

THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONGRUITY AND IDENTIFICATION ON CONSUMERS'
PURCHASE INTENTION FOR CHARACTER LICENSED MERCHANDISE

By

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SELF-CONGRUITY AND IDENTIFICATION ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION FOR CHARACTER LICENSED MERCHANDISE

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The current study adapted self-congruity and identification theories to examine consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. We hypothesized the following: self-congruity will lead to identification; consumers' level of identification and self-congruity will positively affect their attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention for character licensed merchandise; positive product attitude will lead to brand attitude, and subsequently lead to purchase intention.

A total of 134 female young adults participated in the main study. The results supported all hypotheses. We found that self-congruity led to identification. In addition, consumers' perceived self-congruity and identification separately affected the purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. However, when identification and self-congruity were taken together, only self-congruity predicted purchase intention.

The findings of the current study fill the gap in the literature on licensed merchandise and spokes-characters. In addition, the current study was one of the first to examine the relationship between self-congruity and identification. Future research and managerial implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Licensing is the process of “leasing the right to a legally protected entity” (Raugust, 2008). Licensed merchandise is “the association of one firm’s name, likeness, or creation with someone else’s product or service for a consideration” (Meyer, Tinney & Tinney, 1985, p197). Licensing is considered to be a competitive marketing strategy and has been widely adapted by corporations since the 1980s (Meyer et al., 1985). The retail sales of licensed merchandise worldwide reached \$149.77 billion in 2009; in addition, the United States is the largest single market for licensed merchandise in the world (Raugust, 2010). The U.S. market represented 56% of global sales, approximately \$83.15 billion in 2009 (EPM Communication, 2010). IBISWorld (2011) estimated that the revenue in the licensing industry will grow at a more rapid speed between 2011 and 2016.

It’s easy to find character licensed merchandise in our daily life. According to Licensing Industry Merchandisers’ Association (LIMA) (2010), character licensed merchandise is not only one of the largest product segments in the licensing industry but also one of the most recognizable products by consumers. In 2009, character-licensed merchandise represented 12% of the retail sales in the U.S and Canada, and the share of its retail sales was the biggest among Central/ Eastern Europe (25%), Asia (39%), Latin America (37%), Middle East (38%), and South Africa (39%) (Raugust, 2010). Even if children are the main target for character licensed merchandise, research has pointed out that the young adult market is a niche market (MINTEL, 2011). According to MINTEL (2011), 52% of adults who had bought character licensed merchandise between 2010 and 2011 also bought character licensed apparel for themselves, and 62% of adult consumers bought food or snacks which had a celebrity character as a spokes-

character. In addition, many companies have launched character licensed merchandise that mainly target adults. For example, MAC, a leading cosmetic brand in the U.S., has launched its Disney Villains Collection in 2010 and Wonder Women Colour in spring 2011. Since character licensing is such a pervasive business operation, and celebrity character has been considered to be an effective marketing tool to boost business, it is worth deepening our understanding of the factors that influence purchase of celebrity character merchandise.

Despite the fact that character licensing has long been pervasive, there are surprisingly few empirical studies that examine character licensed merchandise and consumer behavior. Extant research on licensed merchandise is limited to an overall introduction of licensed merchandise (Meyer et al., 1985). Some qualitative research has focused on consumers' purchase behavior of licensed merchandise, but those studies were aimed at consumers with unique characteristics such as the relationship between collectible licensed merchandise and collectors (Slater 1998; 2000; 2001). Most empirical studies in licensed merchandise are related to sport team licensed merchandise. Researchers who have focused on consumers' purchase intention for sports team licensed merchandise proposed that identification (Kwon and Armstrong, 2002; Özer and Argan, 2006) and self-congruity (Kwak and Kang, 2009) with the team were key factors that influenced consumers' purchase intention.

Researchers defined those characters which were originally from cartoon or TV programs and then licensed to a marketer for promotional use as celebrity spokes-characters to distinguish them from other characters which were originally created for advertising (Callcott & Alvey, 1991; Callcott & Lee, 1995; Phillips, 1996). Those characters were named "celebrity" because they shared some same characteristics with human celebrities (Callcott & Alvey, 1991; Callcott

& Lee, 1995). Many researchers have asserted that identification and self-congruity with a celebrity endorser could positively affect consumers' attitude or purchase intention (Basil, 1996; Choi & Rifon, 2011). However, for celebrity characters, popularity and likability seemed to be the only reasons that influence consumers' attitude and behavior (Callcott & Alvey, 1991). No research specifically focused on celebrity characters was identified, thus it would be interesting to examine whether identification and self-congruity could have the same influences on purchase behavior as found for other licensed merchandise.

Statement of the Problem

Adapting a theoretical framework from identification theories and self-congruity theory, as well as previous research regarding licensed merchandise, celebrity endorsers and spokes-characters, the current study aimed to examine whether consumers' self-congruity and identification with a celebrity character will positively affect consumers' attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention for its licensed merchandise. The relationship between self-congruity and identification, the factors that play a role in determining consumers' purchase intention were also analyzed. We expect the results of the study can provide guidance for marketers in their selection of celebrity characters for licensing and help consumers understand the psychological determinants of product purchases.

Significance of the Study

The current study contributes to extant literature in the following ways. First, the study can fill the gap in extant literature in both licensed merchandise and spokes-characters. As mentioned, previous research in licensed merchandise focused primarily on an overall introduction to the topic and concentrated chiefly on sports team licensed merchandise. In addition, while some researchers (e.g. Garretson & Niedrich, 2004) have examined how non-celebrity spokes-

characters affected consumers' attitude and behavior, the effectiveness of celebrity spokes-characters has long been ignored. The literature in celebrity spokes-character is limited to an overview of this topic. The current study not only provided a deeper understanding of consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise but also investigated the effectiveness of celebrity spokes-characters by empirical examination.

The current study investigated the relationship between self-congruity and identification. Self-congruity and identification have been separately examined in consumer behavior, but no study was identified taking both self-congruity and identification together. It is worth deepening our understanding of the relationship of the two constructs not only because both self-congruity and identification play an important role in consumers' decision making process but also because the relationship between these two constructs is somewhat ambiguous. For example, both self-congruity and identification suggest that the similarity between an individual and a referent model and an individual's self-image are the two critical elements in self-congruity and identification process. Researchers also posited that perceived similarity is critical in identification process (Bandura, 1986), but it has not been clarified whether self-congruity can lead to identification. As such, by investigating the relationship between self-congruity and identification, the results of the study can provide a deeper understanding of the two constructs, and how they affect consumers' purchase decision.

Conceptual Definition of Constructs

Self-Congruity: the process of “involving the match or mismatch between a stimulus representing a perceived self-image and a referent self-image” (Sirgy, 1986, p14).

Identification: the process of “establishing or maintaining the desired relationship to the other, and the self-definition that is anchored in this relationship” (Kelman, 1961, p.63).

Attitude toward Product: “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (Goh, 2010, p8).

Attitude toward Brand: “an individual’s internal evaluation of the brand” (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318).

Purchase Intention: “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand” (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.56).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Licensed Merchandise

Licensed merchandise is “the association of one firm’s name, likeness, or creation with someone else’s product or service for a consideration (Meyer et al., 1985, p. 198)”, that is, a trademark, spokes-character, or character on a product category which the trademark, spokes-character, or character is not originally developed. For example, one of the most common types of licensed merchandise is branded logo or character apparel such as a Coca Cola tee-shirt or a Toucan Sam tee-shirt. However, both the trademark and the character are not originally developed for promoting the tee-shirt. The Coca Cola trademark would be developed to promote Coke, and Toucan Sam is originally developed for the Froot Loops cereal.

Character-licensed merchandise is a product which has a celebrity spokes-character (e.g. a cartoon or a comic character, such as Mickey Mouse) on that product. Characters are relatively more appealing to consumers because of their interesting characteristics (Meyer et al., 1985). For example, consumers may have a more favorable attitude toward a lunchbox which has Mickey Mouse on it than the one without Mickey Mouse because they associate with Mickey Mouse’s characteristics such as cute appearance, or being funny. However, the strong personality of characters may make them difficult to bond with the image of product, brand or corporation. Since most characters are from cartoons or comic books, a large portion of the character licensing business targets the children’s market; however, the adult market is also considerable (Licensing Industry Merchandisers’ Association, 2010). Some factors, such as nostalgia or the cool image of the character can also generate significant buying power among adult consumers (Licensing Industry Merchandisers’ Association, 2010).

Designer-licensed merchandise is very common in some product categories such as health and beauty aids, apparel and accessories (Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association, 2010). Designer-licensed merchandise represented approximately 20% of the total licensed merchandise retail sales in the U.S. and Canada, and it is the largest portion of the total sales in many European countries such as France, and Italy (Raugust, 2010). In designer-licensed merchandise, some designers are in charge of the design even if they permit licensees to manufacture, market, and distribute a product with a fashion label. Nevertheless, in most cases, the designers or brand owners create, manufacture, and market their own product line to a tangential area and use licensing as a way for brand extension (Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association, 2010). In general, designer-licensed merchandise could be lucrative. However, the licensors need to carefully select the licensees whose product line and image fits the licensors' original product line (Meyer, et al., 1985). It is a win-win situation if the product line and the image of a licensee fit the designer's image because consumers may be more likely to buy the products. Besides, a successful product licensing cooperation could also be a plus to the designer's image.

Finally, corporate trademark licensed merchandise is a product which has a licensor's trademark, logo or names on it. Historically, trademark licensed merchandise had the slowest pace of growth among the three types of licensed merchandise (Meyer, et al., 1985). However, trademark licensed merchandise now is one of the fastest-growing of the licensing business (Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association, 2010). According to Raugust (2010), trademark and brand licensing was the biggest portion of the total retail sales in the U.S. and Canada (26%) in 2009, but it represented a relatively smaller portion of the total retail sales in other countries. Meyer et al. (1985) recognized that trademark licensed merchandise is comparatively difficult to develop because the characteristics of the original product are so specific that the image of the

trademark may be incompatible with the licensed merchandise. For example, consumers may be less likely to associate with a skin care product such as a lotion than with a technology brand such as Apple.

Licensed merchandising has advantages and risks to both licensors and licensees. For licensors, Meyer et al. (1985) classified four potential problems for licensed merchandising. First, companies may face legal problems such as image infringement. Second, brand, as well as corporate image, may also be hindered by licensed merchandise due to poor planning such as selecting inappropriate licensees whose original product line or image don't fit the licensors' brand image. Third, managing the relationship with licensees can be difficult, particularly when the licensor is not an expert in a certain product category. Finally, licensors may not be able to maintain control over licensees' marketing quality of the merchandise.

On the other hand, licensees may also face risks in licensing business. Raugust (2008) listed several risks to licensees. First, the royalty fees, as well as other investment expenses, are considerable. In addition, the advance, and the guarantee, can also be extremely high. Second, sometimes it is difficult to control inventory for licensees. Licensees have to make sure they can manufacture enough licensed products when the demand is at the peak; however, they also have to ensure no excess inventory when the demand becomes weak. Third, if the brand image or the product line of a licensor does not fit a licensee's brand image or its original product, it may lead to failed license merchandising; the situation worsens if the public has a negative association with a licensor's brand, there may be a backlash against the products, or the licensee may gain negative media exposure which will seriously damage the licensee's own brand equity. For

example, if there is a scandal associated with a licensor, it may not only hinder sales of the licensed merchandise but consumers may also form a negative association with the licensee.

