

How Does the Co-branding of Fashion and Artists in a Masstige Way Influence Consumer Attitudes Toward the Fashion Brand?

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Abstract: Co-branding in a masstige way has emerged as a popular brand strategy, believed to benefit both allied brands. While some fashion brands have already adopted this strategy, there needs to be more research on co-branding with artists in a masstige way. This study employs a quantitative research design using questionnaires to examine the viability of Joint Brand Evaluation, Brand Match Evaluation, Consumer Involvement level, and Single Brand Attitude. The analysis is grounded in psychological theories and the masstige theory. The findings indicate that brand culture and value positively affect fashion brands after collaborating with artists in a masstige way. However, this study does not find support for the effect of consumer involvement, and the status consumption effect is insignificant in this model. These results have important implications for brand managers seeking to select artists as partners for masstige co-branding and researchers interested in exploring this area.

Keywords: consumer attitudes, fashion brand, co-branding

1. Introduction

The first fashion co-brand was the Souper Dress, created by Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí [1]. Due to its unique fashion style and indescribable design, this dress received many favorable comments. Co-branding can be seen as a strategic alliance, as a successful brand partnership can result in excellent brand promotion. To a certain extent, co-branding involves two brands exchanging their symbolic value to attract customers at different levels. According to Doshi, co-branding can increase brand value, expand brand influence, add value, share resources, and combine the strengths of each brand to attract more target customers and create new product lines. For instance, the luxury brand LV collaborated with the fashion brand Supreme to release a clothing series, attracting new customers for both brands.

Brand alliances can create synergies [2]. However, compared to a single brand, brand alliances require more attention to matching brands, as the alliance's performance can affect the original brand. Most literature has examined brand alliances from the company's viewpoint, which makes it challenging to answer the question of consumers' attitudes toward the original brand after a brand alliance from their perspective.

In reality, masstige co-branding is based on the idea of “enjoying” [3]. For example, the luxury brand Gucci offers customers an exceptional, unique, and extraordinary experience. At the same

time, Adidas, GAZELLE, and SAMBA are recognized as “the sneaker that defined 90s British rock” by the media. Both brands aim to provide customers with the same enjoyable and desirable emotion, creating a solid connection between customers and the brand, referred to as a self-brand connection [4]. When the self-brand connection is high, consumers are likely to have higher levels of brand attachment [5]. Another study shows that brand dilution is less prevalent among those with a high self-brand connection. Customers with high brand connections tend to connect their identity with the brand image, resulting in a positive attitude toward the brand they connect with [6]. Therefore, for luxury masstige brands, co-branding can have a positive impact. Luxury brands can attract more customers from the fashion industry and create new product lines through these collaborations.

The relationship between co-branding, consumer attitude, and brand image has theoretical and practical value. It is a critical dimension of brand communication, and companies need to understand how to create synergy in brand alliances. This paper investigates how co-branding between fashion and artists in a masstige way influences consumer attitudes toward the fashion brand.

2. Hypothesis Development

2.1. The Brand Culture Effect

Masstige brand managers combine two brands to add brand value while maintaining their competitiveness in the overall market [7]. This can be achieved through brand extension, product line extension, or brand alliance. Co-branding involves combining the characteristics of two or more different brands to create a new brand, and customers are likely to transfer their feelings from the original brands [8]. So from the consumer psychology perspective, when a brand cooperates with an artist, it must also consider whether the artist's image matches the brand image. Based on the information integration theory, people combine all existing information, including attitude, comments, and memory, to produce the final evaluation of a brand. When new stimulation occurs, the evaluation will also be impacted by it. Therefore, the customer's attitude towards a new luxury brand that has cooperated with an artist will be based on their previous attitude towards each brand and the artist. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Because fashion brands and artists share similar cultural attributes, the customer's perception of the fashion brand stays the same or is enhanced when the brand is co-branded with the artist using the new luxury strategy

2.2. The Brand Value Effect in a Masstige Way

Fierce competition and the high cost of entering new markets drive companies to use non-traditional strategies such as brand alliances in a masstige way. This strategy involves leveraging the intangible assets of two existing brands [9], where the positive associations of the existing brand, such as value, image, and visibility, are transferred to the new brand. Masstige brands are a new way to explain brand match, with the concept based on conflicting elements such as luxury and affordability, exclusivity, and accessibility [10]. This approach allows brands to increase profits, create new product lines, and attract new customer segments [11].

