Analysis of the Influence of Crossover Co-branding of Clothing Brands on Brand Image

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Abstract: In recent years, "cross-industry marketing" has become a relatively mature way of brand expansion, transformation and promotion in the clothing industry. Co-branded brands have also become the main research objects of scholars. Cross-industry co-branding can create new brand value on the basis of existing brands, and find more market possibilities, thus expanding consumer groups and improving brand equity performance. The research theme of this paper is the influence of cross-industry co-branding of clothing brands on the image of co-branded brands, among which the influence of the fit degree between brands on the brand image. This paper solved this problem through qualitative research and take the form of questionnaire survey in the group design. It is found that the fit degree between brands has an impact on the brand image, and the brand image with high fit degree is better than the brand image with low fit degree. Consumers have better brand cognition and more positive brand image imagination for co-branded brands with high fit degree. Therefore, clothing marketing management personnel should pay more attention to the "fit" of the brand when selecting partners, and give priority to choosing brands with high fit, such as complementary functional attributes and consistent image attributes.

Keywords: co-branded brands, fit, brand image

1.   Introduction

"Crossover marketing" is a method of commercial cooperation between two or more brands with all participating brand names being retained [1]. Crossover marketing in the clothing industry has become a hot spot in recent years, for instance, clothing and comics, clothing and designers, high-end brands and fast selling brands, etc [2]. Co-branded brands have also become the main research object of scholars, particularly in the fields of brand marketing, brand image gets rich achievements [3]. The range of journals interested in this phenomenon reflects the marketing impact of co-branding alliances [4]. Crossover co-branding can break the inherent stereotypes and display a more unique brand image in the market by integrating new elements on the basis of existing brands. Under the influence of co-branded brands, it is possible to achieve broader market goals due to changes in "perceived buyer value" [4]. However, with the deep of crossover co-branding, the disadvantages are gradually revealed. Not all the crossover co-branding of clothing brands can achieve the expected goals. Some crossover co-branding does not have the same effect because of the low "fit" between partners and joint brands.

The existing literature on the study of co-branded brands is mainly consumer-oriented, while the research on how the degree of fit creates the brand image of co-branded brands is still limited. Predecessors studied the measures and corporate effects of co-industry brand co-branding, and focus more on the perspective of consumers [4]. Although focusing on positive attitudes towards co-branding and behavioral intentions towards co-branding are worthy dimensions of analysis, they provide only partial perspectives. For example, predecessors do not consider how factors about potential partner companies affect the process of brand selection [4]. The foreign literature studies the driving factors of the success of co-branding, although there is a mention of the fit degree, the study is about the purchase intention of consumers, and there is no detailed study on the influence of the fit degree of the cooperative brand on the brand image. In the study of the influence of non-co-industry co-branding of clothing brands on consumer intention, the relationship between the three dimensions of brand image and consumer purchase intention is deeply studied, but the relationship between co-industry co-branding of clothing brands and the co-branding of the created brand image is not studied.

Crossover marketing can achieve diversified competition in order to meet various needs of customers, and provide customers with multiple services and increase their consumption experience, and further influence their value perceptions and purchase behaviors [5]. It can expand consumer groups and attract more potential customers so as to increase brand assets. This marketing strategy can be fully effective if it is successful, but a failed strategic alliance may lead to negative spillover effects as well as damage each partner's brand assets [6]. Therefore, it is really important for successful co-branding to choose the suitable partner. The perceived fit between brands has a significant impact on consumers' evaluation of co-branding for the reason that it declines the possibility of negative outcomes for buying co-branding products [7]. Senechal et al. have found that both the product itself and fit are factors that affect consumers' attitude towards co-branding [8]. Consumers' attitudes towards partner brands affect attitudes towards alliances, which further affects consumers' willingness to buy [9]. So it is really important for clothing brands to select brands that intend to be crossover. The theory that "consistence between partners may influence consumers' evaluation of co-branded products" is beneficial to select the "best partner brand" [10]. This study can put forward suggestions for clothing enterprises to select appropriate brand cooperation and marketing methods for cross-branded co-branding, so as to promote the further development of clothing enterprises. This is a key issue for clothing brand managers who want to be competitive in a large, fast-moving market. Therefore, this study has great significance for marketing strategy.

The research theme of this paper is the influence of cross-industry co-branding of clothing brands on the image of co-branded brands, among which the influence of the fit degree between brands on the brand image. This paper will solve the problem through qualitative research. A new method is put forward to consider the choice of co-production brand of clothing brand partners, that is, to test the influence of the fit degree of co-production brand on the brand image of co-product. The answers of the subjects were collected through questionnaire survey, the correlation between questions and answers was compared, and analyzed the differences between different questions and different answers. Focusing on the image of co-branding brands, empirical research was conducted to reveal the influence of the fit degree of co-industry co-branded clothing brands on the image of co-branded brands.