Despite the potential risk of licensed merchandising for both licensees and licensors, Meyer et al. (1985) recognized it as a lucrative vehicle to gain profit and trademark exposure with little investment. Licensed merchandise can strengthen a trademark by transferring the brand to different product categories (Meyer et al., 1985). For example, establishing a licensed apparel line can enhance brand awareness (Sherman, 2003). Other advantages of licensed merchandising include: the development of consumer recognition, “consumer loyalty”, “increased visibility”, “diminished price comparisons”, “facilitation of product line extension”, and “recession resistance” (Meyer et al., 1985). Margins can be higher for licensed merchandise. According to Research and Market (2009), more than 63% of the licensed merchandise for The Licensing Letter’s report was priced higher than non-licensed merchandise; furthermore, among the 63% of the licensed merchandise, almost 25% of the products charged 50% or more than non-licensed merchandise.

There are many benefits to licensees (Raugust, 2008). First, licensed merchandise does help increase sales. Licensees can take advantage of consumers’ awareness of the licensor’s brand to their product line so that they can reduce the time and cost of launching a brand new line. For example, a toy company might spend more than 10% of the net sales price to launch an original toy versus a licensed toy for which the total costs to launch the product are usually less than 5% of the net sales price (Raugust, 2008). Licensees can also minimize design efforts since they can adapt logos and characters from licensors. Finally, when a licensee cooperates with a famous licensor, it usually can help it increase public exposure and boost its stock price (Raugust, 2008).

Based on extant literature, we can see that licensed merchandise is categorized into a variety of segments by its characteristics. But in general, licensed merchandise is a way for advertisers to catch consumers' eye and increase brand awareness. It is also an efficient way to boost sales at a premium price and lower investment.

Overview of Spokes-character

A spokes-character is a nonhuman character used to promote a product or a brand (Callcott & Alvey 1991; Callcott & Lee 1995; Phillips 1996). Spokes-characters have been recognized as one of the most effective advertising tools in the U.S. for more than a hundred years (Phillips, 1996). Before the term spokes-character was created, people used "trade character" (Kirkpatrick, 1953; Phillips, 1996) or "advertising character" while referring to an animated character developed to endorse a product (Callcott & Lee, 1995). Nonetheless, Callcott and Lee (1995) indicated that "advertising character seems too broad, and trade character conjures up images of a bygone era (p. 145)". In addition, the term trade character is somewhat misleading since many characters are not registered as legal trademarks (Callcott & Lee, 1995). As a result, Callcott and Lee (1995) proposed "spokes-character" as a substitute for "advertising character" and "trade character", and it has been widely adapted by scholars in their research (Philips & Gyoerick, 1999; Garretson & Niedrich, 2004; Philips & Lee, 2005).

Spokes-characters can be segmented based on various characteristics, such as appearance and the medium they present (Callcott & Lee, 1995), but most researchers focused on the origin of the characters. Callcott and Lee (1995) asserted that celebrity spokes-character refers to those characters that are originally from animation, comics, and movies. For example, Mickey Mouse and Sponge Bob are defined as celebrity spokes-characters. Non-celebrity spokes-characters are

defined as characters from advertising. In other words, non-celebrity spokes-characters are created only for endorsing a product. For example, The Snuggle Bear is considered to be a non-celebrity spokes-character. It was not formerly a cartoon or a movie character but is mainly created for promoting the fabric softener. In addition to celebrity spokes-characters, researchers posited that the nature of a celebrity spokes-character is similar to a celebrity spokes-person since both of them already have popularity among consumers (Callcott & Alvey, 199). For example, Phillips (1996) stated that “these (celebrity) characters function as any other celebrity spokesperson and therefore play a different role than the characters created by advertising trade” (p. 145).

It has been widely believed that spokes-characters can increase consumers’ identification with a product (Kirkpatrick, 1953; Phillips, 1996), help marketers capture consumers’ attention, give form to abstract ideas (Baldwin, 1982; White, 1981), and help consumers establish brand identity and favorable brand associations (Kirkpatrick, 1953; Dotz, Morton, & Lund 1996; Fournier 1998; Thompson, 2002). In addition, a significant portion of research has confirmed that a spokes-character can increase consumers’ attitude toward brand (Garretson & Burton, 2005). Extant literature has documented that the greatest contribution of a spokes-character is increasing the likability of a brand (Callcott and Philips, 1996; Phillips, 1996; Garretson & Burton, 2005; Chang, 2010).

In addition to the general function of spokes-characters, extant literature on spokes-characters focused on non-celebrity spokes-characters. For example, Garretson and Niedrich (2004) proposed that the expertise, relevance to the product, and nostalgia of a non-celebrity spokes-

character can generate consumers' trust to character and further have more favorable attitude toward the brand.

Self-Congruity Theory

Previous research has recognized the importance of self-congruity to social behavior. It is widely believed by scholars that people have both a self-image, and an ideal image. Self-image is what an individual perceives himself to be, and an ideal image is the image that the individual want others to perceive. An individual may change his behavior based on whether his self and/or ideal image is congruent or incongruent with a referent model. For example, an individual behaves like a referent model because he thinks the model's image is congruent with his self-image; on the other hand, even if the model's image is not similar with his self-image, an individual may still change his behavior to be like the model because the image of the model is congruent with his ideal image. Applying this theory from social psychology, researchers have asserted that self-congruity can also be applied to consumer behavior (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1986). They have explored whether an individual's self-image congruency with a product image is a substantial factor that determine consumers' purchase decision.

Often commercial merchandise has symbolic meaning to consumers. A symbol refers to an object, picture, word or behavior and is understood not only itself but also some other ideas or feelings that symbol elicits (Levy, 1959). For example, when an individual buys a luxury handbag, the behavior does not merely mean "buying a handbag", the symbolic meaning may be gaining prestige, or being indulged. For many women, a pair of high heels is not just a pair of shoes; it means confidence, or power. The symbolic meanings of the two examples above cannot be seen directly on the behavior or the object itself; instead, there is a metaphor attached to that

behavior and the object. What is more, when people perceive a symbolic meaning of an object or a behavior, the experience is mediated rather than direct (Levy, 1959). For example, for character licensed merchandise, when people think that Mickey Mouse means being adventurous, it is not because there is a direct implication shows that Mickey Mouse is adventurous; instead, the reasons for people to feel that way may be due to personal experience such as the experience of watching some cartoon episodes of Mickey Mouse, or what others told them Mickey Mouse is adventurous.

Levy (1959) proposed that all commercial merchandise has an implicit or explicit symbolic meaning and proposed that people try to satisfy a variety of needs such as feeling and wishes, or to release social pressure by making a purchase. Furthermore, people care about both what a product means to them and what the product can do for them. Later research also supported Levy's assertion that people choose to use or purchase goods for their symbolic meaning to communicate with others and express their self-image (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Schenk & Holman, 1980).

Sirgy (1982) developed self-image/ product-image congruity theory, also called self-congruity theory, and posited that consumers' purchase intention would be motivated by the congruity between self and product image, termed "self-congruity". Self-congruity is the process of "involving the match or mismatch between a stimulus representing a perceived self-image and a referent self-image (Sirgy, 1986, p14)." The concept is similar with Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) which asserted that people's change in their behavior is based on noticing whether there is a similarity between the model and themselves. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986), whether a person changes his behavior based on a referent model's (e.g. friends,

family members, models, celebrities, groups) behavior depends on his identification with the referent model. The reason to determine whether or not to follow a referent model's behavior is his perceived identification with that person. Bandura (1986) stated that the perceived similarity between the model and the audience is the key factor in the identification process. That is, people are less likely to act like the model if they don't feel like they are similar to the model. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H1: Consumers' self-congruity with a character is positively related to identification with the character.

However, Sirgy (1982) stated that there are two mediators to self-congruity; both self-esteem motive and self-consistency motive affect self-congruity theory. Self-esteem motive is the motivation that induces people to meet their ideal self-image and achieve a self-image to meet social approval (Sirgy, 1986). As such, people will tend to buy a product which has the potential to help them reach an ideal image (Sirgy, 1982). Self-consistency motive is the motivation that makes people perceive themselves in a consistent manner with their prior beliefs about themselves (Sirgy, 1986). Based on this motivation, people are more likely to buy a product which is positively consistent with their self-image to avoid damaging their self-image (Sirgy, 1982). When a product image matches an individual's image, both the self-esteem and self-consistency motives would motivate him to approach the product. On the other hand, even when there is an incongruity between an individual's self-image and a product image, if the individual perceives the product image as positive, the self-esteem motive would still foster him to approach the product (Sirgy, 1982).

Sirgy (1985) postulated that the congruity between self and product image will affect consumers' attitude toward product (product preference) and purchase intention for merchandise. In addition, Ericksen (1996) posited that people have a more favorable attitude toward a product image that is similar or even better than their perception of their own self-image. Therefore, in the case of the character licensed merchandise, since the character is printed on merchandise, the image of the character could be considered as a part of the product image. As a result, we can assume that as long as an individual perceives the image of a character congruently with his self-image or ideal image, he is more likely to have favorable attitude toward a product and purchase it. Toward this end, we hypothesized that:

H2a: Consumers perceived self-congruity with the character will positively affect their attitude toward product.

Self-congruity not only facilitates a positive attitude toward product but also attitude toward brand (Graeff, 1996; Jamal & Goode, 2001). Self-congruity theory suggested that a favorable brand attitude is derived from its image congruence, which is a mental comparison between consumers' self-image and brand image (Sirgy, 1982; Graeff, 1996; Parker, 2009). Graeff (1996, p. 5) noted that "The more similar a consumer's self-image is to the brand image, the more favorable their evaluations of that brand should be." Since consumers express themselves by consuming a specific brand (Graeff, 1996) we can assume that consumers are more likely to buy a brand which fits their self-image.

Patterson (1999) stated that consumers can perceive brand image in many ways such as personal experience with the brand, observing a brand's typical users, or through the promotions of a brand. In general, a spokes-character is considered as effective tool in promotions (Garretson

& Niedrich, 2004). As a result, we can assume that consumers will perceive the brand image through the image of a spokes-character. Based on self-congruity theory, we hypothesized that:

H2b: Consumers perceived self-congruity with the character will positively affect their attitude toward brand.

Extant literature has documented that products have personality images as people do (Sirgy, 1985), and it has been long recognized that self-congruity has a positive effect on purchase intention (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy 1985; Ericksen, 1996). In the case of licensed merchandise, Kwak and Kang (2009) demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between self-image congruence and perceived quality, and purchase intention for sports team licensed merchandise. Kwak and Kang (2009) suggested that consumers' self-image congruence with the team will positively affect their perceived quality of the products, which in turn triggers stronger purchase intention. Choi and Rifon (2011) adapted self-congruity to investigate whether consumers' self-congruity with a celebrity image and the level of congruence between the celebrity's image and the product image affected consumers' attitude and purchase intention, and they concluded that consumers' self-congruity with the celebrity endorser will positively affect their purchase intention. As a result, we proposed:

H2c: Consumers perceived self-congruity with the character will positively affect their purchase intention.

Identification Theory

Identification has been widely examined in consumer behavior. Extant literature has documented that identification positively affects perception (Wann & Robinson, 2002) and attitude (Madrigal, 2001). According to Kelman's theory of identification (1961), identification

occurs when an individual adapts behavior from another individual or a group because the behavior can satisfy the individual's self-definition, that is, a way to form part of the self image. Therefore, identification is a way of "establishing or maintaining the desired relationship to the other, and the self-definition that is anchored in this relationship" (Kelman, 1961, p.63).

