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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Many brands can possess strong gender identity: Marlboro for masculine images and Channel for feminine images. Over the years, there has been a growing trend of cross-gender extensions among brands, partly due to the unisex trend in consumer goods. This study examines consumers’ evaluations of cross-gender extensions in an attempt to identify conditions for successful cross-gender extensions. The results show that the gender of a brand, gender of consumers, and product type influence the evaluation of cross-gender extensions.

INTRODUCTION

There are many brands in the marketplace that possess gender identities (Allison, Golden, Mullet, and Coogan 1979; Alreck, Settle, and Belch 1982). They can be stereotyped as either masculine or feminine. Some examples include Chanel, Hugo Boss, Marlboro, and Virginia Slims.

One advantage of these gendered brands is that they leverage on their masculine or feminine associations to attract the male or female consumers respectively. However, this strong association with a particular gender could be a hindrance for brands trying to extend beyond their traditional market segment. As a result, some companies choose to target the opposite gender segment by using different brand names. For example, Philip Morris uses the brand name ‘Marlboro’ for targeting men and ‘Virginia Slims’ to reach out to women (Alreck, Settle, and Belch 1982; McCracken 1993). Similarly, Estee Lauder uses its own brand of fragrance to target its female customers while a separate brand name, ‘Aramis’, is used to target male customers (Fortune 1998).

However, a major disadvantage of using this approach is cost. The cost of introducing a new brand in some consumer markets has been estimated to range from $10 million to more than $200 million (Kotler and Armstrong 2004). In order to deflect the high cost of launching new products, an extension strategy could be employed. In addition to the advantage of lower costs, using an extension strategy also allows the company to leverage on the current brand associations to build brand equity (Aaker 1991). In 1990, an estimated 81 percent of new products introduced were extensions (Keller 1998). This further testifies to the attractiveness of using an extension strategy of gendered brands.

Extending the same brand name to target the opposite sex (cross gender extension for short) is not a new phenomenon. There is a history of masculine brands launching an extension to reach out to women in the domain of traditional masculine products. Examples of cross-gender extensions by masculine brands include Levi’s and Gillette in jeans and razors respectively. However, there is a recent trend of companies extending their feminine brands to target men. For example, Estee Lauder initially launched “Pleasures” for ladies as a perfume with a soft and feminine appeal with Elizabeth Hurley as the celebrity endorser. However, “Pleasures” was later extended into the men’s segment directly under the Estee Lauder corporate brand (Marketing Week 1998). This represents a departure from the traditional branding strategies of Estee Lauder of using separate brand names to target the different gender segments. Another prominent example is the attempt by Triumph International to launch an extension into male swimwear from its original offerings of female swimwear. What is seen here is a growing trend of companies using the same brand name to target the opposite sex segment. In recognition of the vast advantages of using the extension strategy, it is crucial for marketers to know under what conditions a cross gender extension can be successful. It is the objective of this study to find such conditions.

BACKGROUND

Gender Stereotyping of Brands

According to Wrightsman (1977), a stereotype is “a relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labelled with the so-called group characteristics.” Children in every society need to learn their roles and the behaviours that go with them. They need to learn what a child, a student, a brother/sister, son/daughter, man/woman should do. Thus, sex roles refer to the expectations of what a man and a woman should do by society. Combining the concept of stereotypes and the concept of gender roles, gender stereotypes refer to the rigidly held and oversimplified beliefs that men and women, by virtue of their gender, possess distinct psychological traits and characteristics. Such overgeneralizations tend to be widely shared by a particular society or culture. In the past, both men and women have had certain sex role requirements as well as prohibitions (Alreck 1994). For instance, a man had to be strong, tough minded, and decisive, while a woman was expected to be nurturing, lady-like, and put the family first.

Similar to cultural or country stereotypes, gender stereotypes should influence the perception and judgment of any object, including consumer products and brands (Alreck, Settle and Belch, 1982). Keller (1998) also argues that some brands in the marketplace possess certain gender-specific associations so that consumers associate the individual brand’s user as specifically from either sex. A sample categorization of masculine and feminine brands in various product categories is provided in Table 1. The list is not exhaustive. However, it shows that gendered brands are not restricted to the traditional domain of fashion and beauty products. They are found in other product categories such as tobacco and toys.

