

The Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Behavior in Cross-Border Fast Fashion E-Commerce: A Case Study of SHEIN

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Abstract

This study uses SHEIN as a case to examine how cultural differences influence consumer behavior in the context of cross-border e-commerce. In today's digital environment, consumers are continuously exposed to social media advertising, influencer recommendations, and personalized platform content, making the consumer decision-making process increasingly complex. To better understand this process, the study combines Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, the consumer decision-making model, and the AIDA framework. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 191 consumers who had previously purchased from SHEIN, including 96 respondents from the Middle East and 95 respondents from the United States. The study examined three dimensions: cultural adaptation, consumer behavior, and marketing effectiveness. The results revealed significant differences between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers, particularly regarding cultural adaptation and consumer responses to marketing strategies. The findings suggest that cultural background plays an important role in shaping consumer behavior in cross-border e-commerce. For platforms such as SHEIN, adapting marketing strategies to different cultural environments is not only beneficial but also necessary for improving marketing effectiveness and consumer engagement in international markets.

Keywords

Cross-Border E-Commerce, Cultural Differences, Consumer Behavior, SHEIN, Digital Marketing, Hofstede, AIDA Model

1. Introduction

In recent years, online shopping behavior has changed significantly. With the rapid development of digital platforms, consumers are continuously exposed to

advertisements, social media content, and product recommendations. As a result, the purchasing process has become more dynamic, but also more complicated than before (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In the field of cross-border e-commerce, the situation becomes even more complex. Consumers are influenced not only by marketing strategies, but also by their cultural backgrounds. The same product or advertisement may be interpreted differently across markets (De Mooij, 2019; Cai, 2022).

SHEIN is a typical example of this phenomenon. As a fast-fashion platform, it relies heavily on digital tools such as social media marketing, influencer promotion, and personalized recommendations. Therefore, consumers' purchasing decisions are strongly affected by online content and digital interaction (Wang, 2023; Li & Zhang, 2025; Lu & Mullen, 2025).

This paper mainly discusses how cultural differences influence consumer behavior in the cross-border e-commerce environment. By examining consumer decision-making processes and digital marketing mechanisms, and by comparing the Middle Eastern and U.S. markets, the study attempts to explain why consumers respond differently under different cultural contexts. Specifically, this study addresses the following three research questions:

RQ1: Do Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers differ significantly in their level of cultural adaptation perception when shopping on SHEIN?

RQ2: Do cultural differences produce measurable differences in consumer behavior between Middle Eastern and U.S. SHEIN consumers?

RQ3: Are there significant differences in perceived marketing effectiveness, including satisfaction, repurchase intention, and brand recommendation, between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers?

2. Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

2.1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede (2001) pointed out that significant differences exist among countries and regions in terms of cultural values, and these cultural differences further influence consumers' ways of thinking, value judgments, and purchasing behavior. Among the various dimensions proposed by Hofstede, individualism and collectivism are considered two of the most widely applied concepts in consumer behavior research.

In individualistic cultures, consumers tend to place greater emphasis on personal needs, self-expression, and individual achievement. The United States is generally regarded as a highly individualistic market, where consumers are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on personal interests and style preferences. As a result, American consumers usually pay more attention to product novelty, fashion trends, and personalized expression, and they are often more easily influenced by social media trends and digital content (De Mooij, 2019).

By contrast, the Middle East is generally viewed as a more collectivist cultural environment. Consumers in this region are concerned not only with the product

itself, but also with social evaluation, cultural norms, and group identity. In the context of fashion consumption, consumers are more likely to consider whether products fit local cultural traditions, religious practices, and social expectations. Therefore, in the Middle Eastern market, a brand's ability to adapt to local culture can strongly influence consumer acceptance of the brand.

In addition, Hofstede also proposed other cultural dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance, which can help explain differences in purchasing behavior across markets. For example, Middle Eastern consumers may pay more attention to risk control and information reliability during the shopping process. As a result, they are more likely to rely on recommendations from acquaintances, KOL reviews, and social approval. In comparison, American consumers are generally more inclined to rely on personal judgment when making purchasing decisions.

Therefore, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides an important theoretical foundation for analyzing differences between Middle Eastern and American consumers. It also helps explain why SHEIN needs to adopt different marketing strategies in different markets (Cai, 2022).

