, and 29.4% were 36 and older. For the Chinese sample, women accounted for 55.1%, and men accounted for 44.9%. Of the Chinese respondents, 77.9% were in the 18 to 35 age range, and 22.1% were older than 36.

2. Procedure

i. Administration of Survey in the United States

The data were collected using an online survey in the United States. Respondents were recruited from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), an online crowd sourcing system that allows data to be collected from a large sample in a short amount of time. The

AMT has become increasingly popular among social scientists because of its demographic diversity and cost effectiveness. Previous studies that have utilized the AMT found that compared with traditional survey methods, such as random digit dialing, the AMT produces a comparable nationally representative sample and also closely matches patterns of results, despite its self-selected nature (Simons & Chabris, 2012; Sprouse,2011). Further, only adults from the United States can register in AMT, and the system restricts the use of IP addresses upon participation, so only one IP address can respond once to a certain project (no repeated participation is allowed). All payments are handled by AMT, so participants can remain anonymous from the researcher. The current study compensated participants $1.00 for every completed response.

A structured questionnaire was developed for the current study. To minimize the risk of possible artificial responses, respondents were told that the study was examining consumer responses to advertising having various layout and visuals. After an introduction to the nature of study, the participants were asked to complete the first part which comprised of items' assessing self-construals (interdependent and independent) and basic demographic questions (sex, age and income).

Next, the four fictitious ads (two *kawaii* ads and two non-*kawaii* ads) for low-involvement (purified bottled water) and high-involvement (LED television) product categories were employed in the questionnaire. In order to obtain consistent perceptions of appeals of the sample, this study used a within-subject design. Because repeated observations on a single subject can produce less variable data than observations collected from different subjects (Greenwald, 1974). The order of the fictitious ads was rotated to reduce order effects. After the first exposure to the first ad, participants were

asked to indicate how the 24 *kawaii* items applied to the ad using a 7-point Likert scale ("not at all applicable" to "very much applicable"). Subsequently, participants were asked to complete instruments that measured their perception of ad friendliness, self-brand connection, attitude toward the ad, and intent to purchase the product on a 5-point scale (5-point semantic differential scales used for ad attitude and purchase intention). Then, they were exposed to the second ad, and afterwards the instrument was repeated again with questions referencing *kawaii* items, ad friendliness, self-brand connection, attitude toward the ad, and intention to purchase. The process ended when all ads were exposed and reviewed.

ii. Administration of Survey in China

The translation and back-translation procedure suggested by Craig and Douglas (2005) was adopted to create the measures and fictitious ads used in China in order to maintain cross-cultural equivalence. The four fictitious ads used the exact layout and copy as used in the United States. All procedures were replicated from the United States survey, except for the online platform used. The Chinese survey was hosted on *jisha.cn,* a popular survey website operated by a Shanghai privately-owned survey company (founded in 2007) that offers monetary compensation for participants. Although there are no official records on the actual member population of *jisha.cn,* the website has constantly been rated as the top/most popular online survey platform in China among the Chinese *netizen* communities. According to its own claims, registered members of *jisha.cn* reflect the random population of the whole country (*jisha.cn*). Similar to the AMT survey, all completed responses were awarded RMB ¥5.00 compensation. This

compensation was manifested as redeemable points which can be used to redeem gifts or trade into cash and then transferred to bank accounts.

3. Key Variables

In the following sections, the key measures used to test the hypotheses proposed for this study are discussed.

i. Independent Variables

Culture self-construal. As discussed earlier, individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ in their emphases on self versus self-other relations, which therefore shape individuals' self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As the United States and China are ranked significantly differently on the Hosfstede's (2010) individualism (vs. collectivism) dimension, individuals in these two countries should display different emphases on self-construals. Individual self-construal was measured by the short version of the self-construal scale adopted from Gudykunst and Lee (2003).

1. My personal identity is important to me. (ind)
2. I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others. (ind)
3. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group. (inter)
4. I stick with my group even through difficulties. (inter)
5. I respect decisions made by my group. (inter)
6. I maintain harmony in the groups of which I am a member. (inter)
7. I respect the majority's wishes in groups of which I am a member. (inter)
8. I take responsibility for my own actions. (ind)
9. It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision. (inter)
10. It is important for me to act as an independent person. (ind)
11. I should decide my future on my own. (ind)
12. I enjoy being unique and different from others. (ind)

Note: ind = independent self-construal; inter = interdependent self-construal.

Self-construal was measured with a 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree". The scores of independent self-construal were

reversed to average them with the interdependent scores and produce an index with a higher score that indicated a more interdependent self-construal. The 12 items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 for the United States sample and 0.71 for the Chinese sample. As indicated by Gudykunst and Lee (2003), reliability of the short version of the scales tends to be a little lower than the full scales, but the short version is consistently reliable.

ii. Dependent Variables

Ad friendliness. The scale measuring ad friendliness was adopted from Chang and Li (2010) for the following two items.

1. The ad is friendly.
2. The ad is trustworthy.

This scale was measured by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree". Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.82 (the United States), 0.86 (China).

Self-brand connection. Seven items were used to measure an individual's self-brand connection, as adopted from Escalas' (2004) self-brand connection scale.

1. I consider this brand to be me.
2. The brand suits me well.
3. The brand reflects who I am.
4. I can identify with this brand.
5. I feel a personal connection to this brand.
6. I can use this brand to communicate who I am to others.
7. I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be.

The self-brand connection scale was measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree". The seven items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 for the United States sample and 0.78 for the Chinese sample.

Ad attitudes. The study measured respondents' attitudes toward the ads using 4 items adopted from Mitchell and Olson (1981).

1. Bad – Good
2. Unpleasant – Pleasant
3. Unfavorable – Favorable
4. Negative – Positive

Ad attitudes were measured on a 5-point semantic differential scale. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.79 (United States) and 0.81 (China).

Purchase intention. Intention to purchase the advertised brand was measured using three items adapted from Terlutter, Diehl, and Mueller (2006) with minor modifications in the wording.

1. Would you like to try the product?
2. With price being irrelevant, could you imagine yourself buying this product?
3. With price being irrelevant, could you imagine this product to be one of your most likely choices when you next buy it?

The above three items were measured with a 5-point semantic differential scale. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.75 (the United States) and 0.68 (China).

V. RESULTS

A. Scale Validity

To answer the research question, steps were taken to validate the *kawaii* items. To minimize the potential negative effects associated by repeated measures (i.e., the within-subjects design), the responses from the two ads were treated separately (low- and high-involvement ads). That is, the proposed measurement scheme was analyzed using the first ad exposed, which was the purified bottled water ad. Based on the 616 responses, a principal component analysis was conducted for the 24 *kawaii* appeal items. The results showed several items fell below the .2 correlation coefficient line, indicating a poor correlation, and thus were removed from the scale. They are: “Want to possess”, “Light-hearted”, “Fragile”, “Playful”, “Small”, “Roundness”, “Modern”, and “Cartoonish” (see Table 3).

Table 3. Results of a Principal Component Analysis and Reliability Coefficients: 24 *Kawaii* Appeal Items.

Proposed items	**Corrected Item-Total Correlation**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
Desire to touch	.322	.758
Delightful	.681	.738
Amusing	.393	.753
Enchanting	.619	.741
Cheerful	.610	.741
Intimate	.352	.757
Innocent	.439	.752
Childish	.723	.733
Immature	.531	.745
Juvenile	.400	.754
Feminine	.325	.759
Ingenuous	.286	.761
Simplicity	.405	.752
Colorful	.355	.757
Bright	.610	.741
Anthropopathic	.272	.762
Items Fell Below the .2 Correlation Coefficient Line		
Want to possess	-.021	.782
Light-hearted	.136	.764
Fragile	.108	.769
Playful	.119	.770
Small	.033	.777
Roundness	.151	.771
Cartoonish	-.057	.779
Modern	-.176	.792

Second, the measurement model was examined with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using IBM® SPSS® AMOS ver. 21. The model fit was evaluated in terms of (1) item reliability, (2) item weight, (3) correlations between the items, and (4) item multicollinearity. According to prior literature, when assessing model containing formative indicators, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity

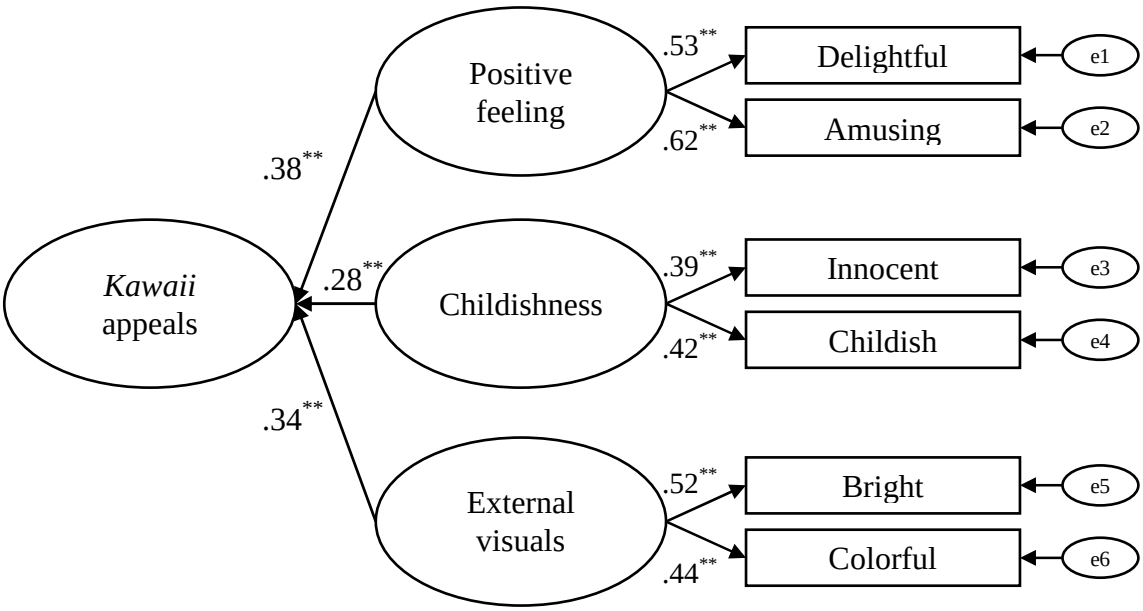
are not required (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). However, some items displayed negative item weights in the model results, resulted in reduced model fit. A closer inspection revealed that, that may have been caused by the existence of multicollinearity between the items. Pearson correlations analyses found that, “Delightful”, “Enchanting”, and “Cheerful” were highly correlated; the same phenomenon appeared between “Childish” and “Immature”, and between “Innocent” and “Ingenuous” (Table 4). Highly correlated items may serve to harm the indicators’ validity and therefore should be either eliminated or combined into one single item. The choice was based largely on theoretical concern. Thus, the redundant items (“Enchanting”, “Cheerful”, “Immature”, and “Ingenuous”) were dropped and the item representing the same meanings (“Delightful”, “Childish”, and “Innocent”) were retained.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations Analyses: Highly Correlated Items.

Delightful	Enchanting .895*** (N=616)	Cheerful .769*** (N=616)
Childish	Immature .681*** (N=616)	
Innocent	Ingenuous .585*** (N=616)	
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed).		

As a result, the number of items was reduced to 12 items, 4 items for each dimension. Another CFA was run based on the revised model of the 12 items. However, the model fit was not satisfactory (RMSEA>.4, PCLOSE = 0). To strengthen the model,

items with a factor loading lower than 1.00 were removed. This resulted in “Desire to touch”, “Intimate”, “Feminine”, “Juvenile”, “Simplicity”, and “Anthropopathic” being dropped from the model. The revised model consisted of 6 items and displayed an improvement over the last model: $X^2_{12} = 276.21$, p = .010, RMSEA = .062 (.027, .100), PCLOSE = .251. The original factor “Powerlessness” was changed to “Childishness” to reflect the change in composition. The model and the loadings of the items on the scales were presented in Figure 11.