Perception of Fit in Cross-Gender Extensions

Past studies in brand extension areas have found that the success of an extension depends on the perception of fit between the parent brand and the extended product category (Aaker and Keller 1990; Boush and Loken 1991; Keller 1998). The greater the perception of fit between the two, the more easily the positive associations of the parent brand are transferred to the extension, thus increasing the chance of success in the extension. Greater fit perception will have a positive impact on consumers’ evaluation of the extension (Aaker and Keller 1990) as well as on their attitude towards the parent brand (Loken and John 1993).

Although the perception of fit could be formed by various factors, past studies have identified two major bases for more successful fits: product feature similarity and brand image or concept consistency (Park, Milberg, and Lawson 1991; Bhat and Reddy 1998). Park, Milberg, and Lawson (1991) suggested that evaluations of brand extensions depend on the degree of overall
perceived fit between the extension product and the brand name. The degree of overall perceived fit is, then, a function of both product-feature similarity perceptions and brand-concept-consistency perceptions. Product feature similarity perceptions are derived by feature correlations or attribute matches from feature level comparisons. Brand concept consistency perceptions are formed by the image fit between the extension product and the brand (i.e., how well the brand concept accommodates the extension product).

In cross-gender extensions, the main concern for marketers would be brand image fit. This is because product feature similarity in cross-gender extension is not significantly important since the extension is in the same product category and shares the same features. The most critical aspect is a brand’s perceived masculinity or femininity. For example, when Triumph extends into male swimwear, the key issue is whether men will accept the feminine image of Triumph on their swimwear. In essence, the focus of this study is on assessing brand image fit between cross-gender extensions.

**Gender of Brand and Evaluation of Cross-Gender Extensions**

According to studies in gender stereotyping, masculine traits tend to be regarded higher than traditional feminine traits (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz 1972; Ashmore, DelBoca, and Wohler 1986). Being strong, independent, and willing to take risks are seen more positively than being weak, gullible, and easily influenced. This difference in values may result in a greater desirability for masculine traits in society.

Since a brand is used as an expression of one’s personality (Aaker 1996), the greater social desirability for masculine traits would be manifested in the choice of products as well as brands by consumers. This line of argument is consistent with the study by Alreck, Settle, and Belch (1982) which suggested that men will almost reject feminine brands while women will most likely accept masculine brands.

Stuteville (1971) also suggested that it is easier for a male-oriented product to attract females than the reverse situation. This is because society labels a boy who acts like a girl as a “sissy” boy while a girl who acts like a boy is called as a “tomboy”. The latter is much easier for a girl to accept than the former is of a boy. Like products, a brand can also be an avenue to express one’s masculinity/femininity (McCracken 1993). Given that it is more difficult for a female-oriented product to attract males, it follows that it is more difficult for a feminine brand to attract males than the reverse situation.

Based on the casual order of consumers’ evaluations of brand extension as examined earlier, the following hypotheses are suggested to predict easier acceptance of an extension from a masculine brand than an extension from a feminine brand:

**H1:** Compared to a cross-gender extension from a feminine brand, a cross-gender extension from a masculine brand will result in:
(a) greater perception of brand image fit,  
(b) greater perception of overall fit,  
(c) more positive attitude towards the extension, and  
(d) more positive attitude towards the original brand.

**Gender of Consumer and Evaluation of Cross-Gender Extensions**

Gender stereotyping studies suggest that men and women perceive sex roles differently, with men holding a more unfavorable view towards femininity (Lii and Wong 1982; Smith and Midlarsky 1985; Werner and LaRusso 1985). Based on the concept that consumers use brands as an expression of their personalities, men and women are predicted to react differently when they encounter cross-gender extensions.