2.2. Consumer Decision-Making Process Theory

Consumer decision-making process theory mainly examines the entire process from the emergence of consumer needs to purchase completion and post-purchase evaluation. Traditional consumer behavior studies generally divide this process into five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

First, during the need recognition stage, consumers realize that there is a gap between their current condition and their desired condition, which leads to the emergence of consumption needs. In the digital environment, such needs are often stimulated by external factors, including social media advertising, short-video content, and online recommendations. For fast-fashion platforms such as Shein, highly visual marketing content can quickly stimulate consumers' desire to purchase (Camargo et al., 2020; Dzhengiz et al., 2023).

Second, during the information search stage, consumers attempt to collect product-related information through different channels. Some consumers rely on their own experience, while others obtain external information through social media, online reviews, and KOL recommendations. With the development of digital platforms, online reviews and social media content have become major sources of information that influence consumer decisions (Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021; Carr, 2022).

During the evaluation stage, consumers usually compare products based on factors such as price, product quality, brand image, and design style. At this stage, consumers from different cultural backgrounds may focus on different aspects. For example, American consumers may pay more attention to individuality and fashion trends, whereas Middle Eastern consumers may focus more on whether products fit cultural customs and social expectations.

The purchase decision stage refers to the process in which consumers decide whether or not to buy a product. In cross-border e-commerce, promotional activities, limited-time discounts, and platform recommendation systems can all strongly affect consumer decisions. At the same time, emotional factors and impulsive buying behavior are becoming increasingly important during this stage (Ajzen, 1991).

Finally, during the post-purchase stage, consumers evaluate both the product and the shopping experience. Positive experiences may lead to repeat purchases and stronger brand loyalty. On the other hand, negative experiences may result in unfavorable comments on social media, which can further damage the brand's image.

Overall, the consumer decision-making process is not completely rational. It is influenced by multiple factors, including cultural background, emotions, social relationships, and the digital environment. Therefore, combining consumer decision-making theory with cultural analysis is particularly important in cross-border e-commerce research.

2.3. AIDA Model

The AIDA model consists of four stages: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. It is one of the most widely used classic theories in the field of marketing. Although the model was originally developed in the era of traditional advertising, it still has strong explanatory value in today's digital marketing environment.

At the attention stage, companies attempt to attract consumers through visual elements, advertising content, and social media communication. In the current digital environment, consumers are exposed to a huge amount of information every day. As a result, a brand's ability to capture attention within a short period of time has become especially important. Shein's short-video marketing on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram is a typical example of this strategy (Appel et al., 2020; Zhang, 2023).

Next is the interest stage, during which consumers begin to explore product information in greater detail. Brands need to maintain consumer interest through product displays, customer reviews, and content marketing. At this stage, the quality and credibility of information can directly influence consumers' perceptions of the brand.

During the desire stage, consumers gradually shift from being "interested" in a product to actually "wanting" it. At this point, brands often strengthen consumer desire through KOL recommendations, customer reviews, and emotional marketing strategies. In the social media environment especially, consumers are easily influenced by content shared by others, which may further stimulate impulsive buying behavior.

Finally, in the action stage, consumers complete the actual purchase. Factors such as discount campaigns, limited-time promotions, and convenient payment methods can all affect consumers' final decisions. For fast-fashion platforms like

Shein, recommendation algorithms and promotional strategies often help increase conversion rates.

Overall, the AIDA model explains the process through which consumers move from awareness to purchase in the digital marketing environment (Dwivedi et al., 2021). It also provides theoretical support for analyzing Shein's marketing strategies across different markets.

2.4. Analytical Framework of This Study

Based on the theories discussed above, this study develops an analytical framework centered on "cultural differences, consumer perception, purchasing behavior". The study argues that different cultural backgrounds influence consumers' need recognition, information processing, and attitudes toward brands, which further affect purchasing decisions and consumer behavior.

In this research, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, consumer decision-making process theory, and the AIDA model are combined to analyze behavioral differences between Middle Eastern and American consumers on the Shein platform. At the same time, questionnaire data are used to compare multiple dimensions, including cultural adaptation, price sensitivity, influencer marketing effects, and consumer satisfaction, in order to further examine the practical influence of cultural factors in cross-border e-commerce marketing.

3. Research Design

3.1. Questionnaire Design

In order to further examine the influence of cultural differences on consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness, this study adopted a questionnaire survey as the main method of data collection. The questionnaire was designed based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, consumer decision-making process theory, and the AIDA model. In addition, previous studies related to cross-border e-commerce and digital marketing were also considered in order to better investigate consumer behavior on the Shein platform.

The questionnaire mainly focused on three dimensions: cultural adaptation, consumer behavior, and marketing effectiveness. The cultural adaptation section examined consumers' perceptions of brand-culture fit, localized product design, and cultural identity. The consumer behavior section mainly included purchasing decisions, impulsive buying tendencies, price sensitivity, and the influence of influencer marketing. The marketing effectiveness section focused on consumer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and willingness to recommend the brand to others.