*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.

Figure 11. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis with Standardized Factor Loadings for the *Kawaii* Model.

The result of a principal component analysis of the items can be seen in Table 5. The items were converged into the three proposed components, explaining 69% of total variance. Cronbach’s alpha for a group of all items was .71; for three factors, “Positive felling”, “Childishness”, and “External Visual” were .72, .67, and .69 respectively. Table

6 summarized the new items and their loadings and weights in the model, thus answering the study's research question.

Table 5. Total Variance Explained for *Kawaii* Appeals.

Component	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Positive Feeling	1.657	27.613	27.613	1.657	27.613	27.613
External Visual	1.323	22.050	49.663	1.323	22.050	49.663
Childishness	1.150	19.159	68.822	1.150	19.159	68.822

Table 6. Final Measurement Items for *Kawaii* Appeals.

Proposed Dimensions	**Proposed items**	**Loadings**	**Weights**
Positive Feeling	Delightful	.532**	.847**
	Amusing	.617**	.540**
Childishness	Innocent	.395**	.340**
	Childish	.415**	.600**
External Visual	Bright	.518**	.767**
	Colorful	.441**	.879**
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.			

B. Hypotheses Testing

1. Manipulation Check

For manipulation checks, mean values of the *kawaii* first-order constructs were calculate assuming an equal weight of each loading. For the low-involvement ads (purified bottled water), a t-test indicated that the mean value of the summed *kawaii* appeal scale items for the *kawaii* ad was significantly greater than that of the mean value of the non-*kawaii* ad (t_{1230}= 60.63, p<.001). The same procedure was repeated for the high-involvement ads (LED television). The results suggested that the mean value of the summed *kawaii* appeal scale items was significantly greater for the *kawaii* ad than the non-*kawaii* ad (t_{1230}= 68.54, p<.001). Thus, respondents perceived the stimuli ads as study intended.

2. Testing Perceived Ad Friendliness between Kawaii and Non-Kawaii Ads (H1)

Hypothesis 1 proposed that ads with *kawaii* appeals will be deemed as friendlier than ads without *kawaii* appeals. Table 7 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing for the differences of perceived friendliness between both high- (M_{kawaii}= 3.29 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.68, p<.005, eta^2= .08) and low-involvement (M_{kawaii} = 3.15 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.72, p<.001, eta^2= .05) product ads. One-way ANOVA test showed that *kawaii* appeals were perceived to be friendlier than the non-*kawaii* ads in both United States (high-involvement: M_{kawaii}= 3.28 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.67, p<.001, eta^2=.11; low-involvement: M_{kawaii}= 3.14 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.70, p<.005, eta^2= .07) and China (high-involvement: M_{kawaii}= 3.30 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.69, p<.05, eta^2= .08; low-involvement: M_{kawaii}= 3.16 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.75, p<.05, eta^2= .05), though not by a wide margin.

Table 7. Perceived Friendliness between *Kawaii* and Non-*Kawaii* Ads.

Overall						
	Kawaii Appeals		Non-*Kawaii* Appeals			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	F	eta^2 (η^2)
Friendliness (High-Involvement)	3.29	.98	2.68	.80	2.29**	.082
Friendliness (Low-Involvement)	3.15	.91	2.72	.89	4.82***	.045
United States						
	Kawaii Appeals		Non-*Kawaii* Appeals			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	F	eta^2 (η^2)
Friendliness (High-Involvement)	3.28	.90	2.67	.87	2.93***	.113
Friendliness (Low-Involvement)	3.14	.90	2.70	.88	3.70**	.068
China						
	Kawaii Appeals		Non-*Kawaii* Appeals			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	F	eta^2 (η^2)
Friendliness (High-Involvement)	3.30	.97	2.69	.73	2.07*	.079
Friendliness (Low-Involvement)	3.16	.92	2.75	.90	2.46*	.048
Overall N=616, United States N=313, China N=303. *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.						

Further, to test the combined effects of ad types (*kawaii*, non-*kawaii*), country (US and China), and product involvement (high and low) to perceived friendliness, a three-way ANOVA test was conducted with friendliness as dependent variable and country and *kawaii*/non-*kawaii* as independent variables. The results were listed in Table

8 and Figure 12 (Levene's test of equality of error variances returned not significant, $F_{7,2456}= 1.72$, $p>.05$).

Table 8. Three-way ANOVA Test of Ad Types, Country and Product Involvement on Perceived Ad Friendliness.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial eta^2 (η^2)
Corrected Model	171.94[a]	7	24.56	30.318	.000	.080
Intercept	21588.82	1	21588.82	26646.57	.000	.916
Ad types	165.04	1	165.04	203.71	.000	.077
Self-construals	1.38	1	1.38	1.70	.192	.001
Country	.43	1	.43	.54	.464	.000
Ad types * Self-construals	4.868	1	4.87	6.01	.014	.002
Ad types * Country	.03	1	.03	.03	.859	.000
Self-construals * Country	.05	1	.05	.06	.802	.000
Ad types * Self-construals * Country	.04	1	.04	.05	.824	.000
Error	1989.83	2456	.81			
Total	23753.14	2464				
Corrected Total	2161.77	2463				

Dependent Variable: Friendliness

a. R Squared = .080 (Adjusted R Squared = .077)

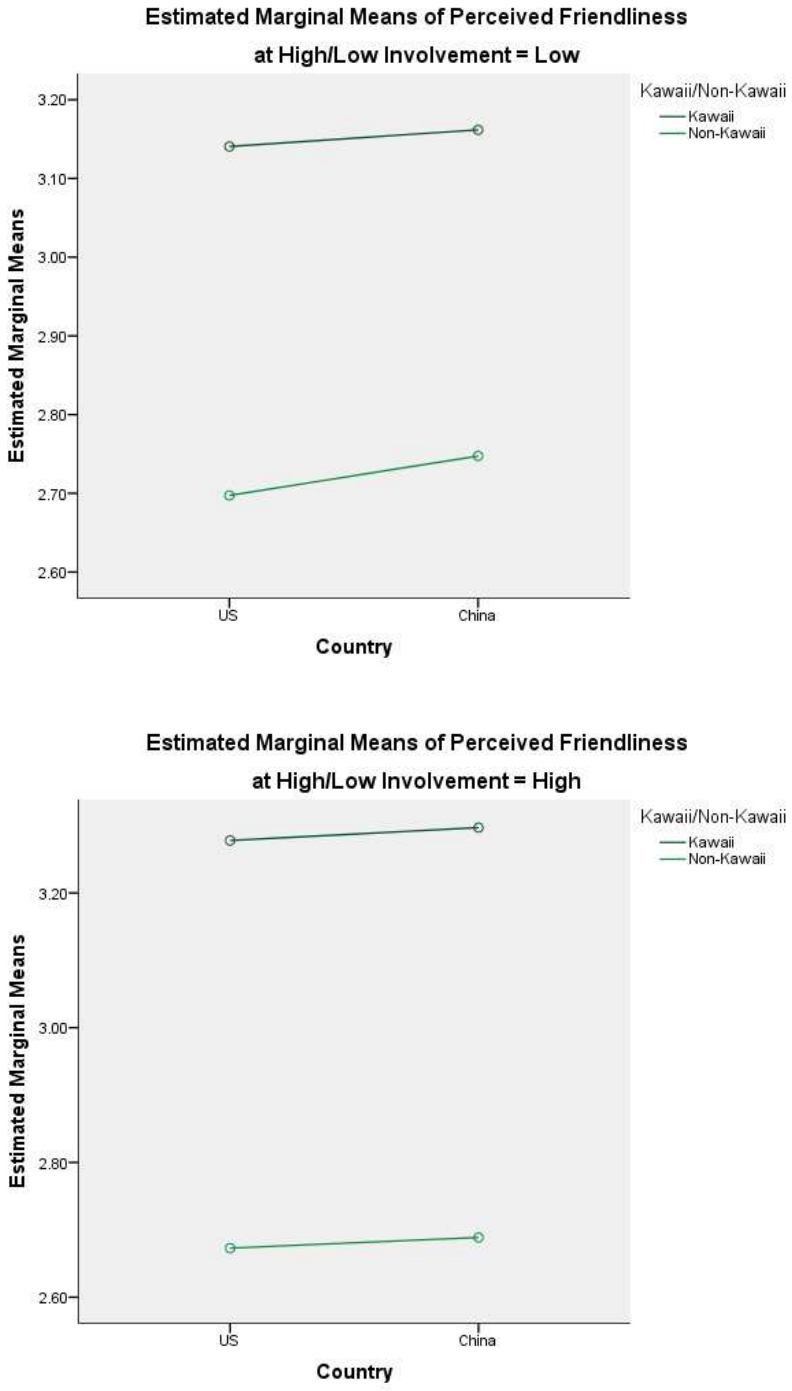


Figure 12. Interactions of Ad Types, Country and Product Involvement on Perceived Friendliness.

The results in Table 8 showed that there were no significant main effects from country to friendliness ($F_{1,2456}$= .54, p>.05, eta^2<.01), interaction of country and ad types

($F_{1,2456}$= .03, p>.05, eta^2<.001), country and product involvement ($F_{1,2456}$= .06, p>.05, eta^2<.001), as well as interaction between country, ad types and product involvement ($F_{1,2456}$= .04, p>.05, eta^2<.001). Only ad types show main effects to the dependent variable ($F_{1,2456}$= 203.39, p<.001, eta^2=.08). Taken the results together, the results indicated that both American participants and Chinese participants found *kawaii* ads significantly friendlier than non-*kawaii* ads. Thus, H1 was deemed supported by the data.

3. Testing Effects between Different Self-Construals (H2)

Next, in H2, the study posited that compared to consumers with a dominant independent self-construal, consumers with dominant interdependent self-construal will form stronger self-brand connections (H2a), exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H2b) and purchase intention (H2c) when the ads feature *kawaii* appeals, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals. For simplicity's sake, the independent/interdependent scale was transformed into nominal variable, with value 1 indicates independent and value 2 indicates interdependent. Two-way ANOVA tests were conducted to test the effects of *kawaii* appeals and self-construal on self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention, respectively. However, some of the two-way interactions did not achieve statistical significance (see Appendix 4 for SPSS output results). Although the two-way interactions were not significant, prior literature have suggested that simple level comparisons or lower level interactions can still help explore potential moderating effects (Aaker, 1999; Kong & Zhang, 2013). Thus, independent-sample t-tests were run to test the differences in means of self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention between the independent/interdependent groups (Table 9).

Table 9: Self-Brand Connections, Ad Attitudes, and Purchase Intention between the Two Self-Construal Groups.

		High-Involvement ad					
		Self-Construal *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		Independent	Interdependent	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.15 (N=299)	3.45 (N=317)	-3.99	614	.000	.025
	Ad Attitudes	3.42 (N=299)	3.60 (N=317)	-2.36	593.1	.018	.009
	Purchase Intention	3.00 (N=299)	3.14 (N=317)	-1.79	614	.075	.005
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.80 (N=299)	2.76 (N=317)	.58	614	.561	.001
	Ad Attitudes	3.43 (N=299)	3.34 (N=317)	1.13	614	.258	.002
	Purchase Intention	3.01 (N=299)	2.93 (N=317)	1.02	614	.309	.002
		Low-Involvement ad					
		Self-Construal *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		Independent	Interdependent	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.21 (N=299)	3.58 (N=317)	-4.85	598.6	.000	.037
	Ad Attitudes	3.15 (N=299)	3.32 (N=317)	-2.10	614	.036	.007
	Purchase Intention	3.19 (N=299)	3.35 (N=317)	-2.13	614	.034	.007
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.70 (N=299)	2.65 (N=317)	.81	614	.417	.001
	Ad Attitudes	2.53 (N=299)	2.62 (N=317)	-1.38	614	.169	.003
	Purchase Intention	2.48 (N=299)	2.55 (N=317)	-1.17	614	.243	.002
N=616.							

