THE CONGRUENT EFFECTS OF CO-BRANDING GREEN,
ECOLOGICALLY-FRIENDLY ADS

By

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ABSTRACT

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Many researchers have explored environmentally-friendly advertising; observing its effects on purchasing behaviors and intentions (Davis, 1993; Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012; Xue & Muralidharan, 2015; Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012) as well as co-branding as a tactic for encouraging consumers to purchase products as well (Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996; Helmig et al., 2008; Norris, 1992; Charry & Demoulin, 2014; Khun et al., 2008). Furthermore, co-branding is an increasingly popular tactic, yet little research has been conducted in relation to how co-branding and green marketing can work in tandem. As a result, this study merges these two advertising tactics by exploring key concepts such as product/brand fit. This is done so by investigating the level of congruence between a fictitious, environmentally-friendly host brand and several differentiating, high equity partner brands. The study employs an experiment to investigate the effects of co-branding (present vs. absent) and the level of congruence (high vs. medium vs. low) on purchase intentions (PI), attitudes toward the ad (Aad), and attitudes toward the brand (AB); building on the Theory of Congruence. The results indicate that, with co-branding, when comparing a co-branded ad to a single-branded ad, there are no significant differences between the participants' attitudes towards the ad or brand, their intent to purchase the host brand's product, or their attitudes towards any given, presented ad. Similarly, when addressing congruence, the level of congruous match has no significant difference on participants' attitudes towards the host brand or their intentions to purchase it. Limitations and areas for future research are also provided.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Advertisers are recognizing an increasing demand for environmental action and are using this demand for action to encourage consumers to engage in ecologically-friendly or green purchasing behaviors. Researchers have explored environmentally-friendly advertising, with particular attention to its potential for increasing purchase behaviors or intentions (Davis, 1993; Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012; Xue & Muralidharan, 2015; Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012). Similarly, advertisers are using co-branding as a viable tactic to encourage consumers to purchase products, and advertising researchers have explored this topic as well (Park, Jun, & Shocker, 1996; Helmig et al., 2008; Norris, 1992; Charry & Demoulin, 2014; Khun et al., 2008). This study will merge these two advertising tactics by introducing and exploring key concepts such as product/brand fit.

Increased interest in sustainability by businesses and consumers has led to terms such as "green marketing", "green consumerism", and "green products" (Shrum et al., 1995). As this movement of sustainable interest continues to escalate, consumers are likely to be more attuned and receptive toward appeals in eco-friendly advertising, when the economy is improving and when marketers are willing to employ additional green advertising (Ahern, Bortree, & Smith, 2013). The sustainable product market is growing with green building, renewable energy, and fair-trade food growing from $3 million in 2005 to $54 million in 2011, $0.8 million in 2002 to $3.6 million in 2011, and $9.8 million in 2002 to $151.9 million in 2011, respectively (The Big Green Opportunity, 2013). More than half of Americans are considered "active or seeker" consumers and will make purchase decisions because of environmental values and/or health-related sustainability issues (The Big Green Opportunity, 2013).

There is an increasing emphasis on the media's role in raising awareness about climate change and enhancing public concern about the planet (do Paco, Finisterra, & Reis, 2012). Given that the advertising industry adapts and evolves to adapt to marketplace realities and the ever-changing trends that makeup societal norms (Zinkhan & Carlson, 1995), such societal norms and media portrayals have been reflected in increasing prevalence and emphasis on green advertising. Research on green advertising over the past decade examined the types of persuasive appeals used in green ads (Yang et al., 2015), the regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention; Bullard & Manchanda, 2013), prediction requests (Bodur, 2015), and best practices for pricing and promotional efforts (Shen et al., 2019); among others.

Given the novelty of green products when compared to more established products that are not portrayed as "green" or "sustainable" within the marketplace, green products have less brand loyalty and equity. Familiarity of green, sustainable products does not influence a consumer's purchase intentions (Braimah, 2015). Francois et al. (2010) argue that brand familiarity can transfer from a host to a partner brand when the match or congruence is moderate or high between the two brands. With that being said, co-branding with a well-known brand that is perceived to have high levels of brand familiarity may help advance the agenda of a given green product and literature pertaining to the field of green, sustainable advertising in general. With that in mind, the level of match (or congruence) between an environmentally-friendly host brand and a well-known partner brand may influence the host brand's attitudes and purchase intentions (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Mazodier & Merunka, 2014); enhancing the agenda of green products and their presence within advertisements.

Co-branding is an increasingly popular tactic, yet little research has been conducted in relation to how co-branding and green marketing can work in tandem. In this study, I seek to

2

elaborate on this research gap by evaluating the level of congruence between partner brands. The current study employs an experiment that investigates the effect of co-branding (present vs. absent) and the level of congruence (high vs. medium vs. low) on purchase intention (PI), attitudes toward the ad (Aad), and attitudes toward the brand (AB) for products co-branded with high-equity partner brands.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The increase in popularity of both co-branding and green advertising as marketing tactics has been accompanied by a heightened interest in research to understand the effects of these techniques (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001; Washburn et al., 2004). The green product marketplace is expanding in both size and popularity, and as a result, is being explored more extensively in advertising research (Davis, 1993; Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012; Xue & Muralidharan, 2015; Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012). Similarly, the practice of co-branding has flourished, because the linkages between two brands within a co-branding venture have been shown to enhance many behaviors like a consumer's attitudes towards a brand, purchase intentions, and pretrial evaluations of a given product experience (Washburn et al., 2000; Washburn et al., 2004; Helming et al., 2008). In the following sections, literature regarding green advertising will be reviewed, followed by a discussion of co-branding research, and finally a discussion of how the two concepts relate to one another.

