Print ISSN: 1738-3110 / Online ISSN 2093-7717
JDS website: http://accesson.kr/jds
http://doi.org/10.15722/jds.22.08.202408.87

Unveiling the Power of Private Label Charm in Distribution: How Cues Shape Korean and Chinese Consumers' Consumption Value and Repurchase Intentions*

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Received: April 31, 2024. Revised: May 10, 2024. Accepted: August 05, 2024.

Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the influence of private label cues, including store image, product design, price promotion, and origin image, on consumers repurchase intention by mediating consumption value from a distribution perspective. Additionally, it explored nationality's moderating role in the relationship between consumption value and repurchase intention. **Research design, data and methodology:** Drawing on the SOR model, data were collected from 246 consumers who had purchased private-label products in the past month. Structural equation modeling analysis was employed to test hypotheses using AMOS and SPSS. **Results:** Findings revealed that cues significantly impact consumers' perception of consumption value, influencing repurchase intention. Price promotion directly affected repurchase intention, while other cues indirectly influenced it through consumption value mediation. Nationality moderated the relationship between consumption value and repurchase intention, with Korean consumers showing a higher propensity to repurchase than Chinese consumers. **Conclusions:** Theoretical implications of the study contributed to understanding consumer behavior by confirming the impact of private label cues, elucidating their differential effects on repurchase intention, and integrating theoretical frameworks. Managerial implications underscored the significance of leveraging cues to enhance consumption value perceptions, tailoring marketing strategies to accommodate cultural nuances, and utilizing cues to bolster consumer repurchase intentions, ultimately enhancing distribution channel effectiveness.

Keywords: Consumption Value, Cues, Distribution Science, Nationality, Private Label, Repurchase Intention

JEL Classification Code: D12, L81, 033, M31

1. Introduction

The persistent economic downturn in East Asia, coupled with the emergence of the singles economy, triggered a notable shift in consumer purchasing patterns toward heightened rationality and pragmatism. An increasing number of consumers embraced a "pinch pennies" approach, opting for affordably priced private-label products to curtail expenses. In Europe and North America, private labels have maintained a stronghold for nearly six decades, with

* This work was supported by the China Scholarship Council, Project No.202208260056.

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Valaskova et al. (2018) highlighted that 46% of European consumers routinely favor private-label offerings renowned for their commendable value. Initially met with skepticism in emerging markets, private-label products were often associated with inferior quality and low prices. However, the advancements in distribution networks and product quality improvements have led to a notable increase in consumer demand for high-value private labels. Consequently, as consumers increasingly sought value-driven options without compromising quality, private labels emerged as formidable contenders, challenging the dominance of traditional national brands (Hwang et al., 2021).

Leading retailers in developed countries, such as Tesco in the United Kingdom, Sears in the United States, Aldi in Germany, and 7-11 in Japan, extensively possessed private-label products and acquired a larger market share through economies of scale and scope. Retailers must leverage their distribution networks to ensure widespread availability and visibility of private-label products, capitalizing on consumer touchpoints to communicate consumption value and drive purchase decisions. With the continuous growth and internationalization of the retail industry, retail enterprises in South Korea and China, leveraging their extensive sales channels and numerous stores, actively promoted private labels, such as Miniso and Daiso. In addition, e-commerce giants like Alibaba and Temu successfully launched their private-label products to seek greater profit margins. Nevertheless, consumers' resources, time, and cognitive abilities were limited, resulting in most of the consumers not engaging in an in-depth examination of private-label product features and performance. The unfamiliarity of consumers with private labels and the uncertainty inherent in the purchasing process had a detrimental impact on their willingness to buy private-label products (Kim & Yang, 2020). Zeithaml (1988) discovered that when the internal attributes of a product or service were challenging to discern, consumers were prone to assess the product's value based on cues. Consequently, enhancing consumers' perceived utilitarian and emotional value by augmentation of private label cues became paramount in fortifying their intent to purchase. Understanding how cues shaped consumers' perceptions of consumption value and influenced their repurchase intentions was paramount for retailers seeking to cultivate lasting relationships with their clientele.

Extensive research, both domestically and internationally, has delved into various aspects of private-label products, such as the impact of digitalization on private-label products (Gielens et al., 2021), distinctions between private-label and national brands (Hwang et al., 2021), the categorization of private-label products (Konuk, 2021), the placement and profitability of private-label products (Shroff et al., 2021), as well as the logistics strategy surrounding private-label products (Xu et al., 2023). However, there remained a notable gap in the investigation of how cues of private-label products influenced repurchase intentions through the lens of value attributes and consumer perceptions. Therefore, it was crucial to explore the impact of cues from private-label brands on consumers' perceived value and their intention to repurchase.