As the t-tests showed, both high- and low-involvement ads with *kawaii* appeals were rated to have stronger self-brand connections from interdependent consumers (t_{614}= -3.99, p<.001, eta^2= .02; $t_{598.55}$= -4.85, p<.001, eta^2= .04 hereafter in high- and low-involvement ads, respectively). The same can be seem in ad attitudes measures for both high- and low-involvement product ads ($t_{593.08}$= -2.36, p<.05, eta^2=.01; t_{614}= -2.10, p<.05, eta^2=.01). The only marginal not significant result for the *kawaii* ads was the purchase intention measured from the high-involvement ad (t_{614}= -1.79, p>.05, eta^2= .01). However, the means differences of purchase intention appeared significant for the low-involvement ad (t_{614}= -2.13, p<.05, eta^2= .01). This result indicated when in low-involvement situation, consumers with interdependent self-construal tended to establish stronger self-brand connections, more favorable ad attitudes and purchase intention with the ad features *kawaii* appeals.

Things took a turn when moving to the non-*kawaii* ads. From the t-tests' results, all measures of differences on means turned out to be small in effect size and not significant. The differences of the means of the dependent variables between the two groups were mixed, and the raw differences were very small (for example, $M_{independent}$ = 2.80 verse $M_{interdependent}$= 2.76, p>.05 for self-brand connection, high-involvement). The result strongly suggested that for non-*kawaii* ads, between independent and interdependent viewers there were no significant differences in self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention. This is in line with the results of the manipulation check.

Overall, the raw difference of means was particularly large on self-brand connection among other dependent variables. The results were in line with the self-congruity theory which hypothesized higher congruency between advertising appeals and

consumer self-construals leads to stronger self-brand connections, which in turn contributes to an increased evaluation. Thus, H2a, H2b and H2c were all supported.

4. Testing Effects between Gender (H3)

Hypothesis 3 was based on the assumption that men and women have a different approach to construct the self, resulting in different emphases on self-construals. Prior literature indicated that women prefer a dominant interdependent self-construal, whereas men tend to do the opposite (Wang et al., 2000). Thus, similar to the above hypothesis, H3 posited that compared to male consumers, female consumers will form stronger self-brand connections (H3a), and exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H3b) and purchase intention (H3c) when the exposed to *kawaii* ads, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals.

Independent sample t-test results can be seen in Table 10. Results of two-way ANOVA were mixed (see Appendix 4 for SPSS outputs), therefore, the study applied lower level of comparisons to explorer the moderating effects, as per Aaker (1999), and Kong and Zhang (2013) suggested.

Table 10: Self-Brand Connections, Ad Attitudes, and Purchase Intention between the Two Gender Groups.

		High-Involvement ad					
		Self-Construal *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		Male	Female	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.15 (N=287)	3.44 (N=329)	-3.92	614	.000	.024
	Ad Attitudes	3.39 (N=287)	3.62 (N=329)	-2.92	558.18	.004	.014
	Purchase Intention	2.98 (N=287)	3.15 (N=329)	-2.21	614	.028	.008
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.78 (N=287)	2.79 (N=329)	-.14	614	.888	.000
	Ad Attitudes	3.39 (N=287)	3.39 (N=329)	.02	614	.998	.000
	Purchase Intention	2.98 (N=287)	2.96 (N=329)	.24	614	.812	.000
		Low-Involvement ad					
		Self-Construal *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		Male	Female	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.24 (N=287)	3.54 (N=329)	-3.84	614	.000	.023
	Ad Attitudes	3.14 (N=287)	3.33 (N=329)	-2.28	614	.023	.008
	Purchase Intention	3.18 (N=287)	3.35 (N=329)	-2.11	614	.035	.007
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.68 (N=287)	2.67 (N=329)	.23	614	.822	.000
	Ad Attitudes	2.58 (N=287)	2.58 (N=329)	-.05	614	.960	.000
	Purchase Intention	2.46 (N=287)	2.57 (N=329)	-1.74	612.65	.083	.005
N=616.							

Similar to the independent/interdependent groups, self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention were differently rated by men (coded as 1) and women (coded as 2), but only for the *kawaii* ads. The results showed that women had stronger self-brand connections with the *kawaii* ads (t_{614}= -3.92, p<.001, eta^2=.024; t_{614}= -3.84, p<.001, eta^2=.02, hereafter in high- and low-involvement ads, respectively), they also demonstrated more favorable ad attitudes ($t_{558.18}$= -2.92, p<.005, eta^2= .01; t_{614}= -2.28, p<.05, eta^2= .01) and purchase intention (t_{614}= -2.21, p<.05, eta^2= .01; t_{614}= -2.11, p<.05, eta^2= .01) than men. However, when viewing non-*kawaii* ads, both men and women showed relatively similar levels of self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention. This was marked by all the extremely small effect sizes (eta^2=.00 for self-brand connection and ad attitude of both types of ads) and not significant results. Again, the results brought support to H3, indicating gender differences in perceiving *kawaii* ads.

It is worth to note that, prior literature indicated self-construals were linked to culture value dimension (individualism vs. collectivism) and also gender (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). Though it is out of the scope of the current study, this thesis sought to test the interactions of gender and culture on self-construals. The study ran a two-way ANOVA test of gender and culture (United States/China), using self-construal as dependent variable. The result can be seen in Table 11 and Figure 13.

Table 11. Two-Way ANOVA Test of Gender and Country on Self-Construal.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial eta^2 (η^2)
Corrected Model	11.84[a]	3	3.95	17.01	.000	.077
Intercept	1389.09	1	1389.09	5985.70	.000	.907
Culture	2.117	1	2.13	9.12	.003	.015
Sex	8.575	1	8.58	36.95	.000	.057
Culture * Sex	.752	1	.75	3.24	.072	.005
Error	142.03	612	.23			
Total	1567.00	616				
Corrected Total	153.87	615				

Dependent Variable: Self-Construal
a. R Squared = .077 (Adjusted R Squared = .072)

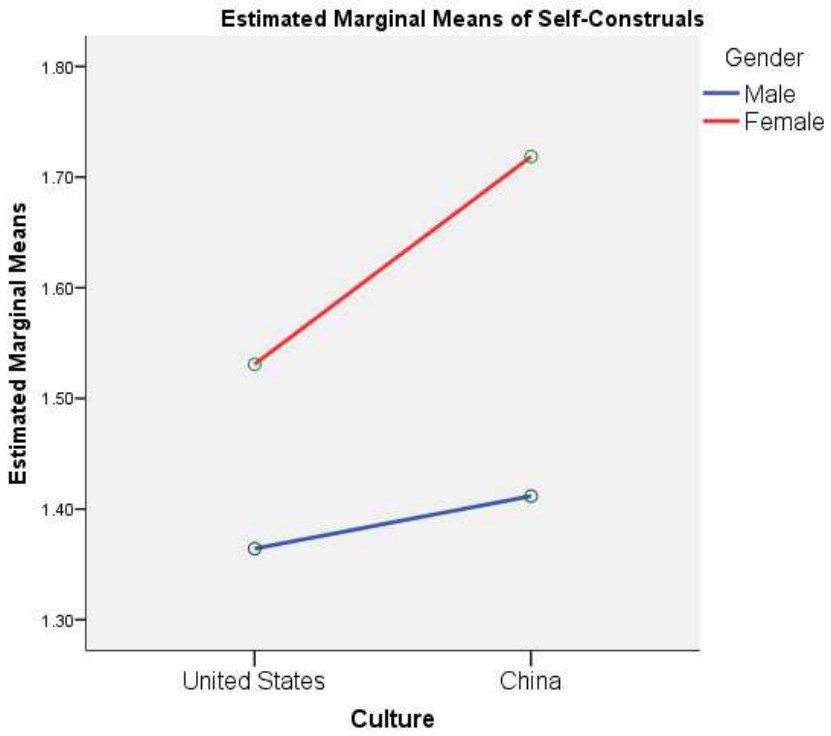


Figure 13. Interactions of Gender and Culture on Self-Construals.

The two-way ANOVA test results showed that both gender ($F_{1,612}$= 36.95, p<.001) and culture ($F_{1,612}$= 9.12, p<.005) yield significant effects on self-construal, whereas the interaction of gender and culture showed no significant effects on the dependent variable ($F_{1,612}$= 3.24, p>.05). Gender showed an effect of 5.7% to self-construal, while culture only accounting for 1.5% of the variance. Combining the main effects of gender, culture as well as their interactions, the result turned out to be significant, accounting for a total of 7.7% of the variance (R^2= .077, adjust R^2= .072, p<.001). However, the Levene's test for homogeneity of variance turned out to be significant ($F_{3,612}$= 16.63. p<.001), indicating there were significant differences in the error variance of the dependent variable. Interpretation to the Levene's test served to remind us to take extra caution when considering the ANOVA results.

5. Testing Effects between Cultures (H4)

As demonstrated above, gender-level variations effects is similar to cross-cultural level effects in persuasion, because self-construal was linked to both concepts. Thus, H4 predicted that when compared to consumers in an individualistic culture, e.g., the United States, consumers in a collectivistic culture such as China will form stronger self-brand connections (H4a), exhibit more favorable ad attitudes (H4b) and purchase intention (H4c) when viewing ads featuring *kawaii* appeals, but not for ads without *kawaii* appeals. To test the hypothesis, procedures similar to testing H3 were run, results can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Self-Brand Connections, Ad Attitudes, and Purchase Intention between the Two Cultures.

		High-Involvement ad					
		Culture *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		United States	China	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.20 (N=313)	3.42 (N=303)	-2.86	612.75	.004	.013
	Ad Attitudes	3.50 (N=313)	3.53 (N=303)	-.57	558.18	.571	.001
	Purchase Intention	3.08 (N=313)	3.06 (N=303)	2.60	614	.795	.000
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.72 (N=313)	2.85 (N=303)	-1.85	614	.066	.006
	Ad Attitudes	3.39 (N=313)	3.38 (N=303)	.19	614	.847	.000
	Purchase Intention	3.01 (N=313)	2.94 (N=303)	.89	614	.375	.001
		Low-Involvement ad					
		Culture *(cells: means of variables)*		Statistical Significance, Strength of Association (η^2)			
		United States	China	t	df	Sig.	eta^2 (η^2)
Kawaii	Self-Brand Connection	3.29 (N=313)	3.51 (N=303)	-2.85	614	.005	.013
	Ad Attitudes	3.14 (N=313)	3.34 (N=303)	-2.36	614	.019	.009
	Purchase Intention	3.18 (N=313)	3.37 (N=303)	-2.45	614	.015	.010
Non-*Kawaii*	Self-Brand Connection	2.69 (N=313)	2.66 (N=303)	.36	614	.723	.000
	Ad Attitudes	2.55 (N=313)	2.61 (N=303)	-1.05	614	.295	.002
	Purchase Intention	2.52 (N=313)	2.51 (N=303)	-.12	614	.905	.000
N=616.							

The results of the t-tests showed that when viewing *kawaii* ads, Chinese respondents showed greater self-brand connections (t_{614}= -2.86, p<.005, eta^2= .01; t_{614}= -2.85, p<.01, eta^2= .01, hereafter in high- and low-involvement ads, respectively) as compared to the American respondents. For ad attitude and purchase intention, however, the results were mixed. For low-involvement products, the Chinese tended to show better ad attitude and purchase intention toward *kawaii* ads (t_{614}= -2.36, p<.05, eta^2= .01; t_{614}= -2.45, p<.05, eta^2= .01, respectively), but for high-involvement products, the results were too small in size and not significant ($t_{558.18}$= -.57, p>.05, eta^2= .00; t614= 2.60, p>.05, eta^2= .00, for ad attitude and purchase intention, respectively). Despite the mixed results in the *kawaii* ads, for the non-*kawaii* ads, again, results showed no significant differences between American and Chinese respondents in terms of self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention, for both high- and low-involvement products. Thus, H4a was supported; H4b and H4c were partially supported by the data.