A five-point Likert scale was adopted in this study. On the scale, 1 represented "strongly disagree", while 5 represented "strongly agree". Higher scores indicated a higher level of agreement with the related statements.

To improve the clarity and validity of the questionnaire, both English and Arabic versions were prepared and distributed so that respondents from different re-

gions could better understand the survey questions.

The questionnaire was originally developed in English and subsequently translated into Arabic. To ensure linguistic equivalence, the Arabic version was reviewed by bilingual speakers familiar with both languages. Minor wording adjustments were made before the final distribution to improve clarity, consistency, and respondent comprehension.

3.2. Questionnaire Distribution Process and Sample Description

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms in April 2026. Respondents were required to be adults (aged 18 and above) who had made at least one purchase on SHEIN within the preceding twelve months. Prior SHEIN use was confirmed through a screening question at the beginning of the survey. Respondents who indicated that they had never purchased from SHEIN were not included in the study.

The Middle Eastern group included respondents residing in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. The U.S. group included respondents residing within the United States. Sampling was conducted using a purposive convenience sampling approach. The survey link was distributed primarily through Instagram, WhatsApp, and related online communities. Because SHEIN's customer base largely consists of active online shoppers, online distribution was considered appropriate for reaching the target population.

After screening, a total of 191 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, including 96 respondents from the Middle East (50.3%) and 95 respondents from the United States (49.7%).

Regarding demographic characteristics, female respondents accounted for 68.6% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 31.4%. In terms of age distribution, respondents aged 18 - 25 represented 40.3% of the sample, those aged 26 - 35 accounted for 35.1%, and respondents aged 36 and above accounted for 24.6%.

Overall, the sample reflects the characteristics of active online consumers and provides an appropriate basis for comparing consumer behavior across different cultural contexts.

3.3. Variable Measurement

This study mainly examined three variables: cultural adaptation, consumer behavior, and marketing effectiveness.

Among them, cultural adaptation was treated as the independent variable. It was mainly used to measure consumers' perceptions of cultural fit, localized product design, and cultural identity associated with the brand. Related questionnaire items included statements such as whether "the products fit local cultural customs" and whether "the brand's values are compatible with local culture" (Q13, Q24).

Consumer behavior was treated as the mediating variable and mainly reflected

consumers' perceptions, purchasing decisions, and impulsive buying tendencies during the shopping process. Example items included whether consumers were "easily influenced by limited-time discounts" and whether they "develop purchasing impulses because of social media content" (Q18, Q21, Q35). In addition, price sensitivity and the influence of influencer marketing were also included in this dimension.

Marketing effectiveness was treated as the dependent variable and mainly measured consumer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and willingness to recommend the brand to others. Related items included "overall satisfaction with the shopping experience on Shein," "willingness to purchase again," and "willingness to recommend Shein to other people" (Q30, Q31, Q32, Q34).

All variables were measured using the five-point Likert scale mentioned above, in which 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the related statements.

The design of these variables was mainly based on previous studies in cross-cultural marketing and consumer behavior, while also incorporating Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and consumer decision-making process theory. This approach allowed the study to more comprehensively examine the influence of cultural differences on consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness.

3.4. Reliability and Construct Validity

Before interpreting the survey results, reliability analysis was conducted for all multi-item constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency of the scales. The cultural adaptation scale (Q13, Q24, Q44, and Q45) achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.854. The consumer behavior scale (Q14, Q18, Q21, Q23, Q27, Q29, and Q35) yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.811. The marketing effectiveness scale (Q30, Q31, Q32, and Q34) achieved an alpha value of 0.800. All coefficients exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

To assess construct validity, questionnaire items were grouped according to the theoretical framework presented in this study. Composite scores were calculated by averaging the Likert-scale responses of all items belonging to each construct. The resulting composite scores were subsequently used for comparative analysis between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers.

4. Cultural Differences between the Middle East and the United States

Cultural differences play an important role in shaping consumer behavior. When comparing the Middle Eastern and American markets, several significant differences can be observed. In terms of consumer needs, American consumers generally place greater emphasis on individuality and self-expression. Fashion is often viewed as a way to express personal identity, and consumers are usually willing to try new and innovative styles. In contrast, consumers in the Middle East tend to pay more attention to social expectations, modesty, cultural appropriateness, and

social norms (Chen, 2023; Papasolomou, 2022).

