Cross-linguistic validation of a unidimensional scale for cosmopolitanism ☆

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ABSTRACT

Consumers' positive dispositions relating to foreign countries, cultures, and products are an important yet under-researched topic, compared against the volume of research on consumers' negative dispositions towards the same. Cosmopolitanism, conceptualized as a general dispositional orientation reflecting an affinity for cultural diversity and the proclivity to master it, garners increasing attention as a variable for international market segmentation. Empirical studies on cosmopolitanism are scarce, principally due to the absence of scale demonstrating sufficient cross-cultural validity across languages. This research reports on such a validation, across four countries and five languages. Psychometric evaluations entailed a number of techniques, including multigroup confirmatory factor analysis. The results largely confirm the cross-lingual applicability of the cosmopolitanism scale.

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1. Introduction

Globalization is more than a macro concept. The effects of globalization are operational at the micro-level, in the everyday life of individuals worldwide. Globalization "promotes the creation of transnational social spaces" (Roudometof, 2005, p. 114), undermining the traditional cultural unit of analysis, the national society. The modern nation-state dates from the 19th century, as do the ensuing notions of national culture/identity. It follows then that the progressive integration of peoples and markets, rising multiculturalism and the corresponding erosion of national borders is engendering a global culture and conceivably, promoting a transnational, ecumenical identity (Arnett, 2002; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Craig & Douglas, 2006; Hannerz, 1992; Merz, He, & Alden, 2008). Social identity is the psychological locus of cultural effects, and accordingly is a powerful predictor of consumer behavior (de Mooij, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Against this background, one construct especially relevant for segmenting consumers within and across national boundaries concerns individuals' cosmopolitan dispositions (Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2009; Keillor, d'Amico, & Horton, 2001; Nijssen & Douglas, 2008; Rawwas, Rajendran, & Wuehrer, 1996; Suh & Kwon, 2002). The practical significance of cosmopolitanism as a segmentation variable has accelerated in a global world where technology progressively emancipates individuals, societies, and product markets alike from the confines of geography.

As determinant variables, constructs are potent bases for international market segmentation (IMS) and while these have been the focus of innumerable studies in domestic contexts, cross-cultural work on psychographics—particularly, assessments of cross-linguistic validity—is comparatively embryonic (Steenkamp & ter Hofstede, 2002). Unlike demographics, for which cross-cultural measurement is relatively straightforward, valid comparisons on constructs require international researchers to develop universally interpreted measures. Conclusions made on observed differences assume that the construct has the same meaning to the multiple groups under investigation; therefore cross-cultural applicability and measurement invariance are fundamental to making sound cross-cultural inferences (Salzberger & Sinkovics, 2006; van de Vijer & Leung, 1997). These issues are pertinent to the study of cosmopolitanism. As a result of the myriad manifestations of cosmopolitanism within the diverse social science literatures, a consensual definition is lacking. This deficiency stems from conflicting theories about the underlying nature of cosmopolitanism (Cannon & Yaprak, 2002; Hannerz, 1990, 1992; Roudometof, 2005; Szerszynski & Urry, 2006; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999; Turner, 2002), and attendant rival operationalizations. Moreover, the absence of a set of construct items that will work equally well (i.e., consistently and accurately capturing the concept in an error-free way) across different languages impedes cross-cultural application of cosmopolitanism. Cross-cultural comparisons on constructs are indefinite without the establishment of measurement invariance.

Adapting Cleveland and Laroche's (2007) cosmopolitanism scale, this research reports on cross-linguistic reliability and validity tests emanating from survey data drawn from individuals living in Canada,

Turkey, Japan, and Lebanon, using research instruments translated from the original English into four languages (Turkish, Japanese, Arabic, and French). Multigroup confirmatory factor analysis and invariance testing largely confirm the cross-linguistic applicability of a five-item general dispositional scale. Nomologically, the results uphold the distinction between cosmopolitanism and foreign traveling experiences/attitudes. Distinct consumer clusters emerge based on the relative combined levels of cosmopolitanism and international traveling experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Cosmopolitanism as a concept

References to cosmopolitanism trace back millennia, to Ancient Greece. The term derives from the Greek *kosmopolitês*, literally meaning citizen of the world (Turner, 2002). The famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1795) spoke of a cosmopolitan constitution in reference to humanity's common rights towards the earth's surface. In the modern era, the sociologist Merton (1957) conceptualized cosmopolitanism as an outward, worldly orientation. In the field of management, Gouldner (1957) employed the same expression to characterize those employees/academicians more oriented towards their profession than towards their organization/institution. Around that time, interest grew in identifying agents associated with the diffusion of cosmopolitan dispositions. The philosopher McLuhan (1962) famously spoke of the implosive power of the media, foretelling the advent of an electronic communications network that would figuratively shrink the globe, creating a global village whose members would have an acute sense of their collective, cosmopolitan identity. This viewpoint has since been reiterated by Appadurai (1990), Smith (1990), Hannerz (1992), and Szerszynski and Urry (2006). McLuhan (1962, p. 32) described the world as "a computer, an electronic brain." The diffusion of satellite television and the Internet has greatly facilitated the virtual interactions between peoples and cultures on a scale almost unimaginable in the early 1960s. The corollary is the deterritorialization of culture (Appadurai, 1990). Global media frees culture from geography, implying that physical proximity and traveling are no longer prerequisites for cultural absorption and diffusion.