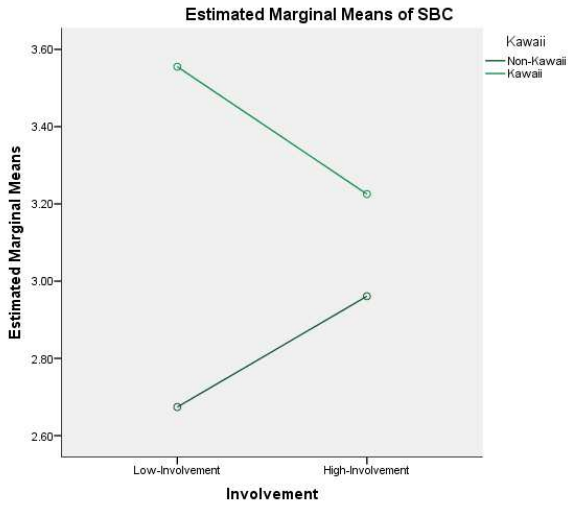
6. *Testing Effects between Kawaii and Non-Kawaii Appeals in High- and Low-Involvement Products (H5 and H6)*

Finally, to examine the differences between high- and low-involvement products with *kawaii* appeals, it was hypothesized that ads with *kawaii* appeals will yield more self-brand connections (H5a), favorable attitude toward the ad (H5b), and greater purchase intention (H5c) than ads without *kawaii* appeals in the low-involvement product category, whereas for high-involvement product category, there will be no significant differences between *kawaii* and non-*kawaii* ads (H6a-c). The results of independent-sample t-test were summarized in Table 13. Figure 14 showed results of two-way ANOVA tests (product involvement and ad types as independent variables; self-brand

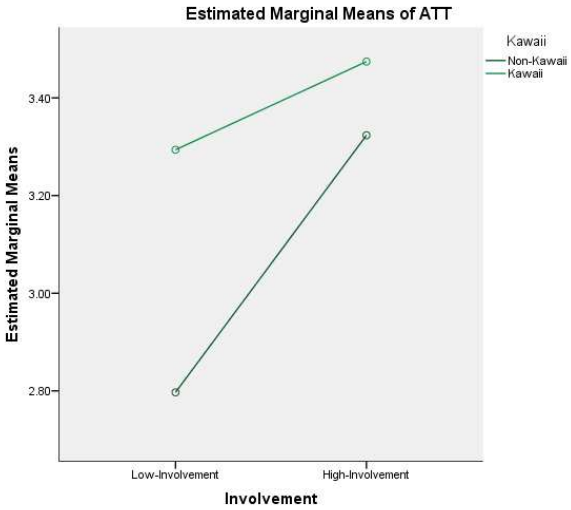
connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention as dependent variables), though all Levene's tests returned significant results ($p<.001$).

Table 13. Effects between *Kawaii* and Non-*Kawaii* Appeals in High- and Low-Involvement Product Categories.

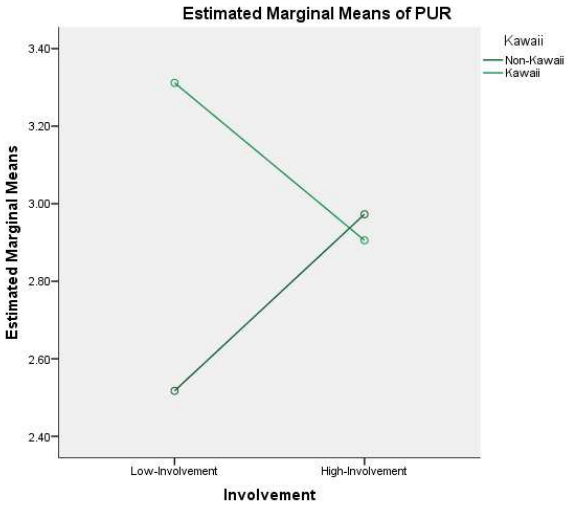
High-Involvement ad						
	Kawaii Appeals		Non-*Kawaii* Appeals			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	F	eta^2 (η^2)
Self-Brand Connections	3.23	.99	2.96	.94	4.97***	.14
Ad Attitudes	3.47	.97	3.32	.95	4.13***	.16
Purchase Intention	2.91	.90	2.97	.95	2.24***	.10
Low-Involvement ad						
	Kawaii Appeals		Non-*Kawaii* Appeals			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	F	eta^2 (η^2)
Self-Brand Connections	3.56	.98	2.67	.82	18.51***	.18
Ad Attitudes	3.29	.97	2.80	.87	6.64***	.15
Purchase Intention	3.31	.91	2.53	.76	2.87***	.12
N=616. *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.						



Dependent variable: Self-Brand Connection $F_{1,2460}$= 66.99, p<.001, partial eta^2= .027



Dependent variable: Ad Attitude $F_{1,2460}$= 19.78, p<.001, partial eta^2= .008



Dependent variable: Purchase Intention $F_{1,2460}$= 137.5, p<.001, partial eta^2= .053

Figure 14. Interactions of Ad Types and Product Involvement on Self-Brand Connection, Ad Attitude, and Purchase Intention.

The results from Table 13 turned out that for low-involvement product, as expected, all three dependent variables showed significant differences between *kawaii* ad and non-*kawaii* ad with relatively strong effects (self-brand connection: M_{kawaii}=3.56 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.67, p<.001, eta^2=.18; ad attitudes: M_{kawaii} = 3.29 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.80, p<.001, eta^2= .15; purchase intention: M_{kawaii} = 3.31 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.53, p<.001, eta^2= .12). Thus, H5a to c were supported.

However, mixed results were found when measuring variables for the high-involvement product ad. For self-brand connection and ad attitude, the differences between *kawaii* and non-*kawaii* ads were actually significant, pointing to a stronger self-brand connection (M_{kawaii} = 3.23 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 2.96, p<.001, eta^2= .14) and a more favorable ad attitude (M_{kawaii} = 3.47 verse $M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$= 3.32, p<.001, eta^2= .16) toward the *kawaii* ad, much like what were observed in the low-involvement product ad. However, purchase intention was actually slightly stronger in the non-*kawaii*, high-involvement ad than the *kawaii* one ($M_{non\text{-}kawaii}$ = 2.97 verse M_{kawaii}= 2.91, p<.001, eta^2= .10), though not by a wide margin. The reverse results contradicted the H6 predictions, thus, H6a to c were rejected.

7. Path Analysis Model of the Link between Kawaii Appeals and the Dependent Variables

Based on the above findings, two proposed path analyses were conducted (for high- and low- involvement product ads). Note that the *kawaii* appeals variable is the sum of the scale items of the six first-order reflective indicators. See Figure 15, 16 and Table 14, 15 for the path analyses results.

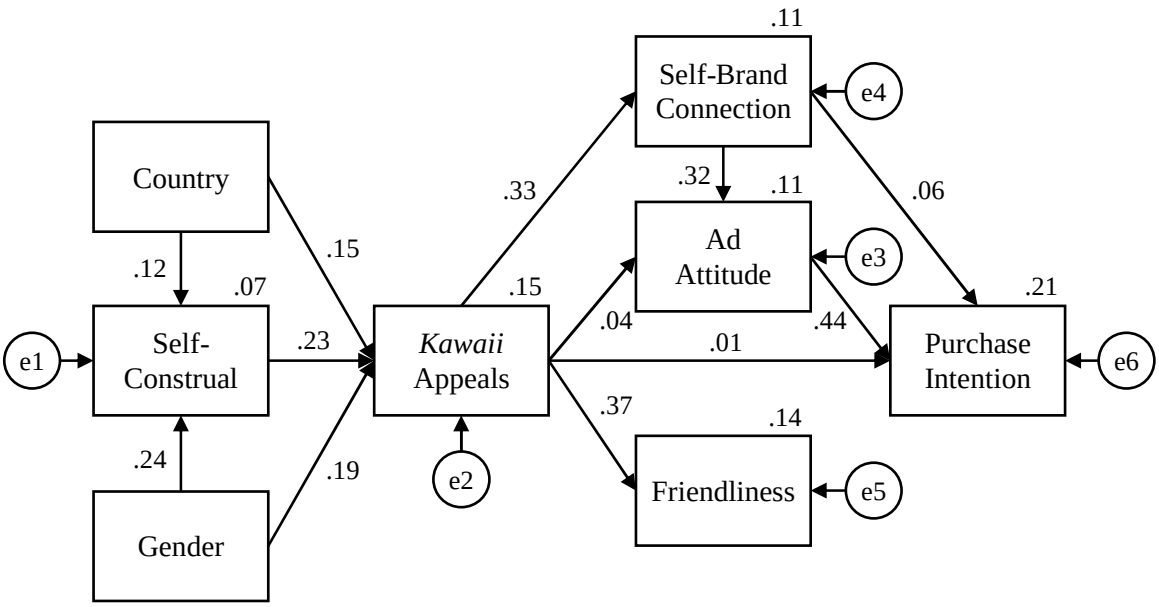


Figure 15. Path Analysis Model for High-Involvement Ad.
N= 1232, Chi-Square (df= 16) = 29.39, p= .021,
RMSEA= .03, PCLOSE= .99.

Table 14. Standardized Betas: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects by *Kawaii* Appeals for High-Involvement Ad

Effects by *Kawaii* Appeals	Friendliness	Self-Brand Connection	Ad Attitude	Purchase Intention
Direct	.373**	.329**	.035**	.011
Indirect	--	--	.105**	.082**
Total	.373**	.329**	.140**	.092**
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.				

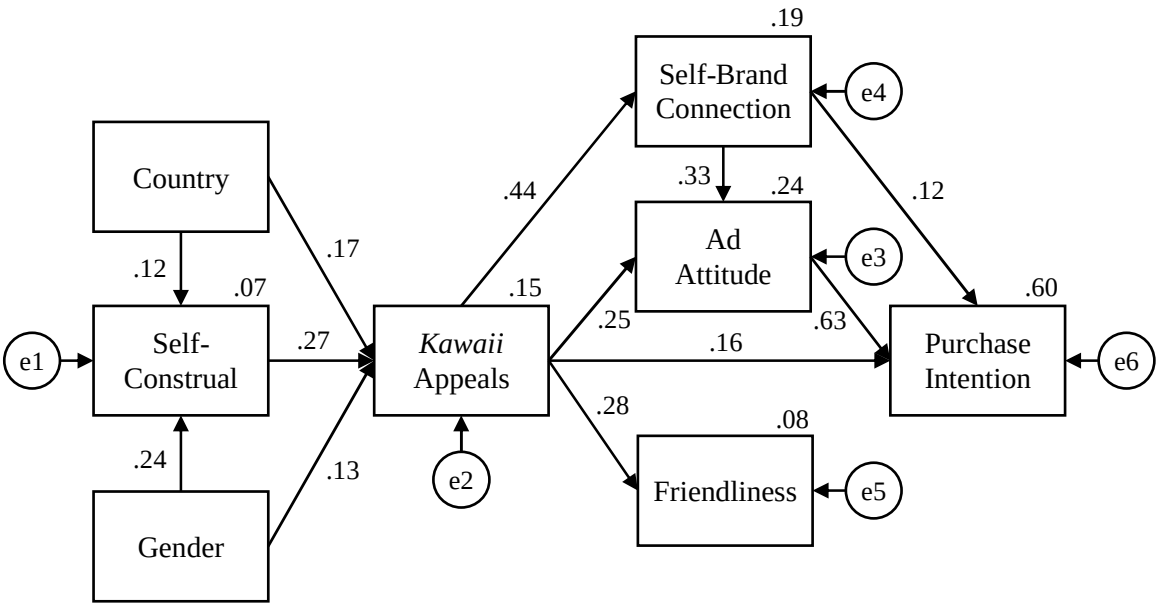


Figure 16. Path Analysis Model for Low-Involvement Ad.
N= 1232, Chi-Square (df= 16) = 30.23, p= .017,
RMSEA= .03, PCLOSE= .99.