Alreck, Settle, and Belch (1982) found that men tend to exaggerate the differences in brands more markedly than women. Men are found to perceive a masculine brand to be more masculine and a feminine brand to be more feminine. They also suggested that compared to women, men tend to find their sexual identity in the material goods they buy and use. This implies that, compared to a woman, it would be more difficult for a man to accept an extension from a feminine brand if it contradicts to his masculine gender identity.

On the other hand, Lull, Hanson, and Marx (1977) found that women were more sensitive and critical of sex-role stereotyping than men. Thus, women tend to be more responsive to gender crossing than men because they prefer to adhere less to the traditional sex role prescriptions. This is opposed to men who have a more rigid definition of their male sex roles. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested when predicting the possible differences between men and women towards cross-gender extensions:

**H2:** In evaluating cross-gender extensions, compared to men, women will have:
(a) greater perception of brand image fit,  
(b) greater perception of overall fit,  
(c) more positive attitude towards the extension, and  
(d) more positive attitude towards the original brand.

**Product Type and Evaluation of Cross-Gender Extensions**

Product types may play an important role in consumers’ evaluation of brand extensions. Since image fit is more important in cross-gender extensions, the acceptance of cross-gender

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**TABLE 1**

Examples of Gendered Brands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Masculine Brands</th>
<th>Feminine Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fragrance</td>
<td>Aramis, Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Estee Lauder, Elizabeth Arden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty care products</td>
<td>Clinique</td>
<td>L’oreal, Lancome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Marlboro</td>
<td>Virginia Slims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Hugo Boss, Arrow</td>
<td>Chanel, Laura Ashley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergarments / Negligee</td>
<td>Byford</td>
<td>Victoria Secret, Triumph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>Lego</td>
<td>Barbie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
extensions would be influenced depending on whether the product type is image-oriented or function-oriented. Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis’s (1986) conceptualization of functional and symbolic brand concept is useful in examining product type effect in cross-gender extensions. With symbolic products, the benefits sought are more extrinsic in nature and usually correspond to non-product related attributes, especially user imagery. Symbolic benefits relate to underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and outer-directed self-esteem (Solomon, 1983). Thus, getting the wrong symbolic product could result in high social and psychological risk.

In the case of functional products, the benefits sought are more intrinsic in nature and usually correspond to product-related attributes. Functional benefits are often linked to basic motivations such as physiological and safety needs, and often involve a desire to satisfy problem removal or avoidance (Fennell, 1978). Such products have a lower level of social and psychological risks when compared with symbolic products.

Since the main concern for cross-gender extensions is the image incongruence between masculinity and femininity, a symbolic product which offers emotional and self-expressive benefits is likely to experience more difficulties than functional products. To explore the differences between these two categories of products in cross-gender extensions, the third hypothesis is formed:

H3: Compared to a symbolic product category, a cross-gender extension in a functional product category would result in:
(a) greater perception of brand image fit,
(b) greater perception of overall fit,
(c) more positive attitude towards the extension, and
(d) more positive attitude towards the original brand.

**METHOD**

**Experimental Design and Subjects**

A 2 (product type: symbolic vs. functional) x 2 (direction of cross-gender extension: masculine to feminine vs. feminine to masculine) x 2 (gender of subject: male vs. female) factorial between subject design was used in this study to test the proposed hypotheses. A total of 233 undergraduate students participated in this study. Among them, 124 (53.2%) were male and 109 (46.8%) were female students.

**Experimental Stimuli**

**Selection of Product Categories.**

Two product categories, one represents the symbolic product category and the other represents the functional product category, were selected through the following procedure. First, a list of product categories where gender crossing of a brand is a relevant phenomenon was identified. Considering the technical feasibility of cross-gender extensions (the sanitary product category, for example, was not considered in this regard because men never use it) and actual existence of both masculine and feminine brand names in the product category, twelve product categories were identified. They were fragrance, shampoo, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, high-end fashion, undergarments, swimwear, magazines, shoes, sportswear, spectacles, and hair gel/spray.