1.1 Green Advertising

Green advertising, or the promotion of brands that have adopted ecologically-friendly product components, operations, and/or packaging, plays an important role in the diversification of product choice within the marketplace by reaching a new, growing niche-market of ecologically-conscious consumers (Davis, 1993; Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012; Xue & Muralidharan, 2015; Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012). There is an increase in the number of consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally-friendly products (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001) with 66% of worldwide respondents saying that they would be willing to pay an additional amount of money for products and services that are derived from

organizations that are dedicated to providing positive environmental and social impact, up from 55% in 2014, and 50% in 2013 (Nielsen, 2015). Of that 66%, more than half are influenced by key sustainability factors such as a product being made from fresh, natural and/or organic ingredients (69%), a company being environmentally-friendly (58%), and a company being known for its commitment to social value (56%) (Nielsen, 2015). As a result, in 2011, organic non-food green products (for example, clothing, personal care, household products, etc.) attained a gross revenue of $2.2 billion (compared to $439 million in 2003) (The Big Green Opportunity, 2013) since, in addition to conventional, regular products (i.e., goods produced by traditional methods), these products are being advertised more regularly (Lin & Chang, 2012).

1.1.1 Past Studies on Green Advertising

Advertising Claims. Consumers consider different aspects of green product advertisements in their decision-making processes, such as a brand's unique claim(s), or factual statements in a given ad. Advertising claims can enhance the image of a particular brand, and consequently consumers' attitudes, by providing meaningful, detailed benefits for the consumer. Specifically, textual claims in green advertising have been shown to lead to a more positive attitude towards the ad (Xue and Muralidharan, 2015). Responses are more likely to be positive toward environmental advertisements when a product's actual, meaningful environmental benefits are described with specific and detailed information (Davis, 1993). In addition, when comparing strong claims (ad claims that are very truthful and believable) to weak claims (ad claims that are not very truthful and believable), significantly higher levels of ad credibility are shown for strong claims in ads than for weak claims. This shows that when ad claims are strong, specific, detailed, and meaningful for the consumer, the claim will appeal greatly toward the

consumer and may be helpful when deciphering what kind of claim to use (Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012).

In addition to traits like strength and meaningfulness, advertising claims can also offer an enhancement in positive brand image (the impression a consumer has for a given brand name) and attitude for a brand name when they are executed correctly which, according to Xue and Muralidharan (2015), occurs when used textually versus visually. When examining the interaction and main effects of textual environmental claims, textual environmental claims have been shown to lead to more favorable perceptions towards a brand's environmental efforts (Xue and Muralidharan, 2015). In general, the use of textual environmental claims in advertising leads to greater positive advertising responses when compared to visual environmental claims.

Message Framing. Message framing, or the way in which information is put into context within an advertising message (Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012; Kareklas, Carlson, and Muehling, 2012; Fowler III and Close, 2012), influences how a message and the claims in an environmental advertisement can impact a consumer's attitudes towards a given advertisement.

Messages can emphasize the positive benefits of engaging in an action (gain frame) or the negative consequences of not engaging in an action (loss frame) (Chang, Zhang, & Xie, 2015). Information processing is facilitated when the framing of a message (gain versus loss) is consistent with an individual's regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention) (Lee & Aaker, 2004). The persuasiveness of regulatory focus-based messages, or messages that are based on human motivation to be either focused on pleasure or avoidance of pain (i.e. promotion-framed and prevention-framed), in green advertising have been previously measured in prior research (Kareklas, Carlson, & Muehling, 2012). Prevention-framed environmental appeals are shown to generate greater favorable attitudes for individuals who have been situationally primed to have a

6

self-view that is independent (views of one's self that are considered to be self-serving, for example, improving one's social status) when compared to environmental appeals that are promotion-framed.

When the objective of an ad is to change the behavior of the consumer in line with the cause, such as encouraging him or her to act on protecting the environment, then emphasizing the general, overall environmental protection industry rather than the brand is more effective (Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012) which is useful is determining what brands to focus on using when co-branding a green advertisement. This is because the advertiser wants to ensure that the brand is perceptually in line with the overall industry that the given brand is associated with. Additionally, it is ideal to frame a green visual in an advertisement with an ad message as a potential gain by focusing on the ad's product benefits (versus a loss by focusing on the costs associated with not enacting a behavior) for the consumer when attempting to change a consumer's attitude towards a given ad from low to high (Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012).

When a consumer is exposed to an advertisement, he or she forms particular impressions or orientations in relation to that advertisement, known as the "attitude towards the ad." A consumer's attitude towards an ad has been shown to be related to a consumer's attitude towards a given brand and his or her intent to purchase a particular product or service (MacKenzie et al., 1989). In regards to a brand's environmental efforts, if no textual information is available, the use of green visuals could generate stronger perceptions or attitudes towards an advertisement as a whole (Xue & Muralidharan, 2015) which could lead to stronger purchase intentions (as opposed to textual ads which can produce more favorable perceptions for claims within advertising).