Table 15. Standardized Betas: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects by *Kawaii* Appeals for Low-Involvement Ad

Effects by *Kawaii* Appeals	Friendliness	Self-Brand Connection	Ad Attitude	Purchase Intention
Direct	.275**	.439**	.251**	.159**
Indirect	--	--	.145**	.303**
Total	.275**	.439**	.396**	.462**
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.				

From the results listed in Figure 15 and Table 14, it is somewhat interesting to see *kawaii* appeals only had small, not significant direct effects on purchase intention (beta= .01, p>.05, hereafter, all betas were standardized). However, it did have a significant total effects (beta= .09, p<.01) via indirect routes from self-brand connection

(total effects by *kawaii* appeals: beta= .33, p<.01) and ad attitude (total effects by *kawaii* appeals: beta= .14, p<.01). In line with prior studies, ad attitude exerted large effects on purchase intention (beta= .44, p<.01). Note that *kawaii* appeals had strong effects on perceived friendliness (beta= .37, p<.01), though in the current model friendliness did not account for any variance on the other dependent variables due to small, not significant effects sizes (beta< .005). Overall, the model accounted for 21% of the variance in purchase intention for the high-involvement product ad (R^2= .21, p<.01).

In contrast of the high-involvement ad, from the results listed in Figure 16 and Table 15 for the low-involvement ad's path analysis, *kawaii* appeals showed a moderate direct effects on purchase intention (beta= .16, p<.01). Combined with the indirect effects (beta= .30, p<.01), *kawaii* appeals had a relatedly large total effects on purchase intention (beta= .46, p<.05). Again, ad attitude had the largest effects on purchase intention among other variables (beta= .63, p<.01). It is worth to note that *kawaii* appeals also had a strong effects on self-brand connection (beta= .44, p<.01) and ad attitude (beta= .40, p<.01) for the low-involvement model. Compared with the high-involvement model, this model accounted for 60% of the variance in purchase intention (R^2= .60, p<.01).

VI. DISCUSSION

This study was designed to provide a better understanding of the nature of *kawaii* appeals in advertising. Based on a review of related literature on the *kawaii* concept, the study proposed a theoretical definition for the *kawaii* construct that can be used for future investigation.

A. Research Question

Three underling dimensions were proposed for the *kawaii* appeals. A large number of items were generated and tested to create and validate the scale. The process resulted in a 6-item scale with three dimensions: positive feeling, childishness, and external visual. Though a large number of items were removed from the original construct, the resulting items were conceptually congruent with prior *kawaii* literature.

For instance, positive feelings (delightful and amusing) are key aspects that make a human baby cute or *kawaii*. From an ethology approach, they serve as stimuli that can elicit tender reactions and affectionate behaviors from adults; whereas from a psychology approach, they are capable to evoke a certain positive "bonding" between the viewer and the cute object. These pleasurable feelings of tenderness are said to be elevated by other kinds of enjoyment, most notably by humorous amusement (Morreall & Loy, 1989). As explained by Morreall and Loy (1989), amusing experience often involves something incongruous. A baby can be incongruous to an adult, a cartoon depiction can be incongruous to a real object. Because their different body proportion and simplicity characters (e.g., an innocence baby, an oversimplified cartoon drawing: ☺) make them amusing to viewers. In return, the cute baby or object establishes rapport with the viewer.

In the same light, being/acting childish is also an important aspect of *kawaii*. *Kawaii* is generally thought of as "kid stuff" in the American culture, where the interest in cute things wears off soon after the child enters middle school. However, in the birth place of the *kawaii* culture, *kawaii* never stops at teenage. Having evolved from the childish hand writing fashion during the early 1970s, today the *kawaii* culture still shows heavy emphasis on being/acting like a child (Kinsella, 1995). Under Japan's "return to Asia" initiative during the 1990s, many industrialized Asia countries were exposed to the *kawaii* pop culture. Chuang (2005) pointed out that because the influx of the Japanese anime, the *kawaii* "baby talk has become a common way of speaking among adult women" in Taiwan (p22). In China, a popular fashion magazine targeting middle-income fashion lovers published a special issue called "Childlike 31 Days" in 2006. In fact, basic human interactions carry a certain degree of infantilization. This is especially apparent in romantic interactions. People often find clumsiness and innocence cute and funny in lovers; touching, kissing, hugging are all ways to show affection for both babies and lovers (Morreall & Loy, 1989).

However, being childlike and delightful cannot always evoke a sense of *kawaii*. Imagine a starving child, a pornographic cartoon, a dirty teddy bear covered by mud. In short, for an object to be recognized as *kawaii*, it needs to possess certain visual features. Prior studies found that to call an inanimate object cute, people are extending the schema which they first perceive in babies (Kinsella, 1995). The visual schema of babies often times consists of being small, round, large eyes, small body, and with warm colors. Western cultures often associate children with bright primary hues. From a biology standpoint, warm colors including red, orange, and yellow, are often seen as a symbol of

youth and vitality. Examples include a baby's pink cheeks, bright and colorful flowers, etc. Dark shades and washed out, pale colors, on the other hand, have historically been used to express mystery.

Although the word "*kawaii*" carries a much broader semantic meanings than the English word "cute", many of those are not suitable in defining appeals for advertising language. Many original items proposed in this study did not survive the validation, "desire to touch", "feminine", "simplicity", to name a few. In retrospect, items such as "desire to touch" and "simplicity" are highly connected with the product features. In other words, if the product itself does not process the necessary qualities, the power of the advertising appeals is diminished. For example, a LED television in a black, flat, rectangle shape is the opposite representation of the colorful, small and round cute look. Nobody would ever want to hug a television set in a cool, black shape.

However, the finding that "feminine" was not considered *kawaii* is surprising, as *kawaii* often entails a sense of infantilized femininity (Kinsella, 1995). Again, this could be tied to the product nature, especially for stimuli ads that employ no human models. Further, the underling implication of "femininity" in *kawaii* is often embodied in women behaving and being *kawaii*. For example, Kou Shibasaki (*柴咲コウ*) in a series of ads for Disney Mobile on *Softbank* (see Figure 1, left ad) struck many *kawaii* poses and acted like a young girl, though she was actually 31 years old at the time the ads were shot. As a limitation of the current study, no human model was used in any of the stimuli. To further explore the dimension of femininity as well as other product-related implications in *kawaii* appeals, it is recommended that human models and various product features be considered in future investigations.

B. Research Hypotheses

This study is based on the assumption that when ads feature an appeal that signals attributes valued in a particular cultural domain, consumers in this cultural domain will respond favorably. Particularly, this study found that while the United States and China both perceived ads with *kawaii* appeals as friendlier, Chinese respondents showed stronger self-brand connections with the ad, more favorable attitude toward the *kawaii* ad, and more intention to purchase the advertised product. This could be explained by the specific culture values mentioned in the literature review section, that advertising emphasizes collectivistic values and uses emotional appeals and soft-sell approaches received more favorable evaluations in Eastern cultures than Western cultures. Another possible explanation for the different receptions between East and West could be a political reason: the Western aesthetic have been historically male dominated, thus, the warm feelings associated in cuteness are not valued as an important aspect of aesthetic features (Morreall, 1991). Because the emotions evoked by *kawaii* images are thoughtless and automatic (Morreall, 1991), cuteness are often ascribed as childish, immature, or shallow in the Western aesthetic (Lai, 2005).

This study also employed interdependent and independent self-construals to explain the differences in responses to *kawaii* ads from respondents of different genders and different culture backgrounds. The self-congruity theory holds that when an advertising appeal is relevant and congruent with the consumers' culturally shaped self-construals, it is more likely a strong self-brand connection with the ad will be developed. According to prior literature, self-construals are connected to culture value dimension and gender (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). With a sample

consisting of male and female, American and Chinese respondents, this study found that Chinese respondents and female respondents are more likely to develop interdependent self-construal. Thus, *kawaii* appeals emphasizing friendliness should be more desirable for Chinese male and female, and American female consumers, and therefore more likely to establish stronger self-brand connections with the product being advertised. The study found cultural-level persuasion effects similar to those reported by Escalas (2004), which indicated that self-brand connections can act as a positive predictor for ad attitudes. This study extends this line of research by showing that advertising appeals can influence self-brand connections, and thus, ad attitudes. Specifically, respondents with domain interdependent self-construal developed stronger self-brand connections, and more favorable ad attitudes than respondents with domain independent self-construal. The study also found gender-level persuasion effects similar to the cultural-level effects. Thus, compared to men, women demonstrated more positive attitudes toward the ads using a *kawaii* appeal.

Research has indicated that self-construal is a multidimensional concept (Wang 2000). Similar to the conceptual definition of independent/interdependent self-construals, Wang (2000) demonstrated that the self can be constructed as separated or connected, which carries three distinct dimensions: (a) self-other association, (b) dependence, and (c) self-orientation. While variations in self-orientation tended to uniquely characterize cross-cultural differences, dissimilarities in the dependence dimension uniquely represented the two genders, and differences in the dimension of self-other association characterized both the cultural and gender differences (Wang 2000). Following this logic, it is possible that the current findings of variations in the effects by

independent/interdependent self-construals were actually multidimensional in nature. It leaves room for future investigation to explorer the effects of different dimensions of self-construals in the reception of *kawaii* appeals across cultures and genders.

In terms of how product involvement's meditated effects on the perceptions on *kawaii* ads, this study found that both high- and low-involvement advertisings showed significant differences of self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention between *kawaii* ads and non-*kawaii* ads. In fact, positive effects of *kawaii* appeals on responses of self-brand connection and purchase intention were more pronounced for a low-involving product. For ad attitude, although the low-involvement ad returned a lesser raw mean value than the high-involvement ad, the difference between *kawaii* and non-*kawaii* is more prominent for the low-involving product, which implied that *kawaii* appeals have stronger effects toward ad attitude in low-involvement situation.

However, for purchase intention in high-involving product, the advantage of *kawaii* appeals did not exist. Specifically, under high-involvement situation, participants showed higher purchase intention for the non-*kawaii* ad. This could be explained by the proposition of the ELM (and HSM) that as people rely on central (systematic) route of processing (as in condition of high-involvement products) which requires more cognitive efforts, they exert considerable amount of cognitive effort to evaluate the information available. As *kawaii* appeals are often unrelated to the intrinsic product attributes, they are perceived as extrinsic cues for peripheral (heuristic) processing. Thus, when in high-involvement situations, *kawaii* appeals will have less impact. This finding is consistent with prior findings regarding the moderating role of product involvement in persuasion (Brown, Homer, & Inman, 1998; Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Erevelles, 1998).

C. Implications for Practitioners

On the practical level, the current study can assist international advertisers in developing effective ways to utilize *kawaii* appeals for advertising to target markets in Eastern and Western countries. First, this study developed a formative second-order measurement instrument for *kawaii* appeal which, in the past had been a rather ambiguously defined concept in the field of advertising. The three formative factors (positive feeling, childishness, and external visual) can serve as the operational definition for *kawaii* appeals in advertising. For ad practitioners, the definition may serve as a useful instrument in examining the relative feasibility for adopting *kawaii* appeals for specific products and audiences. For example, originally proposed as powerlessness, the factor childishness points to the powerless and vulnerable nature of *kawaii* objects. This is analogous to the definition provided by Kinsella (1995), that *kawaii* resembles a human infant. A real life example is the Hello Kitty. Her cuteness derived from her look, which is round, pink and mouthless. She is designed to appear helpless and in need of protection because she cannot speak for herself (Garger, 2007). In certain conditions advertising appeals can be interpreted as product attributes. As a result, advertiser and marketer are wise to play up the strengths and avoid weaknesses of such an appeal that carries the characteristic of being powerless or *kawaii*.