There are two forms of identification, "classical identification" and "reciprocal-role relationship" (Kelman, 1961). "Classical identification" refers to when an individual adapts all or part of the behavior of an influencing agent, that is, he attempts to be like or actually to be the influencing agent. By imitating the influencing agent, the individual fulfills some characteristics that the individual lacks and maintains and satisfies a self-defining relationship. Children imitating their parents' attitude or behavior is an example of classical identification. "Reciprocal-role relationship" occurs when two parties' behaviors mutually influence each other. In a reciprocal-role relationship, the two individuals are usually in a friendship, or in a situation where one of the individuals whose social role is defined with reference to the other (e.g., teacher and student, doctor and patient). A reciprocal-role relationship would only occur when the two parties share the same expectation with each other. That is, when an individual finds something valuable in the influencing agent during self-defining, he tends to behave in a certain way to meet the agent's expectation. As such, the difference between classical identification and reciprocal-role relationship is that an individual in a reciprocal-role relationship does not attempt to take over the influencing agent's identity. Instead, the individual changes his behavior to meet what he thinks is the influencing agent's expectation. Classical identification and reciprocal-role relationship could also occur simultaneously when the influencing agent is a group. As a group member, an individual has to not only behave in a certain way but also meet other members'

expectation. For example, a sport fan may not only emulate a player's behavior to support the player and the team but also act a certain way in order to fit in the fans group.

A theory relevant to character licensed merchandise is Burke's dramatism theory (1950). This theory focuses on people's identification with fictional characters. Burke noted that when people think they share the same values as the character, identification with the characters then occurs. As a result, we can assume that when people find similar or valuable characteristics in a character, it is likely that people would identify with the character. In addition, according to previous studies on spokes-characters, one of the basic functions of having a spokes-character in promotions is enhancing product identification (Phillips, 1996). Therefore, when consumers identify with a character, they are also likely to have identification with the product it endorsed. Although no literature was identified that identification with a character will positively affect consumers' attitude toward its licensed merchandise, previous research suggests that consumers would have a more favorable product attitude on character licensed merchandise. For example, Lapierre, Vaala and Linebarger (2011) found that children have a more favorable attitude toward a box of cereal with licensed spokes-character than the one without licensed spokes-character on the box. Furthermore, prior research has documented that identification will favorably affect consumers' attitude toward other types of licensed merchandise such as sport team licensed merchandise (Lee, 2008). As such, we hypothesize that:

H3a: Consumers' identification with the character will positively affect attitude toward product.

Research on celebrity spokes-people has documented that identification is related to "likableness" and "attractiveness", and the likableness and attractiveness of a celebrity endorser

leads to the process of identification (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). In the current study, we focused on celebrity spokes-characters, those with high popularity and familiarity and are originally created for cartoon programs, comics, or movie but licensed to marketers for promotions (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). Extant literature suggested that the reason for celebrity spokes-characters being so popular is consumers identify with their human personalities (Callcot & Lee, 1995). We therefore assumed that it is very likely that when consumers like a celebrity spokes-character, the identification with the character will also occur. Since using an attractive and likeable spokes-character can create and maintain a positive brand image (LeBel & Cooke, 2008), consumers may generate better attitude toward brand on a character licensed-merchandise. In addition, research on other types of licensed merchandise, sport team licensed merchandise, also suggested that identification can positively affect attitude toward brand (Lee, 2008). Therefore, we hypothesized:

H3b: Consumers' identification with the character will positively affect attitude toward brand.

Previous research viewed buying licensed merchandise as a way for consumers to show their loyalty to the brand (Mason, 1999; Slater, 2000; Slater, 2001; Kwak and Kang, 2009; Kopczenski, 2011). Extant literature has documented that consumers' purchase intention for sport team licensed merchandise is affected by various factors. Among all factors, identification with the team demonstrates the strongest relationship. For example, the sales of the team store, where the sport team licensed merchandise are sold, is positively affected by the success of the team (Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2005) because when the team is successful, the identification among fans is higher (End, 2001).

Several studies indicated that the level of identification affects consumers' purchase intention. Özer and Argan (2006) examined the factors influencing fans' licensed sports merchandise purchasing decisions. The results showed that "identification", "store atmosphere", "friends and groups", "devotion", and "shopping" all influenced the intention to purchase sports team licensed merchandise. Of these factors, team identification had the greatest influence on buying sports team licensed merchandise. Interestingly, Özer and Argan found that fans who buy sports team licensed merchandise not only think the purchase behavior is a way to show support to the team, but also feel that purchasing their respective team's licensed merchandise makes them feel enjoyment because this is the way to show their belongingness to the team. Kwon and Armstrong (2002) examined four factors that foster casual buyers' impulse purchases of sport team licensed merchandise, including "shopping enjoyment", "identity with the product", "time availability", and "availability of financial resource." The results showed that for sport team licensed merchandise, the "identity with the product" (i.e. consumers' sport team identification) was the only significant factor triggering impulse buying of licensed merchandise.

Lee (2008) confirmed that identification will positively affect purchase intention. In his study, he found that even though there were various factors that influence consumers' purchase intention for sport team licensed merchandise, such as personal values, past expenditure, and perceived product attributes, identification with the team is the most significant factor that affects purchase intention.

Identification has also been applied to purchase intention for university licensed merchandise. University licensed merchandise has the strongest sales during athletic events such as football seasons (Kennedy, 2007). Kopczenski (2011) used social identity theory to examine whether

identification toward a university will be positively related to university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, and the results confirmed this relationship. As a result, we proposed:

H3c: Consumers' identification with the character will positively affect purchase intention.

Attitude toward Product, Brand, and Purchase Intention

Attitude is conceptualized as “the amount of affect for or against some objects” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.11) and behavioral intention is an individual's tendency to perform behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) conceptual framework relating to beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, they asserted that an individual's belief, the information about an object/ behavior, forms the attitude the individual possesses, and the attitude will influence the intentions with respect to the object/ behavior. Finally, the intention will foster the behavior related to the object/ behavior. Therefore, we can assume that attitude has a direct impact on intention.

Previous research adapted Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory and defined attitude toward product as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (Goh, 2010, p8). Mitchell and Olson (1981, p. 318) defined attitude toward the brand as an “individual's internal evaluation of the brand.” The definition is similar to Wilkie (1986) who considered brand attitude as consumers' overall evaluation of a brand, and the evaluation is based on the attributes or characteristics of a brand. In addition, Spears and Singh (2004) postulated that “attitude toward the brand is a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior. (p.55)” As

for purchase intention, previous research defined it as “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand” (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.56).

Aaker (1996) stated that a product is under a brand, and a brand is more than a product. Aaker (1996, p.73) proposed that a product includes characteristics such as “scope” (the product category of a product), “attributes” (the characteristics of a product), “quality/ value”, and “uses” (what is a product made for); however, a brand not only possesses the characteristics that a product has, but more characteristics such as “country of origin” (e.g., BMW has German craftsmanship), “organization associations” (e.g., Apple is an innovative company), “brand personality”, “symbols” (e.g., The Nike Swoosh), and “self-expressive benefit” (e.g. a Chanel user means prestige). Therefore, a product can be considered as a dimension of a brand, but a brand has a more comprehensive scope. When a consumer sees a product, the characteristics of the product he perceives will make him form attitude toward the product. Since the characteristics of a product are considered to be part of the characteristics of a brand, we can assume that the attitude toward the product will lead to attitude toward a brand. As a result, we hypothesized that:

H4: Positive attitude toward product will positively lead to positive attitude toward brand.

The relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention has been postulated by many researchers. The majority of research that examined the relationship between attitude toward brand and purchase intention focuses on attitude toward ad (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; Spears & Singh, 2004). In the framework of attitude toward ad, previous studies have confirmed that consumers’ positive/ negative feelings about an ad will form their attitude toward an ad, and the attitude toward ad will further affect consumers’ attitude

toward brand. Finally, the attitude toward brand will affect consumers' purchase intention.

While some mediators such as motivation (MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992) may affect the strength of relation in brand attitude and purchase intention, there is a widespread belief that brand attitude will directly affect purchase intention. As a result, we hypothesized that:

H5: Positive attitude toward brand will positively lead to purchase intention.

Based on the review of extant literature, both self-congruity and identification separately have a positive influence on consumers' attitude and purchase intention. In addition, previous research has established a relationship between product attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention. Therefore, we proposed the conceptual model for current study below (See Figure 2.1). We proposed that self-congruity will lead to identification. Both consumers' perceived self-congruity and identification with a celebrity spokes-character will separately have a positive effect on their attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention. Finally, attitude toward product will lead to attitude toward brand, and attitude toward brand will lead to purchase intention.

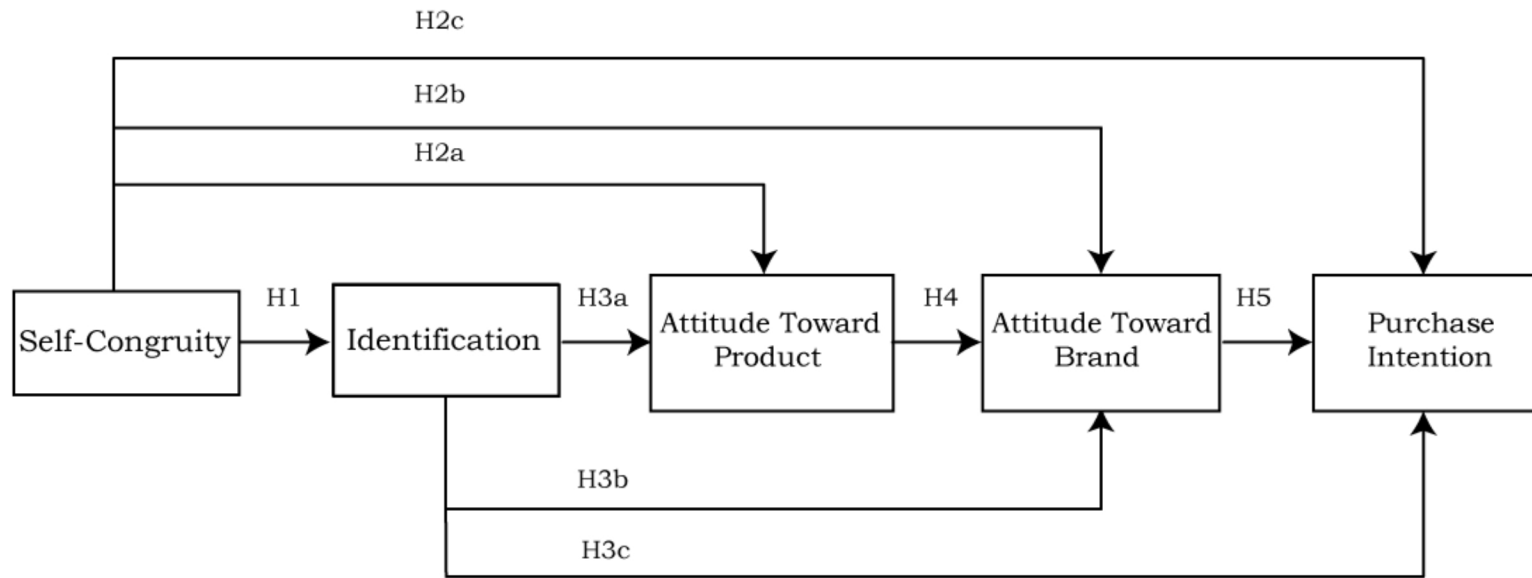


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model for the Current Study

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Selection of Stimuli

According to Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association (2010), character licensed merchandise refers to properties originally from feature films, TV shows, videogames and online entertainment. In short, character licensed merchandise is a product which uses a movie, cartoon, or game character as its spokes-character for promotions. The properties in aforementioned definition is similar to what Callcott and Lee (1995) called "celebrity spokes-characters", that is, characters "originally created for animated movies, cartoon programs, and/or comic strips and then licensed by brands to appear in promotions" (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004, p. 25). As a result, the current study only focused on celebrity spokes-characters. Examples of celebrity spokes-characters include: Mickey Mouse, Sponge Bob, and Wonder Woman.