2. Research Method

Because the original perception of the brand may affect the experiment and the results, consider conducting a pre-experiment to eliminate interference. In the pre-experiment, UNIQLO, Panda Store, Gucci and Welldone are selected. According to Zhu Xuanxuan, the measurement of original brand awareness is divided into brand advertising, service quality and cost performance [11]. Finally,

according to the comparison and search, we find that UNIQLO and Panda Store have similar brand cognition, so we choose these two clothing brands for the next step of the experiment.

The main purpose of this study is to verify whether the level of brand fit in cross-industry cooperation has a positive or negative impact on the shaping of co-brand image.

The subjects of this study were 91 college students in Beijing University of Chemical Technology, including 62 female students aged 19-21 years old. In this experiment, the cross-brand clothing brand UNIQLO, the well-known designer KAWS and the cross-brand clothing brand "Panda Store" were first introduced to the subjects to ensure that the subjects had a full understanding of the original brand and the co-branded brand. According to Luo Ziming's scale, he divided the measurement of brand image into five dimensions: brand cognition, product attribute, brand association, brand value and brand loyalty [12]. Newmeyer et al. measured the fit attributes of partner brands: the complementarity of partners' functional attributes, the consistency of brand image, and the diversity of product portfolios among partners [13]. The Likert5 scale was used for all scales, with the options indicating "strongly disagree", "disagree", "not sure", "agree", "strongly agree", respectively.

Subjects were introduced to two groups of high-fit brands and low-fit brands, viewed pictures of clothing and filled out the scale. After the experiment, participants were given red envelopes to express gratitude.

Research hypothesis:

Brand fit is one of the factors affecting the image of co-branded brand. The co-branded brand image with high fit is better than the co-branded brand image with low fit.
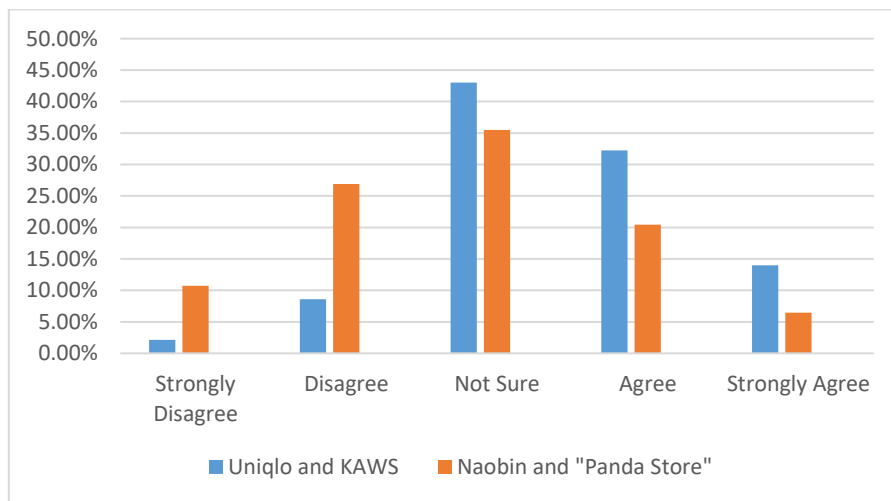
3. Results

Figure 1: The relationship between brand co-branding and user perceived quality.