The construction of the *kawaii* measurement instrument also facilitates a means of measuring and manipulating the strength or degree to which the *kawaii* appeals are utilized. Specifically, the 12-item, three-factor index may enable practitioners to control the extent to which the dimensions of *kawaii* elements are employed in their messages. They also allow advertisers to evaluate the audience's perception of the appeals as well as

their attitudes toward such appeals across product category (high- or low-involvement) and consumer characteristics (interdependent or independent self-construals, gender, and/or culture). This could have significant positive impact on future advertising and marketing decisions.

The general consumer surveys employed in this study validated the measurement of *kawaii* appeals by testing various nomological variables including ad friendliness, self-brand connection, ad attitude, and purchase intention. The results show that *kawaii* appeals had a positive influence on intention to purchase for both high- and low-involvement products, although its direct effect is weak in the high-involvement category. The results also reveal that attitude toward the ad is the most influential factor toward purchase intention, and when in high-involvement context, *kawaii* appeals showed little effects on ad attitude.

It might appear that *kawaii* appeals had weak effects when the consumers are highly involved, however, *kawaii* appeals did contribute to significantly more favorable ad friendliness. Although the relationship between ad friendliness and purchase intention remains unclear at this point, certain products that require no immediate purchase might benefit from a boost on friendliness. A potential client is the service sector, including such categories as banking, insurance, energy, government agencies, and so on. Furthermore, *kawaii* appeals can also be used to establish rapport and thus enhance the effects in other kinds of communications. Health communications for example, can benefit from the use of *kawaii* characters. Study showed that high school students were far more likely to believe anti-smoking messages accompanied by cute cartoon characters such as a humanized penguin or polar bear (Silva, 2003).

The findings of this study further inform practitioners about possible effects of *kawaii* appeals vary across cultures, genders and product and services categories. In general, *kawaii* appeals receive more favorable evaluations among consumers in Eastern countries where collectivistic culture dominated. *Kawaii* has also been shown to have greater appeal among women, as compared to men, across both Western and Eastern countries. Finally, products that require less consumer involvement have are better candidates for using *kawaii* appeals.

D. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

To construct the measurement instrument for *kawaii* appeals, this study employed some experimental measures, thus the results should be treated with caution. In addition, limitations might be addressed in future studies. First, the proposed instrument items were developed largely through review of literature and relevant ads in magazines. Today, it is still not clear whether, and to what extent, *kawaii* appeals in advertising is effective, and relevant studies on the concept of *kawaii* are scarce. One of the goals of this study is to develop a definition of *kawaii* appeals in the context of advertising and persuasion. As a step toward this goal, a certain degree of inaccuracy is inevitable. Further, the review of relevant ads was limited in scope by reviewing only magazine ads. Future study might consider employing extensive content analysis on the use of *kawaii* appeals across various advertising platforms, and test whether results are generalizable to other media.

Second, only two product categories (purified bottled water and flat-screen LED television) were examined in the current study. To some respondents with lower income, a flat-screen LED television might be considered less relevant as the general cost for this might deemed too high. This is especially true when the study included Chinese

respondents, as China's 2013 GDP per capital was less than one-eighth of the United States' (see *data.worldbank.org* for details). Similarly, the two products in this study are predominantly utilitarian. Prior literature has indicated that the practical and hedonic characteristics of a product can moderate advertising message effectiveness (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Furthermore, the study did not take into account participants' usage experience with similar products. Future researcher should examine a broader variety of products and products featuring utilitarian and hedonic values for greater generalizability.

Third, a manipulation check on the high- and low-involvement product category should be performed in future studies to control the product involvement variable. To effectively control the variable, in the survey right after displaying product image a simple question could be added in similar wordings such as "Would you consider buying this product in the next six months?"

Finally, the measurement of this study is somewhat limited by only employing online surveys, as AMT and the China equivalent *jisha.cn* are not fully recognized by academia as scientific research tools. Although recent studies have contribute to the use of AMT as a useful tool for data collection (Simons & Chabris, 2012; Sprouse, 2011), there is however no equivalent study done for the Chinese platform. In light of this, future studies can nevertheless benefit from the classic traditional paper/pencil or experimental design, though such studies would have limitations of their own.

Despite these limitations, the results provide a comprehensive look on the concept of *kawaii* appeals in advertising. With a general consumer survey, the measurement instrument of *kawaii* appeals was validated using nomological network, including ad friendliness, self-brand connections, ad attitude, and purchase intention.

VII. CONCLUSION

The current study attempted to fill a gap in the literature on the effects of *kawaii* appeals in international advertising. East Asia countries, e.g., Japan and China, have long adopted *kawaii* appeals in advertising as a mean to grab attention. Yet, media practitioners in the United States are generally reluctant to accept *kawaii* as an appeal for product promotion (Windolf, 2009). One possible explanation lies in the cross-cultural differences between the Western and Eastern world.

To provide a clear view on the concept, this study established a theoretical definition that coined the Japanese word "*kawaii*" in advertising language. Based on a review of prior literature on the *kawaii* culture and currently available commercial advertisements, a proposed measurement instrument was advanced and tested for validity. A total of 616 general public online responses were collected from the United States and China to validate the construct. The final instruments consisted of 3 dimensions, 6 items scale that can be used to assist in identifying *kawaii* appeals in advertisements.

From a cross-cultural study standpoint, this study also adds to a growing body of evidence indicating that individual differences in self-construals can account for variations in responses observed at the cultural level. The current study has added to these findings by showing that similar gender-level variations can also account for such differences. Specifically, this study found similar results between culture level and gender-level variations in persuasion, which is consistent with prior literature on self-construals. The results of this study established positive links between interdependent self-construal and *kawaii* appeals, which in turn links to self-brand connection, attitude toward to the ad, and ultimately, purchase intention. The results are also in line with

findings regarding the effect of product involvement on the effectiveness of peripheral cues in advertising. Considered as extrinsic cues, the study found *kawaii* appeals received more favorable responses in low-involvement product category.

Finally, from a practical standpoint, the current findings provide a new perspective on the possibilities for advertising to target cross-cultural markets. Particularly, this study provided a better understanding of the use of *kawaii* elements in advertising for both advertisers and practitioners in the United States and China to align standardized ad campaigns cross-culturally.

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APPENDIX 1: INDIVIDUALISM VERSE COLLECTIVISM SCORES

Countries	**Scores**	**Ranking**	**Countries**	**Scores**	**Ranking**
United States	91	1	Jamaica	39	33
Australia	90	2	Russia	39	34
Great Britain	89	3	Brazil	38	35
Canada	80	4	Turkey	37	36
Hungary	80	5	Uruguay	36	37
Netherlands	80	6	Greece	35	38
New Zealand	79	7	Philippines	32	39
Italy	76	8	Bulgaria	30	40
Belgium	75	9	Mexico	30	41
Denmark	74	10	Romania	30	42
France	71	11	Portugal	27	43
Sweden	71	12	Yugoslavia	27	44
Ireland	70	13	Malaysia	26	45
Switzerland	68	14	Hong Kong	25	46
Germany	67	15	Chile	23	47
South Africa	65	16	Bangladesh	20	48
Finland	63	17	China	20	49
Estonia	60	18	Thailand	20	50
Luxemburg	60	19	Vietnam	20	51
Poland	60	20	Salvador	19	52
Malta	59	21	Korea (South)	18	53
Czechia	58	22	Taiwan	17	54
Austria	55	23	Peru	16	55
Israel	54	24	Trinidad	16	56
Slovakia	52	25	Costa Rica	15	57
Spain	51	26	Indonesia	14	58
India	48	27	Pakistan	14	59
Surinam	47	28	Colombia	13	60
Argentina	46	29	Venezuela	12	61
Japan	46	30	Panama	11	62
Morocco	46	31	Ecuador	8	63
Iran	41	32	Guatemala	6	64

(Hofstede, 2010)

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Consumer responses to advertising

Tao Deng
Diederich College of Communication

You have been asked to participate in a research study. You must be age 18 or older to participate. The purpose of this study is consumer responses to advertising. The study involves how people evaluate sample advertisements and will take about 40 minutes to complete. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, nor are there any direct benefits to you. But you may feel gratified knowing that you helped further the scholarly work in this research area. You will be compensated $1 for participating in this study. Your responses will be anonymous and will not be associated with your name or other identifying information. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions about this project you can contact Tao Deng at 414-712-5732 or tao.deng@marquette.edu.

If you agree to the statements above and agree to participate in this study, please press the "Consent Given" button below.

○ I understand and want to participate in the study

○ I do not wish to participate in the study

Thank you for your participation.

Section 1. About yourself… Please select the appropriate response to the statements.

1. My personal identity is important to me.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

2. I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

3. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

4. I stick with my group even through difficulties.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

5. I respect decisions made by my group.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

6. I maintain harmony in the groups of which I am a member.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

7. I respect the majority's wishes in groups of which I am a member.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

8. I take responsibility for my own actions.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

9. It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

10. It is important for me to act as an independent person.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

11. I should decide my future on my own.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

12. I enjoy being unique and different from others.
○ Strongly disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neutral ○ Agree ○ Strongly agree

Section 2. Basic demographic questions

1. What age group below do you belong to?
○ 18 to 25 ○ 26 to 35 ○ 36 to 45 ○ over 45

2. What is your gender?
○ Male ○ Female

3. What is your gross annual income?
○ under $20,000 ○ $20,000 to $40,000 ○ $41,000 to $60,000 ○ over $60,000

Section 3. The following section contains 24 items. Please indicate which of the items applied to the below ad.

[Show sample ad #1] (see Appendix 3 for the sample ads)

I. Please indicate which of the following items applied to the ad on a 7-point scale.

1. Small?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

2. Simplicity?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

3. Colorful?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

4. Bright?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

5. Roundness?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

6. Cartoonish?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

7. Modern?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

8. Anthropopathic?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

9. Fragile?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

10. Innocent?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

11. Childish?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

12. Immature?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

13. Juvenile?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

14. Feminine?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

15. Playful?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

16. Ingenuous?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

17. Desire to touch?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

18. Want to possess?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

19. Delightful?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

20. Amusing?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

21. Enchanting?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

22. Cheerful?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

23. Intimate?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

24. Light-hearted?
Not at all applicable----1----2----3----4----5----6----7----Very much applicable

II. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding the ad you just saw?

1. The ad is friendly.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

2. The ad is trustworthy.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

3. I consider this brand to be me.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

4. The brand suits me well.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

5. The brand reflects who I am.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

6. I can identify with this brand.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

7. I feel a personal connection to this brand.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

8. I can use this brand to communicate who I am to others.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

9. I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be.
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

III. What is your overall attitude toward the ad?

1. Bad----1----2----3----4----5----Good

2. Unpleasant----1----2----3----4----5----Pleasant

3. Unfavorable----1----2----3----4----5----Favorable

4. Negative----1----2----3----4----5----Positive

IV. Would you like to try the product?
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

V. With price being irrelevant, could you imagine yourself buying this product?
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

VI. With price being irrelevant, could you imagine this product to be one of your most likely choices when you next buy it?
Strongly disagree----1----2----3----4----5----Strongly agree

[Show next ad.]

[All ads have been reviewed]

Section 4. Debrief.