In regards to an individual's attitudes towards a given eco-friendly brand, the way in which a consumer perceives him or herself when using a particular green product (i.e., self-view) is important, because it can influence how a green advertisement is targeted to a specific audience (Kareklas, Carlson, & Muehling, 2012). Message framing can influence the impact that self-view or image will have on a given consumer regarding a particular green advertisement. Subjects who are primed to be focused on themselves are persuaded more by prevention-framed messages, and subjects who are primed to be focused on others are persuaded more by promotion-framed messages (Kareklas, Carlson, & Muehling, 2012).

Message framing can also have an impact on why and how consumers purchase a given green product. Fowler and Close (2012) explicate the concept of the green gap, which refers to the disconnect between how consumers intend to act and how they actually act in regard to eco-friendly living. The authors describe different ad message agendas: the macro level agenda, which consists of advertisers seeking salvation of Earth, the meso level agenda, which uses a mix of both macro and micro concerns to advertise a product or service, and the micro level agenda, which is using green messages to sell products and addresses consumers concerned with saving only their part of the planet. The green gap between the micro level and macro level agendas is shown to create the greatest tension when comparing the three macro, meso, and micro agendas (Fowler & Close, 2012). Drawing from these findings, it is logical to assume that when framing a message as a potential gain to the consumer, the ad should be targeted differently given a particular agenda (promotion-framed for macro and prevention-framed for micro). This tension (which was observed in ads differed by relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances) can be remedied by reframing messages so that competing agendas are more closely aligned with one another (Fowler & Close, 2012).

As noted above, regulatory focus (prevention versus promotion) is built off of message framing's gain versus loss engagement concepts (Kareklas, Carlson, and Muehling 2012). This perspective also helps to explain purchase intentions, a consumer's plan to purchase a particular product or service. Purchasing decisions made by individuals who are promotion-focused are likely to show a concern for experiential advancement whereas individuals who are prevention-focused tend to be motivated to minimize loss (Kareklas, Carlson, and Muehling 2012). In regards to both of the categories of regulatory focus, green messages are much more compelling and persuasive when compared to non-green messages with non-product-related appeals (Ku, Kuo, Wu, and Wu, 2012). These findings can help marketers to better target their green advertisements in a particular way based on a target audience's specific preferences, potentially increasing purchase intentions for the targeted audience.

As previously stated, studies have shown that the number of consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally-friendly products is increasing (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001), and these products are being advertised more regularly (Lin & Chang, 2012). Prior research has also revealed that strong, specific, detailed, and meaningful ad claims appeal greatly towards the consumer and may be helpful when deciphering what kind of claim to use (Tucker, Rifon, Lee, & Reece, 2012), textual environmental claims in advertising lead to greater positive advertising responses (Xue and Muralidharan, 2015), prevention-framed environmental appeals generate greater favorable attitudes for individuals who have been situationally primed to have a self-view that is independent (Kareklas, Carlson, & Muehling, 2012), and it is ideal to frame a green visual as a potential gain by focusing on the ad's product benefits (Marie-Cecile Cervellon, 2012). However, not much is known regarding co-branding's effects in relation to green advertising.

1.2 Co-branding

Co-branding consists of two required entities: an "invited" partner brand and a "host" brand (Norris, 1992). These entities depict the category in which a co-branded product will be launched. This explanation defines and addresses the elements needed for co-branding to achieve successful positive consumer perceptions (needing supplementary symbolic or concrete elements and that represent an innovation or an important advantage).

Two key components influence the success of a product that has been co-branded: the consumer's attitude towards the brands involved in the co-branded venture and the consumers' perceptual fit, or how strong the bond is between two brand names in regards to the transference of information between the brands (Charry & Demoulin, 2014). A strong transference of attributes (i.e. higher levels of congruence) from the host brand to the co-branded product will ultimately increase the perceived value of the latter.

1.3 Co-Branding in Green Advertising

Co-branding's effects on green, personal care product advertisements have not been explicitly reviewed. Some guidance may be found, however, by looking at the literature on labeling and green products. Similar to the concept of combining two brand names, organic labeling uses a cue separate from the host brand name to convey information to consumers. Regardless of the brand equity level, an organic label can make an environmentally-friendly attribute salient; creating a positive impact on the perceived quality of a product (Larceneux, Benoit-Moreau, & Renaudin, 2012).

When addressing co-branding in terms of the transference of attributes in terms of environmental and socially conscious brand names, when an organic label is used, it will make an environmentally-friendly attribute salient regardless of what the consumer-based brand equity

level is (Larceneux, Benoit-Moreau, & Renaudin, 2012). This is shown to result in a positive influence on the level of perceived quality for a product or host brand. Just as an eco-seal's environmentally-friendly attribute creates salience for its host green product partner, it is critical to choose a partner brand that has a good fit with its green host brand counterpart to create salience. Hence, because of its importance with goodness of fit, it is relevant to address research related to sustainably and socially conscious brands.

When looking at sustainable labeling in advertisements, consumer and advertiser characteristics have been examined in order to understand the level of eco-seal persuasion by observing the resulting attitudes and intentions (Bickart & Ruth, 2012). The authors measured the attitudes towards a given brand, but altered the measures in a way so that they could specifically look at sustainable brands, thus providing measures that could be used to more accurately measure attitudes towards sustainable behaviors. Furthermore, ad appeal (the advertisement / host brand) has an influence on the impact that an eco-seal source (brand / partner brand) will have on a brand's attitudes with prevention-oriented appeals being the most persuasive when the brand presents either a manufacturer eco-seal and is targeting high-concern consumers, or if the brand presents a government eco-seal and is targeting low-concern consumers (Bickart & Ruth, 2012).