This study aims to address literature gaps with four objectives. Firstly, to identify the key cues inherent in private-label products that influence consumers' perceptions of consumption value. Secondly, to examine how these cues differ in their impact on consumption value and repurchase intentions between Korean and Chinese consumers, while also assessing the impact of consumption value on repurchase intentions of private-label products. Thirdly, to investigate the mediating role of consumption value in the relationship between private label cues and repurchase intentions. Fourth, to explore the moderating effects of cultural differences between South Korea and China on the relationship between private label cues, consumption value, and repurchase intentions.

To accomplish these objectives, this study utilized major private label retailers (e.g., Miniso, Daiso) as its research platform, and data about the influence of cues on consumption value and repurchase intentions were collected. The results of this research contributed to the advancement of private-label marketing theory, offered enhancement of private-label marketing strategies, and provided valuable theoretical insights for the development, distribution, and other practices related to private-label products.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Private Label

Private-label products were products that retailers independently planned to produce and sell directly or commissioned manufacturing enterprises to produce and paste self-developed trademarks for sale, which was a concept differentiated from national brands (Hwang et al., 2021). Researchers denoted private labels with various terms such as Store Brand, Private Brand, Retailer Brand, and Distributor's Brand, which all refer to private labels. Zeithaml (1988) suggested that private-label products were those that followed the retailer's brand name and were sold only in the retailer's channel. Xu et al. (2010) stated that private-label products were products that were sold by the manufacturer to the retailer and were resold by the retailer under its trade name. The private-label products that were directly planned by the distribution companies and entrusted to the manufacturing companies minimized the logistics and advertising costs and were sold at a cheaper price than general products. The definition of private-label products

varied among scholars, but private-label products in general could be summarised as brands which created and used by wholesalers or retailers to differentiate their goods or services from other brands.

2.2. Cues

The theoretical underpinning of this study drew from the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory, which posited that consumer behavior was influenced by external environmental stimuli and internal psychological and emotional changes. In this context, private label cues served as crucial external stimuli that shaped consumers' perceptions and behaviors. Laibson (2001) proposed the theory of cue utilization, which argued that consumers measured the value of a product or service in a multi-dimensional way and that the actual use of the product, the price, the design, the place of origin, the evaluations of others, and the attitude towards the service could be used as criteria, and that consumers' user loyalty and purchase intention were largely influenced by this information, and the theory referred to similar information as cues. Wang et al. (2016) based on prior research on product-derived services and the product itself, cues were divided into internal cues and external cues. Internal cues were derived from the product itself and were related to its physical composition. Internal cues did not change easily provided that the physical attributes remained unchanged, such as the product's function, color, and shape. External cues were related to the external characteristics of the product or the derived service and could change with the passage of time or market upgrading, such as the image of the place of origin, the brand's reputation, the strength of price discounts, and the ambiance of the shop environment. Generally speaking, there were many kinds of factors of cues of private-label products, but especially as the external cues of private-label products, it was more mainstream to observe their differences from aspects of store image, product design, price, and origin.

Store image was the overall impression that consumers had of the shop. The constituent elements of store image mainly included observable objective attributes such as shop color and location, and subjective attributes such as atmosphere, pleasure, and comfort felt at the outlet. Bhakuni et al. (2021) regarded shop atmosphere, in-store services, shop proximity, and brand reputation as constituent elements of shop image. Maharani et al. (2020) found that store image is the main factor affecting the purchase intention of private-label products. Pérez-Santamaría and Martos-Partal (2021) found that store image contributed to perceived brand value, store image was more significant in private-label products than in national brand products, and a good store image for private-label products helped to increase consumer's repurchase intentions.

Product design was the engineering of performance or functional transformation to achieve a goal based on the configuration set in the product plan. Product design was an information resource for consumers to quickly assess the value of a product or the quality of a service in an online shopping environment, and could help consumers make better purchase decisions (Robson et al., 2013). Monnot et al. (2015) found that there was a significant positive correlation between product packaging's evaluation of quality and purchase intention and that product design helped brand communication. Consumers looked at external cues of information such as product design when judging the value of a product or creating a willingness to buy a particular product.

Consumers consider the monetary value of a product or service when shopping and price promotion has always been one of the main advantages of private-label products over national brand products. İpek and Yılmaz (2022) stated that when consumers had difficulty understanding the internal cues of a product, price became an important factor for them to measure the quality of the product, and the level of the price created an intangible evaluation of the quality of the product in the mind of the consumer, and trademarks were more helpful in the purchasing decision compared to the price. Sansone et al. (2021) explored online product purchases found that the higher the price sensitivity and the stronger the value consciousness of consumers, the higher the likelihood that they would purchase private labels, and that price discounts significantly affected consumers' willingness to repurchase. Kim (2008) found that purchases of private-label products in the categories of food and household goods among Korean consumers, consumers with a strong sense of value and those who were more willing to try new things showed a stronger willingness to buy in both categories and that consumer value judgment was the most important predictor of repurchase intention in a comprehensive view.