Tee-shirts were chosen to be the stimuli for the current study for the following reasons. First, the retail sales of apparel/ accessories/ footwear was the biggest product category among licensed merchandise in global (40% of share) and the U.S. (37% of share) market in 2009 (Raugust, 2010). Second, according to MINTEL (2011), tee shirts were the type of character licensed apparel that was most commonly purchased. Based on MINTEL's report, 65% of people who had bought character merchandise in 2010 bought character tee-shirts. As such, tee-shirts can be considered as one type of licensed merchandise that most consumers would be likely to purchase. Finally, apparel could be a part of an individual's image. People usually judge others by what they wear, and many people consider clothing for self-expression (Miller, 1997). Sirgy (1982) asserted that consumers may purchase products that are conspicuous to express self-image. Therefore, people who purchase and wear a character tee-shirt should have a certain

degree of identification and self-congruity with the character since the character would be easily noticed by others when they wear that character tee-shirt. To this end, we used a tee shirt as the stimuli of the study.

In addition, since the preference of celebrity spokes-characters, as well as design varies from male and female, there are relatively few tee-shirts which have the same graphic design for both women and men. Previous research has documented that women are more likely to notice a character on a product and are more likely to purchase character licensed merchandise (MINTEL, 2011). As a result, we included only female participants in the study.

The prospective stimuli were mostly chosen from two brands. One is Junk Food Clothing which is “a licensing powerhouse with distribution rights to over 800 pop-culture properties including rock & roll, characters, movies, sports and foods”, according to its official website (Junk Food Clothing Company, 2012). The other brand is Uniqlo, one of the biggest Japanese apparel retailers, which has more than 843 stores around the world (Uniqlo Co., Ltd, 2012) including three retail stores in the United States (all located in New York City). Uniqlo has launched different series of celebrity spokes-characters apparel featuring Disney, Warner Bros, Snoopy, Care Bears, and Hello Kitty for many years. While Junk Food Clothing and Uniqlo sell a variety of character tee shirts, we eliminated those tee-shirts with slogans to minimize extraneous variables. For the current study, some tee-shirts, such as Tinkerbell, were created by the researchers through graphic editing software Photoshop. Images were cut and pasted onto the tee-shirts. Based on the aforementioned criteria, the total number of the prospective stimuli was eight tee-shirts with six celebrity spokes-characters, including Tinkerbell (positive and negative

image), Stitch (positive and negative image), Minnie Mouse, Snoopy, Smurfette, and Cruella De Vil (See Appendix A).

Pretest

There was no specific age range in the current study; however, we looked for female participants who were over 18. Prior to the main study, a pretest was conducted to determine appropriate stimuli. Twenty-four female undergraduate and graduate students at Michigan State University were recruited for the pretest and were asked to view a series of photos of the stimuli. The participants then wrote down as many adjectives as they could think of for each character and answered the questions regarding self-congruity with the spokes-character. The number of tested stimuli was eight character licensed tee-shirts with six different celebrity spokes-characters, including Tinkerbell (positive and negative image), Minnie Mouse, Stitch (positive and negative image), Cruella De Vil, Snoopy, and Smurfette (See Appendix B). In addition, since whether people can identify the character is crucial for determining the degree of congruence during their self-congruity process, participants were asked whether they could identify the characters and write down each name of the character. The goal of the pretest was to determine two characters that not only had different perceived image among participants but were familiar to them. We chose two characters rather than one character because we wanted to examine whether our hypotheses could be supported for different characters. In addition, there should be a significant difference on perceived self-congruity with each character. That is, the two characters can separately cause significantly different variation in perceived self-congruity among participants.

Design

The experiment utilized two celebrity spokes-characters in the study design. In order to test the proposed hypotheses, two tee shirt posters were designed. In each poster, there was a stimulus, selected based on the results of the pretest, in the center of the poster. In addition, the brand logo and a short description of the brand were both placed in the bottom of the poster.

Data Collection Procedures

The main study was conducted through an online questionnaire via Surveygizmo (See Appendix C, D). There were two sets of questionnaires each with a different celebrity spokes-character chosen based on the results of the pretest. We used a convenience sample for the main study. The majority of the participants were undergraduate and graduate students at Michigan States University. We recruited participants from undergraduate and graduate courses with professors' cooperation. The professors of the classes passed the links of the questionnaires to prospective participants by email. Participants were randomly assigned by their student ID. Participants whose last number of the student ID was an odd number were asked to complete questionnaire A, while those whose last number of the student ID was an even number were asked to complete questionnaire B. We used snowball sampling in main study. The researcher of the current study passed the links of the questionnaires to prospective participants via email and asked them to pass the links to others who were qualified for participating in the main study. There were 134 participants in the final study.

Participants in the main study were asked to view a photo of a character licensed tee-shirt and then type as many adjectives as they could think of for the character. Later, participants were asked to answer the questions related to variables of interest (self-congruity, identification, attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention). After data collection,

participants were categorized into two sets of three groups: high, neutral, and low self-congruity group and high, neutral, and low identification group, based on the average self-congruity and identification score. The results between high and low self-congruity and identification groups were compared to examine whether the independent variables had significant influence on the dependent variables.

Measurements

Self-Congruity

Previous researchers have used consumers' "user-imagery", or consumers' perception of the typical users of a particular product/ brand as the product/ brand image to examine self-congruity (Graeff, 1996; Parker, 2009). The method adapted by many researchers is based on "tapping the subject's perception of product image and the subject's perception of his/her self-image along a predetermined set of image attributes and adding the self-congruity scores across all image dimensions" (Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar & Berkman, 1997, p. 229). That is, researchers tailored a set of attributes that were related to the test product and measured these attributes by either a semantic differential scale or a Likert scale. Subjects then answered whether the attributes are congruent with the product image and their self image. Finally, researchers summed up the distances perceived by the subjects between their product image and the self image across all attributes measured (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1985).

Sirgy et al. (1997) pointed out that the traditional measures of self-congruity may cause problems. Sirgy et al. (1997) asserted that "the most important problem with the traditional method is the fact that the method does not incorporate any reference to the psychological congruity experience (p. 231)". Another potential problem of the traditional method is using

predetermined attributes. As mentioned earlier, previous researchers used a set of adjectives related to the test product as the measures. However, in doing so, it may force subjects to indicate some images that have little to do with the subjects' self-congruity. For example, when a subject considers herself to be cute, young, and energetic (self-image), it is very likely that she will feel congruent with a product image that is cute, young, and energetic as well. However, while using traditional method, the measures may not include the adjectives that the subject thinks of herself or may involve the images that the subject never thinks of. In that situation, the subject has to force herself to indicate whether she perceives congruent or incongruent with the images. Sirgy et al. (1997) considered these other images to be not meaningful because the images may have nothing to do with the subject's self-congruity process. As such, the score may cause random error in measurement. To overcome this measurement limitation, Sirgy et al. (1997) proposed a new method for examining self-congruity and conducted six different experiments to demonstrate that the superior predictive validity of the new method over and beyond the traditional method. As such, in the current study we adapted self-congruity measurements from Sirgy et al. (1997).

Sirgy et al. (1997) asserted the new methods could tap the psychological experience of self-congruity more directly and comprehensively. Before answering the questions, subjects are instructed with the following sentences: "Take a moment to think about [product X]. Think about the kind of person who typically uses [product X]. Imagine this person in your mind and then describe this person using one or more personal adjectives such as, stylish, classy, masculine sexy, old, athletic, or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the typical user of [product X]" (Sirgy et al., 1997, p. 232). Sirgy et al. (1997) emphasized that the new method does not include

any specific attribute so the subjects could indicate the degree of match of mismatch between their self-images and the product image.

The current study adapted the aforementioned instruction. In addition, since Sirgy et al. (1997) conducted six experiments with different product types, we adapted items which they used to test self-congruity with three female outfits for work. The measures included “This outfit is consistent with how I see myself at work”, “This outfit reflects how I am at work”, “People similar to me wear outfit like this at work”, “The kind of person who typically wears this outfit at work is very much like me”, and “This outfit is a mirror image of me at work.” The items were measured by five items on a seven-point Likert scale and the coefficient alpha for the testing of one outfit was .90, and .91 for the testing of the other two outfits. Since the product we chose for the current study is a tee shirt, which is generally considered as casual wear, the items in our study were: “the character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself”, “the character on this tee shirt reflects who I am”, “people similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in a casual situation”, “the kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in a casual situation is very much like me”, and “the character is a mirror image of me” (See Table 3.1).

Identification

The measures of consumers’ identification with celebrity spokes-character were adapted from Basil (1996). Basil (1996) used eight items on a seven-point Likert scale to examine whether consumers’ identification with a celebrity will affect their attitude. He used Magic Johnson as an example and tested whether consumers’ identification with Magic Johnson will enhance their concern over the HIV and their intention for having a blood test. The items that Basil used including “I like Magic Johnson”, “I do not have any feeling about Magic Johnson”, “I can easily

relate to Magic Johnson”, “Magic Johnson is not easily understood”, “I think of Magic Johnson as a good friend”, “I have no doubt Magic Johnson and I would work well together”, “I am personally grief stricken by Magic Johnson’s infection with HIV”, and “Magic Johnson is a personal role model” ($\alpha=.84$). In current study two item were dropped, including “I am personally grief stricken by Magic Johnson’s infection with HIV” and “I do have any feeling about Magic Johnson” because the items were not related to the purpose of our study (See Table 3.1).

Attitude toward Product

Attitude toward product is defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object (Goh, 2010, p8).” We used Kamins and Guptas’ (1994) seven-point semantic differential scale including four items: “bad/ good”, “unpleasant/ pleasant”, “unagreeable/ agreeable”, and “unsatisfactory/ satisfactory” ($\alpha=.92$) (See Table 3.1).

Attitude toward Brand

Attitude toward brand is defined as “an individual’s internal evaluation of the brand (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318).” The measures of attitude toward ad were adapted from Spears and Singh (2004), and it was measured by five items on a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored by “unappealing/ appealing”, “bad/ good”, “unpleasant/ pleasant”, “unfavorable/ favorable”, and “unlikable/ likable” ($\alpha=.95$) (See Table 3.1).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention was defined as “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.56).” In the current study, we adapted Spears and Singh’s scale by five items on a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored by “never/

definitely”, “definitely do not intend to buy/ definitely intend to buy”, “very low purchase interest/ very high purchase interest”, “definitely not to buy it/ definitely buy it”, and “probably not buy it/ probably buy it” ($\alpha=.96$) (See Table 3.1).

Because the image that the subjects had about the character was crucial for determining the level of congruence between the character image and their self-image, a manipulation check was conducted. For both the pretest and the main study, subjects were asked whether they could identify the character, in addition, they were asked to write down/type in the name of the character. Subjects who could not identify the character or whose answer was incorrect were excluded while analyzing the data. Finally, demographic questions were included in the current study including age, educational level and race.