According to the Stereotype theory, customers hold onto their original opinions when encountering a new brand after a brand alliance. Therefore, the original brand value is also transferred to the new brand. For each product, people may have a more positive attitude towards two high-equity brands co-branding than co-branding strategies involving a low-equity brand matched with a high-equity brand. Based on this, this study postulate:

H2: Because both fashion brands and artists have high-value attributes, the association of fashion brands and artists positively impacts fashion brands.

2.3. Status Consumption Effect Based on Empathy Effect and Stereotypes Theory

Previous studies have shown that the main difference between single branding and co-branding with an artist lies in collaboration. Therefore, the artist's effect on consumers' attitudes toward the host brand depends, to a certain extent, on how consumers evaluate the artist. Since the artist is considered an "other" and a "specific object," based on these theories, customers' attitudes towards the brand and the artist will transfer to the new co-branded product when a luxury brand collaborates with an artist. From the customers' perspective, these inherent perceptions will help them evaluate whether the new co-branded product suits them.

In some explanation, fashion brands and artists have the same effect on consumers showing their status in exceptional cases. The desire for status consumption is a critical factor that drives people to consume luxury brands. High-status consumers consider the luxury brand value and price equally important, and luxury brands are typically characterized by expensive price points and conspicuous logos [12]. Given that both luxury brands and artists are known for their high-status symbolic effect, we posit the following hypothesis:

H3: Because fashion brands and artists have a similar high-status symbolic effect, they positively impact fashion brands following their association.

3. Methodology

This study aims to observe customers' attitudes towards luxury brands when they form a brand alliance with artists. In order to control for the influence of other factors, this study uses a questionnaire method to explore the relationship between variables. The questionnaire for this study was designed with 29 questions. The questionnaire has three parts: the first part is an introduction that explains the requirements and provides basic information. The second part is the main body, which includes questions about brand attitude, co-branding attitude, brand matching, and consumer involvement level. The third part includes personal information about the participants, such as gender, age, marital status, education level, career, industry, and disposable monthly income. This study uses the Likert Scale to analyze - the tester's response to their level of agreement with the relevant indicators in the questionnaire. A score of 1 indicates disagreement, and 5 indicates complete agreement.

4. Result

This study utilized a web-based questionnaire to collect data from February 22, 2023, to February 28, 2023. A total of 308 questionnaires were returned and included in the analysis. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 27.0 software to test the research hypotheses.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The data show that individuals with a higher level of education, particularly females, are more familiar with fashion brands and artists. Additionally, those who work in international companies are more likely to pay attention to fashion brands and artists. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, which were above 0.7. These results are discussed in detail below.

4.1.1. Essential Characteristics of the Sample Population

The study found that out of the 308 respondents, 185 were female, and 119 were male. The majority of respondents, 75.66%, were aged between 18-33, which supports the notion that female consumers tend to pay more attention to fashion brands and have a stronger tendency towards luxury con-

sumption at a younger age. In addition, 88.48 percent of the respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher, indicating that high levels of education enabled them to understand the questionnaire better. The data also revealed that fashion brands and artists are more prevalent among individuals with higher levels of education. Furthermore, almost 75% of the respondents were employed, with 37.5% working for international companies. This suggests that individuals who work in a diverse environment are more attracted to fashion brands. Finally, 39.47% of respondents worked in the fashion or art industry, indicating a greater interest in brand alliances in these fields and a deeper understanding of this strategy.

4.1.2. Descriptive Statistics of the Scale Items

The reliability of all the questionnaire structures was checked to investigate the relationship between fashion brands and artists. The results showed that all questionnaires were reliable, with Cronbach's alpha values for Joint Brand Evaluation, Brand Match Evaluation, Consumer Involvement level, and LV Brand Attitude at 0.894, 0.817, 0.776, and 0.820, respectively. Higher Cronbach's alpha values indicate a more significant correlation between each question item of the measured variable, indicating higher internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value for each section of the questionnaire was above 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale measuring each variable. No significant change in the alpha coefficient value was observed after excluding individual question items, suggesting that the internal consistency of the question items with the variables as a whole is high and unsuitable for exclusion. The scale used in this article is based on scales developed by many researchers, with suitable changes for this study, ensuring high content validity. The KMO values for Joint Brand Evaluation, Brand Match Evaluation, Consumer Involvement level, and LV Brand Attitude were 0.841, 0.766, 0.745, and 0.834, respectively, indicating good scale validity, as all values were above 0.7.