Origin generally referred to the place of production of goods, plants, and animals referring to the region where they grew, and industrial products referred to the region where the production, manufacturing, and processing processes were formed. Consumers generalized the origin image from external cues and it directly influenced the consumer's attitude toward the value of that origin (Balabanis & Siamagka, 2017). It has been shown that during the process of purchasing cooked meat products, Japanese consumers valued the origin labeling of the product and judged the value and risk accordingly before deciding whether to purchase or not (Kim, 2008). Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed in this study:

H1a: Store image has a significant positive effect on utilitarian value.
H1b: Store image has a significant positive effect on emotional value.
H2a: Product design has a significant positive effect on utilitarian value.
H2b: Product design has a significant positive effect on emotional value.
H3a: Price promotion has a significant positive effect on utilitarian value.
H3b: Price promotion has a significant positive effect on emotional value.
H4a: Origin image has a significant positive effect on utilitarian value.
H4b: Origin image has a significant positive effect on utilitarian value.
H5a: Store image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
H5b: Product design has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
H5c: Price promotion has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
H5d: Origin image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

2.3. Consumption Value

Value, from the perspective of influencing human behavior as a whole, was a comprehensive concept that included attitudes, beliefs, interests, etc., and was the purpose of emotions such as success, happiness, and security (Kaur et al., 2021). Zeithaml (1988) Research found that consumers compared the benefits gained with costs expended, and consumption value was also known as value for money, which was the ratio between gains and losses and gains. The process of consumer contact with a product is also referred to as the process of generating consumer value. Consumers repurchased a product because they perceived it to be of high value and at the same time value played an important role in gaining market share and enhancing the competitiveness of a firm. The value attribute effectively reduced the price sensitivity of customers and the cost of decision-making, which in turn reduced the customer loss rate of the firm and improved profitability. Khan and Mohsin (2017) found that customers did not just buy the products and services themselves, but its value measurement system. For a broad and abstract value system, value attributes were reflected in two areas, namely utilitarian value and emotional value.

Utilitarian value was related to the functional and instrumental role provided by the product or service from a cognitive point of view, and emotional value was the pleasure and enjoyment, including sensory pleasure, felt during the use of the product or service (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Consumers felt less guilty when purchasing products with utilitarian value compared to emotional value (Sameeni et al., 2022). Emotional value was the purpose-oriented behavior that consumers exhibited when making a purchase, as distinguished from the utilitarian value felt when the purchase itself was completed. It affected the buying process in terms of fun factors such as look and enjoyment, mood shifts, etc., whereas utilitarian value was the provision of better quality at a reasonable price for the consumer to perceive better utilitarian value (Chiu et al., 2014). Value included the physical time cost, financial cost, and emotional cost to the consumer as compensation relative to the expense and began in consumer behavioral research (Zeithaml, 1988). At this point, the emotional or utilitarian value of a product was not absolute, and the same object could be evaluated as pleasurable or practical depending on the value perceived by the consumer (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). In this decision-making situation, emotional or utilitarian attributes differed in terms of motivation to purchase the product, evaluation criteria, and emotions evoked (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Chiu et al. (2021) found that utilitarian value has a facilitating effect on repurchase intention, in addition, Khan and Mohsin (2017) study confirmed that emotional value has a positive effect on repurchase intention. Consumers used value seeking as a mediator to promote repurchase intentions among goal-oriented factors such as commodity power, service features, ease of purchase, time savings, low price, and convenience of facilities (İpek & Yılmaz, 2022). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed for this study:

H6a: Utilitarian value has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
H6b: Emotional value has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
H7a: Utilitarian value mediates the effect between store image and repurchase intention.
H7b: Utilitarian value mediates the effect between product design and repurchase intention.
H7c: Utilitarian value mediates the effect between price promotion and repurchase intention.
H7d: Utilitarian value mediates the effect between origin image and repurchase intention.
H8a: Emotional value mediates the effect between store image and repurchase intention.
H8b: Emotional value mediates the effect between product design and repurchase intention.
H8c: Emotional value mediates the effect between price promotion and repurchase intention.
H8d: Emotional value mediates the effect between origin image and repurchase intention.

2.4. Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention was defined as the likelihood that a consumer would continue to purchase a currently used product or service in the future. McDougall and Levesque (2000) defined repurchase intention as the tendency of consumers to want to use a product or service again through subjective judgment. Lin and Lekhawipat (2014) stated that repurchase intention was the customer's desire to continue using the current service or good at the next opportunity. Kim and Yang (2020) confirmed that cues affected repurchase intention and that cues, as an important factor affecting repurchase intention, emphasized the relationship between endogenous factors such as shop environment, origin image, and repurchase intention or the path relationship between other variables predicated on this. Further, consumption value perception stimulated the customer's desire to purchase by expressing praise or preference for that product or service, which led to more purchasing behavior (İpek & Yılmaz, 2022). An improved perception of consumption value reinforced repurchase intention and recommendation intention, which ultimately contributed to the firm's sales growth (Miao et al., 2022). Cultural differences between South Korea and China could moderate the effects of private label cues and consumption value on recurrence intention. Studies have shown that Koreans often prioritize emotional connections and sensory experiences in their purchasing decisions, reflecting the collectivist nature of Korean culture (Hwang et al., 2021). Whereas, Chinese consumers may have placed greater emphasis on factors such as price sensitivity, brand reputation, and social influence due to the influence of Confucian values and the importance of 'face' in Chinese society (Han, 2016). For instance, South Korean consumers might exhibit higher recurrence intention when private-label products are aligned with their aesthetic preferences and social identity (Yang & Kang, 2022). In contrast, Chinese consumers might demonstrate higher recurrence intention when private-label products offered superior utilitarian value and cost-effectiveness (Butt et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed for this study:

H9a: Nationality plays a moderating role between utilitarian value and repurchase intention.

H9a: Nationality plays a moderating role between emotional value and repurchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Model

The research model in this study, rooted in the SOR framework, explored the interaction between external stimuli, internal psychological states, and subsequent behavioral responses. Private label cues, comprising store image, product design, price promotion, and origin image, acted as stimuli encountered by consumers during interactions with private-label products and retail environments. These cues influenced consumers' perceptions of consumption value, encompassing utilitarian and emotional dimensions, representing the organismic component. Utilitarian value pertained to practical benefits, while emotional value involved affective experiences. Consumers' repurchase intentions served as the behavioral response, indicating their likelihood to continue purchasing private-label products. By applying the SOR framework, this study examined the causal links between private label cues, consumer value perceptions, and repurchase intentions, using structural equation modeling to investigate the mediating role of consumption value in shaping consumer behavior (Figure 1).

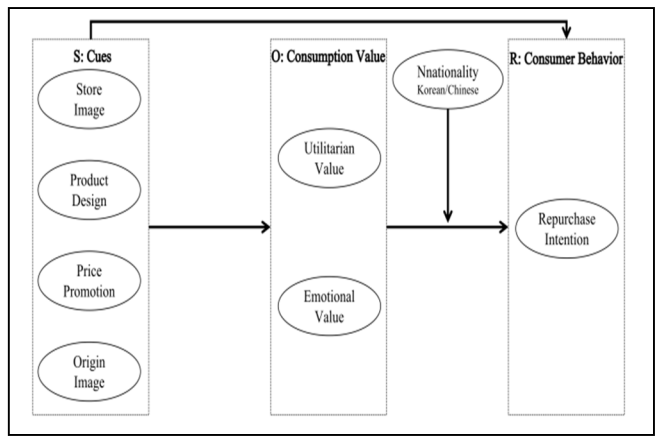

Figure 1: Model

3.2. Data Collection

The employed in this study utilized a simple random sampling approach to ensure the selection of a diverse and representative sample of participants, spanning from April to June 2023. A combination of online and offline methods was utilized to reach a wider audience and mitigate potential sampling biases. Industry associations, alumni networks, and professional colleagues were leveraged to facilitate data collection in different regions, ensuring diversity. Participants were required to have purchased Miniso or Daiso products within the last month before completing the questionnaire, aiming to capture recent consumption experiences and perceptions. Additionally, the study sought to encompass a diverse range of demographics to enhance the generalizability of findings. Therefore, participants from different regions, including Beijing, Xi'an, Busan, and Jeju,

were targeted to account for potential geographical variations in consumer behavior. Subsequently, the collected data underwent initial analysis using SPSS, to establish the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The SEM framework was further strengthened through Amos software, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the structural relationships between variables. Finally, Process Macro was used to explore moderating and mediating effects in different contexts.

3.3. Constructs and Measurements

In this study, cues of private labels are categorized into four dimensions: store image, product design, price promotion, and origin image, based on prior analyses. A total of 13 measurement question items were developed. Store image refers to research by Bhakuni et al. (2021), covering the overall appearance and impression of private-label retail stores. Product design pertains to various aspects of private-label product design such as appearance, texture, and functionality, as measured by a three-item scale adapted from Monnot et al. (2015). Price promotion gauges the attractiveness of pricing and promotional strategies employed for private-label products, using a three-item scale derived from Sansone et al. (2021). Origin image refers to the perception of the geographical origin or production region of private-label products, operationalized through a three-item scale based on Kim's (2008) work. To facilitate data processing, variables were coded as follows: SI for Store Image, PD for Product Design, PP for Price Promotion, and OI for Origin Image. Utilitarian value is defined operationally as the extent to which a brand's product or service meets consumers' functional needs, while emotional value pertains to the feelings and connections evoked in consumers on an emotional level by a brand's product or service. The measurement, drawing from the works of Chiu et al. (2014), Khan and Mohsin (2017), comprises six question items, each coded as UV and EV, respectively. Repurchase intention operationalizes the inclination or willingness of customers to make future purchases of private-label products. Drawing on the research framework of Kim and Yang (2020), three question items were designed and coded as RI.