Table 3.1. Measurements in the Current Study

Construct	Sources	Items	Scale	Crobach's α
Self-Congruity	Sirgy et al. (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself. • The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am. • People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation. • The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me. • The character is a mirror image of me. 	5-point Likert scale	.90/.91
Identification	Basil (1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like the character. • I can easily relate to the character. • The character is easily understood. • I think of the character as a good friend. • I have no doubt the character and I would work well together. • The character is a personal role model. 	5-point Likert scale	.84
Attitude Toward Product	Kamins & Gupta (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad/ Good • Unpleasant/ Pleasant • Unagreeable/ Agreeable • Unsatisfactory/ Satisfactory 	7-point semantic differential scale	.92
Attitude Toward Brand	Spears & Singh (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unappealing/ Appealing • Bad/ Good • Unpleasant/ Pleasant • Unfavorable/ Favorable • Unlikable/ Likable 	7-point semantic differential scale	.95
Purchase Intention	Spears & Singh (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never/ Definitely • Definitely do not intend to buy/ Definitely intend to buy • Very low purchase interest/ Very high purchase interest • Definitely not buy it/Definitely buy it • Probably not buy it/ Probably buy it 	7-point semantic differential scale	.96

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Pretest Results

Results of the pretest in the current study showed that most celebrity spokes-characters were correctly identified except Tinkerbell (with negative image) and Stitch (with negative image). Among eight prospective stimuli, Minnie Mouse, Snoopy, and Tinkerbell (with a positive image) received 100% recognition. All participants answered they could identify the three characters, and the names of the characters they wrote down were correct (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Celebrity Spokes-characters with Adjectives

Name	Adjectives	Recognition
Tinkerbell (with a positive image)	Magical, graceful , skinny, cute , smart, slim, immature, pretty, dainty, girly, childish , playful, mischievous, fairy, sparkly, small, delicate, feminine, fun, sassy, darling, infantile	100%
Minnie Mouse	lovely, girly, graceful, cute , fantastic, ideal, sweet, charming, elegant, popular, beloved, well-educated, sassy, classy , vintage, feminine, pretty , childish, fun, innocent, stylized, timeless, coquettish, stylish	100%
Snoopy	Cool, smart, loyal, cute , quiet, lazy, funny , peace, silly , optimistic, easygoing, relaxed , reliable, smiling, great, friendly, adorable, classic, neutral, nice, wise, happy, chill, witty, chic, awesome	100%
Smurfette	Magic, cute , outgoing, easygoing, sunny, positive, smart, popular, charming, girly, sweet , delicate, joyful, fun, shy, blue, silly, kind, vintage, alone, stylish, beautiful, unique, sassy, independent, innocent	88%
Stitch (with a positive image)	Alien, naughty, cute , childish, boisterous, ugly, silly, crazy, adorable, spunky, fun, juvenile, clumsy, sad, mean, wild , foreign, mischeivious , innocent, cuddly	83%
Crella De Vil	Evil , treacherous, unbelievable, scary, greedy , old, ugly, rich, egotistical, sassy, mean , funny, conniving, cruel , selfish, horrible, sinister, trashy, crazy	83%
Tinkerbell (with a negative image)	Punk , two-faced, difficult, scary, cool, stylish, bad girl , devil, naughty, not well-educated, different, laidback, goth , rebellious, emotional , little-kid, self-objectifying, trashy, dark, slutty	46%
Stitch (with a negative image)	Angry, evil , hot-tempered, arbitrary, irritable, scary , bad, horrible, trouble maker, devilish, red, strange, playful, hot, boyish	38%

Note. N=24. Adjectives in the bold font were most frequently mentioned among participants in the pretest.

Since the degree of the congruence varied, participants whose self-congruity score was higher than 3 (on a 5 point scale) were categorized in high self-congruity group while those whose score was under 3 were categorized in low self-congruity group. Participants whose self-congruity

score equaled 3 were categorized in neutral self-congruity group. Participants in the neutral self-congruity group were eliminated from data analyses. Only high and low self-congruity groups were compared in the pretest.

We chose Snoopy and Minnie Mouse to be the stimuli for the main study because both of the characters received 100% recognition. In addition, Minnie Mouse and Snoopy had different images based on the adjectives proposed by participants. Participants considered Snoopy to be “cool, smart, loyal, cute, and relaxed” while they thought Minnie mouse was “lovely, girly, classy, feminine, and sassy.” We selected two celebrity spokes-characters for the main study because we wanted the results to be generalizable for different types of characters. If there was only one character chosen for the main study, people may argue whether the results could apply to other characters. For example, Minnie Mouse is considered to be a more feminine character. Most of our participants considered Minnie Mouse to be “girly, feminine, sassy, and pretty” (see Table 3.1). Since the subjects in the current study were female, people might argue the femininity of Minnie Mouse may affect participants’ level of self-congruity or identification. To respond to this limitation, we added Snoopy, which is generally considered to be a more neutral gender character, in the main study. In the pretest, participants’ proposed adjectives for Snoopy mostly were “cool, smart, funny, and relaxed” (see Table 3.1), which did not refer to a specific gender. As a result, we had both Minnie Mouse and Snoopy in the main study.

The Cronbach’s α of self-congruity for Snoopy was .90. There were 10 participants in high self-congruity group ($M=3.66$), while 11 participants were in low self-congruity group ($M=2.11$), and the two groups had a significant difference on self-congruity ($t=7.04, p=.00$). In addition, the Cronbach’s α of self-congruity for Minnie Mouse was .94. There were 6 participants in high

self-congruity group ($M=4.03$), while 16 participants were in low self-congruity group ($M=2.08$). The result of the t test indicated that the two groups were significantly different from each other on self-congruity ($t=6.43, p=.00$).

Main Study Results

Descriptive profile of sample

The total number of participants for the main study was 134. The total number of participants in the Minnie Mouse cell was 71. Specifically, there were 51 participants aged between 18 and 24, and 19 participants aged between 25 and 34. In addition, 30 participants were Caucasian, 38 participants were Asian, and 3 participants were African-American. Regarding participants in the Snoopy cell, the total number of the participants was 63. Thirty-nine participants aged between 18 and 24 while twenty-four participants aged between 25 and 34. In addition, there were 34 participants who considered themselves as Asians, 26 to be Caucasians, 2 to be African-Americans, and 1 participant reported her race as other race. All participants in the main study were female (See Table 4.2)

Table 4.2. Sample Profile

	All		Minnie Mouse		Snoopy	
Categories	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Age						
18-24	90	67	51	72	39	62
25-34	43	32	19	27	24	38
35-44	1	1	1	1	0	0
n	134	100	71	100	63	100
Race						
Asian	64	48	30	42	34	54
Caucasian	64	48	38	54	26	41
African-American	5	3	3	4	2	3
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0	1	2
n	134	100	71	100	63	100

Manipulation Check

As noted, whether participants could identify the spokes-character was important during their self-congruity and identification process, thus, a manipulation check was conducted in the main study. Participants in the main study were asked whether they could identify the character they saw in the questionnaire, in addition, they were asked to type the name of the character. If a participant indicates she could not identify the character, or her answer of the name of the character is incorrect, her responses will be excluded when we analyze the data.

In the Minnie Mouse cell, there were four participants who did not identify the character. In addition, five participants indicated that they could recognize the character but typed the name of the character as Mickey Mouse. As such, the effective responses in the Minnie Mouse cell were 62. In the Snoopy cell, since there were two participants indicated they could not identify the character, the effective responses were 61. Therefore, the final sample size used for analysis for the main study was 123.

Reliability and Validity

To test the reliability of the scales for the main study, Cronbach's α were calculated. The Cronbach's α of each construct was .88 (self-congruity), .85 (identification), .94 (attitude toward product), .96 (attitude toward brand), and .98 (purchase intention) (See Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Reliability of each Construct

	Alpha	Mean	Standard deviation	α if item deleted
Self-Congruity	.881			
The character on this tee-shirt is consistent with how I see myself		2.79	1.154	.844
The character on this Tee-shirt reflects who I am		2.51	1.112	.850
People similar to me wear character tee-shirts like this in casual situation		2.93	1.229	.877
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee-shirt in casual situation is very much like me		2.59	1.165	.853
The character is a mirror image of me		2.15	1.025	.853

(Table 4.3 cont'd)

Identification	.846		
I like the character	3.78	.910	.826
I can easily relate to the character	3.04	1.003	.811
The character is easily understood	3.85	.844	.843
I think of the character as a good friend	3.04	1.134	.799
I have no doubt the character and I would work well together	3.02	1.048	.813
The character is a personal role model	2.59	1.101	.825
Product attitude	.937		
Bad/ Good	4.91	1.520	.913
Unpleasant/ Pleasant	5.07	1.514	.931
Unagreeable/ Agreeable	4.90	1.462	.910
Unsatisfactory/ Satisfactory	4.63	1.565	.915
Brand Attitude	.958		
Unappealing/ Appealing	4.85	1.285	.949
Bad/ Good	4.91	1.287	.948
Unpleasant/ Pleasant	4.50	1.451	.954
Unfavorable/ Favorable	4.61	1.365	.944
Unlikable/ Likable	4.61	1.314	.947
Purchase Intention	.976		
Never/ Definitely	3.34	1.841	.973
Definitely do not intend to buy/ Definitely intend to buy	3.15	1.754	.969
Very low purchase interest/ Very high purchase interest	3.09	1.756	.971
Definitely not to buy it/ Definitely buy it	3.07	1.663	.968
Probably not buy it/ Probably buy it	3.02	1.851	.972

The validity of each construct was examined by factor analysis. For self-congruity, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .79, and the Bartlett test was significant

(Approx. Chi-Square=368.497, $p = .00$). High values of KMO ($>.05$) indicated that factor analysis is appropriate for the sample. According to the results, only one factor was extracted, and the cumulative variance was 60.6%. The KMO for identification was .84, and the Bartlett test was significant (Approx. Chi-Square= 279.43, $p = .00$). Based on factor analysis, only one identification component was extracted, and the cumulative variance was 48.4%. Regarding attitude toward product, the KMO was .84, and the Bartlett test was significant (Approx. Chi-Square=429.295, $p = .00$). In addition, only one factor was extracted, and the cumulative variance was 78.9%. For attitude toward brand, the KMO was .83, and the Bartlett test was significant (Approx. Chi-Square=753.429, $p = .00$). Like the aforementioned constructs, only one factor was extracted, and the cumulative variance was 82.5%. Finally, the KMO for purchase intention was .91, and the Bartlett's test was significant (Approx. Chi-Square=919.036, $p = .00$). According to the results, only one component was extracted, and the cumulative variance was 89.5%.

According to Cuieford (1965), a Cronbach's alpha higher than .70 is considered to be reliable. In addition, Kaiser (1974) indicated that the KMO should be higher than .50 for factor analysis, and the fewer extracted components the better. As such, the constructs in the main study achieved acceptable reliability. The construct validity for the main study was good, and the items for each construct explained the same component. In addition, for hypotheses testing, we computed a mean score for each variable.