As can be seen from Figure 1, more subjects "agree" with the joint name of UNIQLO and KAWS, while more subjects "disagree" with the joint name of Naocin and Panda Store; the participants had a better cognition of the joint brand of UNIQLO and KAWS.
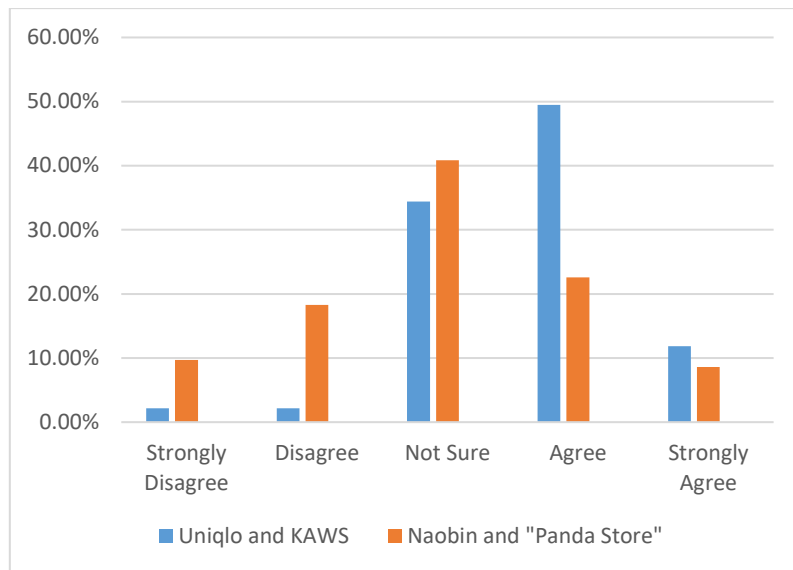
Figure 2: The relationship between brand co-branding and product attribute.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the subjects choose "agree" significantly more than the other side for UNIQLO and KAWS, and choose "disagree" significantly less than the other side. The subjects have a high degree of agreement, that is, the joint brand attributes of UNIQLO and KAWS are better.
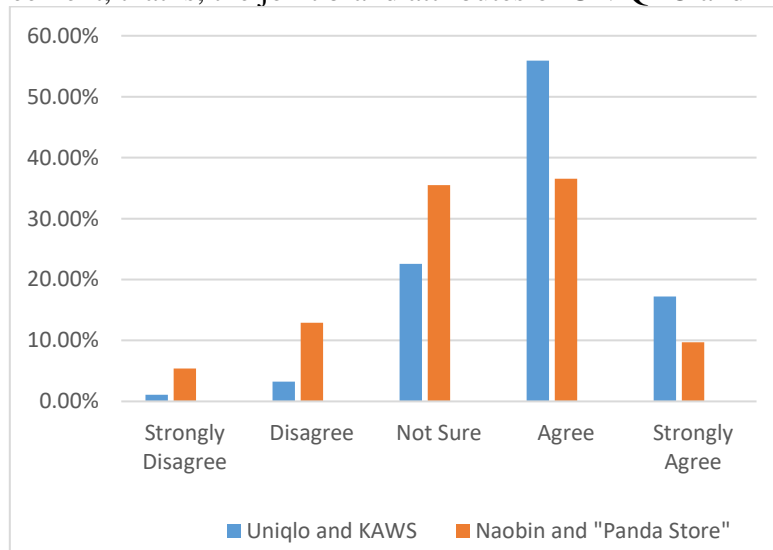

Figure 3: The relationship between brand co-branding and brand association.

As can be seen from the Figure 3, 55.91% of the subjects agree with the joint brand choice of UNIQLO and KAWS, and more than half of the subjects think that the joint brand is more characteristic and higher grade, indicating that the subjects have a good association with the joint brand of UNILO and KAWS.
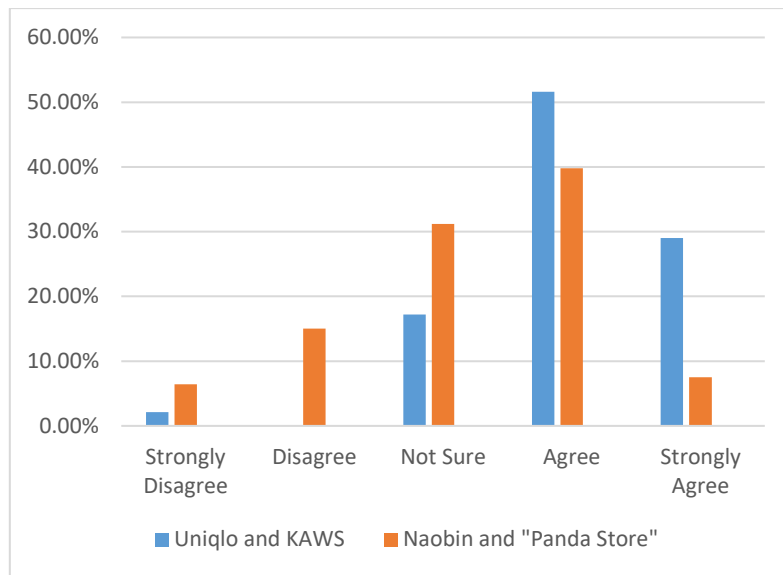
Figure 4: The relationship between brand co-branding and brand value.