All measurement items underwent translation into Korean and Chinese using a parallel translation method, with subsequent adjustments to ensure contextual relevance. A pretest involving 100 data samples was conducted, leading to the correction of semantic repetitions and ambiguities in the items to finalize the scale. Responses to all questionnaire items were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale for consistency (Table 1).

Table 1: Measuring Instrument

Construct	Measurement items	Source
Store Image	X has a pleasant atmosphere.	Bhakuni et al. (2021)
	X provides excellent in-store services.	
	X's location is convenient.	
	X has a positive brand reputation.	
Product Design	The design of X is visually appealing.	Monnot et al. (2015)
	X has a high-quality appearance.	
	X is functional and meets my needs.	
Price Promotion	The price discounts offered on X are attractive.	Sansone et al. (2021)
	The promotional strategies for X are effective.	
	I'm more likely to purchase X when they are on sale.	
Origin Image	I trust the quality of products from the region where X is produced.	Kim (2008)
	I perceive the X regions to be of higher quality.	
	The origin of X influences my purchase decisions.	
Utilitarian Value	X meets my functional needs effectively.	Chiu et al. (2014); Khan and Mohsin (2017)
	X offers good value for the money.	
	I consider practical benefits when purchasing X.	
Emotional Value	I experience positive emotions when using X.	
	X provides sensory pleasure and enjoyment.	
	I feel emotionally connected to X.	
Repurchase Intention	I'm likely to continue purchasing X.	Kim and Yang (2020)
	I intend to repurchase X regularly.	
	I would recommend X to others.	

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

A total of 270 sample data were recovered in this study, 24 invalid data were excluded, and 246 valid usable data were available. The sample data were 54.5% male and 45.5% female. Koreans account for 42.7%, while Chinese people account for 57.3%. The age is mainly concentrated between 20 and 39 years old, each accounting for 32.9% and 34.6%. The employment status is relatively balanced, with 16.3% of full-time, 26.8% of part-time, 22.8% of self-employed, 15.9% of unemployed, and 18.3% of other occupations. In terms of education, 49.2% have attained higher education, while 23.2% have completed secondary education. Income is mainly concentrated between 401-600 and 601-800 USD, both accounting for 27.2%. Generally, the representation of the study sample is high (Table 2).

Table 2: Sample

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	134	54.5
	Female	112	45.5
Nationality	Korean	105	42.7
	Chinese	141	57.3
Age	Under 19	4	1.6
	20-29	81	32.9
	30-39	85	34.6
	40-49	60	24.4
	50-59	11	4.5
	Over 60	5	2
Employment Status	Full-time	40	16.3
	Part-time	66	26.8
	Self-employed	56	22.8
	Unemployment	39	15.9
	Other	45	18.3
Education	Primary Education	11	4.5
	Secondary Education	57	23.2
	Higher Education	121	49.2
	Other	57	23.2
Income (Monthly/USD)	Under 200	10	4.1
	201-400	49	19.9
	401-600	67	27.2
	601-800	67	27.2
	801-1000	32	13
	Over 1001	21	8.5
TOTAL		246	100

4.2. Test of the Measurement Model

In this questionnaire, domestic and foreign mature questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis steps are as follows: first after factor analysis KMO value of 0.921, Barrlett spherical test P=0.000. through the factor analysis of a total of seven common factors extracted, the same variables are co-clustered, and the overall scale structure performs better and is greater than 0.5 (0.769-0.837), indicating that the collected research data is suitable for empirical analysis. Secondly, SPSS was used to analyze the selected Cronbach's alpha coefficient, CR, and AVE to test the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each scale were greater than 0.7 (0.838-0.892) and were assured according to the criterion reliability. CR (0.829-0.892) values were greater than 0.7 and AVE (0.617-0.734) values were greater than 0.6, which indicated that the scales had a high degree of validity. Confirmatory factor analyses were then conducted using AMOS to verify model fit. The results of analysis showed that $\chi^2(188)=366.313$, GFI=0.879, CFI=0.963, IFI=0.964, NFI=0.928, RFI=0.912, and RMSEA=0.062. Overall reliability and validity of the data were judged to be within acceptable limits (Table 3).