Hypotheses Testing

H1 posited that self-congruity will lead to identification. Regression analysis was conducted to examine H1. The result was statistically significant ($F(1,121) = 127.974$, $p = .00$). According to the results, self-congruity explained 51.4% of the variance of identification. In addition, the

results implied that the level of self-congruity will positively affect identification ($\beta=.717$, $t=11.313$, $p=.00$). Therefore, H1 was supported (See Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Results of Regression for H1

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Self-Congruity	.585	.052	.717	11.313	.00

Notes: $R^2=.514$

We hypothesized that consumers who perceive stronger self-congruity with a celebrity spokesperson will generate greater (a) attitude toward product, (b) attitude toward brand, and (c) purchase intention. Prior to examining the hypotheses, participants were categorized into three group based on their degree of self-congruity (self-congruity score > 3 : high self-congruity group; self-congruity score < 3 : low self-congruity group; self-congruity score $=3$: neutral self-congruity group). We used a similar procedure to the pretest. Participants in the neutral self-congruity group ($n=7$, $M=3.0$) were eliminated. An independent t test was conducted, and we found significant differences between high ($n=36$, $M=3.8$) and low ($n=80$, $M=2.0$) self-congruity groups ($t=17.113$, $p=.00$) on the self-congruity measures.

Three sets of independent t test were conducted to examine H2a, H2b, and H2c. The results showed that participants who perceived a high level of self-congruity had significantly higher product attitude ($M=5.9$) ($t=17.113$, $p=.00$), brand attitude ($M=5.5$) ($t=6.188$, $p=.00$) and purchase intention ($M=4.8$) ($t=17.113$, $p=.00$) than those who perceived lower congruence with the character (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Means between High/ Low Self-Congruity Groups (All Responses)

	Level of Self-Congruity		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	High (n=36)	Low (n=80)		
Self-Congruity	3.8 (.4099)	2.0 (.5456)	17.113***	114
Attitude toward Product	5.9 (.8964)	4.3 (1.3600)	6.188***	114
Attitude toward Brand	5.5 (1.02812)	4.3 (1.2018)	4.990***	114
Purchase Intention	4.8 (1.1322)	2.3 (1.3474)	9.490***	114

Note. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

To assess whether differences existed for the two different celebrity spokes-characters, separate analyses were conducted for both Minnie Mouse and Snoopy, and the results were statistically significant as well. For the Minnie Mouse exposure group, 13 participants were categorized into high self-congruity group ($M=3.7$), while 44 participants were in low self-congruity group ($M=2.0$), and the two groups had a significant difference on self-congruity ($t=9.876, p=.00$). For the Snoopy exposure group, there were 23 participants in high self-congruity group ($M=3.8$), while 26 participants were in low self-congruity group ($M=2.0$), and the two groups were a significantly different on self-congruity ($t=13.807, p=.00$).

For Minnie Mouse, participants who perceived higher self-congruity with the character generated higher product attitude ($M=6.1$) than participants who perceived lower self-congruity ($M=4.3$) ($t=4.492, p=.00$). The brand attitude among the high congruity group ($M=5.4$) was also higher than that among the low congruity group ($M=4.4$) with a significant difference ($t=2.513, p<.05$). Finally, the purchase intention among the high congruity group ($M=4.7$) was also higher than that among the low congruity group ($M=2.2$) ($t=5.882, p=.00$) (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Means between High/ Low Self-Congruity Groups (Minnie Mouse)

	Level of Self-Congruity		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	High (n=13)	Low (n=44)		
Self-Congruity	3.7 (.3883)	2.0 (.5758)	9.876***	55
Attitude toward Product	6.1 (.9703)	4.3 (1.2960)	4.492***	55
Attitude toward Brand	5.3 (1.2973)	4.3 (1.2766)	2.513**	55
Purchase Intention	4.7 (1.3376)	2.2 (1.3256)	5.882***	55

Note. ** = $p \leq .01$. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

The product attitude between high and low self-congruity groups in Snoopy was significantly different as well ($t=4.12$, $p=.00$). Product attitude was higher in the high self-congruity group ($M=5.8$) than that in the low self-congruity group ($M=4.4$). The brand attitude among the high congruity group ($M=5.6$) was also higher than that among the low congruity group ($M=4.3$) ($t=4.511$, $p=.00$). Finally the purchase intention among the high congruity group was 4.8, which is higher than that among the low congruity group ($M=2.5$) ($t= 6.925$, $p=.00$) (See Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Means between High/ Low Self-Congruity Groups (Snoopy)

	Level of Self-Congruity		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	High (n=23)	Low (n=26)		
Self-Congruity	3.8 (.4264)	2.0 (.5144)	13.807***	57
Attitude toward Product	5.8 (.8609)	4.4 (1.4505)	4.120***	57
Attitude toward Brand	5.6 (.8661)	4.3 (1.1212)	4.511***	57
Purchase Intention	4.8 (1.0268)	2.5 (1.372)	6.925***	57

Note. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Based on these results, we concluded that consumers perceived self-congruity with a celebrity spokes-character will positively affect their attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention.

For H3, we hypothesized consumers who perceived stronger identification with a celebrity spokes-character will generate greater (a) attitude toward product, (b) attitude toward brand, and (c) purchase intention. Participants were categorized into three group based on their degree of identification. Participants were categorized in the same way as that for self-congruity. There were also significant differences between the high ($n=67$; $M=3.8$) and low ($n=41$; $M=2.4$) identification groups ($t=15.719$, $p=.00$) on identification. Results showed that participants who had higher identification with a character generated greater attitude toward product ($M=5.6$) ($t=8.499$, $p=.00$), attitude toward brand ($M=5.2$) ($t=5.209$, $p=.00$), and purchase intention ($M=4.0$) ($t=6.729$, $p=.00$) than those who had lower level of identification (See Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Means between High/ Low Identification Groups (All Responses)

	Level of Identification		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	High ($n=67$)	Low ($n=41$)		
Identification	3.8 (.46456)	2.4 (.41573)	15.719***	106
Attitude toward Product	5.6 (.86095)	3.9 (1.29548)	8.499***	106
Attitude toward Brand	5.2 (1.01174)	4.0 (1.32499)	5.209***	106
Purchase Intention	4.0 (1.55447)	2.0 (1.26429)	6.729***	106

Note. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

We conducted the same analyses for both Minnie Mouse and Snoopy. For Minnie Mouse, 30 participants were categorized into high identification group ($M=3.7$) while 26 participants were

in low identification group ($M=2.3$), and the two groups had significant difference on identification ($t=11.013, p=.00$). For Snoopy, there were 37 participants in high identification group ($M=3.8$) while 15 participants were in low identification group ($M=2.5$), and the two groups had significant difference on identification as well ($t=10.472, p=.00$).

Three series of independent t test were conducted to examine H3 for both characters. For Minnie Mouse, participants who perceived higher identification with the character generated greater product attitude ($M=5.6$) than participants who perceived lower identification ($M=3.9$). The results between two groups were significantly different ($t=6.475, p=.00$). The brand attitude among the high identification group ($M=5.3$) was also higher than that among the low identification group ($M=3.9$) with a significant difference ($t=4.297, p=.00$). Finally, the purchase intention among the high identification group ($M=3.9$) was also higher than that among the low identification group ($M=1.9$) ($t=5.131, p=.00$) (See Table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Means between High/ Low Identification Groups (Minnie Mouse)

	Level of Identification		t	df
	High (n=30)	Low (n=26)		
Identification	3.7 (.4721)	2.3 (.4690)	11.013***	54
Attitude toward Product	5.6 (.9552)	3.9 (1.0869)	6.475***	54
Attitude toward Brand	5.3 (1.1062)	3.9 (1.2300)	4.297***	54
Purchase Intention	3.9 (1.6031)	1.9 (1.2127)	5.131***	54

Note. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

The product attitude between high identification and low identification groups in Snoopy was significantly different as well ($t=5.292, p=.00$). Product attitude was higher in the high

identification group (M=5.6) than that in the low identification group (M=3.8). The brand attitude among the high identification group (M=5.1) was also higher than that among the low identification group (M=4.0) ($t=2.808, p<.05$). Finally the purchase intention among the high identification group was 4.2, which is higher than that among the low identification group (M=2.2) ($t= 3.988, p=.00$) (See Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Means between High/ Low Identification Groups (Snoopy)

	Level of Identification		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	High (n=37)	Low (n=15)		
Identification	3.8 (.45971)	2.5 (.29457)	10.472***	50
Attitude toward Product	5.6 (.78956)	3.8 (1.63845)	5.292***	50
Attitude toward Brand	5.1 (.93834)	4.2 (1.51035)	2.808**	50
Purchase Intention	4.0 (1.53463)	2.2 (1.37737)	3.988***	50

Note. ** = $p \leq .01$. *** = $p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Based on the results, we concluded that consumers perceived identification with a celebrity spokes-character will positively affect their attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention.

Regression analysis was conducted to examine H4 which proposed that positive attitude toward product will lead to positive attitude toward brand. The result was statistically significant ($F(1,121)= 66.982, p=.00$). According to the results, product attitude explained 35.6% of the variance of brand attitude. In addition, the results implied positive attitude toward product will positively lead to attitude toward brand ($\beta=.596, t=8.175, p=.00$) (See Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Results of Regression for H4 – Brand Attitude

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Product Attitude	.533	.065	.596	8.175	.00

Notes: $R^2=.356$

Finally, regression analysis was conducted to examine H5. The result was statistically significant ($F(1,121)=41.216, p=.00$). Based on the analysis, brand attitude explained 25.4% variance of purchase intention. In addition, the results showed that there was a positive relationship between attitude toward brand and purchase intention ($\beta=.504, t=6.420, p=.00$) (See Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Results of Regression for H5 – Purchase Intention

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Brand Attitude	.688	.107	.504	6.420	.00

Notes: $R^2=.254$

In addition to hypotheses testing, additional regression analyses was conducted to further understand which factors had the most significant influence on purchase intention when considered together. We set self-congruity, identification, attitude toward product, attitude toward brand as the independent variables, while purchase intention was the dependent variable. According to the results, the predictors predicted 57.4% variance of purchase intention ($F(4,118)=39.772, p=.00$). In addition, among all predictors, only self-congruity had significant positive impact on purchase intention ($\beta=.498, t=5.347, p=.00$), while other predictors were not statistically supported (See Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Regression Analysis of SC>IDEN/PA/BA toward PI

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Self-Congruity	.902	.169	.498	5.347	.00
Identification	.334	.205	.150	1.628	.106
Product Attitude	.145	.109	.119	1.326	.187
Brand Attitude	.121	.106	.089	1.144	.255

Notes: $R^2=.574$

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate factors that affect consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. Adapting a theoretical framework from identification theories and self-congruity theory, as well as previous research regarding licensed merchandise, celebrity endorsers and spokes-characters, the current study aimed to examine: 1) whether consumers' self-congruity with a celebrity spokes-character will positively affect consumers' attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention for its licensed merchandise, 2) whether consumers' identification with a celebrity spokes-character will trigger more favorable attitude toward product, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention for its licensed merchandise, 3) the relationship between self-congruity and identification, and 4) which factors (self-congruity, identification, attitude toward product, and attitude toward brand) play a role in determining consumers' purchase intention.