Against this backdrop, the relative dearth of quantitative investigations into cosmopolitanism comes as a surprise. This paucity is due to operationalization issues. Growing interest on cosmopolitanism has unfortunately led to considerable confusion about the concept (Calhoun, 2008). In the popular press, the term often employs synonymously with globalization and urban cultural diversity, or to connote sophisticated tastes and international mobility. Among researchers, cosmopolitanism "…can mean anything from an attitude or value, to a regime of international governance, or a set of epistemological assumptions about the nature of social structures" (Woodward, Skrbis, & Bean, 2008, p. 208). Even among those advocating attitudinal cosmopolitanism, disagreement persists as to whether cosmopolitanism is an innate personality trait or a learnable disposition.

Concatenating the literature, the majority of theorists nowadays approach cosmopolitanism from an attitudinal perspective, although some authors (e.g., Beck, 2002) still cling to the philosophical or worldview conception (see Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Szerszynski & Urry, 2006). Due to personality and/or environmental circumstances, it is plausible that certain individuals are prone towards cosmopolitan traits; however, the perspective taken here is that cosmopolitanism is foremost a learned disposition: a general orientation reflecting a set of values, opinions, and competencies held by certain individuals; specifically a genuine, humanitarian appreciation for, desire to learn from and ability to engage with, peoples of different cultures. In short, an affinity for cultural diversity and the proclivity to master it.

Many theorists previously held that first-hand contact with peoples of different cultures (i.e., experiencing different cultural spaces physically, as tourists, expatriates, migrants, etc.) was necessary for acquiring cosmopolitan traits. With the advent of global electronic media, "distances have been drastically compressed and people everywhere are more 'aware' of the existence of others than ever before" (Hall, Held, & McLennan, 1996, p. 430). Consequently, opportunities exist for acquiring cosmopolitanism vicariously, without foreign traveling (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Hannerz, 1990). Moreover, many transnational groups (e.g., refugees, agricultural migrant workers) are not true cosmopolitans (Hannerz, 1990). Transnationalism is distinguishable from cosmopolitanism, as the former does not refer to the feelings or attitudes of individuals (Roudometof, 2005), but rather, to a diaspora. In his treatise on the international culture of intellectuals, Konrad (1984) wrote about qualities characterizing select groupings of people. He described cosmopolitans as "…those intellectuals who are at home in the cultures of other people as well as their own" and "who know the most about one another across the frontiers, who keep in touch with one another, and who feel that they are one another's allies" (pp. 208–209). Researchers have since deemphasized the intellectual basis of cosmopolitanism, while retaining the stance that cosmopolitanism entails openness towards and ability and willingness to engage in different cultural environments (Cannon & Yaprak, 2002; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Hannerz, 1992; Nijssen & Douglas, 2008; Robinson & Zill, 1997; Skrbis, Kendall, & Woodward, 2004).

One remaining area of disagreement concerns whether an outward orientation supplants a local orientation. For Beck (2002), cosmopolitans are those members of society for whom cosmopolitan values subordinate national values. Yeğenoĝlu (2005) echoes this viewpoint, associating cosmopolitans' universal aspirations with a relative lack of allegiance to any specific cultural community. Both researchers imply that cosmopolitanism and localism constitute opposite ends along a single continuum. Others (e.g., Arnett, 2002) believe that globalization encourages the development of a bicultural (i.e., global and local) identity. Kurasawa (2004) contends that at the individual-level, universalism and cultural particularism are not at odds. Rather than advocating "a reflective distance from one's own cultural affiliation" (Riefler, Diamantopoulos, & Siguaw, 2012), the perspective herewith is that the cosmopolitan embraces "the simultaneous existence of multilayered local, national and global identities" (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 240). While these multiple identities occasionally produce tensions (Ong, 2009), approbation for one's own culture is an extension of a strong appreciation for culture in general, and thus towards different cultures.

2.2. Cosmopolitanism as a construct

The evolution of the theoretical discourse on cosmopolitanism is greatest in sociology. Other domains draw heavily on the sociological perspective. Although the marketing literature has seen a surge of interest with respect to behavioral outcomes of cosmopolitanism, as with sociology, most research is conceptual or qualitative. Cannon and Yaprak (1993) are credited with introducing cosmopolitanism to the marketing domain, although it was Thompson and Tambyah's (1999) qualitative study of the cosmopolitan dispositions of expatriate professionals that brought the concept to the forefront. In 1996, Yoon, Cannon and Yaprak published the CYMYC scale, designed for assessing cosmopolitanism within marketing contexts. However, aside from studies undertaken by one or more of the original authors, this scale has seen little adoption. A recent paper by Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2009) included a review and replication of the CYMYC scale. In it, the authors reached the conclusion that the CYMYC scale "suffers from poor content validity, unclear dimensionality, low internal consistency, and questionable construct validity" (p. 414).

Other cosmopolitanism scales in the social science literature (e.g., Earle & Cvetkovich, 1997; Robinson & Zill, 1997) have also been roundly criticized for lacking content validity and generalizability (e.g., being highly bound to the particular research context), or on the grounds of poor psychometric properties (see Riefler &