Furthermore, brand attitudes have been shown to poorly influence a consumer's purchasing behaviors when he or she has never actually used the brand (Bird, Channon, & Ehrenberg, 1970). Therefore, for this study, partner brands with high levels of consumer-based brand equity will be used in order to potentially transfer the most potent levels of brand salience and brand attitudes for the consumer. Therefore, when examining co-branding in regards to

ecologically-friendly products, granted that the partner brand offers an important symbolic or concrete advantage (Norris, 1992), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Compared to participants exposed to single-branded ads, participants exposed to co-branded ads, will report (a) more positive attitudes towards the ad, (b) more positive attitudes toward the brand, and (c) higher purchase intentions.

1.4 Congruence

Congruence takes place when "two or more objects, entities, people, or groups share essential characteristics" (Kulkarni et al. 2008). For example, tea and coffee are likely to share a higher level of congruence when compared to tea and station wagons, because tea and coffee are more likely to have similar conceptual schemas. Furthermore, consumers' impressions have been shown to be affected by the perceived congruence that occurs between product-related stimuli (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Kamins and Gupta 1994). These studies that have investigated the topic of congruence (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Kamins and Gupta, 1994) and how moderate inconsistencies between two congruent product-related stimuli can lead to greater, more favorable evaluations of a brand (when comparing favorable evaluations of high congruence between two brands).

Meyers-Levy and Tybout's (1989) research was based on Mandler's (1982) hypothesis of differentiating levels of congruence (high congruence, mild incongruence, and high incongruence; or high, medium, and low congruence) between schemas (mental frameworks that allow individuals to interpret and organize information about particular topics or ideas). In addition, their research examined how different levels of congruence can affect the strength and salience in an affective consumer response. They found that moderate (medium) schema

incongruence leads to the most positive levels of strength and salience for affective consumer responses (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989).

When testing the goodness of fit between a product (specifically, an attractiveness-related product like a luxury sports car) and type of spokesperson / ad image (celebrity versus non-celebrity's physical attractiveness), it is best to choose a feature that has high congruence when introducing a new feature to a product (Sirgy, 1985; Kamins and Gupta, 1994). Additionally, when taking into consideration heightened levels of cognition associated with incongruence, moderate incongruence (medium congruence) or a feature that may be outside of an expected schema for a typical consumer of a particular brand name, could obtain even greater favorable brand evaluations when compared to high congruence (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Jagre et al., 2001). With moderate incongruence (medium congruence), consumers are able to resolve the issue by elaborating cognitively without altering the cognitive structures that they have for a particular product. Congruence has been shown to generate mildly positive evaluations for a product, and extreme incongruence (low congruence) has been shown to generate negative evaluations for a product by a consumer (Meyers-Levy & Tybout,1989).

Consumers process information more or less cognitively based on the level of perceived congruence between two or more separate entities. In addition to the effects of moderate incongruence (medium congruence) where consumers exert additional cognitive elaboration to obtain greater product evaluations, when a consumer comes in contact with an incongruence in his or her schema, he or she exhibits greater cognitive elaboration and increased arousal from object novelty in order to resolve any incongruence in his or her set schema (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Jagre et al., 2001). Mandler (1982) postulated that the evaluation and processing

of information for a product could be affected by how congruent or incongruent a product and a consumer's associated product category schema are with one another.

The Theory of Congruence has been used to investigate the goodness of fit between a product and type of spokesperson/ad image, business to consumer gift-giving promotional offers, and distinguishing between a successful and an unsuccessful brand extension (e.g. Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Mandler, 1982; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Kulkarni et al., 2008; Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991).

Moderate incongruence has been found to be the most effective way of leading a consumer to a favorable evaluation of a product. Consumers resolve this incongruence by moving to a lower level in the product hierarchy (a product's relation to other products when looking at different product levels spanning from the lowest level, basic need items, to the highest level, specific items that satisfy consumers' needs) (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). By doing so, consumers put forth additional cognitive effort in order to make links between more dissimilar nodes. Hence, incongruence in a consumer's schema is associated with higher levels of elaborative cognition (Mandler, 1982), which was shown when levels of recall and thoughts observed increased for consumers that were exposed to incongruent brand associations (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). These findings help to establish the groundwork for how the congruence between two products can be influential in a given consumer's purchase decision process.

When there are high levels of congruence between, for example, a spokesperson and a product, there are higher perceptions of the attractiveness of the product spokesperson, believability of the spokesperson, and attitudes toward the product (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Additionally, increased congruence between the product and spokesperson has no effect when a non-celebrity spokesperson is used. The researchers studied goodness of fit between a product

and an advertisement by matching type of spokesperson with a particular product (Kamins &

Gupta, 1994). Congruence not only provides insight into how a consumer makes a purchase

decision but also shows that the paired combination (spokesperson, partner brand, etc.) can

influence a consumer's perceptions of the products and brands involved in terms of

attractiveness, believability, and attitudes towards the brand.

Congruence has also been studied with respect to promotional gifts. Both the attitudes

towards the brand and the attitudes towards an advertised offer are perceived the most favorably

when the relationship between a promotional gift and a product have moderate incongruence

(Kulkarni, Otnes, Ruth, & White, 2008). For example, the use of promotional gift offerings in

the business to consumer market can be more or less effective depending on the level of

congruence between the product and the promotional gift. When moderate incongruence is

exhibited, cognitive elaboration is enhanced, effecting consumers' perceptions of the brands

involved in the two entities (Kulkarni, Otnes, Ruth, & White, 2008). Furthermore, this study

helps to reinforce the importance of congruence in consumer purchasing decisions when

consumers are trying to form attitudes towards a brand.