Consumers in the two regions also differ in the way they interpret information. In the United States, consumers usually rely on clear product descriptions and customer reviews and tend to prefer direct and detailed information. In the Middle East, however, trust and social relationships often play a more important role. Recommendations from influencers, acquaintances, or members of the same social community are generally considered more persuasive.

Attitudes toward brands also vary across the two markets. In the United States, personal preference is often the key factor influencing brand choice, and consumers tend to evaluate brands based on whether they match their personal identity and lifestyle. In the Middle East, by comparison, cultural compatibility and social acceptance often have a stronger influence on consumer attitudes toward brands.

Differences can also be observed in decision-making styles. American consumers tend to act more independently and may be more likely to make impulsive purchases. On the other hand, Middle Eastern consumers are generally more cautious and may spend more time considering different factors before making final purchasing decisions.

These differences suggest that consumer behavior is closely connected to specific cultural contexts. To further examine the analysis above, this study combined questionnaire survey data to compare Middle Eastern and American consumers in terms of brand perception, acceptance of marketing strategies, and purchasing behavior. By organizing and comparing feedback from different regions, the influence of cultural differences on consumer behavior can be observed more clearly.

The questionnaire survey was conducted in April 2026, and a total of 191 valid responses were collected, including 96 responses from the Middle East and 95 responses from the United States. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 5 represented “strongly agree.” Higher mean scores indicated a higher level of agreement among consumers.

4.1. Cultural Values and Differences in Consumer Needs

The survey results further support the analysis above (see Figure 1). Regarding the statement “the product fits local cultural customs” (Q13), Middle Eastern consumers reported a mean score of 4.17, compared with 3.00 among American consumers. Similarly, for the statement “brand values match local culture” (Q24), the Middle Eastern group recorded a mean score of 4.20, while the U.S. group recorded 3.17.

The largest differences were observed for Q44 (“cultural background affects purchasing decisions”) and Q45 (“social circle influences purchasing decisions”). Middle Eastern consumers reported mean scores of 4.00 and 3.61 respectively, whereas American consumers reported substantially lower scores of 1.32 and 1.38. These findings indicate that cultural background and social influence play a considerably stronger role in shaping purchasing decisions among Middle Eastern consumers.

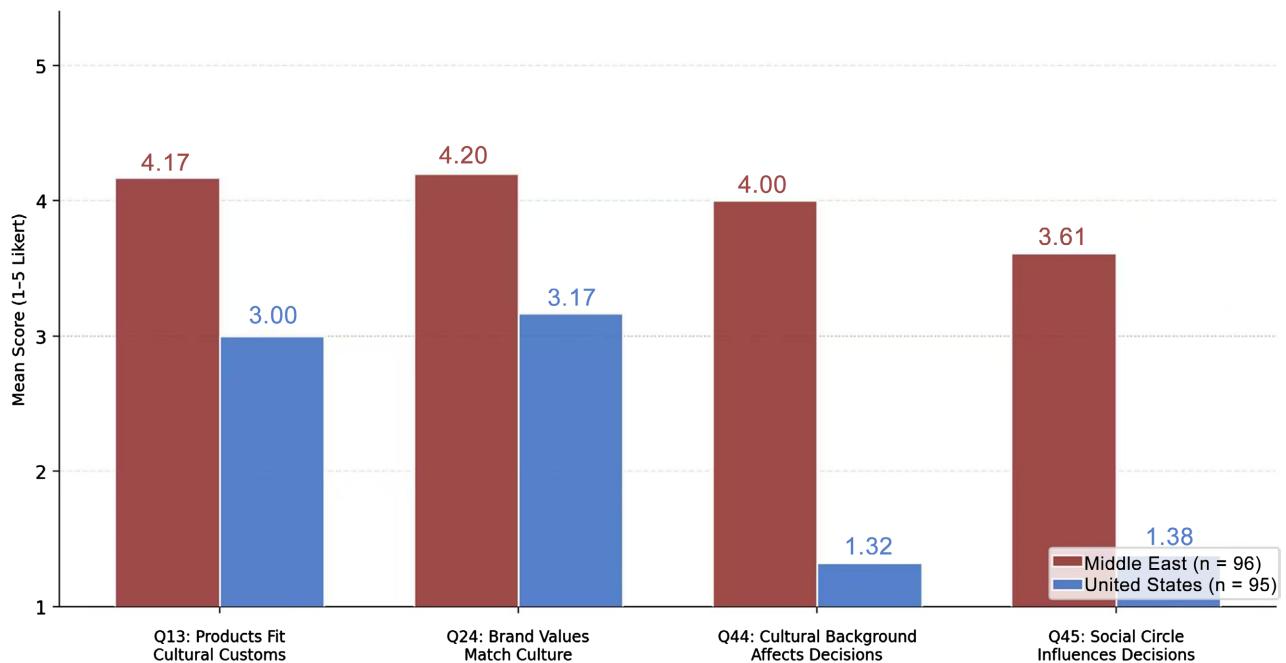


Figure 1. Mean comparison of cultural value recognition between Middle Eastern and American consumers (n = 191).