All hypotheses were supported in the current study. As hypothesized, self-congruity leads to identification. Identification and self-congruity have been widely examined in consumer behavior. Researchers have focused on how the two constructs affected consumers' attitude or purchase intention and found identification (e.g. Basil, 1996; Kwon, Kim & Modello, 2008; Özer & Argan, 2006) and self-congruity (Sirgy, 1985; Parker, 2009; Kwak & Kang, 2009; Ericksen, 1996; Choi & Rifon, 2011) both had a positive influence on consumers' attitude and purchase intention. Researchers have also suggested the value of examining identification and self-congruity together. For example, Parker (2009) adapted self-congruity theory to examine the relationship between brand/brand user image congruence and brand attitude for public and private consumer brands, and he suggested future research could include identification as an

independent variable to increase the explanatory power of self-congruity model, since the congruity measures alone did not explain a large amount of variance. However, in the current study, we did not identify any empirical research that examined the influence of self-congruity and identification together or discussed the relationship between these two constructs. To address this literature gap, the current study included both self-congruity and identification and explored the relationship between the two constructs. The results indicated that self-congruity positively influenced identification. The relationship direction between self-congruity and identification supported Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which asserted that the perceived similarity with a referent model was crucial in an individual's identification process. That is, whether a consumer's identification with a referent model occurs is reliant upon his level of the congruence with the model. Empirical research that adapted Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory also posited that the "perceived similarity" occurred prior to identification (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Kelman (1961) asserted that identification occurs when an individual adapts behavior from another individual or a group to form part of the self image. In other words, people identify with a referent individual because the image of the referent individual is either consistent with their existing self-image or could help them enhance their image (ideal self-image). As such, people may attempt to match their self-image with that of the referent individual prior to identification. Based on the results of the study, we concluded that self-congruity may occur prior to identification. Consumers' degree of the congruence with a celebrity spokes-character will positively lead to their identification with the character.

Sirgy (1982, 1986) asserted that people will tend to buy a product when its image is consistent with their actual self-image or when its image helps them achieve their ideal image. When people's level of congruence with a product image is high, they are more likely to approach the

product. A large body of research has found that self-congruity positively affected consumers' product attitude (e.g. Sirgy, 1982, 1997; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Su, 2005), brand attitude (e.g. Sirgy, 1997; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Parker, 2009) and purchase intention (e.g. Sirgy, 1985; Ericksen, 1996; Choi & Rifon, 2011). The results of the current study were consistent with the findings of these studies, that is, consumers who perceived higher self-congruity with a celebrity spokes-character generated more favorable product attitude, brand attitude, as well as greater purchase intention for its licensed merchandise than consumers with a low level of congruence with the character. In addition to a statistically significant difference, there was a meaningful difference in the mean score of purchase intention between the high and the low self-congruity groups. The mean score of purchase intention among participants who perceived a high level of congruence with a character ($M=4.8$) was twice higher than that among participants with low degree of self-congruity with the character ($M=2.3$). As a result, understanding the match/mismatch between consumers' self-image and a character's image is critical during the decision process to licensed merchandise.

Similarly, the results of the current study showed that consumers who perceived a higher degree of identification with a celebrity spokes-character generated a more favorable product attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention than consumers with low degree of identification. Previous research has established that consumers' identification with a team would positively affect their product attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention for sport team licensed merchandise (e.g. Lee, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Özer & Argan, 2006). However we found no other study that has examined this relationship for character licensed merchandise. Based on the results of the current study, the impact of identification on product and brand attitude and purchase intention can be applied to character licensed merchandise.

The results of the current study also found that product attitude leads to brand attitude, and brand attitude leads to purchase intention. In the current study, we proposed attitude toward product leads to attitude toward brand, and the results were statistically supported. Aaker (1996) treated brand as an extension of a product. Meanwhile, Bass and Talarzyk (1972) posited that brand preference was strongly related to product attributes and the beliefs of the brand. As a result, our results could support aforementioned assertions. It should be noted that the brand we used in the current study, Uniqlo, may not be familiar to many participants since it is not an American brand and only has three stores in New York City. As such, consumers' attitudes toward a product may be particularly important for determining their attitude toward the brand. Therefore, our findings support that consumers' attitude toward a product will positively affect their attitude toward brand, especially when they are not familiar with the brand. Extant literature has documented that brand attitude will lead to purchase intention (e.g. MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; Spears & Singh, 2004; Choi & Rifon, 2011). The results of the current study were consistent with previous findings.

In addition, our analyses found that, when all independent variables are analyzed together, self-congruity was the only significant predictor of purchase intention. This finding was unexpected, as previous literature had established the relationships between identification, product and brand attitude and purchase intention. However, previous research did not employ identification and self-congruity simultaneously, thus this finding needs to be explored in future studies. We propose several reasons to explain why self-congruity was the only significant predictor of purchase intention. First, it may be because the type of the product in the current study was character licensed merchandise. For other types of licensed merchandise, such as sport team licensed merchandise or university licensed merchandise, consumers usually have a strong

degree of emotional connection with the team/university. For example, many people who consume sport team licensed merchandise usually are the fans of the team (e.g. Mason, 1999), and people who buy university licensed merchandise usually do so because they have a strong sense of belongingness (e.g. they are the students/alumni of that school) to the university (e.g. Kopczenski, 2011; Yang, Park & Park, 2007). As such, identification may play a more important role in their decision making process for aforementioned licensed merchandise. However, for character licensed merchandise, consumers may be less likely to have as strong emotional connection to the character as do those sports fans or university alumni. As a result, identification may not play as strong a role in predicting purchase intention when self-congruity is also taken into consideration.

Second, the subjects in the current study were young adults who may be less likely to have a strong degree of identification with characters such as Minnie Mouse. Previous research reported that children, the primarily target consumers for character licensed merchandise, easily identify with both characters and people because they are developing into adults (Cohen, 2004). Adapting ideas, images, attitude, or behaviors from people or characters they identify with, helps children establish their own identities and personalities. However, since young adults are usually considered to be more mature and sophisticated than children and have already established their identity, they may be less likely to identify with a cartoon character. As such, compared to children whose cognitive structures are beginning to form (Mizerski, 1995), identification with the characters may be less effective to generate young adult's purchase intention for its licensed merchandise.

Finally, the stimulus in the current study was apparel, which prior research shows is strongly associated with self-image. People usually judge others by their appearance, including what they wear. Twigg (2007) construed clothing as a connection between an individual's body and the social world, and the self and society. Researchers also demonstrate that clothing is a means for self-expression (Miller, 1997). For example, Sontag and Lee (2004) posited that clothing is "the most proximate material environment for people (p. 161)" because clothing serves as a significant symbol of an individual's mood, identity, and attitude, as well as an expression of self-regard or self-worth. As a result, for young adults, whether a character on an apparel represents their self-image may outweigh whether they identify with the character while purchasing character licensed merchandise.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study examined the relationship between self-congruity and identification, and the relationship between these two constructs and purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. Based on the results of the study, we concluded that self-congruity leads to identification. In addition, both self-congruity and identification separately have positive influences on consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. However, when the two constructs were analyzed together, only self-congruity affected consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise.

Academic Implications

Self-congruity has been a popular topic in consumer behavior and has been examined in different contexts. Besides buying behavior, self-congruity and identification may influence other sorts of behaviors as well. For example, self-congruity may affect the friends we choose and other behaviors. For example, researchers have also applied self-congruity theory to tourism management and suggested that tourists self-congruity with a image of a destination also influences their travel behavior (e.g. Sirgy & Su, 2000; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). The currents study expands the application of self-congruity theory to character licensed merchandise, and the academic implications are as follows.

The results of the current study contribute to the existing literature of licensed merchandise. Previous research regarding licensed merchandise focused only on consumers' purchase intention for sport team licensed merchandise, while the current study explored factors that trigger consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. Researchers have proposed that identification (e.g. Lee, 2008; Özer & Argan; 2006) and self-congruity (e.g. Kwak

& Kang, 2009) with a sports team both had a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention for sports team licensed merchandise. In addition, identification with the team was particularly significant while making a purchase decision (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002). The results of the current study showed that identification separately affects consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise, but when self-congruity, identification, product attitude, and brand attitude were all considered in consumers' decision making process, self-congruity was the only factor that significantly influenced consumers' purchase intention. The results that were different from previous research on sports team licensed merchandise and may be attributed to the type of licensed merchandise (character vs. sports team), the age of the subjects, and the product category (apparel) of the licensed merchandise.

The results of the study also provide a deeper understanding of celebrity spokes-characters. Researchers have conducted a wide range of research in non-celebrity spokes-characters, but research focused on celebrity spokes-character was sparse, and further understanding of celebrity spokes-character was needed (Callcott & Lee, 1995). The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been studied by many researchers. Various factors such as identification and self-congruity have been examined in extant literature (e.g. Basil, 1996; Choi & Rifon, 2011). However, there was limited research that specifically addressed celebrity spokes-characters, despite the fact that they have been widely licensed as a promotional tool. The current study adapted two predictors of purchase intention, identification and self-congruity, to examine celebrity spokes-characters and found that similar to previous studies in celebrity endorsement, identification and self-congruity separately affected consumers' purchase intention. However, when taken together, only self-congruity had an influence on purchase intention.

The current study also proposed a direction of influence between self-congruity and identification. Renowned theorists such as Bandura (1986) and Kelman (1961) posited that perceived similarity with a referent model or an individual's self-image was crucial while construing an individual's identification. On the other hand, Sirgy (1986) treated self-congruity as an individual's match/mismatch process between his self-image and a third party's image and found that an individual's perceived congruence will positively affect his attitude and behavior. The two theories treated self-image or perceived congruence as important elements during the identification/self-congruity process but did not specifically point out which process (identification and self-congruity) comes first. As such, it is worth understanding the relationship between self-congruity and identification so that we can more precisely understand and predict consumers' purchase behavior. In the current study, we aimed to not only clarify the relationship between self-congruity and identification but also examine how the two constructs worked simultaneously. The results suggested that consumers' self-congruity may be an antecedent of identification.

The results of the current study also help us understand more about Millennials, the subjects in the current study. Our findings imply that self-congruity is more influential than identification in Millennials' consumer decision making processes. Although more studies are necessary to explore the reason for this phenomenon, the results suggest that Millennials care more about whether an object reflects their self-image than their relationship to that object. The perceived similarity between their self image and a image of an object may motivate their buying behaviors.

Managerial Implications

The current study provided useful information for marketers to have a deeper understanding of young adults' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. The majority of customers of character licensed merchandise are children; therefore, most market strategies mainly target children. Since young adults are considered to be the niche market, the results of the current study can provide useful information for marketers developing strategies to target young adults. The results of the current study showed that to young adults, the level of perceived self-congruity is the key reason to trigger their purchase intention.

The results suggested that marketers may need to re-examine their criteria for selecting a character for licensing. Marketers might think that as long as the characters are popular among their target market, its licensed merchandise will be successful. However, our study results suggest that for young adult consumers, the popularity and likability of a character may not necessarily guarantee the sales of its licensed merchandise. Characters must also fit customers' perceived image of themselves. Their perceived congruence with the character is the critical factor that influences their purchase intention.

Marketers' might also think as long as the character has a positive image, its licensed merchandise will be successful. But even though the image of a character is positive, this may not necessarily mean that consumers perceive a higher level of congruence with the character. For example, Minnie Mouse was one of the characters tested in the current study. The image of Minnie Mouse has been created as very positive, and it has long been seen as one of the classic Disney female cartoon characters. Participants in the current study considered Minnie Mouse as cute, sassy, classy, pretty, and feminine. Based on the results of the current study, the higher level of congruence with a character these young adult consumers perceived, the higher the

purchase intention for this merchandise. Therefore, marketers should consider whether the image of the character matches their target consumers' self-image.