Congruence is also relevant to brand extensions. When making product evaluations and

purchasing decisions, consumers use information about the consistency between an original

brand concept and an extension by comparing aspects (like product prestige and product

functionality) of an existing product with those of an extension product (Park, Milberg, &

Lawson, 1991). Consistencies in brand concepts and the similarities between product features

(two bases used to evaluate "goodness of fit") that make the distinction between a successful and

an unsuccessful brand extension were found to be contingent on the perceived fit of a new,

introduced product and the existing brand (Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991). These consistencies

15

in brand concepts and product features reiterate the importance of goodness of fit when attempting to enact a successful brand extension (or brand alliance venture like a co-branding partnership) and the notion that consumers look at key components that involve congruence in personal brand schemas and products like product feature similarities and brand concept consistency.

The importance of using a moderately incongruent (medium congruence) relationship between brands when attempting to obtain the greatest positive reactions from consumers has been clearly established (Sirgy, 1985; Kamins and Gupta, 1994). Furthermore, the current study is based on moderate incongruence's ability to elicit the greatest positive reactions, while having low levels of congruence (or high incongruence) elicit negative consumer evaluations and high levels of congruence elicit mildly positive consumer evaluations (Sirgy 1985, Kamins & Gupta 1994).

While prior research is helpful in establishing the need for brand salience, perceived consumer-based brand equity, and congruence or fit in a co-branding partnership, it is not known whether these findings transfer to the eco-friendly product market. Therefore, this study will test these concepts by combining known effectiveness characteristics from co-branding studies with the green advertising environment. I hypothesize:

H2: Participants' (a) attitude toward the ad, (b) attitude toward the brand, and (c) purchase intentions will be the highest for co-branded ads featuring moderately congruent products, followed by highly congruent products, low-congruent products, and, lastly, single brands, respectively.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

This study used a 3 (congruence: high vs. medium vs. low) single factor, between-subject design with a control condition (single branded ad). Congruence was manipulated as a function of the level of fit between an unfamiliar (fictitious) eco-friendly brand and a familiar, high equity brand.

2.1 Participants

Participants ($N = 123$) were recruited via two universities in Southwestern and Midwestern parts of the United States. Students (i.e. Millennials and Generation Zs) are appropriate for this study because of their adoption of sustainable behaviors (or lack of non-sustainable ones) and their consideration of the carbon footprint and environmental impact of products (like hand soaps) in the marketplace (Bulut, Kökalan Çımrin, & Doğan, 2017). The majority of participants were female (78%) with an average age of about 21 ($M = 20.71$, $SD = 1.03$). In terms of class standing, 29.3% of participants were freshmen, 30.1% were sophomores, 27.6% were juniors, 12.2% were seniors, and .8% identified as graduate students. Most participants identified as white/Caucasians (47.2%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (25.2%), Asians (16.3%), African American (4.1%), among other ethnic groups (6.5%, plus .8% with no ethnic identification).

The sample size of 132 was selected after an a priori power analysis conducted through G*Power with the following parameters: effect size: .25, err prob.: .05, power: .95, number of groups: 2, number of measurements: 4, corr. among rep. measures: .5.

2.2 Dependent Variables

Attitude Towards the Ad. The respondents' attitudes towards the presented advertisement was measured using an adapted version of Mackenzie and Lutz's (1989) three-item, five-point semantic-differential scale: Bad/Good, Negative/Positive, Unfavorable/Favorable, and Unpleasant/Pleasant (Cronbach's α = 0.82).

Attitude Towards the Brand. The respondents' attitudes towards a given brand in the presented advertisement were measured using an adapted version of Bickart and Ruth's (2012) six-item, five-point semantic-differential scale: Low Quality/High Quality, Unappealing/Appealing, Something I Dislike Very Much/Something I Like Very Much, Unpleasant/Pleasant, Negative/Positive, and Unfavorable/Favorable (Cronbach's α = 0.88).

Familiarity with the Product Category and Host Brand. The assessment of an individual's familiarity and experience with the host brand in a co-branded ad and other aspects related to the host brand like products carrying the brand name, advertising for the brand, the stores carrying the brand's products, and the product category were measured for both single branded and co-branded ads using an adapted version of Martin and Stewart's (2001) 5-item, five-point Likert scale. Items include "How familiar are you with the product's brand presented in the ad?", "How familiar are you with the types of retail stores that carry the product's brand presented in the ad?", "How familiar are you with the type of advertising that the product's brand presented in the ad currently uses?", "How familiar are you with the product's brand presented in the ad in general?", and "How much experience do you have with the brand presented in the ad's products?" and range from Not at all (1) to Completely (5) (Cronbach's α = 0.92).

Familiarity with the Product Category and Partner Brand. The assessment of an individual's familiarity and experience with the partner brand in a co-branded ad and other

aspects related to the partner brand like products carrying the brand name, advertising for the brand, the stores carrying the brand's products, and the product category were measured for co-branded ads using an adapted version of Martin and Stewart's (2001) 5-item, five-point Likert scale. Items include "How familiar are you with the partner brand presented in the ad?", "How familiar are you with the types of retail stores that carry the partner brand presented in the ad?", "How familiar are you with the type of advertising that the partner brand presented in the ad currently uses?", "How familiar are you with the partner brand presented in the ad in general?", and "How much experience do you have with the partner brand presented in the ad's products?" and range from Not at all (1) to Completely (5) (Cronbach's α = 0.89).