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct		Unstd.	S.E.	t-value	P	Std.	SMC	FL	CR	AVE	Cronbach`s α
SI	SI1	1.000				0.819	0.671	0.804	0.886	0.660	0.884
	SI2	1.052	0.073	14.387	***	0.786	0.618	0.760			
	SI3	1.028	0.070	14.694	***	0.797	0.635	0.806			
	SI4	1.133	0.070	16.079	***	0.847	0.717	0.821			
PD	PD1	1.000				0.773	0.598	0.773	0.829	0.617	0.838
	PD2	1.063	0.075	14.433	***	0.799	0.638	0.799			
	PD3	1.002	0.069	14.459	***	0.784	0.615	0.784			
PP	PP1	1.000				0.795	0.632	0.786	0.848	0.650	0.848
	PP2	1.007	0.074	13.571	***	0.781	0.610	0.759			
	PP3	1.100	0.073	15.014	***	0.842	0.709	0.814			
OI	OI1	1.000				0.834	0.696	0.807	0.873	0.695	0.872
	OI2	0.969	0.060	16.081	***	0.836	0.699	0.823			
	OI3	0.960	0.060	15.908	***	0.831	0.691	0.810			
UV	UV1	1.000				0.827	0.684	0.808	0.871	0.693	0.869
	UV2	0.990	0.064	15.487	***	0.817	0.667	0.815			
	UV3	1.104	0.067	16.568	***	0.853	0.728	0.828			
EV	EV1	1.000				0.849	0.721	0.825	0.892	0.734	0.892
	EV2	0.957	0.056	16.969	***	0.846	0.716	0.824			
	EV3	1.040	0.058	17.982	***	0.875	0.766	0.837			
RI	RI1	1.000				0.831	0.691	0.816	0.874	0.699	0.875
	RI2	1.040	0.064	16.360	***	0.842	0.709	0.826			
	RI3	1.014	0.063	16.142	***	0.835	0.697	0.816			

Note: $\chi^2(188)=366.313$, GFI=0.879, CFI=0.963, IFI=0.964, NFI=0.928, RFI=0.912, RMSEA=0.062; ***, P<0.001

To verify the discriminant validity of the research concepts put into this study, correlation analyses were done and square root values (diagonal values) of the AVE indices for each of the research concepts were derived. The results of the analyses showed that the AVE square root values of the research variables were greater than the correlation coefficients with the research variables, and the confidence intervals of the correlation coefficients between the research variables were not included in the 1.0, and the validity of the discriminative validity was verified (Table 4).

Table 4: Discriminant Validity by Correlation Analysis

	AVE	RI	EV	UV	OI	PP	PD	SI
RI	0.699	**0.836**						
EV	0.734	0.752***	**0.857**					
UV	0.693	0.780***	0.758***	**0.832**				
OI	0.695	0.722***	0.735***	0.605***	**0.834**			
PP	0.650	0.828***	0.680***	0.795***	0.645***	**0.806**		
PD	0.617	0.778***	0.774***	0.685***	0.705***	0.645***	**0.785**	
SI	0.660	0.799***	0.787***	0.633***	0.618***	0.619***	0.783***	**0.812**

Note: ***, P<0.001; Diagonal values are AVE square root

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis validation in this study utilized the structural equations under AMOS and the model fit results showed that $\chi^2(657)=1022.235$, GFI=0.802, CFI=0.957, IFI=0.957, NFI=0.889, RFI=0.874, RMSEA=0.051, which are beyond the general standard values and are within an acceptable range. The path analysis found that: private label cues have a positive effect on consumer value. Among the cues of private labels, only price promotion has a positive effect on repurchase intention. Consumption value also has a positive effect on repurchase intention. Overall, in the path analysis, hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5c, and 6 were supported. However, hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5d were rejected (Table 5).

Table 5: Path Analysis Results

Hypothesis		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1a	SI--->UV	0.383	0.045	8.496	***	Accept
H1b	SI--->EV	0.268	0.043	6.293	***	Accept
H2a	PD--->UV	0.268	0.036	7.384	***	Accept
H2b	PD--->EV	0.247	0.038	6.509	***	Accept
H3a	PP--->UV	0.101	0.037	2.721	0.007	Accept
H3b	PP--->EV	0.105	0.041	2.534	0.011	Accept
H4a	OI--->UV	0.258	0.036	7.209	***	Accept
H4b	OI--->EV	0.478	0.047	10.203	***	Accept
H5a	SI--->RI	-0.193	0.123	-1.574	0.116	Reject
H5b	PD--->RI	0.060	0.091	0.652	0.515	Reject
H5c	PP--->RI	0.131	0.051	2.544	0.011	Accept
H5d	OI--->RI	-0.073	0.113	-0.641	0.521	Reject
H6a	UV--->RI	0.764	0.271	2.818	0.005	Accept
H6b	EV--->RI	0.338	0.153	2.208	0.027	Accept

Note: ***, P<0.001

Secondly, in the bootstrap mediation stability test, the confidence interval was set to 95%, and 5000 samples were selected. The bootstrap method calculated the 95% confidence interval of the mediation effect coefficients, and the mediation effect was judged to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level if the confidence interval did not contain zero. The results found that: consumption value mediates the relationship between cues and repurchase intention, where emotional value is a partially mediated effect in the relationship between price promotion and repurchase intention, and the rest of the hypotheses are fully mediated effects. Namely, only H8c was partial mediation, and the rest were full mediation (Table 6).