Overall, the results suggest that Middle Eastern consumers place greater emphasis on the compatibility between brands and local cultural values during the purchasing process. Compared with American consumers, they are more likely to be influenced by social norms, cultural expectations, and collective values. Consequently, a brand's ability to demonstrate cultural understanding and respect may significantly affect consumer acceptance and purchasing intention.

In contrast, American consumers generally place greater emphasis on personal preference and individual choice. Purchasing decisions are more likely to be influenced by personal interests and product characteristics than by cultural or social considerations. Therefore, cultural adaptation appears to play a relatively less important role in shaping consumer responses in the U.S. market.

These findings are broadly consistent with Hofstede's (2001) theory of individualism and collectivism. American consumers are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on personal preference, whereas Middle Eastern consumers are more strongly influenced by the surrounding social and cultural environment.

4.2. Consumer Behavior Patterns and Purchase Decision-Making

Figure 2 presents a comparison of consumer behavior indicators between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers. Overall, Middle Eastern consumers reported higher mean scores on most items included in the consumer behavior construct.

The largest differences were observed for Q14 ("price is a major factor in purchasing decisions"), where Middle Eastern consumers recorded a mean score of 4.38 compared with 3.85 among U.S. consumers, and Q21 ("emotionally attracted to products"), where the Middle Eastern group reported a mean score of 4.16 compared with 3.69 among American consumers. Middle Eastern consumers also re-

ported higher levels of trust in reviews (Q18), trust in influencer-promoted brands (Q23), and sensitivity to discounts (Q27).

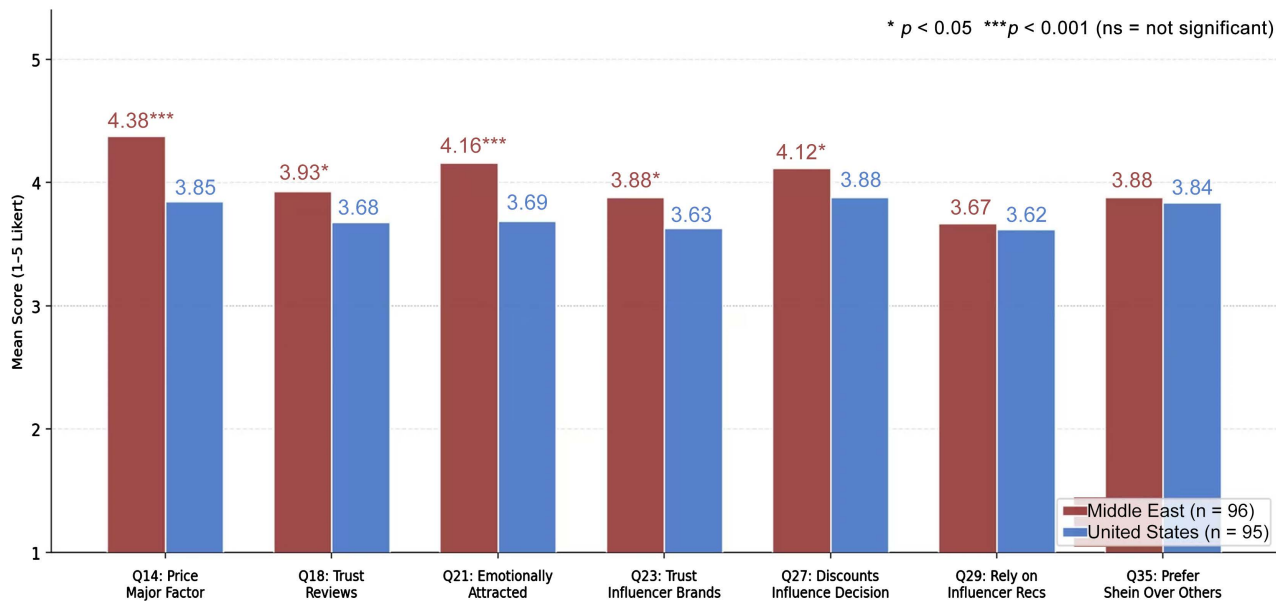


Figure 2. Comparison of consumer behavior indicators between middle Eastern and U.S. consumers.