Congruence Between Brands. The degree to which a person believes that the host brand (or more specifically, its message) fits with the partner brand (i.e. the co-branded brand, product, etc.) in a co-branding partnership was measured for co-branded ads using an adapted version of Kellaris, Cox, and Cox (1993) 5-item, five-point Likert scale. Items include "The partner brand was appropriate for the host brand", "The partner brand did seem to fit with the message of the host brand", "The partner brand was relevant to the subject of the host brand", "The partner brand did match the product of the host brand", and "The partner brand was congruent (or similarly related to) with the host brand in the ad" and range from Not at all (1) to Absolutely (5) (Cronbach's α = .94).

Purchase Intention Towards the Host Brand in the Ad. The likelihood of a person buying the host brand featured in the advertisement if the person was in the market for such a product was measured for co-branded ads using an adapted version of Lepkowska-White, Brashear, and Weinberger's (2003) 3-item, five-point Likert scale. Items include "If I were looking for this type of brand my likelihood of purchasing the brand in the ad would be high", "If I were to buy

19

this type of brand, the probability that I would consider buying the brand in the ad would be high", and "If I had to buy this type of brand, my willingness to buy the brand in the ad would be high" and range from Not at all (1) to Absolutely (5) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$).

Lastly, four questions related to age, gender, education, and race measured the demographics.

2.3 Stimulus Development

Stimuli were developed specifically for this experiment, where I designed ads representing each level of the congruence manipulation in the co-branded ads. The green brand of interest was a fictitious brand called "Clean Green." To select the co-brands, an independent pretest was administered to 70 participants, measuring 14 unique, high-brand equity brands and one fictitious brand on the following measures: brand attitudes (Bickart & Ruth, 2012), brand familiarity (Martin & Stewart, 2001), purchase intentions (Lepkowska-White, Brashear, and Weinberger, 2003), perceived greenness, and purchase intention of both co-brands (Lepkowska-White et al., 2003). Additionally, participants were exposed to 14 different co-branded ads (one for each of the 14 unique, high-brand equity brands which were co-branded with the fictitious brand); measuring attitude towards the ad (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) and congruence (Kellaris, Cox, & Cox, 1993) (refer to Appendix C). The tested brands, selected from lists of valuable brands and green brands were Burt's Bees, Aveeno, Tom's of Maine, Aveda, Febreze, Crest, Snuggle, Under Armour, Cannon, Apple, Pepsi, Juicy Juice, La Croix, and Sony (Passikoff, 2016;, The World's Most Valuable Brands, 2015).

For the current study, I selected Apple, Crest, and Febreze as the three co-brands representing the three levels of congruence (low, moderate, and high, respectively). The brands were comparable on attitudes towards the brand, brand familiarity, and perceived greenness, yet

differed in the level of perceived congruence with Clean Green (see Table 1). Upon this selection, identical ads were designed by placing the fictitious branded product (Clean Green) in the ad, where the manipulation of the co-branding was evident in the addition of the co-brand's logo in the ad.

Table 1: Partner Brand Mean Comparisons

Variable	Apple (low congruence)	Crest (moderate congruence)	Febreze (high congruence)
Attitude toward the brand	6.50 (.65)	6.01 (1.43)	6.21 (1.11)
Brand familiarity	6.79 (.52)	6.55 (.65)	6.10 (1.32)
Perceived greenness	3.50 (2.70)	3.40 (2.46)	4.55 (2.87)
Congruence	1.67 (1.37)	2.24 (1.63)	3.75 (1.39)

2.4 Procedure

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the main study was administered via Qualtrics. Participants were first asked to provide consent. Then, they were presented with a randomly-assigned stimulus advertisement which consisted of an ad that contains either a highly congruent pairing (Clean Green and Febreze), moderately congruent pairing (Clean Green and Crest), or low congruent pairing (Clean Green and Apple). A fourth, control stimuli ad was created; featuring an ad with a single brand (Clean Green) and no co-branded entity. Following exposure to one of the four possible conditions, participants were asked a series of questions about their Attitudes Towards the Ad and Brand (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; MacKenzie & Lutz 1989), Purchase Intentions Toward the Brand in the Ad (Lepkowska-White, Brashear, & Weinberger, 2003), Perceived Congruence (Kellaris, Cox, & Cox, 1993), and Perceived Brand Familiarity (Martin & Stewart, 2001). Finally, the survey concluded with demographic questions and a debriefing describing the purpose of the study. Additionally, attention-checking items were included to ensure valid responses to the survey.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

3.1 Main Effect of Co-Branding

To test the main effect of co-branding, the three co-branded conditions were collapsed into one level and were compared to the single-branded condition. The differences in Aad, AB, and PI between the single-branded ads and co-branded ads were not significant ($p > .05$), thus H1a-c were not supported.

3.2 Main Effect of Congruence

To test the effect of congruence, a series of identical one-way ANOVAs were conducted with congruence as an IV, and Aad, AB, and PI as DVs, respectively.