Second, each product category was evaluated in terms of performance and social/psychological risks to select a functional and a symbolic product category (Friedman and Friedman 1979). A symbolic product is meant to satisfy the emotional and self-expressive benefits. A consumer buys a symbolic product to enhance one’s self-image among others. For example, a consumer does not buy an expensive dress just to satisfy the basic function of clothing. Rather, she buys it to keep or improve one’s self image as perceived by others. Thus, a symbolic product has a high level of social and psychological risks and a low level of performance risk. On the other hand, getting a wrong functional product will not incur much social and psychological risk because it is meant to satisfy the basic utilitarian function of the product. The consumer would judge a functional product primarily in terms of how well it functions. For example, a consumer would be more worried that a vacuum cleaner does not work rather than whether it fits well with his/her image. Thus a functional product has a high level of performance risk and a low level of social and psychological risks based on the above classification of perceived risks.

Thirteen undergraduates took part in a pretest to evaluate the risks associated with the twelve product categories on a seven-point scale (e.g., 1=“very unlikely” and 7=“very likely”). For each product, ratings of the social and psychological risks were averaged out and the mean was compared with performance risk. Hair gel/spray was selected to represent a functional product type because of its highest level of performance risk (4.43) and relatively low level of social/psychological risk (3.26). High-end fashion was selected to represent a symbolic product type with its highest level of social/psychological risk (4.53) and relatively low level of performance risk (2.93).

**Selection of Gendered Brands.**

The pairs of masculine and feminine brands were chosen from the two product categories of high-end fashion and hair gel/spray based on the following criteria. First, the brands should be strongly identified with either of the gender images. Second, the chosen pair of brands for each product type should be equivalent in terms of subjects’ familiarity with and attitudes towards the two brand names. This would allow a fair comparison of the cross-gender extendibility between the masculine and the feminine brand.

With the selection criteria in mind, a potential list of brands was identified first by the researcher. Thirty undergraduate students were then asked to rate each brand in terms of its gender image, attitude, and familiarity. Gender images of the brands were measured on a set of seven semantic scales with seven intervals between the two bipolar adjectives (e.g., large-small, harsh-gentle, masculine-feminine, strong-weak, rough-smooth, etc.) The scale was adapted from Alreck, Settle, and Belch (1982). Attitude and familiarity were measured by a seven-point scale (very unattractive-very attractive; very unfamiliar-very familiar).

Hugo Boss and Chanel were selected as a masculine brand and a feminine brand for high-end fashion product category. They were different in gender image (3.13 vs. 5.05, t=12.28, p<.01) but not significantly different in attitude (5.44 vs. 5.44, t=0.00, p>.10) and familiarity (5.41 vs. 5.52, t=.42, p>.10). Gatzby and Sifone were selected as a masculine brand and a feminine brand for hair gel/spray product category. They were also different in gender image (3.36 vs. 5.26, t=6.38, p<.01) but not significantly different in attitude (4.04 vs. 4.11, t=0.21, p>.10) and familiarity (5.30 vs. 5.41, t=.32, p>.10).

**Manipulation of gender crossing extensions.**

The gender crossing extensions of each brand were manipulated by providing a scenario that announced an extension to target the opposite gender group. For example, the scenario used for the high-end fashion product category is as follows:

“Hugo Boss (Channel) is now a leading men’s (women’s) fashion brand name in the high end fashion category. Delighted with the success of its men’s (Women’s) fashion line, the top management of Hugo Boss (Channel) decides that it is time to take full advantage of this success. It decides to capitalize on
the strength of the Hugo Boss (Channel) brand name in the high end fashion category by launching a new product line—Hugo Boss Ladies (Chanel for men) to target female (male) consumers. Examples of the new product line include dress, jacket and blouse for women (shirts, pants and jackets for men).”

Dependent Measures

Four dependent variables were measured in this study: perception of overall fit, perception of brand image fit, attitude toward the extension, and attitude toward the original brand. Perception of overall fit was measured using four 7-point Likert scales adopted from Bhat and Reddy (1997). Degrees of agreement were measured with the following four statements: “The introduction of the extension makes sense,” “The extension seems logical,” “The extension would be a good example of the brand,” and “The extension would be typical of the brand.” The items showed a good reliability measure (alpha=.93).