As can be seen from the Figure 4, the participants think that the joint name of UNIQOL and KAWS will be more expensive, while the joint choice of Naobin and Panda store "agree" accounts for 40%. Although the gap between the two is small, more participants still believe that the joint brand value of UNIQLO and KAWS is higher.
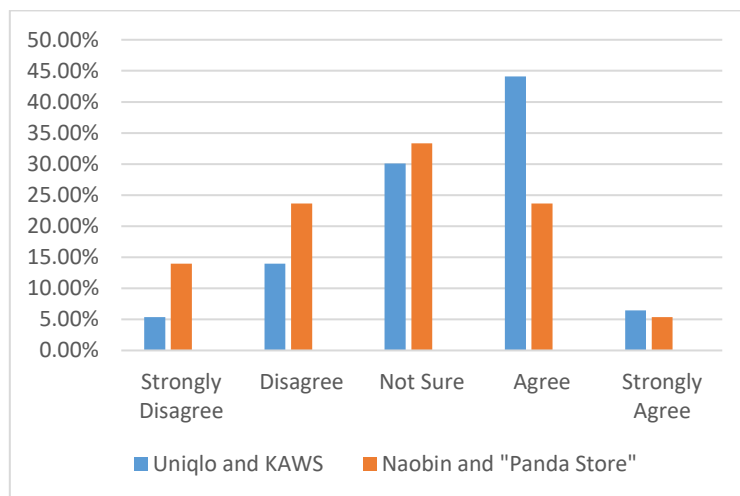

Figure 5: The relationship between brand co-branding and brand loyalty.

As can be seen from Figure 5, the subjects made more repeated purchases for the joint choice of UNIQLO and KAWS, and the uncertain choice data were similar. The participants had higher loyalty to the joint brand of UNIQLO and KAWS.

Through comparative study, it is found that the cross-boundary co-branding between UNIQLO and famous designers (with high fit) creates a better co-branding brand image. More people agree on the five dimensions of brand recognition, product attribute, brand association, brand value and brand loyalty, which will be more accepted by the public. On the other hand, the crossover co-branding of Naobinin and Panda store clothing brands (low fit) disagreed more with the five dimensions of the brand image, indicating that the created co-branding brand image was poor.

4. Discussions

The results of this study are consistent with the hypothesis. The degree of brand fit is one of the factors affecting the image of co-branded brands. Brand co-branding with high fit creates a better brand image than that with low fit. Based on the questionnaire survey and data comparison, it is found that the higher the attribute consistency between brands, the higher the brand cognition, brand value and brand loyalty will be. Previous studies have found that consumers' attitudes towards joint products are affected by individual brand and the degree of fit between two brands and the product [14]. Because the characteristics of clothing brand UNIQLO and clothing designer KAWS are more consistent, so the brand image is better; The brand co-branding of Naolplatinum and Panda store is low in fit, which makes it difficult to associate the shapeability of this co-branding, and even some people will find it strange. Therefore, marketing managers in the apparel industry can use this rule to select partners with high compatibility to achieve professionalism and complementarity. In addition, enterprises pay attention to the same characteristics of the brand when promoting, so as to give people a reasonable and innovative brand perception. On the basis of marketing model innovation, enterprises should improve and optimize organizational structure and expand brand sales field to enhance brand value.

The research results of this paper are based on the previous studies on the development of co-brand, and the selection of dimensions and in-depth study of the impact of cross-industry co-brand fit on co-brand image. The research object of this paper focuses on college students, so the perspective is limited. And because of the small sample size, it is only applicable to clothing brands, and cannot be generally applicable to all industries.

5. Conclusion

Through the experimental method, three dimensions of fit degree of co-branded brands, cross-industry co-branding of clothing brands and co-branded brand image were explored. Interference factors were eliminated, and brands with similar brand recognition were selected for the experiment. The conclusions of this paper were drawn by comparing the brand image created by co-branded brands with high fit and low fit in the minds of consumers through questionnaires.

It is found that the degree of fit between co-branded brands has an impact on the created brand image, and the co-branded brand image with high fit is better than the co-branded brand image with low fit. Consumers have better brand cognition towards co-branded brands with high fit, and consumers have more positive brand image imagination towards co-branded brands with high fit. When adopting joint marketing, clothing marketing management personnel should pay more attention to the "fit" of the brand in the selection of partners, giving priority to the selection of brands with high fit degree, such as complementary functional attributes and consistent image attributes. The research contribution of this paper is to explore the moderating effect of the fit degree of co-branded brand on the cross-industry co-branded brand image and the co-branded brand image, and draw the conclusion that the co-branded brand image with high fit degree is better. It provides theoretical support for clothing brand co-branded marketing and provides reference for managers to choose the best partner dimension. The theoretical contribution of this paper is to confirm that one of the driving factors of co-branding is partner selection, and promote the dimensional-fit degree of co-branding partner selection.

Due to the limited data, small sample size and insufficient representativeness, only the subjects with a small age difference between college students were selected, and no studies were conducted on social figures and other age groups. Moreover, this study only focuses on the garment industry, so the conclusions of this study are limited. Future studies can select more samples, expand the survey

group, and select more brands for measurement data analysis to verify the application scope of this conclusion.

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