Attitudes Towards to Ad. The main effect of congruence on Aad was not significant ($F(2, 81) = 1.27$, $p > .05$). Participants exposed to ads for Clean Green paired with Apple ($M = 4.97$, $SD = .64$), Crest ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .95$), and Febreze ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .88$) did not differ significantly in Aad. H2a was not supported.

Attitudes toward the Brand. The main effect of congruence on AB of Clean Green was not significant ($F(2,91) = .26$, $p > .05$). Participants exposed to ads for Clean Green paired with Apple ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 1.03$), Crest ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.32$), and Febreze ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.31$) did not differ significantly in AB. H2b was not supported.

Purchase Intentions. The main test means of respondents who were exposed to co-branded ads for three different brand names were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found ($F(2,91) = .33$, $p > .05$). Participants exposed to ads for Clean Green paired with Apple ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.71$), Crest ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.82$), and Febreze ($M =$

4.75, *SD* = 1.56) did not differ significantly in their intentions to purchase Clean Green. H2c was

not supported.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study examined the level of congruous match between an environmentally-friendly host brand and three well-known partner brands to observe any protentional differences in a consumer's ad and host brand attitudes as well as his or her intention to purchase the presented host brand's product. As a result, the following provides an explication of this study's foremost findings.

With reference to co-branding, specifically, the results indicated that, when comparing a co-branded ad to a single-branded ad, there were no significant differences between the participants' attitudes towards any of this study's presented ads or brands as well as the participants' intent to purchase the host brand's product that was advertised within the ad.

When addressing congruence, regardless of whichever one of the three brands were presented to elicit a certain level of congruous match (Apple, low; Crest, medium; Febreze, high), participants experienced no significant difference in their attitudes towards any given, presented ad. Similarly, the level of congruous match had no significant difference on participants' attitudes towards the observed fictious host brand, Clean Green. Lastly, regardless of the ad in which the participants were exposed to, their intentions to purchase Clean Green did not significantly differ for any level of the congruous brand pairings.

In accordance with these findings, the reasoning as to why the products manipulated (Apple, Febreze, and Crest) did not garner any significant differences in consumers' evaluations may be due to the fact that the three brands were equally liked (all had high brand equity). As a result of this, the effects were not conspicuous enough to render them significant within this study.

Furthermore, even though there were no significant findings regarding the level of congruous match between the sustainable host brand and familiar partner brand in this study, marketers should be mindful of co-branding partnerships since they do have the ability to transfer brand familiarity from the host brand to the partner brand (Francois et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS

First and foremost, this study only manipulated products with higher levels of brand equity. Future research see how products of varying levels of brand equity may influence different levels of congruous match. This study also manipulated an ecologically-sustainable self-care product type. Further research should look at different product categories that are still influenced by sustainability. Furthermore, only a specific niche market (ecologically, sustainable products) within a particular product category (self-care products) was addressed as well. Future research should examine the effects of congruous match between co-branded ecologically, sustainable product pairings in other product categories. Researchers should also compare other product categories that may not be influenced by ecologically sustainable products.

In terms of industry, this study only addressed the advertising of tangible products. Future research should look at how the service industry is influenced by co-branding and the pairing of sustainable brands as well. Lastly, B2C companies were addressed within this study. Future research should examine B2B as well to see what differences in congruous brand pairings arise.

APPENDIX

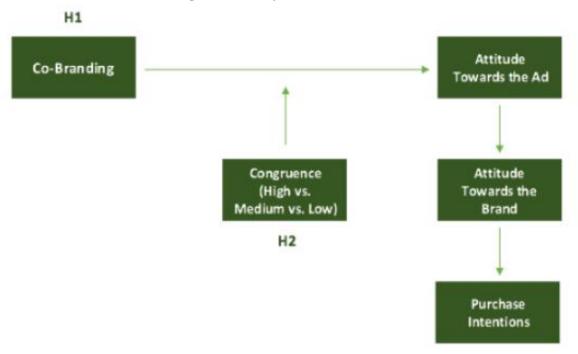**Figure 1: Study Theoretical Model**

Figure 2: High Congruence (Clean Green / Febreze)

Figure 3: Medium Congruence (Clean Green / Crest)

Figure 4: Low Congruence (Clean Green / Apple)
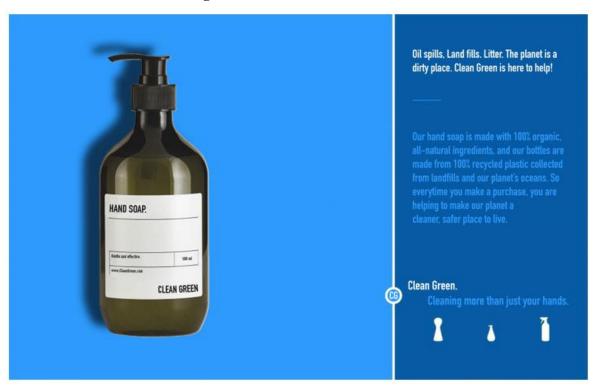

Figure 5: Control (Clean Green)

Table 2: Means & Standard Deviations for Brand Attitudes & Brand Familiarity

	Brand Attitudes		Brand Familiarity	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Apple	6.50	0.65	6.79	0.51
Febreze	6.20	1.11	6.10	1.31
Crest	6.07	1.43	6.55	0.65
Burt's Bees	5.97	1.21	5.11	1.91
Cannon	5.81	1.06	5.29	1.42
Sony	5.76	1.04	6.04	0.87
Under Armour	5.65	1.38	6.20	1.00
Snuggle	5.47	1.45	4.97	1.83
Aveeno	5.40	1.20	4.65	2.09
Pepsi	5.40	1.15	6.63	0.63
La Croix	5.17	1.43	4.66	1.71
Juicy Juice	4.53	0.81	3.10	1.88
Aveda	4.40	0.58	2.70	1.42
Tom's of Maine	4.14	1.14	2.43	2.17