Only small differences were observed for reliance on influencer recommendations (Q29) and preference for SHEIN over competing brands (Q35), suggesting relatively similar attitudes between the two groups on these dimensions.

These findings indicate that Middle Eastern consumers are generally more responsive to a combination of price-related, emotional, and social influences during the purchasing process. In contrast, U.S. consumers appear somewhat less influenced by these factors and may place greater emphasis on individual evaluation and personal preference when making purchasing decisions.

Overall, the results suggest that consumer behavior is shaped not only by individual preferences but also by broader cultural and social influences, supporting the argument that cultural context plays an important role in cross-border e-commerce consumption.

5. Analysis of Questionnaire Results

5.1. Basic Sample Information

A total of 191 valid questionnaires were collected: 96 respondents from the Middle East (50.3%) and 95 from the United States (49.7%). Gender distribution was similar across regions: 66 females and 30 males in the Middle Eastern group; 65 females and 30 males in the U.S. group. Across the full sample, females accounted for 68.6% and males for 31.4%. Age distribution differed slightly between groups: the U.S. sample skewed younger (18 - 25: 47.4%) compared to the Middle Eastern sample (18 - 25: 33.3%; 26 - 35: 36.5%). The demographic comparability of gender across groups strengthens the validity of the cultural comparison (**Figure 3**).

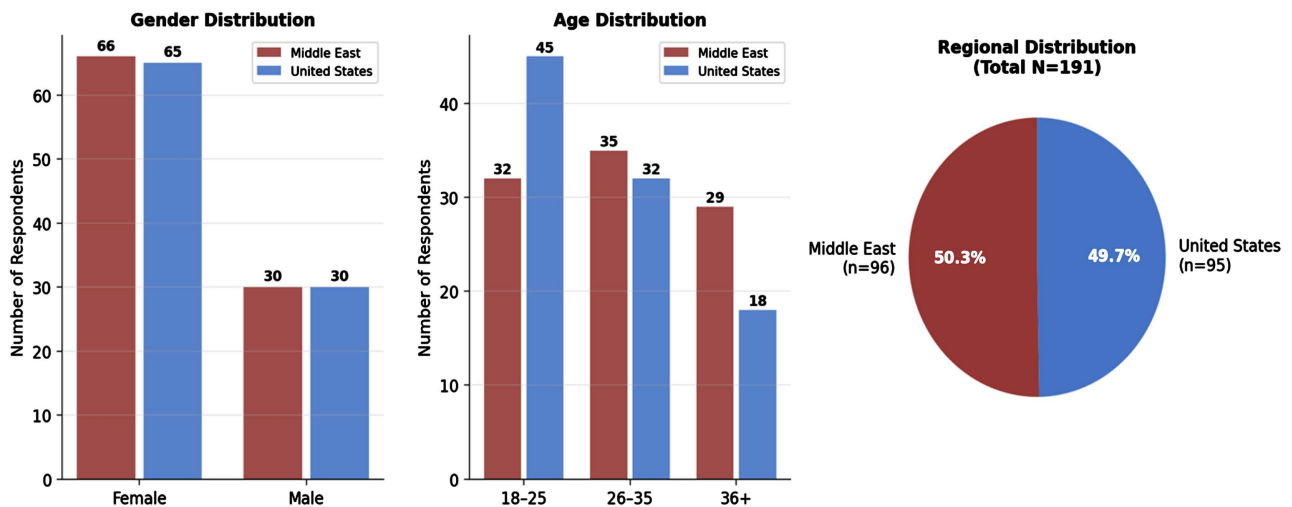


Figure 3. Demographic characteristics of the questionnaire sample (N = 191).

5.2. Influencer Marketing and Consumer Satisfaction

Regarding influencer-related factors, Middle Eastern consumers reported slightly higher mean scores across all three items. For Q9 (“influencers match my life-style”), the Middle Eastern group recorded a mean score of 3.84 compared with 3.72 among U.S. consumers. Similarly, Middle Eastern consumers reported higher scores on Q23 (“trust influencer-promoted brands”) and Q29 (“rely on influencer recommendations”), although the differences between the two groups were relatively modest (Figure 4).