Seven items for perception of brand image fit were adopted from Bhat and Reddy (1997). The items include the scales measuring generic aspects of brand image fit (e.g., fit with subject’s idea and image, similar images, conveys same impressions), symbolic concept consistency (e.g., the user of the extension as stylish as user of brand, the extension makes same statements about users) and functional concept consistency (e.g., the extension as practical as brand, the extension makes same statements about users) and overall image consistency (e.g., the extension as practical as brand) and produced a relatively good level of reliability (alpha=.89).

Attitude toward the extension was measured using three 7-point Likert scales (e.g., good, likable, pleased) adopted from Park, Milberg and Lawson (1991). Attitude toward the original brand was measured using four 7-point semantic differential scales (e.g., good-bad, like-dislike, favorable-unfavorable, positive-negative) adopted from Holbrook and Batra (1987). Both items turned out to be reliable items (alpha=.94 and .96 respectively).

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Although product categories and brands were carefully selected based on pretest results, perceived risks associated with the product categories and the perception of gender image of the brands were measured to check manipulation using the same scales used in the pretests. First, the manipulation of product type turned out to be successful. It was found that hair gel/spray had a significantly higher level of performance risk than high-end fashion (4.87 vs. 3.44, t=-2.358, p<0.05). In terms of social/psychological risk, high-end fashion was rated significantly higher than hair gel/spray (4.90 vs. 3.50, t=7.412, p<0.01).

The choice of the gendered brands also turned out to be successful. There were significant differences between Hugo Boss and Chanel (3.40 vs. 5.06, t=12.29, p<0.01) as well as between Gatsby and Sifone (3.47 vs. 5.29, t=9.63, p<0.01) in the perception of gender image of the brands.

Initial attitudes towards the original brands were checked to evaluate possible confounding effects. It was found that respondents were equally favorable towards Hugo Boss and Chanel (5.15 vs. 4.94, t=1.17, p>0.10) as well as equally favorable towards Gatsby and Sifone (4.60 vs. 4.60, t=0.02, p>0.10). However, the initial attitude level of the symbolic product category (Hugo Boss and Chanel) was higher than that of the functional product category (Gatsby and Sifone). A t-test confirmed this difference (t=2.30, p<0.05). To remove the possible confounding effect from this difference in the initial attitude level between product categories, the initial attitude level was used as a covariate in the following analyses.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, MANOCOVA was first conducted using SPSS for Windows 11.0 with the initial attitude level as a covariate. The means for experimental conditions and the results of the multivariate are summarized in Table 2 and 3. MANOCOVA results show significant main effects of product type and gender of consumers, and a significant 2-way interaction effect between product type and gender of consumers.

The effects are further investigated using univariate analyses. Table 4 summarizes the univariate ANOVA results for all four dependent variables. First, although the main effect of gender-of-brand is not significant at the multivariate level, univariate analyses show a significant gender-of-brand main effect on the evaluation of cross-gender extensions. The image fit perception (3.81 vs. 3.44, t1, 231=2.19, p<.01 by one-tail test), overall fit perception (4.03 vs. 3.69, t1, 231=1.79, p<.05 by one-tail test) and attitude toward the extension (3.72 vs. 3.30, t1, 231=2.10, p<.05 by one-tail test) are higher for the masculine brand condition than the feminine brand condition, thus providing supporting evidences for H1(a), H1(b) and H1(c). Even though it fails to reach the conventional level of significance, the mean of the attitude towards the original brand is higher when the extension is made from the masculine brand to target female consumers than the other way round (4.22 vs. 3.95, t1, 231=1.58, p<.06 by one-tail test), providing a directional support for H1(d).