Table 3: Means & Standard Deviations for Congruence & Perceived Greenness

	Congruence		Perceived Greenness	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Apple	1.67	1.37	3.50	2.70
Febreze	3.75	1.87	4.55	2.87
Crest	2.24	1.63	3.41	2.46
Burt's Bees	4.36	2.28	6.23	3.93
Cannon	1.69	1.45	2.95	1.29
Sony	1.71	1.47	3.05	1.09
Under Armour	1.76	1.49	3.14	1.32
Snuggle	3.13	1.81	3.68	2.42
Aveeno	4.51	2.08	3.64	0.73
Pepsi	1.67	1.49	2.91	1.27
La Croix	1.96	1.49	3.36	1.09
Juicy Juice	2.77	1.82	3.59	1.01
Aveda	4.28	1.96	3.41	0.85
Tom's of Maine	4.21	1.79	5.41	3.32

Table 4: Pre-Test Pair Samples T-Tests:

Brand Attitude & Brand Familiarity

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | t | df | Sig. (2–tailed) |
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Febreze_Att_Tw_Br_Rec oded – Crest_Att_Tw_Br_Recod ed	.13636	1.68100	.35839	–.60895	.88168	.380	21	.707
Pair 2	Apple_Att_Tw_Br_Recod ed – Febreze_Att_Tw_Br_Rec oded	.29545	1.08462	.23124	–.18544	.77635	1.278	21	.215
Pair 3	Crest_Att_Tw_Br_Recod ed – Apple_Att_Tw_Br_Recod ed	–.43182	1.26346	.26937	–.99200	.12837	–1.603	21	.124
Pair 4	Brand_Familiarity_Apple – Brand_Familiarity_Crest	.24545	.45745	.09753	.04263	.44828	2.517	21	.020
Pair 5	Brand_Familiarity_Crest – Brand_Familiarity_Febre ze	.44545	1.05818	.22560	–.02372	.91462	1.974	21	.062
Pair 6	Brand_Familiarity_Febre ze – Brand_Familiarity_Apple	–.69091	1.14597	.24432	–1.19900	–.18281	–2.828	21	.010

*Pairs 1, 2, 3, and 5 are not significant (p > .05).
*Pairs 4 and 6 are significant (p < .05).

Table 5: Pre-Test Pair Samples T-Tests: Congruence

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2–tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Congruence_Apple – Congruence_Febreze	−2.08333	1.70337	.36316	−2.83856	−1.32810	−5.737	21	.000
Pair 2	Congruence_Apple – Congruence_Crest	−.57576	1.09439	.23332	−1.06098	−.09053	−2.468	21	.022
Pair 3	Congruence_Febreze – Congruence_Crest	1.50758	1.77540	.37852	.72041	2.29475	3.983	21	.001

*Pairs 1 (p < .001), 2, and 3 (p < .05) are significant.

Table 6: Pre-Test Pair Samples T-Tests: Perceived Greenness

| | | Paired Differences | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2–tailed)
Pair 1	Q81 – The brand shown (Febreze) is ecologically–friendly (or "green"). – Q76 – The brand shown (Apple) is ecologically–friendly (or "green").	1.045	3.982	.849	–.720	2.811	1.231	21	.232
Pair 2	Q76 – The brand shown (Apple) is ecologically–friendly (or "green"). – Q80 – The brand shown (Crest) is ecologically–friendly (or "green").	.091	3.421	.729	–1.426	1.608	.125	21	.902
Pair 3	Q80 – The brand shown (Crest) is ecologically–friendly (or "green"). – Q81 – The brand shown (Febreze) is ecologically–friendly (or "green").	–1.136	2.569	.548	–2.275	.003	–2.075	21	.050

Table 7: Table of Measures

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Hypothesis	Measure	Source	Notes	When
Attitude Towards the Ad	An individual's attitudes towards a presented advertisement.	H1, H2	3-item semantic differential scale	Adapted version of Mackenzie & Lutz (1989)		Post-Exposure
Attitude Towards the Brand	An individual's attitudes towards a presented brand.	H1, H2	6-item semantic differential scale	Adapted version of Bickart & Ruth (2012)		Pre & Post-Exposure
Brand Familiarity	The assessment of an individual's familiarity and experience with a brand and other aspects related to the brand like products carrying the brand name, advertising for the brand, the stores carrying the brand's products, and the product category.		5-item Likert scale	Adapted version of Martin & Stewart (2001)		Pre-Test
Congruence	The degree to which a person believes that a host brand (or more specifically, its message) fits with a partner brand (i.e. the co-branded brand, product, etc.) in a co-branding partnership.	H2	5-item Likert scale	Adapted version of Kellaris, Cox, & Cox (1993)		Post-Exposure

35

Table 7 (cont'd)

Purchase Intentions	The likelihood of a person buying a brand featured in an advertisement if the person were in the market for such a product.	H1, H2	3-item Likert scale	Adapted version of Lepkowska-White, Brashear, & Weinberger (2003)		Pre & Post-Exposure
Demographics						Post-Exposure

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