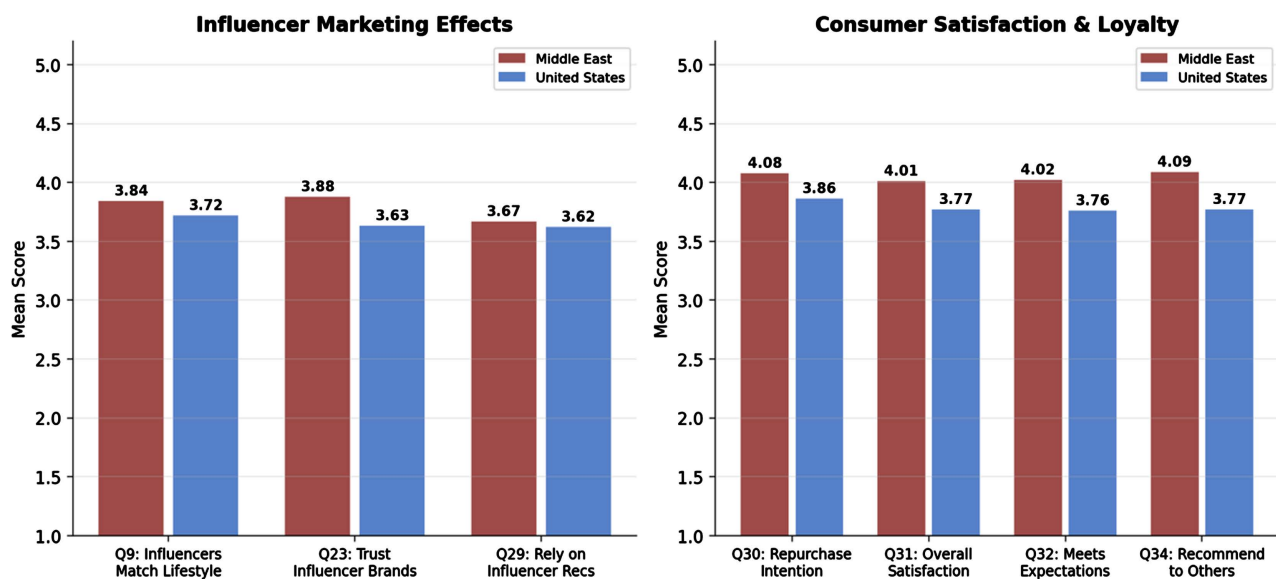


Figure 4. Comparison of influencer marketing effects, consumer satisfaction, and loyalty between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers.

In terms of consumer satisfaction and loyalty, Middle Eastern consumers consistently reported higher mean scores across all indicators. The Middle Eastern

group recorded mean scores of 4.08 on repurchase intention (Q30), 4.01 on overall satisfaction (Q31), 4.02 on meeting expectations (Q32), and 4.09 on brand recommendation (Q34). The corresponding scores for the U.S. group were 3.86, 3.77, 3.76, and 3.77 respectively.

These findings suggest that Middle Eastern consumers generally report stronger levels of satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to continue supporting the SHEIN platform. The results also indicate that influencer marketing may have a somewhat stronger impact among Middle Eastern consumers, although the differences are smaller than those observed for cultural adaptation and price-related factors.

5.3. Inferential Statistical Analysis

To determine whether the observed differences between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers were statistically significant, independent-samples t-tests were conducted using the composite scores of the three main constructs: cultural adaptation, consumer behavior, and marketing effectiveness (Table 1).

Table 1. Independent-samples t-test results for the three main constructs.

Construct	Middle East Mean	U. S. Mean	t(189)	p-value	Cohen's d
Cultural Adaptation	3.995	2.216	18.174	<0.001	2.638
Consumer Behavior	4.000	3.744	3.413	<0.001	0.494
Marketing Effectiveness	4.052	3.789	3.400	<0.001	0.492

The results revealed statistically significant differences between Middle Eastern and U.S. consumers across all three constructs. The largest difference was found in cultural adaptation, where Middle Eastern consumers reported substantially higher scores than U.S. consumers. The very large effect size ($d = 2.638$) suggests that cultural background plays a major role in shaping consumers' perceptions of cultural compatibility and cultural influence on purchasing decisions.

Significant differences were also observed in consumer behavior. Middle Eastern consumers reported higher scores on consumer behavior indicators than U.S. consumers, indicating stronger responses to price-related, emotional, and social influences during the purchasing process.

Similarly, marketing effectiveness scores were significantly higher among Middle Eastern consumers. The results indicate stronger satisfaction, repurchase intention, and willingness to recommend the SHEIN platform among consumers from the Middle East.

Overall, the inferential statistical analysis supports the descriptive findings presented in the previous sections and confirms that the observed differences between the two groups are statistically significant. These findings provide additional evidence that cultural background plays an important role in shaping con-

sumer behavior and responses to marketing strategies in cross-border e-commerce.