Table 6: Mediation Effect Results

Hypothesis		Effects	β	Two Tailed Sig.	95%		Results
					LLCI	ULCI	
H7a	SI-UV-RI	Direct	-0.113	0.701	-1.173	0.371	Full Mediation
		Indirect	1.043	0.001	0.594	2.188	
H7b	PD-UV-RI	Direct	0.038	0.845	-0.486	0.327	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.902	0.001	0.637	1.507	
H7c	PP-UV-RI	Direct	0.266	0.092	-0.052	0.827	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.708	0.013	0.316	1.119	
H7d	OI-UV-RI	Direct	0.174	0.225	-0.182	0.484	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.672	0.001	0.420	1.091	
H8a	SI-EV-RI	Direct	0.270	0.084	-0.035	0.653	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.655	0.002	0.363	1.018	
H8b	PD-EV-RI	Direct	0.216	0.164	-0.138	0.531	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.750	0.001	0.509	1.089	
H8c	PP-EV-RI	Direct	0.423	0.040	0.140	1.109	Partial Mediation
		Indirect	0.558	0.046	0.006	0.830	
H8d	OI-EV-RI	Direct	0.242	0.269	-0.351	0.675	Full Mediation
		Indirect	0.611	0.015	0.235	1.245	

Note: LLCI: Lower limit within 95% confidence interval of indirect effect, ULCI: Upper limit within 95% confidence interval of indirect effect.

This study utilized the Process macro in SPSS and employed Model 14 for moderation analysis. The results indicate a significant moderation effect, suggesting that nationality differences played a significant moderating role in the model, and H9 was supported.

The moderating effects were graphically illustrated to demonstrate them more clearly. The moderation effect plot illustrates the presence of an "intensified superiority effect" between variables. Overall, the line corresponding to Korean consumers is higher than that of Chinese consumers. This implies that at the same level of consumption value, Korean consumers have a higher willingness to purchase. Specifically, for Korean consumers, both the enhancement of utilitarian value and emotional value significantly

enhance repurchase intention. The tendency towards practicality in Korean culture and the emphasis on emotional connections to products lead consumers to evaluate products not only based on their utilitarian functions but also on the emotional satisfaction they provide. Therefore, when products possess both high utilitarian and emotional value, the repurchase intention of Korean consumers is significantly increased. For Chinese consumers, although utilitarian value and emotional value also positively influence repurchase intention, this influence may be affected by more factors such as culture, social background, and personal consumption habits. In the Chinese market, consumers may pay more attention to factors such as cost-effectiveness, word-of-mouth, and brand image, which may to some extent weaken the direct effects of utilitarian value and emotional value on repurchase intention (Table 7).

Table 7: Moderation Effect Results

Hypothesis		β	SE	R^2	t-value	p	95%		Results
							LLCI	ULCI	
H9a	UV* Nationality	0.150	0.072	0.741	2.093	0.037	0.009	0.292	Accept
H9b	EV* Nationality	0.187	0.069	0.716	2.699	0.007	0.050	0.323	Accept

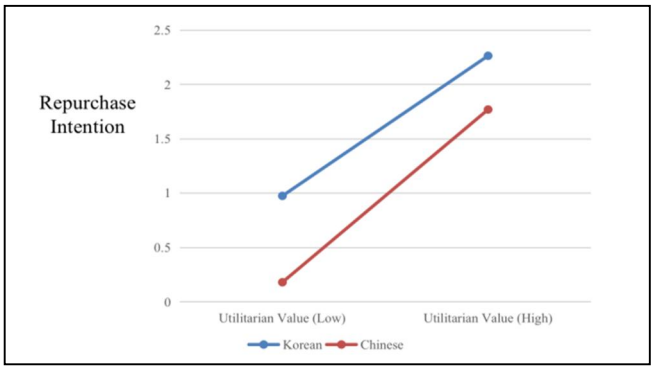

Figure 2: Moderated Effects Plot (UV)

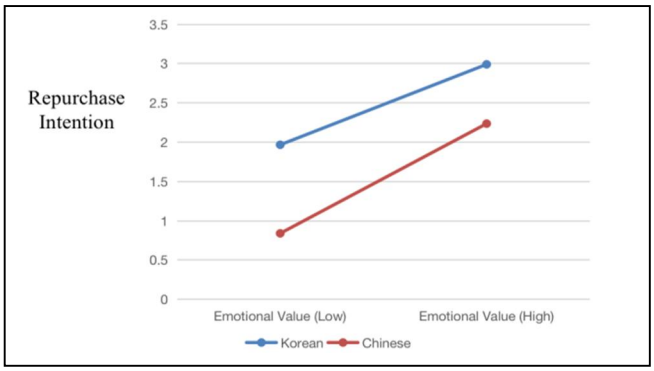

Figure 3: Moderated Effects Plot (EV)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

Due to the downturn in economic expectations, the average consumer presented the characteristic of careful spending, and private labels became a non-negligible consumer object in the consumer market. The findings of this study shed light on the intricate dynamics between private label cues, consumption value, and repurchase intention. Analysis revealed that private label cues, encompassing store image, product design, price promotion, and origin image, significantly influenced consumers' perception of consumption value, comprising utilitarian and emotional dimensions. Importantly, while all cues except for origin image were found to positively impact both utilitarian and emotional values, only price promotion demonstrated direct positive effect on repurchase intention. This suggested that consumers placed substantial weight on promotional strategies when considering repurchasing private-label products, thus consistent with prior research (Sansone et al., 2021).