Marketers may think the brand name has a significant influence on consumers' purchase intention. But based on the current study for character licensed merchandise, consumers' self-congruity with the character was more influential than their attitude toward the brand in determining purchase intention. It is both an opportunity and a risk for marketers. If the character a company selects is able to generate a high level of congruence among its target market, consumers may be more willing to purchase. On the other hand, since consumers may consider the licensed character to be the brand rather than the retailer selling it, and consumers care less about the brand for character licensed merchandise, it will be comparatively more difficult for retail marketers to retain loyal customers. Therefore, other strategies for customer retention and strengthening brand equity were needed.

The results of the current study also provide guidance for advertisers in creating advertising copy and visuals since product image is not simply determined by physical attributes but by other factors such as advertising (Sirgy, 1982). As mentioned, consumers' level of perceived congruence with the celebrity spokes-character is crucial to eliciting purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. When creating messages for an advertising campaign, instead of emphasizing the physical attributes of the product, advertisers can focus on highlighting the personalities of the character which are similar to those among their target consumers. The messages should create an image that allows consumers to perceive that the character fits with their self-image, or to intrigue them to think about qualities they might not have thought about. For example, when MAC cosmetics launched its Disney Venomous Villains collection in 2010

(Magsaysay, 2010), the message it tried to convey was every woman has a “little villain” in her somewhere. It successfully triggered consumers’ to think about their “dark side” by using four celebrity spokes-characters (Cruella De Vil from 101 Dalmatians, Maleficent from Sleeping Beauty, Evil Queen from Snow White, and Doctor Facilier from the Princess and the Frog) to represent its products.

Limitations and Future Research

Like any study, there are limitations in the present study. First, since we used a convenience sample of students and snowball sampling, the results are not generalizable to all consumers. In addition, we recruited only female participants in the current study, so the results may not be applied to male consumers. Second, we chose existing spokes-characters, so participants might already have a preference for these brands. Some extraneous variables, such as consumers’ previous purchase experience or other information they already know about the characters might influence their attitude toward the brand. In addition, a beauty standard is subjective, therefore, the design of the tee-shirts such as the color, might also affect participants’ attitude and purchase intention. Third, the self-congruity score among the high self-congruity groups (3.8 in a 5 point scale) was slightly above the mean, which means overall, participants did not have a very strong level of congruence with the characters. Finally, since we only examined purchase intention, influence of self-congruity on actual purchase behavior might be different.

For future research, it would be interesting to repeat the study on other groups of consumers such as children or males, to examine whether their identification and self-congruity with the character would also positively influence their attitude and purchase intention. In addition, since previous research asserted that likability of the characters also affected consumers purchase

intention (Callcot & Alvey, 1991), likability could be included as one of the predictors in future works. On the other hand, since the current study focused on the U.S. market, we suggest that researchers could expand the research on consumers outside the U.S., particularly those areas where character licensed merchandise is the largest product segment. For example, character licensed merchandise has been the largest product category among licensed merchandise in Asia. In addition, character licensing has been widely applied to various products for adults, such as credit cards, luxury handbags, cars, and scooters. It might be interesting to examine Asian consumers' purchase intention for character licensed merchandise. Finally, the study only examined positive spokes-characters. Future works could examine negative spokes-characters such as Cruella De Vil to see if the self-congruity results could be replicable with these types of the characters.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A PROSPECTIVE STIMULI



Figure A.1 Tinkerbell (Positive Image)

For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.



Figure A.2 Stitch (Positive Image)



Figure A.3 Minnie Mouse



Figure A.4 Cruella De Vil



Figure A.5 Smurfette



Figure A.6 Snoopy



Figure A.7 Stitch (Negative Image)



Figure A.8 Tinkerbell (Negative Image)

APPENDIX B PRETEST QUESTIONNAIRE

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO

- You are being asked to participate in a marketing research study.
- Your participation in this study will take about 10-15 minutes.
- You will be asked to view some photos of apparel and then answer some questions about the products.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS and RISKS

- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding how the design works.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project are being collected anonymously. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link data to you.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.
- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Amelia Wang (989-980-9918, wangch36@msu.edu). You may also contact the faculty supervisor, Dr.

Patricia Huddleston, Professor of Retailing, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-432-1244, huddles2@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

By clicking "next" below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

(1) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.1 Tinkerbell (Positive Image)(Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.1 Self-Congruity Questions (Tinkerbell)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(2) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.2 Stitch (Positive Image) (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.2 Self-Congruity Questions (Stitch)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(3) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.3 Minnie Mouse (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.3 Self-Congruity Questions (Minnie Mouse)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(4) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.4 Cruella De Vil (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.4 Self-Congruity Questions (Cruella de Vil)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(5) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.5 Smurfette (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.5 Self-Congruity Questions (Smurfette)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(6) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.6 Snoopy (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.6 Self-Congruity Questions (Snoopy)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(7) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.7 Stitch (Negative Image) (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.7 Self-Congruity Questions (Stitch, Negative Image)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

(8) What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure B.8 Tinkerbell (Negative Image) (Large Image)

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table B.8 Self-Congruity Questions (Tinkerbell, Negative Image)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
The character is a mirror image of me.					

APPENDIX C MAIN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE (MINNIE MOUSE)

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO

- You are being asked to participate in a marketing research study.
- Your participation in this study will take about 5-10 minutes.
- You will be asked to view a photo of apparel and then answer some questions about the product.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS and RISKS

- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding how the design works.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project are being collected anonymously. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link data to you.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.

- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Amelia Wang (989-980-9918, wangch36@msu.edu). You may also contact the faculty supervisor, Dr. Patricia Huddleston, Michigan State University Professor of Retailing, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-432-1244, huddles2@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

By signing your signature below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt from a brand called Uniqlo. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure C.1 Minnie Mouse T-shirt by Uniqlo



About Uniqlo: Uniqlo is one of the biggest Japanese apparel retailers, which has over 800 retail stores around the world. Uniqlo has 3 stores in the United States, and all 3 stores are located in New York City. One of the flagship stores is at the 5th Avenue, and it is also the largest global flagship store of Uniqlo.

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table C.1 Formal Self-Congruity Questions (Minnie)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
2. The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
3. People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
4. The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
5. The character is a mirror image of me.					

The following statements are about *Minnie Mouse*. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about Minnie Mouse by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table C.2 Formal Identification Question (Minnie)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
6. I like Minnie Mouse.					
7. I can easily relate to Minnie Mouse.					
8. Minnie Mouse is easily understood.					
9. I think of Minnie Mouse as a good friend.					
10. I have no doubt Minnie Mouse and I would work well together.					
11. Minnie Mouse is a personal role model.					

Thinking about *the tee shirt you just saw*, please indicate how you feel about the product by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. Bad	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Good
13. Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant
14. Unagreeable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Agreeable
15. Unsatisfactory	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Satisfactory

Thinking about the brand *Uniqlo*, please indicate how you feel about the brand by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16. Bad	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Good
17. Unappealing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Appealing
18. Unfavorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Favorable
19. Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant

20. Unlikable _____ Likable

The following word pairs are related to *your intent to purchase* the tee shirt. Please indicate how you feel about the product by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21. Never	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
Purchase								Purchase
22. Definitely	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
do not intend to								intend to buy
buy								
23. Very low	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Very high
purchase								purchase
interest								interest
24. Definitely	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
not to buy it								buy it
25. Probably	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Probably buy
not buy it								it

Your information: (Please select only one statement on each question)

26. Age:

____ 18-24

____ 25-34

____ 35-44

____ 45-54

____ 55-64

____ over 65

____ Prefer not to answer

27. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

____ Less than high school

____ High school/ GED

____ Some college

____ 2 year college degree (associated)

____ 4 years college degree (BA, BS)

____ Master degree

____ Doctoral degree

____ Professional degree (MD, JD)

____ Prefer not to answer

28. Please describe your race (you can choose more than one answer in this question)

____ Asian

____ Caucasian

____ African-American

____ Hispanic

____ Native American

____ Other: _____ (please describe)

____ I do not know

Thank you so much for taking your time participating in our research:

the impact of identification and self-congruity on consumers' purchase intention

for character licensed merchandise.

Your answers are very important to us!

APPENDIX D MAIN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE (SNOOPY)

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO

- You are being asked to participate in a marketing research study.
- Your participation in this study will take about 5-10 minutes.
- You will be asked to view a photo of apparel and then answer some questions about the product.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS and RISKS

- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding how the design works.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project are being collected anonymously. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link data to you.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.
- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Amelia Wang (989-980-9918, wangch36@msu.edu). You may also contact the faculty supervisor, Dr. Patricia Huddleston, Michigan State University Professor of Retailing, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-432-1244, huddles2@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

By signing your signature below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

What follows is a photo of a tee-shirt from a brand called Uniqlo. After viewing the photo, please respond to the items and questions that follow.



Figure D.1 Snoopy T-Shirt by Uniqlo



About Uniqlo: Uniqlo is one of the biggest Japanese apparel retailers which has over 800 retail stores around the world. Uniqlo has 3 stores in the United States, and all 3 stores are located in New York City. One of the flagship stores is at the 5th Avenue, and it is also the largest global flagship store of Uniqlo.

[Instruction] Take a moment to think about the character you just saw. Please describe this character using one or more personal adjective such as, stylish, classy or whatever adjectives you can use to describe the character in your mind.

After thinking about the adjectives for the character, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table D.1 Formal Self-Congruity Questions (Snoopy)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The character on this tee shirt is consistent with how I see myself.					
2. The character on this tee shirt reflects who I am.					
3. People similar to me wear character tee shirts like this in casual situation.					
4. The kind of person who typically wears this character tee shirt in casual situation is very much like me.					
5. The character is a mirror image of me.					

The following statements are about *Snoopy*. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about Minnie Mouse by placing an “X” to the response that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement.

Table D.2 Formal Identification Questions (Snoopy)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
6. I like Snoopy.					
7. I can easily relate to Snoopy.					
8. Snoopy is easily understood.					
9. I think of Snoopy as a good friend.					
10. I have no doubt Snoopy and I would work well together.					
11. Snoopy is a personal role model.					

Thinking about *the tee shirt you just saw*, please indicate how you feel about the product by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. Bad	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Good
13. Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant
14. Unagreeable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Agreeable
15. Unsatisfactory	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Satisfactory

Thinking about the brand *Uniqlo*, please indicate how you feel about the brand by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16. Bad	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Good
17. Unappealing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Appealing
18. Unfavorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Favorable
19. Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant

20. Unlikable _____ Likable

The following word pairs are related to *your intent to purchase* the tee shirt. Please indicate how you feel about the product by placing an “X” to the response closest to the word within each pair that best describes how you feel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21. Never	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
Purchase								Purchase
22. Definitely	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
do not intend to								intend to buy
buy								
23. Very low	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Very high
purchase								purchase
interest								interest
24. Definitely	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Definitely
not to buy it								buy it
25. Probably	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Probably buy
not buy it								it

Your information: (Please select only one statement on each question)

26. Age:

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ over 65

☐ Prefer not to answer

27. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

☐ Less than high school

☐ High school/ GED

☐ Some college

☐ 2 year college degree (associated)

☐ 4 years college degree (BA, BS)

☐ Master degree

☐ Doctoral degree

☐ Professional degree (MD, JD)

☐ Prefer not to answer

28. Please describe your race (you can choose more than one answer in this question)

_____ Asian

_____ Caucasian

_____ African-American

_____ Hispanic

_____ Native American

_____ Other: _____ (please describe)

_____ I do not know

Thank you so much for taking your time participating in our research:

the impact of identification and self-congruity on consumers' purchase intention

for character licensed merchandise.

Your answers are very important to us!

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