6. Discussion: Implications for SHEIN

The findings of this study suggest that consumers from different cultural backgrounds exhibit clear differences in values, consumption preferences, and brand perceptions. Consequently, it is difficult for SHEIN to rely on a single standardized marketing strategy across all international markets.

In the U.S. market, consumers tend to place greater emphasis on personal expression, fashion trends, and product novelty. American consumers generally show a relatively high acceptance of personalized recommendations and rapidly changing fashion trends. In contrast, Middle Eastern consumers place greater emphasis on cultural compatibility and social recognition, reporting significantly higher scores on cultural adaptation indicators. These findings suggest that companies entering the Middle Eastern market should pay closer attention to cultural adaptation. Product designs should align with local preferences and cultural expectations, while marketing content should avoid potential cultural conflicts and demonstrate respect for local values. This recommendation is also consistent with recent research highlighting the strategic importance of the Gulf market for SHEIN (Xu, 2025).

The findings also indicate that influencer marketing plays an important role in both markets. However, Middle Eastern consumers appear to place greater trust in influencers and social recommendations during the purchasing process. Therefore, cooperation with local KOLs, increased interaction with consumers, and stronger community engagement may further improve brand communication effectiveness and consumer identification.

One limitation of this study concerns the demographic composition of the sample. Female respondents accounted for 68.6% of the total sample. However, the gender distribution was highly comparable across the two regional groups (Middle East: 66 females and 30 males; United States: 65 females and 30 males). Therefore, the observed differences are unlikely to be explained solely by gender composition. Future studies may incorporate additional demographic control variables, such as age and income, to further isolate the independent influence of cultural factors on consumer behavior.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of cultural adaptation in cross-border e-commerce. For global brands such as SHEIN, balancing a consistent global brand identity with localized marketing strategies may represent an effective approach for improving consumer engagement and long-term competitiveness across culturally diverse markets.

7. Conclusion

This study explored the influence of cultural differences on consumer behavior in the context of cross-border e-commerce. By integrating Hofstede's cultural di-

mensions theory, consumer decision-making theory, and the AIDA model, the study examined consumer responses to SHEIN's marketing strategies among 191 consumers from the Middle East and the United States.

The results provide clear answers to the three research questions proposed in the introduction. First, Middle Eastern consumers demonstrated significantly higher levels of cultural adaptation perception than U.S. consumers, confirming that cultural background influences how consumers evaluate the compatibility between brands and local cultural values. Second, significant differences were identified in consumer behavior, indicating that Middle Eastern consumers are generally more responsive to price-related, emotional, and social influences during the purchasing process. Third, Middle Eastern consumers reported higher levels of marketing effectiveness, including satisfaction, repurchase intention, and willingness to recommend the brand.

The inferential statistical analysis further confirmed that these differences were statistically significant across the three major constructs examined in this study. The strongest difference was observed in cultural adaptation, suggesting that cultural factors play a particularly important role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions in cross-border e-commerce environments.

For cross-border e-commerce platforms such as SHEIN, cultural adaptation is no longer simply a marketing option but has become an important strategic requirement for sustainable international growth. Global brands must continue to balance a consistent brand image with localized marketing practices in order to better satisfy the needs of consumers in different cultural markets.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations, including the use of convenience sampling and the concentration of respondents within specific demographic groups. Future research may expand the sample scope, incorporate additional demographic control variables, and examine other international markets to further explore the relationship between culture and consumer behavior in cross-border e-commerce.

The findings also support Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory by demonstrating that consumers from collectivist and individualist cultural environments respond differently to marketing stimuli and brand communication strategies.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix: Questionnaire Items and Construct Mapping

All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The composite mean for each construct was calculated by averaging the scores of all items listed under that construct.

Cultural Adaptation

- Q13: Products fit local cultural customs.
- Q24: Brand values match local culture.
- Q44: Cultural background affects purchasing decisions.
- Q45: Social circle influences purchasing decisions.

Consumer Behavior

- Q14: Price is a major factor in purchasing decisions.
- Q18: I trust online reviews before purchasing.
- Q21: I am emotionally attracted to products promoted online.
- Q23: I trust brands recommended by influencers.
- Q27: Discounts influence my purchasing decisions.
- Q29: I rely on influencer recommendations when shopping.
- Q35: I prefer SHEIN over competing brands.

Marketing Effectiveness

- Q30: I intend to purchase from SHEIN again.
- Q31: I am satisfied with my overall shopping experience.
- Q32: SHEIN meets my expectations.
- Q34: I would recommend SHEIN to others.

Composite scores were calculated as the arithmetic mean of all items included in each construct.