Next, the main effect of gender-of-consumer is significant on all dependent variables as predicted. The acceptance of cross-gender extension is higher for female subjects than for male subjects (3.85 vs. 3.43, t1, 231=2.78, p<.01 for perception of brand image fit by one-tail test; 4.09 vs. 3.65, t1, 231=2.34, p<.01 for overall image fit by one-tail test; 3.78 vs. 3.28, t1, 231=2.46, p<.01 for attitude toward extension by one-tail test; 4.41 vs. 3.80, t1, 231=3.57, p<.01 for attitude toward original brand). Thus, H2(a), H2(b), H2(c) and H2(d) are supported at all multivariate and univariate levels.

The main effect of product type is significant on all dependent variables except for the attitude toward original brand. The acceptance of cross-gender extension is higher for the functional product category condition than for the symbolic product category condition (3.79 vs. 3.46, t1, 231=2.19, p<.05 for perception of brand image fit by one-tail test; 4.14 vs. 3.58, t1, 231=3.02, p<.01 for overall image fit by one-tail test; 3.86 vs. 3.16, t1, 231=3.52, p<.01 for attitude toward extension by one-tail test; 4.19 vs. 3.98, t1, 231=1.18, p<.12 for attitude toward original brand by one-tail test). Thus, H3(a), H3(b), and H3(c) are supported, but not H3(d).

However, a directional support is found on the attitude toward original brand H3(d).

In addition to the significant main effects, a significant 2-way interaction effect between gender of consumer and product type is found on the perception of brand image fit (F1, 224=8.33, p<.01) and the attitude toward original brand (F1, 224=4.56, p<.01). Therefore, the interpretation of significant main effects of both the gender-of-consumer and the product type factors has to be made within in the relationship depicted in the interaction effect. The relationship is presented in Figure 1 and 2, and the detailed relationship is explained in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

This study examines consumers' evaluations of cross-gender extensions in an attempt to identify conditions for successful cross
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Gender extensions. Gender of the brand, gender of consumers, and product type are considered key conditional factors that may influence the success of cross gender extensions. It is found that all three factors do influence the evaluation of cross gender extensions. Key findings are summarized as follows. First, although it is not significant at the multivariate level, a significant main effect of the gender of brand (more specifically the direction of gender crossing) is observed on the three dependent variables related to the acceptance of cross-gender extension. As indicated by the results, the acceptance of a cross-gender extension is higher when an extension is made from a masculine brand to target female consumers than the other way round.

Second, significant main effects of the gender-of-consumer and the product type are also observed in the study. Women are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Means and Standard Deviations for Treatment Conditions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| | Extensions from Masculine Brand | Extension from Feminine Brand |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Men's Reaction | Women's Reaction | Men's Reaction | Women's Reaction |
| Symbolic Product | Cell size (n) | 32 | 26 | 31 | 27 |
| | Perception of overall fit | 3.43 (1.40) | 4.01 (1.20) | 3.21 (1.34) | 3.76 (1.75) |
| | Perception of brand image fit | 3.29 (1.19) | 4.08 (.87) | 2.88 (1.04) | 3.74 (1.25) |
| | Attitude toward extension | 3.01 (1.36) | 3.69 (1.67) | 2.70 (1.25) | 3.37 (1.89) |
| | Attitude toward original brand | 3.77 (1.51) | 4.59 (1.30) | 3.34 (1.17) | 4.39 (1.33) |
| Functional Product | Cell size (n) | 30 | 29 | 31 | 27 |
| | Perception of overall fit | 4.28 (1.37) | 4.44 (1.44) | 3.73 (1.31) | 4.13 (1.39) |
| | Perception of brand image fit | 4.02 (1.10) | 3.93 (1.19) | 3.56 (1.11) | 3.64 (1.00) |
| | Attitude toward extension | 4.10 (1.40) | 4.15 (1.70) | 3.36 (1.34) | 3.86 (1.24) |
| | Attitude toward original brand | 4.16 (1.21) | 4.46 (1.44) | 3.96 (1.17) | 4.19 (1.12) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MANOCOVA Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Pillai’s Trace</th>
<th>Wilks’ Lambda</th>
<th>Hotelling’s Trace</th>
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<td><strong>Main Effects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender of Brand</td>
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<td>.972</td>
<td>.029</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender of Consumer</td>
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<td>.946**</td>
<td>.057**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Type</td>
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<td>.931**</td>
<td>.074**</td>
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<td><strong>2-way Interactions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand x Consumer</td>
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<td>.990</td>
<td>.010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand x Product</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product x Consumer</td>
<td>.057**</td>
<td>.943**</td>
<td>.060**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3-way Interactions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand x Consumer x Product</td>
<td>.008</td>
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<td>.008</td>
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</table>