Your answers were recorded. Thank you for completing the survey! As you might have noticed, the purpose of this survey is to investigate the effects of cute appeals in ads. Also known as *kawaii* in Japanese culture, cuteness has been widely adopted in advertising as selling points and gimmicks to attract attention. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature on the effects of *kawaii* appeals in international advertising. If you have questions or concerns concerning this research you may contact me at 414-712-5732 or tao.deng@marquette.edu. Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE ADS USED IN THE STUDY

High-Involvement Non-*Kawaii* ad

High-Involvement *Kawaii* ad

Low-Involvement Non-*Kawaii* ad

Low-Involvement *Kawaii* ad

APPENDIX 4: TWO-WAY ANOVA TEST RESULTS

Tests of Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	185.324[a]	3	61.775	78.315	.000	.161
Intercept	11345.926	1	11345.926	14383.732	.000	.921
Kawaii	160.561	1	160.561	203.551	.000	.142
SelfConstrual	7.836	1	7.836	9.934	.002	.008
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	14.004	1	14.004	17.754	.000	.014
Error	968.650	1228	.789			
Total	12527.043	1232				
Corrected Total	1153.974	1231				

a. R Squared = .161 (Adjusted R Squared = .159)

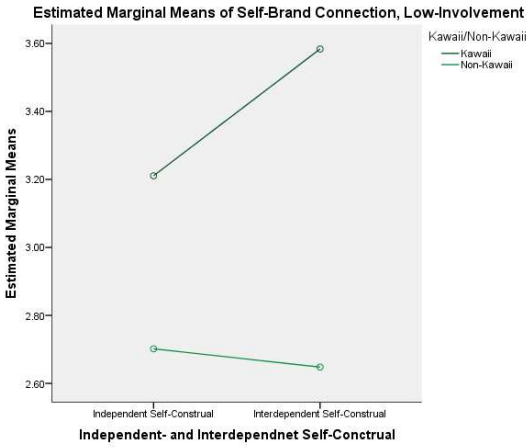
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
6.222	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	139.590[a]	3	46.530	55.332	.000	.119
Intercept	10392.598	1	10392.598	12358.490	.000	.910
Kawaii	133.093	1	133.093	158.269	.000	.114
SelfConstrual	5.282	1	5.282	6.282	.012	.005
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	.585	1	.585	.695	.404	.001
Error	1032.659	1228	.841			
Total	11587.438	1232				
Corrected Total	1172.250	1231				

a. R Squared = .119 (Adjusted R Squared = .117)

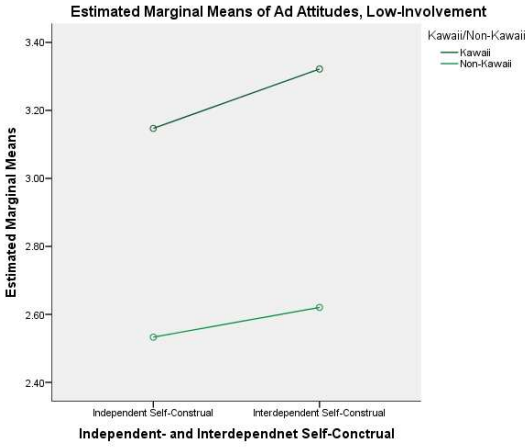
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
18.444	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of :Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	180.763[a]	3	60.254	79.747	.000	.163
Intercept	10304.586	1	10304.586	13638.119	.000	.917
Kawaii	174.943	1	174.943	231.537	.000	.159
SelfConstrual	4.343	1	4.343	5.748	.017	.005
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	.686	1	.686	.908	.341	.001
Error	927.843	1228	.756			
Total	11434.376	1232				
Corrected Total	1108.606	1231				

a. R Squared = .163 (Adjusted R Squared = .161)

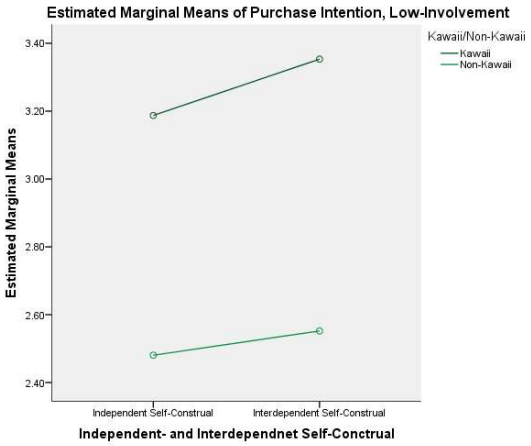
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
17.360	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	98.598[a]	3	32.866	41.723	.000	.093
Intercept	11389.752	1	11389.752	14459.308	.000	.922
Kawaii	82.760	1	82.760	105.064	.000	.079
SelfConstrual	5.269	1	5.269	6.689	.010	.005
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	8.903	1	8.903	11.302	.001	.009
Error	967.309	1228	.788			
Total	12479.726	1232				
Corrected Total	1065.907	1231				

a. R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .090)

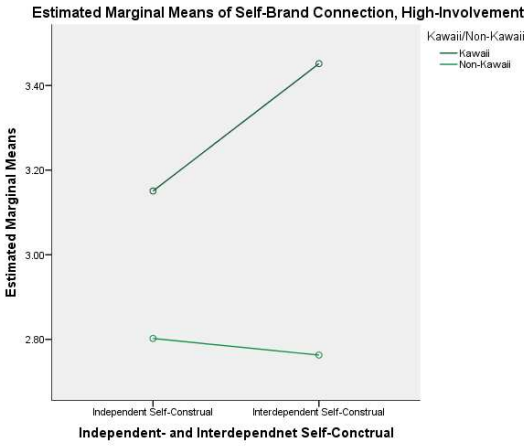
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.328	3	1228	.019

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	11.473[a]	3	3.824	3.820	.010	.009
Intercept	14640.787	1	14640.787	14623.285	.000	.923
Kawaii	4.600	1	4.600	4.595	.032	.004
SelfConstrual	.598	1	.598	.598	.440	.000
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	5.959	1	5.959	5.952	.015	.005
Error	1229.470	1228	1.001			
Total	15899.717	1232				
Corrected Total	1240.943	1231				

a. R Squared = .009 (Adjusted R Squared = .007)

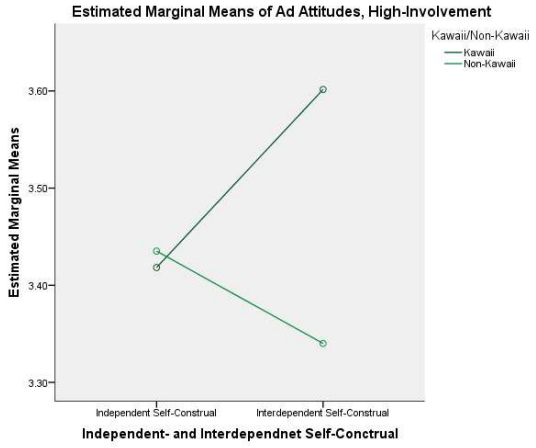
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
7.974	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of Purchase Intention, High-Involvement by Self-Construal and *Kawaii* appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	6.959[a]	3	2.320	2.584	.052	.006
Intercept	11250.914	1	11250.914	12532.130	.000	.911
Kawaii	2.988	1	2.988	3.328	.068	.003
SelfConstrual	.253	1	.253	.282	.596	.000
Kawaii * SelfConstrual	3.523	1	3.523	3.924	.048	.003
Error	1102.456	1228	.898			
Total	12373.065	1232				
Corrected Total	1109.415	1231				

a. R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)

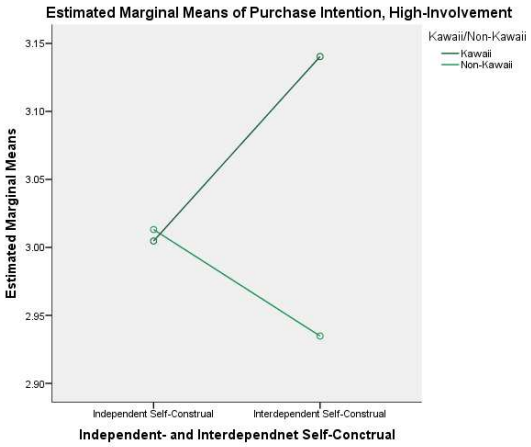
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.441	3	1228	.724

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + SelfConstrual + *Kawaii* * SelfConstrual



Tests of Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	177.051[a]	3	59.017	74.185	.000	.153
Intercept	11284.384	1	11284.384	14184.568	.000	.920
Kawaii	158.006	1	158.006	198.616	.000	.139
Gender	6.103	1	6.103	7.672	.006	.006
Kawaii * Gender	7.464	1	7.464	9.382	.002	.008
Error	976.923	1228	.796			
Total	12527.043	1232				
Corrected Total	1153.974	1231				

a. R Squared = .153 (Adjusted R Squared = .151)

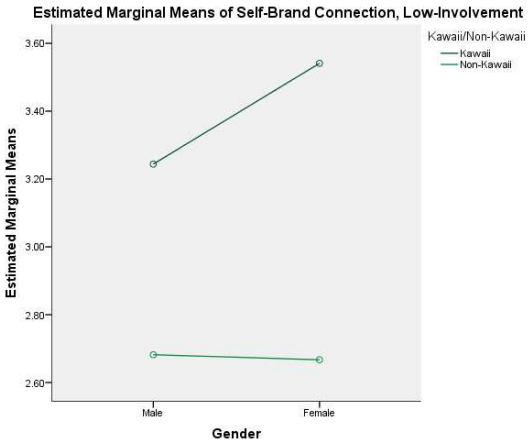
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.177	3	1228	.023

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	139.220[a]	3	46.407	55.165	.000	.119
Intercept	10343.385	1	10343.385	12295.556	.000	.909
Kawaii	130.549	1	130.549	155.189	.000	.112
Gender	2.840	1	2.840	3.376	.066	.003
Kawaii * Gender	2.657	1	2.657	3.158	.076	.003
Error	1033.030	1228	.841			
Total	11587.438	1232				
Corrected Total	1172.250	1231				

a. R Squared = .119 (Adjusted R Squared = .117)

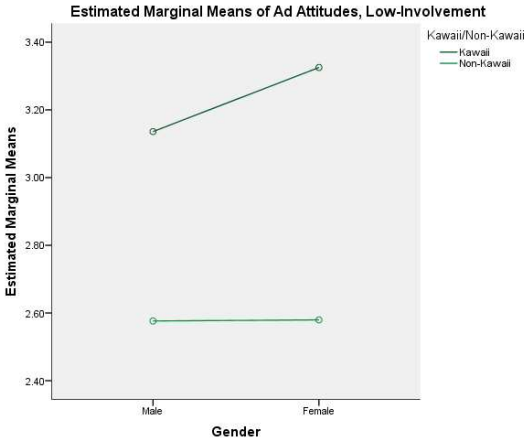
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
17.746	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	181.612[a]	3	60.537	80.194	.000	.164
Intercept	10245.053	1	10245.053	13571.738	.000	.917
Kawaii	173.983	1	173.983	230.477	.000	.158
Gender	5.609	1	5.609	7.431	.007	.006
Kawaii * Gender	.269	1	.269	.356	.551	.000
Error	926.994	1228	.755			
Total	11434.376	1232				
Corrected Total	1108.606	1231				

a. R Squared = .164 (Adjusted R Squared = .162)

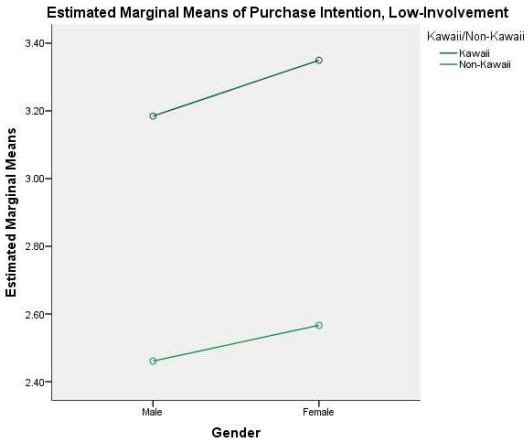
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
18.640	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	97.909[a]	3	32.636	41.403	.000	.092
Intercept	11321.862	1	11321.862	14362.898	.000	.921
Kawaii	80.923	1	80.923	102.659	.000	.077
Gender	7.174	1	7.174	9.101	.003	.007
Kawaii * Gender	6.309	1	6.309	8.004	.005	.006
Error	967.997	1228	.788			
Total	12479.726	1232				
Corrected Total	1065.907	1231				

a. R Squared = .092 (Adjusted R Squared = .090)