Moreover, mediation analysis revealed that consumption value mediated the relationship between private label cues and repurchase intention. Emotional value was identified as a partially mediating factor in the relationship between price promotion and repurchase intention, while utilitarian value fully mediated the effects of other cues. These findings underscored the importance of considering both utilitarian and emotional aspects of consumer value in understanding the mechanisms driving repurchase intention, consistent with prior research (Chiu et al., 2014; Khan & Mohsin, 2017).

Furthermore, moderation analysis revealed significant nationality differences in the model. Korean consumers exhibited a higher willingness to repurchase private-label products compared to their Chinese counterparts, suggesting cultural influences on consumer behavior. This highlighted the need for managers to tailor their distribution strategies to accommodate cultural nuances and preferences in different markets, consistent with prior research (Yang & Kang, 2022).

5.2. Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the study extends the literature on cues by confirming their substantial impact on consumer perceptions of value in the distribution context, echoing findings from Sansone et al. (2021). By identifying the significant influence of cues on both utilitarian and emotional values, research reinforces the multidimensional nature of consumer value assessment, providing further support for the integration of various cues into theoretical models of consumer behavior.

Secondly, the cues of private labels have no significant positive effect on consumers' repurchase intention except for price discounts, and the other intermediary effects are fully mediation except for the partial mediation effect of price discounts on repurchase intention through emotional value. This confirms the conclusion of Hwang et al. (2021) that price promotion has always been one of the main advantages for private-label products to compete with national-brand products.

Third, consumption value significantly and positively affects consumer's repurchase intention. The higher the utilitarian value and emotional value of the product, the stronger the repurchase intention of consumers. The greater the perceived consumption value, the greater the likelihood that consumers will continue to buy the product or service they are currently using in the future. This extends the literature on the role of consumption value in influencing consumer behavior (McDougall & Levesque, 2000), providing insights into the mechanisms underlying repurchase intention formation.

Fourth, this study underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in distribution strategies, highlighting the significant moderating role of nationality differences. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the influence of cultural factors on consumer behavior (Yang & Kang, 2022), underscoring the dynamic nature of consumer responses across diverse cultural contexts.

5.3. Managerial Implications

Firstly, it is important to give full play to the driving force of external leads to promote consumer repurchase of products. Instead of simply adopting a private label product marketing strategy for all consumer groups, retailers should maintain relationships with specific consumer groups or adopt personalized strategies for different customer groups to carry out marketing activities. Empirical analyses reveal that consumers place a high value on price discounts when purchasing private-label products and place less emphasis on shop image, packaging design, and origin image. Retailers should pay more attention to pricing strategies and adapt to consumer price preferences among many cues. Based on the decoy effect and differentiated discount strategy, the proposal and precise pricing strategy should be made scientifically and rationally for the important consumption time points of consumers in different periods. Through the pricing strategy, the consumer's consumption value is increased, to strengthen the repurchase intention of the product.

Secondly, managers should pay attention to the mediation influence of consumption value to promote consumer repurchase of products. Private labels differ from national brand products in store image, origin image, and packaging design, giving full play to the positive externality advantage of cues. Private label brands should launch cost-effective products by strengthening the product promotion and distribution channel construction, to increase the brand's cues exposure pathway. Fully explore the marketing function of the shop image, and guide the enterprise to make the site selection and decoration in line with the consumer's favorite. Combined with the product characteristics of packaging design, cost compression, and increase in the display and exploration of the origin image, enterprises can strengthen the brand and origin of publicity, from the level of emotional value to establish a close relationship with consumers, to achieve the purpose of increasing the willingness to repurchase. For instance, while product design and price promotion may predominantly influence utilitarian value, store image, and origin image may have a greater impact on emotional value.

Finally, findings emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity in distribution strategies, particularly in diverse markets such as Korea and China. For Korean consumers, the increase in utilitarian and emotional value can significantly enhance their willingness to repurchase; For Chinese consumers, this influence may be influenced by other factors. Understanding cultural nuances and preferences can enable managers to develop more effective strategies that resonate with local consumers and drive repurchase intention.

5.4. Research Limitations and Future Directions

Firstly, the study relied on self-reported data, which might have been subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Future research could employ experimental designs or observational methods to mitigate these limitations.

Secondly, the study focused on private-label, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other product categories or industries. Future research could explore the applicability of the SOR model in different contexts to further validate its robustness.

Moreover, while study identified cultural differences in consumer behavior, future research could delve deeper into the underlying cultural factors influencing consumer perceptions and preferences. Comparative studies across multiple cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into the universality versus specificity of consumer behavior patterns.

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