Note: *=p<.05, **=p<.01 (Initial attitude toward brand was used as a covariate)
found to be more receptive towards cross gender extensions than men. The acceptance of cross gender extensions is lower for the symbolic product category than for the functional product category. However, a significant 2-way interaction effect between the gender-of-consumer and the product type suggests a more complex picture on the relationships. It is observed that men’s perception of brand image fit of cross gender extensions is higher when the brand is from the functional product category rather than from the symbolic product category. On the other hand, women’s perceptions are not different whether the brand is from the symbolic product category, or from the functional product category. This pattern is also evident on the attitude toward the brand after extension. Although it is not significant, a similar pattern is observed on other dependent variables as well. Overall, men’s acceptance of a cross-gender extension is

### TABLE 4

Univariate ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Perception of Image Fit</th>
<th>Perception of Overall Fit</th>
<th>Attitude toward Extension</th>
<th>Attitude toward Original Brand</th>
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<td><strong>Main Effects</strong></td>
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<td>Gender of Brand</td>
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<td>6.28*</td>
<td>2.96(O)</td>
<td>3.94*</td>
<td>1.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender of Consumer</td>
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<td>7.73**</td>
<td>5.01*</td>
<td>5.46*</td>
<td>12.05**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Type</td>
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<td>4.43*</td>
<td>9.51**</td>
<td>14.54**</td>
<td>3.41(O)</td>
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<td><strong>2-way Interactions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand x Consumer</td>
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<td>.26</td>
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<td>Product x Consumer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.33**</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>4.56**</td>
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<td><strong>3-way Interactions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand x Consumer x Product</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
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Note: \(O\) = p<.10, *=p<.05, **=p<.01 (Initial attitude toward brand was used as a covariate)

### FIGURE 1

Interaction effect of product type and gender of consumer on the perception of brand image fit
found to be lower in the symbolic product category than in the functional product category compared to women. This finding is consistent with the past finding which suggests that men are more likely to find their sexual identity in the material goods they buy and use. Men are also more consistently defining their sexual identity in terms of external possessions. (Alreck, Settle and Belch 1982). In a symbolic product category, the gender image associated with a cross-gendered brand tends to become a salient attribute, thus, men would become more resistant than women to accept cross-gendered brands. On the other hand, the gender image associated with a brand tends to become a less salient attribute compared to other functional attributes in a functional product category. As a result, it may not become as influential as in a symbolic product category.

Third, the pattern of effects on the attitude towards the original brand after the extension mirrors that of the evaluation of the extension, although the effects are weaker. This may suggest that there is a positive correlation between evaluation of an extension and attitude towards the original brand. A possible explanation is that an incongruous extension not only affects the evaluation towards the extension, but it also affects consumers’ attitudes towards the brand itself. This explanation is consistent with past research findings (Aaker 1991).

The results of this study provide some useful implications to marketers who are considering cross gender extensions. Faced with a cross gender extension from an established gendered brand, marketers may want to know the conditions that could increase a chance of success in the extension. The findings of this study suggest that it would be easier for a masculine brand to extend to target female customers than the other way round. The chance of success would be further increased if the product category is a functional one. This explains why Gillette has successfully extended its shaving product lines to women customers.

However, the findings of this study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. Since university students were used in this study, it should be cautioned to generalize the result of this study to other populations. It has been suggested that demographic variables such as age also have an effect on an individual’s sex role perceptions, which in turn affects an individual’s perception of gender crossing. Another limitation of this study is that only one product category is used to represent each of the functional and the symbolic product categories. The results of this study should also be replicated in other product categories before generalizing the results in future studies.

REFERENCES
Cross-Gender Brand Extensions