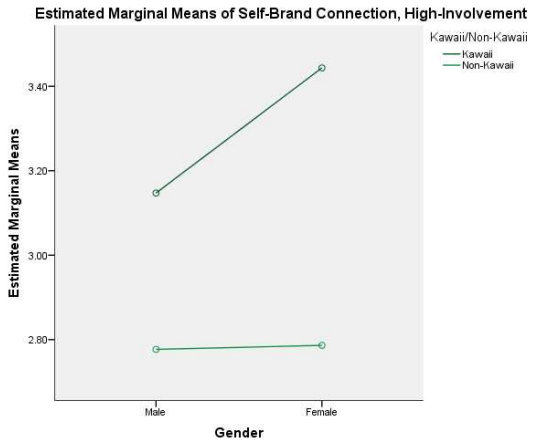
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.150	3	1228	.024

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	12.901[a]	3	4.300	4.300	.005	.010
Intercept	14557.783	1	14557.783	14557.287	.000	.922
Kawaii	4.308	1	4.308	4.308	.038	.003
Gender	3.981	1	3.981	3.981	.046	.003
Kawaii * Gender	4.004	1	4.004	4.004	.046	.003
Error	1228.042	1228	1.000			
Total	15899.717	1232				
Corrected Total	1240.943	1231				

a. R Squared = .010 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

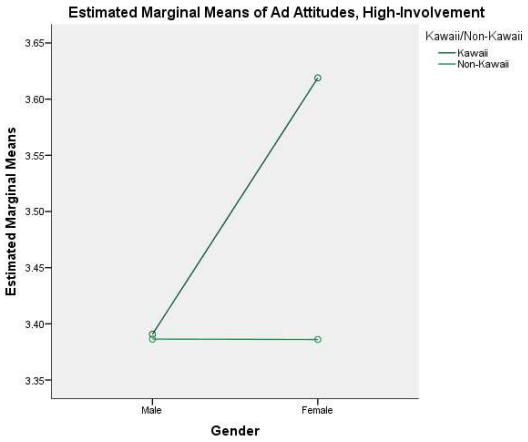
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
11.549	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Purchase Intention, High-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7.557[a]	3	2.519	2.807	.038	.007
Intercept	11192.547	1	11192.547	12473.885	.000	.910
Kawaii	2.783	1	2.783	3.101	.078	.003
Gender	1.686	1	1.686	1.879	.171	.002
Kawaii * Gender	2.688	1	2.688	2.995	.084	.002
Error	1101.858	1228	.897			
Total	12373.065	1232				
Corrected Total	1109.415	1231				

a. R Squared = .007 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)

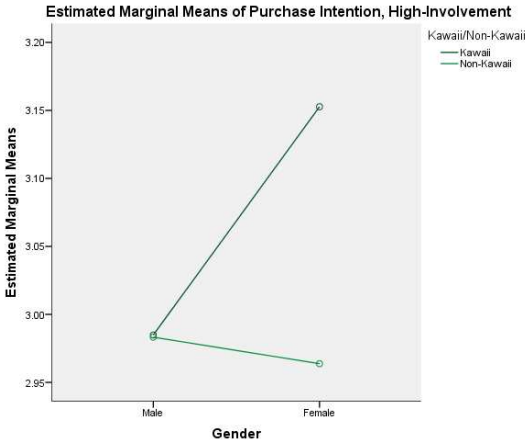
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.771	3	1228	.510

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Purchase Intention, High-Involvement by Gender and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7.557[a]	3	2.519	2.807	.038	.007
Intercept	11192.547	1	11192.547	12473.885	.000	.910
Kawaii	2.783	1	2.783	3.101	.078	.003
Gender	1.686	1	1.686	1.879	.171	.002
Kawaii * Gender	2.688	1	2.688	2.995	.084	.002
Error	1101.858	1228	.897			
Total	12373.065	1232				
Corrected Total	1109.415	1231				

a. R Squared = .007 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)

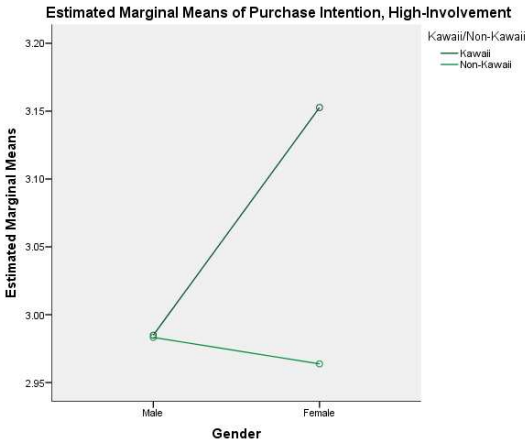
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.771	3	1228	.510

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Gender + *Kawaii* * Gender



Tests of Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	171.083[a]	3	57.028	71.249	.000	.148
Intercept	11376.070	1	11376.070	14212.990	.000	.920
Kawaii	164.332	1	164.332	205.313	.000	.143
Country	3.001	1	3.001	3.749	.053	.003
Kawaii * Country	4.598	1	4.598	5.745	.017	.005
Error	982.891	1228	.800			
Total	12527.043	1232				
Corrected Total	1153.974	1231				

a. R Squared = .148 (Adjusted R Squared = .146)

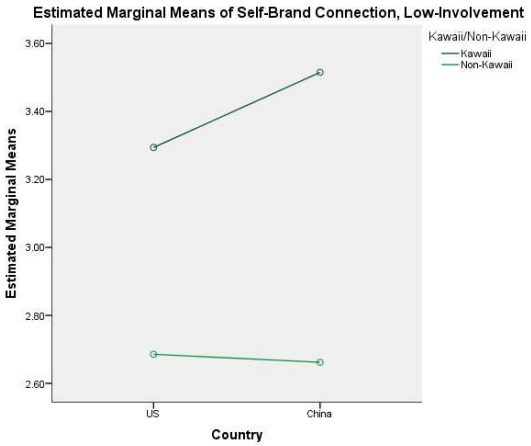
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
6.074	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country



Tests of Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	140.321[a]	3	46.774	55.661	.000	.120
Intercept	10420.076	1	10420.076	12399.948	.000	.910
Kawaii	134.115	1	134.115	159.597	.000	.115
Country	5.306	1	5.306	6.314	.012	.005
Kawaii * Country	1.292	1	1.292	1.538	.215	.001
Error	1031.928	1228	.840			
Total	11587.438	1232				
Corrected Total	1172.250	1231				

a. R Squared = .120 (Adjusted R Squared = .118)

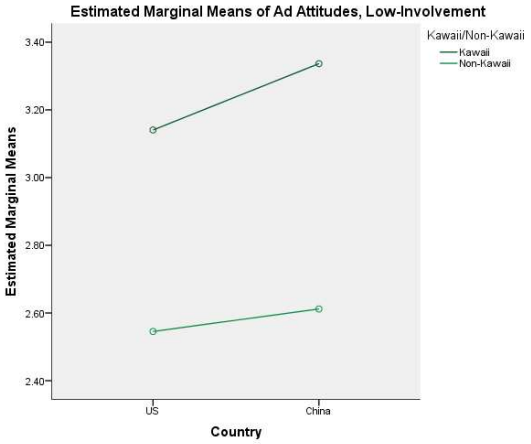
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
17.780	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country



Tests of Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	181.342[a]	3	60.447	80.052	.000	.164
Intercept	10328.359	1	10328.359	13678.118	.000	.918
Kawaii	176.436	1	176.436	233.659	.000	.160
Country	2.590	1	2.590	3.430	.064	.003
Kawaii * Country	3.018	1	3.018	3.997	.046	.003
Error	927.264	1228	.755			
Total	11434.376	1232				
Corrected Total	1108.606	1231				

a. R Squared = .164 (Adjusted R Squared = .162)

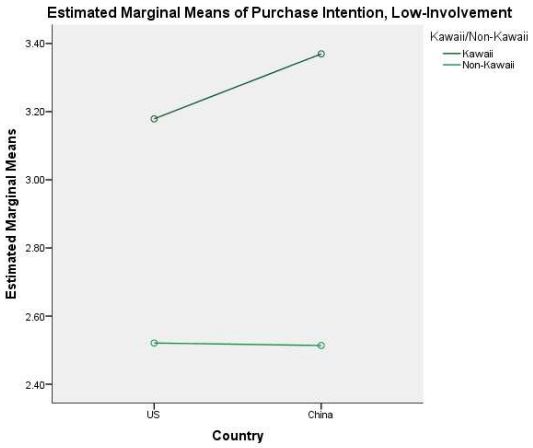
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, Low-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
17.757	3	1228	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country



Tests of Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	94.008[a]	3	31.336	39.593	.000	.088
Intercept	11421.175	1	11421.175	14430.720	.000	.922
Kawaii	84.646	1	84.646	106.950	.000	.080
Country	8.925	1	8.925	11.277	.001	.009
Kawaii * Country	.657	1	.657	.830	.362	.001
Error	971.899	1228	.791			
Total	12479.726	1232				
Corrected Total	1065.907	1231				

a. R Squared = .088 (Adjusted R Squared = .086)

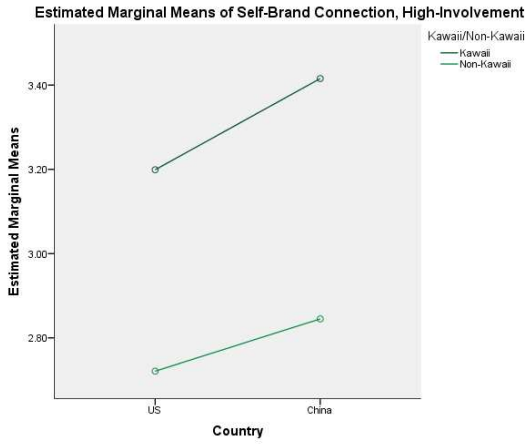
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Self-Brand Connection, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
5.287	3	1228	.001

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country



Tests of Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5.254[a]	3	1.751	1.741	.157	.004
Intercept	14655.866	1	14655.866	14564.678	.000	.922
Kawaii	4.952	1	4.952	4.922	.027	.004
Country	.059	1	.059	.059	.809	.000
Kawaii * Country	.280	1	.280	.278	.598	.000
Error	1235.688	1228	1.006			
Total	15899.717	1232				
Corrected Total	1240.943	1231				

a. R Squared = .004 (Adjusted R Squared = .002)

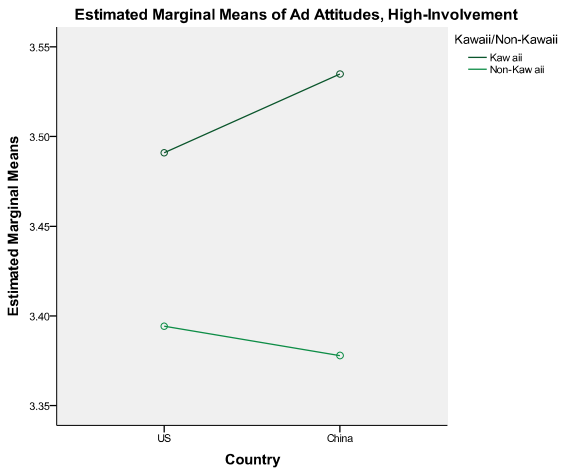
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Ad Attitudes, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
4.275	3	1228	.005

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country



Tests of Purchase Intention, High-Involvement by Country and *Kawaii* Appeals

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3.955[a]	3	1.318	1.465	.223	.004
Intercept	11258.029	1	11258.029	12505.984	.000	.911
Kawaii	3.207	1	3.207	3.562	.059	.003
Country	.593	1	.593	.659	.417	.001
Kawaii * Country	.179	1	.179	.199	.656	.000
Error	1105.460	1228	.900			
Total	12373.065	1232				
Corrected Total	1109.415	1231				

a. R Squared = .004 (Adjusted R Squared = .001)

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable:Purchase Intention, High-Involvement

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.998	3	1228	.393

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + *Kawaii* + Country + *Kawaii* * Country