Based on the average score, respondents were found to be familiar with LV x Yayoi Kusama, as the average score for each variable was above 3.5. However, the score for joint brand evaluation was lower than for brand match evaluation. This suggests that respondents believed LV and Yayoi Kusama shared some brand concepts, but the collaboration needed to meet their expectations. Consumer involvement level scores were almost all above 3.7, and Q3_4 and Q3_5 were close to 4, indicating that consumers are more involved with the luggage area, and luggage brands may have a symbolic status effect.

4.2. Main Effects Model Analysis

This section uses correlation analysis, regression analysis, and validation analysis of moderating variables to test all data to verify three hypotheses. The result finds that each variable in the questionnaire has a strong correlation and causality except consumer involvement level. The result finds that consumer involvement level does not have causality in the primary effect model. It only has a strong correlation with each part of the questionnaire. Finally, H1 and H2 are supported by data, and data do not support H3.

4.2.1. Correlation Analysis

To investigate the relationship between each variable, we computed the correlation coefficient. As shown in Table 3, each variable exhibits a significant correlation coefficient at a significance level of 0.01. Brand match attitude and LV brand attitude strongly correlate with joint brand evaluation, with Pearson coefficients of 0.819 and 0.719, respectively. This suggests that a more positive perception of the joint brand corresponds to a more significant approval of the co-brand culture fit and the cultures of the individual brands, resulting in a higher rating for the separate brand following the

brand alliance. This finding supports hypothesis H1, which posits that the customer's perception of the fashion brand remains the same or is enhanced when co-branded with an artist who shares similar cultural attributes, using the new luxury strategy.

Similarly, consumer involvement level and LV brand attitude correlate significantly with brand match evaluation, with Pearson coefficients of 0.546 and 0.632, respectively. This indicates that more excellent knowledge of the joint brand and the market situation for the product leads to a more favorable rating for the separate brand following the brand alliance. This result supports our hypothesis H2, which argues that the association of fashion brands and artists, both of which possess high-value attributes, positively impacts fashion brands.

4.2.2. Regression Analysis

Correlation analysis only can explain the variable's correlation degree. So we use regression analysis to find out the causal relationship between variables. The correlation analysis result shows a significant positive correlation between Joint Brand Evaluation, Brand Match Evaluation, and LV Brand Attitude. Based on the research hypothesis, we set joint brand evaluation as the dependent variable, Brand Match Evaluation, and LV Brand Attitude as the independent variable. As a result, F-test observations are 419.539 and $p < 0.01$. So this result shows a linear relationship between a dependent and two independent variables. The main effects ANOVA as shown in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the constant was 0.075, and the two independent variables' coefficients were 0.592 and 0.366. The p for the Regression coefficient's t-test is also less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). This result shows that the coefficient is reliable and has a significant value. The linear regression equation is:

$$y = 0.075 + 0.592x_1 + 0.266x_2 \quad (1)$$

According to the linear regression equation, the brand match evaluation variable has a max impact.

4.2.3. Validation Analysis of Moderating Variables

To verify the moderating effect of consumer involvement level in the main effect model, use the crossover variables (Brand Match Evaluation x consumer Involvement level) to test it. The regression equation is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \gamma X x X \quad (2)$$

Y is Joint Brand Evaluation; X is Brand Match Evaluation, x is Consumer Involvement level; α , β , γ are coefficient.

Using Hierarchical moderated regression to analyze the result is in Table 3. From the analysis result, p-value of interaction variables is 0.108, more significant than 0.05. The data do not support the moderating effect of consumer involvement in the brand main effect model. So although consumer involvement has a strong relationship with brand match evaluation and joint brand evaluation, they do not have a causality relationship. It can therefore be inferred that the status consumption effect is not significant in the main effect model. Finally, more is needed to validate the research hypothesis H3.

Table 1: Main effects ANOVA^a.

Model		Sum Squares	Of Degree Freedom	Of Mean Square	F	Significance
1	Regression	136.315	2	68.157	419.539	<.001b
	Residual error	48.25	297	0.162		
	Total	184.565	299			

a. Dependent variable: Joint Brand Evaluation

b. Prediction variable: (constant) LV Brand Attitude, Brand Match Evaluation

Table 2: Main effects ANOVA^a coefficient.

Model		Understudied Coefficient		Coefficient of Standardization		
		Coeffi- cient	Standard De- viation	Coefficient	t	Sig.
1	(constant)	0.075	0.129		0.577	0.564
	Brand Match Evaluation	0.592	0.037	0.608	15.889	<.001
	LV Brand At- titude	0.366	0.042	0.334	8.74	<.001

a. Dependent variable: Joint Brand Evaluation

Table 3: Result of hierarchical moderated regression.

Consumer Involvement level		Understandarized Co-efficient		Coefficient of Standardization		
Model		Coefficient	Standard Devia-tion	Coefficient	t	Sig.
1	(constant)	0.68	0.122		5.556	<.001
	Brand Match Evaluation	0.798	0.032	0.819	24.672	<.001
2	(constant)	0.393	0.147		2.668	0.008
	Brand Match Evaluation	0.728	0.038	0.748	19.186	<.001
3	Brand Match Evaluation	0.144	0.043	0.131	3.373	<.001
	(constant)	0.313	0.155		2.017	0.045
	Brand Match Evaluation	0.731	0.038	0.751	19.293	<.001
	Consumer Involvement level	0.158	0.044	0.144	3.639	<.001
	Brand Match Evaluation x Brand Match Evalua-tion	0.048	0.03	0.055	1.611	0.108

a. Dependent variable: Joint Brand Evaluation

5. Discussion

The results indicate that brand culture and brand value have a direct positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward the fashion brand. In contrast, consumer involvement does not have a significant

intermediary effect. Similar brand values positively influence consumer attitudes, but masstige co-branding also risks commoditizing fashion brands [13]. To counteract this risk, the article proposes that brands can provide customer satisfaction through their brand culture. When both the fashion brand and artist share similar values and can evoke the same feelings in customers, the customers' attitude towards the co-branded brand is influenced by each brand in the brand alliance group. If the connection between the two brands needs to be more vital to reveal the resources or link between them, customers cannot judge the co-branded brand. Therefore, when fashion brands cooperate with artists in a masstige strategy, they should carefully select highly regarded artists who can enhance customers' judgment.

According to associative learning theory and stereotype theory, well-known and high-valued brands can create a positive image in customers' minds. When a brand is allied with an almost unknown or less familiar brand, people tend to extend the associations' network of the first brand to the second partner and new co-branded brand [14]. Customers tend to choose high-valued brands because they believe that high-valued brands always provide good products to protect their value and trust. Customers' attitudes towards co-branded brands are often judged by the products' price [15]. Van and Janiszewski propose a self-learning model to explain how brand value affects product quality [16]. According to their study, the self-learning model produces a blocking effect, and when customers find reliable resources to judge a brand, they will stop receiving any information from outside. Therefore, when fashion brands cooperate with artists, customers transfer their memory from a single brand to a co-branded brand. Both are high-value brands, so customers can judge the co-branded and single brands.

The analysis shows that the variable of consumer involvement needs to be supported, possibly due to inconsistencies in the brand's target customer groups. Therefore, making customers focus on the same concept is more important. As noted in previous research, fashion brands and artists must make a different connection than the usual concept. This may also be a barrier preventing customers from understanding the fashion brand after the brand alliance in a masstige way. This result suggests that customers may want to pay less attention to choosing one brand or an artist or may already have a strong connection with the fashion brand or artist.

6. Conclusion

This study found that brand culture and value positively affect fashion brands after collaborating with artists in a masstige way. However, the data did not support the status consumption effect. Therefore, when fashion brands collaborate with artists in a masstige way, they should pay more attention to whether the brand values are equivalent and whether the brand clientele is consistent.

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